

American Foreign Policy Council

GERMANY

QUICK FACTS

Population: 80,722,792 (estimated July 2016)

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): 3.495 trillion (estimated 2015)

Quick Facts courtesy of the CIA World Factbook (January 2017)

OVERVIEW

Germany 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.¹ Today, Islamists from Germany, including homegrown terrorists, pose a real threat to the security of the German state—as well as to that of the United States and other countries, such as Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Iraq.

Islamism in Germany has deep roots, stretching back to a symbiosis between the German state and radical religious elements during the First World War. These ties 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.

ISLAMIST ACTIVITY

Both peaceful political Islam or legal Islamism and violent *jihadi* exist in Germany today. Political Islam of the lawful variant predominates, although instances of *jihadi* activity have been documented as well with the first horrible jihadist attack with a dozen people killed in December 2016. In 2012, Germany's internal security service, the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution (*Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz*, BfV), estimated that some 30 Islamist organizations with a total of 42,550 members were active within the country.² This represents an increase of more than 4,000 Islamists from 2011 figures³, and is mainly the result of Salafist Islamist groups now being included in the tally. In 2013, the BfV estimated that there were 43,190 active members of Islamist organizations within Germany, with *Salafi* Islamist groups growing the fastest.⁴ However, by 2015, that number had dropped to 14,120 members of Islamist organizations. One reason for this precipitous drop was the fact that Milli Görüs, a Turkish Islamist group active in Germany, was dropped from the BfV's list in 2014, as the agency no longer considered it a threat to the German constitution.⁵ Before, the Federal Agency for the Protection of the Constitution (BfV) estimated Milli Görüs's membership at several 10,000 people, including some 10,000 extremist members (for Milli Görüs see below).⁶

The German security forces mainly focus four jihadist threats in today's Germany: 1) self-radicalized individuals and small groups, 2) those who return from jihad abroad (like fighters for ISIS), 3) those who were hindered to leave the country for jihad and 4) sleepers, well organized by terrorist organizations.⁷

Milli Görüs

Germany has recently changed its views towards the prominent Islamic group *Milli Görüs*. With some 31,000 members as of 2013, the Turkish *Milli Görüs* group is the largest Islamist organization in Germany.⁸ As of 2015, the German Security Forces estimated their members of "several 10,000 people," and 10,000 extremists, but with no concrete numbers of membership like in 2013.⁹ Founded in the early 1970s by former Turkish Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan, *Milli Görüs* now runs 323 mosques and associated centers in Germany¹⁰ and receives most of its funding from donations and membership fees.¹¹ Since January 23, 1995, its umbrella organization has been known as the Islamic Community *Milli Görüs* (IGMG).¹²

For years, the organization has spread anti-Semitic ideology 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).¹³ It also has disseminated written anti-Semitic works, such as Turkish translations of Henry Ford's *The International Jew*.¹⁴ Notably,

the dissemination of such literature is contrary to German law, but to our knowledge no legal efforts to prosecute the group has taken place in that respect. At least some portion of the group also has endorsed and promoted *jihadi* activities abroad.¹⁵

Despite its Islamist character, some state institutions now deal differently with Milli Görüs, including the Office for the Protection of the Constitution in the state of Hamburg, which no longer lists the organization as unconstitutional. Head of that Hamburg office, Manfred Murck, said, Milli Görüs is still not following the democratic system of the Federal System, but he won't count them as enemies of the state anymore.¹⁶ In April 2015, the Vice-Chairman of the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) and head of the opposition in the state of North Rhine-Westphalia, Armin Laschet, visited Milli Görüs in Bremen.¹⁷ Bremen, too, no longer considers Milli Görüs to be against the German constitution. A well known publicist and professor, Werner Schiffauer, a cultural studies scholar, triggered the supposedly changed ideology of Milli Görüs with a controversial book publication about the organization's "change" in 2010. For example, he argued, that parts of Milli Görüs would now allow females to walk alone on the streets, as long as they cover their hair.¹⁸ If we consider former General Secretary of the German Milli Görüs from 2014¹⁹ until 2015, Mustafa Yeneroglu, educated in Germany, who now is a leading AKP politician and head of the "Committee for Human Rights" of the Turkish Parliament in Ankara, doubts arise about the decision to count Milli Görüs not as extremist. During a TV programme in July 2016, he lost control and threatened the moderator to leave her show.²⁰

