

Istanbul Bilgi University

Jean Monnet Chair of
European Politics of Interculturalism
Department of International Relations
European Institute

Jean Monnet Chair Student Workshop I
27 May 2013, Dolapdere, Istanbul

How Can We Explain the Activities of the National Socialist Underground in Germany Against German- Turks With the Existence and Prevalence of Xenophobia Among the German Public?

Nihal Şen
Istanbul Bilgi University
International Relations MA Candidate



Jean
Monnet
Chair



Istanbul
Bilgi University
LAUREATE INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITIES

Abstract

Regionalism can be defined as “the will to make a geographical region, have a spatial identity and a common purpose around which locals can unite to form institutionalized collective action”¹. The present paper suggests that there is strong regionalism in the former East Germany and this causes xenophobia towards the migrants living and working in Germany. The purpose of the present paper is to try to explain the reasons, indications and development of xenophobia among the German public towards German-Turks and to find out whether government policies create a favorable climate for the existence and emergence of xenophobia and to try to explain the past and planned activities of the National Socialist Underground (NSU) in the light of the findings. The results of this study showed that the official policies of the German government are creating a favorable environment for the emergence and strengthening of xenophobia against German-Turks in Germany and the 13 year long activities of the NSU, without being caught, is a proof of that. It has also been concluded that the past and current citizenship laws in Germany are also discriminatory and fostering xenophobia. However, these facts alone are not sufficient to thoroughly understand and analyze the underlying reasons for the activities of the NSU.

Introduction

As explained clearly by Boehnke, Hagan and Hefler², former East Germany has gone through many drastic changes since the fall of the Iron Curtain. Former East Germany is not only trying to adapt to globalization but also to restructure and unify its economy and population with the former West Germany.

As would be expected, there is a significant resistance among members of society against the change brought with the unification of Germany. Moreover, the society witnessed huge changes in the composition of the society, economy, education system and everyday life after the unification, which probably contributed to the resistance and consequently, feeling of xenophobia against anyone who is not perceived as "a member of German society". I believe that this social change and its perception as “good” or “evil” is the cause of right-wing extremist movements in Germany, most of which originate from the former East Germany.

¹ This is the definition we used in our regional studies class.

² Boehnke, Klaus & Hagan, John & Hefler, Gerd. On the Development of Xenophobia in Germany: The Adolescent Years. *Journal of Social Issues*, Vol. 54, No. 3, 1998, pp. 585-602

At the moment, there are several right-wing extremist groups in Germany. According to the official 2011 Report on the Protection of the Constitution prepared by the Federal Ministry of the Interior, a total of about 22,400 people are members of right-wing extremist groups and this number was 25,000 in 2010 and 26,600 in 2009³. The official number of the groups is not disclosed in the official report.

Among the above-mentioned right-wing extremist groups, the National Socialist Underground (NSU) is of particular importance because of its long history of criminal activities without being arrested. NSU is a far-right German group, the existence of which was uncovered in November 2011. This group is responsible for at least 10 murders, 14 bank robberies and two nailbomb attacks⁴. UI Böhnhardt, UI Mundlos, and Beate Zschäpe were identified by the police as suspects⁵, namely founders of the National Socialist Underground and perpetrators of the said crimes, and it was also revealed that the same people were responsible for the "döner killings". The suspects UI Böhnhardt and UI Mundlos committed suicide on November 4, 2011⁶ and police officers found right-wing extremist propaganda videos that contained pictures of victims that show at least three of the "döner killings" among their belongings⁷ and moreover, it was also revealed that the same group was responsible for the murders of 8 Turkish and 1 Greek person between 2000 and 2006. They identified themselves as "a network of comrades united under the motto 'actions instead of words'" and they threatened to make future attacks "if there are no fundamental changes in politics, the press and in freedom of speech"⁸. Journalists have found out some facts about these three people⁹: they have a long history of rightwing extremism stretching back to their youth¹⁰.

After the revelation of all this, the German authorities were under heavy pressure from local as well as international media and public to explain about how and why they failed to stop the fugitives' 13-year run of violence which resulted in 10 murders – including the killing

³ Retrieved from

http://www.verfassungsschutz.de/download/en/en_publications/annual_reports/vsbericht_2011_engl/vsbericht_2011_engl.pdf on January 07, 2013

⁴ <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/nov/18/how-german-neo-nazis-evaded-police>

⁵ http://www.focus.de/politik/deutschland/mordserie-in-deutschland-bundesrichter-erlaesst-haftbefehl-gegen-beate-z-_aid_684001.html

⁶ http://www.nytimes.com/2011/11/14/world/europe/neo-nazis-suspected-in-wave-of-crimes-in-germany.html?_r=0

⁷ <http://www.abendblatt.de/politik/deutschland/article2091707/Dokumentierten-rechtsextreme-Taeter-ihre-Hinrichtungen.html>

⁸ <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/nov/18/how-german-neo-nazis-evaded-police>

⁹ <http://www.abendblatt.de/politik/deutschland/article2091707/Dokumentierten-rechtsextreme-Taeter-ihre-Hinrichtungen.html>

¹⁰ <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/nov/18/how-german-neo-nazis-evaded-police>

of a police officer and a series of attacks on Turkish immigrants – 14 bank robberies and at least two nail-bomb attacks and it was reported in the news resources that the toll could rise as investigators reopen dozens of unsolved cases dating back to 1998¹¹. Furthermore, it was also discovered that this group had prepared a hit-list of 88 possible targets, including two prominent members of the Bundestag and representatives of Turkish and Islamic groups¹².

