



RESEARCH ARTICLE

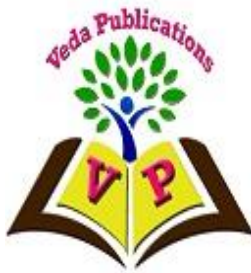
**MUSLIM MIGRANTS IN GERMANY: A STUDY OF THILO'S SARRAZZIN'S BOOK "DEUTSCHLAND SCHAFFT SICH AB"**

Oluwakemisola Adeusi

PhD candidate, Stanford University<https://doi.org/10.54513/JOELL.2024.11103>**ABSTRACT**

This study explores the seventh chapter of Thilo Sarrazin's 2010 book "Deutschland schafft sich ab," which reflects his negative stance on immigration and perceptions of immigrants' resistance to integration in Germany. The chapter titled "Zuwanderung und Integration" (Immigration and Integration) with the subtitle, "mehr erwarten, weniger anbieten" (expect more, offer less), addresses critical threats to Germany's future, such as declining birth rates and challenges with integration, especially concerning migrants from Muslim-majority nations. The book's sensitive topics triggered widespread controversy and media attention, contributing significantly to societal debates on migration and integration in Germany.

This paper also analyzes the reception of "Deutschland schafft sich ab" by considering viewpoints from both supporters (like Bassam Tibi and Necla Kelek) and critics (like Solibakke Karl and Humboldt University Berlin) and proffers suggestions for a more balanced relationship and integration process.

Keywords:*Immigrants, Integration, Muslim, Germany, Discrimination, Islamophobia.***Article history:**

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Deutschland schafft sich ab is the title of a book by Thilo Sarrazin in 2010. With the subtitle *Wie wir unser Land aufs Spiel setzen*, it translates to "Germany abolishes itself; how we are putting ourselves at risk". In this book, Sarrazin provokes thoughts about the threats to Germany's future which are the declining birth rates among Germans, and the increase in the number of underclass and migrants from predominantly Muslim countries and their lack of integration in the German society. The publication experienced so much success despite the amount of criticism. Sarrazin said that he had expected to sell up to 50,000 copies and 100,000 copies at most. The book that was published in 2010 had sold over 1.5 million copies by early 2012. In 2010 and 2011, and for a total of 21 weeks, the book ranked top on the Spiegel bestseller list. Because of the sensitive topics in the book, it triggered controversy in the German society and attracted the attention of the media.

The book contains nine coherent chapters, but this paper will only explore his seventh chapter titled *Zuwanderung und Integration* (Immigration and Integration). With the chapter subtitle *mehr erwarten, weniger anbieten* (expect more, offer less), one could already guess his negative stance toward immigration into Germany and his perception that the immigrants have negative attitude towards integration in Germany.

He explains that a natural man is group-oriented and at different levels can feel a belonging to different groups, ranging from membership of a nation or ethnic group, of a party or religious community, of a football club fandom, residence in a community, etc. The association with these groups

unifies people and creates solidarity among people belonging to same group and naturally creates a contrast between them and members of other group which marks the beginning of arguments, aggression, and violence. The avoidance of the violence that stems from these differences is the achievement of modern civilization and state building by defining group membership and marking territories through the abolition of internal border and reinforcement of external borders. This is done in a bid to control immigration because uncontrolled migration can be dangerous and threatening to the state, examples of which include the erection of the Great Wall of China, the USA's border fence with Mexico, etc.

He refers to Irenäus Eibl-Eibesfeld's statement that reproduction is the major problem for the future and that every country must regulate its population according to its capacity. There is no justification of unsolicited migration as it is a violation of the sovereignty of a state. He goes back to the history of migration in Germany from after the Second World War, when the need for guest workers was high. Most of the workers came with their families and had different attitudes. For example, when most of the Italians went back, most of the Turks stayed behind and kept bringing families and reproducing, in a more rapid manner than the indigenous Germans.

