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the corporatist antecedent of contemporary state-Islam relations

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Abstract
This paper explores the theoretical underpinnings of the state-led establishment of quasi-monopolistic Islam Councils in Western Europe. The author argues that national consultations representing the Muslim faith in seven European countries share institutional characteristics with 19th and 20th century corporatist arrangements with Labor and Jewish Communities, and pursue similar goals of rendering faith and group ideology compatible with national citizenship while encouraging the moderation of group demands on the state.

Keywords   Islam; Europe; corporatism; state-church relations

The widespread economic, social and political marginalization of migrant-origin populations of Muslim back ground in Europe has led to re-Islamization, periodic riots, and isolated acts of terrorism. European governments have pursued a variety of policy responses to the new Muslim presence, ranging from citizenship law reform and headscarf bans to religious accommodation and the overhauling of intelligence laws. Scholars have focused on the confrontations and rhetoric surrounding the difficulties of Muslims' integration in Europe (Buruma, 2006; Cesari, 2004); on the least and most favorable contexts for Muslim integration (Kuru, 2007; Fetzer and Soper, 2005; Koopmans *et al*, 2005); and on the desire of Muslim elites to engage in European political life (Klausen, 2005). Much attention has been paid to the obstacles to Muslims' political mobilization: their fragmentation along ethnic, national, ideological and sectarian lines makes collective action difficult. Warner and Wenner see 'the multiplication of Islamic groups, rather than their consolidation or unification' Warner and Wenner (2006: 472), while Pfaff and Gill blame 'the highly decentralized nature of Islam' for 'reducing the likelihood of large-scale group cooperation' Pfaff and Gill (2006: 810).

Political scientists have largely overlooked the most striking policy response of recent years to the growth of Islam in Europe, and the only effort to date that has successfully mobilized a majority of Muslim leaders to rise above their various divisions: the establishment of quasi-monopolistic Islam Councils by national interior ministries. The past 15 years have seen a proliferation of state-led consultations, councils, conferences and commissions established to represent the Muslim faith in 'state-religion' relations at the national and local level (see Table 1).[1] While all European countries with a Muslim minority engage in some form of state-Islam relations, seven countries have created formal Islam Councils: Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands and Spain. Notwithstanding these countries' distinct state-church institutions and state-society traditions (Minkenberg, 2003; Ferrari, 2002), they have enacted broadly analogous policies towards organized Muslim religious communities.

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These national councils have forced together, under their respective governmental auspices, representatives of hundreds of Muslim prayer spaces in each country – Political Islamist federations alongside local and foreign leaders of 'official' (embassy) and local grassroots Islam – and tasked them (and their regional branches) with resolving many

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of the practical challenges of religious observance facing Muslim populations (Laurence, 2006). The councils have received limited attention in cross-national studies even though they are the principal point of contact between governments and Muslim religious associations at a time when Muslims' political integration in elected and appointed capacities is practically non-existent.

This paper will attempt to situate this institutional development within the literature on corporatism and neo-corporatism, and will treat Muslims as the latest in a line of social, economic and religious groups to pass through this process on the way to full political participation. To conceive of a given Muslim population as a cohesive 'group' requires an active imagination. But the associational fabric of Muslim religious life – thousands of prayer spaces and mosques – is quite real, as is the necessity of resolving practical problems related to the practice of Islam, from appointing chaplains in

Table 1: State-Islam councils in Europe

State-Islam councils in Europe	Founding year
Islamische Glaubensgemeinschaft in Österreich (IGO)	1979
Comisión Islámica de España (CIE, Spain)	1992
Exécutif musulman belge (EMB, Belgium)	1998
Conseil français du culte musulman (CFCM, France)	2003
Contactorgaan Moslems en de Overheid (CMO, NL)	2004
Consulta islamica italiana (CII, Italy)	2004
Deutsche Islamkonferenz (DIK, Germany)	2006

Austria is exceptional for its 1912 recognition of Islam, related to its rule over Bosnia-Herzegovina.

