Conclusion

Germany has opened its doors in a hard period between 2015 and 2016 to refugees, which prompted many Syrians to seek refuge in it to escape the war that destroyed their homes and threatened their lives. Although large numbers of Syrians had already fled to neighboring countries and are living there, the living conditions in those countries are very difficult. In contrast, the European countries in general and Germany, with its welcoming policies towards refugees at that time, in particular became the best places that refugees could possibly aspire to reach, especially after Germany showed flexibility in accepting Asylum applications for Syrians considering their difficult situation.

The transition of the Syrian families from their accustomed way of living to the new environment faced them with great challenges. This study deals with one aspect of those challenges, namely, the familial conflict within couples. The research reveals many aspects surrounding these conflicts, from the difficult conditions the families went through during the war or during the dilemma of forced displacement, to their attempts to adapt to the new environment under specific policies in the hosting countries in general and in Germany in particular. More specifically, the study analyzes from inside the effects of these surrounding conditions on the intimate relationships among family members – the spouses in particular – and on the gender roles that altered under these new conditions and circumstances.

The first chapter of the research discussed the methodology, based on the qualitative ethnographic method, within which I conducted fieldwork in which I met many Syrian families. Despite the fact that this work lasted only for six months, my residency in the city for two years preceding the fieldwork has proven to be extremely precious because it has enabled me to collect all this data in a short period through the network of relationships and bridges of trust that I had built during these years. This gave me the opportunity to obtain in-depth data, although Syrian families, in general, do not like to reveal their personal issues, especially to strangers. This reveals to us the role of the time factor in two folds: First, it is important in building trust relationships that are usually difficult to build in a short period of time; in other words, it takes time for the researched groups

(families in this case) to test the credibility of the researcher. Second, these relationships have an impact on the quality of the data collected by the researcher: the deeper the trust between the researcher and the researched groups, the higher the quality of the data collected. Nevertheless, the process of collecting data in some specific contexts was not without difficulties and challenges, especially as the researched group is a minority that is scattered over several places in Germany, by which it is difficult to meet with it or build appropriate communication channels with its members not the least in light of their great regional and religious differences and diversity. These challenges reveal developments in the concept of "the field" in anthropology that go beyond the restricted spatial space with regard to the relationships that the researcher establishes with researched groups.[625] These relationships studied in their own spatial contexts (the Syrian-German context for the family) are of great importance when assessing their impact on the families under study.

To depict the context of what the families went through before arriving in Germany, the second chapter of this research focused on the difficult conditions: it did so through the narratives of the refugees themselves. It revealed that what these refugees went through caused psychological, mental, or physical damage to many of them at the individual level, and this is also the reason of a significant imbalance in the structures and functions of the family and in its relationship with other families in the community. The refuge journey appears to be "a profoundly formative and transformative experience and a 'lens' on the newcomers' social condition."[626] The powerful events combined with difficult conditions change people's view of life and greatly affect those who experience them, both as individuals and as groups.[627] The war has caused major rifts in people's relations within the Syrian society, between those who share a different religious, ethnic, or political identity.[628] These conditions did not only constitute a motive for mass displacement and deeply affect the relationship between the family

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625 Holmes and Marcus, p. 126.

626 Gadi BenEzer and Roger Zetter, 'Searching for Directions: Conceptual and Methodological Challenges in Researching Refugee Journeys', *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 28.3 (2015), 297–318.

