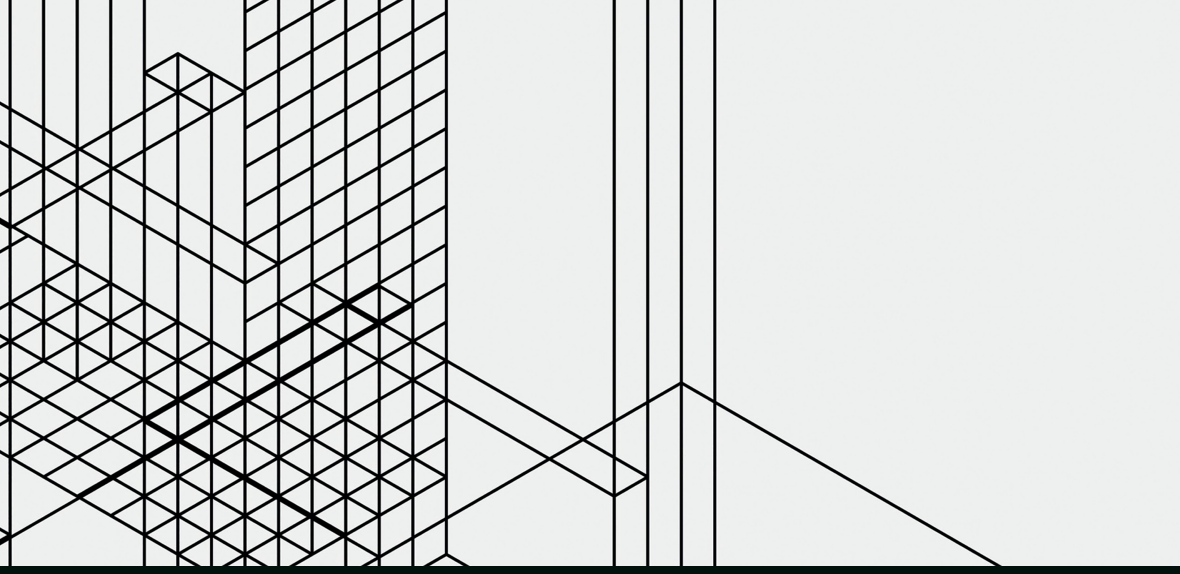
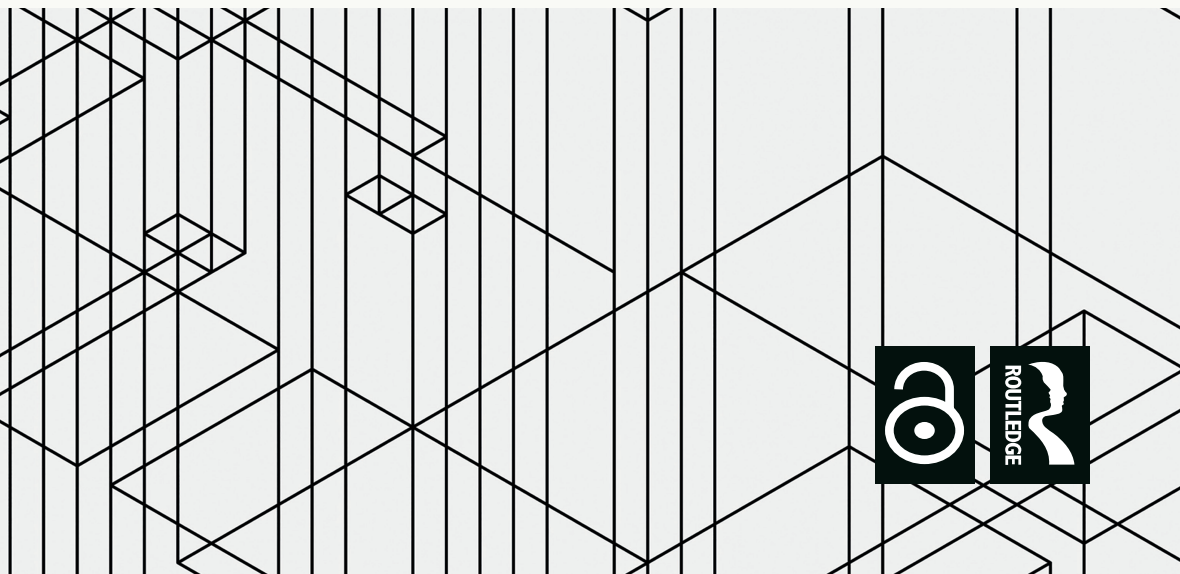


*Routledge Research in Race and Ethnicity*

# NATIVIST AND ISLAMIST RADICALISM

## ANGER AND ANXIETY

Edited by Ayhan Kaya, Ayşenur Benevento and Metin Koca



# Nativist and Islamist Radicalism

This book analyses the factors and processes behind radicalisation of both native and self-identified Muslim youths. It argues that European youth responds differently to the challenges posed by contemporary flows of globalisation such as deindustrialisation, socio-economic, political, spatial, and psychological forms of deprivation, humiliation, and structural exclusion.

The book revisits social, economic, political, and psychological drivers of radicalisation and challenges contemporary uses of the term "radicalism". It argues that neoliberal forms of governance are often responsible for associating radicalism with extremism, terrorism, fundamentalism, and violence. It will appeal to students and scholars of migration, minority studies, nationalisms, European studies, sociology, political science, and psychology.

**Ayhan Kaya** is Professor of Politics and Jean Monnet Chair of European Politics of Interculturalism in the Department of International Relations, Istanbul Bilgi University, Turkey.

**Ayşenur Benevento** works as a postdoctoral researcher in the European Research Council advanced grant project, PRIME Youth, conducted at Istanbul Bilgi University, Turkey.

**Metin Koca** works as a postdoctoral researcher in the European Research Council advanced grant project, PRIME Youth, conducted at Istanbul Bilgi University, Turkey.

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*Edited by Ayhan Kaya, Ayşenur Benevento and Metin Koca*

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# Nativist and Islamist Radicalism

## Anger and Anxiety

Edited by
Ayhan Kaya
Ayşenur Benevento
Metin Koca

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# Abbreviations

| | |
|---|---|
| **AfD** | *Alternetive für Deutschland* (Alternative for Germany) |
| **AIVD** | *Algemene Inlichtingen en Veiligheidsdienst* (General Intelligence and Security Service) |
| **BVD** | *Binnenlandse veiligheidsdienst* (Domestic Security Service) |
| **CDU** | *Christlich-Demokratische Union* (Christian Democratic Union) |
| **CIA** | Central Intelligence Agency |
| **CMO** | *Contactorgaan Moslims Overheid* (Contact Muslims Government) |
| **CNRS** | *Le Centre national de la recherche scientifique* (French National Centre for Scientific Research |
| **DITIB** | *Türkisch-Islamische Union der Anstalt für Religion* (Turkish-Islamic Union for Religious Affairs) |
| **EU** | European Union |
| **FORNET** | Narrative Exposure Therapy for Forensic Offender Rehabilitation |
| **GDR** | *Deutsche Demokratische Republik* (Democratic Republic of Germany) |
| **GREASE** | Radicalisation, Secularism and the Governance of Religion: Bringing Together Diverse Perspectives |
| **ISIS** | Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant |
| **MET** | Muslim Empowerment Tilburg |
| **MRWN** | Muslim Rights Watch Netherlands |
| **NCTV** | *Nationale Coördinator Terrorisme en Veiligheid* (National Coordinator for Counter-Terrorism and Security) |
| **NET** | Narrative Exposure Therapy |
| **NPD** | *Nationaldemokratische Partei Deutschlands* (National Democratic Party of Germany) |
| **P/CVE** | Preventing/Countering Violent Extremism |

| | |
|---|---|
| **PEGIDA** | *Patriotische Europäer Gegen Islamisierung Des Abendlandes* (Patriotic Europeans against the Islamisation of the Western World) |
| **PYI-BEL** | PRIME Youth Interview – Belgium |
| **PYI-FR** | PRIME Youth Interview – France |
| **PYI-GER** | PRIME Youth Interview – Germany |
| **PYI-NL** | PRIME Youth Interview – Netherlands |
| **USA** | United States of America |
| **USSR** | Union of Soviet Socialist Republics |
| **ZEP** | *Zones d'Education Prioritaire* (Educational Priority Areas) |
| **ZUP** | *Zone à urbaniser en Priorité* (Priority Urban Development Areas) |
| **ZUS** | *Zones Urbaines Sensibles* (Sensitive Urban Areas) |

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# Nativist and Islamist Radicalism

## Anger and Anxiety

*Ayhan Kaya, Metin Koca, and Ayşenur Benevento*

### Introduction

This edited volume aims to contribute to the scholarship that has so far studied European youth in ethno-culturally, and religio-politically divided separate clusters, such as "migrant-origin" and "native" youths. In this context, the contributors of this edited volume accord to a single optical lens to analyse the factors and processes behind the radicalisation of both native and self-identified Muslim youths. Accordingly, this introductory chapter lays the groundwork by arguing that European youth respond differently to the challenges posed by contemporary flows of globalisation, such as deindustrialisation, structural exclusion, and socio-economic, political, spatial, and psychological forms of deprivation and humiliation. In responding to existential threats and challenges, social groups exploit what their cultural repertoires offer. In our cases, these cultural repertoires are ethno-national (for native) and religious (for self-identified Muslims) repertoires. The underlying idea here is to challenge the hegemony of culturalist and civilisational discourse prevailing in Europe over the last three decades, and revisit social, economic, political, and psychological drivers of radicalisation – a term that has become overstretched, thus, an empty signifier. Challenging the contemporary ways of using the term radicalism interchangeably with extremism, terrorism, fundamentalism, and violence, we take radicalism as a quest for the democratisation of democracies rather than a pathological issue. We argue that it is the neoliberal forms of governance that often associate radicalism with extremism, terrorism, fundamentalism, and violence.

The edited volume analyses the current political, social, and economic context of the European Union, hit by four fundamental crises – namely, the global financial crisis, the refugee crisis, the COVID-19 pandemic, and the war in Ukraine, which have together led to the escalation of fear and prejudice among some segments of the European public *vis-à-vis* others who are ethno-culturally and religiously different. The main question posed in this volume is as follows: How and why do some European citizens generate a radical populist and Islamophobist discourse to express their discontent

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regarding the current social, economic and political state of their national and European context, while some members of migrant-origin communities with a Muslim background generate an essentialist and radical form of Islamist discourse in the same societies? In such a manner, the volume is novel as it attempts to analyse two sides of the same coin to understand the sources of discontent of populist young native groups on the one hand, and radical young self-identified Muslims with migration background on the other hand. So far, social scientists have studied these groups separately from more culturalist, civilisational, and religious perspectives. The main strength and novelty of this edited volume is to understand and explain the malaise of both native and immigrant origin youth simultaneously through a scientific method by de-culturalising and de-religionising what is socio-economic, political, and psychological in origin. So far, existing studies have focused on one or the other of these two phenomena, while this volume analyses them together. The volume tries to understand and explain the relationship between nativist-populist radicalism and Islamic radicalism.

At the background of the volume is globalisation, playing a key role in the formation, diversification, and solution of the problems behind radicalisation. Various segments of the European public – be they native populations or Muslim-migrant-origin populations – have been alienated and swept away by the flows of globalisation, which appears in the form of deindustrialisation, mobility, circulation, migration, social-economic inequalities, international trade, tourism, "greedy bankers", and automation. In reaction, many are inclined to adopt two interrelated political discourses, which have become pivotal along with the rise of civilisational rhetoric since the early 1990s: *Islamophobism* and *Islamism*. To put it differently, this neoliberal age appears to have led to the *nativisation of radicalism* among some groups of the disenchanted native populations while also leading to the *Islamisation of Radicalism* among some segments of the disenchanted migrant origin populations. The common denominator of these groups is that they are both downwardly mobile and inclined towards *radicalisation*. Existing studies have so far revealed such findings in a way that clusters these two groups of youngsters in separate ethno-cultural and religious boxes (Mudde, 2007, 2016; Roy, 2015, 2017; Kepel, 2017). Based on the idea of offering *one single scientific optical lens* to closely look at some native and migrant-origin youth at the same time, the novelty of this volume lies in its attempt to *de-culturalise* and *de-religionise* social-economic, political, and psychological phenomena. Be the reaction comes in a populist rhetoric or the Islamist rhetoric, they are both employed by radicalising groups of people who have been alienated and swept away by the current neoliberal forms of governance. It is the processes of radicalisation, which need to be understood better. Hence, this volume analyses the social-economic, political, and psychological processes leading to the nativisation of radicalism among the native European youth on the one hand, and the Islamisation

of radicalism among migrant-origin youth with Muslim background on the other.

It seems that some social groups belonging to the majority societies are more inclined to express their distress resulting from insecurity and social-economic deprivation through the language of Islamophobia, even in cases that are not related to the perceived threat of Islam. Several decades ago, Seymour Martin Lipset (1960) stated that the social-political discontent of people is likely to lead them to anti-Semitism, xenophobia, racism, regionalism, supernationalism, fascism, and anti-cosmopolitanism. Suppose Lipset's timely intervention in the 1950s is transposed to the contemporary age. In that case, one could then argue that Islamophobia has also become one of the paths followed by those in a state of social-economic and political dismay. Islamophobic discourse has resonated greatly in the last decade, and its users have been heard by both local and international communities. However, their distress has not necessarily resulted from a Muslim grievance. The first-generation migrants in Europe used left-wing universalist rhetoric to express their problems, whereas the second generations shifted gradually to the particularist language (Roy, 2007). For any troubling situation in the meantime, Muslims have become popular scapegoats. For over a decade, Muslim-origin migrants and their descendants have been primarily seen by large segments of the European public as a financial burden and virtually never as an opportunity for the member states. They tend to be associated with illegality, crime, violence, drug abuse, radicalism, fundamentalism, conflict, and many other ways, represented negatively (Kaya, 2015, 2014).

In addition to using an Islamophobic discourse by some native groups, the agency of populist political figures is also essential in understanding the growth of the radical right in Europe. Populist leaders tend to use different elements of past, heritage, tradition, culture, religion, gender, myths, and memories accumulated in the repertoire of the nationalist imagination (De Cesari and Kaya, 2020; Kaya, 2020). In this regard, it is imperative to examine the implications of the global financial crisis, refugee crisis, COVID-19 pandemic, and EU accession politics on various groups of the European public, be they native or migrant origin groups who are inclined to politically express themselves, respectively, through Islamophobist or Islamist elements coupled with strong populist rhetoric. It seems that those hit by the socio-economic, political, and psychological detrimental effects of globalisation are expressing their anger and disenchantment through ways that undermine the European motto of "unity in diversity".

On the other side of the coin, the volume explores migrant-origin youngsters with Muslim backgrounds who generate an Islamist discourse of empowerment in times of social, economic, and political turmoil. They incorporate themselves into a counter-hegemonic global political narrative, namely Islamism. Then, it becomes essential to find out about the legitimising sources of this discourse, originating partly from the homeland of

migrant origin-people and other spheres of global and regional political and economic contestation. It is also imperative to study how European states have so far accommodated migrant-origin people with a Muslim background and how their attempts to institutionalise Islam have contributed to the Islamisation of radicalism among Muslim-origin migrant populations and their descendants. In this vein, Martijn de Koning problematises the Dutch integration and minority policies, which define Muslims as a threat to social security. Accordingly, racial securitisation has led to two main avenues of Muslim reaction: one that avoids confrontation with the state and one that actively seeks confrontation. Focusing on the Moroccan-origin youths in France, Mehdi Lahlou analyses how marginalised youths were influenced by the Wahabi strand of Islamism, which had penetrated Moroccan society since the end of the 1970s. Finally, with a broader focus on four European states, Germany, France, Belgium, and the Netherlands, Metin Koca argues that the new religiosities in the migrant-origin Muslim communities challenge state-led religious reform and conservation projects, be them coming from their countries of origin or residence. Focusing on the new intercultural policies adopted in Italy, Roberta Ricucci lays down a series of emotional support activities that assist the second generation of Muslims in their personality formation and self-expression.

Hence, the volume mainly analyses the ways in which radicalised groups from both native and migrant-origin populations express their discontent using different cultural repertoires (Tilly, 1977). The main premise of the volume is that these groups, respectively, employ Islamophobist or Islamist discourses to express their social-economic, political, and psychological deprivations in the public sphere, which mainly result from the processes of modernisation and globalisation (Calhoun, 2011). In this volume, two chapters have specific importance in our attempt to stress the commonalities between both groups. In her chapter, Ayşenur Benevento identifies Muslim women and right-wing native women in Belgium and discusses their similar reasonings for participation in and support of the two conventional gendered practices – wearing a veil and being a homemaker. Finding and highlighting similar meaning making processes between both native and migrant-origin populations, who also have very little opportunity to contact one another, is important to challenge the mainstream "civilisational discourse" (Brubaker, 2017) that sets European native and Muslim groups apart in two culturally, religiously, and civilisationally defined distinct boxes (Kaya and Benevento, 2021).

## The Front Side of the Coin: Nativist-Populist Radicalism Hauling European Citizens

In 1967, researchers at the London School of Economics, including Ernest Gellner, Isaiah Berlin, Alain Touraine, Peter Worsley, and others organised a conference with a specific focus on populism. Following this pivotal

conference, the proceedings were edited by Ghita Ionescu and Ernest Gellner (1969) in a rather descriptive book covering several contributions on Latin America, the USA, Russia, Eastern Europe, and Africa. One of the crucial outcomes of the book, which is still meaningful, was that "populism worships the people" (Ionescu and Gellner, 1969: 4). Another outcome was that populism was not really a European phenomenon. However, the conference and the edited volume did not bring a consensus beyond this tautology, apart from adequately displaying particularist characteristics of each populist case.

Today, *populism* has become a global phenomenon. However, the state of play in the scientific community is not very different from the one in the late 1960s with regard to the definition of populism. Rather than having a comprehensive definition of the term, scholars have only come up with a list of elements defining different aspects of populism, such as anti-elitism, anti-intellectualism, and anti-establishment positions; anti-globalism and anti-international trade; affinity with religion and past; racism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism, anti-Islam, anti-immigration; promoting the image of a socially, economically and culturally homogenous organic society; intensive use of conspiracy theories to understand the world we live in; faith in the leader's extraordinariness as well as the belief in their ordinariness that brings the leader closer to the people; statism; nativism; and the sacralisation of "the people" (Ghergina et al., 2013: 3–4). One could argue that the global financial crisis, the refugee crisis, and the pandemic may have played a role in the ascendance of nativist-populist rhetoric. Still, they are, at best, catalysts, not causes. After all, if resentment as a social concept posits that losers in the competition over scarce resources respond in frustration with diffuse emotions of anger, fear, hatred, and anxiety, then there have been several other factors in the last three decades which may have triggered the resentment of the European public, such as de-industrialisation, unemployment, growing ethno-cultural diversity, multiculturalism, terrorist attacks in the aftermath of September 11, humiliation as well as the gender social change and the transformation of the gender order and norms challenging hegemonic masculinity (Berezin, 2009: 43–44; Kaya, 2020).

Many definitions of nativism include differentiation between two groups: natives and immigrants. Migrants have been framed in many European countries as a threat since September 11, even earlier, since they have been perceived as a challenge to the societal, national, economic, and cultural security of the nation. The differentiation between natives and immigrants has become even stronger along with the so-called 2015 refugee crisis. This differentiation is mainly based on their respective temporal relation to the nation, the boundaries of which have been often prescribed. Peter Hervik (2015) defines nativism as favouring established inhabitants over newcomers, eventually leading to the marginalisation of immigrant minorities. Hans-Georg Betz's definition also includes this temporal hierarchy between the two groups. Accordingly, nativism is a political doctrine that prioritises the

interests and the will of the native-born population. The nativist doctrine also dictates that the inhabitants of long standing should reign supreme over those of newcomers (Kešić and Duyvendak, 2019). Mostly, this temporal differentiation between natives and immigrants is coupled with an element of cultural threat by the latter. Betz (2017: 171) posits that nativists regard the nation as grounded in a particular historically evolved culture and system of values that must be preserved and defended at any cost. Both temporal and cultural elements of nativism underline the fear of a loss of identity as a result of being "overrun" by culturally alien foreigners (Betz, 2017: 177). This kind of logic of nativism is represented very well by the polemical thesis of great replacement, which has become prevalent not only in France, but also elsewhere in the West (Camus, 2011). The logic of nativism rests on the demarcation between outsiders and insiders, between foreigners and *the native-born*, acknowledged as bearers of a culturally superior civilisation (Betz, 2017; Kešić and Duyvendak, 2019). In the volume, Ayhan Kaya contributes to these studies by scrutinising heritage populism, utilised by the German nativist party Alternative for Germany (AfD). Based on the testimonies of young AfD supporters, the chapter explains AfD's exploitation of both dissonant and distant past for the masses in an identity crisis.

However, rather than simply recapitulating on the symptoms, one needs to understand the underlying causes of nativism leading to contemporary societal, political, psychological, and ideational divides emerging in Europe where mainstream political parties are becoming less and less credible by their constituencies while previously marginal populist parties, right or left, are becoming more popular. Kaya's chapter questions these causes with a localised focus on the formation of populism in the German state of Saxony, suffering from socio-economic, spatial, and nostalgic deprivation. Analogously, there are three main approaches to analysing typologies of populism in Europe as well as in the other parts of the world: a) anti-globalism approach; b) anti-elitism approach; and c) political style approach.

*The first approach* explains the populist vote with socio-economic factors. This approach argues that populist sentiments come out as the symptoms of detrimental effects of modernisation and globalisation, which are more likely to imprison working-class groups in states of unemployment, marginalisation, and structural outsiderism through neoliberal and post-industrial sets of policies (Betz, 2015). Accordingly, the *losers of globalisation* respond to their exclusion and marginalisation by rejecting the mainstream political parties and their discourses as well as generating a sense of ethno-nationalist, religious and civilisational discourse against migrants (Fennema, 2004). *The second approach* tends to explain the sources of (especially right-wing) extremism and populism with reference to *ethno-nationalist sentiments rooted in myths about the distant victorious past*. This approach claims that strengthening the nation by emphasising a homogenous ethnicity and returning to traditional values is the only way of coming to terms with the challenges

coming from outside enemies, be it globalisation, Islam, the European Union, or the refugees (Rydgren, 2007; Miller-Idriss, 2009). This approach assumes that it is the elites who created all this "mess" resulting from discourses of diversity, multiculturalism, mobility, free international trade, and Europeanisation. *The third approach* has a different stance concerning the rise of populist movements and political parties. Rather than referring to the political parties and movements as a response to outside factors, this approach underlines the *strategic means* employed by populist leaders and parties to appeal to their constituents (Beauzamy, 2013; Kaya, 2020). The populist leaders often attract their followers by means of appealing to the people versus to the elite, generating some bad manners and a political-incorrectness, presenting themselves as both ordinary and extraordinary persons, constantly relying on a crisis, breakdown, or threat, and trying to explain local and global realities through conspiracies (Moffit, 2016: 29).

All three approaches highlight different aspects of populism, but they all agree that there is growing social-economic inequality and injustice in the contemporary world. OXFAM's findings show that the prosperity of the eighth richest person on earth equals the sum of the prosperity of 3.6 billion people.[1] A growing number of people in Europe criticise the elites, including the scientists, for becoming detached from the realities of everyday life of billions of people and for not leaving their Ivory towers. Nativist-populist rhetoric comes out as a protest and a symptom of these structural inequalities and disparities resulting from social-economic, political and spatial conditions. The scientific translation of radical populist rhetoric in everyday life should be carefully made. Instead of understanding it as an anomaly and disease, scholars should try to understand the messages behind it and the outcries of individuals resorting to it. Populism seems to be one of the radical critics of the neoliberal status quo, which seems to have failed with regards to the redistribution of justice and fairness. Hence, radical populism may be interpreted as an individual tactic to fight back against the meta-narratives (strategies) of globalism and neoliberalism. This is a trend that one could see among many native European citizens. Whereas among some of the subaltern, subjugated "wretched of the earth", to use Franz Fanon (1965)'s words, who are mostly Muslim-origin migrants and their descendants, Islam becomes the alternative rhetoric to be exploited against globalisation and neoliberalism, a point which will be revisited shortly.

Scientific research has already demonstrated that native youths who are labelled as "far-right extremists" are the off-springs of independent farmers and small shopkeepers who primarily reside in politically, geographically remote places (Rodrigues-Pose, 2018). Buffeted by the global political and economic forces that have produced global hegemonic masculinities, they have responded to the erosion of public and domestic patriarchy with a renewal of their sense of masculine entitlement to restore patriarchy in both arenas. That ancient patriarchal power has been stolen from them by

the liberal and Europeanised political elite and staffed by legions of the newly enfranchised minorities, women, immigrants, and refugees who have become visibly more active in contemporary international economic and political life. Downwardly, mobile rural and/or lower-middle-class youth are now squeezed between the jaws of global capitalism and a political elite that is at best indifferent to their predicament and, at worse, facilitates their further demise. "The losers of globalisation" apparently resent global capitalism, Europeanisation, diversity, mobility of labour, cosmopolitanism, and international migration by capitalising on masculinity, imagined patriarchy, heritage, national past, nationalism, nativism and looking backwards nostalgically to a time when they could assume the places in society to which they believed themselves entitled. The exploitation of masculinity, patriarchy, nativism, past, and heritage as a cultural capital against the detrimental effects of globalisation is undertaken by the mediated acts of populist political figures (Kimmel, 2003; Kaya and Kayaoğlu, 2017; Köttig et al., 2017). In this volume, an interdisciplinary understanding of these approaches is deployed to analyse the rationale behind the radicalisation of nativist-populist youth as well as Muslim-origin youth in Europe.

## The Back Side of the Coin: Self-Identified Muslim European Youth with Migration Background

It has become common in Europe to label migrants of Muslim origin as persons with a "Muslim identity", the boundaries of which remain unchanged over time (cf., Heitmeyer *et al.,* 1997; Laurence, 2012; Nielsen, 2013). One could trace the genealogy of the ways in which migrants have so far been named by host societies and states. Migrant workers were first simply called "*workers*" in the early days of the migratory process in the 1960s. Then, in the aftermath of the official ban on recruiting migrant labour in 1974, a sharp discursive shift can be observed in their identification by the host societies and states. They have become "foreigners", "Turks", "Algerians", or "Moroccans". In other words, their ethnic labels have become the primary reference for the host societies. *Ethnicisation* of immigrant workers goes in tandem with the process of deindustrialisation in western European countries, where unemployment started to become a common phenomenon for migrant workers, who were mostly left outside the processes of integration to the spheres of education, politics, housing, and labour market (Lipsitz, 1994; Kaya, 2001).

The latest categorisation made by the majority societies and states in Europe to identify migrant origin groups and their descendants derives from the hegemony of the *civilisational and religious paradigm*, which has become popular since the early 1990s. Since then, migrant groups and their descendants with a Muslim background are unquestionably and homogenously labelled as *Muslims*. There are several reasons for this discursive

shift in identifying Muslim origin migrants and their descendants primarily with their religious identity as Muslims. We limit ourselves here to name just two specific developments to explain the sources of this shift: the dissolution of the Socialist Block and the war in the former Yugoslavia fuelling the discourses of the end of multiculturalism and the rise of the discourse of the clash of civilisations.

It was mainly the processes of securitisation and stigmatisation of migration that have brought about the ascendancy of political discourse renown as *the end of multiculturalism* – a discourse, which has often been revisited over the last three decades since the war in Bosnia in 1992, leading to the birth of the Huntingtonian clash of civilisations paradigm, which assumes that civilisations in general, and Christianity and Islam in particular, cannot coexist (Huntington, 1996). In contradiction to the earlier sociological and philosophical trends defining civilisation on the basis of the material processes of industrialisation, capitalism, colonialism, and urbanisation (Elias, 1998), Huntington's attempt to reduce civilisation to religion and culture apparently attracted a large audience across the world, including the European Union. The discourse of the end of multiculturalism is often built upon the assumption that the nation's homogeneity is at stake. Thus, it has to be restored at the expense of alienating those who are not ethno-culturally and religiously from the prescribed definition of the nation on the basis of linguistic, religious, and cultural tenets. Today, such a culturalist paradigm, coupled with the unfavourable elements of the global financial crisis, the current refugee crisis and the pandemic, is likely to fuel radical right-wing populism, which highly invests in the revitalisation of ethno-cultural and religious boundaries between native majorities and minorities (Mudde, 2014; Kaya, 2020).

Along with the growth of a neoliberal and culturalist paradigm over the last three decades, many western European states are increasingly inclined to accommodate migrants and their descendants originating from Muslim-origin countries through some representative form of Islamic institutions. It is now a common practice to see that modern states, be it imperial states or nation-states, are inclined to generate a similar pattern in accommodating centrifugal religious communities that are becoming more visible in the public space. One could see parallels between the ways in which the Jews in France in the early 19th century and the Muslims in Germany, France, Belgium, and the Netherlands in the early 21st century (Safran, 2004; Koenig, 2005; Berkovitz, 2007; Kaya, 2012). The *Conseil Français du culte musulman* in France (2003), Islam Summit in Germany (2006), *Exécutif des Musulmans de Belgique* (1995) and the long-lasting Pillar system in the Netherlands have so far contributed to the institutionalisation of Islam and the construction of parallel societies in these countries through the creation of religious-based liaison bodies. The formation of such religious institutions has also prevented Muslim-origin individuals from seeking civic opportunities to represent themselves through existing political parties,

labour unions, and civil society organisations where the members of the society are represented on the basis of their civic identities (Ireland, 2000; Koenig, 2005; Fetzer and Soper, 2005).

Attempts to institutionalise Islam in Europe for the sake of creating *liaison* bodies mediating between Muslims and the central and local state actors go along with the labelling of migrant-origin individuals with Muslim backgrounds simply as "Muslims" by an overwhelming majority of private citizens, political actors, media and even by the academia. The labelling of those individuals through a religious identity at both political and societal levels seems to be very reductionist and simplistic since their self-identifications are extremely diverse, oscillating between "Muslim", "secular", "atheist", "agnostic", and other identifications (Kaya and Kentel, 2005). Such forms of labelling imposed on migrant-origin individuals and their descendants seem to overshadow the processes of individualisation and democratisation of Islam among younger generations, who have been raised in the European Union countries interacting with individuals of different denominations (Sunier, 2009; Kaya, 2012). Furthermore, the institutionalisation of Islam is also likely to be contributing to the perception of Islam by radical right-wing populist movements as a threat to their authentic way of life.

Religion and ethnicity offer attractive "solutions" for people entangled in intertwined problems. It is not surprising for the masses, who have a gloomy outlook of the future, who cannot benefit from society, and who are cast aside by global capitalism, to resort to honour, religion, ethnicity, language, tradition, and myths, all of which they believe cannot be pried from their hands, and to define themselves in those terms (Eliade, 1991; Clifford, 1994). However, a detailed analysis must be made to decipher the employment of Islam by young Muslims with migration backgrounds in frequent acts of violence. If the analysis is not made rigorously, it will affirm and thus reproduce the existing "clash of civilisations" thesis. Therefore, it is genuinely important to underline that the Islamic identity used by the youth, who show their resistance to the social-economic, cultural and political regimes of truth through different ways (music, graffiti, dance, looting, and arson) in Europe, is not only essentialist, or radical, but also primarily symbolic and democratic (Vertovec, 1995; Kaya, 2014; Martiniello, 2015; Roy, 2015, 2017; Kepel, 2017). The Islamic reference used in such acts of opposition is expressive primarily of the need to belong to a legitimate counter-hegemonic global discourse, such as that of Islam, and derive a symbolic power from that. It seems that religion is now replacing the left in the absence of a global leftist movement. Michel de Certeau (1984: 183) reminds us of the discursive similarities between religion and the left: religion offers a *different world*, and the left offers a *different future* – both offering solidarity. Moreover, it should be remembered that recent acts of violence, such as in Paris (7 January and 13 November 2015), Nice (14 July 2016), Istanbul (1 January 2017), Berlin (28 February 2017), London (2017), Paris (2018) and rapidly spreading to

other cities and countries, are also an indication of the solidarity among the members of the newly emerging transnational Islam, who are claimed to be engaged in religious fundamentalism.

Gilles Kepel (2008, 2017) and Olivier Roy (2007, 2015) are two leading experts working on the Jihadist groups in the EU. While Kepel mostly concentrates on France, Roy has recently extended his research to other European countries, trying to understand the causes of Islamist radicalism and Jihadism. Kepel addresses the social-economic exclusion and colonial memories of Muslim-origin youngsters as well as the promotion of Salafism by the Gulf countries (mainly Saudi Arabia and Qatar) to explain their affiliation with radical Islam and Jihadism. His main assumption is that Islam is becoming radicalised among young Muslims who are exposed to structural outsiderism in the west. Roy (2015, 2017), on the other hand, argues that the issue is not the radicalisation of Islam but rather "the Islamisation of radicalism". Roy claims that the Jihadists, mostly second-generation immigrants, were caught between the tradition-bound world of their parents and the secularism of their French society. Unable to find a place, they adopted a nihilistic rejection of society, expressing through Islam the absence of a strong Marxist language in the contemporary world (Roy, 2015, 2017).

Yet, what Olivier Roy (2015) has already indicated with regards to the analysis of such forms of radicalism, is very important for us to diagnose what is happening. As one of the leading scholars working on the concept of radicalisation, Olivier Roy scrutinises the relevancy and the excellence of the book with a commentary in Chapter 10. Roy corrects the misdiagnosis, arguing that what is happening is not the radicalisation of Islam, but rather the Islamisation of radicalism in the age of neoliberalism. Combining the analyses of Roy (2015) and de Certeau (1984), it is more likely to understand better what is happening in diasporas: *Islamisation of radicalism* among some young Muslims, mostly converts and second/third generations with a Muslim background, in the absence of a counter-hegemonic global left-wing ideology.

The growing popularity of Islam among younger generations in transnational spaces is partly a consequence of the processes of globalisation. *However, only a small minority of young Muslims become radicalised in the diaspora*. The majority of them generate moderate forms of religious identities in a way that liberates them from the confines of their patriarchal culture. The global circuitry of modern telecommunications also contributes to forming a *digitalised umma* within the Muslim diaspora, which is based on the idea of a more homogeneous *community of sentiments* (Appadurai, 1990), shaped by a constant flow of identical signs and messages travelling across cyberspace. A *digitalised umma* (Muslim community) shaped by electronic capitalism tends to get engaged in various forms of *ijtihad* (an Arabic word, meaning interpretation of the Quran) because each individual dwells in a different social, political or cultural context within the diaspora. Whilst the signs and messages disseminated across the diaspora are rather more homogeneous, their impact

on individual lives differs greatly. The signs and messages form a more heterogeneous and individualised form of the *umma*. This kind of *ijtihad*, built up by the media, has the potential to turn recipients into a virtual *alim* (an Arabic word for intellectual) who can challenge the authority of traditional religious scholars (Mandaville, 2001: 160). As Appadurai (1997: 195) rightly says, "new forms of electronically mediated communication are beginning to create virtual neighbourhoods, no longer bounded by territory, passports, taxes, elections, and other conventional political diacritics." These new *communities of sentiments* are constructed in cyberspace, a space often occupied by modern transnational subjects (Vertovec, 1999).

The reality in Europe today is that young Muslims are becoming politically mobilised to support causes that have less to do with faith and more to do with global communal solidarity with their peers in Gazza, Palestine, Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, or elsewhere, the manifestation of which can be described as an identity based on *vicarious humiliation* (Buruma and Margalit, 2004: 10). Some European Muslims develop empathy for Muslim victims elsewhere in the world and convince themselves that their exclusion and that of their co-religionists have the exact root cause: *The western rejection of Islam*. The rejection of Islam has recently become even more alarming due to the rise of nativist-populist movements in Europe that are often capitalising on the growing institutional visibility of Islam in public space and are not likely to observe the individualisation and democratisation of Islam in everyday life. However, the difficulties of the migration context, to which the migrants with a Muslim background are being exposed, do not only stem from the ways in which they are framed and represented by the political and societal actors of the receiving countries, but also from the state actors of their homeland country. In the chapter written by Metin Koca, the readers have the opportunity of going through a discussion of globalisation mechanics influencing the complex religious making processes of migrant-origin communities in Belgium, Germany, France, and the Netherlands. Mehdi Lahlou, on the other hand, examines a specific population, the Moroccan origin youth, to examine the intertwined relationship between community practices, messages, values, past events, and the global form of *umma,* creating a particularly interesting case in France.

## An Interdisciplinary Approach to Radicalism

Radicalism cannot be understood as a stable ideological position. Ideas that are radical at some point could be liberal or even conservative for another. Liberals and democrats of the 19th century were the radicals of their age. It is no longer possible to call them as such. The 1968 generation was also radical in the sense that they challenged the patriarchal socio-political order. The radicals of the 1968 generation were different from the radicals of the 19th century. Similarly, the radicals of the present are also very different

from the former ones. Departing from the theory of social movements, Calhoun (2011) claims that the defence of tradition by nationalist, nativist, populist, or religious groups has also become a radical stance today. He even continues to suggest that this sort of populism and conservatism "has been important to struggles for democracy, for inclusion in the conditions under which workers and small proprietors live" (Calhoun, 2011, p. 250). The present volume contributes to Calhoun's earlier attempts to challenge the current ways of reducing radicalism to different forms of extremism, which neglect socio-economic, philosophical, political, and psychological determinants of radicalism.

Charles Tilly's explanation of collective action is also instrumental for social scientists to understand better the distinctive characteristics of mobilisation at the present time and radical mobilisation in this case. He makes distinctions among three different forms of mobilisation: defensive, offensive, and preparatory. Defensive mobilisation is often bottom-up. A threat from outside, such as globalism, capitalism, or injustice, induces the group members to pool their resources to fight the enemy. Tilly classifies the radical food riots, tax rebellions, invasions of fields, and draft resistance in contemporary Europe as defensive forms of mobilisation. One could also list nativist and Islamist youth mobilisations in the same cluster. Offensive mobilisation is often top-down. This could be a political alliance between bourgeois and artisans to produce the Great Reform Bill of 1832 that introduced radical changes to the electoral system of England and Wales (Tilly, 1977, p. 34). One could also argue that the new political alliances organised by some European right-wing populist parties among various social groups such as working-class groups, precarious groups, women, and LGBTI groups that generate a growing stream of Islamophobic sentiments may also fall into this category (Kaya, 2020). Eventually, the last category of mobilisation, according to Tilly (1977), is preparatory mobilisation, which is also a top-down one. In this kind of mobilisation, the group pools resources in anticipation of future opportunities and threats. For instance, labour unions store some money to cushion hardships that may appear in the future in the form of unemployment, or loss of wages during a strike. This is a kind of proactive mobilisation planned for future threats. Accordingly, one could argue that PEGIDA (Patriotic Europeans Against the Islamisation of the Occident), established first in Dresden, can be named as preparatory form of mobilisation as they seek to protect the Occident from the Muslim "invasion" (Kaya, 2020). In the book, Ayhan Kaya examines the presence of yet another right-wing populist organisation, AfD, through its supporters in Dresden. His chapter stresses that ideological features shared by the right-wing populist organisations in Dresden are used to justify specific political demands such as the stronger regulation of immigration and the exclusion of Muslims.

There is also a strand of research in psychology that relies on socio-economic characteristics to understand factors that influence the process

of radicalisation. This strand is also covered by the contributors in the volume coming from Psychology (Catarina Kinvall, Tereza Capelos, Poppy Laurens, Constantina Badea, and Ayşenur Benevento). Some scholars acknowledge that pathways into radicalisation are multilevel and involve layers of factors, including intra-individual, community-based, and contextual with global ideological forces such as socio-economic grievance, conflicting identities, injustice, oppression, or socio-economic exclusion, marginalisation, alienation, discrimination, civil war or deep-rooted conflicts, invasion and occupation by foreign military forces, economic underdevelopment, bad governance and corruption penetrating the state at all levels, rapid modernisation, de-industrialisation and technological developments such as the rise of the internet and social media (e.g. Allport, 1954; Tajfel, 1981; Taarnby, 2005; Dalgaard-Nielsen, 2008; Ferguson and Binks, 2015; Maskaliūnaitė, 2015; Ferguson and McAuley, 2020a; Coolsaet et al., 2019). The chapter authored by Roberta Ricucci contributes to the body of literature by examining the influence of religiosity among migrant-origin individuals from Italy and their values towards secularisation as an indicator of their acculturalisation attitudes as well as leanings towards radicalisation. In addition, while many radicalised individuals share similar experiences, there exist research accounts that show no direct link between becoming ideologically and politically radicalised and engaging in extremist violence (e.g. Della Porta and La Free, 2012; Ferguson and McAuley, 2020b). Such accounts that challenge the previously confirmed constructs urge psychologists to forego positivistic and normative claims. By introducing the term "relational radicalisation", Constantina Badea identifies the interactive arenas from which marginalisation of Muslims emerges and discusses how these mechanisms influence each other and concatenate to constitute radicalisation processes.

The importance of a comprehensive and culturally sensitive approach for the study of radicalisation is also crucial for the implications the research might have in deradicalisation efforts. To date, research-led and government-led initiatives address the challenge of deradicalisation through a combination of education, training, cultural and religious dialogue that helps members of distinct small communities to have financial and educational freedom, build empathy for each other, etc. Research or government-led initiative that is deaf to the socio-cultural norms and the local economic and political realities not only have little chance of being accepted by individuals who already have a high perception of political grievance but also might widen the trust gap between those individuals and authorities. Therefore, a community-based approach might also have a lot to offer to those who plan to move beyond understanding the radicalisation process in a unique context and study patterns of differences and similarities with others who share similar characteristics (Benevento, 2021). In different ways, all the chapters provide implications for locally and culturally sensitive deradicalisation

efforts at the policy level. More specifically, however, Chapter 3, written by Denis van de Wetering and Tobias Hecker and Chapter 7, authored by Martijn de Koning, have specific importance for scholars and policymakers interested in professional deradicalisation work. Based on his 20 years of work, Koning critically examines the purpose and the consequences of counter-radicalisation efforts targeting Dutch Muslim communities. Bringing a clinical psychology perspective to the book, Wetering and Hecker explore the possibilities and limits of the use of clinical interviews based on their interviews with former far-right extremists in Germany. The latter is significant for including interviews with female far-right extremists, a hard-to-access population and, thus, less represented in scholarly writing.

To recapitulate, this edited volume is based on an interdisciplinary perspective bringing scholars and their empirical research together to have a critical stance on the notions of radicalisation and radicalism. Based on the empirical and theoretical works of sociologists, anthropologists, political scientists, and psychologists, this volume demonstrates the socio-economic, political, spatial, and emotional root causes of radicalisation among different young segments of the European population who are exposed to various challenges resulting from detrimental effects of globalisation such as deindustrialisation, socio-economic deprivation, spatial deprivation, nostalgic deprivation, structural outsiderism, alienation, and humiliation.

## Scope of the Volume

This collection includes empirical investigations, literature reviews, practitioner testimonies, secondary analyses, and theoretical reflections to evaluate the radicalisation of both native populist youth and Islamist Muslim youth in Europe. The authors are a mixture of senior academics, early-career researchers, and specialists with a history in practice who are located throughout Europe and beyond. The authors' various roles as academics, youth specialists, or practitioners result in a variety of texts, from theory-guided interpretations to chapters written from the research field. We appreciate the contributors who tackled the delicate subject of radicalisation and provided their perspectives on how and why the youth might be radicalising.

While we acknowledge the complex system of radicalisation processes affected by multiple levels of the surrounding factors, from the immediate settings of the individual to broader religious, economic, political, and cultural issues; we found it useful to categorise the chapters in accordance with their core message about the underlying causes of radicalisation. The first section of the volume is entitled "Spatial Deprivation and Geographic Contexts". This section aims to invite the reader to rethink existing conceptualisations and approaches to studying radicalisation and discover the way they are rooted in local and regional factors. In Chapter 1, Roberta Ricucci

demonstrates a shift in tone, identifying the tell-tale indicators of a division between first- and second-generation associationism in the Muslim community in Turin, Italy. Ayhan Kaya brings empirical evidence from Dresden, Germany in Chapter 2 to investigate the popularity of the AfD in eastern Germany. The analysis includes AfD's effective communication strategies that exploit the social-economic problems of the local inhabitants. He further argues that the places that experience geographical and nostalgic deprivation might be at risk of becoming the hub of extremist discourse the most. As such, Chapters 1 and 2 zoom into understudied yet extremely intriguing places – Dresden and Turin – to contextualise the settings in which radicalisation matters. Following Kaya's chapter that identifies the local drivers of the nativist radicalism in Dresden, Wetering, and Hecker on the narratives of 13 former right-wing extremist men in Germany in Chapter 3. Questioning the identity-related challenges to their disengagement, Wetering and Hecker reveal the role of the social environment, which is marked by anger, hatred, aggression, and outbursts of violence.

The second section focuses on mental processes more specifically, drawing on the contributions from the discipline of psychology. This section is akin to Wetering and Hecker's approach in narrowing down on the individuals and questioning what else, alongside the spatial factors, triggers individuals' radicalisation. In Chapter 4, Constantina Badea reviews the psychology literature to investigate the role of intergroup dynamics behind Islamophobia and Islamist "extremisation" in Europe. Badea argues that these dynamics could be reversed by "deconstructing" the perceptions that all Muslims are segregationists and all members of the majority society are Islamophobic. In Chapter 5, Catarina Kinnvall, Tereza Capelos, and Poppy Laurens bring forward the intersectionality of gender, religion, and nationalism as drivers and inhibitors of nativism and extremism. The chapter contributes significantly to our understanding of the everyday tensions between French-Muslim women and the majority society in France. Allured by the women's perspective, Ayşenur Benevento (Chapter 6) also consults women in Belgium to speak of their personal gendered choices. Benevento questions whether those choices could be labelled as radical or not based on their justifications and identities. The chapter provides a case study of both self-identified Muslim women and right-wing native women and recognises the rarely heard voices of the latter group in research.

The third section aims to reassess the received wisdom over Islamist radicalisation critically, given the widespread focus on Islamism(s) in the academic literature and beyond. In Chapter 7, Martijn de Koning focuses on the Dutch state's use of radicalisation as an ideological imperative by "racialising" governance against Muslims. Focusing on the practices and technologies of governing, Koning problematises the mechanisms through which the state defines those who belong to the nation and those who do not. Focusing on the French case, Mehdi Lahlou's Chapter 8 delves into

the history of Moroccan-origin Europeans' radicalisation. Lahlou lays down the political-economic internal and external factors behind youths' religious radicalisation. Metin Koca (Chapter 9) seeks migrant-origin European Muslims' agency in their engagement with various globalisation mechanics. Despite participating in religious activities promoted by their countries of origin, their religious sense-making goes beyond, and sometimes against, these activities. Koca concludes that the process saturates the religious field in Europe to the extent that researchers and policymakers shall identify the radicalisation possibilities outside the scope of violent radicalisation. In his commentary, Olivier Roy analyses the alternative claims on the causes of radicalisation into violent extremism, the motives behind radicalisation, and deradicalisation as a "religious question" in Muslim-majority and Muslim-minority contexts.

## Note

1 https://www.oxfam.org/en/pressroom/pressreleases/2017-01-16/just-8-men-own-same-wealth-half-world, accessed on 15 September 2022.

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Part I

# Spatial Deprivation and Local Contexts

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Chapter 1

# Please, Don't Blame Us

## It Is Possible to Be Both Muslim and a Good Citizen in a Catholic Country

*Roberta Ricucci*

### Introduction[1]

Immigrant religiosity is alive, as evidenced by the existence of mosques and prayer halls in several European immigrant-hosting countries like Italy. Welcoming centres also offer a kind of social-support system both for new arrivals and irregular immigrants (Portes and Hao, 2002; Berking et al., 2018). On the other hand, migrants feel at ease in places of worship – there they find clergymen speaking their native language, sharing (or at least understanding) their cultural and ethnic background, and being aware of the difficulties of the meeting/clash between familiar ways of life and those expected by the host society (Bruce, 2017). If this is the situation for the first generation of immigrants, what happens with the second generations?[2] Are they following the secularisation process spreading among youth in Europe? Are they religious in the same way as their parents or are they embracing the European "lay" way? Scientific studies have focused on the growing presence of Muslims through observations and insights carried out from different perspectives: religious beliefs and practices, hope for a certain type of society (secular versus Islamic), definition of identity (religious, Italian, and cosmopolitan), orientation regarding the education of children, intermarriage, and requests made to educational institutions (recognition of holidays and religious teaching in school) (Allievi, 2009; Cesari, 2014). In addition, attention to the religious variable has often been correlated with that dedicated to labour issues (Are Muslims discriminated against in the labour market, compared to other religious affiliations?), schooling (Does the increasing number of Muslim students give rise to claims against secularisation and changes in education?), urban schedules, and spaces, with specific requests regarding nutrition, places of worship, and areas for the burial of the dead (Giorgi, 2020).

The debate on Muslims in Europe sometimes overlaps with that on migration. Indeed, even though an increasing part of Muslims are nowadays European citizens, in the public debate, they are still considered migrants and, among the various migrant categories (asylum seekers, highly skilled

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migrants, and unaccompanied minors …), the less integrable in Western societies due to their religious belonging. In this perspective, Muslims seem to be the most important group, which has challenged the national integration models, highlighting their lack of pursuing socio-economic and cultural inclusion (Kurien, 2021). The discussion on integration has shifted from national to local levels and also affected the debates on Muslims and their rate of inclusion in the various societal domains (Emerson, 2009; Burchardt and Michalowsky, 2015; Martínez-Ariño, 2017; Caponio et al., 2019). To some extent, the local dimension has been overlooked. This means, on the one hand, that local policies intervene in managing Muslim communities' daily lives and, on the other hand, that it is the arrival of the second generation that modifies (strengthening or weakening; modifying or erasing) their fathers and mothers' recognition demands, which had sometimes provoked a public reaction on the part of the citizenry.

The chapter attempts to view these two aspects through the experience of Turin, which qualifies as a privileged observatory for seeing how Islam is managed at the local level due to its history of immigration, the volume of Muslim presence, and immigration policies.[3] There are two elements that give pause for reflection. The first is that Turin is one of the few Italian contexts containing a mature Muslim community with children and adults, old and young, neo-Italians, and converts. Within the city's Muslim universe, the Moroccan (first-arrived and most numerous) and Egyptian collectives are examples of "complete migratory cycles" (Castles and Miller, 1973). The second is that the (negative) effects of the economic crisis are reverberating on the social fabric, bringing back to the fore tensions, and unresolved knots coming from intercultural as well as interreligious cohabitation, two elements that may affect the dynamics between local policies and managing Islam (Frisina, 2008).

## Setting the Scene: Being Muslim in an Italian Multicultural and Still Strong Catholic City

For a long time, in Italy and in its main towns and cities, immigration has been synonymous with North Africa, especially Morocco: this was because Italians started to meet migrants selling small things along the city centres that were mainly from Morocco. So, Moroccans easily became – per antonomasia – synonymous with immigrants (Cingolani and Ricucci, 2014). Later, others who were less invisible in the street started to populate Italian dreams (Filipinas and Peruvians as health caretakers) and nightmares (Chinese, Senegalese, and Tunisian as competitors in the labour market). But, for scholars and service operators, North Africa also means growing numbers of Egyptians and Tunisians in one of the main Italian cities, Turin.

However, Turin has been above all the city of Moroccans. In 2002, the registry office recorded 10,796, about one-tenth of them being Egyptians. There were 6,637 Rumanians (Omedè and Procopio, 2002) – destined to become, in a few years, the national group most representative of immigration. In two decades, the scene had been radically transformed: the Europeanisation of flows brought to the fore Rumanians, Ukrainians, and Moldovans, putting in the shade the city's traditional provenances upon which the spotlight of researchers, social workers, and the media had been focused. Indeed, the last years of the old Millennium, and the first years of the new, saw Moroccans particularly under the microscope. One looked to them for signs of immigration stabilising and taking root in the city. This explains the research on employment insertion, family characteristics, socio-cultural insertion (from associationism[4] both ethnic and faith-based to religious participation), future prospects through the eyes of second generations, and, finally, religion and relations with Islam, which greatly worried and upset the citizenry.

However, within several years, the attention paid to them faded, creating space for curiosity about, and sometimes fear of, the growing presence of Rumanians and other East European citizens. This meant that the focus shifted to the new ethnic communities from the Muslim communities. In the meantime, the Muslim population increased mainly due to family reunions and continuing their insertion dynamics (Ricucci, 2021b). Thus, scholars continued to be interested in how the second generations grew and how things changed in Muslim communities.

It is difficult to outline the characteristics of the Muslim population because there are no available statistics based on religion (Table 1.1). The above table shows data on people settled in Italy from countries with a Muslim population. Focussing on the Turin scenario, which is in tune with the national context, according to the most recent qualitative studies

*Table. 1.1* Estimates of Muslims in Italy by January 1, 2021(first main ten national groups)

| | |
|---|---|
| Albanian | 440,854 |
| Moroccan | 432,458 |
| Bangladeshi | 147,872 |
| Egyptian | 136,113 |
| Pakistani | 127,101 |
| Senegalese | 111,380 |
| Tunisian | 98,321 |
| Gambian | 21,887 |
| Turkish | 20,247 |
| Algerian | 19,447 |

Source: Idos – Confronti (2021).

(Bossi and Ricucci, 2022), the Muslim population in Turin can be divided into three groups:

1. Albanians: They have a very low rate of attendance at the mosque. It is logical that following the negative stigmatisation suffered by Albanians during the 1990s, they have chosen an "assimilation strategy" of integration (Romania, 2004).
2. Moroccans, Egyptians, and Tunisians: They represent the majority of the Muslim population in Turin. There are no significant differences among these three groups in their way of being Muslim in Turin.
3. People from sub-Saharan countries: The most numerous are immigrants from Senegal, the Ivory Coast, and Somalia, followed by Cameroon, Ghana, Mali, and Nigeria. They represent the most secularised group of the Muslim population, both in the first and second generations. A large and well-known Muslim brotherhood, the so-called Murid Brotherhood has played an important role in the integration process of Senegalese who arrived in Turin in the 1980s (Castagnone et al., 2005).

Recently, more attention has been dedicated to youth, those who are still foreigners, and those who have already become Italians. According to various qualitative studies (Ricucci, 2017; Premazzi, 2021), an interesting development among second-generation immigrants is the polarisation that is taking place in relation to the significance of religion in their own lives. Indeed, there is a growing number of second-generation youngsters who opt for a more secular way of life, while an increasingly large group is choosing a more conscious form of Islam (Crescenti, 2021). For young people of the second generation who often have little ethnic social network compared with the links they have with Italians and other peers with various ethnic and religious backgrounds, Islamism can provide a transparent, supportive, and all-embracing frame of reference (Cingolani and Ricucci, 2014).

Socio-economic status varies among the various Muslim communities. Some Moroccans come from the poorest areas of their country (Khouribga), with very low educational attainment and an unqualified job profile; others are qualified and work in Turin as cultural mediators or self-employed persons. Upon their arrival in Turin and the rest of Italy, the Senegalese were generally peddlers. In Ambrosini's (2005) words, they have gone "from peddler to plumber to professional". Egyptians and Tunisians started out working in restaurants and the construction sector, and now a lot of them are entrepreneurs. Albanians are spread out in various sectors, and many of them are women. This is the main difference in comparing the socio-economic status of the various Muslim communities (Prefettura – UTG del Governo and Città di Torino,2006, 2008).

