



The Spectrum of Repression: Swedish Muslims' Experiences of Anti-terrorism Measures

Leandro Schclarek Mulinari¹ 

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Abstract

In this qualitative study, I examine, through the lens of repression, Swedish Muslims' experiences of being targeted by authorities in the latter's attempts to prevent terrorism. In an effort to comprehend the full force of this repression—as coercion in its physical and violent sense, but also in its more subtle and consensual forms—I interweave various Marxist and postcolonial perspectives. The study discusses internal aspects of repression, as well as its external qualities, expanding our understanding of how repression occurs between bodies and within society. I develop the concept of “repressive consent” as a means of grasping situations in which people are influenced to undertake activities against their will. Empirically, the article focuses on experiences of disproportionate security controls and encounters with the Swedish Security Service (Säpo). The material reveals both painful and everyday consequences. For some individuals, becoming a target in the War on Terror may have, as the informants of the study indicate, devastating consequences; for others, it may feel like a friendly chat.

Introduction

In the wake of September 11, 2001, Muslims have become a particularly vulnerable group—targets of control and surveillance, but also of governmental abuse (Fekete 2004; Kundnani 2015; Pantazis and Pemberton 2009). Studies focused on Muslims' own experiences provide insights into ways in which anti-terrorism measures affect people's everyday lives. Such studies have highlighted dubious practices that produce suspects, raising concerns about racism, discrimination, and racial profiling (Blackwood et al. 2015; Mythen et al. 2009; Nagra and Maurutto 2016).

Against this backdrop, I focus here on Swedish Muslims' experiences of becoming targets of anti-terrorism measures on questionable or vague grounds. The emphasis is directed at encounters with the Swedish Security Service (Säpo) and at security controls, with a particular but not exclusive focus on encounters in airports. As the empirical examples indicate, interactions with Säpo can feel innocuous, like a chat over a cup of tea, or they may turn into a nightmare.

✉ Leandro Schclarek Mulinari
leandro.schclarek.mulinari@criminology.su.se

¹ Department of Criminology, Stockholm University, Frescativägen, 114 19 Stockholm, Sweden

The aim of the study is to add to the existing literature on the consequences of anti-terrorism measures, but also to fill certain empirical gaps. For example, scholars have previously overlooked how Swedish Muslims *themselves* experience what Säpo describe as “voluntary talks”—a form of interrogation that is based only rarely on suspicion of a crime. Moreover, the purpose of the article is to make a theoretical contribution by clarifying the type of power to which Muslims are exposed.

Informed by critical race methodologies (e.g., Solórzano and Yosso 2002), I employ the concept of “repression” as an analytical prism through which the informants’ experiences are discussed. This is a key concept to explore, given that the authority of the state rests on its claims to the legitimate monopoly on violence. The following question guides the inquiry: How can Swedish Muslims’ experiences of becoming the targets of anti-terrorism measures be understood as repression? The study’s relevance derives from the identification of security policy as a central sphere in which repressive measures are normalized (Flyghed 2002; Piazza 2017).

As an analytical category, the concept of repression is used predominantly to address authoritarian politics and, in particular, state-sanctioned violence aimed at oppositional movements. Rather than applying the term in a narrow sense, I employ it here to align with discussions of the exercise of power by coercion and with consent. I draw inspiration from Marxism (Althusser 1971; Hall et al. 1982[1978]; Marcuse 1969) and postcolonialism (Ahmed 2004; Fanon (1991[1963]; Said 1978). By engaging in a dialogue with these traditions, I demonstrate how it is possible to understand not only how repression is inflicted on bodies from the outside, but also how it is internalized and circulates throughout society.

The article begins by presenting an overview of security developments post-9/11, with a particular focus on Sweden. The discussion then turns to repression as a form of state power—a practice that involves both direct forms and more subtle expressions. I then describe the study’s methodological points of departure and examine its empirical material. Here, coercive measures are analyzed, and, as a way to highlight situations in which Säpo make contact with the aim of persuading people to speak with them and assist them in their efforts to thwart terrorist activity, I develop the concept of “repressive consent.” The article concludes with a discussion in which the contribution of this latter term is clarified.

Sweden Post-9/11: The Repressive Turn

Although the War on Terror has developed in different ways across the globe, the notion that “repression is an effective safeguard against or panacea for terrorism” has become a prevailing praxis (Piazza 2017: 114). Analyses focused on the West have identified the role of Muslims as that of a suspect community (Cherney and Murphy 2016; Pantazis and Pemberton 2009). Scholars stress that Muslims are not being treated as equal before the law, and airports, in particular, have been highlighted as a place in which Muslims are exposed to racial profiling (Blackwood et al. 2015; Mythen et al. 2009; Nagra and Maurutto 2016). This development raises questions regarding some fundamental principles of the nation state—in particular, the relationship between democracy, racism, and security measures (Fekete 2004; Kundnani 2015; Semati 2010).

