

Najafli Bakhtiyar Etibar oglu

Challenges hindering the integration of Muslims in Germany and the spread of Islamophobia

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Najafli Bakhtiyar Etibar oglu
Postdoctoral Student at the Department
of International Relations and Foreign
Policy
Academy of Public Administration
under the President of the Republic
of Azerbaijan
Lermontov str., 74, Baku, Azerbaijan
ORCID: 0009-0009-4363-8470

The topic of the study is relevant. It examines one of the acute challenges that Germany faces on the path to democratic development, namely the spread of Islamophobia, which is a form of intolerance and discrimination.

The goal of the study is to identify how the challenges Muslims face when integrating into German society influence the spread of Islamophobia in the country.

Methods. The research is based on application of historical method, system approach, content analysis and such empirical methods as comparison, observation, description and measurement.

Results of the study. There have been two waves of mass immigration of Muslims to Germany. The first wave was at the end of World War II, when the German government invited labor migrants, mostly from Muslim countries, to revive its war-torn economy. The second wave began in the early 2010s. Tens of thousands of Muslims, along with others, were forced to leave their homes and seek refuge in Europe, including Germany. As a result of these mass immigration waves Muslims have become the largest religious minority after Christians.

At present, Muslims generally do not face serious obstacles in preserving their ethnic and cultural values, language or practicing their faith. However, there are some challenges associated with their integration into German society. These challenges include limited knowledge of the German language, lower levels of vocational or university education and high unemployment among Muslims. All this leads to their social isolation. As a result, a «parallel society» is formed. The «parallel society» is characterized by the withdrawal of Muslims into their ethnocultural values. In this situation, Muslims are often perceived in German society as bearers of an alien culture. This perception, in turn, fuels fear, hatred and intolerance towards Muslims, contributing to the spread of Islamophobia, which as a form of intolerance and discrimination creates obstacles to the democratic development of Germany.

Key words: Germany, Muslim community, German Islam Conference, Muslim immigrants, integration challenges, Islamophobia.

Introduction. The first official information regarding the mass settlement of Muslims in Germany dates back to the post-World War II period [3, 6]. Following the end of World War II, the government of the Federal Republic of Germany needed a large, low-cost workforce from abroad to revive the devastated economy. To address this need, the government implemented the «guest worker» (*from the German «Gastarbeiter»*) program. Between the 1950s and 1960s, Germany signed employment agreements with several countries, including Italy, Spain, Greece, Turkey, Morocco, South Korea, Portugal, Tunisia, and Yugoslavia. The guest worker program continued until 1973, during which hundreds of thousands of workers from these countries came to Germany as temporary migrants.

The guest workers were primarily engaged in low-skilled jobs within the industrial sector, with Turkish and Arab workers making up the majority. This trend reflected the high unemployment levels in Muslims' home countries. Unlike workers from other countries, many Muslim guest workers chose to remain in Germany even after their contracts ended, eventually bringing their families over as well. This became one of the main factors behind the rapid increase in Germany's Muslim population over the years.

The early 2010s saw a new wave of mass migration of Muslims to the West, including Germany. Tens of thousands of Muslims, along with others

from the Middle East, North Africa, South Asia and elsewhere, were forced to flee their homes and seek refuge in Europe. This wave of migration, often referred to as the refugee crisis or migrant crisis, was sparked by a combination of factors including the Syrian Civil War, instability in Afghanistan, the rise of ISIS, and political unrest in places like Libya and Yemen. Unlike previous mass migrations, this new migration was unregulated and was driven by armed conflicts, civil wars and unrest in these regions. Both mass migrations resulted in an increase in the number of Muslims in the West, including Germany. However, the rapid growth of the Muslim population was often accompanied by difficulties in integrating into German society, which in some cases contributed to the spread of Islamophobia.

The goal of the article is to analyze how challenges Muslims face in integrating into German society today contribute to the spread of Islamophobia in the country. To reach this the following **tasks** should be fulfilled: 1. Find out challenges of integration of the Muslim population into German society today; 2. Analyze an impact of these challenges into the spread of Islamophobia in Germany.

Research methods. The research is based on application of historical method, system approach, content analysis and such empirical methods as comparison, observation, description and measurement.

Main part.

