

Discrimination and Immigrant Identity: Fundamentalist and Secular Muslims Facing the Swiss Minaret Ban^{*}

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Abstract: The 2009 Swiss minaret ban was widely regarded as a blatant act of discrimination against Muslims. We analyzed postings in threads related to the minaret ban in two German language internet forums for young Muslims. The first forum was hosted by a fundamentalist group whereas the second represented a more secular or moderate segment of German Muslims. We expected the fundamentalists to employ more essentializing discourses in face of discrimination, whereas we hypothesized the moderate Muslims to rather employ de-essentializing discourses. Although the fundamentalists expressed their disgust at the referendum's outcome, they also welcomed it as confirming the West's hostility towards Islam in general and their identities as fighters in an inevitable global jihad. They displayed a strongly essentialized insular identity with impermeable boundaries that excluded moderate Muslims as well as non-Muslims. On the other hand, the discourse in the moderate forum disclosed the users' dominant hyphenated identity, which the minaret ban puts a strain upon. They felt the need to strike a balance between their desire to integrate in German society and their outrage about the minaret ban. The results are discussed in terms of the dynamics between minority and majority groups' identity constructions.

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Introduction

A Foggy November in Switzerland

On November 29th, 2009, a majority of Swiss voted in a referendum to ban the construction of new minarets in Switzerland. The referendum had been driven forward by a popular initiative and was heavily supported by the far-right Swiss People's Party (SVP). The subsequent minaret ban received global media attention and was heavily criticized by politicians and religious authorities in the 'Western world' (Cumming-Bruce, 2009) as well as by politicians and religious authorities from the 'Muslim world' (Ekmekci, 2009). In most media, the Swiss referendum was considered an act of discrimination against Muslims in Switzerland and an attack on their religious freedom. Consequently, the referendum was widely perceived as a victory of the European New Right and also feared in case the angry reactions of Muslim leaders provoked an upturn in Islamic fundamentalism in Europe (Ekmekci, 2009). Ayman Ali, the secretary general of the Federation of Islamic Organizations in Europe, was quoted as saying "we are a bit afraid of the rise of extremism on both sides" (Cumming-Bruce, 2009: A15), summarizing the fears of many.

In this paper, we look at the reactions that the Swiss minaret ban triggered in two Muslim online communities - one fundamentalist, the other more moderate - and analyze how these reactions relate to feelings of identity and religious and national attachment.

The Situation of European Muslims after 9/11

In the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Centre in 2001, public opinion towards Muslims in general became more negative in the West (see Cainkar, 2004; Rizvi, 2005). For young Muslims, it is increasingly difficult to successfully negotiate multiple ethnic and cultural 'hyphenated identities' as European Turks, Arab Europeans, or European Muslims (Sirin & Fine, 2007). Whereas many young Muslims in Western countries embrace the freedom and educational possibilities of their 'host' cultures, they often do not want to abandon their 'original' cultural identity (eg Fine & Sirin, 2007; Howarth, Wagner, Magnusson & Sammut, in press) and finely tune their relationship with the host community (Hopkins, Reicher, & Kahani-Hopkins, 2003).

According to the Pew Research Religion and Public Life Project, there were an estimated 44.1 million Muslims in Europe as a whole, comprising 2.7% of the total European population (Grim & Karim, 2011). The 2000 Swiss census shows the Muslim population as representing 4% of the total Swiss population, with 310,000 Muslims living in the country (SFSO, 2000). In 2009, the number of estimated Muslims in Switzerland had risen to about 400,000 (Cumming-Bruce, 2009). The minaret ban was supported by over 57% of those that responded to the referendum, and caused uproar among Muslims in Switzerland and the rest of Europe (ibid). In neighboring countries, opinion polls showed that the French and Austrians were largely opposed to a minaret ban, whereas the Belgians and Czech largely supported a ban (Fekete, 2010), although the law was only passed in Switzerland.

For European Muslims, religious identity appears to be more important than it is for European Christians (cf. Haddad & Smith, 2001, Vertovec & Rogers, 1998). A proportion of European Muslims tend to 'totally' identify with Islam, that is, the social identity as a Muslim seems more salient than ethnic or national identities (Verkuyten, 2007). This may be a consequence of discrimination against Muslims in Europe and of political pressures towards assimilation instead of integration (Hopkins & Kahani-Hopkins, 2006; Verkuyten & Zaremba, 2005). Nevertheless, many Muslim 'total identifiers' also show an interest in identifying with their host country's national culture (Verkuyten, 2007). Those who do not want to readily identify are frequently labelled 'fundamentalist' in public discourse and considered a threat to Western culture in the media. At this point, it is necessary to differentiate closely between the terms 'fundamentalism', 'Islamism', and 'Muslim extremism'.

