Believing and belonging? Religious salience and politicality of young Bosnian Muslims in the time of Islamophobia

Francesco Trupia

View supplementary material ⧉

Published online: 02 Jan 2025.

Submit your article to this journal ⧉

Article views: 276

View related articles ⧉

View Crossmark data ⧉

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

Believing and belonging? Religious salience and politicality of young Bosnian Muslims in the time of Islamophobia

Francesco Trupia ⬤

Department of Cultural Studies, Faculty of Humanities, Nicholas Copernicus University in Toruń, Toruń, Poland

ABSTRACT

After fleeing war-torn Yugoslavia, the Bosnian Muslim diaspora quickly developed institutions of sociability and solidarity in 'the West.' Although they align with a moderate and secular Islam, the generation born after the war endures a climate of hate and hostility. This study investigates how young Bosnian Muslims nurture political participation and keep peddling the stereotype that Muslims threaten liberal democracy. It looks at how the group under study responds to the disadvantages inherent in the post-migrant situatedness and religious identity in Belgium, Germany, and Poland. Collected qualitative data show that a high level of religious salience does not obstruct integration and civic engagement but instead stimulates unconventional and non-institutional political participation. The findings also indicate that young Muslims with Bosnian roots do not resent their family heritage and Muslim community. Yet they self-reiterate a sense of remoteness with other post-diasporic Muslim communities by associating themselves with 'European Islam.'

Introduction

'How far are we Muslims?' Alija Izetbegović, the first president of independent Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1992, raised this question in his Islamic Declaration (Izetbegović 1990, 17) written in the wake of the decolonization age (Rexhepi 2023, 45) but only officially published in 1990 in Sarajevo.

Inspired by his inquiry, this paper investigates the religious salience and political sensitivities of young Muslims born or raised outside Bosnia and Herzegovina (hereinafter, Bosnia) after their families fled war-torn Yugoslavia in the early 1990s. Since 'muscular liberalism' and multicultural policies have recently been shown to provoke a side-effect for Europe-born Muslims with family migration heritage (Rippin 2001; Leiken 2012; Triadafilopoulos 2011; Van Deth 2016; Allievi 2017; Kwon and Hughes 2018), this paper aims to explore potential responses and critiques of this generation to the current instability of liberal democracy. It then scrutinizes how, if at all, the 'Bosnian

CONTACT Francesco Trupia ✉ trupia.francesco90@gmail.com; trupia@umk.pl ⬤ Department of Cultural Studies, Faculty of Humanities, Nicholas Copernicus University in Toruń, 3, Fosa Staromiejska, Room 401a, Collegium Maius, Toruń, Poland

style' of Islam (Bringa 1995) conceives of normative elements of rights and citizenship when identity dilemmas arise vis-à-vis the alarming rise of exclusionary nationalism and Islamophobia.

The scope of this qualitative study is threefold. First, it seeks to discover the potential involvement in political and civic activism, or the roots of alienation from politics, of the group under study. Second, it scrutinizes how members of this post-war and post-migrant generation have settled in and adjusted to a thoroughly 'post-secular society' (Habermas 2009, 59). Third, it looks at how Islam is limited, compromized, or informed by other (post-)diasporic communities originally from Muslim-majority countries in the Middle East, Africa, and Central Asia.

In proceeding to discuss this threefold perspective, this study addresses some caveats across a wide variety of primarily qualitative research. Among the second and third generations of Muslim families in Western Europe, changes and discrepancies of cultural and religious salience remain extraordinarily difficult to detect, measure, and quantify (Lecoyer 2020, 151–153; Hurd 2008, 21). Other factors proxy to Muslims (for example gender, age, place of birth), unlike economic indicators or voter turnout data, do not reveal significant results in terms of political participation (Azabar and Van Aelst 2024, 14). When related to religious questions with political implications, young Muslims with Bosnian roots have been studied through the lens of the diaspora. Assuming that a low-profile attitude and mentality would have been transferred across generations, new modes of political participation and religious salience remain under-researched in spite of the disappearance of Yugo clubs (Bougarel 2008, 5) and the inner divisions in the associative landscape (Bougarel 2008, 155; Bougarel and Mihaylova 2005, 12; Merdjanova 2013, 105).

After introducing the theoretical framework and the research method, the second part of the paper is organized in three sections. The first discusses the different forms and means of political participation of the group under study in a time of rampant Islamophobia. Hence, the city becomes the realm where a great deal of compromise happens, especially in relation to the different tactics of complying with values and norms of Islam and modern views of citizenship. In closing, the last section addresses how young Bosnian Muslims[1] living in 'the West' hold and nurture relations with other Muslims in their place of residence. Therefore, this study is theoretically guided by the following general question: *how does the generation of Bosnian Muslims born in 'the West' nurture practices of political participation in the time of Islamophobia?*

Theoretical framework

Under the guise of laicism, political scientists have emphasized the tenets of a society *without identity*. Within this, only democratic institutions can effectively formulate social virtues, and welfare activities (Boutayeb 2023, 42) around the desire of citizens to live well together and deliberate about the common good (Potulski 2020, 16). While it was long thought that religious salience would decline in modern societies (Azabar and Van Aelst 2024, 1), religion has by no means disappeared in today's modern world (Asad 2003). In fact, religions penetrate power structures and compromise the formulation of authority (Hurd 2008, 121) and the constitution of society and its communities (Scott 2005, 136). Islam, in particular, has come to challenge the

laicism thesis as Muslims themselves absorb a system of knowledge that incorporates ideals, principles, and values expressed in the Qur'an and the Sunnah (Byrd 2017, 13). Their religious salience entails the combination of sincere intentions and personal matters with ultimate commitments (*niyyah*), while their social identity provides the grounding for private and public life (Fleischmann and Phalet 2018, 46; Rippin 2001, 177).

In the post-9/11 era, significant concerns have been raised particularly due to the degree of public (in)visibility of the actual majority of ordinary Muslims whose everyday worries and encounters are often obscured by an intense, albeit ideologically loaded, public outcry (Sofos and Tsagarousianou 2013, 26). While most European Muslims with migration heritage seem secularized in their worldviews and daily practices, *ethnic*, *cultural*, *political*, and *religious* layers play a pivotal role in 'being a Muslim' (Sander 2014). Other proxy factors such as generational changes, genderism, and socio-cultural and geographical features (Grünenberg 2005, 189) influence differently the generations of descendants of Muslim families. Nonetheless, Islam has been essentialized through a monolithic image of otherness (El-Tayeb 2012) and it has become almost synonymous of immigration (Torrekens 2021). This association equalizes Europe-born Muslims with the much larger groups of newcomers from non-European countries, preventing both from enacting postulates of solidarity with the pleas of the ummah (Rexhepi 2017, 55; Ferizaj 2019) lest they face accusations of 'nativism' or 'woke gatekeeping' (Ferizaj 2023).

