

Module 4: Anti-Muslim racism

CLIO

Challenging Hostile Views and Fostering Civic Competences

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THE CLIO PROJECT

Clio is a project for the prevention and coping with right-wing extremism at vocational schools. Teachers and headmasters should be enabled to recognize and understand the corresponding positions among their students and to stand up for democratic values without fear. For this purpose, interdisciplinary experts from Austria, Poland, Croatia and Germany are developing various materials for vocational school teachers in close cooperation with the target group, such as an app, a blended learning training and a podcast. The main focus of this project is to build synergetic networks with other stakeholders in the individual countries in order to strengthen the schools and provide them with knowledge and professionally created material.



1. OVERVIEW

In this module you will learn...

- ... basic definitions of anti-Muslim racism.*
- ... the historic context of anti-Muslim racism.*
- ... how you can recognise anti-Muslim racism.*
- ... why anti-Muslim racism is dangerous for democracies.*

At the end of the text, you will find exercises you can use while teaching about anti-Muslim racism. The Module also provides useful resources for further information or help in concrete situations, as well as “further reading”, if you would like to learn more.

Self-Assessment questions

Answer the following questions to yourself:

- Do you have a certain perception of people belonging to the Muslim faith?
- Do you know any people belonging to the Muslim faith?
- Estimate the percentage of people belonging to the Muslim faith in your country. Then look up the number online. Was your estimation too high, too low? What might have had an influence on your estimation?
- Do you know any stereotypes of people belonging to the Muslim faith? If yes, where did you come across these stereotypes?

2. WHAT DOES ANTI-MUSLIM RACISM MEAN? DEFINITIONS

Today, many different terms are used to describe hostility towards Muslims or their experiences of discrimination. In the following, a selection of the most important terms and concepts will be presented and discussed.

Islamophobia is nowadays probably the most established term to describe hostility towards Muslims. The suffix “phobia” derives from ancient Greek and means fear. The term Islamophobia is often criticised because it suggests that discrimination and hostility towards Muslims are influenced by the feeling of fear. Similarly to the terms xenophobia und homophobia (see Module 1, Module 3, and Module 5), Islamophobic people are placed in the victim’s role and the effects of discriminatory behaviour and attitudes on the actual victims are concealed. Furthermore, the concept of Islamophobia concentrates on individuals as bearers of prejudices

and therefore fails to include the structural dimension of hostility against Muslims¹, which is deeply rooted in the societies we live in.

For this reason, scholars argue that the term can be misleading and must therefore be clearly defined. The Runnymede Trust and the authors of the European Islamophobia Report, for example, define Islamophobia in a renewed more nuanced version as “any distinction, exclusion or restriction towards, or preference against, Muslims (or those perceived to be Muslims) that has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life.”²

The authors also call for the use of the term **anti-Muslim Racism** as it includes the political, institutional and structural dimension of the phenomenon.³ Although it must be noted that the religious affiliation to Islam is not understood as 'race', scholars argue that the phenomenon of hostility towards Muslims follows the same logic as racist discrimination. In **Module 2** entitled “What is Racism all about?”, you learned about the concept of cultural racism, which means that instead of biological differences, cultural differences between people are emphasised and that some cultures are believed to be superior to other cultures. Even if cultural racism does not make direct use of the concept “race”, the discrimination that results from it is nevertheless racist because it includes the same mechanism as racist discrimination. Therefore, this phenomenon is also called “racism without races”.

In the case of Muslim people, this means that they are constructed as “the other” and “different from us”. At the same time, Muslim people are constructed as a homogenous group by supposedly “being all the same” and are attributed intrinsic negative features, like sexist, homophobic, violent or unwilling to integrate into the society, which they are unable to escape because of their “culture” and religious affiliation. Discrimination against Muslims can therefore be characterised as anti-Muslim racism because Muslim people are essentialised on the basis of certain ideas of culture, religion and descent. They are attributed genuine “Islamic” features that “naturally” distinguish them from “us”. Therefore, they have no individual agency, as their “biological” or “cultural” identity determines who they are and how they act or behave. The concept of anti-Muslim racism also implies that this phenomenon can only be researched and understood in the context of other forms of racism and that the phenomenon

¹ Cf. Shooman, Yasemin (2016): Antimuslimischer Rassismus – Ursachen und Erscheinungsformen, in: Informations- und Dokumentationszentrum für Antirassismussarbeit e. V. (IDA) (Hg.), p. 4. (https://www.vielfalt-media-thek.de/data/expertise_antimuslimischer_rassismus_ida.pdf). Accessed: 16 December 2020.

² Elahi, Farah/Khan, Omar (2017): What is Islamophobia. In: Runnymede Trust: Islamophobia: Still a challenge for us all. London: Runnymede, p. 7. (<https://www.runnymedetrust.org/uploads/Islamophobia%20Report%202018%20FINAL.pdf>). Accessed: 07 October 2020.

