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DISCOURSE ON THE MULTICULTURAL POLICY IN SWEDEN IN LIGHT OF THE CHARLIE HEBDO TERRORIST ATTACK

ABSTRACT: Multicultural policy has recently been undergoing a marked crisis and is subject to wide criticism. In the light of recent terrorist attacks it is often highlighted that the reason for such situations might be too much openness towards foreigners. Most European countries are changing their immigration and integration policies limiting their social security and restricting the possibilities of an influx of immigrants. Sweden, which is perceived as one of the most open and tolerant states in Europe also faces new challenges concerning the future of its multicultural policy. The crisis in tolerance towards foreigners is quite visible and it is obvious that the social moods in this state are evolving. Therefore, the aim of the article is to analyze changes in the attitude towards Swedish immigration and its integration policy in the light of the attack on the *Charlie Hebdo* weekly offices.

KEYWORDS: multiculturalism, multicultural policy, Sweden, immigration, immigration policy, integration policy.

Multiculturalism, multi-ethnicity, and globalization. These are the slogans that have already secured their place in the canon of contemporary international studies discourse. Globalization has caused a broad spectrum of consequences, such as a significant ethnic diversity of contemporary societies and constant growth in cultural diversification. These changes can bring many benefits for contemporary states – enriching cultural dialogue is often highlighted. Unfortunately, together with civilization development and globalization, increased citizen mobility and the growth of interdependences both

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between states and non-state actors, it is hard not to notice the threats that stem from this. Media reporting about terrorist attacks and their attempts force us to focus once again on the possible effective strategies of dealing with the problem of the many threats that derive from an increasingly cultural and ethnic diversity. This not only has an internal dimension, but a broader international context.

Individual countries tackle the inflow of foreigners in significantly different manners, both in the field of legal aspects of crossing the borders (tourism and labour immigration, asylum seekers etc.) and an integration policy concerning such areas as the social security availability for foreigners, employment possibilities, naturalization procedures, language programmes (if such are available), and last but not least, the acceptance of cultural diversity in everyday life. One of the most popular policies that has been implemented is assimilation, which is seen in France and the United Kingdom through their respective multicultural policies. This policy undoubtedly has its advantages and disadvantages. However, in times of recognizing differences between cultures, respecting them and political correctness, multiculturalism seems to be more appropriate and compatible with the newest trends.

The aim of the article is therefore to identify potential changes in the attitude towards Swedish immigration and integration policy in the light of the attacks on the *Charlie Hebdo* weekly offices in Paris. The question is where is the line or border between respecting different cultures, customs and values and at the same time remaining loyal to one's own values and historically constituted laws. Another research question is whether religious radicalization and an increasing number of terrorist attacks from religious extremists influence the future of multiculturalism in Sweden. According to the specific, hybrid character of Swedish multiculturalism, it appears to be that the Swedish policy is directed towards creating such conditions, that will naturally encourage immigrants to integrate on a large scale without any of the characteristics of assimilation.

Sweden at the crossroads – multiculturalism or itegration?

Currently, multiculturalism is an integral part of modern European policy towards immigrants and ethnic minorities. Each country adopts it in a slightly different form. It can be

official policy to recognize minorities and their right to cultivate their mother culture, whereas in other countries it can only be an oppositional demand while fighting for wider immigrant rights (Ålund, Schierup 1). It is important though, that many European countries at least declare their openness to multiculturalism and to immigrants themselves, but at the same time make efforts towards limiting immigration, selecting foreigners who can enter their country and restricting the possibility of unhampered cultivation of their own traditions¹. It is also worth mentioning that current wide integration programs are very popular so it is hard to discuss multiculturalism in its pure form.

The primary definition of multiculturalism is derived from cultural anthropology. Accordingly, the existing cultural heritage leads to the creation of distinctive groups existing within the receiving society. There is no possibility of reshaping the cultural identity, and culture itself only has static characteristics (Geşiak, 19). Over time, the perception of culture and multiculturalism has undergone deep changes.

Considering the mobility of people around the world, some questions have been raised concerning the range of states' tolerance towards immigrants' commitment to their cultural identity and heritage. A multicultural policy seemed to be the answer, which relied on respecting all cultural differences deriving from religion, language, traditions, but also respecting ethnic and racial diversity. Multiculturalism also assumes that it is not necessary to renounce one's own cultural identity and assimilate with the receiving society in order to fully participate in daily life (Balicki, Stalker, 254).