An early reminder in Sweden of the human cost of the War on Terror took place on December 2001, when two asylum-seeking men were extradited to Egypt with the help of the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). Because deporting people to places where they risk torture violates international law, Swedish authorities were criticized for the operation by United Nations’ agencies (CAT 2005; HRC 2006). Rather than focusing on

how to protect human rights, since late 2001, Sweden has expanded the scope of its anti-terrorism legislation. In 2010, it criminalized public procurement, recruitment, and training for terrorism. In 2016, the country extended its anti-terrorism legislation to include a ban on traveling abroad with the intent to participate in terror-related activities. These legal reforms have been accompanied by a lowering of the threshold for the use of coercive measures in relation to suspects. In 2019, authorities began applying with renewed vigor a preexisting special aliens control law allowing non-citizens to be detained and deported from Sweden, even after being acquitted in court of terrorist allegations.

A central actor in this respect has been the Säpo. In addition to traditional methods of gathering intelligence, Säpo (2010: 24) conduct what are referred to as “voluntary talks” (*frivilliga samtal*). These primarily involve contacting young people who are not crime suspects, but who are perceived either to be at risk of being radicalized or as important individuals in the sense that they have access to information that Säpo want to verify or dismiss. Säpo estimate that there are thousands of violent Islamist extremists living in Sweden. The supervision of these is a concern for the whole state. By means of local action plans, public employees are commissioned by Säpo to contribute to their intelligence-gathering efforts (Skf 2017: 74). Cooperation is emphasized as a form of preventive work. The Swedish Migration Board (*Migrationsverket*) is one of the agencies that have developed a close collaboration with Säpo (Säpo 2017: 72).

What makes the situation in Sweden all the more compelling is that, from a global perspective, Sweden has been relatively unaffected by terrorist attacks carried out under the guise of violent jihadism. The most deadly attack occurred in 2017, when five people lost their lives. The perpetrator, who carried out the attack in the name of ISIS, hijacked a truck and ran down pedestrians on a shopping street in central Stockholm. Prior to that, the most lethal incident occurred in 2010. This attack was also executed in the central areas of the capital. Fortunately, the suicide bomber killed only himself. Although these types of attacks are rare, they are crucial to the normalization of repressive state interventions within the field of security (cf. Flyghed 2002; Sim and Thomas 1983).

Repression Between Coercion and Consent

Repression is a key concept in critical theory, especially within Marxism and the postcolonial tradition. Fanon (1991[1963]: 65), for example, in his account of the dehumanizing effects of colonization, describes “wars of repression” entailing mass arrests, mass killings, and generalized torture. While Muslims have not been subjected to such measures in Sweden, repression should not be equated only with extreme forms of physical violence. According to Fanon, repression can also be performed in manners that are “more elegant, less bloodthirsty,” whereby “quite peaceful” means are employed to neutralize the opposition. So what exactly is “repression”?

Marcuse (1955: 16) explains that “ever since the first, prehistoric restoration of domination following the first rebellion, repression from without has been supported by repression from within: the unfree individual introjects his masters and their commands into his own mental apparatus.” In other words, for Marcuse, repression has both internal and external aspects. On the one hand, it entails constraints imposed in order to maintain social hierarchies. On the other hand, repression is understood in a psychoanalytic fashion as internalized by individuals in a complex manner. In this process, expressions of repressive tolerance are vital (Marcuse 1969). The argument is that, even in liberal societies, tolerance is limited: people are induced to accept the rule of law and to tolerate the authorities. This

tolerance is, in many instances, serving the cause of oppression. What is established, in other words, is a form of “repressive peace,” to borrow from Lefebvre (2016[1972]).

Brown (2006) has revitalized the discussion of repressive tolerance in many respects, although her work draws more on Foucault than Marcuse. While tolerance, for Marcuse (1969: 82), is a “non-practice,” a passive state employed by the authorities, Brown (2006: 13) focuses on its quality as a cultural norm. She addresses how, initially, the War on Terror was legitimized by a discourse of tolerance toward Islam and Muslims (especially the innocent women and children) who were to be liberated. For her, tolerance strengthens a multicultural discourse that fixes difference, while consolidating self-perceptions of Western supremacy. My study subscribes to Brown’s discussion on the role of tolerance in contemporary politics, while its understanding of repression emphasizes, in line with classical Marxist accounts, the state as a fundamental node in the exercise of power.

For Althusser (1971), the Marxist philosopher, repression involves physical force, but he also links the term to subtle, everyday domination, as well as to administrative and judicial measures taken by what he defines as the “repressive state apparatus.” For Althusser, the role of ideology is key. Repression that appears through the “ideological state apparatus” is seen primarily as symbolic. One should bear in mind that, for the analysis that I employ here, this does not mean that this form of repression is necessarily less powerful: stigmatization, for example, is a powerful repressive tool because it can lead to an internalization of dominance (cf. Ferree 2004).

Accordingly, in order to capture these different forms of repression, it is crucial to be observant of the ways through which the current order is preserved and power-distributed. As noted above, the modern state is fundamental to this, as are notions of “the nation.” In the emergence of the nation-state order, repression in the form of elimination and exploitation of whole populations, as well as the enforcement of racial hierarchies within the new imagined community and its administrative borders, has been vital (Balibar 2011b[1991]: 104). Compared with historical conjunctures based on more overt forms of racism, repressive measures are nowadays usually designed on the basis of color-blind parameters, but are rarely race-neutral in their consequences (Davis 1998).