prisons to overseeing halal certification or organizing religious education in public schools. The institutional form of state-Islam consultations on these pragmatic issues has influenced the attitudes of mosque federations towards national governments. This process shares many characteristics with earlier state-society governance arrangements, in particular those gleaned from the literature on neo-corporatism, that is (1) recognizing the legal authority of the national government; (2) changing tactics of political participation and the use of institutionalized forms of protest; (3) softening of negotiating stance; (4) establishing non-violent credentials; (5) demonstrating intra-religious tolerance and inter-religious dialog. The cumulative effect of these arrangements, in other words, has had a broader impact on the political behavior of mosque federations, including in times of crisis (e.g., acts of terrorism or war, urban unrest or religious 'outrage') (Laurence, 2008). This paper explores the rationale and design of Islam councils by placing them in their historical and institutional context.[2]

EXPANDING STATE-CHURCH RELATIONS

European Muslims' religious 'needs' stand out not simply because the societies they inhabit have long undergone a general 'secularization' (Berger, 1981; Casanova, 1997; Norris and Inglehart, 2006) but because other religious communities – notably Jewish and Christian ones – settled their equivalent practical requirements in consultative structures in the 19th and early 20th centuries. The trope of Islam's incompatibility with 'Western' religious practices is well worn in public and media discourses surrounding Muslim integration in Europe (Deltombe, 2006), but many points of tension share common roots in the plain material inadequacy of Muslims' religious infrastructure. This is most obvious in the shortage of mosques and imams, but several images of Islamic religiosity have been seared into the public imagination: the slaughtering of lambs in bathtubs for Eïd-al-Adha; men praying on rugs in public streets outside mosques; children attending unregistered Quran schools; flying the dead to be buried in the country 'of origin'; or the extremist preaching of rogue imams or of fundamentalist chaplains in prisons. Each of these issues can be traced to a deficit in ordinary state-religion oversight and accommodation.

Centralized and local bodies representing Jewish, Protestant and Catholic hierarchies already serve as interlocutors for administrators to address challenges of religious observance in a formal and relatively transparent process that takes conflicts over religious practices out of the 'public sphere': for example, to license kosher slaughterhouses and butchers; grant permits for synagogues or churches; organize religious class in public schools or in parochial schools recognized by state authorities; create confessional graveyards (or sections in public cemeteries), etc. (Albert, 1977; Schwarzfuchs, 1979; Hervieu-Lèger, 1997; Long, 1991). The contemporary Islam councils have prepared the ground for practical local – and national-level solutions to a series of controversial issues related to religious practices that had long interfered with the social acceptance and integration of Muslims in their adopted European societies.

As is the case with Central Councils of Jews, Protestants or the Episcopal Conference, religious consultations with Muslims are properly understood as 'Councils for the Muslim Religion,' not as 'Muslim Councils.' In other words, these should not be mistaken for instances of political representation. The working agenda of these bodies is statutorily limited to state-religion affairs, that is for the practical needs of an organized

religion, and is not intended to represent the masses of a specific religious origin. The councils provide a regular administrative forum in which to discuss the technical and practical challenges at the intersection of religious practice and public policy – from slaughterhouses to religious education in public schools and visas for the Hajj, thus banalizing and institutionalizing the resolution of controversial issues surrounding Muslims' religious observance.

EXTRA-PARLIAMENTARY CONSULTATION AND POLITICAL MODERATION

As with earlier instances of state consultation with civil society associations, governments harbor an agenda that goes beyond institutional accommodation. Small, potentially violent minority wings of underrepresented groups have threatened social peace and political stability in earlier, critical moments of democratic consolidation in Western Europe and the USA (Bendix, 1996; Dyson, 1980; Skocpol and Somers, 1980; Jacobs, 1982; Skerry, 1998). Corporatism as an extra-parliamentary practice began in earnest in the 1880s and 1890s following the legalization of trade unions and other secondary associations across Europe. Contemporary political Islamist movements share commonalities with 20th century movements that served as philosophical platforms for violent offshoots: for example, anarchist, syndicalist and other far left movements in the 1920s and 1970s, the black militancy of the late 1960s and early 1970s. In the period before 1914, one historian of the time wrote that 'workers' syndicalism appeared as a formidable force ready to give assault to bourgeois society at the very moment when enemies outside [were preparing] to attack' (Martin-Saint-Léon, 1923: 17). Militant organizations that committed political violence – turn-of-the century

'consultations now exist in nearly every European state with a sizeable Muslim minority'

anarchists, post-war Black Panthers, Red Brigades, Red Army Faction, for example – each posed a similar low-level terrorist threat to the violent fringes of Political Islam (PI) in their respective contexts (Roy, 2005; Coolsaet, 2004). The challenge of how to incorporate transnational movements with potentially extremist elements into a democratic institutional framework is thus once again a crucial one.

