Diyanet

The Turkish Directorate for Religious Affairs in a changing environment

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1. Introduction

This is the final report of the research project 'Diyanet, the Turkish Directorate for Religious Affairs in a changing environment', conducted between September 2009 and July 2010 in Turkey and the Netherlands. The aim of the research, which was commissioned by the Project Office IRP on behalf of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, was to explore the policies, agendas and activities of the Directorate after the coming to power of the *Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi* (AKP) in Turkey in 2003. It was expected that the AKP aimed to change the traditional role of the Directorate (Diyanet) from that of guardian to a republican version of Islam to a formal institute actively promoting the 'Islamisation' of Turkish society.

In addition to Turkey, the Directorate operates in other European countries with sizeable Turkish Muslim populations, such as the Netherlands. As a result, policy shifts emerging from the Turkish Directorate may influence policies related to Islam in other parts of Europe. A comparative investigation of Turkey and the Netherlands offers unique insight into the different societal and legal contexts in which the Directorate operates.

The central research question is as follows:

To what extent and how do recent changes in the religious and political power relations in Turkey affect the position and politico-religious agenda of Diyanet, and how do they influence Diyanet's relation with other actors in the Islamic religious arena?

To answer this question, we have put together two research teams, one based in Turkey and another in the Netherlands. The research team consisted of Prof. Dr.. Thijl Sunier, professor of Islam in European Societies, VU University Amsterdam; Dr. Nico Landman, associate professor of Islamic Studies, Utrecht University; Mrs. Heleen van der Linden, VU University Amsterdam; Mrs. Nazlı Bilgili, Sabancı University Istanbul; and Mr. Alper Bilgili, Istanbul University. The team

commenced research in October 2009. In April 2010, preliminary drafts of the 'national' reports were finalised. Based on these reports, we formulated an outline for the final report.

The research findings are based on a thorough study of secondary literature on Islam in Turkey and in Europe, an assessment of relevant documents and information on websites, and not least, interviews with informants, officials and scientists working on Islam. During research, we actively made use of our pre-existing network of contacts and scholars of Islam.

Throughout the course of research, we encountered a number of challenges. The first had to do with the characteristics of the institution we investigated; Diyanet is a state bureaucracy and our informants often limited themselves to politically or diplomatically correct statements. In addition, we had to ensure that the research would not be depicted or perceived as an intervention of the Dutch state into the institutional functioning of another country. Fortunately, in most cases we were able to convince our informants of our intentions, and as a result, did not confront any serious refusal to cooperate.

A more crucial challenge we faced was the sensitivity of the topic. In Turkey, due to historical circumstances, the debate on Islam is extremely polarised. In general, there are either strong supporters of more freedom for Islam- or strong adversaries. The latter category suspects the AKP of having a hidden agenda to Islamise the country and introduce Islamic law in Turkey. It was therefore not easy to find respondents with a more nuanced and balanced opinion.

A final, related challenge concerned the sensitivity of the 'Islam issue' in the Netherlands. During our research we often noticed reluctance on the part of informants to speak openly out about the issue. Diyanet is a state institution operating on foreign soil. In the present debate on the integration of Muslims, 'influence from abroad' is an extremely difficult issue.

After finalising two national reports, we decided to structure the final project report along four main dimensions (explained below). Following a general historical account of Islam in Turkey (chapter 2), the first dimension concerns the

institutional and formal characteristics of the Directorate; it is primarily based on written sources, official documents and interviews with key informants.

The second dimension concerns the activities of the Directorate. How does the institute profile itself through programs, actual practices and initiatives for its constituency? In this regard we have compared written plans with actual activities as they were carried out.

An important function of an institute such as the Directorate is its role as a guide for Muslims. The Directorate issues fatwa's and publishes comments on certain theological disputes. With respect to the position of Muslims outside Turkey, the role of 'religious guide' renders an extra dimension, as it is only with the help of these authoritative comments that Muslims are able to cope with the ambiguities of living in a non-Islamic society. The role of religious guide also gives us an important perspective of how the institute handles novel developments and frictions in society related to religion.

The fourth and last dimension addresses the position of the Directorate as an important player in the global religious field. It was expected that important data concerning the relation between religious organisations in both Turkey and the Netherlands would be gathered. The positioning of the Directorate in temporal religious landscapes offers us important insights into possible shifts in the source of religious, symbolic and political power. In terms of the Netherlands, Diyanet's activities and position is illustrated by a short case study of two mosque organisations in the city of Rotterdam. The case study not only provides an overview of actual practices at a local level, but also offers crucial insight into the relation between a centralised bureaucracy and the everyday activities and decision-making processes of an ordinary mosque association.

As Islam emerges as a central issue in political and public controversies both in and out of Europe, we hope this report will contribute to a better understanding of how Islam takes shape in Turkey and in the Netherlands.

We thank the Project Office IRP, the staff of the Dutch Embassy in Ankara and the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs for facilitating this research. We especially

thank our interlocutors for their willingness to provide us with the necessary information.

2. Historical Background

2.1. Islam in the Turkish republic

> "It would be wrong to claim that the Presidency of Religious Affairs is a continuation of the Ottoman institution of *Şeyhülislâmlık* (the office of the *Şeyhülislam*, the chief religious official in the Ottoman Empire) or its structure. (…) Nevertheless, in Ottoman society, the relations between religion and politics and the organization of religious affairs were regulated under the authority of the institution of *Şeyhülislâmlık,* which was granted a certain degree of autonomy. This was largely preserved and continued during the republican period with some limitations in the field of authority. In fact, in the Ottoman system, the head of the religious administration was not the *Şeyhülislam*, but rather the Sultan. The *Şeyhülislam* administered religious affairs on behalf of the Sultan (Bardakoğlu 2006: 9)."

This above quote is from an address of former President Ali Bardakoğlu in 2003, the year he became the 16th Director of Religious Affairs – almost 80 years after the abolishment of the Ottoman institution of the *Şeyhülislâmlık* and its replacement by the Directorate for Religious Affairs (*Diyanet İşleri Reisliği* – today *Başkanlığı*). Quoting the law 633, published on 2 July 1965, on the Organisation and Duties of the Directorate of Religious Affairs (Diyanet), Bardakoğlu summarises those duties as follows: "To carry out religious affairs pertaining to faith, worship and moral principles, to inform society on religion and to administer places of worship." As to the Directorate, he states: "[It] continued the Ottoman experience to a certain extent, but was given a structure that complied with the secular structure of the state" (Bardakoğlu 2006:10). [1]

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[1] Article 1 of the Law 633: "Duties. 1 – to administer the affairs of the Islamic faith and the principles of its worship and morality; to illuminate the public about religion; and to administer places of worship:." (*Görev. Madde 1 – İslam Dininin inançları, ibadet ve ahlak esasları ile ilgili yürütmek, din konusunda toplumu aydınlatmak ve ibadet yerlerinin*

These statements touch at the heart of the matter at stake in this report: the relation between the state and religion in Turkey today, and the crucial role of Diyanet in structuring these relations.[2] Although Bardakoğlu acknowledges the changes that took place in 1924, he underlines the continuity with the Ottoman past and suggests a rather smooth transition. In fact, this transition was far from smooth, as the state elite in the early republican period tried to impose a secular order and saw Islamic institutions as a potential threat to the social and political changes they wished to accomplish. Many analysts of the early republican period have called the reforms of the Kemalists a revolution, a radical break with the old establishment in which Islam had been so important. It has been argued that the secularist ideology which legitimated the reforms was indeed radical and comparable to the Bolshevik revolution in Russia (Toprak 1981). Bardakoğlu's remarks, however, reflect a popular view in contemporary Turkey that is much more positive about the Ottoman past and tries to harmonise the values of the Turkish republic with those of the Ottoman Empire. In any case, the Turkish version of secularism, as well as the unique relation between the state and Islam – a religion to which 98 percent of the Turkish population adheres, is highly complex. In order to understand the position and functioning of Diyanet, we need to unravel these complexities and show how the relation between Islam and the Turkish state has been transformed and reinterpreted in each phase of the development of the Turkish republic. This chapter will provide the reader with the necessary historical background of this process.

In terms of the relation between religion and the Turkish state, we can distinguish roughly between four phases. The first phase (1923-1945) covers the years in which Kemalism was a powerful political force that regulated many areas of public life in a rather authoritarian way. The second phase (1945-1980) is marked by political liberalisation, the introduction of multi-party politics and the emergence of Islam as a crucial factor in the political process. The third phase

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yönetmek üzere (…)). 'Diyanet işleri başkanlığı kuruluş ve görevleri hakkında kanun' in *Din işleri ve ilgili mevzuat* (Ankara 2001), 57.

[2] From now on we will refer to the Directorate of Religious Affairs as Diyanet.

(1980-2003) is characterised by the emergence of a Turkish civil society and an urban middle class that begins to articulate its religious convictions and outlooks, and the increasing visibility of Islam in public life. The fourth and last phase (2003-today) is marked by the coming into power of the AK party (AKP). We will show that each of these phases, rather than delineating sharp ruptures with the period before, can be conceived as providing the necessary conditions for each following phase.

2.1.1. Secularisation in the early Turkish republic

Reforms in the decade following after Mustafa Kemal (later called Atatürk) proclaimed the Turkish republic in 1923, indeed resembled no sudden rupture with the past. The continuity with an Ottoman past is, however, a continuation of a secularisation process rather than the perpetuation of an institutionalised religious landscape. In an analysis of these changes, Zürcher distinguishes three fields in which secularisation took place. The first is the secularisation of the state, education and the legal system, which impacted upon the institutionalisation of Islam and the *ulama*: the class of religious scholars. Secondly, there were measures taken against the use and dissemination of religious symbols. Finally, a secularisation of social life was envisaged, which included an attack on popular Islam. The first change can be seen as the final stage in the secularisation of Islamic institutions of the state, including education and law; this process began with the Tanzimat reforms of the 19th century and was virtually complete during the regime of the Young Turks (1908-1918) (Zürcher 2006: 227-235). Mustafa Kemal belonged to the radical wing of the Young Turks, who envisaged a rapid modernisation of Turkey based on rationalism and science. Mustafa Kemal frequently underlined that he was not against Islam as a religion; he argued that Islam is essentially a rational and 'natural' religion (WRR 2004: 98). Nevertheless, this religion had to play a very limited social role and many of its political and social aspects had to be curtailed. In Mustafa Kemal's view, Islamic convictions and practices should be an individual affair. The state had to guide and facilitate these practices.

The Kemalist attempts to 'domesticate' Islam can be seen in the role given to the newly established Directorate of Religious Affairs, Diyanet; it was made clear that Diyanet was confined to a separate domain of life, called religion, which no longer permeated and dominated other state domains, such as education and law. In this respect, the three tasks designated to Diyanet by the Kemalists – organising worship, managing religious buildings and religious instruction – were very reminiscent of the tasks of the French *Bureau Central des Cultes,* a part of the French republican central administration (Gözaydın 2008: 218). In 1931, the position of Diyanet was further weakened, as the management and personnel of the Turkish mosques were transferred to another institution, the Directorate General for Religious Foundations. It should be noted that measures taken in this first phase were primarily designed to reorganise the central institutions of society and to bring religious affairs together under the responsibility of one state bureaucracy. In hindsight, we can argue that these reforms were indeed far reaching, but the net effect was a *reorganisation* of the relation between religion and the Turkish state, rather than a *separation*. This has often referred to as the 'Turkish brand of secularism' (Kinzer 2001).

2.1.2. Islam and politics in post-WWII Turkey

In 1946, Turkey became a multi-party democracy, which immediately affected the relationship between the state and Islam. Competition for electoral support evolved into a matter of great importance. As 75 percent of the voters still lived in rural areas, the introduction of democracy rendered the countryside a much more prominent status. Both in rural areas and in the small provincial towns, a conservative, strongly religious worldview was still widespread among the population that had hardly been touched by the Kemalist cultural revolution (Szyliowicz 1966; Mardin 1989). Socially and economically, the countryside was rather isolated. In their election campaigns, the parties were faced with requests to support Islamic activities and to soften secularist limitations. Islam became an important electoral issue. One of the effects of the changing political climate was the Republican People's Party Günaltay-government's decision, in April 1950, to

transfer the management of mosques and Islamic personnel back to Diyanet, a measure that boosted the institution's prestige (Gözaydın 2008: 220).

In May 1950, the opposition Democratic Party, under the leadership of Adnan Menderes, won the elections with a large majority. In contrast to the Republican People's Party, the Democratic Party had secured the backing of local (Islamic) networks, which in the 1950s paid off in the elections. The party showed sensitivity to the needs and perceptions of people other than the urban elite. Moreover, it has been argued that the post-WWII political reforms, together with the massive urbanisation of Turkey in the 1950s, had a much greater influence on the place of religion in Turkish society than the Kemalist revolution three decades earlier (see e.g. Sunier 1996).

One of the first things Menderes did was allowing the *ezan* (call to prayer) to be performed in Arabic again. Furthermore, as religious education in schools expanded, more training programs for imams and preachers were encouraged. The sale of religious literature was permitted and the Democratic Party sought the support of religious movements such as the Nurcus[3] during elections.

Because of its concessions to Islamic groups, the Democratic Party and its successors have often been accused by secularists in Turkey of exploiting religious issues and 'gambling with Atatürk's legacy'. However, this is at most a half-truth. It is true that Menderes made concessions to the religious sentiments of the population, and a series of symbolic measures meant to criticise the secularist policies of the Republican People's Party were initiated by the Democratic Party. However, there was no meddling whatsoever with the secular character of the state and legislation. A return to Islamic legislation - or a relaxation of state control over muftis and mosques - was never considered.

Menderes and his followers reacted outspokenly to the continuous accusations of the Republican People's Party, which held that the Democratic Party was undermining secularism. Against the Kemalist view of secularism as a defence mechanism protecting the freedom of thought from Islamic interference, the

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[3] Nurcus were followers of Said Nursî (1876-1960), a Kurdish Nakşibendi preacher, whose movement split up into various branches after his death.

Democratic Party proposed a secularism that would guarantee citizen's freedom of religion. While secularism should not be anti-religious, it should be limited to matters of state and constitution (Zürcher 1993: 285-7; Yavuz 2003: 61-2; WRR 2004: 105-6).

2.1.3. The 1960s and 1970s

After 1965, the successor to the Democratic Party, Süleyman Demirel and his Justice Party, managed to attract the majority of the Democratic Party's former supporters. Policies pertaining to Islam of this large conservative people's party remained largely similar to that of Menderes' party. Demirel stated repeatedly that, although the state continued to be secular, this should not imply that the individual should be non-religious. Islam was appreciated as a moral code that provided strength to Turkish society. During the Cold War years, politicians of a more conservative orientation even saw Islamic standards and values, along with Kemalist nationalism, as an essential counterweight to the threats of socialism and communism. Religious movements benefited from this view and became even more integrated into the mainstream of Turkish politics. (Yavuz 2003: 62; WRR 2004: 106-7)

The 1960s also witnessed the rise of explicitly Islamic, or Islamist, political movements, whose political outlooks were collectively based on Islamic principles. The new 1961 Constitution extended political rights to Islamic groups and granted them more freedom of expression. Consequently, Islamic political movements were better able to communicate their ideas to the public. This development suggests that it was difficult to make a clear distinction between 'Islamic' and 'non-Islamic' parties. Most political parties showed a growing interest in Islam, which can also be viewed as part of a process of democratisation in Turkey that started after World War II. More importantly, though, is the gradual change of Islam's place in society. Whether political parties can be depicted as 'real Islamist' or as just 'using Islamic rhetoric' to attract voters is not very relevant in this case; it is clear that the social relocation of Islam caused a reconfiguration of the political landscape. The concept of '*laik*', secular, as it was coined by the early Kemalists to

denote Turkish secularism, became a rallying point in the political process of the 1960s and 1970s. Yavuz rightly argues that "many scholars of Turkish politics and society tend to view Turkey's Islamic movement in opposition to the state rather than focusing on the symbiotic relationship between the two. The dominant view, that sees an inevitable clash of Kemalist and Islamist ideologies, ignores the more nuanced evolution and mutual transformation of state and society" (Yavuz 2006: 8; see also Mardin 1989; Çakır 1990).

The rise of political movements with an Islamic outlook was not the result of an increase in piety among the population. The main cause for the electoral success of these parties was the socio-economic development policies of the 1960s. When the larger parties became strongly geared towards big businesses, or civil servants and organised labour, small entrepreneurs (the so-called *esnaf*) no longer agreed with their policies. By the end of the 1960s, these small entrepreneurs had managed to usurp control of the Union of Chambers of Commerce of Turkey from the big industrialists in Istanbul. Their representative became the next president: Necmettin Erbakan, a partially German-educated Professor of Mechanical Engineering at the Technical University of Istanbul, who in 1969 was elected to Parliament as an independent representative for the conservative town of Konya. In 1970, together with a few other parliamentarians, he formed the National Order Party, which was banned for anti-secular activities after the Turkish army seized power behind the scenes in March 1971. In 1973, Erbakan became the leader of a new party: the National Salvation Party, which gave a leading role to members of religious brotherhoods, in particular to members of a branch of the Nakşibendis (WRR 2004: 107). However, Erbakan also successfully represented the voice of those small entrepreneurs who considered themselves victims of previous economic developments. Erbakan articulated a very specific moral rhetoric that had appealed to this 'class caught in between'. It was a mixture of global anxiety, national pride and (Islamic) morality.

Since 1973, the ideology of Erbakan's party was referred to as 'National Vision' (*Milli Görüş*). Its manifesto included typically Islamist facets, such as an emphasis on ethics and morality in education and upbringing, as well as the fight against

usury and corruption. Surprisingly, though, the manifesto also strongly emphasised secularism. Freedom of opinion and freedom of expression were qualified as the foundations of democracy and human rights. However, it was a different interpretation of secularism than that of the Kemalists. What was meant was complete freedom of religion, without state control, the same understanding of secularism that was adopted by the Democratic Party in the 1950s. The Kemalist notion of secularism was rejected as the 'dictatorship of the non-believers'. The other Islamist political movement that acquired influence in the 1970s and 1980s was the so-called 'Turkish-Islamic Synthesis'. In the second half of the 1970s, the Synthesis ideology gained popularity among supporters of the Nationalist Action Party, a radical (reactionary) right-wing party led by an ex-colonel, Alpaslan Türkeş (Erbakan 1975; WRR 2004: 107-9).

Summarising the developments in the period between 1945 and 1980, we see a shift in the understanding of secularism, and in the position of Islam in society. Secularism is no longer understood as a civilisation to be imposed on the uneducated religious masses by an enlightened elite, but rather as a political system in which religious values may be respected, even though the political system as such is not based on a religious doctrine. The older understanding of Islam as an anti-modern force is gradually replaced by an understanding of Islam as an important social force in society. However, this shift is not welcomed by all; rather, we can observe a gradual political polarisation concerning the place of religion in society (Asad 2003).

2.1.4. The 1980 coup and the Welfare Party

The beginning of the third phase in the development of the relation between religion and the Turkish state was marked by a military coup in September 1980. In that year, a junta led by General Kenan Evren, the son of an imam, took control. In addition to banning religiously oriented parties, he unleashed an all-inclusive ideological offensive, in which Islam constituted a central role. The Islam that was officially approved and propagated by the military leadership had much in common with the Turkish-Islamic Synthesis (Yavuz 2003: 71-3; WRR 2004: 109). It had

strong nationalist underpinnings, and it emphasised the link between state and nation, and national unity and social harmony; it also glorified military and authoritarian values. In addition, Islam was presented as an 'enlightened' religion, open to science and technology (Evren 1986: 221; WRR 2004: 109). The goal of this ideological offensive was to render Turkish youth immune to both socialist propaganda and the temptations of radical Islamic movements that were not controlled by the state (Yavuz 2003: 70-1; WRR 2004: 109; Birand 1987; Heper and Evin 1988). The rather ambitious measures taken by the military in those years were designed to reorganise and reshape public and political life in Turkey almost completely.

It was decided that this doctrine of 'state-Islam' should mainly be propagated and inculcated through education. For instance, it formed the basis of the National Cultural Report (1983) of the State Planning Bureau (Poulton 1997: 184; WRR 2004: 109), and lessons in religion and ethics were made compulsory for all classes; the state-controlled media (radio and television) helped spreading the message. Diyanet remained just as tied to the state as before, but in 1982 its existence and tasks were constitutionally substantiated. These tasks reflected the close ties between religion and nationalism that were now propagated. Diyanet had to "protect the Turkish national identity" (Poulton 1997: 185-7; WRR 2004: 109-10). Materially, Diyanet profited from this new policy line: staff membership grew from 50,765 in 1979 to 84,172 just ten years later. The spread of 'correct' Islam was not limited to Turkey; the number of staff members working in Europe for Diyanet increased from 20 to 624 over the same period (Poulton 1997: 185-7; WRR 2004: 110).

Parallel to this 'official Islam', the Milli Görüş movement of Necmettin Erbakan, which was active in the 1970s under different organisational names, reorganised in the late 1980s, as did other 'old', pre-1980 political leaders. Under the banner of The Welfare Party, they took part in political life between 1983 and 1998. In the 1990s, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, the current Turkish Prime Minister, was a prominent member of this party. He belonged to the so-called 'new generation' of Welfare Party politicians who wished to reform Erbakan's political

views according to new standards. These politicians considered Erbakan's ideas outdated and not suited to the experiences and outlooks of the newly emerging Islamic middle-class. This middle-class was a direct result of the economic policies of the 1980s and 1990s, initiated by the Motherland Party under Turgut Özal, who later on became President of the republic. Özal adopted an economic strategy that did away with the Kemalist protectionist policies; conversely, he was in favour of an economic model that opened up Turkey's borders to the outside world. These reforms led to the emergence of the so-called 'Anatolian tigers', a new autonomous force in Turkish history outside the control of the state, who aimed to redefine Turkey by supporting a neo-liberal economic transformation whilst promoting a conservative religious culture. Turkish history after 1960 reflects a conflict between the emerging bourgeoisie and the hegemonic civilian-military bureaucracy over the definition and speed of this process of modernisation – as opposed to Westernisation. In this regard, the structures of both class and political alliances went through a radical change during the Özal period; as the influence of the military-civilian bureaucracy waned, the power of the new Anatolian business class, along with Istanbul-based industrialists, increasingly waxed (Yavuz 2009: 77). This process has created new economic opportunities, a participatory, political system, the 'mediatisation' of politics and new forms of communication networks, and an emphasis on the language of human rights.

Within a decade, Turkey became a country in economic transition, on a path to modernisation and in the stages of producing a new class of internationally oriented businessmen. This resulted in a sweeping improvement in the quality of life among a portion of the urban population. The new wing within the Welfare Party was closely attached to these new policies. In their eyes, Erbakan's policies were too connected to the provincial class of small manufacturers, and in many respects, too conservative. For a number of years, the Erbakan wing and the new wing remained together in the Welfare Party. The Welfare Party formed a coalition government with the True Path Party, the new party of former Justice Party leader Demirel in 1996. After the 'soft coup' of February 1997, Prime Minister Erbakan was forced to resign and shortly afterwards the party was banned by the Constitutional Court

for violating the principle of secularism. Its successor, the Virtue Party was closed down for 'anti-secularist activities' in 2001.

After the abolishment of the Virtue party, the Milli Görüş movement split up into two groups: the 'traditionalists' and the aforementioned 'reformists'. The last group founded the Justice and Development Party[4] in August 2001. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, the former major of Istanbul, was chosen as its leader. Under his leadership, the reformists strongly criticised the political style and policies of their predecessors in the Welfare Party and the Virtue Party, in particular the Islamist and anti-Western element in those policies. By contrast, they started a dialogue with the more secular circles in society, and accepted economic liberalism (Azak 2009: 74-5). The Erbakan wing reorganised itself into the Felicity Party in 2001. Since then, the party did not manage to pass the 10 percent threshold necessary to obtain seats in Parliament.

Many observers in and outside Turkey interpret the popularity of the AKP among the Turkish population as a sign of the (re)Islamisation of Turkey. But the picture is much more complex than a simple 'return to Islam'; in the successive elections since the early 2000s, the AKP steadily increased its electoral support with an extended political, economic and moral agenda. This public support arose not only from the AKP's policy of liberalising strict laws on religion in the public realm and further restricting the influence of the army, but also from an economic agenda that would make Turkey ready for 'Europe'. A thorough analysis of the position of the AKP falls outside the scope of this report, though one important aspect of the political situation in Turkey should be mentioned here.

According to Yavuz and other observers, the AKP is a product of the conflict between localised forms of modernity and Westernisation, highlighted by two key events: the 1997 coup and the 2001 economic crisis. The party came to power to restore the process of liberalisation, and even accelerate it, by fulfilling the Copenhagen Criteria for Turkey's membership of the EU. Thus, the AKP should not be treated as a 'rebellion' against modernity or even Europeanisation, but rather

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[4] We will use the abbreviation of the Turkish name of the party: *Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*, AKP or AK party.

a break from rigid Kemalism and the events tied to the coup and economic crisis (Yavuz 2009: 16). An important question here is to what extent the AKP can be depicted as a 'reformist Islamic movement'. Yavuz is rather clear about that; he calls the present situation, in which Islamic movements are crucial players in the political arena, "a conservative revolution" as it seeks to maintain Turkey's generally conservative traditions and bring local norms and identities to the national level, whilst also "creating new cognitive spaces for different imaginations of the past and the reconstruction of the present (…) and overcoming the rigid nation-state ideology" (Yavuz 2006: 7). This transition does not emerge from the intelligentsia, but rather from "a bottom-up imagination of those who felt excluded and dissatisfied with the prevailing socio-political conditions of Turkey. The AKP has attempted to overthrow the ingrained Kemalist mode or patterns of 'progressive and elitist thinking'. The main goal is to level the society so that the gap top and bottom of society is reduced. In short, the AKP's dream is to shape politics along the identity and needs of civil society"; this process is, in turn, "a normative revolution" in that it seeks to moralise the political institutions and networks. (ibid.).

It should be added that the strong position of a moderate conservative movement in Turkey's political arena has also caused a sharp increase in political polarisation. Since the early 2000s, there have been a variety of instances where clashes occur between the AKP constituencies and the older, republican and strongly secularist segment of the population. The AKP movement argues that a 'real' democratic Turkey should reflect the background of the population; the secularists argue that the AKP is slowly breaking down Turkey's Kemalist legacy. In the next paragraph we will present a picture of the situation in Turkey in the past decade. This is the beginning of the aforementioned fourth phase in the development of the relation between religion and the Turkish state.

2.1.5. The AK party in power

2.1.5.1. The first period of AKP government (2002-2007)

The AKP was founded in August 2001 by 'reformists' within the Virtue Party and initiated by Abdullah Gül, the current President of the republic. Within only fifteen months, these so-called reformists, who were strongly supported by the new emerging business class, managed to turn the AKP into the biggest political movement in Turkey's history. During the 2003 election, the party experienced an overwhelming electoral victory by garnering 30 percent of the votes. During the campaign, the party presented itself as the new alternative for other parties on the central-right side of the political spectrum. Besides the AKP, only the Republican People's Party managed to pass the electoral threshold, and as a result, the AKP obtained two-third of the seats in Parliament.

The AKP positioned itself at the forefront of social justice and reform. It developed into a movement that appealed to those sectors of Turkish society that were the main victims of the socio-economic crisis. They also had a strong foothold in many grass-root level associations and initiatives. In the first years after coming to power in 2003, the AKP adopted a very pragmatic and reconciling policy; its leaders were well aware of the strong tensions between the secularists and the supporters of the new AKP policies, and primarily aimed to prevent political polarisation. The absolute majority in Parliament offered the party a comfortable position to quickly introduce a number of economic, social and political reforms. One of the aims was to pave the way for renewed negotiations with the European Union in October 2005. The macro-economic reforms initiated by the preceding right-wing central government of the Democratic Left Party, the Republican People's Party and the Nationalist Movement Party were upheld by the AKP government. The Turkish economy saw a steady growth, which resulted, among other things, in an increase in the general level of prosperity of the population. The decisiveness and vigour of the AKP government resulted in a rise in popularity, and also made Turkey a reliable partner for foreign investors. Although these new economic policies were initiated by the previous government,

the AKP benefited politically from the results. This was the main reason behind the new victory of the AKP during the general elections of 2007.[5]

2.1.5.2. The second period of AKP government (2007-present)

In the years prior to the 2007 elections, the AKP gradually became more self-assured. The party saw its support among the population increase, which made political leaders more confident. A very important support for reforms to liberalise political life came from Brussels, as the EU argued that only with the complete removal of political restrictions for Kurds, Alevis and other minorities could Turkey fully become an EU member. Meanwhile, tensions in society increased. The renewed victory of the AKP with even more votes (46.6 percent) than in the 2002 elections (33 percent) made the fundamental gap between the secularist and AKP sections of the population even more explicit. The 'Anatolian encroachment', or the presence of a more self-conscious population with a conservative outlook in public spaces – which had previously been the domain of a secularist elite – caused anxiety among the predominantly westernised urban population. Many feared that the AKP had a hidden 'Islamic' agenda, and this feeling was strengthened by the pressure from certain parts of the AKP constituencies to lift the ban on the veil in public buildings, in particular universities. Lifting this ban required a change in the Constitution, for which a two-third majority in Parliament was necessary. Though in early 2008 the AKP-led Parliament voted in favour of lifting the ban, with 410 out of 550 votes, the Constitutional Court, traditional defender of the Kemalist legacy, did not accept this decision and even accused the AKP in June 2008 of subverting the secular basis of the Turkish republic. The ban on the veil remained in place.

Another issue concerned the election of Abdullah Gül for the Presidency. The army and the Republican People's Party opposition considered Gül an unacceptable candidate. His election, however, could not be blocked.[6] The political polarisation in Turkey laid bare a very fundamental and sensitive issue: a more

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[5] http://www.turkije-instituut.nl/2e%20TERMIJN%AKP--396

[6] http://www.turkije-instituut.nl/2e%20TERMIJN%20AKP--397/

democratic Turkey, which is a crucial prerequisite to enter the EU, will no doubt lead to a more prominent and more visible role of Islam in society and in politics. The 'solution' that some hard-liner sections of the republican opposition envision, namely a constitutional barrier against Islam, implies a continuous state control over the democratic process.

The controversies that have dominated Turkish politics for almost a decade reveal the very different notions of secularism invoked by political actors. Secularism is an enormously extended semantic field that cannot be captured in a single definition (Asad 2003; Casanova 1994; De Vries 2008; Göle 2010; Taylor 2007; Van der Veer 1996). In the actual political process in Turkey, there are different understandings of what secularism should mean. Secularists, led by the Republican People's Party, argue that the AKP aims to dismantle 'the secular character' of Turkey. Their understanding of secularism upholds a strict control of any form of religious assertion in the political arena and in public life more generally. In turn, they suggest that legislation should safeguard these control mechanisms. This is the version of secularism underlying early Kemalist reforms. A more moderate version of this understanding of secularism envisions the state as a guardian of the freedom to live without any religious influence on public life. Rather than controlling, the state should act as a neutral referee in religious affairs. This second version has been operational in actual politics for a long time, but in the political turmoil of the last decade among the Republican People's Party constituency, we can witness a call for a return to the strict policies of the early republic.

