

The Milli Görüs of Germany

By David Vielhaber

THE ISLAMIC COMMUNITY MILLI GÖRÜS (ICMG) IS TODAY THE MOST influential Islamist organization in Germany, and one of the most important Islamist movements operating within the Turkish Diaspora in Europe. The movement claims to operate over 514 mosques and cultural centers in eleven European countries; 323 of these institutions are located in Germany.¹ ICMG's total European membership is about 87,000, with an estimated 30,000 members in Germany. The organization estimates that about 300,000 people in Europe attend its religious services on a weekly basis.

The ideology and political agenda of the ICMG are rooted in the ideas of Necmettin Erbakan (1926-2011), a leading Turkish Islamist intellectual who was also one of the most influential Turkish politicians in the second half of the 20th century. Erbakan's political vision was radically anti-secular and anti-Western, and throughout his career, he called for the overthrow of Turkey's secular Kemalist regime. Even though he abhorred Kemalism, Erbakan rejected violent jihadist revolution. Instead, he favored a gradualist, "bottom-up" approach to Islamist revival and political reform that relied heavily on Islamist *dawa*, or ideological preaching and education. In 1969, Erbakan created the Milli Görüs or "National Vision" movement to carry out his agenda of transforming Turkey into an Islamic state.

Milli Görüs missionaries set up the movement's first German branch in the 1970s. The missionary group sought in particular to spread their message among the large numbers of Turkish migrant laborers who had settled in Germany. Since its arrival in Germany roughly four decades ago, the ICMG has remained committed to Erbakan's political vision, both ideologically and tactically. While the Germany- and Turkey-

based Milli Görüş movements share a common ancestry in Erbakan's teachings, the parent movement in Turkey and its offshoot in Germany have faced very different operating environments over the last forty years. In Turkey, Milli Görüş preachers and activists have played an enormously important role in the gradual undermining of secular Kemalist institutions and principles and in the connected rise of political Islam over the last four decades. Now, and especially since the rise to power of the Justice and Development Party (AKP) in 2002, Milli Görüş along with other ideologically-kindred Islamic movements enjoys unprecedented influence over Turkish religious and political life.

In Germany, meanwhile, the ICMG has been repeatedly forced to shift its focus. Germany's security services have closely monitored the ICMG out of concern that it contributes to ideological radicalization and is connected to terrorism. At times, German security forces have moved aggressively to disrupt the group's operations. For instance, in December 2009, German police searched several ICMG facilities as part of an investigation into leading ICMG functionaries on charges of embezzlement and formation of a criminal organization. The investigation was later dropped in September 2009.

To understand ICMG in Germany today, it is useful to consider Islamism's rise in modern Turkey, and specifically, to examine the ideas and methods of Erbakan and the Milli Görüş movement he founded. Indeed, there are important ideological affinities between the Milli Görüş movement in Turkey and the ICMG, as well as substantial present-day operational linkages between the two movements. These linkages are likely to become more salient and powerful over time, not weaker. This is especially the case now, at a time when Turkey is ruled by the AKP, a party with clear Islamist sympathies whose officials have also demonstrated a desire to influence the Turkish Diaspora in Europe.

The Father of Turkish Islamism

NECMETTİN ERBAKAN, WHO DIED IN 2011, WAS THE MOST INFLUENTIAL TURKISH Islamist politician since the Kemalists established the secular Republic of Turkey in 1923. Born into a privileged family and educated in both Turkey and Germany, he was a charismatic, ambitious leader intimately familiar with the political institutions, decision-making processes, and values of Western societies. His political career began in 1969, when he was elected to the Turkish parliament as an independent candidate. Afterwards, Erbakan led five Islamist parties, four of which were banned due to their rejection of Turkey's secular constitution.² Erbakan was himself banned

twice from engaging in any political activity for several years. Nonetheless, he remained firmly in charge of the Turkish political Islamist movement: There were occasional leadership changes in the Virtue Party, for example, but these had no real operational consequences.³ Erbakan personally handpicked key personnel, and the Islamist party's doctrine was based principally on his concept of "Milli Görüş."⁴

Erbakan's manifesto, "Milli Görüş" or "National View," was published in 1969. "National View" was a euphemism for political Islam; the Kemalist nature of the state made the use of an overtly religious name impossible. As with many other Islamist revivalist tracts, the manifesto called for a radical rejection of secular "Western" values and opposition to all kinds of "infidel" economic and political ideas. The manifesto was notable for its deep intolerance toward all Muslims who did not share this vision of Islamist revival and reform. Moreover, the agenda of the manifesto was the overthrow of the Kemalist secular system in Turkey and its replacement with what Erbakan described as a "just order" based on Islam.⁵

A number of Turkish scholars have described how the basic ideological orientation of the Milli Görüş movement has remained unchanged since its founding. According to Sebnem Gumuscu, the "Milli Görüş movement under the leadership of Necmettin Erbakan has implicitly envisioned an Islamic state, and it explicitly aimed for Islamization of Turkish society."⁶ Much like other influential Islamists of his generation, including the Egyptian Said Qutb, Erbakan's political vision was rooted in a highly selective and deeply ideological understanding of Muslim history and Western influence in the world.⁷ He held a romanticized view of Islam's early days, during the first generations after the death of the Prophet Muhammad, and he called for a return to their model by purifying society of its un-Islamic influences.⁸ For Erbakan, the technology and institutions that made the modern West more powerful than Muslim countries were, in fact, originally Islamic.⁹ He blamed what he described as the political, economic, and moral decline of Turkey on corrupting Western influences, which weakened Islam and the Islamic character of Turkey.¹⁰ As Gunes Murat Tezcur points out, for Erbakan, "Islam was a holistic ideology that was in an inevitable struggle with the West."¹¹

Erbakan's political rhetoric was typical of other mainstream Islamists of his generation. He frequently used Manichean language, describing a fundamental struggle between "us versus them," "good versus evil," and "us against the West and the Jews." On "the stump," the author Marvine Howe has observed, Erbakan, "was the consummate Third World radical, crusading against Turkey's Western ties and ubiquitous Zionist plots and in favor of a new Islamic order."¹² Indeed, he seamlessly blended his ideological theories about history and the corrupting influences of Western political and economic theory, particularly capitalism, with a conspiratorial mindset that was

deeply rooted in anti-Zionism and anti-Semitism. Erbakan's worldview was vividly on display in a 2007 interview:

All Infidel nations are one Zionist entity; Jews want to rule from Morocco to Indonesia, the Zionists worked for 5,767 years to build a world order in which all money and power depend on Jews, the US dollar is Zionist money, the Jewish "bacteria" must be diagnosed for a cure to be found; Zionists initiated the Crusades, Jews founded Protestantism and the Capitalist order; and Bush attacked Iraq to build Greater Israel, so Jesus can return.¹³

