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Understanding the Political and Religious Implications of Turkish Civil Religion in The Netherlands: A Critical Discourse Analysis of ISN Friday Sermons

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Abstract: Civil religion encompasses the implicit religious values of a nation manifested through public rituals, symbols, and ceremonies at significant locations and on special occasions. The emergence of new religious symbolisms reflects the evolving structure of religious authority. The Islamic Foundation Netherlands (Islamitische Stichting Nederland (ISN)), the largest mosque umbrella organization in the Netherlands, holds significant influence in shaping the religious beliefs and ethical standards of the Turkish–Dutch Muslim community. Furthermore, the ISN possesses the ability to construct and authenticate discourses that redefine the conceptualization of the 'self' and the 'other.' In early 2017, following increased criticism of sermons written by the Turkish Presidency of Religious Affairs (PRA/Diyanet) in the Netherlands, the ISN, as the Dutch branch of Diyanet, started composing its own Friday sermons in both Turkish and Dutch. This article aims to examine the discursive features of the Friday sermons delivered between 1 January 2017 and 1 January 2023 and explore their connection to civil religion. The study employs Fairclough's three-dimensional critical discourse analysis (CDA) framework and Wodak's discourse–historical approach (DHA) to analyze the Friday sermons. The findings reveal that the civil religious discourses advanced by the ISN possess both unifying and divisive potential. However, the collected empirical evidence suggests that state-sponsored civil religion, emphasizing Turkish nationalism and Islamism, dominates the liberal and pluralistic form of civil religion.

Keywords: civil religion; transnationalism; Islam in Europe; Turkish nationalism; secular nationalism; political Islam; liberal Islam; critical discourse analysis (CDA); discourse–historical approach (DHA); non-formal education; Diyanet; Friday sermons; discursivity

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1. Introduction

Civil religion refers to a variety of belief systems that connect the nation-state to a sense of transcendence. It is a culturally pervasive, non-sectarian meaning system related to the particular socio-political rites that sacralize the nation-state and the history and destiny of a society (Rouner 1986; Williams 2020). Different models of civil religion may require different symbols to bond citizens to different notions and experiences, whether non-tangible (religiopolitical beliefs, the law, or a constitution) or tangible (flags, images, statues, and spaces). Visual and non-visual representations of these forms can unite people around a common history, values, and goals (Kokosalakis 1985; Okumuş 2005).

In modern societies, civil religion exists in three forms: continued undifferentiation, where either the church or the state acts as the sponsor of the civil religion; civil religion as a monopoly in the form of secular nationalism; and differentiated civil religion. (Almási and Bognar 2014; Coleman 1970; Cristi 2001; Hvithamar et al. 2009). Examining forms of civil religion as a culturally pervasive meaning system enables us to analyze how different models of civil religion can be used to promote a particular vision of the nation-state and its values, including potential transnational influences on Europe. This article focused on

the Friday sermons written by the Islamic Foundation Netherlands (Islamitische Stichting Nederland, hereafter ISN), which aimed to foster national bonds among Dutch–Turkish Muslims in the Netherlands. This study did not primarily focus on comprehensively examining how the ISN's discourses directly affect Dutch Turkish Muslims. Instead, its main goal was to delve into the potential influence of different civil religion models on the Turkish—Dutch community. Simultaneously, it aimed to provide a broader perspective on the European Muslim communities that might be experiencing similar effects from the transnational religious institutionalization. Ultimately, I contend that the PRA in Turkey and the ISN in the Netherlands serve as noteworthy illustrations of undifferentiated state-sponsored civil religion, emphasizing their role in shaping the socio-political landscape within their respective communities.

It is important to note that national identities, like all social identities, are constructed and shaped through discourse, which is in turn influenced by various situational, institutional and social factors. This means that discourse both reflects and shapes social and political realities (Wodak et al. 2009).[1] In the case of Islam, religious authority plays a key role in how it is discursively constructed, particularly during times of societal change and upheaval (Hashas 2018; Sunier 2005, 2018). Therefore, understanding the ways in which religious authority shapes discourse around national identity is crucial to comprehending how civil religion operates in different contexts, including those where different civil religion models coexist.

Over the last two decades, Diyanet has emerged as one of the most significant religious authorities pertaining to *yeni milli* (new national) values, also known as *yerli ve milli* (homegrown and national) values by members of the Justice and Development Party (AKP) (Mutluer 2018; Sunier 2010; Sunier and Landman 2014). The institution's transnational networks play a crucial role in defining the features of this novel national identity overseas (see Carol and Hofheinz 2022; Çitak 2010; Gürlesin 2020 [in the Netherlands]; Öztürk and Sözeri 2018; Yanaşmayan 2010). Furthermore, Diyanet adopts the Muslim perspective on sin and sinful acts to delineate the Turkish hybrid identity in Europe (Öztürk 2016, 2018; Öztürk and Baser 2022). This agency has the capacity to construct and legitimate discourses that identify who qualifies as a good Turkish citizen and who is deemed an evildoer among the populace.

A key instrument in Diyanet's efforts to shape religious and cultural identity among Muslim communities is the Friday sermon, which serves as an essential component of traditional nonformal religious education.[2] There is a growing body of research that examines the sociological and psychological effects of Friday sermons on Muslim communities (Durmuş 2009; Gürlesin 2020; Naskali 2017; Stjernholm 2020). These studies suggest that Friday sermons can have a significant impact on individuals' attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors. From a sociological perspective, Friday sermons can shape religious and cultural identity among Muslim communities (Özdalga 2021). Studies have found that Friday sermons can reinforce communal norms and values as well as promote a sense of belonging and solidarity among congregants (Underwood and Kamhawi 2015). Additionally, Friday sermons can serve as a platform for addressing social and political issues, such as discrimination, inequality, and injustice, and promoting social change (Madanat 2019). From a psychological perspective, Friday sermons can influence individuals' attitudes and behaviors. Research has found that listening to Friday sermons can affect individuals' perceptions of themselves, others, and the world around them (Padela et al. 2018). Given the powerful impact of Friday sermons on individuals' attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors, they serve as a valuable source of data for understanding the potential effects of Diyanet on both Turkish and European Muslim communities. By leveraging the influence of Friday sermons, Diyanet can further disseminate new national values and shape the Turkish hybrid identity in Europe, ultimately reinforcing the institution's authority within the transnational networks it has established.

Given the significant sociological and psychological importance of Friday sermons in constructing national identities and civil religions, this research aims to identify and

conceptualize the discursive strategies employed in these sermons within the Turkish-Dutch context. To achieve this objective, the study analyzed 310 Friday sermons that were released between 1 January 2017, and 1 January 2023. By undertaking a comprehensive examination of the discursive features of these sermons and their relationship with civil religion(s), this research sheds light on the potential role of civil religion(s) in shaping national identities in a transnational context. This study specifically focuses on the concepts of 'self' and 'the other' while considering the key notions of milla (nation), waṭan (homeland), and umma (communities sharing a common religion), and it makes a valuable contribution to the broader discourse on this topic. The analysis is based on a combination of Fairclough's CDA framework, which allows for a systematic and multi-dimensional analysis of discourse, and Wodak's DHA, which emphasizes the historical and social context of discourse production and reception.

After this introduction, the article is organized as follows: The first section outlines the theoretical framework, which explores the varieties of civil religion. The second section provides a contextual framework, which is divided into two sub-sections: the Turkish context and the Netherlands context. The third section describes the methodology used in the study. The fourth section presents the analyses and results of the study, focusing on the construction of 'us' and the construction of the 'other' in Friday sermons. Finally, the article discusses the findings in light of the theoretical framework and contextual factors and concludes with the key insights gained from the study and their implications for future research.

2. Theoretical Framework

In this section, I will explore the various forms of civil religion and their historical development. By examining the works of prominent scholars, I will consider how civil religion has been employed to foster national identity, justify political actions, and contribute to democratization. Through this analysis, I aim to provide a comprehensive understanding of the complex concept of civil religion and its potential role in the construction of religious and national identities within the Turkish–Dutch context.

2.1. Varieties of Civil Religion

Jean-Jacques Rousseau, a French political philosopher who lived in the 18th century, coined the term 'civil religion'[3] to describe the sacred morality that a government imposes on its people (Rousseau 1994). According to Rousseau, civil religion preserves a unique bond among citizens by limiting egoism and assisting with the development of a national identity. Rousseau believed that religion might strengthen ties and devotion to the state and legitimize the republic. Therefore, civil religion, according to Rousseau, should be used to replace people's religious commitment, fostering unwavering support for the republic and the good of society (Rousseau 1913, 1979, 1994). Sixteenth century Italian philosopher Machiavelli (1985, 1996) also argued that to develop the cultural virtue required for civic republicanism to exist, it is imperative to have a sacralized understanding of the state and its leadership (see also: Quinn 2020; Frankel and Yaffe 2020).

