Debunking Islamophobia: Addressing Anti-Muslim Sentiment Related to Religion

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Abstract:

In today's world, the growing unrest, and divisions along racial, ethnic and religious lines across the globe is sending alarm bells for humanity. Even developed countries with socioeconomic advancement have failed to sustain equitable societies that provide mutual respect and harmony. Islamophobia is a narrowly defined form of racism targeting Muslim immigrants from non-Western Arab, Asian, and African societies. This abstract explores its origins, manifestations, and consequences, focusing on religious aspects.

By examining various examples from different societies, academic research, and expert opinions, this abstract will highlight the importance of debunking Islamophobic stereotypes and misconceptions. It discusses the need for comprehensive education and interfaith dialogue, promoting understanding and empathy amongst individuals of different religious backgrounds. Moreover, the role of media representation in perpetuating Islamophobic narratives will be gauged along with suggesting ways to counteract biased reporting through accurate, balanced, and inclusive portrayals of Islam and Muslims. Discriminatory policies, surveillance, and hate crimes impact Muslims, highlighting the need for legal protections and cultural diversity.

To conclude, this abstract calls for a multidimensional approach to address Islamophobia. It advocates for collective efforts to challenge biases, promote education, enhance media representation, and establish inclusive policies. By debunking Islamophobic narratives and fostering a climate of acceptance and respect, societies can strive towards a future where Muslim individuals are treated with dignity and equality, free from discrimination based on their religious beliefs.

Keywords: *Debunking Islamophobia,* Anti-Muslim *racism*, *coexistence, Interfaith dialogue and harmony, surveillance practices, discriminatory priorities.*

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Introduction

The history of the interaction between Islam and the "others," particularly the West--- that is spread over the span of fourteen centuries--- is full of surprises ranging from learning, peace, alliance, and co-existence to hate, controversies and war and beyond. Hence, both the ends took advantages to understand each other but unfortunately the dark side of this interaction has been visible on many occasions because of certain reasons including the stereotypes associated with Islam. The history of the Crusades might be a relevant example in this context, which allows the observers to better understand the various factors behind the conflict between Islam and the West. Some people in the West, relying upon the prevailing stereotypes, consider Islam as a religion of violence and extremism that intends to forcefully "Islamize" the Western world. On the other hand, there are some circles in the Islamic world that believe in the similar stereotypes associated with the West and its civilization. This paper attempts to identify the various domestic and international trajectories of Islamophobia---for the attention of policy makers and think tanks---in order to address them from the Islamic religious perspective with the aim to bring about a constructive change to the socio-religious outlook of the hardliners of each end.

Introductory and Historical Background

"Islamophobia" means "fear of Islam" or in the true sense "unwarranted/unwarranted fear of Islam". As 'phobia' refers to the psychology of fear of something without reason [1] emerged as a term against Muslims in the last two decades of the 20th century and was soon introduced to the whole world by the Western media. One of the earliest major reports in this regard, which for the first time warned British society on the inflation of Islamophobia, was published by Runnymede Trust in 1997 under the title "Islamophobia: A Challenge for Us All". Abovementioned, is a leading UK think tank. [3] For the preparation of this report, the Runnymede Trust constituted a commission in which 18 members were enrolled, most of whom were Muslim experts, were participated in addition to other staff. At the outset of the report, Professor Gordon Conway, vice-chancellor at Sussex University, who headed the commission that prepared the report, acknowledged that:

> *"We did not coin the term Islamophobia. It was already in use among sections of the Muslim community as a term describing the prejudice and discrimination which they experience in their everyday lives. For some of us on the Commission it was a new term, a rather ugly term, and we were not sure how it would be received by the readers of our document. However, it is evident from the responses which we received that Islamophobia describes a real and growing phenomenon——an ugly word for an ugly reality. Hardly a day goes by without references to Islamophobia in the media."* [4]