This rant was hardly a one-time occurrence. In 2010, for example, Erbakan said in an interview with the German newspaper *Die Welt* that,

For 5700 years the Jews have rule the world. It is a rule of injustice, cruelty and violence. They have a strong faith, a religion that tells them that they should rule the world. Check out this one dollar bill. It is a symbol, a pyramid of 13 steps, with an eye to the tip. It is the symbol of Zionist world domination. The stages represent four "open" and other secret societies, behind that there is a "parliament of 300" and 33 rabbis parliaments, and beyond that others, invisible leaders. They rule the world via the capitalist world order.¹⁴

As with other Islamists of his generation, Erbakan was an ardent believer in Islamic solidarity and the idea that the whole of the world's Muslims could be unified into one Umma, a global Muslim Nation. The ideal of Islamic unity was a recurrent theme in his many speeches, and it dominated his political career and activism as well. He advocated, for instance, for the establishment of a Muslim customs union, an Islamic NATO, an Islamic United Nations, as well as a single Islamic currency.¹⁵ During his short tenure as the Prime Minister of Turkey, Erbakan founded the "Developing 8," which was intended as an Islamic equivalent to the Western-dominated "Group of Seven."¹⁶

As an activist and demagogue, Erbakan was especially skilled at connecting his ideological and political agenda to an individual's sense of religious duty and obligation. Islamists in general claim the exclusive right to define, according to their own standards, what a real Muslim's duties are and, by extension, who is a real Muslim and who is not. Muslims opposed to Islamism are frequently ridiculed as insufficiently faithful, or denounced as apostates. For Erbakan, a Muslim who did not adhere to the Milli Görüs political agenda was guilty of transgression against Islam. In an interview

with the London-based *Al-Sharq al-Awsat*, Erbakan stated, “Do not consider the Jews and Christians as patrons [for Islam]. How can any person who deals with the Jews be a real Muslim?”¹⁷ In a 2010 speech before an audience of Milli Görüs members in Duisburg, Germany, Erbakan reportedly stated that there were only two kinds of human beings: one kind actively supports the cause of Milli Görüs, and the second group does not.¹⁸

Gradual—But Relentless

DESPITE HIS PENCHANT FOR INFLAMMATORY RHETORIC, NECMETTIN ERBAKAN never encouraged his followers to wage violent jihad to overthrow Turkey’s secular political system. Instead, he favored a gradual, bottom-up Islamization of society which was to be accomplished through the replacement of secular laws and norms with Islamic law. This kind of revolutionary political change required, above all, a dramatic change in mindset, or the acquisition of what Erbakan frequently called a new Islamic “consciousness” or “awareness.” Without such an Islamic consciousness, Erbakan and Milli Görüs activists believed that Muslims would never successfully revive Islam in the modern era. Interestingly, in a 2007 interview with *Al-Sharq al-Awsat*, Erbakan was asked what he thought about Turkish Prime Minister Recep Erdogan, and he responded by saying it was most important for the prime minister to return to true Islamic consciousness.¹⁹

After being systematically suppressed for decades by the Kemalist state, political Islam resurfaced in Turkey in 1969 when Erbakan founded the Turkish National View movement. The movement’s first priority was to establish a nation-wide grassroots support network for the spread of a new Islamic consciousness. By 1973, the Turkish National Salvation Party, which was led by Erbakan and was the successor party to the banned National Order Party, had successfully established branches in fifty-two of Turkey’s sixty-seven provinces.²⁰ Initially, missionaries from the Islamist movement in Turkey focused their outreach on two distinct populations: one, the conservative religious populations in the rural Anatolian provinces and, second, the growing number of impoverished migrant workers in urbanized areas. The missionaries responded directly to the needs of the newly urban workers, offering food, hostels, scholarships, networks for young graduates, assistance with job searches, credit to shopkeepers, industrialists, and merchants, as well as self-help projects for women.²¹ In conjunction with these welfare services, missionaries also nationally distributed audiocassettes with recordings of Erbakan’s speeches. By 1977, the Islamist movement had firmly established itself all over the country.²²

The rigid organization of Erbakan's Islamist movement and its quick expansion soon paid off in the form of electoral successes. After the 1973 elections, the National Salvation Party became the junior partner in a coalition government and Erbakan was appointed deputy prime minister. During his tenure, Erbakan succeeded in exploiting Turkey's Imam Hatip religious schools in an effort to advance the Islamist cause. As the scholar Nilufer Narli points out, "One of the Islamist movement's important strategies was to develop an educated counter-elite as a base of support, especially by strengthening the Islamic stream in the educational system."²³ Erbakan allowed the Imam Hatip schools to offer secondary education and permitted its graduates to enter all departments at universities.²⁴ Erbakan was deeply committed to the schools, and he viewed them and Islamic education as the most effective avenue for the redefinition of national identity.²⁵ As Banu Eligur has written, "Islamists regard the Imam Hatip schools as social networks that sustain and enhance their political power by educating the youth according to Islamist principles."²⁶ Imbued with Islamist doctrine, graduates formed the core of the new economic, bureaucratic, and eventually political Islamist counter-elite.

The so-called "Turkish Islamic Synthesis," adopted after the 1980 military coup, represented a milestone for the Turkish Islamist movement. This new state doctrine provided much greater space for religion in the public, political realm and ended its confinement to the private realm. Religious instruction in primary and secondary schools became mandatory. The Turkish military, which ruled the country from 1980-1983, sought to cultivate a unified national identity based on Sunni Islam in order to counter ultranationalist as well as communist extremism.²⁷ The blowback has been substantial. In the post-1980 era, Islamist groups were able to set up Islamic dormitories, associations, and foundations that specifically targeted disaffected youth.²⁸ Banu Eligur emphasizes that, as a "result of the military's strategy, the process of Islamization in society grew stronger than ever."²⁹ In its attempt to accommodate the Islamists, the Turkish military not only sanctioned an assault on Turkey's secularism, but also created the conditions for the Islamist takeover of political power in the 1990s.

