

## *Is Multikulti Dead? Angela Merkel and Immigration Politics in Germany*

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**Abstract:** On October 16, 2010, Angela Merkel declared in a speech to her fellow Christian Democratic Union (CDU) party members that Germany's policy of multiculturalism was a failure, setting off a firestorm of controversy both in Germany and worldwide. Her speech marked an uncharacteristically bold move for the cautious, calculating Merkel. This case explores the environment in Germany when her speech occurred and addresses the factors that contributed to the charged debate surrounding immigration in Germany in the months leading up to her speech. The case also discusses the wave of Islamophobia in Europe and how Islamophobia relates to the larger debate on immigration in Germany. This case focuses on how Merkel should have approached the immigration debate since many immigrants struggle to assimilate into German society and a significant portion of the German population opposes further immigration, while at the same time Germany faces an acute labor shortage. The case also poses the question of how democratic leaders should balance liberal values of protecting basic rights of all individuals with the need to appease a majority who would like to restrict basic rights for a minority population.

### **Introduction**

On October 16, 2010, Angela Merkel, the Chancellor of Germany, addressed a gathering of youth members of her party, the center-right Christian Democratic Union (CDU), and declared that multiculturalism in Germany had "utterly failed." "The notion," Merkel said, "that we would live next to one another and be happy about one another has not worked" (BBC Europe 2010). Merkel later went on to emphasize the importance of integration: immigrants must obey the law as written in Germany's constitution while also making fluency in the German language a priority. Immigrants, in Merkel's words, must "accept the country's cultural norms" (Hewitt 2010). Many observers interpreted Merkel's statements as her admission that immigrants were not doing enough to integrate into German society.

Merkel's remarks on immigration set off a firestorm of controversy, both within Germany and across the globe. Headline news outlets, from Germany's *Der Spiegel* to Britain's *The Guardian* to America's own CNN, continually highlighted Merkel's statement that multiculturalism had failed and debated its merits. Most commentators, however, simply were shocked that the argument had come from Merkel, since such bold and iconoclastic statements were uncharacteristic of the cautious and guarded Merkel.

Since her entry into the political scene after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, Merkel has maintained a muted and often bland public persona. A chemist originally from East Germany, Merkel was an outsider to the traditional German political scene. When she became both the first female and East German Chancellor of Germany in 2005, Merkel broke with the previous Chancellors' "politics of macho" and their polarizing and provocative position taking (Packer 2014). In contrast to the previous Chancellors, Merkel is "reserved, rational, and uninspiring" in the political realm with a "cautious political style" (Hung 2012). She is, in the words of popular German author Daniel Kehlmann, an "aloof pragmatist of power" (Kehlmann 2016). Those close to her attribute her quiet, careful politics to her background as a chemist, as well as to her early life in East Germany, where the government suppressed dissident political views. As one of her East German friends said, Merkel is "somebody like a chess player... where she thinks things over more carefully and is always a few moves ahead of a competitor" (Packer 2014). In the political sphere, Merkel favors supporting moderate, centrist policies and achieving broad consensus instead of making bold political statements, so much so that German journalists find Merkel nearly impossible to cover (Packer 2014). Merkel's speech on immigration thus seemed very out of character, particularly because it was devoid of her usual niceties and represented a lurch to the political Right. Foreign and domestic observers alike speculated why Merkel broke with her cautious politics to take such a bold stance.

This controversial speech of Merkel's occurred within the context of rising anti-immigration sentiments among the population in Germany, epitomized by the release of German politician and economist Thilo Sarrazin's book *Deutschland Schafft Sich Ab* (Germany Does Away with Itself), which disparaged Turkish and Arab immigrants in Germany, in the autumn of 2010. Up until her speech, the German government largely ignored these anxieties surrounding immigration felt by large segments of the German population, creating a chasm between the political system and much of society. This led to a crisis between state and society, as the position of Merkel's government did not reflect or acknowledge some of the anti-immigration viewpoints espoused at the time. Merkel's speech thus marked her attempt to respond to the anti-immigration sentiments of some segments of the German population.

