THE INTEGRATIONIST POLICY OF THE DIYANET TOWARDS SECTARIAN DIVERSITY

Sümeyra YAKARª   Emine Enise YAKARᵇ

Abstract

In contemporary Turkey, it is possible to identify an intersection of disparate religious and social identities. The sectarian character of believers resonates within the religious interpretations of separate groups and occasionally creates an ongoing challenge and complexity for the Diyanet (The Presidency of Religious Affairs) in Turkey. The institution is mainly responsible to conduct the religious affairs of Turkish people in harmony with the Islamic religion. The non-binding Islamic legal opinions (*fatwā*), which are issued in response to questions of believers represent the most active and influential outcome of the Diyanet. The mission of institution also includes to deal with the problematical teachings of various religious groups and to strengthen the *ahl al-Sunna wa al-Jamā'a* doctrine amongst the people who experience ingroup socialization. The paper seeks to elaborate the institution's encounter with the sectarian diversity with specific reference to themes of modernism, secularism and traditionalism. The research divides religious sects of Turkey into three main categories depending on their connection with the faith area (*i'tiqādī*), worship area (*'ibādī*) and social mobilization (*jamā'a*). The Alevis, Ja'farīs, Shāfi'īs and Nurcus are chosen as representative examples of each of these diverged groups, respectively. To what extent the Diyanet's approach towards these groups is influenced by the concepts of modernism, secularism and traditionalism is the main question that the paper aims to answer. The analysis intents to shed light on the affirmative or rejective responses of the Diyanet towards these sectarianist groups in contemporary Turkey.

Keywords: Islamic law, Diyanet, Alevi, Shāfi'ī, Ja'farī, Cemaat.

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MEZHEP FARKLILIKLARINA KARŞI DİYANETİN BÜTÜNLEŞTİRİCİ POLİTİKASI

Türkiye birbirinden farklılık gösteren çok sayıda dini, sosyal ve etnik kimliklerin

ª Dr., Iğdır Üniversitesi, sumeyrayakar@hotmail.com
ᵇ Dr., Recep Tayyip Erdoğan Üniversitesi, emineenise.yakar@erdogan.edu.tr

örtüşme ve kesişme noktası olarak ön plana çıkan bir ülke konumundadır. Özellikle dini alandaki mezhepsel karakter, sosyal gruplar tarafından yapılan dini yorumlarda kendini göstermekte ve Diyanet İsleri Başkanlığı'nın dini faaliyetlerinde belli alanlarda zorluk ve karmaşıklığa sebep teşkil etmektedir. Resmi bir dini kurum olan Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı, Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Anayasası'nın 136. maddesi uyarınca 1924 yılında Türk hükümeti tarafından kurulmuştur. Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı esas olarak, Türk halkının dini işlerini İslam dininin emir ve öğretileriyle uygun bir şekilde yürütmekten sorumludur. Müslümanların günlük hayatta karşılaştığı problem ve sorunlara, bağlayıcı olmayan bir şekilde verilen cevaplardan oluşan fetvalar Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı'nın en aktif ve etkili olduğu alan olarak öne çıkar. Kurumun temel görevlerinden bir diğeri ise farklı grupların problemli dini öğretilerine alternatifler üretmek, farklı dini gruplar içinde sosyalleşen kişilerin ehl-i sünnet eğitimini güçlendirmektir...

[The Extended Abstract is at the end of the article.]

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Introduction

The Diyanet has increased and expanded its activities, appearance, and voice in both national and international spheres during last decade and this active policy in national arena has further brought out the Diyanet's approaches towards different religious segments of society. Turkish society is dominated by Muslims whose actions, culture and thoughts are derived from a foundation of Islamic ethics and values. Despite far-reaching changes, which can be traced back to secularization and westernization, Islamic morals, qualifications and values still remain active elements of Turkish society. Lewis therefore observes: "The deepest Islamic roots of Turkish life and culture are still alive, and the ultimate identity of Turk and Islamic in Turkey is still unchallenged."[1] Because the majority of Turks are adherents of Islam, the Republic of Turkey is frequently identified as 'Islamic'. This is precisely problematic because it is standard practice to use this term in relation to a state whose constitution establishes Islam as the official state religion or permits some elements of Islamic law to percolate within the state legal system, neither of which are observable in contemporary Turkey. The presence of the Diyanet within the secular Turkish state can be explained as a type of 'hybrid' secularism whom religious institutions reflects its own

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[1] Bernard Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 424.

idiosyncratic character.[2] It would therefore be more accurate to describe Turkey as a democratic, secular state with a Muslim majority population.

The majority population of Turkey is characterized by considerable heterogeneity. The diverse range of cultural, regional and ethnic groups implement various number of different religious interpretations and practices.[3] The Diyanet's relationship with these dispersed religious communities and denominations is precisely controversial because the Diyanet adopts variable attitudes towards them relying on their identical nature and ideological characters. While the Diyanet is the highest official religious institution that teaches religious truth to the society, it also aims to provide religious services without discrimination, to protect Islam from exploitation and to strengthen the unity of the Turkish nation-state as announced at the Constitution.[4]

The article aims to answer to the question of to what extent the Diyanet's approach towards sectarian diversity is differentiable in accordance with teachings and activities of various religious groups. In the first instance, laconic explanations regarding the social role of the institution will be introduced to provide an insight into its social responsibilities and functions within the wider context of social environment in Turkey. Secondly, the article seeks to demonstrate the adopted attitude of the Diyanet towards various sectarian groups that ranges from assentient to rejectionist. In analyzing the Diyanet's approach comprehensively, it will be argued that the Diyanet maintains an affirmative and pragmatic stance in terms of sectarian divisions as long as the religious orders, national unity and harmonious atmosphere are not affected negatively.

A. The Responsibilities of the Diyanet Regarding Sectarian Diversities

The Diyanet takes on responsibility to protect, promote and manage religion through preserving national solidarity and integrity under the secular nation-state system as Article 136 states.[5] The Constitution has

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[2] Emine Enise Yakar, "A Critical Comparison between the Presidency of Religious Affairs (Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı) and the Office of Shaykh al-Islam", *Kilis 7 Aralık Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 6/11 (2019), 423.

[3] Ali Bardakoğlu, *Religion and Society New Perspectives from Turkey* (Ankara: Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı, 2009), 31-32, 90.

[4] "Temel İlke ve Hedefler," *T.C. Cumhurbaşkanlığı Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı* (December 25, 2012), accessed October 20, 2020, https://www.diyanet.gov.tr/fr-FR/Institutionnel/détail/3.