In light of muscular liberalism aiming to protect Western models of toleration, acceptance, and non-conformity by whatever means (Triadafilopoulos 2011), the latter often places religious minorities in a defensive position (Asad 2003, 8) or eventually unleashes side effects among those who are supposed to be acknowledged and protected (Kwon and Hughes 2018). At the same time, young Muslims have founded mosques only for women, including female imams (so-called 'Femimam'), stood up for progressive forms of Islam, embraced feminist philosophies, supported LGBTQI+ rights, and even criticized old-fashioned religious organizations (Khankan 2018, 61). In this regard, El-Tayeb refers to the experiences of 'Queer Muslims' in unravelling multiple positionalities in line with unstable, strategic, and always-shifting performative identities (El-Tayeb 2011, xxxvi). Khankan speaks of 'Critical Muslims' to highlight a different engagement between co-religionists from the West and the Middle East on theological, cultural, and political grounds (2018, 60). Sofos and Tsagarousianou (2013, 82) argue that the political participation of European Muslims may influence the fields of rights advocacy, citizenship, inclusion and anti-racist campaigns where 'Islam' may penetrate the fabric of dailiness even in the most mundane circumstances. Hence, Julia Gerlach (2006) identifies a 'popular Islam,' better known as 'pop Islam,' in describing the tendency of young, postmigrant Muslims to adapt their system of religious beliefs to fashion, music, media, and national identity. In practice, young Muslims experience Islam through actions of mutual understanding and solidarities with the rest of the *ummah* rather than in the strict religious sense of the term (Sofos and Tsagarousianou 2013, 63). These phenomena remain either largely unheard of (Finkelstein 2023, 10), or subaltern to the much louder Islamophobic mainstream (Boutayeb 2023), and many think twice before they dare accentuate a genuine agency in a time of rampant Islamophobia. The latter is not exclusive to isolated and marginal far-right movements but part of mainstream public discourse (Rexhepi 2015, 191) and used as a politically conditioned instrument for

categorizing human diversity (Bobako 2015, 43) where the status of Muslimness is racialized (Özyürek 2015) and recognized as a potential threat to liberal democracy (Jones 2021).

After the dissolution of Yugoslavia, the process of integration in the West has been long and painstaking for many Balkan Muslims. Yet they have quickly developed institutions of sociability and solidarity once they took root (Sofos and Tsagarousianou 2013, 49). Overall, they have historically aligned themselves with moderate, secular, and unconnected radical positions of political Islam (Mark et al. 2019, 169). In the case of Bosnian Muslims, the ethnicization of 'their Islam' has also been paramount to smooth integration and the merging of Western lifestyle with the binding pillars of Islam.[2] Similar to older generations (Bougarel and Mihaylova 2005, 10), young Muslims with Bosnian roots seem to have taken distance from non-European versions of Islam and their preachers, despite the continuous othering that assorts them with other Muslims and contributes to their minoritization (Sofos and Tsagarousianou 2013, 26). That said, scholars so far have concentrated their attention on the post-traumatic experiences of uprooting, the legacies of the siege of Sarajevo (1992–1996) and the 1995 Genocide in Srebrenica. Others have focused on the socioeconomic and professional aspects of integration in 'the West', constructing knowledge of the demographics of the diaspora (Halilovich et al. 2018) given the lack of 'hard data' (Sahadžić 2021).

Theoretically, the group under study is not understood in terms of *second-generation*, *second-generation immigrants*, or *migrant descendants* as mostly used in migration studies (Riniolo and Toivanen 2023). These do not only ascribe a marker of non-belonging (El-Tayeb 2011). They also imply a categorically different, albeit 'European,' category of belonging (Rexhepi 2023, 15) which is trite and banal for Muslims in/from the Balkans who have come to pay a high price for regulating, controlling and restricting their Muslimness to be part of the tolerant, secular, and European 'we-ness' (Karić et al. 2023; Ferizaj 2023; El-Tayeb 2001, xxvi). Thus, young Muslims with Bosnian roots are here referred to as a 'post-modern epistemic community' united around waves of post-memories and self-identification with family and community heritage (Sofos and Tsagarousianou 2013, 73). In it, the transmission of knowledge and the legacies of discrimination, wartime, genocidal violence, and the economic exploitation, which caused migration and dislocation of their family members, strengthen ties between the latter and the generation born and raised outside Bosnia. For instance, the plight of the Bosnian War (1992–1995) and especially the Genocide in Srebrenica (1995) are seminal events. Here, the 'epistemic function' of Islam can accommodate relevant data in political science and international relations theories, thereby developing transnational theories that can extend beyond the conventional theories of war and peace (Sandal 2011, 932). Following Thomas Scott (2005, 108–112), the body of religious and cultural knowledge transferred through performative rituals and normative beliefs of living modernity, bears the 'generation after' to the previous ones. Bosnia is also a central, if not unique, marker of identity (Riniolo and Toivanen 2023, 304); a place of non-memory that still communicates violence and injustice through generations (Posłuszny 2019, 65). Rather than the second-generation term, Marianne Hirsch's concept of 'generation of postmemory' better explicates the relationship that the group under study bears to personal, collective, and cultural traumas or transformations of those who came before (2012, 5). It helps also understand why 'Bosnian Islam' may reassert a political identity of remembering, healing

and reconciling rather than depicting a 'Bosnian way of being Muslim' (Karić et al. 2023). In effect, this gross mischaracterization reinforces the premise of a secular and Western kind of Islam compatible with European modernity, thereby dictating the condition for Balkan Muslims to be recognized as Europeans (Rexhepi 2023, 13) after mulling their Islam (Rexhepi 2019; Merdjanova 2013, 116) in opposition to that of Black, brown, and Arab Muslims (Rexhepi 2023, 65).

This is why, among others, Koinova and Karabegović (2016) analyse the subfield of transitional justice on different scales of the Bosnian diaspora engagement, thereby investigating how mobilization can go beyond the causal mechanisms of coordination and commemoration initiatives (Karabegović 2014, 2019). As they hold a clear position about what they (can) say as a form of self-expression (Hurd 2008, 24), religious salience and political sensitivities may depend on family-oriented and/or diaspora-laden beliefs and practices of Islam. Moreover, it may also activate political participation similar to other descendants of immigrant families originally from Turkey, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, and Pakistan living in France, Germany, and the UK (Leiken 2012; Azabar and Van Aelst 2024). During the Bosnian war (1992–95), the arrival of mujahideen to join the Muslim-Bosniak military leadership constituted a precedent for the latest engagement of a number of radicalized Bosnian Muslims in the Syrian battlefield (Metodieva 2023). Granted that such phenomena are relevant, radical and extremist plots seem foreign to young Muslims with Bosnian roots. If anything, they verbalize discomfort and frustration over the gross human rights violation of Muslims in Palestine, the 1991 events in Iraq, and the recent wars in Syria and Afghanistan, because they all echo the experiences of war and injustice that parents and relatives endured during the collapse of Yugoslavia.

Research method

This research paper is a culmination of empirical qualitative research based on intensive fieldwork conducted over the course of one year (November 2022-October 2023). The fieldwork was carried out mainly in Antwerp (Belgium) and Bremen (Germany), given the interestingly (sub-)urban and inner-city dynamics of their multicultural landscape, such as Durne and Borgerhout and Gröpelingen, respectively. In addition, in-depth interviews were conducted in Warsaw and Toruń (Poland).

These three locations were not chosen randomly. Antwerp hosts about 1,800 Bosnians who arrived in Belgium due to the Yugoslavian war (Halilovich et al. 2018, 18). As the biggest city of the Flanders, with more than half of its local population of immigrant origin, Antwerp is Europe's most racist city according to the Eurobarometer (mentioned by Hoops 2021). Islamophobia has become a major concern because part of the rhetoric of Flemish nationalism. Islam has been questioned with regard to its apparent incompatibility with the Western and Flemish cultures (Smits 2023, 90). In Bremen, fieldwork was conducted purposely in Gröpelingen, a multicultural neighbourhood whose suburban dynamics and 16,000 émigrés from the Balkans are often depicted negatively (De Pommereau 2020). While Islamophobia seemingly overweighs the apparent failure of the integration policies in 'the West', Poland was chosen as an interesting case to compare. Muslims have never constituted a statistically significant phenomenon, but most Poles believe that the number is closer to 10% and even growing (Pędziwiatr 2018).

