Ausländerfeindlichkeit in Contemporary Germany: Not Just an "East German Problem"

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Abstract of Thesis

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Not Just an "East German Problem"

In the years since unification, the phenomenon of xenophobia (Ausländerfeindlichkeit) in Germany has been largely understood as an "east German problem." The recent discovery of a series of murders by an underground cell of eastern German neo-Nazis – who killed eight Turkish immigrants and one Greek immigrant between 2000 and 2006 – has again directed Germany’s attention to the problem of Ausländerfeindlichkeit and right-wing extremism in eastern Germany. Scholars, politicians, and members of the media base their treatment of the subject on the assumption that eastern Germans are more xenophobic than western Germans, despite the fact that very few foreigners actually live in eastern Germany. This thesis employs historical analysis, population data, and public opinion survey data to determine whether or not this assumption holds true.

Ausländerfeindlichkeit, meaning “hostility toward foreigners,” is a type of prejudice in which native Germans view non-German immigrants to be inferior based on characteristics such as culture, religion, and ethnicity. In both East and West Germany, as well as in united Germany, Ausländerfeindlichkeit has led to social and institutional discrimination and even violence against foreigners. Since the terrorist attacks against the United States on September 11, 2001, and the subsequent revelation that part of the attacks were planned by immigrants in the northern German city of Hamburg, the primary target of Ausländerfeindlichkeit in Germany has been the country’s Muslim population, which is comprised primarily of Turkish immigrants and their German-born offspring. Though many countries around the world experience prejudice within their societies, this problem is of particular importance and interest in the German case because of the country’s Nazi past.

German population data shows that only about 5% of the 7.4 million foreigners in Germany live in the eastern part of the country. Foreigners comprise less than 3% of the total population in eastern Germany. Turkish immigrants in particular are highly concentrated in the
west and only 1% of the Turkish population lives in eastern Germany. Despite the smaller number of foreigners living in eastern Germany in comparison to western Germany, a majority of the public opinion surveys consulted show that eastern Germans have more negative attitudes towards foreigners than western Germans. Other survey data, on the other hand, finds no statistically significant difference between eastern and western German attitudes towards foreigners, making it unclear if eastern Germans really are more Ausländerfeindlich. The public opinion survey studies consulted also found that Ausländerfeindlich attitudes vary within the eastern and western regions themselves and that in several western German states, anti-foreigner sentiment is just as high as in the east, facts which are obscured when Ausländerfeindlichkeit is only looked at in terms of east and west. Survey data makes it clear that significant portions of both eastern and western German society hold negative attitudes towards foreigners.

In light of these findings, this thesis advocates a shift away from this east-west paradigm in the study of Ausländerfeindlichkeit in Germany. Instead, the issue must be dealt with on the national level, with the recognition that the potentially higher levels of xenophobia in the east do not absolve western Germans of a need to deal with prejudice in their own region.
# Table of Contents

Acknowledgements ....................................................................................................................... ii
Abstract of Thesis ......................................................................................................................... iii
List of Figures ................................................................................................................................ vi
List of Tables ................................................................................................................................ vii
Glossary of Terms ......................................................................................................................... viii
Abbreviations ................................................................................................................................. ix
Introduction .................................................................................................................................... 1
Conceptualizing Ausländerfeindlichkeit ......................................................................................... 3
Historical Analysis of Ausländerfeindlichkeit in West, East, and United Germany .................... 9
Presentation of Migration Data ....................................................................................................... 29
Survey Information on German Attitudes Towards Foreigners .................................................... 34
Explaining Greater Ausländerfeindlichkeit in Eastern Germany ................................................... 50
Analysis ........................................................................................................................................ 61
Conclusion .................................................................................................................................... 66
Bibliography .................................................................................................................................. 74
List of Figures

Figure 1: Foreign Population in West Germany..................................................................................10
Figure 2: Arriving Ethnic Germans (Aussiedler), 1985-2011 .................................................................18
Figure 3: Number of Asylum Seekers, 1988-2011..............................................................................19
Figure 4: Foreign Population in United Germany..............................................................................29
Figure 5: Foreign Population in Eastern and Western Germany ..........................................................32
Figure 6: Population with a Migration Background, 2005-2011..........................................................33
Figure 7: Agreement... “Foreigners only come here to abuse out welfare state”..............................34
Figure 8: Agreement... “If jobs get scarce, foreigners should be sent home”.................................35
Figure 9: Agreement... “The Federal Republic is dangerously overwhelmed by foreigners”............35
Figure 10: Ausländerfeindlich Attitudes in Western and Eastern Germany, 2002-2012 .............36
Figure 11: Reported Experiences of Discrimination... Eastern and Western Germany .................38
Figure 12: Behavioral Tendencies of Individuals without a Migration Background, East/West ......39
Figure 13: Unemployment Rate (%) in Germany by Länder, 2012......................................................51
Figure 14: Contact with Foreigners by Age Group, 2008 .................................................................58
Figure 15: Voter Participation Rates for the 2009 Bundestag Election (%) ........................................60
Figure 16: Behavioral Tendencies of Individuals without a Migration Background, Regions ........62
List of Tables

Table 1: Foreigners in the German Democratic Republic in 1989 ...........................................14
Table 2: Anti-Muslim Statements, 2008 .........................................................................................26
Table 3: Top 10 Foreigner Groups in Germany, 2011 .................................................................30
Table 4: Foreign Population by Bundesland, 2011 .....................................................................31
Table 5: Eurobarometer 2009 “The Future of Europe” Survey for Select European Countries ....42
Table 6: Political Attitudes on the Topic of Immigration and Migration, 2010 .......................43
Table 7: Right-Wing Extremist Violent Crimes in Germany, 2011 ..............................................46
Table 8: 2009 Bundestag Election, Party List Results for the National Democratic Party ........47
Table 9: Voter Support... National Democratic Party in the Most Recent Länder Elections ......48
Table 10: Ausländerfeindlich Attitudes Among Party Supporters, 2012 .................................49
Table 11: Unemployment Rate in Western and Eastern Germany 1994-2011 ............................52
Table 12: Ausländerfeindlichkeit by Bundesland, 2008 ..............................................................61
Glossary of Terms

*Ausländer:* foreigner; officially a person who does not hold German citizenship, colloquially anyone who is not ethnically German

*Ausländerfeindlich:* xenophobic

*Ausländerfeindlichkeit:* xenophobia

*Aussiedler:* ethnic German (typically from the former Soviet Union)

*Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz:* Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution

*Bundestag:* lower house of Germany's federal parliament

*Bundesrat:* upper house of Germany's federal parliament

*Bundesland (Bundesländer):* federal state(s)

*Deutsche Islam Konferenz:* German Islam Conference

*Deutsch-Türken:* German-Turks

*Einwanderer:* immigrant

*Fremd(er):* foreign(er)

*Fremdarbeiter:* foreign worker, term used by the Nazi regime during the Third Reich

*Fremdenfeindlichkeit:* xenophobia

*Gastarbeiter:* guest worker; cyclical labor migrant

*Jus sanguinis:* principle of citizenship by descent or blood

*Jus soli:* principle of citizenship by place of birth

*Land (Länder):* federal state(s)

*Landtag:* state-level parliament

*Leitkultur:* dominant culture

*Personen mit Migrations Hintergrund:* person with a migration background

*Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands:* Socialist Unity Party of Germany (East Germany)

*Überfremdung:* the feeling of being overwhelmed by foreigners

*Vergangenheitsbewältigung:* overcoming or dealing with the past

*Wirtschaftswunder:* economic miracle

*Xenophobia:* fear of foreigners; anti-foreigner attitude
Abbreviations

CDU: Christian Democratic Union
CSU: Christian Social Union of Bavaria
EU: European Union
FDP: Free Democratic Party
FRG: Federal Republic of Germany (West and then united Germany)
GDR: German Democratic Republic (East Germany)
NPD: National Democratic Party of Germany
NSU: National Socialist Underground
OECD: Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
SED: Socialist Unity Party (of East Germany)
SPD: Social Democratic Party of Germany
Introduction

As a rash of violent attacks against foreigners gripped the newly unified Germany in the early 1990s, citizens in western Germany watched in horror the news reports which showed Neo-Nazi youth in the eastern German cities of Hoyerswerda and Rostock attacking and setting ablaze hostels where foreign workers and asylum seekers were housed. More disturbing were scenes of ordinary eastern Germans, new citizens of the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG), thwarting police efforts to control the situation, cheering the attackers on, and afterwards jubilantly declaring their city to be free of foreigners. Although this spate of xenophobic attacks took place in both eastern and western regions of the country between 1991 and 1993, western Germans and foreign observers alike were extremely concerned about the support the attackers received from ordinary citizens and the seemingly broad based xenophobia, or Ausländerfeindlichkeit, harbored by their fellow citizens in the east. The narrative soon developed that Germans in the east simply were more xenophobic (Ausländerfeindlich), despite the fact that very few foreigners lived in their midst.

This narrative has persisted for two decades now and recently has been given new life. In November 2011, Germany was again shaken by the discovery that between 2000 and 2006 a small group of eastern German neo-Nazis, calling themselves the National Socialist Underground (NSU), had murdered nine immigrants – eight Turks and one Greek – and carried out several bombing attacks which also targeted Turks. Even more disturbing was the fact that throughout the investigation of these murders, German authorities remained largely blind to the idea that these crimes might have been racially motivated acts of violence carried out by neo-Nazis. Over the course of the last year, this case has highlighted the prevalence of right-wing extremism in eastern Germany and led to much western German hand-wringing over the persistence of Ausländerfeindlich attitudes and right-wing extremism in the east.

The purpose of this thesis is to ascertain whether or not this common assumption that eastern Germans are more Ausländerfeindlich than western Germans is valid today, despite lower numbers of foreigners living in the east. Further, the thesis will explain why
Ausländerfeindlich attitudes might differ between these two regions. Finally, this thesis will offer suggestions for combating and analyzing Ausländerfeindlichkeit in Germany in the future.

This thesis will first seek to define and conceptualize the phenomenon of Ausländerfeindlichkeit and explain how it forms. Then a historical analysis will highlight the ways in which anti-foreigner attitudes have developed and manifested themselves both socially and institutionally in West, East, and unified Germany. This thesis will then present German population data to determine the spatial distribution of foreigners in Germany today and to determine whether eastern Germany truly does have fewer foreigners than western Germany. Four recent public opinion survey studies will then be consulted to determine eastern and western German attitudes towards foreigners and either confirm or refute the assumption that eastern Germans are more Ausländerfeindlich than western Germans. Finally, this thesis will offer a brief overview of common theories about why Ausländerfeindlichkeit would be more prevalent in the east and seek to ascertain which of these theories might be plausible.

Ultimately, this thesis finds that migration data clearly supports the narrative that there are far fewer foreigners in the eastern part of Germany, while public opinion survey data shows strong – though not conclusive – evidence that eastern Germans are indeed more Ausländerfeindlich than western Germans. It is clear, however, that significant portions of both eastern and western German society hold negative attitudes towards non-Germans in their midst. Therefore, this thesis advocates shifting away from the current east-west paradigm in the study of Ausländerfeindlichkeit in Germany today, as it obscures a more nuanced understanding of where and why Ausländerfeindlich is found in German society and hinders a national debate about German racism by allowing western Germans to shift the blame onto the eastern Germans.

It is important to note that in the following conceptual section, this thesis will focus primarily on developments which took place in West Germany. When East and West Germany were unified in 1990, West German structures were transposed onto the former East Germany. Additionally, because so few foreigners lived in the former East Germany compared to West Germany, western German concerns about and experiences with foreigners has dominated the
public debate about immigration. Thus the laws, policies, vocabulary, and ideas which affect foreigners in Germany today and the way in which they are perceived and treated by the German government and population are rooted in the history and structures of West Germany.

Conceptualizing Ausländerfeindlichkeit

What is Ausländerfeindlichkeit? The term is often translated into English as “xenophobia”, which the Merriam-Webster dictionary defines as “fear and hatred of strangers or foreigners or of anything that is strange or foreign.” The German term is a compound word – the term Ausländer means “foreigner”, while the term feindlichkeit translated means “hostility”. Though the term could be applied to Germans’ reactions to any person from another country, its most ubiquitous application refers to hostility toward foreigners who are residing long term in the country, or, in other words, immigrants.

Ausländerfeindlichkeit is a form of prejudice – negative attitudes which are formed and held against individuals based solely on their perceived membership in an outgroup, as opposed to one’s own ingroup. Andreas Zick, Beate Küpper, and Andreas Hövermann – a team of sociologists and psychologists with the Institute for Interdisciplinary Research on Conflict and Violence at the University of Bielefeld in Germany – explain how and why prejudices are formed. First, as human beings we categorize those we meet as either part of our ingroup (those who we deem similar to us) or as part of an outgroup (those who are dissimilar). We then stereotype these outgroups by making generalizations about the group and attributing those characteristics to all members of the group – whether they possess them or not. Finally, we evaluate these groups either positively or negatively. “All prejudices share an implicit assumption that all members of the outgroup are the same, and that they are different from and worse than the ingroup.”

The characteristics by which we categorize other people and the generalizations we make about other groups depend largely on the social environment surrounding us – public and private discourse, political rhetoric, and media reports all draw our attention and give meaning to specific characteristics we observe in others. They also offer us images of other groups which we
use to create stereotypes. Identifying the differences of outgroups then strengthens the ingroup’s own collective identity. Judging an outgroup negatively emphasizes its inferiority and at the same time implies the superiority of one’s own ingroup. The nature of German identity has played an important role in the formation and persistence of Ausländerfeindlichkeit and other prejudices throughout Germany’s history.

Ausländerfeindlichkeit and German Identity

Since the 1800s, German identity has been understood as an organic community whose members share the same language, culture, religion, history, and ancestry. This understanding of Germans’ shared ethnic heritage has served not only to define who is German, but also to differentiate other people, both within and without, who are not German. The characteristics of both Germans and others are essentialized, or seen as “unchangeable in nature”. Over time, the concept of a shared ethnic and cultural heritage became increasingly understood as biological or blood heritage and as the German nation gradually achieved political unification, the idea of blood membership in the nation became enshrined in the citizenship laws of the German Reich.

Ultimately this understanding of blood-based membership in the German nation and the perceived need to maintain the racial purity of the German Volk (people or nation) was employed by the Nazis as justification to strip Jews of their rights and for the extermination of some six million Jews and other perceived “undesirables” throughout Germany and Europe.