When Merkel made this speech, however, she confronted a dilemma. As Chancellor, Merkel is obligated to work to preserve every person's basic rights, while at the same time Merkel also needs to represent the will of the people – in other words, the majority. In the case of Germany's immigration debate in 2010, these duties came directly into conflict, particularly in terms of Muslim immigrants from Turkey and North Africa, as anti-immigration advocates often made racist and Islamophobic statements. Germany's Nazi past also complicated this dilemma. Since the aftermath of World War II, one of the predominant goals of the German government has been to provide a check to overtly nationalist and radical right groups. In the immigration debate of 2010, some of these groups began taking advantage of the anti-immigration sentiment of some segments of the population. This spurred the dilemma of how Merkel – as well as other political leaders – should balance liberal values, which support equal rights for all individuals, and democracy, which gives power to the majority, when the majority is against protecting the rights of a minority. How should Merkel have balanced these two conflicting duties when responding to Germany's immigration crisis in 2010?

### **Immigration in Germany in Historical Context**

Until recently, most Germans asserted that "Deutschland ist kein Einwanderungsland" (Germany is not a country of immigration). Unlike the United States, the German national

identity was – and remains – tied to ethnicity (Mounk 2014). The roots of this national identity lie in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, where nationalism based on exclusion of those who were not ethnically German helped spur German unification in 1871. Germany’s minimal experience in assimilating foreigners after unification also influenced the development of its national identity, since it did not possess a colonial empire to the same degree as its European counterparts (Boyes 2010). While this attitude towards a blood-based national identity climaxed particularly during the Nazi regime, some politicians still regularly claim that Germany is not a country of immigration and some ethnic Germans are still reluctant to embrace a broader national identity in which immigrants can fit.<sup>1</sup> In the words of Turkish-German politician Cem Ozdemir, “true” Germans remain those with ethnic or historical backgrounds in Germany, while others are immigrants with a German passport (Ozdemir 2006, 227). This idea is reflected by the fact that Germany previously had some of the most stringent immigration laws in Europe. These laws were based firmly in *jus sanguinis*, or citizenship by blood, rather than *jus soli*, or citizenship by birth in the state’s territory. For most of Germany’s post-war history, immigration did not fit in with the political discourse fostered by political elites and the population at large.

Despite the insistence that it was not a country of immigration, in reality, Germany has a fifty-year history with large-scale immigration. Following the post-war *Wirtschaftswunder* (economic miracle) and the construction of the Berlin Wall, West Germany faced an acute labor shortage in the 1950s and 1960s. Workers from Eastern Germany could no longer fill factories in West Germany. To attempt to solve this problem, West Germany entered into formal agreements with countries in southern Europe, including Greece, Italy, Portugal, and the former Yugoslavia, which granted short-term contracts to workers from these countries to work in German factories. Germany also brought workers from Turkey, Tunisia, and Morocco, with the majority of these economic migrants coming from poorer and more religiously conservative areas in the Anatolian region of Turkey (Sargent and Erikson 2014, 45). These migrants fueled Germany’s economic boom. While these contracts were initially short-term, Germany eventually expanded the length of the contracts, as training new workers every few years became an economic burden. Despite the lengthier contracts, Germans still operated under the assumption that the *Gastarbeiter* (guest workers) were temporary residents and would know when to return to their countries of origin (45). While many workers did return home, nearly half of Turkish workers stayed in Germany and brought their families to join them, presenting Germany with a dilemma in how to integrate them. As the German author Max Frisch stated, “[Germans] asked for workers, but in the end human beings came” (Gorlach 2015).

### ***Multikulti and its Legacies***

In the 1980s, the German government realized that these Turkish immigrants were not returning home and instead were staying in Germany. Confronted with declining birthrates of ethnic Germans and a sizable pool of permanent residents, Germany pursued a policy of *Multikulti* in order to incorporate immigrants into German society. The government encouraged ethnic and religious communities to coexist alongside German communities, or, in Merkel’s

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<sup>1</sup> It is important to note that the endurance of an ethnically-based national identity in Germany – both in the law and in practice – is partly tied to post-World War II and Cold War realities. Following the end of World War II, ethnic Germans who were scattered across Europe began confronting discrimination and persecution, and this national identity allowed them to immigrate to Germany relatively easily. Similarly, ethnic Germans in communist bloc countries – particularly in East Germany – also could make attempts to immigrate to West Germany based on this identity. See Howard (2008).

