

Islam in Europe

Theses

1. The European identity has partially developed in opposition to Islam. This centuries-old history of opposition may be activated again. Examples are the Crusades and the "Turks before Vienna".

About 20 million Muslims immigrated in recent decades to the countries of the European Union. Nearly 100 million Muslims live in the countries of the Council of Europe. The Christian West became the Abrahamic Europe. The immigration of Muslims to Central-Europe has led to fears of the local population about their identity. Such fears exist in the majorities of European societies. They may be activated by xenophobic groups or parties.

2. An example for this history is the prohibition of building new minarets in Switzerland, which was decided in November 2009 by a majority of the Swiss population. The campaign was initiated by a xenophobic right-wing group. It was also supported by people from the middle of the Swiss society - some of them leftists and some of them women who fear the elimination of human rights standards such as the equality of women.

They have accepted a restriction of religious freedom in Switzerland. Churches, entrepreneurs, trade unions, democratic political parties have rejected the ban of minarets - they have lost. It is to expect that a similar referendum in other European countries would also have been successful..

3. Anti-Muslim movements in other European countries have tried to transfer the success in Switzerland to their own country. With varying degrees of success.

In France there was a debate on the burka - it should be prohibited in future. In Belgium the burka is already prohibited, also in some cities of Spain. In Italy the government is fighting against refugees - most of them are Muslims.

In Holland, Geert Wilders has promoted with his "Party for Freedom" (PVV) for a long time an extremely xenophobic and anti-Muslim policy. In the election on June 9 2010 he reached 16% of the vote and nearly tripled his last vote - he became the third strongest political force.

4. In Germany we had elections in North Rhine-Westphalia, the largest province with about 18 million inhabitants, in the beginning of March 2010. The extreme right-wing and xenophobic parties NPD and pro NRW have tried to transfer the Swiss campaign against minarets to Germany. They have even used the posters from Switzerland.

But they had no success. All democratic parties, churches, trade unions and the media turned against them. In demonstrations against mosques they could mobilize only few supporters. Thousands protested against them. In the election the NPD reached 0.6% of the votes and pro NRW got 1.4%. In the final phase of the campaign, they have realized that the posters from Switzerland are not well accepted in Germany. They were deleted on their websites. Instead, you could only find a "Thank you Switzerland". The reason is mainly the broad solidarity of people against anti-Muslim racism. One example is the campaign of the Intercultural Council in Germany, of Trade Unions and Pro Asyl "Racists are a danger, not Muslims."

5. The extreme right-wing political parties were not successful. But at the same time we have a widespread rejection of Muslims in Germany. According to a representative survey of 2004 94% of the respondents think of the disadvantage of women if they hear the word Islam, 83% share the view that Islam is characterized by fanaticism, 60% think it is undemocratic. The characteristic of peacefulness of Muslims is only admitted by 8% of the respondents. New empirical studies nourish the hope, that the situation might slightly improve.

56% agree with the statement that it should be forbidden in Germany to build mosques, as long as it is banned in some Islamic countries to build churches.

Overall we can say that about one third of the local people are ready to discriminate minorities. One third rejects Muslims and one third is ready for a good cooperation. These trend figures are likely to apply in other European countries.

6. Compared to the United States more Muslim workers from the lower classes have settled in Central-Europe. Comparatively they have more problems with integration and the labor market. In Europe the numbers of refugees from Islamic countries are low.

In the U.S., Muslims come mostly from the middle and upper classes. They find more work and have less social problems.

The historical burden of the European identity does not exist. A comparison with the U.S.A. is difficult.

7. It is a deficit, that on the European level there is no exchange of experiences in the fight against anti-Muslim racism.

Summary

1. The European identity has partially developed in opposition to Islam. Now 20 million Muslims live in the European Union and almost 100 million Muslims in the countries of the Council of Europe. The Christian West became the Abrahamic Europe.
2. One result of this history is the prohibition of building new minarets supported by a majority of the Swiss.
3. Xenophobic and anti-Muslim movements in Europe try to transfer the experiences of Switzerland to their country.
4. In Germany the extreme right-wing political parties National Democratic Party and pro NRW tried to transfer the experiences of Switzerland in the elections of May 2010 - with no success.
5. There is a widespread rejection of Muslims in Germany. This is confirmed by various empirical studies. That leads to discrimination in the educational system, labour-market and in public. New empirical studies nourish the hope, that the situation might slightly improve.
6. A comparison with the U.S.A. is difficult because mainly Muslims from the upper class and middle class immigrated. They find more work and have less social problems. The historical burden of the European identity does not exist. To Central Europe mainly Muslims of the underclass immigrated.
7. It is a deficit, that on the European level there is no exchange of experiences in the fight against anti-Muslim racism.

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