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Part III

Multicultural Societies without Multiculturalism?

Chapter Eight

Public Debates and Public Opinion on Multiculturalism in Germany

Martina Wasmer

Introduction

Germany has never stood as the prototype of a multicultural society and it does not do so now. But empirical assessments of the political practice of cultural diversity management indicate that, over time, Germany has adopted more multicultural policies. In 2010 Germany's score in the multiculturalism policy index (MIPEX; see Banting and Kymlicka 2012), measuring the presence (or absence) of a range of policies intended to recognize, support or accommodate diversity, is 2.5 out of a maximum of 8 – a still low score albeit higher than in 2000. Koopmans et al. (2005) see Germany's position in their two-dimensional model of citizenship (presented in Chapter 2 of this book) as no longer close to the ethnic-assimilationist pole where it had been until the mid-1990s but, on both axes – individual citizenship rights and differential group rights – as near the middle.

At the same time, in Germany as well as in other European states with long-established commitments to multiculturalism, in public and political debate, the controversy about the right way to deal with ethnic and cultural diversity in society was growing more intense. In Germany it culminated in 2010 with German Chancellor Angela Merkel's declaration that attempts to build a multicultural society had 'utterly failed'. A bestselling book appeared that same year, Thilo Sarrazin's *Germany Does Away with Itself* (*Deutschland schafft sich ab*) which blamed Muslims for dragging Germany down. Its provocative argument divided the nation. So is there a common 'sceptical turn' against policies recognizing cultural diversity? Is Germany turning away from multiculturalism before actually having reached it?

This chapter examines recent trends in different areas – policies, public debate and public opinion – and looks for hints as to whether this is the case or not. After providing background information on

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immigration to Germany, I review the laws and policies related to diversity that have recently been introduced. In order to ascertain the degree of public and political support for the multicultural model, I consider the public debates of the last decades as well as changes in attitudes since the mid-1990s.

Public opinion on multiculturalism is chosen as the main focus of this chapter for several reasons. Although policy, laws and formal regulations are of major relevance, much depends on the views held by the majority. In everyday life prejudices and xenophobic attitudes may manifest themselves in subtle signs of disrespect, in overt discriminatory practices or even in aggressive behaviour. Additionally, interaction effects may follow, for example when public support is needed to put formally adopted measures into practice.

From a theoretical perspective, a degree of congruency between public policy change and public opinion change should be expected, since in a liberal democratic system policy should be responsive to public opinion, and public opinion should react to changes in policy and political debates. Finally, there is a more pragmatic reason for the focus on public opinion: the availability of time series data from replicative surveys to identify time trends in support for or opposition to multiculturalism. This stands in contrast to the monitoring of policies and debates regarding multiculturalism which has to contend with more ambiguity. For this reason, repeated attitude measurements from the German General Social Survey (ALLBUS; see p. 176) can help us obtain a clearer picture of developments in Germany with regard to multiculturalism. If the empirical results reveal widespread opposition against multicultural policies then, as Crepaz (2006: 97) puts it, public opinion would be 'like the proverbial canary in the coalmines', indicating danger.

Foreigners and immigrants in Germany

On a descriptive level, Germany is obviously a 'polyethnic society' (Kymlicka 1995) characterized by cultural diversity that is predominantly immigration-induced. There have been several waves of foreign immigration (Münz and Ulrich 2003). In 1955 the first recruitment agreement with Italy marked the starting point of a large wave of labour migration to West Germany. Foreigners from the Mediterranean were recruited as *Gastarbeiter* (guestworkers) for particular workplaces, predominantly low-skilled jobs in the industrial sector. The intention was to implement a 'rotation model'

of temporary migration, with migrants working in Germany for a period of one to two years and then returning home. After labour recruitment stopped in 1973, foreign immigration continued at a lower rate; it comprised mainly family reunifications. In the late 1980s and early 1990s the number of asylum seekers and refugees rose significantly, reaching a peak in 1992 when – all types of immigration taken together – a record high of more than 1.5 million immigrants came to Germany. In the following years the number of immigrants declined, mainly due to more restrictions on asylum and ethnic Germans. The result was even negative net migration in 2008 and 2009. Since then it has again increased, primarily because of rising numbers of migrants from Eastern European countries (Federal Statistical Office 2011a; Bundesministerium des Innern 2011).

A feature unique to Germany is the large-scale immigration of ethnic Germans. Their migration was initially privileged but, since 1990, has been more carefully screened (Zimmermann 1999) as the stakes were high: German citizenship was extended to ethnic Germans upon their arrival. This special case that entails an understanding of German identity (Joppke and Rosenhek 2002) is not the subject of this chapter on German multiculturalism.

Several factors account for the proportion of foreign nationals in Germany increasing from about 1 per cent in 1960 to 9 per cent of the total population in 2010 (Federal Statistical Office 2011b). Immigration rates are among the highest in the world; return migration is well below the originally intended level; *jus sanguinis* (up to 2000) meant that children born in Germany of foreign parents had difficulties naturalizing; low naturalization rates generally created a statistically high number of 'foreigners'. Today nearly 20 per cent of the population (Federal Statistical Office 2011b) has a 'migration background', that is, made up of those who (1) immigrated to Germany after 1950; (2) were born in Germany as foreigners; and (3) have at least one parent who immigrated to Germany after 1950 or was born in Germany as a foreigner. In the eastern part of Germany (the former East Germany state) the share of foreigners is much lower, below 2.5 per cent in most regions. The large majority of immigrants live today in the urban areas of western Germany (Münz and Ulrich 2003; Bundesministerium des Innern 2011).

