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Islamophobia in Western Europe: A Comparative, Multilevel Study

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Abstract

This study examines the prejudice against the Muslim immigrants in Western countries. The literature explains anti-Muslim prejudice almost exclusively by individual-level factors. Alternately, this study conducts a comparative, multilevel analysis to include cross-level processes as well. The analysis covers 16 Western European countries, and the data come primarily from the fourth wave of the European Values Study in 2008. Results offer strong support for the relevance of the country-level factors to individual prejudice, while confirming the findings of the major individual-level perspectives. More specifically, the findings suggest that the individuals who live in countries with (1) an official religion or (2) a liberal citizenship regime are more likely to be tolerant toward Muslims. The study also offers some support for the contact hypothesis.

Introduction

Western European countries experienced large and continuous immigration inflows in the twentieth century. The number of immigrants in the continent rapidly increased with arrivals from former colonies,[1] recruited foreign laborers,[2] family reunifications,[3] refugees,[4] and asylum seekers.[5] By the turn of the twenty-first century, many European nations became visibly multiethnic—when they had been largely homogeneous only half a century ago.[6] Moreover, although the immigrants were from a number of different countries and ethnically diverse, most happened to share an Islamic background. In consequence, Muslims came to constitute the second largest religious group in Europe, making up almost 5% of the EU population.[7]

The attitudes of the host societies have not always been welcoming toward immigrants, however. In fact, almost since their arrival in the West, especially Muslim immigrants[8] have been facing significantly high levels of prejudice and discrimination—sometimes to extents that endanger the well functioning of a society.[9] For example, between the 9/11 terrorist attacks in 2001 and mid-2013, half of all mosques in Britain were attacked in various ways.[10] Another manifestation of anti-Muslim prejudice has been the rise of the European far-right, where anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim sentiments find representation. The vote shares of the far-right parties now exceed 7% in eight European countries.[11]

Islamophobia has a historical component as well. Due at least in part to Orientalist dichotomies and oversimplifications, the Muslim identity has long been associated with a set of negative stereotypes in Western contexts.[12] The legacy of the Ottoman Empire has also influenced the construction of the Muslim identity as the historical "Other". For example, the collective memories pertaining to the Ottoman sieges of Vienna in 1529 and 1683 still shape the attitudes toward Muslims in Austria.[13]

Another example is the Bosnian War (1992–1995), where the perpetrators justified their actions against the Bosnian Muslims with the Ottoman past.[14]

These facts and figures imply that the anti-Muslim prejudice in the West is far from being marginal. Yet, such high levels of prejudice, discrimination, and exclusion are concerning for democracies, which, by definition, hold equality, tolerance, and religious freedom among their core values. Furthermore, these negative views and expressions increase social fractionalization, and undermine social harmony. This study thus asks *why some individuals in Western countries are highly prejudiced against Muslim immigrants, while others are more tolerant*.

The emerging Islamophobia literature offers a set of answers to this question. But, when doing so, it focuses primarily on the individual-level factors such as age, gender, education, and religiosity.[15] Another stream examines the larger literature on prejudice. The works in that stream especially focus on the intergroup threat[16] and intergroup contact[17] theories from the social psychology literature in an effort to apply their insights to the question of Islamophobia.

While these studies offer valuable insights, they are confined to the individual level. They do not take country-level factors into consideration. By employing a multilevel analysis that covers 16 Western European countries, this study analyzes the factors on both levels in a single regression model.

The Definition of Islamophobia

Islamophobia is far from being a clear-cut term. In fact, there is an ongoing disagreement over its definition. Many question even the appropriateness of using such a term, especially on the grounds that it is not always clear whether the term necessarily implies a positive or negative attitude.[18] As Bleich notes, some believe that Islam really is a phenomenon that the Western people should be fearful about, and thus declare themselves to be proud Islamophobes.[19]

Another reason behind the vagueness of Islamophobia as a term is that it is a fairly new one. Although the history of the term has now been traced back to 1922,[20] its common usage in the contemporary context has started with a report published in 1997 by the Runnymede Trust, a British NGO that focuses on race relations and equality.[21] Shortly after its release, the Runnymede report became highly popular among scholars and political commenters who focus on the Muslims in the West. One of the consequences of that popularity has been the widespread use of the term Islamophobia. Therefore, despite the ongoing disagreements over its definition or meaning, Islamophobia is now hard to be "discarded from the European lexicon".[22]