The gradual transformation of urban centers was another central focus of the Islamist political agenda in Turkey. A prime example of this was the Islamist transformation of the poor Istanbul suburb of Sultanbeyli, a topic explored in-depth by scholar Cihan Tugal.³⁰ Tugal describes how the Erbakan-led Islamist movement transformed the Sultanbeyli district into an "Islamic fortress" with the help of various religious groups and foundations, booksellers, entrepreneurs, publishers and activists, all of whom began operating in the district after the Turkish Islamic Synthesis. Again, the target groups were the large number of migrant workers living in the district and

youths. The Islamists established a quasi-monopoly over religious education and provided residents with a social safety net. As such, they essentially replaced the government as the main provider of basic social services.³¹

The net result of this was the gradual Islamization of everyday life. Businesses had to adopt Islamic symbols in order to stay in business and secular Muslims were pushed out of the district. In 1989, Erbakan's Welfare Party won the municipal elections.³² Islamists took control of a district in what was, at the time, the predominantly secularist-oriented metropolitan environment of Istanbul. They told the residents of Sultanbeyli that they were "the heirs of the companions of the prophet"—a direct allusion to their romanticized version of Muhammad's flight from Mecca to Medina.³³ Soon thereafter, Islamists promoted the Sultanbeyli district as the center of Turkey's religious revival and the district's residents became the political vanguard in the struggle to overturn Turkey's secular system.

In 1996, Necmettin Erbakan became Turkey's first Islamist Prime Minister. The Islamist movement's gradualist approach to transforming society had resulted in the takeover of political power on the national level. In many ways, Erbakan's agenda while in government was characteristic of his gradualist sensibilities and tactics. Despite his campaign slogans and the promises he made as a candidate that Turkey would leave NATO, close down U.S. military bases, and sever ties with Israel, Prime Minister Erbakan did not pursue an overtly Islamist political or social agenda. Mindful that the military was wary of his Islamist views, the prime minister instead adhered to a largely pragmatic agenda while in office and refrained from attempting to impose a top-down dismantlement of the Kemalist state. A report published by the Washington Institute observed, "Erbakan is tactically a pragmatist, but strategically an ideologue. To stay in power, he is willing to compromise in the short run."³⁴

Nevertheless, the military pressured Erbakan out of office in the so-called "soft coup" of 1997. After the coup, Erbakan's personal standing in Turkish politics decreased substantially. With the rise of the Justice and Development Party (AKP), a new generation of Islamic political leaders led by Turkish Prime Minister Recep Erdogan and skilled in the rhetoric of democracy and moderation continued Turkey's transformation away from secularism. Erdogan was once Erbakan's student; he also served as a youth organizer in the National Salvation Party and later as mayor of Istanbul for the Welfare Party. Erdogan's tenure as prime minister has brought increasing repression of civil society, including Istanbul's assault on press freedom through the widespread incarceration of journalists on thin charges of conspiring to overthrow the government and the undermining of secular institutions such as the constitutional changes of 2010 that gave the government an unprecedented level of influence over the judiciary. These are ominous signs for Turkey's future as a "democratic" and

“moderate” country. Despite his personal loss of influence, Erbakan’s legacy has had a profound effect on Turkish political and religious life.

A New Conquest

THE MILLI GÖRÜS MOVEMENT SET UP ITS FIRST GERMAN BRANCH IN 1976. CALLED *Türkischen Union Deutschland e.V.*, or the Turkish Union of Europe, the original purpose of the organization was to raise money from the Turkish Diaspora, and mainly Sunni-Muslim migrant workers, to support Islamist proselytization and other political activities in Turkey. Since its establishment, the movement has repeatedly changed its name. In 1995, the movement was renamed the Islamic Community Milli Görüs and has kept this name to this day.

From the 1970s to the 1990s, the German branch of Milli Görüs maintained a strong focus on the Islamization of Turkey. The organization provided religious-minded individuals with a sense of community and identity in the Diaspora country. Members openly endorsed the Islamist agenda propagated by Necmettin Erbakan, and hoped to return home once the Islamic transformation of Turkey had occurred. However, over the course of the 1990s, and particularly after Erbakan’s ouster as prime minister and the banning of the Welfare Party in 1997, Milli Görüs activists in Germany lost faith in an impending Islamist transformation of Turkey and began to accept their stay in the Diaspora as permanent.

Today, the ICMG is the largest and most influential Islamist movement operating in Germany. According to the *Bundesverfassungsschutz* (Germany’s Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution), the ICMG in Germany numbers 30,000 members.³⁵ However, the number of people it reaches through its foundations and services is substantially higher.³⁶ The ICMG is affiliated with 323 cultural institutions and mosques, which are connected to the movement in different ways.³⁷

The ICMG’s official public self-projection, disseminated on its website and in the form of various magazines and brochures, attempts to convey the image of a moderate, exclusively religious organization that has abandoned its political, Islamist past.³⁸ For instance, one ICMG publication outlining the organization’s worldview and goals claims that “the ICMG avows itself to the free democratic basic order and considers it to be the basis for a pluralistic, peaceful, tolerant, and harmonic social life.”³⁹ Furthermore, it states that “there is no discrepancy between the way ICMG members think and the way they act.”⁴⁰ Also, the ICMG claims to support equal rights for men and women and it ostensibly rejects the formation of alternate or “parallel” communities for Muslims.

Contemporary ICMG functionaries, moreover, frequently downplay their move-

ment's affiliation with the Islamist ideals propagated by Necmettin Erbakan. Indeed, ICMG leaders sometimes seem to describe Erbakan's teachings as being outdated and out-of-touch with contemporary Muslim life in Europe. In a 2010 interview with the German newspaper *Die Tageszeitung*, for example, an ICMG official Mustafa Yoldas stated, "For large parts of the Milli Görüs movement here in Europe, Erbakan is somewhat of a patriarch, the uber-father, the one you don't like to contradict, but basically we all know: He has to go, his time is up."⁴¹

The ICMG nominally supports Muslim integration into German society, but it has strongly rejected assimilation. The organization, for example, stresses the need for the retention of a religious Muslim identity. Religious services aim to "cultivate a self-contained Islamic identity," while the organization provides educational programs to assist ICMG members in advancing their professional careers.⁴² In its outreach to the wider community, the ICMG attempts to portray itself as a religious social welfare organization that attends to the needs of its ostracized clientele, all of whom are portrayed as being permanently subjected to discrimination and rejection. One source of contention between the ICMG and German elites has to do with the issue of one's "first language." Germany's political elites by and large accept the view that the acquisition of the German language as a person's first language is a crucial requirement for an immigrant's integration into society. However, the ICMG brands this German-supported policy as fostering assimilation, and thus as a policy that encourages Muslims to forsake their Islamic identity. Organization spokespeople have thus made the illogical claim that "being capable of speaking the majority's language requires the acquaintance of one's mother tongue."⁴³ This ongoing dispute is revealing insofar as it shows that ICMG is actively resistant to any meaningful integration of Muslims into German society by denouncing policy initiatives aimed at facilitating the integration process as attempts by the German government to strip immigrants of their Muslim religious identity. Consequently, the creation of alternate spaces and parallel societies can be justified as necessary for cultural survival.

