



# GERMANY

## Quick Facts

Population: 80,594,017 (July 2017 est)

Area: 357,022 sq km

Ethnic Groups: German 91.5%, Turkish 2.4%, other 6.1% (made up largely of Greek, Italian, Polish, Russian, Serbo-Croatian, Spanish)

Religions: Protestant 34%, Roman Catholic 34%, Muslim 3.7%, unaffiliated or other 28.3%

Government Type: Federal Republic

GDP (official exchange rate): \$3.685 trillion (2016 est)

*Map and Quick Facts courtesy of the CIA World Factbook (Last Updated September 2018)*

## INTRODUCTION

*Germany, alongside France, has the highest number of Muslim citizens in Western Europe, as well as in the member states of the European Union as a whole. It is also a hotbed of Islamist activity. Most notably, the attacks of 9/11 were organized in part in Germany by the Hamburg cell headed by Mohammed Atta.<sup>1</sup> Today, Islamists from Germany, including homegrown terrorists, pose a real threat to the security of the German state.*

*Islamism in Germany has deep roots, stretching back to a symbiosis between the German state and radical religious elements during the First World War. However, these connections have not always been strictly hostile. During the First World War, German diplomat Max von Oppenheim authored a guide to encourage Muslim populations to wage jihad against the entente powers, the United Kingdom, France, and Russia.<sup>2</sup> These ties between Germany and Islamists endured during the Second World War, fueled by the Third Reich's close ties to the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, Haj Amin al-Hussaini, and throughout the decades of the Cold War against the Soviet Union, before emerging to challenge the stability of the Federal Republic in the post-Cold War era. However, in more recent years, the relationship between the two has been less than friendly. Islamism and jihadism are prevalent in today's Germany, with the first significant jihadist attack in Germany taking place in December 2016. The Lebanese jihadi entity Hezbollah continues to maintain a strong presence in Germany, with 950 active operatives, who raise funds and recruit new members.*

## ISLAMIST ACTIVITY

Both peaceful legal Islamism and violent jihadism exist in Germany today. Political Islam of the lawful variant predominates, although instances of jihadi activity have been documented as well with a serious

jihadist attack with a dozen people killed in December 2016. Peaceful Islamist groups include Milli Görüs and the Gülen Movement. The Muslim Brotherhood, Salafists groups, and Iranian influencers occupy a murky middle ground on the violence spectrum. More overtly violent groups include Hezbollah, Hamas, and the Islamic State.

### *Milli Görüs*

Milli Görüs is an Islamic political movement based on the philosophies of Necmettin Erbakan, former Turkish Prime Minister and a profoundly anti-secular and anti-Western Turkish scholar. It is popular among the Turkish Diaspora in Germany, as it is an offshoot of an originally-Turkish movement.<sup>3</sup> The group pegs its total European membership at 87,000, with 30,000 of them residing in Germany.<sup>4</sup> By its own estimate, the group maintains more than 514 mosques and cultural centers in eleven European nations. Of these, 323 are in Germany. The German iteration of Milli Görüs has stated that the group wishes to encourage a free democratic political system and help Muslims integrate into German society. However, some controversy remains. In the past, the organization has advocated anti-Semitic views through a range of media. It promotes radical television broadcasts, such as the Iranian TV series *Zehra's Blue Eyes* (which revolves around a fictional Israeli candidate for Prime Minister who kidnaps Palestinian children in order to harvest their organs for Jewish use—and glorifies suicide bombing in response).<sup>5</sup> It also has disseminated written anti-Semitic works, such as Turkish translations of Henry Ford's *The International Jew*.<sup>6</sup> Notably, the dissemination of such literature is contrary to German law, but no legal efforts to prosecute the group have taken place in that respect. At least some portion of the group also has endorsed and promoted jihadist activities abroad.<sup>7</sup>

In 2009, German authorities charged six Milli Görüs officials with fraud, money laundering, supporting terrorist organizations, and associating with criminals. In 2010, the charges were dropped.<sup>8</sup> As of 2014, The Office for the Protection of the Constitution in Hamburg, Germany, no longer views the organization as a direct threat. Manfred Murck, head of the Hamburg office, maintains that while the organization's traditions are not compatible with the fundamental principles of the German constitution, there is no evidence that the group was attempting to dismantle or damage Germany's free democratic order.<sup>9</sup>