[5] Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Anayasası (November 7, 1982), Article 136, accessed October 20, 2020, https://www.tbmm.gov.tr/anayasa/anayasa_2018.pdf.

basically assigned the Diyanet to administer all Sunni-based mosques to answer religious questions, to organize religious education centers, to manage the religious affairs in society, to train preachers and prayer leaders.[6] Since its establishment, the Diyanet has performed two key duties. The first is to oversee the religious affairs of Muslims with regard to worship (*'ibādāt*) and faith (*i'tiqād*), and the second is to manage the places of worship. Equalizing the Diyanet with the office of Shaykh al-Islam, Cornell underscores the function of these institutions as being primarily to control the religious affairs of the society.[7] In 1961, the institution was tasked with informing wider society about religion and managing Islam's ethical principles. Up until the 1960s, the Diyanet's stance towards Islamic legal schools (*madhhabs*) and different religious denominations remained relatively uncontroversial. It was clearly indicated that the view of Sunni tradition (*ahl al-Sunna wa al-Jamā'a*) would be adopted in issues related to faith. It was also established that the Hanafi school of law would provide guidance upon worship issues during the translation process of *Sahih-i Buhari Muhtasarı Tecrid-i Şarīh*,[8] and *Hak Dini Kur'an Dili*[9] with these works being undertaken by the Diyanet. The interpretation of the Qur'an, *Hak Dini Kur'an Dili,* was written by Muhammad Elmalı Hamdi Yazır. In setting out his method in the introduction of the book, Yazır indicates that his interpretation regarding to the issues of Islamic creed and practices depends on the understanding of the Hanafi school of Sunni tradition. Both contributions have been acknowledged as important works in their own right and are not therefore perceived as being biased towards other Sunni perspectives.[10] Additionally, the Diyanet has recently published and translated basic Jafarī

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[6] It might be claimed that while the Diyanet mainly controls and administers Sunni-based mosques, the Jafarī citizens mainly prefer to establish their own mosques. The Jafarī-based mosques and religious centers, approximately 300 in number, are voluntarily contributed by Jafarī associations and Iranian authorities sometimes financially support some of these religious centers. The division or separation is not connected with the constitutional responsibilities of the Diyanet, but instead it is related to the intentional selection or sectarian tendency of Jafarī citizens. See, Şaban Banaz, "Türkiye'de Caferiler", *Tokat Gaziosmanpaşa Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 4/1 (2018), 34-35, 38.

[7] Svante Cornell, "The Rise of Diyanet: The Politicization of Turkey's Directorate of Religious Affairs," *The Turkey Analyst* (October 9, 2015), accessed October 20, 2020, https://www.turkeyanalyst.org/publications/turkey-analyst-articles/item/463-the-rise-of-diyanet-the-politicization-of-turkey's-directorate-of-religious-affairs.html.

[8] İştar Gözaydın, *Religion, Politics and the Politics of Religion*, (Berlin: Friedrich-Naumann-Stiftung Für die Freiheit, 2013), 17; Sönmez Kutlu, "Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı ve Islamiçi Dini Gruplarla (Mezhep ve Tarikatlar) İlişkileri," *Dini Araştırmalar* 12/33 (2009), 109-110.

[9] Elmalılı Hamdi Yazır, *Hak Dini Kur'an Dili* I (İstanbul: Eser Kitabevi, 1971), 19.

[10] Kutlu, "The Presidency of Religious Affairs' Relationship," 249.

textual materials in order to increase the harmonious relationship between different segments of the Turkish society. Regarding the integrative policy of the Diyanet, approximately ten classical Alavi sources are also published including the famous contribution *Velayetname*.[11]

Subsequent to the 1960 military coup, the Diyanet's attitude towards Islamic schools and sects began to be discussed within the Constitutional Court and the institution itself.[12] It has already been noted that the establishment of a Directorate of Religious Sects in place of the Diyanet had already been proposed in legislation to the Constitutional Court. However, this proposal produced little more than an acrimonious debate, which was only resolved when the 1982 Constitution established that the Diyanet would continue to promote national solidarity and unity.[13] During the 1980s, however, the polemical and abrasive debates with regard to the objectivity and neutrality of the Diyanet towards Sunni schools, religious groups and Sūfī orders started to be extensively aggravated.[14] Kutlu points out the increasing debates related to the relationship between the Diyanet and religious groups when he writes: "With the influence of liberalism at the end of the 1980s, demands on the state in general and [the Diyanet] in particular increased and discussion of the problem of representation intensified."[15]

The Diyanet's general and specific (e.g. Diyanet-Alevis relations and Diyanet- Ja'farīs relations) interactions with religious groups have proven to be among the most challenging issues that the institution has recently addressed. In its public and religious services, the Diyanet adheres to principle of remaining above all Islamic legal schools (*madhhabs*) and religious sects. In recent years, the institution has sought to produce authentic religious knowledge without evidencing too clear dependence upon any specific religious group or sect.[16] In reflecting upon the institution's adherence to this 'scientific' approach, Er (the Diyanet's vice-president

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[11] Hacı Bektaş Veli. *Velayetname*, ed. Hamiye Duran (Ankara: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı Yayınları, 2007).

[12] Kutlu, "Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı," 110.

[13] Kutlu, "Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı," 112.

[14] Emine Enise Yakar, "The Interaction Between Islamic Legal Methodologies and Social Context in the Light of the Contemporary Practice of Iftā' A Case Study of Two Institutions," *Ulum* 3/2 (December 2020), 483.

[15] Sönmez Kutlu, "The Presidency of Religious Affairs' Relationship with Religious Groups (Sects/Sufi Orders) in Turkey," *The Muslim World* 98 2-3 (2008), 250-251.

[16] Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Başkanlık Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı in *Basın Açıklaması*, accessed December 05, 2016, http://www.diyanet.gov.tr/tr/icerik/basin-aciklamasi-aciklama/6155.

between 2003-2010) observes:

> 'Without ignoring the modern life and the common accumulation of humanity, [the Diyanet], presenting religious knowledge to the society on the basis of citizenship, informs the society about religion by depending on the main sources of religion, scientific criteria and methodology. The knowledge concerning Islamic belief, worship and moral principles, presented by [the Diyanet], is based on the two fundamental sources of Islam [the Qur'an and the Sunna of the Prophet], accepted by all Muslims, rather than the information and preferences of a sect or a group.'[17]

The Diyanet therefore adheres to rely on the general principles of Islam, as opposed to the experiences of particular religious groups, religious clergy or Sūfī orders when producing authentic religious knowledge. Mehmet Görmez (the former president of the Diyanet) further reiterates the importance of the Diyanet's impartiality in the production of religious knowledge when he states: "In its attempts to educate Turkish society on religious matters, the [Diyanet] produces the needed religious knowledge through scientific and scholarly avenues and keeps its independence because of the principle of secularism."[18] If the production and transmission of authentic and sound knowledge is held to be an important task of this institution, it is not sustainable to maintain that the Diyanet should take the heterogenic religious structure of Muslims in Turkey into account when undertaking this task.