Purpose

Xenophobia is defined as an attitudinal orientation of hostility against non-natives in a given population and it is believed to be connected to racism and right-wing extremism¹³. The purpose of this project is to conduct research about the reasons, indications and development of xenophobia among the general German public towards German-Turks and to find out whether government policies create a favorable climate for the existence and emergence of xenophobia and to try to explain the past and planned activities of the NSU under the light of my findings. For the purpose of this research, German-Turk is defined as any person living in Germany, who has or had Turkish citizenship, at least a mother or father has or had Turkish citizenship and who is or is believed to be Muslim, no matter if they are official German citizens or not; likewise, whether they have legal residence and work permits is irrelevant to my definition, as well.

My hypothesis is that the official policies of the government are creating a favorable environment for the emergence and strengthening of xenophobia against German-Turks in Germany and the 13 year long activities of the National Socialist Underground, without being caught, supports my hypothesis. I also believe that the past and current citizenship laws in Germany are also discriminatory and foster xenophobia. Accordingly, I try to analyze the activities of the National Socialist Underground in the light of these hypotheses.

¹¹ <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/nov/18/how-german-neo-nazis-evaded-police>

¹² <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/nov/16/german-neo-nazi-terror-hitlist?newsfeed=true>

¹³ Boehnke, Klaus & Hagan, John & Hefler, Gerd. On the Development of Xenophobia in Germany: The Adolescent Years. *Journal of Social Issues*, Vol. 54, No. 3, 1998, pp. 585-602

Methodology

In order to test my hypotheses, I analyzed data from several studies conducted in the field of xenophobia in Germany, especially about the presence, prevalence and development of xenophobia against migrant groups, conducted among people including those who were born in 1970s; so my main sources are secondary sources. However, I also analyze a report of the European monitoring center on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC) on discrimination against Muslims and Islamophobia in the European Union. Furthermore, I analyze the book *Deutschland Schafft Sich Ab, Wie Wir Unser Land Auf's Spiel Setzen* written by Thilo Sarrazin in 2010, which became a bestseller in Germany, in which as Kunst, Tajamal, Sam and Ulleberg conclude¹⁴, the writer mainly argues that migration from the Islamic countries is a major threat to the European cultural model and that Muslim migrants are not interested in education or integration and thus they are a threat to the German nation. I also look at the results of an opinion poll in Germany, which was conducted just after the publication of this book, which, again as put by Kunst, Tajamal, Sam and Ulleberg, showed that about half of the German participants agreed with Sarrazin's statements and nearly 20 percent indicated that they would vote for a political party with Sarrazin as a leader (Consumer Field Work, 2010; Silalahi, 2010). In light of my findings, I try to explain the activities of the National Socialist Underground. I use newspaper articles published in English and German to find out more about the activities of National Socialist Underground.

The Study

Members of the NSU, who were born in 1975 and 1977, were actively involved in right-wing groups as early as 1991¹⁵. Klaus Boehnke, John Hagan and Gerd Hefler conducted an impressive research on the development of xenophobia in Germany among German adolescents around 1990s¹⁶. They tested two main hypotheses: hierarchic self-interest and low self-esteem are the driving forces behind xenophobia among 13 – 16 year olds. They show in

¹⁴ Kunst, Jonas R. & Tajamal, Hajra & Sam, David L. & Ulleberg, Pal. Coping with Islamophobia; The Effects of Religious Stigma on Muslim Minorities' Identity Formation. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* 36 (2012), pp. 518-532.

¹⁵ Retrieved from http://www.thueringen.de/imperia/md/content/tim/veranstaltungen/120515_schaefer_gutachten.pdf on December 09, 2012.

¹⁶ Boehnke, Klaus & Hagan, John & Hefler, Gerd. On the Development of Xenophobia in Germany: The Adolescent Years. *Journal of Social Issues*, Vol. 54, No. 3, 1998, pp. 585-602

a two-wave cross sectional study and two-cohort longitudinal study that individual preferences for hierarchic self-interest are a powerful predictor of levels of xenophobia¹⁷.

They expected to find out that xenophobia would be higher among boys than among girls, in East than in West Germany, in those in non-university-bound than in university-bound school tracks, in the mid- than in the early 1990s, and among younger than among older adolescents. However, they did not expect that all of these effects would be influenced by individual levels of hierarchic self-interest and self-esteem and that they would be considerably reduced if not disappear when these two variables were introduced as predictors of xenophobia¹⁸.