However, the 2017 federal intelligence report cites Milli Görüs as having a current membership of 10,000 and is an "object of observation." The group declared its intention to pray for "the liberation of Jerusalem and from repression and occupation." Participants of two of Milli Görüs events burned Israeli flags and used anti-Semitic slogans.<sup>10</sup>

### *The Gülen Movement*

The Turkish Gülen Movement has become increasingly influential in Germany. Founded by Turkish Islamist Fethullah Gülen (born 1938), it is based on the ideas of Faid Nursi (1876-1960).<sup>11</sup> The Gülen Movement does not publicly advocate violence, and instead espouses the gradual imposition of a sharia-based democracy.<sup>12</sup> The Gülen Movement runs at least 20-25 schools in Germany in all, not including some 200 groups for the coaching of pupils after school.<sup>13</sup> There are no official membership numbers available for the Gülen Movement, but the group is believed to be increasingly popular as a result of its educational activities.<sup>14</sup> According to television and media reports in June 2013, Gülen members have tried to influence and coopt democratic parties in Germany.<sup>15</sup> This has clearly been the case in the city of Leipzig, where Gülen members attempted to gain a majority in the city's Social Democratic Party's youth organization, the Young Socialists (Jusos). The Gülen movement also tried to gain influence over the conservative Christian-Social Union (CSU) in Bavaria using the same method.<sup>16</sup>

After the attempted coup against Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and his ruling AKP in Turkey in July 2016, however, German-Turkish alleged followers of the movement faced attacks and defamation by German-Turkish AKP supporters.<sup>17</sup> Germany has the biggest Turkish community outside of Turkey, with over three million Turkish people living in Germany. In August 2018, the German government cut

funding to the Turkish-Islamic Union for Religious Affairs (DITIB). According to the *Deutsche Welle*, the DITIB, which is widely viewed as the long arm of Erdogan in Germany, employed imams “to spy on followers on the Gülen movement.”<sup>18</sup>

The 2017 German intelligence report states the chief priority for Turkey’s intelligence agency (MIT) is to spy on the Gülen Movement.<sup>19</sup> The Turkish government has repeatedly pressed Germany to extradite alleged Gülen supporters to Istanbul. In February, 2017, the head of MIT presented a list to the German authorities of more than a hundred alleged Gülen supporters in Germany.<sup>20</sup>

### *The Muslim Brotherhood*

As of 2017, German authorities estimated that the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) has 1,040 adherents in Germany.<sup>21</sup> While it has no formal representation in the country, the organization is known to run Islamic centers in Nuremberg, Stuttgart, Frankfurt, Cologne, Marburg, Braunschweig, and Munich.<sup>22</sup>

The Brotherhood has a long history in the Federal Republic, beginning with a 1958 initiative to build a mosque in Munich—an effort which resulted in the creation of the *Islamische Gemeinschaft in Deutschland e.V.* (IGD), the “Islamic Community in Germany.” Today, the IGD is headquartered in Cologne and serves as the unofficial representative of the group in national affairs. From 2002 to 2010, it was headed by Ibrahim el-Zayat; since 2010, Samir Fallah has been its head.<sup>23</sup> El-Zayat was general secretary of the World Assembly of Muslim Youth (WAMY), a Saudi organization active in the spread of Wahhabi ideology abroad.<sup>24</sup>

The IGD ostensibly tries to create a positive political climate for political Islam, and to promote a more pious way of life in Germany. However, it also collects money for Islamist causes abroad, and raised funds for Hamas during the 2009 Gaza war.<sup>25</sup> In 2014, the Government of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) published a list of Islamist terrorist organizations; the only German group identified therein was the IGD.<sup>26</sup> The German government’s intelligence report for 2017 noted that number of members—1,040—has remained the same since 2015. The federal intelligence report provides a structural chart of the Muslim Brotherhood that falls under the category of “objects of observation.”<sup>27</sup>

### *Salafist elements*

German authorities consider Salafism to be “the most dynamic Islamist movement,” both within Germany and on a global level.<sup>28</sup> Salafism is a deeply conservative Islamic movement that advocates a strict return to the original practices and beliefs of the Prophet Muhammad and his first followers. Though Salafists are not necessarily violent, there has been some correlation between Salafi groups and violent jihadism.