I argue that the postcolonial tradition offers rewarding insights into the quest to grasp why different groups are imagined as constituting a threat. Said’s (1978) work provides a basis for explorations of the relationship between representations of Muslims as the Other—as barbarians, as potential terrorists—and the implementation of repressive measures against them. Experiences of racial profiling at airports have been understood as a consequence of fears projected along racial lines (Bonikowski 2004; Semati 2010). Here, the role of architecture is crucial because it designs exclusionary social boundaries by producing repressive zones of surveillance (Amar 2010: 577). This type of intervention can be seen as a form of “prepression”—a combination of prevention and repression, which in the pre-crime time frame criminalizes what are thought to be risky behaviors and risky populations (Schinkel 2011: 376).

Rather than leaning exclusively on one theoretical tradition, I maintain that it is important to merge Marxist with postcolonial perspectives. Ahmed’s (2004: 120) work is illustrative in this regard. She interprets the War on Terror as an accumulation of affects that produce surplus value in the form of anxiety, fear, nationalism, etc. From Marx, Ahmed takes the complex formula M-C-M, which captures how money (M) is used to buy commodities (C), which the capitalist later sells for more money (M). In order to highlight the role of labor in this process, Marx identified the full cycle as M-C-M', where ' stands for the surplus value produced by workers, allowing money to be converted into capital. Ahmed insists on this being a transmutative process of circulation, where the original

form is altered over time. While she is interested in understanding the role of emotions in mediating the relationship between the individual and the collective, my focus here is on repression. I therefore see it as fruitful to combine her reasoning with Marcuse's (1955: 35) theorizing on "surplus repression." For him, this concept captures the excess of limitations infected by external actors: it is the extra force imposed in relation to the normalized repression of everyday life. In this analysis, I combine Marcuse's concept with Ahmed's sophisticated account of how such a phenomenon affects the psyche, while also binding subjects together.

While there have been disagreements between scholars on the subject of repression, these have paved the way for rewarding dialogues. Hall's legacy is important in this respect because his line of thinking can be used as a bridge between theoretical traditions (see, e.g., Hall et al. 1982[1978]). Although Hall never rejected Marxism, neither did he accept the notion of reducing complex matters to the outcome of the relations of production, which, he argued, limits the range and relevance of classical Marxist accounts. By engaging with postcolonial scholarship, Hall (1986) facilitated a greater understanding of the relationship between repression as a part of class struggles and the production of hierarchies based on race/ethnicity within the system of nation states. What is distinctive about Hall's perspective—in dialogue with Gramsci and others who question limited understandings of agency (cf. Burawoy and Wright 1990)—is the close attention paid to the correlation between coercion and consent. From this follows the importance of uncovering distinctive features, as well as similar tendencies, across hard-edged policing and the more consensual exercise of state power. From this also follows an emphasis on the shifting qualities of state authority, as well as an understanding that repression—in its different forms—has the potential to backfire (cf. Hess and Martin 2006).

Methodology and Analytical Framework

This article emerges from a report that I prepared for Civil Rights Defenders (Schlarek Mulinari 2019). The report's aim was to capture experiences of racial profiling by interviewing ethnic minorities and people who are racialized as "nonwhite," primarily from marginalized residential areas in Sweden's larger cities. What distinguished the interviews conducted with the informants who identified as Muslim were descriptions of becoming targets for anti-terrorism measures. In this article, I explore these particular experiences and the theoretical implications thereof, in contrast to the report, where I focused mainly on their encounters and which was less theoretically oriented.

The empirical material is based primarily on focus group interviews—a methodology used in previous studies of Muslims' experiences of the War on Terror (Blackwood et al. 2015; Cherney and Murphy 2016). I conducted three focus group interviews. One was organized with six participants, all of whom identified as Muslim. The composition of the other two, with a total of eleven participants, was based on the informants having been raised in stigmatized neighborhoods. A significant proportion of these came from families that had migrated to Sweden from countries where Islam is the dominant religion. In the effort not to impose my categorization onto the informants, I have chosen to analyze only those experiences that the informants, themselves, described as being related to their Muslim background. In addition, four individual interviews were also conducted. I approached these individuals after suggestions from the participants in the focus groups.

Given the delicate nature of the topic, I did not interview any minors. For ethical reasons, I do not include detailed background information in the analysis either because it

could risk revealing the informants' identities. For the sake of transparency and readability, the ages of the informants are indicated, although only in approximate terms.

The sampling procedure precludes me from making generalizations about the situation of all Muslims in Sweden or of all forms of repression affecting this group. Rather, my goal has been to focus on specific experiences of becoming a target of anti-terrorism measures based on vague or questionable grounds, with a spotlight on encounters with Säpo and other security controls. The emphasis on the selection criterion of becoming a target on such grounds—without sufficient cause, and often without cause at all, except for being Muslim—implies that the experiences of people who have been convicted of terrorism rest beyond the scope of the study. The study's scope is also limited by the overlap that exists between security measures and migration policies. While my intention was not to focus on general experiences of repressive policies against asylum-seekers, it is impossible to side-step completely this policy area, as will become clear below.