In the eyes of the city administration, there is no Muslim religious organisation that is more important than the others. In this perspective, the

administration interacts with these organisations stressing their role as an important bridge between the host society and the specific ethnic communities they refer to. Indeed, the administration is interested in supporting the role as an actor in promoting the inclusion of Muslim organisations (Mezzetti and Ricucci, 2019).[5] Activities promoted by Muslim religious organisations are considered by the city administration as useful support for the welfare of local Muslim communities. They offer meeting places and provide after-school activities for children and adolescents, representing an important information point for neo-immigrants.

## Young Muslims in the Mirror

What is happening among the younger generations? Are the children of immigrants born abroad and reunited during compulsory schooling or born and socialised entirely in Italy, following their parents' footsteps? Or do they share with their peers an attitude that oscillates between indifference and an autonomous way of believing in God, often removed from organisational ties? In order to answer these questions, the chapter refers to the results of a research activity that delved into the biographies of over 200 migrant-origin young people, with a prevalence of female components. Specifically, here we reflect on 80 specific interviews, collected in several Italian cities, 36 interviews with Moroccans (first and second generations), Tunisians, Senegalese, and Egyptians living in Turin, carried out in 2019–2021, divided equally by sex. These were young people, mainly high school, or university graduates, from a Muslim milieu, residing in different Italian towns and cities and with a heterogeneous degree of participation in religious associations.[6] This diversity made it possible to collect entries that were different in terms of socio-cultural background and family migration history, such as the Muslim component's move to Italy. The analysis of the semi-structured qualitative interviews with those young people and the author's participation in meetings and events organised by cultural, religious, and community-based associative environments in offline and virtual environments form the basis of this chapter. The quotation below[7] brings us back to the migratory reality that Italy knows today, built through a history of almost half a century. Here, for some communities, the so-called Herberg paradox is being realised: *what the first generations want to transmit, the second ones try to forget, and the third ones want to recover.*

> There is a group of active young adults. We make many initiatives; we want to link the association and the mosque to the territory. We organize activities for Muslim families and the children who attend, but also initiatives that take us outside and make us known. It is not an easy generational change. However, at a certain point it is as if the adults, who are also showing the hardships of migration and sacrifices,

> give up. I don't want to exaggerate, but we are better prepared, we have more tools to talk to young people born or raised in Italy. It is not a lack of respect or trust. It's natural. We also had some discussions, and sometimes we were not warned about certain events or appointments with the constituency. I guess it's a phase for all organizations. I know of associations where there was no agreement and the younger ones who wanted to continue their involvement but then decided to break away and either found their own association or join others that already existed. Personally, I think it's an inevitable process and it's not that important where you are, but not to stop dedicating yourself to the ideals that guide us. We want a more inclusive society, to be active participants in the processes and decisions that affect us, to be citizens who are aware even if we don't all have the city, but that's another story and another commitment.
>
> (F, 29, Morocco)

For many young people about to assume roles and functions in the adult world, the feeling is that they are in the middle of a ford: they have heard and learned stories and times permeated from elsewhere or told by their parents or other adults who have performed educational tasks. Even before 2020 and the dating restrictions brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic, they experienced celebrations. They participated in events in their family's country of origin through the mediation of the Internet, sharing online demonstrations of protest, occasions of celebration, and, sometimes, suffering. Experiences certainly left marks – the emblematic nature of which can nevertheless be debated. In some cases, what counts is the desire to be *"other"* from what one is perceived to be on a daily basis and to claim one's own multifaceted identity. As another interviewee points out, feelings are particularly strong when confronted with young Muslims because of their religious identity:

> When my Romanian friend said that women go to mass wearing white veils, no one reacted. On the contrary, the teacher said that even in Italy they used to do that. When I told them about the veil, one of my classmates immediately said that the veil is not permissible in Italy, that all should be forced to take it off. Some girls also intervened. I tried to explain what the veil means to us, the idea behind it, the choice, but they wouldn't even let me speak. In the end, I banged my fists on the table and told them about Muslim countries where you don't have to wear the veil, like Tunisia, about the women MPs in Morocco, Muslim women who are not enslaved as many think. There is a lot of ignorance and schools do not do much. There is little talk about Islam, no room for discussion. And even the teachers don't seem to want to. It is good with the Romanian students who don't cause problems or those from

> Catholic countries, like the Ukrainian girl who came to my sister's class or the Peruvian girls I had. It's all simple, no flashy symbols, no special requests or holidays that are not celebrated in Italy. In the end you have to survive: either you choose to be stronger and so you do like my cousin, she is not afraid, she wears the veil, she argues, even in the street, when someone is being funny; or, you choose my way, you keep quiet, you don't say anything and you try to be invisible.
>
> (F, 21, Morocco)

For the Muslims, at the centre of attention are the symbols, the traditions, and also the necessary changes that could be occurred in a migratory experience of believers of a religion that, for every attack, far or near, puts Muslims under scrutiny, reserving for its main actors – Italian citizens or even just long-term residents – the treatment of "*unwelcome guests to be treated with suspicion"* (Premazzi and Ricucci, 2016, 4). The theme of prejudice re-emerges and is often reinforced, demonstrating that migration is still an issue tolerated by many, but interjected as a figure of the new millennium only by a part of the citizenry, hopefully not a small minority. It is undeniable – and the data from the most recent polls on Italians' fears confirms this – how immigration and some of its principal actors (especially those we assume to be Muslims because they hold the passport of a country where Islam is the majority religion) represent a growing concern. This is not surprising. It is enough to watch a news program, leaf through a newspaper, or open its online version to realise that better information and education on coexistence and diversity would be necessary for everyone – children and adults, natives, and immigrants.

In the last five years (also confirmed during the pandemic period), there has been a re-emerging need for places, activities, and projects to develop knowledge, promote debates, update ideas, and verify impressions that, if wrong, risk triggering dangerous social conflicts (Premazzi, 2021). At the same time, there is, paradoxically, a step backwards in the demands that Muslim citizens make of institutions: mosques and legal recognition, important issues that could be placed in the background. More significant, or perhaps more urgent and cannot be postponed, are issues such as becoming an important and recognised interlocutor for local administrations, for schools, and for the rich and articulated world of the private social sector that deals with assistance, information, and socio-cultural promotion as well as the theme of local protagonism and rootedness, which translates into developing activities of economic support, accompanying the integration of new arrivals or reunited women. Similarly, the focus on the socialisation of the youngest, from an intercultural perspective, with an important and robust perspective aims at taking up the tension – peculiar to the younger generations – of developing a religious affiliation that is able to combine their feeling of being Italian (or in some cases no longer linked to their

parents' homeland) and the teaching of faith transmitted by their mothers and fathers. Therefore, there are new priorities among young Muslims in the demands to be worked on and invested in. It is particularly in this phenomenon that the differences between the first and second generations, between fathers (and backstage, mothers) and sons (and, not always backstage, daughters), emerge.

## Generational Passage: Religious Socialisations and Outcomes

For the children of immigration, even in the field of faith, migration capital is a burden – a "burning" capital, difficult to manage (Molteni and Dimitriadis, 2021). Among the Muslims who are more involved in associations, there is a greater awareness of the issue; among the others, who are more interested in blending in and not underlining their religious affiliation through active practice, there is a feeling of bewilderment and a clear distance from their parents and their teachings on religion.

> Our parents do not understand that religion does not have the same value for us. We attended classes at the mosque, my younger sister is preparing for the Koran recitation competition. When you become a teenager, you confront other worlds, the world of your friends, your schoolmates, you read. Religion often becomes what others see of you, a label that others see on you, but that means nothing to you, yes, we celebrate the main festivals, but in this we are perfectly Italian: we celebrate but do not believe as many of our Catholic peers do with Christmas. And I can say the same about many of my Romanian or Bengali friends, who are also Muslim in the family.
>
> (M, 24, Tunisia)

The Tunisian interviewee clearly explains a classical mechanism in several children of immigrants' life stories, i.e. of taking the distance from parental cultural background and values, at least in the broader society, from school to sport associations to peer-group activities. The goal is to be "invisible" and to be "not-distinguishable" from their peers according to how they used to behave, how they believed, and what they used to do as traditions at home, especially during adolescence. This attitude has become particularly widespread after 9/11 and the entire subsequent event labelled as a "terroristic attack", which enforced stereotypes and prejudices towards all Muslims, independently from their religious ideas.

> We know who we are, we are Italian Muslims. We are not Arabs, we are not terrorists, and we are not foreigners. Perhaps it is you who have not understood who we are, who have problems with our identity. Even our

> parents are unclear about who we are and are surprised when they only hear us speak Italian or say we are Italian.
>
> (F, 22, Egypt)

For some young Muslim people being able to cope with stereotypes means strongly stressing the Italian part of their identity. This is also an exercise they often have to do with their parents and the elderly people of their ethnic community: the latter group invites young people to be more and more involved in associations with the idea of feeding – their image – them; the youth, indeed, have various ideas of how to manage the religious identity in a country where Islam not only is a minority religion but also not welcomed. In addition to this, youth are well aware of the multi-facets of religious identity: there are several options from being "a strong believer" to being "a totally secular one".

> For me and many of my friends, religion is a cultural trait, a piece of my upbringing; nothing more. We learnt to respect our elders and we learnt the rules of Islam. We live here, this is our place and our time is a time when religion is different from what it represented for our grandparents or for some parents. We are Muslims by tradition, but not because we always go to the mosque or because we are respectful of all the rules. It is curious that you don't understand this, the Italians, the French, and the Germans who don't have foreign origins behave the same way. You keep thinking that we are like our parents, bewildered, who need to find in religion a hook to resist. We are Italians, we feel Italian, this is our country and we do not need religion to feel at home. We must not be discriminated against because you do not know what Islam is and you are afraid of everything.
>
> (M, 24, Senegal)

The generational passage can be noted in the relationship that young people develop with religious belonging even more than practices and dynamics in the public arena (Granata, 2010). To synthesise and simplify, young interviewees can be divided into two groups: the first group refers to those who have been religiously socialised without developing a strong religious identity and defining themselves as Muslim by education (they rarely attend the mosque, any religious value as a life-guide); the second one gathers those who show a religious identity in their religious practices and in how they orient their life.

Among the first group, there are those for whom religion is little more than education received in the family Guolo (2005). They would call them secularised young people who take part in some rituals, maintaining a collective Muslim identity in the face of relative indifference on the level of faith. Religion becomes a reference to the family environment exclusively,

with a relationship of some intensity until adolescence, and then a distancing. In these cases, being Muslim is a (small) piece in the identity mosaic.

> My father is very religious. I was practicing from the age of eight to 18. I always did the five prayers a day, Ramadan etc., because my father had passed on his faith to me. Then at a certain point, I started thinking a little bit in my own way. I don't know, going dancing, watching certain programmes, going out a lot, not going to mosque every week or drinking alcohol, I had to choose. So, I didn't pray anymore; on the other hand, I continued to do Ramadan. Obviously, this displeased my father, but it is my choice. It is useless to go and pray just to please your father. I don't do the five prayers anymore and I don't go to a mosque on Fridays. When you're outside of Muslim countries you can't do certain things anymore, also because going to school or working you can't do that unless you have Fridays off. Some of our parents live as if nothing has changed, for them it is as if in a painting, you change the frame, but the rest remains the same. Here, it is different, the frame is the same, and the rest has changed. We have changed, colleagues, friends, schedules, neighbourhoods, holidays are different. My sisters have also followed the same path as me: one stopped long before me, one resumed after years of interruption, the other two believe but do not pray. However, we all do Ramadan. In short, there are small differences but more or less we have all chosen the same path. My father, on the other hand, continues to go to the mosque, during Ramadan he goes every day; during the rest of the year, because he works, he prays at home in the evenings. However, he has remained very practicing Muslim.
>
> (M, 24, Morocco)

The above words are once again emblematic not only of how adults and young people live their relationship with religion but also of how this relationship cuts across backgrounds. The difference in approach that accompanies the two generations is the same as that found in many Italian families: the outcome of religious socialisation can sometimes result in a younger generation continuing the tradition of their parents' religious behaviour and practices; at other times, they give rise to processes of distancing, to autonomous paths of relating to the sacred (Martino, 2016), *as the next quotation illustrates.*

> My parents tried to pass on their culture and religion to me, but I realized from the very beginning that it was no good. However, I am attached to some things and I want them to stay with me for the rest of my life, because it is something that binds me to them and identifies me. Even if I am not a believer, I identify with them and I like them.
>
> (M, 18, Egypt)

For a second group of Muslim youngsters, religion is a key element of identity, sometimes even in contrast with their parents' generation, which has developed a more private, less visible, religiosity.

> My mother does not wear the veil. I decided to put it on after a trip to Egypt. Even though we were born in Italy, we cannot deny our roots. And religion is part of those roots. I am not afraid of saying that I come from a country rich in culture, important in Mediterranean history. I'm proud to be the daughter of Egyptians, proud to be Muslim. My mother has made a different choice. She has stopped struggling. We know that life is not so easy for Muslims here in Italy. Today it is a little different: many of us now wear the veil at university, and nobody makes smart cracks or looks askance when we go around and about, to the cinema, shops and pizzerias. Twenty years ago, it was different so, to cut a long story short, my mother stopped wearing the veil so as no longer to be always a target.
>
> (F, 22, Egypt)

Compared with a few years ago, the girls whose behaviour seems to be an interesting weathervane in the complex reality (including religious) of the children of immigration are more visible (Salih, 2009). Their adherence is convincing, visible, proud, and active: being Muslim is bound to associational involvement where the religious theme joins those of social cohesion, discrimination, and citizenship. In developing such lived and active religious identity, it is important to stress how the issue of radicalisation is rejected by all the interviewees. As the word of a Moroccan girl graduated in psychology and an active member in the mosque she used to attend:

> We totally reject any discourse on radicalization. We are day-by-day strongly involved in presenting our groups as good citizens and to show to what extent this is possible jointly with our religious belonging. Since 9/11 several activities and project have been promoted and organized by various Muslim association in each Italian city to show the real life of Muslims in Italy: we used to work, to be enrolled at school, to meet friends, to go out for shopping, to go out for a dinner, to organize holidays, to celebrate sport and cultural events as any Italian or Italian associations used to do. Why we have to be evaluated only for our religious life? We do not use to evaluate our Italian or Rumanians or Filipinos friends according to their religious life. Why you do this with us? It seems that we must prove everyday our loyalty to the country. This is our country, why we have to blame it?
>
> (F, 27, Morocco)

These words underline the awareness of being always under-observation. In the meantime, the interviewee points out two crucial issues: 1) the youngest

generation of Muslims feels to belong to Italy due to its socialisation within Italian schools and 2) the fact that Italy is the only country some of them really know, as an Egyptian girl has said along a very passionate answer:

> We are really proud of being Italian. This is our country and several times I have to discuss with my father who do not understand why I so love a country where its inhabitants and politicians still consider those with a migratory backgrounds as unwelcomed people. I can understand my parents thinking at their troubles as immigrants at their first arrivals, but now we are quite wealthy, we live in a residential area, I've been graduated, and I've finished my PhD in political science and my brother is working as an IT expert in a bank. We have to stop to continue to think that we are the wrong side of this country. We are too loud, we are Italians, well inserted in the society and put efforts in present our side of the truth to the media, otherwise only news on terrorism and poor people would be used to describe Muslims in Italy [….] yes I know there are families in economic troubles and young people at risk. It is the same in all ethnic groups, including the Italian ones. So, there is only one way: train the citizens, advise them, organize public event for displaying the real life of Muslim and inform all the people, both Muslims and not-Muslims, that a European and Italian way of being Muslim is possible, without abandon democracy or gender-equality as several political slogans used to mention stressing the incompatibility of Islam with Western country. They are uneducated at all.
>
> (F, 27, Egypt)

The most significant transformations within the Muslim world are recorded in this group: an increase in youth protagonism, the activism of girls, interreligious events, and initiatives for debate on Italian and European Islam. One can then grasp the revolution – also on a religious level – dictated by the growth of the second generations. As well as an advance, in the agenda of the internal confrontation within the associationism, on the themes of leadership and the role that the sons of immigration have to carry forward, instances of recognition and enhancement are genuine to their fathers' generation. The desire of some to pose as leaders, proposing an Islam different from that of their parents, is not, however, without obstacles: it is very difficult for young people to be recognised as representatives of the community, threatening to overshadow figures who have long held roles of responsibility. Therefore, the game, still to be played, concerns the ability of second-generation Islamic associationism not to remain "eternally young" and to be able to combine the needs of new Italians with those of the older generations. In other words, having overcome the season of retreat to the origins, the focus has turned to the future. A new season is looming in which young people can be the main actors.

On the other hand, young people can sometimes count on the support of local administrations (Caponio and Ricucci, 2015): perhaps unconsciously due to the anxiety of assimilation from which immigrant societies suffer, the exponents of second generations are sought and promoted, even on the religious side. Once the season of the presentation of different cultures, religions, and languages as alternative elements in the city's daily life has ended, a phase opens in which attention is devoted to how a person of foreign and Muslim origin can increasingly consider themselves Italian citizens without necessarily relegating the expression of their religiosity to the private sphere (Bossi et al., 2020).

Those who are involved with religious associations are aware of the distance separating their generation and their parents with regard to living and interpreting their faith as well as relations with Italy and their country of origin. Intergenerational comparison of religious aspects shows up a deep reflective capacity on the part of the young, especially those with a higher level of education, in understanding the challenges facing them as children of immigration (Yoon et al., 2008). They also perceive the differences regarding their parents' education and socialisation, which took place in environments permeated with religion where cultural, religious, and national belongings were forged together into a unique affiliation – without distinctions within the local community, distinctive vis-à-vis interaction with the world outside.

In every migratory experience, at the generation shift, parents' associationism faces up to that of the young: the young are recalled to give new energy to their activities and, at the same time, the elderly do not want to leave them the power: so, second generations are considered as a "labour force in the lower positions", not as a future managerial generation. Is this also true for Muslim associationism? An initial point of difference concerns the characteristics of associationism. Among young people, it is a matter of a reflection and commitment path transversal to their origins: the criterion of access is that of recognising Islam as their cultural-religious point of reference. As one of them recalls:

> We don't ask our members for a certificate testifying that they are good Muslims. Our association is called "Young Muslims of Italy," so the access criteria are clear. We are not bound to any particular country: Italy is our common reference and that of our section is Turin.
>
> (M, 22, Morocco)

Another point of difference attains to the way of understanding how leadership should be set up: for young people, they are interested in putting election-type mechanisms into the associations based on election programs, on candidates' CVs, on activated proposals, and social ties shown in the wider socio-cultural context, whereas their parents relied on personal ties and community consensus: in one case, we find elections, directives, and

pre-established deadlines; in the other, reputation (as a good Muslim above all, but also endowed with elevated cultural and social capital) is the determining criterion in being appointed as association representatives (ASGI and FIERI, 2005). The third element of difference has to do with the gender component: girls are an active part (although they have not yet reached the presidency), sometimes leading in organising activities; mothers, on the other hand, keep a low profile.[8] Here we see not only a generational but also a gender revolution.

## The Dreams Come True: It Is Time to Act as the Main Actors on the Stage

So, how do young Muslims respond to the aforementioned demands: do they stand alongside their parents or do they keep their distance by offering their own vision and interpretation of the issues at hand? The mosque question may serve as a prism dividing the positions of the first and second generations. As a young interviewee reminds us, the mosque represents – in a context of mature immigration, for backgrounds firmly settled – a request which may no longer be postponed.

> There is no religious life here. It doesn't exist. If I am religious and want to practice, I can't. Italian mosques are the ugliest places in the world. This is one of the main reasons why I want to go back to Egypt. Here, I can't practice the way I would like to. There are neither instruments nor structures. Relationship with religion is difficult here because you are in a different society. Islam is a religion for the whole world but if you have no mosque, you suffer because it's hot and smelly with people shamefully packed together, and if they close the mosques it will be extremely hard to practice one's religion and develop one's religious ideas.
>
> (M, 26, Egypt)

Parents and children are in agreement about this demand, but with a different approach and attributing different meanings to it. For the latter, a mosque is now only a religious point of reference and should be considered as such in its structure and its décor. For men, above all, it is also for "recovering status" (Dassetto, 1994). Parents, seeing their authority under threat as their children rush into integration and social insertion, try "to recover status as members of the mosque and find the symbolic motivational strength to transfer it within the family" (Ibid., 73). This different approach implies a logical evolution from one generation to the next: all the younger interviewees reduced the mosque to a mere religious function, thereby creating clear discontinuity with the first generation.

How do they intervene in the local arena? How do they participate in the life of the city and promote associationism's socio-cultural role? For the

parents' generation, the cognitive framework within which this relationship is set is that of immigration, which levers the dialectic between a community whose cultural-axiological roots are sunk deep in various elsewhere but are one as to religious reference and a hostile environment with which they are having trouble communicating. Their children would like to drop the references to immigration and diversity: the game is played among equals, between (almost) citizens and residents committed to the common good of the collective and the city. The change of tone is meaningful: as Borkert and Caponio (2010) and Scholten (2011) claimed, the passage is from being destined to be the object of interventions to being fellow actors in developing policies. In this sense, the intercultural variation in the meaning (which we shall see in the following section) of "inclusive intercultural policies", drives relations between Islamic associationism and local institutions to abandon the explosive, reductive immigrants-versus-citizens dichotomy. What is more, for children of immigrants (i.e. "the new actors" on the stage), it is no longer a matter of forwarding demands, which limits Islam to a question regarding immigrants looking back nostalgically towards the past but of inserting the religious debate into the broader discourse of religious pluralism, unchaining it from its nexus with immigration. Energy is spent on constructing relations of partnership, on gaining credibility, and recognition: in other words, on becoming trustworthy interlocutors of institutions and schools. Indeed, the new actors often have no migration experience and are often Italian citizens finding space, expressing the desire to participate in their city's intercultural and interreligious politics.

Turin was one of the first Italian municipalities to develop initiatives and projects to manage the increasing flows of migrants. In the last 30 years, the municipality has shifted from "action on demand", generally multiculturally oriented, to a more coherent and specific intercultural policy. Attention to the second generations emerged mainly in the last ten years of the city's policy evolution. In fact, recently, a new era seems to have come about: the consolidation of intercultural discourse has taken place in tandem, generating a large number of practices, projects, and experiences mainly based on the notions of dialogue, mutual exchange, and social interaction. The centrality of this policy was confirmed by the creation of a Department for Integration, dedicated to defining a coherent intercultural policy for promoting integration: the goal is to embed the discourse on integration in all city policies, reinforcing the shift from special initiatives and ad hoc projects for migrants to policies capable of considering the various facets of the city's residents. This shift was part of the last four mayoral programmes (since 2011), where it was considered necessary to develop the intercultural dimension as an approach affecting all policy areas and to promote the involvement of immigrants in the city's life in various fields: social, cultural, and economic. Immigrants should be metamorphosed from being (or being perceived as) recipients to being pro-active participants in promoting activities.

In this phase, attention to second generations – particularly those with a Muslim background – and their civic involvement come onto the stage. These young people are considered the drivers of the integration process on both sides: on the one hand, supporting immigrants to be engaged with the city and, on the other hand, helping Italian citizens understand the multiple aspects of immigration in the city. This new approach toward juvenile activism has been supported financially in the framework of two calls for projects that the Municipality developed in agreement with a bank foundation. The initiatives acknowledged are primarily directed at second-generation Turin people to whom the city looks for guidance in developing its own intercultural policies. The activities carried out in order to train second generations to become active citizens may be divided into three groups according to their functions: 1) initiatives directed towards useful or practical assistance: concrete help by offering services of orientation and counselling; 2) gathering together emotional support activities, which may at times be defined as assistance towards self-expression and the formation of one's own personality. In this sense, we should also recall improving youths' communicative and expressive capacities and the consequent development of relational skills in free time; and 3) activities directed towards information and educational support to offer moments of updating, reflection, and education on subjects relevant to minors and young people, to cope with educational challenges posed by adolescents, as well as to provide both young people and adults with useful information about educational and training paths (Stoll and Wong, 2007; Taurini et al., 2017).

The result of all these initiatives was the active involvement of young people as organisers, animators, and educators of other foreign minors who are following insertion and growth paths in the city of Turin. In the meantime, these activities have strongly involved second generations in the city's life by considering them active citizens of Turin, even if their citizenship is not Italian.

## Conclusion: New Generations on the Move

To summarise, a diachronic perspective reveals areas of strength and weakness in the city's relationship with first- and second-generation associationism. In the former case, the rapport was mainly on demand: associations, organisationally weak, and ill-prepared to interact with administrations and to belong to a prevalently "by-request" dimension, whether for spaces or funds for small initiatives. With younger people, the relationship shifts toward partnership; new generations want to be recognised as reliable interlocutors, both linguistically and in terms of how administrative mechanisms work. They make a point of being present and active in the city's cultural events and intervening – whenever possible – in decision-making processes in order to reinforce their thesis that Islam is compatible with being

active citizens. Even in an immigration laboratory city like Turin, their aspirations clash with reality because, no matter how much appreciated they are by the majority of political groupings, second-generation associations are not yet seen as being capable of replacing their parent's associations as reference points for institutions. But we should be careful not to confuse absence from the decision-making process with absence from the debate inherent to questions of interest: children of immigration broadcast their view of how they define Muslim belonging by taking part in congresses, organising public events, and – above all – the Internet.

The Turin experience appears to reveal a change of tone and to capture the signs of a split between first- and second-generation associationism. Demands are more general, connected as they are with recognition as actors in, and an important part of, the city's socio-cultural environment. Concerns are related to the sensibilisation and updating of the citizenry as to generational changes taking place in the Muslim community.[9] One seems to be moving on the ground of "symbolic religiosity", where second-generation religious identities are only tenuously connected with beliefs and practice and are rather designed to strengthen common belonging to an association. By means of symbolic religiosity, belonging to Islam can be translated into recognition of a common Muslim identity, which is shared and practiced within associational activities but not necessarily tied to the observance of practices. There is thus a distancing between a practicing Muslim and one who sees Islam as an identity and a cultural marker. Based on this distinction, new demands and new relations (on the side of collaboration and sharing rather than that of breakdown and contrast) with local realities take shape. The goal is no longer just recognising each person's practices and uniqueness. Instead, the goal is to promote each person's right to be different and intercultural policies in which religious diversity is just one part of the social fabric of the city and not a source of conflict.

What is at stake is the ability of second-generation Islamic associationism to move on from its condition of eternal youth and learn to conjoin the needs of the neo-Italians with those of the older generations. Once the time of falling back on their origins has passed, the future beckons. It is a future in which they are already on the threshold of becoming adults, adopting family responsibilities once again, and the appearance of an elderly generation, which once more questions religious associationism and the city about needs that go well beyond caring for the soul.

## Notes

1 In this chapter, I refer to my previous presentations held in several conferences in 2021 (Ricucci, 2021a; Ricucci and Pinna Pintor, 2021) and parts of this chapter, which have been partly revised here, have been already published in Ricucci (2021b).

2 There is a wide debate on how children of immigrants should be labelled. In this chapter, I refer to Rumbaut's definition (1994), who defines second generations as those who are born in a country where at least one parent has immigrated. The use of plural tries to take into account that children of immigrants, even when they share the same generational belonging, may differ by family background, parents' nationalities, and level of integration in the parental immigration country.
3 According to the methodology, these issues will be discussed using a general sample of 80 qualitative interviews collected in several Italian cities, 36 interviews with Moroccans (first and second generations), Tunisians, Senegalese, and Egyptians living in Turin, carried out in 2019–2021, divided equally by sex. Interviews included not only questions on religious belonging, religious participation, and association involvement but also various aspects of life and family's migration experience. Respondents were reassured about the confidentiality of information and the ethical uses of the collected interviews. In the interview quotations, they are recalled in the following way: sex (F = Female; M = Male), age, and citizenship. The analysis will also be enriched by seven interviews with experts, local administrators, and key informant on both Muslims in Italy and at local level where information has been collected.
4 In migration studies, the role of both ethnic and faith-based associations in supporting the various phases of the integration process, from the first arrival to the needs of family reunion to the educational requests in maintaining cultural and religious links across generations have been researched (Ebaugh and Chafetz, 2000; Diehl and Koening, 2013).
5 In addition to this, it should be clarified that the same attitude is developed – by the Turin and all Italian local administrations – to the other migrant (and non-migrant) religious associations, including the Catholic ones (Ambrosini et al., 2018).
6 All the entries were anonymised by entering fictitious names, followed by citizenship, as indicated by all the interviewees.
7 All the interviews have been collected in Italian and managed through *Atlas.ti* for their analyses. Concerning the used language, which is sometimes not grammatically correct, and the insertion of some slang, they indicate a specific and conscious choice to give the voice directly to the interviewees who are young people, asking to express personal feelings. Some linguistically wrong expressions make the content really interesting in terms of the scientific analysis of identity issues and legacies.
8 There are obvious exceptions that appear, above all in the world of ethnic-national associationism, whenever women become stakeholders. A Turin example is the Moroccan female president of the Diafa Al Maghreb association.
9 In this connection, it is worth reading the theatrical work developed by the Turin section of Young Muslim of Italy: "Richiami Lontani" (Distant Echoes), aimed at introducing possible modalities of integration and intercultural dialogue to the Islamic public.

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Chapter 2

# *Alternative für Deutschland*'s Appeal to Native Youth in Dresden

## Heritage Populism

*Ayhan Kaya*

### Introduction

It is often presumed that right-wing populist parties' supporters are political protestors, single-issue voters, "losers of globalisation", ethno-nationalists, "fascists", "Nazis", "neo-Nazis", and/or racists. However, the reality appears to be much more complex. Right-wing populist party voters are dissatisfied with, and distrustful of, mainstream elites and, most importantly, hostile to immigration and rising ethno-cultural and religious diversity, "super-diversity" (Vertovec, 2007), or ethnic hybridisation (Rodriguez-Garcia et al., 2019). Sympathisers of right-wing populist parties appeal to nativist, Eurosceptic, Islamophobic, and Manichean parties as they are mostly subject to relative social-economic deprivation, spatial deprivation, and nostalgic deprivation. Hit by three recent crises simultaneously – global financial crisis, refugee crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic – right-wing populist groups perceive ongoing neo-liberal forms of governance and demographic changes as a set of security challenges threatening the social, political, cultural, and economic unity and homogeneity of their nation.

Many of the European citizens residing in remote places, which "no longer matter", such as formerly industrialised towns, agricultural, rural, and mountainous regions (Rodrigues-Pose, 2018), are more likely to be subject to social, economic, political, spatial, and nostalgic forms of deprivation (Boym, 2001; Gest et al., 2017; Kaya, 2020). Remoteness is not necessarily limited to geographical distance. It is also associated with the political, ideological, and ideational distance of an individual to the political centre that claims to have hegemonic power over the constituents of the political and societal whole. A growing number of European citizens have become affected by unemployment, poverty, and feelings of insecurity, alienation, obliviousness, and abandonment. They have become resentful of their current social, economic and political situation as compared to how it was before. Many such individuals are facing a discrepancy between understandings of their current status and perceptions about their past. In this sense, right-wing populism has become even more attractive for those

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experiencing a kind of *spatial deprivation*, meaning that they believe that they live in a place "that no longer matters", and thus have become peripheral (Kaya, 2020).

Right-wing populism is a rejection of the order imposed by neoliberal elites who have failed to use the resources of the democratic nation-state to harness global processes for local needs and desires (Mouffe, 2018). Such populism originates in deep-rooted structural inequalities and general impoverishment that mainstream political parties have actively contributed to in their embrace of neoliberal governance. There is not enough space in this chapter to extensively elaborate on the literature on right-wing populism of the present age. However, the working definition of populism to be here is borrowed from the disciplines of anthropology and geography. Anthropological approaches mostly understand populism as "the moods and sensibilities of the disenfranchised who face the disjuncture between everyday lives that seem to become extremely anomic and uncontainable and the wider public power projects that are out of their reach and suspected of serving their ongoing disenfranchisement" (Kalb, 2011: 14). Combining socio-economic and cultural dimensions, anthropological approaches focus on "those left behind by the march of neoliberalism" – abandoned by the ones labelled as liberals, globalists, urban-centred elite, cosmopolitans, Christian Democrats, Social Democrats, and the traditional centre-left that have embraced neoliberalism since the 1990s (Boyer, 2016).

As Andrés Rodrigues-Pose (2018: 196–198) put it, populism as a political force has taken hold in many of the so-called spaces that "do not matter". As in developing countries, the rise of populism in the developed world is fuelled by political resentment. Populist votes have been heavily concentrated in territories that have suffered long-term declines and reflect an increasing divide between urban and regional. It is not a surprise then to see that right-wing populism has become a recurring phenomenon in remote places such as Dresden as well as rural and mountainous places, which "no longer matter" (Glorius, 2017). As Ernesto Laclau (2005) noted, situations in which a plurality of unsatisfied demands and an increasing inability of the traditional institutional system to absorb them differentially coexist, creating the conditions for a populist rupture. This rupture may result in right-wing or left-wing populism, depending on the historical path each country has taken. Right-wing populists are anti-elitist and they capitalise on culture, past, civilisation, migration, nation, and race, while left-wing populists prefer to invest in social class-related drivers (Kaya, 2020; Mouffe, 2018; Mudde, 2016; Reynié, 2016). As this chapter is mainly interested in the depiction of heritage populism, it is more relevant to concentrate on right-wing populism.

Based on the hypothesis that all kinds of populisms, radicalisms, extremisms, and fundamentalisms are local, this chapter will exploit the field research findings gathered in Dresden, rather than making general claims

about right-wing populism in Germany. The *Alternative für Deutschland* (AfD) became the first party in Dresden by winning 23.3 per cent of the votes while they received 12.6 per cent of the votes across the nation in the 2017 federal elections.[1] With a 3.5 per cent difference, the party gained 18.8 per cent in the 2021 federal elections.[2] Dresden is a city that has unique characteristics as far as the popularity of the AfD is concerned. The aim of the chapter is to document the ways in which the past is being used by the AfD to mainstream its political objectives, and how young supporters of the party respond to that. The focus will then be both on the investigation of the ways in which AfD leadership is involved in the production of *heritage populism*, i.e. efforts to use the past to mobilise different social groups, and on the exploration of its consumption by young right-wing nativist voters.

## Theoretical and Methodological Deliberations

In this chapter, "right-wing populism" will be perceived and explained as a form of radicalism as elaborated on in the social movements literature. As Robert Gurr (1969) pointed out earlier, angry people rebel. Some youngsters become increasingly angry and radicalised as a result of a variety of root causes. No consensus has emerged on the root causes of radicalisation. Competing narratives have co-existed since its inception between socio-economic and political marginalisation and grievances on the one hand and ideological motivations on the other hand. In the aftermath of 9/11, the term radicalisation has become intertwined with "recruitment" by extremists, who try to persuade these angry individuals to join their war (Coolsaet, 2019). Those who recruit these angry individuals may be both Islamist extremists (e.g. ISIS, Al Qaeda, Boko Haram) and white-supremacist extremists (e.g. Identitarian movement, Combat-18, and the Soldiers of Odin) (CEP, 2019). However, one needs to benefit from an interdisciplinary perspective to understand the root causes of radicalisation without causing a confusion with regard to the meanings of the terms such as radicalisation, extremism, fundamentalism, terrorism, and violence (Calhoun, 2011; Della Porta, 2008, 2014, 2018; Della Porta and Parks, 2016; Tilly, 1986, 1977). To do so, this chapter will benefit from the social movements theory that tries to understand the processes of radicalisation from a relational perspective, and will challenge security-based approaches that are likely to reduce radicalisation to extremism and terrorism. This chapter is based on the hypothesis that social movements theory is more explanatory for the elaboration of the radicalisation of native youth in Dresden – the birthplace of Pegida (Patriotic Europeans against the Islamisation of the Western World) and a stronghold of the AfD – since it scrutinises relational elements that underpin the reactionary attitudes of native Dresdner youth against the destabilising political, societal, demographic, and economic factors that have been prevalent since the unification of Germany in 1990. In their influential

scientific intervention, Donatella della Porta and Louisa Parks (2016) state that the major objectives of social movements have shifted from the search for global justice to the quest for answers to more domestic issues revolving around direct democracy, environmentalism, deindustrialisation, mobility, diversity, and representation.

Craig Calhoun (2011)'s intervention on the elaboration of the term radicalism is also very beneficial for the analysis made in this chapter to understand the root causes of radicalisation of Dresdner youth who tend to generate a reactionary response to social, spatial, and nostalgic forms of deprivation. The chapter proposes an alternative reading of right-wing nativist and populist radicalism: assessing the protests of some right-wing nativist and populist youngsters as struggles for democracy, rather than threats to democracy (Muxel, 2020). Being exposed to socio-economic, spatial and nostalgic forms of deprivation, our young interlocutors have generated different forms of coping mechanisms such as resorting to the past, myths, traditions, culture, *völkisch* ethno-nationalism, anti-Muslim racism, anti-interculturalism, and nativism. These are the items that they could easily pick up from their cultural repertoire as Charles Tilly (1977) would put it, when they need to express their anger, fear, protest, and discomfort. Their reliance on a rather distinct Saxonian culture and history with the memories of the Democratic Republic of Germany (GDR) as well as of the Prussian heritage is also something that the organised right-wing political formations such as the AfD and Pegida tend to exploit to recruit followers.

The research has been conducted with a multitude of techniques, ranging from desk research to discourse analysis of the public speeches of the party leaders of the AfD. Discourse analysis is a qualitative research method focusing on the investigation of the relations between discourse and socio-cultural developments in everyday life. It views discursive practices as an important form of social practice contributing to the constitution of the social and cultural world including social identities and relations (Fairclough, 1992). The main material to be analysed in this chapter is the semi-structured in-depth interviews held with twenty young supporters of the AfD in Dresden and Saxony (age bracket 18 and 30) between April 2020 and April 2021 by a native researcher working under the supervision of this author within the framework of a European Research Council Advanced Grant research (Prime Youth).[3] The chapter starts with the elaboration of the ways in which right-wing populist parties use the past to mobilise different social groups. To that effect, the concept of *heritage populism* will be discussed in detail to pave the way for the following sections in which the political leadership of the AfD will be elaborated on in terms of the ways in which they exploit the past for their own political agenda. Eventually, the work will delineate how young AfD voters respond to such efforts exploiting the past for the formation of a kind of heritage that is to be used for coping with the ills of the present.

## The Use of the Past: Heritage Populism

Heritage is an operational instrument of governmentality in the Foucauldian sense. Heritage is a cultural practice utilised by political actors in the construction and regulation of a range of values and understandings at the national level. If it is shaped by state actors, then it can be termed "authorised heritage" (Smith, 2006). Museums, national myths, and various other narratives were institutionalised as manifestations of national identity and cultural achievement in the 19th and 20th centuries. It is not only state actors but also some of the right-wing populist parties in Europe and elsewhere today that are engaged in mobilising their supporters through a particular sense of history, past, heritage, authenticity, and culture inscribed in their party programmes and speeches (Aslanidis, 2020). Particular peripheral communities may use the same symbolic elements to define and constitute who they are and are not. This is what Smith (2006) calls "subversive heritage", and it is formed by the centrifugal forces in remote peripheral spaces opposing the hegemony of "authorised heritage discourse". The use of "subversive heritage", or what Robertson and Webster (2017) call "heritage from below", as a peripheral, communal, and local cultural practice is an act of convenience that our research team often encountered in Dresden. In this sense, right-wing populist parties are more attentive than mainstream political parties to the ways in which local populations express their claims for "heritage from below" (Robertson and Webster, 2017).

Historically speaking, populisms often involved agrarian populations facing hostile socio-structural conditions in the context of a changing socio-economic environment where industrialisation and modernisation imposed a power shift away from traditional rural communities. Hence, the American People's Party of the 1880s and 1890s, the Russian Narodnik movement of the 1870s, the German Farmers League of the 1920s, the Polish Peasant Movement of the 1920s and 1930s, and the Bulgarian Agrarian National Union of the early 20th century would qualify for the populist family (Aslanidis, 2020; Finchelstein, 2019). Similar to the conditions of the late 19th century and early 20th century in Europe, the recent global financial crisis, the "refugee crisis", and the COVID-19 pandemic have caused many changes in the everyday lives of individuals residing in remote and peripheral places in Europe. They exacerbate tendencies that existed before, e.g. the feelings of people in geographically and politically remote places that they are not only exposed to testimonial and hermeneutical injustice but also to spatial and nostalgic deprivation (Gest et al., 2017; Macmillan, 2017; Rodrigues-Pose, 2018) that leads to a loss of status and even of personal dignity felt by the impoverished middle class as well as working class in the face of globalisation processes that delegitimise social positions built up over time. Social, spatial, and cultural frustrations make some local residents sensitive to political offers of populism which come from outside,

mainly right-wing populists, as in the cases of former East German towns such as Dresden.

Heritage populism is built on material and cultural concerns prompted by economic globalisation, depopulation, and population ageing. Its characteristic feature is a propensity to invest intangible heritage with a set of values, principles, and rules that supposedly inhere in the European or Western way of life, such as individual freedoms, gender equality, and secularism (Reynié, 2016). Right-wing populist parties in Europe instrumentalise heritage as a cultural, political, and economic resource for the present. In this way, their strong emphasis on the past – be it colonial, republican, imperial, traumatic, dissonant, and/or dark – illustrates how heritage is being created, shaped, managed, and exploited by these political parties as well as by the ruling parties to meet the demands of the present and to come to terms with the challenges of contemporary global conditions. Nostalgia as a mythic vision of the nation's golden past has become an essential element of heritage populism since the present and future do not offer bright prospects for many individuals across the world.

Svetlana Boym (2001) distinguishes between "restorative" and "reflective" nostalgia. While the former hopes to restore a golden past as in the time of Augustus II the Strong in Dresden in the early 18th century, the latter draws on the past for a critical re-evaluation and active changing of the present. Restorative nostalgia has become a prevalent aspect of the AfD's political campaigns in Saxony. During the campaigns of 2019, the AfD emphasised a regional identity in Saxony. The poster "Courage for Saxony" (*Mut zu Sachsen*) included an image of a famous monument of Augustus the Strong, former Elector of Saxony and the King of Poland (1670–1733), in Dresden (Weisskircher, 2022). Such a nostalgic element of cultural identity is not only visible in Saxony, but also common to the other East German provinces. For instance, the AfD Brandenburg frames Brandenburg as the heartland of Prussia, and therefore Germany as a whole:

> Beyond the borders of the German cultural space, Brandenburg-Prussia is known for a number of secondary virtues such as modesty, discipline, progressiveness, punctuality and thrift. Character traits that those who direct the fortunes of our Heimat sadly lack. Politics in the state of Brandenburg must return to those virtues that once led to the blossoming of our entire body politic. Today our Prussian virtues are still admired and often carried over to the whole of Germany. They are an important part of our national identity.[4]

The AfD Brandenburg State Election Program 2019 continues by referring to further historical elements of national identity by emphasising important geographical locations, historical dates, buildings and monuments, pictures,

emblems and symbols, works of literature such as songs and poetry, but also common traditions and festivals peculiar to Brandenburg.[5]

Our young interlocutors have shown that they are inclined to use both forms of nostalgia in Dresden. In this sense, restorative nostalgia may become prevalent when individuals are in search of attempts to reinstate a particular vision of a neglected and forgotten glorious past, while the reflective form of nostalgia may play an important role for disenchanted individuals to renegotiate the tension between the charming and familiar tenets of the past and the ills of the present such as the loss of work, deindustrialisation, diversity, transnationalism, anomy, insecurity, and ambiguity (Boym, 2001; Orr, 2017; Smith and Campbell, 2017). While restorative justice discourse is more a matter of choice among the right-wing populist political circles such as the AfD, both restorative and reflective forms of nostalgia become prevalent at societal level among young supporters of the party whom we interviewed. However, one should not immediately associate such a constant state of nostalgia with only a strong sense of loss; at the same time, it should also be associated with "a strong sense of hope or longing for a better future" (Smith and Campbell, 2017: 616).

Heritage is intangible and is all about the present-day use of the past that gives meaning to traditions (Aronsson, 2015). Heritage is a social practice, enacted by groups of people to redefine the boundaries between in-groups and out-groups. The debates about an Islam-free Europe are all manifestations of a Manichean world dividing between "us" and "them", "civilised" and "barbarian", or rather between "us" and "Muslims". Since the so-called refugee crisis in the summer of 2015, the boundaries that are reconstituted by right-wing populist parties and their supporters are not necessarily meant to exclude refugees in need, but rather Muslim-origin immigrants and their descendants, who have become more competitive, visible and outspoken over time with their social, political, economic and cultural demands.

## Dissonant Heritage: Dresdner Population as the "Double Victims of Nazism and Western Imperialism"

Heritage is not always associated with comfortable, harmonious, and consensual views about the meaning of the past. Ashworth and Tunbridge (1996) argued that all heritage is, by its very nature, "dissonant", as the disputed authority to control stories told about the past makes it a conflicted resource (Harrison, 2013). Resulting from the need to come to terms with the remains of a past that can be actively uncomfortable, embarrassing, traumatic, sensitive, negative, dark, and painful, the concept of dissonant heritage has become popular to refer to the sites, objects, and practices that have been, or still are, contested (Huyssen, 1995; Smith, 2006). Although heritage is always made in the present, by the present, and for the purposes of the present, the literature on dissonant heritage, or dark heritage

(Macdonald, 2009), tends to separate heritage that is dissonant, dark, and problematic from all other "normal", comfortable, and consensual forms of heritage. Similar to the other cities of the former GDR, Dresden is a remarkable city with a contested set of narratives about its dissonant past. Since the early days of the Cold War era, the bombing of the city on 13 February 1945 was at the centre of East German memory politics, which offered East Germans an integrative myth of collective innocence based on a discourse of anti-Fascism. However, the anti-fascism discourse was not devised to cope with Germany's Nazi past, but rather as a political weapon for confronting the new "Fascist" and "imperialist" Western threat (Benda-Beckmann, 2015: 83). Hence, East Germans were indoctrinated for decades during the Cold War era to believe that they were the victims of the renewed threat of imperialist war aggression that could be stopped only by the "peaceful" Soviet Union. Over the Cold War years, some of the Dresdner inhabitants also developed anti-Soviet aspirations and motivations to save the *abendländische Kultur* from being colonised by the USSR (Coury, 2016). Hence, both Pegida and the AfD became popular in Dresden, the population of which did not go through a similar process of coming to terms with the Nazi past and Holocaust (Benda-Beckmann, 2015).

The nationalist-conservative wing of the AfD grew stronger after the state elections in eastern Germany in the summer of 2014 (Arzheimer and Berning, 2019; Decker, 2016). In the autumn of that year, marches organised by Pegida took place in Dresden. Demonstrations held every Monday evening in Dresden sometimes amounted to more than ten thousand participants. Spurred on by the accelerating pace of the debate on asylum and refugee policy, these "Monday walks" beginning in October 2014 increasingly resonated with the public and, above all, the media throughout and beyond Germany. Pegida opened a Facebook page created by Lutz Bachmann, a former cook, titled *Friedliche Europäer gegen die Islamisierung des Abendlandes* ("Peaceful Europeans against the Islamization of the West"). Bachmann later had to step down from the movement following public protest against his posing in front of the media dressed as Hitler.[6] He once stated that the movement's name was modelled after a slogan from the Christian Democratic Union (CDU)'s election campaign in the late 1940s and 1950s; *Rettet die abendländische Kultur* (Save Western Culture). This slogan was formed in reference to the threat from the USSR and Bolshevism during the Cold War (Benda-Beckmann, 2015: 59; Coury, 2016). Flagging up some topics such as identity politics, homeland politics, anti-interculturalism, anti-religious diversity, and anti-immigration agitation particularly attractive for youth by adopting social media communication tools such as Facebook, Pegida has contributed to the formation of *Identitäre Bewegung* (Identitarian Movement) in Dresden and elsewhere in eastern German provinces, and functioned as a propaganda tool against immigration and encouraging *völkisch* nationalism (Salzborn, 2016: 50; Virchow, 2016).

Hence, one could argue that Pegida was not only a protest against refugees and Muslims, but also a representative of a much broader resistance to the loss of Christian civilisation's core values and to the German political elite.

The AfD portrays eastern Germans as distinctly prone to protest and resistance, referring to the memory of the "peaceful revolution" of 1989 during the months of the dissolution of the GDR. The AfD is not alone in revitalising the regional identity in Saxony, there are also other far-right political and societal groups such as the Pegida, *Institut für Staatspolitik* (IfS, Institute for State Politics), *Freie Sachsen* [Free Saxons], or *Zukunft Heimat* [Future Heimat]. IfS is a "think-tank" founded in 2000 and now based in Schnellroda, a small town near Leipzig, Saxony-Anhalt, that publishes offline and online, organises seminars, and has a publishing house. *Freie Sachsen* was established in February 2021 during the pandemic as an umbrella organisation aiming to offer everyone to be united for a free region similar to Carinthia, South Tyrol, and Corsica.[7] *Zukunft Heimat* is an anti-asylum initiative founded in August 2015 and active in southern Brandenburg.[8] Such far-right political actors also portray the Federal Republic's political system, the national government and decisions made over the course of the "refugee crisis" (Kaya, 2020) as well as the COVID-19 pandemic as illegitimate. Hence, the dominant function of right-wing populist interpretations of a distinct eastern German identity in Saxony is not only the exclusion of immigrants, but also the delegitimisation of Germany's political elite and the institutions of real-existing democracy (Weisskircher, 2022).

Pegida demonstrators warned against the "Islamisation of the Western World", and they grew into a movement of right-wing radicals. This was another issue on which the neo-liberal faction distanced itself from Pegida and its sympathiser the nationalist-conservative faction. By January 2015, the number of weekly demonstrators for Pegida in Dresden rose to around 20,000. During this period, the influence of the New Right on Pegida increased steadily (Coury, 2016). Based on what Dominique Reynié calls "heritage populism", Pegida and the AfD institutionalised their hostility towards Islam and immigrants based on concerns with secularism, gender equality, freedom of speech, press freedom, and a victorious past, rather than on expressions of racism or xenophobia (Coury, 2016: 51). The interviews conducted in Dresden revealed that all interlocutors had been involved in Pegida demonstrations from the very beginning. Many of them expressed anti-systemic sentiments resulting from their belief that mainstream political parties have neglected their social-economic and political claims (see also Weisskircher, 2022: 96–97). They also expressed their concerns about Germany's liberal refugee policies, and the security challenges posed by the growing number of Muslim immigrants and their descendants. Dresden has a tiny Muslim population, but one that feels increasingly besieged due to the escalation of brutal images of ISIS terror by both the mainstream and social

media. More than 30 years after unification, political activism of the Pegida demonstrators strongly focuses on opposition to Muslim immigration and, recently, the politics of the COVID-19 pandemic. The interviews we conducted with young natives also demonstrate that these protestors reject Germany's *Energiewende* (energy transition) and liberal gender policies (see also Simpson, 2020).

The interviews conducted in Dresden reveal that young AfD supporters have a different interpretation of the past than their peers residing in the western parts of Germany as far as the historical "heroisms" of German soldiers are concerned. Since heritage is the use of the past as a cultural, political, and economic resource in the present (Aronsson, 2015; Ashworth et al., 2007: 2–3), right-wing populist parties are often selective in instrumentalising various artefacts, mythologies, memories, and traditions as resources for the present. Heritage operates as a cultural, political, and economic resource at local, national, supranational, and global levels. As right-wing populist parties are more engaged in the idea of investing in local heritage, they have an advantage over mainstream political parties. For instance, calls for the preservation of German soldiers' deeds from the public in former East German provinces and cities are translated, or rather reinforced, by AfD leadership and have recently become prevalent. One of the co-leaders of the AfD, Alexander Gauland publicly made the following statement in Thüringen, a former East German province neighbouring Dresden, on 2 October 2017:

> If the French are, quite rightly, proud of their Emperor, and the British of Churchill, then we [the Germans] have the right to be proud of what soldiers achieved in the First and Second World Wars.[9]

Both Sharon Macdonald (2009) and Bill Niven (2002) maintain that East Germans cast Nazism largely as a feature of the West, not the socialist state. The East was understood by the GDR population as the location of those who had opposed it. This account was evident in how some of the material remains of the Nazi period, particularly from concentration camps, were publicly represented. In the memorialisation of concentration camps, the emphasis was on political prisoners, especially communists, all of whom were seen as victims of the Nazi actions that the socialist state opposed (Macdonald, 2009; Niven, 2002).

Saxon conservatism has its roots in the pride of the historical legacy of Saxon chauvinism and the state's independence (Volk, 2020). Since the unification in 1990, this historically renowned "Baroque city" has become the meeting point for large-scale European far-right extremist marches, which have appropriated the commemoration of the wartime destruction of the Old Town on a regular basis for the past two decades (Benda-Beckmann, 2015; Eckersley, 2020Volk, 2020). The city of Dresden is also pronounced by

many local actors through a "victim narrative" (victim of both Nazism and Western imperialism) as part of the popular memory because of the 1945 fire-bombings by the Allied Powers (Benda-Beckmann, 2015: 90). The far-right has long used the victim narrative as a means to justify their presence in official commemorations. Pegida and the AfD have also appropriated such narratives (Volk, 2020). Most of the interlocutors in Dresden expressed concerns about being haunted by the past. They firmly believe that the world was conspiring against Germany. When responding to inquiries about political participation, a 30-year-old craftsman from Dresden voiced his worry that the rest of the world has been conspiring against Germany since World War II:

> It's self-explanatory: The ones who are elected don't have the power for making decisions. I can't vote for those who make decisions. I mean the lobbyists [Bilderberger conspiracy]. Back then, I used to think that you can change something with your vote, and that democracy is a real one, let's say it like that. At the moment, I don't vote. I rather try to contribute to humanity. Otherwise, I wouldn't sit here.
>
> (interview, 22 October 2020)

Studies of populism have already discussed the intensive use of conspiracy theories to understand the world (Ghergina et al., 2013). Such theories provide their adherents with a world lacking depth and thus a world that can be more clearly understood. The populist discourse revitalises a "theology of roots" against the conspirator's intentions, to make it possible for its followers to escape from the burden of history by defending the purity and innocence of the "community" (Leontis, 1991: 193). Another lesson to be learned from Dresden regarding right-wing populism's growing appeal is the political resentment various groups express toward the current policies of the leading political parties. A 24-year-old male interlocutor from Dresden said the following when asked about the mainstream political parties:

> … Regarding the corona crisis they only show one perspective of scientists while the other one doesn't matter… And of course, everything becomes more global and it is no longer possible that you can talk… about countries. One rather talks about the Eurozone and laws imposed by Brussels, and all the countries are supposed to abide. It is no longer about German politics but it is about continental politics… These are all different countries with different cultures and it is impossible to impose one system on all countries.
>
> (interview, 25 October 2021)

Evidently, right-wing native youth in Saxony are inclined to establish links between the misdeeds of the ruling parties in Berlin and the

growing anti-Muslim racism in the region where there are actually very few Muslims (Kalmar, 2020). Capitalising on the Islamophobic and xenophobic sentiments of their electorate, the AfD leadership has also used every opportunity to mainstream their party by underlining that Islam simply poses societal challenges to the liberal way of life of the European citizens (Schmidtke, 2020). To that effect, they are exploiting symbols of the past that are paradoxically anti-Nazi.

