

# SUSANNE SCHRÖTER

**IMPACT:** Susanne Schröter is a trained ethnologist and Professor of Anthropology at Goethe University in Frankfurt, Germany. She is the founder of the Frankfurt Center of Global Islam (Frankfurter Forschungszentrum Globaler Islam) and author of several books and articles on political Islam. Schröter has called on the German government to only work with “liberal” Muslims, has a history of making broad and generalized statements about Islam and Muslims, and works with several anti-Muslim voices and organizations.

- Susanne Schröter is a German social anthropologist who focuses primarily on the study of Islam, gender, and conflict. She has served as a professor of colonial and postcolonial anthropology at Goethe University in Frankfurt since 2008.
- In November 2014, **Schröter founded the Frankfurt Center of Global Islam (FFGI), a global think tank where she and her team of “fellows from various countries” link the “problem of Islamism with other factors,” while working on both domestic and foreign policy.** Prominent individuals listed as “associates” of the think tank include anti-Muslim validator Ahmad Mansour and a professor of Islamic theology, Mouhanad Khorchide. In a November 2019 interview, Schröter stated that the think tank advises “teachers, the police and the judiciary” and revealed that some of her fellows have been recruited to the police.
- Schröter occupies several politically important positions related to the field of “de-radicalization.” **Since 2015, she has been a member of the Hessian Integration Conference which advises the government on cultural and social integration affairs.** Schröter has also been a member of the monitoring committee for the federal program “Living Democracy” in the city of Wiesbaden, which is part of the federal government’s program on the “prevention of extremism and the promotion of democracy.” Additionally, **since 2015, she has been a part of the monitoring of projects on Salafism prevention in the city of Wiesbaden, and a member of the expert advisory board of the Hessian Prevention Network against Salafism.**
- Schröter cofounded the **Initiative of Secular Islam in Berlin at the end of 2018**, whose members include Necla Kelek, the Green politician Cem Özdemir, Ahmad Mansour, the political scientist Hamed Abdel-Samad, and the German lawyer Seyran Ates. In November 2018, political scientists Schirin Amir-Moazami and Farid Hafez criticized the organization. **Amir-Moazami argued that “the initiative creates a problematic image of good and evil Muslims.”**
- In **July 2020, Schröter joined the scientific board of the newly established Documentation Center for Political Islam, a monitoring center established by the Austrian government to address “the danger posed by political Islam.”** According to Farid Hafez, this institution is the “latest step in surveilling Muslims and pushing Muslim civil society organizations to the margin.” The board, which is headed by Mouhanad Khorchide, also includes Lorenzo Vidino, Elham Manea, and Heiko Heinisch.
- In 2019, **Schröter authored the book Political Islam - Stress Test for Germany, in which she argues that “political Islam is spreading not only in Arab countries, but also increasingly in Germany.”** In this book, Schröter claims that political dialogue is allegedly focusing on highly problematic Muslim organizations that are not secular and liberal. In an October 2019 interview with Taz, Schröter stated, “My speciality is Islamic totalitarianism, political Islam. Not religion. I am not interested in Islam, which has very different facets, but a political trend that I consider extremely dangerous. Which is extremely repressive not only externally against non-Muslims or liberal Muslims, but also internally and especially against women and girls.”