Hezbollah

The Lebanese Shi'ite militia Hezbollah is also active in Germany, where it has had a presence since the 1980s.²¹ While it has no official representatives, the organization is known to have grown by the end of 2011 to some 950 members and supporters inside the country.²² These are still the numbers as of 2015.²³ The terror organization, was established by several Shia militias in 1982 due to the Lebanon War and the Israeli involvement in it. Hezbollah is an Iranian proxy, and close ally of Syrian dictator Assad. Hezbollah' head Nasrallah denies Zionism's existence and denies the existence of a Jewish nation-state as such. The European Union rejected to count the organization as terror organization, like in 2013, when Malta urged the EU not to list them as such.²⁴ For a long time, Hezbollah was able to work quietly in Germany, which over time became what experts have dubbed its "main fund raising center in Europe."²⁵ The country has also become a source of arms for the Lebanese militia; Lebanese media outlets reported in 2012 that Hezbollah was buying weaponry in Germany via Iranian-controlled companies.²⁶

Hezbollah has managed to maintain a continental presence with virtual impunity until comparatively recently. In 2005, the European Parliament urged member states to ban Hezbollah,²⁷ but many European countries rejected the plea, including Germa-

ny and France. In 2013, the European Union banned the military wing of Hezbollah, a year after the terror organization attacked Israeli tourists in the Bulgarian city of Burgas.²⁸ April 8, 2014, the German Minister of the Interior, Thomas de Maizière, declared the organization “Orphans of Lebanon” (“Waisenkinder Libanon e.V.”) illegal, due to its rejection of “international understanding,” mainly in regard of the Jewish state. The group donated to the Hezbollah owned Shahid-Foundation.²⁹ On November 16, 2015, the German Supreme Administrative Court in Leipzig rejected an objection to the ban and judged that the entire entity of Hezbollah “is an Organization based on the rejection of international understanding, because it rejects the existence of Israel and seeks for her destruction,”³⁰ “regardless if this pursuit is done in a political, social or terrorist manner.”³¹ While the German security forces believe Hezbollah to be a dangerous organization, the German government runs short to denounce it as such and does not take action against it.³²

Hamas

Hamas is estimated to have approximately 300 members in Germany.³³ These activists raise funds for the Palestinian terror group, largely in collaboration with the Palestinian Return Center (PRC) in London.³⁴ 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, because of its close ties to Hamas.³⁵ 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.³⁶ 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 2015.³⁷

Muslim Brotherhood

As of 2015, the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) was estimated to have some 1,040 members in Germany.³⁸ 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.³⁹

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.⁴⁰ El-Zayat was general secretary of the World Assembly of Muslim Youth (WAMY), a Saudi organization active in the spread of Wahhabi ideology abroad.⁴¹ The IGD was also a founding member of the London-based Federation of Islamic Organizations in Europe (FIOE).

According to journalist Ian Johnson, FIOE “is headquartered in a small village in northern England” and has established a series of institutions to “push the Muslim Brotherhood worldview.”⁴²

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.⁴³ In 2014, the Government of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) published a list of Islamist terrorist organizations in which the only German group identified was the IGD.⁴⁴

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.⁴⁵ 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.⁴⁶

Germany has likewise 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.⁴⁷ On July 18, 2016, a young (supposedly 17year old, that is unclear) ISIS follower from Afghanistan attacked five people in a local train near the Bavarian city of Würzburg, almost killing a 31year old Chinese tourist and injuring others as well.⁴⁸ 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.⁴⁹

Over the past three years, the BfV—working in conjunction with groups such as the Hessian Information- and Competence Centre Against Extremism (HKE)—has sought to track German *jihadists* who travel to Syria and Iraq to join ISIS and other *jihadist* groups. As of June 2015, there were estimated to be 677 such *jihadists* from Germany. In their groundbreaking study (the first of its kind in Europe), they analyze sociological data, including age, gender and religious background or the time-frame who long it took someone to become a *jihadist*.⁵⁰ By the end of 2015, the number increased to over 780 people, but since then there has been a significant drop-off in these numbers.⁵¹ This drop is mainly result of the decline of ISIS, but also negative experiences during their time with ISIS, for example, and better controls by the German security forces, who deny *jihadists* to leave the country, as well as the collaboration of a few mosques who try to prevent Muslims from becoming *jihadists*.⁵²