According to the head of the Office for the Protection of the Constitution in Hamburg, Salafists are the fastest growing elements in Germany’s Islamist camp.<sup>29</sup> This may stem from Salafists’ ability to attract teenagers and young adults through music or social media events, as well as via the distribution of the Koran. Salafi groups in Germany were estimated to have increased their number of adherents from 3,800 to some 4,500 between 2011 and early 2013.<sup>30</sup> That growth has continued; as of 2015, some 8,350 Salafists are estimated active in Germany.<sup>31</sup> According to a 2017 German national intelligence report, the number of Salafists totals 10,800.<sup>32</sup> As of July 4, 2017, some media outlets estimated the number of Salafis in the country at 10,100.<sup>33</sup>

This growth has brought with it an increase in militant activity. The first ever Islamist terror attack in Germany occurred in March 2011, when Kosovar Serb Arid Uka killed two U.S. soldiers at the Frankfurt International Airport.<sup>34</sup> Uka was discovered to have been in touch with Salafist elements via social media outlets, specifically Facebook.<sup>35</sup> He was convicted and sentenced to life in prison in December 2012.<sup>36</sup>

German authorities have begun to respond to the growing threats posed by these groups. In June 2012, the Islamist network Millatu Ibrahim was shut down by German authorities in the first action of its kind against Salafist groups.<sup>37</sup> In March 2013, Germany authorities proscribed the Islamist organization Dawa

FFM and two other groups, Islamische Audios and An-Nussrah.<sup>38</sup> On April 16, 2016, two 16-year old Salafists placed a bomb at a Sikh Temple, causing an explosion that injured several people at a wedding. The best known German Salafist, a convert named Pierre Vogel, has radicalized many people.<sup>39</sup>

Social media and the Internet have played a crucial role in Salafist activity,<sup>40</sup> especially alongside activism such as the free distribution of the Koran. The “Read” Campaign, which started in 2011, was established by Cologne based Salafist Ibrahim Abou Nagie, the head of the group Die Wahre Religion (The True Religion). Its aim is to distribute over 25 million German-language copies of the Koran.<sup>41</sup> On May 28, 2016, the state of Hamburg was the first German state to ban the distribution, due to the organization’s extremist and jihadist connections. Other German states might follow suit in the future, including in particular North Rhine-Westphalia.<sup>42</sup> In November 2016, Die Wahre Religion was formally proscribed by the Federal Ministry of the Interior.<sup>43</sup>

### *Iranian Influence*

The influence of the Shi’a variant of Islamism propounded by the Islamic Republic of Iran can be found in Germany as well. The Islamic Center Hamburg (IZH), founded in 1962, is a pro-Iranian institution closely linked to the Islamic Republic. Its head, the Ayatollah Reza Ramezani,<sup>44</sup> was appointed to his post by the Iranian Foreign Ministry in April 2009.<sup>45</sup> The IZH, in turn, tries to spread the ideals of the Iranian Revolution via brochures, events, prayers, rallies, and other activities, and exerts an influence over a number of Islamic organizations within Germany. Furthermore, the IZH is actively involved in the following institutions:

- The Council of Islamic Communities in Hamburg;
- The Central Council of Muslims in Germany;
- The Islamic Community of Shi’a Communities in Germany; and
- The Islamic-European Union of Shi’a scholars and Theologians.<sup>46</sup>

In 2017, Germany’s outgoing foreign minister, Sigmar Gabriel, hosted Hamidreza Torabi as part of a religious dialogue event at the ministry. Torabi heads the Islamic Academy of Germany—a part of the IZH. He is a key organizer of the annual pro-Iranian regime Al-Quds rally in Berlin that calls for the state of Israel “illegal and criminal” and features extremist anti-Western activists and Hezbollah supporters.<sup>47</sup> Ever since the signing of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) on the Iranian nuclear program in July 2015, Germany’s relations with Iran have improved. Despite knowledge of ongoing Iranian attempts to buy military goods,<sup>48</sup> German politics now promotes a normalization of the relationship with Iran. Nonetheless, Iran has continued to seek illicit nuclear and missile technology in Germany.

