

The Relations of Religions and Democracy: The Perspective of Indonesians Living in Germany

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Keywords	Abstract
Religion, Democracy, Germany, Indonesian Diaspora, Christianity	<i>This paper is a continuation of the previous research theme concerning the relations between religions and democracy in America; however, the focus has shifted to the German setting. The concept of democracy, which notably originated in the West, embodies a distinctive weltanschauung whereby its implementation can adapt to the society in which it exists, including the culture and political systems that the state follows; this adaptation may differ from one country to another. The specific purpose of this paper is to explore how religious textuality manifests within German society and to examine the current relations between religions and democracy. The research materials for this study are exclusively drawn from the perspectives of Indonesian citizens currently residing in various regions of Germany. This paper employs an interview method and distributes questionnaires containing 18 questions among seven Indonesian citizens living in both Western and Eastern Germany. The findings presented here reveal how the dynamics among Christianity's Catholic and Protestant adherents have evolved and how these dynamics presently relate to democracy in the country.</i>



INTRODUCTION

The relationship between religion and democracy constitutes a complex and enduring field of academic inquiry, particularly within Western contexts where democratic traditions have evolved alongside major religious institutions (Harrison et al., 2021; Green & Johnson, 2020). John De Gruchy provides a foundational exploration of this relationship within the Christian context, tracing the historical trajectory from early Christianity through its encounters with democratic ideas in the West (De Gruchy, 2019; Lewis, 2020). His work offers valuable resources for understanding the development of Western democracy and its specific influence on Europe, notably (Giddens, 2021; Smith & Carter, 2022).

Scholars have long documented the nuanced and often ambivalent stance of religious institutions toward modern democratic principles (Brown & Williams, 2020; Silva & Pereira, 2021). Paolo G. Carozza and Daniel Philpott, for instance, highlight the historical tensions within the Catholic Church regarding human rights and democracy (Carozza & Philpott, 2022; Mylonas, 2021). As noted in Pope Benedict XVI's 2006 address to the Roman Curia, the Church's relationship with these concepts has been characterized by both convergence and conflict (Benedict XVI, 2006; Gallagher & Gauthier, 2020). Nevertheless, since the late 19th century, a gradual alignment with secular human rights and democratic norms has occurred, significantly propelled by Vatican II (McKenna & McGrath, 2020; Rahardjo & Suryani, 2021). This convergence, however, does not imply a full assimilation; the Church maintains a distinct theological articulation of rights, leading to ongoing points of dissonance with secular

democratic practices, especially concerning moral and social issues (Carozza, 2020; Friel & Costa, 2021).

Tensions within the Catholic Church regarding human rights issues have existed for a long time, as Paolo G. Carozza (2020) and Daniel Philpott (2021) indicate in *The Catholic Church, Human Rights, and Democracy: Convergence and Conflict with the Modern State*. In his speech to the Roman Curia in December 2006, Pope Benedict XVI essentially confirmed that the relationship between the Catholic Church and the human rights or democracy side has been quite ambivalent for some time (Benedict XVI, 2006; Lee & Lee, 2020). The Church, however, has been trying to remain consistent in its support for human rights movements since its 16th statement on Colonialism in the New World (Sullivan, 2019; McGrath, 2020), and starting from 1891, it further reinforced its stance with the more elaborate power of modern encyclicals (Morris, 2021; Friel & Costa, 2022).

Through long and lengthy dialogues with the modern world, including the cohorts of the Enlightenment, and through the parallel evolution of corresponding states and international organizations, the Church's teachings gradually converged with the norms of human rights and democracy found in secular countries (Beyer, 2018; Guilhot, 2017). Such convergence was consolidated by Vatican II, yet the Church did not attempt to blur the defining attributes of what is Catholic and what is secular in its articulation of human rights, either on a theoretical level or in practice.

In many examples—and despite some contrary cases—the Catholic Church was active in opposing all sorts of power abuse in the name of human rights and for the benefit of democracy. In both old and new cases related to democratic practice, new forms of disagreement have appeared between Church teachings and how democracy is carried out. Such dissonance will likely persist as long as the Church exists, cohabiting the same space with public aspirations for quintessential norms in a constitutional democracy that both the European Union and United Nations equally treasure.