Multiculturalism can be perceived in institutional categories, which means that the state creates formal structures, which constitute certain legal borders for ethnic groups to coexist. Such institutionalization is not necessarily an attempt to integrate or assimilate. In a multicultural society, all cultures and value systems can coexist peacefully and each of them can be an added value for a society as a whole (Barska, 14, 32). A society within which there is a balance and mutual understanding between a society's values and those that are fundamental for ethnic minority groups exists will also be called a multicultural society in this article (Ratajczak, 76). Therefore, a basis for multiculturalism

¹ France can be an example since it forbids the exposition of one's own cultural otherness in the public sphere, inter alia the possibility of wearing burqas, traditional turbans or other religious symbols.

was providing a feeling of dignity resulting in equal treatment and respect for cultural diversities. Such provisions became so popular that it became a demand for equal status for all cultures and value systems (Możejko, 142). It resulted in the development of one's feeling of dignity and increased motivation to be faithful to one's culture and convictions. Extensive migrations, together with the appearance of minorities with their feeling of separate identity resulted in expecting recognition and respect of these differences from the state².

Since multiculturalism encompasses many aspects of the political arena and state functioning as well as daily social life, it is extremely hard to clearly define this phenomenon. An element which is often stated in multiculturalism definitions is the co-existence within one society of different cultures and ethnically and religiously different groups (Rokicki, 30–1). Such a definition is rather narrow and concerns only the ideological aspect, without characterizing a specific policy or strategy. Other attempts to define multiculturalism are as follows: *“it is a phenomenon which means the co-existence within a state’s territory of two or more groups being different in the meaning of language, beliefs, customs, traditions and social organization systems”* (Paleczny 148) and *“multiculturalism is nowadays a problem of cultural differences within certain, especially multiethnic states which have their own ethnic, religious and sexual minorities who demand their own place in national culture”* (Burszta, 150). The second definition seems to be more precise, since it considers the political aspect – immigrant minorities demand recognition in the state’s policy. Therefore, multiculturalism should include legal aspects providing all minorities with their rights together with providing cultural relativism where all cultures contribute to the dominant one (Grzybowski, 42).

The specificity of Swedish multicultural model is significantly derived from a wide range of social care and therefore, in the author’s opinion, can be perceived as a hybrid combining both multicultural and integration elements. The Swedish state is based on the equality of every person, including foreigners who are legal

² The main problems deriving from visible cultural diversity that receiving states must deal with according to Bikhu Parekh are Inter alia: female circumcision, ritual animal murders, polygamy, arranged marriages, limited Alcesto certain sport disciplines for Muslim women, marriages among close family, wearing headscarves in public places, Roma and Amish societies not sending children to schools. Parekh, B., *Rethinking Multiculturalism: Cultural Diversity and Political Theory*, Harvard University Press: Harvard 2002, pp. 264–265.

immigrants. Therefore, they are also included in the Swedish social care system. Another characteristic of the Swedish model is the fact, that Sweden's population is rather small. The first immigrants from other Nordic states were welcomed. Carl Ulrik Schierup highlights that Finnish immigrants helped to form multicultural policy in Sweden. As the largest group among immigrants they have preserved close ties with their mother states and had better possibilities of influencing the Swedish government in their struggle for recognition and rights (Schierup, 4–5). A multicultural policy gradually started to evolve towards wider integration strategies including respect for cultural diversities. Specially created state institutions took responsibility for governing the relations between certain cultural and ethnic groups, as well as integration policy (Banaś, 93).

The mentioned above hybrid form of multicultural policy in Sweden is based on both recognition of cultural, linguistic and religious minorities and broad integration strategies. Immigrants can receive extensive assistance from the state after arriving in Sweden without any pressure to assimilate and immigrants have freedom to cultivate their own culture. What is more, foreigners have many opportunities and legal assistance in creating their own organizations, associations, building churches, schools and other cultural centres. It allows the preservation of their own cultures. It is then evident, that the Swedish model combines both multiculturalism and integration which assumes at least some level of dynamics between immigrants and the receiving society. Integration processes make newcomers more similar to the receiving society but at the same time allow for individualism and channels for influencing changes in the receiving society's law and institutional structures (Meien, 4).