According to the state of North Rhine-Westphalia, Iran made 32 attempts in 2016 to obtain proliferation technology for weapons programs of mass destruction.<sup>49</sup> The intelligence agency in the city-state of Hamburg stated that: “there is no evidence of a complete about-face in Iran’s atomic policies” in 2016.<sup>50</sup> A prominent German national security reporter confirmed in October, 2016 that Iran sought technology in the federal republic to build nuclear-tipped missiles.<sup>51</sup> The Bavarian state intelligence agency’s 2017 report stated Iran seeks to expand its weapons arsenal into a nuclear program.<sup>52</sup> The neighboring state of Baden-Württemberg wrote in its 2017 intelligence report: “Iran continued to undertake efforts to obtain goods and know-how to be used for the development of weapons of mass destruction and to optimize corresponding missile delivery systems.”<sup>53</sup> The state intelligence reports contradict German chancellor Angela Merkel’s belief in the efficacy of the Iran nuclear deal, formally known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action.

The German government harshly criticized the Trump administration for its withdrawal from the Iran accord in May 2015. The current German foreign minister Heiko Maas reportedly sought methods to circumvent US sanctions.<sup>54</sup>

Many leading German politicians regularly visit Iran. Examples include Vice-Chancellor and member

of the Federal Government Sigmar Gabriel, head of the Social Democratic Party, but also delegations from Saxony, Mecklenburg-West Pomerania, and Saxony-Anhalt.<sup>55</sup> The office of Martin Dulig, Vice-Prime Minister of Saxony, created a brochure that showed German female politicians in headscarves. The brochure prompted sharp criticism, to which officials replied that they created the brochure for a specifically Iranian audience. This defense did not hold much water, given the controversy over compulsory headscarf-wearing in Iran.<sup>56</sup>

### *Hezbollah*

The Lebanese Shi'ite militia Hezbollah is also active in Germany, where it has had a presence since the 1980s.<sup>57</sup> Founded in 1982 after the Israeli invasion of Lebanon, Hezbollah is a Shiite militant group with deep ties to Iran.<sup>58</sup> The organization is both anti-Semitic and anti-Western. While it has no official representatives in Germany, the organization was estimated to have approximately 950 members and supporters as of 2017.<sup>59</sup> Germany's most populous state, North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW), has a variety of Hezbollah-sympathetic Islamic centers and mosques. The Imam-Mahdi Center is one high-profile example. NRW's intelligence agency wrote in its 2016 report that Hezbollah fighters have entered Germany disguised as refugees. As of 2016, there were approximately 100 Hezbollah members or supporters in NRW.<sup>60</sup>

Hezbollah has often acted as an Iranian proxy, and is a close ally of Syrian dictator Bashar al-Assad. Some controversy remains in the European Union over whether the group should be considered a foreign terrorist organization (FTO). For many years, Hezbollah was able to work quietly in Germany, which became its "main fund-raising center in Europe."<sup>61</sup> Germany has also become a source of arms for the Lebanese militia; Lebanese media outlets reported in 2012 that Hezbollah was buying weapons in Germany via Iranian-controlled companies.<sup>62</sup> In 2013, the European Union declared Hezbollah's military wing (though not its domestic wing) a terrorist group, a year after the organization attacked Israeli tourists in Burgas, Bulgaria.<sup>63</sup> The Hezbollah terrorism attack in Bulgaria resulted in the deaths of five Israelis and their Bulgarian Muslim bus driver.

