Silences about Sarrazin’s Racism in Contemporary Germany*

Michael Meng
Clemson University

From late August to December 2010, Germans engaged in a curious debate about an anti-immigrant book. The discussion involved much talk about the putative failure of migrants to integrate into German society and silence about the book’s racism. The row was provoked by Thilo Sarrazin, a PhD-holding economist and bureaucrat whose bland suits, rounded spectacles, and placid demeanor belie his fierce pen. A Social Democrat and former board member of the Bundesbank, Sarrazin critiques the welfare state, the education system, migrants, and poorly educated lower-class Germans. While Sarrazin manifests many anxieties and develops many arguments, it was his central contention about migrants that kept the conversation flowing. Sarrazin claims that migrants are contributing to Germany’s ethnocultural and economic decline and possibly to its death.¹ His book, Germany Abolishes Itself: How We Are Playing with Our Future, advances cultural and biological racism while stirring a national exchange about immigration the likes of which Germany has not seen since the early 1990s, when discussions about asylum and violence against foreigners erupted in the newly unified country.² Yet, in

¹ Migrants do not appear in Sarrazin’s account as the only cause of Germany’s decline, but they do come off as a central one. Death appears in Sarrazin’s eschatological conclusion and on these pages: Thilo Sarrazin, Deutschland schafft sich ab: Wie wir unser Land aufs Spiel setzen, 10th ed. (Munich, 2010), 393, 394. Sarrazin made small changes to subsequent reprints of his book (see Malte Conradi, “Sarrazin streicht die Genetik,” Süddeutsche Zeitung, November 16, 2010). Sarrazin previewed his thinking in “Klasse statt Masse: Thilo Sarrazin im Gespräch,” Lettre International 86 (Fall 2009): 197–201. This interview provoked the first attempt to remove him from the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD).

² Hermann Kurthen, Werner Bergmann, and Rainer Erb, eds., Antisemitism and Xenophobia after Unification (Oxford, 1997); Deutschlandstiftung Integration, Sarrazin—Eine
all the talk about “failed integration”—the topic that framed the media-driven national debate—the full scope of Sarrazin’s racism and his semi-apocalyptic vision of Germany’s demise fell by the wayside. This elision emerged from a labyrinth of discursive, historical, and mnemonic reasons that this article seeks to untangle.

In *Germany Abolishes Itself*, Sarrazin portrays migrants as a homogeneous, poorly educated group of people who live off Germany’s welfare system, fail to integrate, add little to the country’s productivity, and have too many children. Germany has an ethnically diverse society, but Sarrazin is referring here mostly to migrants from Turkey as well as to German residents/citizens with Turkish ancestry who comprise the country’s largest ethnic minority. Turkish residents/citizens first came to West Germany during the 1960s as laborers through the country’s multinational “guest worker” program. Although Sarrazin occasionally calls Turkish Germans “migrants,” he mostly labels them “Muslim migrants,” referring to them sometimes as “Muslims” and periodically as “Turkish migrants.”

This flattening and essentializing of Turkish Germans—lumping millions of individuals into a single cultural-religious category—brings Sarrazin to his most controversial conclusion: Germany is doing away with itself partly because “Muslim migrants” are having too many children and middle- and upper-class autochthonous Germans are having too few. This demographic imbalance worries him in two ways. First, Sarrazin sees the growing population of Muslims as a threat to the purity of Germany’s supposed ethnocultural essence. “I do not want the country of my grandchildren and great-grandchildren to be largely Muslim,” he explains, “where over large stretches Turkish and Arabic is spoken, women wear a veil, and the rhythm of daily life is determined by the call of the muezzin.”

Second, this demographic imbalance is lowering Germany’s national intelligence. Venturing into the complex field of human intelligence and reprising the disputed claims of the bell curve thesis, Sarrazin intimates that certain groups of

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1 I am borrowing “Turkish-German” from B. Venkant Mani’s discussion of multiple, fluid identifications in *Cosmopolitical Claims: Turkish-German Literatures from Nadolny to Pamuk* (Iowa City, IA, 2007).

2 When I say Muslim migrants or Muslims, I am almost always referring to Sarrazin’s essentialization of Germany’s diverse Turkish and Muslim populations. The focus on religious categories, rather than on ethnationally ones, has intensified over the past decade. See Yasemin Yıldız, “Turkish Girls, Allah’s Daughters, and the Contemporary German Subject: Itinerary of a Figure,” *German Life and Letters* 62, no. 4 (2009): 465–81, 466.

3 Sarrazin, *Deutschland*, 308.

4 Ibid., 9, 17, 90–100, 346–54, 372–74.

5 Sarrazin dismisses criticism of the bell curve thesis as “ideological” (417 n. 61, 419 n. 78). Richard J. Herrnstein and Charles Murray, *The Bell Curve: Intelligence and Class Structure in American Life* (New York, 1994).
people are intellectually superordinate or subordinate to others. He expresses this claim most explicitly through a discourse of class differences, but he also writes about a mélange of other categories and factors that he suggests affect the intelligence and learning abilities of Muslim migrants, including culture, gender norms, religion, “incest,” and “inherited disabilities,” in ways that come close to asserting the innate inferiority of his subjects. Turning to Germany’s prewar Jewish population, he reinforces this argument about inherited group intelligence. “All Jews have a particular gene,” he remarked in an interview just before his book’s release, implying that this gene makes Jews smarter. Over time, Jews have increased their intelligence because, among other reasons, “the rabbi had a higher chance of reproducing since he could marry the rich Jewish businessman’s daughter.”

Such obtuse claims were bound to cause some reaction. In the first weeks of the book’s release, Germany’s mainstream politicians found Sarrazin’s genetic musings distasteful, even if few of them directly addressed his racist arguments about Germany’s migrant population. Angela Merkel, her cabinet members, and all the chairpersons of Germany’s mainstream political parties pronounced his ideas inappropriate, and he resigned from the Bundesbank’s board. Hardly defeated, though, Sarrazin gained support from a considerable segment of German society, and almost every German media outlet debated his book for nearly three months. His ideas and the media’s swooning sent some 1.3 million Germans to the bookstore, turning Sarrazin into “a hero of the people.” Meanwhile, a number of German politicians noted his popularity and recycled some of the clichés and stereotypes that appear in his book, including the belief that Muslims have failed to integrate into German society and that naive multiculturalism has permitted the growth of isolated “parallel societies.”

Sarrazin stood victorious, not only because his book was selling but also because the debate he had provoked had shifted in his favor after his resignation. The German public was now discussing, with alacrity, his arguments—cultural

8 Sarrazin, Deutschland, 316. For the connections he draws between class and intelligence, see 82–83, 91–93, 99–100, 226–27.
9 “Mögen Sie keine Türken, Herr Sarrazin?” Welt am Sonntag, August 29, 2010; Sarrazin, Deutschland, 95–96. While Sarrazin retracted this comment about Jewish genes, he argues in his book that Jews as a group are smarter (93–97).
10 Sarrazin, Deutschland, 95–96.
11 “Volksheld Sarrazin: Warum so viele Deutsche einem Provokateur verfallen?” Der Spiegel, September 6, 2010; number from “Thilo Sarrazin geißelt die Wut der Pharisäer,” Die Welt, January 9, 2012.
12 On the concept of multiculturalism in West Germany and reunited Germany, see Rita Chin, The Guest Worker Question in Postwar Germany (Cambridge, 2007), 191–248; Karen Schönwälder, “Germany: Integration Policy and Pluralism in a Self-Conscious Country of Immigration,” in The Multiculturalism Backlash: European Discourses, Policies and Practices, ed. Steven Vertovec and Susanne Wessendorf (New York, 2010), 152–69.
incommensurability, feeble multiculturalism, demographic anxieties, and failed integration. This topical shift had the effect of diminishing robust critique of Sarrazin’s racism. Indeed, critical evaluation of his book’s racist content never structured the debate’s discursive and ideational framing.13 To be sure, numerous intellectuals, writers, journalists, and scholars across German society—migrants, nonmigrants, leftists, liberals, conservatives, Catholics, Protestants, Jews, and Muslims—controverted Sarrazin’s argument about the biological, genetic, cultural, and economic inferiority of migrants (and, to a lesser extent, his similar argument about lower-class autochthonous Germans). Critical voices most certainly existed. But they could not always be heard because Sarrazin’s book was quickly seized upon as a generally useful, if at times errant, examination of the “problem” of failed integration. All the noise about integration quieted talk about racism.

Silences about racism are not new to postwar Germany, nor are discussions about integration, demography, and multiculturalism. Since the collapse of Nazism in 1945, Germans have hesitantly conversed about racism in their society as they have talked openly about their diversifying and shrinking population (especially since the 1960s).14 Yet the Sarrazin affair is particularly revealing given

13 For a discussion of discursive and ideational frames during media-driven national debates, see David Art, The Politics of the Nazi Past in Germany and Austria (Cambridge, 2006), 13–48.

14 On halted discussions about racism, see Rita Chin, “From Rasse to Race: On the Problem of Difference in the Federal Republic of Germany” (Occasional Papers of the School of Social Science, Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton, NJ, paper no. 42, 2011); Rita Chin, Heide Fehrenbach, Geoff Eley, and Atina Grossmann, After the Nazi Racial State: Difference and Democracy in Germany and Europe (Ann Arbor, MI, 2009); Heide Fehrenbach, Race after Hitler: Black Occupation Children in Postwar Germany and America (Princeton, NJ, 2005); Sara Lennox, “Divided Feminism: Women, Racism, and German National Identity,” German Studies Review 18, no. 3 (1995): 481–502; Uta G. Poiger, Jazz, Rock, and Rebels: Cold War Politics and American Culture in Divided Germany (Berkeley, 2000). On German discourses on integration, migration, and foreigners, see Klaus J. Bade, Ausländer, Aussiedler, Asyl in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland (Hannover, 1992); Chin, Guest Worker Question; Chin et al., After the Nazi Racial State; Katherine Pratt Ewing, Stolen Honor: Stigmatizing Muslim Men in Berlin (Stanford, CA, 2008); Deniz Gökturek, David Gramling, and Anton Kaes, eds., Germany in Transit: Nation and Migration, 1955–2005 (Berkeley, 2007); Ulrich Herbert, Geschichte der Ausländerpolitik in Deutschland: Saisonarbeiter, Zwangsarbeiter, Gastarbeiter, Flüchtlinge (Munich, 2001); Karin Hunn, “Nächstes Jahr kehren wir zurück . . .”: Die Geschichte der türkischen “Gastarbeiter” in der Bundesrepublik (Göttingen, 2005); Leo Lucassen, The Immigrant Threat: The Integration of Old and New Migrants in Western Europe since 1850 (Urbana, IL, 2005); Ruth Mandel, Cosmopolitan Anxieties: Turkish Challenges to Citizenship and Belonging in Germany (Durham, NC, 2008); Monika Mattes, “Gastarbeiterinnen” in der Bundesrepublik: Anwerbepolitik, Migration und Geschlecht in den 50er bis 70er Jahren (Frankfurt am Main, 2005); Karen Schönwälder, Einwanderung und ethnische Pluralität: Politische Entscheidungen und öffentliche Debatten in Grossbritannien
how overt his racism was and how visibly it slid to the margins of discussion. The debate offers a bracing look at one of the paradoxes of contemporary German history: Why do Germans, today committed to remembering their racist past in the public sphere, struggle to discern racism in their present society?

This article attempts a three-layered answer. It argues that Sarrazin’s racism is difficult to notice partly because the prejudices against migrants that he repeats have increasingly become normalized in German society and partly because the issue he purports to raise—integration—is discursively framed as a sacrosanct matter of Germany’s sovereignty as a liberal democracy; the seemingly innocuous and righteous idioms of sovereignty and democracy efface already obscured prejudices. Moreover, the postwar myth that race and racism have largely been purged from German democracy further hinders one from noticing certain forms of racism, as may also be the case in other countries with racist histories. With the collapse of racial states in Nazi Germany, Jim Crow America, and apartheid South Africa, the myth of “postracialness” seems to underscore triumphant narratives about the apotheosis of liberal democracy in certain parts of the world. Still, in Germany the postracial myth is endowed with a kind of aura perhaps seen nowhere else given the overt interrelationship between past and present in Germany. Germany’s liberal present is deeply entangled with its illiberal past. German democracy represents the overcoming of Nazism: it stands in negation to Nazism, and the country’s postwar raison d’être rests on the elimination of racism from German society, among other forms of particularism—such as ethnocultural nationalism.