This creates a problem for the future of Germany because of the declining birth rate among Germans, a fertility rate of 1.4 which means that the next four generations of German will be three quarter less than it is, with half of them above 50 years old. This condition would guarantee that the state and society would almost be void of the



autochthonous population. He further claims that the Germans are delusional that immigration would solve their demographic and economic problems because there has been no proof that the guest workers have significantly contributed to Germany's economy, at least not among Muslim migrants. Germany, he claims, is pretentious with its attitude towards migration issues by taking direction from the media because of political correctness. Because of the growing migration into European countries, there is an increase in the number of right-wing populists.

It is as though Sarazzin is not displeased with migrants in general but with only a specific group which he believes finds it the hardest with integration in Germany. The people belonging to this group are the Muslim migrants from Turkey, Africa, and the Near and the Middle East. To not generalize, he admits that the number of Christians from these regions is insignificant and that they show themselves to integrate better than their Muslim counterparts. In this regard, he considers it unfair that the migrants are lumped together and are not distinguished according to their ethnic groups and regions of origin, and this is an intentional act of political correctness. He says "...es übertreibt die Probleme der erfolgreichen Gruppen unter den Migranten beziehungsweise unterstellt dort Probleme, wo gar keine sind. Gleichzeitig verharmlost die Darstellung die spezifischen integrationsprobleme, die es mit der Migration aus muslimischen Ländern gibt." (262).

(...it exaggerates the problems of the more successful groups among the migrants, respectively assumes that there are problems where there are none. At the same time, the depiction downplays the

specific integration problems that comes with migration from Muslim countries.)

He reports that the percentage of Muslims is higher than other migrants, with a significantly higher birth rate, that the mean age among Muslims is 15 years less than that of the autochthonous German population with a ratio of 30 to 45 years. He also adds that 70 to 80 percent of migration problems can be traced back to the Muslim population. His explanation of the unattractive attributes of Muslims migrants includes the following and are not limited to Germany but spread across many European countries with the presence of Muslim migrants:

- unterdurchschnittliche Integration in den Arbeitsmarkt (below- average integration into the labor market).
- überdurchschnittliche Abhängigkeit von Sozialtransfers (above-average dependency on social transfers)
- unterdurchschnittliche Bildungsbeteiligung (below-average participation in education)
- überdurchschnittliche Fertilität (above-average fertility)
- räumliche Segregation mit der Tendenz zur Bildung von Paralelgesellschaften (spatial segregation with the tendency to form parallel societies)
- überdurchschnittliche Religiosität mit wachsender Tendenz zu traditionellen beziehungsweise fundamentalistischen Strömungen des Islam (above-average religiosity with a growing tendency of traditional or fundamentalist flow)



- überdurchschnittliche Kriminalität, von der "einfachen" Gewaltkriminalität auf der Straße bis hin zur Teilnahme an terroristischen Aktivitäten (above-average criminality, from "simple" violent crime on the street to participation in terroristic activities). (264)

He cites the example of the district of Neuköln in Berlin, the largest Turkish city in Germany in which most of the residents are the Muslim Turks and Arabs majority and where the problems above are more prevalent there just like in the other places in Germany with high concentration of Muslim migrants. He also has a problem with the headscarf among Muslim women which he believes is not a qualifier of a person's Muslim heart, but a visible sign of the parallel Muslim society and a signal of women's subordination to men, a rejection of the western's model of women's emancipation.

Sarrazin attributes the problems with the Muslim immigrants to their Islamic heritage and links Islam with violence. He does this by providing references to events involving Islamic violence and demonstrations around the world, claiming that the cost of accommodating Muslims in Germany is more than the economic benefits they bring. There are attempts to defend Islam by comparing it to Christianity, bringing the history of violence in Christianity into question. This defense does not hold water because Christianity has evolved and has experienced enlightenment which led to the separation of the church and the state and has been able to adjust to current ways of life while Islam is described as backward and closed in on itself. The

Muslims' belief in the absolute truth of the Quran makes them reject religious pluralism, thus making the transition from normal practices to extremism too blurred. The differences between the liberal Muslims who are pro-occident and the anti-occident Muslims emphasizes the ambiguity and the contradictory currents of Islam, Sarrazin explains.