1. Muslim community in Germany

Today, Islam is the largest minority religion among ethnic minorities in Germany, and the Muslim community is the second-largest religious group after Christians. Islam plays a significant role in the lives of many Muslims in Germany, not only for practicing believers but also for those who are culturally Muslim yet consider themselves less religious. Non-practicing Muslims still express their Muslim identity in various ways, such as fasting during the holy month of Ramadan, performing sacrifices during Eid al-Adha to share with those in need, observing some Muslim ethical norms in behavior, and in some cases avoiding pork and alcohol.

Muslims in Germany can participate in Islamic associations, with Turkish-origin Muslims being particularly well-represented. Prominent organizations include the Islamic Community of Milli Görüş, the Turkish-Islamic Union for Religious Affairs, the German Alevi Community etc... These and other Muslim organizations play a vital role in the direction of identifying the challenges faced by Muslims living in the country in their daily lives, conveying them to a wide audience, including representatives of the authorities, as well as proposing solutions.

2. The DIK and main challenges faced by Muslims in integrating into the society

In response to the growing Muslim population in Germany, the government established the German Islam Conference (Deutsche Islam Konferenz, DIK) on September 27, 2006, under the initiative of the Federal Ministry of the Interior. The DIK acts as a forum for dialogue between Muslims and the government, including federal, state, and local authorities, as well as Muslim representatives. More specifically, the DIK regulates the relationship between the state and Islam in the country.

The establishment of the DIK marked a turning point in the state's relationship with Muslim organizations and Muslims in general. Since its inception, the DIK has comprised 30 representatives, half of whom are government officials, while the other half consists of Muslim representatives selected by the Ministry of the Interior. Of the 15 Muslim representatives, five are chosen from various Muslim organizations, and the remaining ten are individuals, including prominent Muslim critics of Islam [1].

The primary goal of the DIK is to regulate the practice of Islam in Germany, ensure the integration of Muslims into society, and oversee the regulation of their activities. To achieve this goal, the DIK works on addressing the issues faced by Muslims in various fields and develops proposals for solutions. These proposals aim to improve relations between Muslims themselves, Muslims and non-Muslims, and between mosque congregations and their neighbors. The ultimate objective is to foster collaboration between

Muslim communities and the state. The DIK's suggestions are the result of three key policies: integration, social, and religious policies [2].

The DIK's *integration policy* is focused on the initiative «Mosques for Integration: Open, Connective, Collaborative» («Moscheen für Integration – Öffnen, Vernetzen, Kooperieren»). As the name suggests, this initiative calls for mosques to become more open in their daily activities and to promote collaboration. The goal is for mosques to engage more with both Muslim and non-Muslim communities. The integration policy also works to prevent any mosque from limiting its daily activities to only one particular Muslim community. This policy significantly contributes to solving the problem of Muslims' social isolation, which is prevalent across Western countries.

The DIK's *social policy* is aimed at preventing anti-Semitism, hostility towards Muslims, also promoting dialogue between various Muslim communities. Under the project «Promoting Social Cohesion – Preventing Polarization» («Gesellschaftlichen Zusammenhalt fördern – Polarisierung verhindern»), the DIK works to combat threats like anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, and Islamic extremism, while striving to reduce increasing polarization in society. In addition to fighting these issues, the DIK also serves as a forum for inter-Muslim discussions regarding the identity and organization of Muslims in Germany.

The focus of the DIK's *religious policy* is on the training of leaders for Muslim communities. The DIK has played a crucial role in the establishment of Islamic theology centers at various universities in Germany. Building on this, training programs for imams are currently being organized to enhance their effectiveness in their religious communities. All of these efforts aim to help Muslims integrate into German society. While training community leaders is typically within the domain of religious communities, the DIK seeks to make this process transparent, provide financial support, facilitate experience exchange, and coordinate existing and planned initiatives.

The DIK, in its role as a forum for dialogue between Muslim representatives and authorities, organizes its activities along *two main lines*:

1. Identifying the problems Muslims face in their daily lives, explaining them to a wide audience, including government representatives, and finding possible solutions

There are significant issues Muslims face in Germany related to their integration into society. These include the teaching of Islam in state schools, the construction of mosques, preventing hostility against Muslims, and addressing Islam-inspired extremism. These matters are discussed, and solutions are proposed through consultations and discussions. Following these discussions, recommendations for

resolving these problems are gathered, guidelines are prepared, and useful information is published.