³ Cf. Ozan Z. Keskinlik (2019): Was ist antimuslimischer Rassismus? Islamophobie, Islamfeindlichkeit, Antimuslimischer Rassismus – viele Begriffe für ein Phänomen? (<https://www.bpb.de/politik/extremismus/radikalisierungspraevention/302514/was-ist-antimuslimischer-rassismus>). Accessed: 21 November 2020.

goes beyond discrimination on the grounds of religion. Compared to the term Islamophobia with its more individualistic perspective, the concept of anti-Muslim racism allows for the analysis of the phenomenon in a broader scope.⁴

Brainstorming exercise: The danger of a “single story”

“My roommate had a single story of Africa. A single story of catastrophe. In this single story there was no possibility of Africans being similar to her, in any way. No possibility of feelings more complex than pity. No possibility of a connection as human equals. [...] This single story about Africa ultimately comes, I think, from Western literature. [...] Show a people as one thing, as only one thing, over and over again, and that is what they become. It is impossible to talk about the single story, without talking about power. [...] Power is the ability not just to tell the story of another person, but to make it the definitive story of that person. [...] When we reject the single story, when we realize that there is never a single story about any place, we regain a kind of paradise.”⁵

This quote is an excerpt from Chimamanda Adichie’s Ted Talk “The danger of a single story” (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D9Ihs241zeg>).

Do you think, the concept of a “single story” applies for Muslim people living in your country? What would that single story look like?

Another term that is often used in this context is **criticism of Islam**. This term however is problematic because by placing the responsibility for actions committed by individual Muslims on all Muslim people and the religion of Islam as a whole, rhetoric and strategies of anti-Muslim racism are being used. The following example might clarify the phenomenon of so-called criticism of Islam: When the right-wing extremist terrorist Anders Breivik killed 77 people in Norway in the belief of the superiority of Christianity⁶, “criticism of Christianity” and the question whether Christian religion is genuinely violent were not debates that were publicly held. Whereas voices criticising Islamic religion as a whole are heard on a regular basis when Islamist extremists commit terrorist attacks. The term criticism of Christianity does not even exist, which indicates that the term criticism of Islam serves as a rhetoric strategy to avoid allegations of racism. Of course, it is legitimate to criticise Islamic religion within a general critique

⁴ Cf. Keskinkılıç (2019).

⁵ Adichie, Chimamanda (2009): Die Gefahr einer einzigen Geschichte. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D9Ihs241zeg>). Accessed: 24 September 2020. (Transcript: <https://www.hohschools.org/cms/lib/NY01913703/Centricity/Domain/817/English12 Summer Reading - 2018.pdf>. Accessed: 4 September 2020).

⁶ Cf. Haimerl, Kathrin (2011): Norwegen: Das Manifest des Anders Behring Breivik: Abgründe des Abendlandes. In: Die Zeit (25 July 2011) (<https://www.sueddeutsche.de/politik/norwegen-das-manifest-des-anders-behring-breivik-abgruende-des-abendlandes-1.1124360>). Accessed: 22 January 2021.

of religions as belief systems. However, when the Islam religion is criticised, anti-Muslim racism strategies are used under the guise of an alleged general criticism of religion.⁷

In summary, many different terms are used to describe hostility towards Muslim people or people perceived to be Muslim and their experiences of discrimination. Each of the terms transports a different idea why Muslim people face discrimination. In this module, the term anti-Muslim racism is used because it establishes a connection to the concept of racism and therefore makes it possible to analyse the phenomenon of hostility towards Muslim people in terms of political, structural, and institutional aspects⁸.

Exercise: definition exercise

Write “Islamophobia” and “anti-Muslim racism” on a sheet of paper and note all the aspects you memorised from the text above. Which concept do you prefer and why?

3. HISTORIC CONTEXT OF ANTI-MUSLIM RACISM

Anti-Muslim racism did not just emerge as a result of the discrimination of Muslim migrant workers or refugees in the 20th and 21st century in Western Europe. Its historic roots can be traced as far back as the late Middle Ages and the early modern period of the late 15th and early 16th century on the Iberian Peninsula. As consequence of the so-called *Reconquista*, the battle of Christian armies in Spain and Portugal to claim territory populated by Muslims since the 8th century, the concepts of religion, culture and descent by blood were mixed and Muslim people along with Jewish people (see Module 2) were constructed as alien minorities. Amidst the expansion of the Christian kingdoms throughout Hispania and the push-back of the Muslim sphere of influence, Muslim people were forced to choose between converting to Christianity or migration. But even after this de-facto forced conversion, Muslim people and their descendants (“Moriscos”) were stigmatised and discriminated and regarded as suspicious converts amid a Christian realm and accused of still secretly practising Islam. “Moriscos” were forced to dress like Christians and the Arab language as well as Friday prayers were forbidden. The concept of “limpieza de sangre” (purity of blood) (see Module 3) was legally introduced to differentiate between people with “pure blood” (Christian people) and people with impure blood (Muslim and Jewish people). Scholars agree that the concept of the purity of blood ultimately speaks for the classification of the phenomenon as racism because it goes beyond religious discrimination. Formerly Muslim people who converted to Christianity were still seen

⁷ Cf. Shooman (2016), p. 9.

⁸ Cf. Keskinikiliç (2019).

as Muslims even if they identified as Christians themselves. This resulted in the mass expulsion of “Moriscos” from the Iberian Peninsula to Northern Africa in 1609.⁹

Furthermore, other scholars conclude that anti-Muslim racism played an important role in the formation of a Christian European identity. The German historian and expert on anti-Muslim racism Yasemin Shooman, for example, states that Muslims were literally constructed as the opposite of Christians in the Middle Ages during the Crusades – as Antichrists. Especially the prophet Mohammed was a target of accusations of being a liar, imposter, false prophet and Antichrist. He was also accused of being an epileptic and therefore his divine revelations were actually hallucinations. The narrative of Mohammed being an epileptic is also linked with the Christian allegation that Islam was not an “authentic” religion. Shooman summarises that with colonialism the Christian perception of Muslims changed in the way that they were not longer seen as powerful military opponents and enemies but as “exotic” and “inferior” subjects of the Orient who had to be civilised by the Christian West.¹⁰ The construction of an anti-Christian stereotype enemy helped to build a European (Christian) identity through the differentiation from the stereotypical image of the “uncivilised backward Orient” and therefore from Islam and Muslim people.