They found the following:

1. Xenophobia was not particularly high among the surveyed youth,
2. Xenophobia was higher in 1995 than it had been in 1991,
3. There was no significant main effect of age group, but there was a significant interaction of age group and year, with eighth graders (having slightly lower means than tenth graders in 1991) showing a steeper increase between years in xenophobia,
4. There was a striking difference in xenophobia between the university-bound students and students in other school tracks. This confirmed the researchers' expectations,
5. Xenophobia of the East Berliners exceeded that of the West Berliners by two thirds of a standard deviation, and 13% of the variance was explained by the East-West factor,
6. The steepest increase in xenophobia over time was found among students from Gymnasium, the university-bound school track, which shows the lowest xenophobia scores among school tracks,
7. Those adolescents who expressed little self-esteem exhibited less xenophobia,
8. Hierarchic self-interest was a strong predictor of the level of xenophobia,
9. Higher levels of xenophobia among boys were almost entirely a consequence of boys' higher levels of hierarchic self-interest,
10. Low self-esteem was related in the unexpected direction of lowering levels of xenophobia. In other words, those youth who indicated by their answers that they were least ill at ease were the ones who were most xenophobic,
11. Xenophobia was quite a stable construct among the adolescents studied. Xenophobia at 15 was primarily determined by the level of xenophobia at 13,

¹⁷ *Ibid*, p. 585.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, p. 589.

12. Not only was the level of xenophobia influenced by historic time, school track, dwelling region, and gender, but so was change in xenophobia. Increases in xenophobia between early and middle adolescence were steeper in the mid- than in the early 1990s; they were stronger among students from non-university-bound school tracks, stronger for those who lived in East Berlin, and stronger for boys and these findings persisted when hierarchic self-interest and low self-esteem were added to the equations,
13. However, hierarchic self-interest did not predict change in the level of xenophobia during adolescence. Although hierarchic self-interest was strongly predictive of level of xenophobia, but it did not discernibly result in a change in xenophobia in the early to middle teens.

Their conclusion is as follows:

“Living in East Berlin, being on a non-university-bound school track, or being a boy influences not only the level of xenophobia, but also the development over time of xenophobic attitudes. Youth from different milieus seem to drift apart within the two years of early to mid-adolescence that we have been able to examine. That is, our study provides evidence that living in East Berlin, being on a lower school track, and living the life of a boy leads these adolescents to become more xenophobic in the course of two years. We see this as evidence of the devastating effect school tracking and other types of segregated youth life have on xenophobia and racism.¹⁹”

Members of the NSU, who were teenagers in the 1990s, were living in Zwickau, which is in the Eastern Germany. There are frequent Nazi demonstrations in Zwickau²⁰. There are pictures of Mundlos and Bönhardt from 1991 wearing typical Nazi outfit for that time: jeans with black, red and gold braces²¹ (not released to the public). Bönhardt hung a doll from a motorway bridge in Jena with a Star of David on it and a bomb planted inside in 1996²² and they had bad school records²³. Accordingly, it is possible to conclude that their social environment and level of success at the school also contributed to their perception of migrants as “enemies”. It is worthwhile to emphasize here the fact that there had been a substantial

¹⁹ *Ibid*, p. 597.

²⁰ Retrieved from <http://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/on-the-trail-of-the-pink-panther-tracing-a-right-wing-terror-cell-s-ties-across-germany-a-798409.html> on January 07, 2013

²¹ Retrieved from <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/nov/18/how-german-neo-nazis-evaded-police> on January 07,2013

²² Retrieved from <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/nov/18/how-german-neo-nazis-evaded-police> on January 07,2013

²³ Retrieved from <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/nov/18/how-german-neo-nazis-evaded-police> on January 07,2013

change in the education system of former East Germany with the unification, which members of the NSU experienced firsthand.

At this point, I want to resort to another study called “Changes in Resistance to the Social Integration of Foreigners in Germany 1980-2000: Individual and Contextual Determinants” conducted by Marcel Coenders and Peer Scheepers²⁴. In this study, Coenders and Scheepers analyzed the change in unfavorable attitudes towards foreigners among the (West) German public over a period of two decades. Applying pooled survey data from 1980 to 2000, they found an overall trend towards less resistance to the social integration of foreigners, only interrupted by a minor increase between 1994 and 1996²⁵. They applied national statistics to indicate the societal context at the time of survey measurement (period characteristics) and during the adolescent years of respondents (cohort characteristics)²⁶.

They have found out that the overall change in 1980 – 2000 might result from either net individual change or population turnover, or both (Firebaugh 1997). They explained that the aggregate change might stem from individual change in attitude or from a change in population composition since older birth cohorts die off and are replaced by younger birth cohorts with different attitudes. With some exceptions, they found out that the older birth cohorts (born before 1946) mostly changed towards less resistance, the middle-aged birth cohorts (born between 1946 and 1965) were mostly relatively stable, whereas the younger birth cohorts (born after 1965) mostly changed towards more resistance. They state that one plausible interpretation would be that the young, who have to enter or have recently entered the labor market, are more strongly affected by contemporary societal circumstances such as the level of unemployment, and will therefore react more strongly to contemporary societal events than the older birth cohorts²⁷.