In the aftermath of the Holocaust, the idea of a German national identity based on shared blood became unacceptable. Political leaders and intellectuals in both East and West Germany attempted to create new identities for their respective states which were post-national in nature. In West Germany a collective identity based on constitutional patriotism, dedication to democratic values and institutions, and economic achievement was emphasized. East Germany, on the other hand, focused on creating a collective identity based on identification with socialism and “anti-fascism”. These attempts on the elite level to forge new collective identities in East and West Germany, however, did not fully resonate with the general population of either state, and ethnic and cultural (ethnocultural) understandings of the nation continue to form the basis for German
identity and citizenship, leading to both the social and institutional exclusion of immigrants in Germany.\(^\text{12}\)

_Avoiding the Vocabulary of Racism_

Rita Chin, et al. explain that though an ethnic understanding of German identity continued to persist within the minds of the German population and in West German citizenship laws, on a discursive level the language of race became taboo.\(^\text{13}\) Instead culture became the primary characteristic used to both define and promote cohesion of the German nation, as well as to differentiate outsiders and explain their essential incompatibility with German society in the public debate.\(^\text{14}\) By couching the discussion about difference within society in terms of culture and by employing non-racialized terms for the ethnic others within their midst, Germany has been able to escape the label of racism in their attitudes and policies toward foreigners.\(^\text{15}\)

Historically, the term for “foreigner” in German was *Fremder*, rather than *Ausländer*, and the word “xenophobia” is also often translated as *Fremdenfeindlichkeit*. However, during the Third Reich, the Nazis used foreigners as slave labor, calling them *Fremdarbeiter* (foreign workers), and thus the term *Fremd* became stigmatized after the end of the war. When the West German government decided to bring in temporary laborers from other countries to fill labor shortages in the 1950s, leaders did not want to encourage any comparison of the new program to the Nazi use of *Fremdarbeiter* and instead labeled these new labor migrants “Gastarbeiter” (guest workers).\(^\text{16}\)

The term *Gastarbeiter* speaks volumes about how the West German government and people for decades viewed the presence of foreigners in their country. In using the term “guest” the government was making clear that the presence of these migrants in West Germany was only temporary and that they were expected to return home.\(^\text{17}\) The second part of the term, “worker”, emphasized that their purpose in the country was to fill a labor shortage and circumscribed the impact of their presence to the labor market only.\(^\text{18}\) At the same time, this label objectified the guest workers, reducing their value as individuals to their function in the economy only.\(^\text{19}\) By fashioning labor migrants as guest workers, the West German government was implicitly saying
that their presence within the country was only a phase of economic development and did not constitute an opening of West German society to other groups.20

Many guest workers, however, chose to stay in Germany and bring their families to live with them long after the guest worker program had ended, forcing Germans to deal with the issue of a growing foreign presence within their midst. While the vocabulary employed to describe foreigners and to debate their place in West German society attempted to avoid the language of race prevalent in the Nazi era, West German discourse still served to differentiate between foreigners and natives and facilitate exclusion. The term Ausländer, for example, replaced the term Gastarbeiter when it became clear that these migrants intended to stay in West Germany and is considered to be less derogatory, but still serves the purpose of distinguishing migrants from the native population. 21 Since Turkish migrants were the largest foreign group, the term Ausländer also quickly became a politically correct (race-less) synonym for Turk, but still emphasized the outsider status of Turkish migrants in West German society.22

The use of the term Ausländer is also significant for what it does not imply. By using the term Ausländer in reference to permanently settled foreigners within their country rather than the term immigrant (Einwanderer), West German leaders were emphasizing that their presence within the country was still not expected to be permanent.23 The use of the term Ausländer in place of the term for immigrant became complicated, however, when the guest worker generation began to have children born in West Germany.

Ausländerfeindlichkeit and German Citizenship

Along with the persistence of an ethnocultural German identity within German society, the idea that membership in the German nation could only be conferred by birth or the principle of descent (the legal term is jus sanguinis), also still remained as the basis for West Germany’s citizenship laws.24 Once foreigners began to settle permanently in West Germany, however, these citizenship laws became a problematic and contentious issue as they precluded the naturalization of long term foreign residents or the granting of citizenship to their German-born offspring, who have
been politically excluded because they were unable to gain German citizenship based on their ethnic heritage or blood.\textsuperscript{25} Thus the designation of Ausländer has been applied to these individuals as well despite the fact that they were not immigrants at all, but rather had been born and raised in West Germany. On the other hand, individuals of German descent, called ethnic Germans or Aussiedler, whose families had emigrated from Germany in previous centuries and who were thus born outside of the Federal Republic enjoyed the right to automatic German citizenship when they entered the country based on their blood heritage.\textsuperscript{26}

After decades of debate, Germany’s citizenship laws were finally reformed and went into effect in 2000, giving long-term foreign residents the right to naturalize and “foreign” children born in Germany the right to receive German citizenship at birth under certain circumstances.\textsuperscript{27} Under the 2000 law, a child born on German soil to foreign parents receives both German citizenship and the citizenship of their parents only if at least one parent has had a legal residence permit for 8+ years and an unlimited residence permit for 3+ years. Then, between the ages of 18 and 23, the child must choose between their German citizenship and the citizenship of their parents, giving the other up since dual citizenship is not generally permitted. If no decision is registered, they lose their German citizenship.

The 2000 law also reduced the residency requirement for adult naturalizations from 15 to 8 years under the condition that the individual give up his or her previous citizenship, has a valid legal residence permit, is gainfully employed, and has not received government welfare support, and has no criminal convictions. The law also includes a loyalty oath and language testing, which is designed to ensure that the individual is sufficiently integrated into German society before being granted citizenship.\textsuperscript{28} While the passing of the 2000 law represented a huge paradigmatic shift in how membership in the German nation is understood, it is still very restrictive. Ultimately, the conditions required to qualify for citizenship under the new law exclude about 60% of foreign children in Germany from receiving citizenship at birth and in the decade following the reform, only around 10% of foreigners were naturalized.\textsuperscript{29}
In the eyes of the German government, a foreigner is defined as any person who does not have German citizenship. Therefore, once an immigrant naturalizes or the child of foreign parents qualifies at birth for citizenship according to the 2000 Citizenship Law, they are no longer considered a foreigner in the legal sense. However, this legal inclusion does not always translate into social inclusion, as these individuals are still not considered German by society at large, which continues to label them as *Ausländer* or, for example, a “Turk with a German passport”, based on their lack of physical or cultural similarity to the majority of the population.\(^{30}\) Even where an attempt is made to use more inclusive terminology, such as “*Personen mit Migrationshintergrund*” (people with a migration background) or “*Deutsch-Türken*” (German-Turks), to describe foreigners and their offspring, these terms continue to mark these individuals as outsiders.\(^{31}\) However, the privileged status for ethnic Germans over other non-German foreigners and the application of the term even to those who have German citizenship emphasizes the racial undertones of the term *Ausländer* (as well as its more politically-correct variants) and the problem of *Ausländerfeindlichkeit* in Germany – *Ausländer* is merely a euphemism for non-German and therefore *Ausländerfeindlichkeit* is simply another term for racism.

Hövermann, et al. explain that prejudices such as *Ausländerfeindlichkeit* or racism have “far reaching negative consequences for those targeted and for the social climate as a whole.”\(^{32}\) Prejudices are manifest in a variety of different ways, from negative or derogatory statements, to acts of discrimination, to violence. Manifestations of *Ausländerfeindlichkeit* in Germany include, for example, discrimination against foreigners in hiring, housing, or education; threats to mosques or hate mail sent to Muslim or immigrant organizations; and attacks on foreigners.\(^{33}\) Prejudices do not necessarily lead to acts of discrimination or violence, but it is important to understand that these attitudes can supply the basis and justification for discrimination or violence. Prejudices which are shared and expressed widely in society – for example through the media or public debate – can lead some individuals, especially right-wing extremists, to justify acts of violence against outgroups by arguing that they are only putting into practice what everyone else is thinking.\(^{34}\)
The following section will offer an historical analysis of migration to Germany and look at how Ausländerfeindlichkeit has developed in West, East, and then united Germany, highlighting how this form of prejudice has led to social and institutional discrimination and even acts of violence against foreigners. While Germany is certainly not the only western, democratic country to struggle with prejudice within its population, how Germans treat the issues of belonging and difference within their society is observed with heightened scrutiny both by the international community and many Germans themselves because of the nation’s Nazi past.35

**Historical Analysis of Ausländerfeindlichkeit in West, East, and United Germany**

*Ausländerfeindlichkeit in West Germany*

Following the devastation of World War II and the division of the country into two separate states, West Germany experienced an incredible economic boom known as the “Wirtschaftswunder” (economic miracle) starting in the 1950s. However, because of the huge casualties suffered during World War II and the eventual erection of the Berlin Wall in 1961, cutting off labor from the east, the FRG had to look elsewhere for the manpower to fuel its economy. Intended as a temporary measure to fill labor shortages, the West German government began recruiting foreign guest workers for Germany’s agricultural and industrial sectors, signing treaties to this end with Italy (1955), Spain (1960), Greece (1960), Turkey (1961), Morocco (1963), Portugal (1964), Tunisia (1965), and Yugoslavia (1968).36 This temporary measure, however, had far reaching and unexpected consequences which transformed the demographic, social, and cultural landscape of West Germany.37

From the outset, the West German government had no intention of opening the country to immigration, made clear by the careful choice of the term “guest worker” to describe these migrants.38 Guest workers were recruited and given a contract for a period of two to three years, after which they were expected to return to their home country. Over time this rotation principle became unsustainable for employers and the government began to renew contracts and residency permits for these foreign laborers.39 During their stay in Germany, Gastarbeiter were expected to live together in dormitories near the factories where they worked and each factory
was supplied with interpreters who would facilitate communication between German employers and management and the laborers, essentially minimizing the laborers' contact with the German population and making it unnecessary for them to learn much German.\textsuperscript{40}

Over the course of the guest worker program, between 1955 and 1973, West Germany recruited nearly 14 million guest workers, around 11 million of whom returned to their home countries when their contracts ended. When the West German government permanently suspended the recruitment of all foreign workers in 1973, many of the remaining 3 million guest workers still in the country, primarily Turks, elected to stay in Germany. They soon brought their families to Germany to join them, leading to a large increase in the number of foreigners living in Germany in the 1970s.\textsuperscript{41}

As Figure 1 shows, by 1975 the foreign population in Germany had reached nearly 4 million – one million of whom were Turkish\textsuperscript{42} – and by the end of the decade the number has increased to 4.5 million. The increase in Turkish migrants in particular led to the establishment of a long-term Turkish population in West Germany and the identification of Turks as the quintessential foreigners.\textsuperscript{43}

Previously the West German government had been able to justify the presence of foreign guest workers in Germany and suspend any concerns over their difference by pointing to their temporary residence and the economic benefit they provided to the country.\textsuperscript{44} The 1970s, however, was a difficult time for West Germany economically and, making a connection between the increasing numbers of foreigners and increasing West German unemployment, the media and
public began to raise concern over “Überfremdung” (being overwhelmed by foreigners). Additionally, as the guest workers’ families began to join them in Germany, the impact of immigration began to affect not just the German economy, but also its society. Soon migration began to be seen not as an economic tool, but as a “challenge to civic order and social cohesion,” and the former guest workers were increasingly referred to by the term Ausländer, highlighting both their cultural and legal outsider status. A survey done by Politbarometer found that in 1981, 66% of West Germans believed there were too many foreigners and by 1982, 77% of West Germans felt this way. Another public opinion poll, which asked if West Germany should integrate foreigners or send them back home, found that in 1978, 39% of respondents wanted to send foreigners home and by 1982, 68% wanted to send foreigners home.

Throughout the late 1970s and 1980s, the foreign population in West Germany continued to grow and with it anti-foreigner sentiment among the native German population continued to rise. Morally and politically constrained from forcing these immigrants to return home, West German leaders continued to maintain that Germany was not an immigration country and put into place policies designed to restrict further migration to Germany and encourage return migration. For example, leaders placed restrictions on work permits for spouses and children; placed limits on the number of foreigners who could live in certain neighborhoods; continued to reject the idea of extending the right of citizenship to foreigners; and even attempted to offer foreigners money to return home. These attempts to reduce the number of foreigners present in West Germany led to a small decline in the foreign population in the mid-1980s (see Figure 1), but with continued family unification and increasing numbers of asylum seekers in the last half of the decade, the number of foreigners living in West Germany had reached around 5 million (approximately 8% of the total population) by 1989.

Despite the West German government’s efforts to restrict further immigration and reduce the country’s foreign population during the 1980s, leaders across the political spectrum recognized the integration of foreigners into West German society as a policy goal and began forming differing understandings of the concept which were debated at the elite level. The left-of-
Social Democratic Party (SPD) and centrist Free Democratic Party (FDP) have tended to espouse a more traditional understanding of integration in which both the immigrant and host society impact one another and in which the government takes the first step in promoting inclusion into society by providing secure residence permits, extending voting rights, and offering access to citizenship.

Further on the left, the Green Party similarly believed that the government should lead the way to integration, but advocated a multiculturalist understanding of the term in which both the immigrant culture and host country culture are treated equally and allowed to co-exist. The right-of-center coalition of the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) and Christian Social Union of Bavaria (CSU), on the other hand, viewed integration as a process of assimilation in which the immigrant was expected to take the first step towards inclusion into society by unilaterally adapting themselves to the host society (accomplished by learning the language and adopting German culture and values) and upon proof of integration, the government would then grant inclusion.53

It is important to note that the debate about integration is less about whether or not immigrants are integrating – studies and general observation show that foreigners in Germany suffer from a lack of integration and deficits in areas such as education and the labor market. The question around which the integration debate revolves is whether the source of these deficits and lack of integration is because foreigners either cannot or will not integrate, as those on the right tend to argue, or because of structural and social discrimination which hinders their integration, which left-wing and centrist politicians believe is the source of the problem. The dividing lines which formed on this issue in the 1970s and 80s were transposed onto eastern German politics – along with West Germany's other political and social institutions – when unification took place and persist today.
**Ausländerfeindlichkeit in East Germany**

Due to the authoritarian nature of the East German state, the East German population’s experience with foreigners was much more limited than West Germany’s. In an effort to minimize contact with the West and create an ideologically homogeneous socialist society, the government of the German Democratic Republic (GDR) constructed the Berlin Wall and placed strict travel restrictions on its citizens. At the same time, these measures also created an ethnically and culturally homogeneous society, with limited contact with foreigners. However, under the auspices of solidarity with other socialist countries, some foreigners did find their way to the GDR. Early on, East Germany offered refuge to Greek, Chilean, Spanish, Palestinian and other compatriots who were facing political persecution in their home countries. The ruling Socialist Unity Party (*Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands* or SED) also brought apprentices and students from other socialist countries to East Germany for vocational training. However, the number of foreigners remained very small until the 1970s, when the GDR began to recruit short term workers from other countries on a larger scale to fill labor shortages and increase economic output.54

