



CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS

OF THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON ISLAMOPHOBIA
AS A SPECIFIC FORM OF RACISM AND DISCRIMINATION:
NEW GLOBAL AND TRANSNATIONAL CHALLENGES

March 15–16, 2023

Baku, Azerbaijan



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Baku International Multiculturalism Center is a legal entity, being a non-commercial organization it ensures the preservation of tolerance, cultural, religious and linguistic diversity in accordance with the ideology of Azerbaijanism, as well as represents Azerbaijan as the centre of multiculturalism in the world, explores and promotes existing multicultural models. In its activities, the Centre is guided by the Constitution and laws of the Republic of Azerbaijan, international treaties to which the Republic of Azerbaijan is a party, decrees and orders of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, resolutions and orders of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Azerbaijan.



The Center of Analysis of International Relations (AIR Center) is a think tank, which provides strategic insights and policy recommendations on international affairs, thus making decision-makers, as well as experts in the field better equipped in analyzing outstanding issues. Our mission is to conduct a comprehensive analysis of global and regional processes and expand activities aimed at raising the international community's awareness of Azerbaijan's foreign policy priorities, particularly the Armenia-Azerbaijan post-conflict period and regional security. The main aim is to understand post-conflict experiences and Azerbaijan's plan to support full regional economic integration as well as the reconstruction and restoration process in Azerbaijan's Karabakh region.



The G20 Interfaith Forum (IF20) offers an annual platform where a network of religiously linked institutions and initiatives engage on global agendas (primarily and including the Sustainable Development Goals or SDGs). The annual G20 Summits are a critical time and place where priority global issues are considered. The G20 process has evolved since it was established in 2008, with various platforms (ministerial meetings, engagement groups) that allow different sectors and communities to present ideas and recommendations to global leaders. Our goal is to contribute meaningful insight and recommendations that respond to and help shape the G20 and thus global policy agendas. The G20 Interfaith Forum builds on the vital roles that religious institutions and beliefs play in world affairs, reflecting their rich diversity of institutions, ideas, and values. These include interfaith and intercultural organizations, religious leaders, scholars, development and humanitarian entities, and business and civil society actors.



JOINT COMMUNIQUE

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON ISLAMOPHOBIA AS A SPECIFIC FORM OF RACISM AND DISCRIMINATION: NEW GLOBAL AND TRANSNATIONAL CHALLENGES

**March 15–16, 2023
Baku, Azerbaijan**

The Center of Analysis of International Relations and the Baku International Multiculturalism Centre in partnership with the G20 Interfaith Dialogue Forum held the conference titled “Islamophobia as a Specific Form of Racism and Discrimination: New Global and Transnational Challenges” on 15–16 March, 2023 in Baku, Azerbaijan. The conference intended to serve as a contribution to combating Islamophobia in all its forms and manifestations.

The conference participants, recalling the resolution 12408 (2022) adopted by the UN General Assembly proclaiming 15 March as the International Day to Combat Islamophobia, emphasized that Islamophobia had emerged as a new form of racism that includes, among others, discrimination, stigmatization and exclusion in all areas of life;

The participants, during the conference, discussed matters of intersectional approach in the fight against Islamophobia, conspiracy theories about Muslims in Western cultures; historical and contemporary perspectives on Islamophobia; joint cooperation in the fight against Islamophobia and the role of international organizations; building harmonious societies by promoting religious diversity and interfaith respect;

The participants acknowledged that Islamophobia and Orientalism, in all of their complexity, have deep roots in the history of European colonialism; they underlined the presence of Islamophobic bias and mindset among policymakers and their influence in many political institutions at every level – from the European Parliament to local municipalities;

It was expressed deep concern at the constant increase in signs of structural Islamophobia in Europe, and France in particular, which has reached its peak with a dramatic leap in recent times;

The participants called on stopping to dissemination of the prejudices and biases on Islam and Muslims through mainstream and social media, which are leading to undermining the foundations of inclusive societies; emphasized the necessity to make clear boundaries between free speech and hate speech and prevent denigrating and mocking rhetoric (e.g. Charlie Hebdo).

The conference reiterated the primary responsibility of international organizations and policy makers to expand the existing legal instruments and policy measures which are not enough to counter stereotypes on Islam and Muslims;

The participants agreed to further enhance cooperation and collaboration in the area of combating Islamophobia.

On the occasion of the International Day to Combat

Islamophobia

International Conference on Islamophobia as a specific form of racism and discrimination: New Global and transnational challenges

March 15-16 , 2023

Baku, Azerbaijan

Concept Note

Marking the first anniversary of the adoption of the United Nations General Assembly resolution proclaiming 15 March as the “International Day to Combat Islamophobia,” the Baku International Multiculturalism Centre and the Center of Analysis of International Relations (the AIR Center), in partnership with the G20 Interfaith Dialogue Forum, organized the conference “Islamophobia as a specific form of racism and discrimination: New Global and transnational challenges.” The main purpose of the conference was to provide an academic platform for discussions on the alarming trend at international and national levels that targeted Muslims and countries with a majority Muslim population. Specifically, the conference aimed to focus on several subtopics, such as the importance of an intersectional approach in the fight against Islamophobia, the manifestation of Islamophobia in some European countries, and Islamophobia in the global media. The international community had been observing sharp differences in the attitude towards refugees from Muslim and non-Muslim countries, and the reporting trend from conflict or post-conflict zones with mixed religious populations. A deep concern had stemmed from the continuous increase in the manifestations of Islamophobia, which had reached its peak with a dramatic leap in recent times, especially stereotyping based on the representation of Muslims in some European countries as alien and incompatible with European culture and values, sharpening stigmatization and leading to the policy of isolation.

In recent years, despite the calls of international organizations and the adoption of various resolutions on combating Islamophobia, there had been contradictory developments, such as the introduction and adoption of laws with more anti-Islamic content and open violations of freedom of religious belief disguised as protecting and strengthening democratic values on the ground of national interests and values. These particular laws had formed the basis for the increase of Islamophobia and other types of discrimination and racism. At the same time, hate speech, which had already become widespread and dangerous in the media, and the fact that Islamic values were equated with terrorism or presented to societies in a comparative

manner, had also led to undermining the foundations of inclusive societies. As a result, the lack of a resolute action plan of individual states in the fight against Islamophobia had made it crucial to establish the basis for an international conference held on a regular and stable basis, involving scholars, experts of international organizations, religious figures, and non-governmental organizations.

The plenary sessions and breakout sessions that were held within the conference included: Plenary (A) "The importance of an intersectional approach in the fight against Islamophobia and new perspectives"; Breakout sessions: (B) "Islamophobia in Europe and national legislations," (B1) "Case study: Islamophobia in France"; (C) "Conspiracy theories about Muslims in Western cultures: The Great Replacement Theory"; Plenary (D): "The intersection of colonialism, new imperialism, and Islamophobia: historical and contemporary perspectives"; (E) "Islamophobia and calls for hate in the media"; (F) "Joint cooperation in the fight against Islamophobia and the role of international organizations"; (I) "Building harmonious societies by promoting religious diversity and interfaith respect." Each panel had consisted of 5-6 speakers and a moderator for 10-15 minutes and had been followed by a Q&A. The International Conference and its publications could have been an advisory resource or a roadmap for nation-states.

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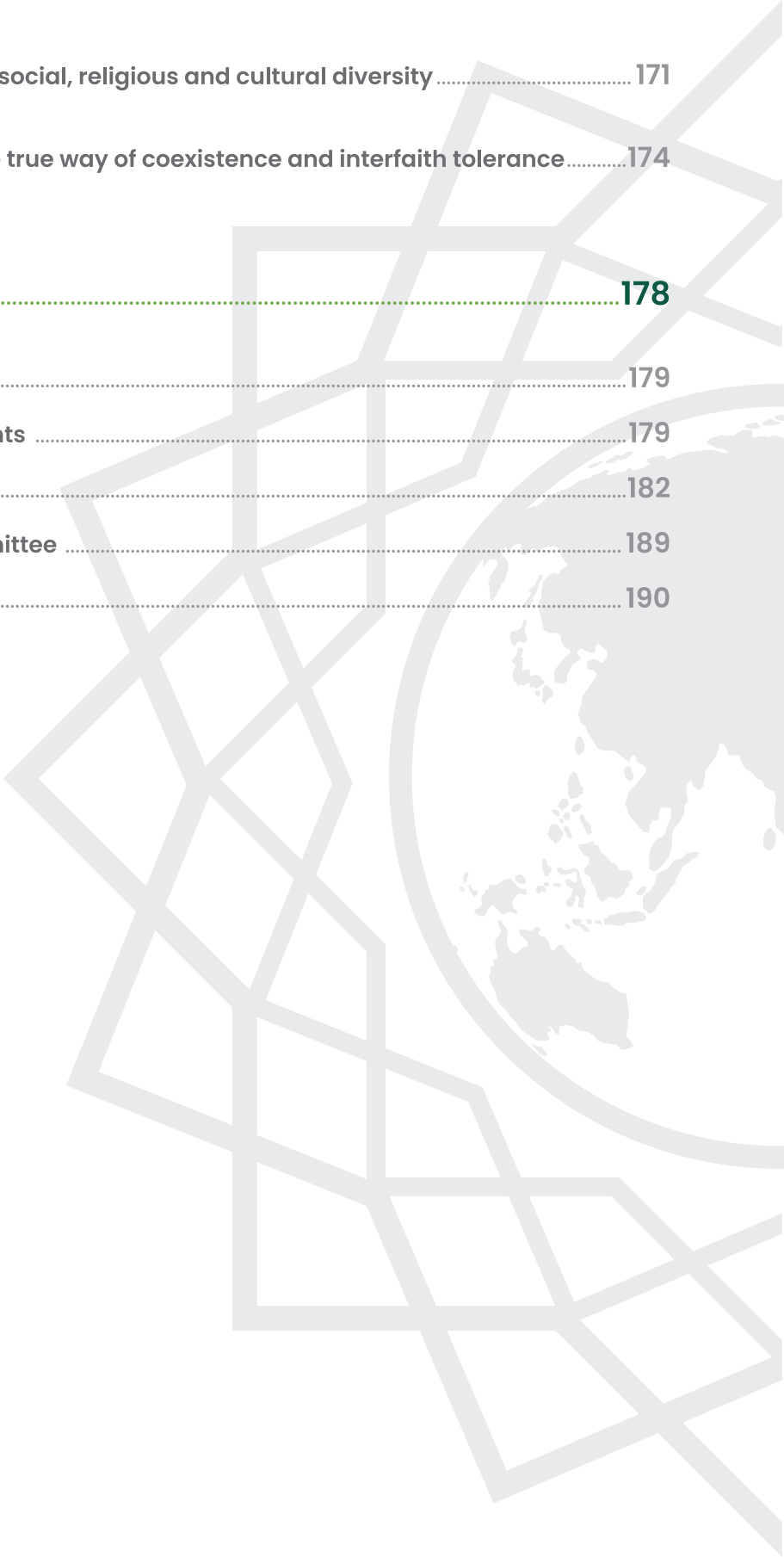
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FOREWORD

Islamophobia is a dangerous road leading humanity to global confrontation

The concept of “Islamophobia” in the socio-political circulation of the world today is essentially a dangerous phenomenon based on false ideas, radical religious, racial, and ethnic stereotypes, artificial threats, and most importantly, hostility and intolerance towards Muslims and the Islamic world as a whole for the sake of geopolitical and geo-economic interests. Islamophobia, as a form of xenophobia, is a serious threat that hinders the establishment and development of the interreligious and intercultural dialogue process. It is not a secret that the interests of power centers and transnational companies are hidden behind modern Islamophobia, which is hiding under the veil of “religious conflict” and which is gradually reaching the scale of a social pandemic, and which pits peoples and religions against each other. One of the dangerous points is that the fear of Islam, and religious intolerance towards Muslims has been injected into the thinking of some Western societies as a standard phobia, “Muslim fear”.

It is known that today in several countries of the world, serious steps have been taken at the legislative level to prevent manifestations of Islamophobia, religious hatred, and intolerance, and the work of religious education among the population has been expanded. However, despite the positive trends, in a number of countries that present themselves as “democratic states” and “heralds of freedom of conscience”, the burning of mosques, persecution of Muslims, insulting of their religious feelings, and burning of holy books are still taking place in front of the eyes of authorities. All this once again shows that racism, xenophobia, religious intolerance, and discrimination are practiced at the level of state policy in several countries. For example, in countries such as France and Sweden, Islamophobia, which has become total, is not limited only to crimes and provocations on religious grounds, it seriously affects the lifestyle of the Muslim population in the country and limits their rights and freedoms on purpose. They face artificial obstacles and social injustice in terms of employment, worship, hijab, and wages, and are persecuted by neo-Nazi and pseudo-religious groups.

In November 2020, at the meeting of the Council of Foreign Ministers of the member states of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation held in Nigeria, the manifestations of global Islamophobia were widely discussed and assessed as a serious threat to global peace, security, and cooperation. In that meeting, March 15 was declared the day of the fight against Islamophobia for the first time. The resolution adopted in this regard stated that cases of terrorism and extremism on religious grounds should not be associated with people’s different religious views, ethnicity, and cultural identity. Two years later – in 2022, the General Assembly of the United Nations – supported the initiative of the OIC and adopted March 15 as the International Day of Combating Islamophobia.

Distinguished by its unique ethnocultural diversity, carrying the mission of a bridge between the Western and Eastern worlds, and at the same time, despite being a secular country, the majority of its population being a carrier of the Islamic faith, Azerbaijan has historically been recognized as a clear example of a center of tolerance, multiculturalism traditions, and interreligious coexistence. These traditions are currently protected and

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strengthened at the level of state policy. The traditions of tolerance and multiculturalism, the inadmissibility of xenophobia and religious intolerance, which were improved and raised to the level of national ideology at the initiative of the national leader Heydar Aliyev, have further strengthened their legal basis and operating principles with the provisions of the Constitution of the Republic of Azerbaijan. Today, the traditions of inter-religious coexistence in the country are getting stronger thanks to the policy of President Ilham Aliyev. It is no coincidence that now the Republic of Azerbaijan is one of the countries leading the fight against all manifestations of Islamophobia.

An international conference on “Islamophobia as a specific form of racism and new discrimination and challenges” was held in Baku on March 15 and 16, 2023, on the occasion of the anniversary of the resolution of the United Nations General Assembly on “International Day of Combating Islamophobia”. One of the main factors necessitating the holding of a large-scale international conference is the fact that Islamophobia tendencies have intensified and reached a critical level, false conspiracy theories against Islam have been released into public circulation, and inter-religious conflicts in the world have become more and more acute. Leading religious figures, theologians, scientists and experts from different countries of the world took part in the conference organized in partnership with the Baku International Center for Multiculturalism, the Center for the Analysis of International Relations, and the G20 Interreligious Dialogue Forum.

It was emphasized in the panel sessions of the conference that the international community is anxiously watching the increase of religious, racial, and ethnic intolerance towards migrants from Muslim and non-Muslim countries and reaching dangerous levels. In European countries distinguished by their religious diversity, there are serious concerns about the policy of isolation and separation of religious minorities. In this undesirable process, not only officials and politicians but also representatives of the mass media are particularly active in forming a negative public opinion about the Islamic religion and its bearers. In addition, despite recent decisions and resolutions adopted by reputable international organizations against Islamophobia, the regular violation of the rights of religious minorities under the pretext of “protecting democratic values” in some Western countries, the fact that Muslims face social injustice and persecution, and the purposeful identification of Islam with terrorism and religious separatism tendencies should be considered as a manifestation of strict racism in the 21st century.

It was also noted at the Baku conference that Islamophobia is of global nature and knows no boundaries as a source of serious threat to international peace and security. To organize an effective fight against it, there is a serious need to develop a rapid action plan and formulate its principles. This highlights the importance of the unanimous activity of state and government bodies, religious community leaders, theological scientists, political scientists, and media subjects based on the ideas and initiatives presented at the conference.

In this publication, speeches and materials from the Baku conference on “Islamophobia as a specific form of racism and discrimination. New global challenges” are presented.

Conference Opening Speech

Welcoming remarks at Conference on Islamophobia as a Specific Form of Racism and Discrimination: New Global and Transnational Challenges

by

H.E. Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu

Former Secretary General of the Organization of the Islamic Cooperation (OIC)



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Your Excellency, Distinguished guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am greatly honored by your invitation to take part in the opening ceremony of the conference titled “Islamophobia as a Specific Form of Racism and Discrimination: New Global and Transnational Challenges” which is intended to serve as a contribution to combating Islamophobia in all its forms and manifestations.

The end of the Cold War brought a decline in the threat of nuclear war between superpowers; however, it also led to the emergence of new tensions as suppressed ethnic, religious, and cultural identity differences among various groups were unleashed. The end of the Cold War provided an opportunity for extremist movements to promote ideologies deeply rooted in ethnic, religious, and cultural identities. As a result, new threats emerged in the post-Cold War era. Various scenarios were envisioned, and literature was produced, discussing potential conflicts between different ideologies and civilizations, often with implicit references to religious origins. Within this context, there was significant debate and concern about the possibility of a clash between the Western and Muslim worlds, often referred to as the “Islam-West” debate.

The developments that occurred after the collapse of communist power and the dissolution of the Soviet empire, along with the subsequent debates and arguments, have created a context in which such fantasizing becomes more acceptable. In a speech given by Mrs. Margaret Thatcher at the North Atlantic Treaty meeting on 7 June 1990, before the collapse of the communist system, she highlighted NATO’s historical role in defending against an aggressive and expansionist communist ideology. However, with the crumbling of communism, she acknowledged that the geopolitical landscape was undergoing radical changes. Mrs. Thatcher emphasized the need for NATO to adapt and extend its role beyond preventing war to actively building peace. She urged NATO to identify future threats, develop appropriate strategies, and collaborate with other organizations to manage Europe’s future effectively. Mrs. Thatcher also emphasized the importance of recognizing that potential security threats might no longer be confined to Europe and that NATO should be prepared to address challenges emanating from

outside the continent. She cited the example of oil supplies in the Arabian Gulf, indicating that the dependence on Middle Eastern oil would increase in the next century and that the spread of advanced military technology could lead to potential threats to NATO territory from non-European regions. Five years later, NATO Secretary General Willy Claes echoed Mrs. Thatcher's sentiments, stating that militant Islam now posed an equally significant strategic threat as the Soviet Union had during communist times. These statements from Mrs. Thatcher and NATO Secretary General Claes underscore the evolving nature of security challenges in the post-Cold War era. It highlights the need for NATO to remain relevant and vigilant in addressing new and diverse threats that extend beyond the traditional European-centric focus of the alliance.

Is Islam a danger to the West? The concern arises from various reasons leading to the perception of Islam as a threat. There is a fear that if this conviction persists, historical tensions like the Crusades might resurface. The tragedy in Bosnia and Herzegovina, where international intervention was insufficient to prevent violence, exemplified the dangers associated with extremist ideologies.

I would like first of all to look into the question of why and how the Western world tends to see Islam as a threat and a common enemy. The first possible reason that comes to mind is that the collapse of communism left a great vacuum on one side of the previous balance which was established after World War II, with communism and the Soviet Union on one scale, and the Western world on the other. The Sudden emptying of the eastern scale after nearly fifty years disturbed the equilibrium. The resulting feeling of emptiness is reflected in Francis Fukuyama's theory alleging the end of history. Later, the search for new enemies and targets found expression in Huntington's book on "clash of civilizations hypothesis, a Scientifically deficient argument that is far from hitting the mark.

Then, the catastrophic attack of 9/11 in 2001 targeting New York occurred. In the aftermath of this event, Islam was perceived as the next enemy of the West. As a result, a sense of Western aggression against Islam developed, finding fertile ground for the proliferation of widespread Islamophobic expressions.

When I took office as Secretary General of OIC in January 2005, one of the most serious issues creating tension between the Muslim world and the West was the growing phenomenon of Islamophobia. The publication of derogatory drawings of Prophet Mohammed in a Danish newspaper in the same year caused widespread consternation, hurt the feelings of Muslims, and ignited protests all over the Muslim world.

Following the eruption of violent demonstrations, I received on 6 February 2006, separate telephone calls from the UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, the EU High Representative Javier Solana, and the Spanish Foreign Minister Moratinos, all of whom sought advice and assistance to calm down the streets. I conveyed to them the expectations of the Muslim world. Based on these contacts, and upon our initiative, a 'Trilateral Statement' was negotiated within almost forty-eight hours and issued simultaneously in New York, Jeddah, and Brussels on 7 February. While condemning the violence, the Trilateral Statement described the caricatures as 'insulting' and 'offensive', emphasizing that freedom of expression entails responsibility and discretion and should respect the beliefs and tenets of all religions. We also started engaging with the EU, OSCE, UNHRC, and other international governmental and non-governmental organizations. Meanwhile, we discussed with many Western foreign ministers who either visited the OIC headquarter in Jeddah or paid them visits. The main point raised by some European

countries and the USA was the “incompatibility of the concept of defamation of religions” with the constitutional principle of “freedom of individuals”. On our side what matters was not using a certain word or expression but what was meant. So, after consultations we decided to use “vilification” which means the same and would not create any problem for the USA and some European countries. That was a step forward from the OIC side to open the door for compromise.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

When we study analytically the controversy that evolved in the aftermath of publishing those ugly, uncivilized cartoons, we find that the rise of Islamophobia has followed a course of three fundamental phases:

1. The first one is the manipulation of the concept of freedom of expression,
2. The second is the politicization of Islamophobia by pro-extremism and right-wing groups to rise votes in elections,
3. The last one is the institutionalization and legal framing of Islamophobia.