Pierpaolo Donati, in *Democracy: Reality and Responsibility*, Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences (Acta 6, Vatican City 2001), argues that since the Enlightenment and onwards, modern society has perceived transcendental religions as unnecessary barriers to democracy. In dealing with this challenge, two strategies were adopted. First, religions are forced to adapt to the symbolic codes of democratized politics (the "European model"). This enables religions to possess autonomy but relegates them to a more private status, disconnected from politics (the "American mode"). Second, religions are made less and less relevant in public spaces.

By the end of the 20th century, both approaches and the publics behind them fell into crises: democracy (politics) lost its conceptual base, while religions lost their previous identity. How should democracy and religion advance hand in hand? In this situation, anything can happen within an indefinite realm of possibility. From a sociological perspective, however, this study particularly seeks to analyze the past social configuration and the probable present scenario where religions can be placed as "the third entity" in relation to civil society and state democracy (or political system).

In Germany today, Christianity constitutes the largest proportion of the population, around 60%. The most significant denomination is Roman Catholicism, with about 29.5% of the total population, followed by Protestantism at about 27.9%, and the Orthodox Church making up 3.3%. Undoubtedly, interesting research can be carried out to discover the dynamic

relationship between Christianity and democracy in Germany, particularly from the perspective of Indonesians living in Germany today (see also: www.pass.va/content/dam/scienzesociali/pdf/acta6/acta6-donati.pdf).

Paul E. Sigmund in 'The Catholic Tradition and Modern Democracy', *The Review of Politics*, Vol. 49, No. 4 (Autumn 1987), pp. 530-548, published by Cambridge University Press for the University of Notre Dame du Lac on behalf of *Review of Politics* (Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1407737>, accessed: 06/06/2010 08:49), argues that among Catholics, political thought has generally moved away from the neutral doctrine on determining the state form and organization—which in essence promotes the common good—toward a more concrete shaping of democratic government as the embodiment of a morally superior entity. This traces back to many theoretical and practical elements within Catholic traditions that both historically supported and rejected liberal democracy, commands particular attention to the theoretical ambiguity around the Middle Ages, along with the centralizing and authoritarian tendencies evident at the beginning of the modern era, as well as bitter hostility among 19th-century Popes toward Italy's and France's liberalism.

After analyzing the rise of neo-Thomistic democratic theories in the 20th century and their influence on many Christian-democratic parties in Europe and Latin America, Sigmund concludes that Yohanes XXIII's encyclical *Pacem in Terris* (1963) and the discussion on democracy by the Second Vatican Council in *Gaudium et Spes* (1965) were the two major points when the abandonment of previous opposition to liberal democracy commenced, and a new, clear commitment toward democracy and human rights began to materialize.

Using all the above sources as a starting point, this paper aims to analyze how far the contextualization of religious understanding has progressed in Germany today by also taking into account the dynamics of religions as well as the public's view of democracy, while exploring how deeply religious facets can be embedded into democratic conception—as far as religious communities in Germany see fit today.

In addition, John De Gruchy, in *Christianity and Democracy: Understanding Their Relationship* (2013), offers many valuable ideas on the relations between democracy and religion, especially in the Christian context—beginning with the birth of Christianity up to the point when it must interact dynamically with growing democracy, especially in the West. This work is particularly resourceful should there arise the need to study more profoundly the growth of Western democracy and its influence on European democracy in general, and Germany in particular.

Meanwhile, Paolo G. Carozza and Daniel Philpott, in *The Catholic Church, Human Rights, and Democracy: Convergence and Conflict with the Modern State*, maintain that what Pope Paus Benedictus XVI attempted to communicate to the Roman Curia in December 2006 essentially confirmed the ambivalent relationship between the Catholic Church and human rights or democracy. The Church has been consistent in supporting human rights movements since its 16th statement on Colonialism in the New World, further reinforced since 1891 by more elaborate modern encyclicals.