1. The Approach of Diyanet towards Theological Sects

The Diyanet has inclusively and pragmatically evaluated the existence of Alevi and Shi'ī groups in Turkey inside the scope of Islamic sectarian diversity rather than non-Islamic religious formations. The Alevi revival of the 1980s resulted in the heightened public visibility of the Alevis and trenchant criticism being directed towards status of the Diyanet and its role within the secular Turkish state.[19] This revealing visibility no doubt attracted

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[17] Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Başkanlık Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı, in *Sayın Oral Çalışların Radikal Gazetesinde Hazırlamış Olduğu "Aleviler" Yazı Dizisi Nedeniyle Başkanlığımızın da Görüşlerine Başvurmak Düşüncesiyle Yönelttikleri Sorulara Başkan Yardımcısı Prof. Dr. İzzet ErTarafından Verilen Cevaplar*, accessed November 17, 2020, http://www.diyanet.gov.tr/tr/icerik/sayin-oral-calislarin-radikal-gazetesinde-hazirlamis-oldugu-aleviler-yazi-dizisi-nedeniyle-baskanligimizin-da-goruslerine-basvurmak-dusuncesiyle-yonelttikleri-s/5864.

[18] Mehmet Görmez, "The Status of the Presidency of Religious Affairs in Turkish Constitution and Its Execution," *The Muslim World* 98 2-3 (2008), 248.

[19] Hamdi Mert, "Gündem: Alevilik ve Başörtüsü," *Diyanet Aylık Dergisi* 12 (1992), 6-7.

the attention of the Diyanet and induced it to issue an explanatory statement relating to Alevism. Er defines the Diyanet's approach to Alevism and states:

> 'In the light of scientific studies based on historical experience and clear knowledge of the main sources of religion, Alevism that accepts Islam as religion, the Prophet Muhammad as the last prophet and the Qur'an as the holy book cannot be regarded as a separate religion.'[20]

This statement clearly demonstrates that Alevism is regarded as a historically Islamic formation.[21] The consideration of its ties with Islam can be interpreted as a form of recognition, and this impression is further reinforced by the use of inclusive language. Kutlu observes that the report prepared by the High Board of Religious Affairs, the highest religious body within the Diyanet, refers to the needs of the Turkish-Shiʻī religious community as part of religious public services.[22] While the statement clearly suggests that the Diyanet was willing to engage with the demands of non-Sunni groups, it does not sufficiently clarify if this recognition extends to the Alevis, or if their demands fall within the scope of religious public services. Presumably, it is not possible to attribute this lack of clarity to only the Diyanet's nebulous and obscure approaches towards the issue of Alevi. Rather, the incomprehensibility of the adopted opinion can instead be traced back to the term in which Alevism is defined. Üzüm outlines the definitions of Alevi in accordance with statements of Alevi believers into 12 categories ranging from the idea of its being a separate religion to a sub-branch of Islam.[23] Since each definition finds its own roots in the statements, practices and manifestation of different Alevi groups, the ambiguous situation creates the cognitive complexity for the outsiders.

In Turkey, Alevi identity, ideology and religious predispositions demonstrate considerable amount of discrepancy from one local region to other, so the Alevi citizens are widely dispersed in terms of self-representation. The definition of Alevism displays noticeable differences among different Alevi groups; these differences have also reverberated in the

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[20] Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Başkanlık Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı, in *Sayın Oral Çalışların Radikal Gazetesinde.*

[21] For detailed information on Alevis's religious stance see, Reyhan Erdoğdu Başaran, "Comparing Scholarship: The Assessment of the Contemporary Works That Links Alevis With Either Shi`ism Or Sunnism", *Kilis 7 Aralık Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 5/9 (December 2018), 315-338.

[22] Kutlu, "The Presidency of Religious Affairs," 250.

[23] İlyas Üzüm, "Kendi Yazarlarına Göre Alevilik-Bektaşilik," *Türkiye Günlüğü* 42 (September-October 1996), 54-74.

divergent understandings of Alevi theology that exhibits salient differences from one Alevi group to other. Alevi theology therefore sometimes applies deistic, gnostic, monotheistic and pantheistic idioms to historically Muslim personalities or sometimes takes agnostic or atheistic routes altogether.[24] Accordingly, Alevism may turn into an ethno-cultural hub that operates independently of faith. Turner and Arslan describe how Alevis define themselves in the following terms:

> 'The Alevis are a distinctive tradition, believing that there is a sacred hierarchy of authority, and their mystical and esoteric beliefs are unlike modernized Sunni Islam. The core of their ritual tradition is known as cem, and this tradition is guarded and organized by religious leaders called dede. The Alevis are associated with Shi'ism because they believe in the twelve imams of Shi'ism and recall the martyrdom of Hasan and Hüseyin. As a result, the Sunni majority often believe the Alevis are Shi'ite Iranians, but the Alevis reject this accusation. They also believe in the equality of men and women, whereas Sunni Islam keeps men and women apart in the mosques and assumes that women are separate from men and require protection. In their prayers and ritual life, they favor the Turkish language over Arabic.'[25]

Seemingly, this definition does not sufficiently clarify where Alevis seek to situate themselves within Islam, or even if they seek to situate themselves in this manner in the first instance. While Üzüm evaluates Alevis as a sub-identity of Islam by emphasizing Islamic motives of Alevis, an Alevi scholar Fuat Bozkurt considers them outside the framework of Islam by highlighting their connection with non-Islamic rituals and doctrines.[26] However, the Diyanet and Süleyman Er (a Dede or Alevi religious functionary) provide an important clarification when they observe that Alevis are not subject to discrimination because there are no basic religious differences between Alevism and the Sunni branch of Islam.[27] In their view, any divergence can be traced back to cultural practices and local customs. Er

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[24] Emir Kaya, "Balancing Interlegality through Realist Altruism: Diyanet Mediation in Turkey" (PhD diss., University of London, 2011), 230-231.

[25] Bryan S. Turner and Berna Zengin Arslan, "State and Turkish Secularism: The Case of the Diyanet," in *The Religious and the Political: A Comparative Sociology of Religion*, ed. Bryan S. Turner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 217-218.

[26] İlyas Üzüm, "Modernizmin Alevi Toplumu Üzerindeki Etkileri," *İslam ve Modernleşme*, (İstanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslam Araştırmaları Merkezi Yayınları, 1997), 277; Fuat Bozkurt, *Aleviliğin Toplumsal Boyutları* (İstanbul: Tekin Yayınevi, 1993), 12.

[27] Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Başkanlık Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı, in *Sayın Oral Çalışların Radikal Gazetesinde*; Mert, "Gündem: Alevilik ve Başörtüsü," 6-30.

observes that the Diyanet maintains that Alevism is a Sūfī religious entity that falls within the scope of Islam.[28] This approach of the Diyanet conceivably indicates that the institution is aware of Alevi identity and Alevi culture, but the recognition and promulgation of Alevi understanding of Islam by the Diyanet will probably deteriorate the institution's position in producing and transferring authentic Islamic knowledge.