This overestimation fuels Islamophobia in media headlines and the whole society (Blachnicka 2014, 52), motivating violence even against people having little to do with Islam (Bobako 2015, 43).

Of the 31 interviewees residing in Belgium, Germany, and Poland, 24 were born outside Bosnia, while 7 fled the country immediately after being born or in early childhood. The latter group of interviewees admits to holding neither memories of the experiences of migration nor consciousness of Bosnia's war dynamics and political atmosphere in the 1990s. As introduced above, they can be considered as members of the 'generation after' (Hirsch 2012) as personal and religious identity has been shaped by a web of memories along with a set of religious practices passed down outside their birthplace. Most parents are originally from Banja Luka and other towns in Northwestern Bosnia, such as Prijedor, Sanski Most, Bihać, and Ključ. A few have their parents originally from Sarajevo and Sandžak – a historically Muslim-majority region divided between Serbia and Montenegro. As recollected throughout in-depth interviews, most of the interviewees' fathers served the Bosnian army, whereas mothers and other relatives were detainees of the Serb-organized concentration camps in the Keraterm factory, the Omarska mines complex and the Trnopolje camp. Some recollected the experiences of their families leaving home just before the war: they were either pressured by Serbian neighbours, or insecure due to the intensifying echoes of war in Croatia. Others recollected the journey out of Bosnia during the war and arrived in Austria and Germany via the Croatian and Slovenian seaside.

The final sample of interviewees is composed of 21 men and 10 women between 19 and 35 years of age. At the time of the fieldwork, many were students who already held at least a bachelor's degree and were pursuing other certifications in a wealth of disciplines. Others were instead employed in different sectors. In both groups, many were found volunteering in the youth association (in Bosnian, *Mreža Mladih*) connected with the local mosques and the larger Bosnian Muslim community in their place of residence. Both education profile and personal aspirations have been an important specificity as critical perspectives and knowledge do not reflect the typically marginalized positionality often ascribed to post-migrant Muslim communities. Nonetheless, it should be pointed out that 8 interviews were conducted through an online questionnaire. As a male researcher and outsider to the Bosnian and Muslim diaspora, the online questionnaire was a more accessible means to grant participation and comply with the ethics of approachability. In addition, mosques remain a physically divided space between men and women, especially during the monthly 'unclean' period (Mushaben 2008, 516), and dominated by (hegemonic) male norms. Hence, participation was granted online at the convenience of female interviewees in order to guarantee a non-threatening and safe space, in both physical and emotional aspects of it (Mayorga-Gallo and Hordge-Freeman 2017, 381). Of 10 female interviewees, 7 expressed interest in participating in the study by filling out the online questionnaire.

Besides 'approachability', the fieldwork came to question my positionality. While partaking in community commemorations and/or attending family events, I was aware of being (with) the Other. The research approach was inspired by an ethnographic sensibility (Simmons and Smith 2017), employed to detect potential concerns, interests, commitments, and inconspicuous modes of practicing Islam (see Angrosino 2007; Millar 2018; Geertz 1973; Given 2008: among others). Therefore, participation-observation was

carried out only upon personal invitation to community events such as *iftar* evenings during Ramadan in Antwerp (Belgium), the 'peace march' for the commemoration of the 1995 Genocide in Srebrenica in Dortmund, classes of Islamic knowledge in Bremen (Germany), and recreational activities at the mosque in Warsaw (Poland). In the case of Poland, in-depth interviews were also conducted in a safe and familiar environment for the interviewees, such as the workplace or other public spaces.

The selection of participants was made by the snowball method. Potential interviewees were invited to participate voluntarily in an in-depth interview and given a Participation Information Sheet (PIS) to inform them about the overall research, the interview objectives, and their rights during and after the interview. After collecting basic information, each interview (including those online) was driven by the same semi-structured and theme-guided questionnaire comprizing three open-ended research questions (RQ). As follows:

RQ$_1$: If at all, how do you participate in the political life of your place of residence?
RQ$_2$: How does Islam guide your everyday life, if at all, amidst the current crisis of liberal democracy and Islamophobia?
RQ$_3$: To what extent does your Muslimness diverge from, or conform with, the rest of the Muslim communities living in your place of residence?

With 'political participation' and 'place of residence' the interviewee was invited to reflect on any sort of public/civic engagement in the everyday life of any familiar locality in town. Potential participation was explored by discussing the importance of the public/private divide, in between which personal behaviour was expected to assign meaning to a specific space (Posłuszny 2019, 59). RQ$_1$ was also raised to detect how phenomena of Islamophobia and anti-migration discourse constrain religious salience or stimulate political action of any sort. Hence, the second part of the interview was aimed at discussing how potential respondents navigate two seemingly competitive situations: first, a sense of self-identification with Bosnia and their family's religious heritage and, second, the normative elements of citizenship in their place of residence. More precisely, RQ$_2$ and RQ$_3$ did not only seek to evaluate the level of religious salience in the context of an ongoing process of adaptation of Bosnian Islam in the West (Bougarel 2008, 12). In light of the much older presence of non-European Muslim communities, both questions aimed at investigating a set of daily practices enacted by interviewees to counteract nativist discourse and Islamophobia. This part of the interview attempts to prove or debunk the promise that, at least in theory, the more zealous a Muslim is in her/his religious salience, the more radical s/he may become in her/his political activities (Roy 2013, 9). Especially for mosque-goers who may (re)discover the *ummah* and practices of solidarity based on religious transnationalism, Azabar and Van Aelst (2024) point out how joint religious activities can (re)create strong and visible in-/out-group dynamics in support or rejection of political Islam. Therefore, RQ$_3$ was posed to understand whether interviewees pre-empt their Muslimness vis-à-vis the mainstream patterns of secularization and liberalization of Western European societies or, conversely, whether they hold and care about relationships with co-religionists from different countries when considering specific political issues.

In the following sections, this research paper considers only first-hand information extracted from the interview material, along with other related information obtained from second-hand sources collected during the period of fieldwork. It should be pointed

out that this qualitative study also considers the relevant opinions of a much smaller group of 9 respondents composed of 5 parents, 2 local imams, and 2 university professors encountered during the fieldwork. Considering the strong personal opinions and insights on much-debated issues among post-diasporic Bosnian Muslims, interviewees are fully anonymized to ensure their personal security and avoid exposure to potential implications in their places of residence. Only information related to gender, age, and place of interviews are mentioned to identify different nuances of religious identity and salience across the three different locations.

Bosnian Muslims in the illiberal city

Discussion about potential forms and means of political participation (RQ$_1$) led most interviewees to value the right to vote in the context of free and fair elections. In triangulating the different answers across the three countries under study, interviewees can be divided into two subgroups. The first comprises those born between the late 1980s and early 1990s, who hold dual citizenship because they were either born or raised in Belgium or Poland. The second is composed of those born around the 2000s, mainly residents in Germany, who, in a few cases, have renounced their Bosnian citizenship for 'better prospects' and for 'exerting their right to vote during presidential elections.' Among the members of the latter group, however, four were waiting for a law change to avoid assimilation.[3] Although they did not specify any issues on a personal level, it has been proven that the German citizenship law has burdened the generation of Muslim families born after 31 December 1999 due to the strict requirement of at least 15 years probationary residence and the final cultural exam (see Leiken 2012, 243–250).

