

# Islamophobic Rhetoric in Election Campaigns: An Analysis of Party Programs and Media Discourses in Germany

*Seim Srelerinde İslamofobik Retorik: Almanya Parti Programları ve Medya Sylemleri zerine Bir İnceleme*

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## Abstract

This study examines the treatment of Islam and Muslims in political election processes in Western countries. The research question is how Islamophobic discourses are framed in political rhetoric and how they influence social life by using the example of the German federal election as an example. The topic focuses on how Islamophobia is nurtured by historical, political and theological factors and how it becomes visible in the election campaign. The subject of the study is the official programs and social media content of political parties such as AfD, CDU, CSU, and FDP in Germany. The methodology includes a mixed approach with content analysis and critical method analysis. The assumption is that political language is effective in spreading and legitimizing Islamophobic attitudes. The results of the study show that discourses directly directed against Islam and Muslims are widespread and visible at a societal level in election campaigns.

**Keywords:** Islamophobia, Islamophobic rhetoric, AfD, CDU, CSU, FDP.

## z

Tarihsel, politik ve teolojik faktrlerden beslenen İslam karıtlığının, siyasi seim srelerinde nasıl grnr hale geldiğini inceleyen bu alıřmada, İslam'a ve Mslmanlara ynelik yaklařımlar ele alınmıřtır. Almanya Federal Seimleri rneğinde, İslamofobik sylemlerin siyasi retorikte nasıl bir yer edindiğini sorgulanmıřtır. Bu baėlamda, Almanya'daki AfD, CDU, CSU ve FDP gibi siyasi partilerin resmi programları ve X sosyal medya platformundaki paylařımlar analiz edilmiřtir. İerik analizi ve eleřtirel sylem analizi yntemlerinin kullanıldıėı bu alıřmada, siyasi dilin İslamofobik tutumların yayılmasında ve meřrulařtırılmasında etkili olduėu tespit edilmiřtir. Ayrıca, seim kampanyalarında İslam'a ve Mslmanlara ynelik doėrudan karřıtlık ieren negatif sylem ve anlatımların yaygınlařtırıldıėı ve bu İslamofobik dilin toplumsal dzeyde grnr hale getirildiėi belirlenmiřtir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** İslamofobi, İslamofobik Retorik, AfD, CDU, CSU, FDP.

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## Introduction

As an ideology of the rejection of Islam, Islamophobia has arisen from prejudice and discrimination against Islam/Muslims. When examining the literature, there are differing views on the origins of Islamophobia and the emergence of the concept. There are views that the term was first used in France in 1925 by Etienne Dinet and Sliman Ben Ibrahim and/or in 1991 in the Oxford English Dictionary (Allen, 2010: 5). However, the term Islamophobia does not seem to be sufficient to capture the opposition to Islam/Muslims comprehensively. In particular, the increasing threat to the visibility of Muslims in social, political, and economic spheres, attacks based on discrimination, othering, exclusion, and physical-psychological violence ultimately point not only to a negative thinking/approach but also to a collective opposition to Islam/Muslims.

These problems we experience today are a result of negative perceptions of Islam and Muslims in the Western world since the Middle Ages (Allen, 201: 25-28). The roots of anti-Islamic sentiments are nourished by a theological and political approach that goes back about a thousand years, as well as the Crusades in later eras. The military activities of the Ottoman Empire towards the West also reinforced these feelings in Central and Eastern Europe (Črnič, 2020: 708). In addition to the political and religious reasons arising from the historical process, the increasing visibility of Muslims in Europe, particularly through events such as migration to Europe after the 1950s, meant that Islam and Muslims were perceived as a threat in the Western world (Lathion, 2015: 134-135; Semati, 2010: 259-261). According to a study conducted in 2017, it is stated that Westerners characterize Muslims as “violent”, “manipulative” and “unethical” (Lipka, 2017). With political developments from the 20th century onwards, Many positioned Islam and Muslims as the 'other', and this situation led to a systematic hostility towards Islam/Muslims in political, social and policy areas.