627 Ibid.

628 For more details on this conflict in general and its effects on women in particular, see Ṭalāl al-Muṣṭafā, Ḥusām as-Saʿd, and Waǧīh Ḥaddād, *Tašḥīṣ ad-dmār al-muǧtamaʿī as-sūrī (1 Min 3): Al-ʿunf wa an-nizāʿāt fi Sūriya wa aṯāruhumā ʿalā as-sūrīʾīn (Diagnosis of Syrian Societal Destruction (1 out of 3). Violence and Conflict*

and its surroundings, but they also had an impact on the relationships within families and on the gender roles among spouses. Field data shows how women – despite their marginalized position within the family in which the dominance is mostly for the man – were entrusted with new familial and societal tasks. This was a direct result of the new circumstances created by the war, in which many husbands were killed, imprisoned or lost their jobs. Indeed, in general these new conditions imposed additional responsibilities upon women.[629] Therefore, one of the results that appeared on the surface and that this study tried to examine is the phenomenon of marital conflicts, where some of these conflicts lead to divorce and others came with violence between spouses. The significance of this chapter's findings lies in the assumption that "better understanding of the experience and meaning of the journey may provide a valuable and distinctive medium through which to develop new insights into the expectations, the challenges and often the pathological and dysfunctional reaction that refugee communities appear to display in exile, encampment and longer term adaptation and settlement."[630] After exploring this experience, the following chapters reviewed some of these challenges and reactions through a micro-level focus on marital conflicts. They also showed that war and violence are not always the primary motives for refugees flying and that there are more complex causes. At the same time it exposes the rifts and the violence that occur during the war between religious, sectarian, ethnic, and national segments of society.

This study also revealed that the pressure on families does not end with their arrival in a country that provides support and safety for refugees such as Germany,[631] because here starts a new chapter in the families' life with new challenges of another kind, namely, a long process that begins with a feeling of shock and loss, followed by the attempts to find a place for themselves in the new society, that is, trying to adapt or find their way in a new environment that is different from their previous ones. This second process goes through a long series of integration policies that refugees are generally subjected to. Due to the different backgrounds of refugees, their interaction with integration policies will therefore be different. The research shows that the response of Syrian families to the changes in the new society in Ger-

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in Syria and Its Effects on Syrians) (Haramoon Center for Contemporary Studies, 2021), pp. 37–44, 60–69.

629   Al-Muṣṭafā and as-Saʿd, pp. 39–44.
630   BenEzer and Zetter.
631   For more, see BenEzer and Zetter, pp. 305–07.

many is conditioned by several factors. The social environment from which the family came plays a major role in the process of adaptation, as the Syrian geography is characterized by its religious, sectarian, ethnic, and cultural diversity. Some of the areas are characterized by great openness, while others are considered moderate or relatively conservative. Some liberal families increased their emancipation, and some moderate or conservative families increased their conservatism. Reverse processes may occur in fewer cases, as the dynamics with which the families deal with the new reality are different and sometimes contradictory. These dynamics are strongly linked with the presence or absence of social control: the more family members share one residential place – a town or city –, the more the families remain strongly tied with the social group to which they belong, the greater then is this control. However, the German integration policies strive at preventing this gathering of social groups through imposing regulations that prevent the movement of refugees in general between states except under certain conditions.

In addition to the previous two factors (social environment and social control), gender has played a large role in these adaptations, as the social pressure and societal control exerted by groups in the Syrian context impacts more on women than on men, as the culture of shame often weighs on women more than on men. Through the new social conditions in Germany, women gained the strength and the courage to rebel against many of the norms that had played a role in their life so far, by limiting them in one way or another. One other factor that impacted on the adaptation processes is age. It was obvious that the interaction of the younger individuals, who were less exposed to the norms of the society in the country of origin, which aims at integrating the individual into the group, were more active than the elderly ones, and their interaction with the various German institutions made their adaptation to the new surroundings smoother. All these factors need further study and examination.