Just as political participation is not 'only voting,' so the right to vote cannot be exerted 'only sporadically,' or 'without being informed,' or 'for someone's vested interests.' Overall, interviewees do not struggle to validate their liberal, secular, and democratic values as they associate themselves with the image of 'Muslims bridging the East with the West,' and even that of 'Europeans before being Bosnian or Muslim.' This self-identification is often explained through the prism of 'Bosnian Islam,' whose religious legacy and salience have been transmitted across generations and nurtured through low-profile practices and traditions since the time of Yugoslavia. In other words, they self-identify as 'European Muslims' in light of the large degree of secular attitudes and modes of worshipping Islam historically rooted in the Bosnian Muslim community. As introduced above, however, interviewees yearn to present themselves as 'good Muslims' to reassure their belonging to Europe and thereby avoid being associated with different cultures arriving from 'further east.'

The majority of interviewees expressed personal interest in today's crisis of liberal democracy and Bosnia's fragile institutional framework. At the same time, they admit to having scant knowledge (or lack thereof) of the complicated institutional and political landscape. Yet many were found to be outspoken about the danger of ethno-nationalism and Serbian separatism, both identified as the spoiling factors of Bosnia's future. Islam does not limit civic engagement in the public sphere, nor does it play any ideological role in living in a society where personal ideas can be easily contested. Some recall sporadic participation in student protests in Belgium, green actions in Germany, and rallies for women's rights in Poland, but without concrete, long-term engagement. Only in two

cases, a female and a male interviewee in Germany, were active members of a student collective at university and of the youth organization of a political party. Interestingly, both interviewees stand for social-democratic values and are not zealous Muslims, unlike most interviewees, who did not express any ideological orientation and had no particular interest in making inroads into politics. They focused on other 'urgencies,' such as economic instability, education, and building their future career.

A lack of political representation is prominent, though. As largely shown in the literature, forms of political participation do not necessarily inscribe into the institutionalized practices within the state (Riniolo and Toivanen 2023, 303). To use Van Deth's words (2016, 3), the group under study was keen on engaging in 'unconventional participation.' They attend educational programs and volunteer in the non-governmental organization (NGO) sector, support actions of solidarity by engaging in social media campaigns, and care about issues of poverty, children's rights, and under-development in the Global South. According to a similar paradigm used by Azabar and Van Aelst (2024), this 'non-institutional participation' is activated by the personal motivation and desire to raise awareness about injustice and lack of recognition of Muslim brothers and sisters in and beyond Europe.

In Belgium and Germany, young mosque-goers are particularly worried about the rise of Islamophobia in their place of residence. In political terms, this issue is verbalized in spite of the invisibility that helps the Bosnian Muslim community avoid racialization and minoritization in comparison with other Muslims of African or Asian origin. Personal concerns intensify due to the rampant far-right discourse winning ground over domestic issues. The following interview insights are instructive:

> We are a small community and the far-right does not target us directly, but they do target all Muslims, so we fall under this category and, often, we do feel it. (respondent 5, male, 25 y-o)

> I feel Islamophobia, and I see how people in town are quite and genuinely racist [...] and do not understand that I am Muslim, so they openly make racist comments in front of me. (respondent 8, male, 29 y-o)

Islamophobia is perceived when hostile and vernacular messages assort *all* Muslims. In this regard, the particularly gendered nature of Islamophobia hits female Muslims the hardest. At school and in public spaces, the veil quickly singles them out and often exposes them to verbal harassment on the street just for wearing it (Smits 2023, 94). While a female interviewee explains, 'the headscarf makes me visible [and] I had to quit job positions for it' (respondent 10, 24 y-o, Antwerp), another complains about 'receiv[ing] fiery glances down-town' (respondent 11, 26 y-o, Antwerp). This follows suit in Germany, yet it is differentiated timewise between the generation born in the 1990s and those born in the 2000s. During the latter period, an interviewee argues that Germans got used 'to greeting refugees and economic migrants' (respondent 22, female, 35 y-o, Bremen) under the guise of Angela Merkel's iconic 'We can do it' (in German, *Wir schaffen das*) in the midst of the 2015 Syrian refugee crisis. During the former period, older interviewees recalled negative experiences in their childhood, when strong wages of racism against newcomers escalated. The so-called 'Baseball bat years' (in German, *Baseballschläger Jahre*) overlapped with the post-1989 reunification period, where uncertainty put extreme pressure on most Germans from the former socialist region. Within this, the legacies of the 1990s have resurfaced from the depths

of the core society, causing most Muslims to experience an internal split and a battle with personal identities amidst the rising anti-migration sentiment which has shifted Merkel's 'welcome culture' rightwards and allowed 'Alternative for Germany' (in German, *Alternative für Deutschland*) to gain consensus.

> I could not enter the first class on my train as the ticket inspector assumed – by judging me and my wife from the way we look like, we were stepping in the wrong wagon [. . .] I sent a complaint letter for anti-discrimination but nothing happened. (respondent 20, male, 34 y-o, Bremen)

> Some elderly German women were complaining about some veiled Muslim women at the bus station [. . .] and I said: You know what? You stand next to a Muslim woman. Although I am not particularly religious, I played the 'Muslim card' to show them that even though they may not notice Muslims, we are still nearby. (respondent 22, female, 35 y-o, Bremen)

This second interview insight interestingly resonates Ferruh Yilmaz's conversion, which, although having nothing to do with Islam on theological grounds, was undertaken to oppose the hegemony of right-wing discourse (Bobako 2015, 52). Other interviewees keep an equal distance from certain ideologies of radical Islam (for example Salafism) and new religious fanaticism fuelled by either old-fashioned left-wing organizations or anti-colonial movements. To counter illiberal methods of political actors, interviewees employ the Qur'anic principle of respectfulness as a means of avoiding any discord with fellow human beings. Education, too, is considered paramount for Muslims to come to terms with the (post)secular society model, as well as for non-Muslims to educate themselves about Islam. In this regard, zealous Muslim respondents refer to respectfulness as one of the pillars of Islam, which teaches how to navigate between different ideas and religious doctrines with tolerance and to rebuff any source of conflict.

As assumed, non-conventional and non-institutional participation goes hand in hand with religious salience. Seminal events that have occurred for some family members in Bosnia not only reactivate some Islamic rituals and prayers but also trigger political acts and social practices of remembrance, forgiveness, and reconciliation (Scott 2005, 185–186). Family memories circulating within and across private and public contexts produce great political sensitivity towards social issues of minority rights, racism, discrimination, and nationalism. In recollecting the Bosnian war and other locally nuanced atrocities of the 1990s, interviewees are keen to organize and participate in commemorations of the 1995 Genocide in Srebrenica, as well as contributing to charity and cultural events during the period of Ramadan and Bayram.

In Germany, most respondents participate in events regarding the 1995 Genocide in Srebrenica in their places of residence or nearby areas. The 2023 peace march in Dortmund is instructive. In Belgium and Poland, interviewees also care about minor yet important commemoration events during the summertime in northwest Bosnia, such as the 'White Armband Day' (in Bosnian: *Dan bijelih traka*) in the city of Prijedor. A male and female from Belgium decided to begin working in the music sector and journalism after exploring their family heritage and participating in solidarity campaigns of the 'Mothers of Srebrenica' in Bosnia and Europe.