I have conducted the analysis within the framework of critical race theory (CRT). CRT proposes that the experiences of people who suffer racism are a crucial source of knowledge and, as such, are pivotal to the construction of theory that aims at challenging injustices (Solórzano and Yosso 2002). More specifically, I have interpreted the informants' experiences of security controls and encounters with Säpo as lying within a spectrum between coercion and consent. The next section below focuses on expressions of repression based on direct and undisguised forms of state action. In the ensuing section, I consider a more refined form of repression.

Between a Nightmare...

In Sweden, the police routinely stop ethnic minorities and people who are racialized as “nonwhite,” under various pretexts. What distinguishes Muslims' experiences is that they are linked to a very serious type of criminality, namely terrorism (Schclarek Mulinari 2019). As a result, they have unique encounters with the agents of the repressive state apparatus:

They [Säpo] have stolen seven years of my life. They never said: “We are sorry.” One day they just communicated: “You're no longer a security risk.” [...] If you don't have blond hair and blue eyes, if you're a blackhead from the Middle East, then they don't care about human rights. The law applies differently to us. [...] It's still a nightmare. When I scream in my sleep, my wife wakes me up. I often panic. (Male informant, 45)

The quotation describes the consequences of a judicial process that extended over several years, in which the informant was suspected of and, for a period of time, incarcerated for allegedly financing terrorism. The informant himself links the experience of being labeled a “security risk” to not having “blond hair and blue eyes.” In arguing that “[t]he law applies differently to us,” the man contends that he has been treated as part of a suspect community, i.e., a minority that has become the focus of particular attention by the state (Cherney and Murphy 2016). As a “blackhead”—a pejorative term for nonwhite Swedes—the informant questions whether the judicial system is as color-blind and race-neutral as it professes to be (cf. Davis 1998).

In the shadow of the individual tragedy described here, it is possible to investigate the experience of becoming a target of anti-terrorism measures. In the Swedish context, wars of repression should not be understood in the most ferocious sense—as arenas where torture

and mass murder are used to incite fear and subdue opposition (cf. Fanon 1991[1963]). The informant accuses Säpo of having “stolen seven years” of his life: “It’s still a nightmare.” On one level—a material level—he was detained and incapacitated, prevented from continuing his life as he saw fit. Once set free, he was required to report to a police station on a periodic basis. His financial opportunities were also limited because his assets were frozen. This can be regarded as the external aspects of surplus repression—the judicial and bureaucratic reality, beyond the daily experiences of Muslims, in general, in Sweden, deprives him of his full potential (cf. Marcuse 1955).

On a more psychological level, the experience provides insights into the internal dimensions of repression. The consequences of the external repression live on within him, even though he has been exonerated and was released from confinement some time ago. Grasping the temporal aspect of repression is crucial for understanding this phenomenon as not a single act, but as a process that continues and accumulates over time. The informant makes clear that repression has been internalized. The fact that the informant describes the role of his partner in handling his “panic” is significant in this context: “When I scream in my sleep, my wife wakes me up.” Repression not only creates emotional restraints at the personal level, but also expands into the immediate social setting through an interaction between the psychological, social, and material reality. Thus, beyond the primary target of repression, a secondary party also becomes involved. What we see here is a process whereby repression moves from one person to another, producing a surplus repression. I understand this as a formula that highlights how the original repressive act is transmuted, taking on a different form through the circulation of the phenomenon between bodies (cf. Ahmed 2004). My interpretation is that the informant is describing the consequence of an extra force imposed on him that, in a modified form, “infects” his partner.

It is important to emphasize that the informant was subjected to a legally and ideologically sanctioned form of repression, which may explain why he did not receive an apology when the claims against him were dropped. This reveals the omnipotence of the repressive state apparatus that follows from the expansion of the coercive measures that can be used against suspects. This shift has quantitative consequences, as more people become targets for anti-terrorism measures on vague or questionable grounds when the field of legally sanctionable acts is expanded. People do not become suspects based solely on their actions, however. As Pantazis and Pemberton (2009: 649) explain in their discussion of how a “suspect community” is produced, “if we consider ‘suspicion’ in the form of a pyramid, then at the base, which will apply to the vast majority of cases, suspicion is primarily linked to an individual’s perceived membership of a subgroup and not to suspected wrongdoing.”

Given the way in which the informants were recruited for this study—and given my interest in experiences of being targeted for anti-terrorism actions on such ambiguous grounds—it is not surprising that the material is dominated by accounts from the lower sections of Pantazis and Pemberton’s pyramid. As another male informant explained to me:

I had been with my aunt. I was stressed and had jogged to the subway. When I was about to pass the turnstile, plain-clothes policemen stopped me: “Where are you going?” “What have you got in the bag?” “Who are you going to meet?” They made me take off my shoes and refused to let me pass until they’d checked my bag. Meanwhile people passed, my aunt’s friends: “What has he done?” “Is he a terrorist?” (Male informant, 30)

The informant describes the gaze of passers-by as allegations formulated in the form of questions: “What has he done?” “Is he a terrorist?” The repressive element must here be understood as a public stigma (Ferree 2004: 91). What characterizes this experience is the

role of the public and, more concretely, the way symbolic repression works through the bodies of the public, producing the informant as a terrorist suspect. What the example also illustrates is the context in which repression occurs: the informant had visited his aunt and was about to take the subway. It is important to reveal the everyday aspects of becoming the target of anti-terrorism measures in order to appreciate more fully the way in which the repressive turn inflicts harm on Muslims. Airports—another transportation hub—play a unique role and many of my informants mentioned them in their statements.