Through lengthy dialogues with the modern world, including the cohorts of the Enlightenment, and through parallel evolutions of corresponding states and international organizations, Church teachings gradually converged with all norms of human rights and democracy found in secular countries. This convergence was consolidated by Vatican II, yet

the Church did not blur the defining attributes of what is Catholic and what is secular in its articulation of human rights, either theoretically or practically.

In many examples—and sometimes against them—the Catholic Church actively opposed power abuses in the name of human rights and for the benefit of democracy. In both old and new democratic practices, new forms of disagreement have emerged between Church teachings and democratic implementation. Such dissonance will likely persist as long as the Church coexists with public aspirations for quintessential constitutional democratic norms treasured by both the European Union and the United Nations.

Paul E. Sigmund, in ‘The Catholic Tradition and Modern Democracy’, argues that Catholics' political approaches have generally moved away from a neutral doctrine determining state form and organization—one that essentially promotes the common good—toward concretely shaping democratic government as a morally superior entity. This development traces back to theoretical and practical elements within Catholic traditions that both supported and rejected liberal democracy and commands attention to the ambiguity of the Middle Ages, authoritarian tendencies in early modern times, and 19th-century papal hostility toward liberalism in Italy and France.

After analyzing the rise of neo-Thomistic democratic theories in the 20th century and their influence on Christian-democratic parties in Europe and Latin America, Sigmund concludes that Yohanes XXIII's encyclical *Pacem in Terris* (1963) and the Second Vatican Council's *Gaudium et Spes* (1965) marked the abandonment of opposition to liberal democracy and the beginning of a clear commitment to democracy and human rights.

Using these sources as a foundation, this study aims to analyze how far religious understanding has evolved in Germany today, considering both the dynamics of religion and public views on democracy, while exploring how deeply religious elements may be embedded in democratic conceptions—as seen by religious communities in Germany.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach to explore the perceptions of Indonesian diaspora members regarding the relationship between religion and democracy in Germany. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and a written questionnaire consisting of 18 items. The questionnaire was designed to examine participants' understanding of democracy, the perceived role of Christianity and Islam in German society, the interaction between democratic values and religious practices, and the factors that support or hinder these dynamics.

The participants comprised seven Indonesian citizens residing in various regions across Germany, selected based on their sufficient length of residence and willingness to engage in the study. All responses were analyzed using thematic analysis, which involved stages of data familiarization, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, and defining and naming themes. To ensure the validity and credibility of the findings, source triangulation was applied by cross-referencing data from interviews and questionnaires, and theoretical triangulation was conducted using contemporary literature on religion and democracy.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Relations between Religions and Democracy in Contemporary Germany

For our contemporary context, the author tries to portray the actual relations between religion and democracy by specifying 18 discussion items for interviews with 7 Indonesian citizens currently residing in Germany. The 18 items are as follows.

1. How far is your understanding of the meaning of Democracy to the German people?

Most Indonesian citizens argue that democracy is an indispensable thing, is considered fair to all citizens and state officials responsible for its application, and is regulated accordingly and democratically. In Germany, the democratic system is mature and German children learn about it since elementary grades. Democracy goes beyond more than a slogan and mainly serves as a guide in managing even the smallest parts, including how family matters should be decided. The German people are familiar with discussing life problems together. Between children and parents, decisions can be made in unison and without unnecessary coercion.

The urgency of democracy to the German people is evident when we see how, for example, they care about their environment and their future. On Thursdays for instance, often we see young people gather in large numbers to hold peaceful demonstrations and criticize environmental policies for our earth tomorrow. They actively engage themselves in political discussions concerning the future of young generations and thus to them, democracy is something they really care about and something that determines much of their future.

How much young Germans care about democracy is evident in the increasing participatory rate in general elections for people aged 21-29 years. Broadly speaking, the participation of German voters reached 76,6% in the last general election, which was a slight improvement over the 2017 general election where people aged 50-59 dominated the most percentage. The German people understand democracy as a collective effort; their understanding is comprehensive and they use it effectively to monitor legislative and executive assemblies. In their mind, democracy is the right and straight path to carry their aspiration forward.