Serious theoretical development of the concept of civil religion was stimulated by Durkheim's ([1893] 1964, [1898] 1973, [1912] 1961, [1925] 1961, [1950] 1992) sociology of religion, where the association between (civil) religion and nationalism can be seen in his work (Featherstone 1990). According to Durkheim, it is irrefutable that the Christian religion became secular, and, as a result, contemporary society needed new secularized traditions to fulfil the same role of integrating people, as ancient faiths had done (Cristi 2009). Because modern cultures no longer worshipped 'the old gods who aged and died', these new civil religions were forced to sanctify secular forms because they could no longer rely on the concepts of the supernatural or the Divine (Santiago 2009, p. 395). Wuthnow (1994, p. 130) also agrees that civil religion is ultimately focused on the nation when he describes it as 'the use of God language with reference to the nation'.[4]

However, without doubt, Bellah, in his article 'Civil Religion in America', contributed most to thought on the relationship between civil religion and nation (Bellah 1967). Civil religion, according to him, was not aligned with any specific church, nor did it constitute a supernatural religion, despite containing elements of both. According to Bellah (1967), this civil religion was a body of beliefs, symbols and rituals that served to elevate the nation and give politics a higher meaning. He thus revealed the connection between politics and religion inherent in the sanctification of certain elements of national community life in the United States.

As it is seen above, the role of religion in society is the subject of two long-standing debates in political science and sociology. In political science, the debate centers around the separation of church and state. In sociology, the conventional view is that religion is integrative for society (Durkheim [1912] 1961), but this is challenged by some who see religion as having a divisive role (Glock and Stark 1965, pp. 170–84). Robert Bellah (1967) has suggested that an essential middle term in these discussions must be introduced. He proposes that we inspect the reality of "civil religion", which is capable of being differentiated from both church and state. The crucial question then becomes: how does civil religion relate, on the one hand, to civil society (state) and, on the other, to the organized religions (churches or other religious entities)? In his article "Civil Religion", Coleman (1970) has developed a typology of civil religions linked to Bellah's above suggestions. According to Coleman (1970), in contemporary societies, there are three forms under which civil religion exists: continued undifferentiation with either the organized religion or the state acting as sponsoring agent of the civil religion; a monopoly status for civil religion under the form of secular nationalism; and differentiated civil religion.

All three of the ideologies, as Coleman (1970) calls them, in Table 1 have been called civil religions, but there are obvious differences among them. All represent "links" by which persons may connect their "society's place in space, time, and history to the conditions of ultimate existence and meaning (Coleman 1970, p. 70)". But these various links emerge from different social conditions.

Table 1. Two dimensions of civil religion.

		Is the Civil Religion Independent of the Church?	
		Yes	**No**
Is the civil religion independent of the state?	Yes	Differentiated	Continued undifferentiation
	No	Secular nationalism	

2.1.1. Type-Case 1: Continued Undifferentiation

Church-Sponsored Civil Religion

The existence of civil religion cannot be assumed to be absent in a society just because it is not differentiated. This role can be fulfilled by either the church or the state (Shoop 2005; Vegter et al. 2023). The church can provide civic symbols by adapting its religious doctrine to questions of national destiny, and this can go beyond its own historical roots (Coleman 1970). Examples of this can be found in Latin America, Greece, and Ceylon. However, having a specific religious organization control civil religion can create difficulties for civil and religious liberties of minorities, raise questions about national loyalties, and impede modernization efforts (Pinter 2014). Therefore, civil religion based on one highly specific world religion is likely to fail in providing national symbols for the whole population in religiously pluralistic societies.[5]

State-Sponsored Civil Religion

State-sponsored civil religion is exemplified by Imperial Rome and Restoration Japan (Gehrig 1981). In Rome, any god could be worshipped in the pantheon as long as it was not exclusive, and subject nations were required to accept the worship of the emperor as a symbol of Roman unity. The Jews were granted an exemption from emperor worship, but

Christians were persecuted and eventually took over the state cult. In Japan, state Shinto became the state religion, promoting nationalism and the divine origin of the emperor (Shimazono 2005). This led to conflicts with Buddhism and Christianity, and it foreclosed the role of prophetic protest in civil religion. In religiously diverse societies, state-controlled civil religion can have structural weaknesses, as certain tenets may clash with established religions and result in conflicts.

2.1.2. Type-Case II
Secular Nationalism

Secular nationalism can be considered as an alternative civil religion, with a worldview and symbol system in competition with organized religions (Coleman 1970; Küçükcan 2010). Secular nationalism arises as a substitute for the traditional national religion when it is not suitable to serve as the civil religion for a modernizing political and economic regime due to its traditional or "outdated" nature (Bellah and Hammond 1980).

Two major examples of the substitution of secular nationalism as the civil religion in place of a traditional religious system are given, one being in the Soviet Union and the other in Turkey after Ataturk's revolution. In the Soviet Union, Orthodoxy and all religions have been severely circumscribed, with secular nationalism replacing religion. The Russian civil religion includes saints (Lenin entombed), sacred feasts (May Day), and a belief in Russia's special role in unfolding world history as the spearhead of the socialist revolution (Kahla 2014; Stoeckl 2020). In Turkey, Ataturk considered traditional Islam an obstacle to economic and national progress and replaced it with political nationalism as a civil religion (Çaymaz 2019). Nonetheless, the success of secular nationalism in Turkey appears to be only partial, as evidenced by the significant resurgence of traditional religious symbolism among the population following the Second World War—a phenomenon that will be examined later in the contextual framework.

2.1.3. Type-Case III
Differentiated

The concept of civil religion, which refers to the use of religious symbols and beliefs in a secular context, is most differentiated in nations where other social institutions have achieved the greatest level of differentiation, such as western Europe and America (Williams 2021). In America, civil religion is almost a unique case, differentiated from both the church and state due to religious pluralism and the technical separation of church and state (Campbell 2021; Davie 2001; Lienesch 2018). American civil religion is not a substitute for organized religions, but rather an elaborate symbol system that is not anti-clerical or absolutist. The differentiated religious system in America, controlled by neither state nor church, has an elaborate symbol system that includes civil saints, holy days, and sermons, as well as a belief that the nation is the primary agent of God's meaningful activity in history (Bellah 1967). This belief has given rise to the doctrine of manifest destiny and world obligation as well as the idea that the nation is the primary society in which individual Americans discover personal and group identity.

Building upon this understanding, Turner (2013), in his book "The Religious and the Political: A Comparative Sociology of Religion", argues that civil religion is a vital aspect of national identity. According to Turner, civil religion serves as a means for a nation to create a sense of shared history, culture, and values, thereby uniting its citizens. Furthermore, he posits that civil religion can be employed to justify political actions, such as war or the exclusion of certain groups from the nation.

Expanding on the role of civil religion in political development, Gorski (2011, 2019, 2021) has written extensively on the relationship between civil religion and democratization. He contends that civil religion has played an instrumental role in the emergence of democracy and continues to contribute to its development today.

It is crucial to note that civil religion is a complex concept, and its role in society can vary depending on the context. Comprehending the role of religious institutions such as

Diyanet in the emergence of civil religion is crucial, particularly in the context of Islamic countries where religion and state relations are intertwined (van Bruinessen 2011, 2018). This perspective can be applied to the specific context of Turkish sociology of religion, shedding light on the country's recent history (Miller 2005) and religious–political policies implemented in the transnational domain (Öztürk and Baser 2022).

3. Contextual Framework

Following the principles of the discourse–historical approach (DHA), here, I will incorporate pertinent historical information and contemporary developments to contextualize the situation in Turkey and the Netherlands. Before the analysis of the texts of Friday sermons, the DHA integrates information on the historical background of state–religion relations and the historical sources in which Friday sermons are embedded; further, the analysis attempts to trace diachronic changes in different discourse types.

3.1. Turkish Context: From Atatürk to Erdoğan

In Turkey, there have been instances of various types of civil religions, as outlined in Table 2. Throughout the history of contemporary Turkey, these civil religions have been present at different times. However, it is important to note that in Islam, there is no central authority akin to a church, which means the question for a Muslim country would need to be revised as follows: "Is the civil religion independent of the religious authority?"

