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# Spatial analysis of Muslim communities' convergence in the Nordic European region, in Scandinavian countries

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**Abstract.** The beginning of the XXI century did not distinguish the Nordic countries from the general European context; neither did it foretell the outcome of the European migration crisis for the Scandinavian countries. The "Golden age" of the Nordic countries' prosperity is rapidly nearing its end in this historical period. The region is waiting for nothing else but painful and rapid — by historical standards — social, demographic, political and cultural changes. Changes that accumulate like an avalanche descending from a mountain will hit the Nordic societies in a period of 5-7 years from the date of this work issue, i.e. 2025-2027. The complex of disasters that will be associated with the conditions for the above mentioned changes will cover the widest range of spheres of Scandinavian social life: from the deterioration in personal and public security to the possible transformation of administrative and territorial affairs of some regions and countries [1].

## 1. Introduction

The beginning of the XXI century did not distinguish the Nordic countries from the general European context; neither did it foretell the outcome of the European migration crisis for the Scandinavian countries. The "Golden age" of the Nordic countries' prosperity is rapidly nearing its end in this historical period. The region is waiting for nothing else but painful and rapid — by historical standards — social, demographic, political and cultural changes. The age of the social system of everybody's relative well-being is coming to an end; time will show what it will be replaced with. Changes that accumulate like an avalanche descending from a mountain will hit the Nordic societies in a period of 5-7 years from the date of this work issue, i.e. 2025-2027. The complex of disasters that will be associated with the conditions for the above mentioned changes will cover the widest range of spheres of Scandinavian social life: from the deterioration in personal and public security to the possible transformation of administrative and territorial affairs of some regions and countries

A separate problem for the welcoming party – the Nordic States — is the fact that people, in bid to escape, flee with their thinking full of constructs that were already inherent due to their surrounding reality, their experiences, religious attitudes, etc. They bear the same contradictions that have destroyed their own state, and which they now introduce into a new society being not ready to give them up. The sad experience of Germany with the Turkish and Kurdish communities showed that consensus on the issue of balance and the rule of law can not be achieved without the involvement of a



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third party/force. The main question is who will become this force in the Nordic countries, which in fact have a very vague idea of what they are actually dealing with (with the exception of some researchers [2]). Only total socialization of all Northern European society elements and their involvement in the construction of a new state, which, for some part, will be Islamic, can oppose something to the rampant crime of roaming gangs in Northern Europe, these "new Vikings". However, at this point it is necessary to stop as it completes the descriptive part of a reliable scientific study of something possible in the framework given by this work, and at the same time becomes the basis for the future large-scale and extensive work of an international character, based on conceptual and innovative approaches of interdisciplinary sciences, but above all – on the theses of humanitarian geography [3].

## **2. Muslim community in the Kingdom of Sweden**

According to the official statistics of Sweden, only in 2016 it officially registered and accepted 162 877 immigrants on its territory, 4/5 of whom are from the Muslim world. For comparison, according to official Swedish statistics, on January 1, 2019, the entire population of Sweden was 10 215 250 people [4]. "Report on freedom of religion" of 2009 made by the Bureau of democracy, human rights and labor in Sweden reported on the residence of 450-500 thousand Muslims on its territory, which is from 5% to 5.7% of the total population of the Kingdom. Only one Swedish organization — "The Muslim Council of Sweden", reported 106,327 "active" Muslims (so-called registered members) in this organization. As of January 1, 2014, the Muslim population of Sweden was at least 7-7.5%. Unofficial statistics put the figure which 1.5 - 2 times exceeds the above-mentioned one [5]. Such significant discrepancies in state statistics, as well as the discrepancy between this data and the actual situation in this particular case can easily be explained by the absence of a special state program aimed at studying the Muslim population of the country, and the work that was carried out in Norway, and partly in Iceland, as will be discussed below. Between years 2011 and 2014, Sweden Muslim population increased by only 2%, and by 2015 it was not less than 7.5% of the total population of the country, while already in 2017, the Muslim population of Sweden was 14 - 17%, only according to the most conservative estimates, i.e. from 1.4 to 1.7 million people, i.e. in the period from 2015 to 2017 it increased in Sweden by 2 times. The available data allow us to conclude that the Muslim population becomes the second largest community in Europe after the Christians (Catholic, Protestant or Orthodox). It has also become the fastest growing religious group on the entire European continent, and Islam, respectively, the second largest religion in Sweden and in the entire region of Northern Europe [6], with the exception of Iceland.