Performing 'Bosnian Islam'

In discussing religious salience within a secular society (RQ₂), the group of interviewees acknowledges human spirituality and how man can relate himself to the outside world without being alienated (Sandal 2011, 934). While they navigate between two (or more) overlapping and contrasting lifestyles that may cause identity dilemmas due to the post-migrant and local situatedness, many addressed the question of religious salience with modesty. Here, they emphasize their 'daily attempts to practice Islam diligently' in order to avoid wrongdoings and temptations. Among the most zealous Muslim respondents, practicing Islam does not mean praying five times a day, reading the Qur'an regularly, or fasting every Ramadan, but rather refraining from unfaithful and prohibited (*haram*) actions in everyday life. For those who self-identify as 'cultural Muslims,' Islam does not even require attendance at the local mosque for praying and worshipping can be conducted in various private and even in some mundane contexts.

Especially in Poland, respondents comply with cultural traditions and practices of Islam only within the family circle. In other words, they have been socialized with Islamic practices at home over the years (Grünenberg 2005, 181). Similar to same-age peers in Belgium and Germany, they avoid eating pork and drinking alcohol because they have never been served at the family table, and they only respect the fasting hours during Ramadan and occasionally the Friday prayer. In the eyes of these interviewees, Muslim festivities are comparable to Christian ones, whose depletion of religious relevance shares a similar spirit of togetherness rather than exclusively religious content and significance (Byrd 2017, 20). When confronted with every day (identity) dilemmas that may jeopardize their Muslimness outside family and community life, interviewees expressed a significant degree of pragmatism. They navigate between Islam and secular worldviews by referring to *European* modes of 'being Muslim.' Afraid of potential 'othering' that may bar them from having a social life, they put a strain on the traditional liberal-democratic sphere of citizenship. Since the centre of gravity of today's societies has shifted from the theme of tolerance to that of respect (Marramao 2012, 183), the Qur'anic principle of respectfulness is yet again employed as the only way to avoid unpleasant experiences and incomprehension.

> At the mosque, we can't say to the person nearby us how to be a Muslim, or judge him, or teach him how to pray. (respondent 29, male, 19 y-o, Warsaw)
>
> The Qur'an clearly says that you are forbidden to impose your beliefs upon someone else.
>
> That's it! I cannot say 'you must,' otherwise I cross the limits. (respondent 23, male, 27 y-o Bremen)
>
> Our Prophet, peace be upon Him, has never taught us to mistreat those who believe otherwise:
>
> when he conquered Jerusalem, he let Jews and Christians live, and only the polytheists who did not accept coexistence, could leave the city. [...] Explaining [respect] is very important to me [...] my little brother argued with other people; I told him to calm down: often religion has nothing to do with what people say. (respondent 4, male, 22 y-o, Antwerp)

On the other hand, such a strong sense of respectfulness may produce a side effect amidst the wealth of postmodern (identity) dilemmas entailing constant confrontation

with Muslims (Van Leuven et al. 2023, 62). In general, respondents show a high level of civic identity, but most males reprehend the societal model of liberal multiculturalism when sharing personal opinions about feminism, peace and war, minority rights, and freedom of speech. In particular, most of the zealous male Muslims resent practices and policies of 'muscular liberalism'; hence, they criticize manifesto-like 'open society' whereby liberal democracies subtly impose a one-dimensional model of tolerance rather than a fair principle of mutual respect. The assumption that liberal democracy ushers in a direct-access society seems questionable (Asad 2003, 5). They point out that they undertake a great deal of compromise in areas of personal law (for example marriage, divorce, gender division, public appearance), which regrettably remain unacknowledged and not reciprocated when they themselves comply with Islamic knowledge and the Prophet's teaching. The cases of the 'Swedish far-rightists burning the Qur'an,' the 'banalization of the rainbow flag,' and the 'politicization of LGBT rights in sport' are taken into consideration to exposing the double standards of Western, liberal democracy. Their criticism does not reject 'modern life' as a whole. If anything, it verbalizes what interviewees define as the need to reciprocate respectfulness both when someone complies with traditional norms and values and when others are keen on complying with a modern view (Rippin 2001, 169).

In Antwerp, the lionization of the 'LGBT culture' is viewed as a divisive issue. As already shown elsewhere (Kwon and Hughes 2018, 658), male respondents express distress in complying with mainstream institutions and their discourse over gay rights. The abundance of the 'LGBT buzzword' in the sphere of politics, the labour market, education, welfare, and sport, is mainly criticized. While males partially retreat from multicultural policies and practices without intolerance malice, most female interviewees confirm that the 'gender debate' remains an issue in and beyond Islam. Often, traditional gender perspectives are used to handle 'gender topics' on legal grounds and in fierce political debates, making room for a 'borderless society' in which 'too much freedom' could disrespect and endanger people's culture and traditions. In facing up to these issues, two dilemmas of (post)modernity (Berger 1977, 70) clearly arise. First, 'individuation' - namely, the separation of the individual from any sense of collective entity; and second, the 'liberation' of fate over choices in the realm of everyday life. Respectively, both cultural Muslims and zealous Muslims navigate between personal worldviews and community expectations by attempting to respect everyone's choice. However, many draw on how unlimited freedom of expression and the 'borderlessness' of personal choices currently endanger the whole society, unleashing the opposite results from those that certain multicultural policies seek to achieve by polarizing the new generations.

The ummah and the 'Balkan rest'

The spontaneous answers to RQ$_1$ and RQ$_2$ led most interviewees to refer to, or occasionally draw comparisons with, other Muslim communities that heighten the sense of the place of residence. They do not refer to the ummah as a benchmark to a global social movement seeking social justice and political actions (Scott 2005, 113), but rather as a and g/local space that may shape lived citizenship in terms of daily actions, mundane experiences, and attitudes towards globalization, migration, and diaspora (Kallio et al.

2020, 714). All interviewees remain foreign to disloyal forms of political participation, potentially driven by the historical anarchist waves with increasing left-wing and/or anarchist ideas or inspired by anti-colonial waves of protest (Korenkov et al. 2022, 114). If anything, their (critical) voices are subaltern to the much larger Turkish and Moroccan diaspora in their places of residence, such as in Gröepelingen, the multi-cultural neighbourhood in Bremen, or in the Durne and Borgerhout city district of Antwerp.

Answers to RQ$_3$ confirm that Balkan Muslims can be seen as the backbone of the institutional integration of Islam, especially in the federal entity of Bremen.[4] It should be pointed out that in both suburban contexts, neighbourhood organizations engage fruit-fully with Bosnian Muslims in a variety of activities thanks to the presence of their cultural centres and local mosques. In Poland, respondents are found closer with family circles and activities of religious organizations, instead. As discussed above, Islamophobia does not target them directly; in fact, a self-reiterated image of 'whiteness,' a 'chameleon-like attitude,' and 'Westernized lookism' make no room for discrimination and unpleasant encounters. A female respondent with an Arabic partner (respondent 6, 28 y-o, Antwerp) argues that 'Balkan Muslims are not even considered seriously [by the ummah] because of their cultural and religious salience in Islam.' Similar experiences are verbalized in other in-depth interviews. Participation-observation at local mosques in Antwerp and Bremen sheds light on friendships and family connections with Turkish and other Balkan Muslims, mainly from Kosovo and Sandžak. Conversely, in Warsaw and Toruń, interviewees do not attend the prayer at the multinational mosque and hold no strong ties with the rest of the small yet present Muslim community. Yet again, interviewees reiterate the identity of 'European Muslims' by lodging the assumption that 'Bosnian Muslimness' is historically 'secular' and 'belongs to Europe' (Hurd 2008, 58) in comparison with other (post-)diasporic forms of Islam. According to the local imam and representative of the cultural centre in Antwerp, respectively:

> Young Muslims from Bosnian families meet other Muslims at school [and] the neighbourhood.