Table 2. Two dimensions of Turkish civil religion.

		Is the Civil Religion Independent of the Religious Authority?	
		Yes	**No**
Is the civil religion independent of the state?	Yes	Differentiated (liberal Islam)	
	No	Secular nationalism (Kemalism)	Continued undifferentiation (political Islam)

Where should Diyanet (the PRA) be positioned in this table? It can be argued that the PRA exhibits a hybrid approach, encompassing both church-sponsored and state-sponsored characteristics of civil religion. The institution represents Sunni Islam, which is the most widely practiced religion in Turkey, and provides civic symbols that are adapted from religious doctrine to questions of national destiny, similar to church-sponsored civil religion. However, as an official state institution, the PRA promotes a version of Islam that aligns with the state's interests and vision, resembling state-sponsored civil religion. The decentralized approach to religious authority in Islam, with local religious leaders and scholars holding more influence, results in a diversity of interpretations and practices within the religion. This absence of a centralized religious authority can make it challenging for governments to control or regulate religious practices, creating a dynamic and fluid relationship between religion and the state in Islamic societies. The PRA's role in this relationship will be further explained in this section.

During the Ottoman Empire, Islam was the dominant religion and played a significant role in the civil religion of the state. Islamic symbols and values were incorporated into national identity and citizenship. However, this created difficulties for religious minorities, such as the Armenians, who were subject to persecution and violence.

Following the Ottoman Empire's downfall, a new nation was founded on secular principles. To build a nation-state, new cults, myths, symbols, and rituals were created, a striking example of which is what one might call the Cult of Atatürk, or *Kemalism*. To develop a secular state and nation, three primary areas were identified: (1) secularization of the state, education, and law were the first areas to erode traditional Islamic institutions, followed by (2) the replacement of religious symbols with those of European civilization and (3) the secularization of social life and the diminishing of the influence of popular

Islam in everyday life. Until his death in 1938, Atatürk played a major role in redefining the Turkish state and the Turkish nation by introducing 'a new set of symbols to mark the shift from Islamic to Western civilization' (Karakuş 2018; Küçükcan 2010; Saçan 2022). During the Kemalist era, the PRA played a significant role in the secularization of the state and the replacement of religious symbols with those of European civilization. In this period, the PRA's role was focused on diminishing the influence of popular Islam in everyday life (Çaymaz 2019).

In Turkey, there have been instances where specific religious organizations have sought to exert control over civil religion. Notably, the rise of political Islam in the 1980s and 1990s led to a shift in the PRA's role, with Islamic groups advocating for the incorporation of Islam as the foundation for civil religion. This development was facilitated by the emergence of political parties with an Islamic agenda, such as the Welfare Party (Refah Partisi) and its successors, who sought to challenge the secularist principles that had governed Turkey since its establishment. These efforts to promote an Islamic-based civil religion manifested in several ways. First, there was an increase in the public visibility of Islamic symbols and practices, such as the headscarf, and a greater emphasis on the role of religion in political discourse. Second, the political platforms of these Islamic groups included calls for the expansion of religious education and the strengthening of religious institutions within the country. However, this shift towards an Islamic-based civil religion created challenges for the civil and religious liberties of certain minority groups in Turkey, particularly the Alevis. As a heterodox Islamic sect that maintains unique religious practices and beliefs, Alevis have historically faced discrimination and marginalization in Turkish society. With the rise of political Islam and its impact on civil religion, the Alevis experienced further difficulties, including the denial of official recognition for their places of worship, called "cemevis", and the imposition of Sunni-oriented religious education in public schools.

Following the rise of political Islam in Turkey during the 1980s and 1990s, the Justice and Development Party (AKP) emerged as a key player. By embracing Islam as a fundamental component of the Turkish identity, Erdoğan and Islamic political forces redefined what it means to be Turkish (Bora 2003; Yilmaz and Albayrak 2022). Here begins the ongoing conflict between Islamism and Kemalism, two philosophies with contrasting views of the nation, the state, and society. Islam is brought to the fore of politics through a counter-revolution, and Erdoğan assumes the role of the nation's new father (Saçan 2022). A large portion of the population is now mobilized by Islam, which also fosters national allegiance. During the early years of the AKP's rule from 2002 to 2010, the PRA played a crucial role in promoting a more liberal interpretation of Islam, which was in line with the party's democratic and inclusive approach to civil religion. This approach aimed to foster greater understanding and cooperation among different religious and ethnic communities in Turkey, and the PRA actively participated in various efforts to promote interfaith dialogue and mutual respect. As a result, the role of the PRA was widely regarded as instrumental in promoting a more inclusive and differentiated version of civil religion in Turkey during this period (Gürlesin 2020).

However, following the 2010 elections, when the AKP secured a majority in the government, the party's approach to civil religion began to shift. This change became more apparent after the failed coup attempt in 2016, as Cristi (2001, p. 76) indicates: 'Civil religious themes would tend to emerge or become more visible in periods of national or international crises'. The AKP increasingly adopted a more conservative and authoritarian stance with a renewed focus on Islamist policies and rhetoric. In the aftermath of the 2016 coup attempt, the Gülen movement was declared culpable and subsequently criminalized as a terrorist organization. In this new phase, the AKP's model of civil religion showed undifferentiated, state-sponsored characteristics and began to emphasize nationalist and Islamist themes, as the party sought to consolidate its power and appeal to its conservative base. Partnering with the far-right MHP (Nationalist Movement Party), the AKP adopted an ultra-nationalist rhetoric, leading to the marginalization and demonization of the Kurdish population. The government pursued policies that prioritized Sunni Islamic values and

practices, which further marginalized other religious and cultural groups. This shift was accompanied by an erosion of democratic norms, increased censorship, and a crackdown on political dissent (Öztürk 2018; Yilmaz and Albayrak 2022).

The rebirth of the past is important in today's Islamic Turkey, whereas secular Turkey was founded on forgetfulness. The state and its followers glorify the Ottoman era, which Kemalism forgot. Every aspect of society incorporates Ottoman themes, including national celebrations, media, education, and foreign policy. The 'banal Ottomanism' that Erdoğan currently practices is a symbolic part of the re-identification of Turkish society (Mandacı 2022). New urban architecture, such as that of the Presidential Complex or the mosque in Taksim Square, bears witness to the Ottoman heritage that has been lost (Orhan 2016).

The role of the PRA, in this process has been significant. The PRA has played a key role in the Islamization of Turkish society, including the restoration of mosques, the promotion of Sunni Islamic values, and the establishment of Islamic education institutions. Under Erdoğan's leadership, the Diyanet has become increasingly influential and has expanded its operations globally. In 2020, Erdoğan reopened the ancient Hagia Sophia as a functioning mosque. The museum, which was formerly a Byzantine-era cathedral and was later converted into the museum by Atatürk in 1935, served as a representation of Turkey's contemporary secular state for more than 80 years has now become a symbol of the dominance of Islam over secularism.

In conclusion, the evolution of Turkey's civil religion demonstrates the dynamic nature of the relationship between politics, religion, and national identity. Moreover, the push for an Islamic-based civil religion in Turkey led to tensions between secularists and conservatives as well as debates about the appropriate role of religion in public life. This ongoing struggle to define Turkey's civil religion highlights the complexities of balancing religious expression with the protection of minority rights and the preservation of secular principles. In the following section, I will explore the transnational aspects of this issue and examine the case of the Netherlands, which further illustrates the challenges faced by countries grappling with religious identity, national politics, and minority rights.

3.2. Current Stiation in The Netherlands

The Netherlands is a diverse country that is home to many different cultural and ethnic groups, including a Muslim population that accounts for about 5% of the total population of the Netherlands, which is around 17.1 million people (CBS 2020). While the Dutch government has made efforts to promote social integration among citizens and residents, there have been ongoing debates about how best to achieve this goal, particularly with regard to Muslim communities (Boender 2012; Gijsberts and Dagevos 2009). The ISN is the largest mosque umbrella organization with its 148 mosques in the Netherlands. Until mid-2016, the ISN's sermons were predominantly written by the PRA, taking into account Turkey's socio-cultural and political structure (Gürlesin 2020). This resulted in speculations that the sermons in the Netherlands were in line with Ankara's interests as a conduit for President Erdoğan's ideas.

