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## From immigrants to fundamentalists: Changing portrayals of Muslim identities in Europe

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# **From immigrants to fundamentalists - changing portrayals of Muslim identities in Europe**

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## **From immigrants to fundamentalists – changing portrayals of Muslim identities in Europe**

**Daphne Owers**

**Abstract:** This article aims to establish how Muslim identities in Germany have been constructed by others and how they differ from realities. Muslim communities have often been viewed with suspicion by majority ethnic groups in European nation states, but even more so since the 9/11 terrorist attacks in 2001. Islamophobia has had negative consequences in European societies – people with MENA roots are often essentialised as a homogenous group of overtly religious Muslims. The simplistic nexus of failed integration, Islamic fundamentalism and home-grown extremism fails to question the discriminatory backdrop of integration policies in European nation states and does not explain why only a tiny minority of Muslims participate in Islamist groups. Hard multiculturalism has been used to essentialise Muslims and claim that they segregate themselves and are resistant to integrating into European societies. Those who advocate for stricter assimilation and anti-immigration policies exploit the supposed ‘failure of multiculturalism’. A progressive form of multiculturalism could reconcile diversity with universal rights and gender equality and give political space to ethnic minorities. Mainstream portrayals of Muslim identities shape and perpetuate public attitudes and policies. This article explores the impacts that Orientalism, Islamophobia and assimilationist policies have had on shaping these portrayals. A more nuanced understanding of the diversity of Muslim communities is key for establishing an accurate picture of contemporary Muslim life in Europe, for unravelling Islamophobic myths, and for suggesting policy which could both recognize and accommodate diversity.

**Key words:** Muslim, Islam, Europe, Germany, immigrant, fundamentalism, identity, multiculturalism, integration, assimilation, Islamophobia

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## **1. Introduction**

Muslim communities have often been viewed with suspicion by majority ethnic groups in European nation states, but even more so since the 2000s, in the wake of large scale terrorist attacks attributed to Muslim extremist groups, such as those in New York in 2001, Madrid in 2004 and London in 2005, and most recently, in Paris in 2015. The fear of Islam, or Islamophobia, has had negative consequences in European societies. Those from, or with family connections to, Middle Eastern and North African (MENA) countries can quickly become essentialised by the dominant discourse as a homogenous group of overtly religious Muslims, i.e. Islamic fundamentalists, prone to radicalization.

Islamic fundamentalism is equated with the threat of extremism and terrorism, and the fear of terrorism can manifest itself in xenophobic rhetoric and discrimination towards minorities. The simplistic nexus of failed integration, Islamic fundamentalism and home-grown extremism does not question the discriminatory backdrop of integration policies in European nation states, and does not explain why only a tiny minority of Muslims in Europe participate in Islamist groups. Furthermore, Muslims often have to prove they are ‘moderates’ and defend themselves against attacks on their identities and their communities in their role as pacifier in the age of Islamic terror. The negative effects of Islamophobia are not only detrimental to Europe’s Muslim communities. Changes to security and counterterrorism laws, whilst targeted at ethnic minorities through practices such as racial profiling, affect all residents’ democratic rights to justice, privacy, and freedom of speech and assembly. Moreover, fostering Islamophobic sentiments at home helps achieve political and popular support for illegal foreign policy interventions, such as airstrikes and wars in MENA countries.

Hard multiculturalism has been used as a theoretical instrument to essentialise Muslims into a homogenous group and claim that this group segregates itself from the rest of society and is resistant to integrating into European societies. Those who advocate for stricter assimilation and anti-immigration policies exploit this ‘failure of multiculturalism’. Some opponents of multiculturalism also argue that multiculturalism is founded on cultural relativistic arguments which risk essentialising communities through difference and giving voice only to conservative leaders in these groups, thus ignoring infringements on individuals’ rights and minority voices (such as feminists and lesbians, gays, bisexual and trans people (LGBT)) within minority communities. However, some scholars defend a progressive form of multiculturalism based on liberal pluralism and human rights which they claim can reconcile diversity (without focusing on

difference) with respect for universal rights and gender equality. However, the voices against progressive multiculturalism are more powerful than those for it, often coming from the mainstream media and leaders of European states themselves.

Mainstream portrayals of Muslim identities are a key factor in shaping public attitudes and policies towards Muslims both inside and outside Europe, which in turn, perpetuate themselves in further mainstream representations. This article explores the impacts that Orientalism, Islamophobia and assimilationist policies have had on shaping these portrayals and on the self-representations of Muslims in Europe, and to what degree Orientalist binaries and stereotypes have changed in a post 9/11 world. How these portrayals differ from actual realities will be examined in the nation-state context of Germany: Multiculturalism and the German *Leitkultur* (dominant culture), mainstream German media portrayals of Muslims and the way feminist and LGBT Muslims perform their identities will be discussed. A more nuanced understanding of the diversity of Muslim communities and the range of values, voices and practices they actually exhibit is a key prerequisite for establishing an accurate picture of contemporary Muslim life in Europe, for unravelling Islamophobic myths, and for suggesting policy for a Europe which succeeds in including all its residents while recognizing and accommodating diversity.

### **1.1 Definition of main terms**

This article uses several key terms that are defined as follows:

***Identity:*** Identity can be an intersection of several identities, one identity can be dominant, there can be several (non-overlapping) compartmentalized identities, or they can merge into a new identity (Wiley & Deaux, 2011: 80-81). Thus identities are performed rather than determined and static (Klandermans, 2012: 197). This article explores Muslim identities in relation to national and cultural identities, such as European, German and Turkish, and in relation to other types of identities such as feminist or LGBT ones.

***Muslim:*** Muslims in Europe have been described as a “non-ethnic religious minority” (Malik, 2010: 52) who nevertheless face “post-racial racism” (Behloul, 2013: 40). A Muslim identity can be “self-chosen” or “externally imposed” or a “complex mixture of both” with other factors playing a role, such as age, gender, occupation and socioeconomic situation, and (parents’) country of origin (Parekh, 2006: 199). Not all people who are deemed to be Muslim by non-Muslims identify as such, or hold their Muslim identity to be their most important identity, i.e.

they may be non-religious or identify more strongly with another cultural identity such as being Turkish or German. For example, only 2/3 of Turkish people in Germany describe themselves as Muslim (Ehrkamp, 2007: 11). This article acknowledges the homogenizing and sometimes erroneous way that the term Muslim is applied to individuals and groups in Europe.

***Immigrant:*** A person who comes from a non-European country who has (permanently) settled in Europe. This includes people from countries that may be considered by some as European, such as Turkey. Some scholars still inaccurately refer to 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> generation Europeans (be they citizens or permanent residents) as immigrants, or employ the term ‘immigration background’ to describe them, based on their non-European ancestry. This article acknowledges the problematic way this term can be used to ‘other’ 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> generation Europeans.

***Fundamentalist:*** A religious person who believes in the literal truth of the holy texts they follow. This can manifest in conservative views regarding appearance and behaviour, and oppose the separation of state and religion. Fundamentalism is differentiated from radicalism; in this article fundamentalism is used for denoting a high degree of religious conservatism, whereas radicalism or extremism refer to those who are prepared to use or condone violence for political ends.

## **2. Multiculturalism in Europe – theory and reality**

The development of multicultural theories was in part a response to immigration to Europe in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Some scholars believe multiculturalism is a “progressive extension of existing human rights norms” (Kymlicka, 2007: 6) from Europe’s liberal tradition and the UN Declaration of Human Rights which sought to rid the world of the “hierarchy of peoples” (ibid: 89), and subsequently aided decolonization, civil rights and group-differentiated rights struggles. These scholars include Taylor, who argues that states’ equal recognition of identities and equal rights were the basis for liberalism and universalism after the break up of social hierarchies in Western Europe (Taylor, 1992). He argues that a “politics of difference” (ibid: 38) grew out of this, which sought to recognize the distinctness of individuals and groups and award a status to these that was not universal. The politics of difference criticizes liberalism for being a homogenizing, hegemonic Western culture, a “particularism masquerading as the universal” (ibid: 44) and thus by definition discriminatory. Taylor states that liberalism has little room for acknowledging “distinct cultural identities” and rights being “applied differently in different cultural contexts” (ibid: 52), with the rights of the individual always having priority

over collective goals. However, Taylor argues that a society can still be liberal while maintaining collective goals if it respects diversity (ibid: 59).

Scholars differentiate between the reality of multicultural communities in Europe, i.e. that there are people from diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds living side by side in Europe, and the support of multicultural theories and policies. Malik terms this *descriptive* and *normative* multiculturalism (Malik, 2010: 12-13). She is among those scholars who argue that due to multicultural realities societies need multicultural policies. Malik defines multiculturalism as a “communal diversity” of colour, race, ethnicity, religion and language (ibid: 13). Modood also builds multicultural theory “from the ground upwards” (Modood, 2006: 7), focusing on the distinctive European aspects of multiculturalism, in particular “secularism and the public presence of Muslims” (ibid: 6). McGhee argues that multicultural policies are the “political accommodation of minorities formed by immigration” (McGhee, 2008: 1).

## **2.1 Multiculturalism as a challenge to the secular nation state**

In general, those scholars who see cultural homogeneity as good and necessary for the nation state argue for assimilation and integration theories for ethnic minorities, while those who see cultural homogeneity as either not good, not necessary or not realistic, support multicultural theories. Parekh believes that liberals have a “narrow and dubious view of integration” precisely because they see cultural unity as a prerequisite for political unity (Parekh, 2006: 186). Bauman, Lanz and Phillips acknowledge the criticism that multiculturalism can undermine social cohesion and (artificially constructed) cultural homogeneity in nation states (Bauman, 1991; Lanz, 2010: 117-118; Phillips, 2007: 12-13). Kymlicka argues that while multiculturalism rejects the homogenous nation state model and its nation-building policies, this is not necessarily a bad thing, as the nation state’s dominant culture, language and religion seek to assimilate or exclude minorities (Kymlicka, 2007: 61-62).

