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«Churchification of Islam» – a by-product of governance of religion in contemporary nation states

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Abstract. The article looks at the governance of Islam in contemporary nation states through the prism of what is called ‘churchification’ of Islam. The notion of church here is taken as a pure sociological category free of any Christian connotations, although, admittedly, the early stage of conceptualization of church sociologically, by Ernst Troeltsch and Max Weber, was to a great extent based on analysis of Christian collectivities. It is argued in the article that the observed phenomenon of ‘churchification of Islam’ is a constitutive feature or even a by-product of governance of Islam in such Muslim-minority contexts as Europe. The article further argues that ‘churchification of Islam’ may be a useful analytical tool in not only explaining the dynamics of institutionalization of Islam in Muslim-minority contexts, like Europe, but could be extended to Muslim-majority contexts.

Keywords: governance of religion; governance of Islam; churchification of Islam; Islam in Europe; Muslim-minority contexts; Muslim-majority contexts

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Inroduction

The concept of State-religion relations presupposes a two-way interaction between the State on one side and religions in the person of their representative organizations on the other; in practically all contemporary nation states, the fundamental of these relations is the regime of governance of religion, here understood as defined and used by Maussen (2007), as a rule imposed over faith communities by the State as the more powerful partner in these relations. By all means, it is the State that has a monopoly in State-religion relations. The State appropriates the control of religion through designing and imposing constitutional regimes of governance of religion, which, in turn, make the State an interested (or even a deciding) party.

The common typology of regimes of governance of religion in contemporary nation states is based on a three-tier system of church-state relations comprising what Leustean (2008: 247) calls “the state church model, the cooperationist (or hybrid) model and the secular (or separation) model.” Irrespective of the model of governance of religion, practically all contemporary nation states through their legal systems (and particularly, through the legal arrangements of State-religion relations) inevitably regulate a crucial aspect of religious practice and identity—the institutionalization of religion through representative spiritual administrations, as a rule, in the form of religious organizations or their associations (councils). However, the available legal options for religious communities may differ significantly, ranging from voluntary through compulsory registration with the State, to rejection or denial of registration (with or without a formal ban of the concerned religious collectivity).

Governance of religion, and particularly, governance of Islam in Europe, has recently been a trendy topic among researchers of religion (Bader, 2007; Ferrari, 2010; Godard, 2007; Koenig, 2007; Leustean, 2008; Loobuyck et al., 2013; Maussen, 2007; Riedel, 2008; Sandberg, 2008; Stan, 2008). Researchers have resorted to an array of labels to define and describe European governments’ approach to and treatment of Muslim religious collectivities, or more precisely, institutionalization of Islam, first of all, its legal, but also socio-political side of it. Researchers talk of domestication and accommodation of Islam, its Europeanization and so forth. Some note that institutionalization of Islam in Europe bears traits of what could effectively amount to ‘churchification’ of Islam. The present article focuses on this specific feature of the governance of Islam in contemporary nation states.

The term ‘churchification of Islam’ so far is not commonly used in Anglophone academic or other literature and still remains an exotic, politically and otherwise sensitive, neologism. But the strategy and the process based on it that the term designates are one or another way recognized, described, and analyzed by numerous researchers of Islam in Europe (Koenig 2006; Vinding, 2018; Sibgatullina, 2023). Sometimes they are referred to as ecclesification (or ecclesiastification, as Jørgen S. Nielsen prefers it (Vinding, 2018: 50, 57)) and their end-state is seen as formation of (national) ‘Muslim churches.’ Ecclesification, however, should not be seen as a synonym of churchification. Put simply, ecclesification of any religion implies creation (top-down, by outside lay forces, such as the State, or bottom-up, by inside actors) of a clerical class or stratum that monopolizes the right to perform and lead religious rituals and to interpret holy texts and religious signs. The course of ecclesification, however, may stop short

of churchification, which comes to its fruition when a religious collectivity ultimately turns into a hierarchically structured ecclesiastical-bureaucratic institution staffed and served by clergy. In other words, while churchification is hardly possible without ecclesification, ecclesification should not, at least in theory, necessarily end in churchification.

In the German-speaking realm, the German-language equivalent of the concept 'churchification of Islam,' 'Verkirchlichung des Islam,' has not only been coined but has also been widely used in German, Austrian, and Swiss academia and media (Tezcan, 2016; Şahin, 2017: 102; Engelhardt, 2017: 15, 140; Schmid et al., 2014: 15; Hunger and Schröder, 2016: 230; ORF, 2017). In German-language texts, this 'Verkirchlichung des Islam,' is seen by its users, who advocate either for or against churchification of Islam, as a controversial term, and is used almost exclusively in connection with state-religion relations and intra-communal dynamics in Muslim communities in Germany, Austria or Switzerland (Akgün, 2015). In the Francophone realm, no direct equivalent of the term 'churchification of Islam' appears to have been used so far; however, the term 'Église musulmane' (a Muslim Church), still seen as a polemical, appeared as early as the 1980s (Rouzeik, 1988; Etienne, 1989) and is used to this day (Tincq, 2016), particularly in connection with the governance of Islam in France.