2. *Obtaining and disseminating detailed information about the life of Muslims living in Germany*

To achieve this, the DIK commissions studies and surveys, and the results are published. Here are titles of the research conducted in this area: «Islamic Communities in Germany» (Islamisches Gemeindeleben in Deutschland) (2012), «How Many Muslims Live in Germany?» (Wie viele Muslime leben in Deutschland?) (2016), and «Muslim Life in Germany» (Muslimisches Leben in Deutschland) (2020).

As part of the DIK's commission, the Migration, Integration, and Asylum Research Center, under the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, conducted a study in 2020 titled «*Muslim Life in Germany*». This study primarily focuses on migrants from 23 Muslim-majority countries and assesses their religiousness, daily religious practices, and integration into German society, along with how these factors have evolved over time [7].

The study shows that in 2019 the Muslim population originating from Muslim-majority countries in Germany ranged from 5.3 to 5.6 million, making up 6.4% to 6.7% of Germany's total population of 83.1 million [7, 3]. The study also notes that the number of Muslims in Germany has increased over recent years. In 2015, the Muslim migrant population in Germany was between 4.4 and 4.7 million, constituting 5.4% to 5.7% of Germany's then population of 82.2 million [7, 3]. This increase of 0.9 to 1.1 million people in just four years is largely attributed to the mass migration of people fleeing military conflicts in regions such as the Middle East, North Africa, and South Asia.

The study also provides data on the countries of origin of the Muslim population in Germany [7, 3]. The majority of Muslims in Germany approximately 2.5 million people are originally from Turkey. They account for 45% of the Muslim population in Germany. The remaining 55% of Muslims come from the following regions:

1. *The Middle East* (Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Syria, United Arab Emirates, Yemen) – 19%. The highest number of migrants in this region come from Syria (729,000 people), a result of the ongoing civil war that has been ravaging the country since 2011;

2. *North Africa* (Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Morocco, Tunisia) – 8%;

3. *Southeastern Europe* (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia) – 19%;

4. *South Asia* (Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Iran, Pakistan) – 9% [7, 3].

One of the key differences between migrants from Turkey and those from other Muslim-majority regions is the proportion of first-generation migrants, meaning

those who personally immigrated to Germany. For instance, in the case of Turkey, this proportion stands at 54%, whereas for the Middle East, it is 95% [7, 5]. This indicates that 95% of Muslim migrants from the Middle East have personally immigrated to Germany. Furthermore, while first-generation migrants from Turkey have lived in Germany for an average of 32.1 years, those from the Middle East have only arrived an average of 6.4 years ago. These figures demonstrate that migrants from Turkey have a longer immigration history in Germany compared to those from other Muslim regions, a result of the guest worker program initiated during the 1950s and 1960s when Turkey sent labor migrants to Germany.

Since the majority of Muslims came to Germany as a result of migration, they mainly settled in the former West Germany. As is well known, until 1989, East Germany was a closed-off state as part of the communist world system, so immigration from foreign countries was not possible there.

Another interesting finding from the study «*Muslim Life in Germany*» is the difference in the level of religiosity among Muslims from various regions. According to the research, the highest level of religiosity is found among Muslims from North Africa (94%), while the lowest levels are seen among those from Southeastern Europe (75%) and Turkey (79%) [7, 6–7]. However, 75% and 79% still represent a large majority in both groups, indicating that most Muslims from these regions are religious. The study also found that, compared to first-generation migrants, the level of religiosity tends to decrease in subsequent generations [7, 6].

When analyzing the integration of Muslims into German society, particular attention must be paid to their knowledge of the state language, German. According to the aforementioned study, most Muslims born in Germany (93%) are reported to have very good German language skills [7, 10]. The level of language proficiency for Muslims born outside Germany varies depending on the region they come from and how long they have lived in the country. Migrants from South Asia and the Middle East, who have arrived more recently in Germany, often report having weaker German language skills [7, 10].