Decades ago, to deal with this controversy, we were determined to pursue, advocate, and move the debate diplomatically from “confrontation” to “cooperation”. I will not delve into the intricate details of this challenging yet successful transformation, but I will mention two significant documents that played a crucial role in initiating an ongoing rapprochement process.

The first document is the 16/18 resolution of UNHRC in 2010 on “combating intolerance, negative stereotyping and stigmatization of, and discrimination, incitement to violence and violence against, persons based on religion or belief.” This resolution was a turning point in considering freedom of expression as a license to incite hatred and intolerance.

The second document is the joint statement by co-chairs of the ministerial meeting on the implementation of UNHRC Resolution 16/18 where the Secretary of State of the United States, the Secretary General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, and the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs, together with foreign ministers and officials from Australia, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Egypt, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Pakistan, Poland, Romania, Senegal, Sudan, Turkey, United Kingdom, the Vatican (Holy See), UN OHCHR, Arab League, and African Union, met on July 15, 2010, in Istanbul to give a united impetus to the implementation of UN Human Rights Council Resolution 16/18 on “Combating intolerance, negative stereotyping and stigmatization of discrimination, incitement to violence, and violence against persons based on religion or belief.” The meeting was hosted by the OIC at the OIC/IRCICA premises at the historic Yıldız Palace in Istanbul and co-chaired by the OIC Secretary General H.E. Prof. Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu and U.S. Secretary of State H.E. Mrs. Hillary Clinton.

Before proceeding to discuss the future of Islamophobia and the required actions, it is crucial to emphasize the shared aspects between Islam and the West, particularly in Europe. These common denominators can be categorized as follows:

1. **Geographical proximity:** The present reality is that Muslims and Westerners are living together under the same rule in almost all Western societies.
2. **Similar spiritual reference:** As part of the entire history of monotheistic religions, Islam is a continuity of Abrahamic tradition and culture.
3. **Shared values:** There is no inherent conflict between Islam and modernity, and Muslims are committed to pluralism and the right of the people to cherish their diversity.

Dear colleagues, the question now is what to do:

1. First of all, we must accept that this is a serious issue that needs to be taken seriously and we must have a clear approach in dealing with it.
2. As I mentioned earlier, we must speak louder and reach all segments of society.
3. We should argue that Islam is also a religion indigenous to the West – numbers speak for this. Consequently, Europe is not a host for Islam but indeed it is home for Islam.
4. We must also argue and convince that Muslims are not aiming to change Western societies or aiming to impose their values on the latter.
5. We must try to have everybody accept the diversity of cultures.
6. When necessary, we should not refrain from self-criticism.
7. All in all, our discourse must be clear and correct. Solidarity and cooperation must be maintained.

Until recently, Islamophobia has been addressed mostly in the context of Muslim communities in the West and presented as a domestic human rights issue needing to be tackled within national political and legal frameworks.

Finally, let me state that Islamophobia has proven to be a highly contentious issue that will continue to mark Muslim–West relations for years to come. I can summarize the main phases which have characterized and accompanied the rise of Islamophobia in the West during my term in office as:

1. Exploitation of the concept of freedom of speech and expression, seen, for instance in the case of Danish caricatures and their aftermath,
2. The politicization of the phenomenon to gain political footing in national politics by extreme right-wing groups, as was the case of the raise of far-right and racial movements in some Western European countries; and
3. The institutionalization and constitutionalization of Islamophobia are exemplified by measures like the ban on the construction of minarets in Switzerland, which was introduced through a constitutional amendment. To conclude my remarks, I would quote the following sentence from an open letter of congratulation I sent to President Obama upon his election years back;

“The desire for peace is universal, yet the conflicts have shown the quest for peace is easily frustrated. Above all what is needed is the restoration of confidence. Throughout the globe, Muslims are in hunger for a new era of peace, concordance, and tranquility.”

Dear colleagues, one of the immediate targets in dealing with Islamophobia at a general scale, there is a need to emphasize that Islam is not an intruder to Europe and that Europe is home to Christians and Jews should not preclude that it is also home for Muslims. Nobody should forget that these three religions emanated from the same geography and none of them was born in Europe.

Thank you for your attention.



INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE
ON ISLAMOPHOBIA
BAKU, MARCH 15-16th

SESSION 1

THE IMPORTANCE OF AN INTERSECTIONAL APPROACH IN THE FIGHT AGAINST ISLAMOPHOBIA AND NEW PERSPECTIVES

March 15, 2023 – 10:00-11:00

Moderator: Ravan Hasanov

*Executive Director of Baku International Multiculturalism Centre
(BIMC)*

Islamophobia is a gross violation of human rights and a manifestation of racial policies

Speaking notes by

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ABSTRACT

This speech deals that Islamophobia as an expression of public ignorance of true Islam in some countries, and it leads to the belief that Islamophobia is the result of deliberate effort. We have to admit that this argument is no longer valid when you see that it is also prevalent among society's elite. This distorts the image of Islam to achieve personal and collective goals and creates a permanent state of fear towards Muslims. Today, we are witnessing a serious increase in Islamophobia in some European countries, especially in France. As French citizens and even born in France, many Muslims are blacklisted every day and become victims of police hatred. One of the current problems of human rights at the international level is the issue of bringing to justice all those responsible for crimes against peace, humanity, and war crimes. In this context, international law has developed several mechanisms.

Keywords: Islamophobia, public ignorance, Islam, international law, human rights

The right to freedom of religion or belief is interdependent with myriad other human rights, including the right to be free from discrimination. The imposition of undue or disproportionate limits on individuals' right to worship, observe, practice, or teach their religion or belief based on their religious identity strikes at the heart of international law's prohibition of discrimination. Additionally, international law recognizes that discriminatory policies and practices that restrict civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights based on religious identity can significantly infringe upon the right to freedom of religion or belief of targeted populations.

All major international and regional human rights instruments forbid discrimination based on religion or belief and article 26 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights provides a freestanding right to equality before the law and equal protection of the law for all persons.

Islamophobia is commonly known as a condition of phobia vis-a-vis Islam and Muslims, which develops into hostile behavior, including verbal and physical abuse against Muslims, their scripture, holy personalities, and symbols including assault against mosques, cemeteries, and religious centers.

Granting that Islamophobia is an expression of public ignorance about true Islam in some countries, the argument no longer holds when you find it widespread among the elite of society as well, which leads to the belief that Islamophobia is the result of a deliberate and intentional effort to distort the image of Islam and create a state of permanent fear of Muslims for purpose of achieving both personal and collective goals.

Today, we are witnessing a significant increase in Islamophobia in some European countries, especially France. As French citizens or even born in France, many Muslims are blacklisted every day and fall victim to police contempt and hatred. Many victims of discrimination by the French police had suffered double harm: physical and verbal violence and the systematic reclassification of the victim's status as a perpetrator. In France, "racism and Islamophobia are now clearly institutionalized and legitimized". Political speculation about Islam and everything related to religion became very popular throughout the European region, especially in the north.

This is regretful to see, especially in some countries, the attempts to curb provocative cartoons against the Islamic prophet, establishing a biased public opinion against Muslim values and the Muslim world in the media bodies, blackmail campaigns with the burning of the holy book of Islam under the curtain of the freedom of expression.

The freedom of expression, the freedom of the press, and creative freedoms are important. But it is also wrong to touch the sensitive points of people and this can be assessed as an incitement to commit violations. Of course, Islamophobic actions such as the burning of the holy book Koran in Sweden a few months ago cannot be considered freedom of speech. It should not be forgotten that, according to the universally recognized principle, one's rights are up to the point where the rights of others begin.

Islamophobia, one of the trends in everyday life in some countries, manifested itself in the most violate manner in Azerbaijan late last century. During the Armenian occupation, all civilian objects on the historical and ancestral lands of Azerbaijan, cultural and religious architectural monuments - mosques, places of religious worship, and cemeteries were mercilessly destroyed, insulted, and looted.

Representatives of many international organizations directly observed these acts of vandalism committed by Armenia and noted them in their reports.

I would like to note that the members of the Independent Permanent Human Rights Commission during their fact-finding mission to Azerbaijan in September 2021 had the opportunity to visit the recently liberated regions of Azerbaijan.

During its visit to Agdam, the delegation was shocked to witness the extent of irreversible damage inflicted on the physical infrastructure, rich cultural and religious heritage. The Central Jamia Mosque, which was built in 1870 and is not only a religious

site but also a cultural heritage, was visibly vandalized. It had graffitied signs of bullets and shelling both in the interior and exterior. The mosque was desecrated during the Armenian occupation when it was used as a barn for cows, horses, and pigs. But the worst part of all of this is that people are being subjected to genocide because of their national or religious affiliation.

The genocide committed by the Armenians in the town of Khojaly in Azerbaijan's Karabakh district on 26 February 1992 is a clear manifestation of Islamophobia and Turkophobia. The civil population in Khojaly was killed for the reason that they were Muslims and they were Turks.

As a result of this horrific crime against humanity, more than 600 peaceful civilians of Azerbaijan, including children, women, and elderly people were murdered. The prevalence of impunity among those who break the law and commit crimes, combined with the existence of double standards in our world, creates a fertile ground for the recurrence of such tragic events.

Unfortunately, there are countries from which Armenia can take the example of committing the crime of genocide precisely in terms of its religious and racial characteristics. One of these countries is France. The French-administered territories outside Europe are nasty remains of the French colonial empire. Especially in Muslim countries.

For more than 130 years, France has waged a terrible war against the Algerian people, which has claimed the lives of more than 1.5 million Algerians. The brutality, the mass atrocities committed by France against the people of Algeria and other countries in Africa, and South-East Asia, is something that the world must never forget, but it must demand justice. We must do everything possible to avoid these tragedies in the future. One of the current problems with human rights at the international level is the issue of bringing to justice all those responsible for crimes against peace and humanity, and war crimes.

In this regard, international law has developed several mechanisms. One of them is international tribunals. International tribunals are a mechanism established to bring justice to individuals and states accused of international crimes, as well as victims of such crimes.

Throughout history, at various times, ad hoc international criminal tribunals have been set up. For the first time, international criminal tribunals for Nuremberg and Tokyo have been established to prosecute those accused of war crimes, crimes against peace, and humanity. Later, other ad hoc international criminal tribunals for Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia had been created to bring to justice those responsible for genocide, crimes against peace and humanity committed in the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda.

As it is known, international criminal tribunals are created by the resolution of the UN Security Council following the provisions of Chapter VII of the UN Charter to bring the perpetrators of genocide, peace, and crimes against humanity to justice. The veto exercised by one of the UN Security Council's permanent members has led to the failure to establish a tribunal and, as a result, to exclude those who have committed acts constituting human rights violations from justice.

I think the dependence on the prosecution of the perpetrators of genocide, peace, and crimes against humanity on the political interests of any state contravenes the principle of the supremacy of human rights and freedoms. In this light, the legal basis for the establishment of an independent of the political interests of any state, and mechanism for the administration of criminal justice over the criminals of the crimes mentioned above should be developed.

The current composition of the United Nations Security Council also creates obstacles to the pursuit of justice because of certain interests. The composition of the Security Council should be expanded to make it more representative and more geographically fair.

Disclosure statement

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The struggle against Islamophobia: A Global Approach

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ABSTRACT

Islamophobia is a form of racism. Racism is a form of governmentality, not just the attitudes of the uneducated or sane. Therefore, Islamophobia is a special way of disciplining Islam. Islamophobia emerges in countries where Muslims are the majority, where Muslims are a minority, and where the Muslim presence is just a memory. It even happens in places where there are almost no Muslims. Islamophobia can be found in all kinds of politics where different societies tame the irreconcilable dimension that constitutes politics. Islamophobia is not unique to liberal democratic regimes, military dictatorships, or one-party states. Thus, the globality of Islamophobia is not only geographical or ethnographic but also social. Islamophobia is not specific to a particular form of government, society, culture, or region; This is what solidifies the global characteristics of Islamophobia. For this, the fight against Islamophobia is a movement that connects creative cultural attitudes through academic interventions and activist mobilizations. To combat Islamophobia is not to define it correctly, but to change the way Muslims understand their place in the world.

Keywords: Islamophobia, racism, liberal democratic, cultural attitude, Muslims

Introduction

Discussing Islamophobia in Baku is a bittersweet experience. It is wonderful to meet scholars from so many parts of the world, but sad that the occasion of this gathering on the shores of the Caspian is the global institution of Islamophobia. This conference in Baku marks another site of dawning recognition of the threat posed by Islamophobia.

There is, however, still the belief that Islamophobia at most affects what perhaps – if we were holding a conference in this city a hundred years ago – could be described as the ‘People of the East’. Islamophobia targets Muslimness. Muslimness is a mobile category; it can be attached to people, buildings, ideals, emotions, conduct, clothes, cuisine, customs, texts, and values. How it is attached and by who is, of course, a political matter. The political is characterized by antagonism. How Muslimness is shaped by its various attachments is not determined in advance of its articulations. For example, it was Balbir Singh Sodhi (a bearded turbaned Sikh man) who was murdered on 15 September 2001 because his murderer attached Muslimness to Balbir Singh’s appearance. This is an Islamophobic attack, even though its victim was a businessman in Mesa, Arizona, not a Muslim, and even though the petrol station where the murder took place was not

a site normally identified as being Islamic. This is one of the recurring confusions that those who contest the concept of Islamophobia hold: that motivation and justification for Islamophobia have its roots in religion. Nor are attachments of Muslimness always done in such visceral acts; most insidious forms of Islamophobia are cold and structural. They are carried out without any obvious emotional charge, they are not done in heated exchanges and outbursts of hatred. For example, those identified as Muslim, going through airports, find that they are subject to enhanced surveillance and probing often carried out by those who themselves could be identified as Muslims. Islamophobia refers to an amalgam of principles, practices, and protocols which seek to discipline Muslimness by reference to Westernising horizons. Islamophobia is a type of racism, and racism is a form of governmentality, not just attitudes held by the uneducated or unhinged. Thus, Islamophobia is a particular way of disciplining Muslimness that denies Muslim agency. Islamophobia occurs in countries where Muslims are majorities, where Muslims are minorities, and where Muslim presence is a mere memory; it even occurs in places where there are hardly any Muslims at all.

Islamophobia can be found nesting in all kinds of politics (institutions, customs, practices, and charters) by which different societies tame the antagonistic dimension that is constitutive of politics. Islamophobia is not native to liberal democratic regimes, military dictatorships, or one-party states. Thus, the globality of Islamophobia is not merely geographical or ethnographic, it is also social. Islamophobia is not exclusive to a particular polity, society, culture, or region; this is what entrenches Islamophobia's global characteristics. It is important, however, not to read from the globality of Islamophobia that it is also a transhistorical phenomenon, stretching back to the moment of Creation. Iblis was not the first Islamophobe, nor was Abu Lahab. Those who insist on such descriptions do so by failing to understand decades of study on social phenomena in general and discriminatory practices in particular. The global institution of Islamophobia is conjectural and contingent, not perennial or essential. This conclusion is important since it lays the ground for the future elimination of Islamophobia. Islamophobia requires not piece-meal measures but rather focusing on appeals for expanding the remit and further transforming the current conjuncture that conspires to make it hegemonic. If Islamophobia was some perennial feature inscribed outside of human history, then we would have no ability to combat it, and all we could do is endure it as simply our fate. Such counsels of patient endurance have been suggested by those who seek to understand Islamophobia through a theological rather than a historical framing. These views are often in service of Islamophobic regimes who, naturally enough, like to spread the view that resistance to Islamophobia is futile. Often these voices reproduce Orientalism, which represents Islam as being fatalistic at the expense of presenting Islam as a demand for justice; such formulations make it impossible to combat Islamophobia.

Hence, an appropriate theorization of Islamophobia is a necessary prerequisite for combatting its protean perniciousness. To defeat Islamophobia, we have to understand that it is not merely a motivation for hate crimes, it is not simply religious bigotry, and it is not just anti-Muslim sentiment. It is a type of racism, and racism is not only an experience that is confined to the past and present of the United States and its Anglophonic appendages.

Muslimness which is the target of Islamophobia, is not, however, a position that is not a stand-in for the positions occupied by Blackness or Indigeneity. Such insistent formulations of Islamophobia re-inscribe Eurocentrism in the form of American

exceptionalism. The history of racism in the United States is not a template for conceptualizing the various permutations of racism across the world. Islamophobia shares a family resemblance with other forms of racism including European colonialism. To include the European colonial venture as a type of racism is simply to draw attention to how the category of racism emerged in the 1930s to describe what Nazis are doing primarily to Jews and the Roma, before the outbreak of the Second World War. During this period the Nazis were trying to apply the policies of European colonial empires to populations inside Germany and subsequently Europe (Césaire 1972; Fanon, 1967: 33; Young 2004: 39; Bernhard, 2017). The invention of the category of racism reflects the hierarchical distinction between the West and the non-West, by reducing racism to the horrors of Nazi rule, it provides an alibi for other Western states which while not ruled by Nazis as such, nonetheless, practiced and preached racialized policies of segregation, repression, and genocidal violence.

The emergence of the category of racism perpetuates the hierarchy between the West and the non-West by classifying discriminatory systems by their location rather than their underlying logic. This is precisely why anti-colonial and anti-racist struggles have experienced greater success when they have refused to allow the distinction between the West and the non-West to demarcate the grounds of their respective struggles. Any anti-colonial or anti-racist movement that fails to contest the violent hierarchy between the West and the non-West is likely to will fall short of achieving its objectives.

The fight against Islamophobia has the potential to unite anti-colonial and anti-racist demands for justice. Muslimness cannot be confined solely to the realm of domestic policy or foreign policy. Policies promoting social cohesion and national security are fused in pursuit of producing a 'good Muslim'. Initiatives that promote inter-faith dialogue, or educational policies that counter misconceptions and stereotypes are commendable and may help expand empathy to include Muslims. Such initiatives, are predicated on the idea of a 'good Muslim' constructed by Islamophobic discourse of countering extremism, and therefore appease rather than challenge Islamophobia. In addition, these initiatives tend to ignore that Islamophobia extends beyond individual ignorance or hatred and reflects a broader restructuring of the relationship between states and societies, to effectively tackle Islamophobia, we must address the underlying structural dynamics that perpetuate it.

As many commentators have noted there is a veritable industry dedicated to the production of Islamophobes and the spread of Islamophobia (Lean, 2012, 2017; Zine, 2022). The islamophobia industry is well resourced, well-connected and it is relentless in its production and distribution of Islamophobic propaganda. Stretching from North America to East Asia flashpoints of Islamophobic activity can be identified along nodes such as Paris, New Delhi, Tel Aviv, Beijing, Naypyidaw, Belgrade... Islamophobia, however, cannot be reduced solely to the activities of an Islamophobic propaganda machine. Islamophobia is not epiphenomenal but structural.

Structural problems cannot be resolved subjectively. While it is no doubt the case, that Islamophobia has an affective dimension, it does not follow that it is this subjective aspect (captured in theorizations that reduce Islamophobia to a form of hate or fear) that can explain its establishment as a global grammar. Methodological individualism, may have its uses in specific cases and may furnish the epistemology of journalists, and social media influencers, but it is inadequate for the task of accounting for let, let alone

understanding Islamophobia. Islamophobia matters not because there are hate-filled individuals out there, but because such individuals are constituted by social, cultural, and ultimately political processes. Unless these processes are challenged and transformed, no amount of “inter-civilizational” dialogue, visits to mosques, and assertions of the peacefulness of Islam will prevail in undoing Islamophobia. The struggle against Islamophobia is political.

Therefore, combatting Islamophobia requires a movement that connects crafting cultural compartments through academic interventions and activist mobilizations. To combat Islamophobia does not mean getting the right definition in place, but rather changing how we understand the place of Muslimness in the world. Combatting Islamophobia means understanding that Islamophobia is a global institution. It works through various mechanisms, especially through the discursive securitization of any demands for Muslim political autonomy. This is true whether these demands are made in Palestine, Kashmir, Eastern Turkestan, Arakan, Tunisia, France, or the United Kingdom. The location of such demands is less important than that they can be inserted into a planetary framework in which values, practices, bureaucratic processes, ‘black sites’, torture chambers, and assassinations may be combined in various permutations to block the expression of autonomous Muslimness.

To combat Islamophobia means waging a battle of ideas on behalf of the need for a plural and just world. It means opposing apartheid, xenophobia and demanding that respect for dignity be available to all without exception. The battle of ideas has a material dimension. To be effective, ideas cannot exist exclusively on the plane of official communique, press releases, and conference resolutions but must be systematically and sustainably embedded in social practices. Fighting a battle of ideas against Islamophobia requires the marshaling of social practices in an anti-Islamophobic ensemble. I would like to suggest three factors that are crucial for the development of such an anti-Islamophobic ensemble.

First, and most critical, is the necessity of mobilizing the Muslim communities against Islamophobia. While there is often an emphasis placed on the idea that combating Islamophobia requires engaging with Islamophobes and attempting to change their perspectives, it is even more crucial to focus on raising awareness within the Muslim Ummah itself. That is, an awareness of Islamophobia and its impact on the expression of Muslimness has to become part of Ummatic common sense. Those who are prime targets of Islamophobia must mobilize against it, eschewing theologically inspired passivity or politically induced apathy. When the Muslim Ummah can recognize the toxic influence of Islamophobia, it is more likely that others who may not be Muslim will also become active in opposing it. Islamophobes often demand that Muslims set an example of moderation, passivity, and collective contrition. The example that Muslims should rather set is a commitment to confronting Islamophobia. Currently, advocates of Islamophobia seem to be in a commanding position, dictating the discourse and suffocating autonomous expressions of Muslimness. If, however, global Muslim communities can be activated against the forces of Islamophobia, it will be a major move in counterbalancing the prevailing advantages held by the Islamophobes.