Homegrown terrorism

Homegrown terrorism, including domestic groups with connections to international *jihadist* organizations, constitutes a real threat to German security. The country faces potential threats from *jihadists* now resident in Germany, as well as *jihadists* of German origin operating abroad who may eventually return to target the Federal Republic. Both groups can be defined as “third generation” *jihadists*, i.e., those not necessarily under the auspices of al-Qaeda but who share its broad Islamist ideology and terrorist approach.⁵³ Such elements have been implicated in plots to carry out terror attacks in Germany,⁵⁴ as well as being known to have received training from *jihadist* elements abroad.⁵⁵ As of 2010, several dozen German *jihadists*—including members of the IJU, the Uzbek Islamic Movement (IBU), the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), and the German Taliban Mujahedin (*Deutsche Taliban-Mudschahidin*, or DTM)—were believed to be active in Pakistan’s Waziristan region.⁵⁶

In June 2013, the German government conducted large-scale raids in the states of Saxony, Bavaria and Baden-Württemberg in pursuit of Islamist terrorists believed to be planning attacks via model aeroplanes. All three suspects apprehended as a result are of Tunisian origin, and one allegedly studied aviation at Stuttgart University.⁵⁷

In March 2015, German officials made raids against “Tauhid Germany” in four of its states, a group with some 30 members, they are considered a follow-up organization of the 2012 banned “Millatu Ibrahim.” During the raids many computers, cell phones, data carriers and propaganda material, used for recruiting *jihadists* for the “Holy War” were confiscated.⁵⁸ After several months of investigation, in November 2016 security forces arrested a number of ISIS supporters, who were accused of having recruited for ISIS in Germany, including one man and his family, who went to Syria. Among the arrested is Ahmad Abdulaziz Abdullah A. aka Abu Walaa, the “preacher without face.”⁵⁹ For homegrown *jihadists* see also “Isis,” above.

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,⁶⁰ was appointed to his post by the Iranian Foreign Ministry in April 2009.⁶¹ 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. These include:

- The Islamic Center Salman Farsi Moschee Langenhagen e.V. in Hannover;
- The Academy Baghiatallah e.V. in Bremen;
- The Iranian Islamic Cultural Community Berlin e.V. in Berlin;

- The Islamic Association Bavaria e.V. in Munich; and
- The Ehli-Beyt-Alevit Religious Community Ehli Beyt Alevi Federasyonu e.V. in Frankfurt a.M.⁶²

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.⁶³

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,⁶⁴ German politics now promotes a normalization of the relationship with Iran.

A Pakistani Islamist, who worked for Iran and spied on Reinhold Robbe, former head of the German-Israel Society ("Deutsche-Israelische Gesellschaft, DIG), was arrested in July 2016. As the suspect had deleted material on his computer, there was no proof and he had to be released. However, no German diplomatic activity was reported in that respect.⁶⁵ On the other side, many leading politicians regularly visit Iran. These trips include Vice-Chancellor and member of the Federal Government Sigmar Gabriel, head of the Social Democratic Party, but also politicians and delegations from Saxony, Mecklenburg-West Pomerania and Saxony-Anhalt,⁶⁶ for example. Gabriel knows about Iran's extremism,⁶⁷ antisemitism and hatred of Israel and mentioned it during his visit, but that will not change the German government's and Germany's economy's⁶⁸ stance and collaboration⁶⁹ with Iran.⁷⁰ There was criticism that a brochure by the Vice-Prime Minister of Saxony, Martin Dulig from the Social Democratic Party, showed several German female politicians with headscarves, as if that Islamist practice is common among non-Muslim German politicians. The German officials said, they did the brochure just for an Iranian audience, which makes things even worse, as the boulevard Bild newspaper pointed out, pointing to anti-headscarf activism in Iran such as by Masih Alinejad.⁷¹