The aim of this article is to conceptually present the phenomenon of 'churchification of Islam' as a constitutive feature or even a by-product of governance of religion in contemporary nation states. It argues that 'churchification of Islam' is a useful analytical tool in explaining the dynamics of institutionalization of Islam in Muslim-minority contexts and should be tested in Muslim-majority contexts.

The article is divided into three parts. Firstly, it grapples with the very concept of 'churchification' - its contents and applicability to Islam. The second part is devoted to explication of how 'churchification' of Islam is executed in a Muslim-minority settings on the example of Europe. Finally, the article considers whether 'churchification of Islam' is a more universal phenomenon observable not only in Muslim-minority but also Muslim-majority contexts.

Discussion: Conceptualizing churchification (of Islam)

The generic term 'churchification' may be taken to imply that the religion under research (in this case, Islam) is being turned theologically into a Christian-like system of religious beliefs and rituals – in other words, its Christianization. Though this course may also occur in practice with Islam, particularly in local forms of folk religiosity in religious borderlands, any possible tendencies within Islam of getting closer to Christianity - through some syncretic beliefs and practices - remain outside of the scope of the analytical gaze of this research.

Alternatively, 'churchification' may suggest that the religion under investigation is being turned institutionally into a church-like religious (ecclesiastical-bureaucratic) structure, as defined and analyzed by the sociology of religion from Weber (1978) and Troeltsch (1919; 1931) on. The Weberian-Troeltschian understanding of church as a religious collectivity encompasses a range of features such as being large in size, conservative in outlook, relaxed on obedience of membership, on good terms with the secular State, and being an integral part of the social order. For the purposes of the present analysis, church is conceived of as *an institutionalized (legally*

recognized) religious community (encompassing the totality of believers of that faith, understood here as a set of dogmas, rituals, and ethics, either of a Christian or non-Christian nature), which has an ecclesiastical-bureaucratic structure staffed by professional (ordained) clergy and which has a positive relationship and attitude to society and the State.

The progression of the churchification of Islam in contemporary nation states is arguably of a double nature. On the one hand, it is the State that has an expectation that Muslims residing in the respective country form a church-like religious organization, which would be recognized by the State as the representative organization of the country's (entire) Muslim population. On the other hand, certain groups of local Muslims appear to be tempted to follow this line suggested (and even endorsed) by the State and start competing among themselves for the status of representative organization, as a rule, at the cost of rival organizations. As the State, very often implicitly, but sometimes also explicitly, sets out the vision of what it sees as 'appropriate' forms of Islamic religiosity on its territory, competing Muslim organizations, particularly in Muslim minority contexts in particular, often get dragged into portraying themselves as being precisely of this type, while demonizing the competitors as representing alien, and therefore potentially or actually dangerous forms of Islamic religiosity, which, in turn, are often labelled by the contestants as deviant or even altogether anti-Islamic.

When it comes to the study of organizational structures in Islam, one of the main questions is how to view *ulama* – possessors of religious knowledge. Are they to be treated like, if not identical to, priests and ministers in Christianity? Are they a trained professional clerical class with ranks and hierarchies? Or, rather, are they a loose horizontal group of 'men of learning' who have been awarded by the believers the right to interpret the sacred texts, but not the duty to be followed and obeyed in their interpretations? Agbaria argues that "[s]tates and political authorities do attempt to intervene in matters of faith to varying degrees. And while there is no formal authority that can impose particular doctrines, it is hardly the same thing as saying that Muslims treat all interpreters of Islamic teachings as equally valid. *This is particularly true in modern times, when the power of the ulama class has been institutionalized in line with the modern state's interests in political legitimacy and stability* (italics added)." (Agbaria, 2018: 210) Agbaria's observation is very relevant as he draws into the discussion the role of political powers. It is not so much the theological issues that are at stake as the socio-political role of religion promoted and administered through and by *ulama* as a collective actor for whom the process of institutionalization may involve a degree of hierarchization.

The ecclesification of Islam, even with hierarchization, though, does not automatically mean churchification, for there may be, at least theoretically, a clergy of some sort in an otherwise church-less religious collectivity. There may, however, arguably be no clergy-less church, as the church organization requires by default administrative-spiritual apparatus with its own hierarchies. Having professional ministers serving in institutionalized hierarchical ecclesiastical-bureaucratic structure makes religious collectivity a church, though Yinger allows that "church can be present in either an institutional form with an elaborate hierarchy among the clergy or in a diffused form." (Yinger, 1970: 256) In any case, there needs to be some sort of organization, no matter how loose, as well as ministers who are professionals and those ministers need to work within the organization—be trained, appointed and dismissed by it, as church "organisation

is rational and bureaucratic, their ministers are professionals and hold their office from the institution.” (Sengers, 2012: 56) There is a tendency that, as regards the development of Islam, these three aspects are emerging and merging, foremost, arguably, in Europe but also beyond. Existence of professional (ordained, however it is understood) clergy, in this case, Islamic, is a must if one wants to talk of a church, as there may be no church without a clergy.