If the term Islamophobia is here to stay, how is it to be defined? In their attempts to offer a definition, most scholars underline feelings such as dislike, hatred, and especially fear toward Islam or Muslims.[23] This is perhaps not all too surprising, given that the term itself refers to a "phobia". But, research often disregards the literal meaning of Islamophobia, and considers the term to indicate a form of prejudice.[24] Bleich, for example, defines Islamophobia as the "indiscriminate negative attitudes or emotions directed at Islam or Muslims".[25] This definition is largely in line with Allport's characterization of prejudice as "a feeling, favorable or unfavorable, toward a person or thing, prior to, or not based on, actual experience", "an antipathy based upon a faulty and inflexible generalization", and "thinking ill of others without sufficient warrant".[26] Using Allport and Bleich as points of departure, this study too considers Islamophobia to be a form of prejudice,[27] and offers the following definition for it: unfavorable prejudgments of Muslim

individuals on the basis of their religious background. Like most of the aforementioned others, this definition too emphasizes the negative and indiscriminate nature of Islamophobia, and characterizes it as a disposition toward a very large group of individuals, due only to their group identity. But, it also brings the term to more familiar grounds by defining it merely as prejudice against another group of people. In addition, the above definition covers the attitudes toward Muslims, and leaves out those toward Islam. This choice of scope is important; because, the unfavorable (pre)judgment of a religion is fundamentally different from having negative attitudes toward individuals on the basis of their religious backgrounds. Also important in that regard is the phrase "religious background", which does not necessarily translate into religiosity, or even religious belief. The phrase thus also covers secular Muslims who face prejudice due to their ethnocultural characteristics or practices. Because, as recent research demonstrates, prejudiced individuals do not—or perhaps, cannot—differentiate between practicing Muslims and others.[28]

The Individual Level

Research on Islamophobia has emerged for the most part after the turn of the millennium. As of early 2014, the majority of the works in that field are still single or comparative country case studies.[29] More systematic and quantitatively driven cross-country studies on anti-Muslim prejudice are less common;[30] and the systematic studies that also include the country-level factors[31] are almost exceptional.[32]

On the individual level, systematic research tends to find that older people,[33] males,[34] less educated people,[35] and those with a lower socioeconomic status[36] are more likely to hold negative sentiments toward minorities in general, and Muslims in particular. On the specific question of anti-Muslim prejudice in the West, the influence of Christian religiosity and Christian traditionalism is also relevant. However, findings on that realm seem to be mixed. For example, Wald and Calhoun-Brown argue that Christian religiosity and religious traditionalism increase the likelihood of intolerance.[37] In contrast, Fetzer and Soper find people who practice religion to be more supportive of Muslims than those who are merely nominal members.[38] The authors interpret that support as the "solidarity of the religious". Somewhat bridging these two almost antithetical approaches, other scholars differentiate between the forms and dimensions of religiosity, and focus instead on behavior and attitudes such as church attendance, religious particularism, and subscribing to doctrinal belief.[39]

In addition to the above works, scholars of social psychology offer further insights into the factors that condition intergroup relations. These scholars study prejudice in general, and not necessarily Islamophobia in particular. In the context of immigration, they often apply the realistic group conflict theory or the symbolic politics theory to explain outgroup prejudice. Realistic group conflict theory argues that immigrants pose (real or perceived) threats to the economic and political power of the host society, especially in contexts where resource competition is fierce.[40] Arguments such as immigrants taking the jobs of natives away, or abusing the welfare system are among the typical expressions of concerns over material interests.