Secondly, the mobilization of Muslims should be seen as an initial step in forging a common front that brings together people of goodwill, embracing non-Muslims from various faiths or without faith in the collective struggle against Islamophobia. To combat Islamophobia effectively means building alliances, and common fronts, politically and

intellectually. Such alliances have to be based on opposing Islamophobia and not domesticating Muslimness by producing officially approved 'good Muslims'.

Thirdly, it is crucial to correctly identify Islamophobia. Islamophobia is a form of racial-colonial domination that engulfed and reshaped the world. It is not predicated on the actions of Muslims; it does not follow that if Muslims were "good" (whatever that may mean in different contexts) there would be no Islamophobia. Islamophobes may concern with what Muslims are doing, but their true target is Muslim beings. Attempts to justify Islamophobia as a legitimate response to the conduct of specific Muslims in particular contexts are based on prior logic which problematizes the existence of Muslimness.

Islamophobia is not inevitable, it is not permanent, it does not have to be appeased. Islamophobia belongs to a family of systems of unjust and undermining discriminatory practices. Therefore, there is much that can be learned from the experiences of anti-colonial and anti-racist struggles across the world. The cultivation of educational and cultural work is crucial to empowering those who understand the gravity of the danger that Islamophobia poses.

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Trends of Islamophobia and racism in South Asia: A critical analysis

ADDRESS BY

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ABSTRACT

This speech deals that Islamophobia has been spreading widely in South Asia, especially in India, in the last ten years. As we know, about two hundred million Muslims live in India. For decades, Indian Muslims have been facing discrimination socially, politically, economically and systematically. Hindu mob attacks have become so common in the past few years that the Supreme Court of India has warned that this will become the “new normal” if action is not taken. Unfortunately, according to Amnesty International, since 1989, more than 162,000 Kashmiris have been subjected had been subjected to inhuman torture by Indian occupational forces, which include stripping naked, beatings with iron rods, heavy roller treatment, electrocution, hanging from the ceiling, burning of the body with iron rods, solitary confinement, sleep deprivation, sexualized torture including rape, molestation, and sodomy.

The article provides an overview of the already militarized Islamophobia in India as a whole. The Islamic world needs to take serious steps to solve this grave problem and save India’s rich Muslim heritage.

Keywords: Islamophobia, India, Muslims, inhuman torture, Muslims, anti-civilization religion, the international community, peace

Respected Excellencies, Honourable Guests, Participants,

Islamophobia in South Asia is on the rise, particularly in India during the last decade. Around two hundred million Muslims are living in India. For decades, Muslims in India have been facing prejudice, communal violence, and systematic discrimination at social, political, economic, and administrative levels. Anti-Muslim sentiments have heightened under the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), which has pursued a Hindu nationalist-cum-racist agenda since elected to power in 2014. In the last twenty years, the representation of Muslims in parliament has stagnated: after the 2019 elections, Muslims held just 5 percent of seats. It is primarily because of the rise of the anti-Muslim BJP, which by mid-2022 had no Muslim members of its party in parliament. According

to a report by a non-governmental organization, Common Cause, half of the police surveyed showed anti-Muslim bias, making them less likely to intervene to stop crimes against Muslims. The Citizenship Amendment Act of 2019 excludes Muslims and applies a religious criterion for the first time to the question of citizenship. In addition to that, the National Register of Citizens (NRC), if implemented along with CAA, can render millions of Muslims stateless within India. The Babri Masjid incident is an important case study to be discussed regarding the rise of Islamophobic mentality in India. A historic mosque built by a Mughal ruler was demolished by Hindu extremists.

An estimated three thousand Muslims died in riots over the mosque. In 2020, Indian Supreme Court formally allowed the construction of a Hindu temple over the site and Modi himself set the cornerstone for that. Recently, BBC's documentary unveiled the dark role played by Narendra Modi in Guajrat Massacre in 2002. Hindu racist terrorists throughout Gujarat killed hundreds of Muslims, raped Muslim women, and destroyed Muslim businesses and places of worship. The then Chief Minister of Gujarat and the current PM of India, Mr. Modi was also among the culprits of the Muslim massacre in Gujrat. He is known as the 'Butcher of Gujarat' yet he came to the most powerful office in India because of widespread anti-Muslim sentiments. In 2013, at least sixty Muslims were killed in clashes that broke out between Hindus and Muslims near the city of Muzaffarnagar. An estimated fifty thousand people, most of them Muslim, fled the violence; many lived in relief camps for months, and some never got to return.

In the last few years, Hindu mob attacks have become so common that Indian Supreme Court warned that it would become a 'new normal' if corrective measures are not taken. According to a 2019 Human Rights Watch report, at least 44 Muslims were killed by the so-called cow protection groups. The term 'love jihad' is also being used by Hindu extremists to portray that Muslim men deliberately seduce Hindu women to convert to Islam to marry.

Many Muslim men are being targeted in the name of so-called 'love jihad.' According to a report by Human Rights Watch, in several cases in which Muslims were arrested, it is found that the police did not follow criminal code requirements, such as producing an arrest warrant, informing the person's family of the arrest, and providing them a copy of the First Information Report (FIR), the official police case, or ensuring that those arrested have access to legal counsel, including during interrogation.

In India, Human Rights Watch documented 254 reported incidents of crimes targeting religious minorities between January 2009 and October 2018, in which at least 91 persons were killed and 579 were injured. About 90 percent of these attacks were reported after BJP came to power in May 2014, and 66 percent occurred in BJP-run states. Muslims were victims in 62 percent. These include communal clashes, attacks on interfaith couples, and violence related to cow protection and religious conversions. Furthermore, in 2020, more than fifty Muslims were killed by Hindu extremist terrorists in mob violence when Muslims were peacefully protesting against the discriminatory Citizenship Amendment Act. The BJP politician and the police, rather than stopping the Hindu mobs from attacking Muslims, supported the violence. A 2021 Human Rights Watch report found that authorities had not investigated police complicity, while they had charged more than a dozen protesters.

BJP-led government has also launched a nationwide campaign to eliminate Islamic culture and historical sites linked with the Muslim rulers of India. The historic Allahabad city is renamed Prayagraj (راج پریاگ) and Faizabad to Ayodhya (ایودھیا) by BJP. Maharashtra Tourism Ministry renamed the Daulatabad Fort to Devgiri (دیو گری) which is located near Aurangabad. Maharashtra's Aurangabad city has been renamed as Chhatrapati Sambhaji Nagar (نگر چترا پتی سمبھاجی). Maharashtra's Osmanabad city has been renamed Dharashiv (دھارا شیو). Similarly, the iconic Mughal Garden at the Rashtrapati Bhavan is renamed Amrit Udyan. (آدیان امریت) 8 In short, almost all cities and other landmarks that have been renamed, or have been proposed to be renamed, have Muslim-rooted names and carry the heritage of Muslim civilization in South Asia – which is being actively erased by the BJP.

India unilaterally changed the status of Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu & Kashmir in 2019 and stripped away its special constitutional status to pave the way for demographic changes in the disputed territory. Despite international condemnation, India is blatantly using brutal force under draconian laws to suppress the indigenous freedom movement. There is an Indian soldier for every seven Kashmiris in the disputed territory which depict that Jammu & Kashmir has been converted into an open jail of the world.

According to Amnesty International, since 1989, more than 162,000 Kashmiris had been subjected to inhuman torture by Indian occupational forces, which include stripping naked, beatings with iron rods, heavy roller treatment, electrocution, hanging from the ceiling, burning of the body with iron rods, solitary confinement, sleep deprivation, sexualized torture including rape, molestation, and sodomy. Similarly, over 100,000 Kashmiris had been killed by Indian forces since 1989 while more than 7,200 people were murdered in custody of the Indian Army. Nearly 11,000 women were raped by Indian soldiers and over 110,000 children were orphaned and about 23,000 women were made widows by the Indian Army. In just 2021, India shut down the internet eighty-five times, harassed and arrested journalists, and detained prominent political figures and activists in Occupied Jammu and Kashmir.

According to internet advocacy watchdog 'Access Now,' India imposed the highest number of internet shutdowns in the world in 2022. India topped the list for the successive fifth time. Out of 187 internet shutdowns globally recorded by Access Now, 84 took place in India, including 49 in Indian-Occupied Jammu & Kashmir. Ashutosh Varshney, an expert on Indian intercommunal conflict at Brown University says, "The longer Hindu nationalists are in power, the greater the change will be to Muslims' status and the harder it will be to reverse such changes."

Ladies & Gentlemen!

This very brief description depicts the status of Islamophobia in India which has already taken the shape of militarized Islamophobia. The Muslim world needs to stand up to address this grave challenge and save the rich Muslim heritage in India.

Disclosure statement

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Islamophobia and the industry public opinion hostile to Islam and Muslims

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper; Presenting a brief statement on Islamophobia and what it presents of the miserable distorted image of true Islam and its human message of friendly coexistence, human goodness, community development, achieving community and people peace, and regularity of conditions of the universe. The Western decision-makers refuse to surrender to Islam with these facts through the historical conflict between Islam and Muslims.

The migration or relocation to the countries of non-Islamic Western countries has resulted in; problems and challenges related to religion, belief, and the ability to positively coexist and integrate with the peoples of these countries; Which resulted in the challenge known as Islamophobia; As those in charge of managing the affairs of today's world have always been; on the siege of Islam and obstructing the march of Muslims; Evidence for this is the situation of Muslims in the countries of the western world, the United States of America and Europe. They are exposed to problems and suffer from crises of peaceful coexistence with the citizens of those countries.

Keywords: Islamophobia, migration, Islamic Western countries, human message, decision-makers

Introduction

Muslims face many challenges within their countries and communities in Muslim countries. And also outside the countries of the Islamic world; Which was settled by groups of Muslims for economic reasons related to the request for livelihood, a request for knowledge and knowledge, or fleeing from political circumstances and conditions. Although some of them have reached the third generation, where their grandparents came to these countries, then the predecessors from the parents, and currently the grandchildren live as citizens of those countries in the face of Islamophobia and have to live with it with its problems and painful repercussions; Which made Muslims live in a defining stage of their existence and their influence in the contemporary world. So it can be said with him that they are in a suffocating crisis, as the difficult equation lies in what Muslims aspire to towards the advancement and progress of Islam and the restoration of its march in the contemporary world; and between the policies of Western countries that practice discrimination, racism, and double standards against Muslims; to control,

possess, conquering, and subjugating others; The state of weakness and backwardness of the Islamic world complicates the position of Muslim minorities. between hope and suffering; seeking to overcome problems; and the desire to highlight their effective role in terms of their Islamic belief; adapting to life conditions in these countries; While they face another challenge, the current state of underdevelopment of the Islamic world, as a third of the world's poor are Muslims; And the lack of a vision to advance and keep pace with progress, which is not a supportive factor for them. Whatever the case, their creative endeavor remains necessary to prove the ability of Islam – as a religion that represents their reference – to contribute to the process of progress. While adhering to the laws and regulations of the countries that have hosted them and are supposed to treat these communities as part of their people and citizens therein; This requires positive coexistence and integration in the system, so that their presence is an active and required factor. And on the guidance of that, their endeavor to preserve the Islamic identity and positive and beneficial coexistence among the peoples of these countries is determined; Which forms the sound foundations of their existence and the active contribution to progress and development for them and the societies of these countries.

And if the situation goes like this; When I found the problem; The current crisis in Islamophobia imposed itself. where you stand on the lookout for them; In light of its export and expansion to non-Western countries such as China, India, the Philippines, and others; to the extent that it controls their living and living conditions; In what is evidenced by the behavior of intolerance and discrimination against Islamic communities, such as restricting treatment of veiled women and working with the saying that it is a racist dress; The insults directed at Islam do not stop at the performance of their religion and the rejection of their identity and their efforts to cooperate and participate in the development process of these countries. The same applies to defamation of symbols, as happened in the insulting cartoons of the Messenger Muhammad, may God's prayers be upon him, which were published in Denmark and republished in France. And what happened in the capital of Sweden, Stockholm, recently, on 1/21/2023, by the Danish extremist who holds Swedish citizenship, who burned the Holy Qur'an in front of the Turkish embassy; By protecting and guarding the police in defiance of religions and international covenants.

It was hoped that Islamophobia would recede, But the opposite happened; the continuation of the practices of inferior treatment of Muslims and the siege of the Islamic presence; This impedes the achievement of integration and peaceful coexistence in their non-Islamic countries. On the other hand, this situation negatively affects the march of the Islamic world and its launch towards a goal: development, peace, positive contribution to meeting their needs, and the possibility of playing an effective role in the contemporary world, which necessitates a proper understanding of the purposes of their law. and prove their ability to give in this era as an active entity in the international system; This necessitates a good investment of their resources, strengthening the home front, and ending the state of division, conflicts, and inter-war wars in the heart of Islamic countries and at the hands of Muslims with a false and erroneous thought. As one of the supplies to get out of the tunnel of underdevelopment.

However, Islamophobia completely obscured this fact from international public opinion. Although the Islamic system is one of the global systems recognized in the Statute of the International Court of Justice. Nevertheless, the racism of Islam was publicized and the message of peace and peaceful coexistence was ignored, in violation

of the saying of the Messenger, may God's prayers and peace be upon him: "He is not among us who called for fanaticism" (); and replaced it with the disadvantages of racism, rejection, intimidation, and hatred, which are the foundations of Islamophobia that denies the principles of Islam in brotherhood and equality in the saying of the Messenger of Islam: People are equal Like the teeth of a comb " () and its universal message in the dignity of man by His saying: And We have honored the sons of Adam"; and showing it differently by describing it as dark and reactionary thought, which contradicts the origins and essence of Islam; and the civilizational contribution of Muslims. The model of Islamophobia deliberately falsifies and falsifies the principles of Islam and its universal message of coexistence and human reform. Organizing life is its proof that Islam came with definitive texts that build human societies on justice, truth, cooperation, benefit, and peace, among which we mention the Almighty's saying: And cooperate in righteousness and piety and do not cooperate in sin and aggression, and what is decided that: Wherever there is interest, then there is God's law, and these are foundations that people aspire to. In every era and time.

Islamophobia industry

A closer look at the phenomenon, as evidenced by events and the conditions of Muslim communities in Western countries, is the steady increase in cases of Islamophobia in quantity and quality, as its rates of incidence are growing steadily on multiple levels and forms. The matter with which it can be said that it has turned into a systematic planned industry and engineering with a concept that reveals its essence and the mechanisms leading to it; and the goals for which it is intended. It requires knowing its dimensions; to show its meaning; It is a compound word in its structure and meaning, its origin is Islamophobia, meaning the fear of Islam: but it is the compulsive, sick, unconscious, irrational, and unjustified fear of Islam and Muslims. The problem lies in its exacerbation and inflation; To the extent that it has become a phenomenon that bears hatred, prejudice, and revenge for everything that is Islamic in thought, perception, dealing, and the status of the Muslim's personality, and in denying the power of the Islamic system. On this basis, Islamophobia is built on two foundations:

The first: building a vision and an intellectual system that constitutes a reference and a reliable basis for expressing an opinion and taking hostile stances towards its parties of individuals and Islamic countries. Dealing with it in a way that achieves the purpose of its presence in intimidating Westerners; And the demonization of Islam and its believers.

The second: the use of legal and material means, including curtailing civil liberties, adopting double standards, and curtailing the rights and freedoms of Muslims; Besides taking means of repression and punishments against Muslims; It suffices to mention among them that when all this happens, those who burn the flag of homosexuals and homosexuals will be punished and accused of anti-Semitism.

One may be surprised at the degree of this shift in the development of the phenomenon and turning it into an intractable rivalry against defenseless Muslim individuals or groups. She has no power to repay her damages or lift the restrictions imposed on her; Standing in a position of confrontation or equality from the pressures and pursuits arising from them; Given the American and European tendency to take more measures and impose restrictions and sanctions that would complicate the livelihood of Muslim communities in these countries; and isolated them from the rest of the spectrum of the people; Seeing them as strangers to society with whom they are not bound by the bond of affiliation and

loyalty. Despite the continuous activities of these communities to respond and converge to dispel fears; This was expressed by the repeated statements and statements about Muslim bodies, most notably what was issued by the European Council for Fatwa: They are part of the people of the state; They have loyalty to him and that their adherence to the Islamic religion does not prevent them from being loyal to the society and the state that provided them with residence and earning the means of their lives in it, And they are keen to integrate into it and strive to preserve it and work on its development and reconstruction.

It may be necessary to explore the reasons for the existence and development of the phenomenon; And the resulting fears and tension in the relationship between the state and society; Towards Muslim communities in the Western world, the most important of which are:

1- The firm belief of Western leaders that they have historically established rights in the Arab regions that were subject to the Christian Roman Empire; And its peoples converted to Islam after the Islamic conquests, which requires Western countries to recover the Christian holy lands from their Arab Muslim owners. Robinson says: One of the goals of the Crusades is to demonize the believers in the teachings of Islam in the popular consciousness, "which is a form of racism and the confiscation of a person's right to choose his religion; the Islamic peoples do not accept Islam as an alternative. This belief was confirmed in the conduct of the successive waves of the Crusades to restore Jerusalem and usurp the Arab lands. As well as the stage of The military occupation and invasion of the Arab and Islamic countries, and the division of the Muslim world as spheres of influence among the countries of the Western world. Orientalism played its role in justifying the colonial stage, with a forged saying that in the occupation there is a shift from a state of underdevelopment to a modern civilization in the interest of the occupied countries. Orientalism also paved the way for the environment conducive to the emergence of Islamophobia. It is a product of Orientalism.

2- The Islamic awakening that emanated from the revival of the doctrinal aspect and the Islamic approach and the renewal of religion; restoring the absent Muslim personality; Because of the perpetuation of conditions of underdevelopment, occupation, and dependency; Islamophobia was among the means of resisting it and seeking to abort it.

3- Designating Islam as a new enemy, as a successor to the collapsed Soviet Union, and the defeat of the communist camp. It contains principles, values, and legislation that the West considers a threat to it; Because of its vitality, flexibility, and ability to keep pace with the times.

4- The unipolar policy – of the United States of America – with all its hegemony, arrogance, and tyranny; prompted it to use and develop Islamophobia to enable it to achieve its aspirations of subjugating the countries of the Islamic world. and draining their wealth.

5- The media with its power and tyrannical methods; This includes social media across space and the open skies; It shapes public opinion and directs it towards being affected by a cause and adopting it. In the name of national security and the public interest. There is no doubt that the media played a pivotal role in the spread of Islamophobia. and promoting its danger to Western ideology and civilization; So he created terror in the hearts of many; Which gave the followers conviction of the need to confront and resist the Islamic presence.

6- The Islamization of Europe, which contributed to the rise of Islamophobia; In the countries of the West, what is reported from time to time with the fear that the Islamic presence leads to the Islamization of Europe and the change of its identity and way of life; As a result of what they notice of the low birth rate in Western countries; Increasing Muslim birth rates.

7- The distorted image of Islam and the insult to everything that is Islamic in person, idea, or practice, with all the fallacies that it entails, such as extremism, violence, hatred of others, the rejection of civilization and civilization, and their claim that they are people of faith who are promised paradise; and that those other than them are the infidels, the people of Hell. This stems from ignorance of the truth of Islam and its purposes in dealing with people and the universe; It is a religion based on mercy, cooperation, peace, dialogue, justice, fairness, and the benefit of people...etc.; With the evidence of the Almighty's saying, "As for that which benefits people, it remains on earth." And the mission of the Messenger's message is in His saying, Glory be to Him: "I only want reform as much as I can," and the hadith of the best of people is the most beneficial to people. Deliberately and persistently intended goals.

8- Acts of religious extremism and terrorism that prevailed in many Arab countries; as a result of misunderstandings; and sick interpretations from groups that monopolized religious understanding and set themselves up as its sponsor and spokesperson; She excelled in her understanding and misled others of the deceived or the seekers of immediate benefits and spoils. Which helped to exploit them, and spread an atmosphere of tension, fear, and danger that Islam threatens unjustly, falsely, and aggressively. Although they are individual actions; The Americans took advantage of the terrorist events of September 2001 in an ugly way hostile to Islam and Muslims. But the truth that should be known; The majority of Muslims are convinced of the principles of Islam, its tolerant spirit, and human values.

These factors are not the only ones present; But it is the most important and most influential; others have an effective effect in causing a negative impact in supporting and spreading the phenomenon. In light of the ideas of globalization and secularism; the weakness of religious discourse and its lack of effectiveness and influence; which inherited a state of incapacity or shortcomings; Until the personality of the Muslim became an individual or a state whose existence he does not care about and whose opinion is not counted, and it is not calculated.

