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By Ariane Wolf and Elisabeth Hell



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Abstract

This publication is aimed at protagonists involved in the prevention of extremism and shows why sexist and anti-feminist ideologies are core elements of extremist ideologies and movements. Anti-feminist and sexist ideologies

- are based on ideas of the biological inequality of human beings (anti-egalitarianism) and legitimise relationships of superiority and subordination.
 They therefore obstruct democratic aspirations.
- are central to extremist groups in terms of strategy, organisation and content.
- are used as a basis for legitimising violence within and outside extremist groups.
- tie in with socially widespread sexist and anti-feminist ideologies and offer broad mobilisation potential.
- provide the legitimising basis for the exercise of violence on a spectrum ranging from devaluations and hostility to sexualised violence, terrorist attacks and femicides.

They are by no means less questionable and radicalising than other anti-egalitarian demonstrations of extremist ideologies. In the prevention of extremism, the task of which includes the prevention of violence as well as dealing with anti-democratic ideologies and aspirations, the confrontation with sexism and anti-feminism should consequently play a central role.

1. Introduction

Context: Anti-feminism, misogyny and extremist violence

The ideologies, motivations and radicalisation processes of violent extremists are more accessible than ever in the digital age. At the same time, however, recent studies on right-wing extremist and Islamist milieus, both online and offline, point to a common feature of various extremist scenes that has been little examined so far: their misogyny and anti-feminist attitudes. It is precisely this knowledge on (potential) target groups of extremism prevention that could contribute to a targeted improvement of prevention programmes.

Across phenomena, sexist ideologies and the rejection of a modernisation of gender relations are a central element of extremist worldviews and the basis for shared enemy images. They can become the most important ideological point of reference and subsequently an independent, closed worldview.

From Halle to Christchurch to Utøya: right-wing extremist assassins see feminism as a basic evil which they blame for the decline in birth rates and their unfulfilled sexual aspirations towards women. Even beyond traditional right-wing extremist milieus, they are often central to extremist ideologies and become the unifying feature of terrorist acts of violence. The misogynistic incel scene, short for involuntary celibate, which has attracted a lot of attention in recent years, is a misogynistic online subculture that has repeatedly spawned terrorist attacks in the past. "Start envisioning a world where WOMEN FEAR YOU," wrote the Isla Vista assassin, celebrated in the misogynistic incel scene, on the PUAHate incel forum a year before the misogynistic assassination (Glasstetter, 2014). He called for violence against women*, wanted to overthrow oppressive feminist systems (ibid.) and urged others to follow him. Regardless of whether the perpetrators position themselves as far-right, incel or neither of these: They refer to each other, build ideological bridges and quote each other. One example is the assassin from Halle, who unsuccessfully tried to enter a local synagogue on Yom Kippur with the aim of a massacre and shot two people in the vicinity. On the day of the attack, he played a song by the British musician Egg White, who presented a misogynistic, violence-glorifying homage to the incel attack in Toronto, in which the misogynist assassin used a van to kill eleven people and injure 15 others (cf. Genius n.d.).1

However, women* are not the only ones affected by anti-feminist and misogynistic violence. Such attacks and agitation are fundamentally directed against the *modernisation of gender relations* and therefore also affect the diverse representatives of a plurality-orientated gender order. Women's associations, feminist housing projects or structures, and members of the LGBTQI+* community have been, and continue to be, targets of attacks and violence (Rahner et al. 2020; Denkovski et al. 2021).

Two Islamist attacks were aimed directly against the queer ²community. In Dresden in 2020, for example, an Islamist assassin carried out a knife attack on a homosexual couple, in which one of the partners lost his life. In Orlando in 2016, an Islamist bomber killed 49 people and injured

The word **queer** serves as an umbrella term and positive self-designation for and by people whose identity does not fit into society's romantic, sexual and/or gender norms (Queer Lexicon: n.d.).

a further 53 at the Pulse nightclub, a well-known meeting place for the LGBTQI+ community that was particularly popular among the Latino* community (cf. Pitzke/Medick 2016). The assassin is revered in Salafi-jihadist online scenes as a hero of violent 'takfir' against the LGBTQI+ community (Ayad 2021: 29 et seq.). Here, liberal Muslims, the queer community and feminism are also targets of hatred and threats of violence as popular enemy images (ibid.).

Misogynistic and anti-feminist violence expresses itself on a spectrum both within and outside extremist scenes. Thus, influential politicians and activists are repeatedly subjected to public bullying and smear campaigns. Whether this is Anna-Lena Baerbock in the run-up to the Bundestag elections, or recently the spokesperson of the Green Youth, Sarah-Lee Heinrich - women* are often affected by targeted hate and disinformation campaigns (Baumgärtner/Höfner et al. 2021; Stokowski 2021). The nature of hatred and violence is also gender-specific: In addition to death threats, the countless hostilities against climate activist Greta Thunberg, for example, have also contained threats of rape and other sexualised violence (Brodning 2019).

Too little light is shed on the role of sexism and misogyny in relation to violence and extremism. A cross-national study of the Asian and North African region by Jacqui True's research team shows that misogynistic attitudes and advocacy of violence against women* may be a more robust indicator of support for Islamist groups than categories such as age, social background,

^{1 &}quot;Steal an armoured truck, see a crowd, I'm speeding up" (Genius, n.d.)

² The word queer serves as an umbrella term and positive self-designation for and by people whose identity does not fit into society's romantic, sexual and/or gender norms (Queer Lexicon: n.d.).

gender and religiosity, which are otherwise so often highlighted in extremism research (Johnston / True et al. 2019). There are no comparable results for the European region.



Beyond terrorist violence, which gets a lot of attention in the media and in social debates, there is an existing foundation of anti-feminist and sexist ideologies that promotes hatred and violence against women*. This can be seen, for example, in the figures on relationship violence: according to crime statistics in Germany in 2020, 139 women were killed by their current or former partners (Bundeskriminalamt [German Federal Criminal Office 2021: 5). During the ongoing extreme situation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, crime statistics have recorded a general increase in relationship violence in Germany of 4.9 per cent, with the majority of violent acts continuing to be committed by men (cf. ibid.). Apart from the high number of unreported cases, the statistics have another weakness: they only identify relationship violence among men and women. Violence against trans and non-binary persons, i.e. persons who do not clearly assign themselves to the male or female gender, remains unrecognised in this context. However, the Trans Murder Monitoring project has been collecting data on trans homicides worldwide since 2008 and states that 375 trans people were killed between September 2020 and October 2021, with the number of unreported cases considered to be very high.

The majority of those killed were trans women; within Europe, 43 per cent of them were migrants (Trans Gender Europe e. V. 2021: n.p.).

This already shows that different forms of group-related devaluation and violence often occur together, and that forms of discrimination and violence overlap and reinforce each other. In particular, racist, anti-Muslim, anti-Semitic, anti-queer, anti-disability or traditional forms of devaluation always play a role in the target groups of attacks - this is no coincidence, but the logical consequence of a worldview based on inequality.

Sexism as a fundamental form of anti-egalitarian thinking

To interpret acts of misogyny and anti-feminist violence merely as acts by individual men who are either mentally ill or have an individual "problem with women*" falls far short of the mark. Instead, it seems sensible to understand them in the broader context of the inequality ideologies of extremist groups: The division into "us" and "them" and the devaluation of the other side play a central role in any form of extremism because it is based on anti-egalitarian ways of thinking. Sexism is probably the earliest learned form of inequality. It has far-reaching, everyday implications for every member of society. The resulting inequality is often naturalised - understood as natural and therefore compelling and unchangeable.

Especially in the context of the central role of inequality ideologies for extremist groups, sexism and the associated devaluations therefore appear to be of great interest. However, they are still overlooked and underestimated. Sexism and anti-feminism are still not considered as markers of extremism in Germany. This is handled differently internationally. Canada, for example, understands incel ideologies as part of violent extremism and condemns incel attacks as ideologically motivated terrorist crimes. However, the common understanding of extremism in this country usually focuses on other ideologies of inequality. For example, the traditional understanding of right-wing extremism contains at its core the elements of racism, anti-Semitism and xenophobia, in combination with authoritarian-nationalist, Völkisch attitudes, but not anti-feminism (Höcker/Pickler/Decker 2020: 249). However, the examples shown illustrate that, even though sexism and anti-feminism are expressed differently in the various groups, there are nevertheless similarities in content, ideological connections and therefore a cross-phenomenal relevance for handling this issue.