As opposed to material interests, symbolic politics theory emphasizes ideal interests—that is, interests pertaining to the national and cultural values of the ingroup, as well as to the symbols of that heritage.[41] According to the theory, immigrants bring with them their own cultures, which the members of the majority perceive as a threat to the dominant one, and become more likely to be prejudiced against them. In the case of Muslim

immigrants in the West, the reluctance of local authorities to issue permits for mosques out of a fear of Islamization of the public sphere falls under the category of symbolic threat perception.[42] The incident in Évry, France, is an interesting example to the competition of cultural symbols. In the 1980s, when Muslims secured a permit to build a large mosque in Évry, the local government encouraged requests for a new cathedral—just so it would balance the mosque's existence.[43]

Both realistic group conflict and symbolic politics theories consider threat perceptions to increase with the increases in the size of the outgroup. Contact hypothesis reacts to this view by arguing that higher outgroup sizes may in fact decrease the likelihood of prejudice—the idea being that, as group sizes increase, so does intergroup contact, allowing people to better know their outgroup members, and to eliminate their prejudices in the process.[44] Among the few systematic studies on Islamophobia, Hutchison and Rosenthal find support for the contact hypothesis.[45] The authors examine non-Muslim students, and find those who have had high-quality contact with Muslims to have more positive attitudes toward Muslims. Stolz, and Strabac and Listhaug, however, do not find intergroup contact to have any significant influence on the attitudes toward Muslims.[46]

These studies demonstrate the extent to which individual differences influence the likelihood of prejudice against Muslims. Yet, as Figure 1 portrays, anti-Muslim prejudice varies across countries as well. This study investigates whether country-level factors also have an influence on that variation.

The Country Level

Albeit largely neglected, country-level factors are also theoretically relevant to individual prejudice against Muslims. For example, the above discussion implies that outgroup

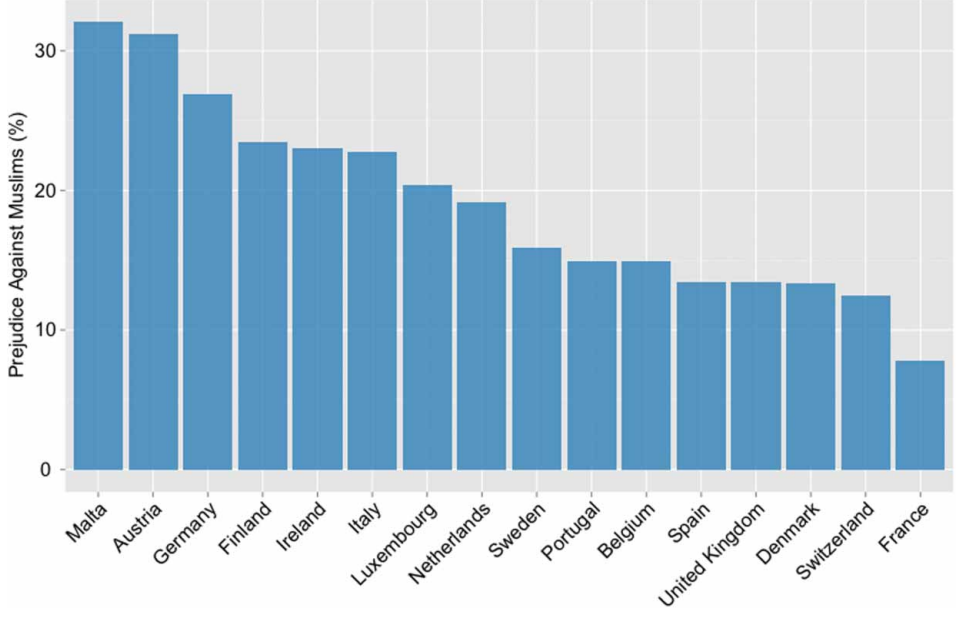

Figure 1. Prejudice against Muslims (by country).
Source: European Values Study, European Values Study 2008: Integrated Dataset (EVS 2008), Cologne: GESIS Data Archive.

size has some relevance to individual prejudice. Research demonstrates that established religion is another such factor. Fetzer and Soper compare the British, German, and French cases, and examine the extent to which these states recognize and accommodate the religious needs of their Muslim minorities.[47] The authors underline that, unlike France and Germany, Britain has not problematized the religious instruction for Muslim children or the practice of wearing of the Islamic veil at public schools. To the contrary, it has recognized such demands, and adapted its policies to accommodate the needs of British Muslims. According to the authors, the different approach of the British policy is due to the historically close institutional ties between the British state and the Church of England. These institutional ties constitute an "ideological prior", and make the accommodation of other religious traditions also ordinary and expected. For example, under the Education Act of 1944, all school curricula in Britain used to include worship and religious education. The authors argue that this recognition of non-Christian beliefs in the curriculum by the state has helped the accommodation of Islamic traditions as well. It is thus theoretically possible for the relations between the state and the established church to work to the advantage of religious minorities.