This short historical excursus shows, on the one hand, that in the late Middle Ages Muslim people “Moriscos” (and Jewish people) were constructed as a race and not only as a religious group, which is the basis for modern anti-Muslim racism. On the other hand, it became clear that Muslim people and Islam were constructed as “inferior” and “unauthentic” compared to Christians and Christianity.

4. FORMS OF ANTI-MUSLIM RACISM: WHAT DOES ANTI-MUSLIM RACISM LOOK LIKE IN OUR DAILY LIVES? HOW CAN YOU RECOGNISE IT?

Anti-Muslim resentments are a widespread phenomenon throughout Europe. In Germany for example, 52% of participants of a survey conducted in 2019 agreed that Islam is threatening, whereas only 36% perceived Islam as enriching.¹¹ In Croatia, findings from 2017 suggest that Muslims from the Middle East and Far East are perceived as “unwilling to integrate” because

⁹ Cf. Keskinkılıç (2019).

¹⁰ Cf. Shooman, Yasemin (2014): “... weil ihre Kultur so ist”. Narrative des antimuslimischen Rassismus. Bielefeld: transcript-Verlag, pp. 41-44.

¹¹ Cf. Bertelsmann Stiftung (2019): Religionsmonitor – verstehen was verbindet. Weltanschauliche Vielfalt und Demokratie. Wie sich religiöse Pluralität auf die politische Kultur auswirkt, p. 13. (https://www.bertelsmann-stiftung.de/fileadmin/files/BSt/Publikationen/GrauePublikationen/Religionsmonitor_Vielfalt_und_Demokratie_7_2019.pdf). Accessed: 22 January 2021.

of social and cultural differences that cannot be changed, while the autochthonous Muslim population in Croatia is perceived as “culturally close”.¹²

In Poland, anti-Muslim racism is a widespread phenomenon, although the percentage of Muslim people compared to the total population is relatively low (30,000 out of 38,5 million people). On the 1st of January 2017, an incident occurred in Ełk, a town with 60,000 inhabitants, which received a lot of international media coverage. After the murder of young Pole by a Tunisian, anti-Muslim riots emerged.¹³ In 2014 and 2016, a comparative study on hate speech against minority groups was carried out by the Center for Research on Prejudice at the University of Warsaw and the Stefan Batory Foundation¹⁴. The study shows the prevalence of negative attitudes of Poles towards Muslims and their religion. The level of anti-Islamic prejudices and support for secular criticism of Islam differed primarily depending on the age group and gender of the respondents. Adults showed a significantly higher level of prejudice than adolescents. Women were slightly less prejudiced against Muslims and presented more positive attitudes. When asked about accepting a Muslim as a co-worker, neighbour and new family member (through marriage), only about 30% of respondents indicated that they would accept a Muslim as a co-worker. The level of acceptance decreased as the closeness of the relationship increased. Moreover, adults and adolescents living in larger towns and adults with higher education levels were more likely to accept a representative of the Muslim minority in everyday relations. In both age groups, more right-wing views were associated with lower acceptance.

For right-wing populist and right-wing extremist parties and groups across Europe (see Module 1), anti-Muslim resentments have high potential to gain voter's support and to get access to the so-called middle of the society. Parties like AfD in Germany, FPÖ in Austria and the Polish parties Konfederacja, NOP Narodowe Odrodzenie Polski (National Rebirth of Poland), Korwin and PiS (the ruling party in Poland) stir up and reinforce already existing anti-Muslim resentments in society.

¹² Cf. Baričević, Vedrana/Koska Viktor (2017): Stavovi i percepcije domaće javnosti o nacionalnim manjinama, izbjeglicama i migrantima. (https://www.cms.hr/system/publication/pdf/94/Stavovi_i_percepcije_doma_e_javnosti_o_nacionalnim_manjinama_izbjeglicama_i_migrantima.pdf). Accessed: 26 February 2021.

¹³ Cf. Łyszczarz, Michał/ Marcinkiewicz, Stefan M. (2018): Radykalizacja antymuzułmańskiego i antyimigranckiego dyskursu w mediach społecznościowych w latach 2016 i 2017 na przykładzie wydarzeń w Ełku. In: Uniwersyteckie Czasopismo Socjologiczne, Vol. 22, No. 1, pp. 59-70. (<http://cejsh.icm.edu.pl/cejsh/element/bwmeta1.element.ojs-issn-2299-2367-year-2018-volume-22-issue-1-article-3273>). Accessed: 15 January 2021.

¹⁴ Cf. Winiewski, Mikołaj/Hansen, Karolina/Bilewicz, Michał/Soral, Wiktor/Świderska, Aleksandra/Bulska, Dominika (2017): Mowa nienawiści, mowa pogardy. Raport z badania przemocy werbalnej wobec grup mniejszościowych, Fundacja im. Stefana Batorego i Centrum Badań nad Uprzedzeniami Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, Warszawa.

Exercise: Analysis of election posters

Analyse the election posters of European right-wing populist and right-wing extremist parties. How are Muslims depicted in the posters? Which features are attributed to them? By contrast, how is the respective majority of society indirectly depicted?

