

# **Causes and nature of anti-Muslim prejudice in Czechia according to citizens**

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**Populism in Central and Eastern Europe:  
Multidisciplinary Perspectives**

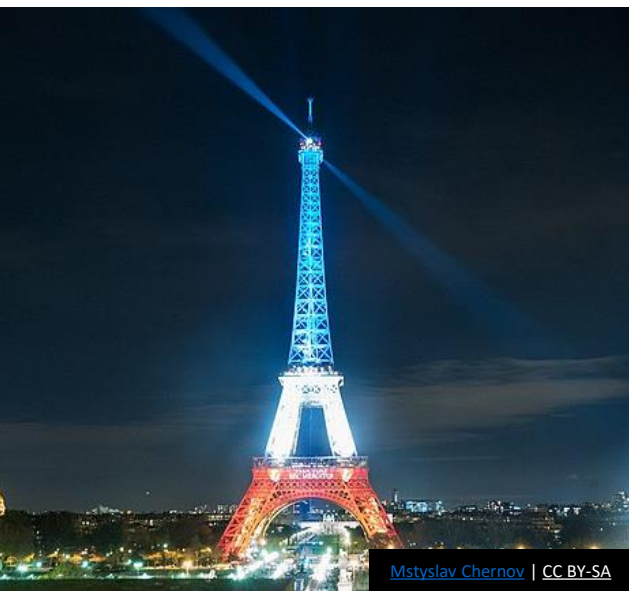
2 April 2022





# Changes by 2014/2015

- Czechia's Muslim population = 0.2-0.3%
- Since 2014, cross-national surveys measure most negative attitudes towards Muslims in the EU among Czechs (e.g., Heath & Richards, 2019; Linek, 2014; Marfouk, 2019; Pew Research Center, 2018; TNS, 2015)
- Attitudes were negative before, but not consistently researched





I CONDUCTED A STUDY



I WILL PRESENT FIVE  
INSIGHTS



FEEL FREE TO ASK IN THE  
Q&A FOR DETAILS

# But before...



Methodology

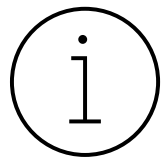


Theory

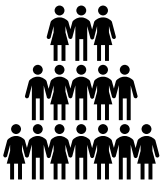
# Methodology



7/2020 – 10/2021 → 23 non-Muslim, 8 Muslim



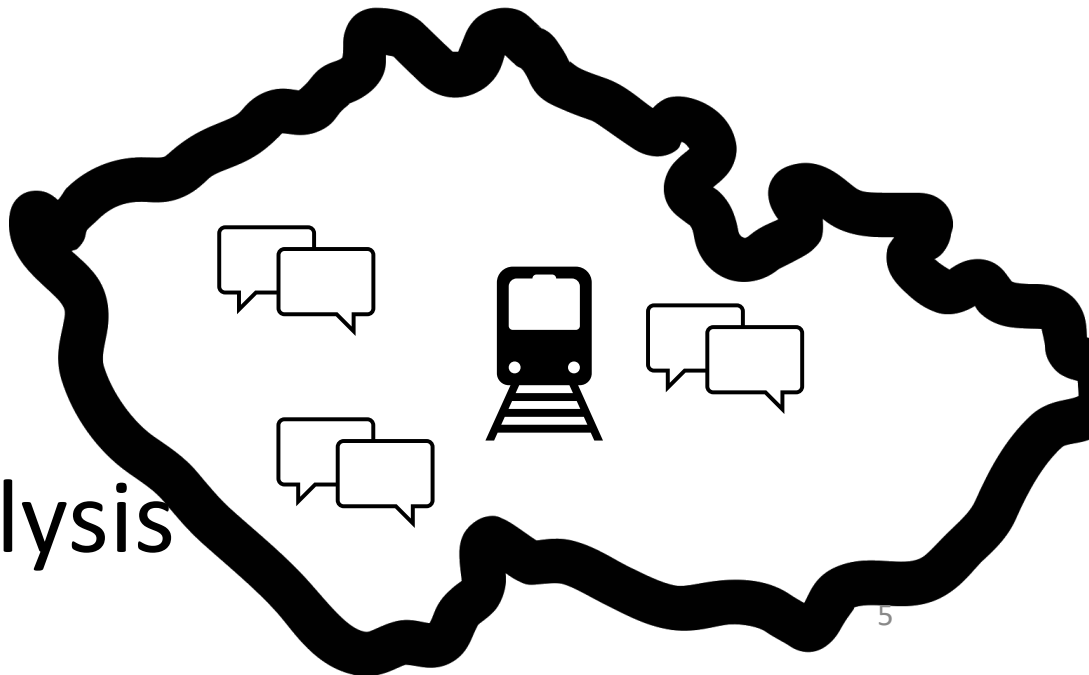
On Czechs' and participants' own attitudes