To illustrate this, following the murder of a local resident of German–Cuban origin, Daniel Hillig, who was stabbed to death by three immigrant-origin youngsters in Chemnitz, near Dresden, on 26 August 2018 during a festival celebrating the city's founding, a stream of street protests broke out in the city. The protests were intensified by the arrest of an Iraqi and a Syrian suspected of killing Hillig.[10] Soon after the immediate protests, in which the crowds openly paid homage to Nazism, Islamophobism, and xenophobia, the AfD leadership organised a "funeral march" for Hillig, who, it is thought, would have been opposed to the idea of being associated with such an AfD-led procession. The march took place in the Chemnitz city centre on the International Day of Peace, 1 September 2018 – a symbolic day (International Peace Day) chosen to attract more demonstrators. Although previously denied by the AfD leadership, the march was held in collaboration with Pegida.[11] The organisers of the march, AfD MPs, Andreas Kalbitz (Brandenburg), Björn Höcke (Thuringia), and Jörg Urban (Saxony), decreed that the march should be a funeral: there would be no smoking and no food or drinks. Colourful clothing, usually worn by Pegida protesters, was forbidden. Only black-red-golden flags and the white rose as a sign of mourning were permitted. It is commonly known in Germany that this flower is a symbol of the resistance by siblings Hans and Sophie Scholl, members of the "White Rose" resistance movement against Nazi rule. The funeral march caused a heated debate in Germany among citizens opposed to the rise of the AfD. Many people were disturbed by the AfD's appropriation of a historical symbol of the anti-Nazi movement and a victim who was reportedly anti-AfD. It was also reported that the AfD had earlier tried to publish an election poster with the slogan "Sophie Scholl would vote for the AfD". However, this was prohibited for copyright reasons by the Berlin district court.[12] The appropriation of the resistance movement against the Nazis, and its leading figure, Sophie Scholl, reflects the AfD's self-elevation as revolutionaries against the forthcoming Islamisation of Germany (Lewicki and Shooman, 2020: 38).

It is striking to see how the AfD has been successfully using peaceful symbols of a dissonant, hurtful, and dark past to attract more popular support for their demonstrations and public meetings organised against the "Islamization and forced multiculturalisation of Germany". One could also view such acts as performative acts of right-wing heritage populism, as they are staged to appeal to large numbers of people at a local level (Reynié, 2016). Such acts are

intended to present the AfD as the chief protectors of liberty who are resisting against mainstream political parties, chiefly Chancellor Angela Merkel and her CDU, for failing to uphold the values and rules of a liberal society and for being complacent in the rise of multiculturalism and Islamism resulting from globalisation and "irresponsible" immigration policies.

## *Ostalgia* in East Germany: Longing for the Lost Home …

East Germany provides other lessons as well. It is not only fear of the present but also unresolved socio-economic disparities of the past which inspire right-wing populism. Most of the interlocutors in Dresden said that they feel forgotten and that their economic interests are not being properly considered. A 30-year-old male from Dresden, a former self-identified neo-Nazi who was enrolled in the de-radicalisation programme a few years ago, expressed his resentment of the unification policies of Helmut Kohl's government in the 1990s and their after-effects:

> In this neighbourhood there is no youth. Those who live here are losers. Most young people move away. This place has no future. The businesses here have not understood digitalisation. The area is middle class. The place here survived the *Wende* [process after the unification] but it has not developed. Despite the fact that Berlin and Poland are not far away, from an entrepreneurial perspective, nothing new develops here …
>
> (interview dated 12 May 2020)

The collective memory of the socio-economic disparities during the unification years seems to be kept intact by many east German inhabitants in opposition to versions of the past disseminated by the official historiography and museology, which they believe is aimed at throwing them into the dustbin of the past (Huyssen, 1995; Lowenthal, 2015). It is also possible to track all sorts of deprivation, be it socio-economic deprivation, nostalgic deprivation, or spatial deprivation in the following quotation extracted from an interview held with a 23-year-old male AfD supporter in Dresden. When asked about whether his family's socio-economic status has somehow changed over the last few years, he said:

> Considering his new work contract, my dad is working under worse conditions now. Instead of a 25-year lasting work contract and pension money, he was unemployed again after four and a half years. Now he is working in a job where he is working in night shifts for minimum wage, and has a 20 km way to work. Without the special supplements for night shifts it wouldn't be worth it if you consider the gas expenses for getting to work. 24 days of holiday a year is also a joke. The tavern my mom used

> to work at was also closed in 1990. Then she looked after her children. In 2003, she started working part time as a seller. During GDR times the profession of cook was a renowned profession and you earned good money. But what you earn in this job today that's a joke. And a tavern is better than a restaurant because you have better working hours …
>
> (interview, 10 October 2020)

Young natives in Dresden who are feeling affiliated with the AfD are more inclined to have nostalgic feelings about the Communist past, which they have not experienced themselves. As such, Pegida demonstrators gathering every Monday in Dresden city centre, and AfD supporters joining the party's rallies, have actively produced a past in the present, a past that is heavy with "empty" promises from previous German governments as well as a nostalgic deprivation resulting from the absence of the Communist past, a past that these young people have not experienced themselves. Such a widespread "Ostalgia", in other words "Eastern nostalgia", the declared love for the "good old times" when the German Democratic Republic still existed, corresponds to a more prevalent rejection of a cosmopolitan social value change in the former east German provinces (Kaya, 2021a; Rensmann, 2019: 40; Yoder, 2020). Ostalgia demonstrates that some of the native youth have generated an interest in symbols of the socialist past and a defence mechanism against the uncertainties caused by rapid political, societal, and economic changes (Göpffarth, 2021: 63; Kaya, 2021a). Ostalgia helps some of the residents of the former GDR form a symbolic resistance to West-dominated politics. Surveys continue to demonstrate that there is a link between support of the AfD and sentiments expressed by East German voters that seems to stem from the emotional, social, and economic challenges surrounding unification (Betz and Habersack, 2020). Even more than 30 years later, eastern German AfD voters define their social identity in relation to western Germans, and they view themselves as "second-class citizens" (Vees-Gulani, 2021: 59). The AfD has capitalised on the grievances of easterners by claiming that they have not been adequately represented in positions of power in unified Germany. The idea of a political elite, uninterested in the concerns of "regular" German citizens, and the perceived lack of freedom and democracy in today's Germany also stand out as fundamental pillars for the AfD, which describes itself as an alternative to the established political parties in the centre (Vees-Gulani, 2021: 60).

In Saxony and other former eastern *Länder*, nostalgia is not simply a passive longing for a lost home and past but a political means to reconfigure the future through reference to the reinvented national past (Kenny, 2017). It provides an emotional basis for the mobilisation of individual, social, and political memories (Assmann, 2008) from the socialist as well as Prussian past to politicise and mobilise electorate through the construction of an alternative German collective memory and right-wing populist future

(Göpffarth, 2021: 58). Dresden is a unique city in Germany. With its rich cultural, architectural, and artistic history, the city is renowned as the "German Florence", or "Florence of the Elbe" (Benda-Beckmann, 2015). The positive myth about Dresden had been established long before its destruction on 13 February 1945. For instance, the famous Frauenkirche has a symbolic power in the narration of the city as a site of cultural heritage (Eckersley, 2020). The Church has even become one of the epicentres of the unification narrative (Vees-Gulani, 2021 64). The city is one of the most touristic cities in Germany with a very rich tangible cultural heritage. However, Dresden had various specific markers other than being a tourist destination. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Dresden was an economic and military centre. It was engaged in war production, housed a large number of soldiers, and functioned as an important transportation hub. Since it was encoded as the baroque city of culture and art (Benda-Beckmann, 2015: 81), most of such aspects of the city were intentionally, or unintentionally, ignored by various local actors. Right-wing political organisations such as AfD and Pegida seem to have intentionally neglected these facts since they try to deal with the "dark heritage" (Macdonald, 2009), or "dissonant heritage" (Ashworth and Tunbridge, 1996; Harrison, 2013) of the Nazi past, and to promote Dresden as the "innocent city" especially during the commemoration of the firebombing of the city around the week of 13 February (Eckersley, 2020). On the other hand, the ruling parties of the city, mostly CDU and Free Democratic Party, have so far been interested in promoting the city as a touristic centre with baroque features, a move that has contributed to the deindustrialisation of the city leaving locals with the feeling of "being left behind" (Salzborn, 2016; Weisskircher, 2022: 93). A 30-year-old young male in Dresden expressed his frustration resulting from the failure of the tourism industry during the pandemic as well as his nostalgic feelings about the industrial past of the city:

> I think that the city has made itself pretty dependent on tourism. Now during Corona, you notice that the city cannot live without tourism anymore. The whole industry is based on tourism, hotels, restaurants, and steamboats. The steamboat company crashed during Corona; it was sold to Italy. I noticed before that many companies were relocated abroad, but through Corona it became more obvious that there is a dependency on tourism. What has changed since my childhood is that the main industries that were here are now relocated abroad. The company Pentacon [camera manufacturer] was sold to China; the tobacco industry doesn't exist anymore; office technology, and the Volkswagen veteran, a luxury vehicle, was constructed here …
>
> (interview, 9 September 2020)

There is a deep-rooted discourse in the city about the idea of protecting Dresden and its cultural integrity from the intrusion of outsiders. The

Remembrance Day, 13 February, is symbolically an utmost important day when the locals commemorate their losses during the war, especially during the bombing of the city by the Allied Powers on 13 February 1945. The city has been appropriated by far-right groups as a place to be protected against all kinds of intruders such as colonialist western German corporate companies, multiculturalist cosmopolitan political elite, and Muslim refugees (Weisskircher, 2022). The interviews conducted and observations made during the field research made it very obvious that there is a robust opposition in the city between Dresden residents who moved to the city from the west after the unification and "true Dresdner" who connect their own identity with Dresden's memory. The AfD and Pegida have strongly invested in the popular emotion among the "true Dresdner" that "Dresden needs to be protected!" (Vees-Gulani, 2021: 67)

Furthermore, the AfD's calls to protect the national community from a variety of "threats" and its articulation of German and European cultural authenticity seem to provide an anchor for those who feel overwhelmed by the pace and extent of change they have experienced in recent decades (Yoder, 2020: 53). The idea of returning to the "great German authentic history" is very much orated by AfD leaders. Björn Höcke, AfD leader in Thüringen, puts the question of German nationhood at the centre of his speeches and calls for the reinvention of traditions through the rediscovering of "German authentic history": "I think we founded a great tradition that is forward-looking … We … as a Volk need a spiritual return to our great history, our great culture, to shape the future and to win back the future" (cited in Göpffarth, 2020: 263). Dresden has always been an acritical city for the AfD leaders since it symbolises the spark of German self-assertion in rejuvenating a destroyed city from its ashes (Vees-Gulani, 2021: 68). As such, Pegida demonstrators gathering every Monday in Dresden city centre, and AfD supporters joining the party's rallies, have actively produced a past in the present, a past that is heavy with "empty" promises from previous German governments as well as a nostalgic deprivation resulting from the absence of the Communist past, a distant past full of glory, as well as the dissolution of a distinct regional identity (Göpffarth, 2020; Orich, 2020). A 24-year-old male interlocutor, member of the AfD and Young Alternative (*Junge Alternative für Deutschland*) who moved from Detmold, a historical city in North Rhein Westphalia, to Riesa, a small town located on the Elbe River near Dresden emphasised the cultural and demographic homogeneity of Saxony in general that pleases his feeling of living at *Heimat* (home) and experiencing the ethnonationalist understanding of German *Volk* (see also Salzborn, 2016: 38–39). He reiterated the following when asked about his take on the refugees and migrants in Germany:

> Those individuals who may be nice, are not welcome insofar because they abandoned their women and children. And there we have the main problem again: it is not because one argues that they are inferior because of their descent, it is because of the foreign infiltration (*Überfremdung*)

> which is taking place. It comes to a point where not only the *German cultural structure* is destroyed but the German *Volk* is also alienated in its biological substance…There are sick cultural Marxists who are talking about creating a one unified person (*Einheitsmensch*)… I want people to know that they want to mix people to destroy cultures, identities and races… Well, soon there will be no more Germans.
>
> (interview, 27 October 2021, italics mine)

Nostalgic deprivation drives this young male to search for his *Heimat* in a place far from his own place of birth. The kind of nostalgic deprivation he is going through seems to stem from the feeling that established notions of home, identity, nation, culture, and tradition have been threatened by the perils of globalisation such as mobility, migration, and ethno-cultural and religious diversity (Rensmann, 2019). His statements in the rest of the interview are similar to the rest of the interviews conducted with the native youngsters in Saxony who coupled such feelings of anxiety, nostalgia, anger, rage, and distrust with Islamophobic prejudice, frequently sliding towards explicit statements about Prussian-Saxonian cultural superiority. These kinds of myths about cultural and civilisational superiority are crucial elements in providing their recipients with homelands and rootedness in "liquid times" as Zygmunt Bauman (2000) suggested earlier. This is also the main rationale behind the birth of Pegida, which was originally established to defend the "Christian" and "European" values against the Muslim migrant "invaders" (Kalmar, 2020). The shift of the AfD from an anti-EU party to a racist anti-refugee party that aligns itself with groups like Pegida also demonstrates that Islamophobic discourse pays off for the right-wing political formations (Weber, 2020). The rise of an anti-Muslim discourse here demonstrates how right-wing populist political communities have become engaged in the consumption of an ancient dualism between "civilisation" and "barbarism" (Bonacchi, 2022: 45).

## The AfD's Attacks on Multiculturalism Appeal to Young Natives: The Fear of the Islamisation of Europe!

The AfD has positioned itself in resistance to a multicultural Germany, rather than in opposition to immigration per se. The party argues that immigration and integration policies should safeguard a Christian society in Germany and should be especially wary of immigrants of Muslim faith (Lochocki, 2015). The protection of "Christian values" must receive far greater state support, and heterosexual German couples should be encouraged to have more children. Shortly before the Federal Election in 2017, Alexander Gauland, said that "German politics just cannot cope with the surge of immigrants and asylum seekers any longer."[13]

AfD's manifesto revolves around anti-Muslim sentiments. It declares that "Islam is not part of Germany", a stronger stance than the previous

"stop Islamism but seek dialogue with Islam".[14] During discussions about its manifesto's principles, the AfD leadership has constructed anti-Islamism as a "political ideology" in contradiction to the German Constitution. As the Federal spokesman for the AfD Jörg Meuthen reasoned, "although, religious freedom was an essential part of German culture, the Western Christian world view was the guiding principle, and not Islam".[15] This emphasis on Christianity as the cornerstone of Western culture and civilisation has been used to discursively construct Islam as the underpinning of eastern/middle eastern culture, which allows for the articulation of a civilisational antagonism. The AfD's propositions to ban Muslim calls to prayer and religious attire, mainly the *burka*, while reinforcing representations of Christianity in the public sphere, also use this logic. These points of conflict are predominantly rooted in the historical antagonisms between West and East over the struggle for cultural dominance. One example is the efforts of Muslim migrants to attain social and political recognition in Germany without being subjected to the process of "othering". Moreover, under the "Islam is not a part of Germany" subheading of their manifesto, the AfD declares that "Islam does not belong to Germany. Its expansion and the ever-increasing number of Muslims in the country are viewed by the AfD as a danger to our state, our society, and our values."[16]

According to the AfD's party programme, German identity is "primarily shaped by culture" and is based on a "unique core inventory" that remains intact. Accordingly, the inclusion of other cultures is considered a threat since it "degrades the German value system", leading to a loss of cultural homogeneity in Germany (AfD, 2016: 45–46). Anti-Muslim racism is an essential aspect that often appears in election posters, the party programme, and party leaders' speeches (Kaya, 2020). Manuela Caiani and Donatella della Porta (2011: 185) explain the stronger emphasis on racial frames to be used by right-wing populist organisations and individuals in Germany as a symptom of an ethno-cultural conception of citizenship and national identity that has prevailed in the country for many decades. In other words, anti-Muslim racism plays an important role in everyday discursive acts of nation-building, and it assists in upholding a diverse spectrum of patterns of dominance over those who are culturally alien (Lewicki and Shooman, 2020: 32). The will to protect traditional values has also a strong resonance with the followers of the party. A 30-year-old male supporter of the AfD stated the following when asked about why he joined right-wing populist circles:

> I hoped to find values and ideals such as discipline, honour, loyalty, pride and strength. I hoped that I could find those values in the ideology. I wanted to protect the family, the people and *Heimat* [home] with values that today are no longer important.
>
> (interview, 12 May 2020)

It is important to keep in mind that the AfD identifies different types of migrants. In effect, there exist "welcome" Muslims, who are willing to step outside their community and enter the German public space where a homogeneous German identity is dominant, and "unwelcome" Muslims, who seek economic gain while refusing to forego their cultural traditions in favour of German culture. Moreover, as Alice Weidel, current co-leader of AfD, stated: "From our perspective, the government's policies offer no long-term, sustainable solutions and ideas for these problems at all … There's a lot of talk, particularly in election periods. But absolutely nothing gets done."[17] As this complaint indicates, the AfD exploits Europe-wide concerns about mass migration by criticising Germany's political culture, thereby legitimising their anti-establishment views. In turn, party members have been promoting stricter border controls and the deportation of Muslims. Alexander Gauland, the AfD's co-founder and lead candidate in the 2017 federal election, asserted that "German interests must be a guiding principle" in deciding the approach to the refugee crisis.[18] The AfD's stance against "culturally alien" residents of Germany is discernible in a 2013 personal e-mail sent by Alice Weidel, which was leaked two weeks before the election day of 24 September 2017:

> The reason we are inundated by culturally alien [*kulturfremde*] peoples such as Arabs, Sinti and Roma etc. is the systematic destruction of civil society as a possible counterweight to the enemies of the constitution by whom we are ruled. These pigs [sic.] are nothing other than puppets of the victor powers of the Second World War …
>
> (as quoted by Ash [2017])

Today, the AfD's stance on culture can be understood through an exploration of their Islamophobic, Arabophobic, and Turkophobic statements (Kaya, 2020). For instance, Alexander Gauland is an outspoken advocate of a homogeneous national culture and identity. In response to then Commissioner for Migration, Refugees, and Integration, Aydan Özoguz's observation that "a specifically German culture is, beyond the language, simply not identifiable", Gauland argued: "That's what a German-Turk says. Invite her to Eichsfeld [of the state of Thuringia] and tell her then what specifically German culture is. Afterwards, she'll never come back here, and we will be able to dispose of her in Anatolia, thank God."[19] Gauland, then, implied that the AfD harbours racial animosity towards the "other". Similarly, speaking in Berlin the morning after the election results, he insisted that there was "an invasion of foreigners", more precisely an invasion of Europe by Muslims which began with "the influx of refugees".[20] During the press conference, he said: "One million people – foreigners – being brought into this country are taking away a piece of this country, and we as AfD don't want that … We say we don't

want to lose Germany to an invasion of foreigners from a different culture. Very simple."[21]

As this statement suggests, AfD has been constructing a discourse centred on exploiting the so-called Islamisation of the West, which relies on fears of the domination of Western culture(s) by Islam. In this context, Gauland has also remarked, "Islam is not a religion like Catholicism or Protestantism. Intellectually, Islam is always linked to the overthrow of the state. Therefore, the Islamization of Germany poses a threat."[22] Alongside the AfD manifesto and much-publicised statements by other AfD leaders, Gauland's comments carry the perception that Islam is defying the separation of religion and state, and that the AfD considers religion the cornerstone of German and European culture.

## Conclusion: Grasping Things at the Root

Bringing together the lessons learned from social movements theory, which elaborates on the processes of radicalisation from a relational perspective, and from critical heritage studies, this chapter has scrutinised the ways in which some nativist youngsters politically affiliated with the AfD have expressed their socio-economic, spatial and nostalgic deprivation. In their reactionary form of radicalism, they revealed that they have a rich cultural repertoire, which offers different tools for their use in expressing their feelings of deprivation, alienation, humiliation, and subordination that result from the destabilising political, societal, economic, and environmental factors since the unification. Myths, traditions, culture, *völkish* ethno-nationalism, anti-Muslim racism, anti-interculturalism, and nativism become pivotal tools to be employed by these youngsters. The same tools are also being used by organised political structures such as the AfD and Pegida to connect with these Dresdner youths and to recruit them in their political endeavours. Hence, heritage becomes a very practical tool to be used by such parties to reach out to new clients who feel politically excluded, socially alienated, spatially left behind, neglected, and nostalgically deprived. Then, heritage becomes a compensatory tool to come to terms with the destabilising factors of deindustrialisation, modernisation, urbanisation, migration, diversity, and globalisation. In the eastern states of Germany, the AfD is more engaged in a kind of heritage populism boosting up artistic, cultural, historical, and architectural elements of the GDR years (Ostalgia) as well as the Prussian past.

This chapter has demonstrated that the AfD's popularity in eastern parts of Germany lies in its communicative strategies, which efficiently address social-economic and psychological needs of the native populations experiencing relative social-economic, spatial, and nostalgic deprivation. Many interlocutors expressed their disappointment with unfulfilled promises made since the unification of the two Germanies in 1990. The Dresdner

youths explained that they have been experiencing various social-economic, demographic, spatial, and psychological problems, which have not been adequately addressed by the ruling elites in Berlin or Brussels. In this sense, the perceived weakness of democracy seems to be one of the root causes for right-wing radicalism in Saxony. When normal channels of access to political system are blocked, reactionary forms of radicalism are perceived as necessary, as there is no other way out.

With reference to the testimonies of the young interlocutors, the chapter has also discussed the ways in which the AfD has exploited the dissonant past. This work has also argued that young AfD supporters tend to gravitate towards an Islamophobic discourse to attract attention from mainstream media and political parties. Populist political parties, particularly their leaders, seek to connect with individuals who are, on the one hand, socially, economically, and politically deprived and, on the other, in search of communities to cope with their nostalgic deprivation and to defend themselves against the destabilising effects of globalisation. Thus, seeking to appeal to these disaffected, right-wing populist discourses simplify, binarise, culturalise, civilisationalise, and religionise what is social, economic, and political in origin. AfD party leaders seem to be heavily capitalising on civilisational matters by singling out Islam. The discourse analysis of the speeches and manifestos of the AfD operating in the eastern provinces of Germany are in parallel with the observations of Rogers Brubaker (2017), who contends that the semantics of "self" and "other" are radically changing in Europe. The collective self in Europe is being increasingly defined in civilisational terms. The civilisational-level semantics of "self" and "other" lay a claim to have internalised liberalism, secularism, philo-semitism, gender equality, gay rights, and free speech. One should not underestimate the fact that current forms of right-wing populist and nativist forms of radicalisation occur when there is a civilisational paradigm prevailing in the world, a paradigm that divides the world into religiously defined civilisational blocks (Della Porta, 2008).

This civilisational identity is underlined by right-wing populist parties as an identity marker of the Christian West *vis-à-vis* so-called illiberal Islam. However, in many interviews conducted in Dresden, it was observed that the interlocutors who have embraced Christianism as a cultural form, but not as a religious form, were mostly atheists and agnostics, who felt that the rise of radical Islam threatened their secular ways of life. The interviews also demonstrate that feelings of socio-economic, political, spatial, and nostalgic deprivation are not only expressed through resentment against multiculturalism, diversity, migration, and Islam, but also through resentment towards the European Union institutions, which are believed to be imposing a unified transnational identity, and thus challenging established notions of national sovereignty and nativism. In one way, the relative success of right-wing populist parties demonstrates that there is a growing discontent against European efforts to assemble cosmopolitan and transnational identities.

This chapter has highlighted the importance of what is local in understanding reactionary forms of protests conveyed by right-wing populist youngsters, whose anti-systemic aspirations resulting from their socio-economic, spatial, and nostalgic deprivation have been exploited by the AfD at the local level. One of the central arguments of the chapter is that right-wing populist parties are more likely to be stronger in geographically and/or ideologically ideationally remote places, where inhabitants are particularly prone to experience a sense of periphery, and possibly a sense of *spatial* deprivation, in addition to social, political, and economic deprivation. Suffering from the destabilising effects of the processes of deindustrialisation, mobility, diversity, depopulation, and unemployment, young generations generate a nostalgia about the way things used to be in the past, such as better job opportunities, cultural homogeneity, prosperity, golden times, and a better treatment by the political centre.

This chapter has suggested that sometimes radical tendencies may be part of a quest for meaning and benchmarks to help individuals deal with the loss of meaning in a world in transition. The quest for meaning may be performed by individuals in different ways subject to the content of their cultural repertoire. This could be possible with the use of a *völkish* ethno-nationalism as in the case of young AfD supporters in Dresden, or with the use of an Islamist mythology as in the case of self-identified Muslim youngsters we interviewed in different European cities (see Kaya, 2021b). Hence, this chapter was an attempt to offer an alternative way of assessing the protests of right-wing nativist and populist youngsters as struggles for democracy, rather than threats to democracy. As Angela Davis (1989: 34) put it, "radical simply means grasping things at the root". Hence, it might be wiser to concentrate on the elaboration of socio-economic, political, and psychological factors shaping reactionary forms of radicalisation of young people, and thus generate an alternative scientific lens to understand the root causes of their radicalisation instead of fiercely judging them as "a bunch of Nazis", "Fascists", racists, or extremists.

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## Notes

1 For the 2017 federal election results, see https://www.bundeswahlleiter.de/en/bundestagswahlen/2017/ergebnisse/bund-99/land-14/wahlkreis-159.html (last accessed 25 March 2022).

2 For the 2021 federal election results in Dresden, see https://www.bundeswahlleiter.de/en/bundestagswahlen/2021/ergebnisse/bund-99/land-14/wahlkreis-159.html (last accessed 25 March 2022).
3 For more information on Prime Youth research, see https://bpy.bilgi.edu.tr (last accessed 25 March 2022).
4 AfD Brandenburg, "Landtagswahlprogramm für Brandenburg 2019", p. 4, https://afd-brandenburg.de/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Wahlprogramm_Brandenburg_2019_ohne_kapitelbilder_kommentare_acc2144-01-06-19-final.pdf (last accessed 8 April 2022).
5 AfD Brandenburg, "Landtagswahlprogramm für Brandenburg 2019", p. 19.
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Chapter 3

# The Interplay of Psychological Stress, Aggression, Identity, and Implicit Knowledge

## Findings from a Qualitative Study of Disengagement and Deradicalisation Processes Involving Former Right-Wing Extremists

*Denis van de Wetering and Tobias Hecker*

### Introduction

Over the last decade, research into why and how individuals leave radical and (right-wing) extremist groups and organisations has produced numerous new findings (e.g. Raets, 2022). Distinguishing disengagement from deradicalisation is necessary for this branch of research. *Disengagement* is the process whereby individuals cease to be members of an extreme (right-wing) group/organisation or to participate in its activities. Metzger (2013) argues that disengagement excludes the aspects relating to ideology and a cognitive and emotional transformation of identity, focusing instead on behavioural change. *Deradicalisation*, on the other hand, is a cognitive and emotional process in which a self-image based on an extreme radical ideology is abandoned in favour of a more moderate legal identity (Metzger, 2013).

Current research on disengagement and deradicalisation has roughly three areas of interest (Raets, 2022). First, the researchers discuss individual and voluntary disengagement from extreme-right milieus as a process: either a gradual one or one in which a specific, sometimes traumatic event creates a cognitive and emotional opening that initiates a complex interplay of factors promoting or inhibiting disengagement. On the one hand, normative/ideological, group-related, and personal push/pull factors, such as disillusionment, mental health, imprisonment as well as a supportive family, friends, and formers, can make remaining in an extreme group or organisation seem untenable (Bjørgo, 2009; Horgan, 2009; Barrelle, 2015; Horgan et al., 2017; Koehler, 2017; Mattsson and Johansson, 2018; Schewe and Koehler, 2021). In the course of the interaction between push and pull factors, non-extreme social relationships and lifestyles become more attractive.

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On the other, group-related, societal/normative, and individual inhibiting factors, like peer pressure, threat, mistrust and lack of opportunity, counteract emerging ideas of disengagement and intentions to disengage (Altier et al., 2017; van de Wetering and Zick, 2018; Milla et al., 2020; van der Heide and Schuurmann, 2018).

Second, the existing research focuses on the development of phase models that map the processual interactions between disengagement and deradicalisation (Mann et al., 2020). Third, extremism scholars focus on the process of identity change in the course of disengagement and deradicalisation. Looking at relevant studies, it becomes clear that identity change takes on a special significance (Morrison et al., 2021: 26–28).

Simi et al. (2017) however criticise the overemphasis on identity transformation in current disengagement and deradicalisation research. Their study demonstrates that former extremists can still find themselves involuntarily confronted with residues of their former extreme (right) identities. Even years after they turned away from right-wing extremism and developed a moderate identity, residues of their extreme right self-image may still affect their thoughts, feelings, bodily reactions, and behaviour (Simi et al., 2017: 13).

In constituting their research object and unfolding their argument on role residues and the latter's addictive potential, Simi et al. (2017: 6) draw on Wacquant's (2004) carnal ethnography and Crosley's (2006) work on embodied reflexivity as far as social theory is concerned. Both these works theoretically construct the body as a mediator between social practice and personal intentionality. On the basis of this reference, Simi et al. (2017) bring the issue of implicit and inarticulate knowledge into the ongoing academic discussion of disengagement and deradicalisation.

By being involved in social interactions through their physical bodies and experiencing this involvement as a bodily sensation, individuals acquire implicit and inarticulate knowledge beyond consciousness and discursive thinking (Polanyi, 1958). However, this tacit knowledge cannot be limited to practical activities. Rather, it enables individuals to interact with their social environment on an intuitive level. The individual pre-reflexively understands how to act, think and feel in social interactions in accordance with shared, collective ideas, norms, and values. Moreover, the individual understands how to express this ability in turn through bodily gestures recognisable to others participating in the social situation (Sauerborn and Scheve, 2017: 157)

Looking at the current literature, however, it turns out that researchers seldom discuss the identity construction processes of disengaging extremists in relation to the implicit patterns that guide their feelings, interpretations, and actions in their everyday lives. Following this, we take pre-reflexive knowledge or patterns of orientation in everyday life into stronger consideration in our investigation of disengagement and deradicalisation processes. Geimer's (2012) ideas give us a way to start thinking about how to write our research question in a way that is consistent with and builds on what has already been found.

## Research Object and Question

Geimer's (2012) considerations are based on the double-meaning concept of subjectification. Equivocal in the sense that this theoretical concept refers to two related processes. On the one hand, it is about how individuals in social interactions are called upon by other participants to perceive themselves in a certain way and to think, feel and act accordingly. By being involved in social interactions, individuals experience a way of perceiving situations and the others involved in them. They intuitively grasp the intentions of the other participants through their felt bodily sensations and know, without thinking about it much, how they can react meaningfully within and in relation to the situation. Perception is a process related to implicit or embodied knowledge, enabling those involved to see themselves and the other participants as subjects of a social interaction, taking a distinct position in it.

On the other hand, and at the same time, the concept of subjectification focus is on the manner in which individuals deal with the request to understand themselves, interpret, feel and act according to a perceived subject figure. On the other hand, the concept of subjectification focuses on the way in which individuals deal with the call to understand themselves along the lines of a perceived subject figure and to think, feel and act accordingly.

Subjectification as a concept embraces the relation between to be called upon in social interaction to follow the norms of a perceived subject figure and the individual's response to this request. Subjectification thus always includes the possibility that the norms of identity, interpretation of the social world, feeling, and action of the individuals involved in social interactions are reinterpreted, changed, or even rejected by the people who participate (Alkemeyer, 2020: 90).

Following the above, Geimer (2012) argues that individuals may embody the perceived subject figures and integrate them into everyday practice pre-reflexively. Alternatively, according to the study, there is a possibility of perceived subject figures becoming the object of identity-related reflections. Individuals negotiate the meaning of the subject figures between themselves and with other people in order to shape their own identity.

Geimer underlines that, in the case of an identity-related reflection on subject figures, the relation between the reflexive formation of identity and implicit patterns of orientation in everyday life can only be defined strictly empirically. It is quite possible for individuals to draw on perceived subject figures to shape their identity without their everyday life being influenced in any way. Under these circumstances, an identity transformation does take place, but with simultaneous continuity of the pre-reflexive orientation patterns of everyday life (Geimer, 2012: 236).

The distinction between a reflexive and a pre-reflexive handling of implicit knowledge, especially with regard to subject figures, allows a differentiated view of the process of identity change. In relation to the processes of

disengagement from (right-wing) extremist groups/organisations, this chapter's aims are as follows. First, we investigate how interviewees portray their self-image in relation to their everyday practice during their involvement in the interactions of an extreme-right group, or organisation. Subsequently, we analyse the disengagement process itself and the factors that set it in motion. We are particularly interested in which subject figures or ideas of identity gain importance in disengaging right-wing extremists, as well as whether and how they translate perceived subject figures into their everyday practice.

The question, therefore, is twofold. It asks, on the one hand, whether disengagement is associated with a transformation of identity-related self-understanding and, on the other, whether a change of identity is accompanied by a transformation of the pre-reflexive knowledge that guided thinking, feeling, and acting in right-wing extremist everyday practice. The last step in our investigation asks about factors that counteract a change in patterns of orientation relevant to everyday life despite a change in identity. Finally, we discuss our findings against the background of the current research. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the practical use of the findings for professional deradicalisation work. In the following section, we present the methodology, method, and empirical basis of our study.

## Methodology and Method

The constant comparative method from Grounded Theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1969: 10) forms the methodological backbone of the present analysis. In a first step, we specifically interviewed former right-wing extremists from subcultural skinhead groups, organised groups, and right-wing extremist parties according to a purposive sampling procedure (Patton, 1990).

After the first interviews, this selection procedure was replaced by theoretical sampling in the style of Grounded Theory. From the initial empirical material, we developed first theoretical ideas and concepts, which guided the selection of further interview partners in a next step. Our aim was to obtain further empirical material, which would irritate the hypotheses developed in the ongoing research process (Glaser and Strauss, 1969: 10–12). In this sense, the selection criteria for the next interview partners developed from the analytical examination of the previous empirical material. On the other hand, the analytical development of theoretical hypotheses and concepts was constantly re-initiated by new empirical material. The interplay of data analysis and data collection drove the process of constant comparison, which included both inter- and intra-group comparisons.[1]

A total of thirteen interviews were conducted with former male members of right-wing extremist groups and organisations. Contact with the interviewees was established through official and civil society deradicalisation programmes in Germany. The interviews were conducted between spring 2015 and summer 2016 as part of the project *Peer pressure on defectors from*

*extreme right-wing scenes* (van de Wetering and Zick, 2018) funded by the Federal Ministry of the Interior. As a result of the selection process of the aforementioned project, three persons were interviewed who had been involved in right-wing extremist political organisations. Seven interviewed had formerly participated in the activities of small, organised groups (Kameradschaften) and four had been part of subcultural, clique-like skinhead groups. Two interviewees had played prominent roles in extreme right party politics. Six belonged to the leadership circle of violent groups and lead the group and/or organised and led (violent) political activities. Six of the thirteen interviewees had become fathers of one or more children during their membership. Three disengaged from their respective extreme-right contexts as fathers-to-be. Respondents were attributed a socio-economic status based on their self-description and their descriptions of family background, school attendance and intended further education and/or employment after leaving the extreme right. Three participants can be attributed to the working-class, eight to middle-class, and two to the upper-class.

To protect the identities of the participants, we used pseudonyms throughout the chapter.[3] Table 3.1 gives an overview of the former right-wing extremists who describe themselves, their life course, experiences, impressions, thoughts, and feelings in this chapter. In addition, the table provides information on the criteria of differentiation that developed in the course of the theoretical sampling and were significant for the selection of the interviewers.

At the time of the interview, all participants were supported by a professional deradicalisation programme or were no longer involved in right-wing extremist activities. The interviews were primarily conducted in the rooms of the deradicalisation programmes.[4] We used a narrative form with open-ended prompts and follow-up questions. The respondents were asked to describe their involvement in a right-wing extremist group or organisation. The questions encouraged the interviewees to create dense narratives about and reflect on the intertwining of ideology, feelings, and willingness to use violence and social interactions and their position within the right-wing extremist group. A special focus of the interview was on the phases of disengagement and the following life course. Most of the participants' narratives also covered experiences in childhood and within the family.

The initial data analysis and coding was done reading entire interview transcripts line-by-line. This enabled us to identify both differences and similarities between the individual cases. The latter served us as a basis for developing initial cross-case concepts, theoretical ideas, and hypotheses. On the one hand, we developed the theoretical codes from the available empirical material. On the other hand, we relied on theoretical concepts from the relevant literature as sensitising concepts.

In this sense, we set our analytical procedures at a level of knowledge that goes far beyond the tabula rasa originally required for Grounded Theory. However, this should not be understood as a limitation or restriction of the

*Table 3.1* Participants

| *Pseudonym* | *Extreme right-wing involvement* | *Activities* | *Fatherhood* | *Socio-economic background* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Erwin* | Organised Group (Kameradschaft) | Subcultural: Party, music, took part in violent political activities | Became a father during involvement | Working-class |
| *Johann* | Clique-like (skinhead) group | Subcultural: Party, music, took part in violent political activities | Became a father during involvement | Working-class |
| *Thorsten* | Clique-like (skinhead) group | Subcultural: Party, music, took part in violent (political) activities | — | Middle-class |
| *Peter* | Organised Group (Kameradschaft) | Took part in violent political activities | — | Middle-class |
| *Bernhard* | Organised Group (Kameradschaft) | Planned, organised and led (violent) political activities | Expectant father | Middle-class |
| *Karl* | Organised Group (Kameradschaft) | Planned, organised and led (violent) political activities | Expectant father | Middle class |
| *Jupp* | Organised Group (Kameradschaft) | Subcultural: Party, music, took part in violent political activities | Expectant father | Middle-class |
| *Ralf* | Organised Group (Kameradschaft) | Planned, organised and led (violent) political activities | — | Working-class |
| *Albert* | Organised Group (Kameradschaft); also involved in the local NPD[2] | Planned, organised and led (violent) political activities | Became a father during involvement | Middle class |
| *Philip* | Organised Group (Kameradschaft) | Planned, organised and led (violent) political activities | Became a father during involvement | Middle class |
| *Siegmund* | Federal NPD-Functionary | Federal NPD-Functionary | — | Upper-class |
| *Mark* | Federal NPD-Functionary | Federal NPD-Functionary | Became a father during involvement | Upper-class |
| *Rudi* | Extreme Right-Wing musician, involved in an organised Group | Organised concerts, recruitment, wrote hate lyrics ideologisation | Became a father during involvement | Middle-class |

research process. Our research activity is to be understood as an iterative process, in which data collection, data coding, and data analysis mutually influence each other. In this sense, data collection is theory-led and our theorising is in turn empirically led. Table 3.2 shows the codes developed and used in the course of the analyses.

As a consequence of this inductive-deductive interplay, theoretical codes and the relationships between them were constantly refined, supplemented, rearranged, and dropped, just as new codes were developed in the process or drawn from the scientific literature. Thus, empirical material is interwoven

*Table 3.2* Codes

| *Code* | *Description* |
|---|---|
| ***Engagement*** | |
| *Extreme-right identity* | Interplay between ideological narrations, (aggressive) atmospheres, perception of subject figures and their translation into the interactions of extreme right-groups and organisation |
| *Aggression* | Reactive and appetitive aggression |
| ***Disengagement Themes*** | |
| *Disillusionment* | Feeling otherwise let down by the movement or its members in some way |
| *Mental Health* | Struggle with mental health issues |
| *Prison* | Imprisonment or being jailed |
| *Family & Friends* | Being influenced by familial relationship and/or friendship |
| *Parenthood* | Expectant fatherhood, being a father during involvement |
| *Programme Intervention* | Being influenced by an intervention programme/ intervention worker |
| *Formers* | Support from formers |
| ***Filters*** | |
| *(Dis)Trust* | (Dis)Trust towards individuals promoting disengagement and deradicalisation. Positive/negative effect on disengagement and deradicalisation |
| *Perceived opportunity* | (not) perceived credible, positive, and sustained opportunity to disengage and/or deradicalise |
| *Security* | (no) significant and credible protection from retaliation from former extreme right-wing comrades. Positive/ Negative effect on disengagement and deradicalisation |
| ***Identity Transformation*** | Perceiving a non-extreme Subject figure: Development of a non-extreme Self-understanding |
| ***Implicit Knowledge*** | |
| *pre-reflexive knowledge inventories* | Pre-Reflexive normative patterns of everyday life orientation |
| *Implicit affective moods* | Persistent affective forms of everyday-life orientation (Anger, aggression, frustration, fear, shame, and guilt) |
| ***Deradicalisation*** | |
| ***Reintegration*** | Development of social relationships outside extreme-right-wing contexts (familial relationships, friends, work, and/or education) |

with theoretical statements and references to findings of current studies in order to gain a comprehensive and in-depth insight into the research object.

A special focus of the study was the process of identity transformation in connection with the disengagement of right-wing extremist groups. In order to explore the transformation, we focused on the one hand on the formation of a right-wing extremist self-image and its implementation in the social interactions of right-wing extremist groups. On the other hand, the development of a non-extremist identity and its translation into everyday life outside right-wing extremist groups in the course of a disengagement had to be elaborated from the empirical material. In order to recognise these complex processes in the empirical material and to be able to reflect on them theoretically, we resorted to the theoretical concept of subjectification discussed in the last chapter. This directs the analytical gaze to discursive subject figures that are mediated in social interactions of a given context. At the same time, we focus on the way in which individuals refer to these figures and possibly draw on them as implicit knowledge in their orientation of everyday life of a specific social setting. The process of methodically identifying the implicit patterns of feeling, thinking and acting focuses on the text type of biographical descriptions, the detailed descriptions of everyday things and the dense narrative passages in the interview transcripts. The study also concentrates on the textual type of argument and justifications. These text patterns give us information about how the interviewees reflexively conceived and ordered themselves and the circumstances surrounding them. The text types we listed make it possible to examine argumentative and reflexive self-interpretations in relation to pre-reflexive everyday orientations in different social contexts and situations at different points in life (Bohnsack, 2010).

Overall, the approach presented here allows us to formulate generalised statements about the relation between identity and implicit patterns of orientation in the course of disengagement and deradicalisation across all the individual cases included in the study.

## Results

### *Extreme Right Male Identities*

When asked about their involvement in a right-wing extremist group, men like Erwin, Johann, Thorsten, Peter, and Bernhard described not so much themselves as the interactions and activities in which they were involved. They thematised cosy get-togethers in the context of the group they were starting to join and talked about campfires, barbecuing, and hiking together or film nights at someone's place. Karl described his involvement in cosy get-togethers as a *good and fantastically interesting feeling* Bernhard spoke in his narration of a coming together of people *who you get on with,* between whom there is *no strife*, and with whom you feel *secure and*

*accepted*. Thorsten portrayed how brief statements such as *Auschwitz never happened*, and *somehow we're always the victims, whether it's today, or in the schoolyard, or back then under the American bombing raids on Dresden* were interspersed, apparently incidentally, by established group members into the situation of being together.

Joining an extreme right-wing group means exposing oneself to repeated and intensifying situative affectivity that creates a sense of there being a permanent threat to the group posed by its supposed enemies. In the atmosphere of togetherness and without wasting many words on it, there is an implicit call for solidarity within the group and bitter hostility towards a fictitious external threat. Most interviewees, including Thorsten, Jupp, Bernhard, Karl, and Erwin, said that they initially experienced the calls for solidarity and fighting against the enemy as an inarticulate demand of the other group members.

The interplay between implicit knowledge and affective moods or feelings should be emphasised here. Implicit knowledge orients individuals to interpret social situations, which in turn can be seen as the basis for the development of emotions. In relation to the descriptions of the right-wing extremist men, however, it becomes apparent that collectively produced affective moods are particularly meaning-giving and action-guiding. In this context, Sauerborn and Scheve point out that "affective feelings and moods themselves [represent] a form of implicit knowledge, namely a genuinely bodily and pre-linguistic or pre-discursive form of knowledge" (Sauerborn and Scheve, 2017: 165). Directly following this, Bernhard, for example, explained that *you really start believing in* the solidarity within the group and the necessity of its fight against its enemies such as migrants, Jews, left-wing, alternative, and gay men as well as mainstream politicians. In the same vein, Erwin remarked:

> *Then you just live this life and start making trouble with the Turks in the schoolyard, because at some point you start to imagine that they really have no business being here.*

It was also apparent that the men had yet to develop the ability to integrate the identity of a right-wing extremist and the norms associated with it into their everyday lives and to apply them appropriately in any situation. Many men like Thorsten said that they had felt *constant physical anger*. Their relationship to the social environment was characterised by aimless aggressive feelings such as anger and hatred. Consequently, some men, like Erwin, report that they were *in the first place always ready for a fight*.

Nevertheless, the aggression and willingness to use violence could not automatically be translated into right-wing extremist street fighting. In order to perceive the right-wing extremist identity of a comrade and fighter and to be able to integrate it into everyday life, the aggression and propensity to violence had first to be put at the service of the right-wing extremist

struggle. Under the watchful eye of a "trainer", the men acquired a practical, implicit knowledge of offensive and defensive techniques, repetitively practised together and physically mastered how to mould and transform their felt body into a "fighting physique".

It requires self-discipline to maintain a trained "fighting physique" even when direct confrontation generates strong feelings of fear of injury to or even destruction of self or others. Fighting the enemy is not a matter of running away, but, as Albert underlined, *hitting with … fists, with … feet … with objects … making sure that you somehow get people knocked down*. In action, the men transformed public spaces normally regarded as self-evidently open to all into spaces of threat, fear, trauma, and grief for those seen as enemies. In this context, Albert explained:

> *The main thing was stress, anyone we came across … Kurds, Turks, Lebanese, left-wing enemies, punks, got it … right in the gob, didn't they?*

The change in the political strategy of the NPD and the realisation of its three-pillar concept (*Drei-Säulen-Konzept*) at the end of the 1990s introduced another model of extreme right male identity, alongside that of the streetfighter (NPD, 1999: 360). Ralf spoke in this connection of a *shift in the right-wing scene*. Albert underlined in his narrative that *politics became enormously important*. In this sense, Philip remarked: *If I don't have any arguments or can't express myself properly otherwise, then I'm harming the scene*. In contrast to the men described earlier, who sometimes described themselves as comrades, fighters, or activists, men like Philip, Ralf, and Albert clearly identified themselves as *political soldiers*.

In internal status struggles, *political soldiers* set themselves strictly apart from the street-fighting extremists found mostly among right-wing skinheads, who, as Philip said, only *drink and shout and have no idea … about politics*. Albert and Philip based their claims to dominance on the strict disciplining of the "fighting body" and its rigorous subordination to the strategic guidelines of right-wing (communal) politics. Philip explained that now fighting no longer just meant direct violent conflict with supposed enemies, but also *running information stalls … or having discussions with members of the public*. In this regard, *making a good impression*, as Albert put it, became paramount in terms of being taken seriously as a political force.

It is interesting in this context that the perceived subject figure of the political soldier is not simply pre-reflexively translated into everyday life. Rather, the self-descriptions of Philip, Ralf, and Albert as well as their thematisation of their differentiation from other right-wing extremist identities, point to an at least partially reflexive reference to perceived subject figures and a corresponding identity formation. Their descriptions of their activities also show that they implemented their identity constructions in their everyday lives. Although men like Philip, Ralf, and Albert differed from right-wing

extremist men like Erwin, Johann, Jupp, Thorsten, Peter, and Bernhard, their narratives show clear parallels to each other.

Regardless of how the men we interviewed described themselves, their involvement in the interactions of a right-wing extremist group enhanced their (already existing) reactive aggression and propensity for violence and put it at the service of political strategies against perceived enemies. However, the aggressions should not be understood only as reactions to imagined threats from perceived enemies. In their narratives, the male interviewees described their confrontations with supposed enemies as atmospherically charged not just with anger and fear but simultaneously with excitement and euphoria, culminating in brutal uninhibited and lustful violence. In their descriptions, the interviewees framed their acting out of brutal violence not so much as a reaction to a threat, but rather as a situation in which the prospect of a fight and the fighting itself were interwoven with positive feelings and pleasurable sensations. Here again, it was apparent that sensations and affective moods functioned as a form of worldview as well as of action-guiding implicit knowledge (Slaby et al., 2011).

The ability to embrace the ecstatic cathartic moment and completely let go was, as Johann told us, based in part *on confidence that you have twenty men behind you … who've got your back*. Johann's narrative shows a juxtaposition of different forms of aggression. On the one hand, reactive aggression references defence against threat and is determined by emotions such as anger, fear, and hostility; in the meantime, appetitive aggression, in which the exercise of violence is linked to euphoria and a feeling of pleasure (Hecker et al., 2015: 1–3; Elbert et al., 2017). However, Jupp's story also makes it clear that social support and legitimisation are needed to feel the (pre-)pleasure of using violence.

As the post-fight euphoria ebbs away, the unpleasant consequences of violence become apparent, as Jupp said:

> *If you see someone lying on the ground … who is bleeding from every hole then that is absolutely real and just raw and really that was … pretty disgusting.*

Nonetheless, the thought that *what you're doing here just isn't right*, incipient feelings of guilt and shame at having caused serious injury all *vanish again quickly, because people are right there, basically saying to you that it was good what you did*. Entranced by the attention and recognition of the other men and their heroisation of his violence, Jupp was *at that moment up and not down*, had *the feeling of power, of being superhuman*, and experienced the anger he had acted out as justified.

Apart from the extreme right identities already shown, the former functionaries of the NPD, Mark and Siegmund, describe themselves as *intellectual men of political influence*. They talk about their extreme right-wing

socialisation in elitist youth organisations of the NPD and right-wing fraternities. On the basis of the political writings and discourses of the extreme right and political discussions, they reflexively developed their own extreme right identity. In their narratives, violence appears only in the forms of the symbolic show of the ritualised duel. Siegmund and Mark both saw themselves as political and intellectual movers and shakers, tirelessly defending the German nation against treacherous politicians.

### *Experienced Contradiction*

The men's descriptions of their disengagement from a right-wing extremist group/organisation were almost congruent with the existing findings of fundamental research. In his foundational study, Bjørgo (2009), for example, emphasises the importance of push and pull factors in ex-members' turning away from right-wing extremist groups and organisations. In particular, the study lists various forms of disillusionment as factors that can promote disengagement.

In their disengagement narratives, the male interviewees described their strong feelings of disillusionment, specifically mentioning disappointed expectations of solidarity and support from their comrades. Erwin, who had spent time in prison, for example, told us how he received no support from his extreme right-wing friends during that time. Rudi explained that the oppressive feelings generated by such experiences made it instantly and *painfully clear that friends weren't real friends after all.* Other interviewees, such as Mark and Siegmund, articulated a disillusionment based on their experience of the impossibility of translating their reflexive self-understanding as being members of intellectual avant-garde into the politics of the NPD. Their attempt to create a *modern, national, social face of the NPD* was blocked by the party's leading politicians, who, they said, were *firmly stuck in National Socialism* and incredibly fixated *on the Third Reich.*

In addition, doubt about the political correctness of ideologically based enemy images is another factor that can play a significant role in regard to voluntary disengagement (Bjørgo, 2009: 36). Karl told us that it felt good to joke around with an Italian work colleague. At the same time, he experienced doubt about his extreme right-wing self-conception that required him *actually just to think in purely German terms and only hang out with Germans.* In a similar vein, Philip talked about his positive experiences with *foreign fellow citizens* he encountered. His reflection on the experience led him to conclude that *certain prejudices that rule in the scene, they are just definitely not right.*

Jupp and Johann bring out a contradiction between (impending) fatherhood and being involved in extreme right interactions in their narratives. The prospect of fatherhood, family life, and the associated affect components triggered a reflexive reassessment of their violent behaviour and

involvement in an extreme right-wing group. In none of the cases did the contradictions experienced by interviewees lead directly to their disengagement from extreme-right contexts. Nevertheless, a special significance can be attributed to the experience of contradiction in relation to disengagement. Siegmund used a metaphor to express his first experience of contradiction and emphasised its importance for his disengagement: *it felt like taking the first little stone out of a wall.*

The men interviewed described how experiencing conflictive situations led them to reflect further on the contradiction and their current life situation. The process of reflecting on the experience involves forms of identity work that include, in some cases, a breakdown of extreme right identities. In this connection Siegmund talked about how he wondered whether the *ideology was wrong … or just the people* and wanted *to give it another chance*, but finally left the NPD abruptly. Mark told us how he realised that the party *and this political scene [were] not reformable.* He experienced this as a *repeated political failure and called it a day.* Thorsten also talked about how, at some point, he was no longer able to conflate his right-wing extremist self-image with his right-wing extremist group. His subcultural extreme-right group transformed itself and moved beyond *fairground brawling* to participate in a more organised fashion *actively in the political struggle.* In the course of the process, the group developed more formalised forms of order that prevented Thorsten from living out his identity-based idea of right-wing extremism that was made up of drinking alcohol, partying, and fighting in the streets. Frustrated and hurt, he said to his comrades who he thought were friends: *Guys, I'm out!.*

Alongside the failure and breakdown of extreme right-wing identities, working through contradiction could also lead to a reformulation of a self-image while still being part of an extreme right-wing group. Jupp and Johann thought about and worked through the tension between becoming and being the father of a family and membership in an extreme right-wing skinhead group. The prospect of an opportunity and an imaginable life outside the extreme right-wing context initiated processes of relocation and reshaping their self-understanding. In this context, the importance of exit support from family members and close friends was also evident (Christensen, 2020). Johann was able to discuss his thoughts and feelings with a friend and his brother, with whom he maintained a close relationship despite his involvement in the skinhead scene. He described the situation as follows:

> *I just didn't feel like it anymore, like that. Everything, not just this skinhead shit. All this beating about the bush, that's all. Because that was now somehow a different picture for me. And my family was there, my wife, my son, and that was it. I suddenly had a completely different attitude. It didn't happen all of a sudden, but over time at some point. Yes, and I was quite happy that my brother and my best friend saw it the same way.*

Contemplating the question of *being part of an extreme right-wing group or being a father*, Jupp's desire for the future grew, that his child should, as he put it, *not be left to manage more or less on its own*. Both Jupp and Johann tried to realise their identity-related idea of being an (emotionally) present father and husband outside the extreme right group.

### *Tension-Laden (Dis)Continuities: Aggression, Lustful Urge for Violence, Fear, Frustration, Shame, and Loneliness*

Following their disengagement, all the men we interviewed sought the support of a professional deradicalisation programme sooner or later. Johann described his relations with his exit counsellors as *a relationship of trust that had grown very strong over time*. With the help of the exit counsellor Johann overcame his speechlessness. Referring to his family life Johann told us:

> *Well, I have definitely become more open as far as showing my feelings is concerned, and generally talking about things.*

Also referring to the help he received from a counsellor and his relationship with his girlfriend Albert explained how instead of:

> *Fits of anger, bickering, arguing and fighting, my girlfriend and I were simply able to speak about things that were bothering us just then and also to talk about the past*.

Thorsten compared the relationship with his exit counsellor to a *session with a psychologist or whatever, where you can just let everything out*. At the same time, Thorsten began to develop a perspective on life for himself:

> *Hey, maybe you want to have kids someday, maybe you want to get married someday and eh … you want to have a permanent job someday.*

While forming and working on his identity, Thorsten explored the possibilities of translating his ideas of identity into reality. In the course of this search for reorientation and reintegration, he finally took up engineering studies.

The narratives underline the positive importance of a relationship of trust between (right-wing) extremists and exit advisors for the course of a disengagement process (Christensen, 2020). The former right-wing extremists that we interviewed spoke in their accounts about how, with the support of their exit counsellors, they gradually began to participate in social life outside extreme right-wing contexts. Nevertheless, dealing with the contradiction between continuity and change was still a major hurdle for most men. In some cases, the process of working through the contradiction between

holding on and letting go seemed to stagnate and counteract the translation of a different self-image into everyday life.

Johann tried to live the life of a loving husband and father, but failed to translate this self-image into his everyday life. He continued instead to orientate his life by implicit and habitual patterns, though he did become more and more aware of them. He went on earning his living by selling the drug amphetamine, which was very popular on the extreme right-wing scene. He also took the drug himself. In his accounts, he speaks about his inner arousal, his readiness for action and the *aggression that was still there all the same – of course amplified by the drugs*. In his narration, he mentioned brutal street fights as well as becoming violent towards his girlfriend.