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).⁷² The Gülen movement runs a number of high schools in Germany⁷³ and does not publicly advocate violence. To the contrary, it has taken pains to distance itself from bin Laden and al-Qaeda. This stance, however, appears to stem from Gülen's 2004 declaration that non-state actors (such as al-Qaeda) are

not permitted to wage war,⁷⁴ rather than from an authentic aversion to armed *jihad* writ large. Gülen's Turkish branch of political Islam espouses the idea of the gradual imposition of a *sharia*-based democracy.⁷⁵ 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.⁷⁶ 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.⁷⁷ According to television and media reports in June 2013, Gülen members have tried to influence and coopt democratic parties in Germany.⁷⁸ 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.⁷⁹ After the attempted coup against Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and his ruling AKP in Turkey in July 2016, however, German-Turkish followers or alleged followers of the Gülen movement faced attacks and defamation by German-Turkish AKP supporters.⁸⁰ Germany has the biggest Turkish community outside of Turkey with over three million Turkish people living in Germany. Turkish immigration started in 1961 with an agreement of the Federal Republic (FRG) and Turkey about so-called "Gastarbeiter," or "guest-workers." (See also below for "Gastarbeiter"). Until 1973 some 900,000 Turkish people came to Germany, most of them stayed in Germany. Other agreements about workers ("guest workers") included Italy (1955), Greece, Spain (1960), Morocco (1963), South Korea (1963), Portugal (1964), Tunisia (1965) and Yugoslavia (1978).⁸¹ These agreements were stopped in 1973 due to the oil crisis.

Salafist elements

German authorities consider *Salafism* to be "the most dynamic Islamist movement," both within Germany and on the global level.⁸² *Salafi* groups in Germany are estimated to have increased their number of adherents from 3,800 to some 4,500 between 2011 and early 2013.⁸³ That growth has continued; as of 2015, some 8,350 Salafists are estimated active in Germany.⁸⁴

This growth has brought with it an increase in militant activity. The first ever "Islamist terror attack" in Germany occurred on March 2, 2011, when Kosovar Serb Arid Uka killed two U.S. soldiers at the Frankfurt International Airport.⁸⁵ Uka was discovered to have been in touch with *Salafist* elements via social media outlets, specifically Facebook.⁸⁶ He was convicted and sentenced to life in prison in December 2012.⁸⁷

German authorities have begun to respond to the growing threats from 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.⁸⁸ In addition, as of September 2016, according to Hessian MP, Ismail Tipi, there are over 700⁸⁹ ongoing

investigations against *Salafist* groups such as Dawa FFM (Dawa Frankfurt) and *Die Wahre Religion* (The True Religion). Finally, in March 2013, Germany authorities proscribed *Dawa FFM* and two other groups, *Islamische Audios* and *An-Nussrah*.⁹⁰

According to the head of the Office for the Protection of the Constitution in Hamburg, *Salafists* are the fastest growing elements in Germany's Islamism camp.⁹¹ This may stem from *Salafists'* ability to attract teenagers and young adults by music or social media events, as well as the distribution of the Quran (see below). On April 16, 2016, two 16-year old *Salafists* put 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, and his distance from *jihadist* terror is nothing more than tactical lip-service.⁹²

Social media and the Internet have played a crucial role in *Salafist* activity,⁹³ especially alongside activism in mosques and on the street such as the free distribution of the Quran by the Read ("Lies" in German) campaign. 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 no less than 25 million German-language copies of the Quran, in fact they distributed indeed some 3,5 million.⁹⁴ May 28, 2016, the state of Hamburg was the first German state to ban the "Read!" Quran distribution, due to its extremist and *jihadist* connections. Other German states might follow suit in the future, including in particular North Rhine-Westphalia.⁹⁵

Finally, November 15, 2016, the organization "The True Religion" was prohibited by the Federal Ministry of the Interior.⁹⁶

ISLAMISM AND SOCIETY

At 4.1 million, Germany's Muslim population is, alongside France, the highest among the 27 states that make up the European Union.⁹⁷ Of 4.1 million, the majority (2.56 million) is from Turkey, while roughly half a million (536,000) from the former Yugoslavia. Iran (70,000), Afghanistan (89,000), Morocco (163,000), Pakistan (67,000), Egypt (37,000), Iraq (97,000), Lebanon (127,000) and Syria (35,000) make up the other significant countries of origin.⁹⁸ When refugees from the 2015-2016 timeframe are taken into account, 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.⁹⁹

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 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),¹⁰⁰ have equated any meaningful criticism of Islam with anti-Semitism, often framed as Islamophobia.¹⁰¹ Many journalists and mainstream scholars even compare or equate Islamist preachers of hate with pro-Western scholars, writers or activists,¹⁰² and reject any military response to Islamism or Islamic *jihad*.¹⁰³ Most instead portray Islam as harmless or interesting, and look uncritically upon figures like leading Sunni Islamist Yusuf al-Qaradawi.¹⁰⁴

Considerable grassroots 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, antisemitic 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.¹⁰⁵ 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, can be said to be at a historic low.