There are two things to focus on in this report. According to the report, the use of this word by Muslim scholars in the Western world came as a defense of themselves, by which they wanted to tell their speakers not to fear Islam/Muslims. This is also

supported by the fact that in the very next year of this report in 1997, a French Muslim (Soheib Bencheikh) wrote a book entitled "Marianne et le prophète: L'Islam dans la France laïque", praising the religious tolerance and freedom of expression found in France's secular system/constitution. The term 'Islamophobia'. He made it clear that true/true Islam cannot confront with democratic values, so there is absolutely no need to fear France and Muslims, but in view of the religious freedom of 2.5 million Muslims of France (in 1997), if the number of their places of worship is increasing, then it is also not surprising or worried. [5] The second important point in this report is that the Western media has given a lot of islamophobias and is obviously being done and continued as a propaganda against Muslims. Details of this aspect will be described in the following pages to address the underlying causes of Islamophobia. Although this report was prepared in the background of British society, it discussed the reasons and factors that promote Islamophobia and then the dangerous consequences contained in it, which the Commission has warned its government and warning about, are basic things that apply not only to British society, but also to non-Islamic throughout Europe and outside Europe. It also applies entirely to the world. That is why this organization has prepared another similar report after 20 years and recently published it and the data given in it suggests that the issue still needs attention, but many times more attention than ever before, and the global leadership has failed to address it. Report reveals that Islamophobia is a belief attributed to Muslims, due to which Muslims or people with these beliefs are given hatred and contempt. The influence of Islamophobia is visible everywhere from schools and workplaces to the country. [6]

According to a report published first by the European Monitoring Center on Racism and Xenophobia after 9/11, "Summary Report on Islamophobia in the EU after September 11, 2001", Muslims are being treated discriminately in Europe after 9/11.[7] In 2004, the United Nations, in a program titled "Confronting Islamophobia: Education for Tolerance and Understanding", took note of the apparently growing impact of Islamophobia and expressed deep sorrow reports that Religious bias against Muslims is being spread all over the world irrationally.[8] In 2008, survey conducted in 21 countries under the patronage of World Economic Forum reports that gulf of hatred and animosity between Islam and the West is getting widened.[9]

According to International Helsinki Report, after 9/11, it has become routine to investigate and search the homes in Germany, especially Muslims. And the only motive for all these things is their relationship towards Islam. [10] In the light of the European Union council of Europe for racial equality, patience/ peace and prosperity, Muslims today are being treated not only based on faith but also on the basis of race. According to the recommendations no.7 of this, race refers to the place of birth, color, religion, language, nationality, and society. It is also said that it would be considered racial discrimination if we treat anyone based on these features. [11] But the obvious target of this is the Muslims today, and that today it seems to be impossible

the concept of Islamophobia and separating it from the Arab, Asian or African generations.

Several such reports have been published in recent years, suggesting that the rate of hate crime against Muslims continues to rise, for example, according to an international organization's 2017 report, after 99 hate crimes against Muslims were recorded in the FBI in 2001 after 9/11, while this continued in later years. In 2016, it was 127. [12] According to another international report, the countries with the highest proportion of religious restrictions/limitations in the world are the Middle East and North Africa. But in the decade 2007-2017, the proportion of religious restrictions imposed on Muslims in Europe at various government levels has increased significantly. These restrictions also include that Muslim woman will not use Hijab to cover their heads. [13] The reports suggest that the wave of Islamophobia has engulfed the whole world, even Australia, New Zealand [14] and Canada [15] which have been considered relatively good countries in terms of religious tolerance, are no longer exempt from Islamophobia (harassment, hate crime, terrorism, and aggression against Muslims). On many occasions, these countries have been very serious in the eradication of Islamophobia compared to many Western countries.

Basic Motives of Islamophobia

Many experts in Islamic history who have made the subject matter and the field of their recent research have described many internal and external causes of Islamophobia or the hatred of the Muslim concepts in the contemporary Western world. [16] but according to us, there are only two main motivations that appear differently, and they are: Power politics, misunderstanding of Islamic civilization or its conscious/unconscious misrepresentation. This may be easier to understand in a brief context below on the dominance or popularity of Islamic civilization.