The challenges facing Muslim integration into German society are not only due to poor language skills but also because of lower levels of vocational or university education. As a result, there is a higher unemployment rate among Muslims. For example, the proportion of employed people aged 16–64 is 53% among migrants from Muslim-majority countries, compared to 72% among non-migrant individuals [7, 10]. Gender disparities are also significant, with women generally experiencing higher unemployment rates than men. However, these gender gaps are especially large among migrants from Muslim-majority countries, where the employment rate for Muslim

women is the lowest (41%) [7, 11]. This is primarily due to the larger family sizes typical of Muslim households, which creates additional challenges such as weak German language skills and a lack of vocational or university education.

Another factor that exacerbates the challenges of integration of Muslims in Germany is the high level of unemployment, which is mainly due to the high birth rate among them. Renowned American political scientist Samuel Huntington, in his book *«The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order»*, notes that the population growth and the increasing number of young people in Muslim countries, combined with economic decline, create conditions for conflict and revolution. At the same time, this demographic shift leads to mass migration of young Muslims to the West and other countries [4, 119]. Considering that most of the Muslims migrating to Western countries are young, and that they also have a higher birth rate than other communities, Muslims in Western countries, including Germany, are experiencing a demographic structure in which the proportion of young people is much higher than that of older generations. For example, in 2020, 21% of Muslims living in Germany were children or adolescents under the age of 15, 22% were between the ages of 15 and 24, and only 5% were over 64. For comparison, the percentage of people aged 64 and over in the general German population is 21%, which is more than four times higher than the share of elderly Muslims [7, 4]. The high birth rate among Muslim communities and the large number of young unemployed immigrants who mainly have poor language skills, low educational levels make it more difficult for Muslims, particularly immigrants, to integrate into German society.

Thus, the poor command of the German language, low levels of vocational or university education, and high unemployment rates are the main challenges Muslims face in Germany. These challenges hinder their integration into German society. Since the above-mentioned problems make it difficult for Muslims to communicate with Germans and other peoples living in the country, which in turn leads to their social isolation and the formation of a «parallel society» in the country. A «parallel society» is a society based on the ethnocultural values of minorities, in particular Muslim minorities. The existence of a «parallel society» disrupts social unity in the country, intensifies the processes of fragmentation and disintegration, and opens the way for ethnic and religious conflicts. Moreover, this is one of the reasons for the spread of Islamophobia.

3. Islamophobia in Germany

Islamophobia promotes fear and hatred toward Islam and all Muslims. However, this fear and hatred are baseless, illogical, and unjust. As a result, Islamophobia is one of the most widespread forms

of intolerance, xenophobia, and discrimination [6, 348].

Islamophobia began to take shape in Germany during the 1980s. At that time, many Muslim workers who had arrived in Germany under the guest-worker program decided to stay permanently in the country. This led to a shift in their social status. In the public consciousness of Germans, Muslims were no longer seen as guests or temporary workers, but as cultural foreigners –carriers of ethnic-cultural values alien to Germans. Like in other Western countries, the ethnic-cultural values of Muslims in Germany are often presented as incompatible with democratic values, such as the rule of law, human rights, and gender equality. Furthermore, terror events, especially the bloody attacks on September 11, 2001 in the United States which were associated with Muslim terrorists, contributed to the creation of the “Islamic fundamentalist” image of Muslim migrants. In this new historical context, Muslim migrants in Germany, as well as in many other Western countries, are portrayed as carriers of foreign cultures and even potential terrorists. The negative image of Muslims in public consciousness has led to not only hatred but also crimes committed against them. All of this points to the widespread nature of Islamophobia in Germany. The «Islamophobia in Germany: National Report 2015», published in 2016, presents Islamophobia as one of the most serious forms of racism in modern German society [11, 186].

Islamophobia promotes fear and hatred of Islam and Muslims, as well as hate crimes against them. The crimes committed against Muslims in Germany due to hatred are a central aspect of Islamophobia in the country. This is evidenced by incidents in Germany. However, it is important to note that until 2017, Germany did not have official statistical data on Islamophobia. At that time, like in many other European countries, incidents of Islamophobic nature were not considered a separate category of hate crimes. It was essential for the police to classify Islamophobic crimes as a distinct category of hate crimes, as this could have exposed the real scale of the Islamophobia problem and helped implement necessary measures to combat it. Only on January 1, 2017 Islamophobic crimes were officially included in police statistics and crime reports [10, 281]. From that point on, Islamophobia was presented in police statistics as a subcategory of «hate crimes» under «politically motivated criminal acts».