Cohorts (locality, IG contact)



Constructivist Thematic Analysis



# Theoretical framework

- Cognitive constructionism (Brubaker, 2002)
- Social psychology:
  - Integrated Threat Theory (Stephan & Stephan, 2000)
  - Intergroup Contact Theory (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006)
- Social cognition of social groups (van Dijk, 1990, 2018)
  
- Islamophobia as cultural racism (Meer & Modood, 2019)
- Racism/Islamophobia as ideologies (Allen, 2010; Miles & Brown, 2003)
- Ideologies as part of social cognition (van Dijk, 2006)



Insights

# 1. Gaps in perceived moment of change in Czechs' attitudes

- 'Muslims' as social actors recalled to enter public debate by 9/11 (most see 9/11 as distant event)
- Even if most perceived 2015 as key turning point for attitudes, Muslim participants recalled hostilities since early 2010s

[The day of the Charlie Hebdo shooting], I decided not to go out. [...] I did not know whether someone would start shouting or swearing at me as if I bore responsibility for what had happened



## 2. “Muslims” is not a neutral topic

- The history of public discourse on ‘Muslims’ limits the scope of the situations and Muslims imagined (e.g., conflation of categories)



## 2. “Muslims” is not a neutral topic

- Perceived general negativity can condition attitudes and behaviours

Politicians must deal with the issues that concern citizens. If citizens want to have calm and security, and consider that Muslims cause uneasiness in France, Germany or Britain... they will not want them here [...] In our town there's almost zero criminality. [...] If they ran a referendum [to take in Muslims] 90% of the people, here, would vote against

(Kamil, 49)

- ‘Fear’ is most commonly mentioned emotional component [*but emotion or lack of direct contact should not obscure ideological rootings*]

### 3. Social Representations of groups sustain ideology

I believe that Czechia is one of the safest countries in the world. [...] I feel safe. I know that I can go onto the streets and walk around the capital, and there is a 95% chance that nothing will happen to me. [...] Most are aware that Czechia is [safe], but they are scared when they travel around Europe, to Paris, London, etc.