In each of these cases, governments pursued a broad institutional engagement of 'moderates' to help defuse class conflict, or racial and religious tensions. These governments used what Dyson calls 'summit diplomacy' among peak civil society associations to create a dynamic of administrative behavioral incentives and disincentives. Many governing coalitions sought trade unions' help to pursue economic modernization policies and contribute to social peace in potentially pre-revolutionary situations (Schmitter and Lehmbruch, 1979; Boismenu, 1994; Williamson, 1985; Beer, 1982). American and British governments sought 'moderate' black associations' dedication to institutional forms of protest as well as social and political integration (Skerry, 1998; Jacobs, 1982: 237). These extra-parliamentary institutions offered civil society organizations an exclusive role in administering specific practical tasks.

In addition to this technical role, a political behavioral agenda undergirded the institutional process: to encourage moderate demands and traditional political participation (Williamson, 1989). A central claim of the neo-corporatist

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literature is that interest groups 'exercise restraint in pursuing their goals in return for their official recognition and privileges' (Olson, 1986). The advantages and privileges of institutional access for organized interest groups, as Offe describes it, are balanced by a set of restrictions and obligations: interest organizations will 'behave responsibly, predictably and will refrain from non-negotiable demands or unacceptable tactics' Offe (1981). Although national governments have taken different national paths and exhibit a good degree of institutional variety, consultations now exist in nearly every European state with a sizeable Muslim minority.

Safran (1983) detected a 'whiff of fascism' in the neo-corporatist revival of the 1970s, but in reality its contours had already been softened; as Berger (1981) convincingly argued, this is 'not your grandfather's corporatism.' Unlike its fascist or authoritarian predecessors, where interest groups were 'managed' in a police state, neo-corporatism stands for 'a kinder, gentler corporatism … [that] allows liberal societies to accommodate class and interest-group conflict without authoritarianism' (Dyson, 1980: 68–9). Neo-corporatism requires 'the opposite of a bully state,' Keeler says. It needs, rather, 'a wheeling and dealing type of public authority seeking out allies, probing and maneuvering for their active consensus' (Keeler, 1987: 17).

A CHARTER FOR MUSLIMS IN EUROPE

In order to gain access to the quasi-corporatist privileges that Jewish, Catholic and Protestant communities presently enjoy, competing Muslim organizations have sought to project the qualities that endear rulers to the faithful (e.g., law-abiding, morally upright, socially engaged) while downplaying those traits that might threaten to be perceived as a threat to public order (e.g., undermining the state's legal authority, political sovereignty or condoning anti-state violence).

Contemporary 'Muslim charters' are a small but important part of the nexus between public recognition, interest representation and political moderation in state-Islam relations in Western Europe. In them, political Islamists and other Muslim groups articulate conspicuously reasonable positions on the themes that have made the presence of Islam in Europe so controversial: Is their loyalty to the nation or their religious community? What is the place of religion in public life? Are social integration and political participation necessary? These questions have gained urgency, as Muslim populations in Europe suffer high unemployment, varying degrees of social alienation and political underrepresentation, and some have been drawn to violent extremism.