This overcoming of Nazism by the democratic present is reprimed by the country’s public memory of the Holocaust. Holocaust memory in Germany has largely—though not exclusively—turned into a depoliticized symbol of German redemption from Nazism. Some seventy years after Nazism, the general sense that Germans have worked through the Holocaust and successfully learned from their past has acquired currency in Germany: the country’s memory culture can now be exported to other countries, or it can be ironized to stimulate remembrance among successive generations of Germans. The perception of an

und der Bundesrepublik von den 1950er bis zu den 1970er Jahren (Essen, 2001); Julia M. Woesthoff, “Ambiguities of Anti-Racism: Representations of Foreign Laborers and the West German Media, 1955–1990” (PhD diss., Michigan State University, 2004).

15 On the postracial trope in postwar West German history, see Chin et al., After the Nazi Racial State; Fehrenbach, Race after Hitler; Poiger, Jazz, Rock, and Rebels; Julia Woesthoff, “‘When I Marry a Mohammedan’: Migration and the Challenges of Interethnic Marriages in Post-war Germany,” Contemporary European History 22, no. 2 (2013): 199–231, esp. 216.

16 Barnor Hesse, “Self-Fulfilling Prophecy: The Postracial Horizon,” South Atlantic Quarterly 110, no. 1 (2011): 155–78.

17 “Der Tabubruch,” Der Spiegel, no. 25 (2013): 21; Barbara Albert, Die Lebenden (Vienna: Coop 99 Filmproduktion, 2012), DCP Cinemascope, 112 min.
achieved memory culture, of a *bewältigte Vergangenheitsbewältigung*, affirms broader liberal narratives about West Germany’s and reunited Germany’s successful postwar liberalization.\textsuperscript{18} In so doing, it hinders talking about racism because such a dialogue would involve questioning Germany’s ethicopolitical order as a democratic nation-state historically conscious of its negated racist and antidemocratic past. As a symbol of postwar redemption, Germany’s memory culture in its current form diminishes or perhaps even disavows the significance of racism; racism must be displaced—by marginalizing it on the fringes of society, segregating it within the former East German territory, or silencing it through talking about other topics—for the postracial myth and the redemptive narrative of successful liberalization to hold.

Some of these arguments, along with the themes about immigration, demography, and memory that Sarrazin raises, certainly apply to other nation-states in the world. The German case reflects global tendencies to forget the complex histories of immigration, silence racism, and create myths about hospitable societies.\textsuperscript{19} Germany also reveals the challenges of memory as a pedagogical project of civic enlightenment, and it exists of course in a contemporary Western world anxious about immigration and Islam.\textsuperscript{20} But while the issues of memory, migration, sovereignty, and racism transcend national borders, they remain entangled in the politics, discourses, and histories of nation-states. And while anti-immigrant and anti-Islamic ideas flow across national borders and harness themselves to transnational themes such as preserving Judeo-Christianity, European-ness, and Western civilization, much of their emotional intensity still derives from concerns and imaginings about the nation. National sovereignty may no longer be the exclusive referent for anti-immigrant sentiments and regulations, as it was

\textsuperscript{18} Adorno already noted the sense of overcoming the past attendant to *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* in 1959 when he called for seriously “working through” (*aufarbeiten*) the past. While the commonly used term *Vergangenheitsaufarbeitung* is contrary to Adorno’s understanding of the concept as enlightenment, it can carry a similar sense of completion. Theodor Adorno, “What Does Coming to Terms with the Past Mean?” trans. Timothy Bahti and Geoffrey Hartman, in *Bitburg in Moral and Political Perspective*, ed. Geoffrey Hartman (Bloomington, IN, 1986), 114–29.

\textsuperscript{19} Ali Behdad, *A Forgetful Nation: On Immigration and Cultural Identity in the United States* (Durham, NC, 2005); Wendy Brown, *Regulating Aversion: Tolerance in the Age of Identity and Empire* (Princeton, NJ, 2006); Bonnie Honig, *Democracy and the Foreigner* (Princeton, NJ, 2001); Gérard Noiriel, “Immigration: Amnesia and Memory,” *French Historical Studies* 19, no. 2 (1995): 367–80; Alana Lentin, “Europe and the Silence about Race,” *European Journal of Social Theory* 11, no. 4 (2008): 487–503; Joan Scott, *The Politics of the Veil* (Princeton, NJ, 2007); Nikhil Pal Singh, *Black Is a Country: Race and the Unfinished Struggle for Democracy* (Cambridge, MA, 2004).

\textsuperscript{20} Recent comparative works include Peter Morey and Amina Yaqin, *Framing Muslims: Stereotyping and Representations after 9/11* (Cambridge, MA, 2011); David Art, *Inside the Radical Right: The Development of Anti-immigrant Parties in Western Europe* (New York, 2011); Vertovec and Wessendorf, *Multiculturalism Backlash*. 

for most of the twentieth century, but it remains the main one.²¹ Transnational attacks against Islam, multiculturalism, foreigners, immigration, and the welfare state may strengthen the acceptability of Sarrazin’s ideas in Germany.²² But his narrative hinges on fears of national degeneration, and Germany’s Nazi past, its redemptive memory of the Holocaust, and its acute attachment to postracial myths shaped reactions to his book. Thus, while this article periodically makes comparative observations, and while its arguments may have broader resonance for historians in other fields, it necessarily maintains the centrality of national politics, discourses, and memories in order to understand the specific iterations of German silences about racism.

**Sarrazin’s Racism**

In one of many interviews about his book, Sarrazin revealed that he submitted his manuscript with the word “race” used throughout, but his publisher urged him to replace it with “ethnicity.”²³ With or without the word Rasse, Sarrazin’s ideas constitute racist claims insofar as they embrace cultural, ethnic, economic, and genetic determinism and place individuals in fixed, cohesive, and hierarchical groups.²⁴ In categorizing, essentializing, and hierarchizing human differences, Sarrazin views Muslim migrants and lower-class autochthonous Germans as distinct from and inferior to middle- and upper-class Germans. He defines group differences and inferiorities mostly in terms of culture and class, and he appears compelled by both an ethnocultural anxiety about national survival and an elitist concern about the preservation of an educated upper class. To these ethnocultural and class fears he adds genetic arguments about human intelligence.²⁵

²¹ For a contrary interpretation, see Matti Bunzl, “Between Anti-Semitism and Islamophobia: Some Thoughts on the New Europe,” _American Ethnologist_ 32, no. 4 (2005): 499–508. For a summary of modern migration regimes, see Klaus J. Bade, Pieter C. Emmer.

²² In addition to his readings on intelligence and demography, Sarrazin is influenced by the writings of German-Turkish writer Necla Kelek, Dutch publicist/academic Paul Schef-fer, and American columnnist Christopher Caldwell.

²³ “Es war ein langer und lauter Furz”: Henryk M. Broder interviewt Thilo Sarrazin,” _Die Tageszeitung_, December 7, 2010.

²⁴ Thus, Sarrazin goes beyond categorizing human beings into groups and attaching fixed values, traditions, and characteristics to those groups—what scholars have variously called essentialism, racialism, groupism, and cultural fundamentalism. He categorizes and hierarchizes. See Kwame Anthony Appiah, “Racisms,” in _Anatomy of Racism_, ed. David Theo Goldberg (Minneapolis, 1990), 3–17; Rogers Brubaker, _Ethnicity without Groups_ (Cambridge, MA, 2004), and “Ethnicity, Race, and Nationalism,” _Annual Review of Sociology_ 35 (2009): 26–27; George Frederickson, _Racism: A Short History_ (Princeton, NJ, 2003); Verena Stolcke, “Talking Culture: New Boundaries, New Rhetorics of Exclusion in Europe,” _Current Anthropology_ 36, no. 1 (1995): 1–24.

²⁵ On the centrality of cultural difference and heterogeneity to the varied forms of contemporary racism, see Etienne Balibar, “Is There a ‘Neo-Racism?’” in Etienne
The resulting mix is contradictory, but hierarchical differences between Muslim migrants and “indigenous Germans” remain consistent throughout the book. Muslims are characterized as religious, traditional, antidemocratic, patriarchal, inefficient, and intolerant, while Germans come off as secular, modern, democratic, productive, and tolerant. Some of these dichotomies concern Sarrazin more than others. He stresses the putative antidemocratic values of Muslims, and he spends fifteen pages critiquing Islam mostly for failing to engage constructively with the secular, modern world as he claims Christianity has done since the Enlightenment. But Sarrazin’s primary concern is economic. Both migrant and nonmigrant Germans function in his book as parts of a mechanized whole, reified commodities whose labor productivity and economic potential can be calculated in charts and tables to forecast Germany’s economic future.

The forecast appears grim. Muslim migrants, who in Sarrazin’s view do not conform to middle-class and capitalist notions of productivity, are reducing the quality of the German workforce upon which the nation’s fate hangs: too few Muslim men work in highly skilled sectors of the economy and too many Muslim (veiled) women do not work outside their homes. Essentializing this economic futility in ethnocultural terms, Sarrazin ranks the productive power of individuals based on their national and/or geographic origins. While he values Italians, Greeks, Spaniards, Portuguese, East Europeans, Chinese, and Indians as laborers, he sees migrants from Africa, Arabic countries, Turkey, and the former Yugoslavia as less productive resources of the German economy. Migrants from the latter group, he fears, are contributing to the growth of “a lower class that has little interest in education and that depends on welfare.” And since they are procreating, they threaten to diminish over time Germany’s “development prospects.”

Balibar and Immanuel Wallerstein, Race, Nation, and Class: Ambiguous Identities, trans. Chris Turner (New York, 1991), 17–28; Geoff Eley, “The Trouble with ‘Race’: Migrancy, Cultural Difference, and the Remaking of Europe,” in Chin et al., After the Nazi Racial State, 137–81; Allan Pred, Even in Sweden: Racisms, Racialized Spaces, and the Popular Geographic Imagination (Berkeley, 2000); Stolcke, “Talking Culture”; Pierre-André Taguieff, “From Race to Culture: The New Right’s View of European Identity,” Telos 98–99 (Winter 1993–Spring 1994): 99–125.

Sarrazin, Deutschland, 360.

Sarrazin would see such differences not as evaluative assertions, but as dispassionate conclusions based on irrefutable facts, which he carefully presents in “a dry, factual text” made up of “tables, numbers, footnotes.” Quotation from “‘Es war ein langer und lauter Furz.’” For a direct engagement with his data, see Naika Foroutan, Sarrazins Thesen auf dem Prüfstand: Ein empirischer Gegenentwurf zentraler Thesen Thilo Sarrazins mit Bezug auf Muslime in Deutschland (Berlin, 2011). For discussions of evidence that contradicts his claims, see Einwanderungsgesellschaft 2010: Jahresgutachten 2010 mit Integrationsbarometer (Berlin, 2010); Joyce Marie Mushaben, The Changing Faces of Citizenship: Integration and Mobilization among Ethnic Minorities in Germany (New York, 2008).

Sarrazin, Deutschland, 265–81.

Ibid., 64.

Ibid., 64.
All the while, Germany’s main economic resource, the intelligence of its workers, is declining amid the country’s demographic imbalance; high fertility rates among poorly educated lower-class Muslim migrants and Germans and low birthrates among educated middle- and upper-class Germans are decreasing the country’s overall national intelligence. Grounding this argument in his reading of Charles Darwin, Francis Galton, Julian Huxley, Gunnar Myrdal, and the bell curve thesis, Sarrazin concludes: “The pattern of generative behavior in Germany since the middle of the 1960s is not only not a Darwinian natural selective breeding in the sense of the ‘survival of the fittest’ but also a culturally conditioned, man-made negative selection, which in relative and absolute terms is depleting at a high rate Germany’s sole renewable material, namely, its intelligence.”