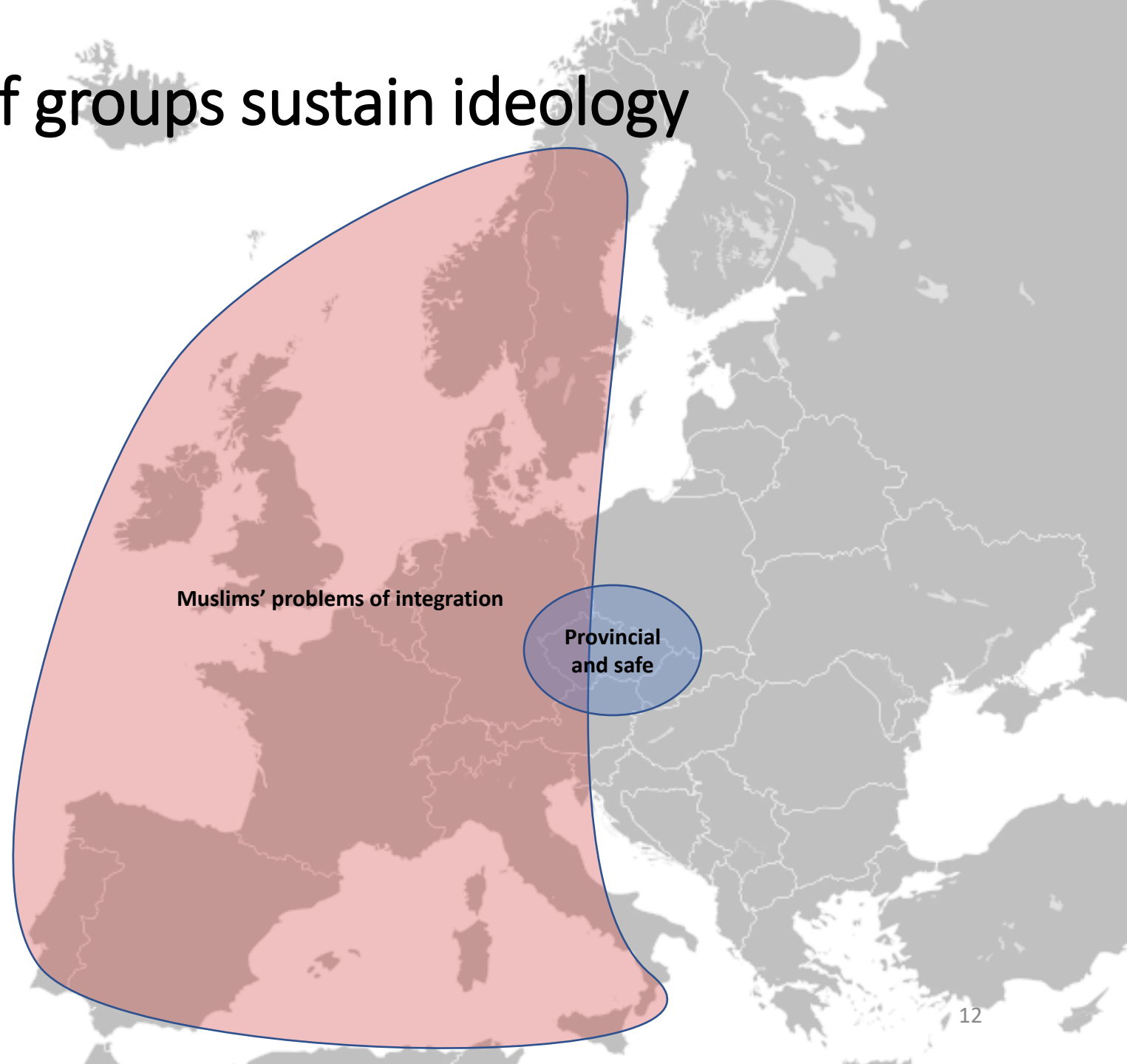
(Stěpán, 20)



### 3. Social Representations of groups sustain ideology

All [Muslim migrants] want to go to Germany, but Germany is now getting out of breath. There are plenty of those blacks in the Nordic countries, in Norway and Sweden, which is a catastrophe because they also do not have enough money for them anymore. The local ghettos there are horrible. In France, it is also horrible, in Paris there are six million Muslims - they do not know what to do with them anymore.

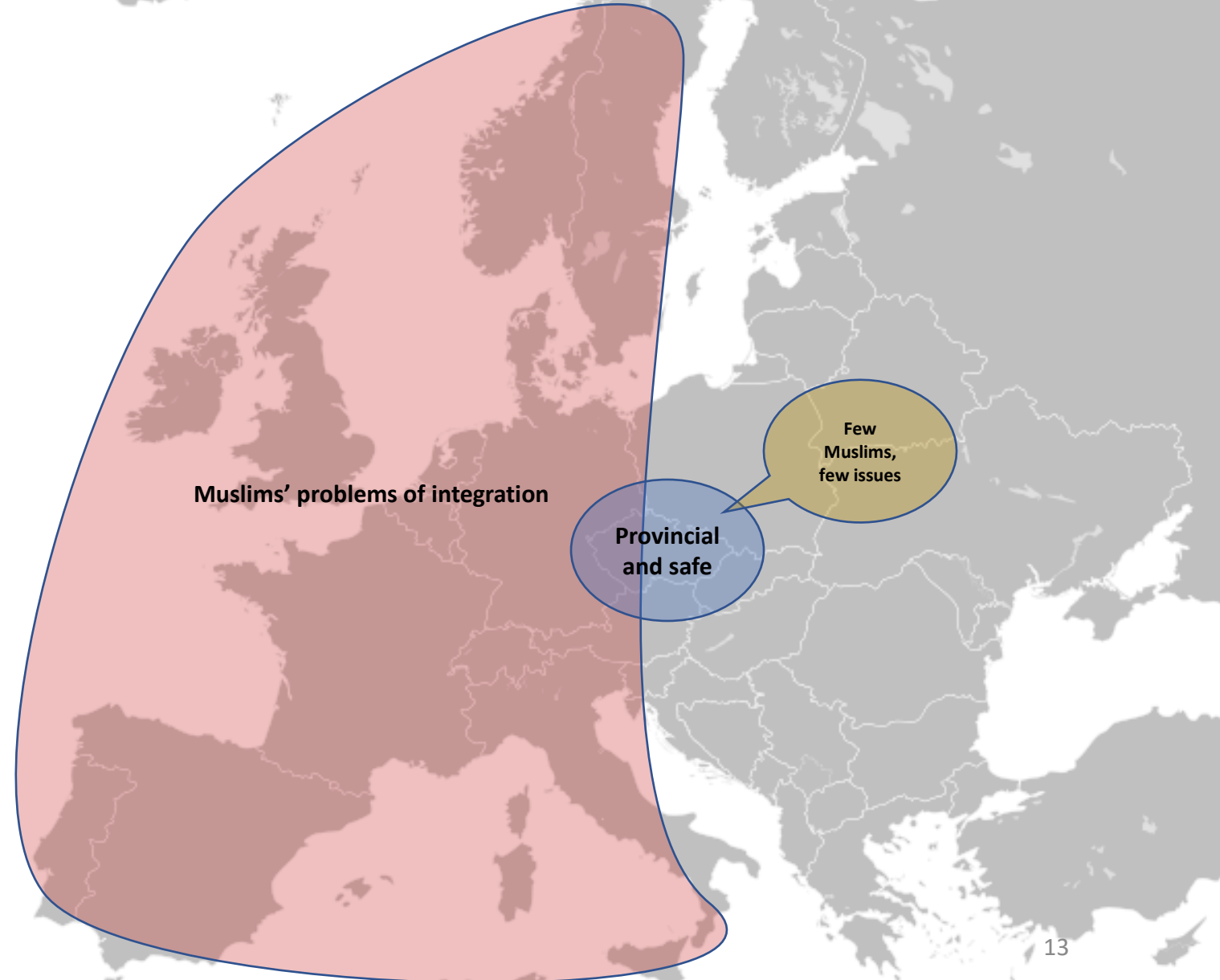
(Klára, 52)