Fundamentalism, Islamism, and Muslim Extremism

Terms such as 'fundamentalism', 'Islamism' and 'Muslim extremism' among others have been loosely and recklessly employed by the media in such a way that any differences between them have faded. Hence, before proceeding, we will attempt to disentangle the terminology and put it in context.

Almond, Appleby, & Sivan (2003) discuss five characteristics of

religious fundamentalism, which can be found in different religions, including Christianity, Islam, Judaism (see also Herriot, 2007), and Hinduism (see also Sen & Wagner, 2009). **First**, religious fundamentalism is a reaction to the spread of a secular global modernity. **Second**, it adopts a reductive dualism that classes all things into 'good' vs. 'bad (dualism). **Third**, it bases its ideology and doctrines on sacred texts and divine authority. **Fourth**, it selectively adopts elements of sacred texts and belief systems that promote its project and dismisses others (eclecticism). **Finally**, it may include a belief in millennialism and messianism.

'Modern' Islamic fundamentalism emerged as a reaction to religion's decreasing importance, particularly in the Arabian Peninsula in the latter part of the 18th century (cf. Esposito, 2010). This took the shape of a reform movement, the main protagonist of which (Abdul Wahhab) would later come to play a major role in the creation of the current Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Wahhab built on previous Salafi⁽¹⁾ 'Islamism' refers to the politicization of Islam by fundamentalists and its application in governance and policy in everyday life (Desai, 2007). As such, the term 'Islamism' does not denote a propensity for violence, but rather a belief that all aspects of life, and, more importantly, political thought, should be directly informed by Islamic interpretation. While Islamists are often political in their expression of Islam, other fundamentalist Muslims may see involvement in contemporary forms of politics as essentially non-Islamic innovations that are characteristic of Western cultures (Roy, 2004).

Islamism in itself was an attempt to assert an Islamic way of life and governance in the wake of decolonization in the Islamic world. This period (from the mid to late 20th century) was characterized by the transfer of power to local political organizations that preferred a secular system to rule their newly independent nations (see Moosa, 2009). Islamism became a political current of opposition to secular and nationalist movements, particularly in the Middle East, North Africa, and South Asia (Roy, 2004). Consequently, Islamism idealizes the Islamic state ruled by Sharia law. This ideal is shared by many Muslims.

(1) Literally derived from the Arabic for 'predecessor', Salafi approaches to Islam advocate a return to medieval Islamic practices and interpretations as applied by the Prophet and his first followers (Al Salaf ul Salih).

What distinguishes violent from other forms of Islamism is the method of implementation that a given Islamist movement's leader chooses to adopt. Some form political parties and participate in local politics⁽²⁾, others see violent conflict against the entire world as the only means of realizing their ideals (Qutub, 1981)⁽³⁾. As such, the term 'extremist' can be used to denote any extreme form of fundamentalism or Islamism. 'Extremist' fundamentalist or Islamist groups hold the belief that their way of being Muslim is the only correct way, and all those, including other Muslims, who do not adhere to their doctrines are infidels (*kuffar*). This practice, called *takfir*, is seen by many more moderate or 'mainstream' Islamic authorities as utterly un-Islamic (Esposito, 2010).

Identities and Essentializing Discourse

Our conceptual framework for understanding the shifting perceptions of group boundaries and processes of identity negotiation employed by various groups in political and societal contexts is provided by psychological essentialism (Medin & Ortony, 1989; Haslam, Rothschild, & Ernst, 2002; Wagner, Holtz, & Kashima, 2009).

Psychological essentialism means to think, talk, and act as if a social group were a discrete natural kind and as if its members were all endowed with the same immutable attributes determined by the group's essence. From the perspective of the discriminated group, self-essentialization can be interpreted as a situated discursive figure in the service of maintaining a socially favorable and distinct group status or as a strategy to facilitate collective action (Wagner, Holtz, & Kashima, 2009). Furthermore, discrimination may contribute to self-essentialization, because the shared fate of being discriminated against enhances the feelings of similarity and groupness among minority group members (Yzerbyt, Estrada, Corneille, Seron, & Demoulin, 2004, p. 122).