However, it is important to consider the broader context in which these debates are taking place. In recent years, discussions around social integration, citizenship development, sense of belonging, and identity among Muslim communities have been prominent in the Netherlands (Phalet et al. 2010; Verkuyten and Yildiz 2009, 2010), and the role of mosques in these processes has been a topical issue (Es 2012; Roose 2009; Sözeri et al. 2022). Some scholars and commentators have expressed concerns about the potential for mosques to promote values and beliefs that are at odds with those of mainstream Dutch society (Polititeacademie 2008; Welten and Abbas 2021), while others have argued that mosques can play a positive role in promoting social integration and building hybrid identities (Sözeri et al. 2021).

However, concerns have also been raised about the potential for mosques to promote extremist ideologies or to be influenced by political actors from their country of origin. In

2018, allegations arose that a considerable number of Dutch Islamic organizations, amounting to approximately 10% of all Dutch mosques, had solicited or received substantial funding, sometimes reaching millions of euros, from Persian Gulf states with the purported aim of promoting Salafism (Holdert and Kouwenhoven 2019). The Dutch National Coordinator for Counterterrorism and Security has linked this funding to a marked increase in the number of Salafi mosques and preachers in the Netherlands over just four years, with the number of Salafi mosques rising from 13 to 27 and the number of Salafi preachers growing from 50 to 110 (Holdert and Kouwenhoven 2018).

In 2019, a study conducted by the Dutch parliament found that young children attending Salafi mosque schools in the Netherlands were being taught highly concerning and potentially "dangerous" beliefs. The study revealed that these children were being instructed that individuals who hold different religious or ideological beliefs, as well as adulterers, apostates, and homosexuals, deserve the death penalty. Additionally, they were being taught that Muslims should distance themselves from Dutch society and its values of equality and freedom and that young Muslims should leave the "unbelieving country" to settle in an Islamic one (Ministerie van Binnenlandse Zaken en Koninkrijksrelaties 2020). These findings raise concerns about the potential impact of Salafi teachings on young Muslims in the Netherlands and their integration into Dutch society.

More recently, the Dutch government conducted a parliamentary inquiry in 2020 into the unwanted influence of religious and social organizations from unfree countries. The inquiry raised questions about the degree to which Islamic countries may be influencing social and religious organizations in the Netherlands. Turkish political influence in the Netherlands was discussed during this inquiry, and scholar in Turkology, Erik Jan Zürcher, criticized the discourse of the ISN for adopting Ankara's political line.

> the vast majority of mosques in the Netherlands were affiliated with the Turkish government organization Diyanet, the Presidency of Religious Affairs. [. . .] The chairmanship of the board of the foundation usually lies with the Attaché for Religious Affairs at the Turkish Embassy in The Hague (but people from the local communities play a big role both in the financing and the management of the various mosques). This diplomat, like the imams of the Diyanet mosques, is appointed by the Presidency of Religious Affairs in Ankara, which, after the military, is the largest government agency in the republic with over 100,000 employees. Religion is a state matter in Turkey, as in other predominantly Muslim countries. After the abolition of the caliphate and the position of Sheikh ul-Islam (the highest religious authority) in 1924, the republic took over the responsibility for the religious needs of the population (which is 98% Muslim). Diyanet is the instrument for this.
>
> [. . .] Diyanet offers a very broad range of services, such as funerals and the organization of the Islamic pilgrimage to Mecca, but ideological influence, if it occurs at all, is primarily through the Friday sermon in the mosque and through religious advice (fatwas). (Zürcher 2020)

In response to criticisms of the Islamic Foundation of the Netherlands (ISN) adopting Ankara's political line, Murat Türkmen, the ISN Secretary, has refuted the claim. He emphasizes that the ISN is an independent foundation that operates in compliance with Dutch law. Additionally, Türkmen argues that Turkey is viewed as the mother figure (ana) and the Netherlands as the father figure (baba), while the ISN shows equal reverence and esteem for both of these senior.

> The ISN has built or purchased all of its mosques with donations from Turkish Muslims residing in the Netherlands. Additionally, the organization is highly accessible and welcomes Muslims of all backgrounds to attend prayer services undisturbed, as per the statutes. ISN is a religious organization that does not involve itself in politics. It, along with its affiliated mosques, is subject to Dutch laws and regulations, and operates transparently in all aspects.[6]

It is worth noting, however, that tensions between the Netherlands and Turkey have been high since 2016,[7] and the ISN began to write its own sermons in Turkish and Dutch (and Arabic since 2022)[8] after facing increasing criticism in the Netherlands.

To sum up, the subject of mosques and Islamic organizations in the Netherlands, especially the ISN linked with Diyanet in Turkey, has been the subject of continuous discourse. The role of the ISN in the Netherlands is a multifaceted and significant matter, and this study sought to address this gap to gain a better understanding of the ISN's discourse on social integration and citizenship development among Dutch–Turkish Muslim communities.

4. Methodology

The present study analysed Friday sermons using a form of critical discourse analysis (hereafter CDA) that is closely associated with the discipline of sociolinguistics, which views language as a social fact. The goal of CDA is to reveal ideologically pervaded and often hidden structures of power, political control, and dominance as well as discriminatory inclusion and exclusion techniques in language use (van Dijk 1993; Wodak et al. 2009). It is important to recognize that discourse analysis is fundamentally an *interpretive* process that always involves *active choices* made by the researchers themselves. These decisions have an impact on what count as data in the first place as well as on how the data are ultimately gathered, analyzed, interpreted, and explained.[9]

The paradigm of CDA, therefore, is not homogeneous (Moberg 2022). In this study, a set of key concepts and analytical ideas taken from Fairclough's 'three-dimensional' CDA framework, combined with Wodak's Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA), serve as the foundation for the analysis that is described below. Using a 'three-dimensional' approach, Fairclough's CDA framework examines texts (i.e., written and spoken language in itself), practices (i.e., the production and interpretation of texts), and sociocultural practices (i.e., the larger societal settings in which texts are embedded, or systems of knowledge and beliefs; Fairclough and Wodak 1997; Fairclough 1995). Wodak et al. (2009) developed the DHA, an enhancement of the CDA, as a helpful paradigm for the examination of nationalist discourse and the discursive construction of a national identity. This methodology is especially useful for this study, as it focuses on the identification and analysis of 'self'- and 'other'-presentation strategies as well as the creation of in-groups and out-groups via linguistic and argumentation tools. In addition to CDA, content analysis was also used in this research project, first as a complement to discourse analysis (Gering 2015) and then to produce both quantitative and qualitative descriptions of the research subject.

The prime objective of our study is to conceptualize and identify the various discursive strategies (as the present study is representing civil religion(s)) employed in Friday sermons for the construction of national identities in the Turkish–Dutch context. In line with the stated objective, the research questions are formulated as follows: How do Friday sermons employ discursive strategies to construct the concepts of 'self' and 'the other' in the Turkish–Dutch national identity context, with a focus on the key notions of milla, waṭan, and umma? How do civil religion(s) contribute to this process? Additionally, how are specific 'other' groups represented and differentiated from the 'self' in these sermons?

The corpus I will examine consists of Friday sermons published by the ISN between the beginning of January 2017 and the end of December 2022. Therefore, I will examine 310[10] texts that were prepared and distributed to the 148 mosques affiliated with the ISN.[11] All the sermons used for this research project were taken from the official ISN website.[12]

According to Wodak et al. (2009), the discursive construction of a national identity is appearing in relation to, on the one hand, the themes of history and culture and, on the other, the themes of 'selfhood', 'sameness', 'similarity', 'community', and 'difference' (or the 'other'). The present study examines the discourses used to create a national identity, that is images of the 'self' and the 'other'. In our analysis of Turkish nationalism, I chose to focus on the key concepts of milla (nation), waṭan (homeland), and umma (communities sharing

a common religion) due to their relevance to the above themes as well as the significance and frequent usage in the text (see Figure 1).

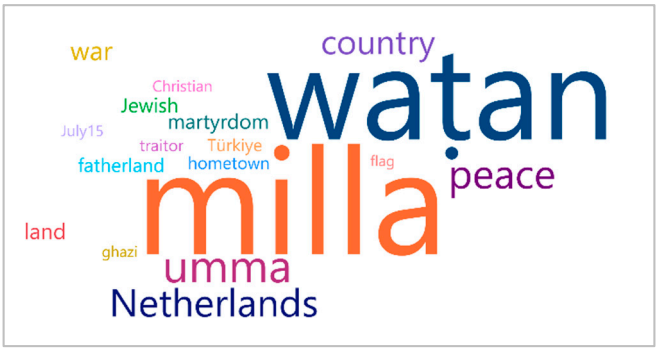


Figure 1. Word Cloud of Turkish Nationalism in Friday sermons.