Today, information on Islamophobia in Germany can be obtained from various sources. One of the primary sources is the annual report prepared and presented by the Ministry of the Interior on hate crimes. According to the Ministry's report, «Political-Motivated Crime in 2015», the number of hate crimes increased sharply from 5,858 to 10,373 between 2014 and 2015 [8]. While there has not been such

a sharp rise in subsequent years, the number of hate crimes continues to increase in Germany. According to the Ministry's report, «Political-Motivated Crime in 2019», the number of hate crimes increased by 5.8% to 8,585 in 2019 compared to 8,113 in 2018 [9]. The majority of these hate crimes, like in previous years, were xenophobic in nature, marking a 2.7% increase from the previous year (2019: 7,909; 2018: 7,701). Crimes characterized by anti-Semitism also rose by 13.0%, reaching 2,032 in 2019, compared to 1,798 in 2018 [9]. The data reflecting the increase in hate crimes in Germany, as shown in these reports, supports the idea that Islamophobia remains at a high level in the country. In modern times, Islamophobia is one of the most prominent forms of hate crimes in Western countries.

One more source providing information about Islamophobia in Germany is the IslamiQ website portal. The portal frequently reports on attacks on mosques in Germany, which have been observed more often in recent times. Although this issue is relevant, it is barely covered by the media in the country. To fill this gap, the portal published a report on attacks on mosques for the first time in 2018 [5]. The report primarily provides statistical data on attacks on mosques. In 2018, there were 120 attacks on mosques in Germany, 141 in 2019, and 148 in 2020 [5]. The material damage caused to mosques as a result of these attacks is usually covered by the mosque's community, as state institutions often refuse to assist them with various excuses. According to the report, many mosque communities are reluctant to report attacks to the police, explaining that it is useless because most of the attacks on mosques remain unsolved. For example, of the 120 mosque attacks in 2018, only 9 were solved [5]. Naturally, this reluctance to report attacks encourages further criminal acts against mosques.

A report by the Network against Discrimination and Islamophobia, based in Berlin, discusses the daily struggles Muslims face in Germany, including rude behavior, degradation, hate mail, threats, and even physical violence. The report highlights that Muslim women suffer more from acts of violence, especially in public places and public transportation, where they are insulted, have their headscarves forcibly removed, and are subjected to verbal and physical abuse without any reason [10]. The IslamiQ website also reports that Muslim women are particularly targeted in Islamophobic attacks.

Information about the state of Islamophobia in Germany can also be obtained from international reports. One such report is the European Islamophobia Report (EIR), published annually by the Political, Economic, and Social Research Foundation based in Istanbul since 2016. As the name suggests, this report provides statistical information and analysis on the spread of Islamophobia in European countries.

The 2016 edition of the report includes a section titled «Islamophobia in Germany. National Report 2015», in which German political scientist Dr. Anna-Ester Younes analyzes the state of Islamophobia in Germany for 2015. She notes with regret that there was no reliable and comprehensive national data on Islamophobia in Germany at that time [11, 179–198]. In the 2018 edition, Younes emphasizes that Islamophobia remains an undeniable force in modern German politics [12, 250]. She notes that, like in many other Western countries, the rise of far-right positions in Germany has been accompanied by a resurgence of Islamophobia. As evidence of this, she points to the Alternative for Germany (AfD) party, which advocates for Islamophobic views and has strengthened its position in the political arena following the 2017 parliamentary elections, becoming the third-largest party in the Bundestag [12, 253]. Younes concludes that the strengthening of far-right forces in 2017 has contributed to the widespread growth of Islamophobia in various sectors of German society, particularly in education, employment, and media, and that discrimination and intolerance have spread, including the degrading portrayal of Muslims in German media and the sending of hateful emails [12, 259–263].

Ulrich Paffrath, a researcher on Islamophobic incidents in Germany, notes that in 2017 more hate-filled letters were sent to mosques compared to 2016. The authors of these letters used terms from Nazi anti-Semitism, referring to Muslims as «bacteria», «parasites in the German people's body», and «Islamic pests» [12, 274–275].