The informal mouthpiece of the international Milli Görüs movement is the Turkish daily *Milli Gazette*, or the *National Newspaper*.⁴⁴ The European edition of the newspaper, which is distributed throughout the EU, serves as an important connective link between the different groups affiliated with the movement and helps to promote ideological conformity between Turkish-based Islamists and European-based ones. Representatives from the newspaper regularly attend events organized by the ICMG and members are actively encouraged to subscribe. In 2008, a high-ranking Saadet Party official from Turkey declared that anyone who does not read the newspaper could not be a true member of Milli Görüs.⁴⁵ For these reasons, the newspaper may be seen as an authoritative and representative publication of the ICMG. Consideration

of the opinions routinely expressed in the newspaper and the policies it has supported provides evidence that the claims made by ICMG to have stopped adhering to Islamism and the teachings of Erbakan are false.

In early 2008, for example, Necet Kutsal, the editor-in-chief of the *Milli Gazette* wrote that waging *jihad* is the duty of every true servant of God. The goal of *jihad* was the creation of a new world:

Milli Görüs is much more than the slogan of a political party. (...) In contrast to other organisms, God the lord created man with the gift of reason and commanded him: Be perfectly honest, as you were commanded. That means you have to fulfil your duties as a servant of God. This starts with the Jihad. The Jihad encompasses all efforts for the fulfillments of Allah's commands, and to keep away from those Allah has forbidden. The main objective of the Jihad is the establishment of a just world. When Milli Görüs speaks of the creation of a new world, she refers to this goal. The Milli Gazette is the bearer of the intellectual heritage of our ancestors, who have entrusted us these grounds. For 600 years, they were the base for a life in a just world. We were great in the past. Therefore we say: "A grand Turkey once again."⁴⁶

A 2008 editorial by Saadet Party official Mete Gundogang stated that the Milli Görüs movement was on the brink of a "new conquest," an important step to the creation of a new world order:

Even if they (the imperialists) try to hide their intentions, we must expose them and create a New World on a just foundation. For we are on the threshold of a new conquest. Conquest means a new phase. A new phase means a new world. A New World means Milli Görüs. Milli Görüs represents our noble people. Our noble people is synonymous with victory. The victory is ours and the victory is near.⁴⁷

An editorial published by the newspaper in July 2009 asserted that political systems created by men are only metaphorical. All true sovereignty lies not with the people, but with Allah, who is seen as the only political authority and administrator:

The State that people have created and administered through their common will is [only] metaphorical. The true master of the State and

its true administrator is Allah. He is the first and last lord of all that can be owned. He is the only Lord of all being. He is the king. Dominion and sovereignty are [only] with Him. For He is the ruler of all rulers.⁴⁸

The *Milli Gazette* is first and foremost a propaganda tool. The political ideas endorsed by the newspaper are essentially those of Necmettin Erbakan. It is openly anti-Western, anti-capitalist, and anti-Semitic, and supports the overthrow of the secular system in Turkey and the Islamization of European countries through Milli Görüş branches in Turkish Diaspora communities.

The Methods of the ICMG

THE PROMOTION OF “ISLAMIC CONSCIOUSNESS”—I.E., THE INDOCTRINATION OF INDIVIDUALS, from an early age on, with Islamist doctrine—is the common denominator underlying most of the ICMG’s educational, social, and charitable activities. These activities aim at replicating the success that Milli Görüş has enjoyed in Turkey by creating an educated Islamist elite that can gradually increase its political clout by infiltrating the German electorate and public bureaucracy.⁴⁹ ICMG seems especially focused on influencing the youth. Indeed, the educational programs ICMG offers are extensive: weekend seminars, summer camps, Quran classes, after-school clubs, a special club for young children, and a large amount of sports and artistic competitions.⁵⁰ In its efforts to inculcate in children a “self-contained Islamic identity,” the ICMG’s educational programs include reading and recitation of the Quran, study of the Arabic alphabet, and general religious instruction.⁵¹ The Milli Görüş ideology as formulated by Necmettin Erbakan continues to have a prominent role in these programs.⁵²

A look at the ICMG’s online bookstore quickly reveals that the organization distributes educational materials with a pronounced Islamist agenda.⁵³ The website offers dozens of books published by the Islamisches Zentrum München (Islamic Center Munich), a notorious hotspot for Muslim Brotherhood (MB) activity in Germany. Authors featured in the store include Sayyid Abul Ala Maududi, the leading South Asian revivalist who championed the idea of Islam as a revolutionary ideology; Said Ramadan, son-in-law of the Muslim Brotherhood founder Hassan al-Banna whose doctoral thesis on Islamic law is a must-read in Islamist circles; and his son Tariq Ramadan, who is himself a ubiquitous and deeply controversial Islamist figure in Europe. Another curious book for purchase in the store is by Jamal Karsli, a former German politician who was at the center of a national debate about anti-Semitism almost a decade

ago after he accused the Israeli government of using Nazi methods against the Palestinians. In his book, he condemns what he describes as the influence of the “Zionist Lobby” in Germany.

Likewise, anti-Semitism was a crucial theme in Erbakan’s political ideology and anti-Semitic notions remain highly visible in the ICMG. According to the German scholar Johannes Kandel, anti-Semitic literature, including Henry Ford’s *The International Jew* and the infamous *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, is sold at book fairs organized by ICMG-affiliated mosques.⁵⁴ Moreover, the magazine of the ICMG’s children’s club, *Cocuk Kulubu*, reminds its young readers to give part of their pocket money to their beleaguered brothers and sisters in Palestine:

Dear children, as you probably know, our Palestinian brothers and sisters have been in a very difficult situation for days. (...) Thank God the Milli Görüs together with IHH rushed to our brothers and sisters and gave them Help. (...) Do not forget to give a portion of your pocket money to your Palestinian brothers and sisters, OK?⁵⁵

The ICMG’s education programs appear to serve two primary purposes. The program seeks, first of all, to lay the foundations for the establishment of a new Islamist elite who can carry on the work of Islamist revival and reform. For example, a columnist in the *Milli Gazette* demanded in May 2009 that the Islamist movement educate professionals that are better, more qualified, more cultivated, more honest, and more virtuous than their enemies:

We must train forces [who] are stronger, [more] skilled and cultured, moral, honest, sincere and virtuous than our Enemies are, with one sentence, we must develop forces that are better.⁵⁶

The second purpose of the ICMG’s educational programs is to convey to Europe’s Turkish Diaspora that religion and politics are inherently interconnected and that an individual’s identity is indistinguishable from his or her religion and cultural heritage.

Islamist movements that operate in Western countries commonly establish umbrella organizations and front groups that claim to represent the whole of the Muslim segment of the population. On this basis, these groups additionally seek recognition as official interlocutors between the Muslim population and the host government. The ICMG has pursued this objective in the form of the *Islamrat*, or the “Islamic Council,” which is ostensibly an association of conservative Muslim groups based in Germany.