Whether or not liberalism is, or can be, difference-neutral is a key issue in the multicultural debate. Proponents of multiculturalism argue that Europe’s liberal tradition is not neutral, as it is based on a Christian heritage and Christian values which are not, and cannot be neutral. Taylor states that “liberalism is not a possible meeting ground for all cultures, but is the political expression of one range of cultures” (Taylor, 1992: 62) which grew out of Christianity and moreover, that much of Western Europe’s liberal culture is built on an “assumed superiority” (ibid: 63) of this heritage. This raises questions of how truly secular European countries are, in



terms of the separation of religion and the state. Multiculturalists argue that “no European political system excludes it (religion) from political life” (Parekh, 2006: 190). The degree to which religion is included in the public sphere varies depending on the nation state, with countries such as Germany giving Christian religions a privileged institutionalised role.

Muslims have provided the biggest challenge to liberal neutrality in the public sphere in recent decades. Firstly, Muslims are the largest immigrant group in Europe (when viewed collectively), whose religion of Islam doesn't slot nicely into the public/private, political/religious separation demanded by liberalism (Taylor, 1992: 62). The idea of religion being private is “not culturally neutral” with the “pressure to bring the private realm into harmony with the public (Christian) realm” putting non-Christian minorities at a disadvantage (Parekh, 2006: 187).

## **2.2 Hard multiculturalism**

Hard multiculturalism sees cultures as private, not public, and culture is “interpreted as traditional practices” (Kymlicka, 2007:99). This private form of multiculturalism has been called essentialist and Eurocentric, selectively determining what makes a culture, and usually selecting the ‘good’ and ‘bad’ elements which are the most different from Western European culture, with Europeans taking “the most conservative values of minorities as authentic, because they are farthest from their own” (Lanz, 2010: 120). Lanz believes that cultures are actually constantly changing without any set borders, because culture originates from the action of individuals, rather than determining their actions (ibid: 120). Žižek writes that “multiculturalism involves patronizing Eurocentrist distance and/or respect for local cultures without roots in one's own particular culture....a ‘racism with a distance’” from a “position as the privileged empty point of universality” where “the multiculturalist respect for the Other's specificity is the very form of asserting one's superiority” (Žižek, 1997: 44). Malik describes hard multiculturalism as only the toleration of difference, when kept private, and without demands for state support (Malik, 2010: 16). This tolerance is a kind of “benign neglect” because it lacks any real political space for minorities (ibid: 29-31).

Of Bauman's three categories of the *friend*, *enemy* and *stranger*, the immigrant to Europe fits into the category of stranger. The stranger is “physically close while remaining spiritually remote” (Bauman, 1991: 60). Bauman argues that the stranger/immigrant is constructed as the “permanent Other” by way of stigmatizing them (ibid: 66). The only way the stranger can escape this stigma is to become “neutralized” or “invisible” by way of assimilation (ibid: 70).

However, this assimilation is almost impossible due to the racism of the dominant culture and can result in the stranger having feelings of inferiority or even self-hatred towards their original culture (Bauman, 1991: 72-73), while never achieving the sought-after equality. Immigrants who do not fit into the traditional, exotic and even commercially exploitable mould of their culture are a threat, with hard multiculturalism only being the “tolerance of the Other in its aseptic, benign form” with anything else being deemed fundamentalist (Žižek, 1997: 37).

Kymlicka believes that this form of multiculturalism is problematic because it stops cultures interacting with each other, and threatens the human rights of individuals in groups by giving power to conservative and authoritarian group leaders (Kymlicka, 2007: 102). This is coupled with the criticism leveled at hard multiculturalism from both progressive multiculturalists and liberals that it can be used to explain away or even justify inequalities in society by saying they are cultural rather than caused by other factors such as capitalism, the class system or racism. Žižek argues that differences based on inequality and exploitation are often “naturalized and neutralized into cultural differences...which must be merely tolerated” (Žižek, 2008: 660).

### **2.3 Progressive multiculturalism**

Progressive multiculturalism argues for public, institutional and political space for diverse cultural communities, beliefs and practices, while still upholding a human rights tradition. Progressive multiculturalism is not the *toleration* of difference but the *accommodation* of difference, through the “politics of recognition”, including recognition in the public realm (Malik, 2010: 18). Modood advocates for political multiculturalism, a “multiculturalism of the public sphere” (Modood, 2006: 4), with more protection against discrimination, the promotion of equal opportunities and an institutional place for Islam in Europe (ibid: 53).

Progressive multiculturalism is, in contrast to hard multiculturalism, actively transformative, as it concerns “identifying and attacking those deeply rooted traditions...that have historically excluded minorities” (Kymlicka, 2007: 99). Schiffauer calls the fight for being equal yet special the “double desire for recognition” (Schiffauer, 2007: 79). McGhee notes that a politics of recognition must also be connected with a “politics of redistribution” in order for it to be effective (McGhee, 2008: 123), thus linking progressive multiculturalism with affirmative action and left-wing economic policies.

However, Joppke argues that giving equal recognition and value to all cultures is “impossible” because it “destroys the notion of value” (Joppke, 2003: 4). Taylor agrees with this argument up to a point, as being able to judge the “relative worth of different cultures” is an “illusion” held by both multiculturalists and their opponents (Taylor, 1992: 73). He argues that equal respect for all cultures is needed, without being patronizing or trying to make “everyone the same” (ibid: 71) and concludes that it is possible to “presume” cultures have value while still rejecting parts of those cultures considered unacceptable (ibid: 72).

Complexity is added when deciding upon which minority groups, leaders and practices should be accommodated in the majority political framework. Kymlicka acknowledges that critics of multiculturalism see it as “abandoning universalism” for collective rights (Kymlicka, 2007: 6) which Phillips calls the oppression of minorities within minorities (Phillips, 2007: 12-13). She advocates for “multiculturalism without culture”, i.e. a multiculturalism which does not put the selected demands of groups (“groupism”) before individuals and does not relativize rights to the detriment of minorities within groups, such as women, but instead focuses on human agency, not selected cultural practices (Phillips, 2007).

#### **2.4 The ‘backlash’ against multiculturalism**

Silj sees three factors as being formative for the current “crisis of multiculturalism” in Europe: an increase in the number of immigrants in Europe, the financial recession starting in 2008 and the subsequent competition for scarce resources; and the “growing presence and visibility of the Muslim community” including widely publicized terrorist attacks (Silj, 2010: 9). Multiculturalism has even been called “one of the main causes” of the 2005 London bombings – across the political spectrum (Malik, 2010: 55).

Joppke believes there has been a retreat from multiculturalism in terms of both theory and practice, with the European liberal state reasserting itself in the form of civic integration policy focused on reciprocity and language learning (Joppke, 2003: 7). Blunkett advocates for active citizenship and integration with a “shared identity based on membership of a political community” (Blunkett quoted in McGhee, 2008: 88). However McGhee argues that this can result in a “duty before rights” nationalism which may actually neglect human rights (McGhee, 2008: 128). Advocates of political multiculturalism argue that as the “public discourse in Europe often...equates the category of immigrant with the category of Muslim” (Kymlicka, 2007: 126), this backlash is targeted at Muslims. Parekh also believes that the terms immigrant and

multiculturalism are often code words for Muslim (Parekh, 2006: 179). He believes there is no empirical evidence that Muslims have failed to integrate, as they are overwhelming law-abiding and greatly respect European institutions (ibid: 184). He believes that “hostility, racism and discrimination” as well as a perception by non-Muslims that Muslims have a way of life which is “incompatible” with European societies are the main reasons why Muslims are considered to have failed at integration (ibid: 179). McGhee argues that the multiculturalism backlash is partly due to white majorities feeling that minorities have “preferential treatment” (McGhee, 2008: 105). He believes that multiculturalism is retreating at the national level, i.e. through immigration and security policies (ibid: 143).

There is often no direct relationship between the degree to which multicultural policies have been implemented in European nation states and the strength of the backlash towards multiculturalism. Some scholars argue that multiculturalism has scarcely been applied in many European countries, such as Germany, yet the backlash against multiculturalism is strongest in these countries. Lentin & Titley argue that there is no empirical evidence to support the claim that multicultural policies have failed, but rather the backlash against multiculturalism is a racist denial of the reality of cultures living together (Lentin & Titley, 2012: 126).

## **2.5 Diversity of Muslim identities in Europe**

Muslim identities have been constructed by dominant groups in Europe and Muslims have had to construct their own identities in relation to this dominant discourse. As Said notes in *Orientalism*, the “semi-mythical construct” of MENA countries as the “Orient” dates back to mediaeval times, and its modern version has been in place since the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century (Said, 2003: xiii), with the “same clichés, the same demeaning stereotypes, the same justifications of power and violence” being used by today’s imperial powers that were used in colonial times (Said, 2003: xv), such as the European cultural hegemony “reiterating European superiority over Oriental backwardness” (Said, 1978: 7).

Muslim identities in Europe are often constructed as both a threat to the secular European state and something which “push(es) (Muslims) to the periphery” of society (Wiley & Deaux, 2011: 62). Debates on Islam have a “totalising tendency” in Western Europe with the construction of several binaries (see Figure 1), such as secular/Islam and modernity/Islam (Behloul, 2013: 39) with the Muslim ‘Other’ seen as non-democratic, authoritarian, and anti-feminist (Schiffauer, 2007: 77), and more so after 9/11 (Bendixsen, 2013: 112).