After his girlfriend made it clear to him that he could *fuck off for good* if he *rais[ed] his hand again*, Johann was looking for a starting point from which to *turn [him]self around*, He wanted *to show other people, especially in the family, that I mean it seriously.* To that end, he symbolically disarmed his fighting physique with a laser treatment to remove his tattoos and make his transformation visible to significant others.

When speaking of his disengagement, Johann concentrated on the aspect of working on himself in voluntary anti-aggression courses. He referred only superficially to his past, without any mention of feelings. Although he saw a relation to his aggression, his childhood and adolescent relationship with his parents and his involvement in extreme right contexts appeared somehow disconnected from his current situation. He mentioned that he *was used to violence … from home … it wasn't exactly roses all the way growing up, at home you sometimes got smacked in the mouth*. In his accounts, he highlighted that what mattered to him in his current situation was to *sort it out for myself in my head* in challenging social situations and *not go smacking every second person in the gob.*

Unlike Johann, Thorsten did not speak about the necessity of controlling aggression, but of having *to fight the demon inside me*. At crowded parties, the demon would whisper to him and his affective relationship with his surroundings was characterised by strong tension, arousal, and this *urge to fight … five men against ten or so, maybe in an alley, or brawling somewhere over benches and tables.* The adrenaline kick was incidental. It was actually about the fact that in a fight anything can happen:

> *You can end up crippled, lose an eye, lose a tooth, get your bones broken, and maybe even die.*

What matters is the good feeling after the brawl, if one had experienced the danger without being seriously injured. Thorsten's accounts referred to the interplay of positive feelings, aggression, and violence.

When describing himself, Thorsten only superficially mentioned his childhood, his relationship with his parents during adolescence, and certain

experiences with the extreme right. He tended to interpret things that had happened to him and made him what he was in rather simplistic and unemotional terms. In his narrative, he was *never good enough at home*, he was confronted with almost impossible expectations (with regard to school), and if his father *lost his rag then you maybe got a clip*. Talking about his adolescence, he mentioned missing (emotional) support from his mother, teachers, or peers, describing himself as a "*lone wolf*".

In some cases, the tension between continuity and change in the context of a disengagement process translates into anxiety about misfortune rather than identity-related self-exploration and seeking opportunities to change. In his narration about his disengagement and his current situation, Albert imagined possible tragedies, focusing primarily on his children and wife. He spoke about terrorism and ISIS, abruptly switching to:

> *When we're in the car, I get scared that some idiot could crash into us and my daughter could die.*

At the same time, he worried about having to *let go of the little I have* when his daughter started nursery. In speaking of loss and letting go, Albert was implicitly alluding to his parents' separation and his loss of contact with them when he was *around thirteen or fourteen*. The failure of two longer relationships with children who no longer wished to have any contact with him also remained unspoken in the background of his accounts.

Others emphasised in their interviews that it was the fact that it was impossible to participate in societal "normality", despite their efforts to change, which created frustration. This led in Siegmund's case, to a return to polarised thinking, framing society as corrupt and Janus-faced. He described leaving the right-wing extremist scene as a situation where he *had slammed that door shut behind him*. But, despite disengagement and personal change, mainstream society and the labour market remained closed to him, as a publicly recognisable former NPD functionary. Frustrated, powerless, and angry, he accused (civil) society of *merely staging a democratic ritual*. He talked about how former extremists are *treated as undesirable and disruptive and denied the social normality they deserve*.

In the same vein, Mark noted that, particularly in the case of prominent NPD politicians, *ultimately people think it's not really possible for them to exit* and the long and difficult path of deradicalisation tends to be doubted rather than acknowledged. Mark also experienced his labour market situation as frustrating and existential. He said that he wanted to be:

> *not necessarily loved but accepted as a whole person with faults and imperfections and not running the race against other competitors with this ball and chain on my leg.*

Jupp described how his reflections on his right-wing extremist past had continued to affect him emotionally up to the present. Six months after disengaging, he said he looked back in shame and incomprehension at his (violent) actions:

> *They haunted me at night for a long time as well.*

In particular, Jupp felt miserable when he spoke to others about his disengagement (in the context of school visits co-initiated by the exit programme) where participants *asked very penetrating questions.* Reviewing his past and development in this unsupervised but partly externally imposed process, Jupp experienced himself and his story as painful. He was unable to comprehend and integrate his past into his current self-understanding and life. He said that in everyday life he:

> *always had this feeling … they can all see that I used to be a Nazi or at least that I come from that scene.*

He was increasingly affected by the feeling that his experiences were not comprehensible to others and would only burden them. This led him to withdraw socially.

## Conclusion and Suggestions for Professional Deradicalisation Work

Our study has inquired into the relationship between reflexive identity constructions and implicit knowledge relevant to everyday life in the course of a disengagement process. For this purpose, the identity of the men we interviewed was first elaborated in relation to their active involvement in the interactions of right-wing extremist groups and organisations. Our analysis identifies three different right-wing extremist identities (streetfighter, political soldier, and politician).

The identity of the extreme right-wing *street fighter* is implicitly mediated in the emotional and interactional dynamics of extreme right-wing groups and perceived by the men involved. The analysis shows that the collectively produced atmospheres within right-wing extremist groups have a meaning-giving effect and make the identity norms of inner solidarity and the outwardly directed aggression against perceived enemies experienceable and perceptible. The men embodied the identity of the far-right street fighter and pre-reflexively enacted that identity in brutal street battles.

The right-wing extremist *political soldier*, on the other hand, consciously distinguishes himself from the right-wing extremist street fighter. Here, reference to the right-wing extremist identities on offer is at least partially reflexive. The political soldier derives his superiority from a strict disciplining of

his "fighting body" and its subordination to the strategic guidelines of right-wing (communal) politics. Moreover, the men who take on this role reflexively design themselves as right-wing extremists who know how to conduct political discussions in public and stage themselves as representatives of a political force that is to be taken seriously.

Again, by contrast, the NPD-*politicians* we interviewed developed their identity reflexively by reference to the political writings, discussions, and discourses of the extreme right. Their political socialisation took place at elitist youth organisations, political front organisations for the NPD and right-wing fraternities. They translated their reflexive self-understanding into their political practices.

The study illustrates that right-wing extremist street fighters and political soldiers undergo an almost identical right-wing extremist socialisation. In addition, their descriptions and accounts indicate that their relationship to their social environment, even before their involvement in a right-wing extremist group, was determined by aggressive feelings such as anger, resentment, rage, and hatred. These embodied feelings and the associated propensity to violence were further reinforced in the emotional and interactional dynamics of right-wing extremist groups and were put at the service of political strategies against perceived enemies.

It also turns out that the aggressiveness described by the men was not only accompanied by feelings of fear, anger, and hatred towards the social environment. Rather, the prospect of violence or the violent expression of aggression was interwoven with feelings of euphoria and lust. The accounts of the former right-wing extremist men point to a juxtaposition of reactive and appetitive aggression.

The men's narratives recounting their disengagement from right-wing extremist groups or organisations are almost congruent with the existing findings of fundamental studies on disengagement and deradicalisation. In their narratives, the men referred to disappointed expectations of solidarity and support from their comrades. In addition, some men pointed to political disillusionment resulting from the impossibility of translating political identities and visions into everyday political reality. Likewise, the correctness of their ideological images of the enemy was thrown into doubt as a result of positive experiences with supposed enemies. In addition, some men stressed the importance of (future) fatherhood in their disengagement from their right-wing extremist group.

The disappointments, disillusionments and events experienced did not lead directly to disengagement, but they did initiate a process of reflexive reassessment of previous violent behaviour and involvement in an extreme right-wing group or organisation. In some cases, this process led to a breakdown of a man's extreme right-wing identity; in others, it resulted in the reflexive development of a new, non-extreme idea of identity while still belonging to an extreme right-wing group. Against this background, the

men interviewed realised that they were not able to continue living up to their right-wing extremist self-understanding or to living out their newly created ideas of identity within right-wing extremist contexts, which in turn initiated their disengagement. In some cases, it can be stated that the prospect of a future life outside right-wing extremism, as well as support from friends and family had a positive effect on the reflexive development of a new identity and disengagement from right-wing extremism.

Again, in line with existing research, our study points to the positive effect of a trusting relationship with people supportive of disengagement. A trusting relationship with a deradicalisation advisor helps disengaging right-wing extremists overcome their speechlessness and open up emotionally to their families and relationship partners. In addition, a trusting relationship encourages the development of new perspectives on life and ideas of identity beyond right-wing extremist contexts.

However, it also turns out that, for all their will to change, some men fail at living out their new identities in their everyday lives. Rather, their everyday life continues to be determined by aggressive feelings such as anger, rage, and hatred. By pre-reflexively resorting to their aggressive feelings, the men not only interpret the social environment as threatening, but they also act out their aggression in the form of violence against others, which in turn hinders their reintegration non-extremist social orders (family, friendship, education, occupation). It also appears that, in some cases, aggressive feelings are mixed with violence-related joy and euphoria, which determine their thoughts and actions in everyday life (Johann and Thorsten: 16–17).

At first glance, these findings seem to be in line with Simi et al.'s (2017) findings on the effects of identity residuals among former white supremacists. In analysing their empirical material, Simi et al. address a *brief flare-up* of previous extreme right-wing beliefs and feelings, as well as a *situational relapse* to the previous identity of a white supremacist. Our findings, however, can only be interpreted to a very limited extent as a brief flare-up of old patterns of thinking, feeling, and acting or as a situational relapse into a former extreme identity. Rather, some cases discussed in our studypoint to a *continuity* of pre-reflexive aggressive moods that counteract the translation of identities into everyday life beyond right-wing extremist groups in the course of disengagement process.

In their study, Simi et al. show that former right-wing extremists describe the disturbing appearance of right-wing extremist beliefs and feelings that they thought they had discarded, or the situational relapse into old identities, as an addiction. In this respect, certain similarities to our study can be found. For example, in connection with his disengagement, Thorsten speaks of the persistence of a strong urge and desire to become violent against others. We have illustrated that this desire is closely related to aggressive feelings mixed with violence-related joy and euphoria.

Furthermore, Simi et al. refer to negative feelings as accompanying symptoms in the course of a disengagement process. The cases of Albert, Mark, Siegmund, and Jupp (14–16) listed here clearly illustrate that persistent moods such as fear, frustration, powerlessness, and shame, as well as feelings of guilt, in the course of a disengagement process need to be taken seriously. These persistent moods are psychologically stressful and significantly involved in the former right-wing extremist's interpretation of their own situation as well as the social environment, and have a guiding effect on action. Understood as implicit knowledge, these affective patterns undermine the process of change by reactivating polarised thinking that had been previously overcome and possibly even leading to social withdrawal.

Again, in some proximity to the findings of Simi et al., our study also shows clear indications of strong self-reflection processes in the course of a disengagement process. However, our study shows that these processes are most pronounced in the initiation phase of a disengagement process. After leaving the right-wing extremist group or organisation, however, the ability of former right-wing extremists to self-reflect seems to be blocked by the persistent negative moods already mentioned.

In this context, it also turns out that the former right-wing extremists are only able to talk about certain aspects of their lives (e.g. childhood/adolescence in the family context) in a very superficial and unemotional way. This blockade in turn works against the realisation of the moderate identity construction developed by the right-wing extremists who disengaged, in their everyday practice, beyond right-wing extremist groups.

The certain proximity to the study by Simi et al. also allows us to follow their suggestions for further research. Accordingly, we also argue for a stronger consideration of implicit knowledge repertoires for research on disengagement and deradicalisation processes. However, going beyond this and in view of our findings, we would like to emphasise the relevance of persistent negative moods as a form of implicit knowledge for the trajectories of individual disengagement and deradicalisation. This also means that further research should not only focus on identity transformation as a central and most significant process. Rather, it is important to consider identity transformations in relation to implicit knowledge repertoires, including persistent (negative) moods, and to examine this relationship in greater depth in the processual course of disengagement and deradicalisation. In this regard, our study suggests taking a look at the entire life story, respectively its narration by the interviewees. This makes it possible to not only explore how, in which social contexts and situations, negative feelings arise, become persistent moods and have a guiding effect on interpretation and action. Rather, individual (dis)engagement and (de)radicalisation processes can be reconstructed in much greater detail and depth. Against this background, the present chapter is to be understood as a first step in examining the so far neglected interplay between psychological stress, aggression, identity, disengagement, and deradicalisation

(Morrison et al., 2021: 36). In addition the biographical perspective provides central starting points for professional deradicalisation work.

The men interviewed not only describe psychological problems such as agitation, tension, fear, frustration, feelings of guilt and shame as well as uncontrollable aggressive outbursts. Although they do not explicitly describe traumatic experiences, many of the interviewed men have experienced situations in which their life or physical and/or psychological integrity was in danger (Johann, Thorsten, Albert, Mark, & Siegmund: 14–16). This encourages us to think about how psychological problems and stress should be considered and integrated into deradicalisation work in order to further increase the effectiveness of the programmes (Koehler, 2020: 18).

An approach developed for traumatised and at the same time violence-prone perpetrators seems very appropriate here: narrative exposure therapy (NET) for forensic offender rehabilitation (FORNET) aims at reducing symptoms of psychological and traumatic stress and controlling readiness for aggressive behaviour (Hecker et al., 2015). It follows the logic of evidence-based trauma-focused NET with special emphasis on violent acts in past and future behaviour. In NET the therapist guides the client by means of exposure through their traumatic experiences in chronological order linking the negative emotions, such as fear, shame, and disgust (Albert and Jupp: 16–19), to the past context and integrating the traumas into the autobiographical memory.

During FORNET verbalisation of any positive emotions and experiences linked to past violent and aggressive behaviours is also encouraged (Johann & Jupp: 10–11). This recall of positive emotions (linked to the *there* and *then*) is contrasted with feelings that emerge during the narration process (*here* and *now*). It helps the client to anchor not only fearful and shameful experiences but also positive feelings that might have been linked to various forms of aggressive behaviour in the past. After working chronologically through the client's past up to the present, in a group session, the client is supported to begin the role change from a violent person to one who is capable of living a non-violent and socially adjusted life.

Further group sessions include psychoeducation on anger recognition, emotion regulation, and behavioural change to abstain from violence. A "buddy system" is introduced, whereby clients are encouraged to form pairs to get mutual support in dealing with frustrations and attempting to find non-violent methods of conflict resolution. Further sessions involve the deconstruction of recent experiences of perpetrated violence or the urge to react violently and avoidance of violence within the previous week. Therapists or coaches are instructed to gradually decrease their active involvement over the course of the group sessions and to encourage group members to become more active in the facilitation of the group to enhance the latter's autonomy. This is possible owing to the repetitive structure of the group sessions, and clients naturally become more active as they become

more familiar and confident with the protocol. At the end of the group sessions, clients are encouraged to continue to meet (Koebach et al., 2021). Finally, the client develops visions and wishes for the future to support a successful integration into society.

Our study finds that the aforementioned approach may fit perfectly into the context of deradicalisation and disengagement. Many former right-wing radicals experience psychological stress but, on the other hand, notice the desire for violence and have violent fantasies even after leaving the extreme right-wing groups. An emotionally sensitive approach like FORNET could therefore also be very successful in exit programs.

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## Notes

1 Intergroup: e.g., skinhead group vs. organised group; Intragroup: e.g., (expectant) fatherhood/skinhead group vs. (expectant) fatherhood/organised group.
2 ***N**ationaldemokratische **P**artei **D**eutschlands*, or National Democratic Party of Germany
3 In accordance with the security concept and the ethical guidelines of the study, as well as the agreements with the interviewees, we refrain from providing detailed und specific socio-demographic data and location information (e.g., age, education, religion, and employment). Some details have been altered in such a way that they are still relevant to the argument, but do not allow any conclusions to be drawn about the person. If in doubt interview passages were discussed with the security experts of the project's research support group and the interviewees.
4 Before the interviews were conducted, the subjects were informed about the objectives, the researchers involved, and the third-party funders. The conduct of the interview and the data processing (recording of the interview, transcription, anonymisation, and publications) were also discussed in this conversation. All participants signed a data protection declaration resp. agreed to the scientific processing of the interview. Upon request, some participants were sent the anonymised transcriptions of the interviews. This gave them the opportunity to delete certain passages or make corrections, although none of the participants made use of this option.

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Part II

# Mental Processes of Radicalisation

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Chapter 4

# Islamophobia and Radicalisation

## When Attitudes of Both Mainstream Society and Immigrant-Origin Muslims Become Extreme

*Constantina Badea*

### Introduction

Immigration is often the subject of political debates in Western countries (i.e. European Union, USA). Members of the majority society might perceive immigration as a threat to national identity, both economically and culturally (Velasco González et al., 2008; Badea et al., 2018). Immigrants not only want to provide for their families' material needs, but they also want to preserve their culture of origin and pass it on to the next generation. When the culture of immigrants is perceived to be different from that of the host country, as in the case of migrant-origin Muslims in Europe, the threat to national identity may be greater and may generate defensive reactions among members of the majority group, taking the form of prejudice and discrimination (Mahfud et al., 2015; Mahfud et al., 2018).

Indeed, some members of Western European countries consider that their cultural identity is built on Christian roots. Other members are committed to the principle of secularism, which guarantees individual freedom of religious practice but also neutrality in relation to state policies. When confronted with the practices of the Muslim religion (e.g. wearing of the veil, specific Islamic teachings), some majority group members may feel threatened, may reject these practices, and may at the same time express prejudice against immigrant-origin Muslims. This polarisation of attitudes takes the form of Islamophobia. Other citizens may reject all religious practices indiscriminately without expressing prejudice against Muslims (Adelman and Verkuyten, 2020).

In turn, immigrant-origin Muslims and their descendants may perceive this rejection by the majority group in the host country. They may have a defensive reaction as well and react with greater identification with their religious group and hostile attitudes towards members of the majority society. Although religious radicalisation is a complex phenomenon that includes many complementary factors, the perception of discrimination in the host country may also contribute to this radical phenomenon. Indeed, the need for social recognition may make young Muslims even more

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vulnerable to radical movements. These radical organisations could attract young Muslims to violent actions presented as acts "in the service of Islam". In turn, such actions are perceived by these young people as an opportunity to fulfil their need for social valorisation.

The chapter starts with the presentation of recent research in social psychology that examines the negative attitudes that members of the mainstream Western society can display against Muslims by distinguishing between prejudice and attachment to abstract principles of secularism. Then, the chapter will examine the "other side" of the relational radicalisation by investigating contextual factors that "push" young self-identified Muslims to join radical movements and engage in hostile acts against the members of the majority society. The work will conclude by defending the idea that social interventions designated to reduce political and religious radicalisation should take into consideration the specificity of these intergroup attitudes, the contextual factors that contribute to their development, and the bilateral characteristics of the processes of radicalisation and extremisation, when comparing young native people and young immigrant-origin Muslims in Western societies. Empirical studies from the Netherlands, France, and the USA illustrate each one of these aspects.

## Islamophobia Versus Attachment to the Principle of Secularism

Issues relating to the accommodation of specific Muslim rights and practices (e.g. wearing the veil in public space) are at the centre of political debates in Western societies. Restrictions on Islamic dressing in public space are often seen as a sign of Islamophobia (e.g. Saroglou et al., 2009). However, some studies suggest that the positive correlation between prejudice against Muslims and acceptance of their religious practices is not always significant (Van der Noll et al., 2010; Adelman and Verkuyten, 2019). As stated in the relevant literature, the level of acceptance or rejection of Muslim practices may depend on the nature of the specific practice in question. Accordingly, individuals can be intolerant because of more principled objections to that particular practice rather than because of their prejudicial feelings (Adelman and Verkuyten, 2019: 1).

Members of the majority group may like Muslims and disagree with practices related to the Muslim religion because they are attached to the principle of secularism, which in some Western countries can be supported by laws prohibiting religious practices in public spaces (e.g. France). In appearance, these individuals do not target the practices of the Muslim religion, but the practices of any other religion within the state institutions. More specifically, the same individuals could express their disagreement with the practices of the Catholic religion in the public space. When answering a survey that measures attitudes towards Muslims, the respondents in many western

societies score low on prejudice against this social group and they score high on the rejection of practices related to the Muslim religion. Indeed, studies with national samples from the United Kingdom, France, Germany, and the Netherlands demonstrate that a large proportion of individuals with positive attitudes toward Muslims also support a headscarf ban (Saroglou et al., 2009; Van der Noll et al., 2010) and reject Islamic education or the building of mosques (Van der Noll, 2014).

Some authors have attempted to distinguish the profile of individuals who dislike Muslims and their religious practices from individuals who do not express prejudice towards Muslims, but do not tolerate the practices of the Muslim religion in the public space. Adelman and Verkuyten (2019) examined the majority group members' reactions to the Muslim minority group and different Muslim practices in the Netherlands. They identified two important groups: one was intolerant of all Muslim religious practices, and the authors labelled it "prejudiced intolerant". The second group was intolerant of certain religious practices and was labelled as 'principled intolerant' by the researchers. Next, the authors considered several demographic and social-psychological variables to examine the characteristics of each group. Compared to the prejudiced, intolerant group, the principled intolerant group was reported to have a higher level of education and to be more likely to engage in cognitively sophisticated thinking. They are also more willing to address the unfair treatment of minority groups and are generally more politically left-leaning. These results show a lack of correlation between tolerance of religious practices and prejudice against Muslims. They indicate that rejection of a particular practice (e.g. Islamic schools) cannot simply be considered prejudice against Muslims. Accepting a particular religious practice does not necessarily indicate non-prejudicial feelings. It is also possible that some practices related to the Muslim religion are better accepted in Western societies (e.g. wearing the veil) than others (e.g. the application of the Sharia law in Europe) (Adelman and Verkuyten, 2019; Dangubić et al., 2020).

What happens when we compare the acceptance of Muslim religious practices with the practices of another religion? Dangubić et al. (2020) examined attitudes toward religious practices in six European countries: Belgium, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom. Authors simultaneously considered multiple religious acts (wearing religious symbols and following religious education in public schools) and multiple religious actors (Muslims and Christians). They differentiated between individuals who apply a double standard by rejecting Muslim but not Christian religious practices (discriminatory rejection), and those who reject practices independently of the religious group engaging in them (equal rejection). Authors argue that much of the previous research on anti-Muslim feelings has considered only Muslim practices, which can lead to the misidentification of individuals as either having negative or

positive feelings toward Muslims. Results of this survey show that half of the respondents who rejected Muslim practices also rejected the same practices for Christians. This indicates that some people who rejected Muslim practices were not applying a double standard in which Muslims are discriminated against. Instead, they show a rejection of all religious practices defending the principle of secularism.

This research highlights the importance of a more refined measure of Islamophobia in order to understand what type of practice is acceptable or not, and under what conditions tolerance towards religious practice becomes associated with prejudice. Moreover, members of the majority group can also claim to be committed to the principle of secularism in general, while their attitudes towards religious practices vary depending on the religion in question (Nugier et al., 2016; Dangubić et al., 2020). One example is the wearing of religious symbols in schools and other institutions, which has been prohibited by law in France since 2004, and which has impacted the meaning attributed to the principle of secularism among French citizens. Indeed, in France, social scientists identified two types of meaning given to the principle of secularism: "historical secularism" and "new secularism" (Bauberot, 2012). The former refers to the law of 1905, which guarantees individual freedom of religious practice and the neutrality of the state concerning this practice. With the laws of 2004 and 2010 prohibiting the wearing of religious symbols in public institutions, as well as the covering of the face, neutrality has moved from the state level to the individual level. French citizens must be religiously neutral in public space. On the other hand, the latter refers to the prohibition of wearing religious symbols in state institutions. Even if this prohibition is not aimed at the Muslim religion, it is perceived as such by French Muslims, with several incidents reported in the media, illustrating the difficulty of wearing the veil in these spaces.

Adam-Troian et al. (2019) proposed that adherence to the new secularism principle may be driven by social identity concerns (also see Tajfel and Turner, 2001) and, more specifically, by national identification. Indeed, research in social psychology shows that increasing national identification may lead to increased prejudice against immigrants with high national identifiers expressing more prejudice against these minorities because they are perceived as both realistically and symbolically threatening (Mahfud et al., 2015; Badea et al., 2018). While threat perception is a key factor explaining the link between national identification and prejudice (Badea et al., 2018), it is also a predictor of adherence to the new secularism principle in France (Roebroeck and Guimond, 2016). In many studies conducted in France, researchers showed that adherence to the new secularism was linked with negative intergroup attitudes in terms of stereotyping, prejudice, and support for discrimination (see also, Anier et al., 2018, 2019). The results of these studies also suggest that agreement with the new secularism principle is potentially driven by national identification. New

secularism is considered a belief tied to the French national group identity and results from a socio-historical deformation of secularism's original meaning.

Being tied to national identity, the new secularism is perceived as a cultural norm (Nugier et al., 2016), and like all other social norms, it is shared and reinforced by citizens in order to exist and be maintained in society. One way to reinforce this norm is to exert normative pressure against individuals who deviate from the new secularism. This social pressure is expressed through various reactions used by an individual to show his or her disapproval of certain behaviours to others, including the disapproving gaze or negative comment (Chekroun and Brauer, 2002), the discrimination in the allocation of symbolic or realistic resources (Dedrick, 1978), and even the exclusion of the offender from the national ingroup (e.g. Schachter, 1951).

In a study conducted by Nugier et al. (2016), participants were asked to take part in a "social survey about life in France". They were given an excerpt from an article in a local newspaper about life in France and the religious practices of its citizens, written by a young student. The student was named Yasmina and presented as Muslim (Muslim condition) or Benedicte and presented as Catholic (Catholic condition). The target was also presented as adopting a normative attitude versus a counter-normative attitude with respect to the new norm of secularism. More precisely, Yasmina and Benedicte were presented with or without wearing a religious symbol (an Islamic veil versus a Christian cross). Participants were then asked to report their intention to communicate their disapproval of the target's behaviour. Their level of prejudice and commitment to the new secularism were also measured. The results show that participants who were firmly attached to the principle of the new secularism displayed social pressure toward the counter-normative targets. However, participants with a high level of prejudice expressed more social pressure towards the counter-normative targets, suggesting that this social control was a form of prejudice against Muslim immigrants. Indeed, the veiled Muslim target received more social disapproval than the Catholic target wearing a cross.

In a different study conducted in France (Cohu et al., 2022), French participants were randomly assigned to one of two experimental conditions in which they read a newspaper article describing either Muslims or Catholics praying in the street. They then completed a questionnaire, including the public expression of religious beliefs dimension (e.g. "As a principle of secularism, everyone should be free to express his or her religious beliefs in private and in public"), the perceived deviation from the secularism principle (e.g. "To what extent do you find the behaviour of these people is contrary to the principle of secularism"), and from the French values measure (e.g. "To what extent do you think these people's behaviour is contrary to French culture"). Results showed that participants saw street prayer as deviating more from French values when the people praying were Muslims rather

than Catholics. In addition, they were more likely to view public expressions of religious beliefs as compatible with the secularism principle when those praying were Catholics. These results were noticed especially among the French participants who were strongly attached to the idea of a social hierarchy of religious groups.

In summary, members of the majority society who disagree with the religious practices of Muslims may express this view either because they are prejudiced against that community, or because they are committed to a form of secularism that prohibits religious practices for all other groups. Those committed to the principle of secularism have certain characteristics such as a higher level of education, and a generally more sophisticated cognitive thinking style. They are also less attached to social hierarchy, more willing to defend the rights of minority groups, and generally more politically left-leaning. In general, Muslim religious practices are more easily rejected than those of the majority Christian religion in European countries. More specifically, the new restrictive policies on individual freedom of religious practice in France may have given a new meaning to the principle of secularism, which is now perceived as a social norm of the national group and linked to prejudices towards immigrants of the Muslim religion. What are the consequences of this perceived rejection among immigrant-origin Muslims? How do they react to this negative feeling of perceived discrimination?

## Perceived Rejection from the Host Country and National Identification

According to the rejection-identification model (Branscombe et al., 1999), members of minority groups identify more with their own group when they perceive high levels of rejection by members of the majority society. This group identification serves as a shield against the harmful effects of rejection and perceived discrimination. In research conducted in the United States (Branscombe et al., 1999), Black-Americans were asked to read scenarios that put them in the shoes of a character receiving ambiguous treatment from a White American. They were asked about their feelings of discrimination, their self-esteem in the face of this treatment, and their identification with other Black-Americans. The results showed that the more discrimination individuals perceived, the more they identified as Black-Americans and, therefore, the less they reported being affected by the perceived rejection. Indeed, identifying with one's ethnic group allows individuals who have been discriminated against to share their negative experiences with other members of the group, and thus obtain a sense of support and solidarity that can mitigate the negative consequences of discrimination on their well-being. However, another result of this perceived discrimination is its association with increased hostility against the mainstream society.

The more Black-Americans felt rejected by members of the majority group, the more anger they expressed toward that group.

This research was replicated and developed with immigrant groups. Specifically, a study conducted in Finland with immigrants from the former Soviet Union confirmed the results obtained with Black-Americans in the United States. It developed a new model in which disengagement from the national group can explain the increase in hostility towards members of the mainstream society (Jasinskaja-Lahti et al., 2009). The results show that perceived ethnic discrimination increases immigrants' ethnic identification and decreases their psychological well-being. However, increased ethnic identification protects their well-being from the negative effects of perceived discrimination. Another consequence is that perceived ethnic discrimination increases their negative attitudes toward the national group. This negative impact of perceived discrimination on attitudes toward the national group is explained by decreased national identification. The more immigrants felt discriminated against, the less they identified with Finland and, therefore, the more they felt hostility against the mainstream group.

In a more recent study conducted in the United States (Hakim et al., 2019), these models were tested with Muslim Americans invited to respond to a questionnaire. Perceptions of discrimination included discrete experiences and perceptions of marginalisation at the individual and group level, indicating whether the participant had personally experienced any form of discrimination (e.g. being singled out by airport security or law enforcement; people acting as if they were suspicious of him or her). Respondents were also asked to rate the difficulty of being a Muslim in the United States after 9/11. Then, the survey assessed participants' identification with their religious group, ethnic group, and national group. Finally, Muslim Americans evaluated their satisfaction with life (i.e. their well-being). High perceived discrimination was associated with high identification with the religious group and ethnic group, and low attachment with the American national group. All types of identification were positively related to the well-being of Muslim Americans. More specifically, religious or ethnic identification decreased the negative effects of discrimination on participants' well-being.

In contrast, low identification with the American people was related to low well-being. In other words, what would make Muslim Americans happy is to be able to identify with all three social groups: Muslims, North Africans, and Americans. Belgian and French Muslims also confirmed this link between perceived discrimination by the majority group and high identification with the Muslim group, which serves as a shield to protect their well-being from negative treatment. On the other hand, low identification with the national group was associated with more hostility towards Belgians or French (Azzouzi et al., 2017).

The study of American Muslims suggests that national identification is important to their well-being. What Muslim Americans wish for is the

opportunity to identify with both their religious group and the national group. However, members of the national group with a history of immigration are often seen as less typical of that group compared to individuals with no history of immigration. A recently documented phenomenon in the social psychology literature is the misrecognition of national identity among young nationals with an immigrant background (Blackwood et al., 2013, 2015; Amer, 2020). National identity misrecognition implies that people relegated to a minority membership (e.g. French Muslims) have their national belonging denied by the majority group (e.g. "native" French). This occurs when the privileged majority subgroup highlights the religious and/or ethnic affiliation of members of the minority subgroup, implying a devaluation of the latter's national belonging (Da Silva et al., 2021). National identity misrecognition is different from other concepts describing the relationships between minority and majority groups, for example, perceived discrimination. Indeed, while discrimination occurs in an intergroup context, where there is a clear distinction between ingroup and outgroup (e.g. individuals from different nationalities), misrecognition occurs in an intragroup context where all the individuals involved are effectively members of the same group (e.g. individuals with the same nationality). However, French Muslims may be relegated to their religious group, a process by which they become "others" and form an "outgroup" inside the national group ( Blackwood et al., 2013, 2015). In this way, they can experience both discrimination and misrecognition with a negative impact on their well-being and attitudes towards mainstream society.

In an experimental study conducted in France (Da Silva et al., 2021), Muslim immigrants read a scenario presenting a fictional character who experiences national identity misrecognition (misrecognition condition) or a conversation with a colleague on an unrelated daily topic (control condition). The authors included measures concerning inferences about the fictional character's perspective (e.g. hostility towards French mainstream society) and the same measures concerning the participant. The scenario presents a character who is a social science and humanities student. The character goes to the restaurant where he/she has just been hired. When preparing for the first service, one of his/her colleagues asks some questions. In the condition in which misrecognition was made salient, participants read the following dialogue: *Which country do you come from?; My parents were born in Morocco.; Ah, you are an immigrant then.; No, I was born in France.; Yes, but you do not look like a French.* In the control condition (without misrecognition), the dialogue was about exams at the university. This experimental protocol was inspired by real-life dialogues experienced by Muslim immigrants in France. Interviews with members of this community and focus groups have highlighted how the micro-aggressions they experience in their daily lives lead them to become more affiliated with their religious identity (e.g. the Muslim

religion) in relation to the one they originally wish to put forward (e.g. French nationality, Da Silva et al., 2021).

According to Da Silva et al.'s (2021) findings, the effect of misrecognition on the perception of hostility is not significant when considering the fictional character's perspective. However, the misrecognition increased these negative feelings when considering the measures of the participants themselves. In other words, the participants were able to project themselves into the character who is experiencing misrecognition of his or her national identity and express their negative emotions towards the members of the majority group. When do these negative emotions towards the mainstream turn into radicalisation?

## Radicalisation as a Process

A growing body of research shows that hostile attitudes towards the majority group do not automatically translate into extremist and/or terrorist actions. Terrorism is an act of war, not linked to any particular ideology or religion. In order to carry out their activities, terrorist organisations need to be able to recruit fighters who are willing to devote themselves to a cause, sometimes to the point of sacrificing their own lives. This does not happen instantly. The transition from a hostile attitude towards the mainstream to the use of violence is a process that follows psychological principles called radicalisation. To date, the most successful model of radicalisation processes includes three factors: need, narrative, and network. Synthesising nearly forty years of research, this model is validated by a multitude of experimental and field studies on numerous armed extremist groups around the world (Kruglanski et al., 2019).

According to this model, the likelihood of an individual joining a terrorist group depends on his or her motivation to feel respected, valued, and socially useful (need). This motivation increases in proportion to the individual's exposure to situations of failure, unemployment, rejection, loneliness, and/or discrimination (Pfundmair, 2019). Radicalisation might also be a function of exposure to discourses that legitimise violence (narrative), and the insertion of individuals into social groups that value violent action (network).

The need for "significance" in the eyes of others, for valorisation and social recognition, is one of the factors of radicalisation (Kruglanski et al., 2019). Researchers show that there are conditions for creating and satisfying this need, a mechanism that can lead to radicalisation. For example, the social exclusion of young people from disadvantaged neighbourhoods can create a need for self-worth and social recognition. This makes them vulnerable when facing extremist organisations that offer them the opportunity to participate in a violent act that is perceived as enhancing their self-esteem. While the intervention of law enforcement agencies to dismantle networks

is essential, as is the improvement of socio-economic conditions, the psycho-social factors of radicalisation must not be neglected.

In summary, members of the Muslim community may react differently to perceived rejection by the majority society. In the face of discrimination, they may respond by withdrawing into their national identity, reinforcing their identification as Muslims, and developing hostile attitudes towards the majority national group. More often, however, young self-identified Muslims claim membership in the national group. Recent research shows that when young Muslims experience misrecognition of their national identity, they may respond by increasing their identification with the majority society (Da Silva et al., 2021). In some circumstances, the misrecognition of their national group membership may also contribute to their feelings of hostility towards the mainstream. However, extreme actions do not appear automatically; other conditions must be met to engage in extremist movements, such as exposure to discourses that legitimise violence and insertion into a social network capable of implementing violent actions. Only a policy that would allow the real integration of young people from immigrant backgrounds, a genuine recognition through socially valued projects, would break this process of radicalisation in the relations between mainstream society and immigrant-origin Muslims.

## Relational Radicalisation

Indeed, radicalisation can be "relational": on the one hand, Islamophobia and discrimination towards young Muslims with an immigrant background. On the other hand, hostile attitudes and sometimes violent actions towards the majority group. Kunst et al. (2016) have attempted to identify the mutual dynamics between the attitudes of the majority group and minority Muslim members that can lead to mutual radicalisation and extremisation of intergroup attitudes (i.e. relational radicalisation). Currently, a growing proportion of the population of Western Europe is made up of members of the Muslim minority. For many members of the majority, this demographic shift may pose a threat to their Christian identity, which may make them less supportive of Muslims' rights of expression (Smeekes et al., 2011; Mols and Jetten, 2014). One example is the thesis of the great replacement defended by the French writer Renaud Camus and taken up by the extreme right-wing parties during the recent presidential elections in France. The basic idea is that the civilisation based on Christian roots is replaced by Muslim civilisation through immigration. On the other hand, members of the Muslim minority groups are also afraid that they will not be able to maintain their religion in this context of social rejection (Hakim et al., 2019).

Two factors appear to be particularly central to the current discourse in many European societies: Islamophobia, among members of the majority group, and religious identification, among members of the minority group.

Taking the perspective of both the minority and the majority group, Kunst et al. (2016) examined how Islamophobia influences the expectations of the majority group on how Muslims should behave in the national sphere, but also on how members of the Muslim minority actually orientate themselves towards the integration process.

Indeed, members of the societal majority have specific expectations as to how minority members should behave in relation to their own culture and the culture of the nation (Bourhis et al., 1997; Badea, 2017). To the extent that members of the majority society fear the religious culture of Muslims, they reject any possibility that allows this culture to be maintained. Instead, they demand that Muslims abandon their religion in public spaces. Shifting from the majority to the minority perspective, the more members of Muslim minorities experience religious prejudice and discrimination, the more negatively their religious identity is associated with engagement in the national sphere (Jasinskaja-Lahti et al., 2009; Badea et al., 2011). An insoluble situation of radicalisation in which majority society members are intransigent in their opposition to Muslim communities and Muslim minorities are held tightly to their religious practices and communities is thus created.

A more detailed analysis of the majority group's attitudes towards Muslim minority groups distinguishes between members of the majority group who are religiously prejudiced and those who are committed to the principle of secularism and the rejection of all religious practice in the public space without targeting the Muslim religion (Adelman and Verkuyten, 2019; Dangubić et al., 2020). They also suggest that individual religious practices such as wearing religious symbols would be more accepted in Western Europe than collective practices such as street prayers (Adelman and Verkuyten, 2019).

A policy of secularism that would guarantee individual religious practice could create a more favourable social context and avoid strong religious identification among members of Muslim minority groups. Furthermore, the fear that the Muslim religion affects the national identity of European states by creating segregationist groups within the national society is unfounded. When looking at the cultural preferences of members of Muslim minority groups, integration into the majority society comes first (e.g. Badea et al., 2011). Young self-identified Muslims want, above all, to identify with the national group and to be seen as members of that group in their own right.

In order to break the process of radicalisation, educational and training programmes targeting the mutual acceptance of cultural differences and the construction of a common national identity are needed. The aim of a recent study conducted in France was to test an intervention based on a self-affirmation procedure to reduce prejudice toward immigrant-origin Muslims (Badea et al., 2020). The authors examined the impact of participants' attachment to the Christian roots of national identity on the effectiveness of affirmation procedures in reducing negative attitudes. Indeed, it is possible that the perception of a shared belief that national continuity

is built on Christian roots (i.e. social norms) increases the perception of the threat associated with Muslim minorities to this identity. This research investigated whether the affirmation procedures would be effective among French people who perceive these norms. In this study, participants were asked to think about values that are important to them personally (self-affirmation) or as French citizens (group-affirmation).

Based on a recent model provided by Badea and Sherman (2019), the authors hypothesise that self-affirmation decreases prejudice against Muslims compared to the other conditions among participants with strong personal beliefs that Christian roots define the continuity of national identity. The same research also predicts that group-affirmation decreases opposition to the rights of Muslims compared to the control condition among participants with a strong perception of social norms that the national identity is defined by Christian roots. When the data was analysed for all French participants, the results of the study did not confirm the hypothesis. Contrary to expectations, when the authors explored the data collected from the French Christian participants, who may perceive themselves as a more direct outgroup compared to Muslim immigrants and who are personally attached to the Christian roots of France, thinking about values important to themselves increased opposition to Muslim rights. However, in both samples (all French participants and only Christian participants), thinking about values important to one's self as a French citizen decreased opposition to Muslims' rights.

## Conclusion

As stated in the introduction to this chapter, immigrant-origin Muslims are often perceived as a threat both culturally and economically (Stephan et al., 2000). The cultural threat seems to have an important impact on the manifestation of prejudice and discrimination against these immigrants (Badea et al., 2020). It is the fear that national identity is no longer the same because of the perceived "massive" presence of immigrants, to the point of evoking the idea of a cultural "replacement", particularly in religious terms (i.e. the Christian religion perceived as the root of European civilisation "replaced" by the Muslim religion). This fear may seem paradoxical when considering the attachment of citizens to the principle of secularism. From this point of view, what is beneficial in intergroup connexions is the commitment to the principle of secularism without being steeped in prejudice and discrimination against a particular religious group (Adelman and Verkuyten, 2019; Dangubić et al., 2020). Indeed, many empirical studies show that acceptance of individual freedom of religious expression (i.e. "historical" secularism) can lead to harmonious intergroup relations (Roebroeck and Guimond, 2016).

The common national identity should be built on democratic principles and values rather than on particular religious views. Research testing

different social interventions aiming to reduce prejudice (e.g. Badea et al., 2020) suggests that constructing a common national identity based on shared civic values as citizens of a supra-ordinate group rather than members of a religious subgroup could be an effective intervention to improve intergroup relations within the same society. Interventions are needed with both young members of the mainstream group and Muslim minorities, in order to increase a real inclusion of all citizens in the national group. The false perception that all members of the majority group are prejudiced against Muslims, and that all Muslims want segregation within the majority society, should be deconstructed. Current research suggests that, on the contrary, there is a willingness on the part of these young people to build a national identity together, around common values.

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Chapter 5

# Radicalisation, Extremism, or a Third Position?

## How French Muslim Women Engage with the Challenges of Assimilation and Difference

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### Introduction

Extant studies that explain how group identification and politicised identities become constructed among radicalising counter-movements identify key similarities between Islamic radicalism and far right extremism (Kisic Merino et al., 2020; Kinnvall and Capelos, 2021). Both violent Jihadist and Islamist-related groups, such as ISIS and Al Qaida, and the Far Right[1] see violence as a strategic as much as a psychological choice to correct a perceived or stated sense of deprivation, grievance, or injustice. With so-called home-grown radicalisation and extremism, has come an increasing emphasis on young Muslims (mostly men but also some women) becoming self-radicalised or the targets of recruitment policies and willing to make the journey to one of the 'holy wars' of the Islamic State. Furthermore, extreme far right nativism sees EU integration challenges, the economic crisis and its policy responses, migration, integration and asylum policies, as the main culprits for the erosion of what is familiar and traditional – phenomena expressed through racism, xenophobia, and violent extremism. As third-country nationals have migrated economically, politically, and culturally to the heart of their former colonial masters, they are perceived as ontological threats to the ideological, social, and political foundation of European societies and citizens (Kinnvall and Nesbitt Larking, 2011, 2012; Kinnvall and Capelos, 2021). Seen as movements and counter-movements, radical Islam and the far right often come together in their racist, xenophobic and extremist discourses, resulting in actions and reactions feeding into one another and keeping both movements alive. The far right and radical Islam also provide interrelated gendered counter-narratives. Muslim masculinity in Europe is framed in opposition to that of the morally righteous masculinity of the West, and they both carry a sense of victimhood, turned into righteous indignation and rage against those seen as responsible.

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There is, however, a third position – one of the individuals who, despite living in similar pressurised environments, refrain from violence and do not support anti-social groups and their actions. We pay attention to this position occupied by some Muslim women in the Western world, who have come to constitute both a racialised and gendered category in nationalist and religious discourse. We ask how their identities are internalised and expressed in the context of the above 'boundaries of inclusion and exclusion'. To answer this question, we first review the literature on the psychological process by which individuals become active in radical Islamist or far right groups, which is not all that different from non-violent groups or from non-religious movements (Kisic Merino et al., 2020). We then account for how identifications and politicised identities become constructed and highlight the discourses, narratives, and practices that obstruct or facilitate the promotion of equality, justice, and inclusive values. We focus particularly on the position of Muslim women minority groups in the Western world, as their status continues to be a source of animosity, anxiety, and anger. The mass migration of newly 'freed' colonial subjects during the twentieth century has generated new racial and cultural divisions that put pressure on individuals and societies also in a current context. In our case study, we examine how post-diaspora (second and subsequent generations) French-Muslim women conceptualise their identity within the context of French republicanism, which promotes notions of nationalism, and a rejection of multiculturalism in favour of assimilation. We present the results of a thematic analysis of interview excerpts[2] focusing on issues of identity, challenges of integration, and cultural and religious obligations. The aim is to identify how post-diaspora French-Muslim women make sense of their identities and related tensions; how the republican model that demands assimilation influences their identity construction and internalisation, and; how the founding values of liberty, equality and fraternity are reconciled with their experiences as Muslim women. Unpacking this puzzle can be of value to local, national, and EU policy-makers, civil society actors, political and religious leaders, educators and social media who contribute to decreased polarisation and thus to dialogue and disengagement from global, politically motivated violence.

Our aim is to understand how French-born female Muslims make sense of their identity in the context of republicanism and its values of liberty, equality, and fraternity, and in result whether they feel they can occupy a space in public life or resign to the traditional private sphere. While the French State upholds a strict measure of integration for its minorities, secular laws keep restricting access to liberty, equality, and fraternity for French-Muslim women and only further challenge their inclusion into French culture. Following discussions of nationalism and identity, it is unclear whether French-Muslims themselves perceive their dual identities to be in conflict or incompatible. If so, how do they manage this tension between the public and

private spheres, the inconsistencies between a traditional, religious identity, and a secular French-European identity, and how do they manage them in their day-to-day lives?

## Gendered Politics: Emotions, Violent Masculinities and the Gendered Struggles of Inclusion and Exclusion

As radicalising counter-movements, both radical Islam and the far right rely on gendered dimensions of political community, often described in terms of projects of belonging. Gender is here viewed as a basic organising principle of all social relations (Rudman and Glick, 2008), that affects how radical political movements function and how they are specifically rationalised through national and/or religious ideologies. In studies of radicalisation and terrorism, gender has been incorporated into the general framework of understanding acts of political violence (Herschinger, 2014), in order to shed light on mechanisms driving these processes and acts and to challenge the gender-blindness of the research field (Keenan, 2014; Schraut and Weinhauer, 2014). Studies point to the importance of understanding how specific forms of radicalisation intersect with violent masculinities or with what has been termed 'toxic masculinity' (Treadwell and Garland, 2011; Kimmel, 2018), including the extent to which nationalist, religious, and gendered narratives have intensified the search for clear boundaries around the nation, religion, and tradition. Studies also examine how women often come to act as symbols of such traditions, as people are increasingly categorised into religious and national groups; and how this has augmented racism, xenophobia, and violent extremism in Europe (Taylor, 1999; Agius et al., 2020; Kisic Merino et al., 2020).

In the UK, the 'migration crisis' discourses during the Brexit debates were used as a rationale for rationalising and normalising the 'migrant threat', using narratives of past practices, memories, and symbols as emotional, embodied, and material representations (Agius et al., 2020). In Sweden and Denmark, the far-right has made migration and failed integration the dominating narrative on which all action is based (Kinnvall and Svensson, 2022). In France, while Muslims are estimated to constitute no more than 8% of the French population (Iqbal, 2015), their perceived historical incompatibility with democracy and civil society (Kukathas, 2003) brings into question the extent to which a French national identity can co-exist with non-Christian religious affiliations.

Here it is worth noting how the search for a proper 'national character' is almost exclusively race *and* gender-based, focused upon the male body and sharply delineating gender differences as a result. Here, national stereotypes, such as the 'clean-cut Englishman' or the 'genuine Swede', are of particular importance as they tend to be related to the protection of the nation. 'The national stereotype represents those who protect the inside

from outside aggressors at the same time as it separates out those who look "different", making looks and appearance a major differentiation' (see Mosse, 1995:168, quoted in Kinnvall, 2006: 81).

In this regard, it is important to note how an attachment to a justifying (religious or national) ideology, and the memorialised myths and symbols associated with it, can provide a sense of belonging, satisfy personal and social ties, and augment status and self-esteem. But it can also offer a sense of risk, excitement, and danger, being part of the wider Muslim Ummah or the greater national community, as well as fulfilling a desire for vengeance and thus contribute to specific masculine attachments that provide bonds and comradeship and an emotional pull to act in the face of injustice (Silke, 2008; Kimmel, 2018; Kinnvall, 2018). As Kinnvall (2018) notes, both alienated young Muslim males and disaffected males of the majority communities can find this particularly appealing as they search for a place of belonging or explore their own religious or cultural identity through collective commemoration or attachment to certain cultural or religious narratives, myths or spaces.

Within these gendered debates, the term 'femonationalism' (Farris, 2017) has been used to capture how feminist issues are being exploited by nationalist, and often neoliberal, proponents to advocate in favour of anti-Islam and anti-immigration campaigns. Femonationalists advance their political agenda by framing Islam as an inherently misogynist religion, where sexism and patriarchy are presented as non-Western and Muslim problems (Farris, 2017). Examples are plentiful, ranging from the ways in which anti-establishment, anti-immigrant, and anti-EU discourses are often geared towards the silencing of not only feminist discourses and claims but also women more generally, female politicians and experts, and the voices of women in communities.

This suggests that the increasing popularity of such strong gender-based ideologies not only shape individual behaviour, but also contribute to the identity of the nation, adding to racial pride and thereby satisfying the notions of masculine hegemony. Both the far right and radical Islam use such ideologies in which the family metaphor is prominent. This metaphor tends to construe women as the symbolic bearers of the nation and overlaps with how women traditionally have been seen as the anchors of the family. However, like in the images of the male as the head of the family, females have been denied any direct relation to national agency. 'This representation of the universal subject as both the creator and the object of knowledge (in both secular and religious terms) is a gendered and racist representation that most political theorists (and theologists) have attributed to (Western) men rather than to women or minorities' (see Tickner, 1996; Mojab, 2001; Kinnvall, 2006: 72).

Women and minorities have increasingly been portrayed as voiceless objects, separating Western males' capacity for reasoning from women's

and minorities' affective bodies (see Kinnvall, 2015). Femininity, in comparison, is often conceptualised as either the opposite of masculinity (the rational male vs. the emotional female), as its inferior (strong male needed to protect its weaker female counterpart), or as its straightforward equal (since man equals women there is little need to look at gender). The fallacies of always defining one in relation to the other emerge in the overgeneralisation that what is male cannot be female, what is male is better than its female counterpart, and what is male should be the standard for what female should be (Tavris, 1992: 27–30). Within this process of overgeneralisation, women's and minorities' identities have been constructed around a lack of independence and autonomy; a lack of subjectivity in the modernist sense of the word. This lack of subjectivity has caused women's and minorities' subordination to appear natural, as primordial as consciousness itself (de Beauvoir, 1949 in Tickner, 1996; Yuval-Davis, 1997), while it reflects racist and gendered patterns of social relations. As Castles and Davidson (2000, see also Mojab, 2001) have noted, the control of female sexuality and reproduction is crucial to nationalism. This is what Yuval-Davies (1997) refers to as the 'burden of representation' – the fact that women come to represent national unity and distinctiveness.

In the following section, we discuss how Muslim women in France have come to occupy such a representative position, situated between the far right and their nativist claims, and that of radical Islam and their religious claims for a global Ummah. Of importance for the argument is how the French postcolonial state has come to build on its legacy of liberty, equality, and fraternity and how this has, similar to many other postcolonial states, involved an uneasy relationship with multiculturalism and religious freedom.

## Being a Muslim Woman in France: Struggles of Identity, Assimilation, and Difference

In France, immigrant streams from North and West Africa and the Middle East aided post-war reconstruction and formed diverse inner-city communities. However, the nation's 'ambivalent relationship with its ex-colonies has left its minority population in a precarious position – legally French citizens but socially and politically isolated (Freedman, 2004: 6). The 'formal separation of church and state' in 1905 established the principle of laïcité, translated as secularism (Freedman, 2004: 10), under which any public expression of religious belief is 'deemed unacceptable' (Kinnvall and Nesbitt-Larking, 2011: 50). By the late twentieth century, non-white religious minorities, including Muslims, were fully visible in French society and increasingly perceived as fundamentally at odds with the Republic's secular values (Kinnvall and Nesbitt-Larking, 2011). The French situation is a combination of strict republican principles, a diverse population and a distinct national identity born from revolution. These principles are used

in political rhetoric to encourage allegiance to the nation and solidarity amongst French peoples.

Scholars have frequently concluded that Islamic extremism is most often found 'not among migrants but among their children – those who attend French public schools and are taught the values of the Republic (Bleich and Maxwell, 2014: 158). The Charlie Hebdo attackers – second-generation French Algerians (Beaman, 2021: 271, 276) – demonstrate how religious extremism provides a 'stripped-down and hyper simplified' version of Islam to guide identity construction when individuals feel alienated from the 'host majority culture' (Kinnvall and Nesbitt-Larking, 2011: 65). Therefore, an examination of post-diaspora individuals can identify the 'boundaries of inclusion and exclusion' in French society, as well as the experiences and conditions which threaten an individual's sense of self and lead them to pursue other avenues of inclusion (Beaman, 2021: 271, 276). This was particularly important in the recent presidential elections, in which three of the four front-runners proposed right-leaning, anti-immigration policies (Boucek, 2022).

Themes of identity and nationalism are dominant in research examining the position of minorities in Europe, often with a focus on the concepts of 'othering' and dual identities. Here, discussions centre on how nationalist fears of 'plural allegiances' (Simon, 2021: 1) and Muslims as a 'monolithic block' (Zúquete, 2008: 323, 324) have been perceived to threaten French national identity and created a 'new racism' in Europe (Kinnvall and Nesbitt-Larking, 2011: 60). With regards to multiculturalism and republicanism, the existing literature discusses the supposed failure of multiculturalism (Chin, 2017: 237), the principle of 'equality through sameness' (Freedman, 2004: 10), and whether Islam and civil democratic society are fundamentally incompatible (Kukathas, 2003: 1). Finally, discussions on liberty, equality and fraternity as France's founding values debate the purpose of laïcité, the reasons for state restriction on religious practice, and the awkward position of fraternity in this famous trio. The next section presents such discussions on nationalism – such as 'othering' and the 'Muslim label' (Fellag, 2014: 1) – as well as dual identities or 'plural allegiances' (Simon, 2012: 3) to understand their influence on identity construction for French-born female Muslims.

### *'Othering', Identity, and Nationalism*

The concept of 'othering' is widely discussed in the literature, defined as 'labelling' individuals 'on the basis of their visibility' which provoke 'questions about origins' and signal 'otherness' (Simon, 2012: 13). Nationalist projects often define an 'other' as a common outsider to unite their followers. In post-war France, Muslims have been the natural outsider within the imagination of political elites, for whilst France 'stands for enlightenment, modernity, and progressiveness', Islam represents the 'opposite' (Bayrakli et al., 2018: 150). The categorisation of all non-white immigrants from the

Maghreb or Middle Eastern region under the 'Muslim label' is evidence of 'othering' and France's struggle to accept their former colonial subjects as 'true French citizens' (Fellag, 2014: 1). The discussion of Muslims as a 'monolithic block' further creates the perception of Islam as an 'ominous threat' to the native French community and drives support for the nationalist cause, not least among forces on the far right (Zúquete, 2008: 323, 324).