The research area of "gender and extremism" is comparatively young; the examination of the phenomenon of anti-feminism even more recent. Due to the structural and content-related proximity to right-wing extremism, there is a growing body of literature on the topic of anti-feminism that also draws on nuanced gender-reflective right-wing extremism research. Comparable depth, however, is not yet to be found in the field of religion-based extremism. The existing literature on Islamist extremism is mainly concerned with role models, and less with the ideological implications of sexism and misogyny. Also, most of it is strongly focused on the so-called "Islamic State". There is also a lack of knowledge transfer into pedagogical practice in this subject area.

Structure

This edition of the publication series gives a practice-orientated overview of the phenomenon of anti-feminism and relates it to the field of work of preventing extremism. It takes the existing literature in the field of right-wing extremism as a starting point for an introduction to the current state of knowledge and sheds light on how anti-feminism is related to right-wing and far-right mobilisation and radicalisation. Subsequently, this state of knowledge is connected with a cross-phenomenal perspective, and the significance of anti-feminist ideologies in extremist groups is explained. Here, particular attention is paid to their functions and common patterns, as well as their potential for violence. The relationship between misogynistic violence and terrorism is shown across phenomena. Finally, gaps are identified and options for action as well as starting points for the practice of extremism prevention are elaborated.

2. Terms

Basically, it can be said that anti-feminism, sexism and misogyny are closely connected, mutually reinforcing and conditional. Nevertheless, it makes sense to separate the terms in order to understand their respective manifestations and functions. Since there are different definitions of the terms, it is particularly important for us here to make these usable for practical extremism prevention. In the following, the central concepts of sexism, misogyny, anti-feminism and anti-genderism are outlined and related to each other from this perspective.

Sexism

In the everyday understanding of the term, sexism refers to the discrimination or devaluation of a person on the basis of their gender. In the following, however, we understand the term sexism, with recourse to the social philosopher Kate Manne, rather as a form of ideology that "justifies and rationalises relationships of superiority and subordination between men and women within a patriarchal gender order" (Manne 2020, 59; cf. also 144). Sexist ideology thus generates ideas and images that are geared towards the preservation of traditional role models. At the core of sexist ideologies are references to natural (because biological) differences between the sexes, which in particular legitimise the claim to the superiority of men and the directly associated "ideal" behavioural demands for both sexes (Höcker/Pickler/Decker 2020: 277).

Misogyny

The term misogyny is usually understood as hostility towards women (Schmincke 2018: 29) and interpreted as a person's fundamental, often pathologised hatred of *all* women*. This non-specific understanding of misogyny is used as an explanation for the interpretation of crimes or terrorist attacks, for example.

Such an understanding of misogyny as all-encompassing hatred against women is hardly suitable for the prevention of extremism. Because even among assassins who despise women, most know some female persons in their social environment whom they perceive as positive, appreciate or, in their understanding, even love. However, this does not in any way prevent the devaluation of other women and women* as a group. Moreover, a kind of pathological hatred is used here as an explanation, about the existence of which, in the end, hardly anyone can give informed details - except perhaps the perpetrator themselves.

Manne (2020) explains the phenomenon as follows: Traditional women's roles, for example, include the expectation to care for and look after others. These are generally not hateful traits, which is why we will rarely find a universal hatred of all females.

According to Kate Manne, an understanding of misogyny as a social system of hostile emotions and aggressive social practices seems to make more sense (Manne 2020): 59, 78). These are guided by sexist ideologies and secure certain female role models by rewarding their compliance and punishing deviations (ibid.: 48). Manne's concept of misogyny makes it possible to understand misogyny as a central manifestation of patriarchal ideology, rather than as a relatively marginal and apolitical phenomenon (ibid.: 59).

Accordingly, misogyny affects different women* in different ways: In particular, when women* or persons identifying as female do not fulfil their expectations as normatively "typically" female, for example when they overstep the boundaries of "their" role or enter into competition with roles and activities understood as male, they are confronted with negative consequences. Although the effects of misogyny manifest themselves in different ways, e.g. in the form of insults, shaming, bullying, discrimination up to assaults and (sexualised) violence, the reasons for the attacks lie in belonging to the group of women* and the non-compliance with the gender norms associated with it.

Misogyny is thus not an indiscriminate hatred of women*, but a functional practice. It serves to maintain gender hierarchies by enforcing male privileges and positions of power (in everyday life), thereby securing the prevailing gender order (Manne 2020: 57). Sexist ways of thinking and misogynist practices can also originate from women themselves, a fact that is also particularly relevant with regard to the preservation and implementation of extremist worldviews.

Intersectionality

Ideologies of inequality not only co-exist but also intersect, i.e. they overlap. As a consequence, people who belong to different (marginalised) social groups are also affected by several forms of discrimination at the same time. Anti-feminist hostilities and violence particularly affect the communities and organisations of non-heterosexual, trans and intersex people as well as Jewish, Muslim, migrant and black women* and women* of colour (Höcker/Pickler/ Decker2020: 253; Manne 2020). This fact can be analytically recorded using the concept of so-called intersectionality. The term goes back to Kimberlé Crenshaw and refers to the interlocking of simultaneously operating forms of oppression and discrimination (Gutiérrez Rodríguez 2012: 81; Bittner 2011: 12).

Anti-feminism

In contrast to misogyny, anti-feminism refers to a stronger political-ideological positioning (Höcker/Pickler/Decker 2020: 270). "Anti-feminism often occurs in an organisational form and has a collective effect" (Blum 2019: 115), and subsequently has strategic functions in addition to ideological and substantive ones.

While misogyny can be traced back to antiquity, anti-feminism is a direct countermovement to emancipatory aspirations (Schmincke 2018; Planert 1998). For this reason, the first mobilisations against the demands for women's rights are often located in the 19th century, as the women's rights movement first used the self-designation feminist in the 1880s. In short: "Anti-feminism has existed ever since feminism existed" (Schmincke 2018: 32). Not all protagonists who support sexist role models are automatically anti-feminist, but anti-feminist narratives are based on strongly conservative and dogmatic ideas of gender (Höcker/Pickler/Decker 2020: 268 et seq.).

Anti-genderism

To this day, anti-feminists usually argue with the necessity of (re-)establishing the supposedly "natural", heterosexual gender order, with biological, religious or Völkisch justifications, depending on the context. We are currently observing a shift in anti-feminist debates towards so-called "anti-genderism" (Schmincke 2018; Blum 2019). Anti-gender protagonists do not explicitly oppose feminism, but rather argue that equality between men and women has already been achieved and that feminism is therefore obsolete (Blum 2019: 42). The struggles of this trend are directed against the concept of *gender*, i.e. the idea that, in addition to biological gender, there is also a socially constructed gender with all the measures and changes associated with it. The diversity of gender identities, such as the recognition of trans identities, and their legal equality as well as active protection against discrimination, are rejected.

3. Debates

Anti-feminism as a code

"Anti-feminism is closely related to other ideologies of inequality, such as racism, homophobia, transphobia and anti-Semitism. Therefore, anti-feminism is also gaining strength at a time in which ideologies of inequality are also booming."

(Blum 2019: 115)

Sexism is undoubtedly related to anti-feminism. Thus, sexist attitudes often form the frame of reference and the precondition for misogynistic as well as "anti-feminist actions" and find expression in them (Schmincke 2018: 29). However, there are some important differences between the two phenomena that have strong relevance for their understanding in relation to extremist phenomena.

Anti-feminism, both then as now, functions as an anti-modern and anti-democratic code and is thus also political-ideological positioning. Anti-feminism is not only directed against feminist concerns, but also transports political messages that are linked to them, often indirectly or covertly as a code. Historian Ute Planert has traced the emergence and development of anti-feminist movements back to the German Empire. Even at that time, anti-feminism was already an institutionalised opposition to the emancipation demands of the first women's movement (Planert 1998: 12 et seq.). Described as the "bourgeois discomfort with modernity" (Planert 1998, quoted in Henninger et al. 2021: 13), codes of content and overlaps in content are already evident in the years of its creation, such as the rejection of modernisation processes and the return to supposedly better times.

Then as now, this unease is fundamentally embedded in an anti-modern zeitgeist and cultural pessimism that opposes progress and longs for undisturbed romance and one's homeland. The basic idea of the Völkisch movement, the supposed longing for a "natural" and "harmonious" original state - for peace, tranquillity and homeland - which was endangered by civilisation, culture and modernity, became very popular at the end of the 19th century (Schutzbach 2016: 583).