The means of communication undoubtedly contribute significantly to the spread of Islam/Muslim opposition and its greater visibility in society. Islamophobic narratives nurtured by the Orientalist perspective that persisted in literary works throughout history are more effectively visible in today's media. (Temel, 2023: 148-178.) Ultimately, it is evident that media tools present a negative Islam/Muslim profile (Mesic, 2011: 1-4). It is known that the media in Western societies emphasize certain negative stereotypes about Islam and Muslims and that this perception leads to the construction of an identity within the society (Cervi, vd., 2021). While the Islamophobic images presented by the media strongly influence individual and societal perceptions, the process of creating and presenting these images through the media is also related to political forces of domination (Pratt, 2011: 380-382). The content with which Islamophobic language takes place in the media, especially in European countries, and the failure to take the necessary preventative measures against the problems faced by Muslims make it undeniable that opposition to Islam/Muslims has a political basis at its core.

From this point of view, this study also puts up for discussion the role of political actors/tendencies in the production, construction, and dissemination of Islamophobic language in the social sphere. This situation, which is particularly visible and widespread in political electoral processes in many Western countries, handles the example of Germany, where the Muslim population is around 5 million (Daten und Fakten über den

Islam in Deutschland, 2024). In this context, the study examines the party programs and social media accounts of political parties that appeared in the federal elections in Germany on February 23, 2025 with xenophobic/anti-immigration and anti-immigration discourses and party programs through content analysis and quantifies and defines them. The content relating to Islam and Muslims in the party manifestos is analyzed using the data obtained from the critical discourse method.

## **Research**

### ***Methodology / theme, purpose, and meaning***

This study examines how the Islamophobic/Muslim opposition generated by the media, particularly in Europe, is related to political actors and tendencies. The study examines the Islamophobic images generated by political language and the appearances of these images on social media, using the German federal election of 2025 as an example.

Questioning the Islamophobic language produced by political causes and addressing the visibility of this opposition will reopen the discussion on the relationship between Islamophobic language and the media and political parties' anti-Islamic/Muslim discourses. This discussion will shed light on the elements that should be considered in shaping social cohesion and migration policies, as well as the problems in the discourse and ideological tendencies of policymakers who play an active role in solving Islamophobic problems.

### ***Research premises and research questions***

V.1 Some political parties in Germany use negative discourses about Islam and Muslims.

V.2 These political parties tend to alienate and marginalize Islam and Muslims by exploiting voters' fears.

V.3 These mentioned political parties construct alienating and polarizing language in their election manifestos in the context of cultural harmony, security, and immigration policies.

The following research questions will be investigated in our study:

A.S.1 Are there anti-Islam/Muslim discourses in the election programs and social media statements of some political parties in Germany?

A.S.2. What is the nature of statements against Islam and Muslims in the election manifestos and social media statements of political parties in Germany?

The sub-research questions prepared to support the aforementioned research questions are as follows:

- What words and concepts are used to portray Islam and Muslims in the party manifestos?
- What texts and narratives are used to frame the above words and concepts in the party platforms?
- What themes are present in the parties' posts on social media?

### ***Scope and restrictions***

The study examines the use of Islamophobic language that is visible in political election processes in European countries, using Germany as an example. In this context, the party

programs of the Alternative for Germany (AfD-Alternative für Deutschland), Christian Democratic Union of Germany (CDU-Christlich Demokratische Union Deutschlands), Christian Social Union in Bavaria (CSU e.V.) and Free Democratic Party (FDP-Freie Demokratische Partei) parties visible with their anti-Islamic/Muslim political principles and programs and media-driven discourses before the federal election on February 23, 2025<sup>1</sup>, in which 29 parties participated<sup>2</sup>, took place on their official websites and through their posts on their official social media accounts X . A preliminary investigation of the party programs and social media posts was conducted and the data was obtained from a communicative perspective.