Although the Diyanet ostensibly seeks to keep an equal distance from all Islamic legal schools and sects, the Alevis (who view themselves as being a Muslim community that operates outside of the Sunni and Shi'ī traditions[29]) have accused it of only adopting the Ḥanafī school of law. For this reason, Alevis have asked the Diyanet to approve different interpretations of Islam and to recognize them as a religious group that can be clearly distinguished from Sunni Islam. This aspiration is however complicated by the fact that the definition of Alevism lacks clarity and does not encompass all Alevis. Karaman observes:

> 'Sometimes those from Alevi communities complain about the lack of services they receive from the Diyanet, but there are contradictions in such claims. Some voice these in the context of human rights, others in the context of freedom of religion and conscience. Others consider the Alevi citizens as belonging to a completely different religion; some consider them atheist or part of an ideological movement that opposes religion. However, there is no historical or scientific evidence to support these claims and extremism. In fact, throughout Turkish history, Alevi citizens have accepted Islamic beliefs and morals, loved Ehli-Beyt (the descendants of the Prophet) and shown faithfulness to the pillars of religion, prayer and moral principles.'[30]

The main problem relating to the definition of Alevism arises in the question of how Alevi foundations and associations define themselves along with 'Alevism'. Some organizations describe Alevism as a non-Islamic religion while others incorporate Marxism to instead depict it as a kind of Kurdish religion.[31] Other groups also seek to establish a link between Alevi

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[28] Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Başkanlık Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı, in *Sayın Oral Çalışların Radikal Gazetesinde.*

[29] Kutlu, "Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı," 112.

[30] Fikret Karaman, "The Status and Function of the PRA in the Turkish Republic," *The Muslim World* 98 2-3 (April 2008), 288.

[31] Mert, "Gündem: Alevilik ve Başörtüsü," 14-18; Turner and Arslan, "State and Turkish Secularism," 216; Thijl Sunier et al., *Diyanet: The Turkish Directorate for Religious Affairs*

citizens and Shiʿī believers by arguing that "the real Alevism is the Alevism of Ahl al-Bayt (the House of the Prophet), namely Shiʿism."[32] Some researchers assert that Alevism is a democratic, national and secular belief system while others claim that it is only the Turkish interpretation of Islam. A research report of the Diyanet describes it as a mythical tradition that does accept the authority of the Qurʾan and the narrations of the Prophet (ḥadīths), along with the practice of the five pillars of Islam.[33] However, it is stated: "[c]ontemporary Alevism is very critical about religious orthodoxy and usually defines itself by distancing itself from Sunni Islam…. Alevis feel attracted to mystical traditions in Islam that look for God in [the] human heart."[34] A further layer of complexity is added by sociological research which suggests that "those who define themselves as Alevi have difficulty [in] defining what Alevism is."[35]

Taking into account the fact that the definition of Alevism invokes various ambiguities and even conflicting interpretations, it is conceivable that the representation of Alevis within the Diyanet may in turn engender various controversies and intricacies. The possibility of accepting Alevism as a religion that falls beyond the scope of Islam makes unreasonable to suggest that the group should be represented within an institution that is concerned with the administration of Muslim religious affairs in Turkey. For this reason, it is clearly incumbent upon Alevis to first clarify the precise meaning of 'Alevism' before advancing a claim to be represented within the Diyanet. In 2007, the political authorities started a governmental project which is known as Alevi opening and this extensive project aimed to minimalize the marginalized status of Alevi citizens.[36] Furthermore, the unawareness of a clear knowledge of the Diyanet's constitutional framework will almost certainly invalidate claims of partiality towards faith communities, religious

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in a Changing Environment, VU University of Amsterdam and Utrecht University, 2011, accessed, December 20, 2020,
http://www.fsw.vu.nl/nl/Images/Final%20report%20Diyanet%20February%202011_tcm30-200229.pdf, 116-117.

[32] Kutlu, "The Presidency of Religious Affairs," 256. See also Sunier et al., *Diyanet: The Turkish Directorate,* 116.

[33] Kutlu, "The Presidency of Religious Affairs," 256; See different definitions of Alevism, Çakır Ceyyhan Suvari and Elif Karaca, "The Alevi Discourse in Turkey" in *Studies on Iran and The Caucasus,* ed. Uwe Blasing, Victoria Arakelova, and Matthias Weinreich (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 511-519.

[34] Sunier et al., *Diyanet: The Turkish Directorate*, 116.

[35] Kutlu, "The Presidency of Religious Affairs," 256.

[36] For detailed information on "Alevi Opening," see Necdet Subaşı, "The Alevi Opening: Concept, Strategy and Process", *Insight Turkey* 12/2 (Spring 2010), 165-178.

sects and Sūfī orders. Accusations will invariably fail to engage with the legal provisions and structures of the institution with the consequence that they will appear superficial in both tone and content.

While some Alevis accuse the Diyanet of being biased against religious groups that diverge from Ḥanafī-Sunni Muslims, Alevism is accepted by the Diyanet as a group that falls within the parameters (belief, history and religious orientation) of Islam. The *fatwā* that assents to marriage between an Alevi man and a Sunni woman clearly demonstrates the attitude of the Diyanet towards Alevism, at least within the sphere of Islamic law. The *fatwā* states:

> 'According to Islamic rulings, the fact that Muslim women marry non-Muslim men is not a licit act. One who accepts the religious rulings that the Prophet Muhammad notified, conveyed, and carried out during his lifetime as authentic and true, and who proclaims that I am a Muslim is a Muslim no matter he/she is called Sunni or Alevi. Accordingly, regardless of the person's Alevi or Sunni identity, one who is inside the borders of Islam can marry with a Muslim woman because there is no religious obstacle for him to do so.'[37]

This Islamic legal statement brings out both the Diyanet's democratic legalist perspective and also its unifying disposition. The *fatwā* makes it straightforward to infer that the Diyanet adopts a deeper internalization of established Islamic teachings. At the same line with the Diyanet, the religious book of 11th grades that is published by the Ministry of National Education assesses Alevis under the sub-branch of Islamic Sūfī sects by highlighting the Islamic figures of Alevis.[38] Instead of focusing upon the cultural, ideological and social differences between Alevis and Sunnis, the state institutions adopt a more inclusive tendency and positive language that is grounded within the unity of faith. It exemplifies the Diyanet's inclusivist and integrationist approach and alignment with the Alevis.