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- In an October 2020 interview in the *Jüdische Allgemeine*, **Schröter claimed**, “Wearing a cross does not discriminate against anyone, but wearing a headscarf does. Women are seen in Islam as the embodiment of seductive powers for men.”
- In July 2020, the Austrian Integration Fund (Österreichischer Integrationsfonds, ÖIF) commissioned a report titled “Challenges in Dealing with Parallel Societies: Basic Analysis of the Situation in Austria in a European Comparative Perspective.” **In the report, Schröter claimed that “already pronounced parallel structures, i.e. an incipient isolation of individual migrant groups from society as a whole, can be observed - especially in Muslim milieus.”** Additionally, she argued that “mosque associations, nationalist and dependent umbrella organizations in particular often favor the social isolation of Muslim migrant groups, particularly through ideological influence from abroad.”
- Following the September 2017 publication of a report commissioned by the ÖIF titled “The Role of Mosques in the Integration Process,” the fund organized a panel featuring Heiko Heinisch, Susanne Schröter, and Constantin Schreiber. During the panel titled “What Role Mosques Play for the Integration of Muslim Immigrants in Austria,” **Schröter said: “Often, they [preachers in mosques] only appeal to the Muslim identity [...] It is crucial for living together that Muslims perceive themselves primarily as citizens of European society.”**
- In a June 2015 article **Schröter made broad and generalized claims including that “many ideas of the Salafist zealots are accepted even by the Muslim mainstream, and that critical reflection is urgently needed. This is met with fierce opposition by many who want to create the impression that Islamist terrorism has nothing to do with Islam – an attitude that plays into the hands of the jihadists.”** Additionally, she **argued that claims of anti-Muslim discrimination play “into the hands of the jihadists,” as these assertions support “the jihadist reasoning that acts of terror are legitimate acts of resistance.”**
- Following the 2019 opening of an Islamic youth center by the Milli Görüs organization in Vienna, Austria, Schröter gave an interview to *Wiener Zeitung* about the center. In the interview, she claimed that the aim of Milli Görüs, a religio-political movement, “was to convert Turkey into an Islamic state.” She went on to claim that the founder, Necmettin Erbakan, the former Turkish Prime Minister, “has also tried several times to form parties that have also been banned because they were rightly accused of subversive intentions.”
- During a December 2019 panel organized by the Friedrich-Naumann-Stiftung, a foundation associated with the liberal Free Democratic Party (Freie Demokraten), **Schröter argued that there should be no cooperation between state authorities and Muslim institutions such as DITIB, Ahmadiyya, the Zentralrat der Muslime, or Millî Görüş.** She claimed “we have to defend the values of the constitution,” accusing the political left of a false tolerance. She advocated for the state to work with liberal Muslims, and claimed that leaving the “refugee work to conservative associations” has resulted in the creation of a “parallel society.”
- Schröter has been the subject of various protests. In **May 2019, Schröter initiated a panel titled “The Islamic headscarf - symbol of dignity or of oppression?” at the University of Frankfurt. In response, students rallied against the event**, created an Instagram profile with the name “Uni gegen AMR - Kein Platz für Anti-Muslimischen Rassismus” (University against Anti-Muslim Racism – No Place for Anti-Muslim Racism), and promoted the hashtag ‘schroeter\_raus’ (schrieter\_leave). The students stated, “just in these days, with the increasing normalization of right-wing populism, people who wear the headscarf in Germany become victims of right-wing violence and racism.” Schröter, however, rejects the allegation of anti-Muslim racism, stating “I criticize totalitarianism, no matter where it comes from, no matter what

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disguise it appears in. My speciality is Islamic totalitarianism, political Islam. Not religion.” **She went on to state that any criticism of Islam is delegitimized in universities: “It is already considered Islamophobic to even address certain topics.” She also argued that “the enemy image of the ‘old, white man’ is a racist construction.”**

- In February 2020, the Department of Religious Studies at the University of Marburg scheduled a presentation by Schröter on political Islam. In response, **a coalition of students protested against the invitation, arguing that they believed Schröter’s lecture would not be a “factual, scientifically valuable contribution to the topic, but rather fear that the lecture will be shaped by populism and racist general judgments.”** Additionally, the students noted that “the concept of ‘political Islam’ is one that has so far lacked any real scientific debate. There is no fixed definition. However, publications on ‘political Islam’ usually have in common, for example, that Islam and Muslims are viewed as a problem and that they follow a us versus them logic.”
- **Schröter’s inclusion in an article on the website of the German far-right party, Alternative for Germany, demonstrates that the positions of scholars like her, Mouhanad Khorchide, and Hamed Abdel-Samad have been welcomed by politicians from the far-right.** Schröter has also been invited to the parliament by Angela Merkel’s governing party, the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) in February and November 2016. There, she gave a talk on the theme “Women in Islam: Explanation or attempt of justification for sexual assaults?”

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