If experiences of being accused directly of terrorism by Säpo are at the top of the pyramid of suspicion, and public controls in the subway are a couple of steps below in the pyramid, then experiences at airports account for much of the base. Experiences of racial profiling at airports have been analyzed as a consequence of the way the Other is produced as a subject inciting fear (Blackwood et al. 2015; Nagra and Maurutto 2016). My interviews confirm descriptions of airports as repressive zones of surveillance—places in which Muslims become targets and are constructed as suspects (cf. Amar 2010). For example, one female informant stated:

I've spent years traveling to Brussels, via Bromma airport. They stop me every single time, and make me go into one of their rooms to remove my hijab. Five times in a row! It cannot be a coincidence. (Female informant, 30)

Although the vast majority of security controls are not perceived as a nightmare akin to that experienced by the first informant, the routine character of security measures makes them essential in the reproduction of hierarchies: it is repression in the daily form of overt domination. “Five times in a row!”—this declaration reveals the routinization of repression and must be understood in relation to the ways in which single events become part of a repetitive pattern that normalizes that repression. The enhanced scrutiny is not perceived as “coincidence.” Rather, it is a form of “prepression”—a measure that targets people before a crime has been committed (cf. Schinkel 2011).

What the informant describes also strikes me as a form of repressive tolerance (cf. Marcuse 1969). For religious reasons, it is preferable to remove the hijab in a reserved room than to do so in public. Hence, what is portrayed here is a form of tolerance that recognizes difference based on a multicultural logic that takes gender and religion into account. The tolerance displayed, however, can also be interpreted as embedded in the logic that has expanded post-9/11, whereby Muslims constitute a group that is particularly vulnerable to coercive measures, especially when traveling (cf. Brown 2006). From this perspective, the reserved room becomes a repressive instrument that legitimizes oppression. This form of repressive tolerance is less painful, though, than other control measures that target Muslims at airports:

When traveling alone, I always think about what I wear. I try to act as small as possible. [...] I've been humiliated so many times. You can defend yourself when you're alone, but when you travel with your children it becomes a completely different thing. The worst thing is when they check your baby's diaper. The very idea that you've hidden something there is offensive. But what can you say? (Female informant, 33)

This informant highlights the different levels of vulnerability one can experience when traveling alone versus when traveling with children. Moreover, her role as a mother and caregiver is discounted and she is regarded as a potential terrorist with possibly more places in which to hide weapons and explosives (e.g., a diaper). Even though she tries “to act as small as possible”—to pass through security without being noticed—her body

is a racial signifier that explains why she is “humiliated” repeatedly at airports. Thus, the informant can be seen as exposed to a security measure that affirms the racial order of the state, while shaping the borders of the imagined community. I contend that, on a structural level, repression is inflicted on people as the result of a hierarchic nation-state system that is organized along the axis of race/ethnicity (cf. Hall 1986). My interpretation is that the informant’s strategy of making herself invisible is an “act” in response to the targeting of difference. As such, it is the consequence of what Balibar (2011a[1991]: 39) has described as “exclusive racism,” which aims “to purify the social body of the stain or danger the inferior races may represent.” Following this line of thought, the security control becomes a way to regulate those regarded as “contaminants.”

The coerciveness of this repressive form is revealed by the fact that the “very idea” that precedes the security control is “offensive.” Still, she exposes herself to it: work demands her to travel. The informant asks: “But what can you say?” It is important to reflect on this question because, in the tension between the enforcement of a repressive power and resistance to it, a space emerges in which the informant can be something other than a docile subject on whom projections of fear are imposed and control measures are taken (cf. Said 1978).

Male informant, 26: I’ve always wanted to test something, but I don’t dare. At the airport when they ask: “Where are you going?” someday I want to respond: “To Syria.” [...] No, but honestly. There isn’t much room for making jokes. We don’t have the privilege of joking about everything. There are limits.

Female informant, 22: The airport isn’t a place for jokes. They can do anything they want with you, even send you straight off to Guantánamo. [...]

Male informant, 26: Yes, they can justify anything.

Female informant, 22: What you can do is ask critical questions: “Do you often stop Muslims?” “How does that fit in with your values?”

A bad joke is grounds for being sent “straight off to Guantánamo.” This evokes the worst possible form of repression that can be applied to a Swedish Muslim—incarceration in another part of the world. Hence, the conversation illustrates how repression connects Muslims within a global order, where stories of similar experiences circulate and become important reference points or serve as cautionary tales for those who have not (yet) been targeted. Indeed, Guantánamo is a place where human rights do not apply. I understand the mention of this prison as a reminder of what might happen if the limits of tolerance are reached and the state decides to break with the guiding principle of this repressive form—passive policies that reproduce their power (cf. Marcuse 1969). Thus, what the conversation reveals is that the War on Terror is experienced as a form of repressive peace in the sense that subjects are induced to accept the rules of, and their place within, an oppressive system (cf. Lefebvre 2016[1972]).