The data showed that – overall – the integration process does not go smoothly, and they revealed the different reactions of Syrians to the new challenges families are facing in the new environment. At the top of these challenges is having to learn a new language, finding a job and suitable housing, religious and cultural challenges in the new circumstances, fear for children and increased responsibility towards them, racism and racial discrimination, in addition to the feeling of alienation. A close look into these challenges reveals their deep impact on marital relations within the

family, that is, as a trigger of the conflicts and often as a cause of disturbing marital relations. These results are in line with some of the few reports that have been published so far about the Syrian families in some countries of asylum.[632] The language, social structures, norms, expectations, and values in the new country are fundamentally different from those that were elemental in refugees' understanding of themselves, which create enormous stress and traumas for these families.[633] These challenges and pressures revealed not only their impact on marital relations but also the obstacles that hinder the integration of these families in the new German environment and the dynamics that some of these families develop to overcome these obstacles, both when these obstacles are on the part of families or because of the bureaucracy in imposing upon them some regulation they are subjected to. Therefore, the legal conditions that regulate the lives of newcomers to Germany in the various previously mentioned fields, and the interaction of refugees with these legal conditions in addition to their personal skills, play a decisive role in the integration and adaptation of refugees in general in the German society. Outlining the various problems that immigrants and refugees face in the United States, Uma A. Segal and Nazneen S. Mayadas write that "[a] number of immigrants and most refugees arrive from nations in which they do not have freedom of speech or choice. Their mistrust of authority, coupled with the possibility of deportation, can erect formidable barriers against probes into lives, experiences, and feelings."[634]

Some official institutions tend to deal with Syrian refugees as "numbers", as some interviewees expressed, or as people who are required to make concessions in exchange for the social support they receive, whether these concessions are jobs they are pressured to accept or the way some employees treat them. This type of treatment must be reconsidered, especially in the case of people who are coming from a war zone, many of whom lost members of their families and see all their possessions being destroyed, not to mention the difficult journey to Europe or the "road of death", as some call it. Although the way the Syrian refugees interact with the officials may seem unproblematic at first sight, this does not mean that the effects of the war depicted in the first chapter have been forgotten, but rather they are still stuck deep in their minds, and their effects may come to the surface

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632 Baobaid et al., p. 42; Körükmez, Karakılıç, and Danış, p. 34.
633 Uma A. Segal and Nazneen S. Mayadas, 'Assessment of Issues Facing Immigrant and Refugee Families', *Child Welfare*, 84.5 (2005), 563–83, here p. 568.
634 Ibid., p. 569.

at any time. On one occasion I witnessed how a Syrian man exploded in an unusual fit of anger at one of the Job Centers in Nuremberg, threw his asylum passport on the ground, and stepped on it, cursing the minute he had decided to come to Germany and expressing his desire not to stay. This tantrum was most probably due to the bureaucracy with which the employees deal with people, the difficulty of communicating in a foreign language, and, most importantly, the result of the previous great pressures he had gone through, all this making him lose his temper. These pressures should be taken into account when dealing with a segment of the Syrian refugees. Social service providers can be expected to understand the culture of the country of origin from which these people come and the harsh migration experience they have gone through.[635]

The experiences of war, the journey of asylum, and the interaction of Syrians with the outside environment and the new pressures it posed upon them are reflected on the inner structure of the Syrian family. "Wars and conflicts minimize the power of social norms and values, undermine patterns of family formation, and hasten family breakdown."[636] This is one of the results that Elizabeth Wanucha referred to in a report on the Conference on the Effects of War Conflicts on the Arab Family. Hence, the fourth chapter of this study revealed these results through the lens of marital conflicts within Syrian families focusing on two dimensions: The first is internal, i.e. related to the characteristics, structures, and functions of the family, and the second is external, i.e., it deals with the effects of the new political, social, economic, and legal conditions in which the family has to live. In both dimensions the focus is on paternalistic attitudes, their changes, and their interactions with the new circumstances. The data showed how these patriarchal tendencies of male dominance underwent major ruptures that eventually led to numerous conflicts among spouses. From the point of view of the internal aspect, these patriarchal tendencies have lost their credit in the distribution of gender roles inside and outside the home as well as in the economic realities that are often controlled by men, and finally they lost their cultural, social, and religious support that

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635   Ibid., p. 567; Andre M. N. Renzaho, Marita McCabe, and Willow J. Sainsbury, 'Parenting, Role Reversals and the Preservation of Cultural Values among Arabic Speaking Migrant Families in Melbourne, Australia', *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 35.4 (2011), 416–24, here p. 422.