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.¹⁰⁶

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 2006.¹⁰⁷ Hezbollah's dedicated television channel, *al-Manar*, was proscribed in hotels and coffee shops in Germany on October 29, 2008.¹⁰⁸ (However, private households in Germany can still watch it via Saudi and Egyptian satellites). More recently, in August 2010, the al-Quds mosque in Hamburg—a *Salafi* religious center known to be a significant source of Islamist indoctrination¹⁰⁹—was belatedly shuttered.¹¹⁰

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.¹¹¹ 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.¹¹²

This schizophrenic 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.¹¹³ However, contrary to Spain, England, France or Belgium, Germany has yet to be the victim of a major Islamist attack. National security forces, with cooperation from foreign secret services, have prevented many 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.¹¹⁴ The BfV and the German Government are aware of the possible threat posed by the current refugee crisis in Europe, both to the EU at large and to Germany in particular.¹¹⁵ However, both organizations emphasize that refugees come to Europe in search of shelter and safety, and prejudice and hatred toward them must be fought.¹¹⁶ As of April 2016, the head of the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution, Hans-Georg Maaßen, said, the Office underestimated IS strategy to bring *jihadists* to Europe and Germany. Maaßen said, “ISIS didn't need to infiltrate *jihadists* among refugees, but they did. We had to learn that lesson.”¹¹⁷ The *jihadist* threat is very acute in Germany as of January 2017. Syrian refugees prevented one of the worst attacks by an ISIS affiliated *jihadist* in October

2016, by delivering a Syrian *jihadist*, who already had heavy explosives for a suicide belt in his apartment, to the police. But then, the German police and the officials at the Leipzig jail completely failed to prevent the *jihadist* from killing himself. They even had an expertise from a psychologist who found out that the wannabee suicide bomber does not want to kill himself (!). The German public was shocked about the failure of the German security system.¹¹⁸ On December 19, 2016, the worst *jihadist* attack ever in Germany occurred. 23-year old Tunisian Anis Amri hijacked a truck, killed the Polish driver by a shot in his head 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 was in jail in Italy for four years, for example, and had used many identities as a “refugee” in Germany. The German security forces and the police failed to prevent this horrible massacre, despite they knew about the *jihadist* long before and feared (or at least knew) he might try to kill himself in a suicide attack or another *jihadist* attack. 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 showed 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 controlled by an ordinary police control at 3.30am. He fired at them, injured a policeman and was killed by his colleague.¹¹⁹

ENDNOTES

[1] *The 9/11 Commission Report: Final Report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States* (New York: WW Norton & Co., 2004).

[2] Federal Ministry of the Interior, *Verfassungsschutzbericht 2012 [Annual Report on the Protection of the Constitution 2012]*, 2013, <https://www.verfassungsschutz.de/download/vsbericht-2012.pdf>.

[3] Federal Ministry of the Interior, *Verfassungsschutzbericht 2012 [Annual Report on the Protection of the Constitution 2012]*, 2013, <http://www.verfassungsschutz.de/download/vsbericht-2012-vorabfassung.pdf>.

[4] Federal Ministry of the Interior, *Verfassungsschutzbericht 2013 [Annual Report on the Protection of the Constitution 2013]*, 2014, <https://www.verfassungsschutz.de/de/oeffentlichkeitsarbeit/publikationen/verfassungsschutzberichte/vsbericht-2013>.

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[117] “Verfassungsschutz: IS falsch eingeschätzt,” April 10, 2016, <http://www.tagesschau.de/inland/verfassungsschutz-is-101.html>

[118] “Syrrer bringt die Polizei zum festgesetzten Terrorverdächtigen“, <https://www.welt.de/politik/deutschland/article158660909/Syrrer-bringt-die-Polizei-zum-festgesetzten-Terrorverdaechtigen.html>; <https://www.welt.de/politik/deutschland/article158724916/Dschaber-al-Bakr-hat-Selbstmord-begangen.html>.

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