Based on the information provided by the police and security services, Yones reports that in 2017, there were 1,906 attacks against refugees and 286 attacks against refugee shelters in Germany [12, 270]. Various figures are presented regarding the number of attacks on mosques in 2017. Official statistics report 57 attacks, while the Turkish-Islamic Union for Religious Affairs states that the number is 101 [12, 271]. It is especially important to note that, in many cases, Muslims do not report acts of violence against them to the police, considering it to be futile. In fact, the police do not respond adequately to Islamophobic incidents. They fail to conduct prompt investigations, and the bureaucratic hurdles they impose frustrate the complainants.

Yones also mentions that in 2017 alongside Muslims, German citizens who defended refugees or opposed neo-Nazi ideologies also faced Islamophobic persecution and violence [12, 267–269]. She refers to reports that Parliament member Caren Lay and her staff were attacked 28 times by right-wing groups since 2010. Yones justifiably links these repeated attacks to the police's indifference to the situation of Muslim migrants [12, 270]. This fact demonstrates that Islamophobia is even supported by some government officials in Germany.

Conclusions. Thus, the guest worker program adopted by the German government after World War II led to the first large-scale migration of Muslims to the country. Their next wave of mass migration occurred after 2011 due to armed conflicts, civil wars, and unrest in countries across the Middle East, North Africa, South Asia, and other regions.

Most Muslims living in Germany have difficulty with the German language, have a low level of vocational or university education and face high unemployment. All this hinders their integration into society and contributes to the spread of Islamophobia by certain political forces in the country. These Islamophobic political forces are also supported by parts of the population. As a result, a paradoxical situation arises. In the name of protecting democratic values some Germans defend Islamophobia, which is inherently undemocratic. Hate crimes against Muslims are the main manifestation of Islamophobia in Germany. This reflects the widespread and escalating nature of Islamophobia in the country. Undoubtedly, these events pose a serious threat to the democratic development of the country and complicate the integration of Muslims into society.

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Проблеми, що перешкоджають інтеграції мусульман у Німеччині та поширення ісламофобії

Наджафлі Бахтіяр Етібар огли

докторант кафедри міжнародних відносин та зовнішньої політики Академії державного управління за Президента Азербайджанської Республіки
вул. Лермонтова, 74, Баку, Азербайджан
ORCID: 0009-0009-4363-8470

Тема дослідження є актуальною, оскільки вона розглядає одну з гострих проблем, з якими стикається Німеччина на шляху демократичного розвитку, а саме поширення ісламофобії, яка є формою нетерпимості та дискримінації.

Мета дослідження – визначити вплив проблем, з якими стикаються мусульмани під час інтеграції в німецьке суспільство, на поширення ісламофобії в країні.

Методи. У дослідженні застосовано історичний метод, системний підхід, контент-аналіз, а також емпіричні методи, такі як порівняння, спостереження, опис і вимірювання.

Результати дослідження. У Німеччині відбулося дві хвилі масової імміграції мусульман. Перша хвиля припала на кінець Другої світової війни, коли німецький уряд запросив трудових мігрантів, переважно з мусульманських країн, для відновлення зруйнованої війною економіки. Друга хвиля розпочалася на початку 2010-х років, коли десятки тисяч мусульман, разом з іншими, змушені були покинути свої домівки та шукати притулок у Європі, зокрема в Німеччині. У результаті цих масових імміграцій мусульмани стали найбільшою релігійною меншиною після християн.

На сьогодні мусульмани загалом не стикаються з серйозними перешкодами у збереженні своїх етнічних і культурних цінностей, мови чи у практикуванні віри. Проте існують проблеми, пов'язані з їхньою інтеграцією в німецьке суспільство. Серед них – обмежене знання німецької мови, нижчий рівень професійної чи університетської освіти та високий рівень безробіття серед мусульман. Це призводить до їх соціальної ізоляції. У результаті формується так зване «паралельне суспільство», яке характеризується замкнутістю мусульман у своїх етнокультурних цінностях. У такій ситуації мусульмани часто сприймаються в німецькому суспільстві як носії чужої культури. Це сприйняття, своєю чергою, підживлює страх, ненависть і нетерпимість до мусульман, сприяючи поширенню ісламофобії, яка, будучи формою нетерпимості та дискримінації, створює перешкоди для демократичного розвитку Німеччини.

Ключові слова: Німеччина, мусульманська громада, Німецька ісламська конференція, мусульманські іммігранти, виклики інтеграції, ісламофобія.