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Femonationalism in the AfD
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FEMONATIONALISM IN THE AFD

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Abstract

Usually, feminism and xenophobia are terms that do not seem related. However, the far-right scene in Germany, specifically the Alternative für Deutschland (AfD), managed to create a connection between the two. The scholar Sara Farris coined the term femonationalism to describe this phenomenon. In Europe, liberals, secularists, right-wing politicians, and even some feminists have misused feminist principles to restrict (Muslim) immigration, women's bodies, and religious freedom.

This paper will take a closer look at this issue by answering the following question: "What is the role of the Alternative für Deutschland's (AfD's) ideal of Western female emancipation in the pursuit of their anti-Islamic immigration agenda?" An analysis of the AfD's language, campaign slogans, and campaign posters, as well as the party- and policy programmes, reveals how feminism and German women's emancipation are being misused to further the AfD's beliefs that immigrants, particularly Muslim immigrants, constitute a threat to autochthone women and the country.

Dedication

I want to thank Dr P.W. van Trigt for mentoring and guiding me through this project. I want to thank my good friend Sienna Emmanuel for always exchanging ideas and helping me with her wise input and motivating words. And finally, I want to thank my family for always supporting me, I have nothing but gratitude for you.

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Introduction

Research Question and Justification

In October 2018, Nicole Höchst, a member of the nationalist Alternative for Germany/Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) party, stated in an interview with *Der Spiegel* that she was worried about the future of Germany and the safety of women from extremist Muslims and immigrants (Amann & Rapp, 2018). "I believe we are the only party in Germany who is really fighting for women's rights, because we point out we're in danger of losing the freedoms and rights of women for which we've fought for centuries" (Chrisafis et al., 2019). This statement, however, is more than a tactic, it is part of an entire political phenomenon called femonationalism which this paper will explore. Sara Farris coined the term femonationalism to describe how pro-women's-rights arguments are (ab)used to support nationalist political goals. The following thesis will focus on the nationalist rhetoric targeting feminism the Alternative for Germany uses to push its anti-immigration and Islamophobic agenda. By analysing the language used in party programmes, the slogans used in campaigns, and the images used in political posters and party websites, I aim to demonstrate that the Western perspective of feminism and the emancipation of women in Germany are being misconstrued to promote the AfD's ideas that migrants, especially Muslim migrants, pose a danger to the autochthonous women and the nation. In order to find out whether other right-wing parties in Europe also misuse gender and emancipation issues to strengthen their xenophobic ideologies, this paper will also analyse material of the right-wing Freedom Party in Austria (FPÖ).

The following research question will be answered during the course of this paper: "What is the role of the Alternative für Deutschland's (AfD's) ideal of Western female emancipation in the pursuit of their anti-Islamic immigration agenda?" The research is of great importance as it offers the background and motives behind the usage of female emancipation with the purpose of creating hatred towards (Muslim) migrants within the German population.

Beyond that, I will examine how the misuse of women's emancipation creates a broad acceptance in the population for placing the autochthonous German society above the "others".

This thesis will contribute to the literature on right-wing parties and anti-immigration policies. More specifically, I will add the gender dimension and how right-wing parties, such as the AfD in Germany, frame women in relation to anti-immigration policy areas. By examining the AfD's political rhetoric and materials through the lens of femonationalism, I hope to contribute to the expanding literature on the relevance of gender in nationalist and far-right politics in general, and in far-right critiques of Islam in particular. This paper aims to illuminate this paradox by demonstrating and explaining the contradiction within the AfD's attitude towards female emancipation and empowerment in Germany.

The research question and thesis are all the more relevant and important to explore as the last local elections in eastern Germany in June 2023 show a renewed increase in support for the AfD. "Almost every third person in eastern Germany leans towards the AfD, and the party is also making progress in the west of the country: nationwide, it has reached 20% according to polls and is thus stronger than Chancellor Olaf Scholz's Social Democratic Party" (Müller, 2023).

Sources and Methods

This paper conducts a literature review in the academic corpus to investigate Islamophobia, femonationalism, women's reproductive rights, and the potential oppression of women in Islam. This is to create an overview of the background of Islamophobia in Germany, and why the party uses women as symbols of German culture through the lens of femonationalism. Subsequently, the thesis will analyse political posters and party programmes the AfD uses to answer what the role of far-right parties' ideal of Western female emancipation is in the pursuit of their anti-Islamic immigration agenda.

These types of primary sources reflect opposite ends of the political spectrum in terms of how the party presents itself during election campaigns. While their election programmes describe the AfD's aims in the context of the individual election at hand, frequently in an argumentative manner, their election posters, on the other hand, offer the programmatic goals as concisely and clearly as possible.

A tool for visual political communication is the political poster. Election campaigns throughout the world use posters as a key visual medium to communicate to their voting base whilst simultaneously battling their opponents. It continues to be a significant part of today's political landscape and discourse, particularly in European nations like France, Austria, Switzerland, and Germany. In conveying extremely condensed written and visual information, campaign posters serve as a quick and immediate burst communication method. Political posters during election seasons are intended to provide an overview of political players, parties, candidates, and key campaigning concerns and topics (Geise, 2016). The increased integration of visualisations into political communication is primarily due to the "practical" understanding that images are perceived earlier, faster, and more directly than texts, that they have a higher activation potential, achieve better memory performance, and that they can have a more lasting and emotional influence (Geise & Brettschneider, 2010). As social media has become increasingly influential in election campaigns, the importance of visuals has become more prominent (Bulla, 2021).

Parties and candidates invest a significant chunk of their campaign funding in them. In Germany, posters often cost close to 20% of the campaign expenditure. The exact numbers for the AfD have not been publicly released. Since posters give little room to clarify policy viewpoints and only reach a small number of voters (compared to TV), these high poster costs may be a shock. The relevance of nonverbal and visual communication in voters' assessments of candidates across a range of systems is well supported by data. Whilst candidates from big

parties focus on their images to convey their excellent qualifications for their position, niche candidates, who have little chance of winning a seat in parliament, emphasise party and ideological signals to demonstrate their allegiance to their party (Dumitrescu, 2010).

A dataset of posters, tweets as well as party- and policy programmes spanning from 2014 until 2021 was examined for content analysis. This paper addresses state elections throughout this period, including federal and local elections in 2016, 2017 and 2021 and the European Parliament elections in 2014 and 2019. When looking at campaign posters from the European Parliament elections of 2014, it is clear that at this stage the focus was on Euroscepticism (Stiftung Haus der Geschichte, 2013).

Figure (Fig.) 1 (Neuerer, 2014). "Was haben das dicke koreanische Kind und die EU gemeinsam? Das Demokratieverständnis." Translation: "What do the fat Korean kid and the EU have in common? The understanding of democracy."

The most relevant posters for this paper are from the federal election in 2017. The reasons given as a trigger point for the xenophobic attitude shift were the refugee crisis of 2015 and the New Year festivities in Cologne in the same year.

The paper will discuss the historical timeframe in more detail below. The posters in the corpus were found through online image searches, mostly on official AfD websites and newspaper articles referring to them. In this approach, even if a comprehensive coverage of all posters from the years in consideration cannot be assured, a high level of authenticity and representativeness can be attained. I have chosen posters that best represent the AfD's attitudes towards the themes of Islamophobia, xenophobia and femonationalism. Whilst the AfD may have included other topics and policies in their campaign material, those are out of the scope of this study and do not contradict the messages of the posters I discuss. As the same themes ran through each election campaign, even by analysing other posters similar conclusions would have been found. I have chosen the most interesting, popular and impactful posters that illustrate the message of this thesis.

At the end of my analysis, I will take a closer look at a poster, a video and the party programme of the Austrian Freedom Party (FPÖ) in order to examine whether and how femonationalism is used to pursue its xenophobic agenda.

Historiography

Feminism and xenophobia are usually two terms we do not place together. Whilst feminism is an idea that gained popularity in modern times, the concept is used by political parties on both the left as well as right ends of the political spectrum to push ideologies.

The academic Jane Freedman explains that the use of women's rights as a counterargument to Islam is not confined to the far-right but can be seen throughout the political spectrum. She argues that policies and legislation are often framed as a defence of the

rights of Muslim women against Islam's supposed patriarchal structures. Freedman claims that in many European countries, a shift of policy concerning Muslim immigrants can be seen "from an assertion to the 'right of difference', and a defence of minority rights, to a more strongly assimilationist approach" (Freedman, 2007, p. 29). Nonetheless, the nationalist undertone of this discourse is more pronounced in far-right political groups. However, in terms of empowerment and change, left-wing parties - despite being populist - are still greater advocates of female politics and emancipation than right-wing ones. In comparison to the development of left populism in Europe, feminist studies have focused more on the growth of radical right populism (Kantola & Lombardo, 2019; Kantola & Lombardo, 2017). The few gender-related issues that do feature on the far-right platform promote conventional gender and family roles and openly oppose LGBTQIA+ and women's rights. The extreme right frequently employs the tactics of appropriating women's rights, interventionist natalist programmes, and feminist terminology (Kantola & Lombardo, 2019; Kantola & Lombardo, 2017).

In order to explain this phenomenon, Sara Farris coined the term femonationalism. She is a reader in the Department of Sociology at Goldsmiths, University of London and holds a PhD in sociology, focusing on topics such as migration and gender. Farris is well known throughout the academic world for her studies on femonationalism, and the use of feminist themes in anti-immigration campaigns by nationalist parties (Goldsmiths, 2020).

In her book *In the Name of Women's Rights: The Rise of Femonationalism,* the scholar and author claims that under the guise of femonationalism, liberals, secularists, right-wing politicians and even some feminists in Europe have appropriated women's rights and feminism to infringe upon religious freedom, women's bodies, and immigration. This is done by demonising Muslims, especially men, to promote their political agenda and objectives (Farris, 2017).

She uses the term femonationalism to characterise a broader trend of using anti-Islam arguments in the name of women's rights, bringing together disparate groups such as feminist bureaucrats (promoting feminist policies - 'femocrats'), neoliberal orientation programmes for migrants, and right-wing populist politicians. Right-wing parties frequently pride themselves in being anti-feminist, but right-wing figures like Frauke Petry, a former AfD politician, and Marine Le Pen now actually call themselves feminists (Bulla, 2021).