### *Data collection, analysis, and methodology*

For the study, the party platforms were obtained from the parties' official websites, and X's social media accounts were followed. The party platforms and X posts were examined using the content analysis method (Carley, 1990), as it allows for digitization and conceptual identification. With the knowledge gained, the ideological/core values and target policies of the parties in the official party platforms were examined and the statements about Islam and Muslims were analyzed using Teun A. van Dijk's method of critical discourse analysis with regard to data collection, linguistic analysis, contextual information and ideological themes. Van Dijk's approach uses linguistic analysis to determine the meaning and contextual information of words and sentences, with the aim of uncovering ideological meanings. In this way, it analyzes how language shapes social power relations, identities, and group representations, and the historical, political, and social context in which the text was written (Van Dijk, 2015).

## **Findings**

### *Results of the analysis of party programs and social media content*

Information on the parties under investigation <sup>3</sup>				
Nu.		Party Name	Party Leader General Chairman	Election Results Voting Rates
1	AfD	Almanya için Alternatif (AfD) (Alternative für Deutschland)	Alice Weidel Tino Chrupalla	-152 Seats -10,327,148 votes (20.8%)
2	CDU	Hristiyan Demokrat Parti (Christlich Demokratische Union Deutschlands) (CDU)	Friedrich Merz	-208 Seats
3	CSU	Hristiyan Sosyal Birliği (CSU) (Christlich-Soziale Union in Bayern e.V.)	Markus Söder	-14,158,432 votes (28.52%)
4	FDP	Hür Demokrat Parti (FDP) (Freie Demokratische Partei)	Christian Lindner	-0 Seats -2,148,878 votes (4.33%)

**Table 1:** Basic information on the parties involved in the review

In the elections in which the parties in question took part, the alliance of CDU and CSU received the most votes and seats. They received a total of 208 seats and 14,158,432 votes.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.islamiq.de/2025/02/13/was-steht-in-den-wahlprogrammen-zum-islam-und-muslime/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.bpb.de/kurz-knapp/hintergrund-aktuell/559500/die-bundestagswahl-2025/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.bundeswahlleiterin.de/bundestagswahlen/2025/ergebnisse/bund-99.html>

The AfD party received 152 seats and 10,327,148 votes, while the FDP party received 2,148,878 votes but did not win a seat.

Nu.	Party	Party Program Slogan	Additional Explanations
1	AfD	Germany Time	Programme of the Alternative for Germany for the election of the 21st German Bundestag
2	CDU	Living in Freedom Taking Germany Safely into the Future	Basic program Christian Democratic Union of Germany (CDU)
3	CDU CSU	Political Change for Germany	Election programme of the CDU and CSU
4	FDP	Everything Can Be Changed	The FDP's election programme for the 2025 federal elections

**Table 2:** Information on the party programs

As can be seen in Table 2, the AfD party ran its election campaign with the slogan “Time for Germany”, on the other hand, the CDU party emphasized the issues of freedom and security with the slogan “Living in freedom, leading Germany safely into the future”. The CDU-CSU alliance ran its campaign with the slogan “Policy change for Germany”. The FDP, on the other hand, focused on change with the slogan “Everything can change”.

Nu.	Party	Concepts
1	AfD	Islam, Islamist, Islamist terrorism, extremism, political Islam, Ummah, Islamization, Muslim, caliphate, caliphate, Koran, Koranic schools, Islamic organizations, mosque, association, Islamist association, Jamaat, Imam, sermon, theology, minaret, muezzin, burqa, niqab, face covering, headscarf
2	CDU	Right-wing extremism, Islamist, Islamism, radicalization, Islamic religious education, Islamic terrorism, political Islam, Sharia, Islamic organizations, Islamic associations, Muslim, mosque, community, imam
3	CDU- CSU	Mosque, Islamism, political Islam, extremist threat, Islamist terrorism, Muslim, mosque associations, Islamic organizations
4	FDP	Islamist, Islamism, threat of Islamism, radicalization, violence, terrorism, extremism, Islamic religious education.

**Table 3:** Terms used and repeated in party manifestos in relation to Islam and Muslims

It is clear that Islam and Muslims are assigned negative terms and concepts in the parties' election manifestos. These terms include negative concepts such as terrorism, extremism, Islamist terrorism and negative expressions such as threat, radicalization, violence, extremist threat, Islamic organizations.