**Figure 1: Non-Muslim and Muslim constructed identity binaries**

<b>Non-Muslim Europeans</b>	<b>Muslim Europeans</b>
Western / Occidental	Middle Eastern / Oriental
Us	Them (the Other)
Modern, dynamic	Traditional, static
Liberal, left and right wing	Authoritarian, right wing
Secular / Christian	Islamic
White	People of colour
Individualist	Collective
Tolerant / LGBT-friendly	Intolerant / homophobic
Gender-equal / feminist	Patriarchal / anti-feminist

*Source: author*

## **2.6 Portrayals of Muslim identities in the age of Islamic terror**

Before the age of Islamic terror, MENA immigrants living alongside native populations in European societies shared a “peaceful mutual indifference” (Schiffauer, 2006: 111). After 9/11 and the London and Madrid bombings however, the diverse group of MENA residents in Europe became collectivized as ‘Muslims’ (Klandermans, 2012: 182) and were constructed as “suspect communities” (Malik, 2010: 57) through racism and terrorism discourses (ibid: 57). Their religion, Islam, was “now inextricably linked with ‘holy war’, male patriarchy and terrorism” (Canan-Şokullu, 2007: 99). Kymlicka notes the subsequent re-securitization of Muslims (Kymlicka, 2007: 125) as does Lanz, with changes in immigration law targeting Muslims as they were “suspected of representing a potential risk” (Lanz, 2010: 127). Islam and terrorism have been “knotted together” (Cesari, 2007: 61) with counterterrorist laws initiating a counter-reaction from some Muslims. McGhee also argues that counterterrorist and immigration laws can be “counterproductive” as they increase feelings of exclusion among Muslims (McGhee, 2008: 49), and such laws are “extremely limited” for not taking discrimination and foreign policy into account (ibid: 81). Modood also argues that “governments create extremism through foreign policy” (Modood quoted in Malik, 2010: 58). Muslims are often seen as a “source of anxiety” in Europe, due to fears of terrorism, mass immigration, and Islam being considered incompatible with democracy (Canan-Şokullu, 2007: 100). Tyrer describes Islamophobia as a “post-racial racism” (Tyrer quoted in Behloul, 2013: 40) because Muslims are not primarily identified by skin colour, but by other things, such as headscarves, beards and mosques (Tyrer, 2013: 52-53). There is also the fear that Islam could (or wants to) permanently change European identities (Schiffauer, 2007: 77) as Muslims are viewed as being proselytizing (Parekh, 2006: 180).

## **2.7 Diversity of Muslim identities in Europe**

There are four main factors that influence the diversity and multiplicity of Muslim identities in Europe: the country of immigration, country of origin (including its dominant culture), generational differences and global Islam (Schiffauer, 2007: 68, Cesari, 2007: 52). Parekh believes that from the second generation onwards, Muslims in Europe have replaced an identity based on their ancestors' country of origin with a stronger identity with Islam and thus a Muslim identity (Parekh, 2006: 181). Many scholars agree that the most important identity for MENA people in Europe is being a religious Muslim (Schiffauer, 2007, Cesari, 2007). Yükleyn disagrees, stating that although Turkish people in Germany are often seen as Muslims, the Islamic communities and mosques in Germany are still "divided along ethno-national lines" and then between Shia, Sunni and Alevi denominations (Yükleyn, 2012: 12) as well as adapting to their particular European nation state context (ibid: 3-4).

Yükleyn also argues that as there is no central authority or representative body for Muslims in Europe there cannot be one monolithic Euro-Islam (Yükleyn, 2012: 257-8). Other scholars agree the emergence of one Euro-Islam is unlikely (Schiffauer, 2007: 92) because supporters of all factions (from moderates to fundamentalists) can be found in all Muslim communities with an "increasing multiplicity of voices" (ibid: 93) and increasing competition between organisations (Schiffauer, 2007: 75; Yükleyn, 2012: 78). This is further diversified through the role of Global Islam: this *Ummah* (Muslim community) can be in the form of fundamentalist Islam politicized through "shared grievances" (Klandermans, 2012: 182) but it can also be a transnational network of any kind of Islam (Cesari, 2007: 57). Global Islam is one reason why some scholars believe there is a growing "gulf" between fundamentalists and modernists in Europe (ibid: 65).

## **3. Muslims, multiculturalism and Germany's *Leitkultur***

Germany has the largest population in the European Union (EU) and a Muslim population of roughly 4 million, which is approximately 5 % of the population (German Conference on Islam, 2009: 11), It is a country where multiculturalism has supposedly failed despite a lack of multicultural policy: it is "central to the European landscape both for the size of its immigrant population and for its reluctance to incorporate it" (Modood, 2006: 7). 'Muslims in Germany' include many variables: the country of own (or parents' or grandparents') origin, degree of official Germanness through citizenship, generational differences, and degree of religious conviction. The first generation of post-World War II Muslim immigrants were called

*Gastarbeiter* (guest workers) and viewed as a national group of ‘Turks’, ignoring ethnic differences between immigrants from Turkey such as Turkish/Kurdish (Yükleyen, 2012). This generation was termed “Islam in exile” (Schiffauer, 2007: 70), with the ‘myth of return’ being a reason for Turkish people to keep strong ties to their country of origin and Germany not to integrate what it considered temporary migrant workers. Then, “after years of ambivalence, immigrants realized they were in Europe for good” (Yükleyen, 2012: 48) and the myth of return receded. The second and subsequent generations of Turkish Muslims are Germans “not just Muslims in Germany” (Schiffauer, 2007: 78), who have less acceptance of their second-class status and less return options (Klandermans, 2012: 197). They are the “stranger” whose “original home recedes into the past and perhaps vanishes altogether” (Bauman, 1991: 60).

Almost 16 million (20 % of) people in Germany have an ‘immigration background’ with this term meaning not only “all immigrants and all foreigners born in Germany” (Bundesregierung, 2014a: 3) but also those born in Germany, with German citizenship, whose parents were immigrants (Bundesregierung, 2014a: 3). Thus almost all second generation Muslims in Germany fall under the category of having an ‘immigration background’ or still being officially considered foreigners: there are approximately 2 million German Muslims with German citizenship (German Conference on Islam, 2009: 311) and 2 million with only residency rights, although they may well have been born and raised in Germany, and speak German as a first language. This is due to restrictive citizenship laws that disallowed dual citizenship until 2014 and forced immigrants to choose between their non-German and German citizenships. The introduction of limited dual citizenship laws can be seen as a positive step to supporting hybrid identities (at least among the children of immigrants) and opening up paths to increased political participation for them.

Categorizing Muslims in Germany as having an ‘immigration background’ (often without the rights of citizenship), can be viewed as ‘othering’ them in an attempt at protecting German cultural identity and disapproving of hybrid identities such as Turkish-German or Muslim-German which could “blur all differences” between essentialised cultures (Lanz, 2010: 1116). Its only positive aspect is its potential as a statistical tool for acknowledging and analysing the everyday discrimination and the lack of white privilege people of colour face in Germany, and formulating corresponding affirmative action policy.

The German Conference on Islam notes that “the Muslim population in Germany is highly heterogeneous” (German Conference on Islam, 2009: 13) with 63 % of Muslims having Turkish roots (approximately 2.5 million), 7 % with North African and 10 % with Middle Eastern roots (ibid: 13). It is significant that “only around half of all people with an immigrant background living in Germany from countries with a relevant Muslim population are Muslims,” with 19 % of those with an ‘immigrant background’ from Turkey, 25 % from North Africa and 41 % from the Middle East not being Muslims (ibid: 311). Furthermore, not all Muslims are religious: non-religious Muslims make up a “sizeable proportion” of Muslims in Germany, with 20 % of Middle Eastern, 22 % of North African and 15 % of Turkish people identifying as such (ibid: 308). Thus religious Muslims make up 69 % of those with Turkish ancestry, 59 % of those with North African ancestry and 47 % of those with Middle Eastern ancestry (own calculations). The majority of Muslims in Germany are Sunni (74 %), 13 % are Alevis and 7 % are Shiites (German Conference on Islam, 2009: 13). 36 % of Muslims consider themselves “extremely devout”, and 50 % “quite devout” (ibid: 14), making the majority of Muslims in Germany (64 %) rather or very religious Sunni Muslims. But as “there are no significant differences between Muslims and non-Muslims in the frequency of attendance of services and religious events” (ibid: 315), Muslims are not necessary any more religious than any other religious group in Germany, such as Christians.

There are three broad factions of Islam in Germany: ultra-orthodox resistance (political Islam, violent or pacifist), orthodox avoidance (public Islam and self-segregation) and individualized acceptance (private Islam, assimilation or withdrawal) (Cesari, 2007: 53; Schiffauer, 2007: 70). The ultra-orthodox are exemplified by the Süleymanci organization; the orthodox is exemplified by Milli Görüs; and the individualized is exemplified by the Turkish-Islamic Union for Religious Affairs (DITIB) (Schiffauer, 2007: 81-89).