AfD in Germany



„Islam? does not fit in with our cuisine.“

<https://www.horizont.net/gallery/media/3255/52240-detailb.ioeg>. 18.12.2020.



„Islam-free schools!“

<https://uebermedien.de/wp-content/uploads/afd-wahlplakat-islamfreie-schulen.jpg>, 18.12.2020..



„I vote for the AfD because I know what Islam can mean if we are not careful. My German friends, let's protect the great city of Berlin, our home!“

<https://bilder.bild.de/fotos/wahlplakat-afd-200071200-47219166/Bild/5.bild.jpg>, 18.12.2020.



„Burqa? I'm more into burgundy!“

<https://img.welt.de/img/politik/deutschland/mobile165317098/3112500827-ci102l-w1024/AfD-Plakatmotive-Wahlkampf-Bund.jpg> 18.12.2020.



[A1]

„So that Europe does not become ‚Eurabia““

https://www.tagesspiegel.de/images/56418261_1149985701850227_74246430103v50022656_o/24215048/3-format43.jpg, 18.12.2020.



[A2]

„Islam does not belong to Germany. The freedom of women is not negotiable!“

https://www.tagesspiegel.de/images/56418261_1149985701850227_74246430103v50022656_o/24215048/3-format43.jpg, 18.12.2020.

FPÖ in Austria



[A3]



[A4]



[A5]



[A6]

Poland



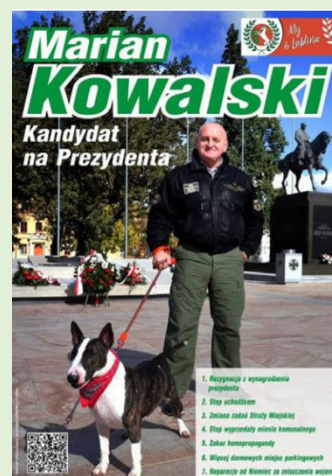
[A7]

[A8]

[A9]



[A10]



The previous exercise clearly demonstrated how right-wing populist and extremist parties spread anti-Muslim racism and use it to mobilise support. It is important to state however that anti-Muslim racism is definitely not a mere “right-wing” phenomenon. Also representatives of

people's parties make anti-Muslim racist remarks, even if these remarks can be more subtle, for example, by using certain "key" words like "abuse of the welfare system" or "groups that don't want to integrate" when talking about the Muslim population.¹⁵ Anti-Muslim racism is deeply rooted in the "Western" society and is closely linked with the European history as shown above.

With anti-Muslim racism, Muslim people are constructed as fundamentally different to "us". It is important to understand that not only people who are actively practising Islam are affected by anti-Muslim racism but also people who are perceived as Muslims.¹⁶ For example, men with a full beard and darker skin. This means that Muslim identity is constructed as a feature that can be conceived from the mere (physical) appearance of a person – completely irrespective of the fact whether this person identifies as a Muslim or not. Specific features thereby become stigmata. Like the before-mentioned full beard, religious clothing like the hijab or a certain "strange-sounding" name can lead to a person being perceived as Muslim. The already mentioned German historian and expert on anti-Muslim racism Yasemin Shoorman therefore concludes that in anti-Muslim racism, cultural, religious and physical factors are merged together. Certain "ethnic" groups are automatically perceived as Muslims, for example migrants from the Near and Middle East. According to Shoorman, the categories ethnicity, culture and religion cannot be thought of independently from each other (intersectionality, see Module 5). The question whether Muslims are discriminated as a religious group or as an "ethnic group" is therefore not expedient. This also explains Shoorman's observation that terms like "Turk", "Arab", "Migrant" and "Muslim" are used as synonyms, for example in media and politics. Religious affiliation is therefore ethicised and vice versa ethnic background is religiously charged. The consequence is that being a Muslim and being German/Austrian/Polish/Croatian is increasingly seen as an antagonism.¹⁷

To better recognise forms of anti-Muslim racism, the most popular narratives and prejudices about Muslim people will be presented in the following.

Exercise: What do you have in mind?

Draw a picture of a "typical Christian believer", then draw a picture of a "typical Muslim believer". Think of how you came up with these attributes and images in your head.

The conspiracy theory of the Great Replacement and the fear of "Islamisation"

¹⁵ Cf. Leonhard, Ralf (2020): Islamophobie-Vorwürfe gegen Österreich: Schuld ist der Ali. In: die taz (03 June 2020). (<https://taz.de/Islamophobie-Vorwurfe-gegen-Oesterreich/!5690319/>). Accessed: 19 February 2021.

¹⁶ Cf. Keskinkılıç (2019).

¹⁷ Cf. Shoorman (2016), p. 8.