Although Sarrazin refrains from writing that lower-class Germans and migrants are innately less intelligent, the logic of his conclusion rests on this assumption and is easily apparent. “Are Muslims Dumber?” was the title given to one of Sarrazin’s first interviews. Sarrazin proposes turning around this “dysgenic” trend through a contradictory mix of social-Darwinist, Mendelian, and Lamarckian solutions. Stressing cultural and biological determinism, yet leaving room for some individual improvement, Sarrazin advocates the state’s increasing the intelligence of its population through a combination of pronatalism, eugenics, and education.

31 Ibid., 353.
32 “Sind Muslime dümmer?” Die Zeit, August 26, 2010. In a foreword to later reprints, Sarrazin disputed the implication of his logic that some ethnocultural groups are smarter or dumber than others. But, as Timothy Garton Ash aptly put it, “this is a misunderstanding he encourages, with his own repeated blurring of the line between cultural and genetic inheritance” (Timothy Garton Ash, “Germans, More or Less,” New York Review of Books, February 24, 2011). Indeed, this blurring becomes clear if we follow Sarrazin’s evolutionary argument about class to its logical conclusion and see where he goes with it. Sarrazin claims that in industrialized societies such as Germany, where social mobility has been occurring since the mid-nineteenth century, the lower class is now devoid of intelligent people because they have all advanced to the middle and upper classes (82–83, 226–27). Autochthonous German society has arrived at a developed phase of history, with the middle and upper classes merely reproducing their intelligent, educated selves through intraclass marrying (226). If Germany’s migrants come from the lower stratum of “archaic societies,” Sarrazin would have to conclude that they make up a pool of untapped, yet-to-be mobilized talent (58). That is not the argument he makes. Rather, he turns to culture, suggesting that Muslim migrants, unlike prewar Jews, have shown no interest in advancing through Bildung because they adhere to “a particular mix of Islamic religiosity and traditional ways of life” (292). If added to this cultural argument are Sarrazin’s ideas about the inevitable decline of Germany’s intelligence, the ethnocultural superiority of Jewish intelligence, and the cultural-geographic hierarchies of human labor, it is easy to infer from his account that the group of Muslims who live in Germany—because of their cultural, religious, class, and geographic origins—are dumber and less economically productive than middle- and upper-class Germans.

33 Sarrazin, Deutschland, 93.
In a chapter titled “demography and population policy” (“Demografie und Bevölkerungspolitik”), he urges state officials and ordinary citizens to recognize the importance of fertility to the nation-state’s health. Venerating the reproductive capital of women and elevating procreation to a national service, he suggests supplying a 50,000 euro subvention to college-educated women who have a child before the age of thirty. The state would dole out the funds “selectively” to those “groups for which a higher level of fertility is particularly desired for the improvement of the socioeconomic quality of those being born.” Sarrazin also emphasizes the importance of education, encouraging Muslims to improve themselves and integrate through Bildung, an originally inclusive idea in the eighteenth century that gradually became less so for Jews over the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as it became entangled with exclusive national identifications. Although egalitarianism occasionally shapes Sarrazin’s notion of Bildung and integration more broadly, it does not square with his concomitant demands for assimilation, his genetic arguments about intelligence, his cultural-geographic hierarchies of labor, and his elitist description of the lower class as purportedly having little interest in education (the bildungsferne Unterschichten).

Sarrazin entangles himself in other contradictions, but he holds to one thing: the stakes are high for Germany. As he puts it in the form of a question: “What will then happen in Germany if the German Volk gradually perishes?” Even if Sarrazin avoids using the term “Rasse,” his fears about Germany’s decline reprise in every other respect racial notions of ancestry, survival, genetics, sexuality, and fecundity. The Volk here is hermetically defined in ethnocultural terms, and its intellectual strength appears to be threatened by the virility of intellectually inferior ethnocultural minorities; the state must intervene in this movement toward degeneracy by encouraging superior autochthonous Germans to procreate. Otherwise Germany will cease to exist. Sarrazin’s book concludes with a vision, decades in the future, of “the decay all over the country of churches, castles, and museums,” as Germany’s ever-growing “Muslim co-citizens” express “no interest in these cultural sites.”

This semi-apocalyptic ending—a satire that is “not unreal”—is Socratically ironic: Sarrazin knows the end of the story and informs those who are oblivious to it. He sees the depleted end of postwar German history and knows both how to forestall it and how to recapture partially some of Germany’s economic and demographic prowess circa 1950. The way to avoid this cataclysmic end starts

34 On the history of Bevölkerungspolitik, see Annette F. Timm, The Politics of Fertility in Twentieth-Century Berlin (Cambridge, 2010).
35 Sarrazin, Deutschland, 390.
36 Ibid., 346.
37 Ibid., 401.
38 Ibid., 396.
39 Ibid., 11.
with discussing Germany’s problems, which Sarrazin and his heroine Necla Kelek, a German Turkish feminist writer whom he invokes as the authoritative voice of the native informant, are doing.\textsuperscript{40} In the long run, though, Germany’s solution lies principally in encouraging educated women to procreate and in insisting on the “integration” of its current migrant population into German ways of life (defined largely as economic, political, and linguistic assimilation). Germany’s politicians must decide to reform their educational, integration, and demographic policies to save Germany from abolishment.\textsuperscript{41}

**INVISIBLE RACISM**

“I am not a racist,” Sarrazin said to journalists of the *Welt am Sonntag*.\textsuperscript{42} It was a line he repeated often to deflect criticism, even though few ever directly charged him with racism. Most journalists, politicians, and commentators could not digest the notion that a mainstream liberal politician, who—like them—should know better, was a racist. “Your new book made us despair, because it could be misunderstood as racist,” *Die Zeit* explained. In the hands of ordinary Germans—less enlightened than those at this table, his interviewers seemed to be implying—Sarrazin’s arguments might go astray. “I am not going to respond at all to your accusation of racism. Doing so would partly confirm what one rejects. I am not a racist,” he said. His interviewers clarified their concern, disclaiming any charge of racism. “We only fear that it could be understood so,” they repeated. “The book deals nowhere with ethnic, but rather with cultural boundaries,” Sarrazin emphasized yet again.\textsuperscript{43}

When racism periodically appeared as a topic during the national debate about Sarrazin, the conversation generally followed this pattern of denial. But it only rarely emerged as an issue to be discussed in the first place. In the fall of 2010, nearly everyone in Germany seemed to be talking about Sarrazin. The volume of print, radio, television, and Internet sources is enormous; the sketch of the debate that follows is based on selections that stem from reading dozens of sources from across the political spectrum. I read, listened to, and watched these sources with two questions in mind: How did Germans frame Sarrazin’s book? What did they find objectionable—if anything—about it? I argue that Sarrazin’s book was

\textsuperscript{40} On Kelek and other migrant feminist writers who share her views, see Gökçe Yurdakul, “Governance Feminism und Rassismus: Wie führende Vertreterinnen von Immigranten die antimuslimische Diskussion in Westeuropa und Nordamerika befördern,” in *Staatsbürgerschaft, Migration und Minderheiten: Inklusion und Ausgrenzungsstrategien im Vergleich*, ed. Gökçe Yurdakul and Y. Michal Bodemann (Wiesbaden, 2010), 111–25. On resistance to Kelek by other migrant feminist writers and artists, see Katrin Sieg, “Black Virgins: Sexuality and the Democratic Body in Europe,” *New German Critique* 37, no. 1 (2010): 147–85.

\textsuperscript{41} Sarrazin, *Deutschland*, 21, 396, 405–6.

\textsuperscript{42} “Mögen Sie keine Türken, Herr Sarrazin.”

\textsuperscript{43} “Sind Muslime dümmer?”
characterized as an intervention into the problem of failed integration. While some Germans offered penetrating evaluations of Sarrazin’s racism, their reactions did little to change the integrationist framing of the media-driven discourse.

In the first three weeks or so of the debate, countless newspaper articles, television shows, and radio programs discussed Sarrazin’s Jewish gene comment, his removal from the Federal Bank, and his arguments about intelligence. As far as criticism went, German commentators disagreed mostly with Sarrazin’s genetic understanding of intelligence. Several academics, including sociologist Armin Nassehi, psychologist Elsbeth Stern, and biologist Veronika Lipphardt, disputed Sarrazin’s claim that intelligence is 50–80 percent inherited and challenged his “biological determinism.”

In Die Zeit, Bernd Ulrich and Özlem Topçu pummeled Sarrazin about his genetic understanding of intelligence. Social Democratic chairman Sigmar Gabriel called him a “hobby eugenicist.” “This is a book about ‘above’ and ‘below’ in our society,” he wrote, “and, moreover, about why it is not only right but also completely normal for biological reasons that there is this ‘above’ and ‘below.’” And yet Gabriel added, “Sarrazin of course is not a racist.”

The same thing occurred during Sarrazin’s first lengthy television interviews on the talk shows Beckmann and Hart aber Fair, which mostly involved objections to his ideas on intelligence. Granted, Sarrazin was easy to oppose on this issue. When a TV moderator asked him why, as a “wise man” and an “expert” in economics, he had ventured into an academic literature he did not know, Sarrazin paused, gulped some water, paused again, and repeated his stock phrase that intelligence was 50–80 percent inherited.

By late September 2010, as the focus on genes and human intelligence faded, the conversation turned to failed integration, multiculturalism, and Islam. The focus on these themes was reinforced by President Christian Wulff’s comment in an October speech celebrating reunification that Islam was part of Germany. Wulff’s assertion launched another round of generally negative attention about Germany’s Muslim population. The debate stayed pessimistic and anxiety ridden until it died down by mid- to late November 2010. In the media-driven national discussion, rigorous engagement with Sarrazin’s racism and his arguments about

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44 Armin Nassehi, “Die Biologie spricht gegen Biologismus,” Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, October 18, 2010; Elsbeth Stern, “Was heisst hier erblich?” Die Zeit, September 2, 2010; Veronika Lipphardt, “Die Bequemlichkeit des Erbes,” Der Freitag, September 15, 2010.
45 “Sind Muslime dümmer?”
46 Sigmar Gabriel, “Deutschland schafft sich ab,” Die Zeit, September 16, 2010.
47 Ibid.
48 Hart aber Fair, ARD, September 1, 2010 (accessed November 15, 2010, http://www.wdr.de/tv/hartaberfair).
49 “Vielfalt schätzen—Zusammenhalt fördern,’ Rede von Bundespräsident Christian Wulff zum 20. Jahrestag der Deutschen Einheit am 3. Oktober 2010 in Bremen” (accessed November 10, 2010, www.bundespraesident.de).
Germany’s degeneration had largely dissipated. Critical voices still could be heard, and I will briefly mention them to emphasize this point. But such voices, expressed in venues that attracted less attention or that were published several months after the Sarrazin affair had ended, only marginally influenced the national discourse.