Some, particularly among Muslims, might want to deny that there has been, is, or may be, a church in Islam and thus to reject the applicability of the concept of ‘churchification’ to Islam. This is the case, however, not necessarily because the dynamics of the institutionalization and governance of Islam in both majority and minority contexts would be seen by sceptics as not showing the signs and features of the churchification (as understood sociologically) of Islam, but because there is a stigma attached to any comparison of Islam to Christianity and the application of Christian terms and concepts to anything Islamic. But, as Tezcan aptly notes, “the rejection of the church model by Muslims – to state their distinct religious identities – does not deny the process of a de facto *functional* churchification.” (Tezcan, 2016: 166-167) He provides the example of Germany and Switzerland, where, according to him, “[d]espite their rejection of the term ‘church,’ associations aspire to achieve the status of body of public law in Germany and Switzerland with all the attached privileges that Christian Churches have enjoyed.” (Tezcan, 2016: 167) In other words, for there to be a process of, to borrow Tezcan’s term, “functional churchification” of Islam, consent and acknowledgement of this fact by Muslims is not needed, as its contents does not depend on a value judgement. The concept of ‘churchification,’ applied in the present research, is cleansed of any Christian connotations to a bare sociological category, and as such may be applied to any other non-Christian religious tradition and religious collectivities, provided, they meet the defined criteria.

Moreover, there are a number of researchers of Islam who play with the idea that even historically, there has been something akin to a Church in Islam and that ulama approximate(d) clergy. For instance, Zwemer is among those who argued that there is (has been) a clergy in Islam. Writing back in 1944, after having insisted that “[e]very religion has had its clergy or priesthood by whatever name called; no one denies that there were Jewish priests and Levites, or that there are Hindu priests and Buddhist priests” (Zwemer, 1944: 17), he passionately argued that there is a clergy in Islam whom he found to be more “Protestant rather than Roman Catholic in their authority and function.” (Zwemer, 1944: 18) According to Zwemer, “[p]riesthood is not a matter of etymology (priest, presbyter, sheikh, elder) but of actual spiritual and temporal power over those who acknowledge its function.” (Zwemer, 1944: 21) Drawing on numerous contemporary authors and his own practical experiences, he proceeded with discussing different types of what he calls Islamic clergy. Zwemer arrived at a conclusion that “[a]lthough Islam never developed any institution entirely similar to the clergy of Christianity, it had from early days and has now three religious classes quite comparable to ‘priests’ and ‘clergy’. The one class, (...), are appointed for public worship and preaching. The second are theologians and masters of canon-law. The third class are hereditary saints and Holy-men.” (Zwemer, 1944: 39) Of the three classes distinguished by Zwemer, the most relevant for the present study is the first, the *ulama* in the person of imams of various ranks at mosques and Islamic spiritual administrations.

Zwemer not only saw *ulama* as a priestly class but found it hierarchical, at least since the Ottoman Sultan Suleiman’s time. Even more, he did not shy away from polemical insinuations, when he suggested that “[i]n the reign of Suleiman, the Sheikh-al-Islam acquired undisputed

authority over all the ‘ulema of the empire. *This was possibly in imitation of the Christian hierarchy under the Ecumenical patriarch.*” (italics added) (Zwemer, 1944: 30). Sedgwick appears to also allow that there was a church in Islam, and in fact not so long ago, when he admits that “[t]wo hundred years ago the ulama held most of the religious authority in Islam, confirming the possible identification of the ulama as the Church of Islam” (Sedgwick, 2003: 40) and particularly when he states that “the location of religious authority two hundred years ago indicates that there was a Church in Islam, and that that Church was the body of ulama.” (Sedgwick, 2003: 40)

Zwemer and Sedgwick each refer to the Ottoman religious-bureaucratic institution (muftiate) presided over by a Grand Mufti under whose oversight all officially appointed *ulama* operated. However, even though the Ottoman Muftiate may be seen as having arguably functioned as a sort of ‘Imperial Muslim Church,’ one needs to acknowledge that not all muftiates in Muslim-majority lands (usually known by their Arabic name *dar al-ifta*) would function like such. Therefore, the term ‘muftiate’ should not be automatically associated with and even less so seen as a synonym of ‘church,’ particularly in Muslim-majority contexts.

Though the concept of the churchification of Islam may arguably be successfully applied in the research of governance and institutionalization of Islam in Muslim-minority contexts as is shown below, it remains to be seen whether it has the same analytical value in research on governance and institutionalization of Islam in Muslim-majority (where the Muslim-majority population is ruled by ‘Muslim’ government, i.e. the government whose members are of Muslim background) contexts.

Methodology, methods and materials

The present research is based on both primary and secondary sources. The primary sources include state Constitutions, *lex specialis* regulating state-religion relations, other laws and by-laws, court rulings, press releases of state institutions, internal documents of Muslim religious organizations, their publications and material on their official communication channels. Secondary sources cover media reports and analysis, think tank publications and scholarly publications. The research also involved participant observation and visits to state institutions (ministries and departments charged with overseeing state-religion relations) and Muslim religious organizations and meetings there with state officials and leadership of Muslim religious organizations. The research also included meetings with scholars engaged in research on state-religion relations and particularly governance of Islam in their respective countries and regions.