> They come to know Islam also through such encounters, [thereby understanding] how different our Islam is.

> Moroccans are very different and, honestly, they do not provide the best picture of Muslims in town. It is about culture, not religion. [...] When Moroccans celebrate [Ramadan, or Bayram], there are always small incidents. There is no way to talk to them about doing some projects together. We feel much closer to Turkish Muslims.

Respondents in Germany point out how 'some forms of racism toward other cultures have penetrated the Bosnian Muslim community' abroad, too. For instance, an inter-viewee bitterly stated that 'antisemitism is rocketing among Muslims in Bosnia.' In Antwerp, almost all male respondents verbalize their concern for Palestine and Palestinians by mixing a sense and images of piety with religious observance and morality.[5] This moral/political attitude is apparently motivated by the presence of the vocal Zionist position of the Orthodox Jews in town. However, neither antisemitism nor hostility towards Jews was verbalized during interviews. In Germany, another male respondent confirms (respondent 20, male, 34 y-o, Bremen), 'Muslim Bosnians are

very empathetic towards Palestinian people [...] due to the wartime suffering and the media campaigns.' Those who verbalize sympathy for the Palestinian cause also engage in solidarity campaigns against products made in Israel, or even made in Palestine but in specific areas where Israeli colonies [*kibbutz*] have recently settled; they also join pro-Palestine rallies to counterbalance the quite vocal Zionist claims of the Orthodox Jewish community in town. Many were found annoyed and frustrated over the Israeli misconduct against Palestinians in their homeland and how Muslims, in Palestine, are powerless and always exposed to violence by Israeli soldiers at Al-Aqsa Mosque during celebrations and praying time. Here, it should be pointed out that interviews were conducted before Hamas's mass-killing of 7 October 2023, and Israel's retaliation into Gaza. Moreover, the gender perspective is telling as no female interviewee specifically referred to the 'Palestinian question.'

Similar to some answers given to RQ_1, g/local perspectives are taken into account to compare political affairs between Bosnia and other Muslim-majority areas in the Balkans and the rest of the world. Most share a certain degree of distress about political development in their parental birthplace. Among those holding double citizenship, some refuse to exercize their right to vote at the Bosnian embassies and in Bosnia proper. Still, this series of self-reflections helps respondents to link their family (hi)stories to current issues in Western Europe.

> What about Herzegovinians? People ignore the differences between Bosnians and Bosniaks [and] the same goes for Catholics and Croats, Orthodoxs and Serbs [...] People immediately ascribe me here to Germany, but I don't want to give the idea that I stand against someone because of my family history and heritage. (respondent 22, female, 35 y-o, Bremen)

> People compare Bosnia and Belgium because of the territorial disputes and the linguistic divide.

> This comparison is very triggering to me [...] and my family. They know that what seemed impossible to happen, it did happen, leading to war. (respondent 3, female, 28 y-o, Antwerp)

To sum up, most respondents employ the mischaracterization of 'Bosnian Islam' to avoid racialization and rise above and beyond subtler methods of othering in the public sphere. They do not associate their Islam with a mostly associated Arab world, thereby taking distance, albeit not entirely, from most of the critical or contested voices among the *ummah*. In doing so, they paradoxically self-reiterate racialization by associating their Muslimness with a 'European' and 'racially whiter' identity (Rexhepi 2023, 64) while expressing deep concern over the danger of religious and political elites – rather than the poor and uneducated Muslims – seeking consensus to reform or purify Muslim communities worldwide.

Conclusion

This research paper is not exhaustive in describing the group and the countries under study, nor does it provide sufficient evidence to propose general knowledge that applies to all subjects of the broadly defined Muslim community from the Balkans. Further research could definitely provide deeper insights and construct more knowledge about the generations born outside the region and after the mass-scale migration in the 1990s.

Nonetheless, triangulation of the data and information collected during fieldwork bring to light some similarities and legacies across the young generations of the Bosnian Muslim diaspora.

At the time of writing, there is no doubt that some generational changes have occurred and are still underway. The group under study responds constructively to the current instability of liberal democracy and the crisis of its democratic institutions in the countries that this research focuses on. Although some respondents (particularly males) are found to contest (post)secular society, neither disloyalty nor radicalism is verbalized or enacted as a means to counter postmodern identity dilemmas and illiberal politics. Islam remains part and parcel of their personal identity, along with a strong sense of belonging to Bosnia and the family heritage that is easily detectable when examining their political opinions and interests.

Within the multicultural urban landscapes of their places of residence, those who grew up in the 1990s are more likely to speak up about racism and experiences of exclusion as compared to those born in the 2000s. The latter generation is more likely to reassert their religious identity, while the former deal much less with identity-related issues in both public and private life. Both, however, are members of the 'generation after' in Hirsch's (2012) sense. Accordingly, religious salience and non-institutional and non-conventional participation go hand in hand, varying according to the family's experiences in Bosnia and their migration heritage. Interviewees of the first group hold a stronger connection to the family heritage, while the second group more strongly identifies with (Bosnian) Islam. Both recall Islam in their everyday life, stressing either the European features of the religion or, rather, calling for a post-national Islam. Political sensitivities remain weaker in comparison with how most interviewees hold Islamic knowledge and practice while caring about 'the other,' nurturing a combination of folkish and religious traditions in family circles, and performing a cosmopolitan version of 'Bosnian Islam' in the place of residence.

When they place a high value on education and practices of respectfulness, critical positions of multicultural practices and policies are nevertheless verbalized. Traditional gender norms are considered important by most male interviewees, who also consider themselves the heirs of values and traditions transferred from previous generations. Conversely, female interviewees seem willing to negotiate and find a pragmatic solution to postmodern (identity) dilemmas without rejecting or jeopardizing their faith. Unlike their parents and relatives, interviewees are more outspoken about prejudices and social injustice as their Muslimness is not understood as exclusive from the core society but mutually integrating into the urban landscape of the place of residence and Europe. Bosnia's rural and urban landscape is their 'holy space,' where their parents come from originally and where most of the elderly from the family continue to live. Bosnia is vividly identified as the spatial symbol of tolerance and 'true Islam' in comparison with other holy sites of Islam worldwide. Sarajevo is often recalled as the spatio-temporal symbol of diversity and mutual respect, whereby the minarets of the mosques, churches and synagogues speak of the historical coexistence of Muslims, Christians, and Jews.

Notes

1. Throughout this paper, 'Bosnian Muslims' and 'young Muslims with Bosnian roots' are employed rather than 'Bosniaks' or 'second-generation Balkan Muslims.' Interviewees rarely

self-identified as 'Bosniak,' which was only rarely used to describe their family heritage in Bosnia along with that of other Muslims belonging to Sandžak, such as the town of Novi Pazar in Serbia or eastern areas of Montenegro.

2. Interview with Prof. Yasemin Karakaşoğlu, Bremen University, Germany, 25.05.2023.
3. In-depth interviews were held between May and June 2023. In this period, 'a law change regarding the double citizenship regime, was in the air,' as an interviewee pointed out (respondent 20, male, 34 y-o, Bremen). In the following months, Germany's Cabinet approved the long-awaited bill on the dual nationality law.
4. Interview with Prof. Yasemin Karakaşoğlu, Bremen University, Germany, 25.05.2023.
5. It must be noted that in-depth interviews were held before the military confrontation between Hamas and Israel started after the 'October 7 events' in 2023.