Both currently and historically, there is also a clear proximity to anti-Semitism in terms of content. Anti-feminist narratives not infrequently contain overt anti-Semitism or anti-Semitic codes (Blum 2019: 115). Anti-Semitism functioned as a cultural code which, through the rejection of the emancipation of Jews, also stood for the general rejection of modernity and democracy - one of the driving forces behind the rise of anti-Semitism in the 19th century (Volkov 1990/2000). At the same time, or even in connection with this, anti-feminist efforts were also gaining strength. The emancipation efforts of women were fought and, together with the emancipation of Jews, were held responsible for an alleged decline in values. (Schutzbach 2016: 583).

Women* and Jews became representative of the hated democratic institutions (ibid.). The interweaving of anti-Semitism and anti-feminism was then, as it is today, connected with the construction of a German-national, defensive masculinity which had to be protected from being softened by emancipation efforts in order to prevent a weakening of the nation (ibid.: 584).

Narratives that were hostile to women* and Jews were condensed to the point of the myth that "the Jews" had invented women's emancipation in order to destroy the German nation. (Fedders 2018: 225). This conspiracy myth is reflected today in the narrative of the "Great Replacement", a widespread conspiracy narrative of the so-called New Right. This goes back to the book "Revolt against the Great Replacement" by Renaud Camus, a German translation of which was published by the neo-right Antaios publishing company. References to this conspiracy myth can be found in the context of various right-wing extremist attacks in recent years. "The Great Replacement", for example, was the title of the "manifesto" circulated on the internet by the assassin who attacked two Muslim institutions in Christchurch, murdering 51 people.

The function of anti-feminism as a code, especially in its significance for the extreme right, is already clear at this point. Similar discourse figures can be found in current manifestations of anti-feminism, e.g. the conjuring up of threat and doom scenarios due to an alleged decline in values and the associated construction of "lightning rod enemies" (Schutzbach 2016: 584) or identifying "culprits" for complex political and social problems in tense phases of social change. This is often accompanied by the activation of "new" enemy images based on old devaluations, such as the "gay lobby", the "lying press" or the "refugees". Here, anti-feminist narratives and images are connected with anti-Semitic, racist, conspiracy ideological and anti-democratic ones.

Anti-feminism in transition

"Anti-feminism is changing in its manifestations and is subject to changes in contemporary history. Currently, shifts from traditional anti-feminism to so-called 'anti-genderism' can be observed."

Many of feminism's historic successes are now the subject of broad social consensus. Unlike at the start of feminist movements, for example, many successes of formal and legal equality, such as universal suffrage or the possibility of opening one's own bank account, are no longer a core issue of anti-feminist mobilisation and are not fundamentally questioned in most social circles. In relation to these successes and the current issues of feminist aspirations, anti-feminist ways of thinking are also changing their manifestations and points of attack.

Main fields of anti-gender mobilisation

Attacks on sexual and gender diversity

The lived plurality of gender and sexual identities and lifestyles is treated as a massive and fundamental threat by anti-gender protagonists. They suspect there is a danger of "homosexualisation" of society and stylise sexual and gender diversity as a threat to the existence of the heterosexual, ethnically understood "white German" nuclear family or a religiously or fundamentally defined community. Traditional gender-related parental roles, such as the connection between being a woman and motherhood and between family and heterosexuality, are central to this debate and are naturalised, i.e. seen as the only and above all "natural" course of events. This happens, among other things, in strategically conducted child welfare debates (Henninger et al. 2021: 9). Here, for example, same-sex parenthood is defamed across the board as a danger to the welfare of children, and the threat scenario of the supposed abolition of the heteronormative nuclear family is conjured up. Furthermore, the promotion of children's rights is stylised as an alternative and a threat to parental rights (cf. Infobox "Demo for all" p. XX; LSVD [German Lesbian & Gay Federation], n.d.). Sebastian Scheele describes this phenomenon using the term "familialism" or family-centred anti-feminism (Scheele 2016: 5).

As in anti-feminist logics as a whole, anti-gender protagonists also assume a rigid two-gender order. This means that they also mobilise against people who question traditional gender boundaries in various ways, such as trans people and people who do not position themselves within the two-gender order. Mobilisation and aggression by anti-gender protagonists are specifically directed against members of the LGBTQI+ community and its organisational structures (Denkovski et al. 2020).



2. Attacks on gender research

Gender research, also called "gender studies", is discredited as "unscientific" and "ideological". This is based on an understanding of science that defines the existing reality, in this case the binary (two-gender) order of the sexes, as nature in itself and deduces from this that this is unchangeable (ibid.: 589). This also rejects the notion, which was explained at the beginning of this article and which is documented by various scientific disciplines and is central to gender studies, that in addition to biological gender (sex), there is also a socially constructed gender (gender) that changes over time and across social, political and cultural contexts.

As such, gender studies are in direct contradiction to any attempt to maintain social inequality via a "renaturalisation" of the gender order and are therefore becoming the preferred target of anti-gender attacks. Within this logic, science should only confirm and not challenge our everyday and empirical knowledge of the category of gender. Gender studies, on the other hand, is a particularly critical academic discipline that questions conventional understandings of rationality, objectivity and gender and always connects this with a perspective that is critical of authoritarianism (ibid.).

3. Rejection of "gender mainstreaming*"

The term gender mainstreaming refers to equality-orientated measures that are intended to identify gender-specific differences and counteract inequalities within policies, institutions and social processes. The aim is to take into account the gender-specific life situations and interests of people in decisions and measures at all levels.

Protagonists of the anti-gender movement defame the concept of "gender mainstreaming" as programmatic and ideological egalitarianism. In the process, the biological differences between men and women are invoked, which need to be protected from "genderism" and its "state re-education programme". "Gender mainstreaming" measures are seen as being "dictated from above". The focus of the attacks

here is on gender-sensitive language, which is rejected as unnecessary and above all as ideological (Schutzbach 2016: 586).

Rhetorical strategies

In all three lines of argumentation, anti-feminist protagonists present themselves as freedom fighters and tie in with anti-elitist, often anti-Semitically coded discourses. Measures that actively promote equal participation in society are being targeted.

The central rhetorical strategy contains a deliberate distortion or inversion of the facts: Those who advocate more inclusive equality - academics, journalists, politicians and activists - are discredited as ideological and authoritarian, often via accusations of excessive *political correctness* ("you can't say anything anymore"). What is lost from view as part of the strategy: the victims of anti-gender violence are the ones who suffer from discrimination, hate and violence, not the perpetrators. Nevertheless, anti-feminist and anti-gender protagonists style themselves as victims of elitist, "politically correct" dogma "from above". Equality-orientated politicians are seen as an acute threat in this worldview.

The theme of danger for one's own group and the *reversal of* perpetrator and victim can also be found in the radicalisation and recruitment processes of extremist groups, as it is precisely these threat narratives that play a central role in mobilisation.

Connectivity to "mainstream society"

Within the German context, Höcker, Pickler and Decker examined the prevalence of anti-feminism for the first time in 2020 as part of the Leipzig Authoritarianism Study and found that anti-feminism is "a relevant social problem at an attitudinal level". (Höcker/Pickler/Decker 2020: 263). Every fourth man* and every tenth woman* in Germany even has a closed anti-feminist worldview (ibid.: 264). Such a closed worldview is present in research when respondents predominantly agree with anti-feminist and sexist statements and at the same time reject pro-feminist or discrimination-critical statements. Respondents then agree, for example, with statements such as "social harmony and order are disturbed by feminism" (likewise anti-feminism) and "I find women who decide not to have a family and children selfish" (likewise sexism), while they disagree with the statement "discrimination against women is still a problem in Germany" (item pro-feminism).

The strengthening of anti-feminism finds concrete expression in the organisation of anti-feminist structures, initiatives and actions at the level of civil society. At the level of party politics, the AfD in particular has repeatedly targeted the mobilising power of anti-feminist gender politics and firmly anchored the protection of the natural gender order as well as the traditional family in its election manifesto for the 2021 Bundestag elections (cf. Alternative für Deutschland [Alternative for Germany] 2021).

The spread of anti-feminist and anti-gender attitudes thus enables a broad connectivity across different protagonists of the democratic and non-democratic spectrum. In this respect, they are used strategically by extremist protagonists, as they enable them to close ranks with conservative circles in many areas, both thematically and organisationally. Surprising alliances are forming here between neoliberal and conservative forces, new-right and right-wing nationalist men's rights movements, through to religious fundamentalist circles that cross "social and political milieu boundaries". (Lang/Fritsche 2018: 335; cf. Höcker/Pickler/Decker 2020: 256; Kaiser 2020: 163 et seg.).