terms “live happily side by side” (Boyes 2010). Yet this policy was relatively superficial. While promoting coexistence, Germany did not grant immigrants citizenship. Instead, they received the “right to reside” in Germany (Sargent and Erikson 2014, 45). Under this policy, immigrants could not vote in certain elections, nor could they become civil servants and were therefore unable to enter the law enforcement, government, and education sectors (Häusler 2012, 41). These structural limitations were the result of a division in policy among the center-right and center-left parties. Center-right parties like the CDU believed in citizenship as a reward for successful integration, whereas center-left parties like the Social Democratic Party (SPD) and the Green Party viewed the granting of citizenship as a prerequisite for integration into German society (Hafez 2014, 81). The center-right view predominated, leaving many immigrants in limbo. Without access to full citizenship, many immigrants had second-class status in Germany, fostering tensions on both sides. Instead of living happily side by side, immigrants often erected “parallel economies” and lived separately in ethnic or cultural enclaves (Boyes 2010). On the one hand, ethnic Germans saw immigrants, particularly those of Turkish origin, as a burden on the state, since many were poor and uneducated and did not fully assimilate into German society. Many Germans also held perceptions of insurmountable cultural differences between Turks and Germans: former Chancellor Helmut Schmidt claimed that “it was a mistake” to invite Turkish *Gastarbeiter* to work in German factories (Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung 2004). On the other hand, immigrants resented the state because of the difficulties in attaining citizenship in Germany, as well as because of the dearth of opportunities that accompanied the status of not holding citizenship.

In 2000, Germany overhauled its immigration and citizenship laws. International pressure, particularly from the Council of Europe and the European Court of Justice, as well as evolving demographic realities in terms of a higher immigrant population, demonstrated the necessity for modernization of Germany’s “antiquated” immigration and citizenship laws (Howard 2008). Germany also confronted heightened scrutiny from international actors in its treatment of immigrants due to its Nazi past. Facing a crisis of democratic legitimacy from the fact that a significant part of the population could not vote, the SPD-Green coalition in Germany’s parliament enacted the Nationality Act in 2000, which reduced the number of years required for naturalization from fifteen to eight years and allowed native-born children of foreigners to become German citizens by birth (Ozdemir 2006; 223; Sargent and Erikson 2014, 46). The Nationality Act required fluency in the German language, passing a citizenship test, and possessing economic independence for naturalization. The Nationality Act also banned dual citizenship for non-EU citizens, forcing children of immigrants to choose their national identity by age 23 (Ozdemir 2006, 224). Thus, despite altering its citizenship policy to *jus soli*, restrictions remained in Germany, which continue to disproportionately affect immigrants from outside Europe, especially Turkey and North Africa. Indeed, 55% of Muslims in Germany, of which Turks and North Africans constitute a significant part, still lack German citizenship and continue to languish in limbo (Hafez 2014, 81). As Howard (2008) notes, these restrictions were, in fact, a result of compromises between the SPD-Green coalition and the CDU, which had mobilized anti-immigration forces in 1999 to prevent the realization of some of the more radical suggestions of the SPD-Green coalition and coopted the discourse of far-right groups (58). This suggests that a sizable population that opposes or has anxieties about immigration still exists in Germany.

In 2005, the German government also enacted the Immigration Act, which centralized and standardized integration measures for immigrants (Williams 2014, 61). To comply with

European Union (EU) standards, Germany also incorporated policies allowing for freer movement of immigrant workers who have an EU Blue Card, which is the work and residence permit for non-EU nationals (Jacoby 2011). Despite these official policies, however, the responsibility for integration into German society often continued to fall almost exclusively on the immigrants themselves.

The Nationality Act and the Immigration Act signaled a shift in the official German approach to immigration. This shift can be seen in the fact that all four major parties now indicate, however reluctantly, that Germany is a country of immigration in their party manifestos (Williams 2014, 73). At the same time, the judiciary began ruling in favor in cases involving Islam, which is often considered to be an issue of immigration since many immigrants to Germany are Muslim. Time after time, the courts had a positive interpretation of religious freedom, such as when a court in Baden-Württemberg ruled that a ban on headscarves in schools was unjust if Christian nuns were allowed to wear habits (Hafez 2014, 44). The Migrant Integration Policy Index, which analyzes integration policies in host countries based on 167 policy indicators, reported a consistently improving trend in Germany (Williams 2014, 74).<sup>2</sup>