2.1.6. The AKP's secularism

What are the positions in the other 'camp'? What kind of opinions can we observe among those in favour of the present AKP government and their version of secularism? Yavuz quotes a speech of Prime Minister Erdoğan from 2006, which adequately captures the "democratically negotiated secularism" the AKP proposes:

"Secularism, as the key guarantee of societal peace and democracy, is a concept with two dimensions. Secularism's first dimension is that the state should not be structured according to religious laws. This requires a standardized, unitary and undivided legal order. Secularism's second dimension is that the state should be neutral and keep an equal distance from all religious beliefs and should be the guarantor of individual's freedom of religion and belief. It is explained in the second article of the Constitution defining the contents of secularism that secularism does not mean atheism; rather it means that each individual has a right to his own belief of sect; the right to freedom of religious practice and the right to equal treatment before the law regardless of faith. Therefore, due to these characteristics, secularism is the foundational and integrative principle of the Republic. The right decisions of Mustafa Kemal from the days of the National Liberation Movement and the concepts that reflect these decisions, which are also internalized by our nation and integrative concepts, must be jealously guarded. I believe that we must carefully avoid turning these integrative concepts [secularism] into a zone of 'social discontent'. For this reason it is necessary for us to protect the meaning as well as the spirit of the concepts" (Erdoğan in Radikal, May 2006, taken from Yavuz 2009: 159).

This quote could be understood as an invitation for 'other religious communities' to embrace the idea of secularism as a negotiable principle. Critics argue that this does not mean that the AKP considers non-Sunni religious convictions equal to other religions. The government's reaction to allegations made by the Constitutional Court in 2008 further elucidate AKP's position. The AKP's defence counted over one hundred pages in which there was a call for a more 'modern' and democratic way of dealing with religion in the public sphere. Not surprisingly, the document underlines in many ways the party's loyalty to 'the values and characteristics of the Republic – those of a democratic and secular constitutional state', and claims that the AKP has actively contributed to the social acceptance of

secularism. Therefore, the document strongly rejects all allegations of the AKP having a secret agenda of Islamisation. Among the trump cards the party brings out in its defence against the accusations, are its negotiations with the EU about the admission of Turkey: "We have more closely than ever approached the goal of modernization as set out by Atatürk - primarily through the distance that we have covered on the path to full membership in the EU." [7]

Although the AKP's "response to the indictment" is primarily an attempt to explain why all accusations of their being anti-secular are simply unfounded, in some places it becomes clear that their understanding of secularism is fundamentally different from that of their opponents who have sued them. The AKP explains this as follows:

> "One of the basic reasons for the opening of this case is the difference between the understanding of secularism as delineated in the indictment and our party's understanding of secularism. There may be different views regarding the characteristics of secularism. The indictment regards secularism as a concept with a single dimension and presents it as a 'civilized way of life' and a 'philosophy of life' that should be adopted by individuals. This approach suggests that secularism is 'the last phase in the philosophical and organizational evolution of societies'. Such an interpretation of secularism is based on a rigid 'progressive' understanding of 19th century positivism. In opposition to such an interpretation, the AK Party's understanding of secularism reflects an approach which is in total harmony with contemporary democratic societies. The mentality of secularism as defended by our party never threatens the basic rights and freedoms of others. On the contrary, our understanding foresees the peaceful coexistence of all individuals within the context of their different beliefs and ways of life. [8]

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[7] http://eng.akparti.org.tr/iddianame_cevap_en.pdf
[8] Ibid., p. 29-30.

Whereas their opponents try to frame the issue as a confrontation between secular and anti-secular forces in Turkish society, the AKP makes a strong case that, in fact, it is about different understandings of secularism, not unlike the different understandings of the term in European countries today.

On Sunday September 12, 2010, exactly thirty years after the military coup which gave the army a permanent formal influence on the political process, a referendum was held. The Turkish population could vote for a further restriction of the political and legal influence of the army, and for a direct influence of the Parliament on the selection of members of the Constitutional Court – the highest legal authority in the country. Both the army and the Court count as staunch defenders of the Kemalist legacy. The Republican People's Party argued that this reform would pave the way for even further Islamisation of society, and greater influence of the 'Islamists'. The AKP, on the other hand, argued that the new law would finally do away with the largest barrier to full democracy in Turkey; in the end, 58 percent of the population voted in favour of the reform. The EU immediately reacted by saying that this was a further step in the direction for full EU membership. Regardless of the positions in this ongoing debate, it is clear that the controversies surrounding the position of Islam in Turkey will dominate politics in years to come. The referendum has further enhanced the political polarisation of the country. On the other hand, it may have paved the way for further political reforms and democratisation that will enable the whole population to participate in the political decision-making process.

2.2. History of Islam in the Netherlands

The first generation of Turkish immigrants mainly consisted of labourers who came to the Netherlands as part of an agreement between the Turkish and Dutch governments in 1964. The official request for labourers subsided in 1974, though the immigration of Turks to the Netherlands continued due to family networks and marriage. In the 1980s, there was an influx of political refugees (Azak 2009: 68), and at the moment, according to the 2009 figures 2.3 percent of the population of the Netherlands has a Turkish origin (378,000 people).[9]

As most of these immigrants had an Islamic background during initial migration, the Netherlands, like other countries in Europe, became an important field of activity for Islamic organisations from Turkey in the 1970s. It was also the time when the oppression of Islamic organisations in Turkey was severe. In the early 1970s, the need among Turkish immigrants in Europe to have proper religious accommodations, such as rooms for prayer and Quran lessons, increased. Between 1971 and 1975, there were many initiatives to this end in several Dutch cities. The need for mosques was enhanced by family kin networks. According to Landman, many people realised that a second generation of immigrants would quickly become estranged from Islam should they not be properly educated (Landman 1992: 42). Sunier argues that the organisational activities among Muslims were relatively clear and straightforward during this period. However, these activities and related cooperation between Muslims were very local, and mostly focused on the provision of accommodation, most of the time consisting of temporary shelters like empty class rooms, community centres, and even empty garages. On the other hand, there was hardly any supra-local coordination of activities and initiatives (Sunier 1996: 39).

From the mid-1970s onwards, an increasing number of initiatives were taken by Islamic movements and organisations from Turkey. In the 1980s, these organisations were engaged in tough competition for resources and support from the Turkish population. This competition, which already commenced in the 1970s,

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[9] http://statline.cbs.nl

has largely shaped the Turkish Islamic landscape; not only in the Netherlands, but also in many countries of Europe (Sunier 1996). It should, however, be noted that the situation in the Netherlands was not simply a carbon copy of the power relations in Turkey. This is a gross misunderstanding that has often framed the debate on Islam in Europe (Sunier 1996: 61). The fundamentally different legal and social circumstances under which immigrants settled in the Netherlands and built up their communities constituted a clear break from the situation in Turkey. In Turkey, the different religious organisations that now operated among Turkish Muslims in the Netherlands had various legal positions and social functions. The Süleymancıs, the first organisation to become active in Europe, were followers of an Islamic teacher who had built up a network focusing on private religious education; Diyanet was a state bureaucracy supervising and facilitating the mosques; and the Milli Görüş movement was associated with a political party. The different social functions of these movements and organisations resulted in the combined ability for an individual believer in Turkey to bring his child to the Quran lessons of the Süleymancıs, benefit from the religious services of Diyanet and vote for a party affiliated with Milli Görüş. In the Netherlands, by contrast, these organisations became more or less equal actors under the same Dutch law. Since they all provided the same religious services, they almost by definition competed for support. We cannot understand the development of Turkish Islam in Europe unless we take into account these crucial conditions (Sunier 1996).

The Süleymancı movement became the first Islamic organisation to become active among Turkish Muslims in Europe. In the Netherlands, the Süleymancıs founded the Islamic Center Foundation (SIC), initiated in 1972 by a Dutch convert, Mr. A. van Bommel. In 1978, the SIC was renamed the Dutch Islamic Centre Foundation of the Netherlands (SICN). The movement set up its own mosques and Quran courses, and developed activities for its own constituencies, though mosque services reached a wider public. SICN considers Islamic teaching to be one of their most important activities. According to their mission statement, the SICN "encourages mutual contacts between Muslims living in the Netherlands and offers Islamic education and instruction opportunities to these Muslims". SICN does not

use the official channels (meaning: Diyanet) to hire religious personnel; they train their own imams according to their own religious principles.[10]

Initially, the SICN followed a very solitary course, having hardly any contacts with other organisations and institutions. For outsiders it was difficult to get access to the organisation and its leaders, but this has changed considerably since the early 1990s. Representatives of the SICN took part in a variety of advisory boards, had regular contact with the government and participated in public debates on Islam. The SICN website underlines that the organisation saw the integration of Muslims into Dutch society as one of their key targets. SICN became an active member of the national Turkish Advisory Board (IOT) and the National Association for Contacts Between Muslims and Government (CMO).[11] One of the most well-known activities the SICN organises is the 'Multifestijn', a yearly multicultural festival, proudly presented as "Europe's largest cultural fair in Utrecht", which will be organised for the fifth time in June 2011.[12] At the moment, the SICN has 48 associative members, of which 41 run a mosque. There are another 43 associations with which the SICN closely cooperates; of these, some 40 organisations engage in youth and teaching activities, and SICN has an imam training centre (Landman 2009: 17).

On the 31st of January 1979, one year after the start of SICN, a new organisation for Turkish Muslims was founded: the Turkish Islamic Cultural Foundation (TICF). Its aim, according to the statutory charter, was to spread Islamic culture throughout the Netherlands, coordinate the activities of Turkish Muslims attached to the TICF and promote relations with Diyanet in Turkey (Landman 1992: 65). Although it was not officially admitted, the TICF was also founded to counterbalance the influence of the SICN (Landman 1992: 101-2). The TICF positioned itself as the moderate and liberal face of Turkish Islam; it could also claim to be the alternative for 'radical' Islamic movements. Since the TICF's imams were trained in state-controlled institutes in Turkey, an agreement between

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[10] http://www.sicn.nl/pages/over-sicn/oprichting.html

[11] http://www.sicn.nl/pages/activiteiten.html

[12] http://www.multifestijn.nl/2010/

the Turkish and Dutch states to send out imams would be beneficial for all parties, according to the TICF (Sunier 1996: 65). From 1980 onwards, Diyanet appointed imams in all affiliated mosques in the Netherlands. The imams themselves could obtain a work permit for the time they were abroad (Den Exter 1990b: 46-47; Sunier 1996: 65). From 1982 onwards, the practical and financial issues surrounding the religious accommodations were handed over to the newly founded Dutch Islamic Foundation (ISN) (Landman 1992: 103). From now on, the mosques that were initiated by TICF were brought under the ownership of the ISN. Now there were in fact two umbrella organisations: the ISN, which acted as the direct link with Diyanet in Turkey, and the TICF, which organised and coordinated activities for the members of the participating associations. Soon TICF/ISN became the largest umbrella organisation in the Netherlands. Although other organisations grew considerably over the course of many years, the ISN - with some 142 mosques – remains the most expansive Turkish Islamic organisation in the Netherlands.[13] The organisation and activities of the ISN and the TICF will be discussed in more detail in the following chapters.

In the early 1980s, as a reaction to the growing influence of TICF/ISN but also because of the repression following the 1980 military coup, supporters of the Milli Görüş movement took refuge in Europe, where it became active among Muslims abroad. The headquarters of Milli Görüş is currently in Cologne, Germany. Since 1997, two branches have remained operational in the Netherlands. The northern branch, Milli Görüş Northern Netherlands (MGNN), coordinates activities and mosques in the northern part of the country. The Dutch Islamic Federation (NIF) coordinates those in the southern part of the country (Lindo 2008: 2). NIF was the former national umbrella organisation, though due to political differences in opinion, it split up. NIF has about 35 mosques and 45 youth associations and women's organisations (Landman 2009: 17).

Apart from these aforementioned three umbrella organisations, there are a number of smaller associations of Turkish Muslims in the Netherlands, among

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http://www.diyanet.nl/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=145&Itemid=97

which the Gülen movement and other Nurcu branches are the most active. The relatively large community of Alevi Muslims (between 20 and 30 percent of all Turkish migrants) has been organised by the Dutch Federation of Alevi and Bektashi Associations (HAK-DER) since 1991 (Landman 1992: 145-46). In the next chapters we will mainly deal with the organisations linked with Diyanet. The other organisations will be mentioned only occasionally.

3. Diyanet as an Institution

3.1. In Turkey

3.1.1. The formal tasks of Diyanet

As was already mentioned in Chapter 2, the official task given to Diyanet when it was established in 1924 was threefold: 1. to administer the affairs of the Islamic faith and the principles of its worship and morality; 2. to illuminate the public about religion; and 3. to administer places of worship. This last task was transferred to another institution, the Directorate General for Religious Foundations, in 1931, but restored to Diyanet in 1950 – and the threefold task has since been reiterated in several official documents, including Act no. 633 of 2 July 1965.[14] Our informants from the institution frequently quoted these standard texts.

Moreover, Diyanet is mentioned briefly in the constitutions of 1924, 1961 and 1982. The 1982 Constitution mentions Diyanet in the 136th article; this article states that Diyanet is part of the General Administration (*genel idare*, i.e. the Ministry led by the Prime Minister himself) and that it functions in accordance with the principle of secularism, staying out of all political ideas and opinions and identifying national solidarity and unity as its primary aim.[15] This article thus defines Diyanet as an institution of the secular Turkish state, operating within the official limits of state ideology.

The above-mentioned administration of places of worship, i.e. mosques, has to be understood in the limited sense of management – not in the sense of actual construction. According to our informants within the institution, building and repairing mosques was not part of Diyanet's budget until recently. Leaving the

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[14] Gözaydin (2008: 219) claims that technically Diyanet operates in a legal vacuum as the Turkish Parliament has now accepted a new Act on Religious Affairs in 1975, which replaces an earlier act of 1965. However, the President refused to sign it and the Constitutional Court supported his refusal. The legal lack of clarity resulting from this dispute seems not to hinder the organisation and activities of the institution.

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http://www.diyanet.nl/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=145&Itemid=97

historical and monumental mosques out of the picture, almost no public funding has been made available for building new mosques or repairing existing ones. However, the administration of mosques does give Diyanet a considerable amount of control over religious life. It is no coincidence that the 'soft coup' of February 1997 was followed by legislation to broaden Diyanet's authority and responsibilities over mosques and *masjid*s (smaller mosques). A new regulation proclaimed that mosques and *masjid*s could only be opened for worship with the permission of Diyanet, which would subsequently take on an administrative role. The regulation also applied to already established mosques; these existing mosques, built and opened for worship by others, would be transferred to Diyanet in three months and Diyanet would provide these mosques with the necessary cadres in proportion with the means available. The mosques were agreed to be 'public property',[16] implying that mosques in the hands of private religious organisations were deemed illegal.

3.1.2. Important tool for the state

It is often repeated by political commentators that the Turkish state uses Diyanet against the democratisation of religion and its possible influence on the social-political sphere (Gözaydın 2009: 246). The founders of the Republic, aware of the impossibility of ignoring the place of religion in people's lives entirely, established Diyanet with the intention of protecting the secular order through provision of public religious services by the state and ensuring that personnel would continue to provide such services under state control (Gözaydın 2009: 273-278). Turhan Feyzioğlu claims that Diyanet has been kept within the administration of the Turkish Republic not only for provision of religious service but also, more significantly, for protecting the secular nature of the state and preventing the intervention of religion in state affairs and politics (Feyzioğlu 1982: 188-216). A similar point is made by Soysal, who suggests that tax money spent on religious officials is not used for including religion within state affairs; rather, taxes are spent to prevent the intervention of religion in state affairs (Soysal 1975: 2). As

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[16] *Resmi gazete (Official gazette),* (1998, 31 July), legislation code 4379-80.

Gözaydın points out, the Turkish law on political parties also strongly suggests that Diyanet is considered an indispensible part of the secular system. This law not only prohibits the use of religion in politics; but article 89 of this law also makes it an offence to challenge the status of Diyanet and calls for the closure of political parties which advocate the abolishment of Diyanet (Gözaydın 2009: 286). In fact, the Constitutional Court banned a political party for this very reason (Otto and Dekker 2006).

One of our interviewees, Mr. Subaşı, the advisor of Faruk Çelik, the *devlet bakanı* (Minister of State) responsible for Diyanet, also stressed that Diyanet should be considered a part of Turkish secularism. However, without understanding the meaning of secularism in Turkey, it is hard to understand Diyanet. For instance, according to Mr. Subaşı, during each military coup, while the Kemalist system was purportedly being restored, Diyanet became stronger. Whenever there is mention of a threat of religious reactionism, Diyanet is awarded more funding and responsibilities. When unwelcome interpretations of Islam begin to circulate, it is through the medium of Diyanet that the Turkish republic can formulate religious alternatives.

In a 2005 publication, Mr. Subaşı underlines the secular use of Diyanet even stronger when writing about the perceived threat of "reactionary Islamic organisations" that could harm the Turkish aim of modernisation. In this scenario, he argues, all state instruments have the joint responsibility of fighting against this serious threat. In the secularism of the Turkish state, Subaşı claims, the aim is to replace the entanglements between the state and religion through the primacy of the state. Religion may continue to exist, but this religion should not be a barrier for the development of the system: it should have a function within it. One of the examples Subaşı provides for this attitude is the Turkish government making religious courses compulsory following the 12 September 1980 coup d'état. Although some secularists have criticised this move as 'reactionary', the idea behind the law was that religion, if left unchecked, could easily be turned into a dangerous weapon by malevolent people (Subaşı 2005: 158-160).

The fact that Diyanet was established by Atatürk himself is, according to Mr. Subaşı, an important legitimising factor, especially against secular critics of the institution.

Although Mr. Subaşı stresses the crucial role that the central administration has in mind for Diyanet, he also emphasises the limits of the institute. Diyanet would never wish to make religion a determining factor in the public sphere; Mr. Subaşı states that the Turkish republic should be seen as a continuation of the Ottoman Empire. The republic 'borrowed' certain institutions from the Empire and adapted them where necessary. From this perspective, he sees Diyanet as a continuation of the Office of the *Şeyhülislam*, the highest religious official in the Ottoman Empire. Although there is, admittedly, a decline in the scope of responsibilities and duties, both institutions act in a similar way as supporting tools of the state. In fact, they are indispensable to the state. However, Mr. Subaşı quickly adds that the President of Diyanet should never attempt to resemble the religious authorities of the Ottoman Empire.

The role of Diyanet also goes beyond a defensive strategy to prevent religious influence in state affairs; it is also presented as an effort to change religious perceptions of the people. Atatürk strongly rejected certain interpretations of Islam and the religious practices associated with them, like mysticism and the mythological and legendary narratives in some Islamic traditions. In line with the strong positivist tendencies of that period (the 1920s and 1930s), those manifestations of religion were to be abandoned, while the morality of the religion was to be preserved. For example, the closure of dervish lodges by Atatürk must be seen as an attempt to reform Islam: to turn it into a more rational and morality-based religion. This intention to reform the Islamic faith has continued to be a part of the political discourse in Turkey. The last Prime Minister before prior to the 1960 coup, Şemseddin Günaltay, who was known to be the first 'Islamist' Prime Minister even though he was a member of the Republican People's Party (Altun 2004: 160-163), was clear about the necessity of providing new interpretations of the Islamic teaching to replace more traditional interpretations. According to Günaltay, the problem is not Islam; it is the wrong understandings of it. This

problem was identified as the main cause of Islamic reactionism and a challenge to be overcome (Altun 2004: 168-169).

Referring to the reformist intentions of the republic's founding father, Özer Ozankaya states that Diyanet is a necessary tool to influence the people "until religious sentiments are devoid of vain beliefs, until religion is free from intentions of exploitation, until adults can form their own beliefs with their free wills and until religion is not a matter of repression anymore" (Ozankaya 1995: 215-216).

All these understandings of Diyanet and the duties attributed to it show that the Turkish state aims to make the Turkish people accept an Islamic identity that is in line with the construct of the state itself (Gözaydın 2009: 278).

A slightly different perspective on the official role of Diyanet was given by the mufti of Istanbul, Mr. Çağrıcı. According to Mr. Çağrıcı, Diyanet brings unity by speaking with authority. Diyanet, he claims, is an institution that provides religious unity and solidarity; that prevents radicalism; and that is respected by the masses, who look to Diyanet for religious guidance. The absence of a central and authoritative religious institution like Diyanet would create religious controversies and turmoil. Mr. Çağrıcı uses Pakistan as an example to prove this point; Pakistan was the most promising Muslim country in the 1960s and 1970s, but because the administration could not provide unity in the public discourse on religious affairs, today "everyone is talking at once". Although one may question the adequacy of this comparison between Turkey and Pakistan, the point of Mr. Çağrıcı is clear: the presence of a unified state institution for religious affairs prevents fragmentation of the Muslim community in a variety of '*cemaats*'.[17] Diyanet's relation with other religious bodies and organisations in Turkey will be discussed later.

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[17] The term '*cemaat*' can have two different meanings in the Turkish context. A certain group of people praying together at the same moment in any given mosque can be referred to as a cemaat. In this case, it does not always refer to a fixed group of people, as in Turkey, except for example some elderly people, people do not pray in the same mosque all the time. A second meaning of cemaat refers to followers of religious groups or movements like the Süleymancıs or Fethullahcıs, who gather together as followers of a specific group or movement and whose activities are not necessarily limited to praying (Bila 1989). It is this second meaning of cemaat that is often used in arguments concerning the monopoly of Diyanet, or its co-existence with other cemaats in the Turksh social sphere.

3.1.2.1. Puppet of the regime?

The task ascribed to Diyanet by the state and secularist authors has led its critics to suggest that the institution cannot have any religious legitimacy, as it is simply a puppet of the secular regime.

According to Ismail Kara, a Professor of Islamic Philosophy at Marmara University, Diyanet can hardly be called a religious institution; the President of Diyanet is appointed by the secular state of the Turkish republic, just as any other state official (Kara 2003: 64). Because of the direct appointment by the Prime Minister, the President of Diyanet resembles other civil servants, whose main purpose is to apply the policies of the governments. Kara points at a change in the appearance of the cadres of Diyanet following the coup of 12 September 1980 to illustrate how Diyanet officials indeed 'became' ordinary civil servants. Muftis without a traditional religious appearance, wearing a tie or lacking a beard or Islamic cap (who began to emerge after the coup) are, according to Ismail Kara, symbolically leaving behind the religious/spiritual identities they possess. These cadres of Diyanet become ordinary civil servants of the state in this way, without any particular religious mark of identification (Kara 2003: 110).

Many other Muslim writers and journalists have criticised the "so-called representatives of Islam and Muslims" (Diyanet officials) of being appointed and hence being tied to political authority (Dilipak 1990: 183). Even the former President of Diyanet, Said Yazıcıoğlu, once mentioned in a newspaper interview that Turkey cannot be considered a secular state, as secularism "in scientific and Western terms" means the separation of state and religious affairs. Religion, according to Yazıcıoğlu, should have been left to the *cemaat*s (Bila 1989). The counter argument came from an earlier Diyanet President, Lutfi Doğan, who argued that by leaving religion to *cemaat*s, the national unity will be harmed, religious communities will attempt to establish theocratic states and sectarian conflicts will emerge (Bila 1989).

The position of Diyanet within the state has not only been discussed in terms of the legitimacy of its existence, but also in relation to suggesting alternatives for its status. One of these alternatives was to provide autonomy to the institution while

still keeping it within the state administration. Although the term 'autonomy' does not have a clearly set legal connotation, an autonomous institution is expected to be free from the influence of political power (Gözaydın 2009: 282). One of the former presidents of Diyanet, Tayyar Altıkulaç, argues that Diyanet should at least be directly tied to the Prime Ministry and have its President elected by a council representing the organisation itself, hereby avoiding direct political choices (Gözaydın 2009: 281).

Of course, there are voices within Diyanet that attempt to downplay or deny political influence on the institution. Our respondent, Mr. Çağrıcı, mufti of Istanbul, categorically claimed that Diyanet has never been used by politics and no politicians have ever dictated tasks to Diyanet. From his point of view, Diyanet has never attempted to determine political decisions. This view is supported by Mr. İzzet Er, who explains that the government is not in a position to formulate religious opinions, and "cannot tell Diyanet to give a certain fatwa. Even if they did, the Higher Council of Religious Affairs (the organ of Diyanet taking decisions on religious issues) would never accept it. They take their decisions according to the sources of Islam." The only way the government intervenes in Diyanet's affairs is through appointments. "As they have the authority of taking the final decision, this is their normal right", he adds. "The governments sometimes have some preferences for people to be appointed in certain offices and they express their views in an acceptable manner."

Mr. Necdet Subaşı also argues that the successive Turkish governments have always respected the presidents of Diyanet and left them relative freedom to manage their own affairs. The limited role of religion in state matters was made clear implicitly, but policy makers refrained from direct interference in Diyanet. Of course, this relative internal autonomy required that the state trusted the competence as well as the loyalty of Diyanet's presidents.

3.1.3. Internal organisation

The study of Gözaydin presents no less than 20 organisational charts of Diyanet, covering the period between 1924-2008. A comparison of these charts shows that,

from its early days, the organisation rested on two pillars, namely the centre in Ankara and the regional offices in the various provinces (currently 81 in number) and districts (numbering 957). Since 1978, a third pillar consists of the offices abroad, all of which are attached to Turkish Embassies or Consulates (currently in 22 different countries). Germany, the country with the largest Turkish population outside Turkey, has offices of Diyanet in 13 regional Consulates.

3.1.3.1. The centre

Diyanet's centre in Ankara has witnessed a growth in size and complexity. Today, the central organisation is structured in seven departments for the core activities (*ana hizmet*), four departments for communication and supervision (*danışma ve denetim*), and five support units (*yardımcı*) (see below).

Figure 1: Central Organisation of Diyanet[18]

The core activities which are identified in the organisational chart are as follows:

1. The Higher Council of Religious Affairs, which is the highest policy making body in Diyanet and is in charge of approving the policy decisions of the President of Diyanet; it is involved with publications and answers religious questions. It consists of a chairman and fifteen members.

2. The Quran Editions Inspection, a body that corrects oral and written work and oversees printed and digital editions of the Quran.

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[18] www.diyanet.gov.tr , Sep 2010

3. Directorate for Religious Services, which supports day-to-day worship by, for example, publishing prayer times for various locations in the world.
4. Directorate for Religious Education, which is responsible for regional centres for religious instruction and the personnel working there.
5. The Hajj Directorate, in charge of organising the Pilgrimage to Mecca.
6. The Directorate for Religious Publications, which not only publishes books, magazines and audio cassettes but also runs book stores.
7. Directorate for External Relations, which is responsible for Diyanet's activities abroad, including the preparation of imams to be sent to Western European countries. This Directorate also is involved in international inter-religious dialogue activities.

The communication, supervision-and-control and support units are internal divisions which can be found in any large organisation, and need no further explanation.

The institution as a whole is led by the President and five Vice Presidents.[19]

The Higher Council of Religious Affairs

As the Higher Council of Religious Affairs (HCRA) is the highest decision and consultation organ of Diyanet, it is logical to discuss its position and role in some more detail. This Council consists of sixteen members, four of whom are selected from a pool of university Professors specialised in Islamic Studies. Members of the council are formally independent of the other cadres of Diyanet, including that of the President, although the President is included as a member. The President of Diyanet does have a say in the selection of members; a selection committee nominates candidates from whom he can chose. However, after this selection, formal appointment results from a decision made by the Cabinet under the approval of the President of the Republic.

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[19] www.diyanet.gov.tr , Sep 2010

Whenever he is available, the President of Diyanet chairs the meetings of the Council. The members' term of office is seven years. The chair and vice-chair are elected by the members of the HCRA with a simple majority vote. The Council can meet when a majority of the sixteen members is available; decisions can be made by a simple majority of those present. The President of Diyanet does not have superior control over the Council; he acts as an ordinary member of the HCRA, and in terms of decision-making, his vote is counted as just one vote. The HCRA can make decisions even in administrative issues, and these decisions must be implemented by the specific departments of Diyanet.

Another institution that should be mentioned in this context is the Higher Religion Consultation. The consultation takes place every five years, and any person who has ever been a member of the HCRA, the current members of the Council, the city muftis, or academics from university Faculties of Theology come together to meet. As an outcome of these meetings, publications are prepared and current religious issues are discussed, as related to us by Saim Yeprem, who organised the meeting in 2002 and is a former member of the HCRA.

3.1.3.2. The regional offices

The centralised character of the Turkish state is reflected in the structure of Diyanet, as all major decisions are made in Ankara. However, Diyanet has a extensive network of regional offices covering all the Turkish provinces and sub-provinces (*il* and *ilçe*). The regional offices are led by a *mufti*. The original meaning of this term is a person who is entitled to issue fatwa's, or Islamic legal advice. In the Turkish context, however, the mufti (of *müfü*) is the highest official in one of the Diyanet districts. The regional mufti supervises the work of preachers, imams, muezzins (the ones who perform the call to prayer), teachers of Quran courses, and other local Diyanet officials. Like other state institutions, there is a hierarchy between the province and the sub-province. Diyanet began opening Education Centres (*Eğitim Merkezi*) in the 1970s in the regions of Bolu, Ankara and Istanbul (Den Exter 1990: 15), and later in other cities. Today, there are

eighteen regional Education Centres; the result of these developments can be visualised in the organisational chart for the regions below:
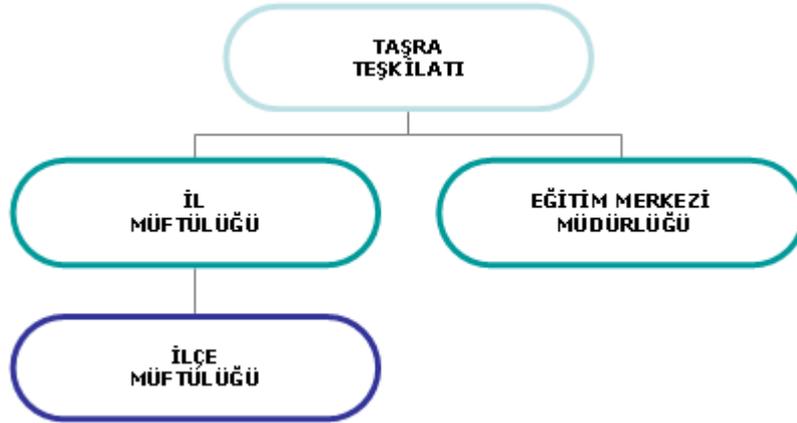
Figure 2: Regional organisation of Diyanet[20]

3.1.3.3. The offices abroad

Diyanet's website only briefly makes mention of its offices abroad, indicating that they are either associated with Embassies, in which case the Diyanet official has the status of a counsellor of the Embassy, or with Consulates, where the Diyanet official is an attaché. However, to operate effectively in foreign countries, associations and foundations have been created according to the legal requirements and opportunities of the respective nations. For the Netherlands, the internal structure of Diyanet institutions is described below.

3.1.4. Statistical data

Opponents of both the AKP and Diyanet have suggested that the current government reveals a hidden religious agenda by increasing the amount of personnel and budget of Diyanet. However, it is difficult to substantiate this claim based on the statistics of Diyanet itself. The table below shows the increase in the number of personnel throughout the years. Besides yearly fluctuations, the total increase in the number of personnel between 1998-2008 is 4.2 percent (see below).