## **3. Muslim community in the Kingdom of Denmark**

After Sweden, Denmark is a part of the risk area judging by the degree of tension. According to official statistics of Denmark, in 2015 the country issued almost 85 thousand residence permits [7], and in 2016 – 80 thousand [8]. Despite the fall in this figure, it unfortunately reflects only how many migrants have been legalized. For comparison, according to the official Danish statistics, on April 1, 2018 the entire population of Denmark was 5 806 015 people [9] of which 501 057 people were immigrants, and 332 874 people were of non-European origin [10]. The figures vary greatly concerning the Muslim population in Denmark. The Danish authorities do not register the religious affiliation of people other than members of the National Church (the Church of the Danish People), and local researchers take into account only registered communities' members. However, even those figures that are provided by authoritative local researchers are very demonstrative. A sociologist from the University of Copenhagen, Brian Arly Jacobsen, cites the following statistics for year 2016. On January 1, 2016, 70.9% of Muslims in Denmark were Danish citizens (mainly as a result of naturalization), this figure decreased compared to January 1, 2015 - he notes that then there were 73.7% of such.

As of January 1, 2016, the entire Muslim population in Denmark is estimated at 284 thousand people (about 5%), for comparison - since January 1, 2015 it has increased by more than 20 thousand people

by 263 800 (4.7% of the total population of Denmark). At the same time, half of the total Muslim population of Denmark lives in the capital region of Denmark [11].

The number of Muslims in Denmark has increased significantly over the last 3-5 years, and today they make up 12.3 percent of the total population, which as of January 1, 2016 corresponded to 703,873 people. There is a clear tendency for immigrants and their descendants to live in major cities such as Copenhagen, Aarhus and Odense, especially in one municipality near the capital. According to the report of Statistics Management of Denmark, the smallest percentage of immigrants and their descendants, only 5.1%, live in the region of North Jutland. The Muslim population is concentrated in the regions of Hovedstaden, 18.3% (communities: Iskhoe – 37,5%, Copenhagen — 21.4%, Fredericksburg is 16.6%, Gladsaxe and Høje-Tostrup — 7.2%) and southern Denmark - 10.5 % (communities: Odense — 14.1%, and Esbjerg — 6.7%, Weile — 4,3%) as well as in the municipalities of Aarhus 15.9% and Aalborg at 17.8%, Central Jutland - 10.1% and Zealand — 8.8%. Aarhus municipality is a municipality outside the capital region, which has the largest proportion of immigrants and descendants. However, there are 13 municipalities in the capital region that have a higher proportion of immigrants and their descendants than those in Aarhus.

Separately, it is necessary to highlight the fact that the rhizome of the whole issue associated with the transformation of the European territory are Muslim communities woven on ethnic, religious and geographical basis [12]. These network half-closed or closed (by type) organizations, have already de facto created the core of the future parallel society which is neither transparent nor permeable to the external researcher. Its contours are already possible to carefully designate as a "Muslim EU", the Northern part of which already occupies two agglomerations: the metropolis of Stockholm and Uppsala, as well as the capital of Denmark, Copenhagen, and the Swedish city of Malmö connected with the bridge (Øresundsbroen) in the absence of the actual border, which creates a single region in which tens of thousands of Muslims live.