Despite this positive trend in the law, conservative politicians and judges still emphasize the *Leitkultur* (guiding culture) and argue that immigrants must adhere to this culture. Thus, most conservatives are now willing to accept outsiders in the community but only within the terms of Germany's "traditional" culture (Hafez 2014, 79). Furthermore, most of these positive developments in the law occurred as a result of elite politics rather than as a joint effort of the government and the population (Howard 2008, 58). Thus, many Germans continue to have anxieties about immigration and often hold stereotypical views of immigrants. For example, some Germans associate immigrants with arranged marriages, honor killings, the drug trade, and radical Islamists and express over-inflated concerns about these issues. For their part, many immigrants also continued to live in parallel societies, heightening existing anxieties about immigration. This tension between the state's approach to immigrants and underlying political opinion bubbled to the surface in 2010.

### **Immigration in Germany in 2010**

As of 2013, Germany has the largest foreign-born population in Europe (Jacoby 2011). In 2010, Germany's population included 7 million immigrants, with roughly 4 million Muslims. Turks, the largest immigrant group, constitute 63% of all Muslims in Germany (Jungclaussen 2010). Although Muslims do not constitute the entire immigrant population in Germany, the media represents them as the "quintessential immigrant" in Germany, particularly those of Turkish origin.<sup>3</sup> Relations between the 7 million Germans of immigrant background, especially Muslims, and ethnic Germans came to a head in the late 2000s as anti-immigration sentiment became intertwined with Islamophobia in Germany. In other words, fear of a "Muslim invasion" in Germany spurred anti-immigration views among various segments of the population. EU negotiations with Turkey for its admittance into the EU, which would allow Turks to immigrate more freely to EU countries, also contributed to fears of Muslim immigration. This fear arose

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<sup>2</sup> The Migration Policy Index focuses on eight policy areas: labor market mobility, family reunion, education, political participation, long-term residence, access to nationality, anti-discrimination, and health. See [www.mipex.edu/methodology](http://www.mipex.edu/methodology).

<sup>3</sup> For example, news pieces on immigrants often feature the stereotypical image of a Muslim woman wearing a headscarf, holding the hands of multiple young children.

from concerns about terrorism, a crises in national identity, and economic difficulties, which coalesced in the late 2000s and stoked anxieties and fears among the German population.

The 9/11 attacks in the United States, the Iraq War, and the terrorist bombings in Madrid in 2004 and in London in 2005 led many Germans to view Muslims in Germany with increasing suspicion. The assassination by an Islamist of the Dutch filmmaker Theo van Gogh, who had made a film criticizing Islam's treatment of women, also stoked the fires of Islamophobia, as many began to fear retaliation from Muslims for not adequately supporting Islam (Häusler 2012, 40). As a result, surveillance of Muslims increased in Germany (Hafez 2014, 68). While this surveillance serves as an example of racial or religious profiling, various mosques in Germany were, in fact, centers of radicalization. The former Al Quds mosque in Hamburg, the second largest city in Germany, played a role in the inspiration of the 9/11 attacks, and German authorities faced criticism domestically and internationally due to their failure to stop the perpetrators. Authorities also linked the mosque to the radicalization of various jihadists who traveled to training camps on the Afghanistan-Pakistan border in 2009 (The Guardian 2010). The 9/11 attacks thus stoked fears about German-Muslims of immigrant backgrounds. In light of this anxiety surrounding Muslim immigrants, media outlets emphasized instances of violence committed by immigrants, particularly young people. For example, the case of immigrant youths assaulting an elderly man on a subway train in 2007 made waves in German media (Frum 2010). Far-right groups in Germany began to take advantage of people who did not consider themselves racist but had fears about radical Islam, shifting the anti-immigration rhetoric in a more extreme direction (Häusler 2012).

Crises in the German national identity and concerns of economic instability exacerbated the widespread fear of radical Islam. In the face of growing interaction among cultures through immigration and globalization in Germany, Germany's national identity came into question, as it was rooted in a particular "German" ethnicity (Mounk 2014). When immigrants began to permanently settle in Germany, they disturbed the idea that Germany was primarily for those with an ethnic German background. This unsettled the identity of many Germans. Furthermore, long-term stagnation in living standards as well as the worldwide Great Recession caused many Germans to feel even less certain about their futures. For example, incomes in Germany remained flat in real terms between 2001-2010. Economic uncertainty and identity crises intensified fears of radical Islam, leading to a volatile climate surrounding the topic of immigration.