The Diyanet has also undertaken a number of initiatives that derived from the requests of Alevi citizens. To take one example, the Diyanet has taken the needs of Alevi-Bektashi citizens into account when appointing personnel to Alevi settlements and villages. These Diyanet officials are trained and informed about Alevi culture before they begin to provide

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[37] Mert, "Gündem: Alevilik ve Başörtüsü," 13.
[38] Ayşe Macit et al., *Ortaokul Din Kültürü ve Ahlak Bilgisi 7. Sınıf* (Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı, 2018), 133-143.

religious services.[39] The Diyanet's printing and publishing of basic Alevi sources can also be considered to be part of these initiatives. During Mehmet Sait Yazıcıoğlu's presidency (1987-1992), the first serious dialogue between Alevis and the Diyanet began when a substantial part of the Diyanet's official periodical (*Diyanet Aylık Dergisi*, XIII, January 1992) was reserved to the subject of Alevism.[40] In this official periodical, Alevi Dedes (Alevi religious functionaries or leaders) and Alevi and non-Alevi academics extensively authored many articles regarding the subject of Alevism. More recently, the Ashura (the tenth day of Islamic month of Muharram[41]), Muharram fasting, the martyrdom of Husain in Karbala, the House of the Prophet (*ahl al-bayt*) and the life of 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib, the fourth Caliph (along with his services to Islam) have become subjects of the Friday sermons and the Diyanet's official periodicals.[42] For instance, the love of the House of the Prophet has previously been the main subject of the Diyanet's official periodical (*Diyanet Aylık Dergisi*, CLXXI, March 2005).[43] More recently, this topic has featured alongside the life of the Prophet Muhammad in the ceremonies of the Week of the Blessed Birth (an annual celebration week focused upon the Prophet's birth) which were organized by the Diyanet.[44] During the week of the Blessed Birth and the Muharram Celebration, the Diyanet organized a number of activities that were implemented in cooperation with Alevis.[45] These recent initiatives (coordination with Alevi leaders, training of staff on Alevism and the publication of Alevi-Bektashi classics) have been regarded with suspicion

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[39] Karaman, "The Status and Function of the PRA," 288; Kutlu, "Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı," 123.

[40] Mert, "Gündem: Alevilik ve Başörtüsü," 6-30.

[41] The tenth of Muharram is a sacred day for Alevis and Shī'i Muslims. On this day, both Alevis and Shī'is commemorate and mourn the tragic dead of Ḥusayn, the grandson of the Prophet Muhammad. At Karbala, which is nearby, Ḥusayn was, along with his family members, tortured and murdered by the army of Caliph Yazid. M. Kamil Yaşaroğlu, "Muharrem," *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslam Ansiklopedisi* 31 (Ankara: TDV Yayınları, 2006), 4-5.

[42] Kutlu, "Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı," 122-123.

[43] The 171 issue of *Diyanet Ayık Dergisi* is mainly committed to the subject of the Ahl al-Bayt. Osman Eğri, "Kültürümüzde Ehl-i Beyt Sevgisi", *Diyanet Aylık Dergisi* 171 (March 2005), 5-10; Ahmet Yaman, "Ehl-i Beyt Hukuku", *Diyanet Aylık Dergisi* 171 (March 2005), 10-15; Ekrem Keleş, "Ali gibi Bir Genç", *Diyanet Aylık Dergisi* 171 (March 2005), 15-18; Seyid Ali Topal, "Hz. Ali'de Yönetim Anlayışı", *Diyanet Aylık Dergisi* 171 (March 2005), 18-23; Abdurrahman Akbaş, "Hz. Ali ve Fatıma'nın Evliliği (Mutlu Yuva Mutlu Beraberlik)", *Diyanet Aylık Dergisi* 171 (March 2005), 23-27; Ömer Menekşe, "Hz. Hüseyin'in Şehadeti", *Diyanet Aylık Dergisi* 171 (March 2005), 27-30; S. Emin Arvas, "Omanlı'da Ehl-i Beyt Sevgisi", *Diyanet Aylık Dergisi* 171 (March 2005), 30-34.

[44] Kutlu, "The Presidency of Religious Affairs," 259.

[45] Kutlu, "The Presidency of Religious Affairs," 259.

and even presented as a covert mechanism through which the Sunni version of Islam can percolated within the Alevi cult. However, the initiatives of Diyanet, which are part of a more general search for an authentic Alevism, attest to the fact that, since the 1980s, the institution has evidenced a somewhat more constructive posture towards the Alevi community, with the consequence that its members have been regarded through a social rather than a religious lens.

2. The Approach of Diyanet towards Schools of Islamic Law

The relationship between the Diyanet and followers of different schools of law rather than Ḥanafī school explains the institutions stance towards legal diversity. The Jaʿfarīs and the Shāfiʿīs are other prominent religious groups that ought to be subject to extensive evaluation by the Diyanet. In contrast to the Alevis, the Jaʿfarīs do not aspire to be represented within the Diyanet. The Diyanet's definition of 'Jaʿfarī' has probably proven to be the largest challenge in relations between the two actors, although this was probably addressed, when the Diyanet published the Jaʿfarī catechism in 2012. Prior to publication, the Diyanet described the Jaʿfarīs as a non-Sunni sect that follows the Jaʿfarī school of law in worship issues and advocates the doctrine of Shiʿī sect in faith area.[46] Jaʿfarīs, for their part, previously frequently espoused the view that the Diyanet was an institution that sought to advance a "Sunnization project" focused upon Muslim residents in Turkey. In an interview with *Caferiyol Dergisi,* Bardakoğlu, the former president of the Diyanet, encapsulated the institution's attitude towards the Jaʿfarīs in the following terms:

> 'Jafarism is an Islamic jurisprudence based on the ideas of the disciples of great scholar, Imam Jafar al-Sadık, and his disciples' opinions. The duty of the Diyanet is to provide religious services to people and to satisfy their religious needs without discriminating in favor of a specific religious group, sect, and Sufi order, because our presidency is a neutral institution [in implementing those duties and responsibilities given by constitutional regulations, laws and bylaws].'[47]

While the Diyanet's religious explanations and services operate from a particular Sunni perspective, the contemporary Diyanet makes a clear concession to the Jaʿfarī school of law. The Diyanet's approach acknowledges the group as one of the valid legal schools in Islam that attests to the

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[46] Kutlu, "The Presidency of Religious Affairs," 259-260.
[47] Ali Bardakoğlu, "Caferileri Kazanmalıyız," *Caferiyol Dergisi* 1 (2006), 5.

considerable religious diversity in Turkey. The fact that the Diyanet implements a specific program that seeks to train imams about the creed, ritual practices and Islamic legal norms of Ja'farīs who live and work in the eastern parts of Turkey and some districts of Istanbul clearly verifies a noticeable shift within the institution's attitude towards this group.[48] The positive approach of the Diyanet towards Ja'farīs is also noticeable at the religious education curriculum of the of 10th grade religious books that is prepared by the Ministry of National Education.[49] Additionally, the recently published religious books for the university education seems to divide sectarian groups according to their survival and non-survival rather than their Sunni or non-Sunni characters.[50] The inclusivist tendency at the education area proves the flexible attitude of the Diyanet for sectarian diversity by prioritizing the national unity.

To the same extent, the Diyanet's approach to the Shāfi'īs (who are mainly dispersed within the Kurdish population) can only be sufficiently engaged within the wider context of the Diyanet's relationship with Islamic diversity in Turkey. This issue evidences a clear paradox that operates along two points: (1) the Kurdish ideological spectrum or state nationalism; and (2) jurisprudential divergence in the Sunni community. When it is evaluated within the context of a larger Kurdish national ideology, the issue conceivably creates a complex enigma for the Diyanet. To a substantial extent, the Diyanet pursues the state's project of national unification, and therefore seeks to reduce communal demands within the state (this is embodied in Kaya's observation that "[t]he hypersensitivity of the subject and the state's nationalistic conservatism has been determining the Diyanet's Kurdish policy to a large extent").[51] On the contrary, when the issue is engaged as a matter of Islamic jurisprudential divergence which is set between the Diyanet's implicit domination of Ḥanafī school and the Kurds' doctrinal adherence to the Shāfi'ī school, the problem presents itself as a trivial concern that needs to be developed into an all-encompassing institutional philosophy by the Diyanet.