By far the largest group of foreigners in Germany are Turks (about 24 per cent of the foreign population). Other important regions of origin are the former Yugoslavia, Italy and, increasingly in recent years, Poland. The vast majority of the population with a

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migration background, however, is made up of former guestworkers and their families and descendants. The mean time of residence in Germany of this group is nearly twenty-five years. Nevertheless, they overall still have a lower educational and occupational status than the native German population, but to a lesser degree in the second and third generation (Bender and Seifert 2003). A disproportionate number of those with a migration background are unemployed and dependent on welfare benefits. Particularly important for the issue of multiculturalism is the fact that, owing to the high share of Muslim immigrants, Islam has become an essential part of the new cultural diversity in Germany.

Multicultural policy in Germany

Up until now, there has never been an explicit multicultural agenda in Germany. Generally, immigration-related policy in Germany is, as O'Brien (2011: 1) has stated, 'controversial, contended and there-fore highly fluid' and consequently it 'defies easy categorization into neat typologies'. This incoherency in multiculturalism during the past decade may be attributed in part to the complicated balance of political power during this period. The absence of a broad consen-sus about the best way to deal with immigration-induced diversity made it necessary to reach compromises, especially during the Grand Coalition from 2005 to 2009, and to half-heartedly accept 'path dependence' after the changes of government in 2005 and 2009. In short, pragmatic policies became inescapable. In addition, the federal structure of Germany – with states at the subnational level being responsible for educational and cultural affairs – hampered the elaboration of a comprehensive policy programme.

Even in the absence of a coherent, explicitly multicultural policy approach, the management of migration-related ethnic diversity may include elements of a de facto multicultural policy. According to Castles (2004: 429), multiculturalism as public policy has two key dimensions: recognition of cultural diversity and social equality for members of minorities. Koopmans et al. (2005) developed a set of empirical indicators for these two dimensions and compared five Western European countries, among them Germany, at three points in time; 1980, 1990 and 2002. As already noted, they concluded that between 1990 and 2002 Germany moved away from an assimilation-ist conception, 'trailing behind' Britain and the Netherlands 'on the path of multiculturalism' (Koopmans 2007: 72). My interest is, then,

to focus on recent temporal trends that shed light on the question of whether Germany is still moving in this direction.

Laws and regulations on nationality acquisition are a crucial dimension of multicultural policies. For the individual migrant, citizenship means access to civil rights. Additionally, the concepts of nationhood underlying citizenship laws are of extraordinary symbolic importance, shaping national identity, definitions of 'we' and 'us'. Thus, the new Citizenship Law of 2000, supplementing the traditional principle of descent (bloodlines) with the *jus soli* principle, was a remarkable change of political practice in Germany. All children born in Germany now automatically receive German citizenship if at least one of their parents has lived in Germany for at least eight years. They are entitled to dual citizenship but have to decide whether to retain German nationality or the nationality of their parents between the ages of eighteen and twenty-three. Also, the number of years of residence in Germany required before immigrants can request naturalization was reduced. With this liberalization of citizenship regulations Germany has moved away from the former ethnic conception of citizenship towards a more civic-territorial one.

No additional progress has been made since then on citizenship regulations. The naturalization rate in Germany remains very low compared to other European countries. A key impediment to higher numbers is the fact that dual citizenship is still not officially recognized and is only a transitional status. In general, those applying for German citizenship are not allowed to retain their old nationality. Although there are exceptions to this rule, they do not apply to the important group of applicants of Turkish descent. In 2007 stricter language requirements for naturalization were introduced and since 2008 applicants have had to prove knowledge of the German legal and social system and cultural background by passing a standardized citizenship test.

These changes point to a notion of citizenship not as a *means* of integration but as the *end point* of a completed integration process (Van Oers 2010). With the coming into force of the Immigration Act in 2005, integration courses comprising 600 hours of German language lessons and 45 hours of civic instruction were introduced. Attendance is obligatory for people applying for a residence permit who do not show minimal proficiency in German. Moreover, settled migrants dependent on welfare may be required to register for these courses (Bundesministerium des Innern 2012). The stated purpose of integration courses is 'helping immigrants . . . in their efforts

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to become integrated', thus ensuring 'that immigrants have equal opportunities and the chance to participate in all areas, especially social, economic and cultural life' (BMI 2012a). According to Joppke and Morawska (2003), the rise of civic integration programmes indicates a shift towards the logic of assimilation and away from the multicultural paradigm.

A steadily more restrictive approach to migration was also exemplified in the tougher rules for family reunification introduced in 2007. Their intention was to promote integration from the outset and to combat forced marriages. Immigrating spouses now must be at least eighteen and pass a compulsory language test abroad before they can join their partner in Germany. Exemptions are made for other EU citizens, citizens of other privileged Western nations and highly qualified immigrants. They raise doubts about the non-discriminatory character of this regulation. Because of its 'pursuing liberal goals with illiberal means', it may deserve the label 'repressive liberalism' (Joppke 2007).

Apart from the right to citizenship, little has changed since 2002 with respect to policies aiming to promote equal individual rights. EU Anti-discrimination Directives were subsumed into national legislation in 2006 but the number of lawsuits has remained modest and is mainly related to discrimination based on disabilities, gender or age (Peucker 2010). On the other hand, foreign residents still largely enjoy the same social benefits as Germans. Reliance on welfare, however, still endangers their legal status (residence permit, naturalization) and jeopardizes prospects for immigration of family members. As for political rights, voting for foreign residents is restricted only to EU nationals and only at the local level. But progress has been made on the political representation of immigrants: 'Integration Summits' and 'Islam Conferences' have been organized by the federal government with participants from immigrant and Muslim organizations.

Measures have been taken to improve immigrants' prospects in the educational system and labour market, for example through special training programmes. Different dimensions of multiculturalism are combined in such policies, which strive for equality and to accommodate group differences. But these measures often imply a 'deficit perspective' on immigrants, in contrast to the positive view of diversity that would be characteristic for a multicultural approach. German language acquisition as a means to resolving problems with education and employment is regarded as the cornerstone of integration. Accordingly, in some cases coercive measures have been taken

requiring pupils to speak only German at school and not merely in the classroom but also during breaks. Affirmative action programmes such as quotas or preferential hiring schemes are not part of German integration policy. However, projects to recruit young people from migrant backgrounds for careers in public administration and efforts to enhance the transferability of educational qualifications acquired abroad have been intensified in the last few years.