### **3.1 The birth, death and re-emergence of multiculturalism in Germany**

Scholars track the emergence of (hard) multiculturalism in Germany (*Multikulti*) as a left wing project from the late 1980s and early 1990s in post-reunification Germany, due in part to the increasing visibility of immigrants and asylum seekers, making Germany’s multicultural realities impossible to ignore (Ramm, 2010: 186). The understanding of multiculturalism based on essentialist concepts of what culture is (Lanz, 2010: 116), meant that it was very easy for critics of multiculturalism to group all immigrants from Turkey into one stereotypical Turkish culture, to determine its few successes (e.g. Turkish fast food) and its supposed failings



(everything too foreign: e.g. a foreign language, a foreign appearance and a foreign religion). Lanz argues that ethnic groups are seen to be self-contained and segregated in Germany because it “does not allow for multiple affiliations” (Lanz, 2010: 121). As Fekete puts it, “Germany has never accepted cultural diversity as a positive feature of society” (Fekete, 2009: 81). There were no policies put in place to actively facilitate progressive multiculturalism in Germany before the theory of multiculturalism was rejected in favour of an assimilationist approach. So even well before 9/11, “integration – with a strong undertone of assimilation” was beginning to dominate the immigration discourse on both the left and right of the political spectrum, with those on the left who still defended multiculturalism dismissed as having a naïve left-wing guilt complex (Ramm, 2010: 188). This “social solidarity” against Muslims, from religious and non-religious, right and left-wing actors, meant they had no major coalition partners (Schiffauer, 2007: 78). The immediate backlash towards Germany’s nascent multiculturalism did not result in a return to denying multicultural realities but an active rejection of Muslim non-Germanness, based on the two concepts of the importance of the German *Leitkultur* and the myth of self-segregated Turkish ‘parallel societies’ (a spin on the socio-economically determined location of working class immigrants’ housing), resulting in the rhetoric of the “failure of the multicultural society” (Ramm, 2010: 187), only to be fixed by adherence to the *Leitkultur*.

Yükleyen describes Germany as maintaining a “partially exclusionist” policy towards immigrants, such as by denying Islam public status and state funding (Yükleyen, 2012: 158). The Multiculturalism Policy Index has been tracking the development of 8 multicultural policies for immigrants since the 1980s, including official state affirmation of multiculturalism, a multicultural school curriculum, representation in public media, exemptions from dress-codes, dual citizenship, funding of cultural activities, mother-tongue education and affirmative action (Multiculturalism Policy Index, 2014a). Germany scored 0 in 1980, 2 in 2000 and 2.5 in 2010, with a score under 3 being considered “weak” (Multiculturalism Policy Index, 2014b). This score of 2.5 was based on the evidence that there is no explicit recognition or affirmation of multiculturalism, no multicultural school curriculum, “weak” representation in the public media, controversy surrounding dress codes, no dual citizenship (before 2014), some funding of ethnic groups, “limited” mother tongue instruction and no policy on affirmative action (Multiculturalism Policy Index, 2014b). The improving (albeit still poor) score suggests that Germany may be slowly creeping towards some form of progressive multiculturalism, even with its assimilationist integration policies, because these policies are better than the complete absence of multicultural policy that existed in the *Gastarbeiter* model.

### **3.2 The obsession with the *Leitkultur* and integration**

The supporters of assimilationist policies perpetuate the *Leitkultur* narrative. Almost ten years after 9/11, Chancellor Merkel made her infamous speech at the Junge Union conference in 2010 in which she declared:

“...we are a country, that at the start of the 1960s brought guest workers to Germany, and now they live with us. They deceived us for a while. We said: they won't stay, at some point they'll be gone. This is not the reality, and naturally the approach was to say: let's have multiculturalism here and live alongside each other and be happy together. This approach has failed, and failed completely!” (Merkel, quoted on YouTube, 2013, translation: author).

At the same conference, CSU leader Horst Seehofer declared that “Multi Kulti ist tot” (multiculturalism is dead) and urged support for the German *Leitkultur* (Schrader, 2010). Thilo Sarrazin's book *Deutschland schafft sich ab*, (Germany abolishes itself) was published the same year, claiming to be a taboo-breaking publication about all the problems caused by Muslims that Germany was keeping silent about, due to political correctness (Foroutan, 2010).

The problems associated with Turkish immigrants have not so much changed focus, but rather have had layers added to them. As one scholar wrote in the 1980s, “the discovery of Turks as Muslims has only just begun” (Kreiser, 1985: 14). The ‘parallel societies’ of Turkish people were complemented with a “growing anxiety about Islamic fundamentalism” and the “ethnicization of sexism” (Ramm, 2010: 185) as well as linking Islam with intolerance of LGBT communities, in an effort to continue ‘othering’ a second and third generation of Turkish Germans who are more integrated than their immigrant parents, through being *of* Germany rather than merely *in* Germany.

### **3.3 The fear of Islamization**

What do supporters of the *Leitkultur* really fear if second and third generation immigrants are by their very nature substantially better at integration than the first generation, and bring with them the benefits of enriching German culture? Giving institutional voice to a multiplicity of cultures would most probably not undermine Germany, so whose interests are really served by shutting out other cultures and perpetuating the *Leitkultur*?

Two key fears will be discussed here: the fear of ethnic Germans being gradually bred-out by the Muslim population, resulting in a cultural takeover, exacerbated by immigration and asylum seekers, i.e. a demographic threat; and the fear of home-grown terrorism, i.e. a physical threat. The proposed solution to these threats has been broadly two-fold: limiting immigration and asylum to Germany, and assimilating the Muslim population that is already in Germany. Only the latter will be discussed in detail.

Some statistics, such as one in three children in Germany under the age of 6 having an 'immigration background' (Foroutan, 2013: 2), fuel the Islamophobic fear of ethnic Germans being bred-out by Muslims, although Muslims make up only a quarter of those with an 'immigration background'. Yet even if Germany's non-Muslim population, based on the German 2012 fertility rate of 1.4 (World Bank, 2014), fell to 70 % of its current number each generation and the birth rate for Muslims, based on the 2.1 fertility rate in Turkey in 2012 (World Bank, 2014), rose to 105 % of its current number each generation, after 3 generations the local German Muslim population would have risen from approximately 4 million to approximately 4.4 million, while the local non-Muslim population would fall dramatically from approximately 76 million to approximately 39 million, with an overall rise in the Muslim population share from 5 % to 11 % (own calculations). But the population in Germany is not decreasing despite a falling fertility rate; this forecast of a Germany with a population of only approximately 43 million in 3 generations will not become a reality, as the key to sustaining the population is immigration. Thus the fear of *Überfremdung* (being overrun by foreigners) is fuelled by the decline in ethnic Germans coupled with the necessary rise in immigration (plus the moral necessity to take in more of the world's refugees). Integration then becomes a bizarre game of assimilating immigrants (or at least their children) into becoming German-enough quick enough to counter failing birth rates, while at the same time trying to prevent them from compromising the *Leitkultur* through multicultural political participation.

However, the *Leitkultur* is not a desirable model for integration policy. Firstly, being strongly encouraged to change some core parts of one's identity could lead to resentment of the dominant German culture and increased support of religious fundamentalism. Secondly, immigrants' 'failure' to integrate into the *Leitkultur* does not explain such phenomena as the educational failures and crimes committed by ethnic Germans. The reality that lower educational achievements and crime are related to structural problems of exclusion, discrimination and poverty traps perpetuated by the class system (such as bad schools in low income

neighbourhoods), and not to being Muslim, does not feature in the *Leitkultur* narrative. Thirdly, the *Leitkultur* does not explain what was popular in the *Multikulti* narrative: an interest in non-German cultures: such as travelling to distant lands, enjoying foreign cuisine and engaging in Eastern spiritual practices and pastimes, not to mention the love affair with global, English-language influenced, popular culture. These foreign cultural influences are not explained by the *Leitkultur*, which comes across as an even more restrictive view of cultures than Orientalism.

### **3.4 ‘Parallel Societies’ – German language skills and education**

One of the strongest portrayals of Muslims in Germany is the decades-old myth of Muslims living in ‘parallel societies’ in urban areas such as Berlin’s Neukölln district (Lanz, 2010: 133). These ‘parallel societies’ are seen to result in poor German language skills, poor educational achievements, crime and radicalisation of young Muslims. This myth was contested by the 2009 German Conference on Islam study which concluded: “The number of Muslims from all contexts of origin who do not have, and do not wish to have, any day-to-day contact with Germans is not greater than 1 %. There is no evidence of explicit ethnic isolation” (German Conference on Islam, 2009: 16). That “36 % of Muslims have a stronger attachment to Germany than to their country of origin” (ibid: 325) also questions the constant framing of Muslims as self-segregating.

There is also the view that people who are not ethnically German cannot speak German at a sufficient level to participate in society. However, for 90 % of second (and subsequent) generations of Muslims, German language proficiency is either good or very good in all language aspects (German Conference on Islam, 2009: 233). Sarrazin’s 2010 accusation that Turkish people with an ‘immigration background’ do not bother to learn German was refuted by data that 70 % of Turkish Germans have a good to excellent command of German (Foroutan, 2010: 17). One only need visit a ‘parallel society’ such as Neukölln (with a combined Turkish and Arab population of only 20 % and people from 147 different countries living in the district) (Bezirksamt von Neukölln, 2014) to see stereotype-breaking multiculturalism in action – such as women in hijab speaking accent-free German to each other. That there is still a quarter of Muslims who “state that their command of German is at best mediocre” (German Conference on Islam, 2009: 323) is due to the large number of first generation Muslims, such as approximately 60 % of Turkish people in Germany (German Conference on Islam, 2009: 111). Thus the need for language courses for immigrants is essential, and Germany’s subsidized and (sometimes) mandatory language courses initiated by the 2005 Residence Act make an important

contribution to language acquisition for immigrants. However, the language inadequacies of some first generation immigrants should not be attributed to all Muslims in Germany, nor should they be used by politicians, such as CSU leader Horst Seehofer, for arguing that immigrants should speak German at all times, even at home, if they want to stay in Germany (Taz.de, 2014). Moreover, there should be more recognition of the positive aspects of a multicultural society, such as the benefits of being bilingual and multilingual.

Muslims in Germany are a “particularly young population” (German Conference on Islam, 2009: 312). Thus education is a key policy area for Muslims, who have often been portrayed as having unsatisfactory educational achievements. But overall statistics are often skewed by the “extremely low levels of education among Turkish women of the first generation of immigrants” (ibid: 15). The educational situation of second generation Muslims in Germany has improved 650 % on the first generation (from 3 % being high school graduates with university entrance qualifications to 22.4 %) (Foroutan, 2010: 16) in what is known as “evidence of educational upward mobility” (German Conference on Islam, 2009: 15).