Results

Churchification of Islam in Muslim minority contexts: Europe

In many Western European countries, the institutionalization of Islam entails an expectation on the side of the State that Muslims create a single representative national religious body or an association of religious organizations, often commonly called a ‘council,’ to serve as an umbrella organization. The expectation for a representative national Muslim religious body comes from

a cultural and legal background, both bound to the perception of religion as inevitably having an organized administrative body, akin to those that Christianity, until recently the dominant religion in much of Europe, has. Nielsen argues that “the regular attempts in most countries to establish some form of common Muslim ‘front’ or umbrella organization, often in response to government initiative, is evidence of an adaptation of structures in a pseudo-ecclesiastical direction.” (Nielsen, 1999: 116) In relation to this, Ferrari maintains that it “is the cultural and legal background that lies behind the request which many states have addressed to the Muslim communities resident in their territories, namely, to provide a representative organization at the national level which is capable of functioning as an interlocutor of the state.” (Ferrari, 2010: 22)

Regulations on the institutionalization of Islam in general and the state-guided process of its ‘Europeanisation’ in particular, in the Western European context, are often viewed by researchers through the prism of what is called the “domestication of Islam.” As Martikainen explains, “[d]omestication’ can have at least two meanings. First, it can refer to processes of adaptation, e.g., with regard to religious institutionalisation. Second, it can refer to the ‘taming’ of a possible threat to social cohesion or security.” (Martikainen, 2007: 255) Sunier understands the ‘domestication of Islam’ as “the political programmes and modes of governance that emanate from the complex relationship between integration, and political priorities of security and national identity.” (Sunier, 2012: 190) In other words, the term ‘domestication of Islam’ may mean both a process and a strategy. Sunier elsewhere argues that “the domestication of Islam is an important device of the symbolic reproduction of European nation states.” (Sunier, 2014: 1141) Though it is not stated so explicitly in the above quotes, domestication-driven governance of Islam in Western Europe perceives Islam as of alien nature, as an ‘immigrant religion’ or a religion of immigrants. As such, Islam is seen by Western European states to be in need of adjustment to be integratable and this is what the domestication means, in both senses of the word explained by Martikainen, when it is applied to Islam in Western European context.

Ultimately, rather than accommodating Muslims in Western Europe, European states, through their governance of Islam, seek to change its institutional structure to fit the existing organizational and ideological frameworks of state-church relations. Generally, “[b]y institutionalizing Islam (...), states convey their interest in reforming religion or in transforming how citizens relate to their religion.” (Laurence, 2012: 18) For Laurence, European states “are not engaged in the special accommodation of Muslims; they are incorporating Islam into pre-existing state-church institutions. European governments are trying to create the institutional conditions for the emergence of an Italian or German Islam, e.g., rather than just tolerating Islam ‘in’ Italy or Germany.” (Laurence, 2012: 13) But in doing this, “European governments are not just trying to initiate a dialogue with Muslim representatives—let alone to simply appease their demands. Rather, they are trying to reconfigure the Muslim religious organizational field with explicit reference to the centrality of the national state. The offer of official recognition of Islam is conditional upon participating organizations’ recognition of the state (and its constitutional framework) in return.” (Laurence, 2012: 249)

Tatari seconds Laurence’s argument by noting that “[e]stablished church-state relations set the institutional framework within which Muslim minorities have to function. Most importantly, the legal status of religious minorities vis-à-vis the state is legislated according to the established

church-state relations of the country. This, in turn, determines the bargaining power of religious minorities to obtain state accommodation for their religious practices.” (Tatari, 2009: 282-283) In the end, however, Muslim communities, even if united, remain at the receiving end, with the State imposing its view on those willing to be coopted and sanctioning (coupled with securitizing) those who oppose it. Laurence concludes that in the end, “religion policy (...) allows European governments to gradually take “ownership’ of their Muslim populations because it grants them unique influence over organizations and leadership within this hard-to-reach minority.” (Laurence, 2012: 12)

State-imposed institutionalization of Islam may and often does have as its aim higher control over the religious life of believers. Institutionalization is in a way taming. Those Muslim religious actors who are susceptible to taming, through institutionalization (in the form of state recognition and registration) undergo a process of normalization or, as some researchers call it, emancipation. Roy talks of a policy of “communitarisation from above,” “implemented by non-Muslim states in parallel with the quest by Muslim organisations to be recognised as legitimate partners by the same non-Islamic states, while using any such legitimacy bestowed upon them to rally a constituency around them.” (Roy, 2003: 209)

In the course of this process of normalization/emancipation, entailing taming-cum-domestication, institutionalized Muslim religious bodies experience expectations and sometimes even pressure from the State’s side (first of all, through legislation but often through extra-legal political and other measures and means) to assume church-like organizational appearance and behavior. In such cases, the whole process of normalization through strategic institutionalization in essence amounts to the churchification of Islam in a given state. Organizationally, the religion of Islam is then perceived to be yet another church among other (institutionalized—recognized and registered) churches, both Christian and non-Christian. The end-state of this process is the birth/establishment of Muslim churches—institutionalized (legally recognized) religious communities, which have an ecclesiastical-bureaucratic structure and are staffed by professional (ordained) clergy and which have a positive relationship and attitude to society and the State. As Koenig argues, “in the process of organizational incorporation, a formalization and hierarchization of Muslim community structures can be observed, which certainly leads to a churchification of Islam.” (Koenig, 2006: 54)