In the name of gender equality, the Muslim man is stigmatised and presented as a danger and threat to the supposedly progressive and emancipated gender relations that prevail in Europe. Here, the outdated Muslim patriarchy is reaffirmed as the enemy and employed in specific political campaigns (Farris, 2017).

Farris states that the occupation of the terms "gender" and "emancipation" by right-wing parties and conservative governments is one of the main features of the current political climate. A hierarchy of cultures is created by instrumentalising feminist approaches (Farris, 2017). However, there is a second form of femonationalism, one which takes the route of neo-imperialism. A prime example of this is Afghanistan. Several scholars have suggested that the call in Afghanistan, as in Europe, to liberate Muslim women is a traditional colonialist/missionary viewpoint (Farris, 2011). In 1988 Spivak, an Indian scholar, literary theorist, and feminist critic, already fittingly claimed that it was about white men who want to rescue brown women from brown men (Chakravorty et al., 1988). This viewpoint is rooted in the incompatibility and conflictual character of other cultures, as well as the supremacy of Western culture over others (Farris, 2011).

It should not go unmentioned that Farris' work is not entirely unchallenged. Möser criticises that Sara Farris essentially ignores the existence of political Islam. According to Farris' perspective, it appears as though migrant and/or Muslim women face no challenges when it comes to attaining personal freedom, individuality, the freedom to make choices

regarding their sexuality and reproduction or determining their desired lifestyle (Möser, 2023). "Farris' emphasis on singular racist and conservative feminist figures omitting most of feminist's critique of racism, but also the way in which she strips Muslim and migrant women of all agency opens the question whether this work should be seen as part of feminist research or rather be interpreted as an attack on feminism" (Möser, 2023, p.3).

It is not a singular phenomenon that nationalism and the promotion of rights of marginalised groups (e.g.: homosexuals or women) are used as a political tactic to exclude Muslims. In her paper, *The Political Economy of Homonationalism* (Farris, 2018), Sara Farris speaks of Jabir Puar's 2007 book *From Terrorist Assemblages to The Right to Maim*. Puar's use of "homonationalism" is intended to describe the attempt to cast homosexual rights against Muslims and racialised people within the framework of American nationalism. It shows the tactics the US government uses to manipulate parts of the gay emancipatory movement.

In the early 2000s, the Netherlands witnessed a politician, Pim Fortuyn, who embodies exactly what Puar described in her book, namely being openly gay and using this to promote anti-Muslim policies (van der Veer, 2006 & Farris, 2018). Alice Weidel is a further proponent of homonationalism. Weidel is an openly lesbian chairwoman of the AfD, which does not mean that the party is not homophobic. For instance, she wanted to eradicate the right to "marriage for all" and only criticised violence against homosexuals when the perpetrators did not fit the party's "racial ideals". The AfD, therefore, claims that the biggest threat of physical violence consists of immigrants, especially Muslims (LSVD, 2017).

Thomson adds to the discussion that a plethora of debates concerning migration and multiculturalism in a Western context have taken place within feminist spaces discussing the relation between multiculturalism and feminist theories. However, more recently, these discussions have also been taken up by right-wing parties who claim to be feminists as they have to defend their women from the dangerous "Other". In this context, Western emancipation

is seen as superior, promoting the attitude of the (superior) West versus the rest (Thomson, 2020).

Dombrowski and Hajek describe in their article "Zwischen Femonationalismus und Antigenderismus rechtspopulistische Geschlechterpolitiken in Deutschland" ("Between Femonationalism and Antigenderism Right-Wing Populist Gender Politics in Germany") the obvious contradictions in relation to feminism, women's rights and gender. Specifically, they examine the action alliance "Demo für Alle" ("Demonstration for All"), which is an antigender movement, as well as online activism by right-wing populist actors after New Year's Eve in Cologne in 2015/16. They come to the conclusion that both campaigns represent a fundamental threat scenario for the dissolution of Western society and the endangerment of its cultural reproduction. In the New Year's Eve debate, women's rights are thus seen as threatened and in the discourse of the "Demo für Alle" it is about the fear of the destruction of the heteronormative family as the nucleus of society. In both discourses, gender and sexuality are the central theme. They focus on the apparent contradictions of right-wing populist politics in relation to feminism, women's rights and gender in order to analyse right-wing populist gender politics. They come to the conclusion that the focus on gender and sexuality is one of the most important mobilisation moments of the strengthening right, specifically the AfD, in Germany in recent years (Dombrowski & Hajek, 2021).

Bitzl and Kurze show that the AfD makes use of an existing hostility towards Muslims in Germany and misuses religion for the purpose of mobilisation and maximising votes. They show that the Islamisation of the discussion and the simultaneous invocation of a Christian-Jewish heritage are electoral tactics to reach the political centre ground (Bitzl & Kurze, 2021).

At this point, I will also address the fact that femonationalism is not only used by right-wing parties but also by feminists like Alice Schwarzer in Germany, Elisabeth Badinter in France and Cisca Dresselhuys in the Netherlands. The publicly known feminist and author

Alice Schwarzer has spoken out on the 2015/2016 Silvester night in Cologne several times in a way that ultimately benefited the arguments of femonationalism and thus earned a lot of criticism. With her statements, Alice Schwarzer generalised Islam and accused its male followers of sexual violence. She argues that Muslim migrants in general must learn to accept and respect equality (Maier, 2021). With the term "toxic feminism", Hark and Villa substantiate the attitude of feminists such as Alice Schwarzer and others who have encouraged racist interpretations of the "Cologne New Year's Eve" in the media (Kaven, 2018).

The literature used clearly shows that policy aspects of feminism, and marginalised groups in general, are misused by right-wing parties in conjunction with nationalist ideology. According to Farris, femonationalism can be understood as combining nationalist ideology with feminist ideas in order to stigmatise and marginalise the "other". Her explanations provide the theoretical framework for this thesis. The affirmative answer to my research question is supported by the comprehensive examination of relevant literature. However, to provide a more nuanced understanding, it is necessary to delve into the context of the Alternative for Germany (AfD) in Germany and the Freedom Party of Austria (FPÖ). In this regard, the answer to the question can be derived by analysing exemplary visual materials, election programmes, and social media posts.

Context

Who is the Alternative für Deutschland?

In comparison to other European countries, Germany is a "latecomer" when it comes to establishing a right-wing populist party. There has always been resistance from the established democratic parties and the media. With the foundation of the AfD in April 2013 and the Patriotic Europeans Against the Islamisation of the West (Patriotische Europäer Gegen die Islamisierung des Abendlandes – PEGIDA) movement in October 2014 the situation changed. At its foundation, the AfD did not follow a radical right-wing agenda. Rather, it was a party with a strong focus on Euroscepticism, liberalism, and conservative social values with some nationalist influence (Grabow, 2016). Initially, its leadership consisted of disappointed members of Germany's elite, including academics, lawyers and former centre-right politicians who were very careful about not being associated with classic right-wing extremism. That was until 2015. In 2015 the party's leader, Bernd Lucke, and many of his followers left the party which resulted in a crucial turning point. The party's neoliberal side, led by him, was defeated by the bigger, nationalist-conservative group (Kemper, 2015).

Under the the leadership of Frauke Petry and Jörg Methen, the AfD started to prioritise topics such as immigration, refugees, and the "danger" of Islam (Arzheimer & Berning, 2019; Niedermayer & Hofrichter, 2016). With a clear distinction on the far right, the more conservative side and the right-wing side of the AfD started clashing (Niedermayer & Hofrichter, 2016). The neoliberal wing of the AfD opposed PEGIDA, while the nationalist-conservative wing sympathised with it. After the 2015 split, the AfD shifted its stance and thus became more anti-immigrant, shifting even further to the right (Grimm, 2015). "The strong social and political thematisation of the refugee problem as the AfD's new brand core has brought the party significantly rising poll ratings" (Niedermayer & Hofrichter, 2016, p. 269). By adopting racist, nationalist, and law-and-order rhetoric, specifically in local branches in

Eastern Germany, the party positioned itself towards the extreme right of the political spectrum. This was mostly accomplished through increasing awareness of the danger to internal security, particularly border crimes, and attitudes towards immigrants and asylum seekers.

Furthermore, the party promotes a nationalist view of women in addition to being anti-immigration. The AfD criticises "propagating single-parent families as a good life plan" in its curriculum. "The AfD is committed to the family as the nucleus of our society. It consists of father, mother and children" (*Programm der Alternative für Deutschland für die Wahl zum 20. Deutschen Bundestag*, 2021, p.104). Furthermore, it rejects gender-sensitive language and women's quotas. "Accordingly, we do not consider women's quotas to be progressive. They are a form of discrimination and perpetuate the image that a fulfilled and valued life for women can only be achieved through a professional career" (*Programm der Alternative für Deutschland für die Wahl zum 20. Deutschen Bundestag*, 2021, p.115). This attitude is reflected in the parliamentary group of the AfD which, in 2021, consisted of 79 men and only 9 women (*Deutscher Bundestag - Frauen Und Männer*, 2021). It is also noteworthy that the typical AfD voter is a male between the ages of 35 and 59 (Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, 2022).

In the federal elections from 2017, the AfD reached 12.6% and in 2021, 10.3% of the votes (Statista, 2017; Statista, 2021).

In German politics, it is often discussed whether or not the AfD can be classified as *verfassungswidrig* which translates to unconstitutional. The former German minister of Justice, Heiko Maas, for instance, claimed that the AfD's calls for the ban of minarets and muezzin calls are against the German constitution (Business Insider Deutschland, 2017).

In general, the actual content of the populist message is context-dependent since populism requires mobilising people's dissatisfaction with the current power structure and prevailing values in society (Golder, 2016). Traditionally, political families have been classified based on their historical background, transnational connections, party name, or

philosophy (Mair & Mudde, 1998). Scholars on the far right have traditionally concentrated on ideology. Unfortunately, there is no clear consensus in the literature on what comprises the extreme right's basic philosophy. Mudde (1996) lists 58 different ideological qualities associated with far-right political organisations. Scholars have increasingly classed far-right parties based on their radicalism/extremism, populism, and nationalism in recent years (Golder, 2016).