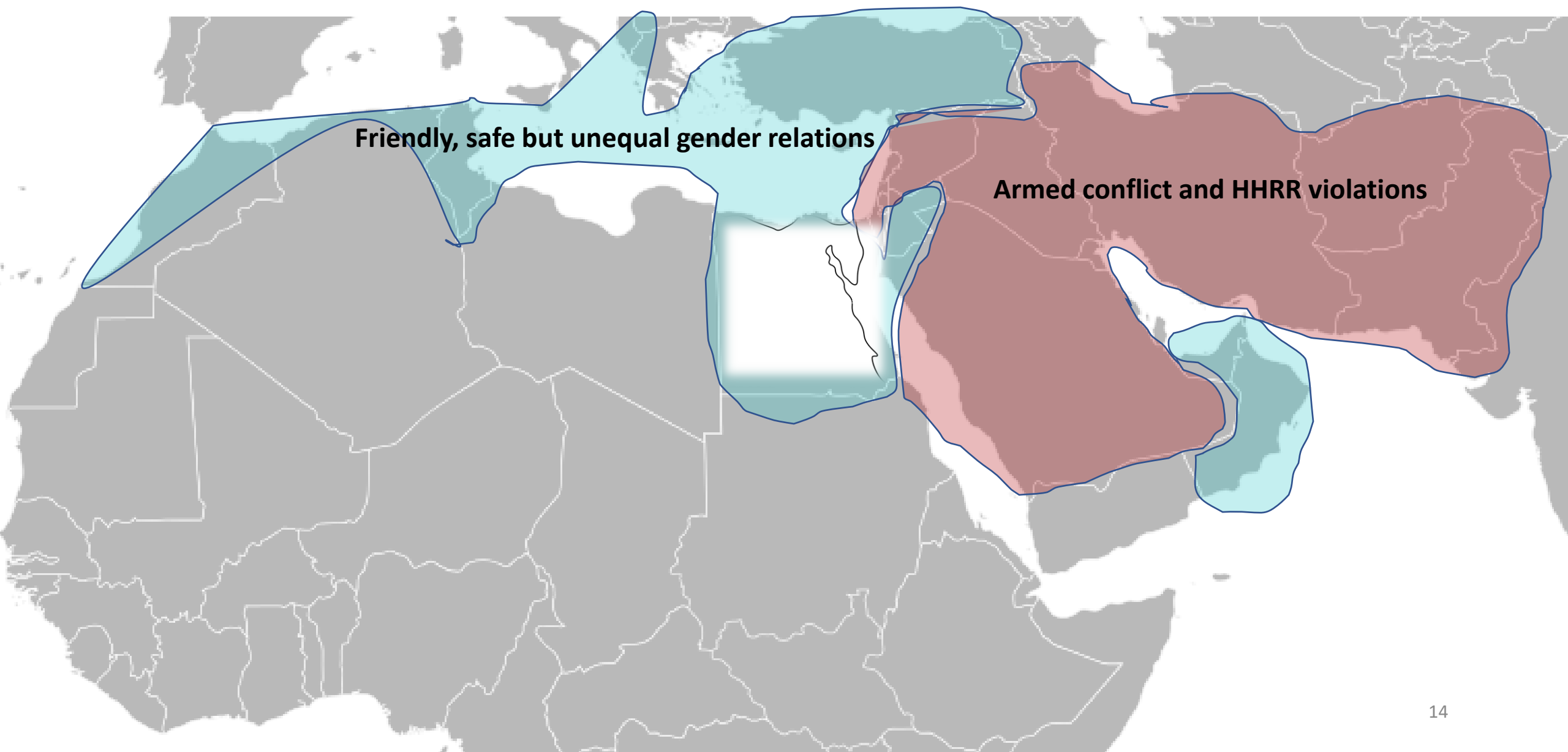
### 3. Social Representations of groups sustain ideology