While the German security forces have believed Hezbollah to be a dangerous organization for the past several years, the German government has not denounced as such and does not take action against it.<sup>64</sup> In 2016, both members of the Israeli Knesset and German Bundestag appealed to Thomas de Maizière to outlaw Hezbollah's entire organization, including the domestic wing and not solely the military wing.<sup>65</sup> The interior minister declined.<sup>66</sup> The Germany left party MP Christine Buchholz has argued that both Hezbollah and Hamas represent legitimate resistance against Israel.<sup>67</sup> The city of Bremen's intelligence agency wrote in its 2017 report that "the Al-Mustafa-Community Center supports Hezbollah in Lebanon, especially by collection donations."<sup>68</sup>

### *Hamas*

Hamas, a Palestinian militant group and political organization, has a small presence in Germany. Hamas was estimated to have 320 members in Germany as of 2016/2017.<sup>69</sup> In NRW, membership increased from 65 in 2015 to 75 in 2016.<sup>70</sup> These activists raise funds for Hamas, largely in collaboration with the Palestinian Return Center (PRC) in London.<sup>71</sup> While Hamas does not have any official representatives in the country, it has been known to work through like-minded organizations to raise funds and promote its political objectives there. In July 2010, for example, Germany banned the Humanitarian Relief Foundation, or IHH, due to its close ties with Hamas.<sup>72</sup> The IHH was noteworthy as the organization behind the controversial Gaza Flotilla of May 2010, and is accused of transmitting 6.6 million Euros from Germany to Hamas in the Gaza Strip.<sup>73</sup> The Palestinian Return Center (PRC), the Palestinian Community Germany (Palästinensische Gemeinschaft in Deutschland e.V.) and their allies held a conference with 3,000 participants in Berlin in April 2015.<sup>74</sup> After the United States government recognized Jerusalem as Israel's capital in December, 2017, thousands of German Muslims burned Israeli flags in Berlin.<sup>75</sup>

*The Islamic State (ISIS)*

The Islamic State (ISIS) is by far the most dangerous Islamist threat to Germany and Europe today. Due to its recent loss of territory and influence in Syria and Iraq, ISIS has changed its tactics, and has begun prioritizing soft targets in Europe.<sup>76</sup> The attacks in Paris, France in January and November 2015 as well as the 2016 bombing in Brussels, Belgium have shown the significant danger that jihadists affiliated with or inspired by ISIS pose in Europe.<sup>77</sup>

Germany has been a target of ISIS-related extremism. On February 26, 2016, a 16-year-old Islamist with connections to ISIS attacked a police officer in Hannover and almost killed him. She is now awaiting trial.<sup>78</sup> On July 18, 2016, a young ISIS follower from Afghanistan attacked five people in a local train near the Bavarian city of Würzburg, almost killing a Chinese tourist and injuring others as well.<sup>79</sup> Thereafter, on July 24, 2016, an ISIS-affiliated jihadist attempted to kill people at the Ansbach Open 2016 in Bavaria. Due to technical problems, his explosives detonated prematurely, killing the jihadist and injuring a dozen other people.<sup>80</sup> On December 19, 2016, a Tunisian jihadist affiliated with the Islamic State rammed a truck into a Berlin Christmas market, murdering 12 people and injuring over 50 people.<sup>81</sup>

According to the 2016 federal intelligence report, there is no firm estimate of the number of Islamic State operatives in Germany. However, the *Washington Post* reported in early 2018 that 300 Islamic State combatants returned to Germany.<sup>82</sup>

The head of Germany's Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution (Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, or BfV), Hans-Georg Maaßen, has publicly said that Islamic terrorism is the "largest challenge" facing the federal republic.<sup>83</sup> In November 2016, security forces arrested a number of ISIS supporters, after several months of investigation. The supporters were accused of having recruited for ISIS in Germany, including one man and his family, who journeyed to Syria. Among the arrested is Ahmad Abdulaziz Abdullah, also known as Abu Walaa, the "preacher without face."<sup>84</sup> In December 2016, the worst jihadist attack in German history occurred when 23-year old Tunisian Anis Amri hijacked a truck, killed the driver and hours later he drove the truck into a Christmas market in the heart of West-Berlin at the Breitscheidplatz, killing eleven people. It turned out that the German security forces were very well informed about the criminal activities of Amri, who had been in jail in Italy for four years, and had used many identities as a "refugee" in Germany. Yet the German security forces and the police failed to prevent the massacre, despite their awareness of Amri's jihadist tendencies. After the attack on December 19, 2016, Amri went to the nearby big train station Zoologischer Garten (Zoo), was filmed by a video camera and displayed the Islamic State sign of victory, went to North-Rhine Westphalia, then via the Netherlands, Belgium and France to Italy. In the city of Sesto San Giovanni, near Milano, he was killed by police.<sup>85</sup>