The council's function as an ICMG front organization is so obvious that it, too, has become a focus of the German authorities. As a result, the German Ministry of the Interior has suspended the council's participation in a series of government-initiated summits aimed at facilitating the integration of Muslims into German society.⁵⁷ Also, the ICMG competes with other Muslim umbrella organizations, including the *Türkisch-Islamische Union der Anstalt für Religion* (Turkish-Islamic Union for Religion), an organization established and controlled by the Turkish bureau of religious affairs in 1984 in order to provide religious services to Turkish migrant workers. However, the *Islamrat* is a member of the *Koordinierungsrat der Muslime* (Coordination Council of Muslims), an association of Germany's four largest Muslim organizations founded to improve coordination between the groups. Nevertheless, even the coordination council only represents about fifteen percent of German Muslims.⁵⁸ Scrutiny by security agencies and marginalization by the state have thus far constrained the ICMG's political clout.

One of the most curious aspects of the Islamist movement in Germany is the interconnection between the ICMG and the current AKP-ruled Turkish government, led by Prime Minister Erdogan. While there is no evidence of direct organizational links, Erdogan's personal history as a student of Erbakan is indicative of ideological affinities. For instance, in a speech at the end of February 2011 in Dusseldorf, Germany, Erdogan explicitly called on the Turkish population in Germany to learn Turkish as their first language and resist assimilation into German society.⁵⁹ His comments, although universally condemned by Germany's political establishment, undermined Germany's strategy for integrating immigrants into society, which prioritized learning German as their first language.⁶⁰ He also advised the Turkish population to concentrate on their education and careers in Germany and proposed a new plan to encourage immigrants to seek German citizenship, views very much in accordance with the position of the ICMG.

In effect, Erdogan, as a foreign head of state, was claiming special authority over the Turkish Muslim population residing in Germany. He was also essentially calling for the establishment of special rights for Muslims in Germany. Moreover, he was clearly trying to use his power and influence as prime minister to increase the political clout of Turks within Germany, and especially those Turks who seek to retain their "Islamic identities" in the face of assimilation into German society. Indeed, before arriving in Europe, the Turkish prime minister asserted that Germany in the future had to consult the Turkish government on all issues concerning the integration process.⁶¹ Although the Turkish prime minister's demands were either rejected or simply ignored by the German public, they showed that Erdogan was clearly attempting to obstruct the integration of Muslims of Turkish origin into German society. In many ways, this is reminiscent of Necmettin Erbakan's policies during his short tenures in the executive branch

in Turkey. Executive power is not only achieved through bottom-up Islamization, but it also abets the process in return by creating conditions for further Islamization.

The ICMG and Germany's Security Services

GERMANY'S SECURITY AND LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES, MOST NOTABLY THE *Bundesverfassungsschutz*, appear to have a very clear understanding of the Islamist threat Germany faces. In 2008, the *Bundesverfassungsschutz* published a document describing the agency's understanding of Islamism. The report accurately sought to distinguish clearly between Islam the religion, Islamic fundamentalism and Islamism and it correctly categorized Islamism as a form of political extremism while rejecting any notions of "moderate Islamism."⁶² In the view of the *Bundesverfassungsschutz*, Islamism as a political ideology interprets religious dogmas as political imperatives that are frequently irreconcilable with the values of democratic societies.⁶³ Furthermore, the report recognized the difference between revolutionary, violent jihadist groups and gradualist movements seeking to promote the Islamic transformation of society through legal means.⁶⁴ The annual *Verfassungsschutzbericht*, which is published by the *Bundesverfassungsschutz*, makes clear how the German authorities categorize the ICMG. According to the 2010 edition of the report, the ICMG pursues a long-term, gradualist strategy aimed at the eventual introduction of Sharia law in Germany.⁶⁵ ICMG activities contribute to the creation and expansion of Islamist milieus, initiate radicalization, and contribute to the establishment of "parallel societies" (*Parallelgesellschaften*).⁶⁶

The report emphasizes, contrary to ICMG's claims, that the organization maintains strong connections to the Saadet Party in Turkey. For the ICMG, advocating democracy and religious freedom is synonymous with establishing special rights for Muslims and the recognition of Sharia law in the German judiciary.⁶⁷ The Islamist label can have severe consequences for ICMG members. For instance, applications for German citizenship are frequently denied. Apart from that, German law enforcement agencies have repeatedly searched ICMG offices on suspicions of tax fraud, embezzlement, and the creation of criminal organizations.

German authorities are also deeply concerned about the ICMG's links to terrorism. While the ICMG neither engages in nor publicly advocates or endorses acts of terrorism, the movement's targeted indoctrination of young people has helped to create ideological environments prone to further radicalization that might express itself as

political violence. Militant rhetoric is common in Milli Görüs publications. For instance, a 2009 column in the *Milli Gazette* asserts that Milli Görüs members are the defenders of Islam, lying in the trenches and ready to march on.⁶⁸ The *Verfassungsschutz* reports regularly that the majority of Islamists in Germany with a propensity toward violence are ICMG members. An interesting example is Cuneyt Ciftci, a 28-year-old Turkish national who lived in Southern Germany. In March 2008, Ciftci killed four people in a suicide bombing in Eastern Afghanistan. He regularly attended an ICMG-affiliated mosque and also had connections to the transnational Islamic movement Tablighi Jamaat.⁶⁹

Another example is the banned German Islamist group known as “Kalifatstaat” or Caliphate, a Milli Görüs offshoot that has explicitly endorsed violent means. Its founder, Cemalettin Kaplan (known as the “Khomeini of Cologne”), was a spiritual disciple of Erbakan, who personally organized Kaplan’s relocation from Turkey to Germany and facilitated his assignment as an Imam in a Milli Görüs mosque. Kaplan split with Milli Görüs in 1983 in protest against the movement’s participation in parliamentary elections. After his death in 1995, his son Metin Kaplan became leader of the Kalifatstaat movement. In 1997, a German court convicted Metin to a four-year prison sentence for solicitation of murder after one of his rivals was shot dead. In 2004, Germany extradited Metin to Turkey, where he is serving a life sentence for treason. Among other plots, his group planned to crash a Cessna laden with explosives into the Atatürk mausoleum.⁷⁰