Their findings are as follows:

1. Changes in the unemployment rate over the last five years as well as a change in foreign immigration both have a positive effect on resistance to social integration,
2. An increase in ethnic competition, as indicated by rising unemployment and/or rising immigration, is accompanied by more resistance to social integration,

²⁴ Coenders, Marcel & Scheepers, Peer. Changes in Resistance to the Social Integration of Foreigners in Germany 1980 – 2000: Individual and Contextual Determinants. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, Vol. 34, No. 1, January 2008, pp. 1-26.

²⁵ *Ibid*, p. 1.

²⁶ *Ibid*, p. 4.

²⁷ *Ibid*, p. 14.

3. Resistance to the social integration of foreigners was smaller when unemployment and immigration were high,
4. A higher level of ethnic competition is not related to stronger resistance to social integration, but an increase of ethnic competition is,
5. The level of unemployment during one's formative years had a positive effect on the resistance to social integration,
6. People with only primary (or less) education are significantly more resistant to social integration than people who have attained a higher level of scientific training, but this also holds for people with middle-level secondary education or with a higher level of vocational training,
7. No significant differences at all between people belonging to different income categories. However, they found significant differences between people belonging to distinct occupational categories. It turned out that people who perform semi- and unskilled manual work express the strongest resistance to social integration, compared to people belonging to the higher service class, followed by the unemployed. Yet, they found that small employers with and without employees and farmers show a fairly strong resistance to social integration,
8. People living in urbanized surroundings, i.e. in cities of more than 500,000 inhabitants, show significantly less resistance to social integration than people living in small towns. Social contacts have a similar effect: the more inter-ethnic contacts people have, the less they oppose social integration,
9. People belonging to Protestant and Catholic denominations show more resistance to social integration than non-religious people,
10. The more right-wing people are and the more materialist they are, the stronger they oppose social integration.

When I look at the NSU in light of this data, I see that they do not have any work records – at least not yet released; they have low degrees of education, which might contribute to their resistance to social integration; less than 100,000 people live in Zwickau²⁸ and they show extreme right-wing tendencies. However, at this point I want to emphasize that the members of NSU themselves were also in a process of integration with the rest of the German society

²⁸ Retrieved from <http://population.mongabay.com/population/germany/2803560/zwickau> on January 07, 2012

and the problems they experienced in this process might have also contributed to their feeling of xenophobia.

In the study called “Estimating the prevalence of xenophobia and anti-Semitism in Germany: A comparison of randomized response and direct questioning” conducted by Ivar Krumpal, sensitive questions about xenophobia and anti-Semitism in Germany were asked to compare the randomized response technique (RRT) and the direct questioning technique²⁹. As stated by Krumpal, the randomized response technique (RRT; Warner, 1965) was developed to protect the respondent’s privacy in the interview situation and obtain more valid self-reports to sensitive questions. After discussing Anti-Semitism, Krumpal explains xenophobia as follows:

“By contrast, competition on the labor market, entitlement to welfare services and feelings of social distance have been the major issues shaping sentiments towards migrant workers and foreigner in post-war Germany (Bergmann, 1997). Prejudices against lower-class foreigners are primarily based on social competition and conflict and differ from the traditional stereotypes imputed to middle-class, socially integrated Jews. The negative attitudes toward foreign nationals tend to involve accusations such as they would take away the jobs from the Germans. Furthermore, fears of foreign influences threatening the German culture pose another source of xenophobic hostility, in particular toward Turks and Arabs. Finally, foreigners are often suspected of committing social fraud and to intentionally exploit the welfare system. The prevalence and distribution of such prejudices in the German population have been measured via the degree of agreement to items reflecting clichés and negative stereotypes such as (Decker and Brähler, 2006): ‘If jobs are in short supply, immigrants should be sent home’, or ‘Foreigners only come to Germany to take advantage of our welfare state’.³⁰”

I omitted the comments related to the Jews, as in the previous section, since I am merely interested in the attitudes towards German-Turks. With regard to the relationships between the socio-demographic characteristics and the odds of having prejudiced opinions toward foreigners, he found the following:

1. Female respondents have significantly higher odds of reporting xenophobic attitudes than male respondents,

²⁹ Krumpal, Ivar. Estimating the Prevalence of Xenophobia and Anti-Semitism in Germany: A Comparison of Randomized Response and Direct Questioning. *Social Science Research* 41 (2012), pp. 1387-1403.

³⁰ *Ibid*, p. 1389.

2. With increasing levels of formal education, the odds of being prejudiced towards foreigners significantly decrease,
3. There are higher prevalence rates of antiforeigner attitudes in East Germany,
4. Respondents from urban areas are less xenophobe compared to respondents from rural areas and with increasing city size, the odds of being prejudiced toward foreigners significantly decrease,
5. Respondents with a high degree of generalized trust have significantly lower odds of being prejudiced compared to respondents with a low degree of generalized trust and this result confirmed the hypothesis that generalized trust which is an important dimension of social capital fosters tolerance and at the same time suppresses prejudices against societal minorities, which indicates xenophobes and anti-Semites respectively appear to be very distrustful people.