636   Elizabeth Wanucha and Gilla Camden, *War Conflicts and Their Impacts on Arab Families* (Doha International Family Institute, 2016), p. 4.

works to perpetuate these patriarchal tendencies in Syrian societies. All of this happened as a result of the family's migration from the environment in which both spouses were raised and of their move to a new environment in which many of the prevailing norms and values contradict those previous norms. Men lose their authority and responsibility within the family, and the women/wives bear this responsibility and authority, alongside the state – especially towards children. This leads to changes in roles within the family and causes a kind of disruption in the relationships between family members that eventually leads to marital conflicts or separation.[637] It should be pointed out that these conflicts are not related to a particular religion, sect, race, or nationality, as I have explained in various chapters: patriarchal tendencies, which are the main causes of conflicts, exist among Muslims, Christians, Druze, Alawis, Syrians, and Syrian-Palestinians. However, the complexities of these disputes may be exacerbated in the case of Muslims with regard to the separation between spouses. In particular, we should look both at how to apply this in a German context, in which social norms or the strength of these norms no longer play their usual role and become more complex in light of religious marriages that are not documented in the civil registry, and at the attempts to resolve these disputes.

The new political, social, and legal realities and contexts show at the same time great relevance for the analysis.[638] The external factors become manifest in the effect of the violence the families had witnessed, on the one hand, and the new German environment, on the other, on facing the patriarchal hegemony and challenging them. The legal dimension with its two basis – laws that protect women from any violence in general and family laws – is one of the major influences on many women's decisions to separate from their spouses. Despite some feminist trend in the formal Syrian state that tries to push women to participate in the labor market, in practice this "state feminism" is not aimed at achieving gender equality or dismantling gender polarization within state institutions, including the judiciary institutions.[639] "All Syrian women, regardless of religious affilia-

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637   See, for instance, Renzaho, McCabe, and Sainsbury, p. 421; Baobaid et al., p. 15.

638   Dawn Chatty, 'Syria', in *Arab Family Studies. Critical Reviews*, ed. by Suad Joseph (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2018), p. 244.

639   For more, see Annika Rabo, 'Family Law in Multicultural and Multireligious Syria', in *Possibilities of Religious Pluralism*, ed. by Göran Collste (Linköping University Electronic Press, 2005), pp. 76–78.

tion suffer from patriarchal family law. They are equal to men in public workplaces but unequal to men in the family"[640], writes Annika Rabo.

The "patriarchal" dominance of males has remained, and it remains enshrined despite numerous reforms to family laws aiming at achieving some kind of equality. The same goes for laws protecting women from domestic violence as long as they are not supported by strict enforcement policies. The social, religious, and cultural conditions, which in turn are linked to customs and traditions, paralyze any tangible development that would achieve justice and gender equality in the Syrian context. When these conditions changed in the German context, the reflections and contradictions of these relations between the sexes appeared on the surface and manifested itself in the form of marital conflicts.

Hence, the aforementioned legal dimensions cannot be separated from the new German socio-cultural context that played a role on many levels, for example, in daring to seek extramarital relations, freedom from the culture of shame, especially those related to the "divorced" (women), and the interventions of parents who often put pressure on women in particular. Through the protection that women felt in general and by their sense of economic independence, with relative freedom from previous cultural, social, and religious traditions, an impetus was created to challenge these patriarchal tendencies. The position of men in the face of women's changes, in general, took several forms. Some men acquiesced to these demands, while others refused to give up their masculine status, in which they were brought up and to which they are accustomed. Consequently, separation or violence against women are not unfrequently the result of these conflicts and marital clashes. Despite the numerous changes that can be observed, it can be said that the dynamics of the family in interaction with the new surrounding environment and conditions differed from one family to the other. Some families insisted on maintaining men's position within the family as relatively dominant, and the women actually submitted and were contented with their position inside the house. In an attempt to visualize these situations for the relationship between husbands and wives, we propose to place them in five main frameworks:

- Feminine protests, which took a rebellious stance and rejected the norms and behaviors associated with the complex patriarchal system that men held.