The ICMG also cooperated closely with the German branch of the International Humanitarian Relief Organization (IHH). The organization’s board of trustees is entirely comprised of ICMG functionaries.⁷¹ According to the *Verfassungsschutz*, the foundation, based in Frankfurt, Germany, channeled about 6.6 million Euros to organizations affiliated with Hamas under the pretext of collecting donations for humanitarian relief.⁷² Other recipients of IHH funds were radical organizations in Pakistan, Yemen, and Sudan, some of which are said to have contacts with al-Qaeda.⁷³ The foundation’s chairman, Mustafa Yoldas, is an active member of ICMG. In 2009, the ICMG and IHH jointly organized a charity event for the victims of an Israeli offensive in the Gaza strip. In 2010, the German Ministry of the Interior banned the IHH on grounds of embezzlement and support of a terrorist organization.⁷⁴ However, there is credible information that the financial support for Hamas has continued. According to an investigation conducted by the German newspaper *Der Westen*, the collection and transfer of funds has been taken over by a different organization, called *Weltweiter Einsatz für Arme* (WEFA; Global efforts for the Poor).⁷⁵ WEFA has close contacts to the ICMG.⁷⁶

Even though it rejects terrorism, the ICMG has resisted and, at times, even obstructed a wider socio-political debate about the ideological sources of contemporary Islamist

terrorism. Instead, the ICMG has embraced the narrative that Western societies are inherently hostile to Islam, and that Muslims are victims of unfair counter-terrorism and counter-radicalization policies. The ICMG has adapted the victimization narrative in a way that reinforces its own socio-cultural agenda, and it reflexively blames any suspicion regarding the organization's goals and ideology on the everyday racism and discrimination Muslims are allegedly subject to in German society.

The ICMG general-secretary Oguz Ucuncu said in March 2012, "Accordingly, the actions of the security agencies and the policies of the federal and state governments are dominated by the idea that these people (Muslims) do not belong to Germany."⁷⁷ The ICMG also rejects usage of the phrases "Islamism" and "Islamic Terror," pointing to the alleged stereotyping of all Muslims caused by these terms. Ucuncu stated in November 2011, "The term 'Islamist Terror' is offensive, subjects all Muslims to suspicion and promotes Islamophobia and violence against Muslims."⁷⁸ The organization even has an on-line forum on its website where victims can report acts of discrimination to the ICMG's legal department. When a Muslim is the victim of a hate crime in Germany, the ICMG portrays the crime as symbolic of the pervasive, latent racism and Islamophobia of German society as a whole. For instance, in June 2009 an ethnic German immigrant from Russia stabbed and killed an Egyptian Muslim woman during an appeal hearing in a German court. Ucuncu proclaimed at the one-year anniversary of the killing, "The necessary socio-political debate in the context of everyday racism against Muslims has not occurred." "Prejudices and stereotypes are now being invoked and cultivated under the guise of criticism of Islam."⁷⁹

When two Lebanese would-be terrorists planted two hidden but dysfunctional bombs in suitcases on two regional trains in Germany in July 2006, the ICMG released a joint communique with dozens of other Islamic organizations declaring that such acts could not possibly be committed in the name of Islam: "We, the signing Muslim and immigrant organizations, condemn with horror and revulsion the attempted bombings in recent days and protest against justifying these actions with Islam. The alleged perpetrators will find no justification in Islam for such acts. Terrorism is a threat and a crime against all humanity."⁸⁰ Furthermore, "We, as Muslims in Germany, are doubly affected by recent events. On the one hand, we are as part of society a potential target of attacks as well as all other citizens, on the other hand, we have to suffer to be increasingly regarded as 'accomplices' by many."⁸¹

The ICMG's stance on the "root causes" of Islamic terrorism, and the radicalization of Muslims in general, reveals another angle in the victimization narrative. Islamist groups and their apologists commonly claim that radicalization is not a result of, or inspired by, Islamist teachings and radical interpretations of the Quran, but rather a reaction to not only the widespread racism and discrimination Muslims are

allegedly subjected to, but also the preventive efforts that are taken by security agencies to monitor and prevent radicalization. Commenting on the increasing prominence of a radical Salafist preacher in Germany, the ICMG's deputy chairman, Mustafa Yeneroglu, wrote,

The lack of acceptance of a pluralistic society, no serious efforts to fight an increasingly rampant Islamophobia, the criminalization of Muslim life as "Islamist," the framing of outreach Muslim youth work as an integration problem, the dominance of the security discourse over any debate about the integration of Muslims, and not least the degradation of Muslim communities to auxiliary police officers, are factors that undermine the efforts of moderate Muslim representatives and give such persons [The Salafists] the arguments they need.⁸²

Yeneroglu continued,

In short, the current policy of prevention rather exacerbates the problems that it claims to fight. It does not fight religious extremism, but the religion itself.⁸³

The victimization narrative serves a concrete purpose for the ICMG. By portraying its members as the perpetual victims of widespread racism, discrimination and violence in a society inherently hostile to Muslims, separation from this society by creating separate "parallel societies" and demanding special rights can be portrayed as a necessity of survival. The ICMG also exploits the victimization narrative to categorically discount any allegations of contributing to radicalization. As such, responsibility for parallel societies and for radicalization lies not with the ICMG organization and its activities, but with the German government's suspicion and its policies. According to the ICMG's narrative, the government's efforts to curb radicalization and promote assimilation are, at root, manifestations of the government's larger efforts to target Muslims and Islam as a religion. Unfortunately, there are scores of non-Muslim journalists and academics in Germany who have accepted this narrative and continuously make excuses and provide justifications for radical Islamist groups.⁸⁴

However, German authorities contest both the victimization and apologist narrative, and they also reject the claim that the group has moderated. In a 2011 interview, Heinz Fromm, head of the *Bundesverfassungsschutz*, stated that he saw no signs of moderation within Milli Görüs and that the organization remained loyal to Necmettin Erbakan's Islamist ideology:

The direction of the organization is determined by those loyal to former Turkish Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan and his Islamist ideology. There are still visible signs of anti-Jewish sentiments and, very practical support of Islamist groups abroad, especially the terrorist group Hamas in its conflict with Israel.”⁸⁵

Committed to Necmettin Erbakan’s Islamist ideology, the ICMG in Germany also strives to emulate many of the methods employed by its parent body, the Milli Görüş of Turkey. The group’s gradualist efforts to spread its Islamist ideology in Turkish communities could someday pose a substantial challenge to Germany’s democratic order. Already, the Islamist project in Germany poses clear challenges to the fabric and functionality of German society and politics. Extremism begets extremism: In part as a reaction to Islamist intrusion, nationalist and xenophobic populist movements are disturbingly on the rise in nearly every European country. Such movements have already appeared at a local level in Germany, and their emergence at the national level may be only a matter of time. Countering and marginalizing the Islamist agenda, and particularly the activities of the ICMG, is therefore of uppermost importance for Germany’s long-term democratic stability. Like many European countries, Germany will eventually have to find a way to cope with legal Islamist groups, such as the ICMG, and to marginalize and discredit their ideology.