In terms of ideology, far-right parties are either radical or extremist. Extremism opposes the concept of popular sovereignty, which is usually implemented through a 'one person, one vote' electoral system. To put it another way, radicalism is the antithesis of democracy. Liberal (or constitutional) democracy is opposed to radicalism. Importantly, radicalism embraces procedural democracy in this formulation, but extremism does not. Radicalism questions the liberal foundations, particularly the positive value of plurality, and the constitutional constraints on popular sovereignty. The tendency to see divides and ambivalence as illegitimate lies at the heart of radicalism (Mudde, 2010). Radicalism does not oppose every form of democracy, while extremism does. In the German language, radical parties are classified as *verfassungsfeindlich*, which translates to anti-constitutional, whereas extremist parties are classified as *verfassungswidrig*, which means unconstitutional (Golder, 2016).

The ambition to construct an authoritarian system that is tightly ordered according to the "natural" inequalities that exist in society and a law-and-order system that harshly punishes rebellious activity connects far-right parties (Golder, 2016; Mudde, 2007).

What is striking, however, is that the AfD is increasingly orienting itself towards the social and political centre. It is seeking to connect with issues beyond the extreme right, such as women's rights and gender issues, in order to force a shift in the social climate to the right (Lang, 2018).

Historical Timeframe

The historical timeline will describe and explain the rise of Islamophobia in the West from 9/11 in 2001 to the events in 2015 (the refugee crisis and the sexual harassment cases that occurred in Cologne during New Year's Eve in 2015/16) to explore the evolution of the ideas which fuel it. This timeline is followed by a theory section which discusses the AfD's attitude towards women's rights and femonationalism before diving into the analysis.

I have chosen to start the historical timeframe with the events that occurred on 9/11 in the U.S. The terrorist attacks included multiple plane hijackings and suicide bombings associated with the Islamic terrorist organisation al-Quaeda targeting the United States. This is widely seen as a significant event which fuelled Islamophobia in the West at the beginning of the 21st century.

Anti-immigrant and anti-foreigner feelings are likely to have increased as a result of the event of the 9/11 terror attacks, not just among U.S. inhabitants but also outside of the U.S., including Germany. How did the terror attacks of 9/11 affect German politics and society? The sociologist Daniela Schiek aims to answer this question by utilising the theory of the consequence of collective violence and how it affects different generations (Schiek, 2014). Collective violence creates a process of identification with history and society, and the more collective this experience is the deeper the sense of historic and social engagement. Only emerging generations have drastically different worldviews. They determine whether cultural patterns will be abandoned or maintained. As a result, generations serve as both social memory brakes and social change seismographs. New generations are born as a result of physical and life-threatening situations. This is because, if they had only heard about such things before, confronting the potential of their collective death is the most essential historic experience for age groups (Schiek, 2014).

The 9/11 attacks had a direct and profound influence on people's beliefs, leading to a rise in discriminatory behaviour toward immigrants as a whole or as a specific minority, such

as Muslims. The terrorist attacks in the United States are seen to have had a detrimental international impact on public attitudes toward minorities in other nations. The currently available research is based on data from collective temporal patterns, such as substantial rises in hate crimes against Muslims in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, not just in the United States but also internationally (Schüller, 2012).

The 9/11 generation has revived the topic of tolerance for many cultures and beliefs, not just in politics but also in daily life. The attacks elicited a new level of communal physical violence that was felt "live" throughout the globe via media. It was the first time young adults encountered the prospect of collective danger to their own life; earlier, they had only heard about such things through older people's stories and experiences (Schiek, 2014).

The comparison of shocked and scared reactions of young Germans and Americans of the same age group demonstrates that it makes hardly any difference how close you were to a historic event when it comes to communal identification. Previous interpretive patterns of "docking" to the event may be seen in German discourse studies; for example, German politicians and authors connected US foreign policy after 9/11 to conditions during World War II (Schiek, 2014). Because it is a "glocal" experience "docking" to past dominating interpretation patterns, the 9/11 attacks spawned a new generation not just in the US but also in Germany. Not only in politics but also in everyday life, the 9/11 generation has reignited the debate over tolerance for different cultures and religions. The 9/11 terror attacks in the United States had a significant and negative impact on individual attitudes toward immigration and immigrants among native German residents, according to the study in Schüller's paper (Schüller, 2012). In the aftermath of the attacks, highly educated respondents showed no significant shift in attitudes toward immigration, whereas the less educated reacted with a significant shift to more negative immigration attitudes (Schüller, 2012). This corresponds with the AfD's voting base which the next section will explain further.

In 2015, over 1.2 million refugees entered the EU member states, Germany being the first destination country. In the second half of 2015, the crisis in Germany reached its peak as the government decided that there would be no limit regarding the number of asylum seekers Germany would allow to enter (Sola, 2018). I clearly remember the German chancellor, Angela Merkel, saying "Wir schaffen das" ("We can do it!"). Alessandro Sola states that the concerns about immigration rose by 22% compared to pre-2015 numbers. Additionally, the researcher discovered that the influx was twice as high in former East Germany. Finally, he also concludes that concerns about immigration are positively correlated with political support for the AfD (Sola, 2018).

Lastly, it is noteworthy to mention that the events which occurred on the 31st of December 2015 in Cologne definitely influenced public opinion concerning immigrants in Germany, which also consequently resulted in the AfD's rise in popularity. There were numerous attacks on women by groups of young men, mainly from North Africa and the Arab world. For many, this marked the end of the so-called "Willkommenskultur" ("Welcome Culture") (Werthschulte, 2017).

The Rise of Islamophobia in Germany

As femonationalism is used to spread Islamophobia, this thesis will now go into further detail discussing the rise of Islamophobia in Germany to create a clearer context for femonationalism in the AfD.

According to Georgetown University's Bridge Initiative, "Islamophobia is an extreme fear of and hostility towards Islam and Muslims which often leads to hate speech, hate crimes, as well as social and political discrimination. It can be used to rationalize policies such as mass surveillance, incarceration (imprisonment), and disenfranchisement, and can influence domestic and foreign policy" (Bridge Initiative, 2018).

While Orientalism has a long history and tradition in Europe, Islamophobia, on the other hand, emerged in the late 1990s. Islamophobia and Orientalism are often interchanged due to the way that they demonise the "Other". Islamophobia and Orientalism frequently draw on variants of the terms "Muslim," "Jew," and "Orient," as well as other recurring narratives that are used to construct and describe the Other. Orientalism may be regarded as a multi-faceted system that uses both positive and negative associations, at times romanticising the "Orient" as a result. In contrast, Islamophobia is founded on a stereotype of a Muslim who is a member of a single race and a Eurocentric and simplified version of Islam. It produces attitudes that emphasise danger, mistrust, and hostility because it is fed by negative preconceptions and biases (Skenderovic & Späti, 2019).

Ferruh Yılmaz from Tulane University in the USA gives an interesting argument and insight into how right-wing parties succeeded in making Muslim immigration a key topic in their programme. "The slide to the right happened over the debate about Muslims and Islam's incompatibility with European culture. Culture, meaning cultural struggle, has been thus the key concept in the turn to the right of the entire political spectrum. The populist far-right capitalized on the increasing attention paid to immigration, turning it into a cultural question, and then managed to push the culturalized immigration debate into the centre of political discourse. The mainstream right then cynically adopted the cultural focus on immigration in part to recapture the anti-immigrant, anti-Muslim animosity that brought the populist far-right electoral gains" (Yılmaz, 2012, p. 276).

Subsequently, this thesis will briefly explore how the level of education is related to the degree of Islamophobia. In her study, Simone Schüller examines individual attitudes towards immigration and xenophobia in Germany. The analysis shows that highly educated participants in the study did not present any change in attitude towards immigration after 9/11. However, the lower educated did show a more negative attitude towards (Muslim) immigration after the

events of 9/11. It is crucial to mention that in her paper, it nonetheless remains an open question whether it can be generalised if more education leads to less prejudice and a greater appreciation of cultural differences (Schüller, 2012).

One of the ways the AfD monopolises or continues to use this prejudice is by focusing on the populist contrast of "Us" versus Islam (Bitzl & Kurze, 2021). The AfD is increasingly relying on a populist contrast of "Christian-Jewish Occident" and "Islam" to establish its identity, while having no special ties to the church or Christian voters, nor to the Jewish community (Bitzl & Kurze, 2021). The AfD utilises anti-Muslim, racist language in its essentialising attributions. The party manages to disguise its right-wing extremist nativist positions, which are primarily manifested in anti-pluralist attitudes (including being against diversity) and the undermining of religious freedom, as a defence of liberal, enlightened Christian values by being embedded in a "clash of cultures" (Bitzl & Kurze, 2021).

One way in which the AfD does this is by adapting the adversary image of Muslims as an out-group to these cultural worries of loss and pluralisation. The AfD portrays Islam as a cultural and political philosophy and that its followers are unable to escape because they are born into it, and hence alludes to the ostensibly urgent necessity to limit Muslims' religious liberties. The division is mostly founded on racial assumptions. All of this takes place under the shield of criticism of Islam, which the AfD does not want to lose as part of the fundamental right to freedom of speech, even though many of its demands are racist, anti-democratic, and right-wing extremist in nature, and so violate fundamental rights (Bitzl & Kurze, 2021).

In the party's election programme, it states that "a critique of Islam, like any other criticism of religion, is legitimised by the fundamental right to freedom of expression. It is unacceptable to suppress criticism of Islam by accusing it of 'Islamophobia' or 'racism'" (*Programm der Alternative für Deutschland für die Wahl zum 20. Deutschen Bundestag*, 2021, p.84).

The AfD is, in a sense, the "party-fication" of Islamophobia, and it propels it forward. When you look at the AfD's demands to outlaw mosques, the creed, to cast Muslims in a negative light, to speak out against minarets, or even to query if Islam is consistent with the law, one is reinforcing stereotypes and biases. This isn't a constructive critique of Islam; it is a complete denunciation of a religious system, and it's unacceptably offensive (Büüsker, 2016).

Analysis

The thesis will analyse primary materials and campaign posters, tweets and party- and policy programmes from the year 2014 until 2021. It describes and provides an analysis of the posters resulting in showing how women, or the AfD's image of women, have been used in the campaigns in this period. At the end of this chapter, I will examine whether the FPÖ in Austria also employs the tactic of femonationalism to pursue its xenophobic agenda.