There are many such characteristics in Islamic civilization from day one that it has emerged as a 'global' civilization' instead of 'Arabic' civilization. Given its global characteristics, its borders soon widened from east to west. In order to ignore the real reasons for the spread of Islamic civilization, there has always been a propaganda in every forum against Islam that 'Islam has spread by the sword'. Although many non-Muslim scholars in the Western world have also refuted this charge on a systematic basis. On the other hand, it is also a fact that Islam has emerged as the fastest growing religion in the contemporary world even in the decline. In this regard, many scientific analysis reports have been published, such as a research report predicting that in 2060, Muslims having their current population (1.8 billion) will have almost doubled to 9 billion, and thus Islam will become the world's first major religion, leaving Christianity behind. At present, Muslims constitutes 24.1% of the total world population but in 2060, this ratio will be reached by (31.1%), meaning by, three out of every ten will be Muslims. But it is worth noting that the main reason for the increase in the number of Muslims in this report is not the conversion of non-Muslims

to Islam, but the Muslims' own ethnic growth/ increase, whose effect, according to the report, will be seen in Africa and the Middle East. [17]

Whether it is due to religious growth or ethnicity or both, many Western scholars must see it as an alarming situation that is sure to have a profound political, economic, and social impact on the whole world in the future, and if this happens, Muslims will benefit from it overnight, whether they are in the East or in the West. Reports of such findings, of course, are a source of further outrage and concern over anti-Muslim actions in non-Muslim Western circles and western Muslim minorities that are already suffering from stereotypes about Islam/Muslims. With the growing population of Muslims in the Western world, their Islamic cultural manifestations cannot be ignored at all, whether they are related to individual (private) matters related to worship/mosques or to different forms of socio-cultural interaction, because these Islamic cultural phenomena create a certain sense of their presence or identity in the West, although this may hinder the materialistic development of the West. These phenomena do not arise, nor do they create any significant 'disruption' in the individual and collective lives of non-Muslims in the West, but despite this, anti-Islamic elements present these cultural phenomena with the ideology of "clash of civilization" [18] and we see it as a threat to public order. France, for example banned the wearing of veils in 2004 public places. In fact, for promoting ulterior motives, there seems to be western media who play an important role as well. Today, in the name of "clash of civilization", Muslim's identity crisis has created, and Muslims are being attacked every day. [19] The concept of Islamophobia has also emerged from this conflict. This is the reason why we should see that the basic human rights and rights of Muslims should be recognized as citizens, and they should also be given full protection of life, property, and honor like other members of the society.

Political hegemony and its negative effects

In the above context, if we return to the basic motives of Islamophobia, we should not ignore that there is a war of political supremacy in the contemporary world, whose history is as old as that of human. In every nation or society, there is a section that always considers political supremacy as its right. If he gets a chance, he does not waste this opportunity and if he does not get the opportunity, he does not hesitate to become a threat to public. In this regard, the statement of Prof. Dr. Ekmeleldin Ihsanoglu, Secretary General of the OIC Organization of Islamic Cooperation (2004-2014), in which he admits that those responsible for the 9/11 attack were fortunately some Muslims who, however, suffered from reactionary psychology. But he has reservation on two, points of concern in this regard. One is that the way the West has started to react and malign the Muslims of the world on this basis, it does not do so at all, if those responsible for this incident are associated with any other religion. This radical attitude of the West is the root cause of Islamophobia. And according to him that the world must realize that mainstream Muslims and extremist Muslims are two different