What irks Sarrazin is Germany's effort to be politically correct in their avoidance of appearing racist or Islamophobic. What he wants is not for a religion to give up its beliefs but that these beliefs should not override state law and rules of civil life. In his response to Erdogan, the Prime minister of Turkey, who claims that Germany is being racist by placing a ban on minaret, Sarrazin claims that Turkey, a somewhat democratic nation is not in the position to speak about religious tolerance because of the pressure on the Christian minorities in the country and other Muslim countries. This drives home his point that liberalism should only be extended to the liberals.

He demands of Muslims that want to live in Germany is that they undergo assimilation to the German culture. Mustafa Cerić, the Grand Mufti of Bosnia Herzegovina, suggests that integration, rather than assimilation, is the right thing to demand because assimilation refers to the loss of one's identity, and shame of one's origin. Integration, he explains is the middle ground between assimilation and isolation. Integration, Sarrazin explains, should majorly be the responsibility of the individual rather than the host country. He accuses the Muslims of blaming their lack of integration on discrimination and racism from the autochthonous society. He refutes the claim of discrimination as the cause of



their lack of integration by explaining that other migrant groups like those from India or the far East look more alien than the Turks and Arab, yet they are more integrated. He blames the Muslim society by claiming that they stick to their traditional and native values by watching only television programs from home and restricting marriage to only members of their group which further isolate them. He also speaks about their anti-German traits and gives instances, which would be termed racism if the acts were performed by indigenous Germans.

He does not exempt Germany from this blame game. Apart from Germany's encouragement of the Muslim's lack of integration, unemployment, illiteracy, and over reproduction of children by becoming a welfare state through the provision of social benefits like Hartz IV, Germany's politics and media also avoids these kinds of discussion to avoid coming off as racists. He also blames Germany's lack of sanction for non-compliance with immigration policies. Comparing Germany to the US, where there are stricter immigration laws, non-provision of social benefits to immigrants, and sanction against non-compliance, the immigrants in the US are still more satisfied and are more integrated than those in Germany because their satisfaction comes from working their way up by themselves and they thank the US for the opportunity. In Germany, however, the welfare state allows for negative selection because it attracts the lower class from the homelands, who develop a dislike for their benefactor to protect their ego because they received the benefits on a platter.

One is forced to ask what Sarazzin wants. His demand from Germany is to set up cultural expectations in which integration is the sole

responsibility of the Muslims like it is in other countries and with other migrant groups. Under his sub-section "Was tun?", he suggests some measures through which Germany can facilitate the integration of the Muslim migrants and are summed up as the following:

- Enforcing compliance with statutory workdays for everyone who can work, where also the deduction of unemployment benefit is the result of non-participation or unpunctuality, where sick leave is checked and where language courses over community work is enforced for migrants that cannot speak German.
- Making kindergarten mandatory for children from the age of three where German is the lingua franca and focus will be on conversation and reading. The punishment for unexcused absence will be the reduction of the child's basic security. There will be no exemptions from classes for religious reasons. There will also be a ban on headscarves like in France.
- Tightening the language requirement for citizenship acquisition and increase in the requirement for language test for the spouses. Also, the immigration of spouse only on the basis that the partner in Germany has earned a living in Germany for three years without claiming basic securities, and the denial of basic security for the visiting spouse for ten years.



- Restricting conditions to apply for immigration in a bid to reduce negative selection of migrants. Fines should also be imposed for the accommodation of illegal immigrants. A database should then be set up for every immigrant to avoid forgery of immigration documents and IDs. (327-29)

Sarazzin means well for his country and can be considered a nationalist and one must applaud his courage in addressing such sensitive topic in a frank manner without minding the consequences. The problem he highlights and the way he highlights them calls for urgency. A country has the right to make policies in its favor to which every foreign member must adhere to if they choose to be present in the country like in the case of Qatar for the 2022 World Cup where several rules and regulations have been listed for visitors ("Qatar World Cup 2022").