Moreover, present study saught for instances where "the other" is constructed or represented in the sermons. This includes language or themes that highlight the differences between the 'self' and the 'other' or that depict certain groups as being outside the community or nation. During my preliminary review of the Friday sermons, I noticed that certain groups, including the Netherlands as a country, the Gülen movement, and the Kurdish population in Iraq, were depicted as "the other". In the following section, I will further examine this portrayal of these groups.

5. Analyses and Results

The present study applied Fairclough's three-dimensional approach to ISN sermons and examined texts (i.e., written language in itself), practices (i.e., the production and interpretation of texts), and sociocultural practices (i.e., the larger societal settings in which texts are embedded). In this section, the key indicators of a national identity are explored, as the present study envisions a close-knit relationship between the construction of nationalism and civil religion (see section 'Nationalism as Civil Religion'). The construction of a national identity necessarily involves the relation between the 'self' and the 'other', and 'othering' is an important activity in the creation of collective identities. In the first part of this section, I explore how the terms *milla*, *waṭan* and *umma* serve to construct a collective 'us'. In the second part, I explore how the ISN constructs discourses of the 'other' by searching for ethnic, religious, and national elements in the sermons.

5.1. Construction of 'Us'

5.1.1. Milla

Milla can refer to a religion, religious community, or nation, three basic meanings that were used in the Ottoman Empire concurrently until the Tanẓīmāt period and afterwards. In the Quran, *milla* is largely similar to *dīn*, and, in fact, it is translated as 'religion' (Şentürk 2005). The term appears in the Quran most frequently as *millat Ibrāhīm*, 'the religion of Abraham', i.e., 'the only true, monotheistic religion' (Ursinus 2012).

In the Turkish sermons[13] prepared by the ISN, the word *milla* (including *milli* (national)) appears 87 times in 43 different sermons over 6 years (2017–2022). Apart from the sermon texts published on the ISN website, the imams recite standard sermon prayers in Arabic and Turkish[14] in every sermon that contain hadiths (sayings of the Prophet Muhammad) and verses from the Quran. In addition, a short closing prayer in Turkish is initiated at the end of each sermon. In the present study, the inclusion of the traditional closing prayer, which is regularly recited from memory by imams and considered as a component of the Friday sermon, was deemed essential for the corpus analysis conducted. As a result, it can be determined that the term "*milla*" was emphasized in a significant manner, with an estimated occurrence of 345 times in 345 distinct the Friday sermons. The Turkish closing is

as follows: O Allah, help Islam and Muslims. Protect our country [*waṭan*] and nation [*milla*] from all kinds of danger [. . .]

This pattern of "*milla*" stated above constitutes a majority proportion of the instances where this concept is mentioned, approximately three-fourths of the total occurrences. Here, the word *milla* is used to indicate a more specific meaning, the Turkish nation, in addition to the general meanings stated above. In another passage, the word *milla* refers to Turkish citizens and those who speak Turkish; it is stated that safeguarding the Turkish culture and language is among the most crucial aspects of being a nation:

> National identity encompasses not only culture, but also language. [. . .] language is necessary to understand yourself and the world. The disappearance of a language is therefore disastrous. (Language and identity; 5 July 2019)[15]

Assimilation will result from the loss of the language, according to the prepared Turkish text[16] of the same sermon:

> . . .there are many people who lost their language and melted into other cultures. (Language and identity; 5 July 2019)

Another sermon follows emphasizes nationalist loyalty as a prerequisite for development into an ideal Muslim:

> A young believer is one who is loyal to his national and spiritual values, has high morals and loves his country (*waṭan*) and people (*milla*). (Our youth are our future; 29 October 2021)

5.1.2. Waṭan

Waṭan is another concept I will discuss here, reflecting an important notion in the process of national identification that emphasizes 'national uniqueness'. The Arabic term *waṭan*, which was first used to describe Muslims' emotional and imagined geographical affiliations in the early days of Islam, was only used in the 19th century to designate Muslims' current political locations within certain physical borders, and this concept came to dominate throughout the Muslim world:

> In modern times, a new word entered the political vocabulary and is now almost universal [. . .] It is the Arabic term *waṭan*, with its phonetic variations and equivalents in the other languages of Islam. In classical usage, *waṭan* means 'one's place of birth or residence' [. . .] The new meaning dates from the last years of the eighteenth century, and can be traced to foreign influence. (Lewis 1988, p. 40)

The idea of homeland (*waṭan*)[17] is an important aspect of the nation-state paradigm. While providing physical space for the nation-state, the homeland also maintains a national identity by generating symbolic acts about the territory through a geographical imagination (Aslan 2015; Özkan 2012).

Waṭan in Sufi thought, however, is an allegorical concept denoting that which exists beyond the material and mundane—the spiritual world, or the abode of unification with the Divine (Çağrıcı 2012). Some defined this as the Otherworld, but others wrote of the grave as one's *waṭan* because it marked the return to the earth, to one's original substance, i.e., the beginning of the return to God. Here, the Sufi concept of *waṭan* touched on the concept of *waṭan* as mother. The return to the earth was also a return to the womb from which one was birthed (Najmabadi 1997).

Various meanings of the term *waṭan*, as stated above, are embedded in the sermons written in the Netherlands. The reader may see how the word *waṭan* is used to refer to the Turkish nation and region in the examples below:

> The Operation Peace Spring[18] launched by our country against terrorist organizations in recent days is being protested by supporters of the terrorist organization in some cities of The Netherlands [. . .] May Allah help our security forces. May he

> protect our homeland and our nation from all kinds of danger. (The construction and use of Mosques; 18 October 2019)[19]

Following the victory over the 'internal enemy', the term *waṭan* is mentioned in another sermon:

> We learned a lot from the terrible coup attempt on '15 July' in our nation. I wish God's mercy on our martyrs, to whom we owe the salvation of the homeland. (Religion is sincerity; 13 July 2018)

In the quotations below, the word homeland is used in the following ways:

> It is our greatest responsibility to leave a beautiful generation that takes the Messenger of Allah as an example and is loyal to its homeland and nation. (Mosque and religious education; 13 November 2020)

> Self-sacrifice [*fedakârlık*] for our national and moral values is to take responsibility for religion, for the homeland, for the flag, for honour and for our future when appropriate. (The morality of cooperation; 5 December 2019)

In one of the 2022 sermons entitled "Love of Homeland", a new and more inclusive meaning was given to the word homeland, suggesting that we should also accept Holland, "the land we live in", as our homeland.

> The Prophet Muhammad did not lose any of his love and affection for his homeland and birthplace, Mecca. In accordance with human honor and dignity, he also chose Medina as his homeland and country. [. . .] We should also be filled with this emotion and thought towards our homeland and the land we live in. (Love of Homeland; 18 March 2022)

In the following examples, it can be seen that the term *waṭan* is used for its spiritual meaning:

> We were sent to this world, which is the place of testing, in order to deserve God's love and affection and to return to our original *waṭan* [homeland], Paradise. (We can earn our hereafter only in this world; 24 May 2019)

In another sermon:

> Everything is not just this world. One day we will say goodbye to this world. Let's have faith and deeds that will make us smile when we go to the original *waṭan* [homeland]. (The three holy months and the Regāib night; 24 March 2017)

Between 2017–2022, the term *waṭan* appeared thirty-nine times including seven times in the form of "*vatandaş*" (fellow citizens), six times as "*vatan ve millet*"(*waṭan* and *milla*), three times as "*vatan sevgisi*" (love of homeland), and three times as "*vatan toprağı*" (country's land) in the main texts of the sermons. However, if the closing prayer (see above for this prayer) conducted after the sermon is considered, it can be said that the term *waṭan* was emphasized around 300 times. The present study found that only two instances of '*waṭan*' reflected its spiritual meaning, as mentioned above.

5.1.3. Umma

The other key concept I would like to address here is *umma*. Many times throughout the Quran, the Arabic term *umma* is used with diverse connotations: a community, a nation, and a people (Bulut 2012). In its broadest sense, it refers to all of humanity [Q. 10:19], though animals establish their own communities as well [Q. 6:38]. The community of prophets that God has sent is referred to as *umma*. [Q. 21:92]; a community of people who share a common religion is referred to as *umma* as well [Q. 10:47]; and it is used to refer to Christians and Jews [Q. 3:113; 5:66] as well as to a group of Muslims [Q. 3:104].