A different but nonetheless related realm of minority accommodation by means of institutional arrangements is citizenship acquisition. Citizenship signifies membership in a "national political community".[48] Contemporary democracies embrace different citizenship regimes that are characterized by a set of rules that specify who will be eligible for membership in the nation, and how. Citizenship regimes thus deal with fundamental questions such as "who are we?", "what are the primary characteristics that define our political community?", "who should be given access to our political community?", and "once let in, to what extent, if at all, should the newcomers abandon their cultures, and assimilate into their larger communities?" In sum, citizenship policies define the nation, draw its conceptual boundaries, and by so doing, delineate who belongs in it and who does not—which raises the question of whether this inclusion or exclusion influences the attitudes toward minorities. In a study of Western Europe that focuses on this particular question, Weldon finds that more restricted access to citizenship increases the likelihood of prejudice against immigrants.[49] Although his analysis examines the prejudice against immigrants in general, and not Muslim immigrants in particular, it still reveals the relevance of another country-level factor to the study of prejudice.

In addition to the above, past research also considers macroeconomic factors such as the gross domestic product (GDP) and unemployment rate to be relevant to prejudice, although it does not necessarily find them to have a significant effect.[50] Altogether, these findings suggest that country contexts should also shape anti-Muslim prejudice. This study thus conducts a comparative cross-country study that takes into consideration a set of country-level factors as well. Three hypotheses emerge from the above discussion on the advanced democracies of Western Europe:

> Hypothesis 1: In countries where the contact between the majority members and Muslim minorities is in high levels, individuals are less likely to be prejudiced against Muslims.
> Hypothesis 2: In countries with a state religion, individuals are less likely to be prejudiced against Muslims.
> Hypothesis 3: In countries with a liberal citizenship regime, individuals are less likely to be prejudiced against Muslims.

Although this study focuses only on advanced democracies, the second and third hypotheses relate to democracy level as well. A fourth hypothesis thus derives from them as follows:

> Hypothesis 4: In countries with a higher level of democracy, individuals are less likely to be prejudiced against Muslims.

Method and Data

In order to analyze the prejudice against Muslims in the West on both individual and country levels, this study employs a multilevel regression analysis that covers 16 Western European countries—that is, all Western European countries except where data are not available, or the vast majority of Muslims in question are not immigrants but autochthonous peoples.[51] A multilevel analysis is better suited for such an inquiry, because it is capable of clustering the country- and individual-level data, analyzing them simultaneously, and by doing so, estimating both between-country and within-country variations in a more accurate manner.[52]

The individual-level data for this study come from the fourth wave of the European Values Study[53] in 2008. Question 6 on the EVS questionnaire serves as the measure for the anti-Muslim prejudice, which is the dependent variable of this study. It reads, "On this list are various groups of people. Could you please tell me any that you would not, generally speaking, like to have as neighbours?" The corresponding Card 6 lists fifteen social groups, including Muslims, and allows respondents to mention as many groups in the list as they like. The survey then codes each response to each of the 15 groups as "mentioned" or "not mentioned".

This survey question is a measure of "social distance" originated by Bogardus,[54] who studied the distance between social groups by asking the group members questions that were designed to reveal the level of intimacy that they would or would not be willing to have with their outgroup members. Bogardus's measures of intimacy include: (1) "close kinship by marriage", (2) "in my street as neighbors", (3) "employment in my occupation", and (4) "citizenship in my country".[55] Among the above, the second category—that is, the unwillingness to become neighbors with the outgroup members—corresponds to the dependent variable of this study.[56]

Two survey questions measure the realistic and symbolic threat perceptions. The survey question on the respondents' concerns over maintaining their employment status measures the former threat perception. Similarly, the question on the concerns over the preservation of the dominant culture measures the latter threat perception.