This is also shown, for example, by the history of anti-genderism: The term "gender ideology" goes back to the environment of the Vatican in the 2000s and is particularly opposed to any deviation from binary, i.e. two-gender (man/women) concepts of gender (Kaiser 2020: 160). The term and its accompanying narratives were adopted and disseminated by conservative protagonists in the feature article and were thus central to the development and dissemination of anti-gender content in the mainstream. For example, in 2006 the Frankfurter Allgemeine Sunday newspaper defamed gender mainstreaming as "political gender reassignment" (Zastrow 2006: n.p.), from which the first wave of mobilisation and follow-up articles could be observed (cf. Lang/Peters in Schmincke 2018; Blum 2019).

Both anti-feminism and anti-genderism occur in an organised way and across national borders. Due to numerous different initiatives and protagonists, there is no "central contact point", no uniform group structure, but an increasingly (internationally) networked and financially endowed network of organised, like-minded people (cf. CFFP 2021). This is the conclusion of a recent study by the Centre for Feminist Foreign Policy (CFFP), which investigated the anti-gender movement and its protagonists beyond the existing literature by means of primary interviews with international feminist activists and those affected,

including tracing donations to the anti-gender movements. (Denkovski et al. 2021). The CFFP warns against underestimating these well-organised networks and highlights the serious threats to LGBTQI+ activists and feminist structures. In Germany, too, there are repeated attacks on feminist housing projects, LGBTQI+ structures and women's* associations (cf. Rahner et al. 2020).

The unusually broad alliance of protagonists and the international frame of reference of anti-feminist and anti-gender mobilisations are presented here using three relevant alliances in Germany as examples: Demo für Alle [Demo for Everyone], Besorgte Eltern [Concerned Parents] and Lebensschutzbewegung [Pro-Life Movement] (see text box). These examples show central themes of anti-feminist mobilisation, such as family policy, adoption and marriage law, reproductive rights of women*, active protection against discrimination and minorities, and gender-sensitive language. Furthermore, the strong overlap of conservative, right-wing and extreme right-wing protagonists in this area is revealed.



Examples: Fighting terms, campaigns, protagonists

Demo für Alle [Demo for All] is an action group which called for demonstrations in various German cities in 2016 to protest against the education plan in Baden-Württemberg. The alliance followed the example of the ultra-conservative Manif pour tous[Demonstration for all] movement, which mobilised hundreds of thousands of demonstrators against gay marriage in France in 2013. The group is still active today and makes the following demand on its homepage: "Any active indoctrination of children in the sense of gender mainstreaming, e.g. by questioning natural gender and family images, must be stopped!" (Beverforde, Hedwig von/Ehe-Familie-Leben [Marriage-Family-Life] e. V. 2020: n.p.). Furthermore, they demand that, "for the protection of children, teaching content that is shameful or injurious to personality in word, image or sound should be avoided". The group uses its website, among other things, to publish brochures such as "Families on the brink - causes and ways out", in which the foreword warns against the large-scale attack against the family and aims to expose the strategies of the Left behind this. Homophobic and transphobic images are deliberately reproduced and placed within the context of child welfare. Demo für Alle was initiated by rightwing conservative protagonists and is partly supported by right-wing extremist groups. Its organisers included, for example, AfD politician Beatrix von Storch, arch-conservative Catholic activist Baroness Hedwig von Beverfoerde and extreme conservative publicist Birgit Kelle.

Besorgte Eltern [Considerate Parents] is another relevant alliance in Germany that mobilises around the topic of family protection and child protection.. For example, the alliance publishes its own information brochures in which it openly warns against the alleged trans and homosexual lobby. Under headings such as "Transgender hype: attack & defence: attacks and dangers caused by the transgender movement" (Beverfoerde/Initiative Elternaktion [Parents' Action] 2021: n.p.) as well as "Sex education in schools and day-care centres: aims, methods and dangers of the 'sexual pedagogy of diversity' (ibid.) and how you can protect your child from it" (Parents' Action), the motives

of orchestrating danger and networking to anti-elitist discourses as described above are clearly shown. Concerned parents are encouraged to explain to their children "... that there are only 2 genders and that there are false ideas circulating in society at the moment. Use appropriate language, don't gender, immunise your child. Do not adopt terms used by the gender lobby" (ibid.: 24 et seq.). The message is clear: Trans and homosexual lifestyles are consistently rejected and educational policy measures to promote acceptance of LGBTQI+ lifestyles are defamed as early sexualisation and endangering the welfare of children. This is how fear scenarios are conjured up: the fear of re-education and (early) sexualisation of children spreads hostility towards trans and homosexual people. In view of real social power relations, i.e. the continuing everyday discrimination, threats and violence against LGBTQI+ communities, the already described perpetrator-victim reversal is shown here as applied rhetorical strategy.

Lebensschutz [Pro-Life], on the other hand, is a broad alliance that unites religious, conservative circles with right-wing nationalist protagonists. Discursively, organisationally and also personally, protagonists from Besorgte Eltern overlap with the Lebensschutz movement.. The initiative promotes a petition against the right to abortion on its homepage. The umbrella organisation Lebensrecht [Right to Life] organises the annual March for Life in Berlin, where Christian, rightwing conservative and right-wing extremist people demonstrate publicly against abortion. Even though the March for Life in Berlin seems relatively small and therefore less significant compared to the Pro-Life movement in the USA, a look at the protagonists involved is revealing. The event is not only supported by the protagonists already mentioned, such as Beverfoerde, Kelle and others, but also officially by the German Bishops' Conference of the Catholic Church. (Kluge 2017). The March for Life event is always accompanied by a number of other actions and campaigns that cover broader anti-feminist issues (ibid.) The Lebensschutz movement aims to (once again) restrict women's* rights to self-determination. These attempts are therefore worrying because women's reproductive rights to self-determination in Germany are also currently only valid to a limited extent. For example, abortions are legally regulated in Germany by Paragraph 218. An abortion is, legally speaking, still illegal and remains exempt from punishment only under certain conditions. Recent developments in Poland and Texas (USA) show that political attacks of this kind can also result in a considerable restriction of women's* rights to self-determination. Here, new legal regulations came into force in 2021 that extremely minimise the possibility of legal abortions.

In terms of personnel and content, Besorgte Eltern and Elternaktion overlap with the Initiative Familienschutz [Family Protection Initiative] and the Demo für Alle and the Lebensschutz movement. Behind the individual action alliances, each with their own websites, brochures and actions, there is a close-knit network of political protagonists from the right-wing conservative spectrum who seek to connect with various social and political milieus via anti-feminist issues.

4. Anti-feminism, misogyny and extremism

Anti-feminism and right-wing extremism

The anti-feminist alliances and campaigns described above give cause for concern both in terms of content and the spectrum of protagonists involved. In particular, with regard to the prevention of extremism, it is important to look at the historical and ideological entanglements of right-wing extremism and anti-feminism to be able to grasp their content-related references.

Feminism, understood as a movement that opposes relationships of domination and the unequal distribution of power within a patriarchal society, is fundamentally opposed to the political goals of the extreme right. As early as 1930, the Nazi theorist Alfred Rosenberg called for the "emancipation of women from women's emancipation" (Rosenberg 1930, p. 264, quoted from Bitzan 2016: 257). Anti-feminism is an integral part of right-wing extremist ideology because it protects the idea of the Volksgemeinschaft [national community] and thus the immediate nucleus of right-wing extremist ideology (Laumann 2014: 21; Lehnert 2010: 90).

Gender is seen here as a biological fact. The two biological sexes, men and women, are assigned different roles and tasks (Leh-

nert 2010: 91). The prevailing ideal of the German woman relates to bearing and bringing up German offspring as well as more general caring tasks relating to the "Fatherland". Under National Socialism, German women were stylised as guardians of the German race (ibid.: 95). Images of masculinity in right-wing extremism are still based on qualities such as militancy, discipline, courage and toughness today (Laumann 2014).

"From the point of view of right-wing extremist protagonists, feminist politics undermines the heterosexual family model and the declared logics of entitlement towards women* that is necessary for the preservation of the people, in the right-wing extremist sense."

(Bitzan 2016: 356).