Germans with these grievances also felt that the government was ignoring their concerns, leading them to look to more radical alternatives. For example, in 2010, roughly 66% of Germans felt that the government did not adequately address their concerns about the state of the economy and immigration, and 64.6% thought they could not influence the government, further inciting tensions between segments of the population and the government (Zick, Küpper, and Hövermann 2011, 99). This political powerlessness was a dominant factor in the development of group-based enmity, or hostility towards certain groups in society, particularly Muslims.

Indeed, German attitudes towards Muslim immigrants in the wake of Angela Merkel's speech were relatively negative. More than half of Germans surveyed believed that Germany had too many foreigners, and 20% thought that Germany would be better off if Muslims did not live in Germany (Hafez 2014, 115, 133). According to a study conducted by the Friedrich Ebert Foundation, a German think tank, 30% of Germans believed that immigrants only came for social benefits and were thus a burden to Germany's economy and society (BBC Europe 2010).

Similarly, as of 2010, only 8% of Germans thought that immigrants had integrated well into Germany society (Der Spiegel 2010b).

The Pew Global Attitudes Project also found that 50% of Germans had unfavorable opinions of Muslims, as compared with roughly 25% in Great Britain and the United States. Furthermore, 58% of Germans believed that the government should restrict the practice of Islam (Ansari and Hafez 2012, 9). The last statistic fundamentally contradicts the right to freedom of religion enshrined in Germany's constitution under the *Neutralitätsgebot* (Requirement of Neutrality), which mandates the state to treat all religions in a neutral and tolerant manner. In other words, some Germans favored policies that would restrict Muslims' basic liberties and rights. Scholars identify restrictions on Islam as "liberal Islamophobia." Proponents seek to safeguard liberal values from "creeping sharia [law]," viewing Islam as a threat to the progress of Western civilization (Ansari and Hafez 2012, 21). While some in this movement are blatantly racist, others have concerns regarding Islamist terrorist networks in Germany, as well as certain practices like honor killings, which do exist in Germany. They do not feel as if the German government is addressing these concerns.

In 2010, the status of immigrants, particularly Muslims, in Germany was quite varied. On the one hand, young Muslim immigrants, non-Muslim immigrants, and indigenous non-Muslims have no difference in attitudes towards the preservation of liberties, particularly freedom of religion (Hafez 2014, 101). Extremism among Muslims is thus not higher than in other parts of society. Similarly, 70% of all Muslims in Germany feel a strong connection to Germany, suggesting that they desire to be or already are integrated into German society (195). Of course, this statistic suggests that 30% of Muslims are not. On the other hand, however, Muslim immigrants complain of discrimination two times more than other immigrants in Germany. Fewer Muslim immigrants are also pursuing the naturalization process, with a decline of 16% between 2007 and 2008 (Mühe and Hieroymos 2011, 85). They are thus choosing to remain in Germany without citizenship.

Furthermore, Muslim immigrants face educational and economic problems. In general, 9.6% of immigrants do not have a secondary school diploma compared to 1.5% of ethnic Germans (Der Spiegel 2010b). Children of immigrant backgrounds are also four times less likely to attend university, and almost a third do not have any professional qualifications (Popp, Gezer, and Scheuermann 2011; Westerwelt 2010). This lack of education translates into economic problems. While only 7.5% of ethnic Germans are unemployed, 14.5% of immigrants are unemployed (Der Spiegel 2010b). This holds disproportionately for Muslim immigrants; the areas in larger cities where unemployment is highest corresponds with areas that have higher Muslim populations (Mühe and Hieroymos 2011, 89). For example, in the immigrant-dominated Neukölln neighborhood of Berlin, two thirds of immigrants live on welfare benefits (Der Spiegel 2010c). Muslim Turks, in other words, are the least integrated immigrant group in Germany (Elger, Kniep, and Theile 2009). These educational and economic barriers are in part caused by Germany's structural limitations to integration, but are also due to the parallel societies and ethnic enclaves in which some Turks in Germany live.