Four other variables measure four dimensions of religiosity: belief in God, regular attendance to religious services, religious traditionalism,[57] and religious particularism.[58] Other individual-level variables include age, gender, college education, political ideology, interpersonal trust, and postmaterialism. (See the Appendix for the question wording and coding information.) (Table 1)

The above measures allow control for all of the major competing explanations on the individual level. On the country level, it tests six factors: (1) the size of the Muslim minority, (2) established religion, (3) citizenship regimes, (4) democracy level, (5) GDP per capita, and (6) unemployment level. Data for these variables come from a variety of sources. GDP per capita (purchasing power parity) and unemployment data are from the World Bank;[59] data on the Muslim minority sizes are from the Pew Research Center;[60] citizenship policy scores are from the Migrant Integration Policy Index

Table 1. Sample structure of the survey

	N	Age < 20	20–29	30—44	45–54	55–64	65–74	74<	Male	Trust	Postm.	Symb. threat	Real. threat	College edu.	Pol. ideol.	Rel. attend.	Rel. partic.	Rel. trad.	Belief in God
Austria	1454	2.9	17.7	28.9	17.4	13.5	12.4	7.3	43.5	35.3	13.3	17.7	7.3	9.3	5.2	15.3	7.9	48.5	72.0
Belgium	1410	2.6	15.3	25.8	19.2	17.8	11.8	7.6	48.2	34.8	20.8	10.4	5.6	32.1	5.0	9.6	5.4	38.5	58.2
Britain	1428	2.3	11.6	22.2	17.4	16.1	14.1	15.5	42.4	38.9	22.9	6.2	3.6	23.7	5.3	10.2	8.5	42.3	58.8
Denmark	1456	1.4	12.2	26.0	19.7	18.5	14.8	7.3	49.7	75.5	16.4	15.0	13.1	36.1	5.4	2.1	5.9	38.6	58.4
Finland	1121	2.5	12.5	28.8	21.6	21.8	10.5	2.3	49.2	60.8	19.0	8.2	1.9	54.9	5.9	3.5	4.5	39.4	55.5
France	1455	2.6	13.2	25.7	16.9	17.7	12.3	11.6	45.4	26.7	14.7	9.2	4.8	30.5	5.0	6.3	5.1	47.0	50.2
Germany	2002	2.1	12.0	24.2	20.9	17.3	15.8	7.0	47.4	36.1	18.1	11.0	3.3	22.4	4.8	6.1	7.7	47.3	42.3
Ireland	959	3.1	18.2	28.1	16.1	14.1	10.4	7.1	39.7	38.4	7.2	8.7	4.8	20.4	5.8	44.2	19.7	41.8	87.6
Italy	1508	2.2	17.7	25.5	18.5	15.3	11.7	9.2	48.1	29.6	19.2	17.3	11.2	15.6	5.2	31.3	19.7	72.7	83.6
Luxembourg	797	5.5	30.6	22.2	15.4	13.4	7.7	5.2	49.6	27.2	10.4	14.8	9.5	22.3	5.2	10.0	3.3	38.6	53.1
Malta	1474	2.2	11.6	20.6	16.6	20.8	17.1	11.1	37.5	20.1	4.7	18.0	15.0	16.0	5.3	81.3	33.7	84.5	98.6
Netherlands	1484	1.3	5.5	23.4	17.2	20.4	17.4	14.8	45.5	60.5	22.2	9.1	6.1	30.1	5.4	15.9	9.4	24.1	57.3
Portugal	1478	2.0	9.7	24.4	15.3	15.5	18.4	14.8	40.9	16.3	3.3	7.0	1.6	9.2	4.9	31.1	31.6	63.4	87.0
Spain	1175	2.7	15.1	30.7	13.7	12.4	12.4	12.9	44.3	34.8	9.5	6.6	9.5	18.4	4.6	16.9	23.6	33.5	71.5
Sweden	1133	2.0	11.7	24.5	20.7	20.2	18.6	1.1	46.7	64.2	14.6	14.3	9.4	31.7	5.4	4.2	3.5	30.0	35.4
Switzerland	1016	1.2	11.1	25.6	18.7	18.0	12.1	13.2	45.3	54.5	16.4	12.0	8.7	24.2	5.2	7.3	4.8	52.0	68.0

Source: European Values Study, European Values Study 2008: Integrated Dataset (EVS 2008), Cologne: GESIS Data Archive.
Note: All values in the table reflect percentages, except for those in the Political Ideology column that are arithmetic means in a scale of 1–10.