Contemporary dimension of multiculturalism in Sweden – what is its future?

The 21st Century without doubt put a great strain on multiculturalism and other strategies towards minorities. The terrorist attacks in New York and Pentagon, in Madrid, London and finally at the Charlie Hebdo offices in Paris led to a crisis in policies towards immigrants and ethnic minorities as well as multiculturalism.

Sweden as a state with significant immigrant groups also engages in the discourse concerning the future of multiculturalism and the growing cultural antagonisms in Europe and around the world. Currently, there is an undergoing visible change in the perception of immigrants in Sweden. It is expressed by change in support for political parties. The Sweden Democrats (Sverigedemokraterna) is a party with an anti-immigrant agenda. According to the party, the Swedish cultural identity can be endangered by massive immigration, mainly by creating areas that are predominantly inhabited by foreigners. They have raised financial threats deriving from immigration as well as cultural ones. The Sweden Democrats believe that immigrants are a significant burden on the Swedish budget (Kamali, 148). However, analyses concerning the long-term effects of immigration show that in a longer perspective immigrants can pay more in to the budget than receive (Legrain).

The Sweden Democrats are attracting support. In the 2006 elections, the party did not manage to exceed the electoral threshold, but in 2010 won 20 seats (Statistics Sweden) and their electoral support was 11% (Sweden Democrat thugs). This can suggest that their agenda had become well-known among the electorate and has apparently attracted a significant part of society. In the current parliament, Sweden Democrats holds 49 seats in Riksdag (Statistics Sweden), which means they have become the third political power. Parties³ with highly anti-immigrant views were until now not significant political players (Lloyd, 88). A rise in the popularity of Sweden Democrats is evidence for a crisis in tolerance in Sweden, and therefore in multiculturalism as well.

The Sweden Democrats is not the only political party that has a strong opinion on immigration to Sweden. The Liberal Party, which is a right-wing opposition party, now is evidently restricting its policy towards foreigners by proposing a change in granting permanent residence status to asylum seekers. The change would assume granting permanent residence after a three-year stay or when the immigrant would be able to provide for themselves

³ Another political party that no longer exists was New Democracy (Ny Demokrati) created in 1991. In parliamentary elections in the same year it gained 6% support. It had an anti-immigration and populist character. Westin, Ch., *Reducing Immigration, Reviewing Integration. The Swedish Rimet Report 1995*. CEIFO: Esbruk 1997, p. 9; Andersson, R., Solid, D. *Dispersal policies in Sweden, [in] Spreading the "Burden"?: A Review of Policies to Disperse Asylum Seekers and Refugees*, eds. V. Robinson, R. Andersson, S. Musterd. Policy Press: Bristol 2003, p. 81.

financially. There is even a fraction within the Liberal Party that is more restrictive in evaluating immigration policy (Liberals prepare to). Such a split in the party itself but also in the Swedish political scene as a whole can be a consequence of the Charlie Hebdo attack and the general discussion on the future of immigration policy in Sweden. It also shows that it is not only radical parties that have toughened up their agendas, but also rather moderate parties who have changed their opinion on immigration.

The events at the Charlie Hebdo weekly⁴ offices led to another wave of discussion on the effectiveness, sense and future of multiculturalism in Sweden. What is more, currently there is significant anxiety about a growing hidden intolerance towards immigrants in Sweden. There have been some cases of racial and cultural persecution, mostly aimed at Muslims⁵. After the Charlie Hebdo attack, the Muslim minority in Sweden is even more worried about its safety. Mohammed Fazlhashemi, professor of Islamic theology and philosophy at Uppsala University admitted that Swedish Muslims have grounds for worrying. He mentioned the earlier incidents inspired by the now defunct New Democracy party. Its xenophobia led to riots in Trollhättan in the 1990s. The role of politicians in Fazlhashemi's opinion is to explicitly show that Sweden is against all expressions of Islamophobia or xenophobia (We shall see).