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[20] www.diyanet.gov.tr, Sep. 2010.

Table 1: Number of personnel, 1998 - 2008[21]

Year	Personnel
1998	79 685
1999	77 795
2000	75 433
2001	76 044
2002	74 374
2003	74 114
2004	71 693
2005	80 299
2006	79 810
2007	84 195
2008	83 033

As the vast majority of Diyanet personnel works as imam and preacher in mosques, these figures must be related to the number of mosques in the same period. The table below shows the number of mosques, with a total increase of 8.5 percent between 1998-2008.

Table 2: Number of mosques and personnel, 1998 - 2008[22]

Year	Mosques	Personnel
1998	73 772	79 685
1999	74 356	77 795
2000	75 002	75 433
2001	75 369	76 044
2002	75 941	74 374
2003	76 445	74 114
2004	77 151	71 693
2005	77 777	80 299
2006	78 608	79 810
2007	79 096	84 195
2008	80 053	83 033

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[21] *İstatistiksel Tablolar / Personel Sayısı* (Statistical Tables / Number of Personnel) Retrieved from Diyanet's official website.
http://www.Diyanet.gov.tr/turkish/tanitim/istatistiksel_tablolar/1_personel/1_1_personel_sa yisi.xls

[22] *İstatistiksel Tablolar / Cami Sayısı* (Statistical Tables / Number of Mosques) Retrieved from Diyanet's official website.
http://www.Diyanet.gov.tr/turkish/tanitim/istatistiksel_tablolar/2_cami/2_1_cami_sayisi.xls

The first table shows that the number of personnel in 2008 is higher than in 1998; however, in certain years – especially between 1998 and 2004 - the number of personnel sharply decreases. On the other hand, the number of mosques has a steady trend of increasing in these years, and these new mosques necessitate an increase in the number of Diyanet personnel. Thus the normal trend in the number of personnel does not match the increase in the number of the mosques. This point is frequently raised by the current AKP government when the opposition and media criticise the increase in Diyanet personnel.[23] The government argues that the current number of personnel is far from satisfying the needs of the mosques in Turkey. Many mosques in the countryside do not have any personnel appointed by Diyanet. As we can see, the numbers and percentages of total increase support this view.

In 2005, 30.8 percent of the mosques did not have Diyanet personnel (Çakır and Bozan 2005: 22). Moreover, the government emphasises the fact that the state does not build mosques in Turkey; it is the people themselves who fund and maintain mosques. The only thing the state should do is appoint imams to these mosques. The government, for that reason, declared that 15,000 people would be hired in 2010[24], marking the sharpest increase in the number of the personnel since 1998.

When the number of Diyanet personnel is analysed in more detail, it can be observed that the biggest portion of personnel graduated from the High School for Imams and Preachers. The group with a lower education level is a minority compared to the rest of the personnel.

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[23] See for instance '*3 kadrodan biri Diyanet'e*' (One out of every three cadres is provided to Diyanet), (2009, November 10), *Vatan*. Retrieved from http://w9.gazetevatan.com/haberdetay.asp?detay=3_kadrodan_biri_Diyanete&tarih=09.01.2010&Newsid=270104&Categoryid=2

[24] Diyanet'e 15 bin kadro müjdesi (Good news for Diyanet: 15,000 cadres), (2007, March 26), *Yeni Şafak*. Retrieved from http://yenisafak.com.tr/Gundem/?i=37290

Table 3: Number of personnel by education level, 2008[25]

	Number	Percentage
Total	83 033	100.00
Bachelor's degree (Religious higher education)	8 812	10.61
Bachelor's degree	5 770	6.95
Associate degree	11 938	14.38
Associate degree (Religious higher education)	20 935	25.21
High school for Imams and Preachers	32 691	39.37
High school and equivalent	1 124	1.35
Junior high school and equivalent	1 195	1.44
Primary school	568	0.68

The percentage of women among Diyanet personnel is increasing; this increase took place especially in the mid-2000s (Gözaydın 2009: 106). However, according to the numbers, in 2008 only 3,710 women worked for Diyanet, hardly 4.5 percent.[26] On the other hand, Diyanet recently spoke out about their intention to decrease this gender gap through the use of positive discrimination in favour of women.[27]

As mentioned above, the AKP government has been criticised for increasing the number of Diyanet personnel. A similar criticism is raised against Diyanet's share of the state budget. The opposition parties and secular media consider the increased funding a reflection of Islamisation within the state. In this vein, Turkish newspapers stated that Diyanet's budget is larger than those of 37 other state

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[25] *İstatistiksel Tablolar / Öğrenim Durumuna Göre Personel Sayısı* (Statistical Tables / Number of Personnel with respect to education level) Retrieved from Diyanet's official website.
http://www.Diyanet.gov.tr/turkish/tanitim/istatistiksel_tablolar/1_personel/1_2_ogrenim_d urumlarina
 gore_personel_sayisi.xls

[26] '*Diyanet İşleri'nde 3 bin 710 kadın görev yapıyor.*' (3,710 women work in Diyanet), (2008, July 7), *Sabah*. Retrieved from
http://arsiv.sabah.com.tr/2008/07/07/haber,004FD00AAFAE447BA45481A5CA3BB95B.h tml

[27] '*Diyanet'ten kadına pozitif ayrımcılık*' (Positive discrimination towards women by Diyanet), (2009, November 8), *Milliyet*. Retrieved from
http://www.milliyet.com.tr/Guncel/HaberDetay.aspx?aType=HaberDetayArsiv&KategoriI D=24&ArticleID=1159507

bodies, and comes in the 7th place after, among others, health care, education, the army, and the Justice Department.[28] However, a more balanced study of Diyanet's budget by Gözaydin shows that Diyanet's share in the national budget has been relatively constant since 1951, when it was raised from 0.2 to 0.6 percent of the total budget. Since then, the percentage has always hovered between 0.5 and 1.0 percent (with two exceptions where the budget was raised to slightly above one percent of the national budget, in 1965-67 and 1990-91). The table below shows the proportion of Diyanet's budget in relation to the total budget since 1993:

Table 4: Diyanet's share in the Budget[29]

Year	percentage
1993	0.9
1994	1.0
1995	0.9
1996	0.6
1997	0.7
1998	0.7
1999	0.6
2000	0.5
2001	0.6
2002	0.6
2003	0.5
2004	0.6
2005	0.7
2006	0.8
2007	0.8
2008	0.9
2009	0.7

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28 '*Diyanet bütçesi 37 kurumu solladı.*' (Diyanet's budget exceeds that of 37 departments), (2006, October 24), *Hürriyet*. Retrieved from
http://hurarsiv.hurriyet.com.tr/goster/haber.aspx?id=5309772
[29] Gözaydın 2009: 224.

Figures like these should of course be interpreted against the background of a more thorough analysis of Turkey's public finance arena, which falls outside the scope of this study. However, these figures suffice to show that the somewhat alarmist opinions, which suggest a drastic increase in public funding of religion, are premature.

Indeed, data on Turkey's public finance show that Diyanet's budget reached its peak during the rule of centre-right parties. In 1966, when the Justice Party was in power, Diyanet's share was 1.89 percent of the national budget. In 1990, during the one-party government, the centre-right Motherland Party, Diyanet's share was 1.23 percent (Çakır and Bozan 2005: 105). During the reign of the AKP governments, the percentage has been much lower.

When the budget of Diyanet is analysed in more detail, it can be observed that the majority is used for personnel expenditures.

Table 5: Budget appropriation of year 2009[30]

	YTL
Current Expenditures	2 426 678 398
1)Personnel Expenditures	2 206 919 000
2)Other Current Expenditures	219 759 398
Investments	16 991 000
Transfers	1 947 000
Total Budget	2 445 616 398

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[30] *İstatistiksel Tablolar / 2008-2009 Yılları Bütçe Ödenekleri* (Statistical Tables / Budget Appropriation of 2008-2009) Retrieved from Diyanet's official website. http://www.diyanet.gov.tr/turkish/tanitim/istatistiksel_tablolar/6_butce/2009_yili_butce_od enegi.xls

3.1.5. Recent developments

3.1.5.1. New legal basis and internal organisation

With regard to the inner organisation of Diyanet, a new step was taken by the Minister of State responsible for Diyanet, Faruk Çelik, with regard to the preparation of a Diyanet bill which was put into effect on 1 July 2010. The bill concerns Diyanet's organisation and duties; emphasising the necessity of a new regulation on Diyanet's duties, Çelik stated that Diyanet's services are being administered through a law that came into effect in 1965 and therefore need to be revised.[31]

One of the most important changes according to the new organisation of Diyanet is the term of office of the President of Diyanet. While the current law does not provide restraints to the term of office, the new law limits it to five years, and the same official can be appointed only twice. The procedure for the appointment of the President was also changed; the President of Diyanet must be chosen by the Religion Supreme Council (*Din Üst Kurulu*). This Council consists of a group of 120 individuals, including theologians, members of the Higher Council of Religious Affairs and regional muftis. The Council selects three candidates for the Presidency, and the Council of Ministers chooses one of these nominees, proposing his appointment to the President of the Republic. This new procedure is claimed to be an attempt to enhance the administrative autonomy of Diyanet. In short, the bill reduces the number of Vice Presidents from five to two and limits their term of office to that of the President.

The Diyanet bill also regulates career opportunities for religious officials, both in the centre and the outer regions. The preachers and imams are able to raise their positions to become senior or head-preachers or -imams. An additional suggestion put forward in the bill is that appointments and promotions of Diyanet officials will be based on merits; exams will be taken for these purposes. Upper cadres of Diyanet will require at least ten years of experience as a university lecturer; this

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[31] He refers to Act 633, which we discussed in 3.1.1.

requirement will strongly enhance the number of academics in Diyanet, especially from the Faculties of Theology.

Another measure installed to raise the academic level of religious officials within Diyanet is the establishment of Diyanet Academies. The Academies will replace a number of in-service training facilities for imams today. One of their aims is to send Diyanet officials abroad; a one year program is scheduled, which includes intensive training in a foreign language.

An interesting proposal in the Diyanet bill is the creation of a Diyanet radio and television broadcasting station. Obviously, this will enhance the possibilities of Diyanet to reach large audiences. This proposal, and the reactions to it, will be discussed further in chapter 4.

Another remarkable detail of the bill concerns the religious identity of Diyanet officials. Under the former law, all employees are expected to be 'religious' (in Turkish: *dindar*, which also can be translated as 'pious'). The use of this Turkish term, instead of the Arabic term *Muslim,* reflects the same ambiguity as the name 'Diyanet' itself, because it can also refer to religious beliefs other than Islam. The phrasing of the law does not exclude pious people from other religions from becoming a Diyanet employee; however, the new law opens the door for non-Muslims further by stipulating that the requirement of 'being pious' applies only to those teaching religion or providing religious services. Diyanet officials in legal consultancy, foreign relations, human resources management, media and public relations are no longer expected to be pious since the acceptance of the bill.

Among the topics of the Diyanet bill, one of the most widely discussed issues is the shift in age restrictions for participation in the Quran courses provided by Diyanet during the summer. According to the former regulations, children cannot attend the courses until they finish the 5th grade of the primary school. The new law, however, makes it possible for younger children to attend these courses - with no age limit - only requiring the permission of their parents.

The Diyanet bill also aims to put an end to a long discussion about the ownership of mosques in Turkey. As we explained earlier, the administration of mosques was one of Diyanet's tasks since its foundation in 1924, a duty later

transferred to the Directorate General for Religious Foundations in 1931 and given back to Diyanet in 1950. However, this does not mean that Diyanet has the exclusive right to own and manage mosques. Currently, many mosques are associated with a local foundation that has collected the money to build the mosque from the people and later maintains responsibility for its maintenance; the responsibility of Diyanet is, in those cases, limited to appointing the imams and supervising the religious services of the mosque. The bill expands this area of responsibility for Diyanet and transfers the official ownership of all new mosques to Diyanet rather than to the foundations building them. This practice will however not be applied to already-existing mosques. According to our interviewee, Mr. Çelik, this development will clarify a legal situation which was until now not very clear, namely the question of formal ownership. However, it will not change the daily financial management of mosques significantly. Many mosques have associated shops and other commercial activities from which the costs of maintenance are paid, while the surplus is used for various religious services or charity works.[32] However, this claim of Mr. Çelik seems to be an understatement of the impact of this measure, as it obviously reduces the autonomy of local mosque foundations and gives Diyanet more opportunities to control flows of money at the local level.

While several of the topics in the bill discussed above are not new at all, they give a legal basis to what already happens in the Diyanet organisation, as İştar Gözaydın told us. Some of the developments mentioned in the following paragraphs also fall in this category.

3.1.5.2. University graduates as the new Diyanet cadres

The increase of academics within Diyanet has been ongoing for some years. Okumuş links this development to the Presidency of Mr. Ali Bardakoğlu, under whose leadership the number of theologians within Diyanet increased. These

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[32] For further information on the bill, see these websites.
http://www.tumgazeteler.com/?a=5591814,
http://www.tumgazeteler.com/?a=5754956,http://www.tumgazeteler.com/?a=5472441,
http://www.tumgazeteler.com/?a=192969

academics generated a new "academic religiosity" (Okumuş 2008: 355) within Diyanet. All of our interviewees evaluate this influx of academics positively, as the educated newcomers are seen to be knowledgeable people who are aware of what is going on in the world. However, the interviewees also refer to some problems rising from this development. The arrival of these academics, who immediately are awarded positions at the top of the institution, has offended some officials who have worked for Diyanet longer. However, Mr. Er says that he interprets such a response as being natural, as it is a kind of reflex to protect the institutional identity.

Mr. Saim Yeprem, Director of the Science, Culture, Arts and Publication Board of the Turkish Diyanet Foundation and former member of the Higher Council of Religious Affairs, interprets this increase in the number of academics within Diyanet as a natural development; as there are now 21 Faculties of Theology in Turkey, graduates of these faculties are becoming increasingly involved in academic careers. At the moment, Diyanet has more academics than ever; there already exists a rule stating that four out of the sixteen members of the Higher Council of Religious Affairs should be instructors in university. Half of the total sixteen members are academics, according to Mr. Bunyamin Erul, a member of the Council, who believes that they make up "the brain of Diyanet". This higher proportion of academics within Diyanet, Mr. Yeprem believes, increases the quality of the institution and adds to the credibility of its scientific character. According to Mr. Yeprem, the general public trusts Diyanet; even if an individual belongs to another *cemaat*, Mr. Erul says, he or she trusts Diyanet. The Council, which is also responsible for providing answers to religious questions and issuing fatwa's, generates the religious knowledge. This knowledge is transmitted to the masses through both muftis and imams and through publications and the media.

3.1.5.3. Decentralising Friday sermons?
An interesting development in Diyanet's recent internal policies concerns the centrality of the Friday sermons. Particularly after the 28 February intervention in 1997 (the so-called post-modern or 'soft' coup), sermons in Turkish mosques

began to be controlled by the central administration of Diyanet. These *hutbe*s were being prepared by a *hutbe* commission, functioning within the Higher Council of Religious Affairs. Afterwards, the *hutbe*s were sent to the imams through the *Diyanet Gazetesi* (a monthly journal). However, this very centralised procedure of controlling the content of Friday sermons was relaxed in 2006, when the task of preparing the *hutbe*s was transferred to *hutbe* commissions within regional mufti offices.

Today, Diyanet seems to move gradually towards an even more decentralised system. According to a new plan, preachers will be trained to prepare distinct sermons for each mosque.[33] A similar proposal was accepted during the 4th Religious Council of Diyanet, organised in October 2009. The 9th decision of the Council discussed the efficiency of *hutbe*s written and sent by the central administration. The Council maintains that imams should be more active in writing the sermons in order to increase efficiency in preaching; this process, the Council claims, should be gradual.[34] The mufti of Istanbul, Mustafa Çağrıcı told us that Diyanet began organising meetings for imams and muezzins (callers for daily prayers) to educate them in the preparation of sermon texts.

Analysing this development, we have to bear in mind that the decentralisation of responsibility in this area is relative; even if the sermon is prepared by a specific imam, the office of the mufti to which the imam is tied has to check and approve the text before it is delivered in the mosque. It is also important to notice that the extreme central control of Friday sermons was not an old tradition within Diyanet and did not come from the cadres of the institution itself, but was rather imposed upon it by the central government.

In the aftermath of the 28 February coup of 1997, the state was anxious about anything having to do with religion, which was seen as the major threat to a secular, democratic Turkish Republic. Therefore, today's more lenient attitude

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[33] Cihan Yenilmez, '*Merkezî vaaz sistemi kaldırılıyor*' (Central preach system will be removed), (2009, December 24), *Zaman*. Retrieved from http://www.zaman.com.tr/haber.do?haberno=931327

[34] Information on the 4th Religious Council, 12-16 October 2009. Retrieved from http://www.diyanet.gov.tr/dinsurasi/sura/default.asp

towards imams writing their own sermons may also be interpreted as a sign that the hard-line secularist policies following the coup have lost their influence.

3.2. In the Netherlands

3.2.1. Diyanet abroad

The activities carried out by Diyanet in the Netherlands and in other European countries are by no means an exception. In a relatively early stage, Diyanet explored the possibilities of reaching out to Muslims of Turkish descent in other parts of the world, notably in the Balkans, the Caucasus and Central Asia. Most Muslims in those regions adhere to the same Hanafi School (school of law in jurisprudence within Sunni Islam) as the Turks in Turkey. Diyanet's reasons for becoming active in the Balkans and former Soviet Republics containing large Turkic speaking populations are manifold and depend on the local situation. However, most of these areas share a history of limited or even non-existent religious education. Diyanet stepped in and provided religious educational materials which were insufficiently available previously. Some interviewees stated that these regions are perhaps even more important for Diyanet than Europe or the USA. According to Mr. Çağrıcı, the mufti of Istanbul, over 15 million theological books have been sent to these regions, where students often come to Turkey for religious education. There they attend Quran courses or study at Vocational High Schools, where imams and preachers are trained, or enrol in Faculties of Theology. Often, these graduates later become the coordinators of religious life in their home countries. In addition, Diyanet provides its own imam training programs. In this way, Diyanet is able to influence the religious landscape in these regions, and implicitly prevents other countries (notably Arabic speaking) to get a foothold.

Moreover, Diyanet sponsors mosque building projects in some African countries, albeit on an occasional basis, as a kind of development aid. The activities in Europe, however, have inevitably to do with the large Turkish immigrant communities there. Currently, Diyanet holds office and runs mosques in most Western European countries with a sizeable Turkish population. More recently, Diyanet extended its activities to the United States as well.

3.2.2. Diyanet in the Netherlands

There were mainly two reasons for Diyanet to extend its activities to European countries with a large Turkish immigrant population, such as the Netherlands. In general, Diyanet reacted to the need for religious accommodation in the Netherlands. Towards the end of the 1970s, the number of Turkish Muslims increased considerably and, accordingly, their need for good accommodation grew. The second motivation could be described as a 'competitive' move, though some would say 'protective' act, against non-official Turkish Islamic movements. In those years, the Süleymancıs were in charge of most of the Turkish mosques in the Netherlands. As Diyanet considered this a negative development, it decided to take steps to change the existing situation. Moreover, it became clear that a considerable portion of the Turkish Muslim population was not happy with the disproportionate influence of the Süleymancıs at that time; they dominated the religious services, and although a majority of Muslims came from rural areas and were not familiar with the controversies between 'parallel' and 'official' Islam in Turkey, the recruiting activities of the Süleymancıs caused tension. This tension among Turkish Muslims became manifest in 1977 in the city of Rotterdam, when during Ramadan two imams, one from Diyanet and one with a Süleymancı background, were invited to deliver their services. Eventually it turned out that a large majority of the Muslims chose for the Diyanet imam. Within two years, both the Süleymancıs and the supporters of Diyanet founded their own umbrella organisations (Sunier 1996). The Diyanet-linked umbrella organisations were the Turkish Islamic Cultural Foundation (TICF), founded in 1979, and the Dutch Islamic Foundation (ISN), founded in 1982.

A mosque in the Netherlands requires an official registration and a legal status, either as a foundation or as an association. This implies that mosques are legally independent organisations. Under the Dutch Constitution, mosques have the same formal position as other religious organisations. Compared to other Turkish Islamic movements, the position of Diyanet in the Netherlands is unique, both due to its specific relation with the mother organisation in Ankara and because of the division of tasks and responsibilities between two organisations in the Netherlands:

the TICF and the ISN. The TICF operated since 1979 as the representative of the Turkish Muslim population and a sort of grass-roots organisation. When the ISN was founded in 1982, however, this was an effort to organise the same population in a more centralised way, formally controlled by Diyanet officials in Ankara, and chaired by the religious counsellor, the *müşavir* of the Turkish Embassy in Den Haag, the formal representative of Diyanet (as explained in chapter 3.1.3.3).

The two umbrella organisations designed a rough division of labour; the ISN was supposed to be responsible for strictly theological issues and formal religious duties and services, whereas the TICF organised social and cultural activities and represented its members in local issues. Until recently, this division of labour and responsibilities between the TICF and the ISN functioned relatively well. In recent years, however, the ISN seems to be shifting - or rather extending - its activities towards the above-mentioned *cemaat*, the community of believers, thus gradually bringing the TICF under ISN's control. We will discuss these developments further in the following sections.

ISN holds office in Den Haag. According to the statutory chart its aim is to "create and maintain opportunities and facilities for Muslims in the Netherlands in order for them to be able to fulfil their religious duties, to improve the position of the Turkish Muslim community in the Netherlands, and provide facilities for intellectual and psychological development of Muslims". These aims have not changed since 1982, the year of its foundation, and can easily be found in open sources like the ISN website or in its periodicals.[35] Under the heading of *faaliyetler* (activities to reach those aims), ISN lists 27 activities[36] which are basically similar to those in a document dating from 1988. Among other things, it is clearly stated that ISN should not interfere in political affairs of any sort. The President (*Başkan*) of ISN since 2008, Dr. Bülent Şenay affirms and emphasises this position: "ISN keeps distance from party politics in the Netherlands. (…) Diyanet is not a religious movement. It is for 80 percent facilitating, functional, and for only 20

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[35] *Yearbook 2009* (*Bülten 2009*: 11); and ISN website http://www.diyanet.nl, Sep. 2010.
[36]

http://www.diyanet.nl/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=100&Itemid=237

percent guiding, not controlling, and in a general way, not very fixed; for example through the fatwa's issued by the *Fatwa Kurulu* (Fatwa Council)."[37] This statement indicates that ISN is careful for example not to interfere in the so-called 'Islam debate' in the Netherlands, but also that it wants to profile itself as a facilitator and religious guide in a general sense and not as a separate religious movement which is, in addition to competing with other movements, catering its own *cemaat*.

At the same time, it should be noted that, as it unfolded in the 1980s, the struggle between different Turkish religious organisations active in the Netherlands, including the ISN and the TICF, contained a certain ideological positioning. Some authors even referred to ISN/TICF as '*Diyanetçi*'s', denoting people adhering to the 'ideology of Diyanet' which refers to the Turkish official Islam. In the Dutch context, it was, simply speaking, part of the game of the different Muslim organisations to profile themselves against each other, and vital for their development. As a part of this profiling, TICF leaders positioned themselves in the integration debate, claiming that they were the most geared towards the integration of Turkish Muslims in the Netherlands (Sunier 1996: 81). On the other hand, it has been argued that ISN/TICF constituencies comprise a "residual category" of Turkish Muslims not adhering to one or another religious movement. According to one interviewee: "Within the Turkish community in the Netherlands you automatically end up with Diyanet when you do not want to be affiliated with a certain movement, but still want to express your affinity with Islam. So, this is indeed a conscious choice."[38]

3.2.2.1. ISN organisational structure

ISN is structured hierarchically and is organisationally linked to Diyanet in Turkey. ISN has a General Board (*Genel Kurul*), a Management or Executive Team (*Yönetim Kurulu*), and a Supervisory Board (*Denetleme Kurulu*) to administer the administrative process. For an organisation chart of ISN we refer to the appendixes. The highest administrative institution of ISN, chaired by the President of Diyanet

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[37] Interview with Dr. Bülent Senay 13th of April 2010, ISN Den Haag.

[38] Interview in Den Haag, 9th of December 2009.

in Turkey (or its representative), is the General Board, falling under the competence of the Turkish Ministry of General affairs, under the responsibility of a Minister of State (*Devlet Bakanı*), which means that Diyanet has a formal influence on the decisions made by the ISN. When we look at the composition of the General Board, currently consisting of seventeen members, it becomes clear that high officials of Diyanet in Turkey can decide on matters in the Netherlands. (ISN Bulletin 2009: 11; cf. Landman 1992: 105). However, the plenary meeting of the General Board only occurs once every three or four years, which limits its influence on day-to-day activities of the ISN considerably. The Management Team of the ISN that runs the organisation is selected and appointed by the General Board and currently consists of seven people. The President of ISN, who is the chairman of the Management Team, is called *Din Hizmetleri Müşaviri*, religious counsellor, or advisor, and is associated with the Turkish Embassy in Den Haag. He is the only official within the ISN who directly communicates with 'Ankara', and although the President only holds his position for three or four years, without the possibility of a second term, he has a powerful role in the institution. Besides providing the Turkish Embassy and Diyanet with information and advice on religious issues in the Netherlands, the President supervises the ISN foundation and the appointments and functioning of imams working in ISN mosques. The practicalities of the latter task are delegated to two *ataşe* (attachés) associated with the Turkish Consulates in Rotterdam and Deventer. The President and his family hold a *diplomatik pasaport*[39], a diplomatic passport.[40] The attachés also hold a sort of diplomatic passport, though their exact diplomatic status has not been investigated by us.

According to several interviewees working within or close to the ISN organisation, there is a formal influence of Diyanet on ISN affairs in the Netherlands, though they all emphasised the relative autonomy that the

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[39] http://tr.wikipedia.org/wiki/T%C3%BCrk_pasaportu#Diplomatik_.28Siyah.29_Pasaport , Nov 2010

[40] Personal and e-mail communication with several interviewees, Den Haag, Dec.2009, Jan, April, Nov. 2010.

Management Team has in most daily affairs. It is a matter of to what degree the ISN can make its own decisions without consulting or interference from Turkey. This may become clearer when we take a closer look at the activities that ISN actually organises, both on a national and a local level. As we have indicated before, in the course of the years there has been a gradual extension of ISN activities that are only indirectly related to theological issues, and could therefore in some cases be labelled 'TICF activities', i.e. educational, cultural and social. As can be observed from the organisation chart, the present ISN organisation, apart from its traditional 'core business', such as the coordination of religious accommodation, invests in activities ranging from funeral services (funeral company and funeral fund[41]) to sports and youth activities. Recently, in 2009, the ISN appointed new staff, in newly created functions dealing with public relations and communication. Also, a special coordinator for youth activities and a press officer were installed in 2009 by the President of ISN, Dr. Bülent Şenay. However, during the conversation we had with the President, he did not consider these extensions of activities as a proof of a 'turn to the *cemaat*', by which we mean focusing more on the grass-roots organisation of ISN and its dynamics. He considered these kinds of activities to have always been the 'core business' of ISN: "It is just a matter of better coordination of our activities."[42]

Being Turkish civil servants, the staff members of the ISN office in The Haag, as well as the President and imams working in the local mosques, receive a salary from 'Ankara'. Staff members in local mosques are generally volunteers. Apart from tax money coming from Turkey and the funeral fund, the ISN earns some additional income from the organisation of the Pilgrimage to Mecca, the selling of books and some other services. Local mosques are built with donations from people or foundations in the Netherlands and elsewhere. 'Ankara' does not fund

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[41] The funeral company and fund have coordinated and provided the necessary Islamic rituals in the Netherlands after the a member recently passed away; members, around threequarters of the Turkish population, pay a yearly fee to the fund.Source: http://www.profnews.nl/946430/Dr..iekwart-van-turken-in-nederland-is-lid-van-uitvaartfonds-diyanet

[42] Interview with Dr. Bülent Şenay, 13th of April 2010.

any building activity. The ISN can, however, function as a bank guarantee for the mortgage once the ownership of the building has been handed over to the ISN.

3.2.2.2. Appointments / human resources: the President of ISN

The structure described above demonstrates the influence of the Turkish government, i.e. AKP, on ISN matters. This is especially the case with the appointment of the President of the ISN by the General Board. Formally speaking, this appointment procedure indicates the direct influence of the Turkish government on the ISN. Arguably this is also true for the present AKP government.

The influence of successive governments on Diyanet and, consequently, on the ISN - the initial research question of our project - is an issue that has been raised before. In an article in the daily Dutch newspaper, *Trouw* in 1997 the following observation was made: "Since Erbakan, leader of the fundamentalist Welfare Party, is the Prime Minister now, many fear his influence on Diyanet. However, according to experts, there is no need for real worries. Erbakan will only be able to influence new appointments."[43] About thirteen years later, we have been asked more or less the same question about the influence of the AKP on Diyanet and/or the ISN. Accordingly, we asked the question to several respondents: "Concerning the ISN, are there changes to be observed since the coming to power of the AKP government?" The majority of respondents came up with similar answers pointing in the direction of the appointment of Dr. Bülent Şenay, President of ISN since 2008. Several interviewees described him as an internationally respected theologian/scholar, who speaks English very well and who has a good international reputation. According to the respondents, this academic outlook makes him different from former presidents of the ISN. A similar observation was made earlier in the Turkish section of this report (3.1.5.2), where we pointed out the increase in academics within the new Diyanet cadres. According to the President of the ISN himself, it is indeed an important, recent development that the present Diyanet leadership is "imported from academia instead of from bureaucratic

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[43] *Trouw*, 12th of April 1997: 'Een bont gezelschap van Turkse moslims in Nederland' (A many-coloured society of Turkish Muslims in the Netherlands).

circles."[44] In addition to Turkey and the Netherlands, such a shift can be observed elsewhere in Europe. In Belgium, for instance, Diyanet has been represented by Professor Halife Keskin since May 2008, who is also an academic.[45] According to Dr. Bülent Şenay, this Diyanet policy of appointing "globally aware" scholars instead of more nationally oriented bureaucrats is "not imposed by the government, but, is part of parallel processes, allowed and accommodated by the government".[46] It can be interpreted as a policy shift towards a more direct and more 'socially sensible' approach to Islam that is closer to people's experiences. It is however difficult to say whether this 'policy shift' was purposefully initiated by high Diyanet officials or by the AKP; or is the result of dynamic and parallel processes, as a reaction to changing circumstances in a changing world? In the previous section, we explained this as the result of an emerging civil society in Turkey and a bottom-up democratisation of Islam, as opposed to the traditional, more 'etatist', top-down Kemalist version of Turkish Islam.

Summarising, we could say that the formal decision-making structure between the Turkish government, Diyanet and ISN has not changed, though there is an observable shift in the policies of Diyanet and ISN with respect to their relation with the constituency. This brings us to the previously mentioned relation between the ISN and the TICF.

3.2.2.3. ISN versus TICF

While the ISN is the umbrella organisation of the approximately 142 mosques in the Netherlands, all individual mosques are also associated with the TICF. The TICF is the actual representative of the local Muslim communities who visit ISN mosques and participate in activities organised by the TICF – though are sometimes facilitated by ISN. Until recently, this was the actual practice. It has often been argued that while the TICF is the public and societal face, the ISN deals with finance, staffing and the facilitating of religious services. Another

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[44] Interview with Dr. Bülent Şenay, 13th of April 2010, Den Haag.