Cultural Racism

"Cultural racism, a refined replacement of earlier biological racism, served this purpose. It evolved from modernization theory, and the associated assumption that nearly all significant cultural innovations emanate from Europe (Blaut 1992), thus relying on history rather than biology or religion to explain the 'superiority' of Europeans, who could be defined as 'modern' and 'progressive', in contrast to non-Europeans as 'traditional' and 'backward', an idea which has become particularly popular in Scandinavia (Alund 1991). The essence of cultural racism, therefore, is that Europeans are not racially, but culturally 'superior'" (Wren, 2001, p.143). The denial of racism leads, in a way, to so-called "not-racism" and racists actions and statements are thus legitimated by simply saying that one is not racist. Far-right, racist parties frequently make use of this tactic (Witzel, 2020).

In 2016, a 30-year-old Muslim doctor from Berlin gave *Der Spiegel* an interview explaining that it is quite challenging to live in Germany now as a person that "looks Muslim".

"Regardless of whether you are a devout Muslim or not: the "Arab" appearance is sufficient for many people to judge us" (Feroz, 2016). Due to that hostility, German Muslims feel they are forced into the following dilemma: they must question how to respond to such intolerance as a German with a migratory background: Succumb to pressure or deny your religion (Feroz, 2016)?

The publication of the party programme in 2017 marked the AfD's transformation from a partially Eurosceptic party into a racist party, which is characterised by a language of xenophobia, ethnic nationalism, and anti-immigration attitudes (Witzel, 2020). The AfD's party programme of 2017 states that "Islam does not belong to Germany. The AfD sees the spread of Islam and the presence of more than 5 million Muslims, whose numbers are constantly growing a great danger to our state, our society, and our system of values. Former Chancellor Schmidt correctly recognised this circumstance in his political balance and formulated it as early as 2008: "Whoever wants to increase the number of Muslims in Germany accepts an increasing threat to our internal peace." An Islam that does not respect our legal system or even fights it and claims to rule as the only valid religion is not compatible with Germany's free democratic basic order" (*Wahlprogramm der Alternative für Deutschland für die Wahl zum Deutschen Bundestag am 24. September 2017*, 2017, p.45).

There is a direct correlation between the normalisation of xenophobic, nationalist, racist, and Islamophobic discourses and the rising enthusiasm for far-right political parties and organisations. These discourses are also accompanied by a rhetoric of fear: more precisely the fear of the "Other", the fear of social change and a weakening of safety nets, summed up it is the fear of cultural loss (Witzel, 2020). One of the main arguments against migration these parties utilize claims that illegal migrants abuse their asylum-seeking statuses in order to get into Germany and abuse its social support system. Refugees' positions changed from that of vulnerably seeking out protection to that of economic migrants due to the way they are

portrayed as sham asylum applicants. The process of creating a false asylum seeker, which involves repeatedly labelling refugees as bogus, may also be seen as the denial of refugee status to all refugees. Thus, refugees change into anything other than refugees, becoming either the common "Einwanderer", criminals, or terrorists (Kosmider, 2020). This stereotype is typically found in far-right ideology, which holds that migrants and refugees choose to travel to nations with sophisticated welfare systems with the intention of living primarily off the welfare state (Rooduijn et al., 2017).

As mentioned above, cultural racism establishes a hierarchy between different cultures, putting the white, Western culture at the very top of the pyramid. This results in an exclusionary environment for non-Western, non-white people living in Germany. Additionally, it supports the notion that "universal" principles serve as the basis for racist exclusion when those who reject or are assumed to be unable to adhere to these "universal" cultural norms are institutionally excluded from society via rules, laws, and structures. It also backs up the idea that these "universal" principles are superior to other social customs on a cultural level. Hence, the main principle of racism without race is that cultures and traditions cannot coexist and that the openness of borders jeopardises the survival of one's own cultural identity.

Fig. 2 (Lachmann, 2014). *"die Einwanderung nicht stoppen. Heute leben sie in Reservaten"*

Translation: *"Didn't stop immigration. Today they live in reserves."*

Figure 2 shows a tweet by the AfD Rhein-Sieg-Kreis depicting an image of a Native American with a text stating that they did not stop immigration resulting in their living in reserves. Attached to this image is a tweet claiming that if Germany continues letting in immigrants it will face the same fate (Lachmann, 2014). The AfD is not the first party to make this comparison. The NPD (Nationaldemokratische Partei Deutschland), a far-right and neo-Nazi political party has also compared the future fate of Germany with that of Native Americans.
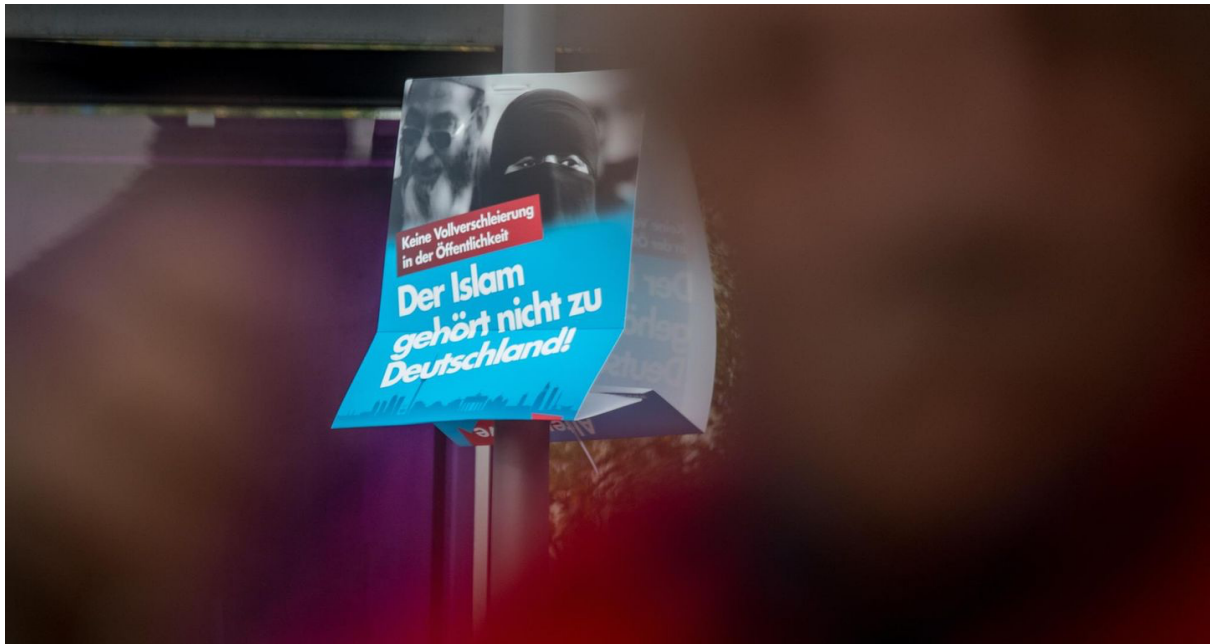
Fig. 3 (Epp, 2018). *"Der Islam gehört nicht zu Deutschland!"* Translation:" *Islam does not belong to Germany"*

Figure 3 shows a poster with the main slogan being "Der Islam gehört nicht zu Deutschland!" This translates to "Islam does not belong to Germany". In a red box above, one can read "No concealment of the people in public". The top half of the campaign poster is filled with a black and white photograph of a veiled Muslim woman in the foreground and a bearded Muslim man wearing religious headgear and sunglasses in the background. The AfD asserts in its policy statement that "Islam does not belong to Germany." "An orthodox Islam that does not respect or even opposes our legal system while claiming to be the only genuine religion is incompatible with our legal system and culture," it adds (Schulte von Drach, 2016).

Domestically, the AfD, a reactionary party, is conducting a cultural war against diversity, social pluralism, and emancipatory social movements (Dunn & Fischer, 2019). Whilst introducing the AfD's proposal on how to deal with Islam in Germany, Gottfried Curio, an AfD member of the German Bundestag, said that "the individual Muslim may be able to emancipate himself from an anti-constitutional corset, but Islam itself, as a social order, opposes the essential contents of our constitution, as well as the human rights charter. It cannot

be integrated into our system of values." He continues his speech by saying that "Islam does not belong to Germany because it cannot belong to our constitutional state. A tolerant Islam is Western wishful thinking. Euro-Islam, German Islam, and democratic Islam are empty fantasies of round squares and angular circles" (Deutscher Bundestag, 2018, 5:23-5:40 min).

However, contrary to what the AfD preaches, religious freedom is a basic right for all religions. Only when religion attempts to undermine the free and democratic society does it face constraints and the state has the power to intervene. Religion in and of itself does not have to be built on democratic standards, neither is the Catholic Church. The AfD's policies and party programme state that orthodox Islam is not compatible with the German legal system – a gross generalisation and as such not in line with the constitution. The AfD claims that (orthodox) Islam is unconstitutional by not acting alongside the constitution itself (Schulte von Drach, 2016). According to the federal constitutional court's interpretation of the constitution, any religious group that satisfies certain fundamental characteristics - such as the number of members or period of existence - can become an organisation under public law (Schulte von Drach, 2016). Additionally, the AfD also opposes the muezzin's call and the presence of minarets, which is unconstitutional. The constitution does not separate whether the freedom of religion applies to Christianity or Islam. Contrary to what the party often expresses, freedom of religion does not only mean that we are permitted to believe in any religion, but it also means that we are allowed to live by certain religions (Schulte von Drach, 2016 & Reuters, 2017).

Fig. 4 (Warth, 2021). Tweet about the AfD Campaign for the European Elections in 2019.

Translation: Learning from Europe's history – under this premise, we presented our campaign for the European elections in #Berlin. Using numerous motifs from German and European art history, the campaign is intended to refer to common cultural values that need to be defended today more than ever. Be it the fight against Islamisation – and the return of medieval customs – or a resounding No to a Europe ruined by green lumberjacks, the AfD is needed to prevent Europe from being absorbed into the magma of the EU and to give German interests a voice. With the call "Europeans vote for the AfD!" directed at a German electorate, last but not least, the campaign refers to the fact that as a German you can also feel like a European because you belong to the community of destiny of Europe, which means that you also have a say.