As evidence for a growing but hidden Islamophobia in Sweden, an interview with the writer Mark Fahmy, who as a child visited his family in Skåne every summer. He highlights that in the past Swedes were more open and helpful for those who looked different, did not know the language or felt lost. Nowadays, it is more common to see Swedes looking in a different way or even disdainfully at foreigners. At the same time, he stresses it is understandable. Sweden for some time has been accepting many refugees and immigrants. Any country that has experienced such a big inflow of foreigners is more vulnerable and probably experiences a certain

⁴ The terrorist attack in Charlie Hebdo was conducted by three terrorists on the 7th of January 2015. 12 people were killed, including two policemen and 11 were injured. The terrorists were French, of Algerian origin – brothers Said and Cherif Kouachi and Hamyd Mourad.

⁵ In 1993 in Tröllhatten, two Somalis were beaten and a local mosque set on fire. Geddes, A., *The politics of migration and immigration in Europe*. Sage Publications Ltd.: London 2003, p. 111.

In May 2013 riots in Husby took place. The disturbances started after the shooting of an immigrant armed with a machete.

cultural shock. Therefore, Fahmy states that Sweden possibly should limit immigration only to those who are willing to respect Swedish values, democracy and freedom (Cutting immigration could do this). It is a rather radical proposal which is not likely to be fulfilled. Swedish politicians are not willing to discuss immigration problems or to undertake such firm solutions for fear of losing an image of the most tolerant, liberal and open state in Europe. However, it is hard to deny that Sweden is now struggling with an increasing problem of hidden intolerance.

Before the Paris attacks there had been several arson attacks on mosques in Sweden. Other incidents occurred after the Charlie Hebdo tragedy. It is now a real threat that all the terrorist attacks may be used by controversial political parties to incite social unrest, which is already strained. However, in spite of worries about growing xenophobia in Swedish society, public support for victims of Paris attacks is wide. More than 3000 people took part in a rally held several days after the attack. The demonstration focused mainly on the freedom of speech, but it was also an expression of protest against such violence (Stockholm Charlie rally). It shows a significant mobilization of the Swedish society and evident condemnation of terrorism. On the other hand, such a reaction arises from the first shock while reflection and questions about the reasons of such cruelty come later on.

The reaction to the Paris attacks was also expressed by the leading Swedish politicians, inter alia prime minister Stefena Löfven and foreign minister Margot Wallström. Both of them condemned the terrorists and highlighted the aspects of the freedom of speech, which should be defended at all costs (Sweden's PM condemns). Freedom of speech was the aspect, which had gained a lot of attention in the light of terrorist attacks on the satirical weekly. This value has a strong historical fundaments in western and European culture. On the other hand, within immigrant minorities, especially those originating from outside Europe, freedom of speech is frequently set aside. What is more, especially in the case of Islam, religious values are fundamental. It is hard to assess where the line is between maintaining a balance between multiculturalism and respecting other cultures ,and remaining devoted to one's own, often historically founded rights. It is also difficult to define the borders of freedom of speech. Whether it is an unwritten rule or maybe limited by sacred values that should not be mocked.

The Swedish prime minister highlighted a worry that racist incidents can be evidence for the growing intolerance of Swedes,

in spite of polls which show otherwise (Uppsala mosque hits). The media often link this with the growth of support for Sweden Democrats, which in the last elections received 13% support with its intolerance towards foreigners (Are mosque fires). The popularity of such political parties can be perceived as evidence of changing social attitudes. However, at this point it is difficult to assess how significant the impact is of the political party's agenda. As a parliamentary party, it has better opportunities of addressing society and propagating its political views. It is important to remember a much wider context of growing Islamophobia though, such as numerous Islamic based terrorist attacks, which are one of the most important factors in fuelling both the anti-immigration discourse and growing xenophobia.

The Sweden Democrats are widely criticized by the Muslim community in Sweden, mostly due to many controversial public appearances concerning immigration and immigrants. After the Paris attacks one of the party members wrote on his Facebook profile "Peaceful religion showed it's real face". His behavior was frowned upon by the political elites. Veronica Palm, one of the Social Democrats' MPs reported this incident as racial agitation. The MP concerned, from Sweden Democrats, had earlier controversially stated that Jews living in Sweden will never become Swedish unless they recant their religion (Sweden Democrats defend). Also in his interview for *Dagens Nyheter* he supported special financial support for immigrants willing to leave Sweden (Sweden Democrat: Pay). Other members of the party and at the same its temporary leader – Mattias Karlsson compared Islamization to Nazism (Islamism threat greater). The above examples of politicians' controversial behavior show the radical face of the party itself. It also reveals that the Swedish political scene is diverse. Alongside politicians who condemn terrorist attacks and all expressions of xenophobia, there are also influential politicians with rather radical views.