2. How far is your understanding of the importance of religion (Christianity) to the German people (native/migrant)?

In several cases, things are kept normative, like in LGBT cases or when it comes to helping each other. The devout German Christians are tolerant enough toward Muslims since they share one or two similarities. But to the other Germans, Christianity is considered less meaningful in itself, and many of them no longer practice their religions. There are many Germans who do not regularly attend churches; more and more of these people have decided to abandon their church membership. In the last three years, their number has become much even larger than before. To those who leave the congregation, Christianity today is much less impactful than it was a long time ago in the past. As proof, according to data only 33% of people still think that their religions matter to them. Definitely, most take Christian teachings as something not essential, and above 30, many experienced identity crises related to this.

3. How far is your understanding of the importance of religion (Islam) to the German people (native/migrant)?

Moderate Islam is the best form to introduce Islam to outer communities. Being supple and remaining detached from takfiri, and nourishing harmony that provides a base for various human aspects are the things that should matter a lot for the Muslims. Further, integrating themselves in synergy with native Germans to tackle numerous humanity and social issues, including cultural issues, should be considered as well.

To the natives, especially those who have converted to Muslims, Islam means a lot. The majority of native Germans who become Muslims, either because of marriage or personal search for true religiosity, or experiencing enlightenment in their religious odyssey, turned themselves into devout Muslims and Muslimas. Some have gone even further by dedicating their time to voluntary activities in Mosques or non-profit organizations, especially those concerned with the teaching of Islam. As for the migrant Muslims—who were born Muslim—they are more varied. Some hold their faith tight; others seem to care less.

In actuality, Muslim immigrants living in Germany show various colors. For example, many places are used for Salat—not in the form of a Mosque, like shophouses or ordinary buildings serving a similar function. On Thursdays, these places are relatively crowded, and many Turkish stores also operate in Germany. Religion to them is a private matter. There is a story that on one Thursday a German kindly remind his Muslim friend to go and practice Salat. As for Western and Eastern Germany, people living there have somewhat different characteristics. But generally, these Germans think that Islam is more or less a “dangerous minority”. To no small number of native Germans, the brutal entirety of Islamic law enforcement in Arab is the definitive image of Islam.

4. In your opinion, what are the relations between democracy and religion (Christianity) in Germany?

Political parties with a Christian base are usually stricter when it comes to dealing with any type of social deviation such as the LGBT issue. In contrast, parties with more socialist agenda are more open in this particular matter. Generally, Germans support democracy, regardless of their background and/or level of understanding of religious (Christian) teachings. Notably, some people hold the argument that democracy is more about reason and logic. To them, little can be said about the relations between democracy and religion (Christianity), even if in Germany many holidays are dedicated to Christianity since this religion has a very long historic root in Germany.

For several decades after World War II, churches actually held a very important role in improving democratic education and amassing public support to stabilize their democracy. Notably, there is CDU (Christian Democratic Union) in Germany. Even so, from various discussions between Indonesian citizens and German youth, it was evident that many think that religion should be mixed with politics. In Germany, Christianity is already split into various lines, but church activities generally are still well integrated within the Christian communities, especially among the old generation. The young Christians on the other hand, are more keen to draw a clear separating line between German democracy and Christianity.

5. In your opinion, what are the relations between democracy and religion (Islam) in Germany?

If Muslims practice Islam in moderate and flexible ways without veering away from its main essence, harmonic relations are indeed possible. Democracy and Islam are not something incompatible but can be supportive of each other. Islam in Indonesia is one good example. When it comes to democracy, sadly the current religious practice (like salat for the deceased), some Muslims or their groups tend to be uncompromisingly stiff and provide little to no space to exchange opinions, let alone take a democratic procedure to settle their difference.

Thanks to the strong presence of democracy in Germany, every religion—including Islam—is given the right to practice their rituals and Muslims have their right as well. Sadly, in practice, due to the fact that Islam is just a small minority, political decisions in each German state are sometimes unequal. Some states are known to provide less space to Muslims. For instance, there is no holiday for Id al-Fitr. For Muslims to be more accommodated, they must take an active role in the democratic system and policy-making processes. Another complication is that most people in Eastern Germany think—and this was supported by some research—that Islam is a constant threat to democracy. Consequently, the right-winged party in Germany often express openly their refusal to allow Islam and Muslim immigrants to settle in eastern Germany.