With regard to the members of the NSU, I can say that in addition to their being from the former East Germany, they have low degree of education, which might have contributed to their being prejudiced towards foreigners and I can conclude that they lack generalized trust from the amount of information I have about them. Moreover, due to their low-level of education, they might feel themselves competing with migrants for employment, although we do not have any work records. On the other hand, as Krumpal suggested, a feeling of social distance might be a strong factor in this case. Considering that they witnessed a revolutionary transition between two cultures, they might feel social insecurity and as a result of facing difficulties in social integration with the former West Germany, they might have developed xenophobia and they might be blaming migrants for their problems in the society.

Another study, conducted by Michael Fertig and Christoph M. Schmidt, called “Attitudes towards foreigners and Jews in Germany: identifying the determinants of xenophobia in a large opinion survey” uses a structural model to explain the answers on a set of questions regarding the perception of foreigners and Jews by native Germans³¹. I omitted the comments related to the Jews, as in the previous section, since I am merely interested in the attitudes towards German-Turks. The researchers claim that serious xenophobic attitudes among young people in Germany persist and these attitudes are mainly the result of the dull economic prospects of the respondents. They propose, therefore, that an adequate counter-

³¹ Fertig, Michael & Schmidt, Christoph M. Attitudes Towards Foreigners and Jews in Germany; Identifying the Determinants of Xenophobia in a Large Opinion Survey. *Review of Economics of the Household* (2011) 9, pp. 99-128.

strategy must be a program aiming at the enhancement of the education and formal training possibilities of German youth³².

The sample was drawn out of all individuals living in private households who, for the 1996 wave, were born prior to January 1, 1978. This wave, conducted between March and June 1996, contained questions on the perception of and attitudes towards immigrants, foreigners and Jews as well as standard socio-economic characteristics of the respondents³³. Their findings are as follows:

1. East German respondents tend to display a slightly more negative attitude towards foreigners,
2. Individuals with medium or even high education and academics clearly tend to answer more favorably,
3. Respondents with no formal training and respondents who experience employment problems tend to answer in a more negative fashion.

Their results suggest that more education on average would change preferences and perceptions positively. They argue that for the success of an immigration policy aiming at the attraction of high-skilled migrants from all over the world, it is important to employ measures that are able to enhance the perception of foreigners in Germany. Therefore, such education programs and initiatives could be helpful. However, they state that the success of such activities is far from being guaranteed.

At this point, I want to revert to a study on the new citizenship law in Germany, called “The Causes and Consequences of Germany’s New Citizenship Law” conducted by Marc Morjé Howard³⁴. This article focuses on the German case to illustrate more general dynamics and theoretical arguments about the politics of citizenship and it shows how an elite-driven process can lead to liberalizing change – despite strong anti-immigrant sentiment within the population – but also how the mobilization of xenophobia can lead to a rather sudden restrictive backlash.³⁵

³² *Ibid*, p. 100.

³³ *Ibid*, p. 110.

³⁴ Howard, March Morjé. The Causes and Consequences of Germany’s New Citizenship Law. *German Politics*; Vol. 17, No. 1, March 2008, pp. 41-62.

³⁵ *Ibid*, p. 41.

As explained in the article, the German citizenship law of 1913 was based on the principle that German citizenship refers to a ‘community of descent’, with little regard for birthplace and residence. Howard argues that after the collapse of the Weimar Republic, this blood-based definition of citizenship was easily manipulated by the Nazi regime for its genocidal purposes. He states that upon coming to power, the Nazis quickly abolished regional citizenship and created a unitary state. He mentions that they also cancelled the naturalization processes that had taken place in the Weimar period, revoked the German citizenship of those viewed as ‘having violated a duty of loyalty to the German Empire or the “German Nation”’ and withdrew the citizenship rights of German Jews³⁶. He argues that this law remained in force after German unification in 1990 and the collapse of the Soviet bloc in 1991, although it was outdated at that point and it started to be used against the migrants who came to work in Germany for discriminatory purposes. Regarding the German-Turks, he writes the following:

“The striking contrast between German-born Turks (speaking fluent German, often studying and working productively in Germany, yet not being granted citizenship) and the large numbers of ‘ethnic Germans’ (arriving with little to no knowledge of German language or culture, yet being granted citizenship automatically) was becoming more and more difficult to justify, either morally or economically.³⁷”

He explains that there was a significant domestic and international pressure on Germany to liberalize its citizenship law:

“German society was fundamentally changed by nearly two decades of ‘guest worker’ programs, from the mid-1950s until 1973, which cycled millions of working men from Italy, Greece, Portugal, Turkey, and Yugoslavia in and out of Germany. At the peak of the program in 1973 there were about 14 million guest workers residing in Germany, 11 million of whom left for their home countries when the oil crisis led to the end of the guest worker model. But three million of them – mainly from Turkey – stayed behind, and with the support of German and international courts, they eventually brought their families to join them and went on to have children who were born on German soil. The result was that Germany transformed from a society with under 700,000 foreigners in 1960 to one with 7.3 million foreigners today – constituting about 9 per cent of its population.³⁸”

³⁶ *Ibid*, p. 42.