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640   Ibid., p. 84.

- Male protests, in which the men strive to preserve the norms of the old patriarchal system and thus the dominant powers of men.
- Husbands and wives maintaining the old roles and frameworks of relationships.
- Men giving up in the face of women's protests and accepting major concessions that limit their previous powers, in the face of the new reality.
- Women submitting due to the lack of strong elements of the ability to protest or rebel.

The last chapter of the research explored the dynamics of families in dealing with their conflicts. In general, "many non-Western immigrant groups traditionally use personal networks to solve their problems, and only seek external help when they have exhausted their own resources."[641] Family notables were – for legal, cultural, and customary reasons – the first refuge for any family conflict in the Syrian context. It seems that – after families were separated and scattered in several countries – this refuge is no longer the basis to which the family turns to resolve its disputes and that the circle of friends, along with resorting to Syrian or German law systems, have replaced it to resolve disputes. The data showed the importance of religious norms for Syrian families, which play a major role in the Syrians' reluctance to resort to official German institutions, and their resort to these norms in light of the freedom of religion guaranteed by German laws. Because of the high importance of these religious norms in the lives of the Syrian immigrants, the study has analyzed the reasons that make them be more inclined to resort to these norms, whether in marriage or in divorce, and the complexities of these approaches to norms with regards to inflaming or resolving the conflicts. The most important factors that played a role in the orientation of Syrians in general to religious norms in the fields of marriage and divorce can be summarized as follows:

- Strong presence of religion in people's lives in general.
- Socio-cultural dimensions related to marriage and divorce in the Syrian context.
- Existence of a system of social assistance that differentiates between single and married.
- A lack of information about the mechanisms of how the German legal system works.

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641 Segal and Mayadas, p. 571.

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- Inability of the vast majority of Syrians to bring all the documents necessary for a civil marriage contract.

If it is possible to depict the type of relations between the parties and the official German institutions, then it can be said that, when the traditional methods of the families fail to resolve the conflict, the parties to the conflict begin to search for mechanisms to end the marital relationship through the official means. This happens, according to the type of marriage each couple has, within three frameworks:

- When submitting the asylum application, the parties had acknowledged before the German official departments that they were officially married in Syria and thus have to be treated as a husband and wife.
- The couple does not acknowledge the official marriage before the German official departments, despite the documentation of the marriage in the Syrian official departments. This case is rather rare.
- The couple is only religiously married, and the marriage is not confirmed before any Syrian or German official offices. This case is widely spread among Syrians.

In the first case, the German official authorities can easily terminate the marital relationship by divorce if a marriage document proving the family status is submitted to the court. The second case is more complicated, as the couple did not register their marital status before the German official departments, which means practically hiding this information when submitting the asylum application, which has legal consequences related to residency permit and citizenship and can possibly weaken both parties. Consequently, the couple applies in most cases of this type to the Syrian official departments to terminate the marriage. In the third case, resorting to the official authorities to terminate the marital relationship is just impossible because German law does not recognize this type of marriage. Therefore, the alternative option becomes to resort to imams who work in Islamic religious institutions to terminate the marriage contract through religious divorce or what is known as khul'. Some opt for this option from the beginning as the way to end their marriage.