As a self-defined socialist state of workers and farmers55, the East German government itself did not officially differentiate between its German and non-German population in its statistical publications for ideological reasons. As a result, only limited information is available on the size and origins of the foreign population in the GDR over time.56 In its first Statistical Yearbook publication after unification, the Federal Office for Statistics recorded that in 1989, there were 191,190 foreigners residing in East Germany. Table 1 lists the number of foreigners residing in the GDR in 1989 by country of origin. The largest group by far was the Vietnamese, who made up nearly one-third of the foreign population, followed by Polish migrants, who made up more than a quarter. However, these migrants represented only a very small portion (1.2%) of the total East German population. In comparison, in the same year there were 4,845,900 foreigners living in West Germany, comprising 7.7% of the total population.57
Around half of these foreigners (95,000) were residing in the country as contract workers, making labor migration the primary source of foreign presence in the GDR.\textsuperscript{58} Like West Germany, the East German labor pool had been reduced due to large casualties during World War II and was further reduced as masses of East Germans fled over the border to West Germany before the Berlin Wall was erected. In order to meet the needs of its economy, the SED was forced to seek labor from other countries, but tried very hard to distance such an initiative from the West German guest worker program, which it maintained was a continuation of Nazi \textit{Fremdarbeit} (foreign slave labor) and an evil practice of Western capitalism.\textsuperscript{59} The SED also sought to avoid giving the impression that foreign workers were needed because the East German economy was struggling.\textsuperscript{60} Instead it presented the initiative to the East German people as a labor cooperation program designed to prepare foreign workers for their future work in the building up of socialism and as an example of solidarity with other socialist oriented states.\textsuperscript{61}

Initially the GDR looked to its close neighbors in the Soviet bloc for labor, reaching bilateral agreements with Poland in 1963 and Hungary in 1967. Over time, bilateral agreements were also struck with Algeria (1974), Cuba (1978), Mozambique (1979), Vietnam (1980), and Angola (1985).\textsuperscript{62} In total, approximately 210,000 foreigners came to East Germany as contract workers between 1967 and 1989.\textsuperscript{63} The main bulk of this migration occurred in the last few years of the GDR, when the use of Vietnamese and Mozambican laborers increased rapidly in an effort

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sending Country</th>
<th>Absolute Number</th>
<th>% Foreign GDR Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vietnam</td>
<td>60,067</td>
<td>31.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poland</td>
<td>51,743</td>
<td>27.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mozambique</td>
<td>15,483</td>
<td>8.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soviet Union</td>
<td>14,885</td>
<td>7.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hungary</td>
<td>13,424</td>
<td>7.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cuba</td>
<td>7,999</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bulgaria</td>
<td>4,939</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Czechoslovakia</td>
<td>3,218</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yugoslavia</td>
<td>2,055</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Foreigners from each of the following countries represented less than 1% of the foreign population: Angola, Austria, Greece, Italy, Romania, United States*

*Source: Statistisches Bundesamt, 1991 Statistical Yearbook*
to salvage the East German economy. Based on data from the State Secretariat for Labor and Wages, in 1987 there were 9,300 Vietnamese and 7,700 Mozambican contract workers in East Germany and by 1989, these numbers had risen to 52,130 and 15,300 respectively.\textsuperscript{64}

Contract workers in the GDR benefitted from guarantees for wages and insurance equal to that of GDR citizens and were also given the right to transfer goods and remittances back home to their families, which made receiving a position as a contract worker very valuable to individuals from other, less economically developed socialist countries.\textsuperscript{65} However, unlike guest workers in the FRG, contract workers in East Germany had no legal or social rights beyond those explicitly set out in the bilateral agreements.\textsuperscript{66} The terms of the agreements themselves were very restrictive as well. Foreign workers were not able to choose their jobs or locations and travel within the GDR was severely limited. The status of their residency in the GDR was precarious, as contract workers were subject to harsh punishment and threat of deportation for transgressions of work discipline or social misdemeanors.\textsuperscript{67}

It is clear that neither officials in the GDR nor the countries of origin intended these workers to remain permanently in the GDR, and many measures were put into place to limit contract workers’ contact with East Germans and to discourage long-term residence. Contract workers were provided with limited language instruction that equipped them with only enough German language skills to complete their jobs, making social interactions with Germans very difficult.\textsuperscript{68} They were required to live separately from East German society in hostels, paying much higher prices for their accommodations than East Germans were charged for similar living situations. These hostels were overseen by East German wardens who locked the hostel each night and enforced strict rules about curfews and visitors.\textsuperscript{69} Infringement of hostel rules could lead to deportation.\textsuperscript{70} Even on the job, where workers were supposed to be on even footing with the East Germans, Vietnamese reported being restricted to their own separate toilets and canteens.\textsuperscript{71} Contract workers were forbidden to have close personal relationships or make marriage plans with East Germans. If a marriage did take place, there was no provision for residency for the foreign spouse, who would be forced to leave the GDR when their work contract came to an
Female workers were forbidden to bring children with them to live in East Germany and if a female worker became pregnant while in the GDR, she was either deported or forced to have an abortion. These restrictions on contract workers were enforced by hostel wardens, work managers, police, and the East German secret police (the Stasi), which had several units dedicated solely to observing and controlling foreigners.

The GDR's restrictive policies resulted in the exclusion of foreign contract workers from East German society. In a 1990 survey, 60% of East Germans reported that they had no contact at all with foreigners. When interactions between East Germans and foreigners did occur, they often proved to be conflictual. The main source of conflict was over foreigners' access to scarce goods. As stipulated by the bilateral agreements which brought these contract workers to the GDR, foreign workers were permitted to purchase and send home consumer goods. The East German government, however, did not communicate with its population about either the economic contributions being made by contract workers or the details of the bilateral contracts. As a result of this lack of transparency, the East German population became increasingly hostile towards foreigners, especially in the later years of the GDR as the economic situation deteriorated, and accused foreigners of hoarding scarce consumer goods to sell on the black market and exacerbating already severe shortages of goods.

Other sources of the conflict, on the other hand, were very much racially motivated, such as frustration over foreign men establishing relationships with East German women or intrusion into East German spaces such as pubs or discos. Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, occasional violent conflict with Poles, Hungarians, and Algerians occurred, but violence against foreigners increased in the 1980s, especially against the black Mozambicans. The Stasi often attributed these episodes of violence between East German youths and Mozambicans in clubs, bars, and discos to the drunkenness of both groups and to the “African’s sensitivity and aggressive reaction to racist taunts.” In the East German state of Sachsen, violent conflicts between German youth and Mozambicans led so many East Germans to protest that the government transferred the Mozambicans to another region and replaced them with Vietnamese. The fact that violent
attacks targeted primarily Mozambicans, despite the fact that they were, as a group, only one-third the size of the Vietnamese population, shows that it was likely racial rather than economic tension driving these attacks.

In many ways, East and West Germany had very different experiences with migration during the Cold War. West Germany’s experience was longer and on a much larger scale. Though an attempt was made initially to maintain spatial segregation between native Germans and foreign guest workers, foreigners eventually found their way into West German society. East Germany, on the other hand, had a much more limited experience both in terms of time and the size of the foreign population. Also, the East German government’s segregation policies were much more successful than West Germany’s, severely limiting the amount of contact between East German society and its foreign workers. At the same time, both countries held very similar basic assumptions about not being countries of immigration, both preferring guest worker models. Thus, they also had a similar understanding that a foreign presence in their country was legitimized primarily by economic necessity, not an openness to diversity.

Auszänderfeindlichkeit in United Germany

For foreigners in Germany, the period surrounding unification was a particularly trying and frustrating time. By integrating the former East German population into the West German social and political framework and also granting citizenship to the hundreds of thousands of ethnic German Aussiedler who flooded Germany after the collapse of the Soviet Union based on their shared ancestry, the ethnocultural definition of German identity – and thus also the inherent outsider status of foreigners – was reaffirmed. At the same time that Germany was dealing with unification and the financial burden of helping the eastern region transition to democracy and capitalism, the country was also confronted with new waves of immigration which further exacerbated the negative feelings towards foreigners which had been building in East and West Germany in the 1980s.
Adding to the foreign population of guest workers and their families already in the
country, masses of asylum seekers and ethnic Germans from Eastern Europe and Russia
flooded into united Germany after the fall of the Berlin Wall. Based on the principle of *jus
sanguinis* in Germany’s citizenship law, people whose families had emigrated from Germany and
had been living throughout Eastern Europe and Russia for generations – ethnic Germans or
*Aussiedler* - still
qualified for German
citizenship and for
generous support from
the German
government. In the
face of economic and
social upheaval in their
countries of birth,
many decided to take advantage of their status as *Aussiedler*, moving to West Germany in droves
starting in the late 1980s (See Figure 2).80

Beginning in the late 1980s, West and then united Germany were confronted with a large
wave of new immigration in the form of international refugees and asylum seekers. In response to
its role in the horrific crimes of World War II and the Holocaust, the founders of West Germany
had included in the Basic Law (German Constitution) some of the most generous asylum policies
in the world, promising political asylum to anyone anywhere in the world being persecuted on
political grounds. Further international agreements and legal interpretation by German courts
have extended this right to asylum to include persecution on the basis of race, religion,
nationality, or membership in a social group.81 As a result of these generous policies and
Germany’s strong economy, the country soon became the primary destination for asylum seekers
coming to Europe from Turkey (Kurds escaping persecution), Yugoslavia, and the countries of the
former Soviet bloc.82
Figure 3 shows the huge influx in the number of asylum seekers arriving in Germany each year in the late 1980s and early 1990s. At the peak of this wave, in 1992, nearly half a million people applied for asylum in Germany, whereas in previous decades the highest number of applicants per year had never reached more than around 100,000. Not only was Germany experiencing a staggering increase in the number of asylum seekers arriving during this period, but it was also receiving far more applicants than any of its European neighbors. In the peak year of 1992, for example, when Germany received 438,200 asylum seekers, other European countries such as Sweden (84,000), the United Kingdom (32,300), and France (28,900) took in far fewer.

The severe economic upheaval and unemployment in the east and the financial burden of unification being shouldered by the west, coupled with this perceived overwhelming flood of foreigners intensified the feeling of Überfremdung among Germans. The German media fueled these feelings, portraying asylum seekers as economic rather than political refugees who were only coming to take advantage of Germany’s welfare system. Common headlines at the time lamented the tidal wave of free-riders washing over Germany and argued that Germany’s “boat was full” and could not carry any more passengers. Brutal attacks on asylum seekers and guest workers alike took place throughout Germany in the early 1990s, shocking both the German population and the international community. These acts of violence were accompanied by a rise in right-wing extremist crime in general as well as an increase in support for right-wing parties on the local and state levels.
In reaction to these attacks on foreigners and increasing Ausländerfeindlichkeit and right-wing extremism in their country, many Germans took to the streets to protest such attacks and participated in candlelight vigils for the victims. Despite this popular showing of support for foreigners in Germany, the government itself did not take any decisive action to address or stem Ausländerfeindlichkeit. Instead, leaders related these anti-foreigner attitudes and attacks to the flood of asylum seekers overwhelming the country and in response amended Germany’s constitution, the Basic Law, and restricted its provision for the right to asylum in 1993, which quickly curbed the number of asylum seekers entering the country (see Figure 3). Even as the German government moved to limit the number of asylum seekers who were seen to be overwhelming and at times abusing the country’s coffers, huge expenditures were made to support Aussiedler, including support for housing, health care, and language classes.

Once the flood of newcomers had subsided in the mid-1990s, Germany’s attention was soon turned to the problem of an ever increasing second generation of foreigners from the guest worker period. As discussed earlier, though these individuals were born in Germany, they did not qualify for German citizenship based on their non-German ancestry, leading to their exclusion from German political life and continued stigmatization as foreigners. For many years, members of the SPD, Greens, and FDP had pushed for changes to German citizenship, but the rash of Ausländerfeindlichkeit and attacks on foreigners in the early 1990s put Germany’s foreigner policies under additional scrutiny and made the need for citizenship reform more pressing.

When a coalition of the SPD and Greens took power in 1998, one of its first actions was to reform German citizenship laws. Their efforts, however, were met with intense opposition from conservative parties on the right, particularly surrounding the issue of dual citizenship. The issue of dual citizenship in turn was bound up in the broader debate about integration. Left-wing parties which supported the idea of multiculturalism, in which immigrants are allowed to maintain their ancestral cultural identity alongside their new German identity, also supported the idea of dual citizenship, in which immigrants are allowed to naturalize and receive German citizenship while also keeping their original citizenship. Conservatives, who favored assimilation— in which
the immigrant is expected to take on the culture, language, and values of Germany – rejected the idea of dual citizenship, arguing that it would hinder integration and lead to divided loyalties among foreigners. For conservatives, naturalization was seen as the culmination of the integration process, whereas those on the left viewed it as a stepping stone which would speed integration.92

When the Red (SPD)-Green coalition introduced its plans for citizenship reform, which included a general acceptance of dual citizenship and the introduction of the principle of *jus soli* (citizenship by place of birth)93, conservatives quickly made what had been an elite level discussion a matter of public debate. Conservative leaders heightened anti-foreigner fears by arguing publicly, for example, that the introduction of dual citizenship would turn Germany into a country of unlimited immigration; that possessing dual nationality would give foreigners a huge, though undefined, advantage over native Germans; and that dual citizenship would hinder integration, causing divided loyalties and (especially in the case of Muslim immigrants) foster domestic links to terrorist groups.94 The CDU/CSU also capitalized on the public’s fear over dual citizenship for political gain, mobilizing a petition campaign against the reforms in the western German state of Hessen. The campaign, aided by polarizing media coverage95, was wildly successful, garnering so many signatures in Hessen that it was expanded nationally, and the CDU/CSU claims to have ultimately gained about 5 million signatures. The campaign was also successful electorally, helping the CDU/CSU to win the 1999 state election in what had been a strong-hold of the SPD, and destroying the Red-Green majority in the upper house of the German parliament, making it impossible for the government to pass their proposed reforms as planned.96

Ultimately a new citizenship law was passed later in 1999 and went into effect in 2000 with only limited provision for *jus soli* and without a general acceptance of dual citizenship (the details of which have been laid out already in this thesis). The success of the petition campaign and shocking defeat of the SPD and Greens in Hessen made it clear that while elite attitudes towards foreigners and integration had been evolving, anti-foreigner sentiment was still
entrenched among the public – even those who otherwise supported left-wing parties – with over 63% of the German population opposing dual citizenship when the law was passed in 1999.  

Along with the passing of Germany’s new citizenship law came a renewed interest in the importance of integration, which was heightened as more and more evidence emerged indicating that foreigners in Germany were suffering from deficits in employment, wages, housing, and education, leading to their socio-economic marginalization. It was at this time that conservatives introduced the concept of *Leitkultur* (dominant culture) which they believed must be the basis of any new immigration schemes or integration policies in Germany. A position statement of the CDU’s Migration Commission, which was issued in 2000 and which has become the basis of the CDU’s integration policy since it came to power in 2005, explains the concept of *Leitkultur*:

“A migration and integration policy can only be achieved if we are certain of our own national and cultural identity... Our German national identity has been formed by our constitution and through our shared history, language, and culture. We Germans have... developed our national identity and culture, which is anchored in our language and arts, in our customs and practices, in our understanding of law and democracy, freedom and civic duty. Germany belongs to the Christian Occidental community of values. We are part of the European culture community.”