Criticism came mostly from activists, academics, intellectuals, writers, and artists who tend to identify themselves politically with the left or center left. Germany’s Left party (Die Linke) distributed a pamphlet comparing “Sarrazin’s racism” to Nazi ideas about the “degeneration of the German Volk.”50 Sebastian Friedrich, an editor of the online magazine kritish-lesen.de (self-described as “undogmatically left”), wrote several articles and edited a volume against “probably the best-selling ‘non-fiction book’ in Germany since Mein Kampf.”51 Less polemically, yet no less forcefully, Sarrazin encountered opposition from self-identified Jewish, Muslim, and migrant writers, intellectuals, and politicians.52 On the television program Hart aber Fair, Michel Friedman, former vice-director of the Central Council of Jews in Germany, disputed Sarrazin’s stigmatization of Muslims and his hierarchy of group intelligence, which he claimed was clearly a “racist idea.”53 Oliver Polak, a German-Jewish comedian, asked: “If Germans were to die out now, would I join them? Or would I survive?” He added: “Perhaps someone forgot to tell people after 1945 that they must be friendly not only toward Jews but also toward Turks.”54

In the Manifest of the Many, more than twenty intellectuals who identified themselves as Muslims “in the broadest sense” imagined a pluralistic Germany that is “inventing itself anew.”55 This manifesto came out three months after the Sarrazin debate and included reflections on such issues as identity, home, memory, and integration. In a somewhat similar register and coming out around the same time, Zafer Şenocak published Germanness: An Information Pamphlet. Şenocak’s tells of his ties to Germany and his sadness about the negative tone of discussions about “integration,” arguing that this pessimism comes from

50 Die Linke, Linke Argumente gegen Rechte Hetze: Thilo Sarrazins Rassismus und die Krise (Berlin, 2010), 13.
51 Sebastian Friedrich, “Spiele(nd) ernst nehmen! Zum Eliten-Rassismus und dessen Funktion,” in Rassistische Verhältnisse: Ausblicke—Tendenzen—Positionen (Berlin, 2010), 25, and “Rassismus in der Leistungsgesellschaft,” in Rassismus in der Leistungsgesellschaft: Analysen und kritische Perspektiven zu den rassistischen Normalisierungssprozessen der “Sarrazindebatte,” ed. Sebastian Friedrich (Münster, 2011), 26–27.
52 On alliances among Jews and Turkish Germans in particular, see Gökçe Yurdakul and Y. Michal Bodemann, “‘We Don’t Want to Be the Jews of Tomorrow’: Jews and Turks in Germany after 9/11,” German Politics and Society 24, no. 2 (2006): 44–67.
53 Hart aber Fair. My transcription.
54 “Oliver Polak: Jüdische Comedy mit Widerhaken,” Kurier, October 19, 2010.
55 Hilal Sezgin, ed., Manifest der Vielen: Deutschland erfindet sich neu (Berlin, 2011).
Germany’s fractured identity. Germans displace their internal anxieties about themselves onto others, talking about failed integration and foreignization rather than about their own “brokenness.”

A number of academics also challenged Sarrazin. Historians Wolfgang Benz and Micha Brumlik garnered perhaps the most public attention by arguing that Sarrazin’s anti-Muslim sentiments shared structural affinities with anti-Jewish prejudices in Imperial Germany. Benz, former director of the Center for Antisemitism Research, focused on the construction of negative images of “others,” seeing “parallels in the organization of prejudices” between contemporary “Islam critics” and late nineteenth-century antisemites. Brumlik, who directed the Fritz Bauer Institute for the Study and Documentation of the History of the Holocaust, compared Sarrazin to Heinrich von Treitschke, suggesting that contemporary anxieties about foreigners mirrored Treitschke’s fears about Polish Jewish immigrants in the late nineteenth century.

Finally, Patrick Bahners, then head of the feuilleton of the conservative Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung (FAZ), issued the most substantial rebuke of Sarrazin and other “Islam critics” in The Panic Makers: German Anxiety about Islam, which appeared in February 2011. Bahners analyzed the growth of “respectable resentment” against Muslims propagated by writers such as Sarrazin, Alice Schwarzer, Necla Kelek, Henryk Broder, Ralph Giordano, Bassam Tibi, and

56 Zafer Şenocak, Deutschsein: Eine Aufklärungsschrift (Hamburg, 2011), 114.
57 Ibid., 27.
58 Claus Leggewie and Bernd Sommer, “Sarrazins Untergang des Abendlandes,” Die Tageszeitung, September 10, 2010; Christoph Butterwegge, “Rechtspopulismus pur,” Frankfurter Rundschau, August 29, 2011; “‘Er landet furchtbar auf dem Bauch’: Ulrich Herbert im Gespräch mit Jürgen König,” Deutschlandradio, September 3, 2010 (accessed December 18, 2010, www.dradio.de). For additional critiques along similar lines, see Lamya Kaddor, “Muslima in Sarrazinland,” Blätter für deutsche und internationale Politik, no. 10 (2010): 41–50; Gerd Wiegel, “Eliten-Rassismus à la Sarrazin,” Blätter für deutsche und internationale Politik, no. 12 (2009): 27–29; Albercht von Lucke, “Propaganda der Ungleichheit: Sarrazin, Sloterdijk und die neue ‘bürgerliche Koalition,’” Blätter für deutsche und internationale Politik, no. 12 (2009): 55–63. These earlier pieces are reactions to Sarrazin’s Lettre interview. In April 2013, the most extensive academic response to Sarrazin to date appeared: Klaus J. Bade, Kritik und Gewalt: Sarrazin-Debatte, “Islamkritik” und Terror in der Einwanderungsgesellschaft (Schwalbach am Taunus, 2013).
59 Wolfgang Benz, “Hetzter mit Parallelen,” Süddeutsche Zeitung, January 4, 2010; Hanno Müller, “Historiker Benz über Sarrazin: ‘Das ist Rassismus,’” Thüringer Allgemeine, August 31, 2010; Christian Staas, “Darf man Antisemitismus und antioIslamische Ressentiments vergleichen? Ein Gespräch mit dem Berliner Historiker Wolfgang Benz über Motive der NS-Forschung und alte, unüberwindliche Vorurteilungsstrukturen,” Die Zeit, November 20, 2010.
60 Micha Brumlik, “Ist die Islamophobie der neue Antisemitismus?” Frankfurter Rundschau, December 15, 2010; “Der Erziehungswissenschaftler Micha Brumlik sprach in Oranienburg über Sarrazins Thesen,” Märkische Allgemeine, April 9, 2011.
Ayaan Hirsi Ali. In more than four hundred pages, he uncovered how anti-Islamic ideas had become “socially acceptable, publicly acceptable, and suitable for television.” Written for a general audience, Panic Makers is probably the most earnest popular analysis of Islamophobia currently available in Germany. Sarrazin dismissed the book as “very angry.”

Yet, no matter how powerful these interventions were, they barely altered the integrationist framing of the national discourse about Sarrazin’s book. The discussion never centered on Sarrazin’s racism. “Most politicians avoided the R-word in dealing with the book,” Bahners remarked. To the extent that racism cut through the chatter about integration it did so as an illusory critique to be refuted as strategic and histrionic. Necla Kelek suggested that critics were creating a “red herring” by supposedly making “the argument of racism.” Charging Sarrazin with racism was an emotive tactic used merely to divert attention from his important insights about failed integration. Kelek made this argument in front of six hundred journalists and live television cameras during her ten-minute speech at his book’s release, where she venerated Sarrazin as “a responsible citizen” who spoke “bitter truths.”

Others also asserted that Sarrazin’s ideas were not racist. Franz Schirrmacher, copublisher of the FAZ, concluded that Sarrazin was “certainly not” a racist. “He’s right in many ways,” he added, despite his mistaken, radical flight into “biologism.” Sociologist Erich Weede argued that to speak of “racism, biologism, and antisemitism” was to imply a “connection” between racist beliefs and “Nazi crimes, above all against the Jews.” In this respect, Sarrazin does not “espouse a racial theory.” Alice Schwarzer, founder of Emma and a long-time feminist activist who has opposed the “Muslim veil” since the 1970s, generally agreed (her book against the veil, The Great Disguise, came out the same month as Sarrazin’s). Schwarzer critiqued Sarrazin for emphasizing “natural differences” between “races and sexes,” but nevertheless she believed that his book had provoked a useful discussion. “I don’t think Sarrazin is a racist, but as a

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61 Patrick Bahners, Die Panikmacher: Die deutsche Angst vor dem Islam; Eine Streitschrift (Munich, 2011), 73.
62 Thilo Sarrazin, “Erdogans Ghostwriter,” Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, February 21, 2011.
63 Bahners, Panikmacher, 38.
64 Necla Kelek, “Ein Befreiungsschlag,” Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, August 30, 2010.
65 Frank Schirrmacher, “Ein fataler Irrweg,” Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, August 30, 2010.
66 Erich Weede, “Demographie, Intelligenz und Zuwanderung,” Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, October 8, 2010.
67 Alice Schwarzer, ed., Die große Verschleierung: Für Integration, gegen Islamismus (Cologne, 2010).
68 Alice Schwarzer, “Laudatio auf Necla Kelek: Ein freier Kopf braucht kein Schamtuch,” Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, November 8, 2010.
respectable SPD member he went off in a bit of a strange direction there,” Schwarzer said. “But since people are forced to react, the Sarrazin debate, in the end, has had very positive results.” For Schwarzer, Sarrazin seems to get it right where it counts most—he, like she, understands that Muslim practices threaten Germany’s democratic values. The veil is “the symbol of gender apartheid,” she said. Oppressing women is “not in our way of thinking, and also does not conform with our understanding of the Rechtsstaat, equality, and democracy.”

Discursively framing her remarks in terms of women’s emancipation, universalism, and democracy, Schwarzer expresses anxieties about difference through seemingly neutral democratic idioms. Her reaction reveals a crucial silence about Sarrazin’s racism. Germans who participated in the discussion did not necessarily deny his discriminatory ideas; rather, they did not see them in the first place because the debate quickly turned into one about reputedly illiberal, antidemocratic, and religious practices that needed to be relinquished through integration in order to protect Germany’s democratic and secular way of life.

Indeed, other prominent liberal voices, such as Hans-Ulrich Wehler and Helmut Schmidt, generally welcomed Sarrazin’s attempt to address integration. Wehler deemed the book the result of an “immense amount of hard work.” Although he contested Sarrazin’s genetic understanding of human intelligence, he said: “We ourselves lived in Berlin for three years. The emergence of this ‘ghetto world’ is palpable there.” Schmidt admitted that Sarrazin made “some bad mistakes” before adding that “the man addressed many problems correctly and triggered a discussion that was urgently needed.” Invoking Samuel Huntington’s “clash of civilizations” thesis, the former SPD chancellor suggested that Islam conflicts with Germany’s liberal democratic principles. Schmidt also opposed removing Sarrazin from the SPD, an idea that initially seemed plausible before it faded amid his growing popularity. By early November the SPD had changed its charge from “racism” to “a type of social Darwinism.” Was the SPD setting up an end to a process that was dividing the party, alienating voters, and likely heading toward

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69 Television interview with Alice Schwarzer on Dialog, Phoenix, October 8, 2010 (accessed December 17, 2010, www.phoenix.de). My transcription.

70 Menschen bei Maischberger, ARD, October 12, 2010 (accessed December 10, 2010, www.daserste.de). My transcription.

71 Schwarzer, Dialog (my transcription).

72 “Sarrazin und die Bildungskatastrophe,” Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, October 9, 2010; Hans-Ulrich Wehler, “Ein Buch trifft ins Schwarze,” Die Zeit, October 7, 2010. For an elaboration of his views on integration, see Hans-Ulrich Wehler, Die neue Umverteilung: Soziale Ungleichheit in Deutschland (Hamburg, 2013), 139–46. For a brief analysis of Wehler’s ideas, see Eley, “The Trouble with ‘Race,’” 146–47.

73 Menschen bei Maischberger, ARD, December 14, 2010 (accessed January 5, 2011, www.daserste.de). My transcription.

74 Susanne Höll, “Fall Sarrazin: SPD feilt an ihrer Begründung,” Süddeutsche Zeitung, November 2, 2010.
failure? Six months later, the party dropped the charges. Sarrazin issued an “explanation,” denying having injected “social-Darwinistic theories,” selective population policies, and discrimination into German politics. He pledged to avoid questioning “Social Democratic principles” at future events.\(^7_5\) Four months later, Sarrazin was saying that “Poles are different from Turks and Arabs. Poles are not aggressive.”\(^7_6\) And he asked eight hundred Germans gathered to hear him speak to imagine what would happen if “Lipizzaner Stallions” were occasionally cross-bred with “Belgian plow horses.” “Totally clear,” he concluded, “the genetic ability to run would sink. . . . It is the same with humans.”\(^7_7\)

**SOVEREIGN CLAIMS, DEMOCRATIC IDIOMS, AND NORMALIZED PREJUDICES**

Why is Sarrazin’s racism difficult for many Germans to see? Multiple answers surface. Many commentators and politicians admitted that they had not read his book; discussions about migration in Germany have historically been about “foreigners” rather than about racism; some of Sarrazin’s arguments may seem banal amid the transnational prevalence of anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim sentiments in a post-9/11 world; his fears about Islam likely have resonance in a country shaped by Christianity (about 70 percent of Germans asked in a 2010 survey saw Christianity as the basis of their culture);\(^7_8\) and Sarrazin is a well-known Social Democrat. A book like his almost had to be written by someone coming from the left who had the gravitas to garner the prestigious publisher, the press attention, and the popularity that it did in a country sensitive to right-wing extremism. These explanations are important. But here I will argue that a constellation of sovereign claims, democratic idioms, normalized prejudices, and redemptive memories displaces Sarrazin’s racism.