In October 2017, Maaßen stated that over 950 jihadists had gone to Syria and Iraq to join the Islamic State. He said that, of the 950 jihadists, 20 percent were women and 5 percent were underage children. He warned: "We see the danger of children who socialized with and were indoctrinated by jihadists returning to Germany after the war zones. This could allow a new generation of jihadists to be raised here."<sup>86</sup> The federal intelligence agency said roughly 140 German jihadists have been killed in Syria and Iraq.<sup>87</sup>

The BfV is aware of the possible threat posed by the current refugee crisis in Europe, both to the EU at large and to Germany in particular.<sup>88</sup> However, the organization emphasizes that refugees come to Europe in search of shelter and safety, and prejudice and hatred toward them must be fought.<sup>89</sup> Germany's law enforcement agencies, however, remain on alert. Maaßen, has admitted that his office had in the past underestimated IS' strategy to bring jihadists to Europe and Germany.<sup>90</sup>

## ISLAMISM AND SOCIETY

At 4.1 million, Germany's Muslim population is, alongside France's, the one of the highest in the European Union.<sup>91</sup> Of 4.1 million, the majority (2.56 million) is from Turkey, while roughly half a million (536,000) has roots in the former Yugoslavia. German Muslims also come from a variety of other places such as

Iran, Afghanistan, Egypt, and Syria. With refugees from the Syrian crisis, Germany now houses closer to 5 million Muslims.

For decades, however, the former Federal Republic of Germany did not consider these immigrants to be true citizens, instead terming them *Gastarbeiter*, or guest workers. Over time, however, this fiction has become increasingly hard to sustain; Turkish workers, in particular, stayed in Germany, and their families followed them there. Racism was and remains a widespread phenomenon in Germany, due to the specific German national concept of citizenship, which until recently was defined along blood, rather than territorial, lines. Thus, being born in Germany did not necessarily mean that you were German in the popular conception. This began to change in 1999 with the passage of a new law granting the children of non-German residents citizenship by birth.<sup>92</sup>

Since the attacks of 9/11, and particularly over the past several years, political Islam has become a major topic of public debate in Germany. The wearing of the headscarf, honor killings, forced marriages, and support for terrorism and anti-Zionist activity are among the main topics of discussion surrounding both Islam and Islamism. Yet many newspapers, researchers, and politicians, as well as the general public at large, remain reluctant to deal with these issues.

Those political groups or parties that express their opposition to political Islam often do so out of ideological and/or racist grounds, rather than as a result of careful analysis of specific elements of political Islam. Likewise, many groups opposed to Islam are also against other foreigners (as well as those considered to be not “German” enough).

Nevertheless, a tiny but growing number of public intellectuals, scholars, activists, authors, and journalists have emerged publicly as critics of Islamism in recent years. These individuals have faced resistance on the public policy front. Some institutions, like the Berlin Center for Research on Antisemitism (ZfA),<sup>93</sup> have equated any meaningful criticism of Islam with anti-Semitism, often framed as Islamophobia.<sup>94</sup> Many journalists and mainstream scholars even compare or equate Islamist preachers of hate with pro-Western scholars, writers or activists,<sup>95</sup> and reject any military response to Islamism or Islamic jihad.<sup>96</sup> Most instead portray Islam as harmless, and look uncritically upon figures like leading Sunni Islamist Yusuf al-Qaradawi.<sup>97</sup>

Considerable support for Islamism and even violent jihad is visible at the grassroots level in Germany, as evidenced through sporadic rallies in German cities in support of various radical causes. Populist, racist, anti-Semitic and extremist groups such as the Pegida movement (“Patriots Against the Islamization of the Occident”) or the party Alternative for Germany (AfD), are gaining massive support among the German population, with shocking electoral results. Such factions received a major showing in contests for state parliaments in Baden-Württemberg (15.1%), Berlin (14.2%), or the Eastern states of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern (20.8%) and Sachsen-Anhalt (24.3%) in 2016 alone.<sup>98</sup> They agitate against all Muslims and refugees and make no distinction between Islamists, Muslims, or even refugees. The relationship between German society as a whole, and Muslims, is in many ways at a historic low.