Disclosure statement

Funding

Notes on contributor

Francesco Trupia is Research Adjunct at the Department of Cultural and Religious Studies of the Nicolaus Copernicus University, Toruń – Poland. He is currently PI of the research project "Civic Responses and Cultural Identity Dilemmas of the Second Generation of Balkan Muslims in Time of Illiberal Democracy", supported by the National Science Centre in Krakow (Poland).

His research interests range from identity and memory politics to minority inclusion, from postsocialist democratisation to studying civil society in Southeast Europe and the Caucasus.

In spring 2023, he visited the Centre of Political History at the University of Antwerp (Belgium), while in spring 2022 he carried out part of my postdoctoral research at the Department of Slavic Studies at Humboldt University in Berlin (Germany). Trupia obtained a PhD in Political Philosophy from the Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski, Bulgaria (2020). While pursuing my doctorate, he also attended summer programs in Germany, Russia, Serbia, and Kosovo.

Over the last few years, Trupia has also worked as a Policy Analyst for the Institute of European Democrats (IED) in Brussels, Belgium, for the Kosovo Foundation for Open Society (KFOS), the "Center for Security Analysis and Prevention – CSAP" from Prague, Czech Republic, and the Alpha – Institute of Geopolitics and Intelligence in Rome, Italy. After concluding my BA in Political Science and International Relations at the University of Catania, Italy, in 2014, he moved to Bulgaria to work in the NGO sector. There I began studying Philosophy at the MA International Program (taught in English) at the Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" in Sofia, Bulgaria.

Between 2014 and 2015, Trupia interned at the NGO Focus – European Centre for Development, working in the city of Pazardzhik with vulnerable groups. I later volunteered for the Caritas-led "Refugee Project" in Sofia, where he taught English and Art classes for Syrian and Iraqi refugees. In 2016, he became International Fellow at the Caucasus Resource Research Centre in Yerevan, Armenia, and between 2017 and 2018, he was also Non-Resident Researcher for the London-based "Institute for Islamic Strategic Affairs – IISA.

ORCID

Francesco Trupia 🔟 http://orcid.org/0000-0002-8984-7886

References

Allievi, S. 2017. *Conversioni: verso un nuovo modo di credere? Europa, pluralismo, Islam*. Napoli: Guida Editori.

Angrosino, M. 2007. *Doing ethnographic and observational research*. London: SAGE Publications.

Asad, T. 2003. *Formations of the secular. Christianity, Islam, modernity*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Azabar, S., and P. Van Aelst. 2024. Religion works in different ways: An intersectional approach to Muslims' noninstitutionalized participation. *Acta Politica* 59, no. 2: 416–38. doi:10.1057/s41269-023-00300-y.

Berger, P. 1977. *Facing up to modernity: Excursion in society, politics and religion*. New York: Basics Book.

Blachnicka, D. 2014. Working groups on manifestations, causes, and factors of islamophobia – Hungary and Poland. In *Islamophobia and its consequences on young people*, ed. I. Ramberg, 51–52. Budapest: European Youth Centre Budapest.

Bobako, M. 2015. Inventing Muslims in Europe. Religion, culture and identity in the time of neoliberalism. *Przegląd Religioznawczy – The Religious Studies Review* 258, no. 4: 43–55.

Bougarel, X. 2008. Balkan Muslim diasporas and the idea of a 'European Islam'. In *Balkan currents. Essays in honour of Kjell Magnusson*, ed. R. Kostić, T. Dulić, I. Maček, and J. Trtak, 147–65. Uppsala: Uppsala University Press.

Bougarel, X., and D. Mihaylova. 2005. Diasporas musulmanes balkaniques dans l'Union européenne [Balkan Muslim diaspora in the European Union]. *Balkanologie - Revue d'études pluridisciplinaires* IX, no. 1–2: 59–211. doi:10.4000/balkanologie.577.

Boutayeb, R. 2023. In praise of coldness: The open neighbourhood and its enemies. In *Open society unresolved. The contemporary relevance of a contested idea*, ed. C. Royer and L. Matei, 38–48. Budapest: Central European University Press.

Bringa, T. 1995. *Being Muslim the Bosnian way: Identity and community in a central Bosnian village*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Byrd, J.D. 2017. *Islam in a post-secular society. Religion, secularity and the antagonism of recalcitrant faith*. Boston: Brill.

De Pommereau, I. 2020. Islam finds a home in German classrooms. *Are we Europe*. https://www.areweeurope.com/stories/islam-finds-home-in-germany-isabelle-de-pommereau/ .

El-Tayeb, F. 2011. *European others: Queering ethnicity in postnational Europe*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

El-Tayeb, F. 2012. 'Gays who cannot properly be gay': Queer Muslims in the neoliberal European city. *European Journal of Women's Studies* 19, no. 1: 79–95. doi:10.1177/1350506811426388.

Ferizaj, A. 2019. Othering Albanian Muslim Masculinities: A case study of Albanian football players. *OCCHIALÌ – Rivista sul Mediterraneo Islamico* 5, 71–93.

Ferizaj, A. 2023. The desperate desire to be 'European'. *Kosovo 2.0*. https://kosovotwopointzero.com/en/the-desperate-desire-to-be-european/.

Finkelstein, K. 2023. *Moderne Muslimas - Kindheit – Karriere – Klischees* [Modern Muslim women – childhood – carries - stereotypes]. Berlin: Verlagshaus Jacoby & Stuart.

Fleischmann, F., and K. Phalet. 2018. Religion and national identification in Europe: Comparing Muslim youth in Belgium, England, Germany, the Netherlands, and Sweden. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology* 49, no. 1: 44–61. doi:10.1177/0022022117741988.

Geertz, C. 1973. *The interpretation of cultures: Selected essays*. New York: Basic Books, Inc., Publishers.

Gerlach, J. 2006. *Zwischen Pop und Dschihad. Muslimische Jugendliche in Deutschland* [Between pop and jihad. Muslim young people in Germany]. Frankfurt: Verlag Ch. Links.

Given, M.L. 2008. *The SAGE encyclopaedia of qualitative research methods*. London: SAGE Publication.

Grünenberg, K. 2005. Constructing "sameness" and "otherness": Bosnian diasporic experiences in a Danish context. *Balkanologie - Revue d'études pluridisciplinaires* IX, no. 1–2: 173–93. doi:10.4000/balkanologie.587.

Habermas, J. 2009. *Europe: The faltering project*. Malden: Polity Press.

Halilovich, H., J. Hasić, D. Karabegović, A. Karamehić-Muratović, and N. Oruč. 2018. Mapping the Bosnian-Herzegovinian diaspora (BiH migrants in Australia, Austria, Denmark, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Slovenia, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United States of America): Utilizing the socio-economic potential of the diaspora for development of BiH. http://www.mhrr.gov.ba/PDF/MAPPING%20BIH%20DIASPORA%20REPORT.pdf.

Hirsch, M. 2012. *The generation of postmemory. Writing and visual culture after the holocaust*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Hoops, J. 2021. Discourses of integration in Antwerp. *The Southern Communication Journal* 86, no. 2: 92–106. doi:10.1080/1041794X.2021.1882544.

Hurd, S. 2008. *The politics of secularism in international relations*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Izetbegović, A. 1990. *Islamic declaration*. Sarajevo: https://archive.org/details/3IslamicDeclarationEng/mode/2up?view=theater .

Jones, S. 2021. *Islam and the liberal state. National identity and the future of Muslim Britain*. London: I.B. Tauris.