For the discriminating group, essentializing an outgroup serves to set the group clearly apart from the dominant population. Such rhetoric can frequently be found in politically right-wing discourse (Holtz & Wagner, 2009). However, the same essentialist rhetoric can also be used as an emancipatory argument in favor of preserving the unique identity

(2) E.g. Jammat-e-Islami in Pakistan.

(3) E.g. Qutubist orientations in the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt.

of indigenous people, while another strand of emancipatory discourse aims at de-essentializing groups and categories to express anti-racist sentiments (Verkuyten, 2003).

There is empirical evidence that minority and majority groups employ essentialist discourses strategically. Minority members have been found to endorse essentialist beliefs about their group when being requested to 'assimilate' to the dominant culture, thus being asked to abandon their cultural or personal identity. In contrast, in the face of open discrimination, they tend to de-essentialize themselves so as to reduce visible homogeneity. This has been shown for Muslim immigrants in the Netherlands (Verkuyten, 2003) and for male and female homosexuals (Morton & Postmes, 2009).

Essence-related rhetoric always serves a purpose and can also cater to contradictory purposes as illustrated in certain feminist circles: self-attributing essence to the category of women, on the one hand, impedes social change as differences between men and women become reified and 'naturalized'. On the other hand, attributing politically organized groups an essence is pivotal if one wants to give them identity and visibility in political struggles (e.g. Fuss, 1989; Bjornsdottir & Kristmundsdottir, 1995). This tension between perceived essence as an impediment and essence as a representational political tool underlines the centrality that this notion has in human intuitive cognitive functioning.

We expect that in the case of Muslim minorities in Europe, 'essence politics' will be similar: Under blatant discrimination, self-essentialization will depend on a group's pre-existing groupness and entitativity: Under the condition of an elevated sense of groupness the discriminated will perceive progressive and conspicuous essentialization as advantageous. This is for example true if status differences between them and the majority population are perceived as unjust, as is the case in all fundamentalist currents of Islam. Consequently, when there is overt discrimination, fundamentalist Muslim groups will take up the opportunity to justify and strengthen self-essentialization as a means to facilitate collective action. In contrast, moderate Muslims who also feel being part of European mainstream culture and who share a lesser sense of groupness, will-probably with ambivalence-perceive the status difference as in part justified and discrimination will lead to accentuating

intra-group variability and differentiation. They should maintain a de-essentializing discourse.

Method

General Approach

The present analysis draws upon data from a collaborative research project on young Muslims' life-worlds in Germany. All in all, more than 7,000 postings from the years 2009 and 2010 in some 400 threads in nine German language online forums used primarily by young Muslims posted were analyzed (Holtz, Kronberger, & Wagner, 2012). The minaret ban was mentioned in five of the nine forums. However, extensive debates about the minaret ban were only found in the *Ahlu Sunnah* and *Vaybee* forums. It is worth mentioning that due to the nature of the data, our findings are restricted to German-Muslim forum users, and no attempt to generalize the data beyond this sample will be undertaken.

This paper follows a comparative case study design by analyzing and comparing the discourse on the Minaret Ban in these two forums. The procedures followed those outlined by Yin (1984) in designing the case study protocol, collecting the data, and following a general descriptive analytical strategy. The approach adopted in the analysis is best captured by Yin's (2013) 'pattern-matching' technique, more specifically attempting to identify patterns between nonequivalent dependent variables. In discussing our procedures, first we will provide a general characterization of the two forums based on previously published analyses on the complete data set (Holtz & Wagner, 2012), which represent our units of analysis. Afterwards, we will first analyze the unfolding discourses linearly following the course of discussion in both threads before proceeding with an in-depth analysis of the interrelatedness between the users' reactions towards the minaret ban and their respective identity constructions.

The Ahlu Sunnah Forum

The *Ahlu Sunnah* forum [<http://www.ahlu-sunnah.com/>] was launched in 2008 and by March 11th, 2010 there had been a total of 58,446 postings in 6,708 threads. There are sections for explicitly religious issues and others for issues related to politics or society. The website also features a separate area for women, which can only be viewed by

registered users. There are no website credits linking it to a specific organization. All in all, 966 postings within 45 threads were sampled for the research project.