One cannot deny everything that Sarazzin has written about Muslims in his book. Islamophobia is a justifiable fear but on the other hand, Sarazzin's book will increase the phobia. Also, this will trigger more disunity between Germans and Muslim migrants or migrants in general. His suggestions for Germany on how to foster integration among Muslim migrants might not be implemented because that will signal to the public that the German government agrees with him in his dislike for the Muslim migrants. Therefore, it looks like Sarazzin has only succeeded in expressing his built-up opinions and generating controversy, but what is a good book without controversies? According to a news article by Deutsche Welle, a survey that was carried out two weeks after the Sarazzin's book was published,

revealed the indifference to the issue of immigration in which more than half of German respondents consider immigration to be more of an opportunity than a problem which means that Sarazzin's book did not create any significant change (DW, 2011).

There have been many reactions to the book, some of which support Sarazzin, and some of which oppose his stance. It is also expected that the Muslim migrants would feel offended and targeted because no matter how much Sarazzin tried to act concerned for Germany and would like to protect its economy, culture, and nationhood, one cannot miss the underlying resentment towards Muslims. In comparing them to other migrants, he apportions the blame of almost all of Germany's problems to them. Critics of the book have accused Sarazzin of forging numbers and statistics to push his points. For example, the W-Serie of Humboldt University Berlin dedicated its second edition to proving the statistic of Sarazzin's thesis. The publication proves with actual statistics against Sarazzin's theses for example:

- that there is positive development in the educational situation among Muslims in Germany and an increase among the second generation, that migrants with Turkish background have an 800 percent increase in higher education qualification.
- that migrant families with Turkish background have a higher educational aspiration than families without a migration background.
- that the proportion of vocational disqualifications among migrants with Turkish background moved to 27% in



the second generation from 68% in the first generation.

- that while there was increase in education among young people with migration background, there was a decrease in competence among young people without migration background, that the percentage of Turkish migrants who earn their living from Hartz IV benefits was 9.5 as opposed to the quota of 40% reported by Sarazzin.
- that 70% of migrants with Turkish background have very good knowledge of German, that 70% of women with a Muslim migration background in Germany do not wear a headscarf.
- that only 7-10% of children with migration background do not take part in swimming and sport lessons, that more German restrict themselves to non-interethnic relationships and marriages than Muslim migrants.
- that the police and researchers have rejected the connection between Islam and crime in Germany, and that the net immigration of Turkish national has been declining for consecutive years (15-17).

If Sarazzin is concerned about the preservation of the German majority and a collective German goal, he would be bothered about immigrants in general because immigration and diversity is a threat to this and according to Putnam Robert, immigration fosters social isolation (141). However, he is specifically bothered about the

Muslim population as can be justified by his statement:

“Ich möchte, dass auch meine Urenkel in 100 Jahren noch in Deutschland leben können, wenn sie dies wollen. Ich möchte nicht, dass das Land meiner Enkel und Urenkel zu großen Teil muslimisch ist, dass dort über weite Strecken türkisch und arabisch gesprochen wird, die frauen einKopftuch tragen und der Tagesrythmus vom Ruf der Muezzine bestimmt wird. Wenn ich das erleben will, kann ich eine Urlaubsreise ins Morgenland buchen.” (308)

(I would like my great-grandchildren to still be able to live in Germany in 100 years if they want to. I wouldn't want that the country of my grandchildren and great-grandchildren is largely Muslim, that Turkish and Arabic are widely spoken there, women wear a headscarf, and the daily rhythm is determined by the muezzin's call. If I want to experience that, I can book a trip to the Orient.)

Sarazzin's fear is not everyone's fear and like Solibakke said, “Sarazzin's group-based enmity goads xenophobic sentiments” (Solibakke, 220). The numerous protests against the book after its publication can attest to this.