“Integration requires..., in addition to learning the German language, loyalty to our state and constitution and integration into our social and cultural way of life. This means that the values of our Christian-Occidental culture, which has been shaped by Christianity, Judaism, ancient philosophy, humanism, Roman law, and the Enlightenment, must be accepted in Germany... Multiculturalism and parallel societies are no model for the future.”

The concept of *Leitkultur* is based on the assumption that cultural diversity is a threat to national solidarity and identity. Based on this formulation offered by the CDU, *Leitkultur* is simply another way of saying assimilation – placing the responsibility for integration on the immigrant accepting the values of the dominant culture with no room to accommodate the cultural identities and values of minorities and focusing on the cultural aspects of integration rather than structural issues. What is unique about the concept of *Leitkultur*, as opposed to previous formulations of integration or assimilation, is the emphasis on the Judeo-Christian, Occidental, and European nature of German identity, which excluded Muslim immigrants and Turks in particular as the
primary outsider group in Germany.\footnote{102} Whereas Turks used to be singled out for their ethnic and cultural otherness, rather than their religion, today the Muslim faith is the primary signifier of Turkish difference. Just as the term Turk became synonymous with the term Ausländer in the 1980s and 1990s, today it is also synonymous with the term Muslim.\footnote{103}

These already growing resentments towards Muslims in Germany were heightened after the terrorist attacks of September 11, and the subsequent revelation that the attacks were planned in part by a cell of Islamic fundamentalists based in the northern German city of Hamburg.\footnote{104} Germans’ awareness of the Muslim population in their midst increased dramatically, along with their concern over the threat of Islamic fundamentalism within Germany’s borders.\footnote{105} Native Germans perceive greater social distance between themselves and Muslim immigrants than other immigrant groups and many Germans hold negative attitudes towards Islam, considering it to be “undemocratic, backward, intolerant of other faiths, and fanatic.”\footnote{106} Over the last decade the media has dedicated much of its immigration reportage to the presence of Islam in Germany and Muslim immigrants’ lives, focusing on negative issues such as the repression of women and forced marriages, honor killings, the wearing of headscarves, Islamic instruction for Muslim children in schools, and terrorism.\footnote{107} By focusing on these negative aspects of Islam and Muslim immigrants, which apply to only a small portion of the Muslim population in Germany, mainstream media promotes stereotypes and fuels Ausländerfeindlichkeit and Islamophobia among the native German population.\footnote{108}

Public debate about Islam in Germany reached its peak in 2010 with the publication of a controversial book entitled “\textit{Deutschland schafft sich ab}” (“Germany Does Itself In”), written by Thilo Sarrazin, a member of the board of the German Central Bank. In his book\footnote{109}, Sarrazin blames the economic and social problems in Germany today, which he believes are destroying the material wellbeing and social stability of the country, on the increasing presence of immigrants - particularly Turks and other Muslims. He laments that the German population is shrinking due to low birthrates and an ageing population, while the birthrate of Muslim immigrants is very high, steadily replacing the native German population with what he describes
as less stable, less intelligent, and less productive foreigners who are “dumbing down” the country.

Sarrazin argues that it is the Muslim culture itself which hinders integration and causes Muslim immigrants to have below average participation in the education system and job market; higher levels of criminal activity; above average dependency on the welfare system; above average fertility levels; above average religiosity with a tendency toward fundamentalism; and a tendency toward cultural and spatial segregation and the building of parallel societies – not just in Germany, but throughout Europe. Islam, which Sarrazin describes as an unenlightened, inherently violent religion, is confronting Europe with the influence of authoritarian, outdated, and anti-democratic tendencies which challenge Europe’s own self understanding and represent a direct threat to Europe’s way of life.

Though many government officials and members of the media condemned Sarrazin’s book for, among other things, its controversial discussion about the genetic basis of intelligence and immigrants’ supposed lack thereof, many of his other arguments were accepted. The arguments in Sarrazin’s book resonated strongly with the German public and it was the best-selling book in Germany in 2010.

The current government coalition of the CDU/CSU and FDP has presented a contradictory stance on the role of Islam and Muslim immigrants in Germany. On the one hand, the government has recognized the need to promote social cohesion and create a welcoming environment to attract much needed highly-skilled foreign workers. Efforts have been made to improve dialogue with Muslims living in Germany with, among other initiatives, the creation of the national Deutsche Islam Konferenz (German Islam Conference) – a forum in which German leaders and representatives of the Muslim community in Germany can discuss pressing issues affecting Muslim life in Germany. In his opening speech establishing the Islam Konferenz in 2006, then-Interior Minister Wolfgang Schäuble (CDU) stated that “Islam is a part of Germany and a part of Europe, it is a part of our present and part of our future. Muslims are welcome in Germany.” When then-German President Christian Wulff marked the 20th Anniversary of
German Unification in 2010, he urged Germans to be open to cultural diversity and stated that just like Christianity and Judaism, Islam also belongs in Germany now.\textsuperscript{117}

Other government leaders have publicly expressed conflicting views and continue to emphasize the concept of German \textit{Leitkultur} and the need for Muslim immigrants to integrate (read assimilate) themselves into German society. For example, in October 2010 German Chancellor Angela Merkel (CDU) declared that “multiculturalism has utterly failed”\textsuperscript{118} in Germany, emphasizing the argument that immigrants must accept German values in order to live in German society. Horst Seehofer, leader of Merkel’s coalition partner, the CSU, stated that “it’s clear that immigrants from other cultures such as Turkey and Arabic countries have more difficulties [integrating]. From that I draw the conclusion that we don’t need additional immigration from other cultures.”\textsuperscript{119} In June 2012, the current German President, Joachim Gauck, distanced himself from his predecessor and stated that rather than seeing Islam as a part of Germany, he would argue that Muslims living in Germany are a part of Germany, not necessarily the religion itself. Shortly afterward, the current Interior Minister, Hans-Peter Friedrich (CDU), went a step further and forthrightly argued that the idea that “Islam is part of Germany is a fact that cannot be proven by history…” rather, Germany’s identity has been “shaped by Christianity and the Enlightenment.”\textsuperscript{120}

Germany, however, is not alone in its antagonistic relationship with Islam and Islamophobia in Germany is part of a larger trend affecting Europe as a whole. With approximately 4.2 million Muslims living within its borders, Germany has the second largest Muslim population in Europe, after France. However, Muslim immigrants make up only 5% of Germany’s total population, meaning that France, Belgium, Austria, and the Netherlands all have a larger proportion of Muslim immigrants relative to their native populations than Germany.\textsuperscript{121} In a study for the Friedrich-Ebert-Foundation, a group of researchers found that while a rejection of Muslims and Islam is widespread throughout Europe, Germany has some of the highest anti-Muslim attitudes in Western Europe.\textsuperscript{122}
Table 2 shows the results of the public opinion polls for select Western European countries. German respondents were more likely than respondents in Great Britain, France, and the Netherlands to agree that there are too many Muslims in their country. In reality, France has a larger Muslim population than Germany both in terms of real numbers and the percentage of the population comprised by Muslims. Great Britain and the Netherlands also have a higher proportion of Muslims than Germany. Germans are also more likely than the French, British, or Dutch to agree that Islam is a religion of intolerance.

Germans are far less likely than all other groups to agree that the Muslim culture fits well into their country/Europe (only 16.6%), which emphasizes the important role that culture plays in German identity as well as the social distance which Germans perceive between themselves and Muslims living in their country. Despite all this, Germans seem to be more informed about certain aspects of Islam than other countries, being least likely to agree that many Muslims perceive terrorists as heroes, or that the majority of Muslims find terrorism justifiable. Germans are also least likely to agree that Muslims’ attitudes towards women contradict their values.

The comparatively higher levels of anti-Muslim attitudes in Germany have gained salience over the last year, as Germany has been rocked by the discovery of neo-Nazi serial murders and attacks against primarily Turkish immigrants in what have been called the “Döner Murders”. Between 2000 and 2006, a group of Neo-Nazi youths calling themselves the National

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question: Somewhat or Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Germany</th>
<th>Great Britain</th>
<th>France</th>
<th>Netherlands</th>
<th>Italy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>There are too many Muslims in [country].</td>
<td>46.1</td>
<td>44.7</td>
<td>36.2</td>
<td>41.5</td>
<td>49.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslims are too demanding.</td>
<td>54.1</td>
<td>50.0</td>
<td>52.8</td>
<td>51.8</td>
<td>64.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Islam is a religion of intolerance.</td>
<td>52.5</td>
<td>47.2</td>
<td>52.3*</td>
<td>46.7</td>
<td>60.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[France: Islam is a religion of tolerance.]</td>
<td>16.6</td>
<td>39.0</td>
<td>49.8</td>
<td>38.7</td>
<td>27.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Muslim culture fits well into [country/Europe].</td>
<td>76.1</td>
<td>81.5</td>
<td>78.8</td>
<td>78.2</td>
<td>82.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslims’ attitudes towards women contradict our values.</td>
<td>27.9</td>
<td>37.6</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>29.2</td>
<td>28.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Many Muslims perceive terrorists as heroes.</td>
<td>17.1</td>
<td>26.3</td>
<td>23.3*</td>
<td>19.9</td>
<td>21.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The majority of Muslims find terrorism justifiable. [France: not justifiable.]</td>
<td>16.6</td>
<td>39.0</td>
<td>49.8</td>
<td>38.7</td>
<td>27.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Socialist Underground (NSU) perpetrated the murders of eight Turks, one Greek, and a German police officer, as well as over a dozen other attacks across Germany aimed primarily at Turks.¹²³ The discovery also exposed broad-based prejudice and racism within German security and police agencies, which had for the most part ignored the idea that these killings might be racially motivated and rather stereotyped the victims and assumed their deaths must have been related to the victims’ own involvement in domestic disputes, drugs, criminal activity, or even the Turkish deep state.¹²⁴

Following these revelations, German leaders expressed their sorrow and shame for these murders and expressed solidarity with the victims and their families. The members of both houses of the German Parliament (Bundestag – lower house; Bundesrat – upper house) issued a joint statement condemning the murders and professing themselves to be “deeply ashamed.”¹²⁵ In an official state ceremony paying tribute to the victims of the NSU murders, Chancellor Angela Merkel described the murders as a disgrace for the country and asked the victims’ families for forgiveness for the wrongful suspicions of the investigators.¹²⁶ In the same ceremony, several of the victims’ family members called for solidarity and for Germans to strive for tolerance in the country.¹²⁷ In the German media as well, a great deal was said about the latent racism in Germany, drawing connections between negative media coverage and political rhetoric and their role in fostering anti-foreigner sentiment, while also highlighting the role these wide-spread negative attitudes and fear have played in creating an atmosphere where right-wing extremists could feel justified in committing such murders.¹²⁸

It seemed that Germany was poised for an in-depth national discussion about inclusion and racism, yet since that time, no such discussion has taken place. Instead the focus of government debate and action has been on the prevalence of right-wing extremism in the country (especially in the east); the failures and corruption of the state’s security agencies; the criminal trial of the last surviving member of the NSU trio; and an effort to ban the right-wing extremist National Democratic Party of Germany (NPD) – which has been linked to the NSU and other
violent neo-Nazi groups. At the same time, government officials and institutions have continued to alienate the foreign population in Germany rather than foster inclusiveness and solidarity.

Less than one month after the state ceremony commemorating the NSU victims, a national debate about integration and the role of Islam in Germany was reignited by Interior Minister Hans-Peter Friedrich (CSU) with the publication of a new study on Muslim integration commissioned by the Ministry of the Interior. Friedrich released the results of the study in a daily tabloid magazine, Bild, rather than waiting for the upcoming Islam Conference where representatives from the German government and Muslim organizations could discuss the study and its meanings. Friedrich then offered alarmist statements about the results, warning that one-in-five Muslims in Germany does not want to integrate, rather than observing the reverse of this statistic, that four out of five Muslims in Germany do want to integrate. Friedrich then further alienated the Muslim population in Germany by stating that “Germany respects the origins and cultural identities of its immigrants, but we do not accept the import of authoritarian, anti-democratic and fanatically religious views. Those who reject freedom and democracy have no future here.”

Just a few months later, both Muslims and Jews in Germany were deeply upset when a German court ruled that the circumcision of a young boy was considered unlawful bodily harm, a crime which could be punishable under German penal code. This sparked outrage among the Jewish and Muslim communities who contended that this court ruling and the debates surrounding it signaled to Germany’s religious minorities that not only are their religious customs strange and unwanted in Germany, they are inhumane, unenlightened, and even criminal. Many within these communities have expressed concern that this increasing social and institutional hostility towards their religious beliefs calls into question whether these groups even have a future in Germany.

From this historical analysis it is clear that Germany’s experience with foreigners has been characterized by manifestations of prejudice leading to both social and institutional discrimination, as well as acts of violence. In a later section, this thesis will look at public opinion
survey data to determine just how widespread these Ausländerfeindlich attitudes are today. The next section will look at migration data in order to gain a better understanding of how foreign residents are distributed spatially in eastern and western Germany today, which will offer context for a discussion about attitudes.

**Presentation of Migration Data**

According to the German Federal Statistical Office, there are 7,369,909 foreigners – meaning individuals without German citizenship – living in Germany today, representing about 9% of the country’s total population. Figure 4 shows that this number has held relatively stable since the mid-1990s, peaking in 1996 at 7.49 million. The data also shows that despite the German government’s decades-long insistence that it was “not an immigration country,” foreigners have come to represent a significant portion of the population.

![Figure 4: Foreign Population in United Germany](image)

Population data from the Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD) shows that in 2010, there were 10,591,000 foreign-born individuals living in Germany comprising 12.9% of the total population. This number is higher than the numbers offered by the German government’s statistical office because the OECD data includes the foreign-born ethnic German Aussiedler, which German data on foreigners does not because they have been granted German citizenship and are not considered foreign. Comparatively, the foreign-born population in the
United States makes up 12.9% of the total population, while making up 11.4% in France, and 11.5% in the United Kingdom.\footnote{132}

According to the World Bank, Germany has migrants from nearly 200 different countries living within its borders.\footnote{133} Table 3 shows the top 10 sending countries to Germany. The largest migrant group by far is the 1.6 million Turkish citizens living in Germany, which makes up nearly a quarter (23.2\%) of the total foreign population. The next largest group, the Italians, represent only 7.5\% of the total foreign population.\footnote{134} However, of the 1,607,161 Turkish foreigners living in Germany today, 514,283 – or roughly one-third – were actually born in Germany and are not migrants at all.\footnote{135}

Where in Germany are these migrants living? The total foreign population in Germany by Bundesland (federal state) is presented in Table 4. When trying to decide how to calculate and present data on migrants at the state level, the question arises how to deal with modern day Berlin since it was part of both East and West Germany. The German government tends to group Berlin with the old West German Bundesländer for issues concerning migration, since, as the table shows, migration patterns for Berlin are much more similar to these Länder (federal states) than to the former East German Länder. Additionally, around the time of unification there were nearly twice as many foreigners in West Berlin\footnote{136} as in all of East Germany and still today 86\% of all foreigners in Berlin live in the formerly western neighborhoods.\footnote{137} For these reasons, I have also chosen to include Berlin with the former West German states in my data presentations.