The apparent support for the ICMG’s agenda in Germany by elements of the Turkish government, and the blatant disregard and contempt that top Turkish leaders have displayed for Germany’s efforts to assimilate its Turkish populations, contribute an even greater urgency to the problem. Countering the domestic Islamist threat will require Germany to reassess its perceptions of the political changes that are underway in Turkey, and eventually to make fundamental changes in the German-Turkish relationship.

NOTES

1. “Organisationsstruktur,” ICMG website, <http://www.igmg.de/gemeinschaft/wir-ueber-uns/organisationsstruktur.html>.
2. The Milli Nizam Partisi (National Order Party): 1970-1971, Milli Selamet Partisi (National Salvation Party): 1974-1980, the Refah Partisi (Welfare Party): 1983-1998, Fazilet Partisi (Virtue Party): 1998-2001, Saadet Partisi (2001-present). The Constitutional Court banned the parties Erbakan founded because they violated Article 14 of the Turkish Constitution: “None of the rights and freedoms em-

- bodied in the Constitution shall be exercised with the aim of violating the indivisible integrity of the state with its territory and nation, of endangering the existence of the Turkish State and Republic, of destroying fundamental rights and freedoms, of placing the government of the state under the control of an individual or a group of people.” *The Constitution of the Republic of Turkey* (Ankara, 1995).
3. Saban Taniyici, “Transformation of Political Islam in Turkey: Islamist Welfare Party’s Pro-EU Turn,” *Party Politics*, 9:463 (2003).
 4. Ibid.
 5. Bundesministerium des Inneren. *Verfassungsschutzbericht 2010* (Berlin, 2011), p. 259.
 6. Sebnem Gumuscu, “Class, Status, and Party: The Changing Face of Political Islam in Turkey and Egypt,” *Comparative Political Studies*, 43:835 (2010), p. 857.
 7. Ali Carkoglu and Barry M. Rubin, *Religion and Politics in Turkey* (New York: Routledge, 2006), p. 64.
 8. Serif Mardin, *Religion, Society, and Modernity in Turkey* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2006), p. 238.
 9. Haldun Guelap, “Using Islam as Political Ideology: Turkey in Historical Perspective,” *Cultural Dynamics*, 14:21 (2002), p. 31.
 10. Ioannis N. Grigoriadis, *Trials of Europeanization* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2009), p. 100.
 11. Gunes Murat Tezcue, “The Moderation Theory Revisited: The Case of Islamic Political Actors,” *Party Politics*, 16:69 (2010), p. 81.
 12. Marvine Howe, *Turkey: a Nation Divided over Islam’s Revival* (Boulder: Westview Press, 2000), p. 25.
 13. Raphael Israeli, *Muslim anti-Semitism in Christian Europe* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2009), p. 108; See also The Middle East Media Research Institute (MEMRI) for a collection of anti-Semitic statements made by Erdogan, “Antisemitism and the Turkish Islamist ‘Milli Görüs’ Movement: Zionists/Jews ‘Bacteria,’ ‘Disease,’” August 29, 2007, Special Dispatch No. 1699, <http://www.memri.org/report/en/0/0/0/0/0/2356.htm>.
 14. Boris Kalnoky, “Erdogan ist ein Kassierer des Zionismus,” *Die Welt*, November 8, 2010, <http://www.welt.de/politik/ausland/article10769062/Erdogan-ist-ein-Kassierer-des-Zionismus.html>.
 15. Grigoriadis, op. cit. p. 101.
 16. Members of the D-8 group are: Bangladesh, Egypt, Indonesia, Iran, Malaysia, Nigeria, Pakistan and Turkey.
 17. Ibid.
 18. Pascal Beucker, “Schlichtes Weltbild,” *Die Tageszeitung*, April 19, 2010, <http://www.taz.de/1/politik/deutschland/artikel/1/schlichtes-weltbild>.
 19. Manal Lofti, “Turkey: Q&A with Necmettin Erdogan,” *Al-Sharq al-Awsat*, November 16, 2011.
 20. Banu Eligur, *The Mobilization of Political Islam in Turkey* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 69.
 21. Nilufer Narli, “The Rise of the Islamist Movement in Turkey,” in *Revolutionaries and Reformers: Contemporary Islamist Movements in the Middle East*, ed. Barry Rubin (New York: State University of New York Press, 2003), p. 127.
 22. Eligur, op. cit. p. 69.
 23. Narli, op. cit. p. 127.
 24. The original purpose of the Imam Hatip schools was to train government-employed imams.
 25. M. Hakan Yavuz, *Islamic Political Identity in Turkey* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 126.

26. Eligur, op. cit. p. 128.
27. The U.S. intelligence community, particularly the CIA, supported the military's strategy. Turkey was to become part of the 'Green belt project', aimed at containing communism. See Eligur, op. cit. p. 91.
28. Chihan Tugal, *Passive Revolution: Absorbing the Islamic Challenge to Capitalism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), p. 49.
29. Eligur, op. cit. p. 95.
30. Tugal, op. cit.
31. Ibid. pp. 102-144.
32. Eligur, op. cit. p. 170.
33. Tugal, op. cit. p. 116.
34. Alan Makovsky, "Erbakan's Turkey: An Early Assessment," rapporteur's summary, *The Washington Institute's Policy Forum*, July 18, 1996, Washington, D.C.
35. *Verfassungsschutzbericht 2010*, op. cit. p. 224.
36. Ibid.
37. Ibid.
38. <http://www.igmg.de>.
39. "Introductory Brochure," Islamic Community Milli Görüs, p. 23, <http://www.igmg.de/uploads/media/Selbstdarstellung-IGMG-Englisch.pdf>.
40. Ibid.
41. Daniel Wiese, "Wir werden als Muslime bestraft," *Die Tageszeitung*, May 14, 2010, <http://www.taz.de/!52571>.
42. Introductory Brochure, op. cit. p. 16.
43. Ibid. p. 27.
44. <http://www.milligazete.com.tr>.
45. Bundesministerium des Inneren. *Verfassungsschutzbericht 2008* (Berlin: 2009), p. 249.
46. Ibid.
47. Ibid. p. 246.
48. Bundesministerium des Inneren. *Verfassungsschutzbericht 2009* (Berlin, 2010), p. 265.
49. *Verfassungsschutzbericht 2010*, op. cit. p. 268.
50. Gonul Topuz, "Entwicklung und Organisation von Milli Görüs in Deutschland," (Kolner Arbeitspapiere zur internationalen Politik, No. 5, October 2003), pp. 47-56.
51. For an overview of the ICMG's educational activities, see http://www.igmg.de/gemeinschaft/bildungsabteilung.html?L=%20%2Fphprojekt%2Flib%2Fconfig.inc.php%3Fpath_pre%3D.
52. *Verfassungsschutzbericht 2010*, op. cit. p. 268.
53. The bookstore can be reached at <http://www.kitapkulubu.de>.
54. This is just one of many examples of how the ICMG cultivates anti-Semitism. See Johannes Kandel, *Islamismus in Deutschland* (Freiburg, Herder, 2011), pp. 125-133.
55. *Verfassungsschutzbericht 2009*, op. cit. p. 271.
56. *Verfassungsschutzbericht 2009*, op. cit. p. 273.
57. Frank Jansen, "Milli Görüs: Vorwürfe bleiben," *Der Tagesspiegel*, <http://www.tagesspiegel.de/politik/vorwuerfe-bleiben/4002296.html>.