The 'Charter of Muslims in Europe' that was recently ratified in Brussels (January 2008) should be evaluated in the light of the political opportunity structure created by state-Islam consultations. The six pages of bullet points – pledging allegiance to their host societies – were issued by the Federation of Islamic Organizations of Europe (FIOE), a thriving network of mosques and prayer spaces in 27 countries and is considered an offshoot of the Muslim Brotherhood movement. The charter outlines 'how we should act as positive citizens and not be a threat,' as Ibrahim el Zayat, a spokesman, put it.[3] The document, ratified by FIOE representatives in all European Union member-states, includes a call for all Muslims in Europe to 'enhance the values of mutual understanding, work for peace and the welfare of society, moderation and inter-cultural dialog, removed from all inclinations of extremism and exclusion.'[4]

This sort of public posturing – an unabashed quest for *Salonfähigkeit* – has

become a recurring spectacle among European-based political Islamists in the past two decades. Beginning around 1989, interior ministers across the continent wrested state-Islam relations from the foreign policy desk and advertised a vacancy in national state-church bureaucracies for 'moderate' Muslim voices. By the mid-1990s, all European governments had stopped purely 'outsourcing' state-Islam relations. But while some then opted cautiously for a pluralist regime, others went the neo-corporatist route. Incentives created by this new forum for interest representation led to a competition among Muslim associations to gain the government's confidence. As Minkenberg writes, 'church-state relations represent an institutional arrangement which provides an "opportunity structure" for religious interests in the political process' (Minkenberg, 2003; Ferrari, 2002). Peak federations of prayer spaces vied for recognition and a permanent role in the Islamic infrastructure – mosques, imams, chaplains, religion teachers, etc. – which was formerly dominated by the foreign embassies of predominantly Muslim sending states (Laurence, 2006).[5]

By enjoining its membership to strike 'a harmonious balance between preservation of Muslim identity and the duties of citizenship,' the FIOE charter of January 2008 continues down a path strewn with earlier such unilateral declarations of good intentions: a 1990 *Bozza d'Intesa* in Italy, the 1995 *Charte du culte musulman en France*, and the 2002 *islamische Charta* in Germany, among others.

THE SYNDICALIST AND JEWISH ROOTS OF MUSLIM MODERATION

The path to Muslim leaders' contemporary attestations of good citizenship can be traced back to critical junctures in the consolidation of citizenship for other marginal groups in 19th – and 20th-century European liberal nation-states (Bendix, 1996; Maier, 1988; Dyson, 1980). The charters being signed by Muslim leaders today share interesting commonalities with the responses furnished two centuries ago by Jewish notables to the '*questions gênantes*' posed by Napoleon Bonaparte and Kaiser Wilhelm I as a condition for the public recognition of Judaism in France and Prussia, respectively (Schwarzfuchs, 1979; Markell, 2003). The notables were polled on their positions on polygamy, divorce and intermarriage, on their attitudes towards fellow citizens and respect for the law, on rabbinical appointments, community policy and economic integration. These questions 'obliged Jews to choose regarding the crucial problems between Jewish law and citizenship: it forced them to reform both religiously and civilly' (Trigano, 2003).

The 19th century witnessed the creation of state-led Jewish *consistoires* and *Körperschaften* that guaranteed community leaders a thriving religious infrastructure (under state oversight), as well as the promise of political integration and access to elected office for individual Jewish citizens. The subsequent accords signed between community and state representatives were what Markell calls 'a double bind': they 'secured recognition for the Jews, yet [they] also secured recognition for [the state] by placing Jews into a new relationship with the state' (2003: 141). This is a common thread in corporatist and neo-corporatist style negotiations: interest groups act as partners of the state, and 'not only represent the interests of their members vis-à-vis the state but also the state's interests vis-à-vis their members' (Weβels, 1997: 6).

An even more apt comparison to today's Muslim charters, however, may be with the *Charte d'Amiens*, signed in 1906 by the Confédération Générale du Travail (CGT), the Communist trade union,

a year after the failed Russian revolution. In it, the CGT assuaged fears of its own revolutionary intentions by recognizing the legitimacy of political parties and 'the imperative of engaging in dialog with the state.' The labor leaders who signed at Amiens asserted their right to call general strikes, but they also issued a call to end 'reciprocal exclusion' in favor of 'mutual recognition' (Touraine *et al*, 1984; Alaluf, 2005). Within 14 years, the CGT affirmed 'the superiority of the administrator over the militant'; in effect, the syndicalists adopted a '*socialisme d'institutions*' in the words of one contemporary observer (Leroy, 1921: 10). As a final point of comparison, it is worth mentioning the set of guidelines produced by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People in 1976 regarding how to 'foster improved relations between politicians and officials … and generally to improve the administrative expertise of NAACP branches' which helped administrators distinguish 'moderates' from militants (Jacobs, 1982: 148).