Manifestations and manifestations of the phenomenon

Based on the principle that every action reacts, Islamophobia has left effects and consequences that are based on resisting Islam and demonizing Muslims. We refer to the most prominent of them:

Excluding Islam and Muslims from decision-making and participation with the ruling elite; or the competent presidential authority in the Western countries you inhabit; Considering him persona non grata, he does not carry the idea of loyalty or belonging to the state system that qualifies him to reach this high position; As he believes in a different ideology. Rather, intolerance against religion has reached the level of open atheism by some Western thinkers, such as Richard Dawkins and Christopher Hechner: by attacking religions as irrational sorcery; However, they single out Islam for its propensity to suppress disagreement and to deviate from unanimity with violence and its prohibition of self-accountability.

- Non-recognition of Sharia law in the general system of the countries of the Western world, neither by text nor by consultation nor by reference to its Sharia; This is, in particular, the affairs of Muslims in personal status and the application of citizenship entitlements; due to its attachment to his Islamic identity in the matter of his appearance and the derogation of some of his rights; It differs from the identity of the United States of America, European countries, Russia, India, China, and others...

Defaming Islam as a belief, law, and morals; Islam is stigmatized as a rigid Bedouin religion devoid of a renewable general vision that is not suitable for the present era. It is a racist religion that excludes others and does not accept them. He does not recognize human rights and condemns others to disbelief and looks at him with suspicion and suspicion. In addition, it carries old backward ideas such as the marginalization of women and the deprivation or derogation of their political and constitutional rights; honor killing of women; female mutilation; Preventing women from driving a car, etc.; He called the Jews monkeys and pigs; And they believed that his religion is unique to the truth and absorbed it.

- Directing education to inculcate Islamophobia in the minds of young people; By including Western educational means incorrect and misleading information about Islam; Which prepares the young and young to be provided with a false culture about Islam and Muslims.

- Discrimination against a Muslim and contempt for his personality; and the use of some racist behaviors against Muslims; The Muslim Arabs are the Negroes of the desert, and they are fat old men with thick beards, who wear robes and are characterized by harshness and callousness. They are idiots and fools, they deal with violence and carry the sword to force others to convert to Islam. The Western view of Muslims is that they are the other and they are a threat to civilization; They do not belong to human life forms. And according to this view of inferiority, there were racist practices to the point of genocide, as mentioned Stephen Shehi: Islamophobia: The Ideological campaign against Black Muslims; Until it reached, in the mid-eighties of the twentieth century, a silent genocide, as described by the World Trade Organization; Then they must be eliminated.

- Incitement and mobilization against Islam and Muslims through official channels or agencies; as the church institution; Like what the evangelical preacher demanded of burning the Qur'an on 9/11/2010; In addition to intellectual, cultural, and media platforms; It is the maker of public opinion; On the intellectual side, we find it in the thought of Bernard Lewis and the writings of Samuel Huntington in his book *The Clash of Civilizations*; Fukuyama in his book *The End of History*; It played a remarkable role in preparing for the intellectual and military clash with the alternative enemy of communism, which is Islam and Muslims. As an American general said in describing the war against Iraq as a holy war against the infidels; Likewise, in the media, such as television, radio, and the press. This leads to mobilizing public opinion and taking a hostile stance against rituals, symbols, and sanctities. As the attitude of the people of New York when Muslims wanted to build a mosque in downtown Manhattan, they expressed their concern about the desecration of the sacred site; There were also loud objections against the building of the mosque.

- Highlighting hate speech and discrimination against Islam and Muslims and dealing with them with double standards; As in the issue of freedom of expression, as if it is not a Muslim's right; This is common in official discourse and on social media, as it is full of

an atmosphere of questioning Islam and creating an atmosphere of congestion and lurking. He described Muslims as foul, evil, and alien to the age; and subjected them to surveillance in the streets, universities, and mosques until it was demanded that non-Muslims be distinguished with a sign to warn them and accuse them of non-correct legal grounds; And to say that it does not work with them except annihilation.

Employing Islamophobia in discussions and using it in a policy of pressure and promotion of certain positions and goals on major Islamic issues such as the issue of Palestine and the processes of normalization with the Zionist entity.

Legitimate and just demands for peace and social security

To address the issue from its different dimensions; Responsibilities must be defined; and that each party performs its duty; and be held legally accountable for the offenses and crimes he committed; This requires examining the problem of Islamophobia and its repercussions in its various aspects. The first thing that can be alerted in this regard is fulfilling the just demand demanded by Muslim communities or minorities. Not only in Western countries, and not only for Muslim minorities; but for all countries in the West and East alike; And also to all Muslim and non-Muslim minorities around the world.

In giving some examples, he emphasizes the necessity of a general law that criminalizes insulting all religions. Member states of the international community are bound by it to preserve rights and fulfill obligations; keeping world peace; This gives effectiveness to peaceful coexistence and combating racism and paves the way for social integration.

Without legislation and measures being taken, the crime chain will not depend on religion. It will not stop the series of right-wing extremism and racist obsession that dominates the behavior of some; He pushes him to attack the lives of some Muslims, as happened in the killing of Marwa El-Sherbiny in Germany in the heart of the court; and in the aggression against Islamic sanctities, the Al-Aqsa Mosque and the Church of the Resurrection; the policy of liquidation and repression against the legitimate resistance of the occupier, the oppression and aggression against the Palestinians, and the deprivation of their rights; economic boycotts to prevent Iran's nuclear program; And the policies of dictation and pressure on the Arab OPEC countries to export gas, oil, and energy to Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states to meet the alternative needs of gas and oil for European countries; After the outbreak of the Russo-Ukrainian War; And also to achieve political and economic interests.

But the problem with Islamophobia lies in the fact that it justifies the actions of Islamophobia by falsifying facts. It accuses Islam of falsifying its truth and disguising its humanitarian message. Stripping him of his correct system and teachings; punishes all Muslims by reducing Islam to a deviant thought and a wrong and offensive deed to the religion and the majority of Muslims. It is practiced by a few Muslims who deviated from the Islamic consensus.

To achieve the goals and objectives of sovereignty, control, and hegemony over the Islamic world and the management of world affairs; if Muslims had a role in highlighting this phenomenon; because of not meeting their needs and doing their affairs in religion and life; and their inability to get rid of the destructive practices resulting from religious extremism and Islamic-Islamic fighting or civil wars taking place in the heart of Muslim homelands and other mistakes and actions; The series of Islamophobia, fear of Islam,

will not stop its aggression and the sustainability of its production of a culture of distortion and hostility to Islam, hatred and derogation of the rights of Muslims. Until fear of Islam became a disease in the hearts of many non-Muslims in Western countries and elsewhere; Rather, the situation has reached the level of skepticism among some ignorant and weak-souled Muslims to the point of suspicion and doubt about the validity and ability of Islam to govern modern developments and lead human affairs in the age of civilization and scientific progress. It is also against the peace and stability of the international community and does not contribute to world security. In addition to the evils and problems that come with it as a result of these grievances, such as extremism, tension, violence, and terrorism; Hence, it is only natural that it will reflect negatively on the relations of the world system and lead to more conflicts, wars, and backwardness.

This law is the criminalization of defamation of religions; With its issuance, criminal acts are determined and the punishment imposed on the perpetrator; Accordingly, responsibility is determined

All parties, and each party is accounted for in all its words, deeds, or actions; In order not to fall under the law. This is what the European Parliament sensed in the wake of the right-wing extremist's burning of the Qur'an in Sweden. It issued a decision to lift the immunity of a French deputy who used to insult Islam. It is a fair measure and thus can reduce the commission of crime; save the lives of individuals; And the protection of the sanctity of rituals, symbols, and sanctities. In addition, the right of the injured party must be stipulated. to resort to the International Criminal Court; It is equal in that to be a natural person - an individual - or a legal person - the state - or a local, regional, or international organization.

Based on the existence of the law; The victim's relatives shall have the right to sue before the International Criminal Court. An Islamic body or regional organization shall also have the League of Arab States, or the Organization of Islamic Cooperation resorting to the court to be held accountable for the crimes that occur frequently and shock the belief of a quarter of the world's population; Such as the crime of cartoons insulting to the personality of the Messenger, may God bless him and grant him peace, or the crime of burning the Holy Qur'an. Therefore, the importance of issuing this law, which Western countries resist issuing, becomes apparent. According to the law, punitive law deals with criminal phenomena and stipulates deterrent punishment for the criminal. Rather, it requires the current situation due to the recurrence of crimes against religion and its followers, the diversity of aggression methods, and their renewal over time from year to year and across space from one place to another, and a large number of occurrences; This is the reality of the case for the religion of Islam and its Muslim followers.

Contradictions of rejecting the law criminalizing defamation of religions

The discussion of the Western position on the abuse of power by Western countries in their rejection of the existence of this just law; In defense of the right of God Almighty and the protection of Islamic identity; The decision-makers, in their defective position, involve violations of acceptable and acceptable basic principles that are decided by religious laws and international status quo; In addition to the need for it in the world of people, including:

Confiscating what was stated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948; It is an international document that is accepted and approved by individuals, organizations, and countries alike. Who is familiar with advertising materials; He finds that he establishes

human rights and the international community, which are natural, innate rights that are obligatory for every human being as a social being, such as the right to choose belief as a basic freedom. the right to life, the right to own property, the right to marry, lineage, the formation of a family, the right to physical and mental integrity, and others; It also establishes basic freedoms such as freedom of expression, freedom of movement, freedom of education, political and economic freedoms, etc. Related to our subject is the religious right established in the Qur'an: "There is no compulsion in religion"; it is both a right and a freedom; so he chooses a religion, for this is a freedom that is due to his conviction, and as long as he embraced the religion, he had the right to preserve and protect it against any attack or infringement upon it. On top of it, and among the responsible positions in this regard, recognizing the status of religious belief, is Canada's position on the increase in the phenomenon of Islamophobia.

Among the violations of the Western position: blocking the principle of dialogue on important and thorny issues; Which is true of the industry of Islamophobia against religion and against Muslim.

- That it is a departure from the principle of dialogue and exchange of views, and the presentation of each of the two parties to his opinion coupled with argument and proof; No person or society denies its importance and value as a way of understanding and agreeing on opinion. And to meet the argument with the argument; At the same time, it is a title on rationality and civility, and it expresses an Islamic principle, which is arguing which is better. in which each interlocutor stands at an equal distance; They are equal in the right to express his point of view and rely on his evidence freely and without offense or defamation. This is justice and fair dealing in dealing with the difference objectively in the issue that is the subject of the legitimate difference without it developing into a rejected dispute.

The implementation of the dialogue with its Islamic controls distances the two sides of the dialogue from the charge of monopolizing the truth. It promotes peaceful coexistence among members of society. He is the performer of the Almighty's saying: "And I or you are on right guidance or in clear error." This is the best system for managing dialogue, discussing the issue, and deliberating opinions to reach an understanding of it in a scientific and civilized way.

But the outcome is that officials in Western countries; do not accept dialogue about what worries them about Islam and its sanctities, and with it the religions. They decide what they want in their countries; they even impose their systems on Muslim countries and societies. It was fair and in the interest that they respect the existence of religion and faith as an instinct in man. Because he knows that he was born, dies, and lives in the universe that was made by a supreme Creator - God, may He be glorified and exalted, who directs the movement of the existence in which he lives and regulates all its affairs. And to keep it from insulting it, and not to offend its symbols and sanctities.

Strangely, they do not accept dialogue; About the issues that they resent against Islam, and consider them to be inconsistent with the ideology of Western societies, and that they are harmful and unfair to human freedom; or that they are neither necessary nor required for the life of the individual; Hence, they confiscate natural and necessary rights to preserve the rights of the individual, the integrity of the structure of societies, and the peace and stability of the international system. Hence, such a position is considered intransigence and arrogance that is not based on a sound basis and contradicts societal peace.

Violation of ideology and social order in Western countries

It is well-known that the political and social systems are based on pluralism. There is the republican system and the monarchy system. the presidential and parliamentary system and the multi-party system; There is also democracy and the public and private freedoms it guarantees. Therefore, the system of societies in these countries is established. What organizes social mobility and leads to peaceful coexistence?

And when is the matter of this system based on the recognition of pluralism; It gives rights and freedoms to all members of the people and guarantees their fulfillment. Given that Muslims are part of the people and they have the right to obtain citizenship in it, with what it includes of equality in constitutional and legal rights and duties. It is necessary to ensure the integrity of the right of belief – being they profess Islam – so that they can perform the rituals of Islam in peace and security; The state should also ensure the preservation of the fundamentals of Islamic belief by respecting the symbols: God Almighty, the Messenger, may God bless him and grant him peace, and Islamic sanctities; the Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Prophet; respect for the belief system in Islam; Included in addition to the above: Belief in angels, messengers, holy books and the Last Day with certainty that no doubt touches upon; If this system obtains legal legitimacy from the United Nations Organization – the General Assembly – then it will be the basis for its existence and guarantee its performance for those who believe in Muslims and followers of other religions. Similar to the decision, which represented a turning point with international efforts aware of responsibility; With what was issued by the General Assembly to combat Islamophobia, then peace and peaceful coexistence will prevail among the groups of society within the state; world peace is achieved; And it is the message sent by the Prophet of Islam: We have sent you only as a mercy to the worlds. It is the commitment of the true believer, as mentioned in the hadith of the Messenger, may God's prayers be upon him: "The believer is the one whom the people secure over their religion, their lives, and their wealth." (This means that the believer's commitment to these duties guarantees peace and positive coexistence).

And based on the above; It is clear that the pillars of the pluralistic social and constitutional system in Western countries require respect for the beliefs of Islam and Muslims. As is the case concerning the beliefs of other religions; Therefore, classifying Islam and Muslims as Islamophobia violates laws and religions; Not to mention violating the origins of the Western constitutional and social system; It means turning against the values of democracy and human rights, which Western regimes have increased over Muslim countries and other regimes. at the expense of the Islamic system in deciding Shura and freedoms of belief, thinking, and opinion...etc; At a time when it is not committed to applying what is stipulated in its constitutions; treat its native citizens with it; It is more appropriate for it to abide by it concerning all its citizens and people.

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An Exploration of Islamophobia as Pathology vs Islamophobia as Consequence of Transactionality

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ABSTRACT

This paper analyzes the differentiation between Islamophobia as a pathological category and Islamophobia as an incidental consequence of a transactional project. It offers a case study approach to review the deployment of Islamophobia based on different underlying motivations. One could reasonably say that the only thing as dangerous as Islamophobia is Islamophilia, the purported affinity toward Muslims. While it is certainly the case that there are indeed many who have an ideological empathy and genuine esteem, respect, and adoration for Muslims, the notion of tolerance and engagement with Muslims currently appears to be a principal impetus for states who based their interaction with the Islamicate on transactional motivations. As such, it is quite possible to harbor negative sentiments toward Muslims and yet seek to engage on issues that are mutually beneficial or, in many cases, advantageous to the non-Muslim actor. It also examines how civil society and state actors may possess different motivations and deploy Islamophobia either independently or in coordination with each other. Finally, this paper offers strategies to address and combat each form of Islamophobia as it is deployed based on its respective and underlying motivational impetus.

Keywords: Islamophobia, Muslims, tolerance, transactional motivations, sentiments, civil society

Introduction

Islamophobia is often, and rightly, examined by its adverse impact on its target. The discrimination and demonization of Muslims as individuals and communities is certainly a manifestation of racism. But are all Islamophobias the same? The assault on a hijab-wearing woman in Paris is not the same as the Chinese policies toward the Uyghur population but for reasons notwithstanding the disparity in scope and scale. The underlying motivation that elicits its use for the actor, whether an individual or the state, is critical to assess as a means to identify Islamophobia accurately and, consequently, to develop strategies to combat it. Borrowing from the title of the classic

1972 motion picture, a key point of distinction among Islamophobias may be framed in terms of “Godfather Islamophobia,” i.e. where Islamophobia is not “personal,” but strictly business. This architecture will allow one to differentiate between Islamophobia as a pathology, based upon an irrational fear or hatred of Muslims, and Islamophobia as an incidental outcome from a transactional deployment, possessing an economic, political, or geopolitical incentive. It will also inform situations where the pathological and transactional motivations for Islamophobia are deployed concurrently and in coordination with one another, e.g. the former acting due to the former and the state because of the latter.

Are all forms of Islamophobia the same? The simple answer is no. As such, it would be reasonable to then presume that strategies to combat Islamophobia cannot and should not follow a single, monolithic prescription. When one considers the needed approach to combatting actions taken against Muslims, one must consider the impetus as well as the actor, as each of these factors can play a pivotal role in optimizing the understanding and solutions sought.

It is helpful when embarking upon any assessment of Islamophobia to operate from a consensus of terminology. While the effort to define Islamophobia has become, in itself, a complex and cumbersome project, the current discussion will be predicated upon the Runnymede Trust definition of Islamophobia, which is:

Any distinction, exclusion, or restriction towards, or preference against, Muslims (or those perceived to be Muslims) that has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment, or exercise, on an equal footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life.

In addition, the Runnymede Report has furnished provided a far more truncated definition as well – “Islamophobia is anti-Muslim racism.”

A considerable part of Islamophobia discourse focuses, understandably, on the recipients of anti-Muslim rhetoric and action. But this offers an incomplete and imbalanced narrative. There is the danger that:

Islamophobia becomes reduced to a phenomenon that is both overly simplistic and largely superficial, defined more by the characteristics of the victims than the motivation and purpose of the perpetrators themselves. (Allen, 2010)

Ideology and intentionality of the actor are thus critical elements of any deployment of Islamophobia, as is agency. Given the long definition of Islamophobia that the Runnymede Report provides, one could reasonably infer that any act that adversely impacts Muslims could be rightly construed as an act of Islamophobia. Yet, the more concise definition creates a conundrum. Are all acts that adversely affect Muslims an act of racism, per se? Is it possible for an actor to adversely impact Muslims as an incidental consequence to some other impetus, i.e. absent a bigoted attitude toward Muslims? Perhaps the best way to review this important distinction is to study a series of illustrative examples of Islamophobia.

The targeted attack on visibly identifiable Muslims for being Muslim

On May 27, 2017, a man stabbed and killed two passengers on a commuter train in the American city of Portland, Oregon. The victims, Ricky John Best and Taliesin Myrddin Namkai Meche had intervened when their killer, 35-year-old Jeremy Joseph Christian of Portland, was relentlessly harassing two young Muslim women onboard the train. Christian had been shouting ethnic and religious slurs at the women, one of whom was wearing a hijab. His focus on Muslim women reflected his sentiments toward Muslims more generally. According to his social media, Christian cited his hatred for “Jihadi Muslims.”

The Portland incident is a fairly straightforward example of what would consider Islamophobia as is perceived- an ideologically driven attack on Muslims, particularly in a public space, with evidence available to confirm the suspected bigotry. It is a direct line between actor and target based on hatred in its purest form. While the actor might have been influenced and had felt emboldened by a public discourse that has appeared more permissive of Islamophobic attitudes, there does not appear to be any endorsement or directive from civil society, per se, or from the state.

Of course, ideologically driven Islamophobia, as demonstrated by the Portland attacker, could be fueled by a moral panic that scapegoats Muslims. As American demographics shift toward the advent of the United States becoming a majority-minority nation within twenty years, the anxieties felt by the current white, male Protestant majority translate into the current “Culture Wars,” and manifest themselves with greater xenophobia, nativism, and hatred, especially toward minorities. Muslims, especially Muslim women that wear *hijab*, are the easiest target to identify, as occurred in Portland. In many ways, such Muslims represent the ultimate antithesis, and thus threat, to the essentialized White, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant trope of American identity, and is blamed for the nation’s economic, social, cultural, and political turns, irrespective of how unjustified or unsupportable such sentiments may be.

Ideological Islamophobia at the State Level: France

In contemporary settings, it is difficult to find an example of a state that displays an animus toward a particular suspect group based on purely ideological grounds, especially in the so-called Western world. And yet, France has earned that exceptional status within its own ironic, self-proclaimed ethos of tolerance and free expression. France’s policies to maintain its official policy of *laïcité* borders on the militant, but also on the inconsistent. While the religious expression is prohibited from the public sphere, French legislation is almost singularly trained on the country’s Muslim community, and more specifically on Muslim women and their respective clothing. Banned from wearing the hijab even to public school, the French policies are designed to remove Muslim women from the public space and ideally, from France altogether. Of course, this restriction only applies to Muslim women of French nationality. When it comes to tourists, especially those who travel to Paris for shopping sprees along the Champs Élysée, not only are such proscriptions absent, Gulf Arab women donning even the more restrictive *niqab* are welcomed with open arms. As such, the transactional benefits to the French economy allow for a thinly veiled, perhaps begrudging Islamophilia while allowing for Islamophobia to be institutionalized for a segment of its citizenry. (Taras, 2012)

The Case of the Uyghur: State-Sponsored “Islamophobia”

The plight of the Uyghur has achieved international visibility, yet it has drawn mixed public condemnation globally. United Nations reports have confirmed suspicions of an organized campaign by the Chinese government to oppress the Uyghur in Xinjiang Province, under the guise of suspected extremist activity within the region, and placing millions into “re-education” centers, or concentration camps. These internments follow a systematic effort to deracinate the Uyghur of their Islamic observance, including the banning of fasting during Ramadan, the prohibition of the recitation of the Qur’an, and even coerced eating of pork products. Acts of torture, forced sterilization and forced labor have also been alleged.

On its face, Beijing’s policies against the Uyghur could appear to be a classic case of ideologically driven Islamophobia. After all, the campaign is singularly focused on a suspect group of the population based on their purported religious affiliation. But there may be some complications in recognizing the treatment of the Uyghur in such simple terms. If the state had an ideological aversion to Muslims within its population, it would be reasonable to assume that the policies directed toward the Uyghur would also be affecting other Muslim communities in China. It is not. The Hui, for example, have been unaffected by the forms of abuse and discrimination that are occurring in Western China. It seems that the impetus for Beijing’s attitudes toward the Uyghur lies behind conventional ideological tropes to ones of geography and economics.