The Great Replacement is a far-right or right-wing extremist conspiracy theory (see Module 7) which states that the European “white and Christian” population, which is considered to be “native”, is being progressively replaced by Muslim populations from Africa and the Middle East through mass migration, demographic growth and low birth rates of “Europeans”.¹⁸ This conspiracy theory combines elements of anti-feminism (see Module 5), anti-Semitism (see Module 2) and anti-Muslim racism. Muslims are depicted as hostile invaders and the discourse on migration is dominated by terms like “flood” and “wave” that are associated with natural disasters. Responsible for this replacement are either “Jewish elites”, “the Muslims” themselves, “left” politicians or feminists that encourage women to have less children or all of the mentioned. This conspiracy theory is said to have been developed by French writer Renaud Camus. In 2011 he published a book called “Le grand remplacement” (“The Great Replacement”) which problematises the presence of Muslims in France as a potential threat and danger to the French culture.¹⁹ Far-right and right-wing extremists like the Identitarians (see Module 1) refer to this conspiracy theory.²⁰ Also, right-wing extremist shooters legitimise their killings with the alleged danger of Muslim replacement like the El Paso shooter and the Christchurch shooter in 2019.^{21 22} Scholars however also point out that this conspiracy theory is the core of a modern racist ideology and has its roots in the National Socialist “*Rassenlehre*” (“racial doctrines”).²³

Acts of terrorism like these impressively demonstrate the great danger of this conspiracy narrative for the societies we live in. Scholars have generally dismissed the claims of a “Great replacement” because it is rooted in an exaggerated interpretation of immigration statistics

¹⁸ Cf. Bracke, Sarah/Hernández Aguilar, Luis Manuel (2020): “They love death as we love life”: The “Muslim Question” and the biopolitics of replacement. In: British Journal of Sociology, Vol. 71, No. 4, pp. 680-701. (<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7540673/>). Accessed: 02 January 2021.

¹⁹ Cf. Bertolaso, Marco (2019): Nachgefragt. Der Attentäter und die Verschwörungstheorie vom „Großen Austausch“. In: deutschlandfunk (18 March 2019). (https://www.deutschlandfunk.de/nachgefragt-der-attentaeter-und-die-verschwörungstheorie.2852.de.html?dram:article_id=443921). Accessed: 19 February 2021.

²⁰ Cf. Davey, Jacob/Ebner, Julia (2019): “The Great Replacement”: The violent consequences of mainstreamed extremism. (<https://www.isdglobal.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/The-Great-Replacement-The-Violent-Consequences-of-Mainstreamed-Extremism-by-ISD.pdf>), p. 4. Accessed: 09 January 2021.

²¹ Cf. Charlton, Lauretta (2019): What is the Great Replacement? In: The New York Times (06 August 2019). (<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/08/06/us/politics/grand-replacement-explainer.html>). Accessed: 02 January 2021.

²² Cf. Schwartzburg, Rosa (2019): The ‘white replacement theory’ motivates alt-right killers the world over. In: The Guardian (05 August 2019). (<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/aug/05/great-replacement-theory-alt-right-killers-el-paso>). Accessed: 02 January 2021.

²³ Cf. Quent, Matthias (2019): Globale Rechte formiert sich. Die Eiskälte der völkischen Ideologie. In: Der Tagesspiegel (24 March 2019). (<https://www.tagesspiegel.de/politik/globale-rechte-formiert-sich-die-eiskaelte-der-voelkischen-ideologie/24139158.html>). Accessed: 22 January 2021.

and unscientific, racist views.²⁴ Another term that is used to spread the narrative of a Muslim threat to European society is “Islamisation”.²⁵

As mentioned above, anti-Muslim racism is not only a phenomenon of the extreme right. Accordingly, elements of the conspiracy theory of the Great Replacement and the fear of “Islamisation” are widespread in the so-called middle of the society. An example for this is the seemingly harmless reporting on how the most frequent given name to new-borns in certain Western European cities or neighbourhoods is no longer Jan or Johann but Mohammed. There is a broad societal interest in the procreation of Muslim populations. Muslims are also depicted as having recently arrived in Europe, ignoring and “erasing both long-standing colonial entanglements and century old and deep-rooted Islamic presences in various parts of Europe”²⁶.

The conspiracy theory of “the Great Replacement” and the narrative of the threatening “Islamisation of Europe” legitimises claims to deport (Muslim) refugees and to further restrict the policies on migration and asylum. Anti-Muslim racism is therefore used under the pretext of an alleged self-defence of “our society” and “our values”²⁷ and can be seen as part of strategies of “securitisation” of migration and asylum policies in recent years.

Alleged backwardness and unwillingness to integrate

A repeatedly used narrative is that Muslim people are “unwilling to integrate” because of “their culture”. In this narrative, Muslim people are depicted as sexist, violent, anti-Semitic, homophobic, patriarchal and hostile to democracy. However, several questions are not being considered in this narrative, e.g., into “what” someone has to integrate? This would need a positive identity of European societies and a definition of what does it mean to be Austrian/German/Croatian/Polish etc. Furthermore, there is no set of measurement of this demanded integration. While Muslim people are suspected of rejecting democracy and the rule of law, there is a general presumption of innocence towards members of “our group”. When for example right-wing populist/extremist groups claim that “Islam” somehow undermines the rights of women, LGBTIQ+ persons (see Module 5) or Jewish people, it is important to understand that these groups use the discourse of this alleged backwardness of Muslim people to incite hate against Muslims and not because they are fighting for equal rights for women and social minorities. Indeed, on the second glance it often becomes apparent that anti-Muslim racist groups, parties and campaigners disseminate the same ideologies of inequality that they accuse Muslim people of. Invoking women’s rights and the rights of social minorities

²⁴ Cf. Balmer, Rudolf (2019): Rechter „Philosoph“ Renaud Camus. Der Hetzer von der Burg. In: die taz (09 August 2019). (<https://taz.de/Rechter-Philosoph-Renaud-Camus/!5616718/>). Accessed: 19 February 2021.

²⁵ Cf. Davey/Ebner (2019), p. 8.