In the religious sections, most users endorse a fundamentalist Salafi Sunni Islam. Moderate Muslims are often referred to as 'Kuffar' ('unbelievers') and other Islamic religious groups, such as Shiites or Alevites, are throughout referred to as sects and apostates. Besides fatwas and religious texts by classical Muslim scholars such as ibn Taymiyyah, *Ahlu Sunnah* frequently features sermons and fatwas issued by modern conservative Muslim religious authorities who are mainly from Saudi Arabia (for example Ibn Uthaimeen, Ibn Baz, or Muhammad Salih al-Munajjid). Some of the forum's users agree with more extremist scholars such as al Sayyid Qutub or al Qaida's al-Zawahiri, whereas others consider their views too extreme.

In political terms, the vast majority of the users support the militant jihad of the Afghan Taliban and their international supporters against the USA and its allies. Some users openly encourage others to join forces with the Taliban or talk about friends who have gone to Afghanistan or Pakistan to join the mujahidin. Those who have died for the jihad are celebrated as martyrs. But occasionally there are also heated debates about violence against civilians and suicide bombings. Frequently, the forum's administrators put an end to these debates that are at times very offensive and slanderous and they suggest continuing the discussion in the password-protected sections or say that such matters should be left to religious authorities. Whereas most users seem to be immigrants from Turkey, North Africa, or the Middle East, the forum is also used by a number of German converts to Islam.

A thread named 'Referendum in Switzerland: large majority against minarets'⁽⁴⁾ was started on Nov. 29th, 2009, the day of the referendum. By December 7th there had been 72 postings and the last one had been posted two days earlier. The postings were authored by 18 different users and the most prolific was User A with 21 postings. Twelve users authored multiple postings. Most of the posts were in German and were interspersed with Arabic or Turkish phrases.

(4) This and the following quotations were translated from German into English by the autho.

The Vaybee Forum

Vaybee [<http://www.vaybee.de>] is a social networking site for young Turks in Germany. Apart from displaying travel offers and news from Turkey, it is also a community tool that is similar to Facebook and has a forum. *Vaybee* is used by a wide spectrum of Turkish-German adolescents and young adults. When discussing religious issues, the majority of users express moderate and tolerant positions, with some even declaring themselves openly as atheists or agnostics, which can lead to arguments with religious users.

On March 15th, 2010, the forum featured 183,872 postings in 2,232 threads. For the study on young German Muslims' lifeworlds, we sampled 974 postings in 40 threads. The thread on the Swiss minaret ban was started on November 29th 2010 and by December 7th there had been 63 postings by 13 different users. The most prolific user had posted 13 times. Eleven users authored multiple postings. All postings were in German with some use of Turkish.

Results

The Fundamentalist *Ahlu Sunnah* Community

The course of the discussion. The thread starts with an uncommented quote from an online article about the referendum. User A then calls for an embargo of Swiss products by Muslims all over the world and is ridiculed by other users. Others explain that the Western world is already 'at war' with Islam and that it is far too late for product bans. In the Western world, they say, no purchase that does not support anti-Islamic forces (i.e. Israel and the USA) is possible. They say it would be better to join the mujahidin in Afghanistan and Pakistan or -'if you are not brave enough' - to continue studying religious texts and prepare for inevitable armed conflict. In this context, there can only be one salient identity - that of a truly believing Muslim. For User B it does not matter if someone is fighting Arabs, Turks or Germans; for him it only matters if someone is fighting against Muslims.

User B continues by saying there is no need for minarets anyway and thus expresses an exclusive fundamentalist kind of Islam, whose adherers reject 'contaminated' forms of Islam. Another user replies that in 95% of the mosques (*masajid*) in Germany only false or invalid lessons (*batil*) are taught.

User B: The religious beliefs [Aqida] of mosques [masajid] decorated with minarets is already spoilt. The mosques with the right beliefs are the so called 'backyard mosques'.

When a user posts a quote from an online article about the condemnation of the minaret ban by the UN high commissioner for human rights, others heavily criticize ethnic and religious discrimination on the part of wide sections of the German population. User C quotes an article about a German conservative politician's advice to German Muslims to contain themselves with the size of mosques and with building minarets. Some users reply that, as always, Muslims are being suppressed but are positive that one day Islam would rule the world. The following exchange illustrates this point:

User D: I perfectly agree. It is not about being outraged against the minaret ban, it is about recognizing how they are taking away the rights of Muslims one by one, how they are trying to drive them out of their countries or turn them into second or third-class citizens. But our minarets will come... namely, when the flag of 'there is no god except Allah' [la ilaha illa Allah; the beginning of the Muslim creed] flies above the rooftops.