[45] http://www.diyanet.be/?&Bid=235355

[46] Interview with Dr. Bülent Şenay, 13th of April 2010, Den Haag.

classification often heard in relation to the organisational and management structure is that of ISN being described as more top-down, while the TICF is said to be more democratic and bottom-up. In other words, a bureaucratic, centralised extension of the Turkish state versus a grass-roots movement emerging from within the Netherlands. A number of documents indicate that the ISN is mainly comprised of civil servants of the Turkish Embassy in Den Haag; they deal with issues such as the management of buildings, financial issues, the organisation of the Pilgrimage, etc. The TICF, on the other hand, is depicted as an organisation of Turkish Muslim migrants; they deal with personal issues related to their position in Dutch society rather than religious aspects (see e.g. Van Heelsum, Tillie, Fennema 2004: 8). However, we question this innate assumption, as it does not take into account the actual practices that take place within the two organisations.

At least on the national level, the TICF foundation today is far less active than it used to be. In particular, they seem busy (re)organising their rank-and-file system; the TICF website has been 'under construction' for at least half a year, and currently consists of a one page Turkish text.[47] On another website, however, the institution's progress seems promising: "At the general meeting on 29/3/2009, TICF elected a new board. Since the founding of the federation, the members elected a completely new board (…). The elected members gathered in Utrecht, last Sunday, and divided the tasks and functions by mutual agreement and in a democratic way."[48] It does not seem a coincidence that the TICF, in this announcement, stresses the "democratic way" the board was elected.

The TICF was founded in 1979, a few years before the ISN, which was founded in 1982. The relation between the two organisations has always been ambiguous and changes according to the circumstances. Both the TICF and the ISN are foundations, in the legal sense of the word. They both have the same local organisations as their constituent parts, and both organisations participate in the Contactorgaan Moslims en Overheid (CMO), the national Muslim advisory board for the government, founded in 2004. But an important difference between the

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[47] http://www.ticf.nl/ , Nov. 2010.

[48] http://www.lokum.nl/ , accessed in May 2010

TIFC and the ISN is the fact that the first has no formal relation with the Turkish government. The General Board of the TICF, the highest body of the organisation, is comprised of representatives of the affiliated local (mosque) associations. The Executive Committee, or Management Team, is selected from the General Board (Landman 1992: 106). This indeed implies that the TICF has a more democratic and bottom-up organisational structure than the ISN. However, according to several interviewees, the so-called grass-roots oriented TICF has gradually been brought under the control of the ISN.

One of our interviewees, a regular visitor of a local mosque and formerly active in the Board of the TICF, stated that a shift has taken place over the course of the past several years. He referred to the mounting influence of the ISN on local matters due to the increasing number of mosques and the general formalisation of tasks and responsibilities. According to him, this resulted in the local associations becoming less influential. The present staff of 'his' mosque is much more willing to listen to the ISN and is less autonomous. Another interviewee referred to an internal discussion in which the ISN argues that the TICF - as an organisation - has become needless. In the past, when the Turkish migrant workers and their families were coping with communication problems and finding their way in Dutch society, the TICF was useful in building up the religious infrastructure and Muslim community; contrarily, with a much more emancipated and integrated population of Turkish descent, the ISN can handle everything that is needed on its own.[49]

Tensions related to the division of tasks, responsibilities and, not the least, influence, are certainly not new (as mentioned previously). In 1992, Landman observed that: "(…) an investigation of 1985 showed that there were tensions between the leaders of the TICF and the ISN in which the first expressed their fear that ISN would be able to encompass TICF easily due to their very loosely formulated mission statement" (Landman 1992: 107). Landman argues that the kind of activities these organisations perform can easily lead to a 'confusion of responsibilities', as the TICF gradually handed over many of its activities to the

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[49] Interview in Apeldoorn, 28th of January 2010.

ISN during the course of the 1980s, such as the coordination of appointed imams, the Pilgrimage and the formal ownership of the mosques (Landman 1992: 109). In 2001, Kadir Canatan arrived at a similar conclusion, stating that: "The influence of the ISN on the daily state of affairs in local mosques has increased, because they take care of the most crucial tasks" (Canatan 2001: 89).

During our research, most respondents more or less acknowledged that the very structure of the division of tasks between ISN and TICF may coincide with the practicalities of facilitating mosques and religious services as opposed to representing the (local) 'ISN *cemaat*'; however, this does not automatically mean that the ISN cannot make a shift towards this *cemaat*. Our findings indicate that the ISN shows a stronger concern for the (local) *cemaat*, and specifically focuses on the social, economic and cultural circumstances of its 'members'. One of the respondents referred to meetings organised by the ISN to motivate people to use their voting rights, which was inconceivable for the organisation a decade ago.

This shift, which does not automatically follow out of the formal responsibilities of ISN, is by some people considered a positive development as it is in the interest of the local Muslim population. Others interpret this shift as a strategic move aimed at neutralising the TICF and conclude that the ISN is violating its statutory chart, stipulating the ISN should not deal with issues other than strictly theological and practical ones. Unfortunately, the President of ISN, Dr. Bülent Şenay, did not wish to elaborate on the matter. According to him, the TICF only exists because the ISN exists, which implies he places the ISN, as a prerequisite, above the TICF, and not the other way around: "(…) ISN is taking up, willingly or unwillingly, the role of a Non Governmental Organisation, an NGO." He refers to developments both in the Netherlands and in Turkey, illustrating that Diyanet, in all its sections and branches, is becoming more of a bottom-up organisation than before. This implies, according to Dr. Şenay, that they are "working more in line with the requirements of civil society, pay more attention to new target groups and, not at least, pay more attention to what actually takes place in society".[50] In the following chapter we will

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[50] Interview with Dr. Bülent Şenay, 13th of April, Den Haag.

take a closer look at how this works out in actual activities and initiatives, both in Turkey and in the Netherlands.

4. Activities of Diyanet

4.1. In Turkey

4.1.1. Traditional activities

As becomes clear from the formal tasks given to Diyanet, and the distribution of personnel over various departments in the organisation, much of the work of Diyanet is associated with the religious activities of Turkish mosques. The vast majority of Diyanet's officials are imams and preachers, whose main task is to lead the daily prayers, deliver Friday sermons and arrange other religious ceremonies in the mosques, such as those occurring during the holy month of Ramadan, the Festival of Sacrifice (*Kurban Bayramı*) and the celebration of the Birth of the Prophet (*Mevlit Kandili*). The regional mufti offices support these mosque activities, as does one of the central departments of Diyanet in Ankara in charge of providing timetables and publishing devotional materials for the celebrations. Since 1976, a specialised department of Diyanet has supported Turkish Muslims who want to go on the Pilgrimage to Mecca.

Throughout Diyanet's history, its second task, the 'illumination of the public about religion', has not only been carried out through sermons in the mosques but also through the publication of Quran editions, books on Islam and periodicals; these documents were distributed in mosques or specialised book stores. Since the early 1970s, Quran courses and other forms of extracurricular education have become another important activity of Diyanet's. In 1971, Quran schools run by private religious associations were put under the supervision of Diyanet; in addition, Diyanet opened its own regional education centres and organised summer schools. A separate Directorate for Education was founded in 1977 for these educational activities. Interestingly, religious education in regular Turkish schools has never been the responsibility of Diyanet; rather, it falls under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education.

4.1.2. Widening the scope

While the religious and educational activities mentioned above remain the core business of Diyanet, under former President Bardakoğlu some initiatives to explore new areas were undertaken. Two plans published in the *Diyanet Strategic Plan 2009* stood out, and provoked a public debate: the plan to launch 'Diyanet TV', and the plan of opening libraries, internet halls, classrooms, tea shops and multi-purpose rooms in 200 pilot mosques. Here it may be noted that these kinds of social and educational facilities have already existed for many years in most large Diyanet mosque complexes in the Netherlands.

In the same Strategic Plan, Diyanet announced that new technological tools will be used in mosques and by the staff providing religious services. Websites will be created for several mosques and the construction of the mosques modified to enable women and disabled people to attend more easily. The staff of these pilot mosques will be educated in public relations and new technologies will be used to ensure religious information and even Quran courses will be available through the internet. In this way, groups that find it difficult to attend (elderly, disabled), or are not sufficiently reached by traditional outreach mechanisms (groups of young Muslims) can be included.[51] These planned developments in the sphere of religious services were criticised by secularists such as the opposition Republican People's Party as a plan to turn mosques into Ottoman *külliye*s, complexes of buildings with a variety of religious and social functions. This was interpreted as a threat to the secular republic, as all kind of recreational, educational and social activities would be brought under control of a religious institution.

In reaction to these criticisms, most of the interviewees from Diyanet first downplayed the impacts of the Strategic Plan, which they refused to call 'changes' (in the sense that any 'change' could all too easily be interpreted as proof that

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[51] '*Cuma'ya mesai ayarı.*' (Adjusting the time of Friday prayer with respect to working hours), (2008, September 20). Retrieved from http://www.tumgazeteler.com/?a=4132423; Eda Ay, '*Diyanet internetle atılım hedefliyor.*' (Diyanet aims advancement through internet)", (2009, May 6), *Radikal*. Retrieved from http://www.radikal.com.tr/Radikal.aspx?aType=RadikalDetay&Date=&ArticleID=934624

secularism is being threatened by Islamisation). The new developments are, according to Mr. Yeprem, nothing more than "modernising" the services of Diyanet, a process that is needed to catch up with changes in the rest of Europe. From their perspective, in today's changing society, with new technologies and means of communication, Diyanet must also modify its instruments to enlighten religious issues to the people.

4.1.2.1. The mosque as a social centre?

Nevertheless, all our interviewees from the top cadres of Diyanet agreed that more is happening than simply upgrading the instruments of communication. Diyanet aims to extend the scope of religious services beyond mosques and religious ceremonies; in this sense, 'religious services' should be understood within the wider socio-moral axis of Islam, which covers much more than just praying, fasting and religious ceremonies.

There is a very physical aspect to this argument. The activities of imams should not be limited to the walls of the mosque; imams are knowledgeable about religion and morality and should use this wisdom outside the mosques as well. Limiting religion and religious knowledge to the mosque is, according to the above-mentioned interviewees, against the essence of Islam. Admitting that this limitation plagued Islam in Turkey for a long time, they condemn this as a wrong way of practising religion. By using new technologies, the message of Islam can reach the public more effectively than the traditional Friday sermon, Quran courses or religious literature.

More importantly, the pilot projects of multifunctional Islamic centres reflect a changing interpretation of the duties of Diyanet and the mosques under its supervision. With regard to the "religious services" the mosque is providing "social dimensions", in the words of Mr. Çağrıcı. He legitimises this practice by pointing at the Islamic tradition and the life of the Prophet Muhammad; limiting religious activities to the mosque, he argues, is not consistent with the Islamic tradition as Prophet Muhammad was careful to identify the social dimensions of religion. Helping the poor, assisting the hungry and homeless, having compassion and pity,

and being a humanitarian are all important components of Islamic religion. Islam today, Mr. Çağrıcı claims, is also concerned with important social problems, "such as drug abuse, sexual deviations, and poverty". These were described as societal problems that may constitute a threat for the future. In addition to the Islamic tradition, comparisons with western Christianity are often called upon to legitimise these new social initiatives of Diyanet. Mr. Erul states that religion today is generally considered a phenomenon that embraces the social sphere as a whole. In the West, the priest is not the priest of the church but the priest of the neighbourhood. The developments within Diyanet mirror this more global phenomenon.

Finally, the voice of the people is often invoked to legitimise the new policies; Mr. Erul stated that the masses themselves have made it explicit that they want Diyanet to extend its scope beyond just religion. The debates on religious issues on television, for instance, show that the masses demand discussing these issues in their social lives as well.

With regard to the 'civil societal' role of Diyanet, İştar Gözaydın agrees that the scope of the activities being organised is widening; she projects that different societal groups are becoming increasingly attracted to mosques, and that the time spent in mosques is also on the rise. Furthermore, Gözaydın suggests this new civil societal structure will begin to resemble church organisations in the West. Previously, visiting mosques in Turkey was very much limited to prayer; people would often go to the mosque, pray and then leave immediately. This practice, she argues, was a result of the Republican attempt to limit the influence of religion on people's life. Diyanet's attempt to turn the mosque into a community centre obviously has an opposite goal: to increase the influence of religion. This should, in her view, not be interpreted as a move towards conservatism, as a large part of the Turkish public is religiously conservative anyway. Rather, it could be viewed as an attempt to make mosques more attractive to religiously conservative followers, making them more accessible to Diyanet. From this perspective, the attempt to create more modern, attractive and multifunctional mosques may also be interpreted as a strategic move in the competition between different religious

associations (*cemaat*s) and Diyanet to draw in and retain adherents. This 'competition' will be discussed in chapter 6.

4.1.3. Women as target group

With respect to Diyanet's increasing focus on social issues, the role of women in social and religious life has been a major point of attention. According to Caner Taslaman former President Ali Bardakoğlu strongly encouraged women to participate in public life even though he would never explicitly criticise the traditional interpretations of Hanafi Sunni Islam that tend to restrict female participation.

The new focus on women can be observed in three areas, which will be discussed below: 1. Diyanet's contribution to public debates on the role of women in society; 2. Specific activities for women; and 3. Turning the mosque into a less male-dominated place.

4.1.3.1. Discussing women's rights

Diyanet can hardly be seen as an institution standing at the forefront of the Turkish feminist movement. Nevertheless, on several occasions the institution and its President have spoken out against social problems like maltreatment of women or forced marriages. Part of Diyanet's contribution to this debate is apologetical: though secularists may blame Islam for the poor living conditions of women in Turkey, this charge is unfounded as true Islam teaches otherwise. Mr. Bardakoğlu, for instance, claimed that forced marriages of girls at an early age are disturbing and violate "religious, traditional and humanistic feelings". An interesting effort made to correct the negative image of Islam in this sphere is Bardakoğlu's appearance on International Women's Day. On March 8th, 2009, he visited women in jail and later explained to the media that the public should not judge female prisoners for their crimes but rather ask about the circumstances that led these women to commit them.[52]

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[52] '*Bardakoğlu "cezaevinde"*' (Bardakoğlu in prison), (2009, March 13), *Milli Gazete*. Retrieved from http://www.milligazete.com.tr/haber/bardakoglu-cezaevinde-117934.htm

According to the Vice President of Diyanet, İzzet Er, women's rights and violence against women in particular have been topics of many Diyanet sermons, lectures and discussion panels. Moreover, he claims that, since 2006, Diyanet has organised 215 meetings about women's rights, 71 about family violence, 144 about human rights in general, 45 about the freedom of education for young girls, and 144 about communication within the family. He also referred to an initiative led by Diyanet in March 2008 to convince parents to let their daughters study; Diyanet even offered to provide stipends to educate 3,025 young girls.[53] İştar Gözaydın confirms the positive attitude of Diyanet towards women's participation in public life and the education needed to facilitate this. In short, Diyanet encourages women to participate in business life, administration and management activities; it also contributes female education and encourages women to take part in international projects in which Diyanet is actively involved as a partner. In terms of women's rights, Diyanet regularly speaks out about violence and discrimination against women (Gözaydın 2009: 163). Hidayet Şefkatli Tuksal, a leading Islamic feminist, columnist and writer on the role of women in the Quran, who is particularly active in the Women Platform of the Capital has also argued that Diyanet, under Mr. Bardakoğlu's organisation, has led many initiatives to cooperate with women organisations. According to her, the new organisational structure of Diyanet allows for the full consideration of the requests of women organisations. She also gave the example of Diyanet's reaction on International Women's Day to the murder of Güldünya Tören, who was the victim of an honour killing and became a national symbol in Turkey.[54]

4.1.3.2. Family guidance

Among the activities aimed at women, a significant step taken by Diyanet was to open family guidance and counselling bureaus. At these bureaus, women can talk about familial problems and be given advice by religious authorities. İzzet Er, Vice

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[53] '*Diyanet "kadın hakları" metnini yumuşatacak.*' (Diyanet will soften the text on 'women's rights'), (2008, March 14). Retrieved from http://arsiv.ntvmsnbc.com/news/438975.asp

[54] Ibidem.

President of Diyanet and responsible for the Presidency of Religious Services Department, considers this an important development as Islam as a religious faith concerns women equally as it addresses men. Therefore women should also be included in the target population of the institution. Up until now, adequate services have not been provided to women; to compensate for this deficiency, Diyanet has already opened bureaus in 53 mufti offices. However, Mr. Er stressed that these developments do not in any way imply that mufti offices not associated with Diyanet fail to address women's issues or provide services and facilities to women and their families.

4.1.3.3. Women in the mosques

Another initiative of Diyanet concerning women is closer to its traditional domain: the mosque. In Turkey, there is mounting public criticism of male domination in mosques. As women begin to spend more and more time in public spaces, they also visit mosques more frequently and pray there. This has led to a tension that Diyanet wishes to address: but how and to what extent does Diyanet wish to do this?

Ali Bardakoğlu made clear during interviews that he welcomes this increased female presence in mosques; he is even reported to have said that women are welcome to have informal gatherings at mosques with tea, cakes and cookies (the so-called *güns,* days of gathering).[55] Most Diyanet officials encourage women to participate in Friday prayers, and a separate space for women is reserved in most of the mosques. According to Islamic doctrine, however, attending Friday prayers is a religious obligation for men, not for women, and Diyanet would probably never openly contradict this doctrine. However, the explicit encouragement of women to participate, and the facilities made available for them, would have been exceptional just a couple years ago and mark a change in Diyanet's policies.

As in other cases, some of our respondents authorised this development by pointing to the Islamic tradition. Mr. Yeprem referred to women in the earlier eras

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[55] Özcan Keser, '*Kadınlara çağrı: Günlerinizi camide yapın.*' (Call for women: Organise your gathering days at mosques), (2009, December 12), *Zaman*. Retrieved from http:www.zaman.com.tr/haber.do?haberno=926333&keyfield=646979616E6574 .

of Islam, including the days of the Prophet himself, who attended sermons in the mosque. In the Ottoman Empire, mosques also had separate spaces for women. According to Mr. Yeprem, the fact that mosques have become male domains where women no longer feel comfortable is simply due to population growth. A sceptical reader may see this historical references as an attempt to project a modern ideal back into history. Nevertheless, linking progressive measures to the Islamic tradition may be an important way of making 'modern' ideals more acceptable in an otherwise conservative religious space.

4.1.4. Recreation and Sport

Diyanet's 'move outside the mosque walls' and attempt to reach new audiences is perhaps best illustrated by its activities in the fields of recreation and sport. One of the most interesting developments in recent years has been the establishment of *Diyanetspor,* the sports team of Diyanet, in 2007.[56] This new branch of the institution is purportedly active in various types of sports, such as volleyball, table tennis, wrestling, and motorcycling. Diyanet has also recruited some of the most famous and successful motorcycle racers in Turkey, such as Kenan Sofuoğlu, who became world champion of the Motorcycle Super Championship in 2007. In popular sports journalism language, the transfer of Sofuoğlu was announced to the public through Diyanet's official website and presented as a major event on the transfer market: "Diyanet has exploded the bomb with this transfer." Here we can see Diyanet not only operating outside the mosque walls and beyond its traditional domain of religious ceremonies, but even turning to populist language.

Mr. Bardakoğlu approached the transfer in a more subtle manner, in a style fitting to his position. He stated that he would follow the racing events of Sofuoğlu and pray for him, and recommended sports to children and young people in Turkey so as to encourage healthier future generations among youth. [57]

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[56] http://www.diyanet.gov.tr/turkish/sporklubu.asp

[57] '*Kenan Sofuoğlu Diyanet Spor'a Transfer Oldu.*' (Kenan Sofuoğlu was Transferred to Diyanet Sports Club), News on Diyanet Youth and Sports Club. Retrieved from Diyanet's Official Website http://www.diyanet.gov.tr/turkish/dy/Diyanet-Isleri-Baskanligi-AnaMenu-teskilat-ici-haberler-68.aspx

4.1.5. Diyanet in the media

A final example illustrating that Diyanet no longer confines itself to mosque activities and strictly religious services is the fact that Mr. Bardakoğlu, during his term, was increasingly visible in the media, where he regularly commented on a wide variety of national and international developments. The Swiss referendum concerning the ban on minarets was one such occasion during which he made public comments both in the Diyanet journal and other media. Mr. Bardakoğlu argued that the referendum disappointed not only Turks but also the whole world.[58] Interestingly, the language used in Diyanet's public opposition to the Swiss minaret ban drew upon the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, a document often referenced by Diyanet. In turn, the ban was seen as a violation of the aims of the Treaty of Lisbon.[59]

Another public statement on international politics arose from Mr. Bardakoğlu's comments on the ethnic violence against Uyghur Turks in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region of China. Here he criticised international actors for committing crimes to achieve strategic goals.[58]

According to Mr. Çağrıcı the relation between the Turkish media and Diyanet has improved considerably in recent years. Previously, Diyanet used its own communication channels, with mainstream media approached only very sceptically or ignored altogether. Today, Diyanet follows the news and responds to major debates through mainstream media outlets. However, Mr. Bardakoğlu also makes moral statements to the media and confronts them with their own responsibility; for instance, he calls upon the media to become more sensitive to their way of informing people about violence as, according to him, the enormous amount of

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[58] *Diyanet magazine*. (2009, December). Retrieved from

[59] 'Statement to the press by the Presidency of Religious Affairs concerning the Swiss referendum of November 29 , 2009 on the prohibition to build new minarets.', (2009, December 1). Retrieved from http://www.diyanet.gov.tr/turkish/dy/Diyanet-Isleri-Baskanligi-Duyuru-4461.aspx

[58] '*O acıyı içimizde yaşıyoruz.*' , (2009, July 9), *Milli Gazete*. Retrieved from http://www.milligazete.com.tr/haber/o-aciyi-icimizde-yasiyoruz-131924.htm

violence mediated to the Turkish public can create tendencies towards violent behaviour.[60]

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[60] '*Bardakoğlu: Merhamet eğitimine ihtiyaç var.*' (Bardakoğlu: Education of Mercy is necessary), (2009, July 17), *Milli Gazete*. Retrieved from http://www.milligazete.com.tr/haber/bardakoglu-merhamet-egitimine-ihtiyac-var-132794.htm

4.2. In the Netherlands

As we have indicated before, Turkish Muslim organisations in The Netherlands and elsewhere in Europe can only partially be compared to those in Turkey. In order to understand organisational and other developments with respect to Islam, it is important to consider the fundamental changes that took place after migration (Sunier 1996). This is especially the case with respect to the activities initiated by these organisations. Initially, activities were mainly oriented towards the preservation of links with Turkey; however, with the transformation of the Turkish Muslim population from migrants to post-migrants, many organisations gradually shifted their policies. Azak points out "the shift from a mosque-oriented Islam towards an Islam spreading itself in the broader public sphere" as being an important development in the Netherlands (Azak 2009: 79). However, it is important to note that Azak explicitly refers to non-ISN organisations in the Netherlands, implying that such a shift does not apply to (or only minimally concerns) the ISN: "Members of Turkish Muslim organisations like Milli Görüş, the Gülen movement and the Süleymancıs participate in the democratic civil society, and are even competing with each other in obtaining their share of governmental funds aimed at stimulating integration. This competition leads to civil activism, beyond the level of mosque organisations, and, accordingly, to an increased participation of Turkish migrants in public life" (Azak 2009: 79).

In addition to 'religious' activities like Islamic education for children, Turkish Muslim organisations also organise 'social' activities. But having said that, we should stress that a division between 'religious' and 'social' activities seems to be quite artificial, especially given that an essential element of what we observed as being '*vermaatschappelijking*' (a stronger emphasis on the social functions of Islam) is in fact the merging of religious and social spheres. Examples of activities from the aforementioned non-ISN organisations include media engagement, such as the weekly *Zaman Hollanda*; the organising of extra classes for schoolchildren and students, for example through the *Stichting Witte Tulp* (White Tulip Foundation, founded in 1997) and the *Stichting Cosmicus* (Cosmicus Foundation,

founded in 1995), which, as "an intercultural organisation," aims at organising educational, cultural, social, and scientific activities "that stimulate and add to the competences and career possibilities of students and alumni"[61]. Interestingly, the aforementioned initiatives are all affiliated with the Gülen movement. The SICN, the foundation of the Süleymancıs, not only organises the yearly *Multifestijn,* "the festival offering the broadest range of cultural activities for the whole family",[62] but also conferences and summer courses.[63] Another activity that seems to be increasingly popular is the semi-public celebration of the yearly *iftars* (breaking of the fast with a shared meal during Ramadan), to which non-Muslims are often invited as well.

4.2.1. Activities of ISN

In order to determine whether the aforementioned "shift from a mosque-oriented Islam towards an Islam spreading itself in the broader public sphere" applies to ISN as well, it is important to pay attention to the activities of ISN. Focusing on the objectives and '*faaliyetler*' (activities) in the statutory chart of ISN,[64] a few things are striking. First, the objectives and activities have hardly changed since the 1980s. Thus on paper, ISN still has the same means to reach the same objectives, suggesting there is no question of a 'recent shift'. Second, ISN still holds that it "definitely is not engaged in political matters".

If we look at the statutory chart, it is possible to make a (albeit artificial) division between 'religious' and 'social' activities. Some activities seem to be aimed more at facilitating religion than at 'spreading Islam to the broader public sphere'. Examples of those religious services are: providing religious information to Muslims in the Netherlands; posting religious staff abroad; developing activities related to the Pilgrimage in the Netherlands and Saudi Arabia; facilitating assistance in connection with circumcision and weddings; offering assistance with

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[61] http://www.cosmicus.nl/site/index3.php?id=18&catid=26&

[62] http://www.multifestijn.nl/2010/

[63] http://www.sicn.nl/pages/activiteiten.html

[64]

http://www.diyanet.nl/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=100&Itemid=237

the transport of mortal remains of deceased (Turkish) Muslims to their mother country; educating religious staff; Quran and language courses; accepting and collecting donations, in money and in kind, and dividing and spending donations, such as *fitre* (alms at the end of the fasting month Ramadan) and *zakat* (a fortieth part of the income as 'alms'); and finally, obtaining property "at the service of the objectives of the foundation".

Another aspect of the ISN's activities seems to be more oriented towards 'the broader public sphere' and the (intra- and inter-religious) 'dialogue'. Examples include: providing social and cultural services and assistance to (Turkish) Muslims living in the Netherlands; organising radio and television broadcastings to inform people about Islam; working together with churches and other religious organisations in the Netherlands; stimulating and coordinating the teaching of Islam and scholarly research; founding and administrating schools that provide Islamic education; translating, printing and publishing books about Quran sciences and other Islamic sciences and arts; opening and maintaining libraries; organising conferences, seminars and contests on Islamic topics; and the organising of, and participation in, social, cultural, scholarly, and sports events.

Since all these activities have changed very little on paper since the 1980s, and because we have observed visible changes in the actual practices of ISN, it is important to analyse the specific interpretations and implementation processes of these activities in concrete situations. In turn, it seems at least debatable whether (planned) activities such as the founding of schools, appointment and training of imams and public broadcasting fit into ISN's claim of being "definitely not engaged in political matters". But let us have a closer look at these actual practices.

4.2.2. ISN activities in practice

The *ISN Yearbook 2009* explains how statutory objectives have been translated into concrete actions.[65] The following activities are mentioned in this regard: organising

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[65] "*HDV anatüzükte yazılı bu kuruluş amaçları ve faaliyet alanlarına uygun olarak oluşturulan çeşitli birimlerinde aşağıdaki başlıklarda belirtilen hizemetler*

public worship in mosques; building, maintaining and managing mosques; organising conferences and seminars; developing a fund and foundation for funeral services; organising the yearly Pilgrimage; organising the offering of a 'substitute sacrificial animal' (by donating money); providing scholarships; distribution of books, calendars, publications, and translations; celebration of religious and (Turkish) national holidays; activities related to an inter-religious dialogue, like 'open houses'; services of the Gültepe Educational Centre; charity campaigns; and contests. The activities organised by ISN are consistent with the earlier quoted statement by the President of ISN, Dr. Bülent Şenay, who insists the ISN increasingly fulfils the role of an NGO and focuses on new 'target groups' such as women and young people. Various activities are new; for example, an exchange program in Turkey is available to youth in the Netherlands to provide them with extra knowledge of the Turkish culture; *ebru* courses (marbling of paper); and lectures of the President at universities and institutions like Clingendael. Some activities are especially organised for women or children, such as '*iftar* for children'; computer courses; and 'Quran courses for women'. In some of ISN's activities, the 'religious component' is indeed difficult to locate, for example, in the courses of '*dıkış-nakış, kumaş boyama*' (sewing, embroidery, colouring textiles) and '*kuaförlük*' (hairdressing), which are aimed at youth. However, some of these non-religious activities organised in larger mosques result from local initiatives rather than ISN policies; nevertheless, the ISN mentions these in it's annual yearbook as being concrete actions in line with their objectives.

4.2.3. Inter-religious and inter-sectarian dialogue

The above-mentioned activities are religious, social and educational in character, and ISN's monthly magazine regularly reports on these programmes in great detail; for example, short texts and photographs are often used to describe openings, jubilee celebrations, open houses, conferences, dialogues with other religions, and meetings with 'fellow-Muslims' - such as the leading 'Uyghur Türk', Mrs. Rabia

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gerçekleştirmektedir" (Within the various units, the following services have been realised, in line with the statutory objectives and activities) (*HDV Bülten 2009*: 12).

Kader, or the Jerusalem-based Uzbek Nakşibendi-sheik Abdul Aziz Bukhari. The ISN even participates in a celebration of the Caferi-community (a Shiite branch within Islam) in the Netherlands. The prominent position of the President in the monthly activities is remarkable; he presents himself both as a religious expert, a (religious) leader, leader of the dialogue, and - conversely - as a 'man of the people' who is everywhere: from conferences on topics related to religion to kick-offs of soccer matches.

One of the largest ISN events took place on the 4th of April 2010 in the Arena in Amsterdam on the celebration of the Birth of Prophet Muhammad (*Mevlit Kandili*). On this '*Kutlu Doğum Avrupa*'-day (birthday celebration in Europe) an estimated 30,000 people were present. These public celebrations have been organised since 1989, both in Turkey and in countries with a substantial Turkish population. During those manifestations, love for the Prophet as well as "*vatan ve millet sevgisi*" (love for the [mother] country and the nation) are propagated. Thus it seems that the 'traditional' Turkish relationship between religion and nationalism is still an important ideological part of Diyanet's message and, accordingly, a way for the ISN to communicate with Turkish citizens all over the world. The celebrations and speeches on *Kutlu Doğum Avrupa*-day are based on 'Islam according to Diyanet/ISN' (Sunni, Hanafi). However, the brochure mentions seven other participating organisations:

SICN (Dutch Islamic Centre Foundation, associated with the Süleymancıs);
NAF (*Hollanda Nizam-i Alem Federasyonu*, Dutch Federation of the World
    Order);
FECC (Federation of Educational and Cultural Centres);
HTIKB (Dutch Union for Turkish Islamic Organisations);
TIF (*Türk Islam Federasyonu,* Turkish Islamic Federation);
TFN (*Hollanda Türk Federasyonu*, Turkish Federation the Netherlands);
NIF (Dutch Islamic Federation, Milli Görüş Southern Netherlands).