What Jewish, black, Muslim and labor leaders have aimed to achieve by asserting their community's compatibility with the legal order and political system is not so much to fulfill the conditions for individual emancipation – after all, many if not most of their constituents were already citizens with full political and associational rights at the time. Rather, it is an attempt to meet the criteria for the state's institutional engagement with civil society organizations. In other words, their concern is not simply public law status (synagogues, mosques, blacks' associations and unions were all legally recognized entities) but equal access to representation of their religious interests within an administrative regime of state-society relations. They are re-structuring and re-orienting themselves in response to a perceived political opportunity structure that would allow them to gain

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representation in institutions and access to organizational resources.

THE NEO-CORPORATIST SHAPE OF STATE-ISLAM CONSULTATIONS

The seven national Islam councils share a set of broad institutional characteristics. These can be illuminated by the literature on liberal neo-corporatism as defined by a government's implicit or explicit use of four mechanisms when creating and maintaining councils. These include (A) recognizing the legal authority of the national government; (B) a government role in the selection of elite participants; (C) the granting of a monopoly of representation; and (D) co-administration (*co-gestion*), or the delegation of policy tasks. This section will briefly elaborate on these mechanisms and signal their relevance to present-day Councils.

(A) RECOGNIZING THE VALIDITY AND SUPREMACY OF CONSTITUTIONAL LAW

The initial task for governments has been to solicit the broad agreement or confirmation of respect for the rule of law among council participants. In state-Islam consultations, the recognition of the national government's legal authority has often taken the form of a Charter in which consultation participants solemnly affirm their religious organization's attachment to the fundamental principles of the republic (this is distinct from the

'unilateral' charters discussed in The neo-corporatist shape of state-Islam consultations section above). In France, participants of the 1999 Al-Istîchara confirmed their commitment to the values and laws of the republic, and Muslim leaders did the same in the Netherlands (the 2005 *Gedragscode*), Austria (2008) and Italy (the 2007 *Carta dei Valori*).

(B) ELITE SELECTION/TRI-PARTITE ARRANGEMENT

The standard metaphor for corporatism is a round table where government, employers and employees sit and negotiate policy and administrative practice. Participants have generally been selected by national government officials or indirectly elected. They are convened in a tri-partite fashion, for example, representatives of the state, labor and capital; or, the state, embassy Islam (EI) and PI. The election or nomination of a council can effectively co-opt leaders and provides a training ground for a new generation of state-oriented elites (Williamson, 1985). Participants in consultative councils are the physical incarnation of their community's place at home in national institutions, by way of personal invitation and interaction with politicians and civil servants. This has usually taken place in the ministry of the interior, which maintains similar contacts with a variety of the other major recognized world religions. The precise formula has varied but in general, one-third of participants in formal state-Islam consultations come from federations of prayer spaces affiliated with EI, one-third from Political Islamist federations, and one-third are individual Muslim intellectuals or converts recruited by the government. EI and PI (instead of employers and unions) sit at the negotiating table presided over by the state. The government may preside, as in Italy and Germany, or act as observers and technical legal advisors, as is the case in France.

(C) GRANTING A MONOPOLY OF REPRESENTATION

A key feature of neo-corporatist arrangements is the hierarchical ordering of a limited number of interest groups (Schmitter, 1974). They are bound – voluntarily, as it were – into a single cohesive organization. These bodies might be advisory or consultative, and/or enshrined by decree or in legislation; they are either indirectly elected from a college of delegates or are directly appointed, or a mixture of the two. The ultimate goal may be the granting of the official status as a religious community (e.g., *Körperschaft des öffentlichen Rechts* in Germany, an association *loi 1905* in France, or an *Intesa* in Italy).