Nu.	Party	Titles of Words/Texts
1	AfD	Fighting violence and extremism with determination
		We are against the further spread of Islam
		The threat of Islamist terrorism
		Criminalization of the demand for the caliphate
		Polygamy, forced marriage and child marriage
		Continuously prevent the influence of political Islam in schools
		Preventing the influence of political Islam on schools
2	CDU	Where are we going?
		For a free and secure country
		A community that is united and creates opportunities
3	CDU- CSU	Policy change for Germany
		Yes to a defensive democracy
		Yes to a guiding culture and harmony
		Creating security in the digital space
		Continuous struggle against the enemies of our state
4	FDP	Religious politics in liberal civil society
		Consistently combating Islamism and strengthening prevention and deradicalization

**Table 4:** Articles and article titles containing terms related to Islam and Muslims

As you can see from Table 4, the party manifestos contain article headings that refer to Islam/Muslims. These headings show how many sections on Islam and Muslims can be found in the party manifestos and how the narrative quality of the headings has an Islamophobic appearance.

Nu	Party	Social Media Accounts and Number of Followers		
		X	Instagram	Youtube
1	AfD	439.452 (@AfD)	316.000 (@afd.bund)	335.000 (@AfDTV)
2	CDU	403.875 (@CDU)	188.000 (@cdu)	30,400 (@cdutv)
3	CSU	236.446 (@CSU)	82,400 (@csu)	6,820 (@csumedia)
4	FDP	418.380 (@fdp)	168.000 (@fdp)	29,500 (@FDP)

**Table 5:** Information on the parties' social media accounts (10.03.2025)

Among the parties in Table 5, it can be seen that the AfD is the party with the most social media accounts (X, Instagram and YouTube). If X accounts evaluate the parties according to the AfD is in first place with 439,452, the FDP in second place with 418,380; the CDU in third place with 403,875 and the CSU in fourth place with 236,446 followers. The AfD has the most followers on Instagram with 316,000; the CDU is in second place with 188,000; the FDP is in third place with 168,000 and the CSU is in fourth place with 82,400. This shows that AfD is the party with the most followers on YouTube by far.

Nu	Party	Number of Contents Checked	Released Content and Interaction Information (Until February 20, 2025)		
			Total Number of Likes	Quote Share	Comment
1	AfD	32	285.360	46.137	10.425
2	CDU	25	40.234	5.115	24.208
3	CDU - CSU	5	8.418	216	4.067
4	FDP	24	34.941	4.816	8773

**Table 6:** "X" shares of parties (January 20to February 20, 2025)

As can be seen in Table 6, the AfD party has the most interactions in terms of content shared and party interaction information in terms of number of content reviewed, total number of likes, comments and quotes. The CDU party is in second place in terms of the amount of content shared, the total number of likes, comments, and quotes. The FDP is in third place in terms of the number of rated content, the total number of likes, comments, and quotes. The CDU-CSU alliance is in fourth place in terms of the number of rated contents, the number of likes, comments, and quotes.

Nu	Party	Concepts
1	AfD	Migration, immigrant, immigrants, security, terror, asylum, refugee, asylum seeker, Islamist terror, Islam, Islamic culture
2	CDU	Migration, Integration, extremism, Refugee, Asylum Seeker
3	CDU-CSU	Migration, radicalization, asylum
4	FDP	Migration, mullah

**Table 7:** Terms used and repeated in articles about Islam and Muslims

As can be seen in Table 7, the AfD party uses directly negative terms such as terror and Islamist terror in its contributions. The CDU, CDU-CSU alliance and FDP parties used terms such as extremism, refugee, asylum seeker, mullah and immigration in their posts. In the parties' X-posts, it was found that the political election process lasted on the axis of immigration/immigrant/refugee, political propaganda took part in the perspective of integration and harmony, and approaches related to Islam/Muslims were conveyed by associating them with immigration/immigration issues.