Table 4 shows that today, foreigners live overwhelmingly in western Germany and Berlin, the “old Bundesländer”. Nordrhein-Westfalen in western Germany has the highest total number of migrants at nearly 2 million, while Mecklenburg-Vorpommern in the east, with just over 40,000 foreigners, has the least. For the purposes of my research, however, a much more accurate
measure to look at is what percentage of the population is comprised of foreigners, since anti-immigrant sentiment has much more to do with perception of being overwhelmed by foreigners than the actual size of the foreign population. For this measure, the city-states of Berlin and Hamburg (both of which I consider to be “western” Germany) have the highest proportion of foreigners, which is not unexpected since migrants tend to settle in urban areas. Among the larger Länder, Baden-Württemberg in the west has the highest proportion of foreigners with 12.1%, while in the eastern German state of Sachsen-Anhalt, only 1.9% of the population is foreign. In fact, in none of the eastern German Länder do foreigners make up more than 3% of the population, whereas the western German state with the lowest portion of foreigners, Schleswig-Holstein, has 5.2%. A quick glance at Figure 5 makes clear that the proportion of foreigners living in western Germany dwarfs that in eastern Germany. This trend has remained stable since unification.
German government data shows that not only is there a difference between the number and proportion of foreigners living in eastern and western Germany, but there are also major differences between which migrant groups are living in these two regions. In all of the western German Länder except Saarland, Turks are the overwhelmingly largest migrant group. In the eastern German Länder, the largest groups are Poles and migrants from the various countries of the former Yugoslavia. Though Turkish migrants are the primary target of Ausländerfeindlich attitudes in both eastern and western Germany, less than 1% of the foreign Turkish population lives in the east (excluding Berlin).

How the German government counts the migrants within its borders is part of a larger debate about citizenship and belonging in Germany. The migration data presented so far has been based on publications by the German government, which for the entire post-war period has collected data on its “foreign population”. However, since for decades German citizenship was restricted to only those who were ethnically German, the foreign population included – and still includes – individuals who were born in Germany but to foreign parents. On the elite level there has been a shift over the last decade toward the use of the term Personen mit Migrationshintergrund (people with a migration background) to describe actual immigrants, individuals born in Germany to immigrant parents, and anyone with German citizenship who has
one or more non-German parent. Since 2005, the Federal Statistical Office has used this new category in the Micro-census, stating that the old categories of German or Foreigner were no longer meaningful measures of German society due to the high number of naturalizations and Aussiedler.

For the purposes of this paper, looking at what portion of the population in Germany has a migration background is particularly useful since the primary problem of anti-foreigner sentiment revolves not around the legal status of immigrants, but rather around the cultural and racial background of immigrants and their German-born offspring. According to the German Federal Statistical Office, in 2011 there were almost 16 million people with a migration background living in Germany, or 19.5% of the total population. Of these, 15,365,000 live in the former West German Bundesländer and Berlin while only 597,000 – or 3.7% of all individuals with a migration background – live in the eastern German Bundesländer, making up just 4.7% of the total eastern German population. This data is in line with the previously presented data on the foreign population in Germany and also indicates that there is an extremely low level of racial and cultural heterogeneity in eastern German society today.

Figure 6 shows the development of Germany’s population with a migration background since 2005. The number of people with a migration background (and therefore the ethnic and cultural diversity) in western Germany has been steadily increasing since 2005. In contrast, this section of the population has actually decreased in eastern Germany from a peak of about 640,000 in 2007 to around 590,000 in 2010, increasing only slightly to just fewer than 600,000 in 2011.
Having confirmed the assumption that far fewer foreigners live in eastern Germany than western Germany, this thesis will review survey data from several different sources to determine whether eastern German attitudes about the foreign population differ from the attitudes of western Germans.

**Survey Information on German Attitudes Towards Foreigners**

*Friedrich Ebert Foundation*

Since 2006, the Friedrich Ebert Foundation, a German non-profit foundation associated with the Social Democratic Party, has published a survey study every other year which attempts to gauge the prevalence of right-wing extremist attitudes in Germany. The so-called "Mitte-Studie" (Middle Study), named for the study’s finding that right-wing attitudes are found not only on the fringes, but also in the center of German society, breaks right-wing extremist attitudes down into six different dimensions: approval of a right-wing oriented dictatorship, chauvinism, Ausländerfeindlichkeit, anti-Semitism, social Darwinism, and downplaying the crimes of National Socialism. For this survey, three statements were given relating to each dimension of right-wing extremism, and participants could respond that they completely rejected, overwhelmingly rejected, partly rejected/partly agreed with, overwhelmingly agreed with, or completely agreed with the statement. For the purpose of this paper, we will look only at the survey results for the Ausländerfeindlichkeit dimension. The results of the three survey questions related to Ausländerfeindlichkeit can be seen in Figures 7-9.

The first question asked was to what degree the participant agreed with the statement “foreigners only come here to abuse our welfare system” (see Figure 7). In 2012, 31.4% of western Germans and 53.9% of eastern Germans either overwhelmingly or completely agreed with this statement.
In western Germany, this number is down from its high of 35.2% in 2006, but has been increasing slightly since 2008. In eastern Germany agreement with this statement has been steadily increasing, going up 10 percentage points since 2006. Additionally, the differential between the east and west in 2012 is larger than in any of the previous survey years.  

The second question (see Figure 8) asked to what degree the participant agreed with the statement “if jobs get scarce, foreigners should be sent home.” In 2012, 29.1% of western Germans and 42% of eastern Germans agreed with this statement. In West Germany, this number is down from its high of 34% in 2006 and slightly up from its level of 26.5% in 2008, but remains at essentially the same level as it was in 2010. In eastern Germany, a higher number of participants agree with this statement than when the question was initially posed in 2006, but attitudes have remained relatively stable since 2008.

The final question posed was to what extent the participant agreed with the statement that “the Federal Republic is dangerously overwhelmed by foreigners” (see Figure 9). In 2012, 35.6% of westerners and 43.6% of easterners agreed with this statement. In 2006, the study found hardly any difference between eastern and
western German perceptions of Überfremdung, when 38.8% in the west and 40.5% in the east agreed with this statement. However, by 2008, this perception had diverged drastically with only 27.9% of western Germans agreeing that the country was dangerously overwhelmed by foreigners while the number of eastern Germans who felt this way rose to 46.7%. Since 2008, attitudes seem to be converging, as feelings of Überfremdung have risen in western Germany while falling slightly for eastern Germans.

Based on the responses to these individual questions, the “Mitte-Studien” finds that today, 21.7% of western Germans and 38.7% of eastern Germans harbor Ausländerfeindlich attitudes (see Figure 10). While in 2004, there was no statistically significant difference between attitudes in the east and west, Ausländerfeindlichkeit has been growing steadily in the east since that time while dropping in the west (though since 2008 it has increased slightly). Today, nearly twice as many eastern Germans hold negative attitudes towards foreigners as western Germans.

Overall, the study finds that eastern Germans have significantly more negative attitudes towards foreigners than western Germans. It must be noted that while in western Germany only a minority of the population expresses agreement with these negative statements about foreigners, in eastern Germany very nearly half of the population agreed with each of the individual statements indicating that these negative attitudes are widespread in that region. From the results of the individual questions, however, it is clear that some issues are viewed much more
negatively than others. Economic issues seem to be of the highest importance, as Eastern Germans are far more concerned than western Germans about the abuse of Germany's welfare system by foreigners, with 22.5% more eastern Germans expressing negative attitudes about this issue than western Germans, and 12.9% more eastern than western Germans agreeing that foreigners should be sent home if jobs get scarce. However, in response to the question of whether or not Germany is being Überfremdet (overwhelmed by foreigners) – a concept which has to do with the visibility of foreign culture and its threat to German society – only 8% more eastern Germans than western Germans express belief that Germany is suffering from Überfremdung. The highest percentage of western Germans agree with this statement, indicating that western German anti-foreigner attitudes revolve more around the cultural threat they perceive from foreigners than an economic threat.

Federal Anti-Discrimination Agency

In contrast to the Friedrich-Ebert-Foundation’s "Mitte-Studien", another recent study carried out by the Expert Council of German Foundations on Integration and Migration (Sachverständigenrat deutscher Stiftungen für Integration und Migration or SVR) and published in 2012 by Germany’s Federal Anti-Discrimination Agency has found that there is no significant difference between attitudes towards foreigners in eastern and western Germany. This study is unique in that it polled people living in Germany both with and without a migration background and asked them questions both about their own experiences of discrimination as well as their willingness to interact on various levels with people from other ethnic backgrounds. From this data, we can look at the issue of Ausländerfeindlichkeit from both the perspective of foreigners (and their offspring) and of the native German population. The authors explain that perceived discrimination by migrants can function as an indicator of the level of their acceptance by the majority (native) population. It is assumed that if Ausländerfeindlichkeit is more pervasive in eastern Germany, then people with a migration background living in that region will also report higher levels of discrimination than their counterparts in western Germany.
The first part of the survey asked respondents to indicate if they had personally experienced discrimination over the preceding twelve months in a variety of areas of typical daily life. The study finds that, over all, people with a migration background reported significantly higher levels of discrimination than those without a migration background. Among people with a migration background, those from Turkey and Africa/Asia/Latin America experience significantly higher levels of discrimination than those from other European countries or ethnic German Aussiedler. This finding indicates that phenotypical differences (appearance/ethnicity) are an important way in which individuals are marked as “different” in German society and are the primary basis for discrimination.

In an east-west comparison, 41.6% of people with a migration background living in western Germany reported experiencing discrimination in at least one of the areas of daily life, while in eastern Germany, 43.6% reported such discrimination. The study finds that though this number is slightly higher in the east, the difference is not statistically significant. Some slight difference can be seen between reports of discrimination by people with a migration background in eastern and western Germany when the individual areas of daily life are looked at (see Figure 11), for example in public transportation and the housing search, but these still lack statistical significance. These results emphasize the fact that in the eyes of Germany’s foreign population, Ausländerfeindlichkeit is just as significant in western Germany as it is in the east.

![Figure 11: Reported Experiences of Discrimination by Individuals with a Migration Background in Eastern and Western Germany, by Place](image)

N=7,065

Source: Antidiskriminierungsstelle des Bundes, 2012
While the study finds that a similar percentage of people with a migration background in eastern and western Germany report having been discriminated against, it must be noted that the group which in general reported the greatest amount of discrimination in Germany as a whole - those from Turkey and Africa/Asia/Latin America, whose outward appearance gives rise to discrimination – are represented in a much smaller proportion in eastern Germany than in western Germany. As stated earlier, less than 1% of all Turkish migrants live in eastern Germany (outside of Berlin).

The second portion of the study attempts to gauge participants’ attitudes toward coexistence with people from different ethnic backgrounds. Participants were asked to describe how likely they would be to 1) approve of a person from a different ethnic background marrying into [their] family; 2) work at a company with a heterogeneous (multi-ethnic) staff; 3) move to a heterogeneous (multi-ethnic) neighborhood; and 4) send [their] child to a heterogeneous (multi-ethnic) school. The responses to this set of survey questions, presented in Figure 12, show no significant difference between the willingness of eastern and western Germans to coexist with people from other ethnic backgrounds.
A high percentage of Germans in both the east (91.7%) and west (93.6%) responded that they would be either very likely or somewhat likely to work at a company with a multi-ethnic staff. There is also a high level of acceptance for multi-ethnic relationships within one’s own family in both the east (83.5%) and west (85.7%). Willingness is much lower, in both the east and west, to move to a multi-ethnic neighborhood or send one’s children to a multi-ethnic school. Just over half of all eastern (55.7%) and western (56.3%) Germans believe it is likely that they will move to a multi-ethnic neighborhood. A still lower proportion (40.7% in the east and 42.2% in the west) finds it likely that they would send their children to a school with a high proportion of children with different ethnic backgrounds. Though there is no significant difference between eastern and western German willingness to coexist and interact with people with different ethnic backgrounds, only a slight majority of all Germans are willing to live in a multi-ethnic neighborhood and less than half are willing to send their children to a school with a large number of foreigners, indicating high levels of anti-foreigner sentiment across Germany.

The results of the Anti-Discrimination Agency study contrast sharply with the results of the Friedrich-Ebert-Foundation study and leave doubt as to the validity of the assumption that eastern Germans are more Ausländerfeindlich than western Germans. The questions asked in the two surveys do differ in ways that may help to explain these diverging results. In the Friedrich-Ebert-Foundation study, attitudes of eastern and western Germans diverged far more on questions about foreigners’ threat to the German economy and welfare state than questions about the cultural or social threat posed by foreigners. The Anti-Discrimination Agency study’s questions, on the other hand, dealt exclusively with social issues and found no difference between eastern and western attitudes. These results indicate that eastern Germans are reacting more negatively to foreigners because they feel more of an economic threat from foreigners than western Germans, but do not see them as more of a social threat than do western Germans.

**Eurobarometer**

Another valuable source of survey information is the Eurobarometer, the Public Opinion Analysis sector of the European Commission, which has been conducted twice a year in all
countries of the European Union since 1974. The survey asks respondents questions about a variety of Europe-wide issues, including their satisfaction with their life, hope for the future, hope for the economy, trust in democratic institutions, identification with Europe, and so on, as well as a few questions each year relating to immigration issues. The following survey results are from the annex of the Spring 2009 Standard Eurobarometer survey, entitled “The Future of Europe.”

When asked if they agreed or disagreed with the statement “people from other ethnic groups enrich the cultural life of Germany,” 64% of western German respondents said that they agreed while in eastern Germany, only 48% of eastern German respondents agreed. These results indicate that a higher number of western Germans than eastern Germans have embraced the idea of an open, multicultural society, but also show that many eastern Germans think positively about the impact of foreigners on Germany’s cultural life as well.

The Eurobarometer survey also found that 38% of western Germans and 44% of eastern Germans agreed that “the presence of people from other ethnic groups is a cause of insecurity.” It is likely that most Germans had Muslim foreigners in mind when answering this question, since concern about the security threat posed by Islamic fundamentalists among Germany’s Turkish and other Muslim immigrants has been high since the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001. The results of this survey question indicate that eastern and western German attitudes toward Muslim immigrants are relatively similar, with only a 6% difference between the two.

Western German respondents were essentially split on the question of whether or not people from other ethnic groups cause increased unemployment in Germany with 42% agreeing that their presence does increase unemployment while 41% disagreed. Eastern German respondents, on the other hand, were overwhelmingly convinced – 51% agreed that the presence of other ethnic groups in Germany increases unemployment, while only 30% disagreed. In response to the statement “we need immigrants to work in certain sectors of our economy,” 54% of western Germans agreed while only 37% of eastern Germans agreed. Similar to the results of the Friedrich-Ebert-Foundation study, these two questions indicate that eastern Germans are
more likely to see foreigners as threat to Germany’s economy and labor market than western Germans.

