



Written by [James Heiser](#) on December 7, 2010

Germans Feel Threatened by Islam

Are Germans less tolerant of Islam than the citizens of other European nations? That is the interpretation which some members of the press and adherents of Islam are trying to place on a recent study.

For example, [Kirsten Grieshaber of the Associated Press](#) declared:



Germans are less tolerant of Muslims than their western European neighbors and feel threatened by Islam — largely due to lack of contact with them, according to a survey released Thursday.

Only 34% of Germans in the west of the country and 26% in eastern Germany think positively of Muslims, according to a poll by the University of Muenster. In comparison, 62% of Dutch, 56% of French, 55% of Danes and 47% of Portuguese hold positive attitudes on Muslims.

The survey polled 1,000 people in each country and each part of Germany. The margin of error was plus or minus three percent.

According to the poll results, less than 30% of Germans in the west of the country favor allowing new mosques to be built. In the east, less than 20% are in favor. By contrast, more than half of the population in Denmark and two-thirds in France, the Netherlands and Portugal approve of building new mosques.

Granting that the poll is actually an accurate measure of public opinion, it is not unreasonable to ask whether the interpretation that is being offered is accurate. The assertion that Germans have less contact with Muslims than do the Danes or the Dutch seems highly unlikely: there are [3.2 million Muslims in Germany](#), second only to France in terms of resident adherents of Islam. Actually, for several decades the German government actively solicited Turkish workers to come and work in Germany, albeit on a temporary (two-year) basis. An article at [TurkishWeekly.net](#) ("[Turks in Germany](#)") describes the result of such "temporary" immigration:

However, there were also Turkish people who went back to Turkey during times when the German economy went down.... 1973 is a very important year, as Germany stopped the recruitment of foreign workers. During the recession of 1974/75 and 1981-1984, Turkish workers preferred to stay in Germany, due to fear of not to being allowed to come back to Germany. From 1974 on, Turkish workers made increasingly use of family unification as is their right according to the European Convention on Human Rights. Today only one quarter of the people of Turkish origin came to Germany as workers, while 53% immigrated as family members and 17% of the adult Turks were born in Germany. 2.4 million people with Turkish origin now live in Germany, 1.88 million of which have Turkish citizenship and 400,000 applied for German citizenship in order to get legal security and to participate politically. They present the largest foreign



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population in Germany and they live mainly in areas with high industrialization because this is where the first generation found their jobs.

The result of such “temporary” work-related immigration may feel somewhat familiar to Americans; what began as a stop-gap measure to deal with temporary need to fill a gap in the labor force transformed into a wave of immigration, with a largely unassimilated foreign population residing in Germany, with many of the foreigners demonstrating little interest in pursuing a path to citizenship. With Germany’s total population just under 82 million, 3.2 million Muslims are obviously a significant religious minority within the nation’s population, and the 2.4 million Turks make up the overwhelming majority of that Islamic community.

According to the [TurkishWeekly.net](#) article, Germans have proven themselves open to allowing these recent immigrants a certain degree of influence over the broader culture:

As the biggest foreign population, Turkish and people of Turkish origin are strongly shaping the image of most German cities. Döner has become traditional German food. Turkish politicians are campaigning for German and Turkish voters. The Turkish present TV shows, they are in the movies and they win prizes for Germany. During the enthusiastic celebrations of the Football World Cup, Turks supported the German team together with the other Germans. But the public opinion also sees the dark sides. Integration problems, criminality amongst the youth, honor killings and fear of “foreign infiltration”. The ever ongoing debates are either mainly over assimilation versus a Turkish parallel society or a German “leading culture” versus multiculturalism, which reflect these two sides of the medal.

One hardly needs to discuss Germans in terms evocative of the canard of Nazism redux to understand the tension which has come to pass in the wake of an unassimilated Turkish migration. And yet, Grieshaber elected to call upon the ghosts of World War II:

“The differences between Germany and the other countries are downright dramatic when it comes to personal attitudes toward Muslims,” the head of the study, sociologist Detlef Pollack said in a statement. “Among Germans there is a strong feeling of being threatened by Islam.”

Pollack noted the survey was carried out in the summer, before German Chancellor Angela Merkel claimed that multiculturalism had “utterly failed” and before a former member of Germany’s central bank wrote a best-selling book claiming German society was being made “dumber” because of the presence of Muslim immigrants.

Thilo Sarrazin’s book, suggesting that Muslims’ inability, or unwillingness, to speak German may be linked to their DNA, broke a post-Nazi taboo on foraying into genetic theories.

The massive success of Sarrazin’s book cracked open growing anti-immigrant anger among many Germans, who fear that their language, culture and generosity is being abused by newcomers, especially Muslims, who many say live off their welfare state without contributing to it.

However, there is a tremendous difference between Chancellor Merkel making the fairly obvious observation that multiculturalism has failed in Germany and the purported racial theories of Sarrazin. (It should also be observed that Germany has rather [extreme laws](#) against the expression of Nazi or Neo-Nazi ideology and revisionist history.) It is not racist to worry about honor killings. It is not inherently racist for citizens to worry whether the language and culture of their nation will be handed on to the next generation. And it is not racist for Europeans to remember the Turks at the gates of Vienna in 1529 and 1683 and therefore question the wisdom of raising minarets in the heart of Europe.



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