things. The former is essentially the regime of Islam, while the latter is always a small segment of people who come out with a terrorist and extremist attitude for various reasons. This is the reason that mainstream Islam condemns those who have been involved in terrorist incidents in Europe after 9/11, because these actions are against the basic teachings of Islam. But on the other hand, in the West as well, there are some elements that are promoting Islamophobia and the basis of the latter class. [20] some Western "intellectuals" are misinterpreting the history of Islam and promoting Islamophobia. According to them, it has been the mission of Islam from the very first day that to forcibly "Islamize" it throughout the world and especially in the West. However, the Qur'an says in clear words that "there is no compulsion in accepting the religion". Also, Islamic history is completely contrary to this misconception, because Muslims did not try to convert non-Muslims, especially in their peak, but gave them their legitimate rights, even on many occasions they were included in the government. [21]

Misunderstanding of Islamic civilization and its negative effects

Western researchers today do not deny the historical fact that in Europe, in the Medieval Era, a hateful and contemptuous impression was created against Islam, without authentic sources, merely on the basis of incorrect facts and false sayings.[22]The political persecution of Muslims in the Christian world was one of the causes, among others.Along with Christian monks, writers, artists, thinkers, and aca demics from Europe also contributed to this derogatory impression.Every misunders tanding about Islam and Muslims today is contributing to a resurgence of Islamophob ia in the West.The Christian religious leaders who appeared to be working for politi cal stability against the Islamic world for their own interests during the Crusades can not be ignored as one of the external causes of these misconceptions, and their refle ction can be seen in the scholarly pursuits of many researchers, orientalists, and their Movement.(23) But one is astonished when same echo is heard and in Muslim circles from contemporary Christian religious leaders. Such as those seen in some statements by Pope Bendict XVI. [24]

Some western politicians are also not far-behind in anti-Islam campaign, such as former U.S. President George W. Bush, who introduced the term "Islamo-fascism" for the first time against Islam.[25] Take the example of 2008 U.S. elections, where President Barack Obama was targeted only as it was argued that his ancestors were Muslims and there was a fear of Islamophobia that Obama himself denied being Muslim. [26]

 One of the most important reasons for not including the Turkiye in European Union is Islam. Interestingly, there was a danger that 21 million Muslims would benefit from it and enter the European country and many European countries would clearly see this new scenario i.e., Europe with such a large population of Muslims. [27] According to an EUMC report published in 2008, Muslims in western countries generally live in poverty therefore, they lack in basic facilities as being enjoyed by western people. [28]

According to the same report, there have been many such evidence where Muslims job seekers are facing discriminatory treatment. There is a big allegation against them that being stereo type they cannot adjust in western society.

The human rights enjoyed by Muslims are lesser than those of other nations who came to the West, and this is due to their religion, i.e., Islam/ Islamic teachings and it is assumed that it is Islam who prevent them from following the loyalty of the Western nation. The general allegation is that Muslims say that they are Muslims first and then British or French. It is also penalizing, and because of this, they are also inferior to these nations. Muslims who migrate to some European countries are also inquired about the Islamic rulings that they follow them, such as teachings about inheritance and hijab. [29]

The purpose of such questions to Muslims who have migrated to the Western world is also to know what kind of religious affiliation the incoming refugees have with the Islamic civilization and other Muslims, including Muslims already in the respective states, because this commitment and now state loyalty have been tested in one context, on which many Islamic scholars have found a way to moderate. it has also been done. [30]

Preventing Islamophobia: Islamic Guidance

There is no doubt that Islamophobia is now increasing alarmingly with all its forms of disrespect for Muslims, which either results directly in the form of hatred, persecution and harassment of Muslims living in the West, or the hatred of Islam and the Prophet (PBUH). By ridiculing, or by attacking mosques and Islamic shrines, to destroy Islamic culture and society, which will hurt Muslims all over the world. [31] But in these circumstances, what should be done in the light of Islamic instructions at a Muslim, individual or collective level, the following points will be discussed in this regard. To break the idol of Islamophobia in the Islamic context, Muslims and related instructions given in this regard should be kept in mind.