In December 2014, Germany held the 7<sup>th</sup> annual *Integrationsgipfel* (Integration Summit) with the focus on increasing levels of participation in education and training for youth with an ‘immigration background’. Its slogan “Equal educational opportunities for all” (Die Bundesregierung, 2014b) ignored structural disadvantages of those without certain class privileges (such as children of working class immigrants), coupled with the “racist structures of the German educational system” (Lanz, 2010: 128). Chancellor Merkel did acknowledge discrimination in Germany: “When one sees how many job applications fail solely based on the (candidate’s) name, one has to say: we must put everything on the table which can be improved” (Die Bundesregierung, 2014d, translation: author). However, the summit played down the importance of Muslim participation in anti-discrimination measures by never making a direct reference to Muslims (Die Bundesregierung, 2014c). Germany’s anti-discrimination policy includes a Diversity Charter, initiated in 2006, signed by companies representing some 7 million employees. But Mipex has been critical of the German approach to anti-discrimination and the Diversity Charter, stating it “has symbolic goals that are hard to evaluate in practice, since companies make vague commitments” and that “Germany’s laws may be ineffective against discrimination because potential victims do not get the support they need from weak equality bodies and State commitments” (Mipex, 2014). The Diversity Charter has held Annual Diversity days since 2013, with companies representing 2.3 million employees in Germany. Yet with no

explicit reference to Muslims, Turkish people or immigrants in its related publication (Charta der Vielfalt, 2014), it is unclear how successful diversity will be in place of progressive multiculturalism if it ignores mentioning ethnicity or culture altogether.

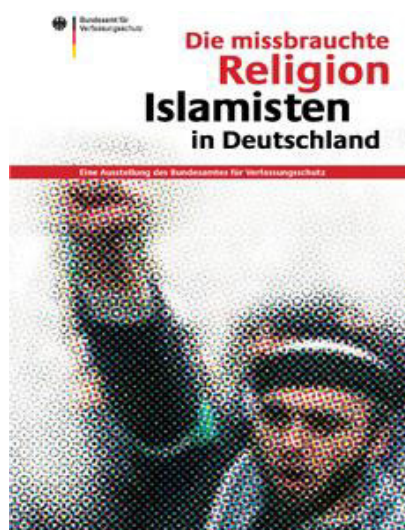
### **3.5 Muslims and counterterrorism**

The way the approximately 86 % of quite or extremely devout Muslims practise Islam is portrayed as problematic for many reasons, two of which are discussed here. Firstly, religious fundamentalism is linked to hatred towards minority groups such as LGBT: “We find a strong correlation between religious fundamentalism...and hostility toward out-groups like homosexuals” (Koopmanns quoted in WZB, 2013). The relationship between Muslims and LGBT will be further discussed in section 6. Secondly, Islamic fundamentalism is considered to be “not an innocent form of strict religiosity”, (Koopmanns quoted in WZB, 2013) which leads to radical Islam, disregard for state laws and home-grown terrorism. Given that 79 % of respondents to a 2011 survey “expected terrorist attacks to occur in Germany” (Jesse & Mannewitz, 2012: 16), the way Muslims are constructed as fundamentalists is key to them being portrayed as a physical threat to Germany.

The Federal Ministry of the Interior *2013 Annual Report On The Protection Of The Constitution* states that “Germany continues to be one of the target countries of Islamist terrorism” (Federal Ministry of the Interior, 2013: 20), stating that there are 43,190 Islamists in Germany, and defining Islamism as “abuse of religion to political ends” (ibid: 20). Yet the vast majority of the 43,190 Islamists come from Milli Görüs (31,000), (ibid: 19) which is targeted by government authorities not because it condones violence, which it does not, (Schiffauer, 2006: 100), but for its “Islamic discourse...which still combines religious and political elements” (Yükleyen, 2012: 63). This is “the intelligence services’ ‘slippery slope’ view of ‘gradual radicalisation’ through membership of any Islamist group” (Fekete, 2009: 121). Leaving Milli Görüs aside, approximately 9,850 individuals are considered to be members of an Islamist group prepared to use violence (Federal Ministry of the Interior, 2013: 19). This figure is only slightly higher than right-wing extremists prepared to use violence (9,600 members) (ibid: 9) and somewhat higher than left-wing extremists prepared to use violence (6,900 members) (ibid: 15). Factoring in all three groups – Islamist, right-wing and left-wing extremist groups – Islamists make up 37 % of the terrorist threat in Germany. But because Islamism is connected to being Muslim, Muslims in Germany are affected by the counterterrorism narrative in a way that ethnic Germans and Christians escape being linked to right-wing and left-wing extremist activities.

The Federal Minister of the Interior banned several more Salafist organisations in 2013, stating that “In late 2013, 5,500 individuals were assessed to be affiliated with Salafist circles (with) a further increase in the number of Salafist followers...expected for 2014” (Federal Ministry of the Interior, 2013: 22). The main concern regarding Salafists is the so-called “blowback effect” (Korteweg, 2010: 33) of returning jihadists from the civil war in Syria and the Islamic State conflict, who “pose a special security risk” in an “open source jihad” of terrorist acts perpetrated by “lone actors” (Federal Ministry of the Interior, 2013: 21). Thus there only has to be one or two rogue Islamists to pose an Islamist terror threat to the country and to wreak havoc on the image of 4 million Muslims. In the ten years following 9/11, before Arid Uka’s 2011 attack on United States’ soldiers at Frankfurt Airport, there had not been any successful Islamist terrorist attacks in Germany, (Jesse & Mannewitz, 2012: 3) and at the time of writing (February 2015) none by home-grown, German-born Muslims. Yet the 2014 Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution’s 2014 exhibition entitled *The Abused Religion, Islamists in Germany* continued to portray Islamists as the number 1 threat to German security (see Figure 2). A terrorist attack perpetrated by Muslims in Germany would cement the pre-existing fear of Muslims as fundamentalists and play into the hands of right-wing anti-Muslim groups.

**Figure 2: Poster for the 2014 exhibition “The Abused Religion. Islamists in Germany”**



*Source: Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution, 2014*

Muslims in Germany are also not immune to the effects of terrorism and counterterrorism outside of their country. This was recently demonstrated in the January 2015 terrorist attacks in Paris, where Islamist terrorists, acting at the behest of Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), carried out an attack on Charlie Hebdo, a left-wing satirical magazine. Muslim groups in Germany were quick to condemn the attacks in the media and at the annual German Islam

Conference, including the German Council of Muslims holding a vigil at Berlin’s Brandenburg Gate the following week under the banner “Let’s be there for each other. Terror: not in our name!” (Deutsche Welle, 2015a). Police raids on Salafist groups in several German cities the week following the Paris attacks resulted in the arrest of two people suspected of recruiting for the Islamic State in Syria (Deutsche Welle, 2015b). While raids may have subdued the public’s fear of gaps in German intelligence, they did nothing to challenge the on-going construction of Muslims as being associated with terrorism. As France sets in motion policies to spend €400 million on counterterrorist measures, including increased data collection and wire-tapping measures and hiring an extra 2,600 counterterrorist staff (Al Jazeera, 2015), Muslims in Germany can expect the already strong racial profiling by the police to worsen: approximately 24 % of Turkish Germans are already stopped at least once a year by the police and 37 % of these had a “perception of ethnic profiling by the police”, meaning that up to 9 % of Turkish people in Germany have at least one experience of police racial profiling each year (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2008: 13).

**Figure 3: Soufeina Hamed’s “Tuffix” 2015 Comic**



*Source: Hamed, 2015*

#### **4. Muslims in the media**

The mainstream media is a key actor in the propagation of constructed Muslim identities and it is important in both mirroring and influencing public and political debate. This section is an exploration of the way four mainstream media publications in Germany portray Muslims. 30 articles from 4 publications were collected from the month of November 2014.



Two criteria were selected for the media analysis: the publications have a national mainstream audience (they have a weekly circulation of over 500,000 (Statista, 2015)); and broadly represent the views of the centre-left (*Stern* and *Die Zeit*) and the centre-right (*Der Spiegel* and *Focus*). Articles were chosen which featured Muslims in Germany and articles that were exclusively about Muslims outside of Germany (such as coverage of events in MENA countries) were not included. The articles were analysed according to the following criteria:

- How Muslims are portrayed as either an homogenous (essentialised) group or with other characteristics such as ethnicity, or type of Islam.
- The stereotypes which are portrayed, e.g. links to terrorism and crime, failed integration, poor treatment of women and intolerance towards LGBT.
- If reference is made to Muslims being a threat to German culture, or Islam not belonging in Germany.
- If Muslims are presented in a binary of the ‘good’ (moderate) and ‘bad’ (fundamentalist) Muslim.
- If there are any mentions of ‘invisible’ Muslims (minorities in minorities), e.g. women who don’t wear headscarves, LGBT Muslims, or Muslims who aren’t religious.