"Aus Europas Geschichte lernen" (Learning from Europe's history) was the name of the AfD Berlin state association's election campaign for the 2019 European elections, which

drew a lot of attention and made headlines when it was unveiled at the end of March. The party intended to promote its right-wing conservative beliefs by using works by well-known European artists. The right-wing party reused century-old works by famous European artists in the spread of political messages in preparation for the 2019 European elections, putting the "high-cultural traditions" in danger. Among the AfD's victims were paintings by Giuseppe Arcimboldo, Pieter Bruegel, and Jean-Léon Gérôme (Häntzschel, 2019).

Thor Kunkel, a writer and AfD adviser, promised the AfD a double triumph with this series of artworks that would be utilised as an advertising campaign. Right-wing conservatives and opponents of the "Gutmenschentums" would appreciate the AfD's "classy" provocation. The anticipated outrage from the media, on the other hand, according to Thor Kunkel, would not affect the AfD, but rather the museums that continue to display such artworks (Häntzschel, 2019). Rather than conjuring up even more divisive ideas of a supposed catastrophe, this strategy asserts that the crisis has been going on for generations. In addition, using old paintings gives the party's election campaign a sort of credibility and respectability.

Fig. 5 (Fröhlich, 2019). *"Damit aus Europa kein 'Eurabien' wird! Europäer wählen AfD!"* Translation: *"To prevent Europe from becoming 'Eurabia'! Europeans vote for the AfD!"*

In some of the artworks used, the main motive is the female body. In the painting by Jean-Léon Gérôme, the naked female body is at the centre of attention. The poster chosen is from the year 2019 (*Fig. 5*) and depicts a naked, white, enslaved woman who is subject to the (male) gaze and is grabbed by a group of darker-skinned, mysterious men. Then there's the slogan: "To prevent Europe from becoming Eurabia! Europeans, vote for the AfD!" The picture depicts a young lady being undressed by a slave trader and given to a group of fully clothed men for inspection, according to the Clark Art Institute's website. A prospective buyer examines her teeth - the market being the setting for this frightening scenario. While staring at the feminine body, 19th-century French viewers had the chance to criticise slavery, which was illegal in Europe at the time (Fuchs, 2019).

The message is straightforward: Islam is intruding on Europe, and Muslims enslave and mistreat German and European women. The title of the painting is "Le marché d'esclaves" (The Slave Market), and the artist is the French historical painter Jean-Léon Gérôme (1824-1904), a representative of Orientalism. Artists such as Jean-Léon Gérôme recognised that their travels to North Africa, Constantinople, and the Near East provided them with a rich source of inspiration and imagery to depict in their works (Bongie, 1996). The French historical painter developed a series of Orientalist works that depict Western perceptions of the Orient. The graphics are influenced by colonialism and are meant to depict the colonial power systems of the time. According to art historians, the scenario is set somewhere in the Middle East or North Africa, and it is a fantasy scene from the fictional realm of 1001 Nights. The painting was sold and is now in the Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute's collection in Williamstown, Massachusetts. However, the institute has publicly demanded that the AfD should no longer make use of the painting for political gain. In a communication to the Berlin AfD regional organisation, museum director Olivier Meslay said, "We strongly reject the use of the picture and insist on its removal." Meslay stated, "We did not make this photo available to the AfD."

There are no copyrights, however, "enabling us to control how it is utilised." As a result, he could only appeal to the AfD's "decency" (Fuchs, 2019).

Above all, the party's aim was most likely to display a lady, if not blonde, at the very least nude and turban wearers who are cruel and violent (Fröhlich, 2019; Warth, 2019). One tweet describes why the AfD chose this picture for their campaign: "Dabei ist das, was man sieht - von dem französischen Maler Jean-Leon Gérôme mit "unterkühltem Pinsel" übrigens genial in Szene gesetzt -, nur die ästhetisierte Umsetzung dessen, was sich in der Silvesternacht auf der Kölner Domplatte abgespielt hat" (AfD Twitter, 2019). This translates to: "What you see - by the way, brilliantly staged by the French painter Jean-Leon Gérôme with an "undercooled brush" - is only the aestheticized implementation of what happened on New Year's Eve on the Cologne Cathedral square." The event will be discussed in more detail in the section focussing on "sexual threat".

Whilst this section shows the cultural and racial complexities of the issue, it is also the use of the term "Heimat(land)" that promotes further xenophobic attitudes and ideologies.

"Heimat(land)" – Native country

Even though the term "Heimatland" has a history of being misused during the Nazi era, inhabitants of Germany and Austria still talk about what it means to them.

In an interview, the German sociologist Armin Nassehi describes the "untranslatable" term "Heimat" as "the questioning of where people feel they belong, the question of how you describe your own culture, the question — of course triggered by the refugee crisis — of what is actually German. [It's] the question of who belongs to Germany, and who doesn't. All that can be subsumed under the term "Heimat," and that's why the term is once again back in fashion" (Krämer, 2018). Historically, the term Heimat has been emotionally charged in Germany and Austria. Although politicians avoided using the term for decades as it was strongly associated with Germany's and Austria's Nazi past, is it being used in various different

contexts in today's political climate. The Greens, for example, such as Austria's current president Alexander van der Bellen, use the term Heimat as an idea of identity (Hasselbach, 2017). The AfD openly uses the term Heimat in order to describe their ideal German culture which excludes everything foreign. It emphasises the importance of national identity, traditions and cultural connectedness. The AfD places a strong focus on an ethnically homogenous notion of Heimat, emphasising separation from immigrants or cultural change.

The following two election posters represent the so-called Heimat and the diversity within it.

Fig. 6 (AfD, 2017) "*'Bunte Vielfalt?' Haben wir schon*." Translation: "*Colourful Diversity? We already have that.*"

The 2017 federal election used a series of election posters called "Trau dich Deutschland" (Dare to do it, Germany). *Figure 6* depicts three women dressed in German

national costumes visible in the centre of the image. Even during the Nazi era, the dirndl was a symbol of homeland propaganda and Jewish women were not allowed to wear them. It was thus used as a means to exclude the "others". If you look at the women's facial expressions, the enthusiasm for German culture is almost exaggerated (Bulla, 2021). The various traditional attires intend to demonstrate that Germany has a sufficient amount of cultural diversity. It is also interesting to note that the hair of the woman in the middle of the picture is completely covered by the headdress. Although the AfD is repeatedly openly against the veiling of Muslim women, it seems to be accepted if it is not based on Muslim traditions (Bulla, 2021).

It is also imperative to examine the quote "Colourful Diversity? We already have that." It soon becomes clear that the AfD only views diversity in terms of the German nation. The party emphasises the importance of defending Western Christian values as well as German women. The traditional clothing and the motto that goes with it obviously indicate a deep respect for regional traditions and the core values of German culture.

Fig. 7 (AfD, 2017) *"'Burka?' Ich steh' mehr auf Burgunda!"* Translation: "*'Burka?' I prefer Burgundy wine!*"

Figure 7 shows three women in traditional dirndl dresses, so-called wine queens. Wine queens are representatives of a wine region who are elected for a certain period. The three women raise their wine glasses to toast. This photo is not only directed against fundamentalist veiling but against all devout Muslims who do not drink alcohol. Again, the national attire represents the Heimat.

Western Ideals and Sexual Threat

Fig. 8 (AfD Kompakt, 2017). *"'Burkas? Wir steh'n auf Bikinis''* Translation: *"Burkas? We prefer bikinis."*

This poster from the same campaign in 2017 presents an excellent example that shows the femonationalist rhetoric of the AfD's anti-immigration discourse. The slogan translates to "' Burkas?' We prefer Bikinis." The poster shows two young, white women walking on a beach in their bikinis. The photograph is taken from an angle, which only lets us see the backs of their bodies. The bikini is used as a symbol which represents women's emancipation in Germany and the Western world. The reference to the Burka, once again, highlights the difference between "Us" and "Them", resulting in a stereotypical image of Muslim women being oppressed due to their choice of clothing. This poster is a prime example of anti-Islamic rhetoric in combination with provocative images of gender as well as sexuality. Women's empowerment is instrumentalised and helps the AfD in creating an image of being a liberal and democratic opposition party.

Figures 6, 7, and 8 are from the same campaign, which includes images of German

women who appear to be very joyful and carefree. It is important to note that these pictures

show a more conventional and conservative view of women, which seems out of touch

and anachronistic. All three campaign posters share the use of vivid, summery colours that

draw attention to women's beauty in an objectifying and sexualised way. Similar to the

images, at first glance, the accompanying texts appear to be optimistic and light hearted, but

upon closer inspection, they reveal a deeper underlying motive that may necessitate a second

look to fully understand.

Fig. 9 (Rutkowski, 2021). *"Deutsche Frau kein Freiwild. Kapiert? Integration verbindlich einfordern."*
Translation: *"German women no free game. Understand? Bindingly demand integration. Fresh wind instead of hot air."*

This poster, *Figure 9*, from the federal elections campaign in 2021, is a prime

example of how the AfD approaches the topic of sexual violence. The image from the year

2021 depicts a brunette, attractive woman with a rather seductive facial expression. She is

wearing a jacket with the zipper half undone showing her cleavage. Below her cleavage is a

red text box which claims that "German Women not free game. Understand?". On the right-

hand side of the red text box the poster "bindingly demands integration. Fresh wind instead of

hot air." The poster directly targets male Muslim migrants ("Understand?"). Furthermore, the language used is grammatically incorrect (the verb and the articles are missing – correct would be: "**Die** Deutsche Frau **ist** kein Freiwild.") and ridicules the way migrants stereotypically talk. There is a very obvious implication that migrants are poorly educated, and it constructs an obvious dichotomy between "Us" and "Them". This poster infers the "Otherness" of Muslim minorities in Germany and promotes the AfD's image of being white women's and Western civilisation's saviour from the threat of Muslim men (Doerr, 2021).

Fig. 10 (Wires, 2016). „*Köln – Stuttgart – Hamburg … Mehr Sicherheit für unsere Frauen und Töchter!* Translation: „Cologne – Stuttgart – Hamburg … more security for our wives and daughters!"