#### **4. Muslim community in the Kingdom of Norway**

The Muslim population in Norway, as in all the Nordic countries, is the largest of all the minorities living in the country. In 2007, the State Bureau of Statistics of Norway registered 79,068 members of the most diverse Muslim communities, which was 10% more than in the previous year, 2006. In 2010, this figure increased to 98,953 people. Independent and alternative sources tend to the fact that the real number of Muslims living in Norway is at least twice larger than the officially declared figures. So, according to their data, no less than 163 thousand people professing Islam lived in Norway in 2009 [13]. For comparison: according to the same researchers, in 2005, their number varied within 120 thousand people. As of January 1, 2019, there were 5 323 933 people living in Norway [14]. In 2015, 141 thousand people (only officially registered Muslims) lived in Norway, the real number of Muslims in Norway is 2-2.5 times more than the official figures. Today, Muslims make up 7% of the total population of Norway. Since the Muslim population is unevenly dispersed throughout the country, every 10th resident of Oslo is a Muslim, while in the second largest city in Norway, Akershus, only a Muslim is one out of 55 people.

Norway, despite its social attractiveness, could not become a "Promised Land" for migrants because of its climatic, natural and geographical realities. According to a journalistic investigation, families fleeing the wars in the Middle East are ready to return to the tent in a refugee camp on the border with Lebanon, as their children can not adapt to the polar days and nights, while the lack of vitamin D affects their bone system and creates the preconditions for underdevelopment [15]. The same problem is relevant for all other polar countries, where refugees of Finland and Sweden are so eager to go to [16, 17].

#### **5. Muslim community in the republic of Finland**

According to official data, the number of Muslims in Finland in 2013 was 50-60 thousand people, according to other sources - 95-125 thousand people. In 2013, the Muslim population of Finland was

from 70 to 80 thousand people, i.e. 1.7–2.1% of the country's population. At the end of 2015, the official number of Muslims in Finland was more than 70 thousand people, which brought the Muslim community to the second place in the number of followers after the Evangelical Lutheran Church and exceeded the number of Orthodox people.

Alternative sources report a figure of 135-140 thousand Muslims. Finland is the only country in Northern Europe, which at the end of XIX - beginning of XX century had a permanent Muslim population (about 1 thousand people) on its native territory. "Finnish Tatars" are an ethnic minority of Finland, the "heritage" of the Russian Empire, the descendants of soldiers and serving nobility. They are the most organized and most integrated into the Finnish society of all other Muslim communities and diasporas, as well as the only fully integrated immigrant Muslim community in Northern Europe. Finland is also unique in having become home to one of the first and officially functioning Islamic parties in the EU - the "Islamic party of Finland". It was established on September 1, 2007 by a group of ethnic Finns-Muslims and still remains the only functioning party throughout continental Europe, which openly declared its desire to introduce Sharia into Finnish legislation.

As of January 1, 2018, the entire population of Finland was 5 520 535 people [18], of which Muslims are not less than 170-200 thousand people. The Government of Finland is the only one in the Northern Europe region engaged in the resettlement of migrants on its territory. In Finland, there are no serious problems of ghettoization, like in neighboring countries in which they are critical.

## **6. Muslim community in Iceland**

Iceland has one of the smallest Muslim communities in the world. In 2015, it officially included only 875 people, which is not 0.1% of the total population of Iceland, which numbered 355,620 people as of November 1, 2018 [19]. Unofficial statistics give the figure of 0.24%, i.e. 1517 thousand practicing Muslims. According to official statistics, in 2015, 465 people were members of the "Association of Muslims of Iceland", founded by a refugee from Palestine S. Tamim. Since 2010, it has been managed and chaired by a Muslim of Icelandic origin I.S. Agnarsson. Other 305 people are members of the "Islamic Cultural Center of Iceland", formed between 2009 and 2010 by a Moroccan K. Askari, which religious life is supported by an Imam from Egypt, A. Seddek. The first Tafsir — a translation of ideas from the Holy Quran into Icelandic was made only in 1993 and 10 years later, in 2003, it was reissued in an amended version.