Grabow et al. (2013: 251) define dual identity as an individual's affiliation 'with both one's ethnocultural minority ingroup and one's society of residence', for instance, French-Egyptian. It is a common experience for post-diaspora citizens in Europe where the dominance of white, Judeo-Christian culture is contrasted by an appreciation for the culture and religion of their country of origin. However, these dual identities are discouraged by the French state, in favour of strict assimilation with French culture (Freedman, 2004: 10). Leaders of the French Third Republic believed that only when society has 'overcome all types of specific identities and belongings' can it truly be equal (Freedman, 2004: 10). As such, Muslims in France have been expected to abandon their allegiance to Islam or their country of origin. This perspective regards identity as a 'finite stock' in which 'plural allegiances' weaken an individual's inherent 'Frenchness' (Simon, 2012: 1, 3). As such, some believe the presence of Muslims in France threatens the cohesiveness of the nation, for they may hold a loyalty that stands 'in competition' with France (Simon, 2012: 1). This is the fear of a 'diluted' French identity (Salem, 2013: 84).

Kinnvall and Nesbitt-Larking (2011: 60) argue that a 'new racism' has emerged in twenty-first-century Europe, where the arrival of a 'foreign culture', rather than race dominates nationalist discourse. In this context, Muslims in France have been consistently constructed as outsiders by nationalist voices, categorised under the 'Muslim label' (Fellag, 2014: 1). This 'othering' serves to undermine their inherent 'Frenchness', despite being legal citizens by virtue of birth. Similarly, the state's discouragement of dual identities certainly impacts identity construction as Muslims are encouraged to abandon all allegiances other than France. There is not much research on how French-born Muslims, especially Muslim women, react to this 'othering' and discouragement of dual identities – do they understand their allegiances to both France and Islam as in competition? If so, how do they manage this conflict? And how do they manage to reconcile the impossibility of satisfying a country that categorises them as outsiders yet demands their loyalty?

### *The Politics of Multiculturalism, Republicanism, and Assimilation*

In 2010, German Chancellor Angela Merkel proclaimed, 'the multicultural concept is a failure, an absolute failure' – soon joined by the former French President Nicolas Sarkozy (Chin, 2017: 237). In France, the rejection of

multicultural politics began in the 1980s when Priority Urban Development Areas (ZUPs) and Educational Priority Areas (ZEPs), which aimed to improve conditions for immigrant families, were declared unsuccessful (Chin, 2017: 260–263). For the French government, instances of violence and riots in the *banlieues* (suburbs) demonstrated the failure of the existing multicultural integration agenda (Chin, 2017: 264). Consequently, the idea of a multicultural society has been wholeheartedly rejected in France as a 'recognition and valorisation' of cultural differences (Simon, 2012: 14). There is a strong belief that such difference fundamentally challenges 'national cohesion'; thus, an assimilationist stance toward newcomers has since been adopted (Simon, 2012: 14). This republican model of integration places identity on a hierarchy in which being French sits above all others, for why would an Algerian or Egyptian not want to be French? The assimilationist logic is underpinned by the belief that equality can only be achieved through the 'disappearance of difference' (Freedman, 2004: 10).

Muslims are targeted for assimilation due to the belief that Islam is 'incompatible with any kind of liberal political order' (Kukathas, 2003: 1). For instance, Kukathas (2003: 15, 16) argues that due to Islam's inability to 'embrace' society 'for as long as there are unbelievers', the democratic principles of 'toleration and peaceful co-existence' will never be accepted. This widely held belief drives the state's demand for the retirement of any other allegiances or identities to the private sphere, fully uniting behind the French national ideology. Only then can minority groups be considered fully integrated into public life, rather than by virtue of being French-born, tax-paying and law-abiding citizens. This agenda is further reflected in proposed immigration policies, which set allegiance to republican principles as a 'precondition' for potential citizens (Zúquete, 2021: 334, 336). However, Kinnvall and Nesbitt-Larking (2011: 54) argue that this logic limits integration at 'anything but a superficial level'. Strict demands for assimilation and the obliteration of any non-French cultural identity will not create a genuine integration or allegiance to the nation, but a culture of fear and insecurity (*Ibid.*). As a result, Khemilat (2021: 214) says that what exists in France is not a harmonious civic culture but 'legalised segregation' – a consequence of the government's 'ongoing refusal to reckon' with its colonial past (Beaman, 2021: 276).

Scholars debate whether the rejection of multiculturalism in France, in favour of a republican model of integration fosters societal cohesion; whether Islam can co-exist with French-European values (Kukathas, 2003); and how these discourses impact the ability of French-Muslim women to feel integrated. Such debates spark an interest in understanding the realities of assimilation for French-born female Muslims. Do they struggle to integrate? And if so, what conditions limit or prevent the adoption of a French identity? Whilst there is a discussion of this in the existing work, it by no means provides a complete picture of their experiences. For instance,

Abdelgadir and Fouka (2020)researched the impact of the landmark 2004 and 2010 laws restricting religious practice on female Muslims in public school at the time (2020: 709, 710). They found that due to a 'climate of increased scrutiny', the laws fundamentally 'changed the reality in schools' for Muslim girls and authorised 'differential treatment' of both veiled and non-veiled Muslim students (2020: 709, 710). It appears that French-Muslim women struggle to integrate into the French culture and community, experiencing 'otherness' in the public sphere. The key takeaway from this discussion of multiculturalism and republicanism is that the French state upholds a strict measure of integration for its minority citizens. They are expected to fully embrace the values of the Republic due to the inherent superiority of the French national ideology.

### *The Founding Principles: 'Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité'*

France's founding principles have formed the basis of the nation's political character since their establishment under the Third Republic. Liberty and equality are essential to the framing of political debates and are frequently used by officials to justify their actions. However, the idea of fraternity is less developed, and often associated with solidarity (Gilbert and Keane, 2016: 900). This section presents the existing debates on France's founding principles to understand how their rhetoric and reality impact identity construction for French-Muslim women.

According to Kukathas (2003: 14), the French understand religion as a 'powerful and dangerous […] political force' that may 'devour civil society'. As such, laïcité (secularism) – the freedom from religion – has become an essential tenant of national identity, yet there is debate amongst scholars as to its true purpose. In the late nineteenth century, the introduction of a universal 'civic education' reinforced the principle of secularism in public life and sought to encourage individualism and 'moral integrity' amongst the French citizenry (Dobuzinskis, 2008: 287, 292). The Third Republic argued that the separation of church and state protected the French people from 'domination by dogmatic religious authorities', emphasising the freedom citizens benefit from when religion is removed from the public sphere (Dobuzinskis, 2008: 287). However, many scholars agree that the 'secular, free and obligatory' public school system in France is first and foremost a nation-building tool (Hamel, 2010: 299). Rather than ensuring the 'equal protection' of beliefs, laïcité aims to secure an individual's 'full allegiance' to the state (Chin, 2017: 197). As such, some have argued that France's growing Muslim population threatens the 'instilling' of republican values due to their perceived 'increased religiosity' (Abdelgadir et al., 2020: 709). Therefore, Islam is understood as a 'menace' to the nation, contributing to the idea that to hold both French and Muslim identities is fundamentally incompatible (Freedman, 2004: 10).

Disputes over the wearing of religious 'identifiers' in public schools (Robert, 2003: 645) culminated in the landmark laws of 2004 and 2010 'prohibiting conspicuous religious symbols' in most public spaces (Croucher, 2009: 200). The reasoning behind these restrictions remains heavily contested – to target Muslims, to exclude them from public life, or in fear of Islam post-9/11 – yet the French polity continues to espouse liberty as their justification. Although neither bill explicitly targeted a particular religion, Abdelgadir et al. (2020) argue that due to the construction of Muslims as in violation of the Republic's secular values, the headscarf has become a symbol of 'inherent non-Frenchness' (p. 711). Therefore, they believe Muslim women are the main victims 'affected by the law in practice', and the state's true intention is to 'reduce the visibility of religion in the public sphere' (Abdelgadir et al., 2020: 707, 711) by excluding Muslim women in a 'politically correct way' (Khemilat, 2021: 216). Freedman supports this idea by highlighting the commonly believed 'dichotomy between liberated French women and their oppressed Muslim sisters' (2004: 18). Here it is interesting to note how also French feminism has been accused of having nativist leanings in its reliance on an eroticised ideal of womanhood that leaves little space for other versions of female subjectivity, such as the veiled Muslim woman. Instead, the *affair de foulard* (the headscarf debate), some critics argue (see e.g. Kemp, 2010), is viewed as profoundly anti-feminist.

This cultural clash between the 'liberated' and the 'oppressed' is emphasised through comparisons to extremism by officials and the media, such as allegations that veil-wearing schoolgirls 'serve as a tool to Islamic fundamentalism' (Salem, 2013: 79). Khemilat (2021: 214) argues that this dichotomy legitimises the 'legal exclusion of veiled women' from French public life by constructing Islam as an oppressive, patriarchal force, incompatible with the free and equal Republic. However, according to the 2003 Stasi Commission, established by the government to 'resolve' the conflict over religious symbols in public schools, restrictions on religious practice allow Muslim girls to 'free' themselves from 'gendered determinism' (Abdelgadir et al., 2020: 710). The Commission presented its report as upholding the nation's republican principles, protecting both laïcité and women's rights. By contrast, Salem (2013: 86) argues it was France's 'fears, misconceptions and prejudices' about Islam that pushed for the 2004 and 2010 restrictions. Rather than protecting national values, the laws aimed to prevent the development of 'certain religious inclinations' due to the fear of extremism post-9/11 (Ajala, 2014: 130).

This understanding supports Kinnvall and Nesbitt-Larking's (2011: 50) 'secular absolutist model' by arguing that the laws aimed to eradicate 'dual loyalties' amongst the French-Muslim population in favour of complete assimilation with French-European culture (Ajala, 2014: 130). With 'Equality – Why refuse minority rights? In the name of equality', the French state has refused to recognise the rights of minority groups (Gilbert and

Keane, 2016: 888). A 1999 constitutional court ruling found that the principle of equality prevents the recognition of collective rights that could 'take precedence' over the individual (Gilbert and Keane, 2016: 888). According to the French state, this ruling is a true incarnation of the Republic's values, but some scholars maintain it is a convenient way to marginalise religious minorities who are deemed to threaten secularism. Here, Gilbert and Keane argue that in upholding this 'absolute notion of equal treatment', the legislature and judiciary have forbidden 'affirmative action' and 'targeted ethnic, religious, or linguistic measures' which would meaningfully improve the lives of Muslim communities (2016: 883, 888, 895). Fellag's (2014: 2, 5) research also found that French North Africans experienced 'ongoing isolation and alienation' from the essential resources which would support 'greater equality and integration'. He argues that the challenges faced by France's minorities have been exacerbated by the government's 'historical unwillingness' to take an 'active role in integrating' its diverse population (Fellag, 2014: 7). Consequently, the presence of Muslims in France has become an 'internal colonial problem' (Maillard, 2010: 9) in which the 'systemic' discrimination they face has been made 'invisible' (Gilbert and Keane 2016: 883, 904).

The founding concept of fraternity adds to making these populations invisible. Dobuzinskis (2008: 287) defines fraternity as an 'ideal of national solidarity', a feeling of unity amongst French citizens. Its inclusion in the Republic's revolutionary slogan recognised the 'common identity' and 'mutual obligation' between the French peoples (Spicker, 2006: 119). However, its connotations of 'collective action' and 'social responsibility' seem to contradict the individualist understanding of society encouraged in discussions of equality (Spicker, 2006: 121, 137, 138). Spicker (2006: 144, 145) argues that the French state's involvement in fraternity and solidarity is 'ambiguous' – identifying efforts in 'social security' and support for 'voluntary and charitable activity'. Yet, we can see the impact of these efforts is outweighed by the reality of the restrictions on liberty and equality for French-Muslim women. However, Gilbert and Keane (2016) maintain that a re-interpretation of fraternity and solidarity could be used to override the 1999 ruling and recognise minority group rights. This would provide justification for 'special measures' to tackle the 'deep inequalities' experienced by Muslim communities across France (Gilbert and Keane, 2016: 900, 903).

The key point from the above discussion is how liberty and equality are used by officials to justify restrictions on Muslim life. The removal of religion from the public sphere is supposed to empower Muslim women, freeing them from oppressive obligations such as wearing a headscarf. Similarly, the recognition of individual over group rights intends to support independence and self-reliance, treating citizens as 'autonomous individuals' rather than confined to a specific group (Khemilat, 2021: 219). 'Liberté, égalité, fraternité' are internalised by most French citizens as something they're

entitled to and enjoy day-to-day. Yet there seems to be a gap between the state rhetoric and the day-to-day reality of Muslim communities facing discrimination, unequal opportunities, and socio-economic instability. How, in practice, do liberty, equality, and fraternity apply to them?

Returning to the questions we posed at the start of our chapter, it is important to examine how French-born female Muslims make sense of their identity in the context of republicanism and its values, whether they feel able to occupy a space in public life and how they manage the tension between public and private life, as well as their sense of citizenship and inclusion/exclusion. Based on the extant literature reviewed above, one can expect that feeling different from their Franco-French counterparts might accentuate feelings of difference and otherness and limit their sense of inclusion. In addition, one can expect that Muslim women might not see themselves as 'true' French citizens and might be more likely to defer to a traditional, religious identity and role in the private sphere.

## Notes on Methodology

To provide answers to the questions above, and to interrogate our expectations, we conducted a thematic analysis of secondary material, specifically excerpts of interview transcripts with second+ generation Muslim women living in France. We sourced interview excerpts from five publications examining intersectionality in the identities of young Muslim women in France: the book chapter *Speaking As A Muslim: Avoiding Religion in French Public Space* by Amiraux (2006)[3]; the book *Why the French Don't Like Headscarves: Islam, the States and Public Space* by Bowen (2008)[4]; the book *Constructing Muslims in France: Discourse, Public Identity, and the Politics of Citizenship* by Fredette (2014)[5]; the book *Muslim Girls and the Other France: Race, Identity Politics and Social Exclusion* by Keaton (2006)[6]; and the article *Embodying Islam and laïcité: young French Muslim women at work* by Rootham (2015).[7] These publications were selected by searching digital libraries (JSTOR, GoogleScholar) for recent published works (20 years, from 2000 to 2019), containing interviews with French-born, Muslim females who were second- or subsequent-generation immigrants. The five publications dealt with the experiences of French-born Muslim women and their interpretations of Islam (Amiraux, 2006), their religious practices (Bowen, 2008), their public identity focusing on social issues (Fredette, 2014), their construction of their self-identities (Keaton, 2006), and their education and employment trajectories as influenced by the racialisation of their identities (Rootham, 2015).

An advantage of using interview excerpts sourced from existing research is that the secondary analysis can be less accused of bias or leading the interviewees to answer questions in a particular way (Capelos et al., 2022). A secondary researcher will be 'less emotionally invested' in the data and its

participants, having not undertaken the interviews themselves, and therefore more open in coding, theming, and presenting their findings (Perry and Ruggiano, 2019: 83). The 'iterative' nature of the method also ensures the 'quality' of analysis through the revisiting of stages which ensures themes are fully developed, enhancing the trustworthiness and reliability of the results (Addington-Hall et al., 2010: 340). This approach further allowed us considerable flexibility by not committing to a particular theoretical approach, while still creating space for 'unanticipated insights' (Braun and Clarke, 2006: 97) which suited our inductive approach to investigating open-ended research questions.

The excerpts sourced were from interviews conducted between 1997 and 2011. The excerpts were selected on the basis of two criteria: a) thematic fit, focusing specifically on identity and republicanism, and b) demographic fit, verifying that the excerpts were from females, French-born, Muslim, second- or subsequent-generation immigrants. Excerpts that did not meet these criteria were excluded from our sample. We identified 89 excerpts that fit the selection criteria. Of these 9 were from Amiraux (2006), 13 were from Bowen (2008), 10 were from Fredette (2014), 44 were from Keaton (2006), and 13 were from Rootham (2015).

The excerpts featured 46 women aged between 15 and 35, mainly of Algerian, Senegalese, Moroccan, and Egyptian origin. The women came from a variety of socioeconomic groups, although predominantly the urban working-class, and had differing relationships with Islam, particularly regarding the wearing of the veil.

One of the authors coded the interview using thematic analysis outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006): familiarisation with the data, generation of initial words or phrases that assign meaning (codes), searching for relevant themes, establishing broader themes, and consolidating key themes. The coder constructed eight categories that measured the frequency of key concepts (duality, cultural and religious obligations, public life, private life, integrated into French society, feelings of difference and otherness, traditional and religious identity, secular French identity). These eight categories also supported the generation of codes during the thematic analysis. Three key themes with the following codes emerged from the analysis:

1. *Duality*: dual identity; dual lives – one French, one Muslim; forced to be French; feeling of difference; feeling like an outsider; frustration; deception; liking France; enjoying a Europeanised Islam; integrated into French culture; preferring French culture.
2. *Challenges of Integration*: attitudes towards religion in France; disliking France; disliking the French public school system; wanting to leave France; French privilege; Muslim label, immigrant status; importance of image; Islamophobia; media bias; racism; the veil; socio-economic inequality.

3. *Cultural and Religious Obligations*: comparison to Christianity; disconnection to country of origin; familial connection to country of origin; fear of adopting religious practice; love for country of origin; partaking in religious practice; sexism; the veil.

In the excerpt below we provide a sample of the coding assigned to the statements of the interviewee in parentheses:

> *When I wore [the hijab], I lived Islamophobia* (Islamophobia; partaking in religious practices). *But now I am considered 'integrated' – because of a meter of tissue* (integrated into French culture; the veil). *The person is the same, but the appearance is different.* (importance of image). *There is intolerance, true intolerance* (challenges of living in France; disliking France; frustration)
>
> Interviewer: Why did you decide to take [the hijab] off?
>
> *Because I could not have found work.* (challenges of living in France; forced to be French; the veil)
>
> Interviewer: Really?
>
> *Yes, it is impossible…Professionally, it is the end. I needed to make a decision between [the hijab] and my professional life.* (challenges of living in France; forced to be French; the veil)
>
> Interviewer: Is it because you work in education policy?
>
> *No. Even a cleaning woman would be asked to take it off. It is not a question of what you do; it is a question of fear* (attitudes towards religion in France)

## French Muslim Women: Living the Third Position

The results from the data analysis showed that the majority of interviewees experienced conflict between their French and Muslim identities on a daily basis. As two interviewees stated: '*But [in France] you have to be French. You have to be French to do anything here'* (Keaton, 2006: 1); *'I practically have to be French in order to succeed in life, otherwise, you're screwed'* (*Ibid.*: 35). This pressure to 'become' French did not create a complete allegiance to France as desired by the state. Instead, a shallow integration was often reported, with feelings of difference or outsider status persisting, as shown in the following two excerpts: '*When I wore [the hijab], I lived Islamophobia. But now I am considered "integrated" – because of a meter of tissue'* (Fredette, 2014: 117). *'Maybe on the outside we're French and on the inside we're Arab'* (Keaton, 2006: 32).

The sense of conflict between the two varied across the data and, therefore, a kind of duality, provides an accurate understanding of French-born female Muslims' 'plural allegiances' (Simon, 2012: 3). The idea of a sliding scale between the French/Muslim end points, conceptualises how identity

is not a fixed position; rather, experiences shift self-identification, sliding between being French and being Muslim. For example, changing to Muslim when celebrating Ramadan with family, or to French when socialising with work colleagues, as the following two excerpts illustrate: *'I needed to make a decision between [the hijab] and my professional life'* (Fredette, 2014: 117); *'Well, take Ramadan, for instance: there's no break. We have to work the same as the day before'* (Keaton, 2006: 148). The implication of this finding is that French-Muslim women had to hide an element of themselves to fit in, presenting a 'proper' Muslim in private or a French woman in public. In the private sphere, this meant following traditional practices and in public, abiding by secular laws. Despite this constant adaptation, feelings of difference to Franco-French citizens persisted. Ironically, this contributed to a 'diluted' French identity which nationalists fear (Salem, 2013: 84) as French-Muslim women feel a 'superficial' integration and affiliation to France (Kinnvall and Nesbitt-Larking, 2011: 54).

Most women also struggled to feel integrated into the French society: *'You find yourself with people; you do not know their culture; you feel very bad, feel still more that you are not well integrated'* (Bowen, 2008: 69). *'I have the impression that I'm different from the others. I have the impression that everyone goes to the gynaecologist regularly except me'* (Keaton, 2006: 149). Hence, the 'disappearance of difference' that assimilation demands can only be achieved when society overcomes 'all types of specific identities and belongings' (Freedman, 2004: 10). In constructing their dual identities as conflictual, the republican model of integration forces French-Muslim women to compromise their religion to participate in public life. The implication of this is that French-Muslim women's allegiance to Islam is undermined. Due to their minority status and legal entrenchment of secularism in the public sphere, the only means to participate in French public life – school, work, shopping, the beach – was to create an image of assimilation. This seriously impacts their self-identification – not only the identity they present to the public and private spheres of their lives – but their fundamental sense of self. The unfair demand for assimilation creates a feeling of difference to non-religious Franco-French citizens who automatically meet these criteria. As a result, French-Muslim women end up having to work even harder to feel a sense of integration and 'Frenchness', despite being citizens by virtue of birth.

The majority of women confined their faith to the private sphere in order to participate in French culture and public life. Although they appreciated the opportunities and privileges they were granted as French citizens, they internalised restrictions on their religious practice, liberty, and equality, which impacted their self-identification. The implication of compromising their religious identity was that despite appearing as integrated citizens, French-Muslim women still felt forced to be French. The key to understanding this is the French state's demand for visible assimilation before

a genuine allegiance to France can develop. As one respondent expressed it: *'Now that we have skills and competencies, and equality finally amounts to something, we are labelled as Muslims to make us feel that we are not yet there'* (Amiraux, 2006: 38–39). As such, the majority of French-born Muslim women in these interviews did not feel the same sense of belonging in their nation of birth as their Franco-French counterparts, due to a culture of fear and insecurity. Their integration was 'superficial', as theorised by Kinnvall and Nesbitt-Larking (2011: 54).

At the same time, it is important to note how the love for their country of origin and religion was often caveated with frustration at Islam, presenting cultural and religious obligations negatively or as a burden. A frequent point of angst was sexism in the Muslim community, which reduced young women to their traditional, domestic role as bearers of the next generation: *'Although she does all that she can to show her worth, a boy, because he is male, will always be better than a girl'* (Keaton, 2006: 175). As such, French-Muslim women experienced constraints on their freedom unfamiliar to both Muslim men and non-Muslims: *'I lie… when there's some holiday, and I want to go hang out with friends – girl friends!… I say something like 'I'm going to the national library' because I know my father will never put a foot in such a place'* (Keaton, 2006: 176). *'You will not become like the French* [Sabine's parents would say]*, have boyfriends, go out'* (Rootham, 2015: 976). *'At the family level, and especially at the father level, I can't do the same things as any other girl'* (Keaton, 2006: 157).

Hence, many of the young women interviewed presented some disconnection to their country of origin and religion, referencing their preference for French culture and a Europeanised Islam. Overall, despite the conflict between their dual identities and struggle to integrate, post-diaspora French-Muslim women did not seem to defer to a traditional, religious identity. Although almost all appreciated their faith and origins, many could easily find criticism of obligations and traditions associated with them and enjoyed the freedoms and opportunities granted to them as French citizens. This did vary among interviewees – for instance, some found the banning of headscarves more frustrating than others – yet overall French-born Muslim women tended to compromise their traditional, religious identity to participate in the public sphere.

## Conclusion

This study provides an important contribution to understanding the challenges faced by French-Muslim women, expanding upon the work of Kinnvall and Nesbitt-Larking (2011), Simon (2012), and Khemilat (2021), as well as the five sources of primary data (Amiraux, 2006; Keaton, 2006; Bowen, 2008; Fredette, 2014; Rootham, 2015). However, there are limitations that serve as invitations for future investigations. For example, we

recognise the time lapse of 11–25 years between the interviews and our secondary analysis. Keaton's (2006) interviews took place before the 2004 and 2010 landmark laws restricting religious practice in public spaces, as well as 9/11 and the War on Terror. These events increased the discrimination faced by Muslim communities in Europe and could have impacted interviewees' self-identification. Future studies can collect interview data post-2016, which would highlight the impact of recent global and European events – the COVID-19 pandemic, Black Lives Matter and domestic Islamic terrorism – or reaffirm the themes found here. Furthermore, these findings can also be applied to contexts beyond France, for example, the three million-plus British-Muslims in the UK (Office for National Statistics, 2018). It would be interesting to understand how the key components of the British national identity – such as speaking English and engaging in typically British customs and traditions – are internalised and impact feelings of 'Britishness'.

This study shows that the characteristics of republicanism embedded within the socio-political context of France had an impact on self-identification. French-Muslim women experience conflict between their French and Muslim identities on a daily basis, struggle to feel integrated into French society, and confine their faith to the private sphere to participate in French public life. Challenges of integration have been noted by several scholars. For example, individuals racialised as Muslims at the work place, especially Muslim women, were also among the most outspoken when it came to identifying their employment prospects as being guided by unfair hiring processes (Rootham, 2015). The consequence of this is a 'superficial' integration, as the demand for assimilationism fails to foster a genuine or natural allegiance to the nation (Kinnvall and Nesbitt-Larking, 2011: 54). These findings have important implications for French society – a picture of tension and adaptation emerges, which France's minority population navigate every day. Through a better understanding of their Muslim population, France can work towards supporting the integration of their post-diaspora citizens, generating a natural loyalty to the nation and resolving the decades-long 'internal colonial problem' (Maillard, 2010: 9). Whilst many French-born Muslim women experienced day-to-day challenges living, studying and working in France, many still referred to their position as privileged in comparison to female relatives abroad. In both their French and Muslim spheres, women experienced discrimination unknown to men. Thus, rather than focusing on their visible, external identity in public and private spheres, more attention should be paid to how French-Muslim women understand their own sense of self, free from religious obligations or secularism. The women whose interviews we analysed here held identity positions outside the far right and radical Islam narratives of hatred and vilification. Despite experiencing discrimination, they assumed a 'third position', one where the conflict between French and Muslim identities

generated a duality that forced compromises and concessions. While their integration appeared superficial, what we noticed was their ability to recognise frustrations with both their national and religious identifications. This allowed them to take mental distance from single-minded and rigid identities based solely on the love for one's nation or religion, and instead adopt sliding positions between the two, despite the adversities and discrimination they experience.

In a broader context, the study shows how French postcolonial policies, similar to multicultural citizenship regimes across Europe and the West, rely on gendered dimensions of political community. Within such gendered regimes, both radical Islam and the far-right stand to benefit from a focus on nationalist and religious narratives that separate the 'modern' majority from oppressive, patriarchal – often portrayed as 'backward' – immigrant Muslims. Within such contemporary identity constructions, women – and Muslim women in particular – emerge as symbols and carriers of religious traditions to be saved or rejected by increasingly radicalised groups on both sides of the spectrum. Hence, much contemporary research on migration, citizenship, and the emergence of radical Islam and the far right shows how groups, institutions and states in Europe are becoming increasingly concerned with defining and closing down the community and national boundaries in response to actual or perceived threats against what they see as 'their' culture, religion, and tradition.

## Notes

1 Scholars have defined the far right in terms of rejecting the state and the democratic process and as a matter of adherence to a virulently racist, xenophobic ideology, or, especially for modern European political parties, by ethnonationalist populism, involving political parties, social movements, and right wing subcultures (Rosenthal and Trost 2012; Skocpol and Williamson 2012).
2 The interview excerpts were taken from five published works: Amiraux (2006), Bowen (2008), Fredette (2014), Keaton (2006), and Rootham (2015). The sources were from three books, a chapter in an edited volume, and a journal article. The interviews were conducted between 1997 and 2011, and excerpts ranged from 13 to 393 words in length, averaging at 84 words. More information about methodology and data is in the 'note on methodology' section.
3 Amiraux (2006:18) interviewed three French-Muslim women of Algerian origin women between 2003 and 2005, with the aim of understanding how these women 'relate to their self-identification as a Muslim' in a context which 'respects laïcité only'. Amiraux's (2006: 47) key finding was the variety with which French-Muslims interpret and embody Islam, such that 'being a Muslim and acting and speaking as such' differed for each interviewee. For example, whilst one chose to be unveiled to keep her faith private, another believed it her duty to preach Islam (Amiraux 2006: 32, 63).
4 Bowen (2008) interviewed three French-born women of Algerian origin in their mid-twenties between 2001 and 2004. The research looked at the 'institutional arrangements' which govern interactions in the public sphere to understand the experiences and choices of Muslim women 'concerning religious practices

and the public display of religious identity' (Bowen, 2008: 2, 68). Bowen (2008: 74) concluded that Muslim women construct their public behaviour according to both their 'personal religious trajectories' and the perceptions and attitudes of others. Bowen (2008: 206, 210) highlighted the problematic 'one way direction of integration' espoused by French officials which created a pressure for interviewees to conform with French values and norms.

5 Fredette (2014:1) examined how French-Muslims constructed their public identity, with a specific focus on social issues such as housing, employment, and education. The findings emphasised the theme of intersectionality and the 'multiplicity of affiliations and backgrounds' which shape one's identity (Fredette 2014: 9). The book concluded that the binary of French or Muslim provide a limited picture of the socio-political experience of the interviewees.

6 Keaton (2006:15) investigated the 'socio-political construction of self' in fourteen Muslim girls, aged 15–19. During her ethnographic research conducted in and around Paris, Keaton (2006) attended lessons and extra-curricular activities with her interviewees. Keaton (2006: 194) found that Muslim girls are forced to navigate 'gendered constraints attached to competing home, neighbourhood and school expectations'. It was not just the French state's actions and rhetoric which impacted identity construction for these young women, but the conflicting attitudes they faced at home, school, and the broader public sphere.

7 Rootham (2015:971) interviewed six women aged between 26 and 35, who were born in France with North African and Middle Eastern family origins to examine how the racialisation of their identities affects their education and employment trajectories. Rootham (2015:974) carried out semi-structured interviews between 2009 and 2011, based on 'growing up in France, schooling, work, identity and perceptions of discrimination'. Despite the 'sheer variety' in their experiences, Rootham (2015: 983) found three common 'intersecting… governing discourses' which posed challenges for the participants – laïcité, post-feminism, and neoliberalism.

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Chapter 6

# Is It Radical for a Woman to Become a Stay-at-Home Mother or Wear a Headscarf?

*Ayşenur Benevento*

## Introduction

Humans interpret their agency by creating narratives about themselves that can offer clues about why they do what they do. In a larger study concerning radicalisation processes among self-identified Muslim youth and right-wing native youth in Europe, living according to one's own principles and making personal decisions appeared to be important for many women participants. Those women explored how their gendered values (e.g. the importance of veiling and mothering or being a homemaker) emerged and how their decision to act in accordance with those values involved self-acceptance and explicit refusal of outside influences when making their final decision.

In Western societies, choosing to wear a headscarf or become a homemaker has been viewed as an expression of women's oppression and the rejection of gender equality. The women in well-developed European countries like Belgium who highlight their agency in accepting those "conservative" values are thus interesting because they embrace and take ownership of two conservative practices that perpetuate stigmas against them while also feeling a sense of empowerment. The current chapter considers the thought processes behind an individual's decision to place value on their status as a homemaker or their decision to practice veiling. It then sheds light on the similarities between the beliefs and considerations of these two seemingly distinct groups of women. The chapter concludes by discussing why it is important for deradicalisation efforts to offer opportunities for diverse forms of expression that capture the socio-political nature of women's roles.

## Inspiration Behind the Current Study

The larger research project, which allowed the current concentration on some young women in Belgium, examines European young people (aged 18–30) in Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands, and France ($N$ = 307; 154 migrant origin Muslim youth and 153 right-wing native youth) who are in

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the process of being radicalised after experiencing marginalisation, alienation and humiliation as a result of their ethnic, religious, spatial or political affiliation [European Research Council AdG (ID 785934) project]. The study found that some native youth groups display a strong negative reaction against an order that they believe alienates and marginalises the native youth and prevents the cultivation of a multicultural society (Kaya, 2020; Kaya and Benevento, 2022). On the other hand, a number of self-identified Muslim young people believe that it is important to become emblematic figures of Islamist ideology in Europe. Coupled with their political grievances and experiences of discrimination, they feel the need to negotiate their roles and responsibilities as Muslim Europeans and become strong defenders of their religiosity. Conceptualising radicalisation as an expression of democratic processes (Kaya, 2020), the larger research project explores the structural and cultural influences that may be important in manifestations of political radicalisation and examines overlapping processes among the two subpopulations of youth.

During the analysis of the larger data set, I noticed that young Belgian women place a particular emphasis on the importance of their self-choices and voluntary adoption of certain gendered practices while expressing their discontent through practices and emotions linked to their ethnicity, culture, religion, heritage, homogeneity, authenticity, past, and patriarchy. These women have presented me, a scholar who studies human development and culture, with a dilemma. As often happens in developmental science, they made me wonder how two groups of women who are often clustered in two distinct cultural and civilisational boxes by many policy makers, media specialists and scholars can develop similar validations of their choices despite (or because of) their very distinct ethnic, cultural and political backgrounds. Although both groups narrate the different broad influences with an essentially different cast of characters, they resolve their stories with the same coda akin to each other: "women should be able to make their choices independently." The stories of the women in both these groups are inseparably bound to this belief, so we must ask a basic question: what does this strong emphasis on self-choice among the two distinct groups of women tell us? Noticing this similar pattern in meaning making helps us determine the ideal environment in the variation of radicalisation experiences.

In his famous psychological experiment, Kohlberg (1958) asked people to judge whether a fictional character named Heinz is wrong to steal a drug that will save his wife's life. A "yes" or "no" response was not acceptable in this experiment. Kohlberg was interested in learning how people process Heinz's behaviour. The research participants had to assess their response and provide information about why they found Heinz to be guilty or innocent since Kohlberg was interested in how individuals would justify their actions if placed in similar moral dilemmas. Analysing the form of moral reasoning and not the particular moral conclusion, Kohlberg classified

individuals' responses and formulated six stages in which he located people's moral development.

Kohlberg insists that the form and structure of moral arguments is independent from the content of those arguments. He thus claims that the moral judgements individuals make should not directly translate into praise or blame of anyone's actions or beliefs. Irrespective of the content of Kohlberg's final verdict on moral development, the experiment is still relevant for investigating the reasoning that people provide rather than looking for binary yes/no responses. As a developmental psychologist, I find that Kohlberg's spirit of inquiry is still useful when approaching the difficult task of giving people an opportunity to make sense of their decisions and then searching for meaningful patterns within their decision-making processes. Rather than studying conclusions, searching for meaning in how individuals rationalise their choices can be a richer line of inquiry. In a similar vein, this paper identifies an interesting group of women (self-identified Muslim women and right-wing native women in Belgium) and discusses the similar reasons that they have for participating in and supporting two conventional gender practices.

## The Relevance of an Intersectional Feminist Perspective to the Current Study

In their attempts to understand the relationship between experience and societal influences, feminist psychologists have increasingly assumed an intersectional perspective rather than focusing on the isolated effects of social categories (e.g. race, class, sex). Feminists who opposed the tradition of statistically comparing men and women as two homogeneous groups adopted the perspective of intersectionality because they believe this approach would help them better understand the complexity of human experiences (Crenshaw, 1989). They highlighted that gender always produces socially and historically shaped subjectivities that are interwoven with social class, race/ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation, and social context (Fine and Gordon, 1989), and they explored women's experiences by prioritising the act of listening to their voices (Fine, 1992; Kaschak, 2015; Teke Llyod, 2019). They shed light on the existence of individuals who feel silenced or marginalised and critiqued the dominant approach of studying the psychology of the masses when considering the social relations of power and privilege (Fine et al., 2012). They also drew attention to the intersections that exist between social classes, sexism, and racism, reflected on how these issues relate to agency and gendered practices (Zuo, 2009; Comas-Diaz and Greene, 2013), and questioned how women of different ethnic origins experience the migration process (Espin and Dottolo, 2015). This shift in methodological and theoretical perspective created an awareness of reflexivity and positionality throughout the social sciences (Bolak, 2021).

Feminist scholars have adopted this approach and directed their efforts to study the effects of different social categories on women's experiences in specific social contexts and locations. The relevance of intersectional feminist psychology in the current study is linked to its claim that women who belong to different social groups experience and make sense of oppression (and privilege) in different ways (Cuadraz and Uttal, 1999; Few-Demo, 2014; Mosley et al., 2021), which I argue are related to different radicalisation processes. The current study is not intersectional simply because it focuses on people who happen to be migrant origin Muslim women or native women aligned with right-wing ideologies in Europe. The study is intersectional because the women's perspectives take precedence over my research agenda. Adopting an intersectional approach allowed me to maintain a sense of curiosity about the ways that women viewed their circumstances on their own terms and explore how reasoning processes are similarly depicted in narratives about different gendered practices. The research context provided an opportunity for women to critically engage with hierarchical gender and societal structures that mark some practices and the labels associated with them. By focusing on how practices become social categories (Brintnall, 2013), intersectionality allows for a consideration of similarities and differences among Muslims or right-wing nativists and emphasises the importance of understanding processes of marginalisation, exclusion, and, ultimately, radicalisation.

## Interpretations of Veiling in Western Societies

Despite the abundance of scholarship that engages with the complexity of contemporary headscarf/veil cultures, two frameworks still prevail in public discourse and scholarly literature: one that views the veil as a symbol of women's submission to men and another that perceives the veil as a symbol of resistance against Western domination, the commodification of women's bodies, and Islamophobia (Yegenoglu, 1998; Göle, 2003; Bilge, 2010). This dichotomous meaning-making of the Muslim veil aims to speak for women and fails to address the reasons that veiled women themselves give for following this practice, which are linked to a sense of belonging, collective efficacy, questions of piety, morality, modesty, virtue, and divinity (Mahmood, 2011; Okuyan and Curtin, 2018).

Multicultural approaches perpetuate the colonial image of Muslim girls as the *oppressed other* (Mirza and Metoo, 2018) in need of protection from all-male Islamic clergy and male family members (Bartkowski and Read, 2002). For instance, British State security interventions have identified veiled young women who also happen to marry early and not go to university as being at the risk of becoming extremists (Shain, 2013). Mainstream media also still plays a central role in depicting Muslim women as either victims or deceptive figures who are defined by the danger associated their

origins (Kamal, 2018). Western media perpetuates the idea that the veil not only covers women's hair but also their "real" motivations.

Does a headscarf symbolise something for everyone? Yes, based on our understanding of culture and use of materials and tools to indicate aspects of culture (Vygotsky, 1978), we can easily claim that as a piece of clothing, a veil might afford different functions for different people in various contexts and locations. Okuyan and Curtin (2018) reveal that by wearing a veil, women in Turkey feel like they have joined communities that embrace specific discourses and sentiments and are reflecting their own understandings of existing cultural and political developments. Bartel's (2005) study, which focused on Muslim women of Moroccan origin in the Netherlands, is also notable for claiming that opinions about veiling are rather expressions of self-determination and identity formation efforts, which are developmentally appropriate for young people. Both these studies are influential because they value the religious experiences and expressions of those who practice veiling.

A veil might provide an opportunity for a religious woman to make sense of, accept and declare her devotion to Islam. The price of this dedication, however, is usually positively correlated with the discrimination that they face in Belgium. While Islam is officially recognised as a religion and anti-discrimination principles are in place at different levels of jurisdiction, intolerance toward Islamic dressing practices is normalised and in some cases entrenched in the Belgian law (Brems, 2020). Even after the Council of State declared that the headscarf ban in Flemish public schools was discriminatory, nothing changed at the policy level, and public opinion still simply refuses to view the ban on veiling in schools as a form of discrimination (Brems, 2020). Consequently, veiled women in Belgium who already have to deal with forms of discrimination linked to their gender identity interpret the discrepancy between the legislation and practice as the public body's effort to legitimise Islamophobia (Van de Graaf, 2021), and they claim strong ownership of their veiling practice *confidently* and *despite* all the obstacles that they face. Almost two decades ago, Timmerman et al. (2003) highlighted this strong reaction in Belgium and revealed that an increasingly large group of Muslims is embracing Islamist ideologies or at least a more conscious form of Islam. They argued that Islamism can offer migrant-origin Muslim youth in Belgium a transparent, supportive, and all-embracing frame of reference.

## Listening to Women's Views to Understand Right-Wing Politics

The body of literature that seeks to understand right-wing politics through a gender perspective has developed strong arguments that explain the role of gender in populism, the radical right, the far right, the extreme right, etc.

(Dietze and Roth, 2020). Before moving forward, I would like to clarify my use of "etc." in the previous sentence and explain why I have defined the women in this study as right-wing nativists.

Blee (2020) has critiqued the messiness in terminology and pointed to a lack of consensus amongst definitions and classifications. Explicitly stating the broad definition of far-right offered by Mudde (2007), many scholars have distinguished far (or alt-right, extreme) right from radical right politics and considered the relevance of gender amongst those who support white supremacist ideologies (e.g. Mattheis, 2018; Scrivens et al., 2018; Blee, 2020; Pearson et al, 2020) or who are members of electoral parties with far-right agendas (Bitzan, 2017; Scrinzi, 2017). Those studies are important because they demonstrate that women's involvement in organised racism and hate movements stems from a personal choice that they make and not pressure exerted by the men in their lives.

Accepting a broad definition of far-right, however, ignores differences that might exist among women coming from various fragments of society across different places, contexts, and time periods. Discursive differences also exist among far-right women groups. While some far-right women groups explicitly admit to embracing a submissive position, object to gender equality, and position themselves as supporters and helpmates of their brothers, partners, husbands, and children (Mattheis, 2018), some create new rhetorical strategies in which they uphold mutual goals with men and emphasise women's role in reducing the debt burden for future generations by managing the kitchen and budgeting for the family (Deckman, 2016).

The global recession and its aftermath led to changes in the capitalisation of housing, health, and education, the further erosion of the welfare state, the discursive shift from collectivist belonging and duties to individual needs and responsibilities (the referral back to the family as agency of care, i.e. mostly to women), the associated global financial crises, and the redistribution of social wealth, which have all had an immense impact on the gender order (Lombardo et al., 2009; Orgad and De Benedictis, 2015). The native women who we interviewed did not explicitly mobilise around anti-democratic or white supremacist ideologies, even if racial supremacy is incorporated into their value systems through their opposition to the Islamisation of Europe. They highlighted a preference for particular groups identified by citizenship, opposed immigration, viewed western culture as superior, and centred traditional gendered practices and values in a narrative that conveys "conservative performances of gender" (Norocel, 2018). Thus, rather than labelling this group of women as "far-right", I use the term "radical right-wing" in order to avoid the presupposition of existing stigmas and grouping very diverse groups of people together.

## Method

### *Data Collection and Procedure*

Between-group studies that focus on ethnic minorities often incorporate majority group members for comparison (Phinney and Landin, 1998). For this reason, these types of studies have been strongly criticised for treating the majority group as the norm (Graham, 1992). The current chapter reflects on this problem and pays greater attention to group differences by recognising that differences do not reflect deviance from the majority. Designed as a between-group study, this chapter aims to identify characteristics that demonstrate similar sense-making processes and values among the two groups of young women who are accustomed to being silenced due to their gender identity and/or religious, ethnic, or ideological alignments.

The study employed a structured interview approach. A female Belgian field researcher conducted the interviews in the native language of the research participants. The researcher took notes during the interviews instead of audio-recording the conversations. Each interview took approximately an hour and a half. The interview guide included 17 questions divided into four blocks of topics that the interviewer could use to conduct the interview and explore relevant information regarding the research participants' socio-economic background and their perception of the political, economic, and social issues in their country, Europe, and beyond. Originally, the interviews were intended to take place face-to-face; however, the COVID-19 pandemic created an environment in which it became necessary to give the research participants a choice of either meeting online or in-person. The data collection took place over a period of roughly two years (March 2020–January 2022).

### *Sample*

This project involved designing and implementing recruitment strategies, considering external conditions such as pandemic regulations, and presenting the research to potential participants. In our regular meetings with the field researchers, we spoke about the underrepresentation of women's perspectives, especially the perspectives of right-wing native women, in the radicalisation literature. The local researcher in Belgium, in particular, effectively sought out women research participants and recruited the most women across the four countries studied in this research ($N$ = 39; 27 self-identified Muslim women and 12 right-wing native women). Her efforts paved the way for the present chapter.

Three linguistically and culturally distinct regions compose today's federal state of Belgium: Flanders, Brussels-Capital, and Wallonia. The first two are similar to each other in terms of their political competencies (Kaya and

Kentel, 2008) and thus the local researcher in Belgium sampled both groups from the Brussels-Capital and the Flanders regions. The researcher adopted various strategies and approaches while working to identify and recruit potential research participants. She focused her efforts on organisations or community connections that were specific to migrant origin Muslims and conservative native populations and the identities within those populations. She also reviewed social media profiles to identify the most politicised or the most religiously invested youth from the organisations and contacted them via social media accounts (Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, or LinkedIn) that she created specifically for this research project. Overall, the local researcher found it difficult to sample women in both groups without relying on intermediary figures and organisations. Using snowball sampling techniques and referrals from community representatives such as an imam or religious group leader worked better in the case of recruiting self-identified Muslim women.

The largest obstacle, however, was finding right-wing native women to participate in the research. Because many people with right-wing group affiliations have experienced adverse representations in the media as well as in research, intermediary right-wing organisations were very keen to protect their community members' privacy and prevent them from being exposed to and portrayed in public in a negative way.

Volunteering for one of those organisations that assist people living in poverty in a deindustrialised town near Brussels in the Flemish province of East Flanders facilitated access to the nativist women's group. The local researcher's involvement with the organisation helped her interview a number of women who regularly visited the organisation and received assistance. The field researchers' role consisted of welcoming families with children to the small playground around which the organisation's building was constructed. She spent about ten afternoons together with the families and played with the children. She also participated in city outings, such as a boat trip to Ghent, a visit to a museum, etc.

Among the 27 self-identified Muslim women, 15 wore a veil, 16 had mothers who worked full time in the service industry (e.g. cleaning and caretaking), four were high school graduates, 22 were university students or graduates, and one had a master's degree. The woman who had a master's degree was actually of Dutch origin and a convert to Islam. The field researcher recruited self-identified Muslim women from various cities in the Flemish region. The group of 12 native women represented a more diverse sample in terms of educational and socio-economic background. Only one had a houseworker mother, while those whose mothers worked occupied various jobs (pianist, librarian, cleaner, interior designer, etc.). Their educational background also varied with six university graduate/students, four high school graduates, and two individuals who did not hold any degree above the compulsory level of education.

### *Analysis*

Values analysis identifies norms, principles to live by, and guiding assumptions stated and/or clearly implied by narrators through different angles around a particular issue of interest (Daiute, 2013 Todorova, 2019 Benevento, 2021). Because values are "culturally-specific goals, ways of knowing, experiencing, and acting in response to environmental, cultural, economic, political, and social circumstances" (Daiute et al., 2003: 85), they provide an important clue about how an individual's diverse cultural beliefs and goals may interact with and be situated within a larger context. Values, occasionally referred to as organising principles, are sometimes stated explicitly, but they are also often expressed implicitly in the language style. Values revolve around topics, such as education, professional roles, character qualities, and politics. Values are principles, norms, and rules to live by that require not only an expression of that topic/subject but also an assertion that it is a value. Organising principles are important analytic tools because they capture explicit and implicit meaning in systematic ways that are enacted in narratives. Speakers use these organising principles (usually implicitly) to determine what details they should include in a narrative, what not to include, and how to organise their expressions.

The field researcher took interview notes in a narrative form and noted follow-up questions individually. The analysis process involved examining these notes, which contained transcriptions from the interviews. In that process, the research team identified 159 value expressions organised into 12 categories, tested several rounds of analysis for reliable application by the group, and analysed 307 transcriptions (193 males and 114 females). Our group of analysts created a coding manual based on multiple readings of all the interview transcriptions and achieved 90% reliability.

This coding manual contained a collection of values that were important for our research participants. A strong emphasis on topics such as diversity, neighbourhood, and political participation was prevalent and diversely represented. During the process of creating the manual, I recognised a need for creating an assembly of values specifically for women because overlooking their female perspective, especially the strong emphasis on women's need to make personal decisions about their lives and their experiences of exclusion, became impossible, especially after reading interview transcripts from Belgium. Most of the female research participants were from Belgium, and their interviews offered an array of female perspectives on the core topics and issues of this research project. In total, I identified nine value expressions organised around issues related to gender:

1. **Collaboration**: Collaborating with public authorities is important/essential in some situations that are relevant to gender-based issues where resolution may require monitoring/intervention, such as those

that involve discrimination. Public authorities include institutions/individuals with power, such as the government, law/laws/legislative bodies, police, school officials, public media, international treaties, etc.

2. **Exclusion**: Social-political exclusion, marginalisation, inequalities, gaps (such as between men and women or within a family) and injustices are important to name and draw attention to in order to address them through social inclusion policies and other practices. It is important to identify these types of issues (e.g. discrimination, stereotyping, invisibility) because they are not just.
3. **Female identity**: It is important to recognise and/or address psychological issues, including psychological feelings, behaviours, unclearly directed aggression, oppression, that are attributed to women and biological differences. These issues tend to be more focused on the individual compared with social issues (e.g. discrimination and abuse).
4. **Personal decision**: Emphasising the independence that an individual has when deciding whether to wear a headscarf or stay at home and/or take care of children is important. Individuals often prove that they have integrity and self-worth by showing that they are trustworthy, competent, sincere, true to themself, conscientious, honest, kind, and careful about their appearance and by demonstrating that they are growing and becoming independent.
5. **Intersectionality**: It is important to recognise and/or address the intersectionality of class/gender/religion/ethnic identity all at the same time.
6. **Motherhood and staying home**: It is important that mothers are attentive and actively involved in their children's education and schooling. Drawing attention to instances when mothers are not involved in their child's life or are unaware of what is going on is also attached to this value.
7. **Needs protection**: Acknowledging that women are often the target of violence and harassment and therefore need special measures taken for their protection is important.
8. **Role model**: Emphasising the role that other women play in influencing the decisions, attitudes, thoughts, and beliefs that one has and aiming to become a woman of influence is important. This excludes mothers.
9. **Solidarity**: Supporting, coming together, and sharing experiences with other women is important.

Values analysis does not only examine narrators' actions or failures. Thus, the findings do not hinge on the act of wearing a veil (or not) or holding a homemaker status (or not). Recognising the experiences of these women and showing awareness about veiling, motherhood, and discrimination underline the narrators' values. None of the interview questions or prompts were explicitly related to gender. The research participants spontaneously introduced these value expressions during their interviews. The unit of analysis

is the interview transcript, which means that the value expression carries the importance, not the place where it is expressed.

Analysing and discussing all of the nine gender value expressions that emerged across four countries and subsamples is beyond the scope of this article. The current chapter will focus only on the value expressions that emphasise a mother's role, freedom of personal choice, and female exclusion, not because they alone are worthy of our attention but because they appeared to be very salient among the radical women who we were able to interview in Belgium.

## Findings

Striking similarities emerged across Belgian women's values and expectations, which was something that I did not initially anticipate considering the study focused on processes of radicalisation across individuals of different backgrounds. Being a woman influenced the interviewees' political experiences and differentiated their perspectives from those of men. For that reason, I present the shared and diverse value expressions that emerged in the interviews with the 39 women first. Then, I focus on the complexity and depth of orientations of the Belgian women categorised in two subsamples, as they present the most intense experience and knowledge as self-identified Muslim and right-wing native women. The similarities between guiding principles that emerge across women's positions led to thought-provoking findings, but some different meanings also emerged from the analysis (Table 6.1).

As shown in Table 6.1, addressing gender-based exclusion, emphasising motherhood, and making personal decisions account for the majority of values across interview transcriptions and are relatively close in percentage of expression. The analysis revealed the implicit and explicit meanings

*Table 6.1* Percentages and frequencies of values organising issues related to gender across research participants (with abbreviated labels).

| *Value expressions* | *Female (n = 39)* % N | *Muslim (n = 27)* % N | *Native (n = 12)* % N |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Collaboration* | 8 (3) | 11 (3) | 0 |
| *Exclusion* | 64 (25) | 85 (23) | 17 (2) |
| *Female Identity* | 5 (2) | 0 | 17 (2) |
| *Personal Decision* | 38 (15) | 40 (11) | 33 (4) |
| *Intersectionality* | 23 (9) | 29 (8) | 8 (1) |
| *Motherhood & Staying Home* | 26 (10) | 18 (5) | 40 (5) |
| *Needs Protection* | 8 (3) | 0 | 25 (3) |
| *Role Model* | 8 (3) | 7 (2) | 8 (1) |
| *Solidarity* | 8 (3) | 7 (2) | 8 (1) |

of being a woman while also holding identity labels such as Muslim, migrant origin, right-wing, and nativist individual. The findings focus on women's uses of the research study to enact and negotiate the meaning of being and becoming all of those kinds of women. The overall frequencies and percentages are important simply because they reveal the nature of their emphases and organising patterns in meaning making activities across both groups.

Among the nine value expressions that appeared to be relevant to gender, addressing gender-based exclusion and interdependent systems of discrimination, emphasising motherhood, the need for protection, and personal choice are relatively prevalent. It is unsurprising that gender and ethnicity-based exclusion emerged as an important topic amongst self-identified Muslim women, who often, experience discrimination linked to religious clothing in Belgium. On the other hand, the emphasis on motherhood and/or being a homemaker was a relatively unexpected value that emerged from the interviews, and as I discuss below, was primarily a focus for right-wing native women, who are in positions that make them more aware of the difference between working and not working. The difference between the occurrence of those value expressions among right-wing native and self-identified Muslim women's interviews connects through the principle of having freedom of choice when it comes to making personal decisions. In other words, women organised many of their gender-focused value expressions around the importance of self-choice, which helped them justify their acceptance of religious clothing or homemaker status.

Having presented the value expressions in terms of overall percentage, I proceed to discuss how women in different positions emphasised values. Identifying shared values across a range of experiences sheds light on what it means to be a woman, while different expressions of certain values amongst various groups indicates conflict while also highlighting potential directions for future policy, practice, and research.

### *"Religion Is Important to Me"*

Obstacles related to discrimination based on religious and ethnic background played a central role in the interviews with the self-identified Muslim women. Muslim women reported that they often experience discrimination at work, school, and/or in public due to their gender, appearance, and religious practices. Despite the fact that religious beliefs may be challenging to describe, these women clearly described their decisions about veiling practices in appreciative terms linked to catalysts in family, Muslim organisations, and ultimately the benefits of self-development. Their narratives illustrated multiple entries into the positions of Muslim women while also offering information about their difficult journeys as veiled students, employers, and participants in public life. The following narrative provided

by a young woman highlights the challenges of practicing veiling while pursuing a career.

> *Religion is important to me. I do my best to follow my religion as good as possible. I pray. I wear a veil. This is not a problem for my job right now, but I had to search a long time to find a job where I could keep wearing my veil. I am originally trained to teach economics and Islam, but I teach only Islam because I was never allowed to teach economics wearing a headscarf. They told me this straightforwardly. It is already in the school regulations that teachers cannot wear it, with the exception of Islam teachers. In some schools, even for teaching only Islam, I was asked if I could remove it in the corridors and only wear inside classrooms.*
>
> (30 y-o Moroccan-origin female in Leuven)

The narrator of the above excerpt recognises the importance of having faith in the beginning of her narrative, identifies the religious responsibilities that come with her beliefs and then discusses the obstacles that she faces as a Muslim woman at work. She highlights her challenging experiences of exclusion when she discusses an instance when she was asked to remove her veil to teach another subject or simply walk in common places in school. Despite the difficulties that she had experienced during her education and expected to experience in the workplace, she remained committed to keeping the veil, which may be interpreted as a revolt against majority society.