Factors leading to misunderstanding between Islam and the West

There is no question that the dominant Western media, which typically presents just one side of a situation and does not do so unintentionally, is the most significant factor in the spread of disinformation and hostility towards Islam and Muslims. There are several programs transmitted worldwide to promote Islam as evil, whether they are news- or political-related shows. Islam and terrorism are being purposefully linked to dogmatism, prejudice, and injustice. Muslims must be active in this arena even though it is very tough to compete with this misinformed media. In order to combat terrorism, the Muslim Ummah will need to deploy its formidable resources, thus it is important to keep the teachings of the Qur'an in mind:

ان الذين كفروا ينفقون اموالهم ليصدوا عن سبيل الله فسينفقونها ثم تكون عليهم حسرة ثم يغلبون ه [32]

"Indeed, these disbelievers are spending their wealth in order to hinder them from the way of Allah, so they will continue to spend their wealth, then they will become jealous of them, and then they will be overcome." "[33]

The lesson in this is that if non-Muslims spend their resources seriously to hinder the path of Islam, then Muslims and others should use their resources to spread the true message of Islam at all levels, individually and collectively, and they should be serious and concerned about it. Surah Al-Asr, also indicates that Muslims should advise each other the truth, i.e., show seriousness about the truth/Islam. Similarly, the numerous verses of the Qur'an in which Muslims are entrusted with the responsibility of preaching and preaching also require that at that time, the religious section of the Muslim Ummah perform the duty as a task.

 The West also perceives Islamophobia's expanding harmful impacts as a threat to itself in various ways, making it more than merely a Muslim issue. A country cannot do anything when its citizens do not respect each other's opinions and relations, whether they are related to Islam or to other nations, according to a number of western intellectuals, political organisations, and politicians. In the same manner, they also think that establishing world peace is currently feasible. when people from other countries do not appreciate one another and when Muslims are not treated with the same respect as people from other countries in Western countries. Additionally, because "racism" in the West is such a troubling issue on a personal level. In response to that Muslims all over the world should appreciate them and according to the Islamic / Quranic tradition of " تعاونوا عل البر "[34,] In the Western world, there is no shortage of academics, legislators, think tanks, or employees. They do defend the case of Muslims or at least make their own attempts to advocate for them for no reason, no matter how important or political. See an illustration of this. Senator Louis Arber stated before the 2007 United Nations Commission on the Rights of Women that Europe has reached a degree of religious prejudice and hostility towards Muslims, and it is the duty of the Western ruling elite to address this prejudice and hostility. He continued by saying that it was crucial for Westerners to understand that such "ugliness" was still present in their communities today. [34]

Similarly, many Western non-Muslim researchers have defended Muslims in their investigations in the context of Islamophobia, in this regard, German Karler Petra wild's book [36] published in October 2018, in which discriminatory treatment have been discussed on ethnic and religious grounds, especially against Muslims in Germany. The author asserts that there is growing hostility between the west and Islam and Muslims, citing many causes for this. She laments the fact that western politicians only criticize Islam and Muslims while never mentioning Jews or Judaism. According to the author, when mediaeval Europeans started to forge their own sense of European identity, they laid the groundwork for an anti-Oriental and pro-Islamic identity, and the West is now poised to repeat this history. The author forewarns them of the negative effects. Likewise, Professor John Wil Cole of the American University

of Michigan's 2009 publication "Engaging the Muslim World" is significant since he defended Muslims/Islam by refuting numerous misconceptions in it.