Nu	Party	Themes				Total
		Xenophobia	Criticism of Immigration/Immigrants	Criticism of Immigration Policy	Other	
1	AfD	6	7	18	1	32
2	CDU	4	5	16	-	25
3	CDU-CSU	1	-	4	-	5
4	FDP	2	3	19	-	24

**Table 8:** Topics covered in the articles

If we look at the prominent themes in the posts of the 4 parties in Table 8, we see that the theme of criticizing immigration policy (18) is most frequently used in 32 AfD posts. It was found that there are 7 posts on the topic of criticizing immigration/immigrants and 6 posts on the topic of xenophobia. We see that 16 of the 25 posts from the CDU party were criticism of immigration policy, 5 posts were criticisms of immigration/immigrants, and 4 posts were xenophobia. Of the 24 contributions from the FDP party, 19 focused on criticisms of immigration policy, 3 on criticism of immigration/immigrants and 2 on xenophobia. In the 5 contributions from the CDU-CSU, there are 4 themes of criticism of immigration policy and 1 theme of xenophobia.

The posts in question were framed with themes of criticism of immigration policy in Germany, criticism of immigration/immigrants and xenophobia. It is evident that Muslim immigrants, who have a significant population density in Germany, are also mentioned in these topics.

As a result of examining the official programs of the parties using the content analysis method, it was found that there are many sections about Islam and Muslims in the party programs and that an Islamophobic approach is seen with negative terms. However, it was found that the said approach was spread under the name of immigration/immigration criticism via the parties' X social media account and that Islamophobic content was shared that threatened the visibility of Islam/Muslims in social life and alienated them.

### **Power Relations and Ideological Considerations in Discourse**

In order to identify Islamophobic rhetoric in the political language of the German elections, the official programs of the parties were examined using the method of critical discourse analysis. The investigation led to the following results:

#### ***Linguistic Analysis: Islam associated with terrorism***

In order to understand which words are used in the discourses and which meanings are constructed with these words, the choice of words, the way in which sentences are actively and passively constructed, to whom they are addressed and which positive/negative meanings they reveal, the sentence structures and the meanings created with the images and metaphors used in the texts were determined:

It was found that the AfD uses terms such as Islamist, Islamization, terrorism, Islamist terrorism extremism in its party manifesto in relation to Islam and Muslims, which are interwoven with negative meanings in the political and social spheres.<sup>4</sup> It can be stated that with these terms a direct objective is questioned and that terror and Islam/Muslims are paired together with stereotypes. Furthermore, terms such as Islamization, political Islam and caliphate are used to portray the religion of Islam as a political threat.

The sentences/texts containing the words in question are included in sections such as “fighting violence and extremism resolutely”, “a free and secure country”, “internal security”, “external security”. This situation may show that Islam and Muslims are presented as a problem for Germany's internal and external security. In the section of the party program entitled “Security”, it says: “This includes both right-wing and left-wing extremism as well as religious – mostly Islamist-based – extremism” and in the statements on page 121 of the same section: “The danger of Islamist terrorism...” and “Political Islam, sometimes in its violent form, poses the greatest threat to Christian Western culture in Germany. If a liberal Western society ignores the dangers to internal security posed by political Islam, these dangers will not diminish, but on the contrary will increasingly threaten the existence of a liberal society. We will defend ourselves against this.” (AfD, 2024: 120-121)

In the CDU party manifesto, terms such as right-wing extremism, radicalization, Islamist terrorism, and Sharia law are used to refer to Islam and Muslims. These terms also include the sentence on page 21 of the party program: “We must guard against all forms of extremism against violence and terror. It does not matter whether it is right-wing extremism, left-wing extremism, Islamism or extremism originating from abroad.

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<sup>4</sup> AfD X account: “A minute's silence for all victims of Islamist terror. A minute's silence for all women and girls who were brutally raped by illegal immigrants and then thrown away like garbage.” (AfD, February 5, 2025)

Radicalization processes must be recognized and prevented from the outset", "also has an active discourse that associates Islam/Muslims with terror and violence. The sentences on page 22, "Islamist terrorism and political Islam are underestimated dangers. Our fight is directed against those who spread hatred and violence and want to establish an Islamist order based on Sharia law. We say to them: Sharia law does not belong in Germany. We have to deal much more intensively with the ideological foundations of this religious extremism", "portray Islam directly as a source of terror and describe Sharia as the basis of violence and hatred and define Islam and Muslims.