Punishment of transgressions of norms, i.e. deviation from the intended gender-specific role and behaviour patterns within this rigid gender order, are historically documented in National Socialism. The tentative softening of the rigid gender order in the Weimar Republic was vehemently opposed by the National Socialists. During National Socialism, violations of norms by girls* and women* could sometimes have drastic consequences such as forced sterilisation or internment in camps (Lehnert 2010: 94). Girls* were criminalised and imprisoned as "antisocial" as part of the "preventative fight against crime". For example, apart from political opponents who were accused of sabotage and resistance, unmarried and/or single women* were also at risk under the accusation of "sexual neglect". This was grounds for imprisonment that existed only for girls* and women*. This is evidenced in detail, among other things, in the documentation and research on the youth concentration camp for girls* and women* in the Uckermark region (Limbächer/Merten 2005). Referring back to Manne's concept of misogyny (see Terms), the repression of non-conforming girls* and women* under National Socialism should be understood as a particularly radical and violent misogynist practice.

Anti-feminism and right-wing extremism today

Both historically and currently, anti-feminist enemy images often express themselves in a *racialised* form. A classic example is the image of the "abusive foreigner" who is a threat to "German women" and the associated need to protect German *white* women from migrant men (cf. Radvan et al. 2016). This theme sometimes also appears in the form of positive references to

feminism: Western culture, in which equality between men and women has already been achieved, is then presented as being threatened from outside. In this way, demands for a rigid and partly militarised immigration and border policy are justified.

In November 2015, for example, Björn Höcke, the state and parliamentary party leader of the AfD in Thuringia, appeared at the *Institute for State Policy (IfS)*. The IfS is an organisational and action platform for the educational work of the New Right, which is now classified as a right-wing extremist organisation by the Office for the Protection of the Constitution. In his lecture, Höcke prophesied for the future of Germany: "It will become more masculine, but unfortunately it will not remain very German". (Höcke in Stokowski 2015). He evokes the threat of abusive strangers and uses classic right-wing extremist imagery: The German woman, who is always *white*, is deliberately stylised as a victim; she has to seek protection from the white German man.



Attempts to instrumentalise feminist issues for right-wing extremist campaigns, such as the moderately successful "120 Decibels" campaign of the so-called *Identitarian movement*, tie in with these images. In short, very emotional clips, women are called upon to defend themselves against sexualised violence, with the impression being deliberately conveyed that this comes exclusively from refugee migrant men (Kulaçatan 2021: 53). This attempt to establish a feminism from the right is an example of how right-wing extremist protagonists selectively and strategically only ever refer positively to women's rights "... when this allows them to assert their superiority over pre-modern, culturally backward immigrant groups" (Schmincke 2018: 33).

Therefore, it is no coincidence that the spread of anti-feminist content and networks goes hand in hand with the strengthening of the extreme right. Sexist ideology, according to Manne, supports patriarchal gender relations and thus also the internal order of the right-wing extremist Volksgemeinschaft. It establishes the principle of superiority and subordination between men and women as a natural necessity. Anti-feminism and misogyny on the part of the extreme right are a logical ideological consequence of this. Furthermore, the mobilisation potential for the extreme right is so high here because anti-feminist attitudes often occur in combination with other forms of group-related devaluations (see chapter *Cross-phenomenal relevance of anti-feminism*).

This is also reflected at the attitude level. The Authoritarianism Study 2020 identified a strong statistical correlation between the overall scale of right-wing extremism and approval of anti-feminist attitudes (Höcker/Pickler/Decker 2020: 275). Even if the causality of the statistical correlations has not yet been fully explained, the results indicate "that [...] turning to rightwing groups and the development of right-wing extremist attitudes is preceded at least by a certain openness to anti-feminist stances" (ibid.: 276). It is also interesting with regard to the prevention of extremism and the development of pedagogical concepts that men are apparently "more susceptible" to anti-feminist attitudes (ibid: 269). Alongside the gender factor, anti-feminism correlates second most strongly with a social dominance orientation. This means that these characteristics often occur together in a person who has a strong social dominance orientation or is male and therefore more likely to also be anti-feminist. Those who suffer from fears of threat and are worried about losing their own position and dominance are apparently also more susceptible to anti-feminist resentment (ibid.). As has been shown, anti-feminist campaigns work specifically with fear and threat scenarios. Masculinist, right-wing nationalist anti-feminism even specifically targets men with fears of social decline and threat. Anti-feminism is suitable for translating individual fears of decline or concrete experiences of precarity, especially of men, into a political stance (Wimbauer/Motafek/Teschlade 2016).

Digression: Masculism, manosphere and misogynous incels

The term *manosphere* refers to a misogynistic (digital) subculture that propagates hatred and violence against women* in its forums (Kracher et al. 2021; Kaiser 2020). The origins of this so-called *manosphere* lie in the men's rights movement,

which has seen itself as a counter-movement to feminism since the 1980s and is becoming increasingly radicalised. The widespread belief here that men are systematically disadvantaged by feminism is often referred to as masculism . Masculism emphasises supposed evolutionary biological differences between the sexes and derives a supposed natural right to male superiority from an idealisation of stereotypical images of masculinity, such as strength and dominance. This understanding of masculinity is glorified in the online forums of the manosphere as alpha masculinity and associated with the right to receive attention, affection, care and sexual availability from women*. Women*, on the other hand, are devalued as evil, manipulative and libidinal, and feminists in particular are demonised. In the meantime, various online communities have emerged that relate to misogynist beliefs and masculism. For example, men's rights separatists such as the Men Going Their Own Way (MGTOW) group, the so-called Pick-Up Artists (PUA) and the incel community have become well-known. The communities relate to masculism differently and differ from each other in their radicalism and individual advocacy of violence (Kaiser 2020: 35).

For the German-speaking area, the masculinist Wikipedia imitation WikiMANNIA, for example, provides quick access to supposed facts which claim to debunk the "feminist victim and hate ideology". To this end, "feminism-free knowledge" is collected and shared among men here. This already shows how anti-feminist narratives are connected with racist ones: Women* or feminists, for example, are literally accused of opening borders for senseless repopulation. (WikiMANNIA 2021: n.p.).

The ideological basis of the *manosphere* is formed by sexist ideologies, the belief in the biological inequality between men and women* and a male claim to dominance derived from this. As a reaction to feminist successes and related individual disappointments, the protagonists of the *manosphere* call for various forms of misogynist violence against women*, or at least glorify it.

The "Evolution of the Manosphere across the Web" study from 2020 shows that the number of digital forums in the *manosphere* has also increased internationally and their content has intensified. In addition, through the evaluation of user movements, it has been possible to understand that users migrate from more moderate forums to more radical ones (Ribeiro/

Blackburn 2020). In the USA, protagonists from the Pick-Up Artist scene radicalised themselves through their anti-feminist men's rights activism to the "alt-right" movement. The Pick-Up Artist scene in the USA is seen as one of the driving forces of the alt-right in terms of the online radicalisation of white men (Mohutsiwa 2016). These findings fit together with various analyses that show the intersections of anti-feminist men's rights activism with right-wing nationalist ideas. The assumption that men are being "rendered effeminate" and disadvantaged by feminism ties in with right-wing nationalist narratives. Those who share a sexist ideology, reject equality for women* and consider feminism a (Jewish) conspiracy are prone to taking further radical stances against the socially marginalised and vulnerable minorities. Compared to the American Pick-Up Artist scene, the German scene has so far been less openly racist and more heavily moderated (Schutzbach 2017). However, the scene has also become strongly politicised here. Therefore, the fear is obvious "that the scene and its ideologies can also be an entry point into more radical positions for young men in this country" (ibid).

The misogynist incel scene mentioned at the beginning also illustrates the danger posed by sexist and misogynist ideologies. While *incel* is simply short for "involuntary celibate", the online scene has become radicalised since its emergence in the 1990s and has come a long way from its original idea of forming a support network for involuntary celibates. Within this newer, often violence-glorifying and -advocating misogynist incel scene, hatred of women and feminists is connected to the victimisation of men, their own subcultural online culture and aesthetics, and language. The proclamation of a biologically and socially determined hopelessness sometimes condenses into a closed anti-feminist worldview. International terrorist attacks are attributed to the scene, such as the terrorist attacks in Isla Vista and Toronto mentioned above (cf. Moonshot 2021, Kracher 2020).