The conversation also shows, however, tolerance toward those who subordinate themselves and resist within accepted boundaries. Even though there is not “much room for making jokes,” what the informants highlight in the dialogue is the possibility of challenging authority, even in situations where one is exposed to repressive measures: “Do you often stop Muslims?” “How does that fit in with your values?” My argument is that the space for resistance should be understood as structured within a framework of dominance that relies on coercion. The velvet glove of the state upholding repressive tolerance has to be understood in relation to its possibility to transform into an iron fist when needed.

...and Repressive Consent

Up to this point, my focus has been on a spectrum of coercive measures. In the following section, I address repression inflicted on the informants in more subtle ways, primarily via attempts to obtain what I define as “repressive consent.” This concept applies, in particular, to situations in which Säpo, in different ways, contact people who are not suspected of any specific crimes, engaging them in the so-called “voluntary talks.” In these cases, Säpo act more in a spirit of consensus:

I was about 16 years old and had just started a youth association at my school. [...] One day I received a call from an unregistered number. It was from Säpo: “Hello! We’d like to meet and talk to you about what you do.” [...] They came in civilian clothes. Mom was home. I had a binder with our statutes and protocols that I showed them. It was a friendly meeting. They just wanted to talk. So we sat there and drank tea. (Female informant, 24)

The informant describes the meeting with Säpo as a “friendly” encounter. I interpret this as the informant perceiving Säpo to be communicating without threatening to use direct force or to employ coercive measures; rather, the emphasis from Säpo is on cooperation and dialogue. By handling the case privately—calling in advance, making an appointment, and coming in civilian clothes—no social stigma is produced (cf. Ferree 2004). For my informant, the meeting with Säpo felt like a friendly chat: “we sat there and drank tea.” The consequence is that no surplus repression is produced: the power inflicted on the informant does not adversely impact anyone else, such as a partner or spouse. The sense of tactful management is linked to the fact that she claims that “[t]hey just wanted to talk.”

While there are occasions when Säpo engage with the informants in ways that are not intended to inflict discomfort, it is not, of course, always the case:

I’m having a meeting in my office. Then a colleague knocks and says: “There’s people waiting for you out here.” He didn’t want to say who it was, but in the end he said: “It’s Säpo.” [...] So I went out: “We were in the neighborhood and thought we could discuss the possibility of having a meeting.” [...] You know, people look at you differently after something like that. (Male informant, 30)

Although the informants are approached in different ways and the conversations take place in different venues, what is noteworthy is that Säpo ask whether there is a “possibility of having a meeting.” The fact that they *ask* is salient in the analysis of repressive forms based on consent. By addressing the informants as free subjects, Säpo give them the choice to obey or disobey (cf. Althusser 1971).

While some of the informants were more open to family, friends, and their religious community about having been contacted by Säpo, several expressed how the contact with this authority produced anxiety and stress. One informant told me that he had talked about it with only four individuals, including me. An important aspect, here, is the fear of what other people might think. On the one hand, one can be perceived as a security risk if Säpo initiate a meeting; on the other hand, one can be thought of as an informant for Säpo. In both instances, “people look at you differently,” creating a lack of trust. Consequently, this preventive work may be understood as a form of prepression—a measure located at the intersection between prevention and repression, which restricts people’s lives (cf. Schinkel 2011). In contrast to forms of prepression at airports that affect Muslims under the guise of random controls, people who are approached by Säpo are contacted specifically

because they are considered to be at risk of radicalization. On the whole, my informants highlighted that Säpo had contacted them because they were interested in obtaining information about people in their social environments or neighborhoods. This element explains why several of the actual meetings with Säpo were characterized by a friendly tone. As Fanon (1991[1963]: 135) describes it, at “opportune moments,” repression is combined with “gestures of friendship.”

The interview [with Säpo] began with the same questions that the Migration Board had asked me. He was checking, I guess, whether the answers matched. Then he began to talk, and talk and talk. He went on about me being a good example. How great it was that, even though I hadn't lived here for a long time, I had managed to study and get a job. [...] Finally I interrupted him: “I appreciate these compliments, but what does it have to do with anything?” (Male informant, 28)

Despite the positive remarks about him as a person, the informant feels a need to interrupt: “I appreciate these compliments, but...” This statement demonstrates that efforts to persuade people to cooperate require trust and that the line between consent and coercion may be quite thin (cf. Hall et al. 1982[1978]: 204). The friendly tone in the interactions with Säpo is premised on the voluntary element of the conversations.

An interview can become an interrogation, however. Even though Säpo officers call—or simply arrive at one's workplace—and state that they want only to talk, it is important to explore the issue of the risks embedded in refusal. These risks expose the difficulty of separating the external aspects of repression from its internal elements.