(MIPEX) project;[61] and the democracy scores are from the Economist Intelligence Unit, 2008.[62] Data for the established religion variable are hand-coded (Table 2).

Results

Table 3 provides the results for two different logistic regression analyses. Both models have 13,005 observations.[63]

Model 1 includes only individual-level factors, while Model 2 has variables on both levels. As expected, Model 2, or the full model, fine-tunes the estimates and their significance levels in the first model.[64]

The results in Model 2 confirm that both realistic and symbolic threat perceptions are relevant in the case of Islamophobia as well. Individuals who are culturally conservative, and those who have concerns over maintaining their employment status are more likely to be prejudiced against Muslims, as they are against immigrants in general.[65]

The religiosity variables return mixed results—that is, the four variables that measure a separate dimension of religiosity vary in their influence on prejudice, and thus confirm the multidimensionality argument.[66] These results bring some context to Fetzer and Soper's "solidarity of the religious" argument, according to which individuals who practice religion are more likely to be supportive of Muslims.[67] Because, the results on religious traditionalism and religious particularism suggest that it is certain religiously

Table 2. The structure of the country-level factors.

	Muslim minority[a]	Established religion	Citizenship policy (0–100)[b]	GDP per capita (ppp)[c]	Unemployment rate[c]	Democracy score (0–10)[d]
Austria	5.7	No	22	39,783	3.8	8.49
Belgium	6.0	No	69	37,025	7.0	8.16
Britain	4.6	Yes	59	36,062	5.3	8.15
Denmark	4.1	Yes	33	39,830	3.4	9.52
Finland	0.8	Privileged	57	38,080	6.3	9.25
France	7.5	No	59	34,041	7.4	8.07
Germany	5.0	No	59	37,119	7.5	8.82
Ireland	0.9	No	58	42,478	6.0	9.01
Italy	2.6	No	63	33,372	6.7	7.98
Luxembourg	2.3	No	66	84,393	5.1	9.10
Malta	0.3	Yes	26	25,303	6.0	8.39
Netherlands	5.5	No	66	42,915	2.8	9.53
Portugal	0.6	Privileged	82	24,939	7.6	8.05
Spain	2.3	Privileged	39	33,158	11.3	8.45
Sweden	4.9	Privileged	79	39,615	6.1	9.88
Switzerland	5.7	Yes	36	47,946	3.4	9.15

Notes: Switzerland's official churches exist on the canton level, where 24 out of the 26 cantons of the country have official churches. Privileged status refers to that of a disestablished church that still has ties to the state, and enjoys certain privileges that may or may not be constitutionally protected. Data on Muslim minority size and unemployment rate are in percentages. Higher values indicate more liberal policies in the citizenship policy index, and a more democratic regime in the democracy index.

[a]Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, 2011, Pew Research Center.

[b]MIPEX III, 2010.

[c]World Bank, 2008.

[d]Economist Intelligence Unit, 2008.

Table 3. The multilevel model of anti-Muslim prejudice (16 countries, $N = 13{,}005$).

	Model 1 Individual level	Model 2 Multilevel
Intercept	−3.220*** (.128)	−3.402* (1.61)
Threat perceptions		
Symbolic threats	0.044*** (.009)	0.061*** (.009)
Realistic threats	0.057*** (.010)	0.052*** (.010)
Religiosity		
Belief in God	−0.343*** (.056)	−0.406*** (.059)
Religious traditionalism	0.537*** (.051)	0.558*** (.054)
Religious particularism	0.260*** (.072)	0.258*** (.074)
Religious attendance	0.007 (.065)	−0.187* (.075)
Controls		
Male	0.254*** (.048)	0.252*** (.049)
Age	0.006*** (.001)	0.008*** (.001)
College education	−0.389*** (.060)	−0.374*** (.063)
Political ideology	0.147*** (.011)	0.147*** (.012)
Interpersonal trust	−0.478*** (.051)	−0.562*** (.055)
Postmaterialism	−0.291*** (.073)	−0.293*** (.074)
The country level		
Size of Muslims		−0.115** (.037)
Citizenship regime		−0.015** (.005)
Established religion		−0.650** (.233)
Democracy level		0.239 (.161)
GDP per capita		−0.002 (.007)
Unemployment rate		−0.079 (.053)
AIC	11,371	11,031
BIC	11,467	11,180
Log Likelihood	−5672	−5495
Deviance	11,344	10,991

Source: European Values Study, European Values Study 2008: Integrated Dataset (EVS 2008), Cologne: GESIS Data Archive.