(D) CO-ADMINISTRATION (CO-GESTION) AND DELEGATION

The final step in state-Islam consultations has been to coordinate the formation of working groups or committees on these concrete tasks to be accomplished. The representatives of the state and participating interest groups 'collaborate to define the goals and content of policy and to implement the policies agreed upon to realize those goals' (Coleman and Chasson, 2002: 173; see also Keeler, 1987; Boismenu, 1994). Interlocutors are granted control over valuable services; for example, the involvement of trade unions in the administration of health benefits for members. They are 'not mere interest intermediaries, but co-responsible 'partners' in governance' (Schmitter, 1981: 295; Schmitter and Lehmbruch, 1979). In the case of the French FNSEA, representatives of the state and farmers participated in public law *chambres d'agriculture* responsible for 'implementing many of the policy reforms at the department level' (Coleman and Chasson, 2002: 173). Successful membership in Islam councils has been

Table 2: What is on the agenda?: working groups of three state-Islam consultations

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Conseil français du culte musulman (France, 2003)

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(1) Imams and the training of imams; (2) chaplains in hospitals, prisons and the military; (3) regulation of ritual slaughter for Eid al Adha; (4) audiovisual media (weekly Islam broadcast on France 2 and CFCM website); (5) inter-religious dialog; (6) organization of the pilgrimage to Mecca; (7) university diploma in Islamic studies; (8) teaching about Islam and Muslims in school texts; (9) membership dues and finances; (10) juridical statute of CFCM; (11) halal certification; (12) foundation for Muslim works in France (creation of prayer spaces); and (13) regulations and structure of religious associations.

Deutsche Islamkonferenz (Germany, 2006)

Working Group 1: the German social order and values consensus; Working Group 2: religious questions in the German constitutional context; Working Group 3: the building of bridges in the economy and the media; Dialog Group 4: security and Islamism.

Consulta Islamica (Italy, 2004)

(1) Integration issues at home, school and the workplace; (2) safeguarding the specificities of religion and Muslim traditions including men's and women's rights, use of the veil, observance of Muslim holidays and precepts, ritual animal slaughter, and Muslim cemeteries; (3) Italian-language sermons in mosques and the training of imams; (4) registration of prayer spaces to normalize 'critical situations' [in small cities] (5) social conditions and rights of immigrants including asylum, humanitarian protection, residence permits, family reunification and citizenship; (6) access of Muslim chaplains to prisons and hospital.

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rewarded with control over specific delegated tasks of state-Islam relations; this could be seen as a modern-day, religious version of *co-gestion* (co-administration) and the delegation of policy tasks. In France, for example, representatives of the participating federations sit on 13 committees. In Germany, the *Deutsche Islamkonferenz* (DIK) is divided into 430-person working groups. These groups issue reports once or twice annually and make relevant administrative proposals.

Areas of *co-gestion* in Islam councils include smoothing the way for construction permits for mosques, overseeing halal regulations, aiding the process of appointment for chaplains in hospitals, prisons or schools, cooperation with Foreign Affairs ministries in visa matters for religious leaders, as well as cemetery planning. Other delegated tasks include:

certifying halal food providers, providing religious education in public schools where permitted, and overseeing religious animal slaughter, coordinating local Muslims' visits on the annual Hajj, co-ordinating the observance of holidays, such as Eid al Adha, and fixing a common timing for the holy month of Ramadan's beginning and end (see Table 2). In Belgium, the Muslim executive arranges religious lessons for 55,000 students, distributes publicly funded salaries to around 700 imams and administers public subsidies for state-recognized mosques. To cite the French example, the national and local councils have announced consensus agreements to nominate national and regional chaplains for the armed forces and the prison system in 2006, as well as a decision in 2007 to create a central foundation for mosque financing

(*Fondation pour les oeuvres de l'Islam de France*) and a temporary agreement on an Islamic theological seminary for imams in the Catholic Institute of Paris.

POLITICAL INTEGRATION OR EXTRA-PARLIAMENTARY REPRESENTATION?

The political socialization of second and third generation immigrants, it could be argued, might simply take place by way of party activism. Why have governments in Europe not merely encouraged the integration of Muslims' interests into existing political parties alone? District-level political clubs in the United States helped mobilize ethnic and religious clubs in elections, thereby socializing them in institutional politics (Birnir, 2007; Dahl, 1961: 52–63; Lowi, 1964), and the French Communist Party and its associated trade union played a similar role for Italian, Portuguese and Polish immigrants (Baillet, 2001: 355).