³⁷ *Ibid*, p. 43.

³⁸ *Ibid*, p. 44.

He argues that thanks to the 1990 citizenship law, which slightly liberalized the requirements for naturalization, the long-standing definition of German citizenship as being based on German descent was finally modified. He states that although the requirements were still quite difficult compared to other European countries, it finally became conceivable that people from entirely non-German family backgrounds could become full citizens of Germany, which was an impressive establishment for Germany, considering its past. He explains that Schröder and the SPD wanted to extend the citizenship to grant dual citizenship to the immigrants, who did not have German citizenship and this effort was opposed by CDU, which conducted a campaign against this idea and in the end, CDU gathered 5 million signatures against the proposed amendments in the citizenship law. Howard explains it as follows:

“In other words, while the liberalization process had proceeded for a period of nearly two decades, it did so quietly, at the elite level, and with little public involvement. However, once the CDU/CSU made the strategic decision to politicize the issue and to mobilize what had always been a latently anti-immigrant sentiment by focusing the campaign for the Hessen *Landtag* elections on the issue of opposition to dual citizenship, the terms changed. And as a result of this popular mobilization, the process of liberalization was abruptly and stunningly halted, leading to a backlash of restrictive measures that were amended to the government’s original proposal. In short, the mobilization of a previously latent anti-immigrant public essentially ‘trumped’ the longstanding and elite-driven process of liberalization.³⁹”

He explains that as a result of all these discussions, the German Nationality Act of 2000 was enacted and it reduced the residency requirement for obtaining citizenship from 15 to 8 years, which applies to people who have a valid residence permit, gainful employment, no criminal convictions, and it also added a language requirement that is instead administered by individual regions. He states that children born on German soil now automatically become German citizens if at least one of the parents has had a legal residence permit for eight years or an unlimited residence permit for three years and the (‘third generation’) German-born children of a (‘second-generation’) German-born person would automatically receive German citizenship, regardless of the status of that person’s residence permit.

He emphasizes that in practice, this residence restriction rules out many foreigners, since such permits are difficult to obtain, and they require steady paid employment and a lack of dependence on the welfare state. He mentions that given how many second- and third-

³⁹ *Ibid*, p. 52.

generation immigrants live in Germany, this restriction effectively prevents the acquisition of German citizenship for approximately 60 per cent of the children born in Germany since the law has taken effect. He argues that the new law also provides that children who receive German citizenship through the procedures described above are allowed to hold dual citizenship until adulthood, but then they must choose one or the other citizenship before reaching the age of 18.⁴⁰ However, I conclude that this law prevents the dual citizenship that Schröder initially proposed. He explains the effects of the law as follows:

“Moreover, the requirement that naturalizing citizens renounce their former citizenship can be waived in cases when that renunciation would bring about excessive ‘hardship’. And in practice, according to a report from the Commissioner for Foreigners of the federal government, 44.6 per cent of naturalized citizens in the year 2000 were able to keep their citizenship. These figures included over 90 per cent of the people who originally came from countries like Iran and Afghanistan, but also 29 per cent of Turks. The figures for Turkish-Germans was somewhat higher than usual in 2000 because of certain loopholes – which have since been closed – that allowed people to renounce their Turkish citizenship upon acquiring German citizenship, but immediately thereafter to reacquire their Turkish passports. In 2003, only 14 per cent of Turks who became naturalized Germans were able to keep their Turkish citizenships as well.”⁴¹

He argues that since dual citizenship is provided only partially, namely until the age of 18, this is still a liberalization and improvement compared to the previous law of 1913. He discusses the reasons for many eligible foreigners’, who can become German citizens, refrained from obtaining citizenship with the fact that German welfare state benefits are so generous that most foreigners already receive all rights and privileges, except the right to vote, and therefore they do not feel a strong need to acquire that right – since they are otherwise fully satisfied. However, he also mentions that this does not explain the fact that although the fellow welfare state of Sweden is much more improved, how its naturalization rate is still higher than Germany.

He argues that a more likely reason for the foreigners in Germany being reluctant to renounce their current citizenship is that if they gave up their current citizenship, they would have to relinquish any inheritance, property, and burial rights in their current country. He also explains that the act of relinquishing one’s prior citizenship in order to become a naturalized German could be quite costly. Regardless of the reasons for the said reluctance, he stresses that under the previous law few foreigners were willing to take the necessary steps to acquire

⁴⁰ *Ibid*, p. 53.

⁴¹ *Ibid*, p. 53.

German citizenship, and so far the new law has not brought about any dramatic changes in this regard, which I believe, signifies lack of integration in the society in general. Accordingly I believe that in addition to the trauma experienced during and after unification of Germany, drastic social and economic changes, which discourage the German public from being more welcoming towards the migrants, the legislation in Germany also discourages the migrants from socially integrating with the German public.

In the study called “Coping with Islamophobia: The effects of religious stigma on Muslim minorities’ identity formation”, Jonas R. Kunsta, Hajra Tajamala, David L. Samb and Pål Ulleberga studied examined direct and indirect effects of different forms of religious stigma on the national affiliation of 210 Norwegian-Pakistani and 216 German-Turkish Muslims, using structural equation modeling. I am only looking at the parts of the study, related to German-Turks⁴².