The concept of the churchification of Islam in Europe infers two interrelated patterns: a strategy to transform – both top-down but also sometimes bottom-up – the institutional structure of Islam in Europe into a church-like one, and a process in which the new (churchified) institutional structure of Islam starts resembling Christian Churches, particularly their ecclesiastical hierarchies. In other words, the churchification of Islam in Europe first and foremost goes through the ecclesification of the body of its spiritual leadership, collectively known as *ulama*. There is growing evidence that *ulama* are increasingly being viewed by European states (in practical terms, in the person of State institutions charged with supervision of governance of religion, be it ministries of the interior or justice, or special departments) as nothing less than Islamic clergy, that is, professional ministers, “a defined group of trained persons who possess knowledge and skills not accessible to the general public, a group which is relatively autonomous in that the members are entitled to make judgements based on their

expertise and are empowered to be largely selfgoverning.” (Hoge, 2011:581) Although this does not automatically imply their hierarchization, there is an observable tendency to seek consolidation of spiritual authority in the hands of ‘high *ulama*’ akin to Christian bishops. So far, however, it would be a too far-fetched statement to claim that the strategy of the ecclesification of *ulama* in Western Europe has already produced strict established hierarchies identical to or at least closely resembling those in Christian Churches.

As regards the institutionalization of Islam in Europe, one needs to acknowledge differences between Muslim umbrella religious organizations found across Western Europe, commonly called ‘councils,’ on the one hand, and Muslim spiritual administrations in Eastern Europe, known as ‘Spiritual Administrations’ and commonly called ‘muftiates,’ as very often their heads hold the title of (Grand) Mufti (Račius and Zhelyazkova, 2017), on the other hand. Laurence, having in mind Western Europe, maintains that “[t]he most striking illustration of a Europe-wide move toward the ‘domestication’ of Islam – and the summit of the process of institutional recognition – came with the development of national consultations with prayer spaces and civil society organizations. Between 1990 and 2010, national interior ministries established local and national ‘Islam Councils.’” (Laurence, 2012: 11-12) Though this may be true in the case of Western Europe, in much of Eastern Europe, counterparts to Islamic councils in the form of national Islamic spiritual administrations (aka ‘muftiates’) were established as early as the 1920s and even earlier (in Russia, starting with the late eighteenth century, and in Bosnia in the end of the nineteenth century). (Račius and Zhelyazkova, 2017)

Perhaps the most seminal difference between the Islamic councils in Western Europe and the ‘muftiates’ in the eastern part of the continent is that the councils are, at least in theory, pluralist – both their rank and file come from different cultural and confessional backgrounds. And although none of the councils has been perfectly inclusivist, most of them have managed to unite a bunch of organizations that represent diverse and sometimes even antagonistic forms of Islamic religiosity. Contrary, as a rule, Eastern European ‘muftiates’ tend to be unitary – there are few if any differences in either the cultural or confessional background of their rank and file. From this major difference follow others, related to both inner structures and infrastructure, but also ideology or at least worldview. Ultimately, if a given Islamic council’s legitimacy very much depends on how inclusive (and representative) it is, and how successful it is in accommodating its constituent member organizations, a ‘muftiate’s’ legitimacy depends almost solely on how many mosques (with their imams) it controls. In the end, while Islamic councils in Western Europe tend or at least try to be democratically (horizontally) governed, the muftiates are often less democratic (that is, governed more vertically).

Although most of the issues advocated by the Islamic councils founded in Western Europe are in nature religious, the councils themselves, strictly speaking, are not religious organizations with a hierarchical religious structure. Individual member religious organizations may have some sort of hierarchical religious structure all the way to approximating those of Protestant Churches. In this, the councils may be reminiscent of councils of Protestant Churches found in many countries around the globe. In the end, while individual Muslim religious organizations constituting an Islamic council may have the features of a church (and there may indeed be more than one Muslim church in a given council), councils themselves, as we know them throughout Western Europe, to this day hardly resemble churches in any sense.

With the fall of the Berlin Wall (and with it the Iron Curtain), the disintegration of the USSR, and the collapse of the communist system in Eastern Europe, the newly independent and sovereign states faced a challenge to overhaul their legislation pertaining to state-church relations in general and the governance of religion in particular. As Elbasani argues, basing on her research in the Balkans, “[i]n line with their democratic aspirations, all post-communist states have allocated new religious freedoms, while taking the lead in closely managing the emerging religious groups and activities. Institutionally, post-communist states have continued to ‘administer’ religious organisations by preserving a multi-tiered system of registrations and institutional controls, subject to unilaterally revocable conditions.” (Elbasani, 2016: 257)

In a range of post-communist Eastern European countries, Islam is recognized as a ‘traditional’ religion, either in the constitution, by a *lex specialis*, or by bilateral state-Muslim agreement. These include Russia, Belarus, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, and Bosnia. In several states (including Muslim majority Albania), Islam (first of all, in its legalist form but also in such a heterodox form as Bektashism) is regarded as a ‘traditional’ religion, though there is no specific legislation making this official. In Bulgaria, the law on religions “expresses respect” for Islam, next to the other two named religions, namely, Christianity and Judaism.