Over the last decades, the integration of immigrants has been understood primarily as structural integration while the issues of cultural and religious diversity have received less attention. Yet notable changes are apparent regarding the accommodation of religious differences. The recurring Islam Conference has served as a basis for helping integrate the Muslim community into the German system of church-state relations. Islamic religious instruction in German schools has been introduced. In 2011 the first centre for Islamic theology started to train teachers for Islamic religious education and imam responsibilities.

On the other hand, in recent years one half of the states of Germany (among them the most populous and those with the largest Muslim populations) have enacted legislation that bans the Islamic headscarf for teachers – a reflection of the 'principle of neutrality' that has to be observed at schools. Only legislation in Lower Saxony and the city states of Bremen and Berlin treat all religions in the same way, in accordance with a Federal Constitutional Court decision. Other states' bodies of law privilege Judaeo-Christian religions (Berghahn 2009).

To sum up, the overall view of recent 'multicultural' policies shows an unclear picture with no identifiable comprehensive multicultural policy. Policies at the core of the multiculturalist approach – recognizing and supporting immigrants in maintaining and expressing their distinct identities and practices (Banting and Kymlicka 2006) – are not key elements of German integration policy. Phil Triadafilopoulos (2012) worries that the undesired side effects of Germany's integration policy (the 'preoccupation with "problem" groups, above all undereducated, unemployed and potentially threatening young men and putatively embattled immigrant women') might foster an atmosphere of distrust and disrespect towards immigrants. The policy may also lead to a negative definition of integration as a 'prophylactic' process that seeks to pre-empt problems and to guard the majority of society against dangers caused by immigration. Finally, Germany's integration policy increasingly gives the

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impression that the responsibility for successful integration lies with the immigrants themselves. Despite official rhetoric that integration is a 'two-way process' that 'requires acceptance by the majority population' (BMI 2012b), little is done to increase the majority's acceptance of culturally different groups. This would entail a positive recognition of diversity that would be a clear sign of multiculturalism.

Public debate on multiculturalism

The term 'multiculturalism' is rarely used in German public debates. 'Multicultural society' usually refers to the existence of a multiplicity of cultures, and not a particular public policy approach. In Germany, the term 'multicultural' during the late 1970s and the 1980s circulated in church, union, social workers' and teachers' circles. The Green Party, especially its leader Daniel Cohn-Bendit, Christian Democratic Union (CDU) intellectual Heiner Geißler and groups within the Social Democratic Party (SPD) were early proponents of a multicultural society (Kraus and Schönwälder 2006; Faist 1994). The catchy abbreviation *multikulti*, which soon became popular, sounded fresh, modern and easy-going. Public appreciation of the concept tended to remain superficial, often folkloric, equating it with pizza and doner kebabs. Nowadays, *multikulti* and terms such as 'dreams/dreamers', 'illusion' or 'naïve' are frequently mentioned in the same breath, signifying its bad reputation.

Although current usage of 'multicultural' or *multikulti* signals the problems that Germany's multiculturalism is faced with, the term is seldom explicitly at the centre of public debates over relevant issues. Three key areas of debate can be identified (although they are closely interwoven): (1) immigration to Germany; (2) the multicultural reality in Germany – perceptions and assessments of positive and, mostly, negative aspects of ethnic diversity; and (3) ideas about how to deal with this multicultural reality.

The first step in adopting multiculturalism as a way to accommodate diversity is to recognize the fact of cultural pluralism in a society. In Germany, official political discourse for decades not only ignored but denied the fact that cultural diversity was here to stay. In particular, the right-of-centre parties CDU and CSU continued until the 1990s to insist that Germany was 'not an immigration country'. At the same time, restricting immigration was a central political concern. At the end of the 1980s and during the early 1990s when Germany faced very large immigration flows (with high

proportions of refugees and asylum seekers), there were two camps in the German debate on immigration. One, which included the governing Conservatives and the tabloid press, claimed that Germany was approaching breaking point, the limit of what it could absorb, conveyed by the slogan 'The boat is full'. The other camp, among them churches, trade unions, NGOs and the Greens, advanced humanitarian and human rights arguments (Wengeler 2006). The assertion that many asylum seekers were abusing the social assistance system of the German welfare state was emphasized by conservative parties and, even more so, by populist parties on the extreme right, such as the Republikaner. Asylum seekers were seen as problematic both because they are culturally different and because they represent economic competitors (Faist 1994).

Heated discussions marked the run-up to the asylum compromise of 1993, but more pragmatic economic considerations stressing the advantages of immigration for the functioning of the economy prevailed (Wengeler 2006). The idea of the foreign workforce as an economic factor that could be adjusted to fit the needs of German society had informed the rotation model of guestworker employment. More recently, immigration has again been seen as a necessity, but this time recruitment of high-skilled labour is the key consideration. Nevertheless, many Germans have trouble accepting immigration as a solution to the country's labour needs. The so-called Green Card initiative – a regulation allowing for work permits for highly qualified foreign workers in information and communication technology – was repudiated in 2000 by the then leading candidate of the CDU for the state government of Nord-Rhein Westphalia, Jürgen Rüttgers. He argued that Germany should invest in education and training instead of importing high-tech specialists from India, coining the slogan *Kinder statt Inder* ('children instead of Indians') – a mantra with which to stir up anti-foreigner sentiment. In 2011 Horst Seehofer, leader of the Bavarian Conservatives, called for a halt to immigration from 'alien cultures' on the grounds that Germany does not need any more Turkish or Arab immigrants because they do not integrate as well as others.