Valuing self-choice and staying true to oneself while positioning that self between multiple ecologies that are seemingly against each other is not an easy task, especially in Belgium. Navigating between different nationalities, religiosities, communities, and ideologies often leads to a desire for a world where no woman feels pressure to make a choice. The following experiences that one participant brought up in her interview highlight a longing amongst women to "*be let free to decide what they want"*:

> *I see it as really a great responsibility to wear the veil, it is not something easy or light. From the Flemish side, you get a lot of interrogative looks or labelled as being oppressed. From the Muslim side, you feel pressure that you are not allowed to do something bad and that you easily get shamed if you would do something wrong. My sister loves to wear it. It is her identity and it feels good the way it is, but it requires a lot of courage. I think that women should be let free to decide what they want. They should not be made uncomfortable.*
>
> (29 y-o Turkish origin Muslim female in Ghent)

The veiled women who we interviewed rarely seemed like victims of discrimination despite their undoubtedly raw experiences of exclusion.

Moreover, their desire for all women to have the freedom of choice did not always appear to be romantic and general. The excerpt printed below is a good example of how some interviewees used their experiences to take action and create social change in connection with feminist movements:

> *My sisters and I established a volunteer collective called "the 5th wave", referring to the feminist waves. And we also established a movement called "Hijabis fight back". On the 4th of June, the constitutional court ruled that the ban on veils in secondary schools is legitimate. I discovered this ruling on the 12th of June, and then I launched some comments on social media, feeling very angry and unhappy. I did not want to have other girls live through what I have endured. I put an Instagram post together with a few others. We made a video. This led to street protests on the 15th of June. It was amazing that we could pull this off and make it happen so quickly after the ruling. I was stunned, and it gave me a lot of positive feelings.*
>
> (23 y-o Moroccan origin female in Brussels)

As this excerpt demonstrates, Muslim women are very independent, critical of their surroundings and feel a responsibility to take over the task of defending their rights. Certainly, recognition of the feminist sensibility of Muslim women who choose to veil their bodies is needed to understand the connection between the veil, Islamophobia, and oppression. While the Western world is quick to assume that Muslim women are forced to wear veil, our migrant origin Muslim women participants pointed out that even mainstream feminist movements are far from recognising that gender is interwoven with social class, race/ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation, and social context:

> *Feminism is a very white movement. In protests they show nudity, but it should not be like that. When they defend the right to wear short skirts in school, everyone is speaking out and acting like a feminist, but when we talk about the right to wear a headscarf, only the ones we know are speaking in our defence and not all those other voices.*
>
> (30 y-o Moroccan origin female in Antwerp)

### *"I Find Caretaking of Children to Be an Important Value"*

The narratives of right-wing native women yielded several different combinations of values, in particular patterns that emphasise the values of motherhood and/or the homemaker status, women's protection, and making personal decisions. These patterns offer insights into the nuanced sense-making strategies of women with right-wing ideologies. The principle of being able to make your own independent decisions seems to contrast with the other two values. This chapter interprets this tension as a desire for

self-dependence that conflicts with a lack of reflection that is fundamental to challenging the social order.

As stated above, the right-wing native women who we interviewed portrayed heterogeneous sample characteristics in terms of socio-economic background. Some of them overcame many adversities. Despite the variety of sample characteristics, the analyses pointed to the shared experiences and values of women who come from very different situations. The reflections from three cases, in particular, highlight some of the dilemmas faced by right-wing native women, who are positioned between numerous influences, such as socio-economic adversities, gendered expectations, and privileges.

The reflections shared by one of the participants shed light on a situation where the desire for personal choice was strong. The interviewee left home when she was about 16 after she was sexually abused by her father. Despite being placed back home by a court, she *"[ran] away from home multiple times and did all kinds of bad things"*. After spending time in two different corrective youth institutions (*Jeugdinstelling*), she was placed in a supervised independent living system (*BZW Begeleid Zelfstandig Wonen*). She spent some time working as a waitress in bars but was eventually diagnosed with mental problems, which allowed her to receive financial support. In her narrative, she has stressed the influence that the BZW had in her ability to think and act for herself. This emphasis on thinking and acting for one's self introduced a turning point in her story. That is, she is uncompromising in her desire to have a family despite her circumstances:

> *I got Amélie (her eldest daughter) in a relationship of a year of a half with an African man. I am no longer in touch with him. She doesn't know him. We stopped being in touch and that's ok. I chose for her not to know him. Seppe (her son) was planned by me. I asked a friend to help me get pregnant. We did not have a relationship or did not want one. It was a conscious choice. I wanted to be the only one raising my kids, but I cannot afford any fertility clinic arrangements. He is a Muslim with a Kurdish background. I've known him very well for almost twenty years. I'm responsible for the children full time.*
>
> (29 y-o native female in Aalst)

Facing adversity did not seem to have a significant impact on the participant's current choices, but without socio-economic support, prioritising motherhood and discarding the working women's status is challenging for many women. The cost of making a choice is not often explicit but rather something that needs to be read between the lines. The following narrative that a divorced working woman shared presents a multi-generational story in which she depicts her mother as a self-sacrificing woman who valued the wellbeing of her children as well as *the collective of western civilisation*. She

reminisces about the past, when women had the *liberty* to provide for their children:

> *My mother became a housewife after I was born and took very good care of us. We had a warm home, and I have many positive memories of my childhood years. I think it is very valuable to have had this. In general, I find caretaking of children to be an important value. That is currently not being appreciated much anymore. It's seemed to disappear. My mother is always ready to help anyone. She embodies this willingness and readiness to help anyone who asks. I value this very much and want to be like this because currently in our society everyone has become very individualistic.*
>
> (30 y-o native female in Hamme)

By having and raising children, these women may be willingly assuming a role through which they can contribute to right-wing nativist movements. The following excerpt from an interview with a teacher might be a good example that sheds light on how a right-wing native woman might easily view liberal western values as being in tension with non-white women, who are supposedly oppressed. In her narrative, the participant asserts that educators should not have to assume full responsibility over children, makes judgements about the child-rearing style of non-white mothers, and then blurts out anti-immigrant sentiments:

> *I learned through experience that minorities are given equal opportunities, but they are less eager to take them. I don't understand. You give so much and you keep giving, but it is never enough. Pupils are offered free additional classes after school. These classes are taught by students, and the school pays for them. They are quite expensive to maintain. Anybody can register for these classes. White kids do, but allochthones do not. We offer a lot that they could benefit from, but they don't take those opportunities. And then I get angry and sad when I hear the media saying that it's the fault of education. I guess a lot is going wrong in the homes of those kids. The blame lies more in upbringing than official education. It makes me really frustrated and angry.*
>
> …
>
> *Once, a mother of a pupil told me, as I told her to be stricter with her son, "what can we do, we are only mothers and women". This was bewildering to me. What do you mean, that you cannot make your son listen to you because you are only a woman? These things get to me.*
>
> (30 y-o native female in Antwerp)

These reflections introduce an issue that has yet to surface explicitly in our broader understanding of women's involvement in right-wing discourse.

## Discussion

Religious and ideological alignments locate individuals within or outside of different social stratifications that outline proper practices and codes of conducts. The analysis that was performed for this chapter observed two gendered practices that are already value loaded: veiling and mothering. Unsatisfied with only observing the existence of these practices, the analysis revealed a striking similarity between how self-identified young Muslim and right-wing young native women make sense of their practices by emphasising their personal choices. Highlighting the importance of having opportunities and space for making personal choices and claiming ownership over their actions, they portrayed a very sophisticated and complex sense-making strategy.

In this research, considering women's justifications for their practices ultimately helped me find an area that linked the narratives of individuals who typically have very little opportunity to interact with one another. However, recognising the role of self-acceptance amongst a diverse set of women who have made the decision to perform gendered practices is not the only aim of this chapter. When all is said and done, considering why this emphasis on personal choice emerged across both groups of women is necessary. The fact that the value of personal choice in decision-making processes emerged within discussions about veiling practices and the roles of mothers seems to present a dilemma, "*a crack that light gets in*" as sung by Leonard Cohen. In this section, I will examine this apparent tension in detail, discuss the possible reasons for its existence, and explain why this is an important component to consider when studying de-radicalisation efforts.

As the interviews in the field were coming to a close, the local researcher in Belgium found two Muslim converts, one of whom was a woman. The woman participated in the study as a self-identified Muslim woman migrant. She was a Dutch-origin Muslim convert living in Brussels. The excerpt presented below is significant because it uses the narrative of self-choice in connection with both veiling and mothering:

> *I used to wear a veil but have stopped out of necessity, out of choosing for myself and my family. I am Dutch by nationality but have been living in Belgium for about ten years. I went on an Erasmus exchange in France during college, and this is where I met my husband, who is Moroccan. It was difficult for him to come to the Netherlands and join me because of the Dutch legislation, so we travelled a while back and forth and then moved to Belgium. I have 4 children. They all have Arabic names.*
>
> *I still feel the enormous frustration and injustice when I think about my veil. I graduated with a masters and am educated to teach in high school, but this is practically impossible in Belgium wearing a veil. Because of this difficulty, I studied more to be a primary school teacher, thinking that this would have been easier.*

> *My boss called me in once saying that three people of in the department were troubled by me wearing a veil, without any further information. I also got fired while being 3-months pregnant, which was unlawful. But anyway, then I decided that it was okay for me to spend more time at home raising my kids.*
>
> (30 y-o female, Dutch origin Muslim convert with no Belgian citizenship, in Brussels)

While reading the participant's story about the difficulties that she faced in the workplace as a veiled woman in Belgium, I felt that the narrative supported what intersectional approaches praise about attentive and respectful listening practices that prioritise shedding light on the reasons why women make certain decisions. Initially, I did not think that this woman was reconciled to giving up the veil, her country of origin, and her career because of her husband, boss, or children. In fact, she explicitly states that it was her decision not to wear a veil and raise her children at home. On the other hand, I could not help but think about the options that she had while negotiating her needs and desires and eventually making a decision about veiling and becoming a stay-at-home mother. Even though her narrative demonstrates the "*enormous frustration*" she felt because of the exclusion she experienced as a veiled pregnant Dutch woman in Belgium, she frames the potential impact of her emotions by focusing her attention on "*choosing for herself and her family*" and "*deciding that it was okay for her to spend more time at home raising kids"*. Was that really an *okay* decision for her?

Similarly, Orgad and De Benedictis (2015) found that the British press framed stay-at-home mothers in a certain way during and after the recession. They demonstrated that newspaper stories that discussed women in the context of the recession and the impact of the UK's government policies framed the situation as one that ultimately enabled and empowered women rather than constraining or conditioning them when it came to making the choice to take care of their home and children, even when they only decided to do so after being fired. Moreover, Belgium is a country with "genderising policies" and a large proportion of the population consists of women with migrant backgrounds (Mostowska, 2021). A recent analysis of gender equality provisions in national collective agreements in Belgium (Lemeire and Zanoni, 2021) claims that European Union policies have made a positive impact on the integration of women into the labour market, but it does not specify which women benefited the most from those policies (e.g. migrant-origin, Muslim, immigrant women, or women living in poverty). Stories of "resilient" women who lost their jobs during economically precarious times discursively reconstruct the insecure job market in a neoliberal economy and unemployment of women as "a blessing in disguise" (Gill and Orgad, 2018). A discourse of personal choice, then, might appear to be the *only* option for women to appear rational, calculating, and self-regulating

(Gill, 2007) despite having trouble finding a secure educational or employment opportunity due to their veil or children.

Nevertheless, emphasising the self-acceptance of veiling or homemaking does not always imply an internalisation of patriarchy. Ultimately, women know that choice and freedom are rarely given but rather taken, and they do not want to give up control over their bodies and lives. They want to make the final decision when it comes to issues related to breastfeeding, changing their last names after marriage, getting an abortion, having cosmetic surgery, etc. and expect respect. Gendered practices can involve personal choice and contribute to women's empowerment. For example, a woman might have more say in her family or community if she adopts these practices. She might also build solidarity with other women and contribute to a political discourse. For some women, assuming a traditional womanly role might not be a problem in itself as long as doing so comes with an opportunity to empower themselves. Women assessing these (and other) gendered practices and related values might be instrumental in identifying sources of grievances, disclosing abuse, sharing experiences of unequal treatment, and transforming personal narratives into organised action to hold responsible stakeholders accountable. Because this study defines radicalisation as a "defensive and reactionary response of individuals who are dealing with social, economic and political forms of exclusion, marginalization, alienation and isolation" (Kaya, 2020), I believe there is no better population to study than women in order to examine the structural and psychological influences of radicalisation and re-evaluate the existing deradicalisation programs. The analysis revealed that gender values are not always based on harmful concepts of masculinity and femininity. It is important to take gender expectations that are less subtle and implicit into account during research when supporting women in their critical engagement with previously held beliefs.

What emerges from this study is the need to provide opportunities for women who feel silenced due to their political or religious alignments to share the same space and guide them to develop compassionate curiosity about each other's narratives. Rather than asking women to provide their opinions about other women's gendered practices (e.g. "Do you think self-identified Muslim women in Europe have the same freedom of choice in the decisions they face, such as whether or not they should cover their hair? Which native European women have the free choice between joining the labour market or staying home and performing domestic labour?"), asking them to narrate their story in a group setting (e.g. "Can you tell more about the time you first wore the veil? Can we discuss the time you envied your mother for being the sole caretaker for you when you were a child?") might be very fruitful.

The literature on women's friendship and leisure can provide a significant source of inspiration when creating leisure spaces where women with

diverse backgrounds relax but also exercise autonomy by appropriating, negotiating, and resisting identities (Hey, 1997) and become aware of and show concern for the feelings and wishes of others. Women-only events that facilitate autonomy and freedom from caring responsibilities provide a crucial forum for self-empowerment and independence (Freysinger, 1995). Ideally, the focus of deradicalisation programs could shift from lecturing "troubled" individuals to helping them share their personal stories and identify and analyse the way that they attended to their feelings of exclusion, marginalisation, and isolation. Deradicalisation can be then designed as the situation in which the needs that caused the radicalisation are being met. This recommendation is relevant to deradicalisation programs that women and men participate in Belgium and beyond.

## Conclusion

The chapter aims to shed light on how young women's decisions are not viewed as choices but are repeatedly assessed in terms of external influence (from religion, right-wing ideology, etc.) rather than as authentic, autonomous acts. This research has demonstrated the importance of exploring the role of homemaker when studying radicalisation, which is an area that has thus far been dominated by concerns about non-normative (non-western) cultural practices such as veiling. By highlighting the double standards through which young women's choices are interpreted, I hope to challenge the mainstream "civilisational discourse" (Brubaker, 2017) that sets European natives and Muslim groups apart into two culturally, religiously, and civilisationally distinct boxes (Kaya and Benevento, 2022).

Overall, findings reveal that women place value on how they make sense of gendered practices. This finding has several implications for radicalisation studies. We need to recognise women's roles as nuanced and multifaceted and conceptualise their values in ways that they define them rather than how others define or judge them while also being critical when they internalise patriarchy or claim to accept their choices about their daily lives, ideologies, religions, and families. Finally, we should rethink how "deradicalisation" is operationalised and move beyond lecturing troubled individuals by providing individualised therapy at group gatherings where compassionate curiosity is encouraged.

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Part III

# Critical Analyses of Islamist Radicalisation

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Chapter 7

# Risking Muslims

## Counter-Radicalisation Policies and Responses of Dutch Muslims to the Racialisation of Danger

*Martijn de Koning*

### Introduction

In early 2020, right before the first COVID-19 lockdown in the Netherlands, I had a coffee with Ismaïl on a terrace in a centrally-located city in the Netherlands. We were discussing a variety of topics, from his kids to COVID-19 to the Dutch Countering Extremism/Countering Violent Extremism (P/CVE) policies. The previous year, he had been arrested on suspicion of providing material support to a criminal organisation with terrorist intent, but the investigation, and possibly the trial, were still pending (and still is at the time of writing). During our conversation, Ismaïl seemed to speak openly and without much reluctance about everything, although he did ask me to keep the conversation confidential (while giving me permission to write about it). There was, however, one topic of discussion which made him lower his voice on a number of occasions, though without losing his seemingly candid attitude: Dutch governmental policies and specifically the P/CVE policies. Lowering his voice on such occasions '…comes natural', he told me later. 'I guess I don't want others in the café to hear me talk about these issues. They may think that I have something to do with it or that I'm a radical or a terrorist.'

A couple of years earlier, in 2016, the Dutch national umbrella organisation of mosques, Contact Muslims Government (Contactorgaan Moslims Overheid [CMO]) organised a meeting in a mosque in The Hague, titled 'Dissent and Perspective'. The public meeting centred on the question: 'How can the Muslim community effectively take its responsibility against hardening, alienation and radicalisation?' Through this meeting, financed by the Ministry of Social Affairs, the CMO wanted to present its social engagement as a mode of taking responsibility.

It is perhaps tempting to perceive the above-mentioned occurrences radically different. In the two vignettes, Ismail and CMO present themselves in almost opposite ways. Ismaïl, who is both the target of a criminal investigation related to terrorism and also regarded as one of the 'boosters' of political Salafism, is trying to be very hush-hush when talking about P/CVE policies. Conversely, CMO, regarded by many policymakers and politicians

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(mostly of the political centre) as a necessary partner of the Dutch government, publicly shows its societal engagement. However, both are also examples of how the P/CVE's ways of approaching the problems trigger reactions among Muslims.

Much of the literature pertaining to radicalism, political violence, and extremism among Muslims focuses on an assessment of the process leading up to the use of clandestine political violence by non-state individual and collective actors. This valuable work shows how an unstable constellation of perceptions of threat, hostility, and injustice, searching for belonging and identity, social networks (online and offline), intra- and intergroup relations play a role in incentivising pathways of (de-)radicalisation (Doosje et al., 2013; Verkuyten, 2018; Wolfowicz et al., 2021). In particular, the search for belonging, identity, and meaning is relevant in relation to Islam and analyses of radicalisation, but may also influence other contributing factors and vice versa (Schuurman, 2019; De Koning et al., 2020). This focus in this chapter is not so much on these potential correlations but rather on an assessment of how policies work and how Muslims engage with them or not.

This chapter joins the conversation of religious and race studies scholars who critically interrogate ideas about religion and race as two separate and fundamentally different categories and look at their entanglements. Dating back to precolonial and colonial times, the practices of classifying people and societal phenomena as religion, and race, good and bad religion and good and bad race have served as conjoined tools to manage a population, as tools to classify what is perceived as an unacceptable difference and to regulate access to social resources, equal rights, and a sustainable future (M'Charek, 2013; Vial, 2016; Topolski, 2018; Nye, 2019). Inspired by the work done by Abu Bakare (2020, 2022), and Khan (2021a; 2021b), Husain (2017), and Cainkar and Selod (2018) who all point to the deeper underlying racialised structures of both counter-terrorism and the category of religion, I will explore the religio-racial entanglements underpinning the governance of radicalisation, extremism, and jihadism in the Netherlands.

Through policy analysis and ethnographic research conducted over the last 15 years and building on my earlier work with Maria Vliek (Vliek and De Koning, 2020), I will firstly explore the P/CVE and counter-radicalisation approaches as a form of governance problematising Islam through a racial-security lens. Subsequently, I will show how this racial-security lens triggers and shapes but does not determine reactions among Muslims. I will focus on two types of reactions: non-confrontational and confrontational.

## Racialisation, Risk, and Surveillance: A Framework[1]

Rather than asking what radicalisation governance looks like, I aim to analyse how the Dutch state does governance, in particular to reflect on the consequences of these policies being focused predominantly on Muslims

in combination with the emphasis on preventing risks (see also Groothuis, 2022). In my assessment of the Dutch P/CVE policies, I rely on Dean's (2010) 'analytics of government'. This kind of analysis is particularly useful for asking the 'how' questions that go beyond the 'what' and 'why' questions. For example, how are people controlled and recognised? It means a focus on the practices of governing, problematisations, and technologies and devices employed in the art of governing. Because the Dutch P/CVE policies constitute a vast field, I will focus my attention on the nexus of security and Islam in P/CVE policies, which, as I will show, underpin a racialising governance regulating who belongs to the nation and who does not (yet). Building on the interactive and relational approach I outlined with Maria Vliek (Vliek and De Koning, 2020), I argue that, in order to understand how the governing of people works, we also need to consider how people engage with governmental interventions - a topic I will focus on in the next section.

Based on Dean's outline, I will describe here 'how we govern and are governed within different regimes' (Dean, 2010, 33) in relation to the Dutch P/CVE policies:

1. characteristic forms of visibility, ways of seeing, and perceiving;
2. distinctive ways of thinking and questioning, relying on definite vocabularies and procedures for the production of truth (e.g. those derived from the social, human, and behavioural sciences);
3. specific ways of acting, intervening, and directing, made up of particular types of practical rationality ('expertise' and 'know-how'), and relying upon definite mechanisms, techniques, and technologies; and
4. characteristic ways of forming subjects, selves, persons, actors, or agents (Dean, 2010, 33).

### *Out of Place, Out of Time, Out of Bounds – Visibilising the Construction of danger*

Analysing forms of visibility pertains to how we imagine who is to be governed, and how that relates to what kinds of problems are constructed as well as the relational fields of authority, (dis-)obedience and knowledge in which people are positioned (Dean, 2010, 41). What matters here is the construction and entanglements of different problem-spaces. Scott (2004, 4) refers to a problem-space as: 'an ensemble of questions and answers around which a horizon of identifiable stakes (conceptual as well as ideological-political stakes) hangs'. It is not only the particular topics that are disputed and turned into problems by different parties with various perspectives, stakes and interests, and power relations that matter. What also matters are 'the particular questions that seem worth asking and the kinds of answers that seem worth having' (2004, 4).

For the sake of clarity, I will make a distinction between three lines of problematisation: spatial (out of placeness), temporal (out of time), and ontological (out of bounds). From the 1960s onward, terms like ethnic minorities, migrants, and Muslims have often been used interchangeably in policies and debates, but in the last three decades, the term Muslim has become the primary marker. The particular entangling of the terms is specifically related to integration policies in the 1980s and 90s through which Muslims were rendered here-but-out-of-place based on ideas about descent, culture, and religion (Mepschen et al., 2010). This process of entanglement occurs through policies making a distinction between autochthones and allochthones (those from foreign soil), combined with making Islam a 'religion of migrants' in need of governmental integration policies. Policies are often based on an essentialising, reifying, and othering notion of culture that imagines certain people as being out of place (Yanow and Van Der Haar, 2013; Van Schie, 2018). Within this idea of culture, the culture of migrants is built upon subjection to particular beliefs and practices which are not only at odds with an idealised vision of Dutch identity, but which may also prevent individuals from accepting and internalising values perceived as secular and/or Judaeo-Christian (De Koning, 2016).

However, this spatial dimension of racialisation was not the only problem-space to emerge. Others have noted a temporal problem-space that emerged as well and is strongly entangled with ideas about secularism and how a secular state should look like. Here, Muslims are regarded as 'too late to the party' (Sunier, 2012; Bracke, 2013) after the dismantling of old models of state and religion. Additionally, they are perceived as less modern when their religious attitudes are compared to other Dutch people, who are seen to have freed themselves from the burden of religion (van der Veer, 2006).[2] Another dimension to this temporal aspect of racialisation is characterising Muslims, and in particular jihadist and Salafist Muslims, as not only premodern, but anti-modern in many cases. This assumed anti-modern attitude, which is regarded as at odds with the prevailing secular model, is said to engender a potentially risky condition that is the result of people being exposed to the teachings of Salafist preachers who focus on disgruntled and alienated youth (often referring to the trope of the 'angry Muslim') (De Koning, 2020).

With the latter aspect of the temporal dimension, we arrive at the third problem-space: ontological insecurity, rendering Muslims as potentially out of bounds. I will discuss this in more detail as it specifically foregrounds the idea of security and threat. As Goldberg (2009) explains, ideas about natural and/or cultural difference in relation to race are connected with and bring about the perception of danger. Here, I am following Croft (2012, 220) who argues that 'security' is a concept that enables dominant powers to decide who should be protected and who should be feared.

Muslims and Islam have been seen as a possible threat for a long time (Renton, 2018; De Koning, 2020), but after the Cold War ended, it became more important to find new threats. This meant a refocusing of the intelligence and security services on the 'progressive radicalisation or fundamentalisation of Muslim communities in foreign parts' which might spill over to the Netherlands. At the time, there was a broad political debate on immigration, Islam, and integration (De Koning, 2016), as well as a series of violent and non-violent actions against migrants. Throughout the 1990s, the monitoring of far-right actions was inconsistent and any connection to racism was denied (Witte and Scheepmaker, 2012). By the end of the 1990s, the Binnenlandse Veiligheidsdienst – Domestic Security Service (BVD) increased its warnings against what it regarded as political Islam in the Netherlands gaining power through Dutch mosques and funding from Islamic foundations abroad. Here, national security and fears about potential future violence were extended to include integration and social cohesion, as well as grievances among migrant youth as a result of failed integration. Simultaneously, the BVD made a nuanced distinction between different forms of political violence and applied a narrow definition of terrorism (Fadil and de Koning, 2019). Attention towards the far-left remained marginal, but several far-right political parties were on the radar as extremists albeit with no specific policies.

In the policies of the Algemene Inlichtingen- en Veiligheidsdienst – General Intelligence and Security Service – the successor of the BVD (AIVD) after 2001, the attention paid to the far-right diminished until 2018, but was usually still mentioned in reports. At the same time, its focus shifted from what its predecessor had dubbed 'political Islam' to 'Salafism'. The problematisation of Salafism rests on two ideas: the ideological threat and the grievances threat. Firstly, there is the idea that the Salafist ideology (and its varieties) is intolerant, anti-Western, anti-integrationist, and anti-democratic. Secondly, grievances held about marginalisation, identity crisis, social isolation, and individual psychological problems could foster a breeding ground that would be conducive to the luring of young Muslims by Salafist preachers into militant ideas about how society ought to be, rejecting the authority and the legitimacy of the Dutch state institutions. This could then result in an active struggle against society and, ultimately, participation in 'radical Islamic violent activities' (Fadil and de Koning, 2019; De Koning, 2020).

The contextual embedding and the various positionalities of the various actors and ideologies involved were frequently concealed (see also Jaminé and Fadil, 2019). Islam in general, as well as orthodox and militant thought, became associated with violence and the idea that Muslims have a predisposition to resort to violence. In this process, the identification of threats to the 'Dutch core values' and the cohesion of the nation is based on and leads to an 'ontological insecuritisation of others' (Croft, 2012) whether loosely defined as Islam (among the far right) or radical Islam, political Islam, Salafism or Jihadism, to name the most important labels. After 2012 when

the first Dutch war volunteers went to Syria to join the war, the focus shifted again. This time, 'jihadism', regarded as a violent extremist ideology, became the main target designating all war volunteers as potential dangers to Dutch national security (not to Syrian citizens) requiring a more compelling intervention by the state and the other actors involved in counter-radicalisation approaches on a local, national, and EU level (Fadil et al., 2019).

Taken together, we can see these problem-spaces and their entanglements as part of a process of racialisation rendering Muslims out of place, out of time and out of bounds and, therefore, a potential risk to the cohesion of nation. As such, racialisation is not completely excluding Muslims: there is a strong idea in integration and counter-radicalisation policies that they can become (almost) like us, that they can be redeemed and rehabilitated. There is a strong gender element present as well: the distinctions made in politics and in religious circles often depend on narratives which construct the female Muslim as the exemplary boundary marker in the construction of Islam vs. the West dichotomy (Roggeband and Verloo, 2007; Moors, 2022).[3]

### *Enabling Government Interventions: The 'Broad Approach'*

The process of making visible who and what the problem is, is based upon a racialising ascription which clarifies how Muslims emerged as a category of intervention (Fassin, 2011, 422). The crucial thing with racialisation is not that it suggests that all Muslims sort of look the same, but that there is a *unifying gaze* on Muslimness, which then produces a template of 'The Muslim'. This template becomes superimposed on a diverse set of people as it measures them and holds them accountable to certain ideas about modernity, suggests who belongs and who does not, and delineates the 'good citizens' who are in possession of the 'correct virtues'. To understand how Muslims and threats are then to be governed, the question becomes about the means, mechanisms, and procedures (the 'techne') of government that both enable and limit governing (Dean, 2010, 42).

As Vliek and I have explained, up until the early 1970s, the Dutch government had no explicit approach to counter-terrorism (Vliek and De Koning, 2020). Various violent and non-violent militant actions which resulted in damages to life and capital were of chief concern to the justice department and the police (De Graaf, 2010). Yet, during the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s, no legislation aimed at countering terrorism was passed in the Netherlands. Throughout the 1970s, an approached dubbed 'The Dutch Approach' emerged: a policy that was aimed at the prevention of violence within the existing legislative framework (Rasser, 2005). As previously mentioned, in the 1990s, the focus of government was increasingly targeted at the integration of Muslim and migrant communities. In response to this assessment, the BVD called for 'integral security care' that not only focused on repression, but also prevention and care. It was, however, the response to 9/11 that

materialised this idea through a comprehensive policy against terrorism. This was built on a mixture of preventive and repressive measures that dealt with potential violence, migration control, and financial control, and included antiterrorism legislation (Den Boer, 2007). This mixture became known and presented as the 'broad approach'.

In addition to the attacks of 2001, it was the Madrid attack in 2004 and the murder of the TV director Theo van Gogh in 2004 in particular, which were instrumentalised in implementing realise a major expansion and diversification of state powers in order to strengthen the rule of law (and the state's use of force). In 2004, after the Madrid attacks, a National Coordinator for Counter-Terrorism and Security (Nationale Coördinator Terrorisme en Veiligheid [NCTV]) was established, followed by a new prison regime for terrorists, deprivation of citizenship in instances when suspects have dual nationality, changes in the penal code, travel and area bans, financial surveillance, comprehensive action plans, extensions of temporary custody and pre-emptive community engagement (Manjikian, 2017; Van der Heide and Schuurman, 2018; Van der Heide and Kearney, 2020). With these measures, the broad approach as envisioned by the AIVD was fully in place: repression of radicalisation and violence on the one hand, and prevention and awareness-raising on the other.

After many people from various militant activist networks went to Syria to join the violent struggles against the al-Assad government in 2012 and 2013, the sense of threat increased (De Koning et al., 2020). In 2014 and 2016, new counter-radicalisation policies were launched which consisted of penal and administrative measures again (De Koning et al., 2020). An example of this approach is the 2014 NCTV program: 'Actieprogramma Integrale Aanpak Jihadisme' (Action program Integral Approach Jihadism). This program outlined 38 measures (some of which already existed) to counter threats to the state, democratic order, and society. The program was based on a combination of measures which were, by then, typical of the broad approach: criminal and administrative law, care and prevention, surveillance, and ideological monitoring. These combinations can be seen as the continuation of a culture of control with the Dutch state as its main protector (van Der Woude, 2010). It has, among many other things, resulted in far-reaching practices of surveillance of Dutch Muslims, their institutions and their practices, partly because of the felt need to be in every artery of society (*haarvaten van de samenleving*) for an early assessment of risk (Ragazzi, 2016; Van De Weert and Eijkman, 2019, 2021).

### *The Rationales of Assessing Threats: The Risk of Muslims Unknown*

One aspect that emerges from the third dimension of government practices is the various forms of thought and knowledge that underpin those practices and are produced by them (Dean, 2010, 42). The policies in recent decades,

whether they focus on the far-right or Muslims, Salafism, political Islam, or Jihadism, are performed in order (according to the policy papers) to protect social cohesion, democracy, the rule of law, and fundamental freedoms and integration of minorities. Here we encounter the complexities and ambiguities of the racialising security logic in P/CVE programmes. The underlying assumption is not that all Muslims are by definition to be distrusted as the exemplary threat, but that there may be a risk because of ideological factors and the presence of particular breeding grounds. Therefore, the racial security logic does not homogenise all Muslims under the figure of the racial Muslim, but interrogates Muslims based upon ideas that come together in the figure of the racial Muslim. This interrogation is necessary in order to know who a person is, what his or her ideas are and why and how this relates to any aspect of the figure of the racial Muslim. Unknowability itself is regarded as a risk to security. State officials, politicians from the political centre, as well as academics are involved in determining where and from whom the threat emerges (see also Sharma and Nijjar, 2018).

Here, I want to pause at the idea of risk assessment because, in my view, this is exemplary of how Islam and Muslims are depicted as a *potential* problem and a problem of the unknown. Drawing on Foucault's sense of a *dispositif* of risk – a heterogeneous assemblage for governing social problems – Van Munster and Aradau (2008) assess the idea of risk as a technology of limits: producing boundaries but also and always capable of exceeding the limits. The idea behind risk assessment is precaution, and the subsequent urge among governments to know what is going on in certain subsections of the population results in screening, probabilistic judgements, and decisions that have wide-ranging consequences (see De Graaf, 2019).

Ideas about risk, as Lupton (2006, 13) argues, produce symbolic boundaries and legitimise the management of potential dangers in order to facilitate social cohesion and democracy. The risk assessment is then based on a combination of abstract factors that have to be made legible for different audiences, or as O'Malley (2016, 86) argues: 'if it can be imagined, it should be governed'. This, however, also works the other way around: if it needs to be governed, it should be imagined. So, labelling phenomena as risks, as in the case of Salafism, helps to imagine where the threat comes from and what the locus of intervention is, but also where it does not (necessarily or immediately) come from, but still may be a locus for the intervention of another type. For example, tying the idea of risk to phenomena such as 'Salafism' and 'Jihadism' (and identifying them as such), the government makes clear that it does not target all Muslims as risky. Others may be at risk, however, which would still require intervention, and beyond that, there may be others who are allies against those risks (which also requires an intervention).

In order to inform such risk assessment, an assemblage of personal gut feelings and specific renderings of Islam, Salafism, and Jihadism are used. Furthermore, local knowledge of youth lifeworlds is used, sometimes

based on policy-related, commissioned academic research (Fadil and de Koning, 2019; Ragazzi and De Jongh, 2019; Van De Weert and Eijkman, 2019). What are then selected as indicators of risk are phenomena (such as specific practices and manifestations of unacceptable beliefs, grievances, and socio-political marginalisation) which threaten particular moral principles and are seen as unevenly distributed between subsets of the population (O'Malley, 2016). This assessment also requires making distinctions between acceptable risks and unacceptable risks in order to determine when to intervene, a complicated issue because it always refers to risks perceived to materialise in an undefined future, and interventions are limited by people's rights and freedoms. The predominant focus on Muslims and radical Islam then turns Islam into a necessary condition to label someone a radical and to be scrutinised for potential risks. It is, however, never a sufficient condition. On the contrary, being Muslim can also turn a person into a possible ally against radicalisation. Salafism and jihadism, however, are regarded as sufficient conditions to label an individual citizen a risk or at risk (Vliek and De Koning fc). Yet, as we will see below, these distinctions are far from clear cut.

### *Summoning the Citizen – Identities and Subjectivities*

This admittedly brief overview of how specific problem-spaces are created, how segments of the population are to be regulated, and what agents are involved, already provides us with the necessary clues to answer the question 'what forms of person, self and identity are presupposed by different practices of government and what sorts of transformation do these practices seek?' (Dean, 2010, 43). We could ask, for example, how specific citizens are made, or make themselves into good or bad citizens, or acceptable or unacceptable allies. What kind of conduct do they have to acquire and demonstrate in order to become acceptable or unacceptable, at risk or risky (Dean, 2010, 43–44)? Important here is that the regimes of governmentality do not solidify those identities or inevitably force an individual to submit to them, which I will make clear in the next section.

## How to Engage with a Racialising Governance of Danger?

There is no one answer to all the different problematisations and their connections that can be called the 'Muslim answer'. Many of the individual and collective efforts of people in the public realm are responses to and engagement with various social, legal, and political responses and depend on their own personal situation, specific addresses in politics and policies, and the various developments within Muslim communities as well as society as a whole (e.g. Van Es and Van Den Brandt, 2020). In line with the above,

the focus will be more on the 'how to respond' question than the 'what' question. Central here is the idea of interpellation. In his work on interpellation, Althusser (1971) analyses the emergence of a subject through the act of turning around at the police hail: 'Hey, you there!' (Močnik, 2013). As Althusser emphasised, the individual 'turns around' as if the hail is meant for her/him, and this shows that interpellation already has to circulate, resonate, and be recognised (Althusser, 1971). The racialising gaze on Muslims and Islam through which Muslimness and Islam are turned into markers of hierarchy regulating access to resources, equality, and rights evokes questions and reflections amongst Muslims to which they feel a need to respond (De Koning, 2019). What matters here is that particular debates and policies pertaining to Muslims and Islam work as an interpellation which not only subjects the individual, but also enables subjectivation (see also Fassin, 2011). Bracke (2011), building on Althusser's work, shows how women can embrace, resist or ignore the terms through which they are interpellated, but may also draw simultaneously on several elements of different styles, as Lems (2020) also illustrates in her research on Muslim women in Madrid. I will restrict my analysis here to two avenues of a potential response: one that avoids confrontation (with the state) and one that actively seeks confrontation. The former emerges out of a diffuse form of interpellation in which it is not clear which individual or organisation is being addressed; the latter is a targeted form of interpellation (at first sight).

### *Fighting Radicalisation and Alienation*

In the introduction of this chapter, I pointed to the meeting organised by CMO against radicalisation and alienation. I was invited to attend this meeting and did so. The plans of the CMO on the one hand focused on embracing the counter-radicalisation paradigm but, on the other hand, also on reappropriating this call to foreground concerns about alienation and the need to strengthen the social position of Muslims and Islam in the Netherlands.[4] One of the ideas which were brought to the fore during this meeting was that if your environment considers your expression (of faith) a nuisance, you should not ignore this but instead show that you are doing something about it.

Their initiatives, as well as those by many individual Muslim counter-radicalisation officers in policy-making, social work, and education, aligned themselves (partly) with the reasoning of the Dutch authorities that regarded radicalisation as a consequence of ideological factors and certain breeding grounds that were taken advantage of by Salafist and Jihadi preachers. They often emphasised the need to involve Islamic institutions and individual Muslims in counter-radicalisation approaches, as well as more power for the security services and more investment in youth work (De Koning et al., 2020, 217).

Interestingly however, the harshest criticism on, for example, the Dutch war volunteers in Syria, came from those who were themselves targets of counter-radicalisation approaches: the imams who claimed to follow a Salafi method of understanding Islam (De Koning et al., 2020).[5] In particular, one imam called the groups of militant activists criminals, ignorants, and idiots for screaming for the introduction of Islamic laws without any knowledge about these laws.[6]

Other circles of Muslims who associated themselves with a Salafi understanding of Islam, sometimes competing with each other, dismissed the militant activists and war volunteers as *khawarij*[7] – ruled by their emotions and desires and following the same path as figures such as Osama bin Laden. After people later began to migrate to Syria, the criticisms of preachers who claimed to follow a Salafi method remained more or less the same, although they became harsher.[8] Yet, in particular, the opposition by these preachers was met with suspicion as they were thought to be maintaining a politics of façade: speaking different messages in public than they did behind-the-scenes, applying a mask of respectability to lure vulnerable young people. This, in turn, lead many of these preachers to question the sincerity of the Dutch authorities and to declare that the Dutch government was on a witch hunt against Muslims and Islam. Their initiatives and statements were important in Muslim circles, but their space for speaking out was much more limited than that of the CMO, whose initiatives often had state approval and, at times, state funding.

To a certain extent, the opposition of the CMO and other mosque organisations towards the militant groups while at the same time shying away from a confrontation with the state (or cooperating with it), can be interpreted as embracing the idea that there is a problem of radicalisation that pertains to Muslims, but also as resisting the negative image of Islam through a performance of acceptable citizenship. The issues they focus on, radicalisation and alienation, also pertain to concerns among parents and about the future of youth. In that sense, the organisations are addressing a variety of publics in ways which are additionally impacted by pleas for an Islamic response and responsibilisation, Islamic duties, and by questions and cries of help from the local Muslim constituencies (Shanaah, 2019; Fadil, 2021; de Koning, 2022). Yet, many of these initiatives also were accompanied by ambiguities concerning how people should relate to and position themselves. Would they be turned into informants? Where do they turn if a group of seemingly radicalised youth shows up at the mosque? Here we see similar reactions as Ismaïl's in the introduction: people anticipate how they will be seen and adjust their behaviour, and also their clothing (not wearing black as one of my female interlocutors told me), accordingly. Such questions and ambiguities show how the interpellation through counter-radicalisation immediately subjects people to discourses on racial security and being a good citizen, yet also signals the considerable indecisiveness of how to respond given the various audiences one needs to address.

### *Subjecting to and Invoking the Law*

The questions mentioned above emerge also because it is not always clear if one is actually the person being interpellated, which creates the space to deliberately ignore the interpellation. Let us now consider a case involving the Dutch anti-Islamophobia organisation Muslim Rights Watch Netherlands (MRWN) in which it is clear who is interpellated. Established in 2020, MRWN presents itself as an 'independent Islamic organisation' standing up for all Muslims regardless of background and against what they call an 'anti-Islam policy'.[9] They have, among other things, focused on Islamophobic reporting in newspapers, practices of religio-racial profiling by banks, and instances of Islamophobic aggression. Their typical mode of action is to go to court and seeking a legal confrontation. On another level, it is atypical, however: it is much more confrontational than is usually the case with the larger mosque organisations and their national umbrella organisations. Yet, one could argue, it is strongly embracing the call for good citizens: applying a legal logic means submitting to the rule of law. Interesting therefore is their own position. Soon after they established themselves, the NCTV mentioned MRWN in one of their threat assessments as one of the boosters of political Salafism. According to my interlocutors with MRWN, this has to do with an allegedly Salafi past of one of the men involved (who has been publicly 'accused' of being a Salafi in order to hinder his appointment as a local imam). The text of the threat assessment was as follows:

> Existing developments in the field of Salafism have continued, with political-Salafist boosters spreading intolerant, anti-integrative and anti-democratic ideas. […] In addition, a number of political-Salafist boosters expand their organisational web, for example through the establishment of the Foundation Muslim Rights Watch Netherlands (MRWN) as a 'watchdog of the Islamic community' against perceived unjust policy. For example, they want to take legal action against alleged discrimination and hate speech in the media and politics.[10]

Although MRWN does not spread a specific Islamic message as such and is open to all citizens, it is nevertheless met with suspicion by associating it with Salafism. This turns them into an alleged threat to integration and democracy and puts them at odds with national security. Whereas I suggest MRWN aligns itself with the terms of interpellation as a good subject by going to court, it is rendered a bad subject that fails to align itself with the terms through which they are interpellated, hence the need for government intervention. In response to this assessment of terrorist threats, MRWN brought NCTV to court in December 2020. I participated in this by writing an expert witness report analysing NCTV qualifications and evidence based on its own definitions of, for example, extremism. MRWN lost because the

court deemed it had no legal jurisdiction to rule over documents intended for Parliament. MRWN appealed, however, and in May 2022, the court ruled in favour of MRWN as the state failed to provide any evidence of a serious complaint against MRWN (and in fact denied it had a complaint at all), but had nevertheless presented MRWN in the context of radicalism and extremism in an assessment of terrorist threats. The court concluded that there was no reason to include MRWN in this assessment and ordered the NCTV to publish a rectification:

> In the Terrorist Threat Assessment Netherlands 53, the NCTV has mentioned the MUSLIM RIGHTS WATCH NETHERLANDS FOUNDATION on page 36 and linked it to extremism, radicalisation, polarisation and the spread of intolerant, anti-integrative and undemocratic ideas… In interlocutory proceedings, the Court of Appeal of The Hague ruled that there is no factual basis for this statement and ordered the NCTV to publish this rectification.[11]

Celebrated as a victory by MRWN, this is the first time the NCTV was forced to account for itself in court, and the second time it changed its threat assessment.[12] In terms of interpellation, this is a remarkable and complicated case. Whereas the motto of risk assessment could be 'if it can be imagined it has to be governed', here the ruling motto seems to be 'if it has to be governed, it has to be imagined', given the lack of concrete evidence against MRWN of any of the qualities associated with Salafism to the extent that the state even declared that there is no such evidence or specific allegation. This makes the interpellation much less targeted than it initially seemed. It is as if, and I am speculating here, the figure of the racial Muslim whose Muslimness is considered a potential risk in an undefined future is made legible by accosting MRWN. As such, guilt by association renders MRWN a bad subject, yet not outside the realm of society. MRWN tries to position itself as a good subject by going to court yet also as a bad subject by refusing the terms through which it is interpellated, and using the court as the moment and platform of staging 'talking back' (see Bracke, 2011, 38).

In terms of resisting a regime of surveillance, we can see this example of legal counteraction as a mode of reverse surveillance or sousveillance: revealing the ongoing surveillance by returning the gaze to the practices of the state. The victory comes in a time when the concerns about stigmatising and invasive counter-radicalisation practices increasingly find a public platform in the media after it was revealed that NCTV and municipalities commissioned research that was to map local network relations of organised and individual Muslims. It is not allowed for the NCTV and the municipalities to function as intelligence services, nor to acquire personal information for security and counter-radicalisation issues. Yet, and here we come to a

potential backlash for MRWN's victory as well: the increasing pressure on the NCTV because of their surveillance practices has resulted in changing the appropriate laws to make such practices legal, enabling the NCTV to gather information without many checks and balances.[13] In the case of MRWN, it may have won this case, but it has not won the battle against the interpellation it faces as a potential risk to national security.

## Conclusion

Racialising governance pertains to a struggle over meaning and definitions, how to substantiate these meanings and definitions, how to implement them, and how to relate to them. The Dutch P/CVE policies are partly the result of this struggle, and co-emerged with the entanglement of different problem-spaces in which people who were increasingly ascribed a Muslim identity were problematised as out of place, out of time and out of bounds. This has resulted in a huge expansion of state powers and all kinds of laws, measures, policy documents and practices to identify, imagine, know, and eliminate potential risks. Yet, at the same time, ambiguity is part of this problematisation as well as it is focused on assessing the potential of risk rather than an all-encompassing ascription of incompatibility, on inclusion and rehabilitation rather than exclusion and on making distinctions between acceptable and unacceptable Islam rather than dismissing Islam in general. However, this also signals that Muslims are seen as lacking something, in some way because they both do not have enough of something ('Europeanness') and also have too much of something else ('Muslimness'). Given that there are no clear goals of deradicalisation or integration, such ideas warn people that they are still not, and perhaps never will be, 'quite like us' (Sayad, 1994; Bhabha, 2004 [1994]). These forms of problematisation are strengthened and reproduced through their circulation in various media (Van Drunen, 2014; Dooremalen, 2021; Meuzelaar, 2021).

Risk assessment based upon early detection of signals of potential violence in an undefined future, centres on the notions of 'knowability' and 'unknowability' whereby the idea of having to know the Muslim creates, in turn, an uncertainty among Muslims as to where one stands and how to respond. The P/CVE approaches therefore do not only turn a racial-security gaze onto Muslims, but some Muslims in turn are also mobilised in order to engage with this gaze. It is this double feature that defines the regime of surveillance and also complicates the racialising governance of Muslims. The differences in ways of engaging, show that although governments seek to control, recognise, and mobilise individuals and groups, they do not determine the identities and subjectivities that emerge. These complexities create room for dissent as well as compliance and reappropriation, because people may be influenced from other sources as well – such as Islamic traditions, antiracism, and feminist traditions.

Yet we need to consider differences in power as well, as the various state institutions have the ability to be more compelling in their efforts than individual and collective citizens. It matters who responds to the interpellation; the Muslims who are categorised as Salafi Muslims as targets of the counter-radicalisation policies will also face the accusation of speaking with a double tongue, thereby delegitimising their voice and being considered as people hiding their true intentions. The case of MRWN signals a troubling matter: there were no concrete allegations against the anti-Islamophobia organisation, yet they were mentioned in a terrorism threat assessment as being part of an antidemocratic, anti-integration and intolerant branch of Islam. For now, I would like to suggest that this may point to the idea that the figure of the Racial Muslim has to be imagined and made legible in a concrete way (by mentioning it as Salafist, Jihadi, or otherwise), but that the concrete imaginary can remain void of any content. This may be a good example of how powerful it is for the state to make a problem out of something. MRWN's victory in court also signals the potential for resistance within the realm of rights and the rule of law.

## Notes

1 The section is closely following and building upon Vliek and De Koning (2020).
2 Such temporal hierarchies are not exclusively aimed at Muslims' religiosity. See Knibbe (2018).
3 For an excellent discussion on gender, race, security, and human rights in relation to P/CVE governance, see Shepherd (2022).
4 According to the flyer that was distributed a week or so before the meeting.
5 I make a distinction between the label used by preachers and imams themselves (for example: claiming to follow a Salafi method) and the label imposed on these but also others: Salafist.
6 *Al-Yaqeen*, 'Idioterie en Islam gaan niet samen!' Not on the website, can still be found via Web Archive: https://web.archive.org/web/20110225203731/http://www.al-yaqeen.com/nieuws/nieuws.php?id=1809, last consulted on 1 October 2014.
7 Literally: those who leave, go away. A group of Muslims who revolted against the leadership of Caliph Ali after he agreed to arbitration with Mu'awiya, the first caliph of the Umayyad dynasty. Used here as a pejorative label to delegitimise other Muslims and paint them as extremists.
8 Al Yaqeen.com, 'Syrië en de jihad', http://al-yaqeen.com/va/vraag.php?id=1463, last consulted on 1 October 2014.
9 According to MRWN's website: www.mrwn.nl. Last accessed 26 May 2022.
10 Dreigingsbeeld Terrorisme Nederland, 53, p. 36. https://www.nctv.nl/documenten/publicaties/2020/10/15/dreigingsbeeld-terrorisme-nederland-53, last accessed 26 May 2022. The page now includes a rectification of the excerpt above.
11 In court the NCTV denied making such allegations. The court however dismissed this argument as incredible. Court of Appeal The Hague, case number: 200.288.787/01; role number: C/09/601839/KG ZA 20-1042. The full text of the verdict can be found here: http://deeplink.rechtspraak.nl/uitspraak?id=ECLI:NL:GHDHA:2022:667, last accessed 26 May 2022.

12 The first time was in 2019 when it changed its inclusion of the anti-racist organization Kick Out Zwarte Piet in a threat assessment in 2016 https://www.nctv.nl/documenten/publicaties/2019/05/23/kozp-in-samenvatting-dreigingsbeeld-terrorisme-nederland-46, last accessed 26 May 2022.
13 NCTV-wetsvoorstel lijkt vrijbrief en maakt controle moeilijk. Autoriteit Persoonsgegevens. https://autoriteitpersoonsgegevens.nl/nl/nieuws/nctv-wetsvoorstel-lijkt-vrijbrief-en-maakt-controle-moeilijk, last accessed 26 May 2022.

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Chapter 8

# The Radicalisation of Morrocan-Origin Youth in Europe

## The Case of France

*Mehdi Lahlou*

### Introduction

In March 1965, following large-scale student demonstrations, Hassan II, former king of Morocco, declared that "there is no danger as serious for the State as that of a so-called intellectual. It would have been better if you were illiterate" (Glacier, 2016). Almost in the same direction, writing to President Nixon in March 1969, US National Security Advisor Henry A. Kissinger (1969) summarised the main findings of a secret CIA survey of the world-wide student unrest of the late 1960s. At that time, France experienced the "May 68", which influenced millions of young people and students all over the world to chant their disapproval of the American war against Vietnam, as well as American imperialism in general. Kissinger (1969) has interpreted the process whereby more and more youth are drawn into the protest, and thus are being radicalised. He adds, "there is no agreement as to the dynamics involved and no evidence that any great number of students remain radicalised once the initial exhilaration of combat is over. The great majority of participants in student dissidence take part because it's really a lot of fun; it is where the action is. Adolescent rebellion, existential angst, systemic alienation … all may be purged through the simple act of adopting the now-existing "protest role" (p. 4).

The CIA report has a behavioural and social-psychological emphasis, which dismisses young people's agency. It could be characterised as an attempt to understand *"What makes Johnny riot"*. It tends to overlook communist and other outside influences as a factor, and its analysis of that particular problem seems to raise more questions than it answers. Kissinger referred to the work of sociologists who had been studying how individuals joined mass protest movements. Nowadays, "radicalisation" is commonly understood as the process through which an individual gets involved in terrorism (Coolsaet, 2022). Ideally, the concept of radicalisation should provide answers to questions such as the following ones: why do individuals join terrorist groups or commit terrorist acts? What goes on in his and her mind? What is it that makes an individual cross the threshold actually to use

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violence? In short: what makes a terrorist? In parallel to all of these questions, at least two others appear to us to be very relevant here: why is there a transition between the 1960s–70s and the present from dissidence/radicalisation considered to be fundamentally student-oriented to religiously inspired radicalisation? To put it differently, what has changed between the immediate post-war period (World War II) and the beginning of the 21st century? Why is the subject today more religiously inspired radicalisation than student one?

This chapter benefits from a Horizon 2020 research project called GREASE, carried out between 2018 and 2022, in which I participated personally by contributing to the analysis of the management of religious spheres in Morocco and Tunisia, in particular (Lahlou and Zouiten, 2019). I also carried out a bibliographic research devoted more particularly to Belgium and, above all, to France. I was also greatly inspired by our individual experience and our knowledge of the field, first as a student in Morocco and France between the 1970s and 1980s and then as a university professor and researcher in Morocco since the mid-1980s. In connection with this experience, I was able to see how many Moroccan migrants in Europe, considered initially as agents of change for their own country, have partly become, over the years, vectors of radicalisation once they returned to their places of origin (Lahlou, 2010).

This chapter attempts to explain the rise of radicalisation in Morocco succinctly. It will also present the drivers of radicalisation in Morocco as well as in Europe. In doing so, the chapter will try to demonstrate how certain approaches to the so-called "Islamic radicalisation" are fundamentally political and sometimes biased, through certain attempts to quantify them.

## The Rise of Radicalisation in Morocco, Some Explanations

When undertaking the issue of religiously-inspired radicalisation among Moroccan-origin youth living in Europe, we are confronted with a constant query about the motivations that are often explaining their radicalisation in reference to Morocco. In this context, this chapter embarks on a series of preliminary questions: what is meant here by the phenomenon of radicalisation? Who are these young radicals of Moroccan descent in Europe? What is the relationship at this level between radicalisation and migration? What are the drivers of radicalisation in both Morocco and Europe, and is it the same form of radicalisation in both geographies?

Among Moroccan researchers, Masbah (2015) and Hmimnat (2020) have been comprehensively interested in radicalisation, extremism, and violence inspired by religion. Radicalisation is often explained in terms of religious motivations as they have been observed for a little more than three decades on both sides of the Mediterranean basin, like elsewhere in

the world. The contemplation is essentially based on an assumption that has been accepted as a "historical truth". Religious radicalisation/violence, as a social and political phenomenon, has been integrated for many years into the imagination and discourse of many researchers, politicians, and media experts, as well as a large part of our society, as a phenomenon that is almost totally integral to Islam.

However, contemporary history displays that religious extremism and radicalisation, as they are generally analysed during the last few years, date back to the end of the 1970s (Coolsaet, 2022). It appears that there are some manifestations of "political violence" in reaction to the invasion of Afghanistan by the army of the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) at the end of December 1979. Such an invasion, portrayed by the USA as a kind of Russian "Vietnam War" (Brzezinski, 2017), was presented as a communist threat against both the Free World and Islam. Hence, the very rapid involvement of the Pakistanis, and especially the Saudis, who supported and financed the actions of the first "Mujahedeen/Jihadists" against the Russian forces with the full political support of the USA (Roy, 1990; Maley, 2011).