Increasing xenophobia in Sweden is visible not only in the political arena but also in social media, where several anti-immigration portals targeted against Muslims living in Sweden have been created. On such portals, after the Uppsala, Eslöv and Eskilstuna mosque attacks, many comments praised such racial prosecution. The President of the Swedish Islamic Society, Omar Mustafa, pointed out that in 2014 14 similar incidents had been reported (Sweden's Islamophobia). Media, both traditional and social, have a great impact on shaping people's opinions as well as on intensifying the negative attitude of Swedes against immigrants,

especially Muslims. They are also an easy means of societal manipulation.

The reaction of Muslims in Sweden to the Paris attack is also an interesting aspect. Similarly to the Swedish political scene in its attitude towards immigrants, the Muslim community is internally split. There are rather a few voices praising the terrorists and their actions. Such support is mostly voiced via Facebook or other social media (Swedish Muslims fear). It is though important not to generalize the Muslim community, since its majority is against jihad and its assumptions. An official statement from the biggest Muslim society in Södermalm was issued. It officially condemned terrorist actions. They also called for calm and to not succumb to emotions. What is more, in their statement they highlighted that such actions are contrary to Islam. At the same time their attitude towards Charlie Hebdo is unequivocal – they describe it as offensive and provocative (Swedish Muslims reach). Omar Mustafa described the Paris attacks and mosque arsons as provocative and aimed at intimidating parts of society.

The problem of this Islamophobia and hidden intolerance in Sweden, but also in other countries, can derive from the image of terrorists and terrorism created by media, which often link this phenomenon with Islam and Muslims. However, terrorism is a much wider and complicated phenomenon, which should not only be associated with Muslims. Fundamentalist terrorism or religious terrorism are only one of many types. Generalizing and placing it on an equal footing with Islam is a definite negation of multiculturalism and what it stands for. As long as such an attitude is practiced, multiculturalism will fade. The United Nations, while preparing a report concerning human rights, noticed the deteriorating situation in Sweden. In the report, the problem of increasing Islamophobia and the discrimination of the Roma was highlighted (UN slums Sweden). The Swedish government made reference to the report, naming it a red light that illustrated the real problem of intolerance and discrimination in this country.

The Charlie Hebdo attack contributed to further reflection on counteracting terrorism, but also to a discussion on possible strategies of silencing and limiting tensions between the receiving society and immigrants. The Minister of Foreign Affairs, Anders Ygeman in his interview for *The Local*, highlighted the need to improve coordination between intelligence services as well as to improve the streamline of information within the European

Union with regard movements of people suspected of terrorist activities. The Minister also admitted that Paris attacks can be used to radicalize the society against immigrants, especially Muslims. From the Swedish government there had been some steps made to provide safety to Muslims. It is mostly based on financial support to cover the costs of the protection of mosques, which are the most probable subjects of attacks. Also adequate measures had been undertaken to increase social awareness among Muslims about the necessity of reporting any expressions of racism or racial persecution (Sweden: We must). It is often stated as a problem that the immigrant communities are afraid to report such incidents.

In the context of European policy on immigration and as a result of the Charlie Hebdo attack, the European Union decided on discussing the introduction of an asylum seekers quota so as to distribute the numbers of incoming refugees more evenly. Recent years have seen numerous refugee waves which have mostly been heading towards Sweden. 9.6 million people live in Sweden and last year more than 33 000 refugees were granted asylum. It means that for every million people Sweden took 3 424 asylum seekers. In comparison, Germany took 589 per one million and Great Britain only 218. In 2015, the number of refugees reached a record number of 163 000, including 51 000 refugees from Syria (Migrationsverket). The European Commission proposed to set a quota for the number of refugees each of the EU states should accept so every country would share in the responsibility for refugees. In accordance with the EC's report, no country should be left alone with migratory pressures. Sweden's Justice and Migration Minister Morgan Johansson voiced his deep support for such a quota system. He pinpointed that for the effectiveness of the Common European Asylum System in the long term it is vital to make refugees distribution more even and fair (Sweden in spotlight). Contrary to Swedish enthusiasm concerning the planned change in the European Union's policy, the new conservative government in Great Britain declared that it would oppose any attempts of changing immigration policy. Hungary also reacted coolly with Hungarian prime minister Viktor Orban calling such a decision "mad and unfair". What is more, Swedish Justice and Migration Minister declared that the EU should also think about introducing a secure channel for refugees to seek protection. Such a lack of protection results in smuggling and unnecessary deaths of refugees trying to cross the Mediterranean