Seehofer's declaration leads us to an important thread in Germany's discourse on 'multiculturalism', reflecting the effects of the new ethnic diversity on society. On the one hand, concern has been expressed in the socio-economic realm about tensions resulting from the formation of a new lower class in society caused by migration. On the other hand, cultural differences are said to induce

problems by undermining social capital and social cohesion. Over the last decades, cultural concerns appear to prevail, either because they are considered more urgent or because they are seen as the root cause of most of the other problems.

Today the debate focuses mainly on the failure of integration, illustrated by immigrants allegedly living in 'parallel societies', that is, closed off from the majority society, lacking German language skills and customs and obeying rules of their own. Especially with regard to Muslim immigrants, these rules are perceived as backward and narrow-minded, oriented towards traditional principles of honour and submission. The withdrawal into secluded ethnic communities is frequently considered the cause for the often poor educational achievement of immigrant children. Additionally, Muslim-dominated residential areas are suspected to be breeding grounds for violence and extremism (Kraus and Schönwälder 2006).

Ausländerkriminalität – literally foreigner criminality – has been a major topic of public debate for a long time. Wide support for the expulsion of criminal offenders born and raised in Germany has been illustrative of the majority's ethnic understanding of national belonging. Today, the high relevance attributed to religious-cultural factors, Islam in particular, is particularly significant. Since 9/11, Muslim fundamentalists have been seen as posing a serious terrorist threat. Outdated parenting styles in Muslim families are supposed to be the main reason for young male Muslims' (alleged) proneness to violence. In the tabloid press or readers' letters, incidents of 'honour killings' are cited as undisputable proof of the problematic nature of Islam in general.

The highly publicized incidents of 'honour killings', the practices of forced marriage described in bestselling books (such as Necla Kelek's *Die fremde Braut*, 2005) and debates about family violence and the Islamic headscarf have given rise to the gender dimension in Islam. Generally, it is Islam that has moved to the centre of public debates on multiculturalism. According to some opinion leaders, including Henryk M. Broder, Ralph Giordano, Necla Kelek and feminist Alice Schwarzer, Islam is inherently illiberal and anti-democratic, so it follows that pious Muslims constitute a threat to 'Western civilization' itself (O'Brien 2011).

The debate about the allegedly adverse economic and social effects of immigration on German society 'has become increasingly intense, shallow and aggressive', claimed Klaus J. Bade, a leading German researcher on immigration and one of the few dissenting voices to

the pessimistic analysis of the situation, in a TV documentary.[1] A key reason for this is the impact of Thilo Sarrazin's *Germany Does Away With Itself*, in 2010. In it the author, a member at the time of the Social Democratic Party and of the Deutsche Bundesbank executive board, argued that Muslim immigrants were unwilling or unable to integrate. In blaming Muslims for all the problems of integration, Sarrazin went further than his predecessors by attributing cultural and social differences mainly to genetic disposition. According to Sarrazin, German society as a whole is inevitably becoming less intelligent because of the higher fertility rate among intellectually inferior Muslims.

The book evoked strong reactions. Most politicians immediately criticized it as racist, but it received massive public support among the German population. To the surprise of liberal intellectual circles in media and politics, respectable middle-class citizens shouted down Sarrazin's critics in public discussions and readings, and acclaimed Sarrazin as a hero for saying 'what everybody really thinks'. The book was seen as a taboo breaker and set off a wave of media coverage. Nearly all voices dismissed Sarrazin's 'genetic theory' as 'nonsense'. But the identifiable main opposing camps accused each other of denying the existence of serious problems because of blind political correctness or naivety and stirring up xenophobic tendencies with inappropriate generalizations and alarmism. One potential development arising from Sarrazin's success was the fostering of populist tendencies. As Habermas put it in an op ed article in *The New York Times* (2010), 'The usual stereotypes are being flushed out of the bars and onto the talk shows, and they are echoed by mainstream politicians who want to capture potential voters who are otherwise drifting off toward the right'.

The Sarrazin debate was typical of German discussions of multiculturalism in that it was the multicultural reality, not the multicultural concept or policies based on it, that was the main focus. As long as the facts of immigration and diversity were being officially denied, political discussions had largely been limited to repeated demands to implement *any* policy concerning these neglected areas. In the 1990s regulation of immigration was the central issue of public discourse while since then integration policy has become the centre of political attention (Heckmann 2010). There is a broad consensus on the general goal of 'integration', even if multiple definitions of it exist. Increasingly it is conceived as a process of adaptation lying primarily with immigrants, with the state providing necessary resources and

structural supports. By contrast, appeals to the German majority to abandon prejudice against and create a welcoming atmosphere for immigrants so as to facilitate their integration have become less common (Wengeler 2006).

The degree of adaptation by immigrants to German society is highly contentious. Is it sufficient when immigrants accept the German constitution and acquire fundamental cultural, especially language, skills? Or are immigrants supposed to adopt the values and customs of the majority culture? The latter idea has repeatedly been the subject of political debates. In 2000 Friedrich Merz, then a leading Conservative politician, demanded that foreigners be prepared to integrate themselves into the German *Leitkultur*, or leading culture. This statement, giving German national identity priority over the 'multicultural society' advocated by the government of Social Democrats and Greens, came under fire, not least for implying some sort of German cultural supremacy. In 2006 the controversial concept of *Leitkultur* was re-introduced into the debate on the integration of immigrants by CDU politician Volker Kauder. In 2010 – after Sarrazin's book was published – the Christian Democrats adopted a resolution that Germany was based on a 'Judaeo-Christian heritage' which should be considered as the country's *Leitkultur*. The message was clear: *Leitkultur* should be understood primarily as a political tool in the struggle against Islam. Critics of the concept argue that the underlying idea of a distinct ethnically defined national identity, based on history, language, descent and culture, neither corresponds to social reality in modern societies, which are characterized by increasing pluralism, nor is the most effective basis of social cohesion. But alternative models – Habermas' 'constitutional patriotism' or human rights as the basis of an enlightened multiculturalism (Bielefeldt 2007) – are infrequently discussed in public.