²⁶ Bracke/Hernández Aguilar (2020).

²⁷ Cf. Keskinilic (2019).

while at the same time trampling all over these same rights is more than cynical and shows that human rights and feminist discourses are being instrumentalised to legitimise anti-Muslim racism.^{28 29}

In Poland, right-wing journalists are alarming that Muslims are “winning the demographic war” in Europe because Muslim women give birth to more children. Tomasz Terlikowski wrote on the Fronda portal, “If we do not take matters into our own hands, Muslims will defeat us with their women's wombs”. The attacks on women in Cologne on December 31st 2015 were presented by the right-wing press as acts of sexual war. It is worth paying attention to the fact that in this context women were treated as a good over which there is a war.³⁰

Of course, it cannot be denied that the fundamentalist interpretation of the Koran contradicts for example with women’s rights and the rights of LGBTIQ+ persons but so does the fundamentalist interpretation of the Bible or of any other religion. Issues like the repressive potential of religions in general, religious fundamentalism more particularly and toxic masculinity (see Module 5) are problems that have to be dealt with, but they cannot be solely projected on Muslim people or people that are perceived to be Muslims. Instead of the racist critique of “Islam” and “the Muslims” as a whole, criticism should be directed to specific campaigners or certain strands of Islam like Wahhabism that overlaps to some extent to the terrorist organisation of the so-called “Islamic State” (ISIS).³¹

The stereotype of the “Muslim terrorist”

Many Muslims experienced an increase of discrimination more or less overnight after the 9/11 terror attacks in the USA. This tragic event led to a sudden increase of the topics “Islam” and “Muslims” in media and political discourses in the US but also in Europe. After 9/11 the association of Muslim people with Islamist terror became more virulent.

This becomes apparent with a thought experiment: Who do you picture when you hear the word “terrorist”? According to the US-American constitutional law professor Caroline Mala Corbin, it is very likely that you do not picture a white person, but a (Muslim) person with darker skin.³² The impact of the stereotype of the “Muslim terrorist” becomes especially clear

²⁸ Cf. Shooman (2016), pp. 9/10.

²⁹ Cf. Drüeke, Ricarda/Klaus, Elisabeth (2019): Die Instrumentalisierung von Frauen*rechten in rechten Diskursen am Beispiel der Kampagne #120db. In: GENDER – Zeitschrift für Geschlecht, Kultur und Gesellschaft, No. 3, pp. 84-99, p. 95. (Available at: <https://www.budrich-journals.de/index.php/gender/article/view/34216>). Accessed: 19 February 2021.

³⁰ Cf. Majmurek, Jakub (2017): Antyislamski pakiet prawicy: inwazja, wylęgarnia, przemoc seksualna. Raport z obserwacji mediów. In: OKO.press (04 February 2017). (<https://oko.press/antyislamski-pakiet-prawicy-inwazja-wylęgarnia-przemoc-seksualna-raport-obserwacji-mediow/>). Accessed: 16 January 2021.

³¹ Cf. Shooman (2016), p. 11.

³² Cf. Corbin, Caroline Mala (2017): Terrorists Are Always Muslim but Never White: At the Intersection of Critical Race Theory and Propaganda of Critical Race Theory and Propaganda. In: Fordham Law Review, Vol. 86, No.

when white shooters are rarely labelled as terrorists but as “mentally ill lone-actors”.³³ This narrative is problematic for several reasons. Firstly, when mental illness is regularly assumed as explanation for shootings, people with mental illnesses are being stigmatised and potentially kept from seeking professional help.³⁴ Secondly, the narrative of the mentally-ill lone-actor individualises the act and also exculpates the perpetrator. Thereby other underlying motives might be concealed, like a racist and anti-Semitic worldview. On the other hand, the idea that “all terrorists are Muslim”, which fatally sometimes even turns into the idea that “all Muslims are terrorists”, is the result of the racist narrative of “Orientalism”, which attributes Muslims features like “exotic”, “uncivilized”, “dangerous”, “violent” or just “the others”. As an analysis of over 900 Hollywood films shows that Arab or Muslim men are usually depicted as terrorists or other villains. Another study revealed that Muslim attacks in the US received 449% more media coverage than other terrorist attacks. Furthermore, another analysis disclosed that 75% of news that focused on Muslims was about ISIS or other militant groups.³⁵ The depiction of Muslims as terrorists in popular culture and media reporting leads to a stereotyping of Muslims which in turn influences the future depiction of Muslims in popular culture and media reporting and also the perception of Muslim people in everyday life.

Even if the association of Muslim people with Islamist terrorism might have become more virulent after 9/11, it is crucial to understand that anti-Muslim racist stereotypes do not emerge as a reaction to Islamist terror attacks. Already existing anti-Muslim resentments are rather reinforced. Additionally, anti-Muslim racism is deliberately used as “a tool of public manipulation”³⁶ to gain voter’s support as already stated above.

Narrative of the “oppressed Muslim women” because of the headscarf

According to another anti-Muslim racist narrative, all women that wear the *hijab* – a traditional headscarf – must be somewhat oppressed by their culture, family and/or religion. This narrative ignores the fact that there are a lot of different reasons why Muslima choose to wear a headscarf. Some simply wear it because it is a tradition, some as a feminist statement, others wear it to express their closeness to god. The narrative ignores the many strands and inter-

2, pp. 455-485, p. 456. (<https://ir.lawnet.fordham.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=5437&context=flr>). Accessed: 09 January 2021.