#### **4.1 Portrayals of Muslims in *Stern*, *Die Zeit*, *Der Spiegel* and *Focus***

In the *Stern* articles, Muslims were mostly (80 %) portrayed as an essentialised group. The one exception was an article describing someone as a “German Muslim with Turkish roots” (Stern, 2014c). The stereotypes featured were that all Muslims are religious, linking Muslims with Salafists, the burka ban debate and that Muslims are not liberal when it comes to women’s emancipation, and that multiculturalism is a leftist cultural relativist mistake (Stern, 2014a; 2014b; 2014c). 60 % of the articles featured views that Muslims were a threat to German culture, and/or Islam did not belong in Germany (Bachofer, 2014; Stern 2014a; 2014b; Stern 2014c). 40 % of the articles portrayed Muslims as ‘good’ and ‘bad’: “a liberal Muslim who distances themselves from the Koran” (Gretemeier, 2014). There were no mentions of ‘invisible’ Muslims. In the *Die Zeit* articles, Muslims were mostly (75 %) portrayed as an essentialised group. The exceptions were mentions of Turkish and Syrian ancestry, interracial marriage, being educated, being liberal, and being an “integration New-German” (Freitag, 2014). The stereotypes featured were the failure of multiculturalism’s ‘parallel societies’ (Tettamanti, 2014) and the linking of Muslims with fundamentalism and terrorism (Tettamanti, 2014; Klingst, 2014; Sezgin, 2014; Thielmann, 2014). Only one of the articles (12.5 %)

presented Muslims as being a threat to German culture. 37.5 % of the articles portrayed Muslims as ‘good’ and ‘bad’: “Liberal Muslims are the object of hostility. From Salafists and Jihadists” (Thielmann, 2014). 37.5 % of the articles mentioned ‘invisible’ Muslims, such as LGBT Muslims (Topçu, 2014) and Muslim women who don’t wear headscarves (Thielmann, 2014).

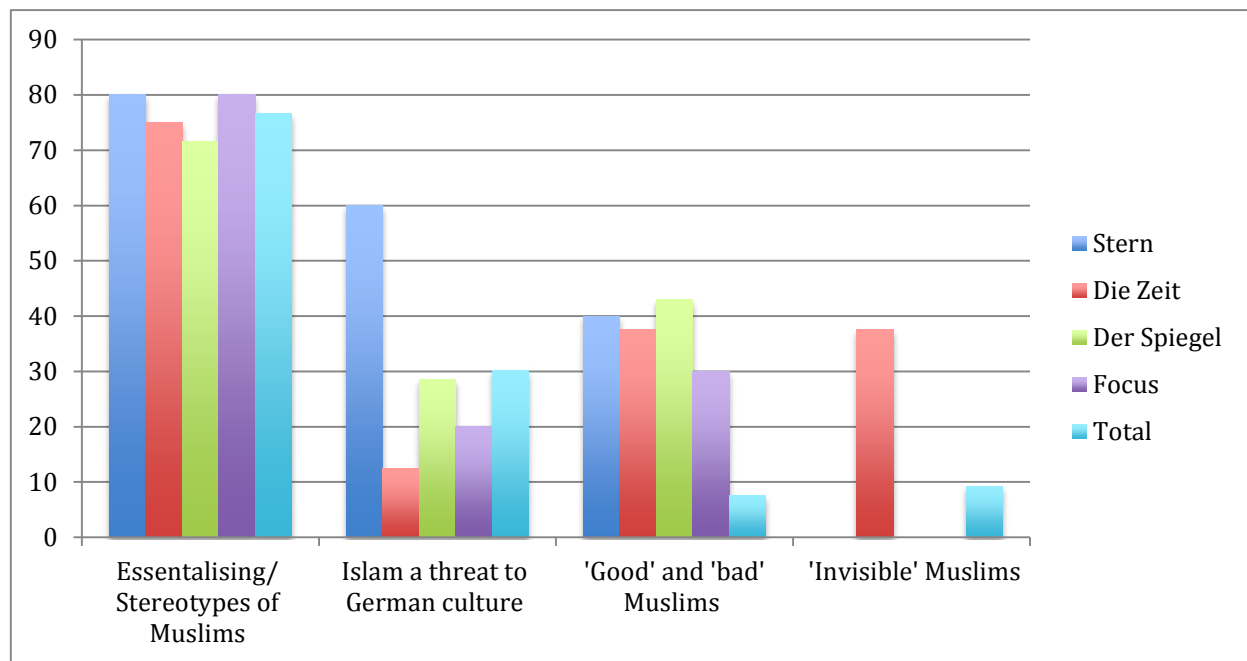
In the *Der Spiegel* articles, Muslims were mostly (71.5 %) portrayed as an essentialised group. The exceptions were mentions of parents’ country of origin being Turkey, Kosovo or Africa, and white Germans converting to Islam (Gezer O. et al, 2014). The stereotypes featured were that all Muslims are religious, the link between Muslims and Salafists, the failure of children of immigrants to integrate and homophobia (Gezer O. et al, 2014; *Der Spiegel*, 2014a-c; Kazim & Münstermann, 2014; Sandberg, 2014; Sydow, 2014). 28.5 % of the articles featured views that Muslims were a threat to German culture, and/or Islam did not belong in Germany “uniting against a common enemy: the presumed danger of Islam” (*Der Spiegel*, 2014c) and “Islamification” of Germany (Sydow, 2014). 43 % of the articles portrayed Muslims as ‘good’ and ‘bad’: “our congregation is ahead of its time” (*Der Spiegel*, 2014c) and “not to relinquish the power of interpretation to the radicals” (*Der Spiegel*, 2014b). There were no mentions of ‘invisible’ Muslims.

In the *Focus* articles, Muslims were mostly (80 %) portrayed as an essentialised group. The exceptions were mentions of being Turkish or Arab (Schattauer, 2014). The stereotypes included references to fundamentalism, Salafists, jihad and terror; headscarves and burqas, and failed integration of immigrants including ‘parallel societies’: “those who identify more with religion than citizenship will capture their districts in their cities” (Kelek, 2014) and linking immigrants with crime (Schattauer, 2014). 20 % of the articles featured views that Muslims were a threat to German culture through such things as population growth (Kelek, 2014). 30 % of the articles portrayed Muslims as ‘good’ and ‘bad’, such as the view that “99 % of Muslims reject the Islamic State” (Stallmann, 2014). There were no mentions of ‘invisible’ Muslims.

#### **4.2 Comparisons of media articles**

When calculating the averages of the four publications, there was 77 % essentialising of Muslims; 30 % included the portrayal of Islam as a threat to German culture; 38 % portrayed the binary of ‘good’ and ‘bad’ Muslims; and 9 % included portrayals of ‘invisible’ Muslims (see Figure 4).

**Figure 4: Portrayals of Muslims in German media articles, in percentages**

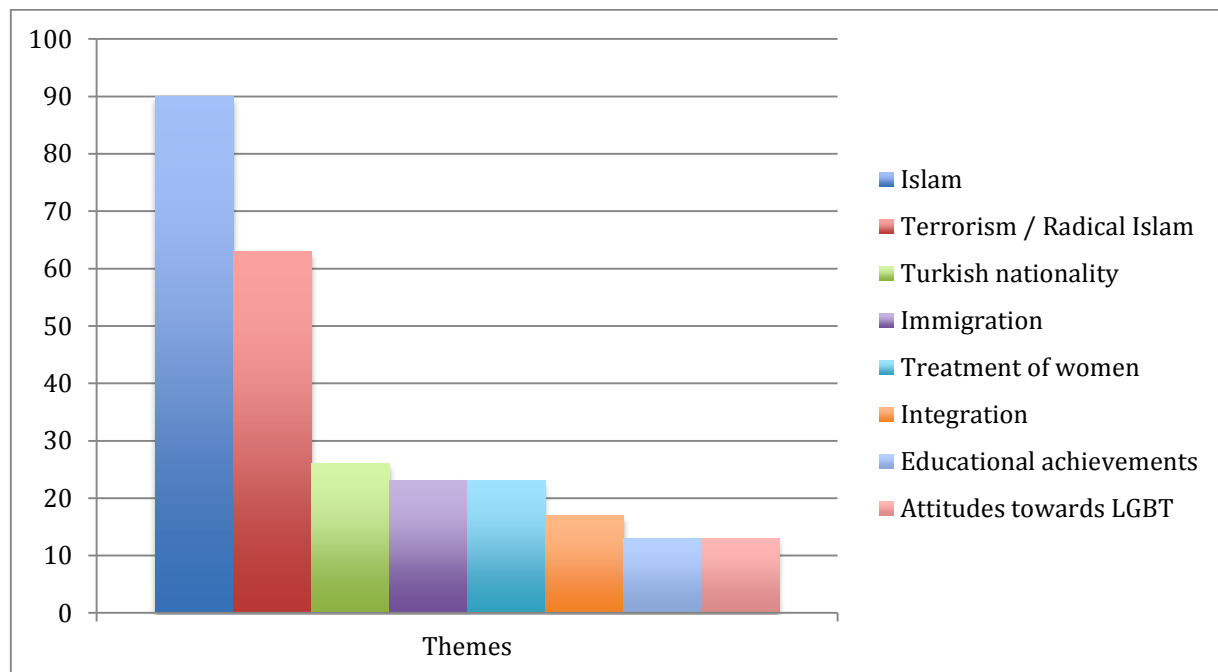


*Source: author, own calculations*

The recurring portrayals of Muslims as a homogenous group of (mostly) Turkish immigrants who have failed to integrate and live in ‘parallel societies’ where the rights of women are marginalised and the educational achievements of children are in need of support, are evident in the percentage of articles that featured these themes (26 % on Turkish nationality, 23 % on immigration, 23 % on treatment of women, 17 % on integration, 13 % on education and 10 % on German language ability). However, the discourse has very much moved its focus towards the topics of Islam, fundamentalism and terrorism. Overall, 90 % of the articles featured the theme of Islam, with a total of 63 % of the articles featuring the themes of radicals, Salafists and terrorism (see Figure 5).