Alongside growing anti-immigration and Islamophobic sentiments and Muslim immigrants' integration struggles is the fact that Germany faces an acute labor shortage. Due to the aging population and the declining birthrate in Germany, the workforce is expected to decline by 5 million over the next 15 years (Elliot and Kollwe 2011). Germany currently lacks 400,000 skilled workers, with 70% of businesses having trouble filling vacancies (Westerwelt 2010). This lack of skilled workers costs an estimated \$20 billion a year (Moore 2010). Germany has

attempted to attract highly skilled immigrants to fill these positions, but only a few hundred immigrants have accepted Germany's offer of permanent residence (Jacoby 2011). Furthermore, more immigrants, including Muslims and Turks, are leaving than entering Germany each year. For example, educated young Germans of Turkish background are more likely to emigrate from Germany to Turkey because of better opportunities due to employment discrimination in Germany (Mühe and Hieronymus 2011, 89). Germany's track record on immigration and its entrenched seniority positions that favor ethnic Germans, mainly because of access to German social and professional networks, are a large obstacle to both attracting and retaining talented immigrants and thus avoiding an acute labor shortage (Jacoby 2011). While anti-immigration sentiments are rife in Germany, immigration is, in fact, critical for the continued success of Germany's economy.

### **Angela Merkel and Immigration**

When confronting issues related to immigration, Angela Merkel typically took a middle-of-the-road approach both in her rhetoric and her policy direction since becoming Chancellor. In fact, Germany experienced a gradual entrenchment of "Islamophilic rhetoric" at the executive level after Merkel came to power (Hafez 2014, 59). In other words, Merkel generally supported the position of Germany's immigrants, particularly its Muslims.

Before she became Chancellor, Merkel had endorsed the idea of Germany's *Leitkultur*, Judeo-Christian values as the basis of immigration in Germany. After becoming Chancellor, however, Merkel abandoned this rhetoric and embraced a more moderate position. She lent her support to her interior minister Wolfgang Schäuble when he founded the German Islam Conference in 2006 and asserted that Islam was a part of German society. This conference opened up a dialogue between the government and Muslim community leaders and established a series of summits on issues of immigration and integration. These summits marked a paradigm shift in the German executive's interactions with its Muslim community.

Merkel also supported integration courses for immigrants. These courses were eventually made compulsory for immigrants who had insufficient knowledge of German, yet they established rewards for those who did well, such as reducing the number of years required to become a naturalized citizen (Williams 2014, 68). In policies regarding immigration and beyond immigration, Merkel therefore took a moderate approach, demonstrated by her leading the CDU leftward on issues of immigration while in a coalition with the center-left SPD. Her moderate position on immigration, however, came under fire in the second half of 2010, particularly from the right side of the political spectrum.

### **Thilo Sarrazin and *Deutschland Schafft Sich Ab***

In August 2010, Thilo Sarrazin, a board member of the Deutsche Bundesbank (Germany's central bank), released his book *Deutschland Schafft Sich Ab* (Germany Does Away With Itself), which harshly criticized Germany's immigration policy. Sarrazin's book created a firestorm of controversy and served as a catalyst to a polarized debate regarding immigration—and the immigrants themselves—in Germany. In his book, Sarrazin asserts that African, Turkish, and Arab immigrants are "dumbing down" Germany. He claims that Turks in particular are less intelligent, thus detrimental to the success of Germany, and that it is "a fact" that congenital disabilities are higher in Turkish and Kurdish immigrants due to inbreeding in their "clans" (Hafez 2014, 136). These genetic arguments harken back to Germany's history with Nazi eugenics. He further states that Turkish immigrants are responsible for a large percentage of

crime in Germany (BBC Europe 2010). His book asserts that immigrants have too many children and depend far too much on welfare payments. Immigrants, in Sarrazin's opinion, have only contributed to Germany by participating in the fruit and vegetable trade and producing "new little girls in headscarves" (Evans 2010). Politicians, including Angela Merkel, were quick to condemn Sarrazin and call for his resignation from the board of the Bundesbank (Hafez 2014, 62). Yet some of the German population supported his book, indicating the divide between the population and the government.