³³ Cf. Vorsamer, Barbara (2020): Das quälende Warum. In: Süddeutsche Zeitung (03 December 2020). (<https://www.sueddeutsche.de/panorama/trier-gewaltverbrechen-psychisch-krank-kommentar-1.5136217>). Accessed: 09 January 2021.

³⁴ Cf. Vorsamer (2020).

³⁵ Cf. Corbin (2017), pp. 458-460.

³⁶ Cf. Mogahed, Dalia (2016): Ted Talk Transcript. What it’s like to be a Muslim in America. (https://www.ted.com/talks/dalia_mogahed_what_it_s_like_to_be_muslim_in_america/transcript). Accessed: 09 January 2021.

pretations of Islam and denies the possibility that Muslima are making independent and individual choices. Wearing a *hijab* is a personal decision and cannot be equated with an alleged general oppression of women in Islam. Because of this narrative, many Muslima who wear the *hijab* are subject to discrimination, hostility and physical assaults. Many report being insulted, being spat at in the street or people trying to tear down their headscarves.³⁷

Exercise: discussion of quote

The German social scientist Ozan Z. Keskinliç concludes an article about anti-Muslim racism with the following statement:

“Ultimately, it is not the otherness of 'Muslims' that explains their unequal treatment, but the logic that constructs them as strangers.”³⁸

Shortly discuss the statement (10 sentences) by Ozan Z. Keskinliç considering the facts you just learned about the forms of anti-Muslim racism. Include in your statement how the unequal treatment of Muslims looks like in everyday life and explain how the mentioned “logic” comes about.

Exercise: Ted Talk – What it's like to be a Muslim in America (Dalia Mogahed)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wzkFoetp-M>

Watch the Ted Talk with Dalia Mogahed and answer the following questions:

- List the negative stereotypes about Muslim people that Dalia Mogahed mentions.
- How does Dalia Mogahed describe the personal experience and consequences of the 9/11 terror attacks and of Islamophobia/anti-Muslim racism in general?
- What information does Dalia Mogahed give about Islamist radicalisation and Islamist extremism?

³⁷ Halser, Marlene (2015): Muslima über das Kopftuch-Tragen: „Nur eine Verpackung, mehr nicht“. In: taz (25 April 2015). (<https://taz.de/Muslima-ueber-das-Kopftuch-Tragen/!5011223/>). Accessed: 22 January 2021 and Götzke, Manuel (2018): Islamfeindlichkeit in Deutschland. Bedroht, beleidigt und bespuckt. In: Deutschlandfunk (27 June 2018). (https://www.deutschlandfunk.de/islamfeindlichkeit-in-deutschland-bedroht-beleidigt-und-1773.de.html?dram:article_id=421366). Accessed: 22 January 2021.

³⁸ Original quote:

„Schlussendlich erklärt nicht die Andersheit 'der Muslime' ihre Ungleichbehandlung, sondern jene Logik, die sie zu Fremden macht.“

(<https://www.bpb.de/politik/extremismus/radikalisierungspraevention/302514/was-ist-antimuslimischer-rassismus>)

- How does Dalia Mogahed refute the argument that Islam is a violent religion? What is your opinion on her argumentation?
- Which impact has Islamophobia/anti-Muslim racism on non-Muslim Americans and the state of democracy according to Dalia Mogahed?

5. WHY IS RACISM DANGEROUS FOR DEMOCRACIES?

It can be concluded that anti-Muslim racism entails more than religious intolerance towards Islam and Muslim people.³⁹ The roots of anti-Muslim racism can be traced far into the history of Europe and its mechanisms constitute an essential element in right-wing extremist/populist but also moderate centrist political agendas⁴⁰. According to Iman Attia, anti-Muslim racism follows the same three-dimensional logic that racism does. Firstly, “they” are “this way” because of their culture/religion/biology (essentialisation). Secondly, “they” are all the same (homogenisation) and thirdly, “they” are different from us (dichotomisation).⁴¹ It leaves Muslims without agency and individual, conscious choices of action.

According to Yasemin Shoorman, the present societal conflicts around Muslim people and Islam can also be partly explained by a progressing social participation of Muslims which results in “conflicts of dominance”⁴². This is why, for example, the construction of representative Muslim places of worship unleashes defensive reactions because mosques that are visible in the cityscape identify Muslim people as visible (equal) members of the society. Strategies of anti-Muslim racism, therefore, aim to assign Muslim people to an inferior position in society and thus negate their belonging to a European society. For this reason, anti-Muslim racism also has an integrating function in evoking a common European occidental identity and also has an immense mobilisation potential as the electoral success of right-wing populist parties all over Europe currently convincingly demonstrates.⁴³

Because anti-Muslim racism contradicts one of the very principles the democracies we live in are built on – namely the equality of all citizens – and because there is evidence that anti-

³⁹ Cf. Shoorman (2016), p. 12.

⁴⁰ Cf. Shoorman (2014), pp. 35-37.

⁴¹ Cf. Ley, Julia (2019): Woher kommt der Hass auf Muslime? Feindliches Denken gegenüber dem Islam prägt unsere Gesellschaft. Warum das so ist und welche gravierenden Folgen das hat, weiß die Wissenschaftlerin Iman Attia. (<https://www.fluter.de/woher-kommt-der-hass-auf-muslime-interview-iman-attia>). Accessed: 15 January 2021.

⁴² Shoorman (2016), p. 13.