Sea (Savage). All the changes mentioned above are the results of both incidents of refugees smuggling but also are current in the light of Charlie Hebdo attacks. The Common Asylum Policy needs to be more coordinated and rationalized. The next step should be a more thoughtful integration strategy which would allow for the minimizing of the potential cultural clash of the receiving society and accepted refugees.

Summary

In 2010, after the end of the integration strategy lifetime, Swedish government decided on conducting a profound assessment of the integration effects. According to the MIPEX III ranking, Sweden was the most favorable state for foreigners among all those countries examined. Sweden has remained the most favorable state in the field of integration⁶. This high position might stem from integration strategies implemented in past decades. By widening the range of integration strategies, Swedes have gradually moved away from multiculturalism in its purest form. Such interest in integration can be a result of Swedish specificity. It is a large country with a relatively small population. Owing to extensive immigration, especially in bigger cities, the ethnic and cultural diversity has started to be perceived as a threat to the Swedish identity and culture itself. As a result, numerous integration programmes have been introduced, which has allowed for, at least, a partial softening of cultural clashes.

Another important aspect that is a challenge to multicultural policy in Sweden is the growing strength of the anti-immigration political party – The Sweden Democrats which is now the third power in parliament. It means that a further increase in support for this party can be expected with any further immigration and integration policy in favor of assimilation. The Sweden

⁶ MIPEX (Migrants Integration Policy Index) – index that evaluates integration policies of 38 states in Europe and North America. It is made after taking into consideration almost 150 indicators concerning among others mobility on labour market, family reunion policies, education, political participation, long term stays, citizenship, counteracting discrimination. The analysis assesses the range of laws guaranteed to migrants, possibilities and pace of integration. MIPEX III is the third edition of the analysis, which has been published in 2011. The most up to date report has been prepared in 2015. MIPEX. Migrant Integration Policy Index. Web. 14 July 2016. <<http://www.mipex.eu/sweden>>

Democrats often highlight the fact that assimilation is the only effective way of creating a homogenous and peacefully existing society. Currently such a scenario seems to be unlikely owing to continued strong support for the Social Democrats. This political party, as long as keeps its leading position, will stand for multiculturalism.

In spite of many examples showing growing intolerance and xenophobia in Sweden, and by extension, a crisis in multicultural policy in Sweden, the newest research shows that Swedes' attitude towards immigrants is much more positive than expected. 72% of Swedish society is in favour of immigration from outside the European Union and 82% of immigrants from the European Union area. These results place Sweden in the first place in the Europe. In comparison, in other countries the percentage of positive attitudes towards immigrants did not exceed 48% (in Spain and Croatia). The general outcome for the European Union was not very positive either – 57% of European Union citizens described themselves as negative towards immigration from outside the EU. At the same time, Swedes asked for major threats to the European Union put immigration and climate change in first place (Public Opinion in European Union). Therefore, it is evident that at least statistically Sweden can still be perceived as a tolerant and open state. However, statistics can be misleading and as reality shows, Sweden currently has many problems with tolerance and its multicultural policy. The problem may be hidden intolerance which is impossible to be proved in polls and research. Political decision-makers' willingness to solve the problem and a general positive attitude towards immigration offers hope that Sweden will be able to overcome all the problems with xenophobia and the crisis in multiculturalism.

New threats to internal security resulting from the migration crisis led to the reestablishment of partial border controls in 2015 with this being extended into 2016. What is more, the asylum policy has been restricted as well with more asylum seekers now being denied asylum in Sweden. Changes in policies are accompanied by growing intolerance – supposedly as a result of growing numbers of immigrants, masked men attacked people from immigrant backgrounds in Stockholm at the beginning of 2016. Sweden has not witnessed similar incidents since the 1990s. This could be taken as evidence of a multicultural crisis in Swedish society.

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