Since 1960s, the Diyanet has employed Kurdish/ Shāfi'ī *imams* (prayer leaders), who have received religious education through *medreses* (unofficial

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[48] Sunier et al., *Diyanet: The Turkish Directorate*, 115.
[49] Recai Doğan, *Ortaöğretim DinKültürü ve Ahlak Bilgisi 10. Sınıf Ders Kitabı*, (Ankara: Özyurt Matbaacılık, 2019), 147.
[50] Talip Türcan, ed., *İslam Hukuku El Kitabı* (Ankara: Grafiker Yayınları, 2018), 3-4.
[51] Kaya, "Balancing Interlegality," 234.

schools that provide traditional instruction in Islamic knowledge).[52] This was named the 'Mele Project' of the Diyanet, and it relates to the employment of Kurdish/ Shāfiʿī *imams* in the Diyanet mosques and offices in spite of the fact that they received *medrese*-education rather than official education in the public schools (for *imams* and preachers).[53] Görmez suggests that the underlying reason of the project is to benefit from well-versed *imams* in Islamic sciences and to offer religious education services for Kurdish/ Shāfiʿī citizens within Turkey's boundaries. The project, as Görmez states, further aims to establish communication with the Shāfiʿī citizes who have clearly developed means through which dissociate themselves from the Diyanet, particularly in rural and less mixed areas.[54] Although some scholars criticize the 'Mele Project' upon the grounds that it is part of the state's assimilation policy directed towards its Kurdish population,[55] closer inspection suggests that it is simply concerned with the provision of socio-religious services that cater to the religious expectations and needs of Shāfiʿī citizens. Kaya refers to the shortage of religious personnel in Eastern Turkey (where the Shāfiʿī citizens are predominantly based) when he observes that "the Shāfiʿī Kurds lack truly representative of religious personnel who would communicate with them through their lore and customs".[56] From this perspective, the Diyanet's praxis appears as a more apposite representation of Islam for the Turkish milieu and the Shāfiʿī citizens. Accordingly, it can be inferred that the dialogue between the Diyanet and the Shāfiʿīs has primarily been articulated in the vernacular religion rather than ethno-nationalism. The institution's leniency towards Jaʿfarīs and Shāfiʿīs that seek to maintain their interpretation of Islamic legal rulings (this is particularly apparent within the area of ritual practices or *ʿibādāt*) suggests that a productive dialogue has been initiated between the Diyanet, and the followers of the Jaʿfarī and Shāfiʿī schools of law. Upon these grounds, it is reasonable to conclude that the

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[52] "Diyanetten 'Mele' Alımı İddialarına Yanıt!" in *Haber Türk* (December 12, 2011), accessed October 10, 2020, http://www.haberturk.com/gundem/haber/696476-diyanetten-mele-alimi-iddialarina-yanit.

[53] "Diyanet Bakanlığından Mele Eleştirilerine Tepki!" in *T24 Bağımsız İnternet Gazetesi* (December 18, 2011), accessed October 25, 2020, http://t24.com.tr/haber/diyanet-bakanligindan-mele-eles tirilerine-tepki,187392; "Diyanet'in Mele İstihdamı Toplumsal Barışa Katkıdır," in *Güneydoğu Güncel*, (December 19, 2011), accessed October 26, 2020, http://www.guneydoguguncel.com/diyanetin-mele-istihdami-toplumsal-barisa-katkidir-1479h.htm.

[54] "Diyanet Bakanlığından Mele Eleştirilerine Tepki!"

[55] Işıl Cinmen, "Mele Projesi, TRT Şeş'e Benziyor," in *Kurdî Bianet* (January 14, 2011), accessed October 10, 2020, http://bianet.org/kurdi/din/134755-mele-projesi-trt-ses-e-benziyor.

[56] Kaya, "Balancing Interlegality," 237.

Diyanet has, in comparison to the Alevis, found it easier to accommodate the Jaʿfarīs and the Shāfiʿīs in its institutional structure.

3. The Approach of Diyanet towards Religious Movements (*Cemaats*)

In Turkey, a number of civil Muslim organizations formed around charismatic religious leaderships and religious movements have become to operate within a zone that falls beyond the Diyanet and the law. The Diyanet generally perceives these civil Muslim organizations and religious movements (*cemaats*) including the Naqshībandī Sūfī orders like the groups of İskenderpaşa, Erenköy, Süleymancıs or Menzil, and the Nurcus like communities of Kırkıncılar, Okuyucular, Yazıcılar or Yeni Asya movement, to be beyond its direct control and therefore a threat to Turkey's national and religious unity.[57] In an effort to retain its influence over society, the Diyanet has published Islamic explanations and informative studies that highlight the percolation of superstitious practices and unauthentic Islamic knowledge within those religious movements.[58] During the 1970s, for instance, there were critical conflicts between the Diyanet and the Süleymancı movements, and the Diyanet's uncomplimentary appraisals of the later led some members of the Süleymancı movement to refuse to pray behind the Diyanet's *imams.*[59] Here, it should be noted that these conflicts were not entirely religious in character and could therefore be traced back to political and social sources.[60] In addition, religious activities that fall beyond the supervision of the Diyanet could still be perceived as an internal threat that potentially undermined the integrity and sovereignty of the Turkish state. The military coup attempt of 2016 can be asserted as clear evidence of this perceived threat of 'reactionary *cemaats*'. The proposition that religion, if left unchecked, could easily be used as a brainwashing instrument by malevolent people is also reiterated by the Fetullah Gülen movement, which represented itself as one sub-branch of the Nurcu movement. The Diyanet, along with all other state institutions, interpreted its mission to be the fight against this

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[57] İsmail Kara, "Din ile Devlet Arasına Sıkışmış Bir Kurum: Diyanet İsleri Başkanlığı," *Marmara Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 18 (2000), 52-53; Sunier et al., *Diyanet: The Turkish Directorate*, 113.

[58] Sunier et al., *Diyanet: The Turkish Directorate*, 113.

[59] Sunier et al., *Diyanet: The Turkish Directorate*, 113-114.

[60] The Diyanet started to choose its personnel amongst people who were graduated from official government schools and institutions. This reality increased the tension between the Diyanet and Süleymancı movement which established its own local education centers and educated its own scholars. See, Ruşen Çakır, *Ayet ve Slogan Türkiye'de İslami Oluşumlar* (İstanbul: Metis Yayınları, 2017); Kaya, "Balancing Interlegality," 238-242.

kind of religious threats.