User E: I do not think we need too many mosques. I would rather call to prayer from my rooftop five times a day [Adhan]. We can also pray openly on the street. How long do you think will it take till the unbelievers [Kuffar] ask us to build more mosques so they do not have to see the religious way of life [Din] of Allah on their streets anymore?

Other members express the hope the minaret ban would show moderate Muslims that long-term peace with the infidels is impossible. Many Muslims in Germany have adapted far too much to the German culture, they say. The fact that Muslims can practice their beliefs quite freely in Germany (e.g. wear the headscarf or even the burqa, or buy halal meat) is regarded as an obstacle for a 'Muslim awakening'.

User F: Maybe this ban is a lesson for those 'Muslims' appealing for caressing the unbelievers [Kuffar] *disgusting*."

These users reconfirm that there is no need for minarets in Germany. However, they unanimously consider the Swiss minaret ban an affront against Islam and an act of discrimination against the Muslim

community that might gradually continue and bring about a ban of headscarves, the Quran and finally Islam (Users G, H).

Discrimination confirming an essentialized identity. The fundamentalists' state of mind allows to interpret each and any discrimination as confirming ideological preconceptions: The Swiss minaret ban is just another 'taunt' by the Western world against Islam, just like the 'Mohammad-caricatures' in Denmark or like the Dutch Theo van Gogh's movies criticizing Islam.

User G: Those taunts, sometimes from Denmark, sometimes France, sometimes the Netherlands, and now the Swiss. We must not subside [...]

The *Ahlu Sunnah* users see such incidents as welcome clarion calls to moderate Muslims who 'still' believe in peaceful coexistence. Instead of appeasement, the users call for provocation and escalation and say that a simple boycott of products is highly inadequate. There can be no compromise in religion they say and there can be no compromise with the 'unbelievers'; and furthermore it is every Muslim's duty to be clear about his or her opinions in this conflict. They share this ideological mechanism with other militant groups of whatever political orientation around the world (Finlay, 2007).

The posters' understanding of Islam promotes participation in what is perceived as a violent global conflict between the Muslim and Western worlds. The general gist is that a 'true' Muslim should take on the fight in the face of the enemy's aggression. Hostility is not so much directed against modern secularism as is typical of religious fundamentalism (Herriot, 2007), but against the perceived oppressors of Muslims in Europe as well as in other parts of the world. Political goals dominate the group's agenda. Consequently, they do not favor building mosques with minarets in Europe as long as the Western world is 'at war' with Islam. They say that big decorated mosques would give the impression that it is possible to live together with the 'infidels' in peace. The war between Muslims and the western world is regarded as inevitable and the time for building will come when Islam has finally won.

In the course of the whole discussion national or ethnic identities do not play any important role, which User B underlines ("... I only care whether someone is fighting against Muslims") and User A is ridiculed

for mentioning his Turkish identity. There is only one salient identity - that of a true believing Muslim. Hence, the minaret ban is not primarily perceived as discrimination but as just another declaration of *their* war against *us*: “we cannot expect anything else from them” [User I].

In terms of category boundaries, the *Ahlu Sunnah* users blur their ethnic identities in favor of a universal Muslim identity (cf. Lamont, Morning, and Mooney, 2002), and at the same time they contract the Muslim community (*Umma*) by branding the vast majority of Muslims as unbelievers. The blurring of ethnic identities in favor of religious identity may enable the religious fundamentalists to resist discrimination as ethnic minorities in a foreign country. On the other hand the narrowing and sharpening of their 'new' ingroup's boundaries leading to a fission (Horowitz, 1977) between 'true' believers and weak and degenerated apostates raises the ingroup's status to that of the elite of the *Ummah*. This exclusivity increases the group's homogeneity and entitativity, and makes the group more efficient, even while lacking access to the central political arena (Wimmer, 2008).

The postings reflect an essentialized sense of identity that is pure and singular. The users do not consider themselves as hyphenated Turkish-German or Arab-German or Muslim-German, but as Muslim to the core, neither attached to the culture or nationality of their country of origin nor to Germany. They essentialize their Muslim identity as immutable and immune to cultural hybridization. By doing this, they are also able to reduce the self-uncertainty which results of their collective experience of discrimination and devaluation (cf. Hogg, Adelman, & Blagg, 2010).