Surprisingly, the fact is that 1000 Muslims living in Iceland, the number of which, with the current dynamics of growth, will not reach 0.1% of the total population of Iceland in the next 15-20 years, and Islam, which they represent, have become an instrument of political struggle within the country. The only significant politician in Iceland who publicly expressed his negative attitude to the construction of a mosque was the former mayor of Reykjavik, O. F. Magnusson. During the 2014 election campaign, the Progressive party candidate, S. B. local Sveinbjornsdottir, ran for the mayor of Reykjavik in the local elections and negatively commented on the start of mosque construction. Among other things, she said that in Abu Dhabi there is no church, despite the presence of at least seven of them if searched in Google.

Muslims in Iceland do not have a separate mosque building, it is a room rented in the center of Reykjavik. In 1999, an understanding of the need to build a mosque was formed for the first time. In 2000, the "Association of Muslims of Iceland" attempted to start its construction in Reykjavik. The city of Reykjavik authorized the request in a specific way: by allocating a plot of land (much less than the applicants had requested, and not quite there), by disapproving the construction plans and its project. The project was suspended until additional land and property issues were resolved and approved. According to a 2007 report by the European Commission on human rights against racism and intolerance in Iceland, an Icelandic researcher writes that "this delay can be regarded as a possible sign of prejudice against Muslims in Iceland" [20] and this is a manifestation of what is described by the same scientist in her work on Icelandic identity [21].

Yet, what may seem quite surprising is that the Muslim community of Iceland connects the resolution of this problem with the assertion of the rights of the Russian Orthodox Church in the

region and with the construction of good-neighborly relations with it. However, despite year 2018 is over, the mosque in Reykjavik has not been built yet.

## 7. Conclusion

In 2018, from 2 to 2.5 million inhabitants out of 27 million locals are practicing Muslims, only according to official statistics of the Nordic countries. At present, there are projects for the construction of the capital's Great mosques, which will be able to accommodate several thousand believers, which are at different development stages in all the Northern European countries, without exception. The Muslim community in the States of Northern Europe is split into ghetto-placed multicultural disparate poly-national enclaves, the number of which only, again, according to the national Bureau of Statistics is already a tenth of the entire population of the region, and in some countries, for example Sweden, it makes a fifth of the population. In addition, it is already possible to raise the question of the formation of a full parallel society within such countries as Sweden, Denmark and Norway.

The population of all five countries of Northern Europe – Iceland, Denmark, Norway, Sweden and Finland on January 1, 2018 is slightly more than 27 million people. As early as in the mid-2000ies of the XXI century, 10 years ago, demographers believed that Northern Europe will reach the number of 25 million by 2025-2027, however, migration flows to the region could dramatically change and surpass almost all, even the most daring forecasts and scenarios for the development of the region until 2020. By 2030, in some areas of Stockholm, the Muslim population will exceed 75% and in the city of Malmö — 90% (see Annex 1). While maintaining the current dynamics, by 2050, the total population of modern Sweden alone will increase to 18-20 million people. Malmö, Helsingborg, Lund, Gothenburg and partly Stockholm will become fully Islamic cities. Most Muslims of Northern Europe will be concentrated in Swedish-Danish megalopolises. 70% of Stockholm residents and every 2nd resident of southern Sweden will be Muslim. The Muslim population of Sweden is more than 50% of the total population of the state. According to this indicator, Sweden is the leader in the EU.

Separately, it should be noted and highlighted that the governments and state bodies of all countries of Northern Europe without exception absolutely lack the understanding of the problem of the Muslim communities and Islamic society development. These are symptoms, or, to be more precise, harbingers of local problems, which may become universal for Northern Europe in the future. Their transformation will inevitably affect cross-border cooperation and its structure after these transformations start [22]. There is a high risk that these changes, as well as their trends, will be extremely radical, as they do not have a platform for compromise or even maneuver at the initial stage. Two of the five Nordic countries refuse to recognize [Denmark] and accept the rights [Iceland] of Islamic communities, another [Sweden] – has no clear idea of what to do and how to work with them. The other two [Norway and Finland] in fact do not differ much from the rest in the sequence of their policies and actions, but at least they have the resources to develop alternative, more positive scenarios for the Muslim communities' development within their territorial and legal borders.

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