The Diyanet's withdrawal from the area of religious affairs and the absence of some organizational control mechanism that would exert control over religious movements could potentially create a political cataclysm and empower those who would seek to advance their evil intentions under the cover of Islam. In this instance and the coup attempt of 2016, such official religious institutions would play an essential role by promoting religious and social unity. The Diyanet's vehement response to the coup attempt of 2016 was to order all *imams* to recite the call to prayer (*adhān*) and the saluting (*salā*) in order to protect the national unity. It seems that at the initial term, the Diyanet does not intervene directly into activities of these socio-religious organizations as long as their ideologies, actions, or practices damage the national unity and religious purity.

When it was first established, the Diyanet's initial aim was conceivably to promote a single version of Islam. However, over time this initial aspiration has been exposed to the divergent policies of different political administrations and the enactment of various constitutional regulations.[61] As Gözaydın recognizes, the Diyanet was originally established in order to inculcate the state's form of Islam into the society during Turkey's early republican period.[62] However, the current Diyanet has succeeded in acquiring a somewhat autonomous official position, in which it assumes responsibility for the maintenance of Islam as a spiritual source for society, the prevention of religious bigotry, the supervision of religion, the training of individuals tasked with providing religious services to society and the unification of Turkish society around the foundation of religion. Turner and Arslan remark, in common with a number of other observations, that the Diyanet has come to function as an essential instrument through which a nationalized Islam is produced and represented.[63] Bardakoğlu evidences an awareness of a number of the criticisms that have been advanced on this subject, and he therefore emphasizes the contribution of the Diyanet in assisting in the production of accurate and authentic Islamic knowledge. In his view, the institution has also evidenced impartiality in its engagement with different Islamic groups, while clearly demonstrating a continued

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[61] Emine Enise Yakar and Sümeyra Yakar, *The Transformational Process of the Presidency of Religious Affairs* (Riyadh: King Faisal Center for Research and Islamic Studies, 2017), 8.
[62] İştar Gözaydın, "Management of Religion in Turkey: The Diyanet and Beyond," in *Freedom of Religion and Belief in Turkey*, ed. Özgür Heval Çınar and Mine Yıldırım (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014), 17.
[63] Turner and Arslan, "State and Turkish Secularism," 211.

commitment to educate citizens about Islam and provide religious services that promote social unity and solidarity.[64] In addition, he also affirms the institution's commitment to remain above Islamic schools of law (*madhabs*), religious sects and *cemaats*.[65] From this perspective, the Diyanet is interpreted as evidencing a moderate predisposition towards religious groups, sects and *cemaats* that accepts the heterogeneity of Turkey's Muslim population and commitment to transfer authentic, sound and true religious knowledge.[66] In adopting moderation and rationality as its core principle, the Diyanet has functioned as an important public institution with a central role in the definition of the parameters of acceptable religious practices.

Conclusion

As a religious institution in the secular democratic state, the Diyanet, is only responsible with informing society about religious issues and administering places of worship (employing *imams*, funding mosques, building religious infrastructure, or issuing *fatwās*). The lack of sanctioning power of the Diyanet's *fatwā*'s affects negatively its position in the scope of legislative area, but the institution has a considerable influence in the area of shaping the social norms and preserving the mainstream *ahl al-Sunna wa al-Jamā'a* interpretation. The Diyanet, therefore, has recently adopted a role that facilitates social relations, interactions and dialogs by standing close to the grassroots of Muslim diversity in Turkey; the Kurdish/ Shāfi'ī, Ja'farī, Alevi populations, and various *cemaats*. In the course of time, the Diyanet as a religious institution has produced its own dynamic approach to Islam and Islamic legal issues in spite of the varying policies of different political administrations towards that institution.

Even though the Diyanet is seen as too Sunni for Alevis and Ja'farīs, too liberal for Sufī orders, and too unobjectionable for religious *cemaats*, it is possible to observe that the Diyanet adopts and develops a neutral and impartial approach towards various religious groups in order to produce authentic, realistic and credible religious knowledge. In the issue of sectarian

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[64] Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Başkanlık Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı, in *Türkiye'de Din -Devlet-Toplum İlişkileri ve Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı, (TESEV) Açılış Konuşması*, accessed November 28, 2020, http://www3.diyanet.gov.tr/tr/icerik/turkiyede-din-devlet-toplum-iliskileri-ve-diyanet-isleri-baskanligi-tesev-acilis-konusmasi-prof-dr-ali-bardakoglu-diyanet-isleri-baskani-istanbul/6221.

[64] Kutlu, "The Presidency of Religious Affairs," 250-251.

[65] Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Başkanlık Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı in *Basın Açıklaması*, accessed November 05, 2020, http://www.diyanet.gov.tr/tr/icerik/basin-aciklamasi-aciklama/6155; Sunier et al., *Diyanet: The Turkish Directorate*, 120-121.

[66] Bardakoğlu, *Religion and Society New Perspectives*, 16-17.

diversity, the Diyanet espouses a policy in a way that symbolizes the mainstream religious interpretation of community, supports social stability, and strengthens the national unity by avoiding increasing tension among different sectarian groups. The presence of the Diyanet within Turkey means that the system is not purely secular as many people claim; but neither it is a completely religious system. However, the Diyanet interiorizes a type of hybrid approach inspired by the themes of modernism, secularism, traditionalism and nationalism. The article soundly claims that the Diyanet in contemporary Turkey functions a mediatory role between the state and the diverse religious groups with the intention of providing the national unity and social harmony within the state.

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MEZHEP FARKLILIKLARINA KARŞI DİYANETİN BÜTÜNLEŞTİRİCİ POLİTİKASI

 Sümeyra YAKAR[a]   Emine Enise YAKAR[b]

Geniş Öz

Türkiye birbirinden farklılık gösteren çok sayıda dini, sosyal ve etnik kimliklerin örtüşme ve kesişme noktası olarak ön plana çıkan bir ülke konumundadır. Özellikle dini alandaki mezhepsel karakter, sosyal gruplar tarafından yapılan dini yorumlarda kendini göstermekte ve Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı'nın dini faaliyetlerinde belli alanlarda zorluk ve karmaşıklığa sebep teşkil etmektedir. Resmi bir dini kurum olan Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı, Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Anayasası'nın 136. maddesi uyarınca 1924 yılında Türk hükümeti tarafından kurulmuştur. Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı esas olarak, Türk halkının dini işlerini İslam dininin emir ve öğretileriyle uygun bir şekilde yürütmekten sorumludur. Müslümanların günlük hayatta karşılaştığı problem ve sorunlara, bağlayıcı olmayan bir şekilde verilen cevaplardan oluşan fetvalar Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı'nın en aktif ve etkili olduğu alan olarak öne çıkar. Kurumun temel görevlerinden bir diğeri ise farklı grupların problemli dini öğretilerine alternatifler üretmek, farklı dini gruplar içinde sosyalleşen kişilerin ehl-i sünnet eğitimini güçlendirmektir.