The fact that in a number of post-communist Eastern European states Islam is recognized officially (and in a number unofficially) as a traditional religion, when talking about governance of Islam, makes the Eastern European context significantly different from the Western European. Designating Islam as a ‘traditional’ religion may mean that the State recognizes Islam, through its followers and their representative organizations, as ‘indigenous’ (as opposed to the universal view of Islam in Western Europe as alien, and therefore in need of domestication). For instance, the Lithuanian Constitutional Court has argued that by passing the law on religions, the Parliament merely acknowledged that Sunni Islam is a traditional religion in Lithuania rather than establishing it as such: “The constitutional establishment of the institute of recognition of churches and religious organisations as traditional means that such recognition by the state is irrevocable. Tradition is neither created nor abolished by an act of the will of the legislature. The naming of churches and religious organisations as traditional is not an act of their establishment as traditional organisations but an act stating both their tradition and the status of their relations with society, which does not depend on the willpower of the legislature.” (Constitutional, 2007). Arguing in this vein, Islam may not be purposefully domesticated by the State, as it is already domestic by virtue of having been present in the country for centuries. Though the Lithuanian case may be exceptional and one of the more extreme (the other similar cases being Polish and Belarusian), it nonetheless is symptomatic and representative of the differences in governance of Islam between Western and Eastern Europe. Recognition of Islam as traditional may also mean that the very act of recognition of Islam as a traditional religion is, on the side of the State, an act of its domestication or completion of the process of domestication. But this is possible only in countries with a system of traditional religions where Islam is not (yet) recognized as traditional.

Top-down led institutionalization of Islam, rather than the desired accommodation, may, and indeed in post-communist Eastern Europe does, become co-optation and serves as part of the

churchification of Islam, when the State expects that representative Muslim organizations model themselves after and function like... Christian Churches with their ecclesiastical hierarchical structures. Though this state-pursued strategy of churchification of Islam is not universal in Eastern Europe, one may discern its features in half a dozen post-communist Eastern European countries, for instance, Bosnia, Lithuania, North Macedonia, Bulgaria and several others. What is understood here as churchification, is the requirement or at least expectation on the State's side that national Muslim communities found representative religious organizations headed by spiritual authorities, who not only serve as interlocutors between the State and the Muslim population, but also as the sole (hierarchically structured) ecclesiastical institutions, staffed by professional religious servants of different ranks in subordination to each other.

In a number of cases, in its governance of Islam, with the aim to co-opt but also to enable its control, the State expects (through setting legal requirements) that Muslims form a unitary (umbrella) religious organization to represent all Muslims of the country—irrespective of their denomination, background or ideology. Hungary, Serbia, Latvia, North Macedonia and Slovakia are representatives of this approach by the State, all in their own ways. So, for instance, in Latvia the law requires religious communities to form representative bodies on the basis of “one body per religion/confession.” But to do that, there have to be no less than ten registered congregations of that particular religion. As Muslims may have only one representative religious organization (association), it would have to either unite disparate registered Muslim religious congregations of different nature (denomination or ideology-wise) or be representative of just one particular denomination or ideology, but at the expense of all others. There has been no attempt to form such a representative Muslim religious association in the country.

Eastern Europe is different from Western Europe not only in that Islam in many Eastern European countries has been institutionalized a long time ago, but that the State has recognized representative Muslim religious organizations (couched in spiritual administrations headed by (chief) mufti). The collapse of both the USSR and socialist Yugoslavia set in motion a process of the nationalization of Islam in newly formed states. It was particularly expressed in the successor states of Yugoslavia but is also discernible in such former constituent Soviet republics like Lithuania and Belarus. Though spearheaded by national representative Muslim religious organizations, this process of the nationalization of Islam was very much supported and at times pushed for by state authorities themselves. While Bosnia and Kosovo—Muslim majority countries—are the two most obvious examples, Serbia, North Macedonia, and Montenegro are other instances of the nationalization of Islam through institutionalization, when formerly pan-Yugoslav Muslim religious organizations became not only national but practically autocephalous, in a process reminiscent of earlier autocephalization of Orthodox Churches in this part of Europe. Thus, Islam did not merely become Islam in... Serbia, Montenegro, or Bulgaria but rather Islam of Serbia, Montenegro, and Bulgaria, if not altogether Serbian, Montenegrin, or Bulgarian Islam. Ultimately, in the Eastern European realm, the institutionalization of Islam, along with its co-optation and bringing it under state control, served the purpose of its nationalization, a secondary ‘domestication.’ Therefore, the earlier referred to observation that “religion policy in particular allows European governments to gradually take ‘ownership’ of their Muslim populations because it grants them unique influence over organizations and leadership within

this hard-to-reach minority” (Laurence, 2012: 12), is very relevant in the post-communist Eastern European context.