The GREASE project demonstrated that poverty, unemployment, and illiteracy are some of the seeds of religious and social conservatism that allow the maintenance of long-standing political structures in most Arab countries, including Morocco (UNDP, 2019; Lahlou, 2020). Such structural limitations provide a sort of guarantee of sustainability for authoritarian governments without a democratic base and socioeconomic or even historical legitimacy. Moreover, such a combination of structural problems represents one of the main factors that has allowed many regimes to remain in place in the Arab world, without any change in nature, since the decolonisation movements of the 1950s and 1960s. Similarly, except for scenes linked to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, especially in the occupied Palestinian territories and in Lebanon, the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region has not experienced any significant acts of religious violence until the end of the 1980s, except for Egypt during the 1970s and after (Brownlee, 2011; 2013). In the meantime, the murderous acts of violence that occurred in Western Europe, in the 1960s and 1970s, in Germany, Italy, and Ireland were linked to extremist left-wing groups such as the Baader Band in Germany (Abosch, 1972), the Red Brigades in Italy (Tarantelli, 2010), or the Irish Republican Army in Ireland (Guelke, 2017).

In Morocco, religious radicalisation among young people began to appear by the end of the 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s. Firstly, it started to be visible in public universities and among student unions, where the Islamisation discourse gradually gained a place at the expense of the socialist and modernist discourses. Then, with the appearance of the "burka", which replaced the traditional female dress, the "Moroccan Jellaba", it gradually spread to a large part of society. In the meantime, the Saudi or

Afghan outfits for men have become visible in the public sphere in Morocco. In addition to the changes in dressing style, social changes also appeared to be creating further distance between girls and boys, particularly in schools.

Similarly, religious rituals linked to the observance of Ramadan and collective prayers became widespread. Since then, the mobilisation of Islamist activists from all sides to go and fight the "enemies of Islam" in Afghanistan, the Balkans, particularly in Bosnia-Herzegovina, and finally Syria has also become pervasive. These kinds of mobilisation were at least tolerated, if not encouraged by the Moroccan government. In this sense, according to A. Rafiki, a research member of the University Mohamed V team working on the GREASE project as well as a former Salafist who went to Afghanistan at a very early age, said the following to explain the relevance of the official Moroccan position in relation to the ways in which the Europeans perceived Jihadists in Afghanistan in the early years of the crisis: "Until the end of the last century, Morocco's approach to Jihad in Afghanistan was in line with that of the West. The latter was considering, at that time, the Arab Jihadists in Afghanistan as 'fighters for freedom'." And this is why the Moroccan authorities have contributed to the journey of many Moroccans to this country through an officially recognised association called "Moroccan Association for the Support of Afghan Jihad". Similarly, they had no problem with the return of Moroccan veterans in Afghanistan to Morocco" (Private interview, Rabat, October 2019).

Publicly announced support for the Jihadi movement, which the former King Hassan II initially endorsed as part of the strengthening of his relations with the rulers of Saudi Arabia to counter the supposed influence of Iran after the Khomeinist revolution of February 1979 began to shift following the 11 September attacks on American soil and the formation of the international coalition led by the USA in Afghanistan. The trend continued to change after the terrorist attacks perpetrated in Casablanca in May 2003 by young Moroccans, which caused the deaths of 45 people. The attacks were described as the deadliest ever committed in the country, but they were not claimed by any religious or political group. In the meantime, Morocco passed its first law making terrorism a crime (Law 03-03), which included "internal attacks on public security" but did not use any religious terms (Taoufik, 2014). Nonetheless, 12 years later, pushed by the events in Iraq and Syria, with the proclamation of the Islamic State, Morocco took again into consideration the fight against terrorism without any reference to its religious origins or the presence of Moroccan citizens in zones of war (or Jihad) in the Middle East and North Africa (Kingdom of Morocco General Secretariat of the Government, 2011).

It is possible to argue that the path taken by radicalising young people in Morocco during the last few decades has been constituted by a combination of both internal and external factors. On the one hand, internal factors have made young people from poor and middle social classes easy targets for recruitment by jihadists as these youngsters were marginalised,

impoverished, unemployed, and without much hope for the future. On the other hand, external factors brought Salafists and Wahabis to the fore, invading Moroccan society since the end of the 1970s under the banner of the protection of Islam. The prevalence of Salafists and Wahabis in Morocco was also legitimised by the Islamist rulers to reciprocate the challenge of Shi'ism that has become pervasive in the region since the fall of the Shah of Iran and the return of Ayatollah Khomeini to Tehran in February 1979.[1]

## Drivers of Radicalisation in Morocco and Europe

After the train attacks in Madrid (March 2004), where the blasts killed 191 people and wounded about 1,841, and the attacks in Paris (January and in November 2015), Brussels (March 2016), Nice (July 2016), in Berlin (December 2016), Barcelona (August 2017), and Nice (October 2020), it appeared that most of the terrorists involved in such violent acts were young men, mainly of Maghreb origin, Moroccans particularly, and also, occasionally of other Muslim states origin such as Chechenia in the case of the assassination of the French teacher Samuel Pati (October 2020). However, while the number of young people involved in these terrorist actions of religious inspiration is very low compared to that of young North African migrants or young Europeans of Moroccan, Tunisian, or Algerian origin, the social and political impact of their acts is extremely important. Moreover, many terrorist acts are committed by young people of non-Muslim origin (e.g. Christ church terror attack, New Zealand, March 2019).

Also, it seems relevant to ask the following guiding questions and to answer some of them succinctly, given the constraints related to the writing of this chapter: Why is radicalisation happening in Europe, and mainly in France, and why in recent years? How many people can be considered radicalised? What is the relationship between migration and radicalisation? How do the political situations in each of the countries involved affect the issue of religiously inspired radicalisation? Is Islam the only religion that leads to radicalisation and violence?

First of all, the recurrence of the violent actions mentioned above and their increase over the last decades can be traced back to the time when there was a political will to defend Islam against communism in Afghanistan in the 1970s as well as in places such as the Balkans and Chechenia where Islam was "attacked". Sometimes, such violent acts were formulated as a desire for "revenge" against the West to clear the actual war zones in places like Syria, Iraq, and Libya of all kinds of disbelievers, including European and American armed forces.

However, such an approach based on external factors alone to explain the contemporary rise of radicalisation inspired by religion (Islam here, in our case) would be rather misleading, or at best, very partial and incomplete, if the analysis does not include structural factors/drivers. One could

enumerate a few structural drivers shaping radicalisation processes among Moroccan-origin youth. First, many young people with migration backgrounds suffer from low educational levels accompanied by the absence of reading, mainly newspapers and books. Second, easy access to information and propaganda documents/messages in the recent reign of social networks. Third, there is a social environment that makes the families increasingly conservative and communitarian. Moreover, one could also refer to the shrinkage in the appeal of traditional political parties on the left as well as on the right, vis-à-vis young populations. This is valid both in Morocco and in Europe. For example, Gilles Kepel explains the rise of youth radicalisation with the following words:

> We have seen how the riots of autumn 2005 were a landmark in their suddenness, intensity, spatial dispersion and temporal spread. At the same time, no party or associative organisation is able to transcribe into a common demand the anger of the young people who participated in the clashes with the police. The riots, in fact, give way to a silence conducive to all readings, which politicians will not fail to take advantage of by producing an intelligible interpretation. More than twenty years after the March of the Beurs in 1983, the evolution of the suburbs is marked by an unprecedented crisis of political representation. While the riots have served as a revelation to question French society about itself, the ability to learn from them and to direct public action accordingly remains a double failure.
>
> (Kepel, 2017: 67)

The arrival of significant funds from the Saudi Arabia Kingdom, the United Arab Emirates and other Gulf rich countries, like Qatar, in the outskirts of large cities (such as Paris, Brussels, Barcelona, etc. …) during recent decades has been very decisive in the rise of religious radicalisation in Europe (Reuters, 2012). These funds promoted the institutionalisation of religious ideologies such as Wahabism and Salafism. Furthermore, the manipulation of extremist/radical local political forces for electoral purposes has also become prevalent.

Moroccan-origin and other North-African, or Turkish-origin people living in Europe are perceived by the majority societies and states as migrants, as if they have just arrived in the European countries. However, many were born in Europe, and their parents arrived in or were brought to Europe shortly after the Second World War. Many have been keeping European nationalities for decades. Hence, an overwhelming majority of those migrant-origin people are European citizens, especially in France, where dual citizenship is more accessible than in some other European states such as Germany or Netherlands (Faist and Gerdes, 2008; Kaya, 2012). Similarly, some of those listed as radicalised are "ethnic Europeans"

who have changed their religion (Karagiannis, 2011). From this perspective, the linking of the phenomenon of radicalisation to young Muslims or Islam appears to be the refusal of migration. This argument added to the old one consists of accusing migrants of "stealing the jobs" of nationals or even, more recently, and more expressly, that of the "Great replacement". Developed over the past few years by Frenchman Renaud Camus, the Grand Replacement Theory assumes that the French people and, more generally, Westerners are being replaced by other peoples, mainly from the Arab-Muslim world (Clementine et al., 2017).

## A Fundamentally Political Approach

The approach to religiously inspired radicalisation and violence is today essentially political. The politicisation of religion is widespread, even more so since the theme of the management of religious space, whatever its components, is also fundamentally political. It stands out strongly, from electoral campaign to election campaign, particularly in France, where it is almost totally absent from campaigns of the same nature in Germany (Maurice, 2021). As a result, it seems to be used more by far-right parties, and even, more recently, by the right, to ensure electoral gains. At the same time, the real problems, such as the decrease in purchasing power, rise of racism, increasing marginalisation of socioeconomically deprived social groups, or global warming, are rather being concealed by the same political actors (Hurard, 2011).

Thus, when a white European attacks Muslims because they are Muslims praying together in a mosque, and kills 51 of them at once, the attacker is simply referred to as a right-wing extremist, or quite simply, mentally deranged.[2] It is often the case that no reference is made to the attacker's religion. It is always the same every time a migrant-origin Muslim is killed in Europe, regardless of their murderer. In contrast, whenever a person identified as Muslim commits murder in a Western country as well as in North America or Australia, he is generally referred to – in the popular media, and not only – by his supposed religious affiliation, and he is then accused of being a terrorist. Islamist. From this, all the crimes committed by this category of people become Islamist-inspired. Hence, their religion, Islam in this case, is criminalised. Such an approach in the form of double standards is also required when it comes to the fate of migrants on European soil.

The double standard has become prevalent in Europe. In this sense, one could refer to the Polish border guards' brutal treatment of thousands of Middle Eastern refugees and asylum seekers at the Polish-Belarus border during the autumn of 2021 (Valcárcel, 2022). When the war in Ukraine started on 24 February 2022, the same Polish border guards acted very differently by welcoming Ukrainian refugees. All the doors of Europe have been opened to the latter, while many European countries such as Hungary,

Poland, Bulgaria, Slovakia, and Croatia closed theirs in the face of refugees and asylum seekers from Africa or Arab countries. One should be reminded of how 27 irregular migrants trying to go to the UK from France drowned in the English Channel on 24 November 2021, while neither the English coastguard nor their French counterparts came to their rescue (UN News, 2021). Despite this, many people very often take up the haunting and naive question posed by a former American president: why do they hate us? (Bush, 2001).

## Measuring the Extent of the Phenomenon of Radicalisation of Religious Inspiration

Quantitative data that approach the phenomenon of religious radicalisation and, a fortiori, that of violence inspired by religion is lacking everywhere. Even if the data existed, it could not make it possible to know precisely what, for example, between the years 2011 and 2015, made the Middle East, especially Syria and a large part of Iraq, become a war zone or a "Land of Jihad" for hundreds/thousands of people from Europe and elsewhere (Barret, 2017), while many of the latter would not be able to place the names of the Syrian or Iraqi capitals on a map. Even if they know it, no one can say exactly why and against whom they went to fight. What have been the driving forces behind such an eruption of violence in regions and within regimes that no one used, only 12 years ago, to call disbelievers? Have the researchers in Belgium, France, or Germany, for instance, take the time to question or interview supposed "jihadists", who are actually more delinquent or marginalised (Masbah, 2015; Roy, 2016) than the fighters of Islam. What would have motivated their radicalisation? What would have led them to leave their peripheral neighbourhoods, their downgraded schools, or their families to go and fight against an enemy they had never heard about before? Did they question, on the same occasion, the role of this group that had been called "Group of Friends of Syria"? (Neuman, 2013). Did they try to understand why Turkey opened its borders with Syria and Iraq to all the warriors it would fight or protect afterwards? Did they also question the respective responsibilities of the French, American, Saudi, Emirati, or Qatari political authorities on the fact that the "fire of Jihad is taking" where other very real fires from Palestine, Lebanon, or Iraq were already lit? Did they also question the deep motivations that led the former French president, Nicolas Sarkozy, to intervene in Libya in 2011 and to carry out an extrajudicial execution of his former "friend", the dictator Muammar Kaddafi, on the advice of a French philosopher and compatriot, a follower of the "war of civilisations"? (Oruç, 2020).

There are some issues to be taken into consideration to explain the rise of terrorist activities in the region. For many years, an opportunity has been given to many groups that are out of control to have access to weapons of all

kinds from the military arsenal accumulated for decades by the Libyan dictator, Muammar Kaddafi. The lack of any prospect after his death prepared the ground for the unfolding of violence, which was given by the perpetrators a religious justification in all the countries of the Sahel and West Africa. It was this political climate that gave France, for instance, the opportunity to carry out the "Serval" and "Barkhane" military operations in Mali between 2014 and 2022 with the support of some European countries and the USA.[3] Hence, the ground was prepared for an inferno of violence affecting a large geography, from North Africa to Europe. In effect, it is possible to draw a link on this subject between two compelling phenomena that have occurred since the 1990s in the region. On the one hand, the devaluation in 1994, decided by France, of more than 50% of the CFA Franc,[4] and, on the other hand, the arrival of financial aid from Saudi Arabia in the region have contributed to the rise of radicalisation in the region. During fieldwork in Mali in the summer of 2006, we noticed, in our route between the cities of Kayes and Gao (about 1,250 km), that there was a Koranic school for young students every 20/30 km, often in remote places away from the urban centres. However, young people aged between 6 and 15 in 2006 could transform into Wahabi Jihadists when they reached the ages between 15 and 25 in 2015. Now in 2022, they have reached the ages of 22 to 32. When some paramilitary actors have put the weapons out of Libyan arsenals in the hands of such young people, the circle is then closed.

When one reviews all of what has happened in Iraq since 2003, it becomes clear that it is not the radicalisation of a certain number of young people from European suburbs or peripheral neighbourhoods of Arab cities that would be at the origin of the surge of violence – which is commonly considered to be of religious inspiration – experienced on both shores of the Mediterranean over the past two decades. In recent years, the region has been changed by a mix of political decisions and geostrategic interests, both from within and outside the region. These changes have spread to other parts of the world, including sub-Saharan Africa.

All the political factors mentioned above have been built around a fertile ground, represented by all the causes that allow young people to pass from one moment to another from a situation of marginalisation (or economic and social delimitation) or even more or less serious delinquency, to a situation of radicalisation and the will to "fight for the defence of Islam". An Islam of which many had no knowledge. The Belgian political scientist Corinne Torrekens notably supports this:

> The question of radicalism is also a political problem. In fact, it is above all a political problem … There is a very, very clear link – which I can show statistically – between the feeling of discrimination and greater religiosity, greater religious practice ….
>
> (Torrekens, 2016; *see also* Torrekens 2020)

In the same reasoning, one can read the intervention of Laurent Bonelli in *Le Monde Diplomatique*:

> What do we know about these terrorists? Although incomplete, the information collected by the press allows us to get an idea of their social trajectories. First, they have experienced early and restrictive interventions of social services and juvenile justice. Family environments are deemed inappropriate or failing; transitions to homes and foster families mark the childhood and adolescence of most of them. Then their schooling seems to correspond to that of the least qualified fractions of working-class backgrounds, as evidenced by the orientation towards technical courses, which they will not necessarily complete. This school relegation sometimes finds compensation in "street sociabilities" (the world of gangs) and the small disorders that accompany them. Transgressive acts (such as theft of a car or scooter, driving without a license), related to honour (brawls or insults for example) or monopolisation (such as burglaries, assaults, or robberies with violence) attract the attention of police and magistrates quite early on. After several cases, many terrorists, like Merah, Coulibaly or Nemmouche were incarcerated for the first time at the age of 19 or less. And new crimes committed on their release revoke suspended sentences and lengthen sentences: from 20 to 30 years, they spend a good part of their time in detention.
>
> (Bonelli, 2015)

In fact, censuses and other ethnic counts are not allowed in most European countries. Whether these are possible, it would be difficult to ask questions such as "Could you call yourself a radicalised or violent person?"; "If so, what would you link such radicalisation/violence to?" Even if there are answers to be given to such questions, on what basis could they be used? How would it be possible to distinguish between what amounts to fanaticism, provocation, a lie, or all of these at once? Quantitatively speaking, it would only be possible to grasp the motivations of radicalisation among people who have been prosecuted for terrorist crimes or belonging to terrorist groups. But, even at this level, it would be very difficult to distinguish between what is supposed to be of religious inspiration and what comes from the simple desire to redeem oneself socially from one's community, or group of origin. When religion is used to justify an action, the person who does it is often seen as a hero by their family and peers.

How many people are affected by this phenomenon? To answer such a question field surveys have been conducted in recent years with certain target populations, including high school students, in France especially. The conclusion of these investigations points out that Islam produces radicalism. Here, I would like to emphasise the flaw and bias in these efforts of

investigations by delving deep into one large-scale research carried out in 2016 by a group of French sociologists. This was a study that gave birth to a collective book entitled *The Radical Temptation – La Tentation Radicale,*[5] published in 2018 (Galland and Muxel, 2018). Such a work, considered by many observers/journalists as fundamentally scientific, has given rise to great publicity with the publication of its outputs. However, if we look a little closer at its methodology, it is possible to make the following formal remarks, at least regarding the samples of high schools and students selected, or even the nature and level of the questions asked.

## Choice of High Schools and Student Samples

In their book, O. Galland and A. Muxel (2018: 60) affirm that "empirical research does not seem to confirm the thesis of the key role that economic exclusion plays in the process of religious radicalisation. First of all, the social profile of terrorists shows that not all are socially and economically marginalised and even that most of them are not. They often belong to middle-class families and have a good level of education". To confirm this hypothesis, the research they conducted should have been oriented, precisely, towards high school students located in neighbourhoods with a favourable situation, and would have had children from the middle classes with a good educational level. However, the choice of pupils they retained was not that; it was rather quite the contrary. Thus, the research team chose 23 high schools to conduct the survey among the students between the 4th grade and 7th grade. These schools were mainly general-technological, vocational, or polyvalent high schools, which were in the city centre and some in popular suburbs as well as in rural places. The choice of high schools was not intended to constitute a sample of students that represents the metropolis, or entire France. It aimed, first, to obtain a sample of pupils who are more often of immigrant origin residing more in Sensitive Urban Areas (ZUS) than the French average, and secondly, to complete this sample of pupils from high schools in peri-urban areas, who are more often of rural origin than the French average.[6]

Additionally, to study this range of attitudes or acts aimed at legitimising radicalism, the authors recall that they had to make several strong methodological choices, particularly in the composition of the sample of respondents. Based on the principle that while radicalism remains a minority behaviour affecting all religions and that its contemporary manifestations are the most visible within Islam, the panel logically overrepresented Muslim high school students attending schools in sensitive urban areas. However, the sample also included other pupils of all origins and social classes in order to ensure a sufficiently representative diversity (Giry, 2019). This ambitious survey carried out with the support of the CNRS in response to its call for tenders after the 2015 attacks, was conducted among 6,828 second-year students, aged between 14 and 16 in high schools in working-class

neighbourhoods, with an assumed bias of overrepresentation of young people "of foreign origin" and "Muslim faith" (1,753), which was around 26% of the sample (Galland and Muxel, 2018).

At this stage, it will be beneficial to return to the number of the Moroccan population living in Europe, and in France, in particular. Thus, according to Eurostat (2015), the Moroccan community was the largest foreign-born community in the EU. In 2011, the top 20 foreign-born communities from outside the EU numbered 18.5 million residents in the EU-28, which was equivalent to 3.7% of the EU-28 population. These 20 communities together accounted for 58.3% of the foreign-born residents from outside of the EU. The largest foreign-born community from a country outside of the EU was composed of EU residents born in Morocco. There were 2.3 million people born in Morocco who lived in the EU-28 in 2011, which equated to 7.2% of all foreign-born residents from non-member countries or 0.5% of the total EU-28 population. When it comes to France only, Moroccans were, in 2019, the second-largest non-EU nationality present in the country, with 755,400 people, or 18.4% of the total immigrant population. However, their share in the total population was then only 1.12%.

The questionnaire administered to high school students aged between 14 and contained 85 extremely tedious questions, tedious even for a university student or a researcher. It comprised many questions beyond the reach of the population of young people. For the sake of illustration of the type of questions asked in the questionnaire, some of them are listed below:

Question 45. What is your opinion about each of the following personalities (Dieudonné Mbala Mbala,[7] Pope Francis, Oussama Ben Laden, the Dalai Lama, Tariq Ramadan, President Barak Obama, Dalil Boubakeur,[8] Angela Merkel, Vladimir Poutine, Marine Le Pen)?

Question 57. When religion and science oppose on the question of the creation of the World, according to you, most often: it is rather religion that is right? or it is rather science that is right?

Question 69. Some think that a good way to govern the country would be to have a strong man at the helm who does not have to worry about parliament or elections. Do you think that would be an acceptable way to run France?

Question 70. Some believe that society should be radically changed, others that it should be improved by reform, still others that it should be protected from change. What is your opinion about this topic?

Question 85. Some say that the attacks of 11 September 2001 in New York against the towers of the World Trade Center were organised by the CIA and not by Oussama bin Laden. What do you think about this?

From a field survey based on elements as debatable and random as those discussed above, the research team withdrew a certain number of categorical answers. Including the following. Thus, the conclusion of the sociologists O. Galland and A. Muxel, leaders of the research team, was obvious: the survey validates "the very clear effect of belonging to Islam on adherence to absolutist ideas in religious matters, as well as on the justification of religious war". In this way, it validates the so-called "Islam effect", which determines orientations – and not behaviours – if not radical and violent, at least relatively sectarian and understanding regarding religious violence. For these French sociologists, neither the socioeconomic characteristics, nor the experience of discrimination, nor even the "identity malaise" of the young people concerned explain their religious absolutism: it is due to Islam (Simon, 2018).

## Why I Did Not Become Radicalised?

To respond to such a statement – and to cast doubt on the supposed positions of a sample of 1,753 young Muslim schoolchildren – I pick up here after the narration of a 29-year-old Moroccan woman living in France, responding to a question we asked her three years ago: why aren't you radicalised? Our research revealed several points that the CNRS survey did not consider important: the educational and cultural level of parents; the educational level of young people themselves; the economic and social situation of parents; the feeling of equality/inequality and justice/injustice within both the family environment and the society in which they live. These are actually decisive points in the mental and behavioural, cognitive, and social developmental processes of adolescents.

The assertion made by the aforementioned survey regarding Islam being a radical religion, was falsified by the young Muslim woman we interviewed. Her story reveals that she has not become radicalised, or she has not been tempted by radicalisation. Even though her paternal and maternal grandparents were devout practising Muslims, they both had a high social background, as they had an average to higher educational level than the average Moroccan population. In this sense, they were able to raise their children without major difficulties and made sure they went as far as possible in their schooling.

But in terms of the practice of religion within their respective families, religious education was essentially done by setting an example for children without ever forcing them to do anything. If all the children, for example, were fasting during the month of Ramadan, there was no obligation when it came to daily prayers or clothing, especially for girls. The lack of obligation in regards to religious clothing is even more apparent since the hijab or the full-face veil was unknown in Morocco until the 1990s. As for her parents, they were able to continue their secondary and higher education in

public educational institutions. The mother became a doctor, and the father became a teacher. None of them imposed any religious practice on their three children. And yet, they and their parents – the grandparents of our young interlocutor– had positions on almost all the political and social issues that concern their society such as the fight against poverty, injustices, corruption, gender equality, or the fight the rights of Palestinians. In such actions, they could be radical but never violent. They could be radical in rejecting all injustices, but never radical, and let alone violent, in imposing their faith or any religious practice on others, whether they are Muslims or not. Such testimony illustrates the idea that a positive migratory trajectory where the young person is equipped with positive thinking and material well-being could provide young people with the opportunity to shun radicalisation and to be in a situation of tranquility and peace with their host society.

Such a finding is far from uncommon in Moroccan society, including among the least affluent categories at both the educational and socioeconomic levels. But, what is palpable in recent cases is a return of social and intellectual conservatism. Nonetheless, this is linked more to the general economic and political situation in Morocco, marked by a relative deterioration in the living conditions of a large part of the population and by the strengthening of conservative right-wing parties to the detriment of left-wing ones.

## Conclusion

This chapter concludes that radicalisation of religious inspiration, even when it takes a violent shape, corresponds more to Islamisation of radicalism, delinquency, or violence than to radicalisation of Islam. The Qur'an has not changed since it was written after the death of the Prophet Muhammad, as the other sacred references have not been rewritten since the advent of Islam, and in any case, not in the last 50 or 60 years. What has changed is the socioeconomic framework and the overall political environment in the Arab world as in Europe and the rest of the world.

In the Arab world, in particular, the monarchies and the oil-rich Emirates have seen their wealth multiply in recent decades. They have done everything to ensure that it remains so in the total absence of any democratic inclination, or desire for protest within their populations, using all the ideological and institutional means that religion offers to them. They will also use their newly acquired financial resources to "help" at all costs, North Africans, other Africans and even some Europeans, French, and Belgians, in particular. In parallel with the growing political influence that this has given to them, they will introduce Salafist/Wahhabist ideologies everywhere such as that of the "Muslim Brotherhood" by helping to build mosques, madrasas, or cultural centres wherever it is possible – changing the ways many Muslims think and act in search of ways of economic and moral salvation.

On the other hand, the governments in place in Arab countries, without oil resources, will possibly use religion to cover themselves from the failure of their economic and social policies and to distance their populations from the opposition within the framework of left-wing parties among others. These populations, abused in their framework and standard of living, and also on the educational and political levels in relation to their fundamental rights will probably fuel migratory flows of all kinds to Europe and the other Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries. With the exception of selected migrants such as qualified ones who are therefore better able to economically and socially integrate into their host countries, many migrants and their children will probably continue to suffer marginalisation, stigmatisation, and downgrading and will be easy targets for extremist religious currents. Eventually, when these migrants are used for electoral purposes in the outlying neighbourhoods where they live, or end up in networks of all traffics, the circle will be closed. Recent Islamic radicalisation is seen for what it really is: an economic, social, and political fact, not a religious one.

## Notes

1 The Iranian Revolution was not the only seismic event to shake the Gulf and the Middle East that year. In November 1979, Juhayman al-Otaibi, a former corporal in the Saudi National Guard, seized the Ka'aba in Mecca with a Salafi armed group proclaiming the arrival of al-Mahdi, the redeemer of Islam whose appearance, according to the hadith (Prophet's sayings), heralds the Day of Judgment, and calling for the overthrow of the House of Saud. Both the Islamic revolution and the mosque attack had profound effects on the course Iran and Saudi Arabia would take over the next four decades. See Hearst (2020).

2 On the afternoon of 15 March 2019, a gunman attacked two different mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand during Friday Prayer, killing 51, wounding 40, and deeply scarring a nation that had, until this point, believed itself to be safe from the scourges of gun violence and far-right terrorism. It was one of the darkest and deadliest days in New Zealand's history. The gunman, an Australian with ties to the racist and xenophobic Identitarian Movement in his native country. See History (2019).

3 Operation Serval was launched on 13 January 2013 by French President F. Hollande "at the request of the Malian government". It involved 4,500 troops. It was replaced by Operation Barkhane in August 2014. The latter, which now has 5,100 soldiers, covers the main countries of the Sahel-Saharan strip. See https://www.ecpad.fr/actualites/les-operations-serval-et-barkhane-au-mali-dans-les-fonds-de-lecpad/ last entry 27 July 2022.

4 The CFA Franc is the common currency of the 14 African countries belonging to the Franc Zone. The CFA franc was created on 26 December 1945, the date on which France ratified the Bretton Woods Agreements and made its first declaration of parity to the International Monetary Fund. At the time, the name meant "Franc of the French Colonies of Africa". It was later known as the "Franc of the African Financial Community" to the member States of the West African Monetary Union and as the "Franc of Financial Cooperation in Central Africa" to the member countries of the Central African Monetary Union.

5 In response to a call for proposals on all subjects that may arise from the questions posed (to our societies) by the attacks on French soil in 2015 and their consequences, launched by the National Center for Scientific Research, France. https://journals.openedition.org/quaderni/1495?lang=en last entry 27 July 2022.
6 CNRS – France. The questionnaire and flat sorting of the Lycées survey led by O. Galland.
7 French humorist, classified as an anti-Semite.
8 Former Rector of the Mosque of Paris.

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Chapter 9

# Religiosities in a Globalised Market

## Migrant-Origin Muslim Europeans' Self-Positioning Beyond the Sending and Receiving States' Politics of Religion

*Metin Koca*

### Introduction

> *Interviewer:* Overall, when you think about your views on cultural, ethnic and religious diversity, or multiculturalism in general, do you think your worldview is different from that of your family and friends? If so, in what ways? And does that have any effect on you?
>
> *Zainab:* I am much more open than my family about many things. […] Even if Morocco itself is moving and changing, my parents have kept the mentality of Morocco from before […] I am a Muslim woman attached to her religion and culture, but my field of possibilities is wider than that of my parents. I speak several foreign languages. I don't have an accent when I speak French. For example, I met a person of English origin in Venice, with whom I talked about veganism.
>
> (PYI-FR, 2020a)

In this interview, Zainab described her efforts to "find [her] space" as a self-identified Muslim conservative in France and a self-identified Westerner in the Moroccan diaspora. She criticised both the French political landscape and the "hypocritical" approaches to Islam in Morocco. Towards the end of her nuanced arguments taking heart from a liminal position, she repeatedly came to the ethical conclusion that faith is a private matter but also should be a publicly visible one. According to her, the political order should guarantee that one can build one's trajectory. After making her knowledge claim, "homosexuality is a sin," Zainab intended to open a space for others to decide their paths: "but I don't have the right to judge them." Her relationship with religion led her to the ethics of non-interference, with which most jurisprudential readings of her faith would not fit well.

Zainab's position includes a tension between communitarianism, a philosophy that situates the individual into one's bounded community (i.e. in her case, a diaspora community), and cosmopolitanism, emphasising the possibility of a single community for all human beings. Zainab navigates through them while assessing her rights and duties based on her

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understanding of Islam, French citizenship, and her Moroccan background. Her definition of the veil as "a religious duty" underlies her prediction that she may start wearing it one day. However, the veil ban in France, on the one hand, and her mother's pressure to wear it, on the other, came together to hinder Zainab's process of developing her religious ideology. She shields herself with a "Westernized vision" against the Moroccan communitarianism in France and her once-colonised Moroccan identity against French assimilationism. Her aim with these manoeuvres is to broaden further the "cosmopolitan" haven of her own, including "open-minded" friends who "decide for themselves" and random people with whom she likes to start a conversation and who do not approach her with judgmental eyes.

This article focuses on the space that Zainab and others urge to open by engaging with globally circulating cultural forms – i.e. "the field of possibilities" in Zainab's words. The research analyses individuals who form their identities around a particular faith system and, as such, become a security concern for the governments occupying themselves with religiosities. In this context, I introduce the two imaginations of radicalisation – namely, radicalisation as religious-nationalist foreign infiltration and radicalisation as religious fundamentalism – associated with migrant-origin Muslims in Europe. This introductory section summarises the central debates and, in their light, the unstable politics of religion in Europe with snapshots from France, Germany, the Netherlands and Belgium. The following section introduces several mechanics of globalisation that enable migrant-origin Muslims to access a repertoire beyond that of the diaspora communities without necessarily losing ties with such communities. Against this backdrop, I focus on 152 PRIME Youth[1] interviews with young adults of Turkish and Moroccan origin (aged between 18 and 30), most of whom keep such communal religious ties.

The first empirical section questions migrant-origin individuals' non-religious reasons for keeping their links in mosques or religious communities funded by their countries of origin. I scrutinise the role of internalising problems, such as anxiety led by the feelings of discrimination, in maintaining organisational ties with such religious communities. By the same token, this section also includes an analysis of our interlocutors' interest in European politics vis-à-vis their countries of origin. I argue that the Erdoğan figure among migrant-origin Muslims, regardless of the Turkish government's aims, is far from embodying a religious-nationalist foreign infiltration. Instead, the figure is an embodiment of the shared discrimination experiences in Europe, and as such, seen among our interlocutors as part of the European context.

Overall, experiencing the deterritorialising nature of migration and globalisation enable our interlocutors to create unique contexts that do not rely on a preconceived notion of time-space. Despite keeping nationality or ethnicity-based religious community ties in the diaspora, our research

participants' sources of religious meaning tend to go beyond these ties. Even though most of them frequent a mosque or organisation rooted in their country of origin, this participation does not necessarily take the form of submission to an unquestionable higher religious authority. On the contrary, it includes disagreements and alternative knowledge claims over subject matters such as intergenerational, intracommunal and gender relations. The disputes extend towards such themes as religious-nationalism's compatibility with religious purity and the role of conviction, pressure, and non-interference in religious ethics. Considering these bottom-up religious meaning-making processes, I will conclude the chapter by problematising the state-led religious reform and conservation projects.

## Imagining "Radicalised Muslims" as Gray Wolves or ISIS Militants

The governments that export their official religions compete with transnational alternatives in an unprecedentedly globalised "market" in the metaphorical sense of the term (Werbner, 2004; Roy, 2014: 161; Haynes, 2016). On the one hand, centralised forms of religion entered Europe through the official Turkish theology programs and imams, the Qatari charities, the Moroccan promotion of Maliki moderation, the *Islam du juste milieu* (Islam of the middle), and the Saudi intelligence and oil-religion trade. Their countries of origin approach migrant-origin Muslim communities not only as relatives and networks but also as a means of influencing European politics (Adraoui, 2019; Bruce, 2020; Drhimeur, 2021; Maritato, 2021). On the other hand, less hierarchical and more decentralised relationships with Islam arise from European Muslims' changing needs for meaning and the various tools they use to communicate with fellow believers elsewhere (Mandaville, 2003, 2013; Roy, 2004; el-Nawawy and Khamis, 2009: 118, 165–209).

Both trajectories have been taken as threats in Europe: the former as a risk of religious-nationalist foreign infiltration (e.g. "the Gray Wolf radicalisation"), and the latter as Pandora's box which includes, among other things, violent extremisms in pursuit of a total apocalypse in the West and the rest (e.g. "the ISIS radicalisation"). In many cases, the former seems to have appeared as a side-effect of the campaign against the latter. An illustration of it is the gradually worsening image of the Turkish High Board of Religious Affairs branch in Germany, the Turkish-Islamic Union for Religious Affairs, DITIB (Müller, 2017: 60; Germany Cuts Funding, 2018; Bertsch, 2020).

With the "Turkish-Islamic synthesis" being its organisational axiom, DITIB played a cooperative role in the German state's numerous counter-radicalisation projects. Decades before these projects, DITIB's religious-nationalist officers became part of an anti-communist network in West Germany during the Cold War (Ozkan, 2019: 46). As the perceived threat shifted from

communism to Jihadism after the Cold War (Juergensmeyer, 1993; Hippler and Lueg, 1995), DITIB was already well-settled in Germany to promote a Turkish cultural Islam resilient to globalising religious neo-fundamentalism, often called (neo)Salafism regardless of its variations (Sheikh, 2021). Among the organisation's most recent collaborative activities was providing imams for Germany's prisons and teachers for religious education at schools (Neitzert *et al.*, 2021: 16). This transnational regime of governmentality rests primarily on interstate cooperation and signifies a structural influence on the presence of Islam in Europe (Cesari, 2009; Humphrey, 2009; Kaya, 2014; Bruce, 2018; Poots, 2019; Baser and Ozturk, 2020). As a crucial illustration, Belgium's recognition of Islam as a Belgian religion in 1974 resulted from the negotiations with Saudi Arabia and the Muslim League members instead of the Belgian Muslim community (Kanmaz, 2002: 103).

Contestation starts when interstate cooperation ends, as the case of DITIB suggests. After the failed July-15 coup in Turkey, various authorities from Rhineland-Palatinate, North-Rhine Westphalia and Baden Württemberg accused DITIB of conducting intelligence activities on behalf of Turkey ('Germany 2018', 2019: 7–8, 14). With its spillover effect, a Europe-wide public debate questioned if Erdoğan managed to mobilise his relatively new ultranationalist allies, known as Gray Wolves, with the state-led (DITIB) or private (*Milli Görüş*, en. National Vision) religious organisations (Tastekin, 2020). The Macron government became the first to declare a plan to outlaw the Gray Wolf organisation as part of its campaign against "Islamist separatism" (Nussbaum, 2020).

At the time of our interview with Zainab, she was hopeful about the Macron government's economic prospects as opposed to the right-wing identity politics and the "mess" on the French left. In the later stages of the interviewing period, which lasted until January 2022, the PRIME Youth's self-identified Muslim interlocutors from France expressed negative views against Macron as he started a political campaign against "Islamist separatism" and "Islamo-leftism" (*see* Joshi, 2021). Intending to promote a republican "French Islam", the campaign targeted Muslim communitarianism and violent religious extremism without distinguishing between them. As such, it also rested on an amalgamation of universalist and parochial religious radicalisations. During the leadership debate between Macron and Le Pen, dated 20 April 2022, Macron defended the law as a bulwark against "the foreign powers" that exert influence on French soil. In the interstate arena, the proposal was depicted as a mini clash of civilisations by the Macron government and the governments of several Muslim-majority countries funding mosques in Europe (Koca, 2020; Wintour, 2020).

The funding of mosques from abroad has also been securitised by others in Europe, including German, Austrian, Dutch and Belgian authorities at various administrative levels (Borger, 2015; Goebel, 2018; Tremblay, 2020; Chini, 2022). This controversy's mainstreaming in Germany and the

Netherlands is particularly noteworthy, as the two countries traditionally differ from France in accepting religious communitarianism, including that of migrant-origin communities. In both countries, decades-long cooperation with the sending countries to meet "foreign workers'" (and then migrants') religious needs has evolved into the question of why European countries do not educate their imams.

The French government proposes to nurture an Islam compatible with the alleged national values of the country. Including, in fact, a set of rather transnational liberal values, the demand is the embracement of certain expressions in the name of gender equality, sexual liberation, and freedom of expression. This agenda rests on the argument that migrant-origin Muslim communities remain under the hegemony of their countries of origin, where such value expressions are not well-established. Concomitantly, it assumes that the attendees of mosques funded by their countries of origin represent obedience to these countries' official Islam. Despite having divergent state traditions and trajectories – i.e. Germany from "segregation to integration" and the Netherlands from "multiculturalism to assimilationism" (Kaya, 2009: 201–209 – building a national Islam has become a standard recipe for all. The fear is that migrant-origin communities live in their ethnocentric bubbles and tend to act in Europe as leverage for their countries of origin. They carry Turkish, Moroccan, or Algerian flags on the streets and, instead of Dutch, French or German, they speak these countries' languages.

## Placing Globalisation in the Debate

What is missing in the frame described above is the in-group heterogeneity among migrant-origin Muslims who are keeping ties with their countries of origin. This section lays down several research targets by introducing three aspects of globalisation under-scrutinised in the context of the political climate described above. While touching upon the interlinked concepts of *transnationalism*, *deterritorialisation*, and *circulation*, I introduce several arguments that should be addressed to assess migrant-origin Muslims' space beyond the receiving and sending states' politics of religion.

The first question relates to transnationalism and the interlocution processes of migrant-origin Muslims in Europe. In general, migrant-origin Muslims have a delicate position in Islamism's national/international and violent/non-violent matrix (*see* Akbarzadeh and Mansouri, 2007: 1–12). With their multiple orientations, they had to liaise with non-Muslims, Muslims of other origins, and their ethnic communities with a colourful mix of religious and political agendas (Grillo, 2004; Vidino, 2010: 39–40). As their audiences diversified, older generations developed various forms of transnationalism, to which the Islamist stream of thought was never alien. Despite the *de facto* national outlook of Islamist movements such as the Muslim Brotherhood, *Milli Görüş*, Jamaat-i Islami, and several Sufi orders,

transnationalism often became prevalent in their theory (Masud, 2000; Akbarzadeh and Mansouri, 2007: 6; Diaz, 2014).

Whereas previous research extensively questioned the Muslim multivocality that transcends national imaginations, the post-second-generation migrants' dialogues have not yet been scrutinised in depth. The current state of the literature indicates a tension between reactive ethnicity and egalitarian attitudes (Çelik, 2015; Maliepaard and Alba, 2016; Herda, 2018). An accompanying process is reactive transnationalism, driven by their shared discrimination experiences with others (Snel et al., 2016). The critical question is who the others to understand are and how their grievances are made to fit with those of the ethnocentrically formed diaspora communities. In this context, I will demonstrate how the pro-migrant left-wing vocabulary echoes among the young and middle-aged migrant-origin Muslims, including individuals who talk about Black Lives Matter and LGBT Pride while also speaking in favour of the religious symbols in the public sphere.

These interlocution processes relate to deterritorialisation, which signifies the disconnection of identities with certain territories, such as migrant-origin Muslims' countries of origin. Given that migrant-origin Muslim communities are constituted by territorial alterations, they are open to seeking faith discourses with no need to have a stable territory. Having become an "absolute deterritorialisation factor" (Roy, 2014: 164), the internet shifted the centre of religious activity towards virtual mediums. Even though many migrant-origin individuals lack migration experience except in their family memories and imposed identities, they are bound by such circulatory mechanisms of globalisation. The deterritorialisation of identities is a theme emphasised by the latest phase of diaspora studies (Cohen, 2008: 1–20). Remarkably, this final phase puts into question the relevance of conceptions such as homeland.

Circulation, with all its vagueness as an idiomatic expression, signifies the concurrent transfer of goods and knowledge claims, including words, contexts, the discourses of action, themes, genres and communication practices. Here lies a discursive challenge that hits researchers, among others. Rockefeller (2011) criticised the lazy use of the terms flow and circulation in the context of globalisation. Despite giving merit to this analysis, Russell and Boromisza-Habashi (2020: 15) rightly identified how such metaphors are "precisely the ones that capture the only general observation" about globalisation. As Russell and Boromisza-Habashi eloquently put it, globalisation does not come with a set of corresponding verbs that indicate individuals' isolated actions. While leaving their marks in daily life, the circulating repertoires settle in new contexts as though they represent a frozen state. Hence, with its scope uncertain, the flow is rendered unisolable and undetectable in many contexts. Among our interviewees' restricted understandings of globalisation are working for multinational corporations in Europe, widening one's culinary horizon, fashioning the same discourses with

"Americans" (i.e. standardisation) and refashioning them differently (i.e. variation). Upon that, they recall their migratory experience, which includes going back and forth between their countries of origin and residence.

The organisations such as DITIB play their part in circulation, more often unintendedly than willingly. On the one hand, as discussed above, the European states aim to nationalise and, for that matter, reterritorialise their migrant-origin Muslim communities. On the other hand, the organisations such as DITIB deterritorialised their activities to maintain migrant-origin communities' allegiance to their countries of origin (Aydın, 2016; Çitak, 2018). In doing so, however, they also contribute to the construction of identifications and engagements alternative to nationalism and ethnocentrism. Hence, cultural frames with a much richer repertoire, from veganism to postcolonialism, appear and engage with the religious identifications of our interlocutors.

While facing and configuring transnational settings under the impact of deterritorialisation, migrant-origin Muslims have not become post-national in the sense that they still have to translate their ideologies into a national context (Grillo, 2004). One way of exploring this process is to focus on the cross-country institutional differences (Avcı, 2005; Bowen, 2009; Kaya, 2009; Tol, 2009 ). For example, Bowen (2009) demonstrated how prominent Muslim actors in France had adopted a "French approach" to religious norms in compliance with the secular Republican tradition while striving for value pluralism. In the same vein, Tol (2009) questioned how differently *Milli Görüş* was contextualised in Germany and the Netherlands – i.e. the former used anti-Western rhetoric, whereas the latter cooperated with the local authorities. Furthermore, Avcı (2005) saturated the differences between *Milli Görüş* in South and North Netherlands.

An alternative unit of analysis to study the contextualisation process is the individual level. For example, focusing on Muslim women's discourses in the German public sphere, Weber (2013) questioned how gender violence in Muslim societies has been thematised and criticised by Muslim women. As I noted above, the European governments often problematise the pro-Erdoğan tendencies among migrant-origin Muslims in Europe. That said, what it means for them to be pro-Erdoğan in Europe has often been left unanswered – e.g. supporting him out of a genuine interest in Turkish particularity or supporting him as a European actor.

Suppose Erdoğan for them is the one in Turkey. In that case, the puzzling question is how come many of our interlocutors praise him staunchly while having little interest in or knowledge of Turkish politics. More broadly, contrary to what Turkey and Morocco would like with their official Islam, our interlocutors' narratives demonstrate a trend toward the spiritual, mystical, or esoteric aspects of religion. Accordingly, the traditional teachers of Islam, including many DITIB imams and *Milli Görüş* teachers, seem to have left their sphere of influence to individuals of affection who lack a

classical education. They are interested in ethics, and the ethical questions they address are the questions of a multicultural Europe rather than Turkey or Morocco.

## The Data and Methodology

The research rests on 152 structured interviews conducted with individuals who self-identify as Muslims in Germany, France, Belgium, and the Netherlands (Table 9.1). Our interlocutors' Muslimness was their common denominator. However, various other identifications appeared in their narratives depending on their perceived context (e.g. some identified themselves as "European", others refused to do so; some identified themselves with the nationality of their country of residence, others did not).

### *The Recruitment Zones and Techniques*

The religious organisations (both state-led and private) and the mosques where the migrant-origin communities lead or participate actively are at the centre of our recruitment. Among these organisations are Milli Görüş, DITIB, and Dawah Foundation. In our network, there were political parties and business networks (e.g. DENK in the Netherlands; the Union of Turkish Democrats in Germany), and also a few relatively microcosmic initiatives, such as the Muslim Empowerment Tilburg (MET) in the Netherlands, and *Bien ou Bien* student houses in Belgium. All in all, the research is intended to bring together the diverse voices in the diaspora communities. An extension of this endeavour would be to classify several social types in contrast with one another.

Though we primarily reached individuals who had organisational ties at the time of our interview, our implementation of the snowball sampling widened our scope to include individuals who did not have such relations. Accordingly, in line with the broader descriptions of the Turkish-origin community as a more organised one than the Moroccan-origin community, our Turkish-origin interlocutors were more inclined to communal religious activity (*Turkish n = 59*/85; *Moroccan n = 27*/*67*). There was an underrepresentation of community ties in the Belgian interlocutors' narratives since the relevant part of the question was not prompted during these interviews. For this reason, among others, I will not conduct a cross-country comparison.

Our non-random sampling mechanisms do not correspond to allow a systematic comparison between the four countries. The process included (1) an imbalance in the number of interlocutors who knew each other from beforehand; (2) intermediaries who had diverging characteristics and incomparable networks; (3) different and arguably contradictory recruitment strategies (Table 9.1).

*Table 9.1* The PRIME Youth ERC Project (ISLAM-OPHOB-ISM, No: 785934)

| *Self-identified Muslims* | *Interviews* | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Country* | *France* | *Germany* | *The Netherlands* | *Belgium* |
| *Interlocutors (Male)* | 16 | 21 | 18 | 11 |
| *Interlocutors (Female)* | 21 | 19 | 20 | 26 |
| *Turkish-Origin (n = 85)* | 16 | 38 | 19 | 12 |
| *Moroccan-Origin (n = 67)* | 21 | 2 | 19 | 25 |
| *Median Age* | 25,8 | 24,8 | 23,9 | 25,5 |

### *Interviewing*

During the interviews, which lasted about 90 minutes on average, we asked our interlocutors to discuss their personal histories, neighbourly relations, family and friendship ties, and mobility history. We also asked about their thoughts on diversity, religiosity, the current state of politics and economics, and finally, their future expectations. We did not mention any specific policy, event, political figure, religious or cultural value, or hot topic in the process. In this framework, we invited them to narrativise their lives at the micro, meso, and macro levels in concentric circles (Bronfenbrenner, 1977; Benevento et al., 2022).

### *Coding and Further Analysis*

Based on our coding manual, each interview is coded into twelve principal codes on areas stated above and 157 sub-codes that saturate each bullet point. These thematic codes helped me establish a general framework before delving deeper into the recurring themes illustrating the diversity in the migrant-origin communities' relationship with Islam. The first sub-codes that I scrutinised were about discrimination – *i.* the narratives that emphasise our interlocutors' personal or collective experiences of discrimination; *ii.* the narratives that acknowledge the importance of experiencing discrimination regardless of whether our interlocutors experienced it. I examined the relationship between these two codes in the light of another sub-code that highlights the content of such ties.

Having identified the interaction between discrimination experiences and community ties, I delved deeper into each interlocutors' community ties to explore a more comprehensive array of motivations behind their mosque socialisation (e.g. cultural nostalgia, essential services, civic activity, political networking). In addition, both quantitatively and qualitatively, I investigate the contextualisation of crucial reference points such as President Erdoğan, King Muhammed VI, Black Lives Matter, and Uyghur Muslims. For that matter, I also consider the codes regarding our interlocutors'

interest in the politics of the country in which they live, their countries of origin, and their broader political horizon. Then, I introduce several themes that crystallise the recasting of the belief system in the community. In these sections, I refer to the interviews not as classifiable and quantifiable objects of study but primarily as standalone sources that require further scrutiny. While following this approach, I also aim to bridge the numerical generalisations with the narrative specifications.

## Communitarianism as an Antidote to the Internalising Problems

The political theory approaches that aim to reconcile liberal and communitarian understandings of society often refer to the importance of resolving communitarian grievances for the sake of individual self-awareness (Kymlicka, 1991: 165). Our interlocutors' collective grievances play a role in their communitarianism along ethnic and religious lines. The relationship between acculturation strategies and migration-related risk factors, such as internalising (i.e. anxiety) and externalising problems (i.e. aggression), attracts attention also from psychosocial standpoints. While searching for a causal arrow between acculturation and anxiety, researchers explore anxiety both as an independent variable (Ünlü Ince et al., 2014) and a dependent one (Özbek et al., 2015; Janssen-Kallenberg et al., 2017). In the human experience, they are often cyclical as perceived discrimination reproduces anxiety, whereas anxiety restores the distance. Recent research suggests that anxiety is moderated by the sense of community, meaning that communal identifications may alleviate the challenges of perceived discrimination (García-Cid et al., 2020; Novara et al., 2021; Lardier Jr. et al., 2022).

Our interlocutors tend to introduce their memories of discrimination in their personal history narratives (n = 65; 42.8%). Most of those with discrimination experiences developed religious community ties at one point in their life (*n = 34*; 52.3%). A larger group of our interlocutors felt the need to evaluate the negative consequences of feeling discriminated against in society, regardless of whether they experienced it personally (n = 97; 63.8%). Nearly half of this group also mentioned community ties as part of their experiences of religion (*n = 46*; 47.4%). An examination of these narratives suggests that shared discrimination experiences had as much a role as family upbringing has (*n = 44/152*; 28.9%) in driving individuals to build trust via religious communities: "keep the friends' circle small to watch out who is really there for you" (PYI-GER, 2020a).

The perceived discrimination experience often directly pushed our interlocutors to look inwards – i.e. towards shared identities and similar backgrounds. For example, increased restrictions on wearing the headscarf at a mixed school in Genk pushed Ayşe to move to "a Turkish school" in Mons, where "all pupils are Turkish, and everyone speaks Turkish"

(PYI-BEL, 2020a). Alternatively, a particular discrimination experience is not directly identified but inferred as part of a larger whole in the religious development narratives. For instance, Zeynep (22) never felt discriminated against in Germany due to her headscarf. However, while describing her self-indoctrination process through which she decided to cover herself and visit two mosques, she recalled her distress with her secondary school teacher who had claimed that "Germans are smarter because of their genes" (PYI-GER, 2020b). The mosque community members believed in Zeynep's account of the incident, which the head of the school did not find convincing.

### *Motives Behind Mosque Socialisation*

By the same token, mosque socialisation does not purely signify a religious indoctrination process in the narratives. Its alternative was instead a total social secession: "If I didn't have this, I'd be a real hermit" (PYI-NL, 2021a). Many narratives made it clear that mosque attendance met "not necessarily a religious need, but a need to belong to something" (PYI-FR, 2020b; PYI-NL, 2020a; PYI-NL, 2021b; PYI-NL, 2021c). For example, during a period he was depressed, lonely, and inclined to commit violence, Adil's yearning for mutual understanding led him to a mosque (PYI-GER, 2020b). As such, the Milli Görüş movement in Utrecht became Fatma's (26) "outlet for identity formation and psychological well-being" (PYI-NL, 2021a). Similarly, Betül (26) reported as a member of Milli Görüş in Amsterdam that many "young people" join the organisation to be called something other than "stupid Turk" or "stupid Moroccan" (PYI-NL, 2021e). Esra described her motivation to keep her ties in organisations such as DITIB and Milli Görüş as collaborating with "other youngsters who are in situations in which they are discriminated against" (PYI-GER, 2021a). These descriptions are in line with the appeal of the Muslim Brotherhood among second and third-generation migrants who feel rejected in Europe (Khosrokhavar, 2010: 142–143; Drhimeur, 2021: 17). When our interlocutors dismissed the mosque attendance as a need, they were thankful for having an already stable religious identity and well-established ties to a community of believers: "when I was younger, […] I needed [to visit the mosque] much more than I do now" (PYI-NL, 2020b).

More broadly, mosque appears in our interlocutors' narratives as a reflection of cultural nostalgia (PYI-FR, 2020c; PYI-FR, 2020d; PYI-FR, 2021a; PYI-GER, 2020c; 29 Sep 2020; PYI-FR, 2021a; PYI-GER, 2021b; PYI-FR, 2021b; *see* "nostalgic deprivation" in Kaya et al., 2020), a basic service that covers funeral procedures between Europe and the country of origin (PYI, 2021c), a medium of civic activity to form charities and help drug addicts or unemployed youths (PYI-FR, 2020e; PYI-GER, 2020d; PYI-GER, 2020e; PYI-BEL, 2021a; PYI-GER, 2021c; PYI-NL, 2022a), a place of gathering

to organise leisurely activities such as kermises, camping, movie days, and football matches (PYI-GER, 2020e; PYI-GER, 2020f; PYI-GER, 2020g; PYI-NL, 2021f; PYI-NL, 2021g; PYI-GER, 2021d), an economical option for school tutoring (PYI-GER, 2020h; PYI-FR, 2020f; PYI-GER, 2021e; PYI-FR, 2021d), or a political network (PYI-NL, 2020a; PYI-NL, 2021h). The discussion sessions often revolved around the perceived collective threats, such as the attacks targeting Muslims (PYI-GER, 2020j; PYI-GER, 2020k; PYI-GER, 2020l; PYI-NL, 2020c).