This list of partners is interesting as it is exclusively Turkish and Sunni; as such, the event underlines the continuation of ethnic divisions within the Dutch Muslim population. Several of the organisations mentioned have in earlier studies been associated with right-wing and nationalist parties in Turkey (Landman 1992: 113). It should be emphasised that here the ISN profiles itself as an umbrella organisation rather than a 'controlling' organisation. And according to the President, this qualification is valid in a general sense as well: "ISN is not having control over other Turkish communities in the Netherlands. But, I would rather call it dialogue instead of cooperation. Competition is not our aim, I would rather see Diyanet as an 'umbrella'."[66]

Other remarkable activities in 2009 and 2010 included meetings on International Women's Day (8th of March) in Rotterdam and Eindhoven; ISN's participation in and sponsoring of the *Multifestijn*, a multicultural festival organised by the SICN (at this festival the President of the ISN gave a lecture on 'uneasiness towards and fear of Islam within society'); a conference in Rotterdam concerning a dialogue with Alevi groups; and *iftar* celebrations (breaking of the fast during Ramadan) in churches.

4.2.4. More emphasis on social function: why?

The ISN not only seems to operate more actively and visibly in society than ever before, but also appears to surpass the TICF with regard to social activities. It is debatable whether the decreased 'visibility' of TICF is a result of a shift in the balance of power between the ISN and TICF. Though it can at least be observed that, since the appointment of the new President, the ISN has been profiling itself more prominently on social dimensions and propagating a 'dialogue' between Turkish Muslim organisations and denominations within Islam, as well as between different religions altogether. However, according to some respondents, this is a simple power play: "If the ISN organises an event or activity, they are prominently present. They have the financial capacities; they can afford prominent guest speakers. But, if it is 'not their show', if other organisations organise it, one does

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[66] Interview with Dr. Bülent Şenay, Den Haag, 13th of April 2010.

not very often see them."[67] Another respondent commented on the relation between the increased number of social activities initiated by the ISN and the competition between different Turkish Muslim organisations (especially between the ISN and Milli Görüş): "Suddenly, more social activities became visible, plus educational and cultural activities, sports, women- and youth branches. They work in the same way as Milli Görüş. But this is not a recent development; it started already some time before the AKP came into power."[68] According to this respondent, the popularity of Milli Görüş played a role here; he suggests that ISN can be characterised as a "competing party, a kind of market player, while at the same time it represents the Turkish state."[69] According to the same respondent: "Formally speaking ISN is the same as always, but in reality, one of the tasks of ISN is keeping Turkish Islam in the right track, like in Turkey."[70] Remarkably, the President of the ISN arrived at the same conclusion: "An important role of Diyanet is the role of 'anti-chaos'."[71] We could characterise this perspective as a kind of safe antidote, like the type of Islam propagated in Turkey after the Coup of 12 September 1980, when the Turkish-Islamic Synthesis, which promoted a patriotic, state-controlled Islam as antidote to 'dangerous' movements and ideologies such as socialism and Islamism, was the widespread ideology of the time.

In short, there now seems to be a stronger emphasis on the interaction and cooperation between the ISN and other Turkish Islamic organisations. This correlates with the changes we observed in Turkey as well, though with a somewhat different cause. In Turkey, these changes were rooted in the emergence of a civil society; this involved a changing position and increased visibility of Islam in the public sphere. In the Netherlands, recent shifts have to do with the specific character of the religious landscape, where all the Muslim organisations have the same legal position. Therefore, the ISN has to acknowledge that it has a

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[67] Interview at Muslim Information Centre Foundation, Den Haag, 20th of January 2010.

[68] Interview at Forum, Utrecht, 20th of January 2010.

[69] Ibidem.

[70] Ibidem.

[71] Interview with Dr.. Bülent Şenay, Den Haag, 13th of April 2010.

fundamentally different position among the Islamic population in the Netherlands than in Turkey. In short, in the Netherlands, Turkish Muslims can (and do) make choices more freely than those in Turkey. The ISN has to win the hearts and minds of the Muslim population, especially in this post-migration era. This implies that the ISN, with regard to its policies, should be aware of the fact that a growing proportion of Turkish Muslims are born and raised in the Netherlands.

4.2.5. Language

Until recently, the ISN has communicated exclusively in Turkish on its website, in its monthly magazine and in its office in Den Haag. Sermons in mosques affiliated with the ISN are also held in Turkish. On the ISN website, the importance of Turkish people's own language is emphasised; for example, books aiming to improve Turkish language skills are regularly promoted by the ISN, such as *Hollanda Diyanet Vakfı'dan Tükçe Dil Eğitimine destek* (*Support at Language Education by ISN*). The website also announced a new project run by the Youth and Sports Department: '*Avrupa'daki Türk Gençleri Kendi Kültürleriyle Bulusuyor Projesi*' ('Turkish Youth in Europe Meet their Own Culture'). In this project, people between the ages of 18 to 25 are offered an opportunity to travel to Turkey in order to familiarise themselves with their own culture more intensively.[72] The President also stresses the importance of preserving the Turkish language and culture. On the other hand, he mentioned during an interview that: "We aim at some *hutbe*'s [sermons] to be given in Dutch. The ISN advised to do that. And also the monthly magazine and the website will be translated in the near future. We will try to start in May 2010."[73] This implies that in addition to (young) people of the Turkish community, the entire non-Turkish Dutch speaking community will have access to texts as well.

Thus while the ISN clearly attempts to keep their 'own language and culture' alive, it also makes pragmatic choices to become part of 'Dutch society' and responds to requirements related to 'integration'. The integration argument was

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[72] http://www.diyanet.nl/

[73] Interview with Dr. Bülent Şenay, Den Haag, 13th of April 2010.

also one of the underlying points in the policy intentions laid out by the Dutch authorities to educate imams in the Netherlands. It is remarkable that other Turkish Islamic organisations, like Milli Görüş, the Süleymancıs and the Gülen movement, already communicate in Dutch with their supporters.

4.2.6. Broadcasting

Broadcasting is an area in which ISN has been forced to forge coalitions with other Muslim parties. Dutch broadcasting law allocates radio and television time to religious programs for those religions that are sufficiently represented among the Dutch population. The Directorate for the Media (*Commissiariaat voor de Media –* CvdM) gives responsibility for overseeing religious programming to a representative organisation of the religious. Since radio and television time was made available for the Islamic religion in 1986, the question over organisational representation has led to a rivalry between various coalitions of Muslim organisations, a competition that tends to flare up every fifth year, when the broadcasting concession has to be renewed. Initially, the ISN left this area to the other Diyanet-linked organisation in the Netherlands, the TICF. The TICF forged a coalition with one Moroccan and one Surinamese Muslim organisation and excluded other Turkish Muslim organisations. Later, the Diyanet-linked organisations were themselves excluded when a rival coalition won the concession. The history of Islamic broadcasting in the Netherlands is complex and requires a separate study, but here it is sufficient to say that requirements of representation imposed by the above-mentioned CvdM has forced the ISN to negotiate and cooperate with a wide variety of Muslim partners. In this process, the ISN has gradually moved away, maybe for opportunistic reasons, from attempts to monopolise at least the Turkish part of the Muslim community. In the most recent application for the broadcasting licence, ISN cooperated with no less than eighteen other organisations, including the Alevi organisation HAK-DER and Milli Görüş Southern Netherlands (NIF).

Though this application was turned down in 2009, it is not yet clear what will happen due to the fact that the rival coalition which won the licence (the *Stichting*

Moslim Omroep Nederland or Muslim Broadcasting in the Netherlands Foundation) fell apart before they could start broadcasting. At the moment, the Muslim Broadcasting license 'case' seems to be in an impasse.

4.2.7. Imam training

The training of imams is one of the most sensitive issues in the public debate on Islam. It is the single most important field where religion and integration issues coincide and where the role of the state in religious affairs is at stake. Since 1996, Dutch governments have studied various possibilities to train imams locally and create alternatives to recruiting imams from Muslim countries. In this regard, however, the Dutch government faced opposition from Muslim organisations who tended to see such initiatives as government interference in internal religious affairs (Landman 1996). Nevertheless, former Minister for Integration and Immigration, Mrs. Verdonk, in a letter marked December 2004, informed the *Tweede Kamer* (House of Representatives) about plans to realise imam training facilities in the Netherlands.[74] She suggested three options: 1. A BA or MA-program of Islamic theology at one of the existing universities, and under the responsibility of this university; 2. cooperation with Diyanet; and 3. projects in which an Islamic organisation would cooperate with an existing university, and for which a project subsidy would be made available. Two years later, she informed the Parliament, without giving details, that no cooperation between her Ministry and Diyanet had emerged. Diyanet had, however, initially participated in one of the projects emerging from the third option. The university INHolland which had already offered a program to train teachers of Islamic religion started a program for imams involving the cooperation with the national platform of Muslims in the Netherlands *Contactorgaan Moslims en Overheid* (CMO) (in which the ISN participates). This program at INHolland started in September 2006. According to the chairman of CMO and lecturer at INHolland, an imam should be someone from among the *cemaat*: "We have chosen the middle course. We do not think learning

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[74] http://rijksbegroting.minfin.nl/2006/kamerstukken,2006/3/2/kst95190.html

the Quran by heart is realisable. No, we offer training for a profession."[75] The spoken language and language of education at INHolland is Dutch, "unless Arabic or Turkish is functional". As a result, current policies allow for the education of Dutch speaking imams.

The ISN, however, refused to participate in the INHolland plans as they found the level of education insufficient; there were also disagreements over the 'imam profile'. The President of the ISN, in a television documentary in April 2009, made clear that the education of an imam should not be compared to professional education; imam training should start at a very young age and impart both a thorough knowledge of Islam as well as "body language" and a certain life attitude. The President expressed his doubts about the quality, the curriculum and the lecturers of INHolland, and added that being a Muslim is not sufficient if one wants to be a member of the ulema. The President concluded by stating that the existing situation of the ISN appointing imams from Turkey should be continued or the level of imam education in the Netherlands should be brought to a higher level.

In addition to INHolland's imam training program, Leiden University and VU University Amsterdam today offer academic programs in Islamic theology. Students in these programs are not specifically trained for the profession of imam. In these cases, the involvement of Islamic organisations like Diyanet has sometimes been suggested but has not yet materialised.

Rather than investing in a completely new avenue to train their Dutch imams, in cooperation with a Dutch university, Diyanet has in recent decades tried to improve the existing system of recruiting the imams in Turkey and preparing them for work in the Netherlands or other European countries. In Turkey, imams receive courses in the language and culture of the country in question. In the Netherlands, they are supposed to attend a tailor-made '*inburgeringscursus*' (integration course). Imams were, until the 1ˢᵗ of July, appointed on a '3 plus 1' term, or a three year term, and had the possibility of a one year extension. Since July 1ˢᵗ, the maximum term is

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[75] Interview at INHolland, 10th of December 2009, Amstelveen.

five years, which also has implications for their residence permit.[76] The appointment and presence of Turkish 'state imams' has aroused many questions, speculations and even fear among policy makers and media. Many people wish to have more insight into the appointment and dismissal process of certain imams. In the Netherlands, imams are formally supervised by the President of the ISN who delegates this task to the attachés in Deventer and Rotterdam. According to an interviewee, imams can be dismissed for several general reasons: corruption, contacts with the press or media without permission, undesired involvement in illegitimate religious activities (i.e. popular Islam, see Chapter 5.1.3.2), or radicalisation. After a first warning, they receive an official letter from one of the attachés, eventually followed by a 'good conversation', a suspension or - in the worst case scenario - dismissal. If an imam is not breaking rules but has a conflict with the Board of the mosque where he is appointed, there can be an 'exchanging of imams'. The above-mentioned interviewee gave the example of an imam at a large mosque in an urban centre who following a conflict with the Board was appointed to a mosque in a small town. However, in general, more research will be needed to grasp an exact picture of 'cases'.[77]

Conversely, Diyanet imams in Europe are also sometimes regarded as 'tools' in the integration process. For example, in Germany imams are mobilised as the ideal 'bridge builders'. For example, the German branch of Diyanet, DITIB, works together with the Goethe Institute in Frankfurt on a joint project entitled, '*Imame für Integration*' (Imams for Integration).[78]

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[76] Interview by telephone, 28th of November 2010.

[77] Ibidem.

[78] http://www.ditib.de/detail1.php?id=184&lang=de

5. Diyanet as a religious guide

A thorough overview of the formal tasks and internal organisation of Diyanet (Chapter 3) as well as its various activities (Chapter 4) has made clear that the institution is not only engaged in the creation of material conditions for religious life, nor is it just involved in managing and organising these activities; its duties also include illuminating the public about religion. A primary activity of Diyanet's highest body, the Higher Council of Religious Affairs, is to answer questions about the correct interpretation of Islamic practices and beliefs. Diyanet is expected to function as a religious guide. It is in this field, perhaps, that the paradox of a religious institution in a secular state becomes most striking. A famous saying of Atatürk is: "The truest guide (*mürşit*) in life is science."; this word for guidance is used deliberately as it holds a religious connotation, and he suggests that today modern science leads the way rather than religious knowledge. Therefore, Diyanet's task to guide the public in religious matters involves the subtle challenge of interpreting Islamic sources in a way that is compliant with the principles of the secular Turkish republic. In this chapter we will look more closely at the content of Diyanet's interpretation of Islam.

5.1. In Turkey

5.1.1. Scientific publications and the Hadith Project

Scientific journals on Islam and Islamic history of Diyanet are often published in cooperation with the Foundation of Religious Affairs, a foundation established by the top cadres of Diyanet in 1975 to support or supplement the activities of the Directorate. The most important publication of this Foundation is the impressive 40 volume *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı Islam Ansiklopedisi* (encyclopaedia).

A new joint project of the Directorate and the Foundation is the Hadith Project, which promises to be highly ambitious with 85 scholars, experts on hadiths from different Theology Faculties, involved (Gözaydın 2009: 153). The project aims to publish a six volume edition and Turkish translation of the Hadith; that is, it will

encompass a collection of sayings and deeds of Prophet Muhammad and his companions, which constitute the second source of Islamic law after the Quran.

This project has, nationally and internationally, been widely discussed, especially after a BBC-contribution on 27 February 2008 that presented it as an attempt to reform Islam. The BBC also linked the project to the American policy of creating a 'moderate Islam' that could counterbalance Islamic fundamentalism and bridge the gap between the liberal West and the Muslim world. Diyanet reacted very agitatedly to these suggestions about the Hadith Project, and argued that it has nothing to do with a 'moderate Islam' project and does not aim at a revision, revolution or reform of Islam. The project should be interpreted as an attempt to make the Hadith understandable for people in the 21st century (Gözaydın 2009: 153).

To put this in perspective, it is important to know something about the character and literary form of the Hadith, or the collection of hadiths. The hadiths are brief reports in which the Prophet Muhammad, his companions or earlier prophets give an interpretation (in words or by an example through their own behaviour) about a religious or moral issue. In the tradition of Sunni Islam, these reports have been handed down to us in six Arabic collections, each of which is large enough to fill four volumes. As these collections were composed more than a hundred years after the death of the Prophet, they contain reports of doubtful authenticity. However, at least two of the collections, the Bukhari and Muslim collections, are considered trustworthy by Sunni orthodoxy. Against this background, any attempt to publish a Turkish edition that is more than a mere translation of the classical collections of Bukhari and Muslim is faced with the problem of determining which hadiths are authentic and which were fabricated. Important questions remain, such as: On what grounds is such a decision made? Which hadiths will be included in the Diyanet edition and why?

Our respondents from the top cadres of Diyanet did their utmost best to correct the image created by the BBC, which suggested that the project was meant to eliminate those hadiths that Diyanet, for one reason or another, wanted to be

forgotten. Mr. Er, for instance, denies that the project has any doctrinal purpose at all, but simply brings together earlier insights about the authenticity of hadiths.

Also Mr. Yeprem underlines that the Hadith Project is not about eliminating unwelcome hadiths, but rather aims to present the hadiths in a language that is understandable today. Still, he hints at the fact that some sort of a new selection is being made. If problems of our time cannot be solved with classical approaches, then the Higher Council of Religious Affairs will replace these less useful approaches with new ones; in saying this, he suggests that the classical Arabic hadith collection did not always make the right choice between authentic and false. He accepts that there are numerous hadiths about the Prophet that have been made up by people. Diyanet aims to present people "the accurate ones".

Mr. Erul, the project leader, primarily portrays it as a matter of presenting the Arabic material to a contemporary Turkish public: the young generations cannot understand the older texts. Hence, this project was initiated in order to make hadiths more comprehensible to the masses. Although many scholars are involved, the project does not aim to produce an academic edition but rather an edition targeting ordinary people.

He explains, however, that the project is more than a translation project. It also includes the classification of thousands of hadiths, according to various topics. This implies a selection process, as many hadiths have been handed down in various different readings. Mr. Erul reacts by stating that more than 200,000 hadiths have been transmitted, thus any book edition will have to make a selection. In turn, the classical collections, like the Bukhari collection, made selections: Bukhari selected only 4,000 hadiths. Similarly, "Diyanet has chosen the most credible hadiths." Mr. Erul added that the new edition should be used the next 50-100 years: "These volumes will be translated into English and German as well."

In our interviews, the question on what basis the selections of hadiths was being made remained unanswered because of the apologetic attitudes of the Diyanet officials. However, the July 2009 issue of *Diyanet Magazine* sheds some more light on the intentions behind the project; one article and two interviews with professors from various Faculties of Theology were included in the issue. Saim Yeprem

argued that a renovation will take place in terms of the "perception of religion", rather than in "religion itself", and emphasised the need to produce knowledge for human beings living in the 21st century without transforming the global message of Islam. This distinction between "religion itself", which is eternal and unchanging, versus our human "perception of religion", that can be moulded to changing circumstances, is an important instrument for modernist and reformist tendencies in Islam today.

Said Hatipoğlu, taking this idea of bringing religion in line with contemporary circumstances even further, argues that if the actions of the Prophet Muhammad are taken out of their historical context and made into a model for all times and all places, this will lead to unacceptable behaviour. Rather than getting lost in the details of his actions and sayings, Hatipoğlu suggests that the real intentions behind Muhammad's decisions and way of thinking should be emphasised. In other words, the Hadith Project should, in the view of Hatipoğlu, present the sayings and deeds of the Prophet within the context of Muhammad's own time rather than portray them as eternal, absolute truths.[79]

Though our respondents consistently deny it, there are good reasons to believe that a reformist tendency is behind the Hadith Project, and that reformist academics are involved in it. At this moment, it is still unclear how Diyanet's hadith collection will exactly look, and to what extent the selection will take into account the 'acceptability' according to modern ethics of certain hadiths. What will happen, for instance, with the many reports on corporal punishment, including stoning in case of adultery? Will they be left out? Will they be included, or put into a historical context to make it clear that they have no validity today? One way or another, this new edition of the Hadith will influence religious interpretation among the Turkish population for the coming decades.

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[79] *Diyanet Magazine* (July 2009). Retrieved from
http://www.diyanet.gov.tr/turkish/DIYANET/2009aylik/temmuz/aylik/Diyanet.html .

5.1.2. The religious authority of Diyanet

Although 'illuminating the public about religion' is a major task of Diyanet, the question of whether or not it has the religious authority to do so is a widely debated issue. Is Diyanet in a position to declare religious rules and act as a religious authority? Many theologians argue that Diyanet is not the religious authority in Turkey; it is just an institution to organise and facilitate religious services. According to Ismail Kara, a professor of Islamic Philosophy, Diyanet is not qualified to represent Islam. Rather than a holy institution with a sacred identity, Diyanet is generally defined as an administrative body or part of the administration, with the responsibility to provide services (Gözaydın 2009: 103-105). Referring to the absence of a Church and a clergy in Islam and to the fact that Islamic doctrine does not recognise a religious authority as defining 'true Islam' or judging individuals' religiosity, Gözaydın argues that there has always been a need for some organisations to regulate the services and facilities of the *ummah*, the community of the believers. Although Diyanet sometimes uses a similar reasoning, it does express itself on and answer to issues related to religious laws.

Fierce discussions revolve around the official status of Diyanet and whether its existence can be justified in both Islamic and secular terms. One of the former Diyanet presidents, Mr. Lutfi Doğan, attributes Diyanet's establishment to the lack of a clergy in Islam.[80] According to him, this absence legitimises the state's understanding of religious services as being public in nature, and the state's provision of these services. Some jurists, however, argue that, due to the very same reason, the organisation responsible for these duties should be objective and unbiased and deal not with faith but only with technical necessities. The main reason underpinning this argument is that Diyanet is funded from the taxes of all Turkish citizens, even if they do not believe in Islam and are not Muslim. Hence, religion in this view cannot be a matter of public service (Derbil 1949: 466).

On the other hand, one of the current vice-presidents of Diyanet, İzzet Er does not limit the responsibilities of Diyanet to the organisation of services; he argues

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[80] Lütfi Doğan, '*Laiklik ve Yeni Yapılanma*' (Secularism and New Structuring), *Milliyet*, (1989, March 4). Retrieved from http://gazetearsivi.milliyet.com.tr/Arsiv/1989/03/04

instead that Diyanet is also an office of fatwa's. However, he also adds that Muslims in Turkey are free to interpret these fatwa's of Diyanet as they wish; they should listen to the fatwa's and rules issued by the Higher Committee of Religious Affairs, though are free to follow or ignore them, according to their own situation. During the interview, he illustrates this point through a hadith of the Prophet which states, "ask your heart". Caner Taslaman, on the other hand, argues that Diyanet might be useful or even necessary to coordinate religious activities, such as providing a time schedule for prayers, but that its role in producing religious knowledge is unacceptable due to the absence of clergy in Islam.

The question whether religious guidance by an institution of a secular state is appropriate depends on one's interpretation of secularism. However, Diyanet has made its task of 'illuminating the people about religion' include the issuing of fatwa's.

5.1.3. Fatwa's and religious advice

In our study of how Diyanet has responded to moral and religious questions in recent decades, we see several patterns. The character of the advice given by the organisation seems to depend on the social and political importance of the issue at hand, and also on whether there is dispute about the topic in the public opinion. Some examples are highly informative in grasping the nature of Diyanet's fatwa's.

Diyanet seems to be rather sensitive about public morality. Practices that are morally disputable, like buying lottery tickets, are criticised by Diyanet and defined as a form of gambling, which Islamic doctrine condemns.[81] However, in the case of many social and cultural practices that are not Islamic in origin but socially accepted in contemporary Turkey, Diyanet tends to legitimate and tolerate rather than protest against them. With respect to celebrating New Year's Eve, for instance, many traditionalists, conservative Muslims and religious teachers would argue that it is a Christian tradition, and should thus not be celebrated by Muslims.

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[81] Okan Müderrisoğlu, '*Piyango kumar.*' (Lottery is gambling), (2005, December 25), *Sabah*. Retrieved from
http://www.sabah.com.tr/Yazarlar/muderrisoglu/2005/12/25/Piyango_kumar .

However, the majority of the Turkish population celebrates New Year's Eve anyway. Mr. Bardakoğlu, clarifies the issue by distinguishing between Christmas and New Year celebrations and by arguing that Christmas is a religious festival for Christians while New Year's Eve is a part of global culture, meaning that it can be celebrated.[82] Diyanet's stance on contemporary issues such as birth control, in vitro fertilisation[83], organ transplantation (Gözaydın 2009: 163) and sexuality taught at schools[84] also reflects views that are commonly accepted by the majority of the population, even though traditionalist and conservatives argue against these practices. Another significant example is Diyanet's stance on the Quran's embrace of monogamy. In Diyanet's purportedly first public statement on the issue (according to the journalist reporting about it), Ali Bardakoğlu observed that officially and socially, monogamy is the rule in Turkey, pointing to the social benefits of monogamy and the disadvantages of polygamy (e.g. the lack of protection of women's rights, problems in children's inheritance, and victimisation of women). In turn, he concluded that polygamy has many drawbacks from an Islamic viewpoint as well.[85] Unfortunately, his statement does not make clear whether he wishes to link this argument to the Quran verse (Sura 4:3) that allows polygamy, as long as the husband treats all of his maximum of four wives equally. Many modernist Muslims argue that this equal treatment of women is a condition that no man can meet, so the intention of the verse is the abolishment of the

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[82] Okan Müderrisoğlu, '*Yılbaşı evrensel kültürün parçası.*' (New Year's Day is part of the global culture)", (2005, December 25), *Sabah*. Retrieved from
http://www.sabah.com.tr/Yazarlar/muderrisoglu/2005/12/25/Yilbasi_evrensel_kulturun_par
casi

[83] '*Vatikan'dan veto, Diyanet'ten onay*' (Veto from vatican, approval from Diyanet) (2008, December 14), *Vatan.*

[84] '*Diyanet'ten "cinsellik eğitimi" çıkışı.*' (Sex education' opening from Diyanet), (2008, December 18), *Vatan*. Retrieved from
http://w9.gazetevatan.com/haberdetay.asp?detay=Diyanetten_cinsellik_egitimi_cikisi_2140
21_1&tarih=09.01.2010&Newsid=214021&Categoryid=1.

[85] Fikret Bila, '*Bardakoğlu'nun verdiği mesajlar.*' (The statements of Bardakoğlu), (2008, June 5), *Milliyet*. Retrieved from
http://www.milliyet.com.tr/Default.aspx?aType=YazarDetay&ArticleID=762966&AuthorI
D=61 .

polygamous marriage. It would be interesting to know whether Bardakoğlu follows this kind of reasoning.

5.1.3.1. Sensitive issues

Diyanet is often quick to legitimate cultural and social practices that are widely accepted in Turkey in terms of Islamic doctrine. But in matters that are hotly debated, Diyanet acts more cautiously and tends to refrain from judgements which utilise Islamic vocabulary (like *halal* or *haram*, allowed or forbidden); instead, a more general vocabulary is used (wise, unwise, usual practice in Islamic cultures, etc.).

For instance, a growing number of people in Turkey have begun to argue that the ritual prayers (*namaz*) should be performed in Turkish, contrary to the orthodox view that formulas and Quran verses for daily prayers are uniform for all Muslims and must be recited in Arabic, the original language. In answer to a question on whether prayers in Turkish would be accepted by God, Mr. Bardakoğlu abstained from providing a clear-cut answer based on religious doctrine and claimed that he could not answer such a question, not having the license to decide which practices would be accepted by God. He added he could only say whether or not a religious practice conforms with Islamic traditions (though he did not mention whether this was the case).[86]

On some topics, Diyanet has modified its position considerably. This modification has usually meant a shift towards interpretations that are more in line with modernity and current social norms. However, this tendency towards accepting and even applying modernity should not be exaggerated; nor should not be forgotten that Diyanet's possibilities of 'reinterpretation' are limited. One example of such a change is Diyanet's perspective on insurance. In 1991, the chairman of the Higher Council of Religious Affairs, İrfan Yücel, stated that most Islamic scholars of the last century have considered insurance *haram* (forbidden) due to its similarity to the practice of gambling. Only the insurance issued by the state, Bağkur and SSK, could be considered permissible as they have no

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[86] Ibidem.

commercial goal. A Council decision on the 4th of July 2005 however considers insurance in general to be a system of social care which cannot be compared to gambling. Rejecting the arguments by scholars who declared insurance to be illegitimate according to Islam, the Council judged that the social insurance of the state and private insurance companies have the same function and should not be evaluated separately simply just because the latter have commercials goals. As the Islamic regulations of social and economic life aim at building a community based on reciprocal help, insurance cannot be interpreted as being against this holy aim in Islam. In short, Diyanet moved from legitimising a state monopoly on insurance towards accepting the privatisation and commercialisation of this social service, which reflects the liberalisation of Turkish economic life.

5.1.3.2. Against popular Islam

An area in which Diyanet has always been clear, in which it claims to represent 'true Islam', is the issue of superstitions and popular Islam. This includes the worshipping of saints and praying to them, asking saints for favours, or expecting them to have a beneficial influence on health, fertility and marriage opportunities. Superstition was the subject of the June 2006 *Diyanet Magazine*.[87] In this issue, 'true Islam' is presented as the alternative for superstitions; however, according to Ismail Kara, in reality this is also an attempt to bring the interpretation of Islam in line with the modernisation process in Turkey (Kara 2003: 79). This may be true, as Mustafa Kemal has also regularly expressed himself against these practices, which he believes contradict a modern scientific world-view. However, these same popular practices are dually condemned by Saudi religious authorities on grounds that veneration of saints violates the Islamic principle that veneration belongs to God alone. Religious puritanism and secular modernity however seem to fit well within this area; perhaps this explains the confidence with which Diyanet argues against it.

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[87] *Diyanet Magazine*, (2006, June),
http://www.diyanet.gov.tr/turkish/DIYANET/2006aylik/haziran/aylik/Diyanet.html

The subject was also discussed in the July 1995 issue,[88] which displayed a cover page bearing the title 'Help comes only from God, not from cloth-patches and not from fortune-telling'. The same message can be seen at many grave monuments and 'holy places' in Turkey visited by pilgrims; popular religious practices at or near such places are discouraged by metal inscriptions conveying the message that praying to saints is not compatible with Islamic doctrine. In a 2006 Diyanet publication, the issue of widespread superstitions is discussed in more detail. In this book, entitled, *Superstitions in 21st century Turkey*, 1,380 superstitions were identified as having "no place in Islam". The condemned practices include: hoping to receive help from attending places such as mausoleums or areas where a holy man is believed to be buried; believing that marrying between the end of Ramadan and the Festival of Sacrifice brings bad luck; reciting the Quran or organising Islamic memorial services on the 7th, 40th or 52nd nights, or at the anniversaries following one's death; carrying blue beads to avert the evil eye; carrying folded prayers or parts from the Quran on ones body; and visiting fortune tellers or witches (Gözaydın 2009: 162).

5.1.3.3. Nationalism and loyalty to the state

Besides taking into consideration social sensitivities and social consensus on certain issues in preparing its statements and explanations, Diyanet has to take into account the official state view, as it is officially an administrative state institution. Its answers to questions regarding historical or political matters must be in harmony with the official state view or, at least, not contradict them. This does not mean that Diyanet only pays lip service to state doctrines; it also makes use of state doctrines to legitimate and strengthen its own religious positions.

In the November 2009 issue of *Diyanet Magazine*, Selim Özarslan suggests that Atatürk defined Prophet Muhammad as the model human being and the Quran as the supreme book. According to Özarslan, Atatürk, who was aware of the importance of religion for the nation, believed in the necessity of religion to be

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[88] *Diyanet Magazine*, (1995, July).

taught.[89] This attitude is widely embraced by Diyanet and signifies that the Directorate, even during the time of the AKP government, uses Atatürk as a legitimising factor for its views.

Diyanet acts as a state institution and frequently mentions the importance of the homeland, the nation and shared historical memory of people living in Turkey. In the October 2009 issue of *Diyanet Magazine*, the importance of the Turkish National Assembly and national will was also emphasised[90] (On the 29th of October, Republican Day is celebrated). And in the August 2009 issue, the importance of the homeland is mentioned several times (on the 30th of August Victory Day is celebrated). Kiyasettin Koçoglu even states here that if the homeland is at stake, everything must be risked for it. The magazine memorialises the victory of August 30th 1922 - during the Independence War - and praises Atatürk, the military leader behind the victory.[91]

Gözaydin mentions an MA-research study on sermons that were prepared by Diyanet between 2003 and 2005; in the sermons, the concepts of 'homeland', 'nation', 'national' and 'Turk' were used 263 times, while terms such as 'human rights', 'equality', 'freedom' and 'brotherhood in Islam' (*Islam kardeşliği*) were mentioned only 29 times. While love towards God was chosen as the subject of sermons five times, loving the homeland was chosen six times as the main topic (Gözaydın 2009: 166). This study of the sermons underlines the nationalist tendency in Diyanet's written publications.