Overall, I have a feeling that their numbers are not yet as large. I do not know what would happen to us if there were going to be here, for example, as many people as there are in France or Germany. It is different there also because of the quantity, and they already need some system that integrates them there. In Czechia, it is more about individuals and whether they want to [integrate], so it is alright. But they are few.

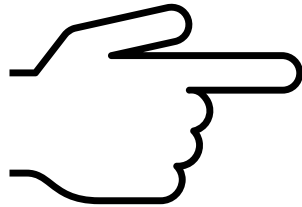
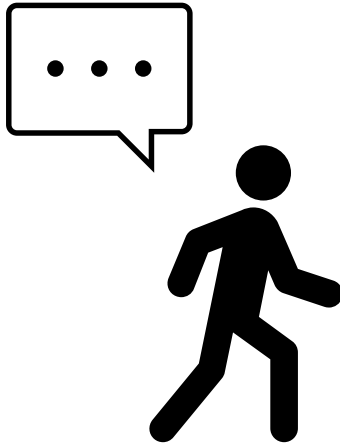
(Hana, 24)



### 3. Social Representations of groups sustain ideology



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## 4. Race matters and 'Islam' means much more to participants than simply a religion

- Muslims often racialised as 'Arabs', 'Middle-Easterners' or 'refugees'
- Muslims as non-White or black (*černý* ≠ *černoč*). 'Whiteness' reserved for ethnic Czechs and Europeans
- Islam adds layer of perceived ethnocultural distance (e.g., Slavic women in hijab being treated as foreigners):

People shouted at [my mother] in the streets when she started wearing the hijab. When she removed it, people stopped screaming at her because of the way she looked. She had a beautiful short curly hair and always dressed impeccably. That is why there was no reason to scream at her. She looked like a Spaniard or an Italian. [...] The hijab became the problem. She believed that people categorised her, that they said, "there goes an Arab and we don't know people from there".

(Maryam, 26)



## 4. Race matters and 'Islam' means much more to participants than simply a religion

- 'Islam' as problematic = Muslims' expected cultural differences and political goals are problematic
- Muslim religiosity in a continuum: from secular to fundamentalist
- Christian participants more likely to understand that there are multiple ways of relating to one's religion

# 5. Self-reported perceived symbolic threat trumps fear of terrorism

- Most commonly self-reported perceived threat was symbolic → “Muslims should respect our norms”. Socioeconomic issues more salient when ‘Muslims’ framed as ‘migrants’.
- Fear of terrorism attributed to older, less educated and radicals by non-Muslims. Muslims believe it is still prevalent.

# Recommendations for future study of Islamophobia in Czechia

1. We need more research on Islamophobia before 2015
2. The history of the topic 'Muslims' influences how many Czechs speak about and imagine who Muslims are
3. Rather than reducing Islamophobia to fears directed at people with whom most lack contact, we need to trace how and by whom the ideology has spread
4. Race is an important category of analysis, while understanding how 'Islam' and 'Muslim religiosity' are understood in practice can shed light on existing prejudice
5. As it is likely that fear of terrorism has lost relevance, we should better understand what are the perceived sociocultural changes expected to be brought by Muslim migrants

**Thank you for your attention!**

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