Dialogue/Understanding and Exploring Common Values

Islam does not impose restrictions on Muslims, and all acts of goodness, wisdom, and compassion are laudable in the eyes of Islam even if they are carried out outside of Islamic sources. The Qur'an particularly names Jews and Christians in this context and calls for them to develop deeper ties based on shared interests since Islam has also developed a fundamental "search for commonalities" in respect to interaction with non-Muslim nations. [37] It's prudent to note that both western cultures and Islamic nations may resolve this issue by mutual understanding. While there may not be much miscommunication between Muslims and the West, there is a major dearth of knowledge about Islam and Islam in the West. The benefit of discussion is that it allows parties to get past their differences in blame and towards understanding. Christianity, which is also the recognized religion in many Western nations, is currently the most popular religion in the Western world. Similar to this, the Jewish faith has a significant impact on the West. Being Abrahamic religions, Islam, Christianity, and Judaism have many things in common. For instance, if the characters in the Book are believers. [38] we can make positive efforts for world public order. Many institutions that understand Islam and promote harmony with people of different faiths are playing a positive role in the West. We must pay attention to this and its positive effects.

Benefiting from the Western framework and the Anti-Islam policies of the West

Islam is without a doubt more than capable of adjusting to the needs of the contemporary world. Because of the way the West views religious tolerance, religious and cultural pluralism, human rights, equality, etc., there is undoubtedly a framework at the state and constitutional level in which many rights and interests of Muslim minorities are guaranteed, despite the numerous challenges that Muslims face in the modern Western world. On the basis of Muslim beliefs, it occurs immediately at night. For instance, Muslims should bring out the fact that it goes against the "principle of justice" in the context of the West if the topic of "state loyalty" is brought up because of Muslims and their religion/Islam in a Western country. [39]

Strategies and forms of interaction with non-Muslims in the field of fiqh

The Islamic guidance in Muba'hat (in addition to the obvious halal and haram) is that if there is chance of creating any fitnah by doing it, it should not be done, as the Prophet (РВИН) had shown when he rebuilt the Ka'bah. There can be many such things in the west.

There may be many laws who seem to conflict with Islamic teachings, but if Islamic scholars ponder in these matters, who are also well-informed, have an opinion that by adopting these western laws a Muslim does not even come out of the realm of the laws of the Western country and does not become disobedient in the eyes of Allah, then you have to take this opinion and adopt it,[40]

unless you change the local laws or and their boundaries in your favor in a legal way. Similarly, from the life of the Prophet (PBUH), there are many instances where non-Muslim nations had to be annexed/contracted for a wider social or political purpose by him. [41]

The Psychology of Response and Justice

Continuous criticism and pressure against Muslims at the global level has brought the situation to such a point that today Muslims have become a victim of inferiority complex. They refrain from exercising their right to self-defense, or in response against the West or to defend Islam itself, they commit such actions which have nothing to do with Islamic teachings. In the psychology of reaction, any person or society often forgets the principle of justice and equality. Keeping this in mind, it should be seen that if a Muslim person takes any action against the West in the psychology of reaction, which has no place in Islamic teachings, then other Muslims and every such action should be condemned, because it has been clearly instructed in the Qur'an that "And do not let the hatred of a people prevent you from being just. Be just; that is nearer to righteousness. And fear Allah; indeed, Allah is acquainted with what you do. [42]

There is no doubt that there seems to be widespread fear against Muslims in many Western countries and they are treated as second-class citizens. The Prophet (PBUH) and his companions in Makkah had to deal with comparable and much harsher circumstances, yet their patience and endurance led them to victory in life and in history. Muslims should not lose patience in the face of these trying circumstances. This is why the Qur'an makes several mentions of the virtues of patience and endurance. In light of this, Muslims should continue to speak out for what they believe to be true while being patient and persistent, and they should have faith that the truth will always triumph and be supported.

Summary Discussion

The non-Muslim world is aware that Muslims are passionately devoted to Islam, both conceptually and practically. They always seek Islamic guidance and make an effort to live in accordance with it. Muslims are so devoted to Islam that they are unwilling to accept any criticism or resistance to its teachings. Instead, they aggressively defend such criticism, and some Muslim intellectuals also respond vehemently to it. A minority of Westerners that support Islamophobia, who do not represent the majority of Westerners, use a variety of tactics to stoke Muslim opposition to the point where they cause conflict or resistance with the West.

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