Kallio, K.P., E.B. Wood, and J. Häkli. 2020. Lived citizenship: Conceptualising an emerging field. *Citizenship Studies* 24, no. 6: 713–29. doi:10.1080/13621025.2020.1739227.

Karabegović, D. 2014. Što Te Nema? Transnational cultural production in the diaspora in response to the Srebrenica genocide. *Nationalism & Ethnic Politics* 20, no. 4: 455–75. doi:10.1080/13537113.2014.969151.

Karabegović, D. 2019. Who chooses to remember? Diaspora participation in memorialization initiatives. *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 42, no. 11: 1911–29. doi:10.1080/01419870.2019.1577473.

Karić, D., H. Buljina, and P. Rexhepi. 2023. Feel-good orientalism and the question of dignity. *Maydan. Islamic thought.* https://themaydan.com/2023/02/feel-good-orientalism-and-the-question-of-dignity/ .

Khankan, S. 2018. *Women are the future of Islam. A memoir of hope*. London: Penguin.

Koinova, M., and D. Karabegović. 2016. Diasporas and transitional justice: Transnational activism from local to global levels of engagement. *Global Networks* 17, no. 2: 169–317. doi:10.1111/glob.12128.

Korenkov, O., O. Balatska, and Y. Rashchupkina. 2022. Separatism and jihadism: Interaction in the context of terrorist activity. *Studia Polityczne* 50, no. 2: 111–38. doi:10.35757/STP.2022.50.2.05.

Kwon, R., and E. Hughes. 2018. Multiculturalist policies in an age of immigration: Do multiculturalist policies influence negative immigrant attitudes toward homosexuality? *Ethnicities* 18, no. 5: 655–91. doi:10.1177/1468796817752013.

Lecoyer, K. 2020. Internormative family conflict mediation within Belgian Muslim families. *Revue interdisciplinaire d'études juridiques* 84, no. 1: 149–77. doi:10.3917/riej.084.0149.

Leiken, R. 2012. *Europe's angry muslims: The revolt of the second generation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Mark, J., B. Iacob, T. Rupprecht, and L. Spaskovska. 2019. *1989. A global history of Eastern Europe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Marramao, G. 2012. *The passage west. Philosophy after the nation state*. New York: Verso.

Mayorga-Gallo, S., and E. Hordge-Freeman. 2017. Between marginality and privilege: Gaining access and navigating the field in multiethnic settings. *Qualitative Research* 17, no. 4: 377–94. doi:10.1177/1468794116672915.

Merdjanova, I. 2013. *Rediscovering the umma. Muslims in the Balkans between Nationalism and transnationalism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Metodieva, A. 2023. The radical milieu and radical influencers of Bosnian foreign fighters. *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 49, no. 9: 1725–44. doi:10.1080/1057610X.2020.1868097.

Millar, G. 2018. Engaging ethnographic peace research: Exploring an approach. *International Peacekeeping* 25, no. 5: 597–609. doi:10.1080/13533312.2018.1521700.

Mushaben, J.M. 2008. Gender, hip-hop and pop-islam: The urban identities of Muslim youth in Germany. *Citizenship Studies* 12, no. 5: 507–26. doi:10.1080/13621020802337931.

Özyürek, E. 2015. *Being German, Becoming Muslim: Race, religion, and conversion in the New Europe*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Pędziwiatr, K. 2018. The Catholic Church in Poland on Muslims and Islam. *Patterns of Prejudice* 52, no. 5: 461–78. doi:10.1080/0031322X.2018.1495376.

Posłuszny, Ł. 2019. Memory, landscape and biography: Non-places and sites of perished communities. In *Moving from landscapes to cityscapes and back: Theoretical and applied approaches to human environments*, ed. A. Haapala, B. Frydryczak, and M. Salwa, 59–72. Łódź: Officyna Publishing House.

Potulski, J. 2020. The civic culture: Between analytical and normative ideal. *Civitas - Studia z Filozofii Polityki* 27, 15–44. doi:10.35757/CIV.2020.27.02.

Rexhepi, P. 2015. Mainstreaming islamophobia: The politics of European enlargement and the balkan crime-terror nexus. *East European Quarterly* 43, no. 2–3: 189–214.

Rexhepi, P. 2017. Unmapping Islam in Eastern Europe Periodization and Muslim subjectivities in the Balkans. In *Eastern Europe unmapped. Beyond borders and peripheries*, ed. I. Kacandes and Y. Komska, 53–77. New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books.

Rexhepi, P. 2019. Imperial inventories, "illegal mosques" and institutionalised Islam: Coloniality and the Islamic community of Bosnia and Herzegovina. *History and Anthropology* 30, no. 4: 477–89. doi:10.1080/02757206.2019.1611575.

Rexhepi, P. 2023. *White enclosures. Racial capitalism & coloniality along the Balkan Route*. New York: Duke University Press.

Riniolo, V., and M. Toivanen. 2023. Future paths in the study of migrant descendants' citizenship: Engaging with critical literature. *Migration Letters* 20, no. 2: 301–11. doi:10.33182/ml.v20i2.2890.

Rippin, A. 2001. *Muslims. Their religious beliefs and practices*. London: Routledge.

Roy, O. 2013. Secularism and Islam: The theological predicament. *The International Spectator* 48, no. 1: 5–19. doi:10.1080/03932729.2013.759365.

Sahadžić, M. 2021. Bosnian diaspora in Belgium (and beyond). Online lecture at the University of Antwerp, April 2.

Sandal, N.A. 2011. Religious actors as epistemic communities in conflict transformation: The cases of South Africa and Northern Ireland. *Review of International Studies* 37, no. 3: 929–49. doi:10.1017/S0260210510001592.

Sander, Å. 2014. Negative European attitudes towards muslims. Questions, theories and possible explanations. In *In the tracks of Breivik. Far right networks in northern and Eastern Europe*, ed. M. Deland, M. Minkenberg, and C. Mays, 127–40. Vienna and Berlin: LIT Verlag.

Scott, T. 2005. *The global resurgence of religion and the transformation of International relations. The struggle for the Soul of the twenty-first century*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Simmons, E., and N.R. Smith. 2017. Comparison with an ethnographic sensibility. *American Political Science* 50, no. 1: 126–30. doi:10.1017/S1049096516002286.

Smits, A. 2023. Islamophobia in Belgium: National report 2022. In *European Islamophobia report 2022*, ed. E. Bayraklı and F. Hafez, 83–106. Vienna: Leopold Weiss Institute.

Sofos, S., and R. Tsagarousianou. 2013. *Islam in Europe. Public spaces and civic networks*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Torrekens, C. 2021. The non-impact of religious practices on the process of inclusion and participation of Belgian Muslims. *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 41, no. 1: 141–56. doi:10.1080/13602004.2021.1894384.

Triadafilopoulos, T. 2011. Illiberal means to liberal ends? Understanding recent immigrant integration policies in Europe. *Journal of Ethnic & Migration Studies* 37, no. 6: 861–80. doi:10.1080/1369183X.2011.576189.

Van Deth, J.W. 2016. *What is political participation?* Oxford: Oxford University Press Online.

Van Leuven, A., S. Mertens, L. D'Haenens, and A. Mekki-Benada. 2023. The political and intellectual discourse on islam and Muslims in Flanders. In *Islamophobia as a form of radicalisation. Perspectives on media, academia and socio-political scapes from Europe and Canada*, ed. L. d'Haenens and A. Mekki-Berrada, 59–74. Leuven: Leuven University Press.