There has to be a new spin on the old stereotypes if they are to grab the attention of readers and sell newspapers. This is done by sensationalist headlines, rather than by measured debate. A selection of the emotive fear-mongering headlines from the 30 articles includes: “7000 radical Islamists live in Germany” (Klingst, 2014), “Whose afraid of Islam? We are!” (Thielmann, 2014), and “A belief to fear” (Klonovsky, 2014), continuing the narrative of the Muslim threat to Germany. And the more right-wing the publication, the more articles about Muslims, with *Focus* having twice as many articles on Muslims in Germany than *Stern*, (10 compared to 5), suggesting that perpetuating stereotypes of Muslims is more beneficial to right-wing interests.

**Figure 5: Main themes of media articles about Muslims in Germany, in percentages**



*Source: author, own calculations*

This analysis demonstrates the central role that Islam has in the media discussion of Muslims in Germany, and the very important role radicalism and terrorism play as themes. Ethnic and cultural identities, such as Turkish, are mentioned, but generally as an additional detail. Other themes relating to immigration, integration and rights debates are regularly featured but play only a supporting role in the rhetoric that all Muslims are overtly religious and Islam has a tendency towards radicalisation.

#### **4.3 Comparing 2014 media articles with pre 9/11 coverage in *Die Zeit***

In contrast to the 30 articles in November 2014, including 8 from *Die Zeit*, there were only a total of 13 articles about Muslims in Germany over the course of the entire 12 months leading up to 9/11 published in *Die Zeit*. This 7-fold increase in articles relating to Muslims in Germany suggests the topic has become much more newsworthy. None of the pre 9/11 articles mentioned either the link between Islam and fundamentalism or the link between Islam and terrorism. Consequently, there was no ‘good/’bad’ Muslim binary present in the essentialised portrayals of Muslims, as Islam’s connection with fundamentalism, radicalization and terrorism was not yet present. No portrayals of ‘invisible’ Muslims were found. The key themes discussed were Islam as a religion (15 %); the *Leitkultur*, antidiscrimination and multiculturalism debate (46 %); the headscarf debate (15 %); and the educational achievements of Turkish immigrants and their

children (23 %). 70 % of the articles referred to people with MENA roots as Muslims, with the remaining 30 % using the term Turkish (Die Zeit, 2000; Dürr, 2000; Janisch, 2000; Jessen, 2000; Leicht, 2000; Lubowitz, 2000; Payrkaya, 2000; Ratzinger, 2000; Hoffritz, 2001; Kaiser, 2001; Sariyaya, 2001; Schmalz-Jacobsen 2001; Werner, 2001).

#### **4.4 Beyond 2014: Patriotic Europeans and Paris Attacks**

The contrast between the 2001 debate over the integration of immigrants, and the anti-Islam movement highlighted in the German press at the end of 2014 is stark. The growing popularity of Pegida (Patriotic Europeans Against the Islamization of the Occident) revealed the fear in some sections of German society that Muslims are a threat to ethnic German culture. In their 2014 Position Paper, Pegida stated they are:

“for the resistance of misogynistic, violent political ideology, but not against the integrated Muslims living here...for the preservation and protection of our Judeo-Christian Occidental culture...for the implementation of citizen referendums based on the Swiss model...against the toleration of parallel societies/ parallel courts in our centre, such as Sharia...against radicalism, regardless of whether it is religiously or politically motivated...(and) against hate preachers, regardless of which religion they belong to.”  
(Pegida, 2014, translation: author)

This position paper plays on the stereotypes of Muslims being radicals, living in ‘parallel societies’ with Sharia law, poor treatment of women and posing a threat to German culture through such things as minaret building. Pegida’s quest for mass media coverage and growing popularity was successful, gaining widespread national and even international media attention (Brenner, 2014).

Only 2 % of Muslims living in Germany live in the federal states of former East Germany (German Conference on Islam, 2009: 311). Considering the strong support that far-right racist groups such as Pegida enjoy in these areas, this suggests that Muslims are less accepted in areas where there are less of them. Approximately 0.1 % of the population in Saxony is made up of Muslims, (Medienservice, 2010) meaning an approximate population of 4054 Muslims live in the whole state. Given that weekly Pegida protests against Muslims on the streets of Dresden grew to 17,000 in December 2014, this accounts for one Muslim for each four people attending the protest. Thus, it is physically absent (literally invisible) Muslims who form the base for this abstract fear of Muslims and its resulting negative portrayals of Muslims ‘islamifying’

Germany. The fear of Islamification is then not just about the Muslims who are in Germany, but of those who ‘are coming’, i.e. future immigrants, particularly refugees from the civil war in Syria. These refugees, often stranded at the gates of the EU, living in desperate conditions and needing the EU to make good on its human rights values, already have enemies awaiting them in Germany if they are ever to arrive. That the most vulnerable citizens of the world are portrayed as a threat to ethnic Germans is a disgrace that even Chancellor Merkel recognised in her condemnation of Pegida as having “hatred in their hearts” (Merkel, quoted in *The Guardian*, 2014).

**Figure 6: Soufeina Hamed’s “Tuffix” 2014 Comic**



*Source: Hamed, 2014*

January 2015 saw Muslims in the headlines for terrorism again, with the AQAP Charlie Hebdo attacks in Paris. Yet as the November media analysis and the December rise in prominence of Pegida show, Muslims are never out of the headlines and Islam is never free from suspicion; the only thing that changes is how often and for how long they are on the front page and how strong the connection to terrorism is. *Focus*' front cover following the Paris attacks featured a machine gun and the phrase “This has got nothing to do with Islam – Yes it does!”, *Der Spiegel*'s front cover had “The terror of losers” printed over the picture of the three Muslims assailants in the Paris attacks, *Die Zeit*'s read “Living with Terror” and *Stern*'s title read: “Islam and Europe. The eternal rage. From Napoleon to the Paris attacks – 200 years of bloody confrontation” (translation: author, see Figure 7). The portrayal of Muslims as Islamic terrorists, at battle with ‘the West’ was played out, once again.

**Figure 7: Front pages of *Die Zeit*, *Focus*, *Stern* and *Der Spiegel*, in January 2015, following the AQAP attacks in Paris**



*Source: Die Zeit, Focus, Stern and Der Spiegel, 2015*

### 5. Minorities in minorities and minorities against minorities

The actual diversity of Muslim identities and how these are represented in Germany is a complex and sometimes conflicting negotiation between various groups and individuals, influenced not only by the dominant European (Orientalist) discourse on Islam, European forms of Islam and by Global Islam, but also by other factors such as minority rights’ debates. This section explores how feminism and LGBT rights feature in the portrayal of Muslim identities. Muslim feminists and Muslim LGBT are some of the ‘invisible’ Muslims, minorities in minorities which non-Muslim liberals often claim they are saving when criticizing Islam. Are these voices ignored or vilified within Muslim communities?

The category of ‘invisible’ Muslims does not simply mean adding one more identity to the mix. ‘Invisible’ not only challenges the binary of ‘good’/‘bad’, moderate/fundamentalist, it includes power dynamics within Muslim communities and questions stereotypes of Muslims as, for example, anti-feminist and anti-LGBT. Moreover, more than one identity can be performed at any one time, and the line between ‘good’ and ‘bad’ depends on who sets it. For instance, Muslims may visit more than one mosque, without having strict loyalty to a single organisation, and without necessary having strict agreement with the mosque’s views (Bendixsen, 2013: 104), but if one mosque is labelled ‘good’ (such as DITIB) and another ‘bad’ (such as Milli Görüs) by the government authorities, this leaves the individual Muslim attendee at risk of being profiled as a fundamentalist despite not necessarily being so. Some Muslim organisations don’t wish to be identified with those who have been labelled fundamentalist by the authorities, out of fear of reputation “contamination” which may lead to their organisation also being placed on the federal watch list (Bendixsen, 2013: 100). Thus Muslim identities performed by subjects

themselves are also a conscious negotiation between what the German government perceive to be good and bad.

### **5.1 Limitations of religious representation**

Only 20 % of German Muslims are formal members of a religious association (German Conference on Islam, 2009: 14) and only 13 % are “actively involved in a religious community” (ibid: 316). Therefore it is difficult to assess to what extent a religious organisation truly represents its formal and informal members, something acknowledged by the German Islam Conference: “The Muslim organisations represented in the German Islam Conference represent a minority of Muslims in Germany” (ibid: 330). This claim to representation can be broken down as follows: DITIB 16 %, Association of Islamic Cultural Centres (VIKZ) 7 %, Alevi community in Germany (AABF) 4 %, Central Council of Muslims in Germany (ZMD) 3 %, Islamic Council for the Federal Republic of Germany (IRD) 2 %, and the Coordinating Council of Muslims in Germany (KRM) 2 % (ibid: 317). A small number of Muslims (approximately 1 %) are involved in Islamist Muslims organisations, and an even smaller percentage (about 0.1 %) are involved in Islamist groups prepared to use violence. That Muslim religious organisations represent only up to a third of Muslims means that two thirds of Germany’s Muslims are not formally represented (as Muslims) by them.

### **5.2 Minorities in minorities – feminism in Muslim communities**

The ‘headscarf debate’ in Germany produced a 2004 Constitutional Court ruling that wearing a headscarf shows “lack of cultural integration” (Fekete, 2009: 71). It has also been used as proof of women’s oppression in Muslim communities. Yet in actuality only 28 % of Muslim women wear a headscarf (German Conference on Islam, 2009: 319), with only 12 % saying they wear a headscarf because of family demands (German Conference on Islam, 2009: 319-320), and half of highly religious Muslim women not wearing a headscarf at all (German Conference on Islam, 2009: 14), which questions stereotypes about who wears a headscarf and why. Nevertheless, the headscarf remains a convenient symbol for those who criticize Islam as being even more patriarchal and misogynist than society already is.