Germany has accepted over 1 million refugees since 2015, the overwhelming majority of whom come from Muslim-majority countries. Tensions arose in response to the migration of refugees and asylum seekers. In 2017, the anti-immigration, far-right party alternative for Germany entered the *bundestag* as the largest opposition party. Alternative for Germany secured 12.6% of the vote, nearly 6 million votes.<sup>99</sup> Germany’s interior minister said in 2018 that migration was the “mother of all political problems.”<sup>100</sup> His remarks came after two asylum seekers from Syria and Iraq were arrested for allegedly stabbing a man to death in the city of Chemnitz. In response, neo-Nazis and far-right protestors organized a march against migrants in the city.<sup>101</sup>

## ISLAMISM AND THE STATE:

Some Islamist groups, such as the Muslim Brotherhood, have been present in Germany for years without

engaging any real struggle for power with the government.<sup>102</sup> Others, however, have fared less well in Germany. Hizb ut-Tahrir, for example, was formally banned on January 10, 2003, a decision that was affirmed at the federal level in January 2006.<sup>103</sup> Hezbollah's dedicated television channel, al-Manar, was proscribed in hotels and coffee shops in Germany on October 29, 2008.<sup>104</sup> (However, private households in Germany can still watch it via Saudi and Egyptian satellites). In August 2010, the al-Quds mosque in Hamburg—a Salafi religious center known to be a significant source of Islamist indoctrination<sup>105</sup>—was belatedly shuttered.<sup>106</sup>

The German government, for its part, has also attempted to participate in—and to influence—the dialogue over Islam taking place inside the country. In 2006, it established an official “Islam Conference,” which continues to convene several times a year. At this venue, leading Muslim congregations, along with independent activists, authors, and scholars, discuss the relationship of Muslims and German society with German politicians, headed by the Federal Minister of the Interior. This approach has garnered disapproval from critics, who say that the conference itself has been co-opted by its inclusion of Islamists and suspicious groups. These include the German Islam Council (Islamrat für die Bundesrepublik Deutschland e. V., or IRD), which was excluded from the Islam Conference in 2010 due to criminal investigations against some of its members over their ties to Islamism.<sup>107</sup> In September 2016, the tenth anniversary of the Islam-Conference was held, but the institution remains highly controversial. “The State is not integrating Islam, but promotes Islamists,” critics of the venture have opined.<sup>108</sup> This fragmented approach has led leading critics to contend that Germany, despite its role in international counterterrorism efforts (including Coalition operations in Afghanistan), still lacks a real anti-terror strategy.<sup>109</sup>

However, national security forces, with cooperation from foreign secret services, have prevented several terrorist attacks. Finally, sometimes the jihadists have simply had bad luck or have been stopped by Syrian refugees, such as in the case of an ISIS affiliated jihadist who, after a protracted chase from Saxony to Leipzig, was apprehended by authorities as a result of a tip from a Syrian refugee. Police found 1.5 kilograms of explosives in the suspect's apartment—leading to the conclusion that they had averted the worst jihadist attack in Germany's history.<sup>110</sup> However, the national security apparatus has had its failures. In October 2016, Syrian refugees reported a Syrian jihadists to the local police, as he was gathering heavy explosives for a suicide attack. The German police and the officials at the Leipzig jail failed to prevent the jihadist from killing himself. The German public was shocked about the failure of the German security system.<sup>111</sup>

The major split within Chancellor Merkel's ruling coalition centers over the question of whether Islam is integral to contemporary Germany. The German interior minister Horst Seehofer, from Christian social union, has said “Islam does not belong to Germany.” Chancellor Merkel has vehemently rejected Seehofer's position, arguing that “these Muslims belong to Germany and in the same way their religion belongs to Germany, that is to say Islam.”<sup>112</sup>

ENDNOTES

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