58. “Wer Macht mit im Koordinierungsrat der Muslime?” *Welt Online*, April 11, 2007, http://www.welt.de/politik/article803811/Wer_macht_mit_im_Koordinierungsrat_derMuslime.html.
59. Holly Fox, “Debate Rages in Germany over Erdogan’s ‘Turkish First’ Comments,” *dpa*, March 1, 2011.
60. “Erdogan’s Rede Emport die Koalition,” *Sueddeutsche Zeitung*, March 1, 2011.
61. “Schroder und Erdogan appellieren an Merkel,” *dpa*, February 26, 2011.
62. Bundesamt fuer Verfassungsschutz, *Islamismus aus der Perspektive des Verfassungsschutzes* (Köln, 2008), p. 5f.
63. *Ibid.*
64. *Ibid.*
65. *Verfassungsschutzbericht 2010*, op. cit. p. 204f.
66. *Ibid.*
67. *Verfassungsschutzbericht 2009*, op. cit. p. 274.
68. *Ibid.* p. 273.
69. Annette Ramelsberger and Matthias Sander, “Per E-Mail in den Heiligen Krieg,” *Sueddeutsche Zeitung*, March 17, 2008, <http://www.sueddeutsche.de/bayern/selbstmordattentaeter-aus-ansbach-per-e-mail-in-den-heiligen-krieg-1.282642>.
70. For a more detailed discussion of the *Kalifatstaat*, see Kandel, op. cit. pp. 89-95.
71. *Verfassungsschutzbericht 2010*, op. cit. p. 270.
72. *Ibid.*
73. Peter Carstens, “Taschengeld für Palastinensische Geschwister,” *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, August 3, 2010.
74. *Ibid.*
75. Tobias Bolsmann, Sinan Sat and David Schraven, “Spenden aus Marxloh für die Hamas?” *Der Westen*, July 15, 2010, <http://www.derwesten.de/nachrichten/Spenden-aus-Marxloh-fuer-die-Hamas-id3387598.html>.
76. *Ibid.*
77. “Welttag gegen Rassismus: Sicherheitspartnerschaften begünstigen zunehmenden Rassismus,” ICMG Press Release, March 20, 2012, <http://www.igmg.de/nachrichten/artikel/2012/03/20/14841.html?L=%2F.html>.
78. “Verwendung von Kampfbegriffen wie ‘Islamismus’ bzw. ‘islamistischer Terror’ muss eingestellt werden,” ICMG Press Release, December 7, 2011, <http://www.igmg.de/nachrichten/artikel/2011/12/07/14734.html?L=%2F.html>.
79. Ucuncu: “Umfassende gesellschaftspolitische Aufarbeitung des islamfeindlichen Mordes an Marwa El-Sharbini steht noch aus,” ICMG Press Release, June 30, 2010, <http://www.igmg.de/nachrichten/artikel/2010/06/30/12710.html?L=%2F.html>.
80. “Nicht in unserem Namen: Muslimische Verbände gegen Terror und Gewalt,” ICMG Press Release, August 25, 2006, http://www.igmg.de/gemeinschaft/presseerklaerungen/artikel/2006/08/25/596.html?L=ftp%3A%2Fsvr0015%3Abdw002gr%40svr001.com%2Fpublic_html%2FTestMail.php.html.html.
81. *Ibid.*

82. Mustafa Yeneroglu, "Denn Vogel macht den bösen Muslim am besten," ICMG Commentary, July 9, 2011, <http://www.igmg.de/nachrichten/artikel/2011/07/09/denn-vogel-macht-den-boesen-muslim-am-besten.html>.
83. Ibid.
84. The most prominent Islamist apologist in German academia is Werner Schiffauer, an anthropologist who has researched Germany's Turkish immigrant population for decades. In his latest study on the ICMG, he makes the assertion that contact with German democracy has had a moderating influence on the ICMG's Islamist agenda (Werner Schiffauer, *Nach dem Islamismus*, Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2010). Though this may certainly be true for some individual members, the idea that Milli Görüs as an organization has moved away from Islamism is based more on wishful thinking and Schiffauer's own prejudices than factual evidence. Schiffauer concludes that recent leadership changes within the ICMG are signs of its abandonment of its Islamist principles. Schiffauer calls this "Post-Islamism." Within Milli Görüs' approach towards achieving religious salvation, he identifies a transformation away from the Islamic state and toward the individual. He also attributes the surveillance of Milli Görüs' activities by German security services to their "Orientalism" and "Islamophobia." In a nutshell, according to Schiffauer, the German authorities harass Milli Görüs because its members are different (Muslim). He believes that it is exactly this harassment that fuels radicalism and prevents successful integration of ICMG members into society. Consequently, he considers the ICMG to be the victim, not the agitator. The journalist Ian Johnson provides an excellent assessment of Schiffauer's work: "His approach is rigorously modern: informants are given pseudonyms, and their statements taken at face value. He does not investigate work and only checks stories against each other for internal logic—he never consults public records or tries to create a historical narrative. His research is also driven by a sense of guilt: that foreigners are victims and German society is oppressive. Thus he has become an advocate for groups like Milli Görüs; for example, he once served as a friendly witness on behalf of a group member." (Johnson, op. cit. p. 234). Schiffauer's arguments are symptomatic of Islamist apologist thought in Germany and elsewhere. He is by no means the only example. See for instance the publications of Ina Wunn, professor at the University of Hannover. Specifically: Ina Wunn, *Muslimische Gruppierungen in Deutschland* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2007). Also, Michael Luders, *Allahs langer Schatten: Warum wir keine Angst vor dem Islam haben müssen* (Freiburg: Verlag Herder, 2010). It should be noted that there have also been instances of "Islam Bashing", another unfortunate trend. Several books by the journalist Udo Ulfkotte fall into this category.
85. "Deutschland bleibt Ziel des islamistischen Terrorismus," *Der Tagesspiegel*, February 17, 2011.