⁴³ Shoorman (2016), p. 13.

Muslim racism correlates with resentment towards other societal minorities, anti-Muslim racism, like other ideologies of inequality, poses a great danger to the democratic culture of European societies.⁴⁴

Unfortunately, the phenomenon of anti-Muslim racism and the danger it poses are still not appropriately acknowledged in the public and political discourse. Scholars criticise that anti-Muslim racism is only recognised as a problem when it comes to acts of violence⁴⁵ like the right-wing extremist terrorist Christchurch mosque shooting in New Zealand on 15th March 2019, where 51 people were killed, and 40 more have been injured or the Hanau shootings on 19th February 2020, where a right-wing extremist killed 10 people and injured five more. These blatant manifestations of anti-Muslim racism are however only the tip of the iceberg. Anti-Muslim racism occurs every day – even if non-Muslims might not be aware of it because it does not directly affect them. For example, in Austria, affected people also report that they have been increasingly experiencing incidents of anti-Muslim racism after the Islamist attack in Vienna on 2nd November 2020.⁴⁶ In Poland there have been anti-Muslim violence acts in Elk⁴⁷ and a small town Ozorków⁴⁸ in January 2017. The only reason for attacking the man in Ozorków was the assumption that he was a Muslim.

It can be concluded that in order to successfully counter anti-Muslim racism and the discrimination it entails, there first has to be a public and political awareness of the phenomenon and that is the responsibility of each and every one of us.

6. EXERCISES YOU CAN USE WHEN TEACHING ABOUT ANTI-MUSLIM RACISM

1.) Watch the rap song “Generation Sarrazin” by Kamyar & Dzeko in class (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CzHECZnNMoa>). Let your pupils answer the following questions: Which experiences describe Kamyar & Dzeko in their song? Describe who is meant by “we” and “them” and jointly consider who decides about who belongs to which group.

(https://bausteine-antimuslimischer-rassismus.de/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/Generation_Sarrazin_Anlage3_Fragenkatalog.pdf.) Accessed: 22 January 2021.

⁴⁴ Shooman (2016), p. 13.

⁴⁵ Cf. Ley 2019.

⁴⁶ Cf. Köhler, Diana (2020): Antimuslimische Übergriffe nehmen nach dem Anschlag in Wien zu. (<https://fm4.orf.at/stories/3009204/>). Accessed: 15 January 2021.

⁴⁷ Source: Dziennik Gazeta Prawna <https://wiadomosci.dziennik.pl/opinie/artykuly/539266,rosjanie-elk-incident-zabojstwo-konflikt-hybrydowy.html> (access 29 November 2021)

⁴⁸ Sources: Polskie Radio Łódź <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1xubTYRSxCo> - access 10 January 2022; Dziennik Łódzki <https://dzienniklodzki.pl/pobicie-pakistanczyka-w-ozorkowie-proces-w-sadzie-okregowym-w-lodzi/ar/12019266> - access 10 January 2022

2.) Analyse the memes on the website of No Hate Speech Movement Deutschland

<https://no-hate-speech.de/en/counter/anti-muslim-racism/>

Ask your students to consider which problems and stereotypes the different memes address.

3.) For more exercise material in German language, visit <https://bausteine-antimuslimischer-rassismus.de/paedagogische-leitlinien-fuer-rassismuskritische-arbeit-mit-jugendlichen/>

7. WHERE TO TURN TO? NGOs & NETWORKS THAT CAN HELP YOU LEARN MORE

Germany:

- Bildungsteam Berlin Brandenburg e.V. – Bildungsbausteine gegen antimuslimischen Rassismus (<https://bausteine-antimuslimischer-rassismus.de/>)
- CLAIM - Allianz gegen Islam- und Muslimfeindlichkeit (<https://www.claim-allianz.de/>)

Austria:

- Dokumentations- und Beratungsstelle Islamfeindlichkeit & antimuslimischer Rassismus Österreich (<https://dokustelle.at/>)
- ZARA – Zivilcourage und Anti-Rassismus-Arbeit (<https://www.zara.or.at/de>)
- Farid Hafez – Austrian political scientist and expert on anti-Muslim racism

Poland:

- Centrum Islamskie ul. Wiertnicza 103, Warszawa tel. 022 8856276 (centrum@muzulmanie.pl)
- Otwarta Rzeczpospolita - Stowarzyszenie Przeciw Antysemityzmowi i Ksenofobii (<http://www.otwarta.org/>)
- Polskie Stowarzyszenie Studentów Muzułmanów, ul. Koźmiana 2/51, tel. +48 22 399548
- Nigdy Więcej Association (<https://www.nigdywiecej.org/>)
- Instytut Bezpieczeństwa Społecznego (<https://www.fundacjaibs.pl/>)
- Ośrodek Monitorowania Zachowań Rasistowskich i Ksenofobicznych (<https://omzrik.pl/>)
- Centrum Wielokulturowe, Warszawa (<https://centrumwielokulturowe.waw.pl/>)
- Krajowe Biuro Międzynarodowej Organizacji ds. Migracji w Polsce (<https://poland.iom.int/>)
- Fundacja na Rzecz Różnorodności Społecznej (<https://frs.org.pl/>)
- Polskie Forum Migracyjne (<https://forummigracyjne.org/>)

Croatia:

- Islamska zajednica u Hrvatskoj (<http://www.islamska-zajednica.hr/>)

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The website is addressed to all those who want to learn more about the religion of Muslims -
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