In the case of religious marriages the disputes become particularly complicated when the husband refuses to divorce, which according to Islamic law is essentially his right. It becomes also complicated in light of the lack of experience of the imams and the lack of legal protection for any agreement between the parties. Consequently, the conflict resolution process some-

times is not free from threats of violence or extortion and exploitation in some cases and in other cases from the loss of the material or moral rights of one of the parties. These implications call for the development of a better system for resolving disputes in a more professional and qualified manner, especially with regard to the aspect of the work of imams, as they are closely related to issues of marriage and divorce.[642] Rohe noted that "there is an urgent need formulated by Muslim representatives themselves for professionalising persons involved in ADR."[643] Therefore, any official support from the German state to make the imams' work more professional, in turn, will contribute to reducing the negative consequences of conflicts within families.

Relation between State and religious norms

Some concerns may be raised in this context related to the issue of the German state's neutrality towards religions or to the fear of violating the freedom spaces granted by state systems to religions in accordance with the prevailing laws. While these concerns must be taken into account, it is necessary to be aware of the possible consequences if the State party turns a blind eye to the relative chaos in the practices of religious norms that carry a legal nature such as matters of marriage and divorce, and the consequences of both directions must be considered in determining the state and its institutions. The research has shed light on the consequences of a policy of "turning a blind eye" towards the practices of families to their religious norms and on the consequences and complications that resulted from such practices. We think the assessment of the aspect of "state intervention" in such procedures is left to the competent legislators and others. Believing that reliance on the secularization of law away from religious and other norms is the way to solve problems is a "big mistake", as Marie Claire Foblets points out.[644]

Faced with this complex reality and given the gap between religious norms and civil laws, one can conceivably envision four possibilities, as

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642 Jaraba, 'Problems Relating to Archiving Nikah Documents in Germany's Arab Mosques'.
643 Rohe, 'Alternative Dispute Resolution among Muslims in Germany and the Debate on "Parallel Justice"', p. 108.
644 Foblets, p. xi.

Joel A. Nichols points out, which are controversial in legal, political, and academic circles: The first is to give the power to organize and implement religious laws to the religious groups themselves. However, this threatens the status and authority of the state and may expose individuals to violating the values of equality and justice imposed by the state. The second is for the state to be involved in regulating religious marriages and divorces according to the parties' religious views. However, the criticism directed at the first trend of violating the values of freedom, equality, and others remains present. The third is to convert individuals' religious norms into civil law and make them the dominant and exclusive law for marriage and divorce. This in turn requires the existence of more than one law for marriage and divorce and calls for a greater strengthening of cooperation between civil and religious authorities. The fourth is that the parties derive from other legal articles and establish agreements that include their religious norms before and after the marriage.[645]

These four trends are, in one way or another, not without the problem of the state finding that some of these religious norms conflict with its general policies and may violate values that are part of these state policies if religious groups want to apply all religious norms in their classical form. This raises a controversial question: Does the state have the right to impose all its norms on the citizens or individuals residing in it even if the parties agree to other norms (religious, cultural, etc.) that contradict these norms? In other words, what if the individuals have given up some of their rights related to the norms of public policies of democratic countries and follow other norms that contradict them (such as inheritance rules, for example)? Does the state have the right to prevent them from exercising these norms? This is an issue related to the dialectic of the relationship between privacy, family, and the state.[646] There is a feeling among Syrians in general that the German state exercises a paternalistic authority over them that they did not experience before, as the family in the Syrian context generally used to enjoy its privacy away from state interventions.

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645 Nichols, pp. 981–83.

646 For more, see Mavis MacLean, 'Families', in *The Oxford Handbook of Empirical Legal Research*, ed. by Peter Cane and Herbert Kritzer (Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 394; Natan Lerner, 'Group Rights and Legal Pluralism', *Emory International Law Review*, 25.2 (2011), 829–52, here pp. 829–30.