This essentializing tendency also finds expression in the users' ways of addressing others in the forum. For example, user J responds to user A who joked about a third: “Should we treat our '*Geschwister*' [brothers and sisters] in such a way?”. The term '*Geschwister*' in German language equally refers to both sexes equally and underlines the 'bond of blood'. The custom of addressing group members as 'brothers and sisters' unites the addressees in a symbolic and, indeed, an essentializing way. Whereas for most fundamentalists and Islamists, the oft-heralded Muslim theocracy seems to be just a nebulous vision for the distant future, the more extremist members of the *Ahlu Sunnah* forum want it here and now

while they are still alive. Everybody who does not share this vision-including more moderate Muslims-is considered an enemy.

Even though the 'true Muslims' within the Ahlu Sunnah forum are united by their shared beliefs, that is, by some inner state, the users call for women to wear scarves and men to have beards, and for prayers to be said in public on the streets of Germany. These external signs are meant to underline the 'inference potential' of their 'Muslim essence'. The essentialized Muslim identity discourse of the *Ahlu Sunnah* community contrasts starkly with the discourse unfolding in the secular *Vaybee* forum.

The more secular *Vaybee* forum

The course of the discussion. The minaret ban thread in the Vaybee forum starts with a user asking how a democratic nation such as Switzerland could have arrived at such an undemocratic decision. He also asks whether anybody knew about the laws on building churches in Muslim countries. He closes with a remark implying that 'we' are not ready for a multi-religious society yet.

Another user thinks that the effective agitation by right-wing populists was a reason behind the minaret ban. He regrets that Muslim representatives in TV debates are often unable to effectively counter the populists' misleading references to forced marriages and female circumcision. Switzerland is referred to as a conservative and racist country. Criticism of the minaret ban on the part of certain European politicians is welcomed. Another user states that mosques with minarets are only used by fundamentalists and Islamists anyway and this comment is approved by other users. Another user states that there is no need for the call to prayer anyway, now that watches and mobile phones exist.

User K suspects that the immigrants' behavior towards their 'hosts' was also a reason for the minaret ban. For him, the Turks are far from being well integrated in German society. He says that he himself was planning to return to Turkey in future. He also says he wants to help modernize Turkey and criticizes the Islamists who regard Europe as a 'house of war' (darul-harb) that has to be conquered by Islam. Hence, he is against mosques, minarets, and Muslim cemeteries in a country where they are not valued. Other users agree with his criticism of fundamentalist Islam and racism in Germany. User L counters that apart from the

call to prayer, minarets also have a symbolic function, much like the bell tower of a church.

User L: One should not reduce everything to mere functionality. Many things about religion are only of symbolic value and that doesn't mean they are meaningless. By the way, I would be proud, if there were some mosques decorated with minarets in the city where I live. This would be a symbol that we (Muslims) have done our duty as Muslims in a Christian country.

Other users criticize this statement and discuss the point of religion in the 21st century. Some state that one should not force places of worship upon a foreign country if the local population does not want them. User K agrees and writes that a guest must always respect the host's rules.

User L agrees with the duties of the guest but says that every member of a society should have the same rights. He also criticizes Turkish agitation against the construction of churches while User K replies:

User K: Of course you are right that we must not force something upon the Germans or Europe in general. Nevertheless, we must become aware of being at home here. Whether we like it or not, Germany is our home because we live here and raise our children here. We must finally stop behaving like people, who are only tolerated. We must get this out of our heads. If we think like that, then it is normal that we are treated like guests. After 40 years, this shouldn't be the case anymore.

He goes on to criticize the intolerance of many Muslim countries as well as the ignorance of many Europeans towards Islam and Turkey. The schism between secularist nationalists and religious Muslims in Turkey discussed as well. Other users complain about how easy it is to stir up intolerance and hatred - among Muslims as well as among non-Muslims - and how hard it is to motivate people to engage in positive activities.

When a user quotes the results from a poll showing that a majority of the population in Germany is against minaret bans, others argue that the results of such polls always depend on how the questions were posed. Religious tolerance in Muslim countries is unfavorably compared to religious tolerance in Europe. Religious tolerance is regarded a challenge for both the 'Western' and the 'Muslim world'.