Cross-phenomenal relevance of anti-feminism

Overview

The previous explanations have explained the phenomena of anti-feminism, misogyny and sexism as well as their connections and shown their connections to right-wing extremist phenomena. Fundamental elements have already been highlighted:

- the organisational and political-ideological nature of anti-feminism and its implications for mobilisation;
- its social connectivity via sexist and anti-feminist attitudinal patterns;
- the multifaceted and fundamental role of sexism as an ideology of inequality and the link to other anti-egalitarian attitudes;
- the rhetorical strategies, such as the evocation of threat scenarios and the reversal of perpetrator and victim roles.

We shall now take up these themes and illuminate cross-phenomenal references and manifestations. The relevance to extremist phenomena is presented based on common content-related themes, functions and the strategic significance of misogyny and anti-feminism.

Forms of expression and commonalities in content

Bridge narratives

We know from radicalisation research that the complexity-reducing function of extremist ideologies that provide clear answers to complex questions can be particularly attractive in the identity formation processes of young people, but also in phases of life where there is upheaval or the search for answers (Pisoiu et al. 2020: 7). The associated irrefutable claim to truth can be observed above all with regard to gender-based discussions: "The radical groups claim interpretative sovereignty over how society should function and which forms of living together are legitimate and which must be fought by radical means; not least with regard to 'the' right family and 'the' right understanding of gender". (Meiering et al. 2018: n.p.).

Gender images and policies "affect" all members of a society both politically and privately. Role models and behavioural norms



associated with gender influence almost all aspects of our daily lives: the way we speak, the way we dress, the places we go to and the leisure activities we take up. Regardless of how these are lived out, whether we reject or endorse traditional images, they are present and accompany our decisions as well as our positioning and perception. From this point of view, it is not surprising that extremist protagonists also deal with these images and incorporate them into their worldviews (e.g. through gender and role images), recruitment strategies (as mentioned above in the example of right-wing extremism) and their mobilisation (e.g. through the issue of anti-genderism).

Cross-phenomenal analyses of extremist groups reveal surprising ideological and organisational commonalities, especially with regard to the function and existence of sexist and anti-feminist narratives. Using various buzzwords, researchers and practitioners repeatedly point out that extremist groups seem to share certain basic dislikes and ideological narratives, so-called *bridge narratives*. These bridge narratives of different radical groups often follow similar patterns and have unexpected overlaps (Meiering et al. 2018: n.p.).

In one of the few studies that looks at other religious fundamentalist tendencies (e.g. Christian fundamentalism, as well as

⁴ Meiering (2018: n.p.) summarises this: "The talk is of 'grand narratives of the extreme' (Jennifer Schellhöh et al.), 'cultural' or 'flexible codes' (Shulamith Volkov and Michael Kiefer), the 'glue' of illiberal movements (Paul Nolte), 'fragments of ideology' (Andreas Zick et al.) and of 'complementary narratives' or 'rhetorical allies' (Julia Ebner)."

fundamentalist Hindu and Sikh tendencies) alongside Islamist extremism and right-wing extremism, after their extensive review of the available literature, the researchers emphasise: "A shared characteristic across all the organisations addressed in the literature review is that they are anti-feminist. They hark back to a golden age of male entitlement and berate the emergence of the new social movements as if these disrupted a natural order of things" (Dhaliwal/ Kelly 2020: 29) - an analysis that is quite revealing in view of the results of the Leipzig Authoritarianism Study. For it has already been established here that anti-feminism is related to men's fears of loss of status and fear of losing their economic and social position (see chapter *Anti-feminism and right-wing extremism*).

Besides anti-feminism, other such bridge narratives include, for example, a divided anti-universalism, anti-modernism and anti-imperialism united by anti-Semitism and the dispositive of resistance. "The common denominator is their enemy images: modernity, universalism, the Jews, feminism". (Meiering et al. 2018: n.p.). In Islamist extremism, too, the interweaving of various anti-egalitarian ideologies and the function of anti-feminism as a vehicle for anti-Semitic codes is once again evident (cf. ibid.). These common enemy images and devaluations assume different forms in the different groups, but are similar in content as well as in their functioning and logic. At an organisational level, they enable surprising coalitions and unexpected alliances (ibid.).

Extremist protagonists from different phenomena areas use similar patterns of argumentation - sometimes the protagonists even refer to each other positively. Under the name "Islamogram", Salafist-jihadist pages on the social media platforms Instagram, Facebook and the Telegram messenger service explicitly use an image aesthetic and symbolism that originates from the extreme right and has been very successfully disseminated here. For example, images of Hitler or Pepe the Frog, the symbol of the alt-right movement, are used to humorously address a young, internet-savvy generation, and then share their own version of misogyny towards women, LGBTQI+ people, liberal Muslims and a general rejection of secularism and multiculturalism. (Ayad 2021: 28).

The ideological connections sometimes also make it possible to switch between extremist scenes. For example, various cases are known in which people have switched between right-wing extremist and Islamist groups, such as the case of the former neo-Nazi Sascha L., who was arrested for planning an Islamist attack (cf. Stukenberg 2017; Ebner 2018).

Mutual positive references accumulate, especially between assassins from the misogynist incel scene and right-wing extremist assassins. While anti-feminism and sexism occur in combination with other ideologies of inequality among far-right assassins, the worldview of misogynist incels is explicitly constructed around sexist and anti-feminist logics. What they have in common is a framework of anti-egalitarian thinking in which sexism is central as a fundamental ideology of domination.

Gender constructions: masculinity between claim to power and fear of social decline

The way in which role models are lived out differs considerably on a practical level in the various scenes and is always in close connection with the respective cultural, historical and socio-political context. As stated above, in the right-wing extremist context, a cross-phenomenal analysis also comes to the conclusion that rigid gender-related ideas of norms and a strong focus on traditional, heterosexual family models occupy a central place in various extremist ideologies and groupings. (Meiering; Dhaliwal/Kelly 2018 and 2020). Meiering et al. (2018) show this with reference to Islamist groups, in particular the so-called "Islamic State".

What is striking here is the importance that masculinity or constructions of masculinity take on: incels, religious fundamentalist and also right-wing extremist protagonists complain of the decline of men's social power and influence. They demonstrate, along with this, "a sense of aggrieved victimhood" - proclaiming an associated victim role (Dhaliwal / Kelly 2020: 13-14). This stylisation as a victim in a world that favours women is particularly acute in the narratives of misogynist incels.

Here, there is a nostalgic focus on a supposed former order in which male privilege and authority still existed (cf. ibid. 14). Fundamentalists increasingly consider the purity of the group, embodied in the behaviour of women and girls (e.g. through clothing, contact with the outside world), to be in danger and argue of a "moral degeneration". Narratives of fundamentalists therefore often include a recourse to the male role as head of the family, while right-wing extremist groups typically place sexual privilege at the centre of their arguments (cf. ibid. p. 14).

Unifying across the different tendencies, we find a 'heroic-masculine worldview' coupled with sexism and queerphobia - a stable bridge between all authoritarian tendencies (Weiß 2017: 247 in Meiering et al.: 21). The existing constructions of masculinity assume authority and defensiveness as central elements of being a man, and the inequality of the sexes and especially the superiority and dominance of men are naturalised in the process (Dhaliwal / Kelly 2020: 30; Meiering et al.: 21). Here, too, we find the theme of the abusive stranger, which was explained in the previous section relating to right-wing extremism. It follows almost the same logic here: our "own" women must be protected from hostile influences, men, sexualised violence, and with them the purity of the community understood in fundamentalist terms (cf. ibid., Taub 2015). As the practices of the so-called "Islamic State" have shown, it is quite possible in this view to want to protect women of one's own group from rape on the one hand and to condemn this form of violence, while on the other hand using it as a means of warfare against women who do not belong to the group (cf. Taub 2015).

Misogynous violence as a spectrum

We know from radicalisation research and practice that radicalisation does not proceed linearly in the direction of violence and that by no means does every group-related devaluation or support for extremist worldviews lead to physical violence. Which factors ultimately account for joining extremist groups and engaging in violence often remains unclear and difficult to assess. In this context, research approaches that locate misogynist and anti-feminist attacks on a spectrum of violence appear promising. Research dealing with group-based devaluation clearly shows that different forms of anti-egalitarian thinking often occur together. However, different forms of violence legitimised by this tend not to be put into context. Thus, sexualised violence and femicide 5 are rarely seen in the context of extremist violence or as politically motivated. However, if different forms of anti-egalitarian thinking overlap, it is natural to question whether the different forms of violence also reinforce and condition each other.