When asked if they agreed or disagreed with the statement that “immigrants contribute more in taxes than they benefit from health and welfare services,” a majority of both western (59%) and eastern (65%) Germans said they tended to disagree. The survey question was then changed slightly and the participants were asked if they agreed or disagreed that “legal immigrants contribute more in taxes than they benefit from health and welfare services.” Though attitudes improved slightly when immigrants legally residing in the country were considered, still 50% of respondents from both regions disagreed with the statement. The percentage of respondents who agreed that immigrants contribute more in taxes than they receive in welfare benefits is shockingly low in both the west (11%) and the east (9%). From these results it is clear that across the board, a majority of Germans in both regions believe that foreigners are burdening the state rather than positively contributing to its growth.

As discussed, the presence of Ausländerfeindlich attitudes is not specific to Germany. To truly understand the situation in Germany, one must look at the phenomenon in the context of Europe as a whole. Table 5 shows the results for select questions from the Spring 2009 Eurobarometer survey\textsuperscript{154} for eastern and western Germany, France, Italy, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, and the average of all EU-27 countries combined.

| Table 5: Results of Eurobarometer 2009 “The Future of Europe” Survey for Select European Countries (In percent) |
|-----------------------------------------------------|---------------|----------------|----------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| Agree...                                             | Germany - W   | Germany - E   | United Kingdom | France        | Netherlands    | Italy         | EU-27 Average |
| People from other ethnic groups enrich the cultural life of (OUR COUNTRY). | 64            | 48            | 52            | 64            | 66            | 79            | 54            |
| The presence of people from other ethnic groups is a cause of insecurity. | 38            | 44            | 57            | 38            | 43            | 50            | 45            |
| The presence of people from other ethnic groups increases unemployment in (OUR COUNTRY). | 42            | 51            | 59            | 44            | 38            | 47            | 49            |
| Immigrants contribute more in taxes than they benefit from health and welfare services. | 11            | 9             | 27            | 12            | 21            | 25            | 22            |
| N=                                                  | 1,521         | 1,352         | 1,038         | 1,000         | 1,096         | 24,528        |


These survey results show that western German attitudes towards foreigners are for the most part more positive than the rest of Europe on average and relatively on-par with France and the Netherlands. Eastern Germans, on the other hand, have generally more negative attitudes
than the European average or West Germany, France, or the Netherlands, but more positive attitudes than either Italy or the UK on certain issues. On the question of whether immigrants contribute more in taxes than they benefit from the health and welfare systems, however, an overwhelming majority of both eastern and western Germans have far more negative attitudes than the European average, the UK, the Netherlands, and Italy, though they are both very similar to French attitudes. Thus we can see that for both eastern and western Germany, the perception that immigrants are taking advantage of the welfare system is much more prevalent than in most of Europe.

Overall, the results of this Eurobarometer survey indicate that negative attitudes towards foreigners are more prevalent in eastern than in western Germany. It also shows that a majority of eastern Germans hold these negative attitudes, although on the issue of foreigners’ contributions to Germany’s welfare state, a majority of western Germans also hold negative attitudes. These survey results are in line with the general findings of the Friedrich-Ebert-Foundation study’s finding that eastern Germans have more negative attitudes towards foreigners than western Germans and in the same strain contradict the findings of the Federal Anti-Discrimination Agency’s study which found no difference between eastern and western German attitudes.

Info GMBH Survey

A smaller public opinion survey, taken in 2010 by a private survey company, Info GmbH, in response to the publication of Thilo Sarrazin’s book, adds further insight into the differences in Ausländerfeindlichkeit and Islamophobia in eastern and western Germany.

| Table 6: Political Attitudes on the Topic Immigration and Migration, 2010 in % |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|----------|----------|
| **I agree that...**                                           | **West** | **East** |
| Islam is not a “peaceful religion that does not tend toward violence.” | 38       | 43       |
| Accepting Turkey into the EU would threaten the Christian culture in Europe. | 29       | 24       |
| Islam is a threat to the German culture.                      | 18       | 16       |
| Germans must to everything possible to protect their culture against immigrants, with force/violence if necessary. | 9        | 17       |
| I would prefer it if all foreigners had to leave Germany and return to their country of origin. | 8        | 17       |

Source: Info GmbH, 2010. N=1,040
The results of this survey (see Table 6), find that 38% of western Germans and 43% of eastern Germans believe that Islam is “not a peaceful religion that does not tend toward violence” – or in other words, they believe that Islam is not a peaceful religion and that it does tend toward violence. While this difference is slight, it shows that eastern Germans harbor more negative attitudes about Islam itself. However, eastern Germans (16%) are less likely to perceive Islam as a threat to German culture than western Germans (18%), though the difference is so slight that attitudes between east and west about Islam’s threat to German culture should be considered the same. Additionally, it must be pointed out that only a small portion of the population in both regions responded that they believed Islam to be a threat to German culture, which is surprising given the amount of public and media attention dedicated to the issue.

Western Germans (29%), the survey finds, are also slightly more concerned than eastern Germans (24%) about the threat to Christian culture in Europe that would be posed by accepting Turkey into the EU. Along with the questions in Table 6, the Info Gmbh Survey also asked participants “what do you personally think of Sarrazin’s statements about Muslim migrants?” In response, 36% of western Germans and 40% of eastern Germans said that they believed Sarrazin was either completely correct or mostly correct, but expressed himself too harshly. While slightly more eastern Germans responded that they agreed with Sarrazin’s statements about Muslims, eastern and western reception of Sarrazin’s arguments are very similar.

Taken together, this survey finds that only a minority of eastern and western Germans hold negative attitudes towards Islam in Germany and that though there are slight differences, attitudes are generally similar in both regions. It should be noted, however, that over 99% of all Turkish immigrants – the primary Muslim group in Germany - live in the old Bundesländer (including Berlin). Thus eastern Germans are just as negative about Islam as western Germans, even though the presence of Islam is negligible in the east (outside of Berlin).

A much larger disparity between eastern and western German attitudes is perceptible for statements made about immigrants in general. Germans in the east show more broad-based willingness to reject foreigners altogether, with 17% preferring that foreigners would be forced to
leave Germany and return to their country of origin, as opposed to 9% of western Germans. This response can be compared to the Friedrich-Ebert-Foundation’s finding that in 2010 (the same year as the Info Gmbh survey) 40.8% of eastern Germans and 23.9% of western Germans (42% of eastern Germans and 29.1% of western Germans in 2012) agreed that “if jobs get scarce, foreigners should be sent home.” While these questions both find a large disparity between east and west, with a larger percentage of eastern Germans supporting sending immigrants back to their home countries, once the issue of scarce jobs is brought up, the percentage of Germans in both regions willing to support forced repatriation for foreigners goes up. This highlights the sensitivity of the German population, and eastern German population in particular, to the presence of foreigners in their country in relation to economic hardship.

The most disconcerting finding of this survey was that nearly one-fifth (17%) of eastern German respondents agreed that Germans must do everything possible to protect their culture against immigrants, with force/violence if necessary, compared to 8% of western Germans. While this number is still very low, any level of support for the use of force against minorities in Germany is of concern, particularly in light of the country’s Nazi past. As discussed previously, in post-war Germany the concept of culture has become racialized and is used to demonstrate the irascible difference between Germans and non-German others within society, just as biological explanations were used during the Nazi period.

The results of these four survey studies offer several conflicting findings about the assumed disparity in Ausländerfeindlich attitudes between eastern and western Germany. Though it cannot be conclusively determined that eastern Germans are more Ausländerfeindlich than western Germans, the majority of the surveys do find higher levels of anti-foreigner attitudes in the east, suggesting that this narrative holds true. Next, this paper will examine two other oft-cited sources of data – crime rate data from the German Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution and recent election data for the Neo-Nazi National Democratic Party of Germany (NPD) – to further determine whether a disparity exists between eastern and western attitudes towards foreigners.
Additional Evidence of Greater Ausländerfeindlichkeit in Eastern Germany

When discussing Ausländerfeindlichkeit in Germany the media and scholars often point to data published by the German Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz (Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution), which shows that right-wing extremists are committing more violent crimes in eastern Germany than in the west.\textsuperscript{157} Table 7 shows the most recent data from the Verfassungsschutz on the number of right-wing extremist attacks in each of the Länder, as well as the percentage of the population those attacks represent.

From this data we can see that the highest number of violent right-wing extremist crimes (180) took place in the western German state of Nordrhein-Westfalen in 2011. The next highest number of right-wing extremist crimes took place in Niedersachsen (west) and Sachsen (east), both states recording 84 such crimes. While the highest numbers of violent right-wing extremist crimes were recorded in the west, the lowest numbers were recorded in the west as well, with Bremen and Saarland recording only 6 crimes each in 2011.

Germany’s Länder vary greatly in their size and population, however, some being only city-states while others cover large areas of rural land or contain many large cities. In order to

| Table 7: Right-Wing Extremist Violent Crimes in Germany in 2011 |
|-------------------|--------|------------------|
| Land              | Total  |
| Old Bundesländer  |        |
| Baden-Württemberg| 35     | 0.33             |
| Bayern            | 57     | 0.45             |
| Bremen            | 6      | 0.91             |
| Hamburg           | 21     | 1.18             |
| Hessen            | 12     | 0.20             |
| Niedersachsen     | 84     | 1.06             |
| Nordrhein-Westfalen| 180   | 1.01             |
| Rheinland-Pfalz   | 31     | 0.77             |
| Saarland          | 6      | 0.59             |
| Schleswig-Holstein| 27     | 0.95             |
| Berlin            | 42     | 1.21             |
| New Bundesländer  |        |
| Brandenburg       | 36     | 1.44             |
| Mecklenburg-Vorpommern | 37 | 2.25             |
| Sachsen           | 84     | 2.02             |
| Sachsen-Anhalt    | 63     | 2.70             |
| Thüringen         | 34     | 1.52             |

Source: Bundesministerium des Innern, Verfassungsschutzbericht 2011
better understand the prevalence of violent right-wing extremist crime in the individual Länders, it is also important to look at the rate of crime.

When looked at in terms of a ratio of the number of crimes to the population size of the Länders, it is clear that there is a much higher rate of right-wing extremist violent crimes in eastern Germany than in western Germany. The highest rate of violent right-wing extremist crimes in 2011 was found in the eastern state of Sachsen-Anhalt, where 2.7 crimes took place for every 100,000 residents. Even the Land with the lowest crime rate in the east, Brandenburg (1.44 crimes per 100,000 residents), had a higher crime rate than any of the western Länders. Big cities like Berlin (1.21) and Hamburg (1.18), with large migrant populations, have around half the rate of politically motivated right-wing extremist crimes than the more sparsely populated, homogeneous eastern Länders like Mecklenburg-Vorpommern and Sachsen-Anhalt do. Unfortunately, the Verfassungsschutz report does not offer information about which groups (e.g. foreigners, Jews, communists) these crimes were committed against on the Länders level. For all of Germany, however, the report states that of the 766 right-wing extremist violent crimes committed in 2011, 350 (46.4%) were against foreigners.

Another oft-cited indicator that eastern Germany is more Ausländerfeindlich than the west is that the National Democratic Party of Germany (NPD), which has ties to violent Neo-Nazi groups, receives far greater electoral support in the east. Table 8 shows the results of the party list vote (Zweitstimmen) in the most recent federal election in 2009. We can see that the NPD received a larger percent of the votes
in the new Bundesländer, with its greatest success in Sachsen where it received more than 4% of the vote. Importantly, the NPD did not clear the 5% threshold which, under German electoral rules, parties must meet to be awarded seats in the Bundestag. Thus the party has no national representation.

On the Länder level, the NPD has received even more voter support in the east, surpassing the 5% threshold in both Mecklenburg-Vorpommern and Sachsen and receiving seats in the parliaments of these Länder. As Table 9 shows, the NPD received the greatest percentage of the votes in the five new Bundesländer: Mecklenburg-Vorpommern (5.9), Sachsen (5.6), Thüringen (4.3), Sachsen-Anhalt (4.1), and Brandenburg (2.6). The party did sustain losses in its strongholds of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern and Sachsen in the most recent Land elections, but still garnered enough votes to remain in the Landtag (state parliament). While the NPD has not received enough support to enter a Landtag in any of the old Bundesländer, the party did make gains in half of the western Länder in the most recent elections.

While this data on right-wing extremist attacks and election results do indicate that there is greater animosity towards foreigners in eastern Germany, it is important to make a distinction between Ausländerfeindlich attitudes and right-wing extremist action. In the wake of the NSU murders, government officials, police, the media, and the German public have focused their debate and outrage on the presence of right-wing extremist and Neo-Nazi groups and the violent
acts they perpetrate, particularly in eastern Germany. Little discussion, however, has been devoted to the every-day prejudice and racist attitudes which permeate German society and which provide fertile soil and a sense of justification for violent, organized right-wing extremism.\footnote{159}

Right wing extremism is a pattern of attitudes which are characterized by the common traits of prejudice and an ideology of inequality – the belief that some social groups, such as the homeless, homosexuals, Jews or foreigners, are inferior. Politically, these attitudes are manifested as an affinity for dictatorial forms of government, chauvinism, and the justification or downplaying of the crimes of National Socialism. Socially, they are manifested as anti-Semitism, social Darwinism, and anti-foreigner sentiment. Connected to, but still distinct from these right-wing extremist attitudes are right-wing extremist actions, which include voting for or membership in extreme right-wing parties, provocation of weaker social groups, and violence. Individuals may hold right-wing extremist attitudes, but still not act on them, which is often the case. The danger of thinking of right-wing extremism only in terms of actions such as voting or violence is that it may lead – and has led – to the idea that these attitudes only exist among those who are on the political fringe or who perpetrate violence. In reality, however, right-wing extremist attitudes exist in the middle of society and across the political spectrum.\footnote{160}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>CDU/CSU</th>
<th>SPD</th>
<th>FDP</th>
<th>Greens</th>
<th>Linke (Left)</th>
<th>Parties of the Right</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>West</strong></td>
<td>20.8</td>
<td>24.1</td>
<td>15.6</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>19.6</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>East</strong></td>
<td>47.8</td>
<td>48.3</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>37.5</td>
<td>36.2</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Data from the Friedrich-Ebert-Foundation (see Table 10) shows that anti-foreigner attitudes can be found among the supporters of all of Germany’s major political parties, both on the right and left of the political spectrum. In both eastern and western Germany, 75% of respondents who professed support for right-wing extremist parties were found to hold Ausländerfeindlich attitudes – further emphasizing the fact that while Ausländerfeindlichkeit is a major component of right-wing extremism, they are not completely synonymous. It is also interesting that in both eastern and western Germany, Ausländerfeindlich attitudes are more
prevailing among supporters of the SPD than the CDU/CSU. It is most surprising that in eastern Germany, 37.5% of Green party supporters hold anti-foreigner attitudes, despite the party's unequivocal and long-standing support for policies such as opening Germany up to immigration, multiculturalism, and acceptance of dual citizenship. These findings further support the need to look at Ausländerfeindlichkeit as an issue separate from political right-wing extremism and as a problem affecting all of German society, not just eastern Germany.