Position of Muslims

The renewal of religious norms in order to bring them in line with the values of modernity is something that, even if it passed as a legal-scientific project, is not easy to convince the people with and thus to make them accept these new religious norms. The data revealed a skeptical attitude by groups of religious people towards some fatwas related to marriage and divorce issued by imams living in Germany or in the West. Many people turn away from such fatwas if they are not convinced of the base arguments, simply because they contradict what they have been accustomed to. The challenge does not stop at the stage of convincing religious groups only of these norms but goes beyond to convince them that civil institutions (state institutions in this case) can indeed apply the people's (refugees') religious norms. In other words, it is difficult to convince them that these civil institutions are credible, especially since they have fears and mistrust of such institutions based on previous experiences in their countries of origin. During the fieldwork, I observed a desire among many religiously observant families to find in German civil institutions – if they resort to it – a platform for the application of some religious-Islamic norms that do not conflict with public policies with regard to issues of marriage and divorce. But this desire to recognize legal and cultural pluralism is fraught with dangers and is closely linked to the general political climate towards religious minorities in general and Muslim minorities in particular. The high level of extremism on the part of some religious-Islamic groups, on the one hand, and the exploitation of this in strengthening the discourse of the extreme right in the European context, on the other hand, is reflected in the discourse of politicians[647] and on defining state policies towards this debate about religious norms related to Muslims.

Here, in front of all these possibilities and challenges, the logical question arises about the position of Germany/Europe and the position of minorities in it. In this context, Rohe indicates: "When it comes to the present situation in Europe, an extraordinary example of law and ADR influenced

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647 See, for example, the statement of British Prime Minister Cameron – and similar statements of German Chancellor Merkel and French President Sarkozy – about the failure of multiculturalism after 2011, that is, after some dramatic developments in some countries of the Islamic world. Tina A C Besley and Michael A Peters, 'Islam and the End of European Multiculturalism?: From Multiculturalism to Civic Integration', in *Teaching, Responsibility, and the Corruption of Youth* (Brill, 2019), pp. 81–101.

by Islam can be found in England (which is now outside the EU), where an 'angrezi shariat' (English sharia) is obviously developing."[648] Rohe also explained that, in general, "strong European states are used to organise unity in diversity by one legal order granting far-reaching 'internal' dispositions (dispositive law) instead of establishing parallel legal systems, and to enforce law first and foremost by state institutions."[649] Hence, the dowry or two witnesses are accepted in marriage contracts in Germany.[650]

Suggestions

The hope of some Syrians – as they expressed – in the presence of religious institutions that they can turn to resolve disputes or to practice some religious orders may be achieved by establishing an internal council that is acceptable to the different religious groups aiming to implement these orders or to settle their disputes. The Ahmadiyya Muslim Jamaat,[651] which established its own council in Frankfurt, is a practical example of this in the German context. But such councils are challenged (in addition to the above-mentioned challenges) by the great differences in the intellectual, doctrinal, and political affiliations of Muslims in general and by the impact of these differences on the society with regard to the establishment of such councils, on the one hand, and on its working mechanisms, on the other hand. Thus, Germany has adopted two of the four aforementioned trends: The first is to give the authority to organize and implement religious

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648 Rohe, *Alternative Dispute Resolution in Europe under the Auspices of Religious Norms*, p. 5.

649 Rohe, 'Alternative Dispute Resolution among Muslims in Germany and the Debate on "Parallel Justice"', p. 93.

650 Rohe, 'Application of Sharīʿa Rules in Europe: Scope and Limits', p. 339; Rohe, *Muslim Minorities and the Law in Europe*, pp. 142–43; Rohe, 'Shariah in Europe', pp. 685–86.

651 Ahmadi Muslims believe what ordinary Muslims generally believe. "The difference starts with the person of the promised Messiah or, as the case may be, the Imam Mahdi. Whereas most Muslims are still expecting the Imam Mahdi, who was expected by many in the nineteenth century, the Ahmadis claim that he has already come in the person of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, their founder, in the present-day Punjab region of India." For more, see Yahya Hassan Bajwa, 'Religious Freedom and the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community (Jamaat): A Case Study of a Victimized Community', in *Human Rights and Religion in Educational Contexts*, ed. by Manfred L. Pirner, Johannes Lähnemann, and Heiner Bielefeldt (Cham: Springer, 2016), I, pp. 105–14.