*Deutschland Schafft Sich Ab* became one of the largest-selling titles in post-war Germany; in fact, it was the bestselling book on politics by a German author in a decade (Paterson 2011). It sold out multiple times in the months following its release in August, and Sarrazin claimed that most of the letters he received were of "support and congratulations" (Der Spiegel 2010c). Indeed, Sarrazin struck at the heart of the tensions regarding immigration. Given its past with Nazism, Germany has a tradition of suppressing xenophobic and racist rhetoric; it is a very "politically correct" country. Sarrazin made a clear break with this precedent, particularly due to his status as a "German everyman." Sarrazin had previously been an executive at Deutsche Bahn and was Berlin's finance minister. He was also a member of the center-left SPD rather than a far-right fringe movement. Sarrazin, in other words, made Islamophobia more acceptable to express in German society.

Sarrazin's book also further divided German politicians. The SPD, the political party to which Sarrazin belonged, attempted to expel him, but sympathetic members prevented his expulsion (Hafez 2014, 87). The President of Germany in 2010, Christian Wulff, symbolically declared that Islam belonged to German culture on October 3rd, the date of German reunification. The presidency in Germany is a ceremonial post and is intended to be above partisan politics, with the president acting as the voice of morality in Germany. Thus, Wulff's speech attempted to bridge the gap between Muslim immigrants and wider German society. However, 66% of the German population disagreed with Wulff's speech, declaring that while Germany should foster religious freedom, Germany should avoid equating Islam with Christianity, the "traditional" religion of Germany (Der Spiegel 2010c). Politicians from other political parties, as well as from the CDU, asserted that Wulff's speech contradicted Germany's "Judeo-Christian traditions." For example, Joachim Herrmann, the interior minister in 2010, claimed that, "Germany [did] not want to integrate Islam but to retain its own cultural identity" (Hewitt 2010). Attempts at conciliation thus received a fair amount of criticism in the political sphere.

Angela Merkel's CDU and its sister party in Bavaria, the CSU, had a varied reaction towards the Sarrazin-fueled immigration debate, as demonstrated by party members' responses to Wulff's speech. Labor minister Ursula von der Leyen agreed with Wulff, claiming that Germany needed to lower, not raise, its barriers of entry for foreign workers due to the labor shortage in Germany. Von der Leyen was nearly alone in this sentiment, however, as most members denounced those that were accommodating to Islam (Hafez 2014, 84). Horst Seehofer, the chairman of the CSU and Minister-President of Bavaria, embodied this side of the debate. Seehofer stated that *Multikulti* was dead and echoed Sarrazin in believing that Germany should no longer allow Turks and Arabs to move to Germany because they cannot adequately integrate into German society (Ansari and Hafez 2012, 11). In Seehofer's words, if Germany did not curb immigration, it risked becoming "the world's welfare office" (Der Spiegel 2010a). Clearly, Sarrazin's arguments had not only inflamed anxieties among the broader population but also permeated the political sphere in Germany.

Rene Stadtkewitz, a former CDU parliamentarian expelled for inviting anti-Islamic Dutch politician Geert Wilders to speak in Berlin, also formed the Freedom Party in the months after Sarrazin's book release. The Freedom Party fundamentally opposed so-called "Islamic values," claiming that they stood in opposition to the Western values that characterize Germany (Der Spiegel 2010d). Wilders' idea that Europeans "do not deserve to become strangers in [their] own land" had entered German political discourse with the founding of the Freedom Party (Hewitt 2010). Within this context, Seehofer asserted the widespread belief that Parliament – and Merkel – needed to respond to a significant segment of the population's anxieties about immigration.

Merkel thus faced a precarious situation in approaching Germany's immigration debate. Merkel's remarks that seemed too conciliatory towards Muslim immigrants were often met with criticism, both among the population and within her own party. Given her leftward shift and more moderate take on many policy issues, many members of her party had been already questioning if she was conservative enough to be the leader of the CDU. The CDU was also trailing far behind in the polls due to fears of immigration and about the economy in light of the Great Recession, which had negative implications for the upcoming local elections in March 2011 (Moore 2010). In fact, Merkel's approval ratings reached a historic low in July 2010, with only 43% of the German population supporting her (Deutsche Welle 2010a). Merkel needed to recapture support both for her party and for herself within her party if she were to continue as the leader of the CDU.