This is no new phenomenon; a closer analysis of some headings in a book on *hutbes* written in the 1920s by former President of Diyanet, Ahmet Hamdi Akseki, shows how the Turkish Republic at that time used sermons in mosques as ideological tools. Some of the headlines are: 'Defending the Homeland', 'Helping the Turkish Aeronautical Association', 'The Honour of military service', 'The one

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[89] *Diyanet Magazine*, (2009, November), 227th issue. Retrieved from
http://www.diyanet.gov.tr/turkish/DIYANET/2009aylik/kasim/aylik/Diyanet.html
[90] *Diyanet Magazine*. (2009, October). 226th issue. Retrieved from
http://www.diyanet.gov.tr/turkish/DIYANET/2009aylik/ekim/aylik/Diyanet.html
[91] *Diyanet Magazine*. (2009, August). 224th issue. Retrieved from
http://www.diyanet.gov.tr/turkish/DIYANET/2009aylik/agustos/aylik/Diyanet.html

who works will get his reward' (Kara 2003: 74). Kara, argues that the headlines and content of the sermons have always been considered highly important and deserve special attention. The sermons should share a uniting and reconciling discourse and be devoid of personal, political or ideological implications. The central control of the sermons, which we discussed in chapter 4, underlines the importance of the sermon in the eyes of state officials (Kara 2003: 70). In turn, the writings hanging between the minarets of a mosque during festivals (*mahya*s) illuminated by light sometimes contain messages that refer to the morality of the state rather than to religious faith, like the instruction 'save your money' (Kara 2003: 75).

5.1.3.4. Social harmony in Turkey

One of the most central concerns of Diyanet is social unity and harmony in Turkey. As this belongs to the constitutional tasks of Diyanet, it needs no further legitimation. Nevertheless, the President of Diyanet closely links this contribution to social harmony to the religious services Diyanet provides. If religious service is not provided successfully, gaps will be filled by ideas that harm social peace. Religion, in his view, should be used to prevent the spread of harmful ideas in society.[92]

However, Diyanet's contribution to social harmony need not be explicitly religious; it can also contain a moral appeal to the public. A good example is a statement made by Mr. Bardakoğlu in December 2009, emphasising that everyone has the responsibility to prevent the mounting unrest in the streets, which resulted from the closure of the Democratic Society Party (DTP)- the Kurdish party in the assembly- by the Constitutional Court. He went on to say that people should respond positively towards this call for unity and harmony, and refrain from encouraging provocations: which he calls "the fire of *fitna*".[93]

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[92] '*Bardakoğlu: Din hizmetleri iyi verilmezse boşluk olur.*' (There will be a vacuum if religious service is not provided efficiently), (2010, January 9), *Zaman*. Retrieved from http://www.zaman.com.tr/haber.do?haberno=938100&keyfield=646979616E6574

[93] '*Diyanet İşleri Başkanı Prof. Dr.. Ali Bardakoğlu Rize'de uyardı: Fitne Ateşine Dikkat.*' (The President of Diyanet Professor Ali Bardakoğlu warned in Rize: Be cautious of the fire

This example shows that Diyanet's official task of providing and protecting national peace and unity is not only interpreted in religious terms, but also (more predominantly) in national terms. Our respondent, Mr. Er, confirmed this idea; when asked what should be done when national and religious interests clash, he replied simply: "We are trying not to make them clash. Preventing a clash between the two is very important for our social integration. It is highly beneficial to present these two to the public as mutually supporting each other." The ideology of the Turkish-Islamic Synthesis, which became an important state doctrine after 1980, still seems to play an important role within Diyanet.

Reflecting on the relationship between nationalism and religion in Turkey, Mr. Subaşı argues that 'Turkishness' cannot discard religion. As religion in Turkey has been redesigned by the state, Islam has always been a component of Turkishness. Although religion was repressed in the early republic, it continued to be a factor in propagating national unity. Even the army, that is so often portrayed as the watchdog of secularism, has used religion and claimed that patriotism is a religious duty.

5.1.3.5. Signs of autonomous reasoning

Diyanet has not always acted in line with the ideas of the central administration. For instance, in the period following the coup of 28 February 1997, Diyanet declared that the headscarf is an order of Allah (Çakır and Bozan 2005: 36). Under the circumstances, this claim was very much against the interests of the central administration, as the headscarf was seen as the main symbol of Islamist politics – a political structure seen as the most serious threat against the secular Turkish order.

The statements of former President Bardakoğlu and former Vice President Mehmet Görmez (who is now President) at the Orthodox Seminary in Halki on Heybeli Ada (an island in the Sea of Marmara) constitute another example of Diyanet's autonomous position. The Greek government and the Orthodox Church

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of provocation), (2009, December 19), *Milli Gazete*. Retrieved from
http://www.milligazete.com.tr/haber/fitne-atesine-dikkat-146725.htm

in Istanbul expect Turkey to allow the reopening of a seminary in the country, which would be the only school where the Greek minority would be able to educate its clergy. In turn, the AKP government uses this issue in negotiations with the Greek government as a means of improving the position of the Turkish minority in Greece.[94] Görmez, however, suggested that the seminary issue should be evaluated within the scope of religious freedom; he stated that every religious group should have the right to train its own clergy, which has been interpreted as a form of criticism of government policies.[95]

One of the most mediatised statements from Diyanet in recent years concerned television. While Mr. Bardakoğlu delivered a Friday sermon in Diyarbakır, he recommended that the audience turn off their televisions for half an hour in the evening and spend that time reading or listening to the Quran. The general message of his sermon was to convey the importance of the Quran to Muslims. According to him, the Quran reveals our past, future and even ourselves and hence meeting with the Quran means meeting with ourselves. While reading the Quran, Muslims know both God and themselves, and realise the whole universe was created for them and become thankful to God. For these reasons, Bardakoğlu recommended devoting some time to the Quran in the evenings.

Mr. Bardakoğlu's speech aroused a heated discussion in the media, and some journalists argued that such a recommendation should not be given in a secular state as there are non-Muslims and even non-believers in Turkey. Their interpretation of the statement was that it "forced" people to read the Quran rather than encouraged it; they maintained that a person making this public call to read the Quran was unfit for the Presidency of Diyanet in a secular republic. Others, however, considered Mr. Bardakoğlu's statement just one of many to be expected from the President of Diyanet. A well-known journalist ironically responded to the turmoil by asking whether the critics expected the President of Diyanet to

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[94] 'Erdoğan refers to Turks in Greece in seminary debate', (2010, January 5), *Today's Zaman*. Retrieved from http://www.todayszaman.com/tz-web/news-197584-erdogan-refers-to-turks-in-greece-in-seminary-debate.html

[95] Sadık Güleç, '*Diyanet'ten Ortodoks açılımı.*' (Orthodox opening from Diyanet)", (2010, January 3), *Taraf*. Retrieved from http://taraf.com.tr/haber/46234.html

recommend gambling or watching soap series on TV and the dubious sexual relations portrayed in these programmes. However, Bardakoğlu's critics insisted that he should not comment on the private lives of citizens, which was "none of his business". He ought to limit himself to regulating religious life. Another commentator, although highly critical of the existence of an institution like Diyanet in a secular state, said that the statement of Bardakoğlu was very logical: if a state institution is allowed to wear the robes of religious authority (that is, with gown and turban), one should not be surprised if it calls for the Quran to be studied and followed.[96]

This fierce public debate makes clear how sensitive the issue of religion and how contentious the behaviour of Diyanet as a religious authority has become. A moral and religious appeal by Diyanet to turn of the television and study the Quran in the evenings is all too easily constructed to be a threat to the secular public order of Turkey. The more secular circles of Turkish society may have reluctantly accepted the fact that taxpayers' money is spent on an institution like Diyanet as it is an institution meant to control and manage Islam. However, many become alarmed when Diyanet directly addresses the wider public with religious and moral appeals. The issue also illustrates that the President of Diyanet, Ali Bardakoğlu, did indeed intend to do more than merely manage the material facilities of religious life and limit the influence of anti-modern Islam interpretations; he also wanted his institution to play a role in society as a whole and address the nation with an appeal to morality and religious conscience. The more Diyanet seems to act as a religious authority, the higher the tensions with secular forces in Turkey are likely to be.

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[96] For more information on Bardakoğlu's statement and the media discussion revolving around it, see these websites;http://www.guncelhaber.com/haberler/vequottelevizyonu-kapatip-kuran-okuyunvequot-
459887.htm,http://www.zaman.com.tr/yazar.do?yazino=951428,
http://www.haber7.com/haber/20100215/Bardakoglunun-Haberturke-Kuran-yaniti.php,
http://www.aksam.com.tr/2010/03/09/yazar/16323/sevim_gozay/Diyanet__medya_ve_oku
ma_isleri.html, http://www.medyakulisi.com/haber4755/hasmet-babaogludan-altayliya-
elestiri_1/kulis1.aspx, http://www.kanalahaber.com/kurana-degil-neye-cagiracagim-haberi-
42736.html

5.2. In the Netherlands

As we already indicated, the migration of Turks to Western Europe placed their cultural and religious life under quite different legal, social and political conditions than in Turkey, and although the emerging Turkish Muslim organisations maintained ties with the home country, they had to adapt. On both the institutional level (Chapter 3) and in their activities (Chapter 4), Diyanet in the Netherlands could not simply copy models from Turkey; it had to take the Dutch environment seriously. If we now turn to the issue of religious authority and guidance, it is relevant to ask two questions; the first is that of centralisation versus decentralisation of religious authority: in other words, to what extent can and do representatives of Diyanet in the Netherlands develop their own religious interpretations and give independent religious advice? The second is that of contextualisation of the religious messages: to what extent does the content of the religious information presented to the faithful living in Western Europe consider the specific European conditions?

5.2.1. ISN-officials as religious guides

The website of the ISN refers readers looking for answers to religious questions to the central Diyanet site in Ankara. When clicking the heading, '*Dini Sorular*' (religious questions), the inquirer automatically arrives at the '*Dini Soruları Cevaplandırma Komisyonu Bilgi Sistemi*' (the data bank from the commission providing answers to religious questions) section of the Turkish Diyanet website.[97] The same thing happens when clicking in the ISN page on '*Dini Bilgiler*' (religious information).[98] In an interview with the President of ISN, Dr. Bülent Şenay responded to several of our questions on religious matters by handing over written statements from the President of Diyanet at the time, Professor Ali Bardakoğlu.

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[97] http://sorusor.diyanet.gov.tr/

[98] http://www.diyanet.gov.tr/turkish/dy/Diyanet-Isleri-Baskanligi-AnaMenu-dini-bilgiler-95.aspx

These examples suggest that the ISN very much functions as an intermediary conveying messages from the central office in Ankara.

Bardakoğlu's statements also underline the idea that providing religious guidance is more a responsibility of the central institution rather than the individual Diyanet representatives working at the regional or local levels. In an article about the duties of Diyanet, Bardakoğlu argues:

> "Sound knowledge means a struggle against superstition, error, ignorance, injustice and religious abuse. In the Islamic tradition, it has been theologians that have been the ones who have continued [this] struggle (…) By basing its actions on sound religious knowledge and information, the Presidency of Religious Affairs does not tolerate hard-line tendencies that disturb social peace, and proceeds to educate, convince and inform people who have such tendencies. (…) Piety, which is based on emotion rather than knowledge, usually remains reserved and withdrawn. It becomes nearly impossible to enlighten people who have surrendered to a certain force, movement or centre of attraction in an emotional atmosphere with such sound knowledge. (…) Despite everything, centres of religious knowledge and the Presidency of Religious Affairs have managed to attain a level of success in this difficult tasks. Complete success is not possible, in any case." (Bardakoğlu 2006: 16-18)

In this quote, Bardakoğlu positions his institution against a variety of deviations from 'correct' interpretations of Islam, instead of basing the authority of Diyanet on "sound knowledge" of the religion. At the same time, the quote locates this sound knowledge in "centres of religious knowledge and the Presidency of Religious Affairs". He does not specify where "centres of religious knowledge" are, but we understand this as a reference to theological faculties in Turkey. Both the stress Diyanet puts on unity and the careful way in which the Ankara centre issues fatwa's about religious questions leave little room for regional or local representatives (such as the ISN President in the Netherlands) to act independently.

On the other hand, both ISN activities and its magazine, the *HDV Bülten* (ISN bulletin), suggest that the ISN President does show leadership; the President himself claims that the ISN is more than an organiser of activities, and actually provides guidance. More than his predecessors, the current President tries to make himself more visible whilst creating an image of being 'among' and 'above' the people at the same time. In paragraph 4.2.3., we characterised the image of the President as a "religious expert, a (religious) leader, leader of the dialogue, and, on the other hand as a 'man of the people', who is everywhere: from conferences on topics related to religion to kick offs of soccer matches." In this chapter on religious guidance, his position and initiatives as a religious expert are important. One way of communicating with the people are through monthly addresses in the above-mentioned ISN bulletin.

On the first page of the monthly, the President usually writes the leading article. The articles often begin with '*değerli dostlar*' (dear friends), and the President later goes further to discuss a societal or religious topic. In his writings, he displays a sound knowledge and understanding of Dutch society. For example, in the April 2009 issue, he carefully depicts the religious landscape of the Netherlands, noting the various Muslim organisations, quoting the *Minderhedennota* of 1983 (official report on minorities, migration and integration), and speaking about the Dutch phenomenon of '*pillarizasyon*' (pillarisation). The subject of this article is 'equality before the law and freedom of religion'. In this context, the ISN is characterised as a leading party, a kind of 'guide' whose purpose is to meet the demands and needs of the Turkish community in the Netherlands, both inside and outside of the mosque:

> "*HDV, dini toplulukların din hizmetleri ihtiyacının karşılanması esasına dayalı bir yapı içerisinde 300 bin civarında Hollandalı Türk topluluğa en geniş ölçüde, yani cami içi din hizmetleri ve cami dışı din hizmetleri kapsamında, Kur'an kursu, din eğitimi, ramazan, hac, kurban, cenaze hizmetleri, kadınlara ve gençlere yönelik eğitim ve kültür hizmetleri, spor etkinlikleri organizasyonu vs. mahiyetinde din hizmetlerini organize*

etmekte ve rehber kurum görevini ifa etmektedir." (In its effort to meet the needs for religious services – in a broad sense, both inside and outside the mosque - of the Dutch-Turkish community of around 300,000, ISN organises religious services like Quran courses, religious education, Ramadan, Pilgrimage to Mecca, the ritual sacrifice, educational and cultural activities aimed at women and youngsters, sports, etcetera, and has the function of an institution of guidance).

The figure of around 300,000 in this above quote is interesting, as the number of Dutch people with a Turkish origin hovers around 380,000. Assuming that the President knows these statistics, he must have deliberately left out a portion of the Dutch-Turkish community. This could be taken to mean that the ISN's target group is the Sunni community, not the Alevis. On the other hand, the number of 300,000 is high enough to suggest that the target group includes all the Sunni Turkish Muslims and not only those actually attending Diyanet mosques. The question of how the ISN positions itself in the wider landscape of Muslim organisations in the Netherlands will be discussed in the next chapter.

The various responsibilities and target groups of the ISN is also raised in an article series entitled, '*Islam'da Maruf, Muamelat ve Toplum Ahlaki*' (correct behaviour, social regulation, and social ethics in Islam). In this articles, the President explains that the Muslim community is comparable to what is now called 'civil society' ("*Islam toplumu modern zamanların ifadesiyle 'sivil toplum'dur*"), and points to the importance of the fact that the evolution of moral codes and ethics within society is a social process (*HDV Bülten*, May, June, July, August 2009). In the September 2009 issue, the President also points out the importance of religious and cultural activities organised by the ISN, which are aimed at preventing youth from losing their own cultural background:

"*Gençlerimiz dini, sosyal ve kültürel ihtiyaçlarlarının karşılanması onların her yönü ile hayata hazırlanmasının manevi sorumluluğu her an omuzlarımızdadır.*" (Meeting the religious, social and cultural needs of our

youngsters and the moral responsibility of making them ready for life is always on our shoulders.)

In statements like this, the President of the ISN reveals his ambitions to lead and guide. However, the services rendered and guidance given are usually presented in the general language of moral education; this type of education could be given anywhere: locally, nationally and internationally, by imams and other religious personal employed by Diyanet. It does not suggest a broader ambition to develop a religious authority that operates autonomously from the centre in Ankara.

5.2.2. Contextualised religious knowledge

The contextualisation of Islamic knowledge has received growing attention among scholars working on Islam in Europe. An important issue has been the emergence of what is often called *fiqh al-aqalliyat*, Islamic law for minorities. The idea behind this concept is that Islamic prescriptions, especially the ones regulating social, economic, and political life, were formulated for Muslim majority countries and therefore cannot be adequately applied to societies where Muslims are a minority. A key figure in this respect is the Egyptian Muslim scholar Yusuf al-Qaradawi, the chairman of the European Council for Fatwa and Research: an organisation specialising in answering religious and moral questions faced by European Muslims.

For some decades, Turkish Muslims living in Europe have used the opportunity to pose religious and moral questions to the Higher Council of Religious Affairs of Diyanet in Ankara. In 1990, Jac den Exter estimated that 25 percent of the questions asked to the Council came from Muslims living outside Turkey, most of them in Germany but also some in the Netherlands (Den Exter 1990b: 34; see also Den Exter 1990a). Many questions concerned everything from marriage and divorce, interest, ritual slaughter, praying under the imam of another school of law, and using the false teeth or inlays. The fatwa's of Den Exter were formulated in general and universal terminology and did not address the specific situation of European Muslims in the way to that of Qaradawi's European Council. More

research on Diyanet's fatwa's and responses to questions raised by European Muslims is urgently required to asses how Diyanet contextualises the knowledge of Islam. Such a study could also inquire as to how the experience of being part of a secular political system has shaped Diyanet's religious authority and methods of interpreting religious morality in a secular culture.

Some responses to the Dutch context may be seen in the messages of ISN's President, Dr. Bülent Şenay, in the ISN bulletin. In the October and November 2009 as well as the January and February 2010 issues, the President wrote philosophical essays and comments on the meaning of religion in the 'modern era'. In December, he addressed the question of whether Muslims who live in non-Muslim countries should be allowed to participate in the celebration of Christian festivals. This is interesting as similar issues have been publicly raised by Diyanet in Turkey as well, regarding the position of Muslims in Turkey (see section 5.1.3 of this report). The ISN's answer to this question is evidenced in the aforementioned *fiqh al-aqalliyat*, or jurisprudence of minorities, such as Muslims living in the West. In the article, the ISN President mentions the pagan roots of holidays and festivals (such as Christmas or New Years) which later were 'Christianised'. He concludes that Muslims are allowed to celebrate these festivals in the sense of 'enjoying the public holiday' and may congratulate their neighbours. It is, after all, their culture and the dominant culture in the country. However, the participation of Muslims in religious celebrations is officially *caiz değil* (religiously not permissible) unless one is invited, on an institutional level, to represent Muslims for a prayer or sermon as part of a (Christian) celebration. In using the phrase *caiz değil*, Mr. Şenay here resorts to the vocabulary of Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*) to address the situation of Muslim minorities. He speaks as a religious authority; the content of his recommendation can be analysed as a safe 'middle way' between Muslim isolationism - that would reject participation in Christian holidays totally - and an inter-religious encounter between Islam and secularism.

6. Diyanet in the religious landscape

We have thus far discussed the tasks, activities and religious profile of Diyanet without regard to other religious organisations or groups. However, it is clear that the religious landscapes of Turkey and the Netherlands are quite complex; Diyanet is only one player in the field of Islamic life. However, Diyanet's role is unique in that it is a privileged actor operating under the support of the Turkish state, which allows it resources that other Muslim organisations do not have – even in the Dutch context. In this final chapter, we will examine the relation between Diyanet and the various other Islamic and different religious communities.

6.1. In Turkey

6.1.1. Interreligious dialogue

As Mr. Yeprem told us, Diyanet has an office whose sole occupation is to engage in an inter-religious dialogue; this office is technically part of the Directorate of External Relations, one of the core departments of the institution. He compared this office to the Vatican's Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, which is interesting as it suggests that Diyanet plays the role for Turkish Islam that the Vatican plays for Catholicism; namely, representing one world religion during an encounter with other religions.

In November 2010, Mr. Yeprem mentioned that a meeting was scheduled between Muslims and Christians on the subject of revelation. In an effort to underline common ground between the two religious faiths, Mr. Yeprem suggested that it is better to speak about dialogue "between religious people" than pointing out various aspects of the two different identities. Meetings like these are intended to develop a culture of "living together." However, the aim is not to establish a mixed, hybrid religious system by combining elements from different religious traditions; instead it is to provide each faith with an inside view of different religious beliefs and practices.

The same concern about blurring the religious boundaries emerged when Pope Benedict XVI visited Turkey; in Istanbul's Sultanahmet Mosque, there was a moment of silence in which he visibly prayed. This evoked a critical reaction from Diyanet President Ali Bardakoğlu, who stated: "The most meaningful thing would be if everyone would protect and support their own beliefs and their own traditions. In order for a healthy dialogue to occur, it is not right for an imam to have to put on a cross and pray before the Virgin Mary, or priests to pray in mosques. In order to build healthy relations between religions, it is enough that we respect the beliefs, values and character of others. It is not right to expect that others will pray as the Pope did."[99] Diyanet's view on inter-religious religion can be readily observed in the fact that some of Mr. Yeprem's students now work in the Vatican, teaching Christians about Islam; likewise, some Catholics are active within Diyanet in teaching Muslims about Christianity.

For one of our respondents, Mr. Erul, this inter-religious teaching framework and dialogue should not be limited to Christians, but should also include "atheists or Satanists". It is easy to speculate as to whether representatives of each group might feel uncomfortable being brought together in this way, though the intention to display open-mindedness is obvious.

Diyanet's top officials have often attended meetings with dignitaries from various non-Muslim religious communities. Diyanet was present at the first 'meeting of civilisations' in Hatay (2005), along with the Chief Rabbi, the Armenian Patriarch and the Greek Patriarch. The way 'Hatay' was written on the poster of the meeting attracted media attention, as three letters of the word were represented by the symbols of the three monotheistic religions. However, many conservative Muslims did not approve of this method of portraying three major world religions as equally important.
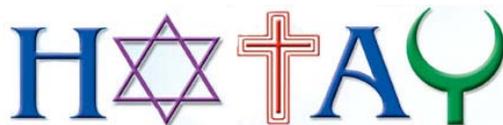
The emblem of the 'Hatay Meeting of Civilisations'

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[99] http://www.turks.us/article.php?story=Pope_prayerintheSultanahmetMosque

Mr. Bardakoğlu's positive attitude towards inter-religious dialogue complements his call for religious tolerance, which in his view is a consequence of Islam's doctrines on unity and solidarity. Responding to a question of a journalist, which inquired as to whether he supported the idea that the historical monastery of Sumela (near Trabzon) should be made available for religious services to the Christian community, he argued that a person who keeps his own values should give others the opportunity to practice their beliefs as well. He added that he considered it his duty to protect all different religions and denominations. Diyanet, he stated, respects and supports freedom of religion for all religious minorities in Turkey and does not display intolerance to any one group. Bardakoğlu also took this opportunity to extend his call for tolerance to ethnic diversity. Our tradition, he stated, is one of respecting each other regardless of the ethnic roots or type of belief. Interestingly, the tradition he refers to could be interpreted as meaning the Islamic tradition, the Turkish nation and the secular state simultaneously. This is clear from his words: "It is important to be the citizens of the same state, being bounded to the same Quran and the same prophet, possessing the same memory and geography."[100] The rhetoric used here is a remarkable mix of diversity and unity. It uses, so to speak, different registers at the same time: there is the secular register of national unity that transcends ethnic and religious diversity – in this register non-Muslims are simply a part of nation. But there is also the register of Sunni Islam. In this register the "same Quran" becomes the binding factor, so that non-Muslims are not part of the nation, but are outsiders, towards whom the Turkish-Muslim nation needs to be tolerant.

6.1.2. Diversity in Islam

A similar ambiguity of Diyanet's identity – whether it should speak as an orthodox Sunni institution or as a religious institution above the parties – becomes clear in its

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[100] '*Bardakoğlu: Islam Ötekinin Dinine Saygı Duymaktır.*' (Islam is respecting the other's religion), (2010, April 16). Retrieved from:
http://www.haber7.com/haber/20100416/Bardakoglu-Islam-otekinin-dinine-saygi-duymaktir.php

attitude towards the internal divisions within the Turkish Islamic population. We have already seen how Diyanet strongly attacks some popular religious practices as superstitions which have no place in true Islam. In this attack, Diyanet behaves as a religious authority defining the correct religious doctrines and practices according to Sunni orthodoxy. But at the same time Diyanet officials like to claim that they are above the parties and accommodate diversity. Is this simply rhetoric or more? How does Diyanet in fact relate to the existing diversity in Turkish Islam, where a huge variety of Shia and Sunni communities and associations are active in organising religious ceremonies and publishing their religious opinions? To answer such questions we discuss three denominations within Turkish Islam: the various Sunni '*cemaat*s', or religious communities, the Alevis, and the Twelver Shia.

6.1.2.1. Diyanet and the '*cemaat*'

In many studies about Diyanet the rivalry between a top-down institution of 'official Islam' and the bottom-up associations of 'parallel Islam' is mentioned (e.g. Landman 1992: 80-84). The so-called parallel Islam includes religious movements outside the direct control of Diyanet, and which are often opposing the secular culture of the state elite. These movements include the Nurcu movement, the Süleymancıs, and most recently the Milli Görüş movement. As loyal servants of the Kemalist project, Diyanet top officials tended to see these movements as anti-modern, anti-secular, and a threat to the existing order. To curb their influence, Diyanet published hostile studies about them and tried to take control over some of their activities, for example Quran courses. Diyanet prepared several written documents insulting and condemning the Süleymancıs and Nurcus, labelling them as '*tarikat*', (Sufi orders, associations of Islamic mysticism) or as sectarian movements. Such documents claimed that these groups were similar threats to Turkey much like communism and the Christian missionary were. Some of the documents were published and received media attention. The 1970s were dominated by Diyanet's conflict with the Süleymancıs and Hüseyin Hilmi's Işık group, both being branches of the Nakshbandi *tarikat*. The conflict between these groups and Diyanet was a tough one, and the hostile attitude of Diyanet led some

of their members to refuse praying behind Diyanet imams in the mosques. According to Ismail Kara, the conflicts are not simply about religious interpretation, but concerned also the political and economic problems behind them (Kara 2003: 112).

In 1997, the year in which hard-line secularists tried to curb the influence of a perceived Islamism, officials of Diyanet often expressed critical views towards the *tarikat*s. On 24 January 1997, the Diyanet President at the time warned the public about 'fake sheikhs' and recommended people to gain knowledge about Islam through reading the Quran on their own.

Though the relations between Diyanet and other Sunni movements have sometimes been hostile, scholars also noted that adherents of these movements were active within Diyanet itself, as became clear in Western Europe in the 1980s, when imams of these movements often turned out to be former imams of Diyanet. Caner Taslaman also downplays the former rivalry to some extent. The initial aim behind the establishment of Diyanet may have been to promote a single Islam controlled by the state, but in reality Diyanet has never had a monopoly in this sphere and always had to cooperate with the *cemaat*s.

Today's top officials of Diyanet speak in much more positive terms about the abovementioned religious communities. According to Mr. Er, Diyanet tended to ignore the *cemaat*s in the past. He remarks how "today, however, we regard them as a social phenomenon. We meet them. We also believe that we can benefit from them". A significant moment in this changing situation was seemingly a meeting held by Diyanet's Religious Council in 1994 in which representatives of these groups were invited (together with Alevi representatives, see below).

If we are to believe Mr. Yeprem, the rivalry no longer exists. Today, the *cemaat*s support Diyanet and those with differing views from Diyanet are few in number. Mr. Bardakoğlu has not spoken in hostile terms about the Sunni *cemaat*s like his predecessor did in 1997. It is therefore tempting to suppose that this more constructive attitude towards the Sunni associations reflects the fact that the ruling party, the AKP, has strong relations with some of these *cemaat*s.

Mr. Yeprem acknowledges the growing influence of the *cemaat*s, noting how many of them now have their own private TV and radio channels, newspapers and magazines. He interprets this as proof that secularisation and modernisation theories predicting the decreasing role of religion were wrong. Additionally, he analyses this growing influence in terms of the rise of civil society in Turkey. Taslaman also confirms this and concludes that although the power of Diyanet is still considerable, it has also diminished relative to the *cemaat*s.

With regard to religious diversity, the Sunni *cemaat*s are a relatively easy to handle for Diyanet, as both are adherents of the same main faction, the Sunni denomination of Islam. Diyanet and the *cemaat* may have had rivalries, emerging from their different attitudes towards the state and different positions within the secular state, but they share the same religious orientation and accept the same religious sources.

6.1.2.2. Twelver Shia

With respect to Caferis or the Twelver Shia, the largest branch within Shiite Islam and the state religion in Iran, there is a different point of departure. The group has only a limited following in Turkey. Though Diyanet had offered religious services from an exclusive Sunni perspective, today the institution has opened its doors for the Caferis and accepts the religious diversity of Sunni and Shia in Turkey. Diyanet even started to accommodate this diversity within its own institution and is prepared to train imams living in the eastern parts of Turkey and in Istanbul as members of this community. Diyanet's statements about the Caferi movement signify how Diyanet interprets the belief system and the practice of Caferis as legitimate interpretations of Islam.[101] The contrasting attitudes towards the 'superstitions' of popular Islam on the one hand and Caferi Islam on the other makes clear that Diyanet does not have a neutral position above all religious diversity, but tries to a certain extent to allow diversity within Islam.

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[101] Okan Müderrisoğlu, '*Diyanet'in hedefi Caferileri kazanmak.*' (Diyanet's aim is to gain the support of Caferis)', (2005, December 25), *Sabah*. Retrieved from http://www.sabah.com.tr/Yazarlar/muderrisoglu/2005/12/25/Diyanet_in_hedefi_Caferileri_kazanmak

6.1.2.3. The Alevis

Perhaps the toughest issue in terms of accommodating religious diversity is its relation with the Alevi population of Turkey. This population is very diverse in religious attitudes and affiliations. The vast majority, however, share a distrust and dislike of Sunni orthodoxy and Diyanet. In the last decades, Alevis have become the fiercest critics of Diyanet and have challenged its presence in the secular Turkish state, what they see as a stronghold of Sunni orthodoxy.