Of particular concern over the last years has been the fact that relations between Germans and Turks have deteriorated. Repeated demands have been made by the right-wing political camp supported by an unlikely partner, groups concerned with women's rights, that Muslim immigrants should stop adhering to customs and traditions incompatible with modern Western culture. In turn, Turks have resented restrictive, exclusionary German policies, such as the language test taken abroad for immigrating spouses of Turks, as well as the current German government's opposition to Turkey's EU accession. Controversies about the building of mosques in German cities exacerbated this worsening of relations. Mosques are a visible sign

of cultural diversity and of Muslims becoming an established part of German society. Consequently, when right-wing populist groups such as Pro-Cologne and Pro-NRW organize against the building of mosques and even win seats on local councils, this evokes a feeling of rejection within the local Muslim community. To be sure, public reactions to the building of mosques are mixed.

An additional factor affecting relations between Turks and Germans are the visits to Germany by Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. He urged Turkish immigrants to resist assimilation, which he called a crime against humanity, and to teach their children to speak and read Turkish before German (SpiegelOnline International 2011a, b). Many politicians criticized what they viewed as Erdogan's inflammatory rhetoric and his inaccurate description of Germany's integration policy. Many ordinary Germans watching television coverage of crowds of over 10,000 people waving Turkish flags and applauding Erdogan's speeches saw this as proof that Turkish immigrants and their descendants lacked a feeling of belonging to Germany and showed no willingness to integrate in the host society.

In November 2011 a series of murders committed by a Zwickau-based neo-Nazi terror cell calling itself the National Socialist Underground (NSU) was uncovered. Between 2000 and 2006 the killings of nine small business owners of Turkish and Greek origin, as well as a bomb attack in an immigrant neighbourhood in Cologne, shocked the German public. Authorities were accused of failing to take the threat from right-wing extremists seriously enough. The investigators, consistent with common prejudices, had assumed that the murders were motivated by family disputes or criminal gang rivalries. Learning that the murders were carried out by the NSU evoked a sense of collective shame. Chancellor Merkel described the serial murders as a 'disgrace for our country'. Media across the political spectrum published articles calling for tolerance and respect, asking whether xenophobic fears had been stirred up over the last decades, criticizing integration policies seeking to appeal to German voters and depicting immigrants as a security risk (SpiegelOnline International 2012). In contrast to the Sarrazin debate, the majority blamed itself and not immigrants for the affair.

Another factor that might have consequences for multiculturalism is the European debt crisis. The euro crisis distracted – at least for a time – public attention away from the challenges of cultural diversity. Many ordinary citizens in Germany were unhappy that their country

had to pay the largest share of the bail-out of Greece. It is conceivable, therefore, that foreigners abroad may take on the role of scapegoats from the immigrants living within Germany. As the 'foreigners inside' are in several respects – as taxpayers, citizens potentially affected by social security cuts, and so on – in the same boat, lines of conflict may shift. Major changes to immigration and integration policies as a response to the European debt crisis seem unlikely. However, given the EU principle of the free movement of labour, a new migration wave from southern Europe can be expected. If the skills of these immigrants match the needs of Germany's economy, prospective immigrants from culturally distinct, non-EU countries may become disadvantaged.

Public opinion on multiculturalism

We cannot infer from public policy and public debate alone the reception accorded to immigrants and their descendants. Much depends on the views held by the majority population. In the remaining part of this chapter I examine public opinion on multiculturalism. The main questions addressed include how widespread attitudes are supporting multiculturalism today, and how these attitudes have changed in recent decades. Because of space constraints, I do not consider the issue of causal determinants of attitudes.

The analysis relies mainly on attitudinal data collected by the ALLBUS (**All**gemeine **B**evölkerungs**u**mfrage der **S**ozialwissenschaften) survey programme (Koch and Wasmer 2004; Terwey 2000). ALLBUS is oriented toward academic users and sets very high methodological standards, especially with respect to sampling. It is based on repeated multi-thematic face-to-face surveys. Every two years since 1980, a representative cross-section of the population – the number of respondents varies between 3,000 and 3,500 – has been surveyed, using both constant and variable questions. In 1996 and 2006, ALLBUS included a topical module focusing on attitudes towards ethnic minorities. The survey thus allows us to compare people's views before and after the important changes of political practice in Germany initiated by the government of Social Democrats and Greens.

Based on an understanding of multiculturalism that combines the two key principles of social equality and participation, and cultural recognition I selected data for analysis concerning the following issues: (1) appreciation of cultural diversity; (2) support of state

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Table 8.1 German views on cultural diversity in 1996 and 2006

		'Foreigners enrich German culture'		
		disagree	neutral	agree
'One feels like a stranger in one's own country because of foreigners'	disagree	**Neither positive nor negative** 1996: 41.1% 2006: 32.8%		**Predominantly positive** 1996: 30.0% 2006: 33.3%
	neutral			
	agree	**Predominantly negative** 1996: 22.6% 2006: 24.5%		**Ambivalent** 1996: 6.3% 2006: 9.4%

ALLBUS 1996 and 2006, own calculations. Note that n=3246 (1996) and n=3099 (2006).

action that promotes equal rights for foreigners and recognizes cultural diversity; (3) demands for cultural adaptation; and (4) social contacts with and social distance towards foreigners.[2]

Two items in ALLBUS 1996 and 2006 raise the issue of cultural diversity in general terms. One is formulated to place immigration-induced cultural diversity in a positive light. The proportion of German respondents[3] who agreed[4] that foreigners enrich German culture rose from 36 per cent in 1996 to 43 per cent in 2006. Paradoxically, when the issue is raised in negative terms, a similar increase can be observed, indicating the high degree of ambiguity in public opinion. In 2006 more interviewees agreed with the notion 'With so many foreigners in Germany, one feels increasingly like a stranger in one's own country' than in 1996. It seems as though Germans have developed more clear-cut attitudes towards cultural diversity. Whilst in the earlier data 41 per cent agreed neither with the positive item nor with the negative one, only 33 per cent did so in 2006 (see Table 8.1). One-third of the respondents held predominantly positive views on cultural diversity but approximately one out of four reported feelings of alienation, which were not counterbalanced by a positive valuation of cultural diversity.

