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Zusammenfassung der Dissertation:

## **INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE BETWEEN WESTERN AND MUSLIM COUNTRIES:**

### **AN ANALYSIS OF THE ROLE(S) OF INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE IN THE FOREIGN CULTURAL POLICY OF IRAN AND GERMANY TOWARDS EACH OTHER BETWEEN 1998 AND 2013**

Despite the vast amount of research on the issue of intercultural dialogue, little is known about its role in the foreign cultural policy of so-called Muslim and Western countries. Iran and Germany are two examples which have had a relationship for a long time. There is a general view that their cultural relations are completely dependent on political tensions (issues like Iran's nuclear energy program) and political changes (like the change of Iranian presidents from reformist Khatami to a hardliner Ahmadinejad). Cancellation of some Iranian-German cultural events (like the visit of the *Staatskapelle Berlin* orchestra in August 2015 to Teheran) strengthens this hypothesis. However, the hypothesis is challenged when one looks at the huge amount of cultural and academic cooperation that has been implemented between Iran and Germany under the discourses of intercultural dialogue: the *European-Islamic cultural dialogue* of Germany, the *interfaith dialogue* and *dialogue among civilizations* of Iran. If the cultural relationship between the two countries were completely or primarily dependent on political tensions, it would have been difficult to implement so many activities under these discourses in the last two decades. It seems that there are potentials and opportunities in intercultural dialogue which allow both countries to keep their cultural relations, despite political tensions. Hence this study investigates the actors, aims and activities under the different discourses of intercultural dialogue, from 1998 to 2013. The research is intended to identify what the role(s) of intercultural dialogue in the foreign cultural policy of Iran and Germany towards each other is, and why.

To reach the goal of this study, the structure of the foreign cultural policy of Iran and Germany and different institutions that implement foreign cultural activities are analyzed. Because of the novelty of the issue of intercultural dialogue in the context of foreign cultural policy, there is no established methodological and theoretical framework to guide the study. Moreover, to analyze such an issue, it was necessary to work on information from the two different contexts of Iran and Germany. It was also expected that studying published texts on the issue would not be enough and there would be a need to access sources beyond them. Consequently, this study applies the qualitative method of grounded theory, firstly, to develop a theoretical discussion from evidence in the field study of Iran and Germany, and secondly to go beyond the published texts and access the views of different individuals who have been involved in the implementation of intercultural dialogue activities. Texts and informal conversations in the first stages of the study are initially coded and used to select the main discourses and actors of intercultural dialogue in both countries. At a later stage these codes are then used in the context of interviews to create focused and axial codes. Because the individuals who encounter intercultural dialogue vary, different groups are interviewed in the study. They are: diplomats, high-ranking officials, members of staff, and

informed individuals (number of interviewees: 81). The relevant activities of the cultural section of the German embassy in Iran, the Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst (DAAD), Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen (ifa), and the Goethe Institute, as well as relevant activities of Iran's *Rayzani* in Germany (the branch office of the Organization of Islamic Culture and Relations) and the International Center for Dialogue among Civilizations (ICDAC) are explored in detail. At least 200 texts in Farsi from the Iranian side and 150 texts in German from the German side are analyzed, including annual reports, budget bills, bulletins, legal statements and regulations.

The main argument of the study is that intercultural dialogue has played a supplemental role in the foreign cultural policy of Germany and Iran towards each other, but in different ways. It created an "open door" for German actors to continue implementing cultural activities with Iranian partners, even in difficult times. It likewise created an open door for Iranian actors to assist in Germany's cultural projects. Why intercultural dialogue played a supplemental role in the foreign cultural policy of Iran and Germany differently, is because there are differences between the structure of the foreign cultural policy of Iran and Germany; in the organizational efficiency of their respective cultural actors; as well as in their political considerations. This finding illustrates that although the cultural relationship between Iran and Germany has been affected by political tensions, it has been influenced by apolitical factors (organizational efficiency and the integrated or dual structure of their foreign cultural policy) too.

By using grounded theory, this study creates a fresh and deeper understanding of the phenomena of intercultural dialogue. The main argument of the study is supported by including four main characteristics of intercultural dialogue activities between Iran and Germany from 1998 to 2013, as follows: firstly, German actors have played a more active role in implementing intercultural dialogue than Iranian actors; secondly, Iranian actors have mostly had a tendency to accompany (more passively) intercultural dialogue; thirdly, there have been some advanced and new forms of intercultural dialogue which have not been reflected in any study on intercultural dialogue up to now; fourthly, there has been a high number of intercultural dialogue activities in the academic field.

This study is relevant to current arguments which emphasize a need for intercultural dialogue between Muslim and Western countries as a contribution to peace. It suggests that conducting intercultural dialogue does not depend merely on political tensions between them, but also on their cultural infrastructures, the structure of their foreign cultural policy, and their organizational efficiencies.