   A detailed explanation of what Alevism is would require the space of a complete book (see e.g. Olsson 1998). Here we can only sketch some features that are necessary to understand the challenge they potentially constitute for Diyanet. Though hard statistical data is lacking, most academic observers assume that between 15 and 25 percent of the Turkish population belongs to the Alevi community. This community has a quite distinct religious culture, in which ritual dances and music plays a significant role. They share some religious ideas with Shia denominations that see Ali, the nephew and son-in-law of the Prophet Muhammad, as the perfect human being and even as a manifestation of God on earth. In the Ottoman era they were sometimes persecuted by the Sunni sultans and hid in remote villages, but the mystical brotherhood of the Bektaşis made its lodges or *tekkes* major centres of Alevi culture and religiosity. In the Republican era much of this culture was lost by secularisation and the gradual disappearance of isolated life in villages. However, in the 1980s Turkey witnessed a revival of the Alevi identity. Many Alevi authors stressed the secular and humanist aspects of their tradition rather than religious ones. Despite this there was a revival of distinct religious celebrations, often organised by newly created Alevi associations that sometimes founded their own houses of worship, called *cem* houses (meaning a place for the Alevi religious ceremony of the *cem)*. Contemporary Alevism is very critical about religious orthodoxy and usually defines its own identity by distancing itself from Sunni Islam. Most Alevis do not accept the authority of the Quran and the Hadith and feel no obligation to practice the five 'pillars of Islam'. Many of them feel attracted to mystical traditions in Islam that look for God in the human heart.

Since the 1980s in Alevi publications and on websites complaints could be found about the unequal treatment they received in Turkey, compared to the Sunnis whose religious needs were cared and paid for by Diyanet. Also in Europe, Alevi institutions advocate this cause with political parties.

Increasingly, the Alevis are mentioned as an example of the problematic way in which Turkey deals with its religious minorities.

Alevi workshops

This background considered, it is not surprising that the Turkish government has instigated a number of initiatives, for example and most particularly the Minister of State Çelik, who is responsible for Diyanet, began an initiative to discuss the relation between Alevism and Diyanet. This so-called 'Alevi workshop' consisted of seven different meetings between June 2009 and February 2010. A prominent Alevi author, Reha Çamuroğlu, who surprisingly is a Member of Parliament for the AKP, underlined the importance of these workshops, as they marked the first time the Turkish Republic officially listened to the Alevis and recognised them as a distinct group bearing that name. It is interesting to note that it was the AKP that made this move, an Islamist movement highly distrusted by many Alevis. The Alevi workshops were not only an important step towards a dialogue between government agencies and Alevis, but also brought together a wide variety of Alevi organisations with rather different perspectives on the origin and future of Alevism.

Both the diversity within the Alevi community and their distrust of the intentions of the AKP government and Diyanet made the chance of a consensus highly unlikely. To what extent the final report, prepared by Minister of State Çelik, really represents views that are accepted by a majority of the attendants is an open question. Nevertheless, the report makes clear that the discussion focused on the need to change the current position and structure of Diyanet, because it seems to represent only the interests of Sunni Muslims, but is paid from tax money collected from all citizens of the Turkish Republic, either Shia or Sunni or non-Muslim.

It was observed in the report that most Alevis were in favour of the abolishment of Diyanet and very sceptical about the legitimacy of such an institution in a secular state; this view is upheld in much Alevi media. More surprising is the claim that by the end of the meetings, most Alevis were convinced that such a radical step was not realistic; as a result, a new option was put forward, that of turning Diyanet into a autonomous civilian institution constitutive of various different interpretations of Islam. Rather than abolishing Diyanet altogether, it was agreed that creating a fair and indiscriminating system of religious taxation was the way forward.

A final remark in the report was rather alarming for Diyanet, namely the remark that participants had agreed upon that fact that Diyanet's current structure would keep Turkey from entering the EU.

Minister of State Mr. Çelik was expected to present the final report to the Turkish Prime Minister, Mr. Erdoğan. So far, no official steps have been taken on any of the issues discussed in the meetings or mentioned in the report.[102]

Though Diyanet was involved in these Alevi workshops, it was not an initiator of the gatherings; the repercussions from the workshops could, if translated into concrete measures, have drastic consequences for the institution as it exists today. Vice President İzzet Er strongly underlined the fact that these workshops were not initiated by Diyanet but rather by the government and the Ministry of State to which the institution is linked. Everything Mr. Er told us suggested that he was not pleased with the direction these workshops had taken, and most of his remarks about the meetings can be summed up in two words: 'damage control'. In other words, he stated that the workshops had not led to "any solid argument or request regarding Diyanet". Though he did admit that the status of Diyanet was discussed, he pointed to the lack of consensus on the issue among Alevis themselves. He did not see any convincing reason to really transform Diyanet; however, he offered to

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[102] '*Alevi Çalıştayı Bitti Uzlaşma Sağlandı.*' (Alevi workshop has ended consensus has been reached), (2010, January, 30). Retrieved from http://www.cnnturk.com/2010/turkiye/01/31/alevi.calistayi.bitti.uzlasma.saglandi/561722.0/

help "our Alevi brothers" by publishing the results of some projects in which classical texts associated with the Alevi tradition would be translated in contemporary Turkish. He also pointed out that the Turkish Diyanet Foundation has already put such projects into motion.

Diyanet's own statement on Alevism

If the report on the Alevi workshops of 2009 and 2010 did not reflect the views of Diyanet itself, what position does the institution take on the issue of Sunni – Alevi diversity? In the past, Diyanet has tended to ignore the presence of such diversity; however, since the Alevi revival of the 1980s and their increased public visibility, such an attitude is no longer possible. What followed was a series of attempts to downplay the distinct religious identity of Alevis and stress a common ground. An example was a statement made by Bardakoğlu to the Turkish press in 2008 on Ashura, the tenth day of the Islamic month of Muharram: a holy day for Shia Muslims (including Alevis). On this day, the Shia commemorate and mourn the tragic dead of Hussein, the grandson of the Prophet Muhammad, who was massacred together with most of his family members by an army of the Caliph at Karbala. Bardakoğlu seized the opportunity to emphasise the love for Hussein and all Muslims, Shia and Sunnis alike, even using Shia religious vocabulary (like the term *Ehl-i Beyt*, used for the family members of the prophet). He mentioned that the Karbala incident had harmed all Muslims around the world, regardless of their region, culture, denomination, or spiritual approach. However, he insisted that all Muslims must learn from these kinds of sad incidents and refrain from all sentiments and behaviour that might damage the unity and solidarity of the Islamic world.[103]

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[103] *Muharrem ve Aşure Mesajı* (Diyanet's statement to the press on the Month of Muharram and Asura (Noah's pudding)). (2008, December 12). Retrieved from http://www.diyanet.gov.tr/turkish/dy/Diyanet-Isleri-Baskanligi-Duyuru-4801.aspx; '*Biz bir ve beraberiz*' (We are one and together), (2009, December 27), *Milli Gazete*. Retrieved from http://www.milligazete.com.tr/haber/biz-bir-ve-beraberiz-147657.htm

Although this kind of discourse is completely in line with Diyanet's attempts to promote social unity and harmony, many Alevis consider this an attempt at forced assimilation as no recognition of the distinct Alevi identity was made. A press statement published in December 2008, in which four important questions about this issue were raised and briefly discussed, depicts a clearer picture of how Diyanet positions itself against Alevi claims. The first question concerns the definition of Alevism. Alevism is defined broadly and includes various groups and communities that play an important role in shaping Turkey's social, cultural and historical architecture; as such these various groups constitute an important part of Turkish cultural identity. The press statement suggests that Alevism must be regarded as an historically "within-Islam formation" and the fruit of Islam. After some digressions about the need for sound scientific research to confirm this claim, Diyanet responded that "Alevism that accepts the Prophet Muhammad as the last prophet and the Quran as the holy book cannot be regarded a separate religion". What this means for those Alevis who do not accept the Quran remains unclear. According to Diyanet, however, research on Alevism shows that a vast majority Alevis define their religious practices as Islamic and even as constituting 'the essence' of Islam. The structuring of Alevism around *tekke*s (lodges) and the hierarchy of *dedes* (the title of Alevi religious leaders) and derwishes proves that Alevism must be understood as a form of Islamic mysticism. The press statement likewise repeatedly stresses that Alevism is not a separate religion. As in the Ashura message of Bardakoğlu, the language is inclusive, which can be construed as a gesture of acceptance; however, it denies the distinct identity which Alevis claim themselves.

The second question addresses the official recognition of *cem* houses, places for the Alevi *cem* ceremonies, as "places of worship" and deserving of financial support from the state. The fact that Diyanet supports mosques but not the Alevi *cem* houses has been one of the reasons for Alevis to speak out about

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Açıklama - Alevilik (Diyanet's statement to the press on Alevilik). (2008, December 12). Retrieved from http://www.diyanet.gov.tr/turkish/dy/Diyanet-Isleri-Baskanligi-Duyuru-128.aspx

discrimination. However, Diyanet's motivation is as follows: *cem* houses are a new phenomenon as the *cem* ceremonies were previously held in *tekke*s or even private houses. Moreover, Alevi worship practices do not fall into the category of Muslim ritual prayer (one of the five pillars), but rather into the much wider category of devotional and cultural practices. *Cem* houses are therefore not similar to official mosques, churches or synagogues. Moreover, Diyanet argues that mosques have been accepted as a common place of worship for all Muslims, regardless of their denomination, practices, etc. It maintains that official places of religious worship should be distinguished from places where mystical, scientific or cultural activities associated with that religion are taking place. Finally, if *cem* houses were recognised as places of worship, it would imply that Alevism is a religion distinct from Islam. *Cem* house may fall under legal protection but should not have the same status as the mosque. In this line of reasoning, the logic of unity and diversity of Diyanet's ideas becomes very clear; though many manifestations of Alevi culture are mentioned, accepted and even praised as a worthwhile contribution to Islamic and Turkish culture, Alevism is subordinated to the symbols of orthodox Sunni Islam: the Quran, the Prophet and the five pillars of Islam.

The third question surrounds the issue of whether Diyanet is prepared to create an Alevi department within its own institution. Diyanet claims to be "above groups and sects" and simply the voice of Islam, as it depends on two major Islamic texts: the Quran and the Sunna. The task given to Diyanet by the secular state, namely to stay out of political controversies but to create national unity, is often invoked by the institution to refuse a separate Alevi department. It might go without saying that many Alevis do not accept that Diyanet is above groups and denominations (Çakır and Bozan 2005: 114) Also, the aforementioned behaviour of Diyanet towards the Twelver Shia is not consistent with the argument against a relative autonomy for the Alevis.

In the last section of the press statement, Diyanet responds to an accusation made by Alevis, who charge that mosques were built by the state in Alevi villages. Diyanet makes clear that the building and maintenance of mosques is not among the duties of the institution. Mosques in Turkey are built by individuals or private

organisations; Diyanet's function is to allow individuals to open mosques for worship, whilst regulating mosque activities and appointing and financing imams.[104]

What the issues brought forth in the Alevi-Diyanet discussion make clear is that Diyanet makes conscious attempts to use inclusive language towards different religious denominations though categorically refuses to make real concessions to the Alevis, who they only accept as different within strictly defined parameters: those of Islamic orthodoxy. In short, the fact remains that Diyanet does not recognise the Alevis as a religious minority and does not award them rights equal to other religious denominations.

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[104] *Açıklama – Alevilik* (Diyanet's statement to the press on Alevilik), (2008, December 12). Retrieved from http://www.diyanet.gov.tr/turkish/dy/Diyanet-Isleri-Baskanligi-Duyuru-128.aspx

6.2. In the Netherlands

6.2.1. ISN and the other Turkish-Islamic organisations

As explained in chapter 3, the juridical position of Diyanet in the Netherlands is quite different from that of Turkey; it operates through a foundation (ISN) that has no monopolies or exclusive rights compared with other Turkish and non-Turkish Muslim organisations. Nevertheless, the ISN occupies a specific position in the Islamic landscape in the Netherlands due to its status as the formal representative of the Turkish state, and as such, has its financial backing. Among the Turkish Islamic organisations, the ISN is the largest in terms of the number of mosques, which number around 142. Also, the ISN is by far the largest owner of mosques in the country. When we compare the level of organisation among migrant communities with an Islamic background, the Turks are essentially the best organised migrant community (Van Heelsum, Tillie, Fennema 2004: 1). Migrant organisations have always been a sensitive issue in broader debates about integration in the Netherlands. Some have argued that a high level of organisation among migrants is an indication of trust and emancipation (see also Putnam 1994). For example, there is a correlation between the level of organisation among migrants in the Netherlands and their participation in local elections (Tillie 2009). Those who are critical towards migrant organisations argue that the continuation of these types of these groups is an indication of staggering integration. In any case, Turkish migrants do have the largest number of organisations; they are also the most organised Muslim community in the Netherlands (with 223 mosques in 2009 against 132 Moroccan and 22 Surinamese). Most mosques in the Netherlands are still ethnically organised (Van Heelsum, Tillie, Fennema 2004: 3), though the number of non-ethnic mosques is increasing.[105]

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[105] For a list of Islamic organisations and umbrella organisations in the Netherlands, see: http://mighealth.net/nl/index.php/Lijst_van_Turkse,_Marokkaanse,_Surinaamse_en_Moslim_Organisaties_in_Nederland .

The ISN is a member of the CMO, the National Muslim Advisory Board to the government, which consists of several Islamic umbrella organisations. Since 2004, the year of the CMO's recognition by the Dutch government, it has had regular contact with the Dutch government. At the moment, the CMO has ten member organisations. In addition, the CMO has a long-standing working relationship with eleven different Muslim organisations and platforms. The CMO issues reports and advices on a variety of topics related to Islam in the Netherlands.[106] Since January 2005, another advisory board has been active: CGI, or the Contact Group Islam. The CGI branched off from CMO because they criticised the Sunni-domination of the CMO Board. It is remarkable that both the ISN and the TICF are members of the CMO, which actually means that the Diyanet *cemaat* has a double vote in the CMO. In general, both the ISN and the TICF have a well organised network in the Netherlands. They actively take part in advisory and consulting committees on different levels (Van Heelsum, Tillie, Fennema 2004: 9). The TICF also participates in ethnically based organisations such as the Advisory Board for Turks (IOT, *Inspraak Orgaan Turken*).

The relation between Diyanet organisations and other Turkish Muslim organisations has changed over the past decades. The President of the ISN describes this relation as "not competitive but also not very cooperative".[107] According to him, the level of dialogue between the different Turkish Muslim organisations is improving. He states that the large manifestation (*Kutlu Doğum*

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[106] Member organisations:: Unie van Marokkaanse Moskeeën in Nederland, Islamitische Stichting Nederland, Milli Görüş Noord-Nederland, Nederlandse Islamitische Federatie, Overkoepelende Sjiïetische Vereniging, Stichting Islamitisch Cultureel Centrum Nederland, Turks Islamitische Culturele Federatie, World Islamic Mission, Vereniging Imams Nederland, Limburgse Islamitische Raad. Samenwerkings- en overlegpartners: IHSAN, Stichting Islamitisch Begrafeniswezen, Raad van Moskeeën Noord-Nederland, Islamitische Vereniging van Bosniaks in Nederland, Landelijke moslimvrouwenorganisatie ALNISA, Afghaanse Culturele Vereniging te Utrecht, Somalische vereniging SOMVAO, Diyanet Organisaties Rotterdam en Omgeving, SPIOR Stichting Platform Islamitische Organisaties Rijnmond e.o., STIPU Stichting Islamitisch Platform Utrecht e.o., Brabantse Islamitische Raad . See also: http://www.cmoweb.nl/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=30&Itemid=48 .

[107] Interview with Dr. Bülent Şenay, 13th of April, Den Haag.

Avrupa) organised in the Amsterdam Arena on the 4th of April 2010 was a joint undertaking between various groups. It must be noted, however, that it was a joint *Sunni* undertaking, as Alevis were not involved. In this framework, the President called Diyanet a *camia*, by which he means a community or an umbrella comprising different views. He also makes clear that differences between Diyanet and other organisations are "not theological, but social differences".[108] By saying this, he rather explicitly refers to Milli Görüş, and adds that the relation with the Gülen movement is more problematic due to somewhat distinctive religious views. A board member of a Muslim platform (and a member of Milli Görüş) stressed the theological unity between Diyanet and his own organisation:"There is just one Islam and the problems are not related to Islam but to the social vehicle so to speak."[109]

The inclusive language of Dr. Şenay raises questions about the future relation between the ISN and other Turkish-Muslim organisations in the Netherlands. Referring to the ISN or Diyanet as umbrella organisations inclusive of diversity may sound like an attempt to overcome rivalry, but still positions the ISN above the others. This seems to reflect the situation in Turkey, where Diyanet has a monopoly on certain religious services, rather than the European context, where such a privileged position does not exist for them.

For their part, the other Turkish-Muslim organisations (particularly Milli Görüş) may claim that religious controversies with Diyanet no longer exist but they have not given up their autonomous position vis-à-vis the ISN. In fact, the Milli Görüş, Süleymancıs and ISN have created their separate networks of mosques and developed very similar strategies to create communities, on the local, national and even European level. This European level is visible on the new website (since the end of 2009) of the ISN, where (under '*linkler*' (links)) we observed that the ISN confidently refers to its 'sister organisations' in Europe.

The efforts to create a community around Diyanet mosques raises interesting questions about the distinct identity of the Diyanet community, especially

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[108] Ibidem.

[109] Interview in Amstelveen, 10th of December 2009.

considering that both the ISN President and Milli Görüş spokespersons downplay the religious and ideological differences between them. Questions surrounding identity also emerge in an analysis of who is attending ISN and Milli Görüş mosques respectively: why do these individuals choose one mosque over another? Is it for practical reasons (the location of the mosque)? Does it have to do with the influence of friends or family? Or do they make a deliberate choice based on the distinct identity of that mosque and the umbrella organisation to which it belongs? Based on earlier research (Sunier 1996) we can say that the boundaries between the 'communities' of the various Turkish-Islamic networks are far from clear. However, their organisational infrastructures, and the religious services they provide, are, both on the local, the national and the international level, clearly distinct: a situation which has not changed in recent years.

With the Alevis, however, the situation is very different. Here it is indeed a theological dispute. As in Turkey, the exact number of Alevis in the Netherlands is unknown. Estimates vary between 20 and 30 percent of the migrants of Turkish background in the Netherlands. According to a spokesman of the Alevi federation HAK-DER, it is impossible to speak of Alevis as a unified community. They differ in outlook from politically engaged to religiously or culturally orientated. They often have a Kurdish or a Turkish background. A spokesperson of HAK-DER considers Alevism a philosophy which is close to humanism. It is, in his view, the non-activist outlook that imparts a lack of attention or even neglect by the media. These kind of Alevi people and Alevi organisations are, due of their moderate, reconciling tone, apparently not very interesting for the media.[110] HAK-DER does, however, participate in IOT, together with TICF, and in 2009 HAK-DER cooperated with the ISN in an (unsuccessful) attempt to obtain a broadcasting license. Apart from that, there are other cultural and religious occasions in which HAK-DER and the ISN work together, as we can regularly read and observe in the monthly ISN bulletin.

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[110] Interview in Driebergen, 11th of February 2010.

The close link between the ISN and the Turkish state makes it difficult for the two actors to profile themselves in the Dutch media and speak on behalf of the *cemaat* about issues such as the integration of Turks into Dutch society. Until recently, the ISN left this task to the TICF, and if asked, could point to the division of labour between the two umbrella organisations. However, at this point we have noticed a gradual but clear turn. In early 2008 former trade union leader Doekle Terpstra and chairman of the foundation 'Islam and Integration', Mohammed Sini, presented a manifesto in which they warned against the 'brutalisation' of the debate on Islam and integration.[111] The manifesto was signed by sixteen representatives, among them the TICF but also Arif Yakışır from the ISN.[112] In those days, Yakışır was in charge of the ISN Educational Centre in Rotterdam. The current President of the ISN appeared in a program of the Islamic Broadcasting Company, NIO in April 2009, to discuss the possible imam training institute in the Netherlands. Rather than appearing as a servant of the Turkish state, he acted as a theologian. In September 2009 he appeared in another program on Dutch television to speak about religion and science. He continues to participate in conferences on Islam and the political situation in the Netherlands; for example, in October 2009, he participated in a conference at the Clingendael Institute in The Haag. He spoke at conferences at Dutch and foreign universities about the inter-religious dialogue. In general, President Dr. Bülent Şenay presents himself on these occasions as a theologian rather than manager. The ISN seems to keep a distance from the everyday political squabbling, but the organisation appears to aim to profile itself as an important participant in the debate on the place of religion in society. According to the President, "the aim is to bring Islamic science, hermeneutics, into the public discourse and the public debate."[113]

The conclusion to be drawn from these seemingly trivial events and developments is that the ISN, headed by the current President, is turning from a primarily bureaucratic body to a visibly academic, theological institution that is

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[111] http://www.benoemenenbouwen.nl

[112] http://www.trouw.nl/opinie/podium/article1752080.ece

[113] Interview with Dr. Bülent Şenay, Den Haag, 13th of April 2010.

simultaneously among and above the *cemaat*. This ambition provoked a sceptical reaction from one of our interviewees, who said that the ISN co-operates with the other organisation as long as it is "their show".[114]

6.2.2. Case study: two mosques in Rotterdam

From the analysis so far, it becomes clear that ISN, both in its theological and in social roles, though also vis-à-vis other religious movements, aims to profile itself at once as an equal partner simultaneously and as a religious guide that stands above, or embraces, all parties. In the following section, we present a small case study of two mosque organisations to get a more detailed picture of these developments. In order to better understand the 'Umwelt' of local mosques, two large mosques have been chosen for further analysis.[115] Both of the mosques are located in Rotterdam, a city with more than forty mosques (Erkoçu and Buğdacı (ed.) 2009: 16), of which seven are ISN mosques.[116] The Kocatepe mosque is located in the Afrikaanderwijk, a so-called 'multicultural' quarter in Rotterdam-Zuid, also known as a 'Vogelaarwijk', or 'krachtwijk' (power quarter), i.e. one of the forty weak city quarters designated by former Minister of Integration Vogelaar as a focus for social action. The mosque is situated in an old monumental building, which was built in the 1920s and formerly used as a school. The Mevlana mosque is located in Rotterdam-West in a quarter that, like Rotterdam-Zuid, also has a high proportion of Muslim inhabitants. The Mevlana mosque was built in 2001 and is one of the few 'newly built' mosques in the city. In 2006, the Mevlana mosque was chosen as the 'most beautiful building of Rotterdam'[117] by the city's inhabitants, beating out, among others, the 'Erasmus bridge', the 'City hall', the 'Feyenoord stadium', and Hotel New York.

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[114] Interview in Den Haag, 20th of January 2010.

[115] The information is based on various visits of both mosques, guided tours given by a policy maker of SPIOR, Platform Islamic Organisations Rijnmond Foundation, and interviews with members of the board, the before-mentioned guide and volunteers working in the two mosques.

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http://www.diyanet.nl/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=145&Itemid=97

[117] http://www.top010.nl/html/mooiste_gebouw_rotterdam.htm

The organisations running the Kocatepe and Mevlana mosques are daughter foundations of the ISN, which is apparent in their names (ISN Kocatepe and ISN Mevlana, respectively) and their articles of association. The day-to-day management, however, lies in the hands of a local board consisting of volunteers, who during interviews emphasised the importance of local decision-making processes and the relative autonomy from activities run by the ISN in The Hague. They found this important, as they were involved in several kinds of neighbourhood activities which required a thorough familiarity with local political dynamics.

Both the Kocatepe mosque and the Mevlana mosque are more than mere houses for prayer. In addition to the prayer rooms, they have board rooms, a conference room, rooms for the elderly, youth, women and girls, internet facilities, class rooms, a small library and study facility, a kitchen and canteen, and even a hairdresser. Kocatepe mosque recently opened a youth club, a non-alcohol hang out place for Saturday nights, and watching – Dutch or Turkish - football matches on a super-size screen, events supervised by an volunteer appointed by the mosque, who is familiar with the neighbourhood and knows how to handle youth (particularly male youngsters) living there.

Kocatepe and Mevlana are both open seven days a week, during prayer times, but also for courses and social activities. The general activities organised are as follows: praying five times a day, Friday sermons, Quran classes, festivities on religious holidays, meetings organised around various topics like health or social problems, visitation of the sick, co-organizing (with ISN) the yearly Pilgrimage. The women's department has several separate activities, such as language courses, Quran classes, but also sewing-classes and 'women-only' swimming lessons. On a regular basis, guests are invited and social gatherings organised. The Kocatepe women's department even organises "Kermes", an event similar to a street-fair, but held within the borders of the mosque complex. Special activities are also organised for youth. According to a Board member of Kocatepe: "The aim is keeping youngsters away from 'the street' and avoiding their 'derailment'." The youth have their own rooms and an active board; among other activities, they

undertake visiting the cinema, playing movies, organising theatre plays, watching football matches, bowling, karting, camping, table tennis, and 'tailor-made' classes about Islam for youth. There are also some activities aimed at younger children, like watching children's movies. And last but not least, Kocatepe has its own football team, R.V.V. Kocatepe, which has 25 teams. They regularly join the national K.N.V.B. competition. Both visitors of the mosque and private sponsors finance most of the above-mentioned activities. These activities are therefore largely locally based. Board members of both mosques say that between 250 and 500 persons participate in courses and other activities on a weekly basis.

The wide variety of activities in the Mevlana and Kocatepe mosques to some extent meet the ideal of Shervin Nekuee, a well-known author and opinion leader of Iranian background in the Netherlands, who wrote, in a visionary book about mosques in the Netherlands:

> "To create a welcoming feeling in mosques for non-Muslims seems to be impossible as long as we take the concept 'prayer house' literally and as long as the mosque is experienced and presented as a one-dimensional entity. It surprises me that in cities like Amsterdam and Rotterdam, with high European pretensions, still nothing like a 'La Grande Mosquée de Paris' exists. That mosque, in the same complex, houses a prayer room, a hammam and a restaurant. In the inner garden are a patisserie and a tea house. It is a favourite place for Muslims and non-Muslims, for locals and for touristic visitors of Paris. But mosques can even offer more than that; rooms for yoga, longer retreats and Zen meditations. Why should you not want to offer room to the masses searching for spirituality and host them, and accordingly, be rewarded by society the best way to be rewarded by society: the appraisal of a courteous host?" (Erkoçu and Buğdacı 2009: 59).

For the Kocatepe and Mevlana mosques, while allowing Zen meditations and yoga may be excessive, opening the mosque for activities to non-Muslims is, under certain conditions, accepted and encouraged.

The activities organised in the mosques can roughly be divided into religious and non-religious categories, though this distinction may be somewhat artificial. A board member of the Kocatepe mosque argued that social activities are constituent in making and maintaining the local *cemaat*. He argued that there are two separate spaces in Diyanet mosques in the Netherlands: the 'ISN space' and the 'TICF space', or the religious and the social space, respectively. However, at the same time, the board members and other volunteers working in the mosque admitted that "the division is not 100 percent clear". There is indeed a distinction between social activities organised on a local level by mosques and those initiated by the ISN in Den Haag. In the latter case, the mosque more or less acts as a host; often, photographs of the activities appear in the monthly ISN bulletin. As mentioned previously, the ISN appears to be shifting its activities, focusing more on the social dimension. Though despite these changes, and regardless of the structural differences between a local mosque and a national institute, it should be emphasised that the social and religious distinction occurs within an organisational setting that is first and foremost religious. The attempts made by the Dutch government in the 1980s to mobilise mosque organisations for activities oriented towards integration of migrants, for example, was in fact an attempt to reinforce the migrant status of these mosque organisations.

Both the Mevlana and Kocatepe mosques have imams appointed and paid by Diyanet. Their work falls under the supervision of the *müşavir*, religious counsellor at the Turkish Embassy in Den Haag and religious attaché of the Turkish Consulate in Rotterdam. They are permitted to stay and work in the Netherlands only temporarily (currently five years) and are expected to attend a tailor-made 'inburgeringscursus', an integration course to learn more about the country, culture, major national debates, and language.

Their appointment by Diyanet gives them, and all the other 'Diyanet imams', a strong position within the local mosque community. Moreover, the local mosque

board cannot dismiss them. Board members can only file complaints to the imams' supervisors at the Consulate or Embassy. This power relation is quite different from the situation in Moroccan mosques, where imams can, and frequently are, fired by local mosque boards.

In the two mosques visited by the research team, the imams have more responsibilities than just leading prayers and delivering sermons; they also act as spiritual leaders of the local *cemaat,* and one could even say they are 'religious social workers'. The board members of both the Kocatepe Mevlana mosques stated that one of the important tasks of an imam is "to have conversations with people, especially youngsters, who seem to be derailing". In both mosques, interviewees told us that the imam is also in charge of social control. In the case of 'unfavourable behaviour' or problems with visitors, the imam can be called in. What is meant by 'unfavourable behaviour' ranges from theft, drug abuse or school absence, but also includes religious radicalism. The imam may also be expected to address sensitive or problematic issues, such as the national turmoil surrounding the movie *Fitna* by Geert Wilders, or local issues such as suicide attempts by a member of the mosque organisation. Apart from the imam, such intermediary work can also been done by local board members. Whereas on a national level the ISN provides religious information, the local imams act as shepherds, coaches and counsellors who know the people personally. In fact, the distinction between their religious and social function has become blurred, just as the distinction between social and religious activities in the mosques is somewhat unclear. Creating opportunities for assisting with homework or organising sports are all considered part of the 'core business' of the imams' religious leadership.

Here we touch on another delicate issue with respect to the role of religious leaders in the Netherlands; several studies indicate that traditional Islamic leadership in the form of the local imam suffers from a poor reputation not being able to reach younger generations. Many young Muslims are searching for new forms of spiritual guidance (De Koning 2008, Boender 2007, Peter 2006). Though the imams in the Kocatepe and Mevlana mosques are far from fluent in Dutch, our

respondents were quite positive about their ability to carry out the social tasks expected from them.

The huge variety of activities outside the strictly religious sphere also creates bridges to the neighbourhood and social environments of the Mevlana and Kocatape mosques. One of the most concrete and visible elements of this is the various media (brochures) displayed at the entrance of the mosques. Some of the titles include: *Anlamak ve anlaşılmak Hollandaca dilini bilmekle başlar* (Understanding and being understood starts by speaking the Dutch language), a pamphlet about a Dutch language course; *Kendi dilinde ilgi* (Attention in your own language), a course on discussing personal and sensitive matters in one's mother tongue; and *Size ev bakım var / yardım mı?*, which contains information about home (health) care. There is also a brochure containing an invitation to a conference on the Islamic mystic and poet Mevlana Celaleddin Rumi in one of the mosques, as well as an invitation to the introduction days of Ibn Ghaldoun, an Islamic secondary school in Rotterdam. In turn, the commercial 'Umwelt' is visible with *Sigorta & Ipotek* (insurance and mortgage) pamphlets, Komfort Makelaardij & Verzekeringen – 'Size bir telefon kadar yakınız', a promotional leaflet of an insurance and housing company, and Garage Middelland – 'Aktie grote beurt APK Gratis en nog veel meer aktie', the promotion material of a car repair garage. All these announcements indicate that the role of the mosque in the local community exceeds that of religious issues.