Sarrazin’s book raises an issue—migration—that has long been apprehended as a concern of national sovereignty, and he targets a particular group of migrants/minorities who have long been stigmatized in Germany. To begin with the issue of sovereignty: Sarrazin views humans as naturally “territorial” and as “group” oriented creatures; humans build walls and borders to protect those who are part of their group from those who are not. Seeing exclusion and containment as timeless features of human history, he writes: “it is the right of any state or society to decide for themselves whom they want to accept into their territory or society, and they have the right to look after the protection of the culture and traditions of

\(^7_5\) “Sarrazins Erklärung,” *Die Zeit*, April 21, 2011.

\(^7_6\) “Darf man das? Mit Thilo Sarrazin in Kreuzberg,” *Aspekte* ZDF, July 22, 2011 (accessed December 15, 2011, www.aspekte.zdf.de). My transcription.

\(^7_7\) Sascha Adamek, Jo Goll, and Norbert Siegmund, “Sarrazins Deutschland—Wie eine Debatte das Land spaltet,” *Die Story*, WDR, January 9, 2012 (accessed January 9, 2012, www.wdr.de). My transcription.

\(^7_8\) Detlef Pollack, “Wahrnehmung und Akzeptanz religiöser Vielfalt,” www.uni-muenster.de/Religion-und-Politik (accessed February 26, 2011).
While Sarrazin may wish to view migration as a natural priority of national sovereignty, it of course only became codified as such after World War I with the rise of an international system of nation-states and the decline of laissez-faire mobility. Since the early twentieth century, nation-states have asserted their sovereignty vis-à-vis migration by controlling the physical and imagined boundaries of space: they govern who can enter their territory and how migrants ought to live once they have entered it.

Germany’s most pressing sovereign issue today is not who is allowed to enter its national space, but how migrants already in it are to be integrated into the nation-state. While integration carries multiple meanings in contemporary Germany, its currently dominant iteration in national political discourse tends to emphasize adaptation, reinforce cultural differences, and assume that Germany’s way of life needs to be protected. A considerable segment of German society seems to understand integration as assimilation, as a one-sided, asymmetrical, teleological process of adaptation (over 80 percent of Germans asked in a 2010 survey agreed with the statement that “Muslims need to adapt to our culture”). As in many other nation-states, integration is understood as a politically legitimate issue of national sovereignty: Germany claims the right to insist on migrants accepting its way of doing things to guard its national and political traditions.

But exactly which traditions is integration supposed to protect? Some Germans speak openly about protecting Germany’s ethos—its language, culture, religion—but more seem to express their anxieties about ethnocultural differences through the seemingly neutral, acceptable language of secularism and liberal democracy, idioms that for obvious historical reasons carry more legitimacy and respectability in the postwar (West) German public sphere than, say, overtly ethnonationalist ones. In West Germany and reunited Germany, Germans have indeed endeavored to be fiercely democratic: their “militant democracy” (streitbare Demokratie) has

79 Sarrazin, Deutschland, 308.
80 Wendy Brown, Walled States, Waning Sovereignty (New York, 2010).
81 Chin, Guest Worker Question, 86–105. See also Peter O’Brein, “The Paradoxical Paradigm: Turkish Migrants and German Policies” (PhD diss., University of Wisconsin at Madison, 1988). For localized modes of integration in contemporary Germany, see Mushaben, Changing Faces of Citizenship, 170–221. Localized concepts of integration can be much more demotic and inclusive than those that circulate in national political discourse. See Vielfalt bewegt Frankfurt: Integrations- und Diversitätskonzept für Stadt, Politik und Verwaltung (Frankfurt am Main, 2011).
82 The percentage was equal to or higher than the percentages for Denmark, France, and the Netherlands in this comparative survey. Pollack, “Wahrnehmung und Akzeptanz religiöser Vielfalt.”
83 The perception that immigrants threaten national sovereignty is, of course, hardly new. For a multilevel temporal and geographic comparison of immigrants in modern Europe, see Lucassen, Immigrant Threat. See also Bade et al., The Encyclopedia of Migration and Minorities in Europe.
entailed limiting political speech and actions that endanger what the Basic Law calls the “free democratic basic order.”\textsuperscript{84} Over the past sixty years, protecting democracy has led to banning the far-right Socialist Reich Party, outlawing the German Communist Party, demonizing New Leftist radicals, marginalizing the far-right National Democratic Party, and today fighting against “Islamicism and Islamic terrorism.”\textsuperscript{85}

The current struggle against “Islamicism” involves monitoring violent groups, but it also entails combating traditions that appear threatening to Germany’s democratic basic order. In 2004, for example, Chancellor Gerhard Schröder (SPD) noted that “many Muslims” need to accept “the values of democracy and the Enlightenment.”\textsuperscript{86} Speaking at Berlin’s Jewish Museum, he continued: “More than ever we are faced with the task of leading a fight for culture. In Europe, we must defend and preserve the ideas of the Enlightenment as the guidelines of politics.”\textsuperscript{87} Peter Schneider made a similar plea in an essay titled “The New Berlin Wall” published in the \textit{New York Times} in 2005. He claimed that Germany’s Muslim women were enduring a form of “slavery” and concluded with a secularist call for “integration”: “Only by sticking hard to their own Enlightenment, with its separation of religion and state, can the Western democracies persuade their Muslim residents that human rights are universally valid. Perhaps this would lead to the reforms necessary for integration to succeed.”\textsuperscript{88}

Across Germany’s political spectrum, one can hear similar democratically veiled demands for integration, and of course one can also hear them in many other nation-states across Western Europe.\textsuperscript{89} In 2010, to take just one recent example, British Prime Minister David Cameron attacked multiculturalism for failing to provide “a vision of society” to which immigrants would want to belong. “Frankly,” he said, “we need a lot less of the passive tolerance of recent years and a much more active, muscular liberalism.”\textsuperscript{90} In Germany, though, such defenses of liberal values seem infused more with anxiety than with bravado.

\textsuperscript{84} On “militant democracy” (first formulated by Karl Loewenstein in 1937), see Matthew G. Specter, \textit{Habermas: An Intellectual Biography} (New York, 2010), 77–79; Jeremy Varon, \textit{Bringing the War Home: The Weather Underground, the Red Army Fraction, and Revolutionary Violence in the Sixties and Seventies} (Berkeley, 2004), 268–303.

\textsuperscript{85} Listed as one of eight areas of concentration of the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution (last checked June 17, 2013, www.verfassungsschutz.de).

\textsuperscript{86} “Rede von Bundeskanzler Schröder zur Preisverleihung für Verständigung und Toleranz an Johannes Rau,” November 20, 2004 (accessed December 31, 2011, www.archiv.bundesregierung.de).

\textsuperscript{87} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{88} Peter Schneider, “The New Berlin Wall,” \textit{New York Times}, December 4, 2005.

\textsuperscript{89} Perhaps the best account on the veiled exclusionary language of liberal democracy vis-à-vis Muslim migrants is Scott, \textit{Politics of the Veil}.

\textsuperscript{90} “PM’s Speech at Munich Security Conference,” February 5, 2011 (accessed February 20, 2011, www.number10.gov.uk).
insofar as challenges to democracy rise to the level of contesting Germany’s post-Nazi ethicopolitical sovereignty. Even so, the effect of framing integration as a natural sovereign right to preserve liberal democracy is similar across nation-states. As in many parts of Europe and North America, so, too, in Germany does the idiom of protecting democratic values wrap fears about ethnocultural differences in a consensual and rhetorically neutral language of equality, freedom, and secularism. Particularism is advanced through a language of universalism.

The bias embedded in this language seems undetectable to those who are speaking and hearing it—perhaps all the more so amid the normalization of anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim sentiments over the past thirty years, and especially since 9/11.91 In *The Fragility of Empathy after the Holocaust*, Carolyn Dean shows how widely circulated prejudices can turn into normal, masked parts of everyday life and language.92 Since the 1980s, prejudices against immigrants, foreigners, and Muslims have become ever more banal in Germany, Europe, and North America. In Germany, a number of writers across the political spectrum have been articulating Sarrazin’s ideas for years. If Sarrazin’s explicit turn toward biology and genes may have been new in the post-Nazi context, his anxieties about postwar difference and birthrates have deep roots. Demographic worries date back to the mid-1960s, when unease about the decline in West German birthrates and “guest worker” fertility emerged against the backdrop of worries about Europe’s declining population in contrast with the simultaneous increase in births in Asia and Africa.93 This concern about demography intensified through the 1970s and 1980s, with an array of newspaper articles and books appearing on Germany’s demographic crisis.94

These anxieties about fecundity and survival interlock with broader discontents about Germany’s diversifying society. These have circulated at least since

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91 On post-9/11, see Morey and Yaqin, *Framing Muslims*.
92 Carolyn J. Dean, *The Fragility of Empathy after the Holocaust* (Ithaca, NY, 2004).
93 Matthew Connelly, *Fatal Misconception: The Struggle to Control World Population* (Cambridge, MA, 2008).
94 The earliest doomsday book about Germany’s and Europe’s declining birthrates appeared in 1957, but most were published in the 1980s. See M. Findeisen, *Europa stirbt und merkt es nicht* (Frankfurt am Main, 1957); *Deutschland—ohne Deutsche* (Tübingen, 1984); Bruno Heck, ed., *Sterben wir aus? Die Bevölkerungsentwicklung in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland* (Freiburg, 1988); Robert Hepp, *Die Endlösung der Deutschen Frage: Grundlinien einer politischen Demographie der Bundesrepublik Deutschland* (Tübingen, 1988). See also “Sterben die Deutschen aus?” *Der Spiegel*, March 24, 1975; Richard Kaufmann, “Wenn Fruchtbarkeit importiert wird,” *Deutsche Zeitung*, September 21, 1973; Theodor Schmidt-Kaler, “Mit wieviel Fremden die Bundesrepublik leben kann,” *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, September 30, 1980; Herwig Birg, “Grundkurs Demographie,” *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, February 22, 2005–March 3, 2005. For a discussion of demography in modern German history, see Tel Aviver Jahrbuch für deutsche Geschichte, vol. 35 (2007); Thomas Etzemüller, *Ein ewigwährender Untergang: Der apokalyptische Bevölkerungsdiskurs im 20. Jahrhundert* (Bielefeld, 2007); Timm, *Politics of Fertility*. 

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the early 1970s when West Germans began more openly discussing migrants, whom they tended to perceive as others with cultural traditions different from those of Germany and Christianity. Sarrazin’s tropes of foreignization, incommensurate differences, backwardness, female oppression, religiosity, and failed integration have circulated in public discourses for several decades now. Nevertheless, negative perceptions of migrants in public discourse have arguably intensified over the past decade amid discussions about “parallel societies,” failed multiculturalism, the welfare state, Turkey’s potential admission into the European Union, and Leitkultur (leading or guiding culture). To list just a few examples: in 2003, Heinrich August Winkler opposed Turkey’s entrance into the EU partly because it has never been part of the “world-historical special path of the West.” In 2006, Arnulf Baring told Germany’s tabloid newspaper, Bild, that multiculturalism had failed because “foreigners” had not accepted German culture. “It’s not the Germans who are the fools, but the politicians and do-gooders who have cherished multicultural dreams for decades.” In 2009, Peter Sloterdijk described the welfare state as a “kleptocracy,” which takes money from “productive” members of society and gives it to “unproductive” ones.