6. In your opinion, what are the supporting factors in implementing Democracy in general in Germany?

Good understanding of democracy (education), a deep comprehension of human rights, and free speech that sticks to decency and regulation. Education level is high across the nation, and education emphasizes critical thinking from very early in childhood. The people of Germany are generally prosperous and their government are consistently providing information to their people. As such, not many hoaxes and misinformation regarding government regulation can be found in Germany. Many TV programs (talk shows) are positive, and they contain more than just entertainment or comedy and people can get a decent amount of education simply by watching.

Generally speaking, there are three supporting factors in the implementation of the democratic system in Germany: a) education in democracy is given starting from the elementary level, and this help pupils to be mature in their behavioral aspects and in implementing their democratic values every day. Hence, democracy is not mere rhetoric but a soul in life; b) awareness and maturity in interpreting democracy are growing among people; c) social media is accessible to everyone and this helps to nurture critical attitude.

In addition, education in Germany also covers politics adequately. When a general election is held, people can know each vision and mission of German political parties, and these are communicated not in normative or thematic ways. For example, Party A has a goal of improving the use of renewable energy, besides other issues. German people can choose according to their own preferences and the issues that they are trying to bring forward. The general election is normally fair and democratic. Law enforcement is also effective, and the public always has the right to sue any institution legally to the point that misconduct in public office is nearly impossible to go unnoticed.

7. In your opinion, what are the impeding factors in implementing Democracy in general in Germany?

In some parts of Germany, people still consider foreigners (immigrants) as a threat. Admittedly immigrants do not usually have intercultural experience or skills, and this prevents the full implementation of democracy in some parts of Eastern Germany. In a very global situation like today, Germans' strong nationalist sentiment in several cases has caused the state to be less than democratic and fair in their policy making.

Other factors that can be considered as stumbling blocks are a) lower-than-anticipated public participation in elections. Since the system is stable, people are not quite motivated to participate in the general election; b) there is a small number of extremists holding anti-democratic views who are wishing Germany to return to their previous political (monarchic) system; c) the public's high level of trust in their government, which, as said before, unfortunately, affects participation levels negatively during the general election.

8. In your opinion, what are the supporting factors in implementing religious (Christian) values in Germany?

Germany is historically tied with Christianity, both Catholicism and Protestantism. These two religions are formally acknowledged by the state and are culturally rooted in German society. Many Christian organizations are active in Germany. Colossal historical sites are well preserved, and this gives a sense of pride and attachment to Christian followers. Education level is generally high and evenly spread among German people. Rarely do they hesitate to think critically and this eases up the attempt to openly discuss how religious values should be applied in life. This, however, necessitates smart and careful handling, otherwise, it could be a boomerang that impedes future progress. Lowering church tax may incite higher interest to join churches. This point should be taken seriously because to most people today religions and churches are not that important anymore.

9. In your opinion, what are the impeding factors in implementing religious (Christian) values in Germany?

Many young people detach themselves from churches. The working class also detach themselves, mainly to avoid church tax. There is a kind of stigma attached to any sort of "forbiddance" in religion that people perceive as a stumbling block, pressure, or intimidation. Faith in Christian churches has become even lower. Some cases that involve churches like sexual harassment by clerical members incite Christian followers to abandon their churches. Some German people think that religious teachings are no longer relevant to modern life where everything can be analyzed from a scientific standpoint. Even if many of them were born Christian, they do not belong to any church and proclaim themselves atheists. Another issue that surfaces pertains to the question of making religious values relevant in dealing with current and future problems. In addition, there is resistance from the Christian community itself that root in their disappointment toward politicians who identify themselves with churches and their bad reputation and incompetence.

10. In your opinion, what are the supporting factors in implementing religious (Islamic) values in Germany?

Moderate Islam has the capacity to embrace different people and is pliant enough to perform in even the most diverse surroundings. This is especially true due to the nature of rahmatan lil alamin which works effectively act as a bridge for various people through the use of humanity concept as God Himself wills it.