As mentioned before, the two local mosques have conference rooms with facilities. These rooms are sometimes rented out to other organisations; depending on the renting party and the topic of the meeting, a fee is asked by the mosque. If a Muslim women's society meets there to discuss issues such as child abuse, no fee is asked, though if a non-Muslim school requests a guided tour and information about Islam for its students, the mosque asks for a fee. The admission of external parties is, however, guarded carefully. The mosque boards generally do not accept activities that would offend the local *cemaat,* though here we also see a gradual change. Twenty years ago it would be inconceivable for many Muslims to allow non-Muslims in during important moments such as the *iftar*, celebrating the

breaking of fast with a meal. Today, any serious mosque Board has its own *iftar* party for the neighbourhood.

Officially, politics are not allowed inside the mosque; however, in the tea or television room no one can forbid visitors from having conversations about politics or candidates. In the case of the Mevlana mosque, in the 'TICF part' of the mosque pictures of candidates for the local elections were put on the walls.

The board members of the Kocatepe mosque have put together a kind of mission statement about the position of the Kocatepe mosque within its local, social environment. Kocatepe has relationships with the police – including the 'wijkagent' (area policeman) – as well as schools, the BOA (Bewoners Organisatie Afrikaanderwijk, a local organisation of people living in the quarter), churches, and health care organisations. Relationships with other Islamic organisations also exist, though to a lesser extent. The best relationships, albeit not formalised, are those with the Milli Görüş and Süleymancı organisations. The ISN and the TICF do not participate in the SPIOR, the Rotterdam Platform of Muslim Organisations, though this is the result of a personal conflict (which began some twenty years ago) about leadership and the dominance of the ISN and the TICF in issues related to Islam in the Netherlands. Today, informal relations between the platform and the local TICF and ISN organisations are not bad. However, there are currently – according to some informants – no intentions to become a member of SPIOR in the near future.

This above case study of two local mosque organisations and their local functions shows that the Mevlana and Kocatepe mosques in Rotterdam are multifunctional, religious, social and educational centres. If Diyanet in Turkey today launches pilot projects to broaden the range of mosque activities, the Dutch ISN mosques may serve as a model. In this way, the Diyanet network in Europe is not merely a transplantation of Turkish models; it has developed its own modus operandi that could even be brought back to Turkey.

7. Conclusions

The central question of this research was:

To what extent and how do recent changes in the religious and political power relations in Turkey affect the position and politico-religious agenda of Diyanet, and how do they influence Diyanet's relation with other actors in the religious arena?

The relevance of this question arises from two central observations regarding the role Diyanet plays in the way Turkish Islam takes shape, both in Turkey and in Europe more generally. First, an adequate assessment of Diyane's institutional position (and possible changes in this regard) could prove relevant for European policy makers in terms of both foreign policy and laws related to immigration and integration. Diyanet's activities in European host countries and close connection with the Turkish state are not new but have existed over the past 25 years. However, the present political climate in Europe has made the extent to which the Turkish government exerts influence on Turkish citizens abroad a sensitive issue. Second, a close examination Diyanet touches on the present debate about the future membership of Turkey in the European Union, and the conditions Turkey should fulfil to occupy such a position.

This research also contributes to important scientific and academic debates concerning the development of Islam in an increasingly secular age. The report elaborates on the important issue of the separation of church and state and how secularism takes shape in different political and social contexts. The results of this research can contribute to a deeper understanding of how relations between religion and the state evolve under constantly changing circumstances.

The research consisted of two parts, the first examining Diyanet's role in shaping Islam in Turkey, and the second analysing the situation in the Netherlands. For the Turkish case, we considered the institutional and legal framework in which Diyanet operates and possible changes in this framework. We also examined the politico-religious influences both on and emerging within Diyanet, and the extent to which the AKP adopts these influences. Finally, in addition to analysing the various activities carried out by Diyanet, we also investigated characteristics of Diyanet's religious leadership position in and out of Turkey, and possible changes in this respect.

With respect to the Dutch portion of this research, in general we addressed the same issues. Since the socio-political context in which Diyanet operates in the Netherlands differs fundamentally from Turkey, we have concentrated in particular on how this difference operates in specific situations. Of particular concern was the question how Diyanet positions itself vis-à-vis other Turkish religious movements operating in the Netherlands.

Conclusions

We broke down our analysis of Diyanet into four dimensions, focusing on the institutional role, the actual activities of Diyanet, the role of Diyanet as a 'religious guide', and how Diyanet positions itself vis-à-vis other Islamic groups and religious denominations.

With respect to the first dimension, we looked primarily at Diyanet's relation with the state, its internal organisation, the financial position of the institution, and the composition of the staff. Diyanet was set up in 1924 by the Turkish state, then under control of a Minister of State who was responsible for the Directorate; the primary aim at the time was to control Islam and organise the material aspects of the religious life of Muslims. The central office in Ankara and regional departments across the country together have the mutual task of fulfilling these aims. Since the 1970s, Diyanet extended its organisation abroad, notably in Europe but also in other parts of the world. From the 1980s onwards, the importance of Diyanet to the Turkish state increased substantially. The 1982 constitution expects

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Diyanet to contribute to national solidarity and unity and gives the institution a place in the General Ministry (i.e. the Ministry led by the Prime Minister). Within this ministry, the responsibility for Diyanet lies, as was in 1924, with a Minister of State who is a member of the Turkish cabinet.

Though our respondents from Diyanet underlined the relative autonomy of Diyanet in formulating its own judgments on religious and moral matters, and although media reports from recent years suggest that not all statements of Diyanet were appreciated by the government, it is obvious that, for decades, the Turkish government has seen Diyanet as an instrument through which policies on Islam are put into practice. As such, the Turkish government has traditionally expected Diyanet to operate as an ally to government policies. The present government is no exception to this political tendency. While a recent modification of the law regulating the internal organisation of Diyanet gave the institution more possibilities to manage their own affairs – e.g. in the nomination of candidates for top functions – it did not fundamentally alter the power relation between Diyanet and the Turkish government.

Turning from the influence of government to that of society, it is common knowledge that factions exist within the ranks of Diyanet (political, regional and theological) that reflect to some extent different segments of Turkish society. These fractions are able to exert their own influence on decision-making processes. Sometimes this has been presented as infiltration of conservative and Islamist forces attempting to Islamise Turkish society through Diyanet. The problem with such statements is that they often come from biased sources and cannot easily by verified or falsified. Such an endeavour was not the aim of our research. However, that a large and growing organisation like Diyanet has sympathisers encompassing a variety of cultural and religious subgroups seems obvious.

Diyanet is also a large bureaucratic organisation with thousands of employees and a large budget. As a state organisation, it should not be depicted as a religious movement with a specific religious identity. We contend that Diyanet should indeed be seen as a state bureaucracy in the first place; many of the changes and continuities that we have described in this report should also be understood in this

perspective. One consequence of Diyanet's position in the state is that fundamental changes in its political role are very unlikely in the short run, both due to its constitutional base as well as the financial and economic repercussions any change in Diyanet's position might impart.

With respect to institutional characteristics, we observed sometimes contradicting tendencies, such as on the one hand more centralisation and on the other the transferring of responsibilities to regional offices. Until recently, the Friday sermon (*hutbe*) was issued by the central Diyanet authorities on a weekly basis. This was one of the measures in which successive secularist governments tried to control local imams and religious practices. Decentralising the Friday sermon could thus also be interpreted as a move by the AKP to promote religious freedom: one of the political priorities of the AKP.

In terms of Diyanet's budget, the number of personnel has increased steadily over the last fifteen years, though at pace consistent with the general growth of the Turkish population. There were no remarkable changes in the budget and related activities of Diyanet since 2003.

However, in recent years, there have been changes worth mentioning. We observed a stronger focus on the professionalisation of religious personnel. There is a slightly larger proportion of board members within Diyanet with theological training as opposed to civil servants lacking theological training compared to ten years ago. We also observed a clearer distinction between religious tasks and those of a more administrative nature. In general, decentralisation and professionalisation point at a shift away from the controlling function of Diyanet – a function which has a high priority for secularists – towards the theological tasks of the organisation.

With respect to institutional developments in the Netherlands, we did not observe major changes in the last decade. In the Netherlands (as in other European countries) Diyanet established a daughter organisation in the early 1980s, the ISN, in order to exert control over Islamic practices of Turkish citizens abroad. The board of the ISN in The Hague is formally presided by the head of Diyanet in Ankara. This means that Diyanet has a direct influence on the policies of the ISN.

CONCLUSIONS

The daily management of the ISN is in the hands of a senior official of Diyanet, who is appointed as *din müşaviri (*counsellor on religion) at the Turkish Embassy in Den Haag. He holds a diplomatic passport and stands above the two religious attachés residing in the Dutch consulates in Rotterdam and Deventer. While the latter are more engaged with the imams working in the Netherlands (their appointment and functioning), the *muşavir* advises the Ambassador on religious issues, which is his main task.

One important way for Diyanet to exert influence on local Muslim communities is through the appointment of imams. The selection of these imams takes place in Turkey, as they are officially employees of the Turkish state. In addition to this, mosques that resort under the ISN are officially owned by a foundation that is also associated with Diyanet. In short, one could conclude that Diyanet in Turkey has a powerful influence on Turkish Muslim communities in the Netherlands through the organisational structure of the ISN and the appointment of imams.

Such a top-down analysis, however, does not take into account the fact that mosques in the Netherlands operate in a fundamentally different context than in Turkey. Our research findings are consistent with previous research which found that the development of Muslim communities in Europe has its own dynamics. For a long time, the strong emotional and familial attachments of many Turkish migrants in Europe provided a solid basis for organisational links between Diyanet and the Turkish Muslim communities in Europe. In the course of the past twenty years, we have seen that these ties have lost much of their saliency. It is very likely that this will influence the position of organisations such as Diyanet among Muslims in Europe. In addition, Diyanet in Europe operates in a fundamentally different legal-political framework than that in Turkey; this too is relevant for the position of Diyanet.

With respect to the activities of Diyanet (the second dimension of our analysis), not surprisingly, current emphasis is on religious services in the mosque and Islamic education. This can be considered the core business of Diyanet throughout history; most of Diyanet's budget is geared towards the salaries of religious personnel, the printing and distribution of religious material, and the organisation

of religious activities. In the past decades (well before the coming to power of the AKP), Diyanet has, in addition to these core activities, been increasingly concentrated on its public role. This has become clear in two ways. On the one hand, Diyanet has increased the use of modern mass media to reach out to those segments of society that cannot be reached through conventional means. On the other hand, Diyanet has invested in activities that have no obvious religious undertone, such as sports, social activities for special target groups, and art. The experiment with mosques as social centres that are more than places of worship is a good example of the process we have called 'the social turn'. Diyanet is more explicitly active in those fields that are located on the boundaries between religious and non-religious.

The same could be observed in the Netherlands, where the ISN is changing its function from a bureaucratic administrative institute into an organisation that reaches out to the local religious community. Although most Turkish mosques in the Netherlands are still places where there is no sharp distinction between religion and Turkish culture, and where 'love for the fatherland' is a self-evident element of the daily religious practice, we could observe an increasing emphasis on a process of 'rooting'. Dutch is becoming more important as the common language in a variety of activities. We consider these gradual changes as a crucial aspect of this 'social turn'.

Diyanet's duties include articulating and illuminating Islam to the general public; one of the activities of its highest body, the Higher Council of Religious Affairs, is answering questions about the correct interpretation of Islamic practices and beliefs. We identified the religious guidance of Diyanet as one of its more sensitive activities, as in this field two loyalties come together, and possibly collide: the secular state and the religious arena. The picture that emerges from our analysis of the religious information and guidance of Diyanet is one of an institution extensively engaged in the vocabulary, classical sources and methodologies available to Sunni religious authorities all over the world. Fatwa's issued by Diyanet gain their legitimacy in the same way as other fatwa institutions, by interpreting the Quran, quoting authentic prophetic traditions and using

analogous reasoning to address new moral questions. In this sense, Diyanet works like an institution for Sunni orthodoxy.

However, it is striking how much Diyanet's religious and moral advice conforms to values promoted by the modern Turkish republic, which are widely accepted by the Turkish public. Diyanet's stance on contemporary issues, such as birth control, in vitro fertilisation, organ transplantation, and sexuality, as well as how these subjects should be taught in schools, broadly reflects the views and opinions of a majority of the population. Diyanet accepts and promotes Turkish nationalism, one of the pillars of the Turkish republic, and provides it with a religious legitimacy. A field where the ideas of Sunni orthodoxy and Kemalism go remarkably hand in hand is popular Islam and the veneration of saints; this is condemned as superstitious and in violation of the Islamic principle that veneration is for God only.

As a religious guide, Diyanet has managed, so far, to avoid clashes with the secular principles of the Turkish republic. In some sensitive cases, this was done by refraining from religious judgments utilizing a specific Islamic vocabulary (like *halal* or *haram*, allowed or forbidden) and using more general language instead (like wise, unwise, usual practice in Islamic cultures, etc). Also, Diyanet officials have refused to pass religious judgments on politically controversial topics, like the headscarf ban for civil servants, simply commenting that such matters were for the government to decide.

The last dimension we addressed concerned the place of Diyanet in the broader religious landscape of Europe. Questions asked in this regard related to whether the organisation recognises religious diversity both within Islam and in the rest of society. We were particularly interested in the relation between Diyanet and the Alevi people, comprising an estimated 20 percent of the Turkish population. Two issues are at stake here; Diyanet is a service institute for religious matters, and when the Law gives Diyanet the task of coordinating religious services, there is no explicit reference to Sunni Islam. In Turkey, with a Sunni population of about 74 percent, however, it has always been assumed that religious services provided by Diyanet were implicitly based on Sunni Islam. The resurgence of Alevi Islam in the

1980s challenged this situation and created a dilemma for the Turkish government and Diyanet: were Alevis entitled to benefit from Diyanet services, and if so, under what conditions? This controversy still rings true today; making substantial concessions to Alevi claims would drastically change the role and identity Diyanet has cultivated for decades. Refusing such concessions could easily be seen as favouring a religious community (the Sunnis), and discriminating against another (the Alevis). Moreover, this tension is very likely to influence the debate on Turkey's integration into the EU. So far, the AKP government has taken cautious steps towards a dialogue with the Alevis, but the Diyanet leadership itself has been very reluctant to accept the Alevis as a distinct religious group.

Diyanet could also emphasise its function as a service institute for all religious denominations and adopt a more neutral position. However, in practice, we did not observe such a strategy. In general, Diyanet refrains from making statements about the position of religious denominations in Turkish society.

In the Netherlands, the position of Diyanet within the national religious landscape is fundamentally different from that in Turkey. From their foundation in the early 1980s onwards, formally speaking, ISN mosques had no privileged position in comparison to other Islamic organisations, apart from the arrangements for imams. They are, on paper, just one of the many organisations operating in the religious field. We observed some relaxation in the way Diyanet addresses other movements. On some occasions, Diyanet openly collaborated with other movements, though it is too early to draw strong conclusions on this subject about a possible policy change. A sceptic might argue, for the Dutch case, that this reconsideration of their position is a strategic move to encapsulate other organisations and to dominate them, but we could also conclude that this is simple '*Realpolitik*'.

Reflections

Our findings lead us to conclude that policy changes in recent years, both within the institutional structure of and towards Diyanet, do not reflect any remarkable breaks with the periods prior to the coming to power of the AKP. In other words,,

the AKP has not used its political power to enforce major changes in the position of Diyanet any more than other governments in the past. Yet we contend that a thorough assessment of the policies of Diyanet should neither be confined to the last decade, nor to the policies of the present government alone, but rather take into account the transformations of Turkish society over a much longer period. Only then are we able to interpret both changes and continuities in our observations. It was for this reason that we included older documents, secondary literature and other relevant sources in our analysis, thereby ensuring an historical perspective. The conclusions described above should thus be interpreted against the background of these societal transformations.

Since the 1980s, Turkey has been undergoing vast social and political changes. New political parties have emerged that began to address their constituencies through new media outlets; the country opened up economically and a new urban middle class was born. Even more fundamental, and related to these developments, was the growth of a civil society in Turkey, which facilitated the gradual rooting of a democracy – not simply from a legal standpoint but also in everyday social life. The political effects of these changes continue to gradually unfold. For one thing, it is clear that Islam has become a crucial factor in the making of modern politics in Turkey. Admittedly, Islam has for long played a marginalised political role in the past and is more visible today. This has often mistakenly been referred to as the 'return of Islam'; however, this is not a very adequate understanding of recent developments. The present saliency of Islam as a social and political force is not a 'return' to an earlier phase in history, but rather reflects the recent social and economic changes discussed above. Another important development is the intensified negotiations between Turkey and the European Union about the country's membership. The fact that a vast majority of the Turkish population is Muslim imbues the membership issue with a deeply cultural and religious connotation.

Thus, the continuities and changes in the policies and practices of Diyanet should not simply be attributed to the AKP's coming of power; rather, both the changes and the victory of AKP must be considered manifestations of broader

societal changes sketched above. Islam in Turkey has long been associated with rural backwardness, provincialism and conservatism, and not least, a strong inward looking attitude. Until the end of the 1990s, Turkey's main Islamic political movement was strongly against relations with the European Union. However, the societal basis of the AKP is a strong urban Islamic middle class with an international outlook.

How can we relate these developments to the position of Diyanet? From our research findings it becomes clear that Diyanet, as it exists today, engages in essentially three functions which determine its public face. The first function involves the role of Diyanet as state bureaucracy that controls, monitors and 'domesticates' Islam. The second is Diyanet's role as a service institute, which facilitates the material conditions of religious life – a service that, in principle, could be provided by a religiously neutral institution for different religious groups in society. The third function of Diyanet is as a modern version of a Sunni religious authority (which also was one of the functions of the *Şeyhülislam* in the Ottoman era). In this function, Diyanet's activities are only oriented towards the estimated 74 percent of Sunni Muslims in Turkey and those abroad.

The first function of Diyanet has existed for most of the republican years. As a controlling institute, Diyanet is meant to promote a republican version of Islam. Services such as imam training and religious guidance are in that respect means to a Kemalist end. However, since the 1980s, this controlling function came under pressure. The second function, as a facilitating institution, is often stressed by Diyanet to external observers who express their bewilderment of a secular state tolerating a religious institution like Diyanet. Indeed, this second function is probably what many European observers would find the most acceptable function of an institution like Diyanet. As we saw in practice, Diyanet operates mainly as a modern Sunni 'church' institution. The quote of former President Bardakoğlu, with which we began this report, strongly suggests this.

The role of Diyanet is complex and these three functions seem contradictory as they reflect the different political forces that act upon Diyanet and 'appropriate' its legitimacy in society. Different political actors prefer and underline these different

functions. In addition, the different functions or combinations of them can be emphasised in different circumstances and contexts, and this is precisely why successive governments have never seriously considered the abolition of Diyanet. The AKP is no exception to that political tradition.

However, the different contradicting functions within the institutional framework of Diyanet also make its position in society principally complex. The continuity we observed in the way Diyanet is organised, in its formal structure and in its legal place in society has two main implications. On the one hand, it means that the seven years of AKP rule have apparently not resulted in fundamental changes to the make-up of Diyanet – something that some more secular observers feared. On the other hand, it implies that no new initiatives should be expected which coincide with what secular or western observers might like to see. Diyanet's position vis-à-vis non-Sunni Islamic movements has not changed fundamentally either. In other words, the implicit demand by some Western governments towards Diyanet to 'open up' and function as a neutral service institute (that facilitates religious denomination equally) will probably not be complied with in the near future, at least not on paper. Also, the apparent contradiction between Diyanet's three roles (guardian of the secular order, service institute above the parties, and Sunni religious guide) is not likely to be resolved in the near future. Major changes would undermine the relative balance between the three functions of Diyanet.

However, with respect to the actual *practices* of Diyanet, our findings reveal that there are clear changes both in Turkey and in the Netherlands. There has been an unmistakable relaxation in the controlling role of Diyanet. In several sections of our report, we mention 'parallel Islam' in Turkey, denoting non-official, semi-legal Islamic movements that play a significant role in the Turkish landscape. Until recently, Diyanet was strict in curbing all kinds of activities initiated by 'parallel Islam', though various social and economic transformations (noted above) have relegated some of these movements to the margins of society; conversely, other groups, notably those in support of the AKP, have acquired a more prominent position. It is thus clear that the division between 'parallel' and 'official' Islam

needs a thorough revision, not at least because it has also influenced the Islamic landscape in Europe.

The most important changes both in Turkey and in the Netherlands are related to what we have called the 'social turn' (*vermaatschappelijking*) in the characteristics of activities and initiatives taken by Diyanet. In both Turkey and in the Netherlands, there are clear indications that Diyanet is orienting itself more explicitly to the *cemaat,* the religious community, at least to the Sunni community. Whereas previously the ISN in the Netherlands organised primarily religious activities, it has now extended its program with activities designed to work on the social texture of the religious community. Also in Turkey, there are clear signs that Diyanet is progressively engaging in activities that resemble those of a typical NGO. How can this be interpreted? In our view, there are two ways to assess these developments. One is to consider these actual practices as strategic choices to extend Diyanet's influence over the Muslim population with new instruments. A more logical (and less conspiratorial) explanation would be that a 'turn to society and away from the state' is part of the long-term changes that have taken place in Turkish society. To put it differently, for a long time the secular state was the sole political force that (through Diyanet) directed the course of Islam in Turkish society. From the 1980s onwards, though actually since the post-war democratisation of Turkish society, the influence of civil society on the place of Islam has increased considerably. This shift is currently being reflected in the attitudes and activities of Diyanet.

We have argued that assuming a direct correlation between the coming to power of the AKP and a possible policy change in Diyanet neglects the various shifts in Turkish society over the past three decades, in which the emergence of Islam as a significant social force is just one of many elements. It could also be argued that some aspects of the ongoing Islamisation of Turkish society is an obvious and self-evident result of these societal developments. The recent referendum, in which a majority of the population voted for further restrictions in the political power of the army, will no doubt increase tensions between secularists and the more religious portion of Turkish population. What is clear is that Diyanet's constitutional duty to

support national harmony and unity whilst illuminating religious matters to the public has not become any easier.

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9. Appendices

9.1. Organisation chart of Diyanet, 2010[118]
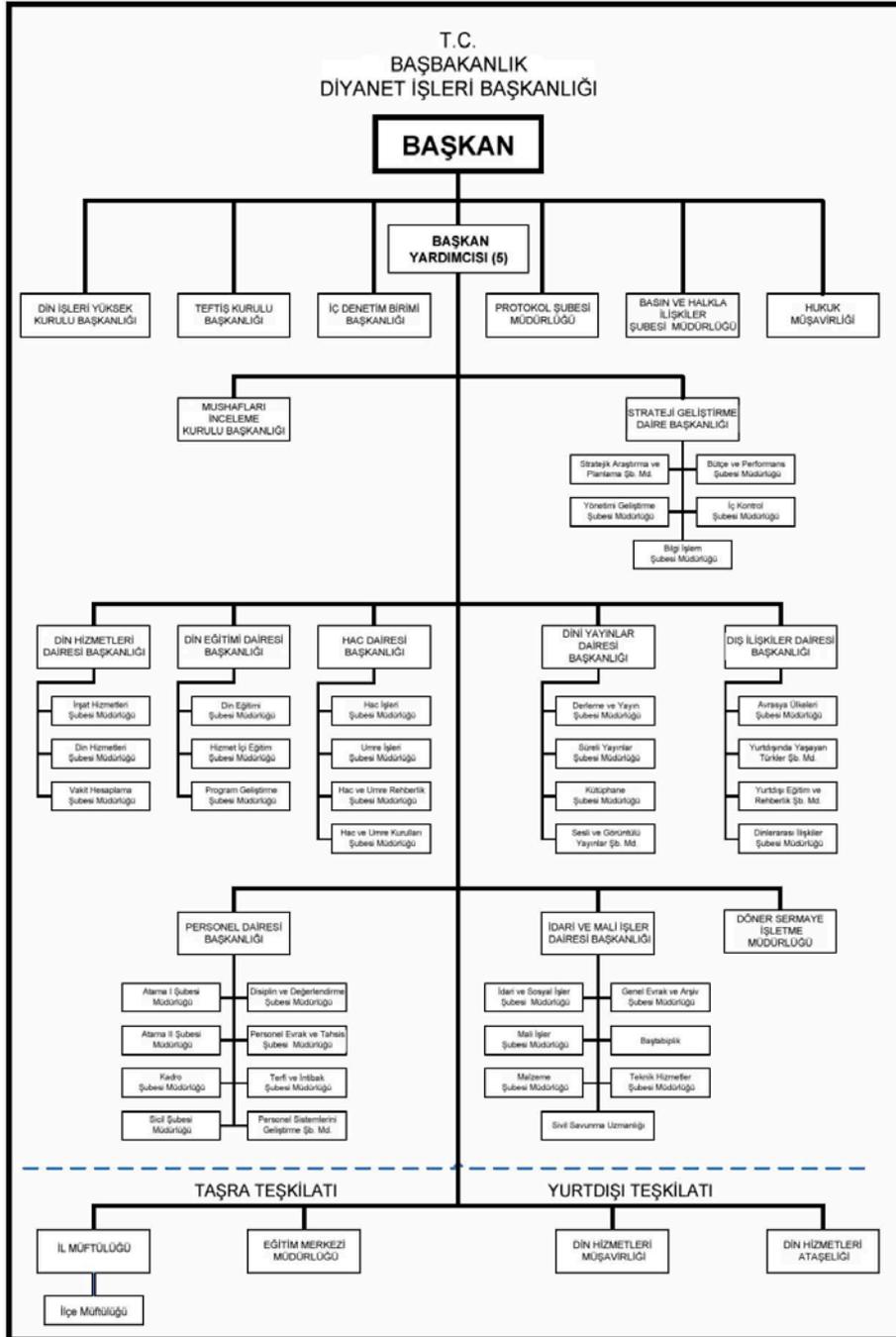
Organisation chart ISN[119]

HDV Genel Kurul	• HDV: ISN; • Genel Kurul: General Board • Denetleme Kurulu: Board of Supervision • Yönetim Kurulu: Management Team • Eğitim Merkezi: Education Centre • Araştırma Merkezi: Research Centre • Şube Camileri: local mosques (142) • Çalışma Birimleri: work units • Idari Koordinatör: administrative coordinator • Muhasebe: treasurer • Sekreterya: secretary; • Cenaze Fonu: funeral trust • Cenaze Firması: funeral company • Gençlik Koordinatörü: youth coördinator • Hizmet Birimi: service unit • Iletişim ve Medya: communication and media

Member of the General Board[120]

Professor Dr. Ali Bardakoğlu (T.C. Diyanet Işleri Başkanı)

Doç. Dr. Ali Dere (DİB Dış İlişkileri Dairesi Başkanı)

Doç. Dr. Bülent Şenay (Din Hizemetleri Müşaviri)

Dr. Tayyar Altıkulaç

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http://www.diyanet.nl/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=103&Itemid=193
[120] HDV Bülten 2009: 11

Professor Dr. Mustafa said Yazicioğlu

Sami Uslu

Arif Soytürk

Rıza Selimbaşoğlu

Niyazi Baloğlu

Ahmet Uzunoğlu

Mustafa Yılmaz

Mehmet Kervancı

Hayrettin Şallı

Mahmut Sezgin

Remzi Yavuz

Erdinç Türkçan

Mehmet Nuri Yılmaz

The current Management Team was appointed on 19 October, 2008, and has the following composition:

Dr. Bülent Şenay, chairman

Veysel Kükrek, treasurer (imam of the Ahi Evren Mosque, The Hague)

Rahim Usan, accountant (chairman of the Mimar Sinan Mosque in
   Heerhogowaard)

Nevruz Özcan (chairman of the Fatih mosque in Roermond

Recep Erkoç (chairman of the Supervision Board of the Nebi Mosque in Kampen

Zekeriya Açkalmaz (coordinator of the ISN-Education Centre in Rotterdam

Abdurrahman Aydeğer (chairman of the Mevlana Mosque in Rotterdam)

9.2. List of respondents

Mr. Subaşı, advisor of Faruk Çelik, the Minister of State responsible for Diyanet. Also a member of the Higher Council of Religious Affairs.

Mr. Çağrıcı, mufti of Istanbul.

Mr. İzzet Er, Vice President of Diyanet.

Mr. Caner Taslaman, theologian and philosopher.

Mr. Saim Yeprem, director of Science, Culture, Arts and Publication Board of the Turkish Diyanet Foundation and former member of the Higher Council of Religious Affairs.

Mr. Bunyamin Erul, member of the Higher Commission of Religious Affairs and the person leading the Hadith Project.

Mrs. İştar Gözaydın, Professor of Law and Politics, Istanbul Technical University.

Mr. Bülent Şenay, President of ISN the Netherlands.

In the Dutch case, on request of the interviewees, besides the President of the President of ISN, due to privacy reasons, we decided not to publish names. Summarising, we conducted about twenty interviews; representatives of various Muslim organisations on national and local levels, board members of mosques, board members and policy makers of Muslim platforms, individuals close to ISN, scholars and journalists.

9.3. List of abbreviations

AKP:	Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi or Justice and Development Party.
CMO:	Contactorgaan Moslims en Overheid or national Association between Muslims and the Government.
CvdM:	Commissariaat voor de Media or Directorate for the Media.
HAK-DER:	Dutch Federation of Alevi and Bektashi Associations.
HCRA:	Higher Council of Religious Affairs.
HDV:	Holland Diyanet Vakfı; Turkish name of ISN.
IOT:	Inspraak Orgaan Turken or Turkish Advisory Board.
ISN:	Islamitische Stichting Nederland or Dutch Islamic Foundation.
NIF:	Nederlandse Islamitische Federatie or Dutch Islamic Federation.
SIC:	Stichting Islamitisch Centrum or Islamic Centre Foundation.
SICN:	Stichting Islamitisch Centrum Nederland or Dutch Islamic Centre Foundation.
TICF:	Turks Islamitische Culturele Federatie or Turkish Islamic Cultural Foundation
SPIOR:	Stichting Platform Islamitische Organisaties Rijnmond or Rotterdam Platform of Muslim Organisations

Postscriptum: Resignation of Professor Ali Bardakoğlu

On Thursday the 11th of November 2010, the head of Diyanet, Professor Ali Bardakoğlu announced that he had resigned from his post, which he held since 2003. News reports and speculations in and outside Turkey suggested that he was removed from office due to his recent remarks, that were criticised by the AKP, on *Kurban Bayramı* (Festival of Sacrifice) and the Muslim headscarf. Bardakoğlu had said that Diyanet would recommend not to slaughter animals during the festival that year, if this would eventually endanger the livestock population in Turkey. On the headscarf, he had said that although it is considered a religious requirement, women who do not wear headscarves could still be Muslims. Besides, on several occasions before, he had stated that solving the headscarf issue should be left to the politicians, refusing to mingle with politics on this topic: "We were never party to the headscarf debates, because the debates are mainly concerned with the political or legal nature of the issue. We make statements about the religious nature of the issue only." (Bardakoğlu 2006: 137). Professor Bardakoğlu himself, however, told the media that he had already planned his resignation almost a year ago and that it had been a deliberate choice. Bardakoğlu was succeeded by Professor Mehmet Görmez, the deputy head of Diyanet since 2003.

The resignation of Professor Bardakoğlu took place after the period of our research. We leave this change of presidency to future researchers to analyse. Nevertheless, we believe that the sometimes wild speculations in the press about these event tell us more about the polarised climate in Turkey that about what actually happened. We have no reason to assume that the early retirement of Bardakoğlu makes a revision of the outcomes of this report necessary.