When looking at the ISN sermons, this concept appeared 94 times across the 5-year period. Here are some examples:

> Our Lord describes Muslims as an exemplary community for humanity, an *umma* representing beauty, justice, and all human values. (Islam and Muslims in Europe; 31 March 2017)

Being a member of the Islamic *umma*, the believer closely observes what a large family they belong to during the pilgrimage:

> What an honour it is to be from the *umma* of Muhammad! But being the members of the best *umma* chosen from among the human family also requires responsibility. (The most beautiful trait, good morals; 9 Augustus 2019)

The term umma is seen to encompass the wider Muslim community in almost all the practices that were examined. This was expressed twelve times in phrases such as "*ümmet-i Muhammed*" (the community of Muhammad), five times as "*ümmet olma bilinci*" (consciousness of being part of the community), two times as "*hayırlı ümmet*" (blessed community), and five times as "*İslam ümmeti*" (Islamic community). It was only used twice to denote the community of prophets God has sent. The present study did not encounter the wider meanings of this concept in the sermons. This use of the term umma in the sermons shows how religious identity is integrated with local and national identity and how these two concepts can be seen as intertwined. Ultimately, this analysis showed how the concept of umma is used to emphasize the importance of community and belonging in the Islamic faith.

In this section, I examined the contextual meanings and usage frequency of three key words. The findings suggest that the Friday sermons in the ISN heavily promote Turkish nationalism and political Islam, indicating a significant influence from the current context in Turkey. However, the spiritual and inclusive usage of the concept of waṭan in the sermons also suggests that the institution is to some extent influenced by debates in the Netherlands and occasionally takes measures to consider certain sensitivities. These results will be further analyzed in the discussion.

5.2. Construction of the 'Other'

Members of a national community simultaneously create disparities between themselves and the 'other' (countries, communities, nations) while imagining national singularity and homogeneity (Wodak et al. 2009). This study found that the Netherlands as a country, the Gülen movement as a religious group, and the Kurdish population living in Iraq were considered as the 'other' in the sermons.

The identity of the second generation is more 'hybrid', with ties to both Dutch society and their Turkish ancestry. In this study, therefore, I speculated about the depictions of 'The Nederlands' that the ISN presented in its sermons to second-generation Turks, who want to build their Turkish–Dutch identity. In the main text,[20] the word Holland is used 72 times. Of these, 39 of them specifically refer to the "Hollanda Diyanet Vakfı" (Islamic Foundation Netherlands) as a corporate identity, highlighting the foundation's activities. The remaining 33 instances of the word refer to the Netherlands in general. In 17 of the 33 uses, the context refers to Muslim residents living in the Netherlands, such as "Muslims residing in Holland", "our religious brothers and sisters living in Holland", "our nation's presence in Holland", and "our citizens living in Holland". In seven of the thirty-three uses, "The Netherlands" is mentioned in the context of addressing issues such as illness, waste, smoking, and drug use in the sermons.:

> About 400,000 loaves of bread are thrown away every day in The Netherlands. Huge piles of garbage are created with the waste of 170 million kilograms of fruit and vegetables a year. (Let's avoid waste; 22 June 2018)

Let us look at the examples given in a sermon titled, 'The harms of substance abuse':

> According to studies, unfortunately, the age of smokers in The Netherlands has decreased to twelve. [...] It was determined that one out of every five people in The Netherlands smoked cigarettes. Every year, 19,500 people die in The

> Netherlands due to the harms of smoking. (Substance abuse and its harms; 20 July 2018)

In another sermon:

> According to statistics, there are 1.1 million diabetics in The Netherlands, the country we live in. (Fasting and health; 26 April 2019)

In the last example, there is a sensitivity rarely seen. The sermon titled, 'The month of Ramadan and its importance', which the ISN delivered on 3 May 2019, refers to the liberation of the Netherlands, which also coincided with this period, as follows:

> Dear Muslims! Next Sunday, 5 May 2019, is the Dutch liberation day. On this occasion, we respectfully commemorate the people who fought and lost their lives for the liberation of The Netherlands in World War II. May our Lord grant eternal peace, tranquility, and happiness to the society we live in. Amine.

The way the Gülen movement is treated in the sermons is another matter I aim to address while discussing the idea of the 'other'. I observed that the sermons radically isolate the Gülen community, which was cut off from Turkish society after 2013 and after the failed coup in 2016. Since 2017, every year during the week of 15 July,[21] the word 'FETÖ'[22] is clearly mentioned in the sermons in Turkey, and the Gülen movement is defined as traitors.[23] This discourse is mirrored in the sermons of the ISN. However, it appears that the ISN has made a strategic decision not to use the term 'FETÖ' in the Netherlands, possibly in order to avoid controversy and maintain positive relations with the Dutch government and society. However, it can be said that this religious group is subjected to heavy implicit accusations. In the sermon titled 'Religion is sincerity' (13 July 2018), diseases of the heart are referenced using such characteristics as selfish, arrogance, grudge, hatred, and hypocrisy. The sermon continues as follows:

> Deception (taqiyyah) is a spiritual ailment that we must steer clear of. It involves portraying oneself as different for the sake of worldly gain and using dishonest tactics to harm Islam from within. Those who engage in this practice view betrayal and hypocrisy as a religious obligation to achieve their goals. This behavior is detrimental not only to those who partake in it but also to society as a whole. The failed coup attempts in Turkey on 15 July 2016, provide clear evidence of the harm caused by such actions.

It seems that both the ISN and PRA have agreed to use the term *taḳiyya* in their sermons. Therefore, I would like to emphasize it here specifically. The word literally refers to a Muslim's concealment in a dangerous situation to protect their life or the community.[24] However, the ISN emphasizes that this concealment is done for "worldly interest" and to "harm Islam from within". Another sermon delivered to this group concludes by quoting the following hadith: "He who points a weapon at us is not of us, and he who deceives us is not of us" (Abuse of religion; 23 November 2018).

In the sermons analyzed, there is an implicit identification of a specific group as being involved in religious abuse. These references allude to the group's engagement in terrorist activities, the perpetration of murders while claiming to act in the name of Islam, profiting through the manipulation of religion, and altering the teachings of Allah for personal gain. The ISN's use of its religious authority to criminalize the Gülen movement can be seen as a form of implicit support for the AKP regime.

Another example concerns the parallel discourses of the PRA and the ISN on the matter of the Kurdish conflict. The discourse that the ISN promoted amid the tense interactions between the Turks and Kurds is one of the most significant aspects shaping Turkish–Dutch Muslims' conception of the 'other', which I aim to explore here. Tensions between the Kurds and Turks were exposed in the Netherlands after the intervention of Turkey in the northern Iraq region, named by the Turkish state as the 'Peace Spring Operation'. Hundreds of Dutch Kurds gathered at the Malieveld in The Hague in protest of the Turkish intervention

of northern Syria. After this intervention, the Turkish community was warned by the ISN against an escalation of violence in The Netherlands as follows:

> The Peace Spring Operation launched by our country against terrorist organizations in recent days is being protested by supporters of the terrorist organization in some cities of The Netherlands [. . .] (The construction and use of Mosques; 18 October 2019)

Approximately 70,000 individuals of Kurdish descent, hailing from the Kurdish regions of Syria, Turkey, Iraq, and Iran, reside in the Netherlands. In this particular sermon, the ISN classified all Kurds participating in these protests as "supporters of a terrorist organization".

5.3. Conclusions

From a critical discourse analysis perspective, the association of the Netherlands with negative concepts such as illness, waste, smoking, and drug use may be interpreted as an attempt to create a negative image of the country. This could be a deliberate strategy to undermine the reputation of the country or to discredit its values and culture. It is also worth considering the potential role of cultural stereotypes and biases in shaping these associations.

The language used in the ISN sermons in the Netherlands is employed to reinforce the idea of a homogeneous Turkish Muslim community, drawing parallels with the AKP's approach in Turkey, as discussed earlier. The "other" is identified as those who do not share their beliefs or values, fostering a sense of division and exclusion. The discourse around the Gülen movement is particularly concerning, with the movement being identified as the "other" and implicitly accused of betrayal and hypocrisy, mirroring the criminalization and marginalization of the Gülen movement following the failed coup attempt in 2016 in Turkey. Similarly, the discourse around the Kurdish population in the ISN sermons serves to create a sense of division, with all Kurds participating in protests being labelled as "supporters of a terrorist organization". This rhetoric echoes the ultra-nationalist stance adopted by the AKP in Turkey, in alliance with the MHP, which has led to the marginalization and demonization of the Kurdish population.