Based on the data offered in this section, there is a strong indication that eastern Germans exhibit higher levels of Ausländerfeindlichkeit attitudes than western Germans, though this cannot be conclusively supported due to some mixed public opinion survey results. The following section will look at commonly offered explanations for higher levels of Ausländerfeindlichkeit in the eastern Germany than western Germany.

**Explaining Greater Ausländerfeindlichkeit in Eastern Germany**

**Economic Explanations**

The most common explanations for anti-foreigner sentiment look at the effect that state of the economy has on how social groups view one another. Ethnic conflict, it is argued, is not a product of racism, but rather of competition for scarce resources, which in industrialized countries primarily takes the form of jobs. In this line of thinking, anti-foreigner attitudes are linked to poor economic performance – if unemployment is high, the native population will develop resentments against immigrants whom they feel are competing with them for jobs. It follows then that if the economy improves, the native population will be less likely to feel threatened and the problem of anti-foreigner attitudes will abate.161 Based on the finding that anti-foreigner attitudes are higher in eastern Germany, it is expected that unemployment is also higher in that region.

Figure 13 shows the average unemployment rate in the German Länder in 2012.162 From this map, it is clear that the unemployment rate in eastern Germany, which sat at 10.7% on average, was nearly twice as high as in the western region where the unemployment rate was 5.9%. However, Figure 13 also shows that unemployment rates vary across both the eastern and
western regions with the unemployment rate in the eastern Land of Thüringen (8.5%) being similar to several other Länder in the west such as Nordrhein-Westfalen (8.1%) and Schleswig-Holstein (6.9%). The unemployment rate in the western German city-state of Bremen (11.2%) is slightly higher than the eastern German Länder Brandenburg (10.2%) and Sachsen (9.8%), as well as Thüringen. While a pattern of east-west disparity can be seen, there is also a north-south disparity, yet there are no studies which look into whether there is greater Ausländerfeindlichkeit in the north.

![Figure 13: Unemployment Rate (%) in Germany by Länder, 2012](image)

Based on the information in Figure 13, economic explanations of why anti-foreigner sentiment occurs are consistent with what one sees in Germany – several public opinion surveys find that people who live in the east, where unemployment rates are higher, exhibit higher levels
of anti-foreigner sentiment. Table 11 presents the unemployment rate in eastern and western Germany between 1994 and 2011 and shows that over time the unemployment rate in eastern Germany has been reduced. Based on this information, we would expect that Ausländerfeindlichkeit in eastern Germany would be falling, yet the Friedrich-Ebert-Foundation study has found that Ausländerfeindlichkeit has actually been increasing in eastern Germany over the last decade. Thus we can infer that unemployment is not the only relevant indicator for Ausländerfeindlichkeit.

The data in Table 11 is also useful for looking at a different economic explanation for anti-foreigner sentiment which focuses on feelings of relative deprivation, rather than the straightforward economic situation. When one group feels that another group in society has an unjustifiable advantage over them or that they are not receiving their rightful portion, this will lead to feelings of dislike and competition which may seem to legitimize discrimination against weaker social groups, such as immigrants. While the data in Table 11 shows that the unemployment rate in eastern Germany has gone down, today it is still about twice as high as the unemployment rate in the west and thus continues to serve as a source of economic frustration in the east which could lead to feelings of relative deprivation. Though they are much better off now than they were under communism, eastern Germans’ frustration over their continued lagging economy in comparison to western Germany is also likely a reason that eastern Germans hold more negative attitudes towards or discriminate against foreigners.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Western Germany</th>
<th>Eastern Germany</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>14.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>13.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>15.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td>17.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>8.6</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>17.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>17.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>17.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>18.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>18.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>9.9</td>
<td>18.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>17.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>15.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>13.1</td>
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<td>6.9</td>
<td>13.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>12.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>11.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Bundesagentur für Arbeit, "Arbeitsmarkt in Deutschland"
Another major group of theories which seek to explain the difference in eastern and western German attitudes toward foreigners look to the different historical experiences of the two regions after World War II. The first major theory is based on the fact that while West Germany painstakingly dealt with Germany’s role in the Nazi crimes of the Third Reich, East Germany did not. As a result, western Germans have developed democratic norms of tolerance and civil courage which help them to embrace their increasingly diverse society and which eastern Germans lack.

Much of how East and West Germany each approached the Nazi past had to do with the respective political and ideological spheres of influence under which they fell after Germany’s defeat in World War II. Aligned with the Western Allies, early West German leaders believed that the only way to regain the country’s international standing and to stave off a resurgence of German nationalism and fascism would be through political democratization, economic recovery, and accepting the burden of the Nazi persecution of the Jews. For the Western Allies as well, it was clear that Germany’s acknowledgement of responsibility for the Holocaust, treatment of its surviving Jews, and abandonment of racial ideas and practices would be important indicators of its level of democratization.

Initially, West German leaders believed that a confrontation with the past would destabilize the democratization process and instead allowed the West German people to slip into silence about their individual culpability in the Nazi past. Leaders focused instead on the creation of a liberal democratic order intended to serve as an antithesis to the Third Reich, enshrining in the Basic Law such values such as respect for human rights, liberty, and equality and giving these values a central place in the identity of the new West German state. However, by the 1960s, as democracy began to take root in West Germany, leaders began to realize that “daring more democracy” and becoming more deeply integrated with the West would require a public, national discussion about the Holocaust and crimes committed under the Nazi regime. This realization was spurred by the rebellion of the younger, politically liberal
generation who, in challenging the existing system, became critical of the older generation of leaders’ silence about the Nazi past. The political activism of the younger generation helped to spread critical attitudes about the government’s silence on the Nazi past and to encourage more open and inclusive public discussion.\textsuperscript{170}

The process of publicly discussing and dealing with the Nazi past, which has come to be known a \textit{Vergangenheitsbewältigung} (overcoming the past), was greatly aided by democratic institutions and values which had developed during the first decade of the Federal Republic. One of the primary forces driving the process of \textit{Vergangenheitsbewältigung} was the continued prosecution of Nazi criminals. These trials, covered extensively by the print media and television, brought the reality of the Holocaust to life for the West German public. Trials were often accompanied by television documentaries about the Third Reich, exhibitions about the Holocaust and the Nazi crimes, and national discussion about the Nazi past in German newspapers through editorials and letters to the editor. They also sparked grass roots investigation and discussion of the Nazi past by school, youth, and church groups.\textsuperscript{171} A series of political debates also took place in the West German Parliament (\textit{Bundestag}) about the extension of the statute of limitations on Nazi crimes in order to continue the prosecution of Nazi criminals, which generated much media attention in their own right. The \textit{Bundestag} voted in 1965 and again in 1969 to extend the statute of limitations and in 1979 it was abolished completely.\textsuperscript{172} The West German government also took care to preserve former concentration camps as sites of commemoration and of historical enlightenment.\textsuperscript{173}

By going through the process of \textit{Vergangenheitsbewältigung} in West Germany, the memory of the crimes of the Nazi past became an essential part of the West German psyche, helping to discredit right-wing extremism, nationalism, and racism and to establish a new identity based on dedication to the constitution and democratic norms. Though this process has not necessarily led western Germans to embrace diversity and multiculturalism, it has led to a consensus against overt racism and values of civility and tolerance which help to improve attitudes towards foreigners.\textsuperscript{174}
While the establishment of democratic values and institutions played an important role dealing with the Nazi past in West Germany, the way in which East Germany remembered and dealt with the Nazi past was influenced heavily by communist ideology and by the Cold War. According to German communist thinking, German fascism was a "dictatorial, terrorist, and imperialist form of finance capitalism,"\textsuperscript{175} thus the experiences of the Third Reich were viewed as a capitalist crisis rather than as a product of German history or society.\textsuperscript{176} Under this ideological understanding, West Germany, as a capitalist state, was seen as the successor to the Nazis and fascists while East Germany understood itself as the successor state to the communist, anti-fascist resistance fighters of the Third Reich. East Germans were seen as the victims of and winners over the Nazi regime, and were therefore absolved of the need for any self-reflection or public debate about their own guilt or responsibility for the crimes of the Nazi period.\textsuperscript{177} Instead, the task of dealing with the Nazi past meant overcoming fascism, which they accomplished by creating a socialist state in East Germany; fighting the Cold War; and commemorating the communist, anti-fascist resistance during the Third Reich.\textsuperscript{178}

Though East Germany did address the Nazi past in its anniversary celebrations, memorials, concentration camp museums, and school curriculum, historical memory was limited to remembering only the communist resistance fighters and communist victims of the Nazi regime. Historical memory of other groups of victims and resistance fighters – including of course the Jewish victims of the Holocaust, who were by far the largest victim group – was suppressed.\textsuperscript{179} This failure to discuss or even remember the genocide perpetrated by the Nazi regime meant that such issues as anti-Semitism, racism, or hostility toward other nations went unexplored in East Germany. As a result, the consensus against overt racism and values of tolerance and civility which developed in West Germany were not present in the East, nor was right-wing extremism fully delegitimized. When East Germany did begin to experience some exposure to foreign students and workers, hostilities were common and were only suppressed by the totalitarian nature of the East German state which, of course, crumbled in 1989.\textsuperscript{180}
Another historical explanation for higher levels of right-wing extremist attitudes in eastern Germany (including Ausländerfeindlichkeit), which is readily espoused by western Germans, has to do with eastern Germans’ forty year political experience in the GDR. Socialization in an authoritarian political culture, it is argued, has formed authoritarian people. The antidemocratic political culture of the GDR, then, has created mentalities such as authoritarianism, anti-pluralism, and friend-enemy thinking which are still powerful among eastern Germans today. This theory, however popular, does not hold up empirically. According to the 2012 study by the Friedrich-Ebert-Foundation, eastern German youths between the ages of 14-30 are more likely than 31-60 year olds or those over 60 to harbor right-wing extremist attitudes of chauvinism, anti-Semitism, and social Darwinism and also more likely to support the idea of dictatorship and downplay the crimes of National Socialism. Eastern German youths are also just as likely to hold anti-foreigner attitudes (38.5%) as the 31-60 (38.3%) age group and only slightly less likely than the 60+ (39.3%) age group. Thus eastern German youth who have been socialized in a democratic society display greater levels of anti-democratic and authoritarian mentalities than older eastern Germans who were socialized in the GDR, making east-west differences which have occurred since unification a more likely source of these attitudes.

Social Explanations: Contact with Foreigners

Another major explanation, which is tied to eastern Germany’s historical experience under the GDR, is that eastern Germans have had less contact with foreigners and therefore have yet to become accustomed to or develop positive attitudes towards them. Contact theory posits that contact or interaction with our fellow men and women determines our attitudes towards them. Increased interethnic contact – especially in voluntary relationships among friends and acquaintances, but also in the family circle, at work, or in the neighborhood – will lead to better understanding and acceptance and diminished prejudice. Based on contact theory, we would also expect to find that young people in Germany – who have more opportunities to associate with foreigners in school and who accept their presence as a matter of course – have more positive attitudes towards foreigners than the older generation which has experienced migrants.
as new comers and outsiders. Jerome Legge has found that in Germany, “those who are familiar [with foreigners] are more inclined to accept foreigners as marriage partners and neighbors, to favor equal rights for them in Germany, to be less stringent in concern for the standards of naturalization, and to have a generally favorable attitude toward immigrant and refugee groups.”

Due to the closed nature of the East German state there was little to no immigration to East Germany until the 1980s, when it became absolutely necessary to bring in guest workers to fill labor shortages there. At the time of unification, there were only 191,190 foreigners in all of eastern Germany - excluding West Berlin – representing around 1.2% of the total population. Today, there are still only 319,878 foreigners in the new Bundesländer, who make up about 2.5% of the population. This low level of ethnic, cultural, and racial heterogeneity means that eastern Germans have fewer opportunities to associate with and get to know foreigners and, as contact theory posits, are expected to have higher levels of anti-foreigner sentiment than areas where foreigners have lived for longer periods of time and in larger numbers, such as western Germany. Additionally, the types of foreigners living in each region also affect the amount of contact Germans are able to have with them. Because of the economic structure in Germany, most foreigners have been attracted to western Germany, even after unification, because there were more job opportunities there. Therefore, the primary group of migrants coming to eastern Germany since unification is asylum seekers placed there by the German government and who live in separate, government provided housing and have not been permitted to obtain work permits because of their refugee status. As a result, this significantly cuts down on opportunities for eastern Germans to form contacts with foreigners in neighborhoods and in the workplace.

A 2008 survey by the Allensbach Institute for Opinion Research confirms that the vast majority of Germans in the east do not have contact with foreigners. In answer to the question “are you friends with or at least well acquainted with foreigners who live here with us, meaning do you sometimes socialize with them privately?” 46% of Germans in the west answered in the affirmative while only 22% of the respondents in the east did. Thus contact with foreigners is
higher in western Germany, where attitudes towards foreigners are also more positive, while contact with foreigners is much lower in the more Ausländerfeindlich eastern Germany. In this way, the contact theory seems to simply and powerfully explain that because of the different historical migration experiences of East and West Germany, eastern Germans have had less contact with foreigners and therefore have not had the opportunity to form positive attitudes about them, as have western Germans.

However, when respondents’ answers are broken down by age group, contact theory loses some of its explanatory power (see Figure 14). For all ages, more western Germans are friends with foreigners and the number of Germans who are friends with a foreigner goes down the older the respondents are. However, the largest disparity between east and west is for the youngest age group, 16 to 29 year-olds, with 66% of western German youths reporting having foreign friends while only 28% of youth in the east did. The age effect, therefore, seems to be weaker in eastern Germany than in western Germany. Additionally, despite slightly higher levels of contact with foreigners, younger eastern German youth, as already discussed, do not exhibit lower levels of Ausländerfeindlichkeit.

There are also several problems with contact theory itself which weaken its explanatory power. First, while interethnic contact may lead to positive experiences which lessen prejudice, it is possible that these types of contacts may also be negative experiences which strengthen prejudice. Additionally, media coverage and political rhetoric may also serve to counteract or take the place of personal positive experiences and because the issue of immigration has been so
politiciend in Germany, this factor is likely to have a significant effect on interethnic contact and attitudes in Germany. Finally, the causal direction of contact theory has been called into question. It is unclear if people who have more contact with foreigners therefore have more positive attitudes towards them, as assumed, or if those who for some undefined reason have more positive attitudes towards foreigners are therefore more likely to seek contact with them.\textsuperscript{191}

\textit{Political Explanations: Level of Democratic Experience}

Another explanation for greater \textit{Ausländerfeindlichkeit} in eastern Germany is that democracy is newer in that region and has not yet taken a strong hold there. Democratic values such as tolerance and respect for minority rights, which serve to counteract prejudices, are thus expected to be weaker than in western Germany, where democracy has existed for much longer. As a result, it is expected that weaker democratic values in eastern Germany will lead to higher levels of \textit{Ausländerfeindlichkeit} in that region. Conversely, areas with high levels of \textit{Ausländerfeindlichkeit} are expected to exhibit signs of weak democracy.