Özellikle son yıllarda Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı'nın ulusal ve uluslararası alandaki faaliyet ve aktivite alanını genişletmesi, bu kurumun önemini artırmış ve dikkatlerin kurum üzerine yönelmesine sebep olmuştur. Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı'nın ulusal alandaki aktif faaliyetleri, bu kurumun toplum içerisinde bulunan farklı dini grup ve oluşumlara karşı yaklaşımının daha net bir şekilde anlaşılmasına imkân tanımaktadır. Çoğunluğunu Müslümanların oluşturduğu Türk toplumunun fikir, kültür ve toplumsal faaliyetleri genel olarak İslami ahlak ve değerlere bağlı olarak gelişip şekillenmiştir. Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Devleti'nin kurulmasından sonra sekülerleşme ve batılılaşma

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[a] Ph.D., Iğdır University, sumeyrayakar@hotmail.com
[b] Ph.D., Recep Tayyip Erdoğan University, emineenise.yakar@erdogan.edu.tr

süreci esnasında yaşanılan geniş kapsamlı değişimlere rağmen, İslami ahlak ve değerler Türk toplumunun vazgeçilemez öğeleri olarak hala önemini korumaya devam etmektedir. Türkiye nüfusunun çoğunluğunun Müslüman olması uluslararası arenada Türkiye'nin İslami bir devlet olarak tanınmasını beraberinde getirmesine rağmen bu tanımlama kendi içerisinde sorunludur. Bir devletin İslami olarak kabul edilebilmesi için devletin anayasasında İslam'ın resmi devlet dini olarak belirtilmesi veya hukuk sisteminin İslam hukuku hükümleriyle uyumluluk göstermesi gerekmektedir ki bu şartlar günümüz Türkiye'si için geçerli değildir. Seküler yapıya sahip Türkiye devletinde resmi bir dini kurum olarak Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı'nın bulunması, Türkiye'deki seküler sistemin kendine özgü melez bir karaktere sahip olmasına yol açmıştır. Bu karakterden dolayı, uluslararası arenada Türkiye'yi çoğunluğunu Müslümanların oluşturduğu, demokratik ve laik bir devlet olarak tanımlamak hem Türkiye'nin tanımlanması hem de Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı'nın sistem içerisindeki konum ve misyonunun anlaşılması için daha açıklayıcı bir sonuç vermektedir.

Çok çeşitli kültürel, bölgesel ve etnik grupları içinde barındırarak kozmopolit bir yapıya sahip olan Türkiye'de, bu çok kültürlü yapının yansımaları dini inanış ve yaşayış şekillerinde kendisini göstermektedir. Farklı dini gruplar tarafından verilen din eğitimi, yapılan yorumlamalar veya uygulanan pratikler toplum içerisinde kişilerin grup bağlılığı anlayışından dolayı çeşitli dini cemaatlerin oluşmasına sebep teşkil etmektedir. Toplum içerisinde ortaya çıkan farklı dini cemaatlere karşı Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı'nın tutumu ise genel olarak grupların, dini kaynakları yorumlama şekillerine, ayırıcı vasıflarına ve ideolojik söylemlerine göre şekillenmektedir. Türk Müslüman toplumuna dini bilgiyi öğretmek için en yetkili resmi kurum olan Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı, aynı zamanda toplum içerisinde ayrım gözetmeksizin her kesime dini hizmet sunmayı, dini farklı kişi ve grupların istismarından korumayı ve anayasada belirtildiği gibi devlet ve toplum arasındaki birliğini güçlendirmeyi amaçlamaktadır.

Temel olarak belirtmek gerekir ki, Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı'nın çeşitlilik gösteren gruplar karşısında sergilediği tutumun iki önemli unsuru bulunmaktadır. Bunlardan ilki bu gruplar tarafından üretilen dini öğretilerin gerçek İslami emir ve yasaklarla uyumlu olup olmaması meselesidir. Belli bir grubun müntesipleri tarafından üretilen dini yorumlar, İslam'ın temel değerleriyle tearuz içerisinde ise, Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı bu gruplara karşı mesafeli bir tavır sergileyerek dinin bu gruplarca istismar edilmesini engellemeyi amaçlamaktadır. İkinci unsur ise, dini gruplar tarafından üretilen fikirlerin toplumsal alanda ayrışma meydana getirerek ulusal birliğe

karşı tehdit oluşturma ihtimalinin değerlendirilmesidir. Dinin istismarı temeline dayanan gruplar tarafından üretilen dini görünümlü, problemli fakat toplum içerisinde kendine taraftar bulan öğretilerin ulus, devlet ve toprak bütünlüğüne yönelik bir tehdit oluşturduğu durumlarda Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı bu gruplar ve onların faaliyetlerine karşı katı bir reddedici bir tutum sergilemektedir.

Bu makale Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı'nın mezhepsel çeşitlilik karşısında benimsediği tutumu, modernlik, laiklik, gelenekçilik ve ulus bütünlüğü temalarına özel atıfta bulunarak açıklamaktadır. Dini oluşumlar, itikadi ve inanç alanlarıyla ilgili olanlar, ibadet ve muamelat alanıyla ilgili olanlar ve toplumsal dini cemaatler olmak üzere üç temel gruba ayrılarak, her bir kategori için örnek gruplar seçilmiştir. İnanç alanıyla ilgili olarak Alevilik, ibadet alanıyla ilgili olarak Şafilik ve Caferilik, ve toplumsal dini cemaat olarak Nurculuk seçilerek, analiz bu örnek gruplar üzerinde yapılmıştır. Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı'nın bu gruplara yaklaşımında modernlik, laiklik, gelenekçilik ve ulusçuluk kavramlarından ne ölçüde etkilendiği, makalenin temel konusunu oluşturmaktadır. Karşılaştırmalı analiz metodu kullanılarak yapılan bu çalışmada, Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı'nın devletin resmi dini kurumu olarak Alevi, Şafi, Caferi ve Nurcu gruplarıyla olan iletişimi, bu gruplar karşısında uyguladığı yöntem, mezhepsel farklılıklar karşısında takındığı onaylayıcı veya reddedici tutumun açıklanması amaçlanmıştır. Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı, Alevi ve Caferi gruplar tarafından aşırı Sünni olarak değerlendirilirken, Sufi gruplar tarafından fazla liberal olarak görülmekte, dini cemaatler tarafından da itiraz kabul etmeyen bir yapıya sahip olmakla eleştirilmektedir. Bu yorumlara karşı Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı'nın faaliyet ve çalışmaları analiz edildiğinde, toplumun tüm kesimine dini bilgiyi doğru bir şekilde öğretebilmek, dini birlik ve toplumsal huzuru korumak amaçlarıyla bu resmi dini devlet kurumunun, toplumsal gruplara karşı objektif bir tutum sergilediği anlaşılmaktadır. Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı'nın dinin istismarına dayanan ve ulusal çıkarlara zarar veren gruplara karşı daha çok reddedici ve eleştirel bir tutum sergilediği yapılan analizlerden anlaşılmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: İslam Hukuku, Diyanet, Alevilik, Şafilik, Caferilik, Cemaat.

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