*$p < .05$.

**$p < .01$.

***$p < .001$.

inspired thinking and the particular meanings one attaches to religion that lead to prejudice, rather than the belief in God or the attendance to religious services. In fact, when controlling for religious traditionalism and religious particularism, both the belief in God and religious attendance increase the likelihood of tolerance toward Muslims. Put differently, if the otherization of "sinners" or the claim to exclusive authenticity does not exist in a particular religious teaching, the belief in God or regular attendance to services will lead not to prejudice but to tolerance. A "solidarity of the religious" is thus likely only in the absence of beliefs that superiorize one's own group or inferiorize others.

All control variables are significant in the directions that are in line with the findings of previous research. Males, older people, and the individuals with a right-wing political ideology are more likely to be prejudiced against Muslims. In contrast, those with a bachelor's degree, those who hold postmaterialist values, and those who consider most people to be trustworthy are more likely to be tolerant. The estimates of all individual-level variables are significant on a 0.001 confidence level, except for the estimate of religious attendance, which is significant on a 0.05 level.

On the country level, three of the six variables return significant results: outgroup size, citizenship regime, and established religion. The estimates of these variables are significant on a 0.01 level. The other three country-level variables—GDP per capita, unemployment rate, and democracy level—do not seem to have any significant influence on the individual attitudes toward Muslims. Hypothesis 4 is not supported.

Country-Level Influences

The results demonstrate that the country-level factors are also relevant to anti-Muslim prejudice. Of the three findings on the country level, the association between the size of the Muslim minority and the likelihood of tolerance toward Muslims suggests that intergroup interaction reduces prejudice. This finding is in line with the contact hypothesis. Nevertheless, it has to be noted that a larger minority does not always translate into a higher level of intergroup contact. A large minority group may very well be relatively isolated from the larger society, while a small one is largely integrated into it. Another related issue is the quality of the intergroup contact, as opposed to the quantity. When contacts occur on unequal terms, or involve negative experiences, they are unlikely to lead to tolerance.[68] Due to data limitations, this analysis was unable to take into consideration the degree or the nature of the actual intergroup contact. Therefore, this result is more a strong indication in support of Hypothesis 1 than a firm confirmation for it.

The second significant estimate on the country-level is that of the established religion variable. In countries with an established religion, individuals are significantly more likely to be tolerant toward Muslims. In the corresponding binary variable, 4 out of the 16 countries are coded as having an established religion: Britain, Denmark, Malta, and Switzerland.[69] However, this coding is based on whether a state church exists in the country. A less narrow definition would also include the states that still maintain institutional ties to their disestablished churches, and offer them certain privileges.[70] A second binary variable coded with this less narrow definition would include five more cases: Finland, Ireland, Sweden, Portugal, and Spain. When the analysis is rerun after replacing the first binary variable with this second one, the estimate of the variable is still significant —this time on a 0.001 confidence level. ($p = .000018$) These results suggest that what Fetzer and Soper find in a three-case comparative study may be generalizable to Western Europe.[71] Hypothesis 2 is supported.

The third and final significant result on the country level indicates that, in countries with more liberal citizenship regimes, individuals are more likely to be tolerant toward Muslims. This result, on the one hand, confirms the larger literature that emphasizes the influence of institutional arrangements on the behavior of individuals,[72] and on the other, links to how liberal citizenship policies increase the likelihood of tolerance toward minorities.[73] Citizenship creates a sense of community, and forges ties among people who, by nature, have racial, religious, or linguistic differences. Put differently, when the institutional arrangements regarding citizenship cease to maintain inequalities on the basis of these differences, the ethnicization of these identities becomes less likely.[74] The particular finding in this study regarding citizenship policies suggests that such a process occurs in the case of the Muslim immigrants as well.[75] Hypothesis 3 is supported.