Figure 10 shows a campaign poster for the local elections in Rheinland-Pfalz in 2016 which shows a female teenager who is wiping the tears off her face. In the background, there is a blurry depiction of several men in the dark. On the poster it says "Cologne – Stuttgart – Hamburg … more security for our wives and daughters!". The three dots imply that there will probably be more attacks in other German cities too. Here again, it is the threat of sexual assaults by "Them" (Muslim men) against "Us" ("our wives and daughters").

Posters which depict sexual assault are almost always linked negatively to male, Muslim immigration. Sexual crimes committed by asylum seekers and immigrants were exploited by the AfD in order to establish a hierarchy between "real" Germans and racialised (potential) "new" Germans, for instance, asylum seekers, and refugees (Giuliani et al., 2020).

In their paper "Die Migrantin retten!?" (Save the female migrant!?), the authors María do Mar Castro Varela and Nikita Dhawan highlight the fact that sexism is becoming a problem for male Muslim subjects, even though sexism is known to be ubiquitous in European cities (do Mar Castro Varela & Dhawan, 2016).

The AfD tries to give the impression that Germany is not a safe place for autochthone women any longer. However, when looking at the statistics, it is visible that in fact, the opposite is true (RTL Online, 2021). This indicates that the AfD does not base its campaign posters on facts and truthful events, but rather uses aggression in the narrative. This leaves assault by native Germans invisible in party communications.

Already the painting *Figure 4* depicts that migrants, with a darker complexion, who do not look stereotypically "European" sexually idealise and take advantage of white (German) women. The longer one is exposed to a narrative, such as posters that portray immigrants as criminals, the more permanent the impact. A study by Helbling et al. discovered that the effectiveness of these posters depends on the pre-existence of a positive, sexist image of women (women are victims and in need of help attitude). You can't gain new voters that way because it's an interaction between members of your target demographic resulting in the fact that not more young women are now turning to right-wing parties out of fear. The majority of the time, people who have not internalised sexism are unaffected by such advertisements and campaigns. It is clear that threats to culture or the economy are not the only reasons for the feeling of threat by migration. Studies from the social sciences demonstrate that foreign men

are viewed as more violent and dangerous than foreign women and local men (Helbling et al., 2016).

Racism and sexism combined are known as ethnosexism. Since New Year's Eve 2015/16 in Cologne, this discursive creation of ethnosexist entanglement has been more prevalent in German-speaking countries (Dietze, 2016). New Year's Eve 2015/16 was notorious for raising controversy over the dangers of male immigrants from the Middle East and North African countries to German women. More than 600 women said they were molested primarily by North African and Arab men, creating a "rapist black refugee" figure that had a major impact on public discourse (Kosmider, 2020). In addition to discrediting all males who are classified as "different", the Cologne Silvester attackers also exonerate European men from accusations of sexism and racism as all the blame was shifted on the "different" ones (do Mar Castro Varela & Dhawan, 2016). Different cultures have different accounts of what gender roles in society are, but the relative disrespect women face is a global issue and not one specific to one culture. For the AfD, for instance, the attacks in Cologne were the result of an excessively lenient asylum policy and proof of their claim that it is challenging to reconcile Islamic and Western traditions (Helbling et al., 2016). The AfD falsely claims that they are the only political voice that talks about the safety of women - they present themselves as the real defenders of women's rights. The party's narrative not only used Cologne for its anti-immigration agenda, but it also discredits feminism by using their arguments. It is a challenge for feminists to compete with right-wing voices as they will use feminist contradiction for their own purposes (Schuster, 2021). In this context, it has to be mentioned that other feminists such as Christine Delphy in France, Annamaria Rivera in Italy, and Anja Meulenbelt in the Netherlands, have called such a depiction of Islam an inappropriate generalisation with inherently racist overtones (Farris, 2011). They have emphasised the need to support Muslim women's initiative for self-determination in the face of external patronage, criticising the claims

of nationalist xenophobic parties and neo-liberal governments to stand up for women's rights as hypocrisy that only serves to exacerbate an already existing Islamophobic climate.

'Cologne' was mentioned 97 times on ARD and ZDF television stations (Drüeke, 2016). The prevailing framing of the narrative within those reports, which invoked colonial tropes of the purportedly dangerous, sexually aggressive black guy (Fanon, 1986) who poses a threat to the presumably innocent white lady, was what prompted feminists to join in the argument (Hoch, 1979). In a discourse analysis of fifty-eight newspaper articles about 'Cologne' published in the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* and *Die Welt* in January 2016, Dziuba-Kaiser and Rott (2016) found implicitly racist narratives about 'criminal North Africans' and 'hypersexualized Muslim men' in more than half of the articles. Drüeke (2016) found a negative and homogeneous picture of the offenders based on their non-German ethnicity in his examination of TV coverage reporting 'Cologne.' Much less media attention is given to, for example, the annual Oktoberfest in Munich, where numerous women are sexually assaulted by autochthonous men (Amnesty, 2018).

In discussions concerning the attacks that followed, calls for a stricter immigration policy and the origins of the criminals were raised rather than the expansion of victim protection or sexualized violence as a social issue (do Mar Castro Varela & Dhawan, 2016).

Fig. 11 (examioGmbH, 2023). *"Dem Führer – die Jugend"* Translation: *"To the Führer - the youth".*

If you look back at German history, the role of women in Nazi Germany was to birth as many children as possible to promote the preservation of the "Aryan race". Katherine Rossy writes: "A 1938 Christmas Day newspaper article from the Völkischer Beobachter, the official Nazi propaganda newspaper, reveals the degree to which Nazi leaders considered childbearing the principle patriotic duty of German women: 'The prolific German mother is to be accorded the same place of honour in the German Volk community as the combat soldier since she risks her body and her life for the people and the Fatherland as much as the combat soldier does in the roar and thunder of battle." With these words, Reich Physician Leader Dr Wagner, head of

the People's Health Section in the Reich leadership of the party, at the behest of the Führer, announced the creation of a Medal of Honor for prolific German Mothers at the Party Day of Labor. Three million German mothers, on the German Mother's Day in 1939, for the first time will be solemnly awarded the new badge of honour by the leaders of the party (Mosse 2003, 45-46)'. This article is referring to the Cross of Honour for the German Mother programme, also known as the MutterKreuz, one of the main Nazi pro-natal policies designed to increase the birthrate of "racially pure" Germans. Every year on August 12, Hitler's mother's birthday, German mothers were awarded a bronze cross if they had four children, a silver cross if they had six children, and a gold cross if they had eight children (Rossy, 2012, p. 87-88). This inhumane policy went as far as forced sterilisations and abortions affecting two million Eastern European workers (mainly women from Russia, Poland, and Ukraine) during the Second World War. The main goal was to avoid children of "mixed blood". Another target was children of Afro-Germans: their mothers were forced to decide whether to let their children get sent to a concentration camp or let their "mixed blood" children get forcefully sterilised. The anti-natalist racist policies of the Third Reich reached their peak with the introduction of the "Nürnberger Gesetze" (the Nuremberg laws) to protect German Blood and German Honour. Marriage and sexual relations between Jewish-Germans and non-Jewish Germans were prohibited. It is estimated that between 10-30% of "racially unfit" women were sterilised from 1933-1945 (Rossy, 2012). The horrific nature of Nazi anti-natalist policies and propaganda shows how quickly ideas of racial purity can spread and escalate and be widely accepted by the population.

Fig. 12 (AfD, 2017).*"'Neue Deutsche? `Machen wir selber."* Translation: *"' New Germans?' We will make them ourselves. Go for it Germany".*

The AfD too tries to make German women look as feminine and "fertile" as possible, making them into an object that needs protection. The poster from the federal elections in 2017 shows an image of a young, blonde woman with an obviously pregnant stomach. She is lying down on the grass on top of a picnic blanket smiling at the camera.

To prevent the ties of German culture from fraying even further, in the AfD's perspective, they are openly encouraging, those whom they consider to be German women, to increase the birth rate and expand and strengthen their idea of German culture. This is the AfD openly claiming that Germany is not German enough anymore. It is being invaded by Muslims

who are not able to adapt to German culture (Kaya & Tecmen, 2019). In her work, Sara Farris discusses the lack of representation of migrant women. When migrant women are acknowledged at all, according to Farris, they are presented as covered and restrained Orientalist objects (Farris, 2017). By donning a head covering and seeming to be dependent on begging to support themselves and their enormous number of "unmanageable" children, migrant women portray the tyranny brought about by the presence of Muslim men. Here, the emotional economy operates in a way that highlights animosity toward male migrants by dehumanising Muslim women into throwaway goods (Kosmider, 2020). The poster shows that the AfD wants German women to reproduce, but what is the party's stance on women's reproductive rights? High birth rates are commonly cited in far-right arguments to support the thesis that Muslims will inevitably outnumber native Europeans. Because of fertility rates, there remains a division between Germans and immigrants. Women in Islamic civilisations are viewed as suppressed childbearing machines, "othering" them into one-dimensional symbols for what seems to be their only role, in contrast to the low fertility rates in Germany (Kosmider, 2020). Whilst conservatives like to put women in these one-dimensional roles, the conflict arises when Muslim women take on these roles and have a higher birth rate which threatens German homogeneity.

We have seen the (ab)use of feminism by the AfD, but how feminist is the party really when we look closer at their policies, in particular, their perspective on reproductive rights? Recently, an increase in arguments that place women's rights at the centre of conservative, Christian and far-right critiques of Muslims and Islam were observed, leading to a more mainstream discourse in which Islam is perceived as oppressive. Muslims and Islam are viewed as sexist which makes them a danger to Western nations and principles such as female freedom (Farris, 2017). These conflicting views are used to convey an incompatibility of cultures.

Despite their use of women's rights arguments, many far-right groups are staunchly conservative, and their dedication to gender equality can only be considered tactical.