By contrast, the Three Gorges Dam project created the world’s largest hydropower dam. Completed in 2012 and generating 22,500 megawatts of power, the project displaced 1.4 million people, destroyed ancestral homes dating back several generations, and submerged two cities, 114 towns, and 1,680 villages along the riverbanks. This region was populated by Chinese non-Muslims, suggesting that Beijing’s march for infrastructure progress does not discriminate or target communities based on religious affiliation.

The Uyghur suffer because of where they are, more than for whom they are. The Xinjiang Province, home to the Uyghur in western China, happens to be the very region through which China’s ambitious Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) courses through. China has invested over \$1.5 Trillion in the resurrection of its famed Silk Road, closed in 1368 by the Ming Dynasty. A comprehensive commercial network over both land and sea routes, BRI begins in eastern China and makes its way to the western edge of Europe, terminating at the Dutch port city of Rotterdam, with several spurs throughout Asia and Europe along the way.

Beijing appears to have assessed that the Uyghur pose a potential threat to the BRI, either by creating obstacles and disturbances to the smooth transportation of goods along the route or could leverage their positionality for greater autonomy and privileges from the Chinese government. Authorities also seem concerned that the Uyghur could be used by external forces that seek to disrupt China’s economic investment and growing dominance. In essence, these policies are an example of transactional efforts that have an element of Islamophobia that is incidental to broader and more immediate priorities.

China's treatment of the Uyghur population demonstrates a particular engagement of state action and citizenship. According to Foucault, citizenship may be employed by different types of power, e.g. the state or society. It may serve as a mechanism for inclusion or exclusion; for example, patriotism and jingoism are potential consequences of citizenship taken to a certain extent and can be exploited by the state as a means of social control. Society uses citizenship as social closure, first, to define itself as a moral space, and second, for integration and homogenization (Van Houdt, 2008). In matters of state or society, citizenship may be seen as a mechanism to regulate a population, the very definition of bio-power (Foucault, 1976). Bio-power creates the situation whereby the control of the 'social body' becomes the end of political power.

Bio-power of society about citizenship is illustrated by the use of 'moral citizenship,' the active participation in society, to contribute to the health of society, qua social cohesion (VanHoudt). Expanding upon Foucault's work on governmentality, Deleuze contends that the modern world has moved from societies of discipline to societies of control (Deleuze, 1992).

Foucault was concerned with the notion of panopticism as a form of bio-power, the disciplinary mechanism by which social control can be achieved. While the original idea of the panopticon, a circular prison that optimized surveillance of the maximum number of inmates, was proposed by British philosopher Jeremy Bentham, Foucault applied the phenomenon more abstractly, to institutions and states in general. With its scope of surveillance of the Uyghur population, Foucault would doubtless contend that China is engaged in creating the ultimate panopticon.

Islamophilia: Islamophobia's Sometimes Evil Twin

The Crusades were a nearly three centuries-long series of military campaigns by European forces that were obsessed with invading and conquering the so-called Holy Land from Muslim rule. Beginning at the end of the 11th Century, the Crusades lasted into the 1270s and were instigated by a Papal Edict by Pope Urban II in 1095. The impetus was a way to galvanize Europe and distract it from a plethora of internal conflicts that enervated the economic well-being of the continent and the Church itself. Islam became the convenient "Other" and Islamophobia was certainly a key thrust to motivate and mobilize the Crusaders. And yet, upon arrival and initial success in Palestine, the Europeans had to shelve their ideological aversion for Muslims and develop a *modus vivendi*, as had Christians for centuries who lived in the region in a far more harmonious manner.

Colonial Islamophilia

The European colonial project was one of the most devastating episodes of Muslim history. The Islamicate was irreparably damaged through a protracted period of exploitation, subjugation, and, in many instances, abject violence, even genocide. There was certainly a racist, bigoted impetus that helped drive the moral indignation of superiority driving European colonizers. At the same time, there were several moments of engagement and cooperation with Muslim actors. The British East Indian Company exploited ambitious and opportunistic Muslim parties to defeat Tipu Sultan and his opposition to the world's first corporation. Ultimately, the divided Islamicate of India allowed for the demise of the Mughal Empire and the eventual absorption of the subcontinent into the British Empire.

The Arab Revolt during World War I that led to the eventual destruction of the Ottoman Empire is one such illustration. Similarly, the British amity vis-à-vis the Gulf States, a relationship dating back nearly two centuries, allowed for the appropriation of oil wealth and the relatively soft-landing independence of many countries over a half-century ago. (Ali, 2002) The affinity for these Muslim regimes for transactional benefit subsumed an ideological animus or antagonism to the subterfuge. At the same time, British racism and Islamophobia are certainly not erased or concealed by such feigned magnanimity toward former Arab protectorates. (Taras)

Similar exploits of the Muslim world have continued unabated, even if it requires negotiations with groups that Western regimes have branded terrorists. During the 1990s, shortly before the 9/11 attacks, and despite not formally recognizing them as the legitimate government of Afghanistan, American oil companies were meeting with the Taliban in the hopes of securing control and ownership over gas pipelines passing through the country. (Rashid, 2001) Transactional business dealings will forgive a host of other sins and shortcomings. As has been shown over the past three decades, the Taliban have proven to be both vital business associates and convenient villains for imperial exploits (Kumar, 2012)

Trump and the Muslim Ban and Saudi Arabia

In 2015, then-candidate Donald Trump opened his bid to become the 45th President of the United States by declaring a "Total and complete shutdown of Muslims entering the United States until our country's representatives can figure out what is going on." After being elected, and within a week of his inauguration, then President Trump made good on his campaign pledge by signing an executive order banning people from six Muslim countries and Venezuela from coming to the country, even if previously approved for a visa. Trump spent most of his term in office exhaling Islamophobic invectives whenever he had the opportunity, emboldened by a media environment and general public discourse that was mostly ambivalent, if not approving of such demonization of a group. In the past, Trump had made specious, anti-Muslim statements, such as allegedly seeing Muslims standing atop buildings across the Hudson River from New York City in New Jersey, cheering on the destruction of the World Trade Center on 9/11, a visual impossibility from Manhattan, even if true.

Trump's hatred of Muslims is not necessarily ideological, or it has limits for the realities of business. When US intelligence implicated Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman in authorizing the murder of US-based journalist Jamal Khashoggi in October 2018, then President Trump was far from critical of the de facto monarch. Neither did he invoke one of many tropes that some crafted of Islam as a violent religion or cultural paradigm. It became quite obvious why the US President showed such rhetorical restraint. Sources reported on the personal benefit to Trump's business ventures that came from maintaining an amicable relationship with the Kingdom itself and with Bin Salman personally. The Saudi sovereign wealth fund invested nearly \$2 Billion in a company headed by Trump's son-in-law, Jared Kushner. The multi-billion dollar Saudi investment in the LIV Golf League, a rival to the PGA, Professional Golf Association, sees Trump golf courses receiving substantial financial gain, as have his hotel holdings.

Assuming that Trump has any ideological sentiments at all, it would not be a shock to learn that he harbors strong anti-Muslim attitudes, based on a long history of racist, bigoted remarks about Muslims and several other groups, including Jews, people of

color, women, homosexuals and the disabled. Yet, his willingness and enthusiasm to engage with Muslim leaders for personal profit, perhaps even over US policy, is indicative of a transactional engagement irrespective of Islamophobia being somewhere in the calculus of his personal beliefs. Trump epitomizes the dichotomy presented by Mamdani of the “Good Muslim” and the “Bad Muslim.” (Mamdani, 2002)

Islamophilia can also be deployed as a guise, revealing how it, too, can be part of a transactional, not ideological impetus. In 2022, the Biden administration announced that it was protesting the Beijing Winter Olympics Games. Due to Beijing’s treatment of the Uyghur population, Washington was not going to send any high-level officials to the Opening Ceremonies. Not only was this gesture symbolic, the American petulance was also arguably one of the most tepid of such gestures. In 1980, the United States expressed its displeasure with the Soviet Union’s invasion of Afghanistan with a complete boycott of the Moscow Summer Games. A more careful study suggests that the US was looking for an excuse to display its stridency toward Beijing for a host of issues, including China’s increasing geopolitical dominance, and found an excuse to employ human rights as a light cudgel diplomatically. It was hardly a strong statement on behalf of the Uyghur and in all likelihood, had the Uyghur issue not been underway, the US would have needed to find some other “cause” to champion, like Chinese policy toward Taiwan.

The guarded manifestation of American “Islamophilia” may be regarded as yet another example of transactional Islamophobia. The complex interconnectivity of the global economy and the realization that China cannot be bullied as perhaps was the case in the past caused the United States to approach Beijing with considerable restraint, despite Washington’s often hackneyed invocation of human rights as justification for diplomatic, political and even military action against regimes it accuses of violating such rights. There is simply too much transactional interaction between the US and China that the lives, livelihoods, and welfare of a few million Muslims would risk the delicate geopolitical balance between these two states. As such, the purported Islamophilia was hardly a countermending posture to the continuing attack on the Uyghur.

There is, perhaps, an even more cynical assessment of the Biden Administration’s invocation of the Uyghur issue than merely finding an excuse to besmirch China. American Muslims, as individuals and through advocacy groups, exerted considerable pressure on the White House to take action on the Uyghur situation. What transpired was the aforementioned statement of criticism and limited protest regarding the Beijing Games. Although many American Muslims were appreciative of the President’s response, even regarding it as evidence of their newfound political influence on the corridors of American power, it might be a very pyrrhic victory. They gained next to nothing in addressing the underlying issue of Chinese state abuse of the Uyghur. Beijing has not altered its activity in Xinjiang one iota. As problematically, the US government can now claim to have responded to Muslim advocacy efforts, stanching future criticism that it is unresponsive to Muslim demands, and worse, it can now claim that by “championing the Muslim cause,” it would be inappropriate to accuse the government of Islamophobia for any actions it takes looking ahead.

The Chinese example of the mistreatment of its Muslim population bears an important distinction. It is deployed by the state, not Chinese civil society. There is no indication, apart from the use of its citizenry in military roles, that Beijing is generating animosity toward the Uyghur based on an ideological hatred of Muslims. But are there examples where the usually ideologically driven Islamophobia of civil societies works in concert with the state-driven policies of incidental Islamophobia through transactional

engagement? Perhaps the answer lies in an assessment of contemporary India, which shows a hybrid form of Islamophobia, a liminal space where ideological Islamophobia coalesces with state transactional-based Islamophobia.

The government of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is a textbook case of state manipulation of Islamophobia in civil society while its policies, though impacting Muslims in a highly adverse and enervating way, may be deployed primarily for transactional reasons. Per Foucault's perspectives on citizenship, the Modi regime certainly traffics in jingoism, redefining what it means to be Indian as synonymous with being Hindu. For India's minority religious communities, including over 200 million Muslims, national identity is now a contested trope, with questions of true and full inclusion no longer an accepted certainty. National observances, including Independence Day, are festooned with Hindu imagery and rhetoric, alienating others despite a nation that was founded on religious pluralism, non-sectarian public space, and a secular government.

Hindu chauvinism, most commonly manifested as Hindutva, an extreme form of religious nationalism, is sanctioned by the government, which turns a blind eye when civil society elements, including the paramilitary, fascist RSS conduct anti-Muslim pogroms. Modi had a history of such chauvinism while Commissioner of Gujrat Province. Under his tenure, Gujrat was the locus in 2002 of some of the worst manifestations of communal violence since the days of Partition. Nearly eight hundred Muslims were killed in what investigations suggest was a conflict instigated and enabled by Modi himself. His alleged complicity was even noted by the US government, which refused to issue him a visa to visit the United States in 2005, a ban that was only lifted upon his election as Prime Minister in 2014. Similar bans were in place in the United Kingdom and European Union until 2012 and 2013, respectively.

For the Hindutva masses, their anti-Muslim hatred is entirely ideological, and a manufactured animosity, thanks to historical revisionism and religion-national identity that asserts a Hindu dominant, if not Hindu only narrative. And while Modi and members of his cabinet might share this Hindutva belief and ethos, the Indian government policies that target and discriminate against Muslims, like the recently redrafted laws that define Indian citizenship and which revoked special status for Kashmir, betray New Delhi's efforts to distract the masses from its true objectives: an ambitious lurch toward a more corporatist government. Modi's policies of demonetization, privatization of the agriculture sector, and other areas of the industry are intended to concentrate the country's economy and wealth in the hands of a select few industrialists and oligarchs, to the expense of hundreds of millions of Indians. A compliant and complicit media, much of it owned by the same plutocrats that support and prop up the Modi regime, feeds conspiracy theories about Muslims and sensationalizes the revisionist narrative of Islamophobia for public consumption while eliding critical coverage of state economic policies. As wealth disparities increase and intensify, the masses have been indoctrinated into creating and then normalizing latent Islamophobia. The state's deference to these fervors shows an implicit complicity between the regime and civil society that assuages the state from implementing directly targeted policies that would betray ideologically based motives. In the process of such tacit coordination, the public becomes stakeholders in upholding India's new Hindu identity, redolent of western states, post 9/11, recruiting the public's help in combatting terrorism with its "If you see something, say something" campaign.

Conclusion

The current assessment illustrates various forms of Islamophobia. It makes the distinction between an ideologically based anti-Muslim hatred, one that is the dominant impetus for civil society actors, and state action, which often occurs within the context of transactional engagement of an economic and/or political nature, where Islamophobia is incidental to the regime's motivation for its actions. These two forms of Islamophobia can act autonomously of one another, as they often do, but on occasion can exist in collaboration with each other. Consequently, it is reasonable to presume that a single, monolithic strategy for combatting Islamophobia will not work for three distinct deployments of it.

In the case of ideologically driven Islamophobia, there is a two-prong approach that may be employed to combat its influence and execution. An appeal may be made to certain sectors of society that can be allies to repel Islamophobic sentiment and conduct as repugnant and inimical to social harmony. In addition to such civic engagement, political engagement is critical to implore the state to enact and enforce laws that prohibit Islamophobic action. This approach also ensures that the state asserts its intolerance of Islamophobia instead of tacitly approving it or worse, collaborating with the Islamophobic elements of society.

Where the state is involved in adversely affecting Muslim populations, even if as an incidental result of transactional policies, it is important to engage those sectors of civil society that object not only to the impact on Muslim communities, but that also will object to the distracting economic and political measures underway. Human rights discourse may be unhelpful and ineffective, so an approach and appeal to the economic and political may yield greater success. In addition, efforts to bring accountability to the state for its actions may offer resistance and potential rescission of policies that target Muslims. Where possible, hate crimes legislation should be demanded as a demonstration that crimes that target specific communities should be treated as exceptional violations.

In those scenarios where collaboration exists between state and civil society in the deployment of Islamophobic policies and actions, severing the connection between state and society is the first line of combatting negative activity. In democratic regimes, where many of these situations occur, the political and judicial arenas may be the optimal spaces for changing toxic policy. A "divide and conquer" strategy, ironically, can cut the connection, and possible strength and efficacy of the state and society actors.

This paper is intended to demonstrate that the intentions and ideology behind an act of Islamophobia are as crucial to assess, if not more important, than the act itself in devising strategies to combat anti-Muslim activity. It is also essential to distinguish between the type of actor involved. Generally, ideologically driven Islamophobia arises from civil society actors, and bears a direct correlative connection to the ideology itself. At the same time, state deployment of Islamophobia tends to be incidental to a different, primary stratagem, often in the realm of commercial interests. This "business" affected Islamophobia is no less consequential or effective, but it requires a metric of understanding and response different than what mere ideological countermeasures will address.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

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Combat Islamophobia: Necessary and sufficient condition for global stability and peace

Speaking notes by

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ABSTRACT

Islamophobia is an ideologically inspired strategic political project. It was planned and prepared during the 1980s, activated at the beginning of the 1990s, and strongly intensified since the year 2000. According to this project, after the break of the USSR, Islam, and Muslims became the main global opponents to the values of the so-called "Western world" and a threat to liberal democracy. Concretely, the project presents an attempt, based on unscrupulous falsification of history and the true character of Islam, to denounce Islam as an anti-civilization religious extremism, and to create negative stereotypes of Muslims as fanatics and terrorists. The introduction of the theory of the unavoidable "clash of civilizations" (Samuel Huntington) was immediate and so far the most dramatic consequence of Islamophobia. Therefore, organized, coordinated, and unified action of the international community to combat islamophobia and its true motifs, is both necessary and sufficient condition for sustainable global stability and peace.

Keywords: Islamophobia, political project, Muslims, anti-civilization religion, the international community, peace

The cultural arrogance of contemporary Islamophobia is based on unscrupulous falsifications of and systematic disrespect for historic facts. Its key "argument" is that Islam is an intruder in Christian Europe that arrived from Asia (Middle East) and that as such, it does not belong to the European cultural identity and tradition. The fact that Judaism and Christianity arrived in Europe from the very same part of the world as Islam, namely Asia (Middle East) and that consequently, they are also intruders in Europe and do not belong to the European cultural identity and tradition, is completely ignored. Obviously, contrary to the statement proclaimed by the late Cardinal Ratzinger, (later Pope Benedictus XVI) that: "Europe is and was throughout its history a mono-cultural continent with exclusively Christian identity", the truth is that Europe is not and never was neither monocultural nor exclusively Christian continent. In great parts of Europe, Islam entered more than three centuries before Christianity. Concretely, as early as in the year 641. In the region of southern Caucasus, Azerbaijan, already settled by the

Muslim community, Abdurrahman ibn Rabi'a el-Bahili founded the first Islamic state in Europe (Dzavid Haveric, History of the Muslim Discovery of the World, 2012). Muslim state Al Andalus was founded in the year 711 and lasted almost 800 years, until the year 1492. Compared to this, the greatest part of Europe (all of Scandinavia, including Denmark; today's Germany, Poland, Baltic republics, Belorussia, Russia, Ukraine, Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Hungary remained polytheist for more than three centuries since the Christianization of this part of Europe had not started before the beginning of 11th century. In the meantime for at least 500 years and through this period, the Muslim state Al Andalus was by far the greatest, economically most developed, most powerful, and most influential state in the whole of Europe, leading in all areas of philosophy, science, arts, and poetry.

Apart from the falsifications of history, the project of Islamophobia has distorted the true nature of Islam presenting it as an exclusive, discriminating, and intolerant religion. In reality, the truth is that the contemporary mainstream world's concept of racial, ethnic, religious, and cultural tolerance, both as a fundamental obligation and as state practice, for the first time in history was introduced not by Christians but by the Islamic state. The fact is that the first authentically inclusive, multi-confessional, and multi-ethnic state in the history of the world, which epitomizes modern political ideals, was the Islamic state. This state was founded and proclaimed in Medina by The Chart of Medina/Medina Constitution, written by Muhamed s.a.v.s in 624. The Medina Charter is arguably the first constitution ever written incorporating religion and politics (Yildirim 2006, 109-117), which demonstrates that Islam rejects the use of compulsion and violence in religion. Since the time it was written, Islam's highest social and cultural values have continued to spread and are lived throughout the whole world. In other words, modern Europe's cultural identity and value system, have their origins in the cultural tradition of Islam, seeded in its soil 1200 years before it was accepted by the Christian state of Europe after the French Bourgeois Revolution of 1789.

On a large scale, this political practice was introduced in Europe by the state of Al Andalus and continued later by Ottoman/State Osmanli Devlet and remained present in the European Islamic states till the beginning of the 20th century.

This explains how ethnic identity, national languages, sacral objects of all Christian nations, and Jews were preserved for five centuries in the whole region of the Balkans which is a unique case in the history of the world, even after the collapse of the Ottoman state.

The spirit of tolerance of Islam remained preserved through the Ottoman legacy till today throughout the Balkans, most specifically in Bosnia. Therefore, instead of defining "Europe as a monocultural continent with exclusively Christian identity", we should rightfully speak of "Europe as a multicultural continent with the shared legacy of Christian and Islamic identity".

Having all this in mind it is of utmost importance to set new standards for the discussion of the place of Islam on the contemporary global stage, its role in the history of human civilization as well as its key importance for the future stability, peace, and cooperation among all nations, traditions and cultures of the world.

Instead of defensive and inferior tones which prevailed in the past, instead of yet another submissive apology of Islam, the future discussion on Islam should offer strong and valid arguments for affirmation of Islam as the key factor in shaping the identity of the contemporary world and creating its political standards, ideals, and highest moral values!

There are three main reasons why to combat Islamophobia:

1. Because of the perennial civilization obligation to respect universal human rights and to pursue the highest moral values epitomized in Islam;

2. Because the politics and practice of Islamophobia/anti-Islamism are permanently generating an ever deeper gap between the two greatest and most influential civilization patterns in the world, inspiring distrust, animosity, and hatred between billions of human beings. The case of A. Behring Breivik sufficiently illustrates the pathological nature of Islamophobia;

3. Because combating Islamophobia/anti-Islamism is the best and most efficient way to create necessary and sufficient conditions for global peace, stability, and cooperation between Islam and Christianity, as the two monumental civilization paradigms of the contemporary world.