Hyphenated identities: “We are not ready for a multireligious society”.

Many postings in the Vaybee forum express a fear of xenophobia and right-wing extremism, and the associated feelings of exclusion and discrimination, where the Swiss referendum was just the peak. Simultaneously they welcome personal freedom, education, and modernity, as attractive aspects of German and more generally Western culture. Backward-looking fundamentalist Islam is regarded as one of Turkey’s biggest problems and one of the Muslim world’s generally. Attempts at conciliation by representatives of both sides-the Muslim world and the Western world-are appreciated. Religious tolerance is regarded a challenge for both sides.

User M: As opposed to 20 or 30 years ago, people get to know exactly the agitation against them in the Muslim world. Long lasting peace can only be based on reciprocity. The more religious the Muslims become, the more religious the supposedly post-Christian Europeans will become. If the Turks want to have mosques in Germany, they have to allow non-Muslim religious buildings in Turkey. And the Muslim world is not just Turkey. Others are much worse.

Only a few *Vaybee* users would endorse the construction of minarets in Germany. Some oppose religion in general; others do not want to upset the non-Muslim Germans’. Throughout the discussion, the *Vaybee* users refer to themselves foremost as Turks, whereas in other threads the *Vaybee* users more often express hyphenated identities such as German Turks or Turkish Germans. Many users feel rejected and excluded by the non-Muslim Germans, but at the same time they are also very critical of fundamentalist Muslims and Turkish immigrants who do not do enough to integrate into German culture. The users who support the construction of minarets show a comparatively stronger identification with Germany than those who oppose it. Minarets would symbolize that Germany is their new home, in which they can practice their religion in a proud and peaceful way. Those who are not so keen on seeing them constructed are so out of completely different reasons than the *Ahlu Sunnah* community. It is part of their interest in de-essentialization.

This interest in a differentiated identity goes as far as criticizing the Turkish government and the Muslim world in general for their lack of tolerance towards Christians. The vast majority of users would endorse a tolerant multicultural society but also seem to think that ‘we’ are not

ready for this. With this 'we', the *Vaybee* users show their simultaneous identification with Germany as well as with Turkish or Muslim culture.

All in all, the Swiss minaret ban seems to put a great strain on the hyphenated identities of moderate Muslims. The users feel provoked by the minaret ban as Muslims as well as discriminated against in racial and ethnic terms because they are Turks. Their social identity is challenged by right-wing populists in Europe and also by the Muslim fundamentalists. Whereas some users try to blur and de-essentialize divisive ethnic and religious category boundaries by referring to the possibility of multi-ethnic and multi-religious communities unifying all of mankind, others resort to their original ethnic identity as Turks and to returning to their 'homeland' some day.

Discussion

Our study shows the different reactions one political event - the Swiss minaret ban - is able to trigger among different Muslim communities in Germany. The *Vaybee* participants identify with their country of origin and their religious and cultural 'heritage' as well as with German and 'Western' culture. Many of the users in the *Vaybee* forum express frustration and cynicism, and struggle to balance their multi-faceted identities drawing on ethnic (Middle Eastern), religious (Muslim), and national (German) affiliations. Because their loyalties lie in several identifications, they fear *both* the rise of xenophobia and right-wing extremism, *as well as* that of Muslim fundamentalism (Hopkins & Kahani-Hopkins, 2006).

On the other hand, the participants in the *Ahlu Sunnah* forum seem to even welcome the Swiss referendum because it reconfirms their essentialized identities as 'true Muslims' and fighters in the inevitable global jihad. Additionally, they consider the construction of minarets in Europe a misguided symbol of appeasement with Western culture. On one hand, they strengthen their groupness with an essentializing rhetoric and overt symbolism. Thereby, they confront and reject not only modern secularism, but also more moderate forms of Islam. By doing this, on the other hand, they re-confirm the prejudice of large parts of the majority against 'the Muslims' in general, even if they are but a small part of the Muslim community. This constellation may be further aggravated by the dominant media's unwillingness to distinguish between different factions within immigrant communities (Jaspal & Cinirella, 2010). In turn, right-

wing and populist movements in Europe, such as the Swiss People's Party, are further encouraged to think up strategies to suppress the free expression of Islamic identity. This in turn is perceived by many Muslims as blatant discrimination against Islam in general and plays into the hands of the fundamentalists, who hope that other Muslims will also cut their ties with mainstream German society.