In this context, new research findings see precisely this connection between violence against women and extremist violence. For example, Dhaliwal and Kelly (2020:14) see "parallels between desensitisation and the sense of power associated with relationship violence and public acts of violence". On the one hand, this could go hand in hand with the process of dehumanising and objectifying another person, which entails misogynistic logics. On the other hand, extremism researcher Paul Gill argues that a history of violence could remove natural inhibitions to engaging in violence (Taub 2016: n.p.).

Femicide refers to the killings of women* and girls* attributed to their gender.

Practitioners also report time and again that different forms of, and experiences with, violence intertwine in complex ways in biographies and fundamentally shape individuals in their personal decisions and developments. A comprehensive study of the personal biographies of terrorist assassins in Britain, France, Spain, the USA and Australia emphasises the personal connections to relationship violence and family violence of all assassins as perpetrators as well as victims (Smith 2019). Research into the biographical backgrounds of assassins of mass shootings in the USA since 1982 revealed that of 22 acts, half were specifically directed against women, 32% of the acts had a misogynistic motive, and 32% of the perpetrators were even convicted of stalking and harassment and 85% of relationship violence (Follman 2019). There are still gaps in the research due to limited biographical information and weaknesses in cross-phenomenal analysis. Nevertheless, from this perspective, a relevant question arises for the prevention of extremism: to what extent do misogynistic and anti-feminist attitudes promote violence against women* in "private" as well as in the context of public attacks?

As a rule, those who carry out extremist attacks are united across a range of characteristics: They are young, male, heterosexual. How does this come about and why are so many of them convinced of the natural superiority of men - and willing to use violence to secure or regain their "superiority"?

Here, the concept of so-called toxic masculinity can offer a starting point. It states that, through gender socialisation, we already learn a gender role in childhood that brings with it specific requirements. For boys and men today, this role still means gaining and maintaining sovereignty, independence, control and strength, as well as sexual potency. Many boys orientate themselves towards this, especially in their adolescence, and learn early on "not to be (or appear to be) victims, not to be different, not to be disabled, not to be homosexual and not to be helpless". (Tippe 2021: 52). The male gender role is thus concretely linked to the requirement of dominance. This can escalate into problematic and damaging ways of thinking and behaving for boys and men. The more pronounced this idea is, the more the urge to fulfil gender requirements can lead to an extreme devaluation towards everything that could endanger one's masculinity. This devaluation sometimes leads in turn to the concrete exercise of psychological or physical violence against women, lesbians, gays, intersex or trans people, or men* who are considered weak (ibid.: 50).

Michael Kimmel, a researcher on masculinity, has studied men's violence towards women* in relationships and, like Tippe, refers

to an exaggerated male self-image. His explanation focuses on the male claim to control and dominate their partners (Kimmel 2016: 217). Relationship violence often happens when men* (perceive that they) are losing control, because their partner denies them something to which they are naturally entitled according to the still widespread norms of gender roles - namely care, affection, attention, sexual availability or, more abstractly, honour and respect (Manne 2020). Violence is used by men with an exaggerated male self-image to restore the natural order (of superiority and subordination) between partners: "The notion of violence as a restorative force is part of a gender-specific equation." Violence is only the means; the end is the restoration of honour and respect, the ability to rectify a humiliation (ibid: 217). In this sense, Kimmel refers to relationship violence by men as being restorative.

If we follow Manne, Tippe and Kimmel, violence perpetrated by men against women* in "private" is always a misogynous practice that serves to defend the claim to male dominance. A contempt for women* combined with men's offended sense of entitlement and their urge to establish control and dominance connects violence against women* in the "private" sphere with extremist attacks. The carrying out of violence against women* promises empowerment.

In this context, we always look at misogynistic violence in the context of women's* transgressions as women within a sexist gender order. As shown above for the field of right-wing extremism, the strong disciplining of women* when they deviate from the intended roles and norms is a functional and substantive part of extremist worldviews. In addition to the examples given for right-wing extremism, we can also see these in various religious fundamentalist groups. An example of this is the disciplinary practices of the Taliban or of the so-called "Islamic State" (Dhaliwal / Kelly 2020: 30). It is important to mention at this point that these norm violations are by no means controlled and punished exclusively by men, but that women also take over the control and punishment (Meiering et al. 18), as demonstrated by the female "morality police" in the so-called "Islamic State".

If we relate these different forms of violence to the previous remarks on misogyny and anti-feminism, a new perspective emerges: violence in relationships and femicides are not the tragic fates of individual women*, and assassinations against women are not the acts of confused, woman-hating, lone perpetrators. They are based on sexist ideology and are to be seen as an extreme misogynist practice aimed at preserving traditional gender relations.

Anti-egalitarian thinking as common ground

Functionally, common enemy images and the associated devaluations have a group-stabilising and identity-building effect. They form a central part of extremist ideologies and modes of action of extremist groups: One of the central attractive features of extremist groups is the socially close-knit community on the inside and the strong exclusion on the outside. The demarcation between the superior "us" within the group and the external "them" is indispensable, especially in the formation and maintenance of a strong identity-forming group membership and the reduction of complexity that is central to radicalisation processes (Meiering et al. 2018: 26). Anti-feminism "has a collective effect" (Blum 2019: 115) and helps to stabilise the group by producing exclusion.

Strategically, misogyny and sexism lend themselves to transporting essentialist notions of group-based superiority and inferiority relatively unnoticed, as they continue to be often depoliticised and can therefore find broader appeal than, for example, anti-Semitism and racism. The Leipzig Authoritarianism Study has shown that anti-feminist attitudes are related to political-ideological positions, especially conspiracy mentalities and authoritarianism (Höcker/Pickler/Decker 2020: 270). High approval ratings in these categories often occur together with anti-feminist attitudes and, at the same time, are of great relevance to sexist attitudes. Inferring causality from statistical surveys is inherently complex, yet there is clear statistical evidence that these attitudes often occur together and overlap in content (cf. ibid.).

The same applies to the occurrence of group-related devaluations: prejudices against one group - such as immigrants, for example - do not usually occur in isolation, but the devaluation of one group goes hand in hand with the devaluation of other groups (Zick / Küpper 2015: n.p.). In doing so, they always follow the same pattern of maintaining or establishing social hierarchies (ibid.). It was empirically confirmed that those who advocate hierarchies between social groups in general are more likely to have a tendency not only to devalue one specific group, but usually to devalue a whole range of groups (ibid.).

Gender perceptions, as well as a rejection of the modernisation of gender relations, can therefore represent a connectable and easily-accessible bridging issue. Especially with regard to the rejection of modernisation, as explained above, anti-feminism



can also revert to socially widespread sexist and unequal gender concepts and tie in with them. Misogynistic or sexist gender politics prevalent in society can provide a shared frame of reference and subsequently easy points of reference.⁶

Researchers repeatedly emphasise the strategic function of anti-feminism, which enables solidarity across different groups and protagonists. "Anti-genderism is obviously very suitable as a "hinge" or *symbolic glue* ... (possibly better than issues with strong right-wing connotations) for forging broad alliances for authoritarian and racist politics" (Schmincke 2018: 33).

In view of the connections between different forms of violence discussed in the previous section, the role of sexism and misogyny seems to be underrepresented in extremism research so far. The attitudinal study by Johnston and True et al. mentioned at the beginning also makes this appear to be the case. Their findings suggest that misogyny could be an even more relevant (early) indicator than the traditionally examined categories such as age, religiosity, social origin and locality. In their study, carried out in one North African and three Asian countries, aggressive misogynistic attitudes - advocacy of violence against women* - formed the factors that most robustly predicted support for extremism.

5. Options for action for educational practice in primary, secondary and tertiary prevention

In the previous sections, we have shown how extremist mobilisation and violence are linked to anti-feminism and notions of male dominance and militarised masculinity. But what options are there for action to counter anti-feminism? And what does this mean for the practice of extremism prevention? The following sections show possible countermeasures and recommendations for action.

Cross-sectoral recommendations for action

Recognising and naming anti-feminist motives and strategies

Anti-feminism and misogyny are an integral part of right-wing extremist and Islamist ideologies and can interweave with them to form a cohesive worldview. Despite many years of work by researchers (e.g. on the extreme right and gender-reflected education), the ideological and organisational connections are often misunderstood and seen as secondary. Despite increasing public attention within Germany, for example on the occasion of the attacks in Halle and Hanau, this still means that these similarities in acts of violence are underestimated. This goes hand in hand with the depoliticisation of violence against women*, which is classified as "private", not as ideological.