norms that do not conflict with the general policies and laws to the groups themselves. The second is that the parties benefit from legal articles that take into account religious orders and are provided by German law.[652]

Professionalizing the work of imams, providing them with the necessary training to deal with family issues for minorities, and establishing internal councils for religious groups should, in addition to making use of some legal articles that take into account religious norms for minorities, take place in parallel with trying to fill other loopholes that increase the complexity of disputes. The data revealed a knowledge gap about the religious legality of marriage and civil divorce. Therefore, it is necessary for the members of these societies to obtain clear information about the legal rules and procedures applied in marriage and divorce in Germany and to involve actors or mediators from these groups with state systems and institutions.[653] In addition, "[f]urther training for counsellors in the social sector is required on a larger scale. This group of people often gains trust because the general counselling, e.g. traumatized refugees with anxiety (residence status), has helped in family conflicts with shyness in public, or shyness to admit own weaknesses."[654] It is very important to have people who understand the language and culture of these groups in such and other institutions.

The time factor signified by the long presence of families in Germany and even the presence of the second and third generations of these families may play a major role in changing the structures and functions of the family. That in turn will affect the patriarchal forms of power within the family, which means that it will witness more fissures that are expected to make its presence weak. The time factor may also help to overcome language gaps and give groups more awareness of the rules and legal system that regulates their lives in general and of the complications or mistakes that they have fallen into as a result of some of their practices in their new environment. Nevertheless, this also depends on the stability of these families and how well they adapt to the new German context.

Ultimately, the results of this research constitute a qualitative addition to understanding the current developments of Syrian families in a German/European context. In an extended endeavor, Foblets has worked with several researchers on "looking for keys to understanding some of the

652 Rohe, 'Alternative Dispute Resolution among Muslims in Germany and the Debate on "Parallel Justice"', p. 97.
653 Rohe and Jaraba, pp. 184–86; Collo, pp. 166–167.
654 Rohe and Jaraba, p. 186; see also Collo, p. 168.

current developments in the various ways people organize their family relationships in a context where they are faced with the challenge of embracing diversity from the perspective of 'cultural encounters': civil versus religious law, majority versus minority practices, and so forth, with a particular focus on challenges related to religion and law."[655] The topics of this research constitute an addition that helps understand the interactions of religious, cultural, and social norms that families are accustomed to with the new German environment from several aspects, whether those that are reflected in the internal relationship between the spouses and which the research has tried to address in depth or those that are reflected in the families' interaction with the external environment with its challenges and difficulties. The intersections – or rather conflicts – of the religious, cultural, and legal norms in families have naturally constituted an important part of this research, not only in the aspect of family laws but also by a broader range of factors, all related to the family in one way or another.

Necessity to further study relations to children

Finally, it should be noted that another type of conflict that needs to be highlighted within the Syrian family is the strained relations between parents and children. Indeed, the social, cultural, and legal conditions have affected these relations in one way or another. While these relations are formed in the Syrian context within the framework of domination, obedience, and dependence of the young or adult children on their parents, new developments have arisen in these relations, especially for those who arrived in Germany in their teenage years or before. Parents are keen to preserve and introduce the customs and traditions that they were brought up according to into the lives of their children. However, the effects of the new reality began to reshape the identities of the children in a manner that tends more to enhance independence and individuality, and thus they challenge parental authority and reject previous perceptions held by the parents.[656] This makes this issue a very interesting topic that needs further research and study.

Conflicts within the Syrian family take other turns due to the need for young men to marry and the little number of Syrian girls to marry to in

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655   Foblets, p. xi.
656   See, Segal and Mayadas, p. 576.

Germany for a variety of reasons. Thus, these young men resort to marriage "online" via parents or acquaintances from Syria or neighboring countries. Due to this online marriage, in many cases women separated from their husbands since they arrive in Germany. The next generations may reveal other developments in these conflicts, which involve further research.