The CDU-CSU party program, on the other hand, defines Islam and Muslims with the words Islamism, political Islam, extremist threat and Islamist terrorism. The choice of title on page 42 of the party program, "Resolute fight against the enemies of our state", "also underlines that Islam is a threat that must be combated. The sentences in the corresponding article, "We must carefully monitor all types of extremism of violence and terror, whether right-wing or left-wing extremism or Islamism", "A clear stance against supporters of terrorism. This applies in the event that calls are made to eliminate the free democratic basic order, such as the call for an Islamist state or the conviction for an anti-Semitic crime" also have a structure interwoven with negative meanings. The article entitled "Stance against Islamism" and the following statements "Islamist terrorism and political Islam are ignored as dangers. We will deal more intensively with the ideological foundations of this religiously motivated political extremism" are also sentence structures with negative meanings, negative judgments and threats.

On the other hand, the FDP defines Islam/Muslims with negative terms such as Islamism, the threat of Islamism, radicalization, violence, terrorism and extremism. The article on page 25 entitled "Consistently combating Islamism and strengthening prevention and deradicalization" and the statement "We Free Democrats want to actively combat the threat of Islamism. The radicalization of Muslims in German society leads to social division, violence and terrorism. The radicalization of Islamist influencers, especially via the Internet, has increased significantly in recent years." present Islam and Muslims as problems that must be combated and are associated with terrorism and violence.

When examining the words/phrases associated with Islam and Muslims in the content of the party manifestos, it was found that the negative word choice is evident, with threatening and hateful meanings, and that the narrative structure using generalizing language about Islam and Muslims is prevalent.

Furthermore, there is a political equivalent to the Islamophobic language prevalent in the West in the relevant texts, and there is a narrative that emphasizes that Islam/Muslims are a security problem, a political target, and a power field that requires action.

### ***Contextual Information: Islam/Muslims in the sights***

The construction of identity and the representation of a certain group or social structure, the ideological tendency of the respective producers of meaning and the contexts constructed with the sentences can be determined in the texts of the party programs.

In the AfD party program, the identity of Islam and Muslims, the way in which they are represented and the ideological meanings attributed to them point to an important problem. The sentence "We reject interference in our internal affairs through ideological

or financial support for Islamist and nationalist groups from abroad” on page 92 of the program positions Muslims as a dangerous organization that is under the control of various countries and can be manipulated. The presentation with an alienating and judgmental word and the perception of a threat from abroad are among the prominent meanings in the sentence.

The following statements can also be found under the heading “Internal Security” in the party program: “The punishability of the call for a caliphate, the call for the establishment of a caliphate by some Muslims living in Germany in their events and demonstrations are completely incompatible with the free democratic basic order and violate the Basic Law” (AfD, 2024:121), and “the activities of so-called Koran schools that teach anti-constitutional content must be stopped and banned. Terrorist organizations aim to eliminate democratic structures and the rule of law with their actions”(AfD, 2024: 122). They stereotype Muslims and portray them as individuals who can commit a crime; they define terrorist activities by including fundamental rights such as religious education; and they construe the Quran, which contains the basic teachings of the Islamic religion, with negative language. These statements are not only an expression of the party program, but also of a political and social ideology. The sentence on page 123 “Criticism of Islam, like all other criticism of religion, is legitimized by the fundamental right to freedom of expression. It is unacceptable to suppress criticism of Islam by accusing it of “Islamophobia” or so-called anti-Muslim racism.” has the appearance of legitimizing Islamophobic discourse and actions that are seen as anti-Islamic. The sentence on page 124, “Polygamy, forced marriages and child marriages of Muslims living in Germany violate German law and public policy, which is based on polygamy, forced marriages and child marriages. These marriages should be annulled. The AfD opposes the oppression of Muslim women and demands that women and men have equal rights in all areas.” contains a fictitious ideological representation that stereotypes Muslims and constructs the context that there is oppression of women in Islam. The statements on page 125, “Body and face covering We also want to ban the wearing of burqas and niqabs in public spaces in Germany, as in France, Austria, Denmark, the Netherlands and Switzerland. The ban on face coverings should also be implemented in this context. Following the example of other European countries, we call for the headscarf to be banned in public institutions and especially in schools.” contain directly Islamophobic sentiments and show the extent to which the oppression of Muslims has been internalized/normalized and that this oppression and resistance pursue political goals.