If we turn the focus to equal rights (for a detailed analysis of the 1996 data, see Wasmer and Koch 2000), the German population makes clear distinctions between different groups of foreigners, and this is becoming increasingly the case. The statement that Turkish residents should have the same rights as Germans *in every respect*

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was supported by 37 per cent in 2006. By contrast, a clear majority of 59 per cent favours parity of treatment for Italians who, as EU citizens, already enjoy a far superior legal status anyway.

ALLBUS questions concerning concrete policy measures designed to promote particular forms of equality for foreigners living in Germany address the issue of social security (the same entitlement to welfare benefits and other social security benefits), opportunities for exercising political influence (the right to vote in local elections) and cultural issues (including the question 'Should there be Islamic religious instruction in state schools, should there only be Christian religious instruction or should there be no religious instruction at all in state schools?').[5] In 2006 between 43 and 48 per cent of German respondents expressed their willingness to grant parity of rights to immigrants (see Table 8.2).

The issue of Islamic religious education in public schools is a special case. In 2006 32 per cent stated that state schools should provide religious instruction for both Christian and Muslim children, while 33 per cent (mostly respondents from the eastern part of Germany) responded that they should provide no religious instruction at all. From an equal treatment perspective, one could therefore argue that a large majority shows no inclination to privilege the Christian religion. However, public schools in Germany actually do provide regular religious instruction for the main Christian religions, and it is not clear how interviewees who prefer no religious instruction at all would have answered a forced choice question with the other two response options. Thus, it seems appropriate to narrow the focus to those who do not entirely reject religious education. We find that about half of these respondents support Islamic religious education, slightly fewer in 2006 than in 1996.

An interesting result is the discrepancy between a generally positive attitude to equality of rights and attitudes towards equal treatment in specific spheres of life. Many of those who were strongly committed (scale points 6 or 7) to equal rights for Turkish residents *in every respect* nevertheless opposed specific rights. This holds true especially with respect to two concrete political measures which have been subjects under discussion: the local election voting right is opposed by 19 per cent of those who are generally strongly in favour of equality of rights; in turn, 22 per cent state that there should only be Christian religious instruction in state schools despite their strong agreement to 'equal rights in every respect'. This result is reminiscent of the 'principle-implementation-gap' described by Schuman et al.

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Table 8.2 Public support in Germany for multiculturalism: 2006 compared to 1996

Concepts and Items (responses classified as multiculturalist position)	Responses in favour of multiculturalist positions Proportion in 2006 (%)	Responses in favour of multiculturalist positions Change since 1996 (percentage points)
Cultural diversity perception		
Cultural enrichment (agree)	42.8	+ 6.5
Stranger in own land (disagree)	52.6	− 4.4
General equal rights		
for Turks (agree)	36.7	+ 1.6
for Italians (agree)	59.2	+ 5.8
Policy support		
Same welfare benefits (agree)	47.4	+ 0.3
Local voting rights (agree)	42.5	+ 7.1
Religious instruction ('also Islamic', if any)*	47.6	− 3.5
Dual nationality (agree)	31.6	− 3.1
Demands for cultural adaptation		
Lifestyle adaptation (not agree)	19.9 (24.0 in 2010)	− 20.3
Lifestyle adaptation (not important as citizenship requirement)	9.8	− 12.1
German language (not very important as citizenship requirement)	18.7	− 27.1
Christian (not at all important as citizenship requirement)	48.4	− 9.3
Social distance		
Turks – neighbours (not unpleasant)	59.4	− 5.8
Italians – neighbours (not unpleasant)	94.3	+ 1.6
Contacts with foreigners		
Any contact ('yes')	71.9 (74.3 in 2010)	+ 5.8
Friendship ('yes')	48.8 (52.3 in 2010)	+ 5.1
n (2006 and 1996)	≈ 3100	≈ 3250

*n=2104 in 1996; n=2056 in 2006
ALLBUS 1996 and 2006, own calculations.

(1997) with regard to race relations in the US, and may be an indication that some respondents uphold the principle of equal rights only in a superficial way so as to resist giving up privileges.

Tolerance of dual citizenship is more compatible with

multiculturalism than with assimilationist views because the former accommodates transnational ties of immigrants while assimilationists seek to avoid 'divided loyalties' (Faist 2007). Thus, the finding that in 2006 less than a third of Germans – slightly fewer than in 1996 – agreed with the statement that foreigners should be able to acquire German citizenship without renouncing the citizenship they currently possess might be seen as an indicator for only weak support for multiculturalism.

Multiculturalism aims to foster equality and at the same time to promote the recognition of cultural plurality. If ethnic minorities were expected to assimilate into the host culture by abolishing their own cultures and traditions, this would be the opposite of a multicultural approach. Table 8.2 presents percentages of responses *not* demanding adaptation: they reveal a strong desire on the part of the German majority for immigrants' cultural adaptation. The most striking result is the dramatic increase in these demands.