Appealing to fears of Islam and immigration was an option that could potentially allow Merkel to recapture support for herself within her party and for her party among the population, especially since a considerable portion of the German population with these views felt alienated from the government. With instances of violence and failed assimilation, these Germans' fears were certainly not unfounded. By adopting an anti-immigrant position, Merkel could coopt the discourse of Sarrazin and growing numbers of far-right groups.

However, embracing anti-Islamic rhetoric risked allowing far-right and nationalist rhetoric to become appropriate within the mainstream political discourse, thereby going against a founding principle of post-war Germany. Taking such a position could also feed into the climate of anxiety and uncertainty in Germany at the time. Furthermore, taking an anti-immigrant position could hinder Germany's attempt to recruit skilled immigrant labor in order to alleviate its population decline and labor shortage. As one of the world's biggest exporters, such a position posed a threat to Germany's economy. The progress that the government and courts had made in assimilating immigrants also could be damaged. Anti-immigrant rhetoric would hurt Germany's liberal foundation, which ensures protection of basic rights, as well. In approaching the immigration debate in Germany, Merkel faced the classic dilemma all democratic leaders face: to defend Germany's liberal foundation or cater to, in Alexis de Tocqueville's words, the "tyranny of the majority" in order to shore up support.

## Epilogue

On October 16, 2010, Angela Merkel declared that *Multikulti* was dead in a speech to the CDU's youth party members, which served as her attempt to reshape the immigration debate raging in Germany. While she initially tried to take a middle-of-the-road approach in the debate by reiterating President Wulff's statements that Muslims belong to Germany, her uncharacteristically bold statements about multiculturalism in her speech overshadowed her favorable comments about Muslims and signaled that she would now be taking a less moderate approach to immigration. Merkel seemed to sacrifice supporting the rights of all those in

Germany and took the side of the majority by being critical of the minority, that is, of immigrants. In the words of *Der Spiegel*, Merkel “raised the temperature” on an already inflammatory debate on immigration with her speech (Der Spiegel 2010b).

Her speech spurred worldwide controversy, with political leaders and news outlets either strongly condemning or enthusiastically supporting her statements. Within Germany, left-wing politicians quickly criticized her statements. The leftist Green Party leadership claimed that Merkel was looking for a scapegoat in an attempt to regain votes, and the center-left SPD declared that Merkel had failed to be courageous enough to contradict Horst Seehofer and his critical comments of Muslims. Most conservatives, however, supported Merkel’s approach, declaring that immigrants must accept the traditions of Germany. Other commentators claimed that she was right in stating that Germany’s policy of multiculturalism, in which multiple cultures live side by side, had failed, opening an opportunity for Germany to modify its policy. Across Europe, political leaders, such as David Cameron and Nicolas Sarkozy, made speeches that echoed Merkel’s claim that multiculturalism had failed in their own countries. Merkel’s speech thus became a cornerstone not only in Germany’s but also in Europe’s debate on immigration.

Following her speech, the CDU introduced legislation that contained measures intended to better integrate immigrants into German society. Among these measures are German language courses, policies to prevent forced marriages, and a relaxation on the requirements to transfer foreign degrees, which allows immigrants to get jobs in their fields of expertise (Deutsche Welle 2010b). The immigration debate, however, raged on, especially in light of comments by some members of Merkel’s party. Schäuble, her former interior minister and current finance minister, stated in 2011 that too many *Gastarbeiter* had come to Germany, and her interior minister from 2011-2014, Hans-Peter Friedrich, even asserted in his first week as minister that Islam is not and will never be a part of German society. Thus, Merkel’s speech neither fully succeeded in addressing the concerns of the anti-immigration segments of the population or fully supporting the position of immigrants in Germany’s immigration debate.

While Merkel broke with her cautious, careful politics and catered to the anti-immigrant public with her speech in October 2010, she subsequently retreated from this policy, particularly during the ongoing European refugee crisis beginning in 2015. As political leaders across Europe fell victim to nationalist, far-right, and anti-immigrant discourse and worked to close their borders to desperate refugees and migrants, Merkel remained steadfast in her support of the refugees and migrants, becoming, in the words of Karl Vick for *Time Magazine*, “the Chancellor of the Free World” (Vick 2015). Yet avoiding pandering to the majority and instead embracing liberal values also proved controversial for Merkel. Merkel continues to confront the ever-present dilemma between representing the will of the majority and upholding liberal values for all people, particularly in terms of immigration.

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