It is expected that the German government makes their stance public because like Brandes mentioned, Sarazzin could be seen as a representative of established politics because of his membership in the SPD, his work as finance senator in the red-red coalition in Berlin from 2002 to 2009 and his work in the Bundesbank (10), which is why he was expelled by Germany's Social Democrats (SPD)



on the basis that his views are incompatible with human rights (<https://www.dw.com>). For Angela Merkel, Sarrazin's theses were "extremely hurtful, sdefamatory and very polemical" (Brandon, 10). By mutual agreement, he stepped down from being a member of the Board of Management of the Deutsche Bundesbank. It can be well expected that Sarazzin would be disappointed at Germany's stance and Angela Merkel's statement "*Wir schaffen das*" during the 2015 immigration wave in Germany and Europe in general especially with most of the migrants coming from Syria.

Of course, the book garnered the support of some people as well, one of whom is Necla Kelek, a Turkish-German who is involved in discussions about Islam and the western values. She believes that Sarazzin's numbers and claims are correct, and that Islam is indeed an hinderance to integration. She herself was disowned by her family because of their contrasting beliefs, her being a liberal Muslim, and her family, conservatives. Marcinkowski also thinks that Sarazzin aims for a holistic reform of the German society and the people's society without offering any political alternative and that the book is not a product of islamophobia.

Another person who would agree with Thilo Sarazzin is Bassam Tibi, a Muslim German political scientist who was born in Damascus, Syria and later moved to Germany. He is well known for his discussions about the integration of Muslim immigrants to European countries. In an interview with Spiegel which was published in 2006, Tibi affirms that the accusation of racism has become an effective weapon in preventing people from criticizing Islam in Germany, and he has been accused

of the same thing despite his Muslim background and knowledge of the Quran. He mentioned how the representatives of the Islamic communities in Germany quickly try to prevent Muslim children born in Germany from being exposed to the influence of their host society, thereby raising the children as though they were not born in Germany. This, he believes, is a result of the ideological war between the Western world and the Muslim group who politicize their cultural background. Sarazzin confirms Tibi's argument that the absolutism in Islam does not allow for pluralism and tolerance which continues to drive a wedge between Muslims and the Westerners. Their points also agree that Germany appears weak in her attempt at political correctness and in avoiding the accusations of racism, which puts Germany at risk of being overridden by Islamic organizations because the weaker the Muslims perceive their partners to be, the greater the expressions of their anger, which is usually carefully orchestrated. Tibi suggests that the Muslims in Germany give up three things for their integration in Europe, namely, the Jihad, the Shariah, and the idea of converting others to Islam because all three are not in agreement with the German constitution. He also suggests that Muslims redefine their ideas of tolerance and pluralism, but the problem lies in the fact that only a few of them would agree to these demands.

The parallel society in Germany and the absolutism of Islam combined with Germany's weakness will make it difficult for both parties to reach agreements that will benefit and not hurt both parties. However, Germany needs to first stand by her right to make policies that would lead to progress and reject political correctness by setting clear



standards that will uphold her values and constitution. The solutions to these problems must include both the top-bottom and bottom-top approach. This means that the measures will involve reforms that concern already existing Muslim migrants and provisions for the incoming generations. Also, the work to be done does not only involve the Muslim migrants, but also the Germans. Like Tibi mentioned that after forty years of residence in Germany and contributions to the German society, he is still considered a foreigner and is therefore pushed to remain on the border between being Muslim and being German. He says this in contrast to America where foreigners are easily accepted to become American. He suggests a change in the ideology of who is considered German. Further suggestions from Tibi include the re-education programs in schools to re-orientate children about Islamic belief and western values like the one that happened after the third Reich in Germany in which young people were made to become democrats. It would also be important for the German government to deliberate and collaborate with liberal Muslims to enlighten Imams and other Muslims and reach a consensus.

Finally, suggestions are easier to proffer than to implement. Therefore, it should be expected that there will be difficulties in pursuing these goals and that it will take a long time, but it is important to keep up and start early even if the change will only be noticeable in two or three generations.

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