Furthermore, anti-feminist and misogynist motives are not systematically taken into account when recording crimes - for example, police crime statistics still do not include any recording of misogynist motives. Even in preliminary investigations, hos-

⁶ Nevertheless, Höcker, Pickler and Decker (2020: 270) point out that individuals can also be anti-feminist to some extent without having particularly high scores on the sexism scale. This is an interesting finding, especially with respect to current antigenderism mobilisation strategies, which need to be further examined in future studies - especially with regard to extremist groups, for which there are hardly any data points in this study.

tility towards women is not a category in itself and is currently neither considered to aggravate the punishment in the sense of Section 46 of the Criminal Code nor to be politically motivated (Baumgärtner/Müller 2021).

This lack of statistical coverage is symptomatic of an underestimation of the problem and contributes to its perpetuation through the blind spots that remain. To fail to understand violence against women* as political violence is to overlook the underlying ideologies of inequality. As a consequence, these aspects of the motive for the crime remain unaddressed. Consistently recognising and naming these motivations through an appropriate analysis is an important first step.

Firmly confronting sexism, misogyny and anti-feminism

As described under the heading of "Bridge narratives", right-wing extremist, anti-feminist violence not only feeds on anti-feminist ideologies themselves, but also derives part of its legitimacy from the spread of sexist ideologies in broader social discourse. The reproduction and acceptance of sexist ideologies in society as a whole contributes to the normalisation of extreme and sometimes violent misogynist attitudes and actions. Here, preventative work has an important role to play: the consistent questioning of sexist ideologies and misogynist behaviour should be recognised as a cross-sectional task of preventative work at all levels and consistently implemented as part of educational practice. To this end, this strategy must be supported by institutions, research and politics as well as by individual educational practitioners. It must be clear that misogynist and anti-feminist violence is not only expressed in sensational terrorist attacks, but in everyday hatred, violence and incitement.

Establishing gender reflection and diversity orientation as a cross-sectional task

Clearly-defined ideas of gender roles are an attractive feature of extremist groups. For adolescents and young adults, these clear ideas are particularly attractive because they provide simple answers to complex and contradictory gender demands and their unambiguousness supposedly facilitates the formation of the (gender-based) role. This can initially have a relieving effect (Debus/ Laumann 2014: 154). It is therefore the thoroughly demanding task of preventative work to counteract the mobilisation of anti-feminist narratives through plurality-orientated counter-offers.

To this end, gender reflection should be implemented as a cross-sectional task at all levels of preventative work. This includes, above all, not equating the topic of gender with women, but creating gender-reflective offers for boys* and men* as well as girls* and women*. The aim of gender-reflective education is to relieve young people of the demands of masculinity and femininity. Relief also includes consciously and openly addressing gender role requirements, especially in connection with experiencing crises or engaging in destructive behaviour. Gender roles manifest themselves via conformity with norms, for example in terms of appearance and behaviour. Sexism is always connected to a culture of superiority and subordination. We therefore advocate a conscious pedagogy that is critical of power and norms in order to strengthen young people's resilience to ideologies of devaluation and inequality.

A systemic approach is particularly useful at the level of primary prevention: This means dealing less with the behaviour and attitudes of individuals and more with gender roles and sexism, as well as the associated hierarchies, devaluations and exclusions, for example in youth groups or classes, as a shared responsibility (ibid: 158).

Development of guidelines for dealing with sexist ideologies and misogynistic violence

The stabilising function of these concepts should not be underestimated, especially in the field of secondary and tertiary preventative work with clients whose sexist gender images and related ideological convictions are entrenched and interwoven. Breaking down sexist beliefs is pedagogically very challenging, because it involves questioning naturalised beliefs that are deeply ingrained in the identity of the clients and guide their actions in many areas of life. Especially in practice with male clients (and groups), certain hyper-masculine or toxic images of masculinity and accompanying devaluations, such as sexism or trans- and homophobia, serve as everyday, strongly normalised, social practice. They are often shared and rarely (openly) questioned. For such situations, conceptual groundwork is helpful, because otherwise, recourse to naturalising gender concepts is always obvious, and ideological fragments can (unnoticeably) become further entrenched within the training courses.

Therefore, there is a need for a dedicated conceptual elaboration of how to deal with anti-feminist and sexist ideologies as well as misogynist behaviour.

There should be a focus on the development of concrete guidelines for gender-reflective processing of anti-feminist and sexist ideologies. As a first step, existing knowledge as well as experiences and methods can be reviewed and systematised with regard to their implications for dealing with sexist ideologies in order to identify any blind spots. In a second step, the challenges and concrete goals can be formulated in detail. Such guidelines should provide orientation and support for practitioners in terms of their educational direction and, at the same time, leave enough room for the necessary individuality in practical implementation.



Further education and training for trainers and disseminators

Gender-reflective preventative work requires a high level of expertise. Relevant topics for further education and training are, for example, the specifics of gender socialisation as well as gender-specific aspects of radicalisation processes, extremist scenes and ideologies of inequality. Furthermore, it is also helpful to deal with the concept of intersectionality, because the simultaneity of forms of devaluation and discrimination is recorded analytically here and sexism and misogynous violence against women* and LGBTQI+ communities are thus no longer seen as having secondary importance to preventative work. In the field of tertiary prevention in particular, specialist knowledge of gender-specific aspects of violence – in the family and/or in partnerships and in a sexualised manner – can also be of impor-

tance. Here, an interdisciplinary exchange with other areas of psychosocial work is useful, for example from the area of working with perpetrators in the context of relationship violence or the support system for those affected by violence and discrimination. Through interdisciplinary networking and knowledge transfer, gaps in knowledge can be closed and existing educational approaches can be further developed.

Opportunities for reflection for teaching staff

Educational work on sexism, misogyny and gender does not take place in a vacuum: conditioning, social context and personal history not only have an influence on the target groups of preventative work, but also on the practitioners themselves. As in all educational fields of action, it is necessary to critically examine one's own attitude, internalised images and assumptions in order to be able to carry out the necessary work with clients, relatives and disseminators that is critical of discrimination, norms and power. Knowledge of one's own attitude and assumptions regarding the category of gender should be seen as part of educational professionalism (cf. e.g. Kraitt et al. 2019). This requires (critically) continually examining one's own gender socialisation, identity and position with regard to their significance for educational practice. A tried and tested, yet too rarely institutionalised method of this necessary continuous reflection is the firm implementation of external and/ or team-based supervision. This can contribute significantly to professionalisation by creating spaces for critical and regular examination of one's own practice, institutionalising a feedback culture and providing space for content-related stimuli (cf. Schramm Pedersen et al. 2019).

Benchmarks for gender mainstreaming in the prevention of extremism

An extended implementation of gender-reflective services and structures can be strengthened by *decisive political decisions* and the consistent specification of the corresponding framework conditions. For example, many funding lines still lack concrete and demonstrable targets for the inclusion of gender-specific methodology for extremism prevention projects and programmes. These guidelines should not only include gender-sensitive target group work and outreach, but also the thematic treatment of anti-feminism and misogyny in the prevention of extremism within the framework of existing and new services. Appropriate further training opportunities should be budgeted for in funding lines.

6. Conclusions

Anti-feminism contradicts basic democratic principals, such as the all-encompassing equality of women, lesbians, gays, trans, inter and non-binary people. Nevertheless, sexist ideologies and misogynist practices are deeply ingrained in social structures and individual ways of thinking and behaving. They connect with other ideologies of inequality such as racism, anti-Semitism, homophobia, classism and disability discrimination and play a central role in extremist worldviews. They are an important connecting element between extremist groups and enable mobilisation and organisational solidarity beyond extremist groups. This publication has highlighted these overlaps and contributes to the systematic inclusion of these issues in research, policy and preventative practice.

Knowledge of sexist ideologies and their intersectional mode of action offers a great opportunity for the targeted improvement of extremism prevention programmes. Translating this insight into the theory and practice of extremism prevention requires a rethinking of our understanding of the core elements of these ideologies. The stabilising, mobilising and radicalising role of sexist and anti-feminist ideologies, which is still underestimated, must be recognised and adequately addressed within extremism prevention. Further steps in the area of research and practice as well as legal and formal frameworks are necessary to ensure contemporary and effective treatment of relevant ideologies and thematic areas within extremism prevention.

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- Violence Prevention Network gGmbH
 Judy Korn, Thomas Mücke Executive Board
 Alt-Reinickendorf 25
 DE-13407 Berlin, Germany
- +49 (0)30 917 05 464
- +49 (0)30 398 35 284
- post@violence-prevention-network.de
- www.violence-prevention-network.de
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