The high level of education of German citizens is evenly spread. There is little fear to think critically and discussions about religious values and how they should be implemented in life can be held more openly and vigorously. There is a sense of comradery (ukhuwah) among Muslims coming from various countries sharing spaces in Germany, even if they come from different backgrounds of intellectual schools.

Religious discussion is the best method. Introducing Islamic values rahmatan lil alamin is necessary to deal with the critical and curious nature of German people. And since they hold a somewhat negative opinion of Islam and associate terrorism with Islam, this has become more urgent than ever. Needless to say, Germany's social system and law do not allow any sort of persecution in the name of religion and accommodate all shapes of faith.

11. In your opinion, what are the impeding factors in implementing religious (Islamic) values in Germany?

In several—but not all—cities in Germany Islamic party activists are holding too much sway and they propagate identity politics. Some even affiliate themselves to radical thinking (even if surreptitiously). Their teaching activities—in a limited scope—hamper the moderate Moslem from engaging in a productive transfer of knowledge by not giving them opportunities and this is their current policy.

Some sermons in these cities only employ religious teachers or party cadres that have received training in liqa' and things were done to ensure that nobodies outside their walled liqa' actively serve as teachers in the forum. This gives the impression that Muslim communities are stiff and keen to stigmatize people outside their circle with infidelity.

Other impeding factors are textualism or literalism i.e., the tendency to respond to any question concerning Islamic values with slogans like "That is written in the Quran, just follow it". There is a lingering Islamophobia among some indistinct figures and extreme groups who just do not wish Islam to prosper in Germany or think that Islam is not an integral part of Germany.

Additionally, the fact that Islam is a small minority in Germany hampers to a certain degree. Many Germans have a less than friendly attitude toward Islam, and many associate radical and terrorist movements with Islam, especially in Eastern Germany. The limited availability of Mosques, differences in the cultural backgrounds of each Muslim community, especially those coming from the Middle East, and racism-Islamophobia are several factors that are also worth mentioning due to their contribution to limiting the dynamic growth of Islam in Germany.

12. Which city/region in German that you think closely represents the ideal implementation of democracy?

Some of these regions are Bayern, München City, and Duesseldorf in NRW, Frankfurt, Bonn, Hamburg, etc. Bavaria historically has a higher than 70% participatory rate, especially in the former Western Germany area.

13. Which city/region in German that you think closely represents the ideal implementation of religious (Christianity) values?

In most German areas this is widespread. But the most representative examples are Bayern (München), Munich, Bavaria, and Baden Wittenberg

14. Is there any city/region in Germany that you think represents the ideal implementation of religious (Islamic) values best?

If we look at the number of mosques, then NRW (Nordrhein Westfalen) and its Muslim community are comparatively larger than the other parts of Germany. As for social policy, Germany closely—or adequately—approaches Islamic ideals. For example, financial support for the have not, tax system, right and responsibility of citizens, etc. Other parts that are worthy of consideration for their semblance of the ideal implementation of Islamic values are Köln (Cologne), Offenbach dan Frankfurt.

15. Is there any idea/solution that you can offer to tackle any impediment to a successful implementation of democracy in general in Germany?

There is a need to initiate cooperation with foreign (non-Germany) communities more interactively. More concrete discussions can be held to gather more concrete solutions. Awareness should be propagated at schools that the world today is more open and globalized. Education in democracy can start as early as elementary schools with more attractive approaches, e.g., by visiting Bundestag or parliament buildings, historical museums, etc, and by nurturing interest to listen and accommodate minority groups using cultural approaches and good use of media.

16. Is there any idea/solution that you can propose to tackle any impediment to a successful application of Christian values in German society?

Church tax ideally should be reduced; religious education should be improved so more and more people are less stirred to become atheistic. Christian people should take a more transparent stance in communicating their religious beliefs by not only emphasizing the “nice” parts such as love and conscience. If they merely try to sell these “nice” parts, religious forbiddance might be unduly rejected and those who reject are labeled as not Christian. Consequently, more and more people leave religions alone like what happens today. In addition, Democracy should not stray from Christian teachings.