The CDU party program states: “An Islam that does not share our values and rejects our liberal society does not belong in Germany. Only very few of the Muslims living in Germany are organized in large Islamic associations. We support their organization in Germany. To this end, research and teaching in Islamic theology must be further strengthened and German-speaking imams must be trained at German universities. Foreign governments must not interfere in mosques, Islamic associations, Muslim organizations and Muslims in Germany” (CDU, 2024:38) and has a narrative that aims to control and judge civil society activities and Islamic educational processes, which are a democratic right of Muslims.

The sentence in the CDU-CSU program (CDU, 2024:41) “We will close mosques that teach hatred and anti-Semitism and will not allow such activities” carries a political

narrative that targets Islamic institutions and is based on opposition. The statement on page 57, “We do not want remote-controlled Islam. It is unacceptable for foreign governments to influence Muslims in Germany through mosque associations and Islamic organizations under the guise of religious freedom.” contains a judgmental tone towards Muslims as people who are directed, controlled and held together for various purposes.

In the FDP party manifesto (FDP, 2025:25), next to the sentence “Consistently combat Islamism and strengthen prevention and reduction of radicalization”, it says: “We Free Democrats want to actively combat the threat of Islamism. The radicalization of Muslims in German society leads to social division, violence and terrorism. The radicalization of Islamist influencers, especially via the Internet, has increased significantly in recent years.” The statements associate Muslims with terrorist organizations, portray them as supporters of violence and claim that they are a threat to German society.

In the statements in the party manifestos, it seems possible to talk about a context that accuses Islam/Muslims, targets them, stereotypes them and presents them as a threat through the use of dominant language. It is also clear to see that these narratives are fed by social and political ideological tendencies.

### ***Ideological Themes: Islam/Muslims surrounded/controlled/oppressed***

The basic messages/ideological themes that are attempted to be constructed with the data in the party manifestos show which social group the discourse is aimed at, which ideas are supported and which ideological conflicts exist.

Based on the linguistic analysis and contextual information in the AfD party manifestos, it was found that the ideological themes overlap and that political language aimed at discrimination/rejection towards Islam/Muslims is used. Furthermore, the messages in the relevant program text, the social group that is supposed to be affected by these messages and the ideological conflicts that may arise from them have found a discourse with political expressions/strategic goals as follows:

- "We will no longer remain silent when it comes to the importation of foreign conflicts into German territory. In this context, we will also make it much easier for foreign criminals to re-immigrate." (AfD, 2024: 101),
- "The legal requirements for measures to terminate the residence of foreign participants must be created and implemented; these persons must be deported." (AfD, 2024: 121),
- "The activities of so-called Koran schools that teach anti-constitutional content must be stopped and banned." (AfD, 2024: 122),
- "We are against the further spread of Islam." (AfD, 2024: 123),
- "The AfD rejects the idea of a public-law status for Islamic organizations." (AfD, 2024: 123),
- "The AfD calls for Islamist associations or mosque communities to be consistently banned if the conditions for this are met." (AfD, 2024: 123),
- "We want to legally prohibit the financing and operation of mosques and facilities in Germany by foreign states." (AfD, 2024: 123),

- “The chairs for Islamic theology at German universities should be abolished and the positions transferred to denomination-neutral Islamic studies.” (AfD, 2024:123),

- “The construction of minarets and the call to prayer by muezzins should be banned” (AfD, 2024: 124),

-“We also want to ban the wearing of burqas and niqabs in public spaces in Germany, as in France, Austria, Denmark, the Netherlands and Switzerland. In this context, the ban on face covering should also be implemented. We call for a ban on headscarves in public places and especially in schools, following the example of other European countries (AfD, 2024: 124).