Furthermore, the governance of Islam in countries with autochthonous Muslim communities significantly differs from governance of Islam in Western Europe also in that, though not universally, in many parts of Eastern Europe ‘nationalized’ Islam is often pitted against forms of Islamic religiosity deemed alien. This way, groups espousing revivalist Islam (such as Salafis) sometimes tend to be doubly marginalized and excluded—first by state-recognized representative Muslim religious organizations, then by the states themselves, out of security concerns but often on advice from representative organizations. Ultimately, there is a tentative tandem emerging between the dominant Muslim religious organizations, as a rule run by the autochthonous Muslims, and the State to control, marginalize (often through securitization) and, if need be, eradicate unwelcome forms of Islamic religiosity.

In result, in many, if not most, post-communist Eastern European states, one sees a substantial involvement of the State in seeking to mold Islam (and its representative organizations) into forms acceptable to the State. Often, this is being done by co-opting the Islamic leadership through recognition of their religious organizations as representative of the entire Muslim population of the country, this way endorsing the chosen form of Islamic religiosity as almost official Islam in the State, all at the expense of other forms of Islamic religiosity. As Elbasani argues, “[t]he way in which institutions, interpretations, and legitimising arguments have developed in post-communist contexts (...) reflects the crucial role of the state in establishing, framing, and maintaining an organised ‘religious field’. This organised ‘field’ implies collaboration between state institutions, intellectual circles, and nationwide religious hierarchies in enforcing ‘official’ versions of Islam, which develop in tandem with government exigencies and policies.” (Elbasani, 2016: 254). In this regard, post-communist Eastern Europe is once again markedly different from Western Europe in its governance of religion (including Islam).

Additionally, in a number of Eastern European states there have been or were newly established ‘faculties of Sharia’ to train professional imams. In itself, this is of no wonder, as such institutions may be seen as an equivalent of Christian priest seminaries or university divinity faculties/ departments found in practically all European countries. What is of importance here is the legal requirement that individuals who wish to serve officially as imams need to be graduates from national institutions of higher education where imam training programs are offered. In some cases, only nationals of the country are allowed to serve as imams. These requirements, as much as they are to preclude graduates of Islamic universities abroad from taking up positions as imams, are also to safeguard that Islam preached at a given country’s mosques is of a nationally approved version, with as little Middle Eastern or other foreign influences as possible. Besides, the nationally approved and endorsed imam training programs, next to serving the function of reproducing ‘European’ Islam-minded imams, also have a security dimension—Islam taught at such government-controlled programs and later preached to the laity by graduates is safe and sterile, free of the radicalization virus that may lead to the disease of extremism.

Churchification of Islam in Muslim majority contexts?

There has been so far very little research on what may amount to churchification of Islam in Muslim-majority contexts. Nonetheless, those engaged in research on institutionalization of Islam in contemporary (often post-colonial) Muslim majority countries may observe not only a trend of growing state control over Muslim religious collectivities but also conscious efforts by the governments to mold those Muslim religious collectivities into church-like ecclesiastical-bureaucratic institutions, aka national, if not state, Muslim Churches. In a number of Muslim-majority countries, one witnesses emergence and strengthening (foremost by top-down will) of monopolistic Muslim religious institutions claiming and charged with supervising religious activities of the entire Muslim populations who are voluntaristically assigned to one – state endorsed – form of Islamic religiosity.

Sedgwick, having researched Muslim-majority contexts, makes an observation that “[w]here a single denomination constitutes the establishment, it may exercise significant control over the general sociocultural environment.” (Sedgwick, 2004: 234). He further argues that “[w]here there is a monopolistic religious or political system, the environment is under the control of the established church or ruling party, and all parties and denominations other than those that constitute the establishment will find themselves excluded, in a state of high tension with both their environment and the political or religious establishment—or even with both, given the tendency for religious and political authority to coalesce in monopolistic systems.” (Sedgwick, 2004: 233). These Sedgwick’ observations are particularly valid for some Muslim-majority countries, especially those, where the overwhelming majority of the population has historically adhered to a particular denomination of Islam.

The Turksih example, although admittedly, very peculiar, is telling. The Turkish Presidency of Religious Affairs (*Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı*), universally known as Diyanet, has been found by researchers to resemble a national, if not state, church (Tezcan, 2016: 167). Sunier et al. argue that “in practice, Diyanet operates mainly as a modern Sunni ‘church’ institution” (Sunier et al., 2011: 144). Shakir compares it even to the Catholic Church: “[w]ith close to 80,000 employees and a budget larger than that of many service ministries of the Republic, (...) is probably the world’s largest and most centralized Muslim religious organization, comparable in scope and capabilities only to the Vatican. The Diyanet employs imams, pays their salaries, organizes religious life and acts as the highest religious authority in questions of doctrine and practice.” (Shakir, 2017: 110) Gözaydin, although avoiding Christian terminology and not calling the Diyanet a church, in her analysis of how the Diyanet is structured and functions, nonetheless shows it to be a virtually national Turkish “Muslim Church.” (Gözaydin, 2013; 2006). Some might argue that Diyanet is even a Muslim Church with a global reach, as it sends its cadre to serve as imams wherever there is a demand for them, particularly Turkish diaspora in the West.