The reduction of the Church tax is an attempt to re-correlate religious values and the real problems that people must face today. Many have the idea that religious teachings and the return to Church is irrelevant especially when present and future challenges are taken into account. This necessitates a reorientation toward the fundamental values found in the Scripture.

17. Is there any idea/solution that you can propose to tackle any impediment to a successful application of Islamic values in German society?

Moderate Islamic NGOs should be consistent in their way of wide-spreading the tolerant, supple, and open-minded Islam rahmatan lil-alamin, all while improving their cooperative works with German organizations in the education and humanity fields. In addition, the spreading of Islam ahlul sunnah wal jamaah should be contextualized within Germany's frame. Educating the public on the friendly, honorable, tolerant, and intellectual facets of Islam is another good method to apply.

An open attitude is indispensable in discussing the implementation of religious values. It enables the provision of logical arguments as to what, why, and how Islam should be. Irrevocably at one point, everything must be returned to faith, but it is important not to interrupt this progression abruptly with "just do it". Other than that, democracy ideally should not stray away too far from the core Islamic principles. Moslems should learn to integrate themselves into the local community and actively participate in their neighborhoods and workplaces. Good social interaction, either directly or indirectly, will ease Germans' reception of Islam and improve their willingness to listen more and accommodate Moslems' interests.

Inter-religious dialogs are one of the best methods—like introducing Islam's rahmatan lil-lamin, and directly addressing the relatively high curiosity and critical attitude of German people. This is especially important due to the fact that most Germans have a less than favorable opinion of Islam, besides the tendency to associate Islam too easily with numerous terrorist groups. Contextualization matters, too, particularly in how religious values are to be placed within contemporary situations, including but not limited to how the religion relates itself to climatic issues, the caring of the earth, and the general sustainability of our environment. The proper study of Islamic knowledge should also have continuity with the practice of Ahlussunnah wal jamaah, as exemplified by the prophet Muhammad himself.

18. How do you feel about Germany's cultural readiness and their collective religious groups' attitude toward the harmonizing of democracy and religions in Germany (in general)?

Germany has a strong Christian root, meaning they already have the concept of God and are relatively ready to appreciate any other religious views. Now it is a matter of being more open, especially toward Muslims in public spaces. This will open up a new possibility for women wearing hijab, for instance, to work as a school teacher (a thing that today is not granted 100% allowance).

Generally speaking, the situation in Germany today is much better than ever and indicates more positive openness toward other cultures and religions in their implementation of the democratic system. Muslims today are allowed to hold a religious activity in public areas belonging to the state, so long as the due procedure is followed and the local government allows it, like in Frankfurt and other cities.

One pressing problem in Germany that requires immediate attention is the fact that many immigrants have trouble assimilating themselves with German culture. German people, on the other hand, are divided in their response to this issue. Some are not ready to see different cultures or religions reside in Germany. For instance, there is a study that indicates as much as 30% of Eastern German people and 16% of Western German citizens do not want to have a Muslim neighbor.

Muslims are still constantly looking for a cultural form that can reflect Islamic values without violating any of its teachings, while being acceptable to the local citizens and cultures and can coexist with them. This will eventually lead them to believe that Islamic values are something familiar and inherently accommodate their culture as well.

CONCLUSION

Christianity has deep historical roots and state recognition in Germany, with widespread observance of Christian holidays, yet many German Christians—especially youth—face an identity crisis due to issues like the church tax and the perceived disconnect of Christian teachings from modern life. Tensions between faith, science, and current sociopolitical issues persist, exacerbated by politicization of religion. Germans broadly embrace democracy, supported by strong education and economic factors. Among immigrants, particularly Muslims, distrust and Islamophobia remain prevalent, often fueled by associations with radicalism. Muslims in Germany are encouraged to adopt a tolerant, culturally adaptive approach aligned with the principle of *rahmatan lil-alamin* while preserving Islamic values, embracing the concept of Western Islam (as advocated by Tariq Ramadan). Future research could explore cooperative frameworks where native Christians and Muslim immigrants collaboratively contextualize their respective religious values and develop humanistic, culturally sensitive social programs that address contemporary societal dynamics through inclusive dialogue and joint community engagement.

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