Sarrazin said what many German commentators had already said, and he also tapped into fears harbored by an apparently considerable segment of German society. According to four surveys conducted in 2010, a significant percentage of Germans expressed unease about foreigners and Islam. Of the Germans polled, 50 percent agreed that Germany had too many immigrants; 52.5 percent concurred that Islam was a “religion of intolerance”; 34.3 percent said that foreigners come to Germany to benefit from its welfare state; and 57.7 percent in the former West German states thought negatively of Muslims in general, as did 62.2 percent

95 I am inevitably simplifying here a complex society and a complex issue. For the many nuances of discussions about race, difference, migrants, and Islam in postwar German history, see, as a start, Chin, Guest Worker Question; Chin et al., After the Nazi Racial State; Ewing, Stolen Honor; Herbert, Geschichte der Ausländerpolitik; Hunn, Nächstes Jahr; Douglas B. Klusmeyer and Demetrios G. Papademetriou, Immigration Policy in the Federal Republic of Germany: Negotiating Membership and Remaking the Nation (New York, 2009); Mandel, Cosmopolitan Anxieties; Monika Mattes, “Gastarbeiterinnen” in der Bundesrepublik: Anwerbepolitik, Migration und Geschlecht in den 50er bis 70er Jahren (Frankfurt am Main, 2005); Thomas Mittmann, “Säkularisierungsvorstellungen und religiöse Identitätsstiftung im Migrationsdiskurs,” Archiv für Sozialgeschichte 51 (2011): 267–89; Mushaben, Changing Faces of Citizenship; Schönwälder, Einwanderung; Woesthoff, “Ambiguitäten von Anti-Racism”; Woesthoff, “‘When I Marry a Mohammedan.’”

96 See Göktürk, Gramling, and Kaes, Germany in Transit, 110–330.

97 Heinrich August Winkler, “Grenzen der Erweiterung: Die Türkei ist kein Teil des ‘Projekts Europa,’” Internationale Politik 2 (2003): 60.

98 “Multi-Kulti ist gescheitert,” Bild, April 5, 2006.

99 Peter Sloterdijk, “Die Revolution der gebenden Hand,” Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, June 13, 2009, and “Aufbruch der Leistungsträger,” Cicero, no. 11 (2009): 94–107.
in the former East German states. Only about 20 percent of those asked believed that Islam fits into the Western world.100

**Redemptive Memory**

Sarrazin’s racism fades amid the respectability of prejudice against migrants, the framing of integration in terms of sovereignty, and the concealing language of democratic universalism. But it also diffuses amid the myth that Germans have successfully purged race thinking and racism from their society and politics after 1945. This postracial myth obscures racism in many liberal democracies scarred by racist pasts, but in Germany its displacing effect may be stronger partly because it is powerfully ritualized by the country’s redemptive cultural memory of the Nazi genocide of European Jews.101 Over the past decade, Germany’s long process of confronting the Nazi genocide of European Jews has settled into a stasis of recollection in the public sphere. With a few exceptions now and then, most mainstream German politicians, intellectuals, and journalists no longer dispute the importance of Holocaust memory to public life.102 The intensity of the memory debates of the 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s has relaxed for now, and a culture of contrition has generally emerged in the public sphere.103 Although narratives about resistance, ignorance, and victimization persist among segments of German society,104 the Holocaust in Germany has now arguably become a cultural memory, a durable, ritualized part of a group’s historic consciousness

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100 Wilhelm Heitmeyer, *Deutsche Zustände* (Berlin, 2010), vol. 9; Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, *Die Mitte in der Krise: Rechtsextreme Einstellungen in Deutschland 2010* (Berlin, 2010); Pollack, “Wahrnehmung und Akzeptanz religiöser Vielfalt”; Sozialwissenschaftliches Forschungszentrum Berlin-Brandenburg, *Sozialreport: Daten und Fakten zur sozialen Lage 20 Jahre nach der Vereinigung* (Berlin, 2010).

101 On race and memory in the United States since the mid-1960s, see Daniel T. Rodgers, *Age of Fracture* (Cambridge, MA, 2011), 111–43.

102 A recent exception is Egon Flaig, “Die Habermas-Methode,” *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, July 17, 2011.

103 The literature on Germany’s memory battles is enormous. For a concise analysis, see Atina Grossmann, “The ‘Goldhagen Effect’: Memory, Repetition, and Responsibility in the New Germany,” in *The ‘Goldhagen Effect’: History, Memory, Nazism—Facing the German Past*, ed. Geoff Eley (Ann Arbor, MI, 2000), 89–129. A more recent extensive treatment is A. Dirk Moses, *German Intellectuals and the Nazi Past* (New York, 2007).

104 Olaf Jensen, *Geschichte machen: Strukturmerkmale des intergenerationellen Sprechens über die NS Vergangenheit in deutschen Familien* (Tübingen, 2004); Robert G. Moeller, “Germans as Victims? Thoughts on a Post–Cold War History of World War II’s Legacies,” *History and Memory* 17, nos. 1/2 (2005): 147–94; Harald Welzer, Sabine Moller, and Karoline Tschuggnall, “*Opa war kein Nazi*”: Nationalsozialismus und Holocaust im Familiengedächtnis (Frankfurt am Main, 2002).
and collective identity.\textsuperscript{105} While several scholars have recently observed that Holocaust memory blinds Germans to new forms of racism, a question remains: How exactly does it reduce German sensitivities to new forms of exclusion?\textsuperscript{106} The answer does not necessarily involve its singularity. Memories of the Holocaust can flow in many directions and can involve opposition to racism; the dialectic between a particular historical event and universal experiences of discrimination can be productive.\textsuperscript{107} Rather, the answer seems to lie with the redemptive role that Holocaust memory performs in contemporary Germany as a symbol of the country’s successful post-Nazi transformation into a tolerant, post-racial liberal democracy. This redemptive memory brackets off racism as an artifact from the past that has now largely been overcome.

The complex processes over the past seventy years that have made the Holocaust central to German public life can hardly be discussed here. Instead, I merely want to discuss the redemptive function of this cultural memory in West Germany and reunited Germany through one political-intellectual intermediary—Jürgen Habermas—to consider how this redemptive framing of memory might displace the presence of racism in contemporary German politics and society. I turn to Habermas not only as one of the most resonant carriers of Holocaust memory but also as a public intellectual whose ambition to build a postnational identity around a self-critical memory culture illuminates some of the paradoxes of Holocaust memory in Germany’s political culture.\textsuperscript{108} The tension in his writings between didactic introspection and political redemption through atonement for a delimited community of perpetrators uncovers, I think, one of the central aporias of memory as a critical project of enlightenment in Germany today.

\textsuperscript{105} Jan Assmann, \textit{Cultural Memory and Early Civilization: Writing, Remembrance, and Political Imagination} (New York, 2011).

\textsuperscript{106} Chin et al., \textit{After the Nazi Racial State}, 21–22; David Theo Goldberg, \textit{The Threat of Race: Reflections on Racial Neoliberalism} (Malden, MA, 2009), 154–63; Damani J. Partridge, “Holocaust Mahnmal (Memorial): Monumental Memory amidst Contemporary Race,” \textit{Comparative Studies in Society and History} 52, no. 4 (2010): 820–50. On the tensions more broadly between Germany’s diversifying society and its ethnocultural framing of memory, see Andreas Huyssen, “Diaspora and Nation: Migration into Other Pasts,” \textit{New German Critique} 88 (Winter 2003): 147–64; A. Dirk Moses, “Stigma and Sacrifice in the Federal Republic of Germany,” \textit{History and Memory} 19, no. 2 (2007): 140–42.

\textsuperscript{107} Michael Rothenberg, \textit{Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization} (Stanford, CA, 2009); Max Pensky, “Cosmopolitan Memory,” in \textit{Routledge Handbook of Cosmopolitan Studies}, ed. Gerard Delanty (New York, 2012), 254–66.

\textsuperscript{108} On redemptive memories in West Germany and reunited Germany, see Moses, \textit{German Intellectuals}. My labeling of Habermas as a “carrier” of memory comes from Jan Assmann’s conceptualization of cultural memory as having “special carriers,” i.e., “shamans, bards, griots, priests, teachers, artists, scribes, scholars, mandarins, and others.” Jan Assmann, \textit{Cultural Memory}, 39.
Drawn to Walter Benjamin’s injunction to remember past injustices, Habermas argues that the past endows present and future generations with an “obligation” or “liability” to remember past suffering and to consider critically which traditions should be transmitted into the future. He envisions a new, progressive kind of national memory that opposes national myths and traditions. This critical approach toward tradition links with his social theory of building democracies based on communication, reason, mutual recognition, and consensus. Ever cognizant of the dangers inherent in modernity, yet resistant to the postwar pessimism of his teachers Adorno and Horkheimer, Habermas has staked out since the early 1960s an emancipatory theory of critical debate and reason in a public sphere in which equal citizens embrace the normative practice of reflexive, rational deliberation to settle political questions in the interests of all citizens. The process of open, impartial, and equal deliberation ideally leads to rational consensus. Habermas stresses the many hindrances to reaching such consensus. The one most germane here is that universalist, normative ideas of deliberation and consensus unfold within cultural and historical worlds: citizens may arrive in the public sphere defined by particular traditions, beliefs, and pasts that may hinder rational, free, critical, and consensus-oriented discussion. Even so, Habermas remains optimistic both toward the ideal of communicative rationality and toward the possibility of determining through critical reflection which traditions from the past should be continued. Put very generally, he argues that the process of communicative rationality will lead to an overcoming of particularism and heteronmony: he believes that rational discourse will subject traditions to critique and universalize those traditions that withstand permanent scrutiny and that citizens of a “communication community” will ideally become autonomous selves partly

109 Jürgen Habermas, “Historical Consciousness and Post-traditional Identity: The Federal Republic’s Orientation to the West,” in The New Conservatism: Cultural Criticism and the Historians’ Debate, ed. and trans. Sherry Weber Nicholsen (Cambridge, MA, 1990), 252–53, 255, 263. For other invocations of Benjamin in the context of memory, see Jürgen Habermas, The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Twelve Lectures, trans. Frederick G. Lawrence (Cambridge, MA, 1990), 11–16; Jürgen Habermas, “Grenzen des Neohistorismus,” in Die nachholende Revolution (Frankfurt am Main, 1990), 155, and “Ideologies and Society in the Post-war World,” in Autonomy and Solidarity: Interviews, ed. Peter Dews (London, 1986), 53–54. On Habermas’s distinctive take on Benjamin’s messianic, antiprogressive conception of history, see Max Pensky, “On the Use and Abuse of Memory: Habermas, ‘Anamnestic Solidarity,’ and the Historikerstreit,” Philosophy and Social Criticism 15, no. 4 (1990): 351–80.

110 Habermas developed this latter point in his exchange with Gadamer, whom he questioned for “misjudging the power of reflection” to critique tradition. Jürgen Habermas, Zur Logik der Sozialwissenschaften, 5th ed. (Frankfurt am Main, 1982), 303. The Habermas-Gadamer debate is located in Karl-Otto Apel, ed., Hermeneutik und Ideologiekritik (Frankfurt am Main, 1971). See also Habermas, “Grenzen des Neohistorismus,” 155–56.