Annex:

It is my privilege to propose to all the participants of this Conference a Declaration inspired by the spirit of the Medina Constitution, addressed to the General Assembly of OUN against all sorts of political practices inspired by religious hatred, including anti-Semitism and anti-Islamism. Having in mind that the next year, 2024 will be exactly 1400 years since the Medina Constitution was written, it is of great importance and effect to propose that the next year 2024 be celebrated as 1400 years of the Medina Constitution and proclaimed as the year of ethnic, religious and cultural tolerance and cooperation.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.



INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE
ON ISLAMOPHOBIA
BAKU, MARCH 15-16th

SESSION 2

ISLAMOPHOBIA IN EUROPE AND NATIONAL LEGISLATION

March 15, 2023 – 11:45-12:45

Moderator: Esmira Jafarova

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Islamophobia as a Specific Form of Racism and Discrimination: New Global and Transnational Challenges

Speaking notes by

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ABSTRACT

The speech expresses that the phenomenon of Islamophobia causes our young people to experience anxiety and trauma, as well as a wide range of complex identity issues that affect their presence in person, online, and in communities. At the same time, we know how Islamophobia and the position of some Western regional powers on the resolution of conflicts on the side of Muslims hurt global politics, working mechanisms of international relations, and international law. It is also regrettable that some countries, such as France, act as impartial mediators in the resolution of these conflicts, claiming that they are responsible for the protection of global peace and security. In this context, the law adopted by the French Senate on November 15, 2022, requires the application of sanctions against Azerbaijan. Designating Azerbaijan as an “occupant” which has been under Armenian occupation for nearly thirty years, is yet another indication of the Islamophobic approach throughout its history. The author emphasizes that countries should share best practices and work together to combat Islamophobia.

Keywords: Islamophobia, conflict, global politics, security, sanctions against Azerbaijan

The main objective of the “Islamophobia as a specific form of racism and discrimination: new global and transnational challenges” event is to identify institutional response to the phenomenon of Islamophobia and racism that is on the rise, and is currently being expressed in some European nations, media outlets, and extreme political rightists. This phenomenon is causing our young people to experience anxiety and trauma as well as a wide range of complex identity issues that affect their presence whether in person, online, or in communities.

The ICYF is deeply concerned about the growing islamophobia in several Western countries and their treatment of Islamic sanctuaries. In this context, we decry the recent horrific act of the Holy Quran being burned in front of the Turkish Embassy in Stockholm by far-right activists with the consent of the government as another manifestation of

Islamophobia that is periodically and purposefully encouraged by some Western states.

ICYF, as a youth organization that in its general assembly represents over 65 member organizations from The OIC member states and beyond, reacted immediately by appealing to the Swedish government to reconsider its decision and advising its member organizations to take action against this hate crime. As a reaction, they started several initiatives to oppose the burning of the Holy Quran and expressed their displeasure and anger on various social media websites.

Regrettably, we are witnessing how Islamophobia and the stance of some Western regional powers toward settling conflicts and disagreements on the side of Muslims have significantly and negatively impacted global policy, international relations, and the working mechanisms of international law.

It is also unfortunate that some countries, like France, claim that they are responsible for maintaining global peace and security while also serving as an unbiased mediator in resolving these conflicts. In this regard, the law passed by the French Senate on November 15, 2022, calling for the imposition of sanctions against Azerbaijan and designating this country as an “occupant” who already has lived under Armenian occupation for nearly thirty years, is yet another indication of the Islamophobic approach throughout its history.

By OIC Council of Foreign Ministers (CFM) Resolution No. 10/48-POL on “the Elimination of the Consequences of the Aggression of the Republic of Armenia against the Republic of Azerbaijan,” the ICYF Board applauded the efforts made by the governments of Azerbaijan and other member states to maintain the South Caucasus’ peace and the process of normalizing relations between these two nations and urged the French Senate to rescind its resolution. Our global community’s long-term health, harmony, and development depend on the strengthening of the core principles of faith, human rights, dignity, prosperity, and progress.

In light of this, ICYF introduced the “Heads Up High Islamophobia” program for young people from European Muslim minority communities engaged in or interested in combating Islamophobia in 2020. The purpose of the training is to support the victims of hate crimes and prejudice, as well as to develop the skills of young people and give them and their communities the assistance they need to recover from trauma and anxiety.

Through its first and second ICYF calls for Youth Global Action Countering Islamophobia, ICYF remains dedicated to coordinating the efforts of our international partners for long-lasting solutions and policies, as well as cooperation for improved intercultural harmony, mutual understanding, and dialogue between civilizations.

ICYF’s call for global youth action to combat Islamophobia builds on the efforts of OIC to address the global effects of Islamophobia, particularly on the large Muslim youth populations in non-OIC Member states, by way of encouraging collective measures of governments, international organizations, non-governmental organizations, the international community, and youth organizations to further promote awareness against discrimination, strengthen solidarity, and engage in cultural and civilizational dialogue.

As a consequence of an open-ended meeting in Istanbul in March 2019, the OIC has called for global action to combat religious discrimination, Islamophobia, intolerance, and hatred. The OIC Islamic Group urged the UN Secretary-General to call for a special meeting of the UN General Assembly to declare Islamophobia a form of racism. ICYF embraced this global call. As a result, The United Nations General Assembly unanimously approved a resolution on the "International Day to Combat Islamophobia" on March 15, 2022, and today we are celebrating the resolution's first anniversary.

On this auspicious occasion, I wish to share some policy recommendations on this occasion from the viewpoint of young people to assist avoid and eradicate Islamophobia.

Education about Islam and Muslim culture is necessary for combating Islamophobia. Combating stereotypes and myths and fostering understanding may aid in preventing false information from spreading. Addressing the inaccurate representation of Muslims in the media and media outlets to portray Muslims accurately and impartially is also crucial.

Political leaders play a significant impact as well. They can encourage mutual respect, support harmony and tolerance, celebrate diversity, and speak out against Islamophobia.

To tackle Islamophobia, legal and policy frameworks are necessary. Governments can create and enact laws and regulations that promote diversity and tolerance while also protecting Muslims against prejudice and hate crimes.

Our common future depends on building understanding amongst nations, religions, and cultures. The key to combatting Islamophobia is to promote understanding between Muslims and other faith communities. Communities can become more cohesive and robust via interfaith discussion and participation in their affairs.

Yet, until the underlying reasons for Islamophobia are addressed, those efforts would be ineffective. The main causes of Islamophobia include conflict, economic insecurity, social isolation, and political instability. The best way to fight Islamophobia is through empowering Muslim communities, as this will provide them with the resources and support, they need to become resilient. Fighting against extremist ideologies is yet another crucial element. To foster peaceful coexistence and reduce fear and mistrust in our communities, we should cooperate in promoting moderate and inclusive interpretations of Islam.

Countries must work together to combat Islamophobia, especially when it comes to sharing best practices. International organizations play a part in fostering a culture of tolerance, respect, and understanding for diverse healthy communities.

Thus, we must coordinate our national and international efforts to dismantle Islamophobic myths, encourage interfaith and interreligious conversations within youth populations, and spread authentic and original readings of religion and religious practice.

We ask Allah to lead us to what is best for our young people, countries, and humanity.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

Islamophobia as a Specific Form of Racism and Discrimination: New Global and Transnational Challenges

Speaking notes by

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ABSTRACT

In recent times, we have witnessed an increase in the level of Islamophobia, manifested in hate speech, discrimination, and violence against Muslims. This dangerous phenomenon is growing stronger not only in Europe and the so-called West, but unfortunately also beyond its borders. Because of Islamophobia and the systematic targeting of the Muslim community in some Asian countries. Unfortunately, hatred of Muslims is not only manifested in individual attitudes and actions but in many cases is also structurally rooted in political initiatives or institutional arrangements, as well as in the media in Europe. The gendered aspects of Islamophobia must be given special attention, as women are disproportionately affected by the phenomenon and are most often targeted because of their clothing style. If hatred based on religion or ethnicity is not effectively addressed by political authorities, defamation of one's religion or belief can only erode the trust of the affected people in government institutions.

Keywords: Islamophobia, discrimination, violence, Europe, political authorities, government institutions

The UNGA resolution adopting the International Day which was presented on behalf of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation will serve as an annual reminder in raising awareness of Islamophobia to prevent and combat it by promoting constructive narratives about Muslims, around Islam, at large. The resolution aimed at uniting communities through “strengthened international efforts to foster a global dialogue on the promotion of a culture of tolerance and peace at all levels”, while deploring all acts of violence against persons based on their religion or belief”.

It is needless to emphasize, however, that in a globalized world, many of us are products of two or more cultures, today. There is more than “unites us than which divides us”. What is needed is to build relations based on mutual respect, trust, and a deeper understanding of each other. As many of you are aware, the Organization

of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) is an intergovernmental body with 57 member states covering 4 continents including Europe. One of the key priorities of the Organisation is the promotion of inter-cultural and inter-religious dialogue for peaceful coexistence, and combating racism and discrimination, including Islamophobia and anti-Muslim hatred. The situation of Muslims in non-Muslim countries is a priority concern of the OIC. Unfortunately, today, we witness growing levels of Islamophobia as manifested in hate speech, discrimination, and violence against Muslims, as well as those perceived as Muslims. This dangerous phenomenon is gaining strength not only in Europe and the so-called West but sadly beyond, as we are witnessing mounting Islamophobia and systematic targeting of the Muslim community in certain Asian countries.

In recent years, across Europe far-right populist parties have gained significant electoral successes by fanning the flames of populism through the “politicization of religion”, justifying an agenda of anti-Muslim hatred by linking it to existing socio-economic insecurities in the society. Through the application of the infamous principle of “divide and rule” the far-right extremists further polarize society by encouraging the dangerous narrative of “us” versus “them”.

In discourses at the EU level, the terms Islamophobia and anti-Muslim hatred are used interchangeably. Surveys conducted by many human rights and equality bodies, including the European Union Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA) have exposed a dramatic spike of Islamophobia in Europe in recent years, resulting in the exclusion of Muslims in key areas of life such as education, employment, and housing. Anti-Muslim hatred manifested in prejudice, stigmatization, discrimination, and violence is multi-layered. Unfortunately, these are not only manifested in individual attitudes and actions but in many cases also structurally ingrained in policy initiatives or institutional arrangements, as well as in the media in Europe. The gendered aspects of Islamophobia need particular attention as women are disproportionately affected by this phenomenon, often targeted for their dress code. The general perception of Muslim women in the West is that they are oppressed and therefore, they need to be liberated.

The current focus on Muslims as terrorists, criminals, and unwelcome migrants has further contributed to the polarization of societies. The mindset that all Muslims and Islam as a religion are collectively responsible for terrorist acts committed by some who profess to be Muslims is no doubt a flawed inference. What is most often overlooked is the fact that among European Muslims, many are contributing to society as law-abiding citizens, doctors, engineers, scholars, politicians, serving in the army, working as bus and tram drivers, construction workers, garbage collectors, name it.

Activities of bigoted individuals and groups who incite hatred and violence, insult or ridicule sacred symbols and beliefs and defame religions can never be condoned. Like many, we believe that freedom of expression or speech is not an absolute right; it is subject to “special obligations and responsibilities”. To give some recent examples in Europe, the burning or mutilation of copies of the Holy Quran are provocative acts that exemplify hatred and incitement to violence in addition to being a manifestation of Islamophobia. Such actions cannot and must not take cover under any legitimate expression of the right to freedom of expression or opinion, which carries responsibilities under international human rights law e.g. the obligation not to carry out hate speech and incite people to violence.

At the European level some important steps have been taken including the appointment of a European Commission Coordinator for Combatting anti-Muslim hatred; holding webinars aimed at improving media reporting on Muslims and Islam, funded by the European Commission (DG Justice) in coordination with the European Federation of Journalists (EFJ); launching of the European Anti-racism action plan (2020-2025) which recognizes racisms, “that link to religion or belief in cases such as anti-Muslim hatred”; declaration of September 21 as European Day Against Islamophobia by the Council of Europe (CoE). Our attention was drawn to two important adoptions at the level of the Council of Europe recently, namely, ECRI revised General Policy Recommendation No. 5 on preventing and combating anti-Muslim racism and discrimination, and the CoE resolution “Raising awareness of and countering Islamophobia, or anti-Muslim racism, in Europe” in October 2022.

These are certainly praiseworthy initiatives, in addressing discrimination and stereotyped profiling of Muslims at the European level. Much would, however, depend on the effective implementation of these plans and strategies at the national level by the respective EU Member States. There is an urgent need to put words into action through sustainable advocacy and sincere efforts at implementation. First and foremost, what is crucial is to muster the “political will” across the European political landscape to do so!

Hatred and discrimination based on religion, race, and ethnicity as well as defamation of one’s religion or faith unless effectively addressed by the political authorities can only lead to erosion of the affected people’s trust in public institutions. This would lead to further undermining their sense of belonging to their country of residence or the host country ...This impedes social integration.

Understandably, there could be natural reasons for people having trouble trusting those who are different from them. To my mind, building trust among diversities is an investment in harmonious coexistence. This would of course require taking time to understand differences and find commonalities. Phobia as in the case of Islamophobia, is an irrational fear, most often triggered by ignorance and misinformation. Depiction of Muslims as alien to, and incompatible with European culture and values leads to further stigmatization and exclusion. In this regard, first and foremost there must be public recognition that “Muslims are part and parcel of Europe’s diversity, to which they have contributed for centuries”. Discussions during our first panel today, also provided a historical perspective attesting to the long presence of Muslims in Europe, who are not “recent intruders”. School curricula need to provide accurate information on the presence of Muslim people in Europe and their contribution to European culture and development.

There is a need to encourage and support dialogue and cooperation between groups and communities of different religious backgrounds; conduct awareness-raising and information campaigns to convey the message that preventing and combating Islamophobia is the responsibility of all members of society. A collaborative approach is needed involving religious actors, faith-based organizations, community leaders, civil society organizations, politicians, parliamentarians, and policymakers in fighting prejudice, building trust, and promoting social inclusivity. Engaging the youth, our future generation in the process is extremely crucial. I have often referred to the importance of “Cultural diplomacy”, as a soft power, a tool to remove misconceptions and foster trust and understanding by bridging gaps between cultures, not only through literature, but also through music, theatre, cuisine, and so forth.

For inter-religious and inter-cultural dialogues to have a deeper impact they must be structured and conducted in a manner to reach the grassroots of society, e.g through educational programs, starting very early on in one's life, and through the responsible and targeted use of the media, including social media to propagate balanced narratives about Muslims and Islam and to refrain from negative stereotyping and stigmatization of Muslims. The role of civil society organizations in countering all forms of racism, intolerance, and discrimination, including Islamophobia is very important.

In closing let me underline the significance and timeliness of the Baku Conference as an important opportunity to raise awareness of the actual situation related to the issue of Islamophobia and to call for concrete global actions needed to combat threats of incitement to hatred, discrimination, and violence based on one's religion.

It remains that while we seek protection for Muslims living in the West and beyond, we must also be prepared to give similar treatment to minorities living in Muslim countries within the framework of avowed respect for diversities as embodied in Islam. The Quran states in the chapter of al-Kafirun (the disbelievers): Say: 'O disbelievers! I do not worship that which you worship. Nor do you worship Whom I worship. And I shall never worship that which you worship. Nor will you worship Whom I worship. (So) you have your Din (religion), and I have my Din (Religion).'

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Islamophobia, Turkish Trauma, and Europe

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Abstract

In the speech, the speaker expresses that if we look at the interaction of Europe with Islam in a period when the church was also growing stronger, we can see that as the kingdoms became stronger politically and economically, it becomes clear that the Turks emerged as a prominent presence. Thus, Islam and Turks, as well as Turks, Islam, and Muslims, are often used interchangeably in European literature. Europe's fear of Islam manifests itself, especially in the form of Turkophobia. Therefore, when we talk about Islamophobia in modern Europe, it is necessary to take into account the systematic fear that has continued until the present day. Moderation of this dynamic depends on environmental, regional, or international events. Today, Islamophobia manifests itself in violence against Muslims in Muslim-minority countries, especially in Europe. The issues of racism and discrimination that exist in Europe have turned into hostility towards Muslims to a significant extent. Certain organizations in the West are actively working to justify and legitimize this hostility. Conservatism, non-conformity, and cultural and religious differences are used as excuse materials in these efforts.

Keywords: Islam, Turkophobia, Muslims, Europe, racism and discrimination, cultural and religious differences

The history of Islamophobia, characterized by increasing verbal and written attacks and legal restrictions against Muslims living in Western European countries, dates back quite far in European history. In the 10th century, the spread of Christianity brought together tribal formations and small states, shaping what is roughly present-day Europe. Looking at Europe's interaction with Islam during the period when kingdoms were increasingly organized socially and politically, experiencing rapid population growth and significant economic development, with the Church also gaining strength, it becomes evident that the Turks emerged as a prominent presence. Hence, Islam and the Turks, as well as the Turks, Islam, and Muslims, are often used interchangeably in European literature. Europe's fear of Islam is particularly manifested in the form of Turkophobia.

We can say that the relationship between Islam and the Western world started in the early 8th century (711 AD) with the Muslim conquest of Spain. This conquest campaign, which was halted by the Bedouins just 170km away from Paris, faced a tense and conflict-ridden encounter, even though the purpose of this conquest was not to forcibly convert Christians to Islam, but rather, even as Christians, they were promised a more just and better life under Islamic rule.

The entry of the Turks into Anatolia after the Victory of Malazgirt in 1071 not only alarmed the Byzantine Empire, known as the Eastern Roman Empire but also shook the entire Western world; the Old World was shaken to its core. This is why, in the late 11th century, when Pope Urban II called for a crusade, the Crusader armies engaged in battles with the Turkish Beyliks in Anatolia for two centuries. It is important to note that due to unfamiliarity and lack of knowledge, people in Europe feared the Turks and Islam. Therefore, they were easily influenced and frightened by religious and political figures. Some of the people who came into contact with and learned about the Turks chose to be under their rule instead of other oppressive forces. This was not a scenario desired by the Church or the kingdoms. On the contrary, they found it useful to portray the Turks as man-eating antichrists or incarnations of the devil, as it allowed them to consolidate their own power dynamics and manipulate them for their own narrow interests. Thus, the enduring functionality of Islamophobia, or the fear of Turks in Europe, remains significant even today.

The Battle of Kosovo in 1389, followed by the Conquest of the Balkans, and ultimately the Fall of Constantinople in 1453, sent shockwaves throughout the Western world. Notably, Cardinal Bessarion in Trabzon seized the opportunity to rally support by claiming to “liberate Istanbul” from the Turks. He successfully mobilized churches in the West, solidified his authority over the people, and secured significant assistance. Centuries later, interestingly enough, Slobodan Milosevic, the President of the Serbian Federal Province of Yugoslavia at the time, exploited Turkophobia to provoke Serbian Slavs against Muslim Bosnian Slavs. Addressing the public from a specially designed white podium inscribed with the dates 1389 and 1989, Milosevic called for resistance to 500-year Turkish oppression, which is completely fictitious per se. This rhetoric served as a pretext for the ongoing internal warfare and massacres.

In the 16th century, for example, the religious revolution led by Martin Luther, who argued that the Catholic Church had deviated from true faith, and the emergence of Evangelism would not have been successful without Turkophobia. Martin Luther described the Turks and their religion as a punishment from God, sent down to the Church to make it repent, and as the embodiment of the devil. Through this portrayal, he was able to foster a sense of unity among churches and consolidate their efforts against the Turks and their religion, Islam.

Although ultimately unsuccessful, the Ottoman Empire’s attempts to conquer Vienna left a lasting mark on the consciousness of Europe, giving rise to the enduring “Turks in Vienna Trauma.” The preservation of the inscription “May God Protect Us from the Plague and the Turks” on the city walls serves to keep this fear alive. The Turkish Trauma has become, in a way, Austria’s *raison d’être* and an event that defines its identity. Through its harsh legal measures targeting the Muslim community, which is predominantly of Turkish origin, this phobia is repeatedly fueled for political purposes.

Islamophobia was institutionalized through the establishment of the *Türkensteuer* (Turkish Tax), an additional tax collected from the citizens of Western states bordering the Ottoman Empire until the 18th century to finance defense expenditures against the Turks. Subsequently, from the early 18th century to the beginning of the 20th century, for a span of 100 years, countries like France, England, and Russia, under the name of the “Eastern Question,” made significant efforts to dismantle the Ottoman Empire, which was keeping Europe’s fear of Islam alive, and divide its territories. They aimed to send the Turks back to their lands of origin.

Therefore, when discussing Islamophobia in contemporary Europe, it is essential to consider the fear that has been systematically perpetuated from that time until the present day. The alleviation or intensification of these dynamics is contingent upon environmental, regional, or international developments and is intricately intertwined with them. For instance, following the Cold War that ensued after World War II, a greater fear emerged, leading to the portrayal of the Islamic world, especially through Hollywood, in more romanticized and even fairytale-like narratives, presenting it as foreign yet inherently good. The Islamic world, with Turkey at its core, played a pivotal role in safeguarding the United States and Western Europe from the threats posed by Communism and the Soviet Union. Despite being geographically distant, it held a significant connection. This centuries-old relationship between Muslim Turks and Western Europe took on a new dimension starting in the 1960s, marked by the arrival of Muslim "Guest Workers" in Western Europe, encouraged by the United States. Within this migration wave, Turks once again formed the largest community. It is crucial to emphasize that the relationships being discussed here differ from the historical ones; they have never been viewed on equal terms. The narratives during that period briefly eased within a hierarchical structure that favored the West. However, it is important to note that there has never been true reconciliation between historical Islam and historical Turks. The violent incidents of the 1990s and early 2000s provide clear evidence of this.