Certainly, the items analyzed cannot be interpreted unequivocally as measuring attitudes towards multiculturalism. The ALLBUS questions represent demands for integration of immigrants into dominant values, culture and social behaviour that are contrary to multiculturalism to varying degrees. Therefore for each indicator it was important to distinguish which responses should be classified as 'in favour of multiculturalism'. Three of the indicators are based on the respondent's opinion on how important certain criteria should be in the decision regarding whether to grant German citizenship. Cultural preconditions for naturalization include: 'lifestyle adaptation', 'language ability' and 'church membership' (Diehl and Tucci 2011). The most exclusionary position would be to claim that 'whether the person belongs to a Christian denomination' should play a central role in becoming a German citizen.

In 1996 the majority stated that this ascriptive attribute should be not at all important (1 on a 7 point scale), and it dropped to 48 per cent in 2006. With respect to the importance of naturalization applicants being 'prepared to adapt to the German way of life', a decrease of a similar magnitude can be observed, but at a totally different level. Only a tiny minority of 10 per cent does *not* place high importance to this criterion in 2006. In turn, an inflated value placed on immigrants' German language skills stands for high barriers on nationality acquisition in cultural terms that contradict a multicultural approach. In tandem with policy priorities, survey results reveal an enormous increase in the proportion of respondents who feel

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that it is very important 'whether the person is fluent in German'. Correspondingly, in 2006 the proportion of Germans who were not insistent on this prerequisite more than halved from 1996.

The overall finding that Germans put increased emphasis on the cultural adaptation of immigrants is confirmed by the response to the softly formulated normative statement that immigrants 'should adapt their way of life a little more closely to the German way of life'. This question has been asked since 1980. Until 1994, the data had shown a slow but steady increase in those not agreeing with this demand, from nearly a third of (West) German respondents to about a half. Then the trend was reversed and the percentage dropped sharply to only one-fifth in 2006. The data from 2010 (24 per cent not agreeing with the statement) might indicate that this trend has come to an end. Up to the appearance of Sarrazin's book (when about 60 per cent of all interviews had been completed), 26 per cent did not expect foreigners to adapt a bit more to the German way of life, in contrast to 21 per cent of those interviewed later. This seems to reveal a short-term effect of the Sarrazin book.

Interpreting the results regarding cultural adaptation items is made difficult by the fact that there is no measure of demands for immigrants to eradicate their own culture. Some evidence is found in the International Social Survey Programme (ISSP) that can throw light on this issue.[6] When Germans are forced to choose whether it is better for a country that different racial and ethnic groups maintain their distinct customs and traditions or that they adapt and blend into the larger society, nearly two-thirds (64 per cent) chose adaptation in 2003. This was a far higher percentage than in 1995 (46 per cent), supporting the ALLBUS finding of an increasing inclination to a sceptical view of cultural diversity. Another clear indicator of the turn away from multiculturalism are ISSP results showing that the percentage of respondents disagreeing with the statement 'it is impossible for people who do not share Germany's customs and traditions to become fully German' (24 per cent in 2003) and the percentage agreeing that 'ethnic minorities should be given government assistance to preserve their customs and traditions' (33 per cent in 2003) have strongly declined, by 15 and 14 percentage points respectively, since 1995.

Let me supplement the results concerning public opinion on societal multiculturalism with indicators from ALLBUS on interethnic relationships at the personal level. After all, without interactions between the majority population and members of immigrant groups,

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recognition of cultural diversity could end up in separation and seg-
regation instead of multiculturalism. Congruent with results for the
equal rights items, Germans' 'feelings of social distance' vary greatly,
depending on the immigrant group. Asked how pleasant or unpleas-
ant it would be for the interviewee to have an Italian person as a neigh-
bour, only a tiny minority of 6 per cent chose a negative scale point,
compared to 41 per cent for a Turkish person. This gap has widened
since 1996. The proportion of Germans who do *not* express negative
feelings about a Turk as neighbour has even declined by 6 percentage
points, a further indication that reservations about cultural diversity
are to a large extent the result of anti-Muslim resentment.

ALLBUS data reaching back to 1980 point to a steady increase in
contact between Germans and foreigners, and 2010 data substantiate
this trend. Nearly three out of four respondents now report having
some sort of personal contact with foreigners living in Germany, be
that at work, in the neighbourhood, in their own family/family circle
and/or among friends and acquaintances. Particularly noteworthy is
that voluntary and more intimate contact – having foreign friends –
continues to increase: about one half of the respondents state they
have immigrant friends and acquaintances.

Overall, then, ALLBUS surveys show that the German public are
divided in their view on multiculturalism. Only one of the attitudinal
indicators in Table 8.1 – social distance towards Italians, not really
a key indicator of multiculturalism – shows a clear majority of 60
per cent or more for the position labelled as 'in favour of multicul-
turalism'. The picture is different if we look at the supporters of the
only political party in Germany that has been committed to the idea
of multiculturalism, the Greens. Most of the multicultural attitudes
listed in Table 8.3 constitute a majority view.[7]

Especially in their evaluations of cultural diversity and the conten-
tious issue of Islamic instruction, Green supporters have long been
exceptional. But among them, too, a major shift towards demands
for immigrants' adaptation and linguistic assimilation has taken
place. Supporters of the two major political parties, the Christian
Democrats and Social Democrats, also differ significantly from one
another, with CDU supporters strongly opposed to multiculturalism.
Yet again, attitudes are similar in both political camps with regard to
the need for cultural adaptation of immigrants.