Overall, this study reveals the ways in which language can be used to reinforce social and cultural divides and promote a sense of "us" and "them", both in Turkey and within the Turkish Muslim community in the Netherlands. The parallels between the discourse in the ISN sermons and the AKP's approach in Turkey demonstrate the transnational impact of political and religious rhetoric and the potential for such discourse to shape social identities and foster divisions across borders.

6. Discussion and Conclusions

The literature on the Turkish sociology of religion has not systematically analyzed how a secular state has made use of civil religion in constructing a national and religious identity in Europe by using the transnational religious structures of the state. This paper addressed this gap in the civil religion discourse by studying the sermons prepared by the ISN, the transnational arm of the PRA (Diyanet).

The analysis presented in this section reveals the prominent use of the concepts of "milla", "waṭan", and "umma" in the Friday sermons delivered by the ISN. The frequency of these terms provides insight into their significance in the religious discourse of the ISN and their potential role in shaping the religious and national identity of the Turkish Muslim community in the Netherlands. The use of the term "milla" in the sermons highlights the importance placed on Turkish national identity within the context of Islam. The examples presented show that the concept of "milla" is used to refer not only to a religious community or nation but also to the Turkish nation and Turkish citizens. The concept of "waṭan" is also shown to be important in the religious discourse of the ISN, particularly in its use to refer to the Turkish nation and region. While the term has a spiritual meaning in Sufi thought, the sermons analyzed here largely use it to emphasize the importance of national identity and loyalty to the homeland. The use of the term "umma" in the sermons reflects the importance

placed on the Muslim community and its shared values and responsibilities. The examples presented show that the term is used to refer to the wider Muslim community and the community of prophets sent by God. This use of the term emphasizes the importance of belonging to a larger community and fulfilling one's responsibilities to that community.

The ISN constructs the "other" in its sermons by identifying certain groups, such as the Netherlands, the Gülen movement, and the Kurdish population, as different from and inferior to their own. The ISN uses the term "Holland" to refer to issues such as illness, waste, smoking, and drug use in the country. This study also notes how the ISN demonizes the Gülen movement in its sermons, avoiding the use of "FETÖ" but making implicit accusations of betrayal and hypocrisy. Additionally, the ISN criminalizes and demonizes the Kurdish population by classifying all Kurds protesting the Turkish intervention in northern Syria as "supporters of a terrorist organization".

The present research highlights how civil religious discourses promoted by the ISN can have both unifying and divisive effects. However, the data gathered indicates that a state-sponsored civil religion centered on Turkish nationalism and Islamism, without differentiation, is more prevalent than a differentiated civil religion that embraces liberal and pluralistic principles.

Undifferentiated and state-sponsored civil religion presented in this context interprets religious concepts based on the state's interests, narrowing their broad and inclusive meanings and limiting them to the daily interests of the Turkish state. The basic elements that make up the Muslim identity, such as *waṭan*, *milla*, and *umma*, lose their embracing and inclusive aspects. The sermons constantly refer to Turkey and the Turks, not the Netherlands, when they speak of "our security forces", "our country", or "our people". It can be said that being born in and living in The Netherlands as a Dutch Muslim is not even considered a side element of the Muslim identity in the sermons. Meanwhile, the idea of *waṭan* aims towards Turkish national unity, and the concept of *umma* refers to Islamic unity.

This particularistic, religiously nationalistic discourse embedded in the ISN sermons stresses the ethno-religious dimensions of national identity, often connecting Turkish Muslims to the territory of Turkey. These civil religious expressions highlight the boundaries that separate the religio-national community from others. The ISN's civil religion, therefore, falls short of providing settings that encourage a feeling of belonging to the Netherlands and participation in a pluralistic Dutch society.

Although these discursive activities emphasize *gemeinschaft* (i.e., community) and particularism, which are the main characteristics of the new *Salafism* that increasingly dominates the contemporary Turkish interpretations of Islam (Hammond 2017), they could be partly successful in establishing an atmosphere of security for Turkish–Dutch Muslims, though it does not seem possible to promote peaceful coexistence in the long run in Dutch cities where pluralism is a reality. If Islamic concepts are interpreted in such an exclusive manner, they may conflict with the inclusive vision of citizenship in which tolerance of diversity occasionally goes beyond orthodox religious boundaries (cf. Essabane et al. 2022). The embracing of such interpretations of the Friday sermons within such a pluralistic setting can lead to tensions between believers and secularists and in the interreligious domain as well as to tensions among world religions, such as Christianity, Judaism, and Islam. It can also lead to extreme hostility towards traditional interpretative communities and towards all forms of rationalism, intellectualism, and mysticism in Islam (Gülsah Çapan and Zarakol 2019; Gürlesin 2018; Reddig 2011). The increasing tensions between Turks and Kurds after the sermon read at the beginning of 'The Peace Spring Operation', the demonising and exclusion of the Gülen movement, in line with Ankara's policy, and the lack of emphasis on the sense of belonging to Dutch society during the sermons strengthen concerns.

Discursive acts have a range of roles in social constructions. First, they play a significant role in creating and maintaining certain social conditions, and second, they may help to maintain and legitimize an existing social order. Third, discursive acts are used to sustain and reproduce the status quo, while, fourth, discursive activities may be successful

in changing, deconstructing, or even eradicating the status quo (Wodak et al. 2009). Recent changes have brought attention to the localization efforts of the ISN, which can be regarded as a significant step in the preparation of Friday sermons. Specifically, these efforts involve the formation of a committee by the ISN to write the sermons as opposed to relying on sermons written in Turkey.

State-controlled global networks have functioned as unifying forces, but these same networks have also contributed to state detachment and differentiation processes (Sunier et al. 2016). In the long run, the ISN can fulfil the function of 'creating and maintaining certain social conditions' and 'deconstructing, or even eradicating the status quo', as outlined by the first and fourth items.[25] It can be said that the sermons that the ISN produced between 2017–2022 were much less nationalistic and ultra-Orthodox than the sermons of the PRA (Gürlesin 2020). In addition, our investigation did not turn up any evidence of systematic anti-European or anti-Dutch propaganda in the current study. Though rare, spiritual and inclusive usages of the term '*waṭan*' and the remembrance of Dutch Liberation Day are signs of inclusive and pluralistic perspectives in the sermons. The ISN should, however, put forth a greater effort to support the integration of Muslims into the pluralistic Dutch society.

The changes in the discourse of the ISN since 2017 indicate that Islam in the Netherlands, to some extent, alternates between negotiation and conflict to reconstruct an individual and collective identity (cf. Carol and Hofheinz 2022; Gibbon 2008; Gürlesin 2020; Ongur 2020; Sbai 2019). In the Netherlands, the ISN experiences various kinds of social and political pressure and adjusts itself to a variety of situations in which it undertakes religious activities. However, as far as the present study observed, the ISN sermons are used to sustain and reproduce the status quo in Turkey. The undifferentiated discursive activity mentioned in the second and third items above is still evident and prevailing in this sense. Therefore, the present author believes that the tension between reproducing the status quo offered by Turkey and deconstructing this status quo by placing the demands of the Dutch plural society at its core will determine the ISN's stance in the near future.

The present study assumes that the situational, institutional, and social contexts will continue to shape and affect the ISN's discourse in the future, and, in turn, these discourses may influence social and political reality. Through discourses, the ISN constitutes objects of knowledge, situations, and social roles as well as identities and interpersonal relations between different social groups and those who interact with them. Understanding the impact of the ISN's discourses on Dutch–Turkish Muslims was not one of the tasks of this inquiry. However, the present author suggests that it is essential to investigate its reception and recontextualization in other domains of Dutch society,[26] in other words, in the everyday lives of Turkish–Dutch Muslims.

As Nielsen (2015) indicates, there is a global shift from a former period of nation building and educating to indoctrination through shared narratives of a common identity to the more recent emergence of new and contested forms of collective participation concerned primarily with citizens' relations to a state. The greatest challenge facing the ISN today is developing 'pluralist Turkish-Dutch citizens' capable of living in a variety of different and sometimes conflicting worlds of meaning while still maintaining a strong sense of personal and communal identity. At this point, I see the recent local educational initiatives in Islamic education, where an inclusive pedagogical approach combined with earlier developed traditional materials, as highly promising (ter Avest et al. 2021a, 2021b; Wielzen and ter Avest 2017).