### *Interest in a European Erdoğan and a Deterritorialised Ummah*

A third of our interlocutors expressed a strong interest in European politics (*n = 51*, 33.3%), and nearly as many were following Turkish or Moroccan national politics (*n = 60*; 39.7%). More significantly, in terms of combining the two, some expressed disinterest in their European country's national politics while being interested in that of their country of origin (*n = 15*; 9.8%). A closer analysis of the narratives demonstrates that these speakers expressed interest in their countries of origin through Europe more than the other way around.

Erdoğan was a reference point primarily because he represented the alternative to be seen by our interlocutors' adversaries located in Europe. For instance, in the climate of the controversy over the Prophet Muhammed cartoons in terms of freedom of expression, Erdoğan calling Macron "retarded" was justified by some interlocutors as "a freedom of expression" (PYI-BEL, 2020a). Moreover, Erdoğan being demonised in Europe made him defensible in the eyes of a not-pro-Erdoğan interlocutor just because the process resembled Muslims' discrimination experiences (PYI-NL, 2020d). Regardless of their political views, many others saw the scapegoating of themselves in Europe while talking about Erdoğan's image in Europe (PYI-BEL, 2021b; PYI-GER, 2020g; PYI-FRA, 2020g; PYI-NL, 2021k; PYI-GER, 2020m; PYI-GER, 2021e; PYI-GER, 2020n; PYI-FRA, 2020f; PYI-FRA, 2020a; PYI-GER, 2020o). After making the same argument, Murat (27) concluded his evaluation by considering how Erdoğan is even more popular in Europe than in Turkey:

> You know 70% of the Turks in Belgium vote for Erdogan [compared to 40-50% in Turkey]. If you ask why, well, this is the reason why.
>
> (PYI-BEL, 2021b)

For the same reason, Erdoğan became a much more frequently appearing reference point than King Mohamed VI even among most of our Moroccan-origin interlocutors. They made much fewer emphases on Moroccan politics than the Turkish-origin interlocutors mentioned Turkish politics in their narratives (Moroccan-origin = 5/67; Turkish-origin = 39/85).

Their deterritorialisation went beyond the abovementioned reference points. The same Moroccan-origin individuals were much more interested in locations outside their country of residence and origin ($n$ = 45/67). Instead of Morocco, these locations were Palestine, Syria, Xinjiang, and the US countries where the Black Lives Matter protests took place. In the light of all these locations, their support for Erdoğan rarely meant that they were under the influence of the official Turkish policy. Their opinions were still contextualised in the European public debates and in reaction to the perceived Islamophobia in Europe. For example, while defending Erdoğan against Macron in their quarrel over the Islamist separatism campaign, Amira (23) also criticised the Turkish-Islam synthesis that combines religious nationalism and communitarianism (PYI-BEL, 2020b).

Instead, our interlocutors have grown interested in combining the ideological pools of anti-racism, environmentalism, gender politics, and veganism – i.e. what interests the progressive global youth culture. For example, using an alter-globalist repertoire against the regimes of food governance (Wrenn, 2011), Zainab amalgamated veganism with her Muslim conservatism. According to her, there is "in fact" very little halal meat, as the badly treated animals cannot be halal (PYI-FR, 2020i). Referring to the hadith transmitted originally by al-Bukhari (1978: 2365), she mentioned a practising Muslim woman tormented in hell due to causing a cat's death by leaving her thirsty (*see* also Sayeed, 2013: 28). In contrast, Zainab also described a prostitute who went to heaven as a result of feeding a needy cat. This story hinges on Zainab's conclusion that judging individuals, including sex workers, shall not be the task of others. This point brings me to the question of how our interlocutors strive to reframe communal ties from within.

## Recasting the Communal Ties

Once the religious repertoire meets a medium accessed by individuals without necessarily passing through a community, it frees itself from the communal authority structures. Religion and the community, as such, often become alternatives to one another. In this awareness, the individualistic readings of the belief system require disentangling the religious purity from pre-existing social links. Religion as a community activity triggers further secularisation by means of religion, whereas religion without a community may yield an individual spiritual search.

Among our interlocutors who visit the *de facto* ethnically defined mosques, some have come to the realisation that it is not religiously desirable for mosques to be divided in accordance with ethnicity, kinship, tribe, or homeland. "It is the faith that counts, not the origin," in their words (PYI, 2020f). A few interlocutors also acted passionately in this endeavour. For example, they ensured that the Turkish mosque's discussion sessions attracted the interest of "more outsiders" in Schaerbeek (PYI-BEL, 2020c).

Najla (23) appreciated the ethnically diverse mosque communities whom, she described, are as pure as children on a playing ground: "they don't care about differences, their play is innocent" (PYI-NL, 2020e). Mosques in diverse public spheres, such as the university campuses, often witnessed tension between the ethnically-defined communities and religious transnationalists: "I felt I had other visions of the world different from the Egyptians" (PYI-BEL, 2021c). Some of our interlocutors opted out of the mosque meetings where the participants knew each other beforehand and were inclined to think similarly (PYI, 2020p; PYI-FR, 2021g; PYI-FR, 2021f; PYI-GER, 2021a; PYI-NL, 2021h). For example, Ömer (24) made it clear that breaking up with his friends at the mosque "allowed me to focus much more on faith" (PYI-NL, 2021h).

Their vigilance against confirmation biases illustrates a pursuit of reflexive self-awareness (Koca, 2022). In order to escape the community-led confirmation bias, many of them diversified the mosques they visit or blended the experience with the deeper pool of online sources (PYI-GER, 2020q; PYI-FR, 2021e; PYI-FR, 2021f; PYI-GER, 2021f; PYI-FR, 2021g; PYI-NL, 2020f; PYI-GER, 2021a). Commonly, they explained their motivation by rationalising the desire to go beyond the boundaries of their communities: "Of course, I also had an Islamic upbringing, but at some point, you just want to know more" (PYI-NL, 2020g; *see also* PYI-NL, 2020h; PYI-GER, 2021a).

Two of our interlocutors notified us about their church visits for a more transcendental religious experience: "all houses of God are beautiful" (PYI-GER, 2021c; PYI-GER, 2020m). Despite being the few who frequented churches to produce a religious meaning, they were not the only ones who called for an interfaith front against the threats to religious values or symbols in the public sphere. According to Ferit (24), it was a pity that the religious Christians in Europe refrain from sharing their faith-based messages: "I would wish for Germany to become more Islamic or in general more Christian" (PYI-GER, 2020q). Some of the new Muslim organisations differentiate their identities from the mainstream by inviting rabbis and priests to their meetings (PYI-NL, 2020i; PYI-NL, 2020j; PYI-FR, 2020b). In their discussion sessions, the groups speak Dutch, German or French rather than Turkish or Moroccan: "[although] we do have a Turkish background, […] we were all born here and speak Dutch better than Turkish." (PYI-NL, 2021i).

One repercussion is the creation of microcosmic communities in this larger whole (*see* Pisoiu, 2015). From the Hague, Mahmood (30) summarised the experience "youngsters" seek as "Islam 2.0" (PYI-NL, 2020k). Like Mahmood, Adil (26) found the recipe in homegrown figures addressing a transnational youth culture, such as Pierre Vogel who, as a convert, de-ethnicise religion (PYI, 2020b). Mehdi (23) volunteers for a group called Dawah, which aims to provide the Muslim youths with a kind of "Islamic inspiration" to integrate into the Dutch society (PYI-NL, 2020l). Referring

to the limits he sees in the traditional mosque education based on "memorising the Quran", Mehdi distinguishes between guiding youths in daily life and teaching the verses. Anecdotally, he described an individual who did not receive much help from the mosque community while trying to quit drug addiction: "Contrary to the mosque, we teach them how to behave" (PYI-NL, 2020l). This generation of mosque sceptics found many new organisations. "It was a conscious choice to have this foundation outside of a mosque," said Badr (26), a founding member of the MET (PYI-NL, 2020m). Hatice shared her doubt as to whether mosque communities or theology students have a more sophisticated understanding of Islam than others: "Some of them haven't internalised [the religion], they aren't conscious" (PYI-GER, 2020f). Mehmet (25) identified his generation's (i.e. "the third-generation") religious need as learning how to operationalise the beliefs in "real-life situations" instead of memorising the verses and orders (PYI-GER, 2020pa). Having considered these limits, Leyla evaluated her delicate balance in the community organisation: "Sometimes I am inside, sometimes outside" (PYI-GER, 2020r).

## Unease with Nationalism, Ethnocentrism, and Traditionalism

The diaspora communities also include individuals who problematise some settled traditions in Muslim countries. Instead, they promote more decentralised and universalistic readings of the belief system. The range of dissatisfaction goes between objections to religious nationalisms exported by the counties of origin and criticisms towards the traditional Muslim languor. These criticisms demonstrate the variety of representations in the diaspora organisations. For instance, Osman (29) has been a member of *Milli Görüş* since 2014. In the youth council of the movement, he introduces to youngsters not only Erbakan, the founder of the Milli Görüş movement, but also Malcolm X, Martin Luther King, and Rosa Parks as role models. While defining his main objective as lifting the barriers between Turks and Moroccans, Osman produces a universal imagination that goes beyond ethnocentrism. He criticises the religious nationalism prevalent in Turkey: "the Turkish nationalists […] want to help some people prior to others, but this is not what Islam means" (PYI-BEL, 2020c).

### *Intergenerational Tensions*

There is a generational element in the tension over nationalism. Mert (26) understands his parents' ties with Turkey: after all, "they were born there." However, having grown up in "Brussel's diversity" together with his brother, he argued that they do not feel the same about the sensitivities of Turkish people, from "laïcité" to "nationalism" (PYI-BEL, 2020d). İrem (24)

reported that she has difficulty understanding "the conflict between Turks and Kurds[…]: why Sunni people should be better than Alevi people or why a homosexual partnership should be inferior to a heterosexual relationship" (PYI-GER, 2021g).

Depending on one's capability of making the religious repertoire deconstruct such perceived inequalities, this line of thinking may steer one away from the belief system altogether. As I have questioned in the introduction, an illustration of this tension is Zainab's criticism of Moroccan authoritarianism from a "Westernised" standpoint. She aimed to adopt this standpoint without giving up her colonised Moroccan background and religious identity (PYI-FR, 2020a). Like Zainab, Duygu (30) realised that the "global vision" she tried to maintain was not shared by most of her relatives (PYI-FR, 2021g). Feride (30) experienced a similar tension with her nationalistic relatives living in Turkey: "They are not open-minded: they only know Turkey, they have only known about it" (PYI-FR, 2021h).

Alternatively, the same line of thinking yields a spiritual search against the elders' secularisation by means of religion. Beyond their in-family differences of opinion (*n = 41/152*; 27.0%), some interlocutors differentiated themselves from their parents by calling them traditional people, or "cultural believers", neglecting some fundamental aspects of the belief system (PYI-NL, 2020k; PYI-BEL, 2021d; PYI-BEL, 2020e; PYI-FR, 2020e; PYI-FR, 2020h).[2] Some are admittedly more reactive in ideological or faith matters than their parents. While referring to the gap between immigrants, on the one hand, and young people with immigrant backgrounds on the other, Mohammed (24) drew a bleak picture of his father: "he is the immigrant liked by the Whites because he keeps his mouth shut and his head down" (PYI-FR, 2021i). Another interlocutor associated criminal behaviour among migrant-origin Muslims with the lack of a proper religious education in their countries of origin (PYI-BEL, 2021d). This divergence surfaced in our interlocutors' emphases on a selection of religious symbols, such as the veil, and explicitly anti-colonialist and anti-racist performances.

### *The Ethics of Non-Interference*

Another aspect of the intergenerational and intracommunal tension is religious ethics – i.e. our interlocutors' philosophical reflection upon their moral conduct. Having been forced by her ex-husband and his family to wear a headscarf, Didem (30) argued that "the majority of Muslims have betrayed the message of Islam" (PYI-FR, 2021j). Neriman (25) had problems with her father as she was "hanging out with guys" (PYI-GER, 2020s). She also had difficulty explaining to him that 80% of her academic department were males. Malak (27) criticised her father's understanding of religion, as he threatened to disinherit her when she started to live in a shared apartment with her boyfriend: "I would not call [my father's religion] Islam. Because

[…] faith only works with conviction" (PYI-GER, 2020t). Ömer (26) built his life around social work in drug rehabilitation, in contrast with his father, who gave the verdict that "drug addicts and prostitutes will go to hell" (PYI-BEL, 2020b). Ömer operationalised the same belief system to respect others' life trajectories: "It is not up to me to judge them." To him, Islam does not have clear-cut guidelines applying in the same way to everyone.

In these narratives, the trouble is caused by those that fulfil their lust for domination in the name of religion. An illustration in this context was the case of Lale Gül, who wrote an autobiography criticising the Turkish-origin Islamic communities in the Netherlands, where she grew up. While disagreeing with Gül's denigration of the belief system, Nurten (26) made it clear that not Gül but her parents should be held responsible: "Her parents have said to her, 'you are going to hell,' but they cannot say that at all, they are not God" (PYI-NL, 2021i). Murat (30) recalls such "typical Turkish things" in his family, including "no miniskirts, no shorts", not smoking in front of parents, and no relationship with an irreligious woman or a non-virgin. In disappointment with the resilience of such attitudes, he concluded that his ethical counterarguments "go in one ear and out the other" (PYI-GER, 2020u).

Indeed, many parents are not against independent thinking, but the factors that cause them to be criticised and those that make them worthy of praise are intermingled in the narratives. In appreciation of her family, Leila (22) differentiated between being born a Muslim and choosing it freely. Questioning the role of her parents in her religious development, she concluded: "I was lucky enough to have parents who gave me the freedom to choose" (PYI-FR, 2021g). When Najla (23) decided to wear a headscarf, her father asked her repeatedly if she did so under anyone else's pressure. Najla expressed her happiness to be the one who made this decision (PYI-NL, 2020e). Imams were not necessarily against free-thinking either. Muhammed (30) explained his transition from a "blind belief" to a self-conscious and self-responsible one with the help of an imam who told him, "if you are in doubt about something, then you have to look for the answer yourself" (PYI-NL, 2020k). Common in these cases is the appreciation of self-agency.

### *Tradition under the Test of Creolisation*

The explicit and implicit dress codes also create tensions in the ethnically defined mosque communities. While describing their aim as attracting young people ashamed of going to mosques, some members of MET imagined a girl "who does not wear a headscarf" (PYI-NL, 2020m; PYI-NL, 2020n; PYI-NL, 2020j). Such gatekeeping leads some interlocutors to distance themselves from organisations such as DITIB. Merve (28), a formerly active member of the organisation in Cologne, revised her sense of belonging after

disagreeing with the organisational structure that imposes a single meaning on symbols such as the headscarf: "I like the people, but I no longer like the association that much" (PYI-GER, 16 July 2020).

Beyond these questions of agency, the dress codes are under the influence of creolisation, which marks the convergence of different cultural groups reterritorialised together. Mustafa (30) prefers clothing that makes it difficult to know if the carrier is a Muslim or a hipster (*see* Ajala, 2017). This ambiguity solves the labelling problem against young Muslims in society. While observing a diverse set of Muslim appearances in Amsterdam, Mustafa developed an interest in the traditional clothing outside of the Turkish bubble in which he grew up. Although he ended up mixing bits and pieces from the Afghan and North African garments such as djellaba, he could not wear them in "this Turkish mosque" because "the mosque people do not like" them (PYI-NL, 2020d).

Among others, Nagihan's relatives were somewhat captive in their cultural clusters: "they are very communal, so they don't care [about different viewpoints]" (PYI-FR, 2021j). Diversifying one's news sources played a decisive role in reaching different conclusions about life. According to Nebahat (29), limiting oneself to the Turkish TV would make young Turkish-origin individuals' vision precisely like that of their parents (PYI-FR, 2021c). Although Gözde (24) inherited the religious thinking of her parents, she also noticed a divergence in lifestyles as "my mother does not have an international environment as I do" (PYI-GER, 2020g). Amina (20) criticised elders for not understanding what youngsters "encounter every day". She explained her argument by underlining that the latter do not categorise people based on nationalities and are concerned with discrimination and diversity. After all, the first person who read the adhan was black (PYI-GER, 2021h). After mentioning the Black Lives Matter demonstrations and the protests for LGBT rights, Amina concluded: "We want more openness" (PYI-NL, 2020h).

### *Disagreements over the Borders of Acceptable Diversity*

The last anecdote arouses the question of acceptable diversity. Many of our interlocutors attend mosques despite having problems with the religious expertise claimed by the mosque authorities. In some cases, this turns out to be a disillusioning factor. A noteworthy illustration is İlayda's struggle in the DITIB community. "You are born into [DITIB]," says İlayda about her ties with the organisation as a Turkish-origin German citizen. The discussion sessions and preaches about the borders of acceptable diversity surfaced her fundamental disagreement with her parents and the organisation:

> A huge problem is the LGBTI topic. I accept and tolerate and understand the people and their views.
>
> (PYI-GER, 2020p)

Although she continued to attend the organisation meetings at the time of our interview, she started to "question things they say".

Dissatisfaction with one's surroundings in one's religious habitat, including one's family and one's society of origin, paves the way for developing different senses of belonging with the others. For example, from Paris, Asmaa's (29) search for religious purity helped her self-identify more with France than with Morocco. She considered that she did not have a proper religious education from her family. Therefore, she felt alone in her Islamic "spiritual quest". She criticised Moroccan society for following traditions blindly. Despite having suffered multiple times from the reactions against her veil in France, mixing with Muslim citizens of other origins at mosques helped her deculturate herself from the remnants of Moroccan customs: "for giving me this opportunity, I say thank you to France from the bottom of my heart" (PYI-FR, 2020i). After a similar experience, Gamze (25) realised that the other people in "this brasserie" may welcome a Muslim while also taking alcohol there. As opposed to these distractions that isolate her from society, her solution is to "focus on myself and ask what it is that I want". By the same token, she criticised parents who do not let their daughters travel alone. Evaluating the role of family pressure in the straightforward explanations of racism, she argued that the feelings of being unwelcome are partly rooted in such parents' prejudicial senses of appropriateness (PYI-BEL, 2020f). Adib (24) sees Islam as an opportunity for Belgium as it orders one to be "nice and friendly" towards one's surroundings and, at the same time, be critical for the better. Hence, he argued that such Islamic virtues alleviate society's hopelessness and nihilistic and suicidal tendencies (PYI-BEL, 2021a). Ferdi believes that becoming a better Muslim makes him "a better Dutch citizen" because, in his understanding, Islam is about helping society altruistically (e.g. spending time with the elders, praying and contemplating, keeping the future in mind) (PYI-NL, 2020a).

### *Religion as Spirituality*

Another visible trajectory that contributes to the diversity described above is the belief system's disentanglement from the political load of the public religions. One interlocutor described the trend as attaching importance to the brain, cognition, and emotions instead of following a clear-cut scripture (PYI-GER, 2020r). It is "a form of meditation", according to another interlocutor (PYI-NL, 2021i). The Quran as such is rather available in the spirituality section of the bookstores.

While seeing Islam as a meditative trip, very few of our interlocutors imagined a physical trip to Hajj ($n = 7$; 4.60%). The trip is towards the inner self and encourages the self to comprehend Islam as a source that calms down, soothes, and reduces stress and irritation (PYI-FR, 2020c; PYI-FR, 2020j; PYI-FR, 2020a; PYI-BEL, 2021e; PYI-FR, 2020i). The trip includes

developing forgiveness, modesty, and benevolence in relation to others (PYI-FR, 2020k; PYI-BEL, 2020c; PYI-FR, 2020j; PYI-FR, 2020f; PYI-NL, 2020a; PYI-BEL, 2021e; PYI-GER, 2020p; PYI-GER, 2020v). Looking inwards privatises the beliefs, inspires contemplation in quiet (PYI-FR, 2020c), and helps become non-judgmental, non-confrontational and tolerant (PYI-FR, 2020a; PYI-FR, 2020h; PYI-FR, 2020j; PYI-GER, 2020b; PYI-FR, 2020f; PYI-GER, 2020p).

Many interviewees reported that their faith makes them more inclusive in their social interactions: "I have also had friends who are not Muslim" (PYI-NL, 2021f; PYI-FRA, 2021b; PYI-FRA, 2021g; PYI-FR, 2021b). Sometimes they could not convince others. For instance, Fatma (26) had a hard time convincing her coworker that she was not disturbed by the short dresses of her officemates: "She kept asking [about it] because I didn't fit [into] the stereotype she had of me" (PYI-NL, 2021a). According to Mehmet, the mosque activities fail to address "the human aspects" of Islam, which he describes as education of general morality in contrast with formalised rules (PYI-GER, 2020pa). Such an education, he argues, would make it clear that one should favour a "good Cristian, Jewish, Agnostic over a bad Muslim".

## Conclusion

This research aimed to map the diverse and convoluted religious paths migrant-origin Muslims take in Europe, despite forming straight rows to pray together at mosques. Young to middle-aged Muslims' socialisation at mosques is far from representing a clear-cut process of religious indoctrination. The ties they keep with the organisations rooted in their countries of origin do not suffice to indicate an equalisation of their ideas and interests. The study focused on 152 interviews to infer various aspects of religious diversification and saturation in the Turkish and Moroccan-origin communities. It referred to a series of conceptions related to globalisation – i.e. circulation, deterritorialisation, and transnationalism. I concluded that our interlocutors interact with a globally circulating religious repertoire reterritorialised and recontextualised in Europe and in line with the locally produced emotional needs, interlocution processes, and ideological priorities. Although many of them recall symbols from their countries of origin, they interact with them not only through the public debates in Europe but also alongside many others they recall from elsewhere.

I also argued that our interlocutors' relationship with Islam goes beyond the propaganda of the sending and the receiving states in several ways. Some interlocutors' emphasis on the spiritual aspects of Islam, which contradicts the formalised public religious norms, have been securitised by the Turkish Directorate of Religious Affairs (Diyanet) under the label of deism. Similarly, some interlocutors' problematisation of religious nationalism and ethnocentrism is also not ideal from the standpoint of the sending states as

it limits their ability to operationalise the sacred repertoire selectively. In addition, the intracommunal and intergenerational tensions add new dimensions to the mosque socialisation processes and the value expression about following the elderly. The saturation of this religious field requires identifying the radicalisation possibilities outside the realm of "Gray wolves" and "ISIS", and outside the scope of violent radicalisation.

These arguments have implications for state-led religious reform or conservation projects as well. A community of believers that feels discriminated against will not accept the terms imposed by the state authorities that share the blame. Structuring national Islams following the state officials' words is likely counterproductive for the self-identification of migrant-origin individuals. On the other hand, the sending states' religious personnel, lacking the native language skills and the awareness of European specificities, will not be able to "conserve" their official religion in the diaspora communities either. However, the remaining relevance and power of the two authoritative claims suffice to demonstrate the limits of the hyperglobalist accounts of globalisation. Therefore, future research shall focus on the polarisation in the many-voiced migrant-origin communities and the political economy of relations through which the state authorities appropriate the religious sphere.

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## Notes

1 This study is conducted as part of European Research Council Advanced Grant Project "ISLAM-OPHOB-ISM: Nativism, Islamophobism and Islamism in the Age of Populism" (No. 785934).
2 In this research context, I focus on those who grew up in conservative communities and then criticize them, instead of those who discover religiously conservative communities after becoming more religiously conservative than their parents.

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Chapter 10

# Commentary

## Why Extremism?

*Olivier Roy*

### Introduction

The usual explanations in terms of political protests, social movements, socioeconomic conditions, social exclusion, or racism do not explain the present radicalisation into violent extremism. If these socioeconomic conditions were the real trigger, there should have been far more radicals than we have. Moreover, they should have entailed the rise of political or social movements that would have addressed the grievances of the "excluded", promoting a more moderate platform and addressing a far bigger constituency than the sympathisers of radical violence. To make a comparison, the leftist radical violence of the sixties and seventies came in the wake of a larger social and political politicisation that was traditionally framed by the communist and socialist parties as well as the trade unions – that is in the same period of radical activism by the Red Brigades in Italy, massive, but peaceful, strikes used to paralyse the economy regularly. Comparatively, the present radical extreme right in Europe rises together with populist parties, which present a softer vision of their grievances (opposition to immigration and Islam). Simply put, there is a continuum between social movements and political parties, either from the left or right, with the extreme radical wings, leftist in the seventies and mostly rightist now. The reason is that the "mainstream" populists or communists share the same political imaginary as their own radicals (the myth of an ethnic nation or class struggle and revolution). Does the same "couple" exist for the Islamist radicals? Is there a continuity between the more "mainstream" Islamist movements (such as the Muslim Brothers or the Salafis) and the Jihadis? The question has been hotly debated, and of course, the answer would determine what we understand by radicalisation and deradicalisation.

Indeed, many do consider moderates and radicals the same "couple" by looking at the Muslim brothers compared to the Jihadist groups. However, the comparison does not work. In the Middle East, the Muslim Brothers never endorsed the concept of global jihad, while almost no known radical did come from their ranks. There is a more significant overlap between

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Salafis and Jihadis, in Tunisia, for instance. Still, the mainstream Salafi movements never endorsed the concept of global jihad and did even support the military takeover made by general Sissi in Egypt, who launched a strong "anti-terrorism" policy. In Libya the only armed Salafi movement (the madkhalists) supported general Haftar, a close ally of general Sissi.

In the West, the disconnect between violent radicals on one hand and political Islamist or Muslim preaching movements is even greater. In fact, there are very few social movements or organised groups that are mobilising a part of the Muslim population. The few exceptions are the Turkish Milli Görüş, which controls hundreds of mosques (mainly in Germany), the Tabligh preaching movement, originating from the Indian subcontinent but recruiting among the whole Muslim population (including many converts), and the Barelvis who mobilise Muslims from the Indian sub-continent. No known violent radical came from Milli Görüş, while a few made a passage through Tabligh, but left because they were disappointed by the refusal of violence and the rejection of politics defended by the leadership.

The present Islamist violent radical movement is defined by a call for a global jihad that is joined by young volunteers from different countries who never engaged in political or social movement, whether in their country of citizenship or the country of their parents or grandparents. There is a clear generational dimension among the Islamist radicals: in the West, they are largely from the second generation, especially from North Africa, they often have a past of petty delinquency, and they are joined by converts. But these sociological factors do not explain why so *few* second generations joined jihadism. There have been many discussions on the roots of radicalisation. This book makes an in-depth review of different explanations (socioeconomic, ideological, religious etc.) and provides an interesting survey of different field works. Instead of trying to analyse the roots of radicalisation by bringing my own theory,[1] I will turn to the other side of the story: the deradicalisation policies that are implemented in different places. These policies shed light not so much on the real radicalisation processes, but on the assessment and prejudices underlying these policies. They are always centred on combatting bad Islam by promoting good Islam.

## Motives Behind Radicalisation

Radicalisation is no longer in the act (violence) but in the motives. The reading grid is not political, social, or psychological (e.g. terrorism as a form of pathology), but religious. Of course, this corresponds to what Islamist terrorists say: by definition, they refer to a religious matrix. But how can this matrix fit into a conceptual category that at the same time takes into account this religious dimension and is thinkable in the usual concepts of political science? As "religion" is not a category of political science (where we prefer to speak in France of the "religious fact"), we use the concept of ideology.

We define jihadism as a religious ideology, although this term of ideology is a bit out of place and contributes to erasing the difference with secular ideologies. I prefer to talk about jihadism as a big narrative construct centred on self-heroisation and the quest for salvation through martyrdom. However, this is not the category most commonly used by deradicalisation actors. The premise of deradicalisation policies is therefore not so much that religion is the motive for radicalisation (this is the dominant opinion, but we will not enter into the debate here), but above all that religion is something very specific and that it would therefore make the radicalised inaccessible to any political or even simply rational approach. The radicalised would remain dangerous as long as we had not reset his religious software.

The categories that we will use are, therefore, deeply rooted in a universe of belief: we question the sincerity of the radical prisoner, and we will question the issue of *taqya*, that is to say, the right for a believer to conceal his belief or even to commit acts contrary to the norms of religion (e.g. drinking alcohol or going to prostitutes), provided of course that the objective is the advancement of the religious cause. The conclusion and, at the same time, the premise is, therefore, that the radicalisation of religious practices precedes the transition to violence. Especially in France, prevention measures logically focus on the "weak signals of radicalisation" that could herald the transition to violence and are almost always signs of Salafist-type religious practices. This is the strategy advocated in France by the CIDPR (Interministerial Committee for the Prevention of Radicalisation) and the Ministry of National Education. Therefore, not only preachers who speak of jihad are hunted down, but anyone defending an "integralist" relationship to religion, for example, those who declare that the law of God is superior to the law of men. In short, any attack on secularism can be a premise of radicalisation, which therefore presupposes a very high potential recruitment pool (any observant can turn to radicalism). This presupposition is unrelated to the actual number of terrorists or jihadists, and of course, perfectly unmanageable, especially since many radicals go under the radar because they do not have a visible religious practice, and sometimes even do not care about practice.

## The Religious Question in Different Contexts

This centrality of the religious question is also affirmed by the authorities in Muslim countries affected by jihadism. There is, therefore, convergence with Europe on diagnosis, but in very different contexts. There is a consensus that jihadists and terrorists have not understood true Islam or that some imams preach a misguided Islam. Nonetheless, Muslim countries obviously do not have the same definition of religious radicalism: rejecting gender promiscuity, exhibiting ostensible signs of religiosity (such as the callus on the forehead, which indicates an intense practice of prayer, called *zabiba* in

Egypt), condemning homosexuality, all these attitudes, in Muslim societies, are not seen as signs of religious radicalisation that can lead to violence. Very often, Egyptian, Moroccan, or Tunisian courts go in the same direction as the Salafists on the question of blasphemy or homosexuality. The paradox is that both secular Western and Muslim countries put the issue of good Islam at the heart of deradicalisation, while they have neither the same definition of good Islam nor the same means of action.

For Western countries, "good Islam" is a liberal Islam, an enlightened Islam. In general, and especially in France, "good Islam" must follow the path that Christianity has been forced to follow in Europe: endorse the separation of religion and politics and consider faith to be a personal and reversible choice. It must also recognise the achievements of the 1960s in terms of values: feminism and LGBT rights. Emphasis is therefore placed on the need for deculturation in relation to the cultures of origin. Islam, managed by the countries of origin, was identified in France by the government as one of the elements of Islamic separatism. Acculturation to what is claimed to be European culture must necessarily be accompanied by a theological reform to justify the distance taken from traditional Islam. Some European countries (Germany, the Netherlands, and Austria) have a legal framework where they can encourage the emergence of institutes or faculties of Islamic theology. The problem is, of course, that a secular state such as France can hardly intervene in the religious field: the government has therefore chosen to support an Institute of Islamology, which is supposed to work in the direction of religious reform. But once again, in the same line that we substitute the religious "fact" for religion, replacing theology with Islamology is to ignore the specificity of the religious, that is, faith and practice.

European countries are thus reduced to looking for the "good" thinkers of Islam, who could justify, in theory, the liberal reform that we want to provoke. Indeed, there is no shortage of high-level Muslim intellectuals, scholars, and essayists who produce good quality books, demonstrate great erudition, and renew the interpretation of texts. The problem is the potential audience. The problem has been reversed as if it were the theological discourse that aroused adherence: yet few people convert after reading theological treatises, and few radicals study first before taking action. The idea that texts (both theological and ideological) precede action does not correspond to the way in which believers, moderate or radical, live their religion in a mixture of spirituality, conformism, and collective practices in the context of social ties (or on the contrary in solitude), search for identity etc.

The question of religious "experience" is central. However, this experience is very different depending on whether Islam is the dominant religion, deeply associated with the society's culture, or is the religion of a minority distinguished by its relationship to immigration and disadvantaged social categories. The one who adheres to the global jihad, detached from any real social bond, is in a different logic from the one who fights in a local jihad,

deeply rooted in the complex bonds that are part of local political anthropology and not in the abstraction of an above-ground "radicalisation".

In Muslim countries, in order to oppose both Salafism and the political Islam of the Muslim Brotherhood, governments draw on the repertoire of tradition, unlike European countries. The plurality of this tradition is certainly emphasised in terms of legal schools, Sufism and its relationship with literature. One highlights the deep link between Islam and national culture, this time for the benefit of national culture. Salafism is now often presented as a foreign import, including in Saudi Arabia, since Mohammed Ben Salman denounced the Sahwa movement as perverting the traditional Saudi "good Islam" (which, in fact, is Wahhabism, often considered one of the expressions of Salafism, which shows the plasticity of the concept of "good Islam"). In Morocco, Egypt, and Pakistan, Sufism is being rehabilitated as a counterweight to Salafism. In Pakistan, for example, General President Pervez Musharraf (1999–2007) founded the Sufi National Council in 2006, taking the opposite view of another General President, Muhammad Zia-ul-Haqq, who, following the 1977 coup d'état, had favoured more radical currents (such as Jama'at-i Islami) and more fundamentalists. The problem is that the equation "Sufism = pietistic spirituality" is by no means guaranteed. If the transition to violence is the criterion for radicalisation, then many movements of Sufi origin have passed to violence without having experienced the famous theological radicalisation. In Great Britain, it was the Barelvi movement (from the Indian subcontinent), which is also very opposed to Salafism, which launched the protest in 1988 against Salman Rushdie's book *The Satanic* Verses, which motivated many attacks. In Pakistan, a fringe of Sufi and Barelvi origin has become radicalised around the issue of blasphemy, led by the Tehreek-e Labbaik Pakistan (TLP) party, which has succeeded in recent years in mobilising on the issue of blasphemy and repeatedly destabilising Pakistani governments. Zaheer Hassan Mahmoud, who attacked the former offices of Charlie Hebdo in September 2020, was a discipline of Ilyas Qadri, a charismatic leader also from the Barelvi movement and Sufi inspiration. In short, it is not the theological question that distinguishes between moderates and radicals.

As we have seen, the governments of Muslim countries do not promote a "liberal" version of Islam in their fight against radicalisation. This is a fact that puts them at odds with Western countries. In any case, the "good Islam" put forward by Muslim states defends conservative values, such as modesty, respect for the sacred, social conformism, and gender difference. Moreover, it is done in an authoritarian and dirigiste framework that does not favour intellectual research and the debate of ideas. On the other hand, Muslim countries can play on a card that Europe does not have: social pressure on the environment from which the radicalised comes (family or clan or tribe for countries where it makes sense, such as Jordan and Saudi Arabia). These means are widely used in Jordan, where, for example, the tribe of

Zarqawi, the leader of Al Qaeda in Syria and Iraq, issued a statement repudiating him.[2] Similarly, Saudi Arabia uses paternalistic techniques of social reintegration: after, of course, a re-education to the "good Islam" in prison, the former radical is granted the means to live and help to get married. Therefore, they play on social conformity and the importance of Islam in national culture and social cohesion. This is much more difficult for a secular country like France, even if European countries like Italy do not have the same reluctance to involve religious actors in prisons.

## Conclusion

Whether in Europe or the Middle East, the establishment of a diversified, even liberal Islam, nevertheless, comes up against a contradiction in terms: it presupposes a climate of intellectual and religious freedom. However, both in Europe and in the Muslim world, "good Islam" is built from an authoritarian and vertical approach, parallel to a more or less open repression of dissenting voices. If it is logical for authoritarian countries to impose a state and bureaucratic vision of "good Islam", it is more delicate for European countries to make a kind of thought police, criminalising the expression of certain ideas. For example, in France, the Collective against Islamophobia in France was dissolved in 2021, while it has never been involved in violent radicalism.

Both in Europe and Muslim countries, the desire to reform Islam is reflected in legislative and political normativity, where the definition of good practice is deferred to the law and the courts. Religious freedom is a collateral victim of the fight against radicalisation, because this fight locks the space for theological reflection and puts the religious field under the direct or indirect control of the state. The risk is to kill the spiritual message supposed to be carried by "good Islam" by bureaucratising religion and watering down the very expression of faith. In the contemporary context of secularisation, those who turn to any kind of religion do not seek the softest versions and certainly not those promoted by the state for their "moderation". Consequently, it is only in the milieu of the believers that a new theological reflection can be developed, and, once again, this presupposes an open, free religious space, which means an open and free society.

## Notes

1 Olivier Roy (2017). *Jihad and Death*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
2 November 20, 2005 the tribe of Zarqawi, the Khalayleh-Bani Hassan signed a collective petition to condemn his terrorist activities. It was signed by his own brother.

# Epilogue

*Ayhan Kaya, Metin Koca, and Ayşenur Benevento*

## Introduction

This concluding section reflects the arguments advanced by the contributors and aims to bridge the edited volume's aims with each chapter's conclusions, putting them in various orders to clarify how they interact. The collection rested on primary data, including (a) the PRIME Youth European Research Council (ERC) project interviews conducted with self-identified Muslims and natives in Germany, France, Belgium, and the Netherlands, (b) the interviews conducted in Germany under the scope of the project *Peer Pressure on Defectors from Extreme Right-wing Scenes*, (c) the interviews conducted with migrant-origin Muslims in Turin, Italy, and (d) ethnographic research conducted in the Netherlands on Muslim activists and organisations. In this volume, there were also theoretical and conceptual discussions introduced by researchers who have been working on radicalisation for long. In this part, our findings will be summarised based on four bullet points, including (1) the conceptualisation and typologies of radicalisation, (2) the peculiarities of nativist-populist and Islamist radicalisation, (3) the main drivers and facilitators behind such radicalisation processes, and (4) the possible remedies for radicalisation. As the co-editors of this volume, we appreciate the advantages of complexity and cherish the range of ways in which the contributors recognised the intricacies of the notion of radicalisation, currently located at the Centre of the European studies.

## Typologies of Radicalisation

All chapters combine one another ultimately to address interdisciplinary literature dealing with the concept and the types of radicalisation. While elaborating on numerous cases in which policymakers, academics, and practitioners use the word radicalisation, this edited volume demonstrated how radicalisation, as a concept, should go beyond the connotations of violence, extremism, and terrorism. This volume asserts that overcoming the term's negative connotations could be possible by applying the fundamental,

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domain-specific theoretical frameworks that were in place before the term "radicalisation" was politicised and securitised. In sum, the contributors often underlined a kind of co-radicalisation and/or relational radicalisation.

Ayhan Kaya's contribution situated the concept of radicalisation on Calhoun's three-fold classification, philosophical radicalism, tactical radicalism, and reactionary radicalism. Highlighting all of them, Kaya concludes that the radicalisation of Dresdeners towards heritage populism fits into reactionary radicalism provoked by the "perils" of capitalism, globalism, and transnationalism. Kaya demonstrates how the past and heritage appeal to those who feel socioeconomically, spatially, and nostalgically deprived in the present.

Wetering and Hecker's research scope is extremism, inclusive partly of what Kaya classifies under radicalism. Distinguishing between the types of extremists, Wetering and Hecker compare and contrast streetfighters, political soldiers, and politicians on the right-wing extremist scene, particularly in the NPD. According to them, political soldiers aim to differentiate themselves from the street-fighting extremists, who reduce the ideology to a "fighting body", and the politicians, who limit themselves to elitist and mainstream organisations.

Kinvall, Capelos, and Poppy identified a "third position" beyond radicalism and extremism. Despite living in "pressurised" environments, the individuals in the third position refrain from committing violence and supporting "anti-social" groups and actions against the majority society. In line with the arguments on co-radicalisation in the broader literature, Badea described the interaction between Islamophobia and the attacks in France as a process of relational radicalisation. According to her, this process masks that young self-identified Muslims identify with the national group and desire to be recognised as its members. Badea's chapter pursued the ties between segregationism and Islamophobia as key components of relational radicalisation. Wetering and Hecker emphasised individual anecdotes whereby right-wing extremism was tempted firstly against migrants grouping on the street or in the schoolyard.

Martijn de Koning problematised deradicalisation policies by zooming in on Muslims that actively seek confrontation with the state. Accordingly, the current practices of governing and, meanwhile, racialising counter-radicalisation in the Netherlands misses how the confrontational Muslim organisations may submit to the rule of law against discrimination. Metin Koca explored the non-violent radicalisation processes among migrant-origin Muslims, which contradict the imaginations of violent radicalisation and the analogous deradicalisation policies in Europe. One claim Koca problematised is that migrant-origin Muslims radicalise under the religious indoctrination of their countries of origin. In contrast to this prediction, Koca argued that many young Muslims in Europe develop alternative knowledge claims despite socialising at mosques funded by their

countries of origin. While engaging with a globally circulating repertoire in seeking religious purity, many individuals refuse to identify with the national values constructed for them in Europe. This process does not alienate them from Europe since they refashion (deterritorialise and reterritorialise) the online sources in liaison with their interlocution processes and needs in Europe. Analogously, Olivier Roy identifies the need for a climate of intellectual and religious freedom against the bureaucratic visions of "good Islam." Koning, Koca, Ricucci, and Roy shared the argument that more attention should be paid to the microcosmic organisations where young Muslims participate.

## Peculiarities of Nativist and Islamist Radicalisation

The collection acknowledges that the ideological dimension of each radicalisation process adds to the complication of the concept. In this vein, we embrace and extend what Isaiah Berlin argued about defining populism:

> I think we all probably agreed that a single formula to cover all populisms everywhere will not be very helpful. The more embracing the formula, the less descriptive. The more richly descriptive the formula, the more it will exclude. The greater the intension, the smaller the extension. The greater the connotation, the smaller the denotation. This appears to me to be an almost a priori truth in historical writing.
>
> (Berlin, 1967: 6)

Our contributors were not in an effort to offer a single formula to cover all radicalisations. That said, there was an assumption shared by all the contributors: all radicalisations are local. Hence, the radicalisation was examined in the context of its manifestation among specific populations. At times, this level of in-depth examination involved in the study of contextual peculiarities in certain time periods among groups of people who manifest comparable tendencies of radicalisations. One way of doing this, as Benevento and Badea followed, is to find a shared element in the particularity of groups many would put in distinct cultural or civilisational clusters. Both touch upon processes leading to the nativisation of radicalism and the Islamisation of radicalism from a social-economic, political, and/or psychological point of view. In doing so, their chapters express compassion to seek elements amongst groups of people, seemingly opposed to each other yet similar in their interpretations of social-economic, political, and psychological deprivations. Benevento combined them together and argued that young self-identified Muslim and right-wing native women in Belgium value having freedom of choice in regard to personal decisions. In other words, the two groups' narratives on their values intersect despite their little opportunity to contact each other.

Having a unifying approach, Badea was also interested in the divergence of radicalisations in European majority societies as well as Muslim minorities. She divided the first group into two: those that oppose the religious practices of Muslims with sentiments particularly against Islam, and those committed to a form of secularism that limits religious practices for all other groups, including Christians. On the flip side, Muslims' radicalisation has also diverged. Among them are those with a withdrawal of national identity and those that still claim membership in the national group.

Beyond studying these populations on an equal foot, the other chapters rested on each of their more specific problems with state policies, structural difficulties, and dominant ideologies. Supporting this position in his commentary, Roy distinguished Islamist radicalisation from that of the "right" and the "left," for mainstream Islamism and Jihadism do not represent a couple between moderates and radicals. Given the extensive focus on Islamism in the literature as well as state policies, the volume brought forth four chapters that attempted to critically re-evaluate the conventional wisdom regarding *the Islamisation of radicalism*, as Roy puts it. These chapters by Koning, Lahlou, Koca, and Roy analysed both violent and non-violent radicalisation processes, with the (dis)connections between them.

Since the 1970s, many Muslim-origin immigrants and their descendants have been encouraged to mobilise themselves socially, politically, culturally, and economically within their ethno-religious frameworks by constructing isolated communities to protect themselves against threats they perceive. The construction of isolated parallel communities has brought about two important consequences in Europe. On the one hand, it has reinforced ethno-religious boundaries between majority societies and migrant-origin groups leading to different forms of ethnic competition in the urban space, especially among the working-class segments of local communities. On the other hand, it has strengthened the process of alienation between in-groups and out-groups, leading to the decline of intergroup contact. The decline of intergroup communication provides a fertile ground for the spread of Islamophobic sentiments and Islamist radicalism.

Islamic parallel communities are present in European countries such as France, Germany, England, Belgium, Denmark, and the Netherlands. Their preferences for isolation are not necessarily the result of the conservatism of Muslims but rather a reaction to the structural and political mechanisms of exclusion. In other words, part of what shows itself in the form of a religious revival is the structural problems such as racism, discrimination, Islamophobia, xenophobia, injustice, poverty, deindustrialisation, unemployment, and humiliation. In this vein, Koca's chapter explained anxiety as a booster of religious socialisation for migrant-origin individuals. Lahlou identified the factors behind Moroccan-origin Muslim youths' radicalisation with the increase in poverty, the deepening of wealth inequality, youth unemployment, high illiteracy with a burden especially on women, and the

weak health system. Connectedly, our contributors emphasised structural difficulties in their analyses. Although it is without a doubt that social and class tensions erupt from such structural problems, some states, administrations, populist parties, the media, and even intellectuals misdiagnose or misrepresent the issue to the public, which in turn makes it almost impossible to solve.

The processes of deindustrialisation, starting from the late 1970s, and the rise of inequalities in politics, education, the labour market, health services, and the judicial system alienate Muslims from the majority societies. Hence, they have come to hold on to religion, ethnicity, language, and tradition – whatever they believe cannot be taken away from them. Discrimination in everyday life has become common for many Muslim individuals and communities in Europe. Right-wing populist political parties across Europe indulge in deliberate misreadings, which result in the syndrome depicting Muslims as the "enemies within" to be eliminated. Given the problematic representation and statisticalisation of immigrants and Muslims in the media and political sphere, the issue runs into a dead-end. When all the misinterpretations and misevaluations add up, it is easy to see how smoothly the "neighbours next door" can be turned into the "enemies within."

Ayhan Kaya's chapter supported the argument that populist parties and movements often exploit the issues of parallel communities, migration, and Islam. They portray them as a threat to a nation's welfare and social, cultural, and even ethnic features. Populist leaders also tend to blame parallel communities of Muslims for some of the major problems in society, such as unemployment, violence, crime, insecurity, drug trafficking, and human trafficking. This tendency is reinforced by racist, xenophobic, and demeaning rhetoric. The use of words like influx, invasion, flood, and intrusion are just a few examples. Many public figures in Europe have spoken of a "foreign infiltration" of immigrants, especially Muslims, in their countries. Some political leaders even predicted the coming of *Eurabia*. This mythological future continent will allegedly replace modern Europe, where children from Norway to Naples will allegedly learn to recite the Quran at school while their mothers stay at home wearing *burqas*. Some populist political party leaders such as Éric Zemmour, Marine Le Pen, Thierry Baudet, Alexander Gauland, and Viktor Orbán even talk about the "Great Replacement" conspiracy in Europe. Referring to the growing visibility of Muslims in the European space, some right-wing populist leaders effectively deploy the fear of Islam as a great danger in the foreseeable future. Referring to a white-supremacist slogan coined by a right-wing French writer, Renaud Camus (2011), such right-wing populist leaders simply want to make their followers believe that a global elite is actively replacing Europe's white population with people of colour from non-European countries.

Some right-wing populist politicians began to unmask the immigration of Muslims as an integral part of a deliberate strategy of Islamification.[1]

To support such a claim, such politicians may refer to a whole range of Arabists, orientalists, political scientists, journalists, and politicians who may boast a reasonably solid reputation, such as Bat Ye'or, Bernard Lewis, Oriana Fallaci, Samuel Huntington, Hans Jansen, Pim Fortuyn, and Ayaan Hirsi Ali. Such populist politicians have also openly criticised Islam by aligning themselves with the liberal and civilisational attitude towards certain cultural issues, such as the emancipation of women and homosexuals. It is also known that a growing number of political parties in Europe exploit and encourage fear of Islam and organise political campaigns, which promote simplistic and negative stereotypes concerning Muslims in Europe and often equate Islam with extremism and terrorism.[2]

## Drivers of Radicalisation

Another aim of the collection was to identify the main drivers of radicalisation. While identifying several ways in which distant times and spaces penetrate the present, we limited our geographical scope to the European continent to reach comparable findings from similar historical and political contexts. All in all, we investigated the connections between radicalisation and economic disparities, feelings of discrimination, cultural alienation, and various individual and social-psychological factors. The local conditions and the in-group contexts play various roles. It can be challenging to determine what exactly constitutes a kind of radicalisation, and it is frequently impossible to track a single person's radicalisation over time. Therefore, numerous conceptual models arise in literature, but very few cross-sectional or longitudinal findings are helpful in monitoring the radicalisation processes. Thus, meaningful patterns of differences and similarities that emerge among people with hyphenated identities located in distinct localities (e.g. AfD supporters in Saxony, veiled Muslim women living in cosmopolitan cities of Belgium, Moroccan-origin Muslim youth in France) have the potential to depict how radicalisation is a distinct psychological process anchored in the social milieus in which it occurs.

Gender was among the themes discussed often by various contributors in the volume. For instance, focussing on both self-identified Muslim women and right-wing women from Belgium, Benevento argued that the global financial crises and the subsequent redistribution of social wealth had an immense impact on the gender order. Accordingly, the global recession and the erosion of the welfare state led to a discursive shift from collectivist senses of belonging and duties to individual needs and responsibilities. The latter renders women "agents of care" in the family.

The causes of Islamist radicalisation were also discussed in the volume. Despite distinguishing between the external and internal factors, Mehdi Lahlou argued that both play a role in the Moroccan-origin youngsters' radicalisation. Accordingly, the external factors served as an opportunity

for "Wahhabis" and "Salafists" to affect Moroccan society under the banner of the protection of Islam. The factors such as the Iranian Revolution and the end of the Cold War played a role in the process. The internal factors combined with these developments were poverty, unemployment, and illiteracy, which Lahlou described as the seeds of religious and social conservatism that allow the maintenance of long-standing political structures in most Arab countries, including Morocco. Bringing together the external and internal factors, Lahlou described "Jihadists" as marginalised, impoverished, unemployed, and without much hope for the future. In contrast with this reading, Roy maintained that "Salafists" and "Jihadists" do not form a continuum. Questioning the alternative explanations of violent radicalisation, Roy dismissed the theories that explain the current wave of violent radicalisation in terms of political protests, social movements, socioeconomic conditions, social exclusion, or racism.

Anxiety, anger, fear, and hatred were some notions often used in different contexts. Koca's focus was centred on internalising problems that migrant-origin individuals experience in their meetings with the majority society. Anxiety led by feelings of discrimination plays a fundamental role in reproducing their ties with the religious communities funded by their countries of origin. As both Koca and Roy identify, this is not a risk factor for violent radicalisation, given that no known violent extremist came from the organisations such as Milli Görüş.

Anger and anxiety mattered in the right-wing milieu as well. Wetering and Hecker pointed to the remaining influence of the former social environments and identities for individuals who try to disengage from the right-wing scene. According to the authors, disengaged individuals' relationship with the social environment continues to be marked by anger, hatred, reactive and appetitive aggression, and outbursts of violence. Kaya directed the same question to the populists of Dresden with the caveat that "all kinds of populisms, radicalisms, extremisms and fundamentalisms are local." He concluded that the destabilising effects of deindustrialisation, depopulation, and unemployment pushed young generations to generate nostalgia, where they imagined better job opportunities, better governance, cultural homogeneity, and prosperity.

## Possible Remedies for Radicalisation

All contributions have arguments on or, at the very least, implications for the "solutions" to radicalisation. As the previous bullet point makes evident, employing thorough and locally sensitive methodologies is vital in the study of radicalisation. Up to this point, research-driven and government-led projects have combined education, training, cultural exchange, and religious dialogue to help minority communities integrate into the majority society. The initiatives that are blind to the socio-cultural norms and the local economic and political realities risk widening the trust gap between those

people and authorities. Therefore, approaches focussing on local and intersectional contexts would be helpful for those who aim to go beyond profiling radical groups and individuals. Having combined such efforts, we contend that the chief deradicalisation strategy would be to develop programs that alleviate the feelings of anger and anxiety led by unemployment, discrimination, and the other factors behind marginalisation.

The governance of religion plays a crucial role in this endeavour. Emphasising the principle of secularism among French citizens, Badea argued that constructing a common national identity based on shared civic values could be an effective intervention to improve intergroup relations within the same society. She made the caveat that interventions are needed with both young members of the mainstream group and Muslim minorities in order to bring all citizens together in the national group. Also focussing on France, Kinvall et al. point to the need to address French Muslims' integration challenges. Failing to foster a genuine or natural allegiance to the nation, assimilationism leads to a "superficial" adherence at its best. In the same vein, Koca argued that people who feel discriminated against would not accept the terms imposed by the state authority that, they think, shares the blame. Therefore, structuring *national Islams* following the words of European state officials is likely counterproductive for the self-identification of migrant-origin individuals. Roy concluded that "good Islam" is built from an authoritarian and vertical approach in both Europe and the Muslim world. These contributions identified the solution as the saturation of the religious field with intellectual and religious freedom, through which nonviolent religious radicalisms, autonomous from the state religions, including that of migrants' countries of origin, will take precedence.

Koning crystallised the lack of genuine deradicalisation or integration goals. Current policies give Muslims the message that "they are still not, and perhaps never will be, 'quite like us.'" The P/CVE approaches turn a racial-security gaze onto Muslims. In turn, some Muslims are also mobilised in order to engage with this gaze. This double feature, Koning argued, defines the regime of surveillance and racialisation. Ricucci offered inclusive intercultural policies, which would drive the parties to abandon the explosive immigrants-citizens dichotomy. She examined how Turin became one of the first Italian municipalities to generate inclusive practices, projects and experiences based on dialogue, social interaction, and mutual exchange. Communication between those social groups (native and migrant-origin) who have been so far left apart from each other seems to be one of the remedies of co-radicalisation.

Benevento concluded that the focus of deradicalisation should shift from "lecturing troubled individuals" to assisting them in sharing their stories, through which they can express their feelings of exclusion, marginalisation, and isolation. In this endeavour, Benevento introduced the concept of compassionate curiosity. Wetering and Hecker sketched a roadmap to

successful therapy for disengaged individuals. The authors urged Narrative Exposure Therapy (NET) for forensic offender rehabilitation (FORNET) to be integrated into the professional deradicalisation work.

The defence of tradition, culture, religion, and past by religious, nationalist, nativist, or populist individuals has become a radical stance today. This radical stance can be interpreted as a reactionary form of resistance against the perils of modernisation and globalisation experienced by both self-identified Muslims and natives. Muslims in minority contexts often believe they are discriminated against, alienated, humiliated, and socio-politically and economically excluded in everyday life. Labelled as far-right extremists in Europe, many native individuals have similar sentiments. It is primarily these socioeconomic, political, psychological, and spatial forms of deprivation that prompt these groups of people to generate radical stances to express themselves politically and thus to be heard. In this regard, both Islamist revival and right-wing populism can be regarded as outcries of those who feel pressurised by the perils of modernisation and globalisation. Then, one could also assess these protests and forms of expression as *struggles for democracy* rather than threats to democracy.

Radicalisation provides socioeconomically, politically, spatially, and nostalgically deprived groups with an opportunity to build an imagined home away from the one that has become indifferent, alienating, and even humiliating. In other words, radicalisation becomes a regime of justification and an alternative form of politics for many to protect themselves from day-to-day discrimination, humiliation, and neglect. They believe that speaking from the margins might be a more efficient strategy to be heard by those in the centre who have lost the ability to listen to the peripheral ones. As Robert J. C. Young (2004) pointed out, it is not that *they* do not know how to speak (politics), "but rather that the dominant would not listen."

## Notes

1 The term "Eurabia" was first introduced by Bat Ye'or, whose real name is Gisèll Littman, an Egyptian-born British citizen and key figure in the UK-based Counter-Jihad Movement, who is now living in Switzerland.
2 See The Council of Europe Resolution 1743 (2010), http://www.assembly.coe.int/nw/xml/XRef/Xref-XML2HTML-en.asp?fileid=17880&lang=en

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