The 9/11 attacks in the United States marked a turning point in promoting and legitimizing all actions driven by Islamophobia, which include the repressive and restrictive policies imposed on Muslims in each country. The 9/11 attacks were used to portray devout Muslims, not only in countries with Muslim minorities but also in Muslim-majority countries, as terrorists or terrorist sympathizers. This narrative sometimes resulted in the invasion of their countries and the persecution of their people. Samuel Huntington, in the 1990s, introduced his hypothesis with the question "The Clash of Civilizations?", but then added an exclamation mark to it, taking the situation even further by linking conflicts with Islam to the "bloody borders of Islam" and particularly to its warlike nature. This has made him a polarizing and self-fulfilling prophet.

Today, Islamophobia manifests itself in acts of violence against Muslims in countries where they are a minority, notably in Europe. The existing and persistent issues of racism and discrimination in Europe have significantly transformed into anti-Islamic sentiment and animosity toward Muslims. Certain circles in the West are actively working to justify and legitimize this sentiment and animosity. Excuses such as conservatism, inadaptability, and insurmountable cultural and religious differences are used as materials in these efforts.

In Germany, out of the 5.5 million Muslim population, 3.5 million are Turks. Initially, it was expected that Turks would assimilate or eventually leave within 20 to 30 years. However, after 60 years since their immigration, they have moved beyond the status of mere guests and have established their presence in their host countries while maintaining their own cultural identity. Nevertheless, there has been a resurgence of Islamophobic rhetoric in recent times.

With the reunification of Germany in the 1990s, there was an increase in violence against Turks. In 1992, Turkish homes were set on fire in Mölln, and in 1993, a similar incident occurred in Solingen. Between 2000 and 2007, eight Turks were murdered by a Neo-Nazi gang in their workplaces. In 2008, another incident took place in Ludwigshafen, where Turkish homes were set ablaze, resulting in the deaths of nine Turks. However, the perpetrators of this act were not found. In 2020, a racist attack in Hanau resulted in the killing of nine foreign nationals, including five Turks. Despite these incidents, the Turkish

community in Germany maintained their composure and throughout their 60-year history of immigration, they have never engaged in any harmful actions towards their host country. Despite this constructive approach, Germany's rhetoric has not changed towards a more inclusive policy. According to a religious tolerance survey conducted by the Bertelsmann Foundation, 52% of the German population still perceives Islam as a threat today. This lack of tolerance towards Abrahamic religion Islam, Muslims, and their institutions, in contrast to the tolerance shown towards Buddhism and Hinduism, can be attributed to the portrayal of Islam by the media as an ideology based on terrorism rather than a religion, especially after the events of 9/11.

Ultimately, we do not live in a world dominated by homogeneous civilizations, as envisaged by Samuel Huntington. Despite the theories and actions of racist and discriminatory groups, a study conducted in 2017 revealed that there are a total of 26 million Muslims living in Europe, with a population of 521 million. Even considering only regular waves of migration, it is projected that by 2050, the Muslim population's share will increase from 4.8% to at least 11%. Given the current socio-political conditions, it can be expected that this trend will lead to increased areas of conflict. In such circumstances, the role of NGOs in raising awareness and mobilizing communities and institutions can be emphasized. However, the responsibility and burden of finding a solution is often placed solely on the affected party. They are expected to exert more effort, show more tolerance, and take more initiative. While these expectations are indeed significant, we may not be seeking empathy from the right place.

Society, on its own, does not possess the authority to bring an end to injustices, to legitimize and institutionalize positive steps, transforming them from mere good intentions and romantic folklore into binding actions. The ultimate authority capable of achieving this is the national state. The question remains: how can we encourage states that have thus far failed to take action? I believe this is somewhat inevitable for rational nation-states. The increase projected in the research will become a significant factor in demographic terms. The effective management of this growth, which will impact societal balances, is crucial for leaders and the sustainable peace and stability of nations. This is expected to prompt a systemic revision in states that have historically insisted on a homogeneous structure.

Ultimately, to prevent conflict, it is essential to formally and practically eliminate the material and spiritual deprivation and injustices that fuel and are fueled by Islamophobic tendencies, and to ensure security for everyone. This will be crucial in fostering mutual trust, communication, and interaction.

In particular, the education system needs to develop a sincere curriculum regarding Islam, Muslims, and societal realities, aiming to foster mutual understanding. Providing support to young people in internalizing these realities will be necessary. Only then can actions such as burning the Noble Quran be thwarted by a social taboo.

Only a state structure that recognizes and embraces the diversity of its society, reflects and sustains it through its institutions, bridges the gaps of conflict, and actively fosters an encouraging, facilitative, interactive, and cooperative environment can prioritize stability that comes with justice over the uncertainty and security dilemmas associated with fear.

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The need for political recognition of Islamophobia as a form of racism in Europe

Speaking notes by

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ABSTRACT

Mainly, international organizations such as the European Union, OSCE, and the Council of Europe still refrain from using the word Islamophobia in the names of the coordinators they set up to tackle anti-Muslim racism due to the objection of some member states. If we look at the studies conducted in the last two decades and examine them academically, we see that a well-established literature on Islamophobia has emerged. Hundreds of books on Islamophobia are published in various languages, international meetings are held regularly, and academic journals are published continuously. Therefore, to combat Islamophobia, our most important need today is to establish cooperation with non-governmental organizations with professional human resources such as Greenpeace, Human Rights Watch, and Amnesty International, equipped with sufficient financial resources and organized on a global scale. This NGO may be centrally organized and have offices in multiple countries, or may form a coalition with existing NGOs to combat Islamophobia.

Keywords: Anti-Muslim racism, Islamophobia, Non-governmental organizations, international organizations, coalition

The United Nations General Assembly declared 15 March as the International Day to Combat Islamophobia with a unanimous decision last year. France, India, and EU representatives disputed this decision on the same grounds. According to representatives of these countries, discrimination against all religions should be fought together, and it is not right to highlight discrimination against a single religion. The fact that the representatives of France and the EU use the same arguments as if they agree with the representatives of India, where Muslims are lynched on the streets, is thought-provoking in terms of showing the extent and spread of Islamophobia in Europe. Despite this, the representatives of France, the EU, and India seem to have supported the decision in order not to be alone in the face of the whole world.

As you know, March 15 is the anniversary of the Christchurch Islamophobic terrorist attacks in New Zealand, in which 51 Muslims were killed and 40 Muslims were injured.

Therefore, it is of symbolic importance that this date is declared by the UN General Assembly as the International Day to Combat Islamophobia. Moreover, this decision should be seen as a historical turning point in the fight against Islamophobia on a global level. In this way, for the first time, the problem of Islamophobia was politically recognized on a global level with a decision taken at the UN General Assembly.

Although this decision is not binding, it is a milestone for the global recognition, understanding, and combating of Islamophobia. One should note that many countries, including EU member states, persistently deny the existence of this problem, and the leaders of these countries do not even utter the word Islamophobia.

Likewise, international organizations such as the EU, OSCE, and the Council of Europe still refrain from using the word Islamophobia in the names of the coordinators they have established to combat anti-Muslim racism, due to the opposition of some member states.

For this reason, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe has established the position of "Personal Representative on Combatting Intolerance and Discrimination against Muslims", the European Union Commission has established EU Coordinator on combatting anti-Muslim hatred and discrimination, and the Council of Europe has established the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on anti-Semitic, anti-Muslim and other forms of intolerance and hate crimes.

If the International Day to Combat Against Islamophobia is utilized well by Muslim NGOs and organizations in terms of global political recognition of the problem, it will take the fight against Islamophobia to a new dimension. Despite this, we need to state that we are just at the beginning of the fight against Islamophobia, which has become the dominant ideology of the 21st century. When we look at it academically, we can say that basic literature on Islamophobia has emerged with the studies carried out in the last twenty years.

Hundreds of books have been published in different languages on the subject of Islamophobia, regular symposiums or international summits are held and there are academic journals that are constantly published. Moreover, there is a consensus among academics on the definition of Islamophobia as anti-Muslim racism. Of course, it is political and civic activism that will bring all these academic studies to the field.

In this regard, perhaps dozens of NGOs have been established in Europe, acting independently of each other, especially in the last two decades.

The biggest problem of these NGOs, most of which are not professional, is that they do not have sufficient financial and human resources. Working at the national level, these NGOs also face serious state pressure in countries such as France. As it will be remembered, France closed some of these NGOs without a court order.

Therefore, our most important need today to combat Islamophobia on the ground is a non-governmental organization with professional human resources such as Greenpeace, Human Rights Watch, and Amnesty International, equipped with sufficient financial resources and organized on a global scale. This NGO can be centrally organized and have offices in many countries, or it can form a coalition with existing NGOs to combat Islamophobia.

The priority of this NGO, which can be called the Global Islamophobia Watch Center, should be the daily registration of Islamophobic incidents on a country basis and the publication of relevant statistics annually. For this, a committee consisting of expert academicians must develop a strong methodology by examining similar NGOs around the world.

The time has come to challenge the anti-Muslim racism on the ground systematically, which complicates the lives of Muslims in the Western world and Muslim countries, poisons the relations between Muslim and non-Muslim world, leads to Islamophobic terror attacks and violence to genocide, normalizes racism and discrimination, and reinforces the power of global power circles.

Talking or writing is no longer enough, it's time to take action.

So now it's time to go down to the field and start a struggle systematically on the field for a practical solution to the problem. The first duty of the Global Islamophobia Watch Center should be to record the Islamophobic incidents on a country basis daily and to share these statistics with the public on a monthly and annual basis, with a sound methodology. The second task of the Global Islamophobia Watch Center is to ally as broadly as possible in the fight against Islamophobia by lobbying NGOs, academics, intellectuals, businessmen, politicians, government institutions, journalists, and opinion leaders in the relevant countries. The third task of this center should be to inform, educate and train Muslim non-governmental organizations, opinion, and youth leaders about Islamophobia. First of all, we need to educate ourselves about what kind of problem we are facing. The fourth task of the Global Islamophobia Watch Center should be to initiate a legal struggle both at the national and international levels. We need to bring discriminatory laws, practices and hate crimes against Muslims to national and international courts. Since such cases require significant financial resources and expertise, it is essential to set up dedicated funds for this issue.

On the other hand, the Global Islamophobia Watch Center must support studies on Islamophobia at the graduate level. One can say that current academic studies only cover the tip of the iceberg we face. From education to the field of employment, from the media to the discourses of politicians, the necessary work to reveal discrimination and racism against Muslims has still not been done.

The fifth task of the Center should be to raise issues related to Islamophobia in international organizations such as the UN, OSCE, European Parliament, and Council of Europe, and to take initiatives to ensure that this issue is recognized politically and stays on the agenda of these International Organizations continuously.

As history has shown us, public pressure plays a very important role in the fight against racism. For this reason, this center can announce every year at the national and international level, the Islamophobic politician of the year, the Islamophobic media organization of the year, the Islamophobic movie of the year, the Islamophobic novel of the year, the Islamophobic company of the year, the Islamophobic writer of the year and so on. This will create public pressure on those who commit racism and discrimination against Muslims without any hesitation and fear of any legal, political, or financial repercussions.

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No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

Islamophobia in Contemporary Europe (in the Case of France): The Roots of the Issue, Mechanisms and Actors

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ABSTRACT

The process of colonization developed by France over North Africa in 1830 turned into one of the most terrible and bloody pages in world history. The people of the Maghreb resisted fiercely, putting forward several outstanding fighters and leaders. France has not yet returned several territories subject to decolonization to their legal owners and is pursuing a policy of annexing these territories in the spirit of neo-colonial policy. Europe today experiencing a crisis of pluralism and multiculturalism, presents a contradictory picture. Western countries, including France, use Islamophobia as leverage to regulate public perception. Although “Islamophobia” as both a term and a phenomenon is now widely accepted, its definition and use remain a matter of controversy and debate. In this article, the author attempts to consider the preconditions for the emergence of the phenomenon of Islamophobia in France, the history of the origin of the term “Islamophobia”, the features of its various interpretations in the scientific literature, as well as to highlight the current state, forecasts, and prospects on the issue in general.

Keywords: France, Islamophobia, Muslims, colonialism, racism, religious discrimination

Introduction

Europe today experiencing a crisis of pluralism and multiculturalism, presents a contradictory picture. Western countries, including France, use Islamophobia as leverage to regulate public perception. Experts are sure that hatred of Muslims has become a tool for changing the agenda, reducing the level of dissatisfaction with the negligent policy of the authorities of several European countries. The situation started during the 1990s when different phenomena that aimed at denying multiculturalism began to take shape in European countries. It was a time when movements such as anti-Semitism, racism, or xenophobia began to attract more and more followers, and new phenomena that deny multiculturalism, began to take shape. What started as a trend supported by only a few partisans, Islamophobia became in less than three decades a social phenomenon present in almost all Western cultures. Events such as the 9/11 attacks in the United States of America or the numerous terrorist attacks that took place on the territory of the European Union in the past decade, as well as terrorist attacks associated with Muslim

fundamentalists, allowed Islamophobia to quickly become widespread in Western society and join many forms of rejection of multiculturalism, which were already present in cultures with large influxes of migrants. In 2019, Muslims in many European countries faced some form of Islamophobic hatred. Mosques were attacked in France, Germany, Norway, and the UK. Islamophobia and anti-Muslim tendencies have intensified across Europe in 2020. This is stated in reports prepared by international organizations. The United Nations has declared March 15 as the International Day Against Islamophobia. However, countries such as India and France opposed this decision and thus showed their attitude toward Islamophobia. Ethnic and religious minorities are being targeted in Western countries facing economic crises. Any mistake or crime of Muslims in Europe is replicated, and the entire Islamic world is represented as the culprit. In French society, the Muslim is identified with “the other,” an irrational barbarian. Islamophobia conceives Islam as inferior, a manipulative ideology that invites people to violence.

In this article, we tried to consider the preconditions for the emergence of the phenomenon of Islamophobia in France, the history of the origin of the term “Islamophobia”, the features of its various interpretations in the scientific literature, as well as to highlight the current state, forecasts, and prospects on the issue in general. The article has an introduction, three parts, and a conclusion. The research was carried out on the historical method, comparative analysis, descriptive and dialectical method, as well as general scientific methods of analysis.

1. Preconditions for the Emergence of the Issue: The Colonial Past of France?

With the decay of the Ottoman Empire, in 1830 the French invaded and began to colonize French North Africa which is most of the Maghreb^[1] region, including Tunisia in 1881 and Morocco in 1912. The French conquest of Algeria took place between 1830 and 1847. On April 17, 1912, in the Fez riots Moroccan infantrymen mutinied in the French garrison in Fez but failed to take the city and were defeated by a French relief force. French North Africa was a collection of territories in North Africa controlled by France and centering on French Algeria. The process of colonization developed by France over Algeria, the resettlement policy, and the paramount strategic importance of the region, provoked the Algerian Independence, one of the bloodiest and most terrible conflicts of the post-war period. The methods used in the Maghreb to establish French hegemony, in the “best” tradition of the Reign of Terror, or simply the Terror^[2], during the French Revolution, the infamous slogan of which was “Liberty, Equality, Fraternity or Death.” reached genocidal proportions and war, as famine and disease led to the death of between 500,000 and 1 million Algerians.^[3]

[1] The Maghreb (al-Maghrib) is a geographical term given the Muslim Arabs gave to the area usually defined as most of the region of western North Africa or Northwest Africa, west of Egypt. The traditional definition includes the Atlas Mountains and the coastal plains of Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, and Libya.

[2] The Reign of Terror, or simply the Terror (fr.: La Terreur), was a climactic period of state-sanctioned violence during the French Revolution (1789-1799).

[3] The Scramble for Africa. France in Africa. World Civilizations I (HIS101) – Biel. <https://courses.lumenlearning.com/suny-fmcc-boundless-worldhistory/chapter/france-in-africa/>

The peoples of the Maghreb resisted fiercely, putting forward several outstanding fighters and leaders both from the popular and the aristocratic (*sharīf* / 'noble') and intellectual strata. Thus, for example, 'Abd al-Qādir ibn Muḥy al-dīn al-Jazā'irī (1808-1883) was an Algerian religious and military leader who leading the resistance movement that was growing against the French invasion of Algiers in 1830. As an Islamic scholar and Sufi who descended from a noble and influential family, at the age of twenty-five he took an oath to the main representatives of the Algerian tribes to defend his homeland. For fifteen years, he conducted a heroic struggle against the superior forces of the French army, one of the most advanced armies in Europe until his final surrender in 1847.

Later 'Abd al-Hamīd ibn Mustafā ibn Makkī ibn Bādis, (1889-1940) Islamic reformer, scholar and figurehead of cultural nationalism, leader of the reform movement in Algeria, and fighter against French colonialism, continued this struggle. This movement focused on the problem of changing the Muslim society and the starting point for that was Algeria. After the Second World War, it became the most important continuation of the Algerian War of Independence. 'Abd al-Hamīd ibn Bādis was not only against the French, but also against the Algerians, who defined Algeria, which arose as a result of colonialism, as the territory of France, and the Algerians as Muslims who became French. His famous slogan "Islam is my religion, Algeria is my homeland, Arabic is my language" was taken up and continued by many other activists fighting for the decolonization and freedom of Africa.

'Abd al-Hamīd ibn Bādis (1889-1940) had a profound influence on the worldview of Mālik bin Nabī (1905, Constantine, French Algeria, also known as Colonial Algeria - 1973, Algiers, Algeria) who was an outstanding Muslim and Algerian intellectual, writer and philosopher. Traces of this deep influence were reflected in the intellectual development of Mālik bin Nabī, stretching from the issue of colonialism to the problem of civilization.^[4] Arguing about the nature of colonialism, the thinker wrote: "Colonialism first tries to make an individual a traitor acting against the society in which he evolves. If it fails in its attempt, it will try to reverse the roles, this time pushing for the individual in question to be betrayed by his society...".^[5]

French North Africa ended soon after the Évian Accords of March 1962, which led to the Algerian independence referendum of July 1962. «A hallmark of the French colonial project in the late 19th century and early 20th century was the civilizing mission (mission Civilisatrice), the principle that it was Europe's duty to bring civilization to "backward" people. Rather than merely govern colonial populations, the Europeans would attempt to Westernize them through a colonial ideology known as "assimilation".^[6]

In general, French authors are not inclined to recognize the close connection between the colonial past of France and the emergence of Islamophobia. The French invasion was met with hostility. French forces engaged in wholesale massacres of entire tribes. Approximately one-third of the Algerian population died as a result of colonization, whether from direct warfare, disease, or starvation. Some governments and scholars

^[4] Mahmut, Hakkı, Akın. Müslümanların Tarihe Dâhil Olma İmkânı: Malik bin Nebi'nin Tarih Felsefesi ve İslam Medeniyeti Anlayışı. Düşünce Tarihi Serisi. Müslüman Dünyada Çağdaş Düşünce. Cilt 6: Kuzey Afrika Düşüncesi. Yurtdışı Türkler ve Akraba Topluluklar Başkanlığı Yayınları : 2020. s. 38.

^[5] Bennabi Malek. La Lutte idéologique dans les pays colonisés. Traduit de l'arabe par Nour-Eddine Khendoudi. El Borhane, Algérie: 2005. p. 135.

^[6] The Scramble for Africa. France in Africa. World Civilizations I (HIS101) – Biel. <https://courses.lumenlearning.com/suny-fmcc-boundless-worldhistory/chapter/france-in-africa/>

have called France's conquest of Algeria a genocide, such as Ben Kiernan, an Australian expert on the Cambodian genocide who wrote in his book *Blood and Soil: A World History of Genocide and Extermination from Sparta to Darfur on the French conquest of Algeria*: "By 1875, the French conquest was complete. The war had killed approximately 825,000 indigenous Algerians since 1830. A long shadow of genocidal hatred persisted, provoking a French author to protest in 1882 that in Algeria, "we hear it repeated every day that we must expel the native and, if necessary, destroy him".^[7]

Historian Halim Gençoğlu, the author of four books and several articles in African Studies, writes in his research paper that on February 23, 2005, the French law on colonialism was an act passed by the Union for a Popular Movement (UMP) conservative majority, which imposed on high-school (lycée) teachers to teach the "positive values" of colonialism to their students in North Africa. The law created a public uproar and opposition from the whole of the left wing and was finally repealed by President Jacques Chirac (UMP) at the beginning of 2006, after accusations of historical revisionism from various teachers and historians. Algerians feared that the French law on colonialism would hinder the task of the French in confronting the dark side of their colonial rule in Algeria because article four of the law decreed among other things that "School programs are to recognize in particular the positive role of the French presence overseas, especially in North Africa." Benjamin Stora, a leading specialist on French Algerian history of colonialism and a pied-noir^[8] himself, in his book *Algérie, formation d'une nation; suivi de, Impressions de voyage: notes et photographies* («Atlantica»:1998) (Eng.: *Algeria: Formation of a Nation; Observations, Travel Impressions: Notes and Photographs*) said: "France has never taken on its colonial history. It is a big difference from the Anglo-Saxon countries, where postcolonial studies are now in all the universities. We are phenomenally behind the times." In his opinion, although the historical facts were known to academics, they were not well-known by the French public, and this led to a lack of honesty in France regarding the French colonial treatment of the Algerian people.^[9]

H. Gençoğlu summarizes the results of his research with the conclusion that most of the French colonies in Africa are still under French rule and an assimilation culture. Their stooges are the kings of the 'democratic' dictatorship. France still forces 14 African countries to pay a colonial tax for the benefits of slavery and colonization. France continues to collect rent on the colonial buildings they have left in these countries. It is estimated that these African countries pay over \$500 Billion as colonial tax to France each year. Also, 80% of the 10 countries with the lowest literacy rates in the world among adults are in francophone Africa. The researcher considers, until France leaves Africa, economic hegemony and coups will continue.^[10]

^[7] Kiernan, Ben. *Blood and Soil: A World History of Genocide and Extermination from Sparta to Darfur*. Yale University Press: 2007. p. 374.

