

Headlines:

- **Islam Shouldn't Culturally Shape Germany**
- **How Islam Shaped the Enlightenment**
- **Pakistan could face US Aid Cuts over Human Trafficking**

Details:

Islam Shouldn't Culturally Shape Germany

A leading German politician has dug his heels in to the debate over Islam in Germany. In an interview, Alexander Dobrindt said he wasn't discriminating against Muslims, but that Islam "has no cultural roots in Germany." Alexander Dobrindt, the leader of the Christian Social Union's (CSU) parliamentary party, defended against criticism on Wednesday that his conservative Bavarian party was seeking to marginalize Muslims while doubling down on the stance that "Islam is not part of Germany." The comments by a high-ranking politician from the sister party of Chancellor Angela Merkel's Christian Democrats (CDU) threaten to reignite a debate that the German government has been hoping to let peter out for weeks. Dobrindt's comments come as Merkel attempts to smooth over rifts in her coalition government between the Social Democrats (SPD), her CDU and the CSU. The CSU and the SPD in particular have been butting heads over refugee policy, with the Bavarian conservatives attempting to take a more hardline approach. In March, CSU party head and Interior Minister Horst Seehofer sparked controversy when he said in an interview that Islam was not part of Germany. The phrase was a central pillar in the right-wing populist Alternative for Germany (AfD) party platform in last year's general election. Shortly after Seehofer's comments, Merkel told parliament that Islam was part of Germany. The CSU has upped its conservative rhetoric in recent weeks as part of an effort to win back voters from the AfD ahead of state elections on October 14, having conceded a large number of votes to the far-right party in last September's national election. [Source: Deutsche Welle].

Western politicians are papering over the failure of liberal democracy and blaming Islam instead. The real issue is that much of Western enlightenment drew its inspiration from the study of Islam. However, Western scholars have worked hard to conceal this truth.

How Islam Shaped the Enlightenment

In 1698, the noted Arabic scholar and Catholic evangelical crusader, Ludovico Marracci published the first historically accurate Latin translation of the Qur'an, as well as a refutation of the Muslim holy book—both of which he hoped could be used to help "fight Islam." Since the Reformations of the sixteenth century, religious conflicts had been settled not only by the sword, but with the potent weapon of philology, the linguistic science that produced accurate versions and translations of holy and ancient texts. Philology had such force that new translations and interpretations of the Bible had helped split the Church. Marracci hoped that his accurate work would have the same effect in training crusading priests to dispute the word of Muhammad. As it happened, Marracci's translation did not have the effect he intended, as Alexander Bevilacqua shows in his tour de force study of the origins of modern Islamic scholarship in the West and its central role in the Enlightenment, *The Republic of Arabic Letters, Islam and the European Enlightenment*. Bible critics and burgeoning Islamic

scholars from Paris and Leiden to Oxford used his accurate translation of the Qur'an not to fight Islam, but to study and appreciate it. His work became the basis of even more translations and historical works, ultimately leading to the founding of great schools and centers of Islamic languages and culture in Europe the eighteenth century. Central to Bevilacqua's story are two friends who began the feat of explaining Islam to Europe in the seventeenth century: Antoine Galland, the Orientalist scholar, book hunter, archeologist and translator of *One Thousand and One Nights* and the court scholar, Barthélemy d'Herbelot. Fluent in Arabic, Persian, and Turkish, d'Herbelot included full translated poems and even entertaining and grand mythological tales. He listed all histories, sciences, arts, literary traditions, mythology, magic, and poetry of the Orient, as well as the stories of great military captains. Basing his own work on works such as the sixteenth-century literary scholar Ibn Khatib al-Qāsim's anthology of Islamic literature, and on the work of the seventeenth-century Ottoman scholar Kātib Çelebi, d'Herbelot attempted to make Islamic scholarship accessible to Europeans. Rather than an attack on Islam—as Marracci had attempted—d'Herbelot's book was a remarkable tightrope walk between fulfilling the desires of his repressive patrons and creating the most serious European encyclopedia extant of the Islamic world. [Source: The New Republic]

Any sincere Western scholar that studies Islam and its influence on the Western world would soon realise that early European scholars took much of their thinking from Islam. Indeed, Europe was apt at the intellectual theft of Islamic ideas, just as today China steals its ideas from America.

Pakistan could face US Aid Cuts over Human Trafficking

The Trump administration is warning Pakistan it could lose US civilian aid worth tens of millions of dollars this year if Washington finds that the South Asian nation has not done enough to combat human trafficking, US officials said. An aid cutback would deal a fresh blow to US-Pakistan relations following President Donald Trump's suspension in January of some \$2 billion in US security assistance over what Trump said was Islamabad's failure to crack down on Afghan insurgent sanctuaries used for attacks into Afghanistan. A large portion of US civilian aid - \$265 million in 2017, according to a source at the US Embassy in Islamabad – could be withheld if the State Department puts Pakistan on a list of worst global offenders in human trafficking in an annual report due out in June. The funding is relatively modest for the size of Pakistan's economy. But Islamabad could suffer a heavier jolt if Washington also decides to oppose new assistance from international financial institutions such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. These are all sanctions that the United States, under federal law, can impose on any country receiving the lowest grade on human trafficking unless Trump issues a full or partial waiver. He did so for most countries on last year's blacklist, following a pattern set by recent predecessors who were especially lenient on US allies and partners. By making good on its threat against Pakistan, the Trump administration would raise questions about whether it was using the Trafficking in Persons (TIP) report to pressure Islamabad to do more on counter-terrorism.[Source: Reuters]

Despite American threats to cut various forms of aid to Pakistan, the leadership of the country continues to beseech Washington. When will the civil and military leadership of Pakistan realise that severing ties with the US will place the country on the path to recovery?