111 Jürgen Habermas, The Theory of Communicative Action, trans. Thomas McCarthy (Boston, 1987), 2:77–111.
through their ability to assess self-critically their traditions, beliefs, and pasts as they interact discursively with others.\footnote{As Habermas puts it: “Universalistic action orientations reach beyond all existing conventions and make it possible to gain some distance from the social roles that shape one’s background and character.” Habermas, \textit{Theory of Communicative Action}, 2:97.}

In his political writings, Habermas connects these theoretical arguments to the case of the Federal Republic of Germany. Democracy in Germany, he argues, must involve critical reflection on the country’s uniquely illiberal, nationalistic traditions. And it is here that Holocaust memory seems to intersect with Habermas’s social theory: it critiques and negates Germany’s past traditions of ethnocultural nationalism, antimodernism, and authoritarianism. Remembrance compels Germans to adhere to the postnational universalistic norms and procedures of the democratic constitutional state. Remembering the violent consequences of nationalism affirms the priority of cosmopolitanism over ethnocentrism by monitoring and guarding against the reappearance of nationalistic traditions.\footnote{Jürgen Habermas, \textit{Between Naturalism and Religion: Philosophical Essays} (Malden, MA, 2008), 106.} A self-critical national memory provides a kind of motivational, cultural-historical anchor for abstract legal cosmopolitanism.\footnote{A self-critical memory of the nation-state is merely one element of Habermas’s largely Kantian-inflected legal and institutional cosmopolitanism. See, most recently, Jürgen Habermas, \textit{The Crisis of the European Union: A Response}, trans. Ciaran Cronin (Malden, MA, 2012).}

This mnemonic dimension of Habermas’s cosmopolitanism contains at least two tensions.\footnote{All quotations from Jürgen Habermas, “On the Public Use of History,” in \textit{New Conservatism}, 233.} First, who are the members of the community for whom Holocaust memory is to anchor Germany’s new postnational identity? Habermas answers by positing a cultural-historical definition of membership: a prepolitical, cultural-historical holistic community of perpetrators bears the liability for keeping alive “the memory of the sufferings of those who were murdered by German hands.” History entangles Germans in “a web of familial, local, political, and intellectual traditions,” which created the life context “in which Auschwitz was possible not by contingent circumstances but intrinsically.” The liability for this past is transmitted to following generations and must be “repeatedly renewed.” No German “can escape this milieu, because our identities, both as individuals and as Germans, are indissolubly interwoven with it.”\footnote{All quotations from Jürgen Habermas, “On the Public Use of History,” in \textit{New Conservatism}, 233.} Yet, residents and citizens of Germany who do not share a cultural-historical lineage to the perpetrator community do escape this milieu, a point Habermas stressed during the
debate about Berlin’s Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe: “The circle of authors who could desire such a memorial closes. Neither Jewish Germans, nor the Sinti and Roma who reside in Germany, nor the immigrants who have become nationalized since the end of World War II, can say what this memorial should express. The authors are those citizens who are the direct heirs of a culture in which ‘that’ was possible, who belong to a network of traditions that connects them with the perpetrator generation.”

Second, Habermas’s postnational memory rests on a redemptive understanding of German history. Acknowledging Germany’s unique history and building a liberal democratic state emancipates Germany from that history. Habermas sees Germany’s historical trajectory as a deviation from and return to a still salvageable Western modernity, with the Holocaust as the event that broke Germany from its illiberal, nationalistic traditions and thereby created the condition for its path to liberalism. Linear time does not define Germany’s liberalization; a cyclical time of sin, ruination, and redemption does. “Unfortunately, in the cultural nation of the Germans,” Habermas writes, “a connection to universalist constitutional principles that was anchored in convictions could be formed only after—and through—Auschwitz.” With its nationalistic traditions negated by the Holocaust, a ruined Germany finally opened itself up to Western modernity after 1945. It reached the point of liberal democracy from which it had strayed into the abyss of Nazism. In this cyclical reading of time, the collapse of Nazism surfaces as the genetic and teleological moment of postwar German history, representing both its beginning and end: “the year 1945 also marks a turning point—a turn toward something better, toward the mastering of the force of barbarism that had broken through the very foundations of civilization in Germany.”

For Habermas, Germans should be historically conscious of this unique path to liberal democracy and should reincarnate it through monuments that mark Germany’s violent past in the public sphere, such as Berlin’s Holocaust memorial, a project he favored as “a sign that the memory of the Holocaust remains a constitutive feature of the ethicopolitical self-understanding of the citizens of

117 Habermas, “Finger of Blame,” 41. Several paragraphs later, Habermas says that naturalized immigrants “may well regard other things as relevant and will one day leave their own mark on the cultural memory of the nation.” Will they later on join the community of perpetrators? If so, why not now? Or will Holocaust memory be rationalized and self-reflectively critiqued like any other cultural tradition as German society changes? On the dilemmas of Habermas’s position on cultural identity and holism, see Max Pensky, “Cosmopolitanism and the Solidarity Problem: Habermas on National and Cultural Identities,” Constellations 7, no. 1 (2000): 64–79.

118 I am building on Moses’s understanding of Habermas as a “non-German German.” Moses, German Intellectuals.

119 Habermas, “Apologetic Tendencies,” in New Conservatism, 227.

120 Jürgen Habermas, “Learning from Catastrophe? A Look Back at the Short Twentieth Century,” in The Postnational Constellation: Political Essays, ed. and trans. Max Pensky (Cambridge, MA, 2001), 45.
the Federal Republic.” This act of recollection—taking up the obligation of remembering past injustices and connecting them to the present as Benjamin commanded—involves salvaging fragments of the past that otherwise would disappear. As Habermas explains, “the anamnestic redemption of an injustice, which cannot of course be undone but can at least be virtually reconciled through remembering, ties up the present with the communicative context of a universal historical solidarity.” This solidarity with the victims appears here and elsewhere as a duty (following Adorno), but also as an act of atonement and repentance. Germans ought to remember the past but they also atone for their sins in doing so. Remembrance appears as a didactic obligation and as a secularized form of ethicopolitical redemption. Memory forms the redemptive substance of a stable (post)national identity for a cultural-historical community of Germans, even as Habermas insists on its perpetual, discursive role as a learning process of enlightenment.

The tension in this dual framing of memory as a pedagogical process and a redemptive identity runs through contemporary German political culture. A number of Germany’s mainstream politicians, journalists, and academics have embraced Habermas’s critical memory culture to the extent of opposing blatantly recognizable forms of antisemitism, xenophobia, and prejudice. Germany’s far right political parties have been marginalized, posting some of the weakest election numbers in Europe over the past twenty years. But while right-wing political parties have been discredited and overt expressions of antisemitism in the public sphere have usually been confronted, new forms of prejudice, especially seemingly respectable ones coming from establishment politicians such as Sarrazin, have emerged among segments of German society when Holocaust consciousness has never been greater. I see a relationship here between

121 Jürgen Habermas, “Brief an Peter Eisenman,” December 16, 1998, reprinted in Der Denkmalstreit—das Denkmal? Die Debatte um das ”Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas”; Eine Dokumentation, ed. Ute Heimrod, Günter Schlusche, and Horst Seferens (Berlin, 1999), 1185.
122 Walter Benjamin, “Theses on the Philosophy of History,” in Illuminations, trans. Harry Zohn, ed. Hannah Arendt (New York, 2007), 255.
123 Habermas, Discourse of Modernity, 15.
124 Adorno, “What Does Coming to Terms with the Past Mean?”
125 On this tension between duty and atonement, see Pensky, “On the Use and Abuse of Memory.”
126 Art, Politics of the Nazi Past, and Inside the Radical Right.
127 While German political sensitivity to antisemitism is now fairly strong after a long “learning process” since 1945, a 200-page report commissioned by the Bundestag revealed multiple manifestations of antisemitism in Germany. “Antisemitismus in Deutschland—Erscheinungsformen, Bedingungen, Präventionsansätze,” Deutscher Bundestag, 17. Wahlperiode, Drucksache 17/7700, November 10, 2012. On the postwar history of German political reactions to antisemitism, see Werner Bergmann, Antisemitismus in öffentlichen Konflikten: Kollektives Lernen in der politischen Kultur der Bundesrepublik 1949–1989 (Frankfurt am Main, 1997).
memory and racism beyond merely the synchronous one. Amid the sense that Germany has now found its way to *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* after a long, self-created exile of repressing the past, that it has now reached the telos of remembrance, or at least that it has arrived at some kind of stasis of remembrance, the redemptive impulses of memory currently seem quite powerful in the public sphere, with important consequences for discussions about racism and the didactic capacity of memory to monitor against such particularism. If Holocaust memory marks Germany’s successful enlightenment and comprises an important element of its (post)national identity, it may act as a screen memory that sieves out distressing, abject layers of time. It may displace the discomforting presence of racism in a way somewhat akin to the ways in which memories of hospitality and equality function in the United States and France, respectively. All three memories perpetuate foundational national narratives and identities about German rehabilitation, American hospitality, and French equality.129 Racism unsettles these narratives and is thus displaced or marginalized by them. In short, the didactic, critical aim of Holocaust remembrance has been blunted by its redemptive function, as some memory actors now seem to acknowledge: some have begun to ironize redemptive narratives of the Holocaust in order to salvage memory as an enlightenment project.130

But Holocaust memory in its redemptive, identity-forming dimension may not only diffuse the significance of racism: it may also advance forms of exclusion against those who stand outside the circumscribed community of German perpetrators. Some German commentators and politicians (especially but not exclusively conservatives) have recently discussed Holocaust memory—perhaps unwittingly—in tacitly exclusionary ways. In 2010, the CDU minister responsible for integration in North Rhine-Westphalia remarked that the Holocaust is 128 Freud argues that an innocuous layer of time can displace or substitute a distressing one much like a screen sieves, conceals, and protects. As he writes, a screen memory “owes its value as a memory not to its intrinsic content, but to the relation obtaining between this content and some other, which has been suppressed.” Sigmund Freud, “Screen Memories,” in *The Penguin Freud Reader*, ed. Adam Phillips (New York, 2006), 557. In the case of Holocaust memory, as Michael Rothberg notes, it may seem perplexing that a traumatic past is doing the labor of displacing. Yet, as a cipher of Germany’s transformation, Holocaust memory functions as a comforting memory insofar as it reinforces Germany’s postwar narrative of democratic redemption in relationship to the discomforting, suppressed memory and image of racism in postwar and contemporary Germany. One layer of time gains its meaning, as Freud explains here, in relationship to another. Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory*, 12–16.

129 Brown, *Regulating Aversion*; Behdad, *Forgetful Nation*; Scott, *Politics of the Veil*. Perhaps the most prominent ironist of Holocaust memory today is the Berlin-based Israeli Jewish artist Yael Bartana (e.g., “The Jewish Renaissance Movement in Poland” and “Zwei Minuten Stillstand”).

130 On German tolerance as a discursive strand of exclusion, see Yasemin Yildiz, “Governing European Subjects: Tolerance and Guilt in the Discourse of ‘Muslim Women,’” *Cultural Critique* 77 (Winter 2011): 70–101.

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"Silences about Sarrazin’s Racism"
“an important part of our national identity” and “a part of our shared guiding culture (Leitkultur).” “Especially when society changes,” he noted, “it is important always to embrace anew the legacy of our history and pass it on.”

132 Germany is facing a complex issue here, but such calls for memory integration run the risk of reproducing essentializing assumptions about Germans and migrants. Germans can come across as enlightened teachers who are imparting knowledge to backward pupils whose “migration background” is supposedly the reason for their ignorance. Even as the demand to disseminate Holocaust education disrupts memory’s long-standing framing in Germany as a hermetic practice, it can reinforce exclusive understandings of national belonging and membership. This emerging focus on memory integration also overlooks the complex relationship of migrants to the Nazi past. Some migrants may have little knowledge about the Holocaust and some might be hostile to it, but others have profoundly reflected on it.

Such nuances, though, attract little attention from a growing number of German commentators—including Sarrazin—who explicitly deploy philosemitic stereotypes of Jews to articulate an ethnocultural, exclusive understanding of Germanness. In his book, Sarrazin longs for Germany’s prewar Jewish population as he describes their economic, cultural, and academic dominance of prewar German life. This nostalgia rests on historical stereotypes of Jewish power and implicitly characterizes Muslims as minorities who have failed to contribute to and integrate into German society. This panegyrical essentialization of prewar German Jews not only displaces or perhaps even disavows the violence of the Holocaust; it also construes Muslims as the uncultured, inassimilable, ungebildet foils to German Jews. Indeed, some German commentators have spoken of Germany’s “Judeo-Christian” heritage to exclude Islam from Germany’s history and culture.

133 Zafer Şenocak, Gefährliche Verwandtschaft (Munich, 1998); Das Märchen vom Letzten Gedanken (Ballhaus Naunynstrasse, October 8, 2009); Warten auf Adam Spielman (Ballhaus Naunynstrasse, October 7, 2010); Kreuzberger Initiative gegen Antisemitismus (www.kiga-berlin.de); Aktion Sühnezeichen Friedensdienste, Neuköllner Stadtteilmütter und ihrer Auseinandersetzung mit der Geschichte des Nationalsozialismus (Berlin, 2010).