Conclusion

The findings of this study contribute primarily to the emerging literature on Islamophobia. The literature on Islamophobia lacks systematic studies, and especially cross-country

investigations. Studies that take into consideration the country-level factors are also rare. This study thus constitutes an attempt to offer more generalizable results. By conducting a cross-country analysis on Western Europe, it demonstrates that, besides within-country differences, between-country differences too are relevant to the study of prejudice. Therefore, as the above results suggest, country contexts that shape the attitudes of individuals toward their outgroups deserve a closer attention.

On the policy dimension, the findings on the country level suggest that, in an effort to reduce Islamophobia, policy-makers should make adjustments to the existing institutional arrangements so as to accommodate Muslims on an equal footing with the adherents of other faiths. Not all countries in Europe follow the example of Britain, however. On the contrary, there seems to be an increasing suspicion toward Muslim immigration in particular, and multiculturalist policies in general. This trend is highly concerning for the well functioning of European societies, especially considering the existing levels of anti-Muslim prejudice and discrimination.

Under the circumstances, the common perception of Muslims as the "Other" seems unlikely to change in the foreseeable future. In fact, the aforementioned facts and figures imply that little has changed since Bosnia in the minds of large groups of people in European countries about Muslims. That is not to say that another genocide is in the making in Europe. It is true, however, that both small and great tragedies that involve group identities often have similar beginnings. Therefore, further contemplating the 10 stages of genocide[76] may help prevent future tragedies: classification, symbolization, discrimination, dehumanization, organization, polarization, preparation, persecution, extermination, and denial.

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NOTES

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Appendix: Question Wording and Variable Coding (European Values Study, 2008)

Anti-Muslim prejudice

"On this list are various groups of people. Could you please tell me any that you would not, generally speaking, like to have as neighbours?" (v53) (0 = Muslims not mentioned; 1 = Muslims mentioned)

Symbolic threats

"Some people may have fears about the European Union. I am going to read a number of things which people say they are afraid of. For each tell me if you—personally—are currently afraid of". "Loss of national identity and culture" (v258) (1: Not afraid at all, 10: Very much afraid)

Realistic threats

"Some people may have fears about the building of the European Union. I am going to read a number of things which people say they are afraid of. For each tell me if you—personally—are currently afraid of". "Loss of jobs in [country]" (v261) (1: Not afraid at all, 10: Very much afraid)

Belief in God
"Which, if any, of the following do you believe in?" (v119) (0 = God, if not selected; 1 = God, if selected)

Religious traditionalism
"How would you feel about the following statements? Do you agree or disagree with them?: Homosexual couples should be able to adopt children" (v154) (0: neither agree nor disagree; agree; agree strongly; 1: disagree strongly; disagree)

Religious particularism
"These are statements one sometimes hears. Please choose the statement that best describes your view?" (v128) (0: there is only one true religion, but other religions do contain some basic truths as well; there is not one true religion, but all great world religions contain some basic truths; none of the great religions have any truths to offer; 1: there is only one true religion)

Attendance to religious services
"Apart from weddings, funerals and christenings, about how often do you attend religious services these days?" (v109) (0 = Once a month: once a month; About once a year: only on specific holy days; once a year; less often; Never: never, practically never; 1 = Once a week or more: more than once a week; once a week)

College education
"What is the highest level of education you have completed?" (v336) (0 = pre-primary education or none education; primary education or first stage of basic education; lower secondary or second stage of basic education; (upper) secondary education; post-secondary non-tertiary education; 1 = first stage of tertiary education; second stage of tertiary education)

Political ideology
"In political matters, people talk of 'the left' and the 'the right'. How would you place your views on this scale, generally speaking?" (v193) (1: Left, 10: Right)

Interpersonal trust
"Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted or that you can't be too careful in dealing with people?" (v62) (0 = can't be too careful; 1 = most people can be trusted)

Postmaterialism
"There is a lot of talk these days about what the aims of this country should be for the next ten years. On this card are listed some of the goals which different people would give top priority. If you had to choose, which of the things on this card would you say is most important?" (v201) "And which would be the next most important?" (v202) "According to the choice of materialistic (1/1 or 3/3) or post-materialistic (2/2 or 4/4) aims in v201 and v202 respondents were coded as materialistic or post-materialistic persons."

Materialistic choices: maintaining order in the nation, fighting rising prices.
Post-materialistic choices: giving people more say in important government decisions, protecting freedom of speech