I was waiting for my decision from the Migration Board. Then I get a call: “Hi, I'm calling from the Swedish Security Service.” [...] “Does this concern my application for citizenship?” “No, no, no, it doesn't concern your application.” [...] They contacted me several times after that. Finally I said: “I want to live a normal life.” He just responded: “If you don't want to continue this cooperation, and feel obliged, then you don't have to talk to us anymore.” “You're forcing me! I don't want you to contact me anymore.” (Male informant, 28)

What is important about these statements is the effort that the Säpo official undertakes to obtain consent from the informant: “If you don't want to continue this cooperation, and feel obliged, then you don't have to talk to us anymore.” The statement indicates an attempt to make the informant do something against his will without actually threatening the informant of the consequences of noncompliance. My interpretation is that Säpo are sometimes unsuccessful in concealing the repressive logic through which they hope to obtain and secure cooperation and collaboration. Essentially, while Säpo want the individual to feel that the “cooperation” can continue on his own terms, the informant still feels that Säpo are “forcing” him to talk. The informant's question, “Does this concern my application for citizenship?,” reveals his vulnerability. He has just commenced his asylum process, and the query is a reminder that the state is bolstered not only by claims concerning the monopoly of the legitimate use of violence, but also by the authority to include or exclude people through its administration of national borders (cf. Balibar 2011a[1991], 2011b[1991]). Given that anti-terrorism measures are formed in close association with migration policies, it is not at all surprising that questions of citizenship form a strong undercurrent in the interview material, despite the fact that it was not collected with this focus in mind.

The informant's response underscores the fact that Säpo are not always effective and the attempt to manufacture repressive consent leads the informant to state that: “I don't want you to contact me anymore.” From the perspective of Säpo, their efforts have backfired

(cf. Hess and Martin 2006). The informant resists and does not want to talk to them. What is distinctive about repressive *consent*, in contrast to repressive *tolerance*, is that the state apparatus requires people's active participation. While the state authorities can, to a certain degree, tolerate people who resist further involvement, repressive consent, even if it produces frustration and anger, works only if it motivates the informants to participate and contribute. For Säpo to succeed, the informants must accept the repressive agenda. This element causes the agents in the repressive state apparatus to turn to ideology in the sense that they try to persuade by argument. This, in turn, requires informants to justify their reasoning:

They think they have to make me collaborate. But if I hear something that's dangerous for Sweden, then I will call them because it will also be dangerous for me, for my family, for my children. Everyone who lives here has a responsibility to take care of Sweden. (Male informant, 45)

Here, the informant has an apparent problem with the way that Säpo tries to motivate him to contribute. According to him, all residents of the country have a "responsibility to take care of Sweden" and he does not have to be convinced to help this cause. As I see it, the problem for Säpo is that they have not secured what Burawoy and Wright (1990: 256) identify as "spontaneous consent"—where no direct threats are needed in order to make people accept their place within a hierarchical system, and what authorities have established as the appropriate course of action within it. Rather than focusing on coercion, then, questions of how authority is legitimized come to the fore—a topic that also arose in my interviews:

They wanted me to help them if I heard or saw something. They wanted me to play on the blue-and-yellow team. "This is your chance to become Swedish." He didn't say it directly, but indirectly: "Now you have a possibility to prove that you're Swedish." [...] I answered: "That isn't something that I'm interested in. I cannot provide you with information that you cannot get elsewhere. My perspective also clashes with several of your most trusted advisors'." (Male informant, 29)

At the core is the informant's own willingness to "help" when he hears or sees "something." The statement illustrates how Säpo attempt to recruit Muslims by treating cooperation as a "chance to become Swedish." That Muslims must "prove" their loyalty to the nation—and that they can do so by providing information about other Muslims—raises questions about what it means to be "on the blue-and-yellow team." In so doing, it reveals the symbols on which repressive consent is founded and the ways that nationalistic feelings are generated and reignited as a consequence of the War on Terror (cf. Ahmed 2004). Apparently, the informant is not a passive subject in this exchange. He dismisses Säpo's logic, arguing that his view "clashes" with theirs. For me, the underlying conflict concerns competing views of state and nation and, more specifically, the relationship between race and the security policy that has been developed since 9/11 (cf. Fekete 2004). The role of consent in the current order, at least with regard to the Swedish context, has to be emphasized. Certainly, the informant describes how Säpo allude to a policy toward minorities that aims at assimilation—in the sense of subordinating people under the banner of the nation. The informant, however, indicates that he does not want to cooperate. If prevailing security policy were based on the technique of forcing people into submission, then the informant could probably not make this choice. Interestingly, the informant's rejection of the attempt by Säpo to recruit him forces Säpo to tolerate his position. Unlike the informant whose legal status is at stake, the one who is Swedish by citizenship can force the agents of state

to back down. In this case, they have no further weapons in their arsenal—to return to the analogy of tolerance as the establishment of repressive peace (cf. Lefebvre 2016[1972]).

Concluding Discussion and Summary

In this article, I have intertwined Marxist and postcolonial perspectives in order to understand different forms of repression as operating within a spectrum. This has facilitated an exploration of Swedish Muslims' experiences of becoming targets of anti-terrorism measures as a “nightmare”—as a consequence of coercive measures that exert powerful constraints on people's lives—or as something that is performed more in the spirit of consensus—“over a cup of tea.” Earlier research has often demonstrated a narrow understanding that essentially reduces repression to overt state violence, rather than viewing the phenomenon in the spectrum between coercion and consent. What distinguishes this study is its more nuanced consideration of the range of ways in which repression can be exercised and resisted.