“Muslim students should not be given special rights because of their faith, such as exemption from swimming and sports lessons. The AfD rejects the teachings of Islam” (AfD, 2024: 162).

The CDU, on the other hand, accepts the reality of Islam and Muslims in Germany, but states political goals to control this process (CDU, 2024: 28).

The party manifestos of the CDU and CSU contain political statements that refer directly to the rejection of mosques. However, based on the prejudice that Islam and Muslims could be prone to violence, it proposes a control mechanism (CDU, 2024: 5, 42).

The FDP, on the other hand, advocates fighting Islam and Muslims, which it stereotypes as Islamism, and taking preventive measures because Muslims associated with terror and radicalism pose a danger that could lead to a split in society (FDP, 2024: 25).

As can be seen, the party program addresses issues directly related to Islam and Muslims, such as the visibility of Islam in social life, the existence of Islamic institutions and education, using political language and formulating anti-Islamism as a political goal.

These statements do not reveal the political struggle with anti-Islamic/ Islamophobic language, but on the contrary, the effectiveness of political factors together with other practices in the production of Islamophobic language. Islamophobic attitudes and behaviors, which are manifested today in social, economic and political life as violent behaviors against Islam and Muslims, are legitimized in electoral processes, and political propaganda makes anti-Islamism a strategic goal.

## Discussion and Conclusion

Islamophobia/Muslimophobia, which is becoming more widespread in Western societies, takes on a more threatening dimension by assuming an institutional and strategic form, especially in times of crisis and political events involving political decision-makers and actors. In this study, we delved into the German federal elections of February 23, 2025 which represents a political, sociological, and communicative problem area. This study, which content-analyzed, digitized and conceptualized the party manifestos included in the sample and the parties' X social media accounts, and examined the resulting data in detail using the critical discourse method, arrived at the following data as a result of the research:

1) Political parties such as the AfD, the CDU, the CSU and the FDP in Germany use anti-Islamic/Muslim rhetoric in their election manifestos and on social media.

2) Islam and Muslims are stereotyped with negative terms and concepts such as terror, violence and radicalism and portrayed as a threat.

3) It is emphasized that political, economic and social measures should be taken against Islam and Muslims.

Based on these findings,

a) It can be established that the dominant Islamophobic language in the West has a political background/equivalent and that there is a narrative that sees Islam/Muslims as a security problem and targets them politically and interprets them as an area where action is needed,

b) The prevalent use of accusatory, discriminatory and exclusionary language and narratives directed against Islam/Muslims also show a continuity that feeds into social and political ideological tendencies/orientalist approaches,

c) Islamophobic attitudes and behavior, which now manifest themselves in violent acts against Islam and Muslims in social, economic and political life, are legitimized in electoral processes and anti-Islamism is made a strategic goal through political propaganda.

Moreover, despite the approaches of political parties directly targeting the visibility of Islam in social life (mosques, headscarves, etc.) and threatening fundamental rights, the findings obtained with the mixed method, the fact that no religion or member other than Islam and Muslims are targeted, and even the emphasis on fundamental democratic rights clearly reflect the extent of anti-Islam/Muslim, xenophobia and hate speech, and this situation shows that politicians in particular are causing serious damage to social harmony processes.

The media used by the parties as propaganda tools also legitimize Islamophobic rhetoric and lead to the spread of Islamophobic views. This situation leads to a normalization of Islamophobic tendencies in society and to the reinforcement of misunderstandings in the public sphere.

The findings reveal the threatening situation of political language in the production of Islamophobic language and show that;

- Anti-Islam and anti-Muslim and hate speech fueled by this opposition should be considered a crime,
- A political fight against anti-Islam and anti-Muslim is necessary;
- She points out that communication measures should be taken against the role of the media in creating Islamophobia,
- For Germany to maintain its democratic and multicultural structure, politicians and the media should use more inclusive and fair language and reconsider social harmony and immigration policies.

With this study, academic studies that focus on the political and strategic background of Islamophobia with different disciplines and how these political approaches create a

perception of Islam/Muslims will provide an academic approach to the solution points of the problem of Islamophobia, which has become a global problem.

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