The results of the Spring 2012 Eurobarometer survey show that eastern Germans do have more negative attitudes about democracy and government than western Germans.\textsuperscript{192} When asked whether or not they tend to trust political parties in Germany, 69\% of western Germans and 79\% of Eastern Germans said that they tended not to trust political parties. In the same strain, 54\% of western Germans and 65\% of eastern German respondents tend not to trust the national government while 45\% in the west and 61\% in the east tend not to trust the \textit{Bundestag} (national parliament). Germans in both the east and west have much more trust in their regional governments than the national government, with 64\% of western and 54\% of eastern Germans responding that they tend to trust regional or local public authorities. Additionally, the Spring 2012 Eurobarometer survey found that nearly half (49\%) of all eastern German respondents said that they were not satisfied with the way democracy works in Germany, compared to only 25\% of western Germans. While 72\% of Germans in the western region believe that their voice counts in Germany, only 62\% in the east believe so.
Another indication that the quality of democracy in eastern Germany is suffering is the lower levels of voter participation in that region. Aside from the fact that low voter turnout weakens the government’s connection and accountability to the people, low voter participation is a concern because if people do not voice their opinion through voting, the chances are higher that they will turn to non-democratic means of making themselves heard, such as politically motivated violence. Figure 15 presents the voter participation rates for the most recent Bundestag elections and shows that participation is indeed much lower in eastern Germany, where much lighter shades of pink are seen on the map. It must be noted, however, that in some areas of the east, such as Sachsen in the south east or Mecklenburg-Vorpommern in the north east, voter participation rates are just as high as in many areas of western Germany.

Based on these two sources of data, we can conclude that eastern Germany does show more negative attitudes about democracy and democratic institutions and suffers from lower
levels of voter turnout, both of which are theorized to lead to higher levels of Ausländerfeindlichkeit, which we also see in the eastern part of Germany.

**Analysis**

Based on the migration and survey data presented, there is strong, though not conclusive, evidence supporting the assumption that eastern Germans are more Ausländerfeindlich than western Germans. Scholars and policy experts alike have been analyzing Ausländerfeindlichkeit in Germany based on this east-west paradigm since the early 1990s, yet it does not appear that it has led to any fruitful solutions as significant portions of both eastern and western Germans hold Ausländerfeindlich attitudes and these attitudes may even be increasing in the east. It is therefore necessary to explore other ways of looking at the phenomenon of anti-foreigner attitudes in Germany.

In the Friedrich-Ebert-Foundation’s 2008 report on right-wing extremist attitudes in Germany, survey data from 2002-2008 was combined to show the level of Ausländerfeindlichkeit for the individual Bundesländer,\(^{193}\) as presented in Table 12 where the new Bundesländer are highlighted in pink and the old Bundesländer in blue.

![Table 12: Ausländerfeindlichkeit by Bundesland (2002-2008)](attachment:image)

This data shows that during this time period, Ausländerfeindlich attitudes in some western German Bundesländer have actually been higher than in some eastern German Bundesländer. The top two Länder have essentially the same level of Ausländerfeindlich attitudes at just over 39% yet one, Sachsen-
Anhalt, is in eastern Germany while the other, Bayern, is in western Germany. Two other western German states, Niedersachsen and Hessen, have higher levels of *Ausländerfeindlichkeit* than the eastern German state of Thüringen. While the five new *Bundesländer* are all in the top half of the list, it is clear that high levels of anti-foreigner sentiment are not exclusive to the eastern region of Germany.

The 2012 Federal Antidiscrimination Agency study also finds a similar pattern when the data is looked at by survey regions (three in the west, two in the east) rather than east-west. While the study found no statistically significant difference between attitudes towards people with a migration background in eastern and western Germany, more statistically significant differences could be seen between the individual survey regions (see Figure 16).

![Figure 16: Behavioral Tendencies of Individuals without a Migration Background, Survey Regions](image)

When asked if they would move into a heterogeneous neighborhood, 56.3% of western Germans and 55.7% of eastern Germans said that they would be willing to do so. When the data is looked at by survey region, the study finds that 59.9% of respondents in the Berlin-Brandenburg area of eastern Germany replied that they would be willing to move into a neighborhood where people from other ethnic backgrounds live. This number represents the highest, most affirmative response of all the survey regions and is 5% higher than in the western
German Rhein-Main region. Most significantly, the response in Berlin-Brandenburg is a full 17% higher than the response in the eastern German Halle-Leipzig region, showing that attitudes can vary greatly across the eastern region of Germany.

Furthermore, when asked if they would send their children to a heterogeneous school, only 40.7% of respondents in the western German Rhein-Ruhr region said they would do so. This result is essentially the same as the responses in both the East German regions of Berlin-Brandenburg and Halle-Leipzig. In the western German region of Rhein-Main, on the other hand, 47.2% of respondents maintained that they would be willing to send their children to a school with children from other backgrounds. This data shows that attitudes can also vary across western Germany and can help give further insight into Ausländerfeindlich attitudes in Germany, which cannot be perceived when survey data is aggregated into eastern and western German responses.

By focusing on an east-west paradigm in seeking to understand the phenomenon of Ausländerfeindlichkeit in Germany, other contributing factors can also be obscured. For example, while the Friedrich-Ebert-Foundation found that in 2012, 38.7% of eastern German respondents held Ausländerfeindlich attitudes, the study also found high levels of Ausländerfeindlichkeit among the unemployed (36.7%) and Germans over the age of 60 (31%). Analyzing Ausländerfeindlichkeit by other types of variables, such as individual Länder for example, offers a more nuanced understanding of where negative attitudes towards foreigners can be found in German society and helps to debunk some common explanations for Ausländerfeindlichkeit in Germany.

Most politicians and the media tend to attribute higher levels of Ausländerfeindlichkeit in eastern Germany to the high unemployment levels there and the data presented in this thesis confirmed that theory. However, looking at the Länder level we can see that Ausländerfeindlichkeit is high in states where unemployment is high and in states where unemployment is very low (compare Table 12 and Figure 13). For example, the Land with the highest level of Ausländerfeindlichkeit is Sachsen-Anhalt in the east (39.3%) where the
unemployment rate is 11.5% – the third highest in the country. The Land with the second highest (and nearly identical) level of Ausländerfeindlichkeit is Bayern in the west (39.1%) where the unemployment rate is only 3.7% – the lowest in the country. Other western Länder where levels of Ausländerfeindlichkeit are comparable to the eastern German Länder, such as Niedersachsen and Hessen, also have low levels of unemployment. This calls into question the common assumption based on the East-West paradigm that economic resentments are the primary source of Ausländerfeindlich attitudes.

The theory that strong democracy leads to lower levels of Ausländerfeindlichkeit also loses explanatory power when the data is viewed on the Länder level. Comparing Table 12 and Figure 15, it can be seen that the eastern state of Brandenburg, where voter turnout is the lowest in Germany, has lower levels of Ausländerfeindlichkeit than Bayern, the state where voter turnout is highest and where democracy is therefore expected to be strongest. Again, looking at Ausländerfeindlichkeit through an east-west paradigm would completely obscure, for example, the fact that even though Bayern has the lowest levels of unemployment and some of the strongest democratic values and practices, it has higher levels of anti-foreigner sentiment than most of the economically and democratically challenged eastern Länder.

Another problem with the east-west paradigm is that there is no political or social consensus on why this difference exists. Much of the thinking by everyday Germans and the political elites is still cast in terms of the old Cold War Feindbild (image of the enemy) that East and West Germany projected on the other. Western Germans embrace the idea of the “east German problem” and argue that there is greater anti-foreigner sentiment in the east because eastern Germans have not yet embraced democracy and shed the authoritarian personalities or culture of silence they learned under socialism. Eastern Germans on the other hand are frustrated by and often reject the assumption that Ausländerfeindlichkeit is solely an east German problem and argue that right-wing extremism in the east is a western German import which came about after unification.
This phenomenon was seen recently when Interior Minister Hans-Peter Freidrich (CDU), in an interview with Der Tagesspiegel, expressed his concern about the infiltration of eastern German civil society by Neo-Nazis and the need to strengthen democratic values in the east. In response, the Minister President of Sachsen-Anhalt, Reiner Haseloff, came to the defense of the former East German Länder, expressing his frustration with the assumption that there is a democratic deficit in eastern Germany when East Germans had fought so hard and gone to the streets to bring it about. He acknowledged that there has been an infiltration of eastern German society, but argues that it came about when the Neo-Nazis imported their structures to the east after unification. This example shows that there is not an east-west consensus on the existence or origins of right-wing extremism and Ausländerfeindlichkeit as an eastern German problem. When elites seek to address the problem through the lens of this east-west paradigm, their effort is often interpreted as an accusation or offense, making cooperation between eastern and western German elites more difficult. Additionally, how elites understand the problem may lead to diverging policy prescriptions over which politicians will certainly argue, making any effort to deal with the problem prone to gridlock.

Finally, the east-west paradigm does not recognize the influence that western German attitudes can have on eastern German attitudes through the national media and political rhetoric. A 2008 study by the University of Bielefeld has shown despite the fact that practically the entire Turkish population in Germany (99%) lives in the old Bundesländer (including Berlin), eastern Germans have far more negative attitudes towards Turks than other immigrant groups, including “Muslims” – a groups which is comprised primarily of Turks. More importantly, eastern Germans are also significantly more Ausländerfeindlich towards Turks than are western Germans. With Turks making up just 0.1% of the population in the east (outside of Berlin), it is unlikely that eastern Germans have sufficient personal contact with Turks to judge them either positively or negatively based on their own experience with them. When no direct contact with foreigners is available, judgments can only be made based on hearsay, which is obtained primarily through media reports and political rhetoric. Thus the prejudice which caused the NSU to target the Turkish victims of their murder spree was likely based on attitudes which were formed in western
Germany and expressed widely throughout the country by negative media reports, allowing these neo-Nazi youth to justify their actions by giving them legitimacy.

In light of these facts, this thesis questions the utility of continuing to emphasize an east-west paradigm in research and public discourse on Ausländerfeindlichkeit in Germany. The result thus far has been the casting of Ausländerfeindlichkeit as an “East German problem” and has led to essentialist thinking about eastern Germans and eastern German society as undemocratic and xenophobic. Rita Chin and Heide Fehrenbach argue that this discourse marginalizes the place of racism and Ausländerfeindlichkeit in German society, locating it in eastern German society where democracy has not yet taken hold. Western Germany’s established democratic ethos is cast in opposition to eastern Germany’s illiberal socialist inheritance, discouraging western Germans from any self-examination of their own racist (or Ausländerfeindlich) attitudes and practices.199 By breaking out of the east-west paradigm in the study of anti-foreigner attitudes in Germany, some of the thus-far difficult to achieve goals or unfruitful solutions for reducing Ausländerfeindlichkeit in eastern Germany, such as bringing its economy on par with the western German economy or strengthening eastern German democracy, can be reevaluated and new explanations and solutions sought.

**Conclusion**

Intolerance and prejudice are found all over the world, even in western democracies that are founded upon ideals such as tolerance and pluralism. A perhaps disproportional amount of attention is paid to the presence of such attitudes in Germany, given the historical burden of the Nazi regime and Holocaust and the unique way in which these attitudes have found their way into German citizenship law, structurally excluding multiple generations of immigrants and a large portion of the population from political enfranchisement today. Understanding the roots of Ausländerfeindlichkeit in Germany is an essential task as an ever larger portion of the German population, especially younger generations, have migration backgrounds. In addition, Germany’s ageing, shrinking population will increasingly need to rely on immigrants to fill labor shortages and fund its welfare, health, and pension funds.
The primary scholarly and policy paradigm for understanding and combatting Ausländerfeindlichkeit in contemporary Germany, especially in the wake of the “Döner” or NSU murders, is that eastern Germans are more Ausländerfeindlich than western Germans, even though far fewer foreigners live in that region than in western Germany. Thus the roots of Ausländerfeindlichkeit are sought in the social, political, and economic deficiencies of eastern Germany in comparison to western Germany, and in the historical and political legacy of the GDR. This thesis has found strong (though not conclusive) evidence that eastern Germans are indeed more Ausländerfeindlich than western Germans. However, by lumping all of the states in each of these two regions together, the east-west paradigm obscures the fact that very high levels of Ausländerfeindlichkeit also exist in some areas of western Germany, while in some areas of eastern Germany, Ausländerfeindlich attitudes are no higher than in the west. Therefore, this thesis argues that scholars and policy experts must shift away from the east-west paradigm.

Above all, better understanding and combatting Ausländerfeindlichkeit in Germany will require a nation-wide discussion about racism in German society and institutions, which has so far been lacking or misplaced in debates about right-wing extremism. Now is the time for Germany to engage in such a discussion, before the memory of the NSU victims fades. Banning neo-Nazi parties will not stop Ausländerfeindlichkeit and it will not stop right-wing extremism. Violence and political action are manifestations of underlying attitudes. Furthermore, they are legitimized by these attitudes. In order to protect its foreign population and minorities from discrimination and violence, Germany must go to the root of the problem and deal with the fundamental prejudice and ideology of inequality which exists within its society.

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7 Mandel, Cosmopolitan Anxieties, 216.
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63 Dennis and LaPorte, State and Minorities in Communist East Germany, 118.
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71 Ibid., 107.
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78 Ibid., 113-14.
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80 Klusmeyer and Papademetriou, Immigration Policy in the Federal Republic of Germany, 181-82.
81 Ibid., 133.
82 Legge, Jews, Turks, and Other Strangers, 41.
83 Klusmeyer and Papademetriou, Immigration Policy in the Federal Republic of Germany, 135.
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85 Abali, German Public Opinion on Immigration and Integration, 4.
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87 Klusmeyer and Papademetriou, Immigration Policy in the Federal Republic of Germany, 144-152.
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90 Green, Politics of Exclusion, 7.
93 Green, Politics of Exclusion, 97.
97 Abali, German Public Opinion on Immigration and Integration, 5-6.
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100 Ibid., 3.
102 Ibid., 235-36.
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113 Foroutan, Identity and Muslim Integration in Germany, 6.
114 Ibid., 7.
121 Foroutan, Identity and Muslim Integration in Germany, 4.
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169 Ibid., 268-70.
172 Herf, Divided Memory, 337-342.
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175 Herf, Divided Memory, 14.
176 Ibid., 33.
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179 For a full discussion of these issues, see Niven, Facing the Nazi Past.
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