In their policy programme of 2021, the AfD states a commitment to the traditional family as a guiding principle. "A misunderstood feminism unilaterally values women in working life, but not women who are "only" mothers and housewives. These often experience less recognition and are financially disadvantaged. […] It should be desirable again to enter into marriage, raise children and spend as much time as possible with them. The AfD wants a social discussion of values to strengthen the role of parents and is against the stigmatisation propagated by gender mainstreaming" (Grundsatzprogramm, 2021, p. 41). In order to raise Germany's birth rate, the AfD's policy programme suggests a policy of greater appreciation of parental work and encouragement towards young people to start a family to prevent the "wrong" demographic development (Grundsatzprogramm, 2021). The policy programme proves that the AfD aims to repeal gender equality legislation, force women back into conservative and traditional gender roles, and cut funding for gender studies (Grundsatzprogramm, 2021). And when the AfD talks about wanting to help mothers, immigrant women are not included. The party laments the "ethnocultural shift in the population structure" brought on by the reportedly high birth rate among migrants, especially Muslim women (Grundsatzprogramm, 2021, p. 42). Therefore, the AfD exclusively refers to white German families without a history of immigration when it promotes mothers and families. The AfD believes that autochthonous women have an obligation to have more children and is pushing for government initiatives to encourage more births. For the AfD, having children is a state objective rather than a private matter. Therefore, the party is less interested in the needs of women and instead advocates for a racist family policy. Only women who uphold the party's beliefs will receive assistance, according to the promise (weiterdenken, 2017).

Women suffer the most in nations governed by right-wing nationalist parties and fundamentalists, according to a report released in March 2020 and examined by *Der Spiegel* (Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschland (SPD), 2020). Same-sex partnerships and transgender rights are fully rejected by the AfD. Only the conventional, nuclear family with "one father and one mother" is recognised by the party. Furthermore, the AfD is anti-abortion and anti-feminism, and it classifies gender ideology as anti-constitutional (Olsen, 2018). The right-wing party demands an end to the financial support of abortion and is very vocal against the "mixing" of the "German" people with other cultures. The AfD is a vocal opponent of equal rights for women, quotas in the economy and politics, and the EU's Gender Mainstreaming idea (Dunn & Fischer, 2019). The goal of Gender Mainstreaming is to create better policies by taking into account the interests and concerns of both men and women (Council of Europe, 2014).

When looking at the AfD's website, the attitude towards abortions and women's reproductive rights becomes obvious. There are multiple articles written by Beatrix von Storch, a previous MEP, and a current member of the German Bundestag. In May 2022 she commented on the abortion lobby in the United States. She prophesies that Germany will "fortunately" suffer from the same fate. Usually, AfD members being vocal about female reproductive rights are men, which makes her stance all the more shocking. The politician claims that it is a left-liberal movement to stop the long-overdue amendment of the landmark judgement "Roe v. Wade" by whatever means necessary, even criminal ones. The abortion lobby and its "zealous followers", who believe a woman's "right" to abortion is absolute and reject the unborn child's right to live, are determined to achieve their aims by any means necessary: street pressure and public fear. Beatrix von Storch thinks that the right to life is being restricted when legalising abortion (von Storch, 2022).

An AfD representative in the European Parliament is Joachim Kuhs. He became one of the party's first members in 2013, the year of the party's formation - he specifically joined the Christian group of the AfD. He won a seat in the European Parliament in 2019. The EU Parliament conducted a discussion on Texas's abortion legislation on October 7, 2021. Every abortion, according to Joachim Kuhs, is a tragedy, furthermore, he adds that this should not concern the European Union; on the contrary, he considers the pro-choice wave in European countries to be troubling. He concludes by noting that Texas is not in a position to receive an abortion lecture from Brussels (Kuhs, 2021).

The "protection of life" movement's ideological foundation is primarily a Christian viewpoint that regards every pregnancy as desired by God, regards the embryo as a human being (person) from the moment of conception, and thus recognises neither the need nor the right for pregnant women to choose not to carry their pregnancy to term. Abortion is deemed murder by the organised "protection of life" movement, and hence a violation of both divine and secular law. The "protection of life" groups seek to outlaw abortion completely or limit the resources available to counselling centres and doctors who perform abortions (Krolzik-Matthei, 2019). On their website, the AfD furthermore claims that unborn children have the right to life as well. Far too frequently, this right is overshadowed by self-awareness or societal apprehensions about the future (AfD, 2017). Additionally, the party is against any form of family that doesn't consist of the traditional nuclear family image of a father, mother and child. According to the AfD, every 'German' woman has to have three children for Germany to survive. Women who are childless or who choose to have less than two children per woman requested by the AfD, for example, for personal or professional reasons, do not contribute to the AfD's fantasised 'battle' against the 'death of the people.' Single moms or mothers from so-called educationally disadvantaged classes are not particularly deserving of support either according to the party (SPD, 2020).

We have established, that the AfD does not support LGBTQIA+ rights, however, it also condemns and calls gender ideology unconstitutional. They claim that if women want to earn more, they should work more (SPD, 2020). The AfD wants to abolish gender research, which deals with the scientific analysis of gender inequalities. State gender equality policy is presented as harmful and should be ended and the party wants to get rid of women and gender equality officers (SPD, 2020).

Subsequently, the right-wing party is also against the formation of one-parent households. The AfD's website says that the party opposes funding organisations promoting single-parent families as a normal, progressive, or desirable way of life (AfD, 2017). Germany had 2.1 million single mothers and 435 thousand single fathers in 2020 (Statista, 2020). These numbers show that the lack of support for single-parent households affects a lot of women and men who raise children alone.

The AfD claims to support women's rights, however, when looked at in a little more detail, it becomes clear that the opposite is true. The party "supports" the rights with ulterior motives in mind. The party damages women by portraying women's main purpose as being mothers, further damage is done as it refers to equality as a "gender illusion" and criticises it.

Policy

This chapter will focus on the passages in the AfD's party programme that are relevant to the topic. What immediately catches the eye is the fact that there is a separate chapter on the subject of Islam. "The AfD opposes the oppression of Muslim women and demands equal rights for men and women in all areas. We want to ban the wearing of burqas and niqabs in public in Germany as well, similar to France, Austria, Denmark, the Netherlands and Switzerland. The headscarf as a religious-political sign should not be permitted in the public service and should not be worn in public schools by teachers and pupils" (*Programm der Alternative für Deutschland für die Wahl zum 20. Deutschen Bundestag*, 2021, p. 86). By

directly addressing the oppression of Muslim women and calling for equal rights for men and women, the AfD is clearly instrumentalising socio-political issues.

In the chapter "Familien stärken und fördern" - which translates to "Strengthening and promoting families" it states that "the AfD is committed to the family as the nucleus of our society. It consists of father, mother and children (*Programm der Alternative für Deutschland für die Wahl zum 20. Deutschen Bundestag*, 2021, p. 104). "More and more couples have therefore lost sight of the ideal value of a family as a socialisation space and emotional intergenerational community. The idea of "self-realisation" as a priority has led to the desire for children to be put on the back burner in favour of income and career or being pushed out of one's life planning altogether. We call for the re-establishment of the special protection of the family guaranteed by the law. Parents who stay at home for all or part of the family work are devalued in our society" (*Programm der Alternative für Deutschland für die Wahl zum 20. Deutschen Bundestag*, 2021, p. 105-106). "Parents who look after their infants themselves experience them developing directly, provide them with education and thus maintain their physical and mental health, while children under the age of three in external care, in particular, are associated with developmental risks" (*Programm der Alternative für Deutschland für die Wahl zum 20. Deutschen Bundestag*, 2021, p. 107). It is obvious that the AfD's family policy is purely addressed to (what they consider) German families and it also shows a very nuclear-family-centred traditional attitude. "It must once again be possible for a family with small children to live on one salary" (*Programm der Alternative für Deutschland für die Wahl zum 20. Deutschen Bundestag*, 2021, p. 107). This demand clearly shows that the previously mentioned "equality between men and women" is contradicted as it implies that women should stay at home to raise children and thus give up their careers and financial independence. The AfD is trying to strengthen the role of the traditional heterosexual nuclear family as a guarantor of social order to save the German people. This family policy, which is oriented towards

population growth, also includes demands for the "protection of life" (the right of women to reproductive self-determination is called into question) (Ketelhut, 2018). Both the policy programme as well as the party programme show that there is a different approach to the topic of equality and family. In relation to migrant families, the "subjugation of women" is denounced and the demand for equality is misused. In contrast, a very traditional and value-conservative image of the family is propagated in relation to the autochthonous population.

Additionally, the AfD challenges the concept of multiculturalism. "Identity is shaped by our German language, our values, our history and our culture […] Cultural relativism and multiculturalism lead to a juxtaposition of parallel communities lacking common values for living together" (*Programm der Alternative für Deutschland für die Wahl zum 20. Deutschen Bundestag*, 2021, p. 158). The political party can thus be classified as critical of multiculturalism, especially regarding religion and Islam. Wright and Bloemraad (2012, p. 78) give a popular definition of multicultural policy as "specific government policies aimed to favourably recognise diversity and enable minorities to preserve cultural and religious traditions while integrating them into public life." The scepticism towards multiculturalism can be described as widespread among the population, not only towards Muslims but also towards political measures that support religious pluralism. This is reflected in the election results of the Alternative for Germany which now defines itself almost entirely in terms of its rejection of Muslims (Kolb, 2018).

However, the constitution says that Germany is secular, not laicist. This means that the state does not completely divide religion from itself, like in France. In Germany, as opposed to France, society still benefits from dialogue and the relationship between religion and the state. It is important to note that the Constitution mentions religion and not the Church or Christianity. This means that every religion should benefit from religious freedom: "(1)

Freedom of faith, conscience and religious and philosophical belief shall be inviolable. (2) The undisturbed practice of religion is guaranteed" (*Art 4 GG - Einzelnorm*, 2023).

While posing as advocates for the cause of women, especially veiled women who are supposedly victims of Islam's inherent misogyny, these parties and the governments that support them continue to enforce laws that discriminate against women (Leyenaar, 2004).

Clear examples of this are the various campaigns against abortion, the restrictions on women's access to reproductive technologies, but also the failure to address income disparities between men and women and the different forms of institutional sexism. This attitude is classified as anti-feminist and xenophobic.

The Use of Femonationalism in the FPÖ in Austria

In order to find out whether other right-wing parties in Europe also misuse gender and emancipation issues to strengthen their xenophobic ideologies, this paper will now analyse the situation of the Freedom Party of Austria (FPÖ). I chose to compare the AfD with the FPÖ, as Germany borders Austria and is the country I grew up in and the place that triggered my political awareness.