Immigrant associations have been active in continental Europe for roughly four decades and they have undergone several phases of mobilization (see Léveau and Wihtol de Wenden, 2001; Geisser and Kelfaoui, 2001; Geisser, 1997). Successive generations have shifted from a focus on homeland issues and the defence of immigrants' rights (visas, residence permits and social rights, though occasionally political rights and naturalization, too) to the fight against racism, discrimination and right-wing political parties, and the religious accommodation of Muslims as equal citizens. But each of these phases of mobilization has given way to a weak flow of individuals from civil society associations to the political parties.

There are several obstacles to the timely integration of Muslims into political parties. Half of Europe's 15–17 million Muslims are still foreign nationals, and only half of those who are citizens of

'There are several obstacles to the timely integration of Muslims into political parties.'

European states are of majority age and thus able to vote (Earnest, 2006). In fact, political parties across Europe have been actively seeking the support of minority voters (Laurence and Vaisse, 2006; Vaisse, 2007; Laurence, 2007). But very few individuals of Muslim background have gained access to elite leadership positions in political parties or eligible positions on party ballots. This situation is in part the legacy of earlier obstacles to naturalization that have led a high percentage of adult Muslims to retain their original nationality; as resident aliens they are disenfranchised. But it is also the simple reflection of a youthful population. If one excludes minors from the European Muslim population, a relatively small number of majority-age citizens (approximately one-third) remains. The number of elected and appointed political representatives and members of government hailing from these milieus is not trivial but it is quite modest. Roughly one generation after the permanent settlement of immigrant laborers (1973–1974), the children of migrant workers of Muslim background have reached elected office at all levels of government. In the past decade, elections where candidates of Muslim origin ran have produced, roughly: 300 local councillors in the UK; 10 national legislators apiece in Belgium, Germany, Netherlands, the UK; and a handful of cabinet members in France, the Netherlands and the UK.[6] Islam councils offer Muslim religious leaders some other form of interest representation within state institutions; for now, they are practically the only game in town.

Extra-parliamentary consultation has a long pedigree, beginning with 19th and early 20th century profession-based and religious corporatism through post-war race-oriented, agricultural and trade union-oriented neo-corporatism (Schmitter, 1974; Berger, 1981; Jacobs, 1982; Keeler, 1987). The 'by-passing of parliaments' first took place in recognition of the incapacity of voting rights alone to ensure interest representation for a working class electorate. The expansion of the franchise in the course of the 19th and (early) 20th centuries was a watershed moment for democratic politics, but suffrage had transformed representation into a party system, and the working classes had series difficulty gaining entry into party leadership, or for their own new parties to make electoral headway (Epstein, 1980). Its impact was undermined by the fact that legislators were unsalaried, and by the 'gentleman's club' atmosphere that persisted in national parliaments well through the First World War). Persistent restrictions on voter registration kept working men disenfranchised long after the Reform Acts in the United Kingdom (Powell, 2004). Overall, the effects of working class voters on the composition of the nation's political elite, as one scholar of the Edwardian era put it, was 'slow to be felt' (Powell, 2004: 13). There were no working class members in parliament by 1869, and no son of working-class parents had risen to become a member of cabinet from 1801 – 1905; 'not a single exception … was available to symbolize the possibility of rising from humble origins to high office' (Epstein, 1980: chapter 7).

The need for alternative modes of political participation and interest representation soon led to institutional innovation. 'As parliamentary mediation encountered difficulties,' Maier writes of the 20th century's interwar period, 'differing mixtures of bureaucratically sponsored interest-group mediation seemed to offer possible alternatives' Offe (1981: 41; 1988: xii). In other words, if government needed a labor perspective on policy questions, it could turn only to representatives of industrial workers' civil society: the trade union movement and labor leagues. This bears striking similarities to the role of Islam councils with respect to the state of Muslims' representation in elected institutions.