The vast majority of German Muslims are caught in the middle. They struggle to strike a balance between their becoming part of their host nations and simultaneously to resist the temptation to overreact in the face of overt discrimination. The increasing strain on the hyphen of their identity as German-Muslims constantly requires renegotiating their group's entitativity versus openness.

As a result of such negotiation, members of multicultural communities may have multiple identities, passing as members of a host country, being recognized as immigrants, or some variant of this. Cultural and racial identities are always constructed through a series of oppositional themes: cultural maintenance versus cultural contact; identity as inclusion versus identity as exclusion; institutionalized ideologies versus agency. Thus acculturation, must be understood as a dynamic, situated, and multifaceted process that allows immigrants some leeway in the various shades of integration (Hopkins, 2011; Howarth et al., forthcoming). In the same vein, the veil worn by female Muslims can express a yielding to cultural pressures as well as signify resistance to pressures for assimilation (Wagner, Sen, Permanadeli & Howarth, 2012; see also Verkuyten, 2003). A crucial difference between secular *Vaybee* users and fundamentalist groups is the attitude towards adopting or rejecting flexibility.

Consequently, the opposition between religious categories-Christian versus Muslim in this case-is a smokescreen that hides the more pertinent divisions *within* the categories. As neither of the two religious categories is far from being a coherent whole as depicted in societal discourse, the more profound cleavage is the division between moderate and secular on the one hand and fundamentalist and reactionary on the other *within* each group, whether Christian or Muslim. This cleavage cuts across both categories and provides a ready-made pattern of comparable interests. The present study demonstrates that there is such a fundamental division within the immigrant community that is mirrored by an equivalent division within the European majority.

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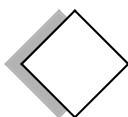
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التمييز ضد المهاجرين وإشكالية الهوية: المسلمون الأصليون والمسلمون المعتدلون في مواجهة القرار السويسري بمنع تشييد المآذن

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ملخص: في عام 2009 أجرت دولة سويسرا استفتاء للسماح للمسلمين بإنشاء المنارات فوق المساجد وإذاعة الأذان، وهذا ما رفضه أغلبية الشعب السويسري. نظرت الشعوب المجاورة لقانون منع المنارات على أنه دليل صارخ على التمييز السلبي في معاملة المسلمين (discrimination). قمنا في هذا البحث بتحليل ما ينشره المستخدمون في منتديين للشباب المسلم في ألمانيا؛ المنتدى الأول تديره مجموعة من الشباب المتعصب، والثاني يمثل طبقة من المسلمين الوسطيين أو العلمانيين. توقعنا أن نجد حديثاً جوهرياً⁽¹⁾ (Essentialling) في وجه العنصرية والتمييز في المجموعة المتعصبة وحديثاً مضاداً للجوهرية (de-essentializing) عند المجموعة الوسطية. على الرغم من أن المجموعة المتعصبة أبدت امتعاضاً من إقرار القانون، فإنهم رحبوا به لتعزيزه زعمهم بأن هناك عدواة تجاه الإسلام في الغرب عامة ولتعزيزه هوياتهم (identities) كمحاربين في حملة جهاد عالمي محتوم. أظهر المتعصبون هوية جوهرية ومحصنة بشدة؛ بحدود غير قابلة للاختراق، وتستبعد الفئات المسلمة الوسطية بالإضافة إلى غير المسلمين. أما المنتديات الوسطية فقد كشفت الحديث فيها عن هوية موصولة (hyphenated identity) مهيمنة أزعتها قانون منع المنارات. شعر هؤلاء المستخدمون بالحاجة للموازنة بين رغبتهم في الاندماج بالمجتمع الألماني وغضبهم على قانون المنارات. نناقش هنا نتائج البحث في إطار ديناميكية الأقليات لبنائهم هوياتهم (identity construction) في مجتمع الأغلبية.

المصطلحات الأساسية: التمييز، التعصب، الجوهرية، الهوية الموصولة، المسلمون، بناء الهوية.

(1) الجوهرية هنا مصطلح يدل على آلية نفسية اجتماعية، يستخلص فيها الفرد أو المجموعة جوهرًا من مجموعة معينة، يتعلق بصفات أساسية للمجموعة، ويكون ذلك - في غالب الأحيان - متعلقًا بالعنصرية أو التمييز السلبي.