Empirically, the study lends support to what other researchers have concluded about the experience of Muslims in the West—that the War on Terror has had serious consequences for this group, raising concerns about whose security is achieved at the expense of whom (Cherney and Murphy 2016; Pantazis and Pemberton 2009). When Muslims are subjected to repression on imprecise, questionable, or vague grounds, the relationship between security measures and racism becomes apparent (Fekete 2004; Kundnani 2015; Semati 2010). Given that authorities throughout the world are continuing to advance repressive policies, especially in response to the fear of terrorism, it is essential to continue exploring how Muslims are reduced to the Other—on whom fears are projected and control measures taken (cf. Said 1978).

Theoretically, this article has advanced several arguments concerning the repressive state apparatus and the forms of power through which it maintains its authority. I have shown that measures that target individuals also impinge on other people who have close bonds to those who are directly affected, as well as Muslims in general. Experiences of becoming a target are linked across time and space through circulation and exchange, enabling repression to be experienced and felt beyond the primary target of state intervention. By combining Marcuse's (1955) concept of surplus repression with Ahmed's (2004) understanding of surplus value as a process where a phenomenon takes a different form through circulation, I demonstrate that repression inflicted on subjects from external actors binds people together. My interviews indicate that repression is passed, from a husband to his partner, but also from Guantánamo to Sweden, underlining Muslims' vulnerable position. In a complex interplay, the repression inflicted originally is transformed and revalorized.

Furthermore, my study develops the concept of repressive consent, identifying interventions that tread a line between coercion and consent (cf. Hall et al. 1982[1978]). The exercise of power in a combination of forms is key to understanding the ways in which societal hierarchies are maintained by agents of the repressive state apparatus (cf. Althusser 1971). Because one of the main contributions of the study is the development of the concept of repressive consent, its qualities will be further specified in these final paragraphs.

With the term “repressive consent,” I have explored situations where state agents attempt to induce Muslims to carry out actions that they really do not wish to undertake. The problem for the state is that consent does not appear spontaneously (cf. Burawoy and Wright 1990). What does it mean when a national security service defines such a conversation as

“voluntary”? What risks exist for those who refuse to subordinate themselves to Säpo’s agenda? Who can afford to pay the price associated with this type of risk? These questions indicate the need to understand the *unsuccessful* efforts of Säpo officials to manufacture consent as fruitless attempts to conceal the repressive power on which their work is based. My interviews underscore the role of citizenship in the process of persuading people to cooperate and collaborate. I contend that this element has to be analyzed in relation to the repressive power that comes from the administration of nation-state frontiers within a hierarchical world order (cf. Balibar 2011a[1991], 2011b[1991]). Viewed as a crime-preventive measure, I regard repressive consent as a form of repression, given that the intervention targets people who, rather than having committed a punishable act, belong to a suspect community (cf. Schinkel 2011).

Whereas repressive tolerance needs only the passive involvement of people in the sense of their accepting the rules determined by authorities (cf. Marcuse 1969), the use of repressive consent stems from the state’s needing the active participation of subjects: people have to be *recruited*. As such, repression has to be internalized by the informants. In my interviews, it becomes clear that the production of repressive consent is made in an effort to reduce conflict. This explains the gestures of friendship from the agents of the repressive state apparatus described by the informants.

While repressive consent and repressive tolerance differ regarding subjects’ assigned roles, there are also similarities. Both repressive forms are used presently in order to target Muslims. Both are based on the velvet glove of the state, while relying on the iron fist if necessary. Furthermore, my material demonstrates that repressive tolerance and repressive consent are exercises of authority embedded in a logic that has expanded in the aftermath of 9/11. What is enforced is a world order where Muslims are particular—and ongoing—objects of suspicion (cf. Brown 2006).

I regard it as analytically important to emphasize that experiences of racial profiling at airports also contain elements of consent. At airports, my informants were not made to submit to repressive policing at borders while fleeing for their lives, but were traveling for business or pleasure. As such, there is an element of *choice* to be considered. According to the informants in my study, findings which are consistent with those published elsewhere (cf. Mythen et al. 2009; Nagra and Maurutto 2016), this consent does not extend further than to the situation in which people are chosen for enhanced scrutiny. Subjecting to enhanced scrutiny means upholding the status of repressive peace (cf. Lefebvre 2016[1972]).

With this line of reasoning in mind, repressive consent has a much greater scope than has been applied in this article. It may also be assumed to permeate or regulate other contexts that are characterized by interactions with state agents structured hierarchically (e.g., community policing). People relate to the repressive state apparatus not only when they are the targets of various measures, however. In Sweden and elsewhere, public employees are being encouraged to play a more deceptive role in the implementation of security policy. This may be regarded as constituting an expansion of the frontiers of the repressive state apparatus. How these public employees negotiate their position will be decisive for the future character of the nation states in the West and the place of Muslims within it. Will public employees—teachers, social workers, nurses, etc.—comply freely with these developments? Is there a need to manufacture repressive consent? Or are coercive measures also to be implemented in relation to these public employees?

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Compliance with Ethical Standards

Conflict of interest There are no conflicts of interest to declare.

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