CONCLUSION

Some scholars would argue that the state-Islam councils are not neo-corporatist at all, just as the labor-capital negotiations of the 1970s could be seen as just 'more consultation and cooperation' (Schmitter and Lehmbruch, 1979: 3). Safran, for example, never accepted Schmitter's 'use (and misuse) of the concept of corporatism.' He argued that the 'structured and more or less institutionalized relationships between sectors of civil society and the public authorities do not necessarily add up to corporatism (whether "authoritarian," "societal," "liberal," or "soft").' The reason is that neo-corporatist institutions 'in constitutional democracies' fail to grant a real monopoly on serving as the government's interlocutor in their relevant policy areas: 'such sectors continue to enjoy a variety of behavioral options' (Safran, 1983). Furthermore, the government still reserves the right to act without its partners' assent. For all practical purposes, however, Islam councils have an effective monopoly on the representation of Muslims' religion-based demands.

The differing attitudes towards neo-corporatist bodies held by political parties in national governing coalitions have in the past led to an increase or decrease in the active consultation of trade unions and agricultural unions in policy-making (Keeler, 1987). In their short lives, national Islam councils have had a role to play

in the most sensitive policies affecting Muslims – such as laws on headscarves or counterterrorism – only when they have been invited to do so. Consultations in Germany and France have been left out of the loop during the expulsions of radical imams as well as legislation on religious garb in public schools. For this same reason, however, the state-Islam councils elude the most vociferous critics who viewed neo-corporatism as nothing less than 'neo-feudalism' (Wilson, 1987: 13). As Jacobs points out regarding neo-corporatist councils for UK blacks in the 1980s, black organizations could hope to make only a 'limited impact': 'Groups may be "integrated" into the various bodies ... but their ability to affect directly the policies of ... governments is ... relatively modest' (1982: 253). The limited portfolio of Islam Councils – and their frequent abstinence from important policy matters – from headscarves in schools to religious discrimination or Middle East foreign policy – circumscribes the type of case where their input is sought.

Nor are these Councils exact analogs of the historical state-religion consultations for Jews, Catholics or Protestants of previous centuries, but they share the same broad goal of encouraging religious practice that is compatible with national citizenship. As the Turkish-German author Zafer Senoçak (2003) argues, 'A Muslim march through the institutions would have an emancipatory character by breaking through the metaphorical ghetto walls and leading to a critical relationship to Muslims' own traditions.' Empirical research conducted for the author's larger research project suggests that prayer associations and federations have indeed changed greatly as a result of their participation in Islam councils, and the councils themselves have produced measurable policy outcomes (Laurence, forthcoming). Before their inclusion in state-Islam consultations, some federations were confrontational and made unrealistic demands. The influence of state-Islam consultations – or, indeed, even the *possibility* of being chosen for government consultation – has had a moderating effect. Participants have repeatedly declined to engage in inflammatory or ambiguous rhetoric when presented with the opportunity, for example the 2004 'headscarf laws'; the 2006 Danish cartoon affair; or the 2008 'Fitna' movie broadcast on the internet. They have eschewed street demonstrations in favor of lobbying and lawsuits, and demonstrated an interest in keeping hold over administrative gains in the anodyne realm of technical state-Islam relations.

Populations of Muslim origin in Europe today are not yet politically integrated, but institutionalized government consultations on religious matters involve ever-greater numbers of Muslim association leaders. As a result of meticulous institution-building by interior ministries across the continent, authorities have opened up new channels for addressing the material needs and religious sensibilities of a minority population that is, for the time being, without significant electoral representation.

Acknowledgements

Notes

1 See, for example: Cesari and McLoughlin (2005); Hunter (2002); Koenig (2007); Maussen (2007); Ferrari (2002); Bowen (2005); Klausen (2005); Kastoryano (2002); Haddad and Golson (2007); Haddad and Balz (2006).
2 For an analysis of the councils' performance, see Laurence (2008).

3 Cited in http://www.euractiv.com/en/culture/conflict-cultures-islamic-leader-tells-eu-parliament/
article-169562, 12 January 2008.
4 For full text of charter, published 10 January 2008; see www.eu-islam.org.
5 For an account of the shift from 'outsourcing' state-Islam relations to 'incorporating' Muslim
organizations, see Laurence (2006).
6 Author's calculations, with thanks to research assistant Andrew Lim.

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