There are feminist voices within Muslim communities who are often very critical of outside attempts to ‘save’ them by non-Muslim feminist groups. They criticize these groups for placing western feminist ideals on Islamic practices and thus ignoring the still-existing deficits in gender



equality for all women in Germany (Aktionsbündnis muslimischer Frauen, 2011: 1). One non-Muslim feminist group critical of Islam is Femen, whose main protest tactic is to write protest slogans on their partially naked bodies. After Femen's topless protest outside Ahmadiyya Mosque in Berlin in 2013, a group of Muslim women staged a counter-protest, parodying Femen with slogans of their own (see Figure 8), rejecting the Femen narrative that all Muslim women live in a Stockholm-syndrome relationship with Muslim men (Ulusoy, 2013: 8). According to Ulusoy, one of the counter-protesters, "Feminism does not mean that I present other women as victims, rather that I support them. Particularly when I don't always like their decisions. Freedom and feminism is when I allow each person their freedom, independent of my own life path and convictions. Everyone doesn't have to share these" (Ulusoy, 2013: 9, translation: author).

**Figure 8: Muslim women protesting in front of the Ahmadiyya Mosque in Berlin, 2013**



*Source: Netzwerk Gegen Diskriminierung von Muslimen, 2013*

Non-Muslim feminists often ignore feminist activities in the Muslim community. One example of these groups is the Network Against Discrimination of Muslims. They meet with women's groups at all types of mosques including those linked with Salafism, in order to help gain solidarity in the fight against discrimination (Netzwerk Gegen Diskriminierung von Muslimen, 2013: 5).

Another Muslim woman who offers alternative portrayals of Muslim women is cartoonist Soufeina Hamed. She draws comics to "create transparency and dialogue" (Hamed, 2013: 33). Her themes "show the banality as well as the particularities and problems for a Muslim

woman...I want to show that we are all more similar than we (want to) believe. Muslims are actually just as boring as all the others. We have our tiny differences which make living together all the more exciting” (Hamed, 2013: 33, translation author). Her comics confront stereotypes of Muslims as foreigners, and anti-Muslim movements such as Pegida, and the criticism of Islam as not being vocal enough against terrorism (see Figures 3, 6 and 9).

**Figure 9: Soufeina Hamed’s “Tuffix” 2013 Comic**



Source: Hamed, 2015

### 5.3 Minorities against minorities? Islamophobia versus homophobia

Muslims in Germany are often portrayed as being homophobic, with Islam being the ‘intolerant’ religion when compared with Christianity. Yet German society is still rather broadly homophobic itself. In the 2010 European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) LGBT survey, 67 % of respondents said that discrimination against LGBT was either fairly or very widespread in German daily life (FRA, 2010) and 26 % of respondents said that assaults on LGBT in Germany were fairly or very widespread (FRA, 2010). 46 % of respondents answered “yes” to the question “In the last 12 months, (in Germany), have you personally felt discriminated against or harassed on the grounds of sexual orientation?” (FRA, 2010). With this in mind, any connections made between Muslims and discrimination towards LGBT in Germany should also acknowledge that homophobia comes from all sectors of society.

While feminist voices have met with some positive approval inside Muslim communities in their support of Muslim women’s self-empowerment, the situation regarding non-Muslim and Muslim LGBT is more complicated. This uneasy relationship was recently exhibited in Berlin. Leadership Berlin, a civil society organisation, planned a meeting for November 2014 between

the DITIB Şehitlik Mosque, which participates in Mosque Open Day, and LGBT groups such as LSVD (Lesbian and Gay Federation of Germany) on the topic of “Islam and homophobia”, to be held at the Şehitlik Mosque. The event received a lot of negative media attention in Turkey which led to it being cancelled. In their subsequent press release, the Şehitlik Mosque wrote “it was not our goal to legitimize any concept (i.e. homosexuality) that is sinful according to our religion” (LGBT News Turkey, 2014). Thus the initially promising meeting to counter portrayals of Muslims as homophobic backfired, with media headlines such as “Berlin mosque shut the door on gays!” (Kaos GL, 2014). At the event, which finally took place at an alternative location, Şehitlik Mosque spokespeople stated they did not endorse homosexuality, as they considered it sinful, but did respect LGBT and condemned any violence or discrimination against them, and would welcome LGBT to visit the mosque (Leadership Berlin, 2014). LSVD rejected the change of location and did not attend what it called an “alibi event” since for them it was vital the event took place in the mosque (Queer.de, 2014). The LGBT press was also not convinced with what they considered to be vague answers and homophobic comparisons of homosexuals with alcoholics. Instead they stated that a “sexual revolution in Islam” was necessary (Siegessäule, 2014). While hardly LGBT-friendly, the official Şehitlik Mosque position of tolerance and respect, and condemnation of discrimination and attacks on LGBT, is a challenge to the view widespread in LGBT organisations that Muslims are more homophobic than non-Muslims (Castro Varela, 2008: 14). But until the two standpoints of the homophobic ‘homosexuality is a sin’ and the Islamophobic ‘Islam needs a sexual revolution’ views can find a compromise, the perception of Muslims as intolerant of homosexuality will live on in Germany.

A clue to how a compromise may come about can be learned from listening to the voices of Muslim LGBT activists themselves. LGBT activists in Palestine state that “Homophobia is not the way we contextualize our struggle. This notion comes from a specific type of activism in the global north...Religion is often an important part of Palestinian LGBT people’s identities. We respect all of our communities’ identities and make space for diversity” (Hilal, 2013). Thus Islam can’t just be moulded into the Global North’s template for a sexual revolution – LGBT Muslims must be the starting point for change. GLADT (Gays and Lesbians from Turkey) and LesMigras are two LGBT German Muslim groups who reject the simplistic link between homophobia and Muslim communities. GLADT argues that the ethnicisation of attacks on LGBT downplays the rise of fascism among all types of people across many countries (Jentsch & Sanders, 2008: 31). LesMigras notes that people can face multiple discriminations based on

their “multiple belongings” and that “Individual experiences of discrimination are hierarchized and played against one another: one example of this would be the claim that homophobia is worse than racism and therefore homophobia should be dealt with first” (LesMigras, 2009).

## 6. Conclusion

Hard multiculturalism in Germany has been used to essentialise and exclude Muslims, and justify assimilationist policies and the lack of multicultural policies. A protectionist fear of change, with its roots in Orientalism, drives the Islamophobic *Leitkultur* which seeks to resist Muslim cultural influences in Germany. But attempting to shut the door on Muslim influences only serves to threaten German culture in a different way, by making it more exclusionary and a breeding ground for right-wing nationalism.

Progressive multiculturalism and acknowledgement of hybrid identities would better reflect realities in Germany. To have a thriving progressive multicultural society, the hegemonic cultural identity has to adapt to other cultures, thus creating space for hybrid identities whilst itself dynamically transforming into an enriched cultural landscape with multiple ways of performing a national identity. Culture doesn't have to be a competitive zero-sum game with space only for one dominant language, ethnicity and religion, while other cultures stay on the fringes.

Therefore policy would be wise to move beyond an assimilationist form of integration and embrace progressive multiculturalism. Germany's MIPEX rating of 57 or “halfway favourable”, on an index where 100 would mean complete comparable equality between immigrants and non-immigrants (Mipex, 2014) shows there is a lot of room for improvement in immigration and integration policy. Yet it must be remembered that ethnic minorities have desires for political participation beyond merely integrating into the dominant culture, and at some point there must be a return to the language of multiculturalism if Germany is to move beyond subsidized language courses and limited dual citizenship rights and truly accommodate the demands of ethnic minority voices.

One of these demands which must be addressed by policy is the introduction of Islamic religious instruction at state schools, something which 76 % of Muslims are in favour of (German Conference on Islam, 2009: 318). Institutionalisation (and therefore state funding) of Islam should also be seriously discussed if Islam is to achieve official equality with Christianity.

These would both require in depth consultation with all stakeholders, as not all Muslims favour institutionalisation, and many Muslims have only informal interactions with religious organisations, or none at all.

Improving opportunities (and reducing discrimination) for Muslims in the areas of education, training and labour market outcomes is essential, something the German Conference on Islam advocates for through targeting the “the social situation (social background, education, employment, income)” of Muslims in Germany (German Conference on Islam, 2009: 334). Investing in the ‘educational upward mobility’ of Muslims must be undertaken with an awareness of the socio-economic and class barriers to education in Germany. Affirmative action, to help ethnic minorities in poor districts in Germany escape the constraints of the intersection of classism and racism, and not using poverty as proof of failure, is urgently needed; condemnation of racist right-wing groups is not enough. Promoting anti-discrimination campaigns and more positive images of Muslims in the mainstream press and public spaces are needed for countering negative stereotypes and portraying the actual diversity of Muslim identities in Germany, including those whose voices are often not heard, such as feminists and LGBT. Muslim identities have often been defined from the outside as a overly simplistic binary of ‘good’ and ‘bad’ Muslims, where the ‘good’ Muslim integrates into German society and practises Islam privately, and the ‘bad’ Muslim holds uncompromising fundamentalist views they wish to spread, coupled with political intentions. There is some space in Muslim communities for ‘invisible’ Muslims such as feminists, who are also often resistant to non-Muslim feminist critiques of Islam. The situation regarding LGBT Muslims is more complicated, as they face homophobia inside and outside of the Muslim community. However, Muslim LGBT organisations can avoid ‘taking sides’ in the Islamophobic/homophobic debate and pursue their own agenda for recognition and change.

Options for future research into the changing way Muslim identities are portrayed in Germany include studying the political aspirations of German Muslims, and how they would like to transform society in ways that escape the polarities of assimilation and fundamentalism. Rather than devoting all research efforts to exploring how a few thousand German Muslims have become radicalised, it would be fruitful to also explore how the other 4 million Muslims want to improve the country they live in and give voice to their ideas for ending discriminatory portrayals of their identities.

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