In post-communist Central Asia, arguably, the process of nationalization of Islam, similar to that observed in the post-Yugoslavian Balkans, is coupled with institutionalization of Islam which has led to creation of national Muslim spiritual administrations (aka muftiates) which lately have been strengthened through legal measures to assume the role of sole supervisors of Islamic affairs in the respective countries. These monopolistic national Muslim spiritual

administrations control (or at least seek to do so) and run the respective countries' mosques by appointing imams and ensuring that Islam preached by them is the 'correct' one approved jointly by the state and the muftiate; they also provide exclusive (or exclusively valid) Islamic education in establishments of higher education staffed by faculty who are part of the overall ecclesiastical-bureaucratic structure, this way making it a closed eco-system. In consequence, the outsiders, like revivalists (Salafis and others), then, are as a rule 'othered', sometimes to the point of their securitization by both the state and the muftiate and even outright pushing beyond the pale by banning their activities.

These tentative insights into the dynamics of institutionalization and governance of Islam in Muslim-majority contexts need further thorough investigations before one conclude that the churchification of Islam is a wider phenomenon and not limited to Muslim-minority contexts like Europe.

Conclusions

Governance of Islam as part of the overall governance of religion (and often religious diversity) in contemporary nation states may go in diverse directions – from state's sincere pretence at neutrality to suffocating control. The chosen path is determined by an array of circumstances, not least of which is a divide between Muslim majority and minority contexts. In a Muslim-minority context such as Europe, one can discern certain features in the governance of Islam that, as has been argued in this article, amount to and may be labelled 'churchification of Islam'. However, due to the differences in the nature and origin of Muslim communities, this churchification of Islam proceeds differently in Western and Eastern Europe: while in Western Europe, Muslim communities are in a constant process of establishing themselves, Eastern Europe hosts well-established autochthonous populations of Muslim background. If in Western Europe, institutionalization of Islam is often permeated by rethoric around domestication and 'Europeanization', in Eastern Europe, Islam had been already long perceived as 'domestic' and European by most sides concerned.

Ultimately, both the process and the end-state of churchification in the western and eastern parts of Europe are markedly different – while in West Europe churchification of Islam often limits itself to establishment of 'councils' – umbrella organizations representing an array of Muslim religious collectivities (whose practices forms of Islamic religiosity may significantly vary from each other), in Eastern Europe this often ends in the formation of a 'national Muslim Church'.

In some of the Muslim-majority countries one may also observe a similar trend – birth of national, if not altogether state, Muslim Churches. Turkey is often provided as an case but other states, like some in Central Asia, may be even better examples. However, before one can come to any well grounded conclusion that there is indeed a process of churchification of Islam in Muslim-majority contexts, more in-depth research is needed.

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«Исламды шіркеулендіру» қазіргі ұлттық мемлекеттердегі дінді басқарудың жанама өнімі ретінде

Андатпа. Мақалада қазіргі ұлттық мемлекеттердегі ислам дінінің басқарылуы «шіркеулену» призмасы арқылы қарастырылады. Шіркеу концепциясы бұл жерде кез келген христиандық коннотациялардан ада әлеуметтанулық категория ретінде пайдаланылады. Дегенмен Эрнст Трельч пен Макс Вебердің шіркеуді әлеуметтанулық концептуализациялауының бастапқы кезеңі негізінен христиандық қауымдастықтарды талдауға негізделгенін мойындау керек. Мақалада байқалған «исламның шіркеулену» құбылысы Еуропадағы аз ғана мұсылмандары бар елдер контекстінде исламды реттеудің айқындаушы белгісі немесе тіпті жанама өнімі болып табылады деп тұжырымдайды. Мақалада әрі қарай «исламның шіркеуленуі» Еуропа сияқты азшылықты құрайтын мұсылман елдеріндегі исламның институционализациясының динамикасын түсіндіру үшін пайдалы аналитикалық құрал бола алады, сонымен қатар мұсылмандардың басым көпшілігін құрайтын елдердің контексттеріне де кеңейтілуі мүмкін деп тұжырымдайды.

Түйін сөздер: дінді басқару, исламды басқару, ислам шіркеуі, Еуропадағы ислам, мұсылмандар аз шоғырланған елдер контексті; халқының көпшілігі мұсылмандар бар елдер контексті.

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«Воцерковление ислама» – побочный продукт управления исламом в современных национальных государствах

Аннотация. В статье рассматривается управление исламом в современных национальных государствах через призму так называемого «воцерковления» ислама. Понятие церкви здесь используется как социологическая категория, свободная от каких-либо христианских коннотаций, хотя, надо признать, что ранний этап социологической концептуализации церкви Эрнстом Трельчем и Максом Вебером в значительной степени основывался на анализе христианских сообществ. В статье утверждается, что наблюдаемый феномен «воцерковления ислама» является определяющей чертой или даже побочным продуктом регулирования ислама в контекстах стран с мусульманским меньшинством, как, например, в Европе. Далее в статье утверждается, что «воцерковление ислама» может быть полезным аналитическим инструментом не только для объяснения динамики институционализации ислама в странах с мусульманским меньшинством, таких, как Европа, но и может быть распространено на контексты стран с мусульманским большинством населения.

Ключевые слова: управление религией; управление исламом; воцерковление ислама; ислам в Европе; контекст стран с мусульманским меньшинством населения; контекст стран с мусульманским большинством населения.

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