Die Freiheitliche Partei Österreich (FPÖ) was founded in 1955 and saw itself as the political representation of former NSDAP members (the National Socialist German Workers' Party – Nazi Party), German nationalists and national liberals. The first two party leaders were former members of the SS (Florian, 2020; Mudde, 1996). At its foundation, the party had a mainly nationalist agenda, however, throughout the years, the FPÖ tried to become more liberal and open to coalitions. In the most recent general elections in 2019, the Austrian Freedom Party gained 16.2% of the votes (*Nationalratswahl 2019*, 2019). The latest opinion poll, which was conducted at the end of May 2023, shows that the most popular party in Austria is the FPÖ (*Sonntagsfrage Nationalratswahl Österreich 2023 | Statista*, 2023).

A closer look at the party programme gives insights into the political instrumentalisation of immigration and family politics. Comparable with the AfD's party programme, the FPÖ ascertains that "Austria is not a country of immigration. This is why we pursue a family policy centred around births. Legal and legitimate immigrants who are already integrated, who can speak the German language, who fully acknowledge our values and laws and have set down cultural roots should be given the right to stay and obtain citizenship" (*Party Programme of the Freedom Party of Austria (FPÖ) Austria First*, 2011, p.5). Further parallels can be drawn in family politics: "The family, as a partnership between a man and a woman with common children, is the natural nucleus that holds a functioning society together, and which, with the solidarity of the generations, underpins our sustainability. We are committed to equal opportunities between men and women, to mutual respect and to fair incomes, regardless of gender. We emphatically reject the preferential treatment of a gender to overcome actual or perceived discrimination. Statistical inequalities caused by a variety of factors cannot be evened out by wronging individual people. This is why we speak out against any quota regulation or "gender mainstreaming". […] We are committed to the primacy of marriage between a man and a woman as a distinct way of protecting child welfare. Only partnerships between men and women provide our society with a wealth of children. We reject a separate legal institution for same-sex relations" (*Party Programme of the Freedom Party of Austria (FPÖ) Austria First*, 2011, p.8).

What stands out is the fact that the AfD's party programme is constantly being updated and adapted to current socio-political developments in a much more meticulous and well-founded manner. The last party programme of the FPÖ dates back to 2011 and is comprised of only 17 pages, whereas the AfD's is over 200 pages long. What is identical in terms of content, however, is the focus on the traditional nuclear family-oriented stance, although the AfD also adopts more extreme positions in this regard. Islam, or the threat posed by Islam, is also not

discussed in detail and the FPÖ also does not speak out against the oppression of Muslim women. Thus, no explicit reference to femonationalism can be derived from the party programme of the FPÖ. Research into the election posters of the FPÖ since 2016 has also shown that there are no Austrian-wide comparable subjects to the posters presented by the AfD. Only in isolated social media posts, such as the Facebook post by Herbert Kickl (current FPÖ party leader) one can find topics such as the headscarf ban. The poster and video shown are from local branches and politicians.

Fig. 13 (Kickl, 2020). *"Das Kopftuch steht für die Unterdrückung der Frau!"* Translation: *"The headscarf represents the oppression of women!"*

In the post, Herbert Kickl claims that "the FPÖ maintains that the headscarf is not a religious symbol but stands for the oppression of women. A headscarf, therefore, has absolutely no place with children in school. There is definitely no place for symbols of political Islam in our schools" (Kickl, 2020).

When dealing with the issue of sexualised violence, women's rights and equality are clearly being instrumentalised by the FPÖ. Sexualised violence is only discussed when perpetrators that are framed as the "Other" victimise autochthonous women. In the case of

autochthonous violence ("Austrian" men violating "Austrian" women), the problem is even played down – the freedom party's approach to sexualised violence is thus ambivalent and instrumental. The autochthonous man is supposed to appear as the "protector" and thus consolidate his claim to ownership of "his" women. Furthermore, ethnic hierarchies are maintained by propagating a supposed incompatibility with non-European cultures. The discourse on sexualised violence is used to underline the supposed inability of mainly Muslim migrants to integrate (Weidinger & Werner, 2017).

The discussion about sexualised violence, as explained earlier in this paper, started after New Year's Eve in Cologne in 2015/16. Looking at the actual statistics and figures in Austria at that time, the following picture emerged: Even though there was an increase in absolute numbers of reports against asylum seekers in 2015, the most important countries of origin of foreign suspects were not Syria, Afghanistan, or Turkey, but Romania, Germany, and Serbia. It is also worth mentioning that in 2015, of the actual convictions for sexual offences, almost 3/4 of the cases were attributable to Austrian perpetrators (Weidinger & Werner, 2017).

What has been said so far can be demonstrated very well by means of a video and an election poster of the FPÖ.

The first example is a video, that has been deleted by now, in which a local FPÖ politician explained to the "honourable asylum seekers" how they should behave towards Austrian women. Using a mannequin, Armin Sippel explains how asylum seekers should "deal with our women". To make his messages even clearer, signs in German and Arabic were held up to the camera (kurier.at, 2016).

Fig.14 (kurier.at, 2016). Screenshot of Austrian politician Armin Sippel.

Armin Sippel presents himself as the protector of autochthonous women, who are constructed in the video as potential victims of the assault of male asylum seekers. The woman herself does not have a say and is objectified, literally. The asylum seekers, as a collective, are assumed to be perpetrators of sexualised violence. Sippel's video ends with the sentence "Hands off our women" and thus women's bodies are instrumentalised. A claim to ownership of "our" women is evident, as well as victimisation and dependence on the protective, white, Christian, autochthonous man (Florian, 2020).

In 2016, the RFJ (Ring Freiheitlicher Jugend Steiermark - Styrian Freedom Youth Ring) launched a campaign called "Hands Off!".

Fig. 15 (RFJ Steiermark, 2016). *"Finger weg! Unsere Frauen sind kein Freiwild!"* Translation: *"Hands Off! Our women aren't free game!"*.

Here again, the same statement is made as in Sippel's video. Sexual violence is attributed to migrant Muslim men and the claim of ownership of autochthonous men over "our" women is made (Florian, 2020). There are elements like in AfD posters *Fig. 7* (three women in German national costumes) and *Fig. 9* ("German women no free game. Understand?") which were discussed and explored in previous sections. In the video, the poster and the general attitude of the FPÖ, sexualised violence is not discussed as a social problem but stigmatised as a problem imported by (Muslim) migrants and asylum seekers – very similar to how the AfD approaches these topics.

In summary, it can be said that the FPÖ also produces the paradox of positioning itself against feminism on the one hand and using sexist and racist arguments for the protection of autochthonous women on the other. It is the same right-wing ideological thinking with xenophobic arguments that the AfD uses. Here, too, traditional values and patriarchal structures are being propagated, which are, however, simultaneously problematised in the case of migrant groups which is how Sara Farris describes femonationalism (Farris, 2017).

Conclusion

"What is the role of the Alternative für Deutschland's (AfD's) ideal of Western female emancipation in the pursuit of their anti-Islamic immigration agenda?" The argument of the thesis is centred on the nationalist and pseudo-feminist language the AfD employs and the use of images to advance its anti-immigration and anti-Islamic agenda. A brief excursion to the situation in Austria shows that elements of femonationalism can also be found in the policies of the FPÖ.

The language employed by the AfD's members, its party- and policy programmes, election posters and website were analysed for the thesis. The paper clearly demonstrates that the AfD is misusing feminism and German women's emancipation to forward its beliefs that Muslim immigrants pose a threat to both autochthonous women and Germany itself.

The majority of posters show German women according to the AfD's conservative worldview, which is focused on traditional and conservative values. The women appear devoted to their country Germany, drinking wine in their national attires - sexy and seductive. All these "achievements" of a Western woman appear in a radiant glow, while the subliminal suggestion is that the Muslim woman is veiled and oppressed. The slogans on the posters reinforce these statements ("Burkas? We prefer Bikinis!" in *Fig. 8*) or point directly to the other "dark" side ("German women no free game. Understand?" in *Fig. 9*). The campaigns' partly "humorous" presentations aim to move the right-wing parties into the political centre and make them electable for a broader majority. The current poll results in June 2023 confirm that both parties are succeeding (Müller, 2023).

In all of the election posters examined the same narrative is used subliminally or directly: the independent, self-determined German woman who must be protected from the aggressive, violent Muslim man. The Muslim woman is not part of this language and remains in the background - oppressed and unfree.

However, upon closer examination of the party and policy programme, it becomes evident that their promoted portrayal of the family diverges significantly. In this regard, the AfD adheres to deeply entrenched traditional and conservative values, actively voicing opposition towards feminist ideologies and gender-related concerns. The comparison of the election posters and the party programme makes it clear how much the AfD instrumentalises feminism in its imagery (posters), which is not reflected in the AfD's party programme. Hence, feminism is only used as a tactical antithesis to the AfD's view of the Islamic patriarchy.

What has been said so far is reflected in the literature used. For Sara Farris, the occupation of gender and emancipation issues by right-wing and conservative parties is an essential aspect of today's political climate. Farris' statement that a hierarchy of culture is created by instrumentalising feminist approaches was also confirmed in my analysis. Specifically, referring to the situation of the AfD in Germany, both Bitzl & Kurze (2021) and Dombrowski & Hajek (2021) conclude that the AfD misuses feminism to fuel xenophobic attitudes towards Muslims in Germany.

What was not found in the literature and only came to light through the analysis of the posters is the fact that many of the messages only convey sexism and racism on closer inspection and at a second glance. This tactic can bring right-wing parties more into the political centre, as the topics are presented harmlessly and even humorously at first glance.

By writing this thesis, I uncovered the motives, attitudes, and visions the AfD and FPÖ have, which allowed me to understand today's political climate in many parts of Western society even better. A very recent example of the attack on hard-won women's rights is currently happening in Austria (Salzburg). In May 2023, the government programme, where the FPÖ is part of the coalition, states that abortions should be avoided, and children should be given up for adoption and foster parenthood. This latest example in my home country shows an anti-feminist, backwards-looking attitude in the middle of Europe and attacks women's right

to self-determination (OTS, 2023). Only by providing understanding and reading between the lines, it is possible to counter these dangerous movements and make a change – now more than ever.

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