They conducted this study to find out the extent to which perceptions of an Islamophobic society, experiences of religious discrimination and negative representations of Muslims in the media influence Muslims’ religious identity, national identity and national engagement in a group of Norwegian-Pakistani and German-Turkish Muslims. They show that a 2004 opinion poll in Germany indicated that a vast majority of the participants associated Islam with terror and with the oppression of women. Moreover, more than half of the respondents did not believe in the peaceful coexistence of Christianity and Islam. They argue that this development ultimately peaked in August 2010, when Thilo Sarrazin, a representative of the German Social Democratic Party, in a bestselling book called *Deutschland Schafft Sich Ab, Wie Wir Unser Land Aufs Spiel Setzen*⁴³ stated that migration from Islamic countries constitutes a major threat to the European cultural model and that Muslim migrants generally are uninterested in education, unwilling to integrate and a threat to the nation.

In the aforementioned book Sarrazin argues that even the second generation of Muslim migrants in Germany have lower professional qualifications and academic performance, so they form a lower class and they increase structural problems in Germany by migrating from the Middle East and Africa; moreover, because of these migrants, the proportion of intellectually weaker layers of the society is getting bigger. He states that the number of

⁴² Kunst, Jonas R. & Tajamal, Hajra & Sam, David L. & Ulleberg, Pal. Coping with Islamophobia; The Effects of Religious Stigma on Muslim Minorities’ Identity Formation. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* 36 (2012), pp. 518-532.

⁴³ Sarrazin, Thilo. *Deutschland Schafft Sich Ab, Wie Wir Unser Land Aufs Spiel Setzen*. Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 2. Auflage, 2010.

foreigners in Germany grew from 3 to 7.3 million from 1970 to 2003; however, the number of foreigners, who have social insurance, did not change and remained as 1.8 million. He argues that the basic social security system of Germany is so well-designed that Muslim migrants in Germany earn at least 60 percent of a median income as unemployment payment and this amount is sufficient for them to have a dream-like life in Germany, without even working. He asserts that income claims of the Muslim migrants are over their skill-level even from the beginning and so their high rate of unemployment is pre-programmed. People migrate from Africa, Near East and Middle East to Germany to improve their living standards and the German social system guarantees this even without working.

Accordingly, he compares Germany with the US and Canada, and says that since these countries do not have a welfare system like Germany, people who migrate to these countries know that they cannot survive there without working. He argues that only the unfit for working and lazy people migrate to Germany, if their country of origin is poor. He also mentions that there is a persistent decline in the working population in Germany and the proportion of the immigrants to Germans is constantly increasing, which should be addressed because otherwise, there will not be a qualified youth appropriate for these jobs in Germany, again since these migrants are not fit for these jobs⁴⁴.

Kunst, Tajamal, Sam and Ulleberg indicate that about half of the German participants of a recent survey agreed with Sarrazin's statements and nearly 20 percent indicated that they would vote for a political party with Sarrazin as a leader (Consumer Field Work, 2010; Silalahi, 2010). They continue with the following:

“Moreover, an opinion poll published in 2010 showed that most participants agreed with the statement that “Muslims’ religious practice in Germany should be substantially restricted” (Decker, Weißmann, Kiess, & Brähler, 2010). Finally, the recently appointed interior minister, Hans-Peter Friedrich, publicly asserted that “Islam does not belong to Germany” (Vitzthum, 2011).”

Their findings related to German-Turks are as follows:

1. Religious identity negatively affected national identity and private and public national engagement,
2. Religious discrimination had a weak direct negative impact on national identity,

⁴⁴ *Ibid*, pp. 370-371.

3. Negative media representations had a negative indirect impact on the participants' national identity, private national engagement and public national engagement, mediated by religious identity,
4. Religious discrimination was a negative indirect predictor of the German-Turkish respondents' national identity, private national engagement and public national engagement.

Accordingly, it is possible to conclude that the religion of the German-Turks is an important factor, affecting the level of xenophobia. The perception of Islam is not good and even the Interior Minister explicitly expresses his feelings about Islam to public media, which does not help to encourage social integration.

European Monitoring Center on Racism and Xenophobia published a report called "Muslims in the European Union, Discrimination and Islamophobia"⁴⁵. In the conclusion section of this report, the following remarks are made:

"... It is evident that Muslims often experience various levels of discrimination and marginalization in employment, education and housing, and are also victims of negative stereotyping and prejudicial attitudes. It is difficult to attribute such discriminatory phenomena exclusively to religion, as Muslims are likely to become victims of multiple discrimination on the basis of their religion, race, national or ethnic origin, language, color, nationality, gender, and even legal status. (...) Discrimination against Muslims can therefore be attributed to Islamophobic attitudes, as well as to racist and xenophobic resentment, as these elements are in many cases inextricably intertwined. Racism, xenophobia and Islamophobia become mutually reinforcing phenomena and hostility against Muslims should thus be seen in the context of a more general climate of hostility towards migrants and ethnic minorities. This report finds that Muslims are vulnerable to discrimination and manifestations of Islamophobia in the form of anything from verbal threats through to physical attacks on people and property. The report presents research and statistical data – mostly through 'proxy' data, referring to nationality and ethnicity – showing that Muslims are often residents in areas with poor housing conditions, while their educational achievement generally falls below national averages and their unemployment rates tend to be higher than average. Muslims tend to be employed in jobs that require lower qualifications and as a group they are over-represented in low-paying sectors of the economy. Thus, many Muslims, particularly young people, face limited opportunities for social advancement and experience social exclusion and discrimination. Yet, given the paucity of available data, it is clear that the true extent

⁴⁵ European Monitoring Center on Racism and Xenophobia. "Muslims in the European Union, Discrimination and Islamophobia". EUMC 2006.

and nature of discrimination and Islamophobic incidents against Muslims continues to be under-documented⁴⁶.”

Conclusion

I demonstrated my hypothesis that the official policies of the German government create a favorable environment for the emergence and strengthening of xenophobia against German-Turks in Germany and the 13 year long activities of the National Socialist Underground, without being caught, is a proof of that. I concluded that the past and current citizenship laws in Germany are discriminatory and fostering xenophobia. Moreover, the significant changes in the education system, daily social life and economy experienced in the former East Germany are important factors, which need to be taken into consideration while talking about xenophobia. There is an on-going process of integration in Germany; both among Germans of former West Germany and East Germany and also among the Germans in general and the migrants. Accordingly, there is some competition among the members of the society for employment opportunities. Furthermore, the perception of Islam in Germany is not positive and this contributes to the reluctancy of social integration for both sides in the society. However, I believe these facts alone are not sufficient to thoroughly understand and analyze the underlying reasons for the activities of the NSU.

Consequently, this research is useful in understanding the development of xenophobia among the German public and it gives an idea about possible reasons about why Uwe Böhnhardt, Uwe Mundlos, and Beate Zschäpe, founders of the National Socialist Underground (NSU), acted in the way they did; however, this research also shows that xenophobia alone is insufficient in explaining their activities. The right wing groups that these people were associated with need to be analyzed further to understand thoroughly why they did what they did and how to prevent these events from happening again.

⁴⁶ *Ibid*, p. 108.

References

- Boehnke, Klaus & Hagan, John & Hefler, Gerd. On the Development of Xenophobia in Germany: The Adolescent Years. *Journal of Social Issues*, Vol. 54, No. 3, 1998, pp. 585-602.
- Coenders, Marcel & Scheepers, Peer. Changes in Resistance to the Social Integration of Foreigners in Germany 1980 – 2000: Individual and Contextual Determinants. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, Vol. 34, No. 1, January 2008, pp. 1-26.
- Consumerfieldwork (2010). Meinungsumfrage zur Buchveröffentlichung von Thilo Sarrazin: Hat Sarrazin recht, oder hat Sarrazin nicht recht? Retrieved from <http://www.openpr.de/news/463082/> and <http://www.consumerfieldwork.de/pressemitteilung-sarrazin-umfrage.htm> on November 11, 2012.
- Eslaporte. Why far right terrorism is dangerous in Europe: November 17 and the National Socialist Underground in Germany-Comparisons, retrieved from <http://yellow-stars.com/blog/2011/12/07/why-right-terrorism-dangerous-in-europe-november-17-national-socialist-underground-in-germany/> on November 09, 2012.
- Fertig, Michael & Schmidt, Christoph M. Attitudes Towards Foreigners and Jews in Germany; Identifying the Determinants of Xenophobia in a Large Opinion Survey. *Review of Economics of the Household* (2011) 9, pp. 99-128.
- Firebaugh, G. *Analyzing Repeated Surveys*. (1997) Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Howard, March Morjé. The Causes and Consequences of Germany's New Citizenship Law. *German Politics*; Vol. 17, No. 1, March 2008, pp. 41-62.
- Muslims in the European Union, Discrimination and Islamophobia, *European Monitoring Center on Racism and Xenophobia*. EUMC, 2006.
- Krumpal, Ivar. Estimating the Prevalence of Xenophobia and Anti-Semitism in Germany: A Comparison of Randomized Response and Direct Questioning. *Social Science Research* 41 (2012), pp. 1387-1403.

- Kunst, Jonas R. & Tajamal, Hajra & Sam, David L. & Ulleberg, Pal. Coping with Islamophobia; The Effects of Religious Stigma on Muslim Minorities' Identity Formation. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* 36 (2012), pp. 518-532.
- Sarrazin, Thilo. *Deutschland Schafft Sich Ab, Wie Wir Unser Land Aufs Spiel Setzen*. Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 2. Auflage, 2010.
- Silalahi, P. (2010, September 5). Wie groß wäre eine Partei der Unzufriedenen? Bild am sonntag. Retrived from <http://www.bild.de/politik/2010/politik/achtzehn-prozent-wuerden-sarrazin-partei-waehlen-13857592.bild.html> on November 11, 2012.