To sum up, some positive trends can be observed with respect to
interethnic contacts and the majority's acceptance of equal political
rights for immigrants. Some results may hint at a growing tendency to

Table 8.3 Support for multiculturalism in Germany according to voting intentions: 2006 compared to 1996*

Concepts and Items	Responses in favour of multiculturalist positions 2006			Change since 1996 (percentage points)		
	CDU/ CSU (%)	SPD (%)	Greens (%)	CDU	SPD	Greens
Cultural diversity						
Cultural enrichment (agree)	37.5	46.7	70.4	+7.9	+8.0	+16.3
Stranger in own land (disagree)	49.8	56.8	75.4	−6.6	+0.1	+3.8
Rights and policies						
Equal rights for Turks (agree)	27.1	41.8	57.1	−0.7	+2.2	+3.5
Local voting rights (agree)	35.6	50.6	61.9	+7.8	+10.0	+6.0
Religious instruction ('also Islamic', if any)**	40.9	51.4	80.4	−4.5	−1.8	+12.9
Dual nationality (agree)	26.9	38.3	55.0	−0.4	−1.5	−3.2
Cultural adaptation						
Adapt way of life (not agree)	16.3	20.4	41.2	−16.3	−19.3	−20.6
Lifestyle adaptation (not important for naturalization)	7.6	9.0	24.6	−7.9	−14.8	−13.9
German language (not very important for naturalization)	17.1	15.1	32.2	−22.7	−34.2	−21.3
Christian (not at all important for naturalisation)	40.5	49.5	70.4	−8.0	−8.5	−2.0
Turk as neighbour (not unpleasant)	54.0	64.7	76.7	−3.8	−1.4	−4.6
n (2006 and 1996)	≈ 800	≈ 710	≈ 230	≈ 800	≈ 730	≈ 370

* For reasons of clarity, this table contains only items considered most meaningful and respondents with the intention to vote for one of the major parties in Germany or for the Greens.

** n=601 (CDU), 483 (SPD), 228 (Greens) in 1996; n=580 (CDU), 467 (SPD), 158 (Greens) in 2006.

ALLBUS 1996 and 2006, own calculations.

Islamophobia. But the most striking result is the turnaround in public opinion that has taken place with regard to cultural adaptation. Many Germans nowadays prefer immigrants to adopt the German language and to conform to the German way of life, in accordance with the idea of a uniform *Leitkultur*. It is less clear whether the majority is expecting complete assimilation to German customs and norms or only conformity to some basic values and rules.

Conclusion

In Germany state actions as well as public discourses are regularly characterized by complexity and contradictions. There is no official national commitment to multiculturalism and no broad public support for multicultural ideas. So what about the questions posed in the introduction: Is there a common 'sceptical turn' against policies recognizing cultural diversity? Is Germany turning away from multiculturalism before actually having reached it?

I have described elite and public concerns about the negative effects of cultural diversity. To achieve the widely shared goal of socio-cultural integration of immigrants, a certain degree of acculturation, at a minimum linguistically, is considered vital, especially where Muslim immigrants are concerned. The challenge will be to accomplish integration without forcing immigrants to give up their own culture. A more differentiated and less biased view – especially on Muslims – will be required, acknowledging intracultural differences and avoiding insinuations about the general 'inferiority' of Islam. Sarrazin's book obviously was not helpful in this regard. On the other hand, the fact that Germany – in contrast to most of its neighbours – has no right-wing populist party with significant success at the polls gives reason to hope.

Radical cultural relativism is not an answer in cases of deep disagreements about values endangering social cohesion. In such cases – and not limited to intercultural differences – a solution acceptable to all may best be reached through deliberation. A deliberative accommodation of cultural diversity requires equality of opportunity and intercultural dialogue. In this sense, organizations such as the 'German Islam Conference' are a step in the right direction. But, since voting remains the usual method of decision in a democracy, extended voting rights for foreigners and/or lower barriers to citizenship are essential.

For many years, German politics has concentrated on promoting

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equal (or less unequal) access for immigrants to the educational system and the labour market. Research on the socio-economic integration of immigrants (Böcker and Thränhardt 2003; Koopmans 2003) comparing, for example, residential segregation and unemployment rates, has shown that Germany has been more successful in these areas than the multicultural pioneer that is the Netherlands. From an analysis of survey data on identification, language proficiency and use, religious observance and interethnic social contacts of Turkish immigrants in Germany, France and the Netherlands, Ersanilli and Koopmans (2011: 229) concluded that 'combating socio-economic disadvantages of immigrants is a more promising avenue to stimulate immigrants' socio-cultural integration than policies that focus on formal legal equality and cultural accommodation or assimilation'.

We might conclude, then, that Germany may neither celebrate cultural diversity nor strive for multiculturalism, but it nevertheless is able to promote equal opportunities and provide equal individual rights for immigrants. There are no signs that a policy of specific group rights could gain broad acceptance in the near future. But the state's commitment to provide equal opportunities for the individual's 'freedom of self-determination' recognized in the Convention of Human Rights – if understood as comprising cultural issues as a key area of personal choice – could be enough to secure that each immigrant can freely decide to what extent he or she adopts cultural elements of the host country and to what extent he or she maintains the culture of origin.

Notes

1. http://www.rbb-online.de/doku/titel_mit_s/sarrazins_deutschland.html
2. The terms used by the German public for both immigrants and their descendants have varied over time. The 1980s and 1990s term *Ausländer* (foreigners) gradually replaced the earlier term *Gastarbeiter* (guestworkers). New terms such as *Migranten* (migrants) are in the process of entering common use. *Ausländer* (since 1994) and *Gastarbeiter* are the terms used in ALLBUS questions (Blank and Wasmer 1996).
3. All analysis reported here is based on respondents holding German citizenship. Data have been weighted to correct the disproportional ALLBUS sample with unequal selection probabilities between western and eastern Germany.
4. If not otherwise stated, a response scale running from 1 = completely disagree to 7 = completely agree has been used.

5. For full question wording see ALLBUS questionnaires at http://www.
gesis.org/allbus/recherche/frageboegen/
6. These are my calculations based on ISSP 1995: National Identity I and
ISSP 2003: National Identity II.
7. The differences between supporters of the various parties are partly due
to socio-structural composition, especially with respect to the variables
of age and, more importantly, level of education. But multiple regres-
sion analysis not provided here reveals that the effect of party affiliation
remains highly significant after controlling for such variables.

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