On migrant engagements with the Nazi past, see Michael Rothberg and Yasemin Yildiz, “Memory Citizenship: Migrant Archives of Holocaust Remembrance in Contemporary Germany,” Parallax 17, no. 4 (2011): 32–48.

134 Sarrazin, Deutschland, 93–96.

135 For discussion and critique, see A. S. Bruckstein Çoruh, “Die jüdisch-christliche Tradition ist eine Erfindung,” Der Tagesspiegel, October 12, 2010; Brumlik, “Ist die Islamophobie der neue Antisemitismus?”; Heribert Prantl, “Der Missbrauch der Juden durch die Politik,” Süddeutsche Zeitung, November 9, 2010; Adam Soboczynski, “Unser
Horst Seehofer remarked, “no other. This includes tolerance of other religions. But other religions cannot be formative for our evolved orientation of values.”

These invocations of Germany’s Christian-Jewish heritage reveal a final tension within Germany’s self-critical memory culture: Sarrazin and some of his supporters embrace, use, and reject it all at the same time. A liberal, a democrat, a German, a European, a philosemit—a nationalist and an internationalist—Sarrazin reprises Germany’s redemptive story of democratic liberalization in his book, celebrates cultural difference if it is Jewish, and bristles at the thought that his remarks against migrants could be taken as racist. With decades of atone-ment, billions in reparations, and hundreds of Holocaust memorials behind him, Sarrazin scoffs at the notion that Germans like himself might be anything but redemptive cosmopolitans. He then wields cosmopolitanism to separate Muslims as intolerant, illiberal, and antidemocratic. All the while, he believes that Germany must be liberated from its culture of contrition in order to deal with its problems as a “normal” country. Sarrazin thinks of himself and emerges in the eyes of his supporters as a freedom-of-speech warrior who is cutting through decades of guilt-induced sidestepping. As Ralph Giordano exclaimed, “Thilo Sarrazin’s book is a blow right to the heart of Germany’s political correctness, a frontal attack on Germany’s multiculturalists, xenophile one-eyers, and the all-inclusive huggers.”

Dohnanyi compared the handling of Sarrazin to the “shameful treatment” of Martin Walser, who twelve years earlier had expressed indignation about Holocaust memory as a “moral cudgel.” In 1998, Dohnanyi defended Walser just as he now defended Sarrazin. “I must come back again to the case of Walser,” he wrote in 2010. “The crime and Germany’s great guilt over the Holocaust have first suppressed us and then created multiple taboos (known as ‘political correctness’). In the shadow of our history and of an often all too one-sided image of ourselves, we avoid debates and words that are common

136 Katrin van Randenborgh and Frank Thewes, “Wer nicht arbeiten will, kriegt kein Hartz IV,” Focus, no. 41 (2010), www.focus.de/magazin/archiv.
137 Ralph Giordano, “Wider die Kreidefresser,” Die Welt, September 4, 2010.
138 For a brilliant contextualization of Walser’s intervention into reunited Germany’s redemptive memory politics, see Moses, German Intellectuals, 254–62, 276–80.
among others. . . So please, no more cowardice about words such as race, Jews, Muslims.”

DIFFUSING RACISM

In October 2010, Habermas replied to Sarrazin in the New York Times, continuing a long tradition of stepping into public debates that goes back to 1953 when he responded to the publication of Martin Heidegger’s *Introduction to Metaphysics*, a lecture course that was delivered in 1935 but did not appear until after the war. The “eschatological aura” of Heidegger’s vision of Western modernity’s end disturbed Habermas somewhat less than did the fact that such a vision was published with no explanation after 1945; the lack of any apparent remorse from Heidegger for his embrace of Nazism and his brazen injection of antimodern ideas into Germany’s still fragile democracy seemed to concern Habermas the most.140 Periodically since then, Habermas has entered the public sphere to resist manifestations of nationalistic politics and attempts to diminish Germany’s obligation to remember the Holocaust.141

In 2010, Habermas was responding not to the issue of memory per se but rather to an iteration of ethnocultural particularism. He expressed concern about rising “xenophobia,” “hostility,” “discrimination,” and “ethnic aggression” in Germany, and he resisted the recent invocation of Germany’s Judeo-Christian tradition: “With an arrogant appropriation of Judaism—and an incredible disregard for the fate the Jews suffered in Germany—the apologists of the *Leitkultur* [leading national culture] now appeal to the ‘Judeo-Christian tradition,’ which distinguishes ‘us’ from the foreigners.”142 He also insisted that the liberal state demand no more of its immigrants than that they learn the language of its society and accept its constitutional principles—arguments he has developed further in his recent work on religion in the public sphere, which can be read as an intervention on behalf of religious minorities in Germany.143

139 Klaus von Dohnanyi, “Feigheit vor dem Wort,” *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, September 6, 2010.
140 Jürgen Habermas, “On the Publication of Lectures of 1935,” in *The Heidegger Controversy: A Critical Reader*, ed. Richard Wolin (New York, 1991), 192; originally published in 1953 in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*.
141 On the centrality of Nazism to Habermas’s political writings, see Pensky, “Habermas and the Antinomies of the Intellectual.”
142 Jürgen Habermas, “Leadership and Leitkultur,” *New York Times*, October 28, 2010.
143 Jürgen Habermas, *Between Naturalism and Religion: Philosophical Essays* (Malden, MA, 2008). Habermas’s defense of Muslims is explicit in his political writings: “Polyfonie der Meinungen: Wie viel Religion verträgt der liberale Staat?” *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, August 6, 2012, and “Die Erweiterung des Horizonts,” *Kölner Stadt-Anzeiger*, November 8, 2006.
At the same time, though, Habermas framed the Sarrazin debate as one that was about “integration, multiculturalism, and the role of the Leitkultur,” and his engagement with Sarrazin’s racism seemed halting at times. He asked: “Are there grounds for concern that the ‘old’ mindsets could undergo a revival?” He answered: “It depends on what you mean by ‘old.’ What we are seeing here is not a revival of the mentalities of the 1930s. Instead, it is a rekindling of controversies of the early 1990s, when thousands of refugees arrived from the former Yugoslavia, setting off a debate on asylum seekers.” Thus he concluded: “Nevertheless, I do not have the impression that the appeals to the leitkultur signal anything more than a rearguard action or that the lapse of an author into the snare of the controversy over nature versus nurture has given enduring and widespread impetus to the more noxious mixture of xenophobia, racist feelings of superiority and social Darwinism. The problems of today have set off the reactions of yesterday—but not those of the day before.”

In the early 1990s, a series of targeted assaults against foreigners erupted in Germany to which hundreds of thousands of Germans responded with protests (to cite one example, 400,000 Germans gathered in Munich for a candlelight protest in December 1992). Habermas notes these attacks in his New York Times piece—and in the early 1990s reacted poignantly to them—but here he does not linger on them, nor does he linger on Sarrazin’s racism. Instead, he shifts to “another trend” that is of “greater concern”: the apparent weakening of deliberative democracy amid growing frustration with a “helpless political system,” which is leading Germans to protest projects such as the demolition of Stuttgart’s old central train station and to embrace “charismatic figures” such as aristocrat Karl-Theodor zu Guttenberg. This shift from Sarrazin to Guttenberg to Stuttgart, from xenophobia to charisma to civic protests, may just reflect Habermas’s current concerns about Germany’s political class. But it may also suggest the conceptual blockages at work in thinking about racism in a country shaped by the memory of the Holocaust. If in Germany racism tends to conjure up restricted associations with the radical physical violence of the 1930s and 1940s and tends to be connected to a past perceived as now largely overcome, then perhaps Habermas did not fully recognize Sarrazin’s more normalized verbal prejudices on their own terms as new iterations of racism some seventy years after Hitler. His comparison of Sarrazin’s claims to “old mindsets” seems

[144] Habermas, “Leadership and Leitkultur.”
[145] Ibid.
[146] Jürgen Habermas, “The Asylum Debate,” January 14, 1993 in Jürgen Habermas, The Past as Future, ed. and trans. Max Pensky (Lincoln, NB, 1994), 121–41.
[147] Habermas, “Leadership and Leitkultur.” Guttenberg was popular at the time of Habermas’s writing, but six months later he resigned from his post as defense minister after admitting to plagiarizing his dissertation.
to affirm this reading: Sarrazin’s ideas appeared far distant from what has rather consistently worried Habermas since his first intervention in the public sphere in 1953—Nazism and the memory of its crimes.

A year later, Zafer Şenocak, who, like Habermas, has thought deeply about Germany’s past, suggested in a radio interview that Germany’s “wounded national pride” precludes Germans from talking about racism. “Everything that has to do with racism, with crimes against others and otherness,” he said, “has naturally a very, very strong connotation in Germany.” The interviewer interjected: “But we are nevertheless proud, Mr. Şenocak, that we have supposedly handled our past.” “Yes! We look into the past, but not into the present,” Şenocak responded. “The handling of the past now obstructs our view into the present and also really makes us in the present very sensitive and very anxious in approaching these issues.”

Şenocak’s observations are perceptive, albeit when conceived somewhat differently. Germans may struggle to confront the ambivalences that define their democracy partly because the notion of a firm democracy—a streitbare Demokratie—is central to their nation-state’s identity and ethico-political sovereignty. Democracy is one of the most positive identifications Germans have. And yet here lies the rub: the histories of migrants unsettle this identification. They tell of prosperity built with cheap labor, democracy established with selective citizenship rights, tolerance accompanied by discrimination, equality constructed with restricted social mobility, Holocaust memory accompanied by limited introspective didacticism. Şenocak’s argument about Germany’s conflicted identity has long been emphasized. Amos Elon spoke of Germany’s “shattered trumpet” in his 1966 travelogue. But Germany also has repaired identities, and it is these repaired identities that discussing racism disrupts with anxiety, engendering silence and evasion, because what layer of time is left for Germans to look to if their postwar (West) German narrative of democratic and mnemonic redemption is rendered ambivalent, if their one lone trumpet, in a shattered orchestra, plays broken tunes? Or to come at the issue somewhat differently: the halting and diffuse nature of discussions about racism ironically rests on denying what Germans have been striving for since 1945—normality. German democracy today is normal in all the discordant tunes that come out of working through the conflicting liberal democratic demands of difference (individualism) and sameness.

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148 “Mit einem NPD-Verbot ist es nicht getan: Zafer Şenocak im Gespräch mit Friedbert Meurer,” Deutschlandsfunk (accessed December 11, 2011, http://www.dradio.de/dlf/sendungen/interview_dlf/1606427/).

149 Amos Elon, Journey through a Haunted Land: The New Germany, trans. Michael Roloff (New York, 1967), 174–93.

150 Till van Rahden, “Clumsy Democrats: Moral Passions in the Federal Republic,” German History 29, no. 3 (2011): 485–504, 495–96.
(equality). Mediating these demands involves productively recognizing the tensions between universal principles and particular identities. And that involves recognizing German democracy as full of contradictions like any other democracy, rather than as one that has largely purged itself of racism and ethnocultural nationalism.

$^{151}$ On mediating national identities and cosmopolitan norms after Nazism, see Seyla Benhabib, *Another Cosmopolitanism* (New York, 2006).
Erratum

In Michael Meng’s article “Silences about Sarrazin’s Racism in Contemporary Germany,” published in the March 2015 issue of the JMH, the typesetter inadvertently omitted two lines of footnote 21. That footnote should have read as follows:

21 For a contrary interpretation, see Matti Bunzl, “Between Anti-Semitism and Islamophobia: Some Thoughts on the New Europe,” American Ethnologist 32, no. 4 (2005): 499–508. For a summary of modern migration regimes, see Klaus J. Bade, Pieter C. Emmer, Leo Lucassen, and Jochen Oltmer, eds., The Encyclopedia of Migration and Minorities in Europe: From the 17th Century to the Present (Cambridge, 2011), xxx–xxxiv.