How far present and future forms of civil religious discourse will go towards helping Turkish–Dutch Muslims meet this challenge remains an open question. Thus, choices are being made in the educational policy of the ISN concerning whether to inscribe fixed narratives of history that constitute a 'Turkish nation' or to envision religious pluralism and active citizenship as a renewed social contract that is constantly in progress.

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Notes

1 More recent publications also indicate that there is a growing interest in the application of discourse analysis to the study of religion (see Hjelm 2014; Johnston and von Stuckrad 2021; Wijsen 2021; Wijsen and von Stuckrad 2016).

2 Non-formal education here can be defined as the organized educational activity outside the established formal system—whether operating separately or as an important feature of some broader activity—that is intended to serve identifiable learning clienteles and learning objectives. The distinction between formal and informal education is largely administrative. Formal education is linked with schools and training institutions; non-formal is linked with community groups and other organizations; and informal covers what is left, e.g., interactions with friends, family, and work colleagues (Schweitzer et al. 2019).

3 In some ways, he intended it to be independent of the church when he called it "civil", and he similarly intended it to be independent of the ruling government when he called it "religion" (Bellah and Hammond 1980).

4 According to Wuthnow, both civil religion and nationalism serve as belief systems that give the collective identity, meaning, and purpose. Both explain how the group views itself as well as its illustrative past and desired future. The key definition of "who belongs to the nation and who does not" is presented in both attempts to arouse feelings of community belonging and civic loyalty (Wuthnow 1994, p. 131).

5 When a particular religious organization controls civil religion in a nation, it leads to three main problems. Firstly, it creates challenges for the civil and religious liberties of minorities in the country, as demonstrated by the persecution of Protestants in Spain and Christians in Ceylon. Secondly, it raises questions about the national loyalties of religious minorities and puts undue pressure on them. For instance, in medieval Europe, Jews were often considered disloyal citizens, as were Protestants in France before the revolution and Catholics in post-Elizabethan England.

6 See for the further critics from the parliament and responses of the ISN's president Murat Türkmen: Parliamentary Committee of Inquiry into undesired influence on social and religious organizations in the Netherlands (POCOB) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mR9J341M51U (accessed on: 19 May 2021).

7 To see the arguments of the debates between the Netherlands and Turkey (see NRC 2022).

8 A few days before Friday, the sermons are shared as four differen versions—Turkish, Dutch, Dutch summary, and (since 2022) Arabic—on the ISN's website. The sermons are first written in Turkish and then translated into Dutch (by Ahmed Bulut (specialist in religious translations at the ISN)) and Arabic. However, these translations are sometimes not in the form of one-to-one translations (please see 16th note). Mostly, the sermons are read aloud by the imams in Turkish. In cases where the imam knows Dutch at a certain level, a short summary in Dutch is read aloud at the end of the sermon (Gürlesin 2019). For the sermons published since the beginning of 2017, see: https://diyanet.nl/cuma-hutbeleri/ (accessed on: 3 October 2021).

9 CDA does not claim to be able to adopt an objective, socially neutral analytical position, in contrast to other forms of discourse and conversation analysis. CDA practitioners do in fact argue that such apparent political indifference eventually contributes to preserving an unjust status quo. The emancipatory, socially critical method of CDA aligns itself with individuals who experience political and social injustice (Wodak et al. 2009).

10 Considering that there are 52 weeks in a year, this number should have been 312 in 6 years. Since the mosques are closed within the framework of the COVID-19 measures, the sermon broadcast was paused for a period of 2 weeks (between 20 March 2020 – 27 April 2020).

11 For information about mosques affiliated with the ISN, see: https://diyanet.nl/hizmetlerimiz/subelerimiz/sube-cami-adresleri/ (accessed on 6 May 2021).

12 For the sermons published since the beginning of 2017, see: https://diyanet.nl/cuma-hutbeleri/ (accessed on 5 April 2021).

13 Differences between the Turkish and Dutch versions of the sermons are evident, and this analysis will attempt to highlight them in subsequent sections. Given that the primary language of the sermons is Turkish, the focus of this discourse analysis will be on that language.

14 In mosques where Turkish is the predominant language, the inclusion of Arabic parts in the Friday sermons is significant in fostering a sense of unity (umma) with other Muslim ethnic groups who do not speak Turkish.

15 The author of this article personally translated all excerpts from the ISN sermons into English.

16 As previously mentioned, there are significant differences between the Turkish text and its Dutch translation. The Dutch translation of the aforementioned passage reads as follows: "In de loop van de geschiedenis zijn sommige talen verloren gegaan en dat is erg jammer" (In the course of history, some languages have been lost, and that is very unfortunate). The emphasis on assimilation seems to have been removed in the Dutch translation.

[17] Waṭan—which, in Arabic, means the place of one's birth—can be translated as "homeland" in English. But this translation does not entirely reflect the implied meaning of the word in the Turkish language. In English, "homeland" refers to the territory of the nation-state, but in Turkish, waṭan occupies a unique predominating status in political discourse. It refers not only to the national territory but also to major political and legal concepts derived from the word waṭan, including citizen (vatandaş), patriotism (vatanseverlik), heimatlos (vatansız), high treason (vatana ihanet), and traitor to homeland (vatan haini) (Özkan 2012).

[18] The 2019 Turkish offensive into northeastern Syria, codenamed Operation Peace Spring (Turkish: Barış Pınarı Harekâtı) by Turkey, was a cross-border military operation conducted by the Turkish Armed Forces (TSK) and the Syrian National Army (SNA) against the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) and later Syrian Arab Army (SAA) in northern Syria.

[19] This part of the sermon is only in the Turkish text; it is not included in the Dutch translation.

[20] In the sermons analyzed in this study, the term "Nederlands" (Hollanda) appears 378 times. However, it was found that in the majority of these instances (specifically 306 times), the term is mentioned at the end of the sermon to indicate that it was prepared by the ISN in the form of "Hollanda Diyanet Vakfı". Since this portion is not recited during the sermonzengin, it was excluded from the analysis conducted in this study.

[21] The July 15th coup attempt in Turkey and its commemoration has become integrated into the new calendric method in both Turkey and the Netherlands. This phenomenon is not new, as Zengin (2008) found in his study of Friday sermons during the Second Constitutional Monarchy period of the Ottoman Empire (1908–1920) that the content of sermons was strongly influenced by the Islamic calendar, with important seasons, months, days, and nights shaping the subjects addressed. This tradition continued throughout the 20th century and into the present day, with the calendric method remaining a significant factor in determining the content of sermons.

[22] In the aftermath of the coup attempt of 15 July 2016, President Erdoğan launched a purge against Fethullah Gülen's followers. The government declared a state of emergency and dismissed or suspended more than 130,000 civil servants from their jobs, arrested or imprisoned more than 80.000 citizens, and closed more than 1.500 non-governmental organizations (NGOs) for alleged ties to Gülen and his movement. As part of this operation, the Gülen movement was designated by the Turkish government as the 'Fethullahist Terrorist Organisation' ('FETO').

[23] The sermon titles for the week of July 15 in the last six years of the PRA were selected as follows: 2022, "Victory of Unity and Togetherness"; 2021, "We Witness Loyalty, Courage and Martyrdom Against Betrayal"; 2020, "July 15 and Spirit of Unity"; 2019, "Commemoration of July 15 and Understanding the Betrayal"; 2018, "Rebirth of a Nation"; and 2017, "Resistance Witnessed by the Sala: July 15". To access the sermons from the past five years in various languages, please visit the PRA's sermon archive at https://dinhizmetleri.diyanet.gov.tr/kategoriler/yayinlarimiz/hutbeler/hutbe-ar%C5%9Fivi (accessed on: 21 May 2021).

[24] *Taḳiyya* is a practice in Islam whereby one conceals their religious beliefs and refrains from performing their regular religious duties when faced with a threat of harm or death. This practice can be employed to protect either an individual or a community, and its usage and interpretation may vary across different Islamic sects. For further insight, refer to the work of Strothmann and Djebli (2012) on this topic.

[25] The nation's failure to uphold its ideals can be criticized using civil religion. Martin Luther King Jr., for instance, used the language of civil religion to urge the United States to improve and become a more racially equal society.

[26] It would be advantageous for religious scholars who study multiple identities or diverse allegiances in multicultural cultures to link CDA and dialogical self theory (DST) (see Wijsen 2021).

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