^[8] Pieds-noirs (fr.) – the term referring to Christian and Jewish people whose families migrated from all parts of the Mediterranean to French Algeria, the French protectorates in Morocco, and Tunisia, where lived for several generations and were expelled at the end of French rule in North Africa between 1956 and 1962. (The Scramble for Africa. France in Africa. World Civilizations I (HIS101) – Biel. <https://courses.lumenlearning.com/suny-fmcc-boundless-worldhistory/chapter/france-in-africa/>)

^[9] Gençoğlu, Halim. French colonial legacy in Algeria. // United World International (UWIDATA): 10.12.2021. <https://uwidata.com/21460-french-colonial-legacy-in-algeria/>

^[10] Gençoğlu, Halim. The legacy of French colonialism in Africa. // United World International (UWIDATA): 09.13.2021. <https://uwidata.com/20956-the-legacy-of-french-colonialism-in-africa/>

2. Features of the Interpretation of the Term “Islamophobia” and the origins of its Appearance in France

After 2001, the term “Islamophobia” has been actively discussed not only in France but also in many other Western countries. According to scientific research, Arab authors believe that Islamophobia in France appeared in the Middle Ages and began to manifest as a tendency in the 18th century during the period of colonial expansion. French scholars were the first ones to develop studies in which Islam was interpreted as the antithesis of modernity. The origins of Islamophobia lie in medieval Orientalism, characterized by the struggle between Muslims and Christians, during which the latter rejected Islam, considering it irrational and backward.

In this sense, authors like Jules-Hippolyte Percher in his book *À la conquête du Tchad* (1891) described Muslims as a menace against Christians.^[11] However, the term quickly fell into disuse in the 1920s, returned to use only after the 9/11 attacks. A feature of this situation is that after 2001 “Islamophobia” became an actively discussed term not only in France but also in many other Western countries.

According to Kotovich, most of the Arab origin’s authors exploring the phenomenon of Islamophobia in the example of French society, consider that this term and phenomenon first emerged in France and French. The main argument in favor of this point of view is the French colonial past and the peculiarities of the position of the Muslim citizens of France during this period. Muslim authors claim that France has been enmity with the Arab-Muslim world since the beginning of the colonization of Algeria in the 1830s. Islamophobia, Christian in nature, arose in the spirit of the crusade, flourished during the colonial expansion, and, after a period of latency, recovered with the “war on terror”. In particular, Huda Asal, also a researcher of Arab origin, shares this point of view, believing that the origins of Islamophobia lie in medieval Orientalism, characterized by the struggle between Muslims and Christians, during which the latter rejected Islam, considering it irrational and backward. The author claims that the very word “Islamophobia” belongs to the French. Already at the beginning of the 20th century, the works of the French colonialists appeared, in which this term was first used in the context of studying various spheres of Muslim life in the colonial empire of France.^[12]

Without denying the complexity of the definition, Asal also writes about the specifics of the perception of both the term and the phenomenon of Islamophobia in France, that the protest against the term is often combined with a denial of recognition of the phenomenon itself. She views it as a refusal to consider Islamophobia as a form of racism and Muslim populations as victims of prejudice, discrimination, and increasingly significant attacks, in France and elsewhere. Opponents of the term defend the freedom to criticize religions and accuse people who fight Islamophobia of being censors. Moreover, the former consider the fear of Islam as legitimate (because of the suffix “phobia”) and the manifestations of the Muslim faith as proselytizing and anti-secular (*antilaïques*). Many go so far as to challenge academic research and reports from international organizations on Islamophobia, accusing the victims of self-excluding

[11] İrfan, Kaya, Ülger and Maribel, Benitez. Islamophobia in France, from Racism to “Neo-Populism”. // LAÜ Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi (VIII-I) EUL Journal of Social Sciences: Haziran 2017 June. S. 50–66. P 55.

[12] Kotovich K.A. Islamofobiya vo Fransii: trudnosti opredeleniya. // Sosialniye i qumanitarniye issledovaniya seqodnya: nepredskazuyemoye proshloye, neopredelennoye budushee. Sbornik materialov XVI Vserossiyskoy (s mejdunarodnim uchastiyem) nauchnoy konferentsii studentov, maqistrantov, aspirantov I molodikh uchenikh. Vipusk 16. Izdatelstvo Tomskoqo Gosudarstvennoqo Universiteta: 2021. Pp. 393-393. (In Russian). P. 396.

themselves due to “communitarianism”^[13].^[14] “Islamophobia is thus defined as an ideology whose springs, functions, and goals are similar to those of racism”, Asal claims.^[15]

Kotovich also notes that the French historian Nicolas Lebourg considers Islamophobia to be a new kind of “heterophobia” (from the French *altérophobie*). The meaning of Lebourg’s concept of “alterophobia” is that racism and all its manifestations are based on fundamental myths and scientific facts that allow an individual to separate himself from “aliens” in a certain society. In other words, in any particular historical context, there may be a specific type of alterophobia, for example, anti-Semitism, racism towards the black population, Islamophobia, Arabophobia, etc. A manifestation of alterophobia in French society, according to Lebourg, is anti-Semitism at the turn of the 19th–20th centuries, as well as Islamophobia today. The author points out that Lebourg considers Islamophobia to be a manifestation of racism, and that many European authors tend to consider Islamophobia precisely racism, based on the fact that Muslims have certain characteristic markers (clothes, behavior, and so on) that allow us to consider them representatives of one conditional race, which is sometimes called a “race in spirit”, despite the difference in their biological races, nationalities, origins, and even the branches of Islam that they profess.^[16]

Lebourg also writes about the origin of the term “Islamophobia”: “Its first appearance (1910) is significantly earlier than its entry into common usage (after 1997). The birth of the term was part of a lexical frenzy revelatory of the tensions that emerged in France because of the necessity of reconciling the nation-state, industrial society, and the colonial empire: the words “nationality,” “immigration,” “ethnicity,” and “xenophobia” all emerge between 1825 and 1901”.^[17]

Summing up the comparison of the interpretations of the term “Islamophobia” by the authors of Arab and French origins, we can conclude that both groups of authors tend to define this phenomenon as a kind of racism. In the study commissioned by the European Parliament’s Policy Department for Citizens’ Rights and Constitutional Affairs, Islamophobia is also defined as a specific form of racism: “Islamophobia is a form of racism that refers to acts of violence and discrimination, as well as racist speech, fuelled by historical abuses and negative stereotyping and leading to exclusion and

^[13] Here H.Asal means Muslim communitarianism. Communitarianism is a philosophy that emphasizes the connection between the individual and the community. The author proceeds from the opinion that communitarianism has become, among the destroyers of Islam as well as its apologists, a political instrument and the expression of an ideology that is far from clarifying the understanding of current developments among Muslims but maintains and aggravates ambiguities and misunderstandings. Also one of the topics of critical scientific discourse is often the issue of Islamism as communitarianism, the central claim that Islamism can be interpreted as a form of communitarianism and that underlying the communitarian and Islamist critiques of liberal norms and institutions there is a shared way of thinking about the community and the person.

^[14] Asal Huda. L’islamophobie en France: le déni d’un phénomène bien réel. –Dans le livre: Racismes de France. Sous la direction de Omar Slaouti, Olivier Le Cour Grandmaison. Paris. La Découverte – “Cahiers libres”: 2020. Pages 170 à 186. P. 175.

^[15] Ibid, 176.

^[16] Kotovich K.A. Islamofobiya vo Fransii: trudnosti opredeleniya. // Sosialniye i qumanitarniye issledovaniya seqodnya: nepredskazuyemoye proshloye, neopredelennoye budushee. Sbornik materialov XVI Vserossiyskoy (s mejdunarodnim uchastiyem) nauchnoy konferentsii studentov, maqistrantov, aspirantov I molodikh uchenikh. Vipusk 16. Izdatelstvo Tomskoqo Gosudarstvennoqo Universiteta: 2021. Pp. 393–393. (In Russian). p. 394–395.

^[17] Lebourg, Nicolas. Islamophobia in France. Occasion, 2016. halshs-01696784 https://www.researchgate.net/publication/323004346_Islamophobia_in_France

dehumanization of Muslims, and all those perceived as such”.^[18] The report further underlines the fact well-known to those of skill in Islamic studies that Islamophobia is largely built on the process of orientalism studied by Edward Wadie Said (1935–2003), a Palestinian American professor of literature, a public intellectual, and a founder of the academic field of postcolonial studies in the 19th century.

According to Said, “In newsreels or news photos, the Arab is always shown in large numbers. No individuality, no personal characteristics or experiences. Most of the pictures represent mass rage and misery, or irrational (hence hopelessly eccentric) gestures. Lurking behind all of these images is the menace of jihad. Consequence: a fear that the Muslims (or Arabs) will take over the world”.^[19] In his *Covering Islam*, third and last book in a series of books (*Orientalism* /1978/, *The Question of Palestine* /1979/, *Covering Islam* /1981/), Edward Said tried to “treat the modern relationship between the world of Islam, the Arabs, and the Orient on the one hand, and on the other the West: France, Britain, and in particular the United States.”^[20] In this classic work, Said reveals the hidden agendas and distortions of fact that underlie coverage of the Islamic world in the American media when they interpreted Islam for others making this religion synonymous with terrorism and hysteria: “It is only a slight overstatement to say that Muslims and Arabs are essentially covered, discussed, and apprehended either as oil suppliers or as potential terrorists. Very little of the detail, the human density, and the passion of Arab-Muslim life has entered the awareness of even those people whose profession it is to report the Islamic world. What we have instead is a limited series of crude, essentialized caricatures of the Islamic world presented in such a way as, among other things, to make that world vulnerable to military aggression”.^[21] As for the roots of the origin and formation of negative stereotypes and policies towards Muslims, here too Said introduced a valuable observation into the scientific discourse, pointing out that after World War II in Europe, “the transference of a popular anti-Semitic animus from a Jewish to an Arab target was made smoothly since the figure was essentially the same”.^[22]

The work of İrfan Kaya Ülger and Maribel Benitez shows that some scholars affirm that it is necessary to distinguish between the “old Islamophobia,” related to the colonial past of France, and the “new Islamophobia” featured by the mistrust towards Islam, immigrants, and Arabs. When applied to Muslims it signifies that Islam is now treated as an ethnic identity regardless of where they originated.” Other scholars pointed out that in Europe there is a prejudice against Muslims in general but also to ethnic groups like Turks specifically.^[23] Ülger and Benitez also provided an overview of the discussion around the phenomenology of the concept of Islamophobia, giving examples of the most diverse views and definitions of scientists on this topic. For example, some of them are: “Islamophobia is a current phenomenon aimed to safeguard the future of European civilization” (Matt Bunzl (2005)); “even though Islamophobia is a new topic, it is a “phenomenon dated back centuries”” (Grosfoguel (2006) and Nasr (2004));

[18] Protection against racism, xenophobia, and racial discrimination, and the EU Anti-racism Action Plan. Policy Department for Citizens' Rights and Constitutional Affairs Directorate-General for Internal Policies. Study Requested by the LIBE Committee. European Union: 2022. p. 37.

[19] Said, Edward W. *Orientalism*. New York. Vintage Books, Random House Inc.: 1979. p. 287.

[20] Said, Edward W. *Covering Islam: How the Media and the Experts Determine How We See the Rest of the World* New York. Vintage Books, Random House Inc.: 1997. p. 41.

[21] *Ibid*, p. 84.

[22] Said, Edward W. *Orientalism*. New York. Vintage Books, Random House Inc.: 1979. p. 286.

[23] İrfan, Kaya, Ülger and Maribel, Benitez. *Islamophobia in France, from Racism to “Neo-Populism”*. // LAÜ Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi (VIII-1) EUL Journal of Social Sciences: Haziran 2017 June. S. 50-66. s. 56.

“Islamophobia is related to a “cultural racism,” which is a result of colonial frameworks that legitimize the White-European supremacy over inferior cultures such as Jews, Arabs, or everyone who was described as “people from the wrong religion”” (Grosfoguel (2013) & Mielants, 2006); “Islamophobia is nothing but a strategy to condemn criticism towards Islam” (Ilya U. Topper (2015) and Alvin H. Rosenfeld); “In France, to talk about Islam exposes people to severe criticism because Islam is a topic which in fact is a “no discussion topic”” (Michel Hollubecq (2015)); “even the Islam is a minority religion, it has changed the lives of French people in a key issue for democracy: freedom of speech, because now a fear emerges from being accused of racist or Islamophobic” (Michele Tribalat (2011)) etc.^[24]

3. Current State, Forecasts, and Perspectives of the Issue

Relentless migration flows from regions with high birth rates (Near and Middle East, North Africa) mean that every year Europe becomes more and more Muslim. The birth rate of Muslims is three times higher than non-Muslims, and already 20% of children and young people in Europe come from Muslim families. As a result, Muslim communities in Europe are generally much younger than non-Muslim ones. For example, one-third of Muslims in France are under the age of 20, while only 21% of the French themselves are at this age.^[25] The Arab-Muslim diaspora in France is the largest in Europe and, according to various estimates, is over 5 million people (the population of France in 2008 is 64.5 million people). Most of it is made up of immigrants from the Maghreb countries (over 82%).^[26] İrfan Kaya Ülger and Maribel Benitez point out that according to a sociological survey conducted in Paris in 2013, 74% of respondents considered Islam intolerant, contrary to the values of French society. In addition, survey participants believed that Muslims are intolerant and seek to impose their way of life on the society that welcomes them. They also indicate that veiled women, mosques, Arabic speakers, shops selling halal products, as well as beard men wearing turbans are commonly attacked because they are perceived as “Muslims.”^[27] “In fact, the debate about a real integration process in France has deviated using a neo-populist rhetoric which focuses on trifling topics like the use of *niqab* (Islamic face covering), *burkini* and the consumption of *halal* meals”.^[28]

Huda Asal also writes about the biased attitude of the French state towards Muslims at the present stage. Hence, also the development of security policies that target supposed “radicalized Muslims”, as was the case after the attacks of January and November 2015 (Charlie Hebdo, Hypercacher, Bataclan). The French state has been denounced by several organizations for having put in place counter-terrorism measures deemed abusive and discriminatory. These exceptional measures mainly targeted “Muslims”, but out of 4,600 searches, only 16 have given rise to prosecution for the “apology of terrorism”. This is how the images of an external and internal Muslim enemy mingle, seen as the Trojan horse of the “Islamists” who rage on national soil, influenced by countries or movements that France considers as major political threats, even existential. Finally,

^[24] Ibid, 52.

^[25] Dobayev I. Islam I miqrasii v Yevrope: proval politiki multikulturalisma. // “Musulmanskii mir”, №4, 2015. pp. 40–54. (In Russian). p. 41.

^[26] Dolgov B. Arabo-musulmanskaya diaspora vo Fransii: islamskaya identifikatsiya I svetskaya demokratiya. // Islam v sovremennom mire. № 3–4, 2012. pp. 96–102. (In Russian). p. 96.

^[27] İrfan, Kaya, Ülger and Maribel, Benitez. Islamophobia in France, from Racism to “Neo-Populism”. // LAÜ Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi (VIII-I) EUL Journal of Social Sciences: Haziran 2017 June. S. 50–66. p. 53.

^[28] Ibid, p. 62.

it is a question of gendered Islamophobia which constructs the figure of the violent and extremist Muslim man compared to that of the veiled Muslim woman, submissive but dangerous, suspected of contributing to the Islamization of society and of undermining jeopardizes a major principle of the Republic: secularism (*la laïcité*).^[29]

As the other researchers point out, according to the French model of assimilation, immigrants must fully absorb the culture of the majority. For a long time in Europe, a policy of multiculturalism was pursued towards Muslims that assumed the coexistence, interpenetration, and mutual enrichment of different cultures. However, as the number of Muslims in Europe increased, the concept of multiculturalism began to appear more and more cracks.^[30] At the same time, it can be said that it is paradoxical that “when Europe was gripped by homophobia and sectarianism, Muslim societies were criticized for being too non-heteronormative and multicultural – signs of Muslim “degeneracy” remedied through the imposition of colonial rule”.^[31] Expert Azeezah Kanji calls “Islamism” the French state’s pet bogeyman du jour. According to the anti-Islamist leftists, discourses challenging oppression (anti-colonialism, anti-racism, feminism, etc.) serve as sources of it, contributing to what these leftist anti-Islamists like to call “radical Islam”. Today, when the signifiers of “civilization” have changed public “intellectuals” like French philosopher Pascal Bruckner complain that Islamism prevents them from freely demonizing Muslims for being too intolerant. As analyzed by medieval literature scholar Geraldine Heng, for centuries before that, it was what might now be called “Islamism-Judaism”: the recurrent conspiracy theories conjoining Jews and Muslims as threats to European Christendom, so that “the two infidel races were [treated] as halves of a single body of Semitic aliens”.^[32] Kanji also gives the following facts, already widely known today, in connection with Islamophobia in France: the Collectif contre Islamophobia en France (Collective Against Islamophobia in France) was liquidated by the French government in November 2020; Prominent Islamophobia expert Professor Farid Hafez’s home was raided by counter-terrorism police in Austria, also in November 2020 – part of a series of raids against Muslim academics and activists; In February 2020, the eminent philosopher and anti-racist, Palestine solidarity activist Professor Cornel West was denied tenure at Harvard University; In March 2021, the right-wing Swiss People’s Party proposed a ban on the wearing of Muslim headscarves in public places, allowing it to attract twice as many votes and win the general election. Similar political maneuvers are regularly carried out by political forces in France and Germany.^[33] The exploitation of Islamophobia for political purposes has also been the product of a “postcolonial” Left that, just as Islamophobes do, assigns individuals to an ethnic-cultural origin. The fact that the exploitation of Islamophobia for political purposes has also been the product of a “postcolonial” Left that, just as Islamophobes do, assigns individuals to an ethnic-cultural origin, is also indicated by Lebourg.^[34]

[29] Asal Huda. L’islamophobie en France: le déni d’un phénomène bien réel. – Dans le livre: Racismes de France. Sous la direction de Omar Slaouti, Olivier Le Cour Grandmaison. Paris. La Découverte – “Cahiers libres”: 2020. Pages 170 à 186. p. 174.

[30] Dobayev I. Islam i miqrasi v Yevrope: proval politiki multikulturalisma. // “Musulmanskii mir”, №4, 2015. pp. 40–54. (In Russian). p. 42.

[31] Kanji Azeezah. “Islamism” or Islamophobia-Leftism? // Al-Jazeera: 2 Apr. 2021. <https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2021/4/2/islamism-or-islamophobia-leftism>

[32] Ibid.

[33] Ibid.

[34] Lebourg, Nicolas. Islamophobia in France. Occasion, 2016. p. 6. halshs-01696784 https://www.researchgate.net/publication/323004346_Islamophobia_in_France

“The ambiguity of the French Left” is also discussed by Yasser Louati, exploring the issue of how *laïcité* was enshrined in the French Constitution and how its redefinition has legitimized Islamophobia.^[35] The author indicates, that the legacy of the colonial era continues today. Although after France formally decolonized, *laïcité* became entrenched, ceasing to dominate public discourse. He gives many facts about how *laïcité* returned to the forefront of French politics to give legal support to institutionalized Islamophobia. In 2003, François Baroin MP, a close ally of Jacques Chirac, submitted a document is crucial to understanding France’s Muslim-centred controversies entitled “Pour une nouvelle laïcité” [for a new laïcité]. “The document stated that after “defeating the Catholic religion”, to crack down on “communautarisme” and “Islamism” and “uphold Western values”..., a “new *laïcité*” had to be implemented”. Louati highlights an important aspect of this document, pointing out that its author consciously conceived it as an anti-Muslim weapon that will discriminate against a specific population, when he concluded and stated, “At some point *laïcité* and human rights are incompatible”. Thus, concludes Louati, when Muslims are accused of “violating *laïcité*”, it is not about the historical *laïcité* enshrined in the 1905 law and the Constitution, but a new about the *new laïcité* that is being weaponized to back identity-based controversies and justify Islamophobia.^[36] Louati also writes about the Islamophobic hysteria of Macron who used a similar strategy when has far outdone his predecessors in codifying Islamophobia in law, when he was elected in 2016. “Notoriously Islamophobic figures occupy key positions in his administration, saturating public debate with anti-Muslim controversies and declarations, using “Islamodiversion” to distract from unpopular reforms... Macron’s key political message was not based on hope for a better future but on the fear that Muslims were taking over the country”.^[37] Seema Syeda agrees with many of Louati’s research points and confirms in her study that, the situation in France is by far the most detrimental to the basic human rights of the Muslim community, with the heaviest attacks and legislation against the visibility of Muslims in public.^[38]

According to Jim Wolfreys’s opinion, in France, the racialization of the issue of Muslims and their self-determination and identity has taken a negative turn, because it tends to be viewed as a threat to national values and sensibilities. The author points out that, in recent years, the French state has resorted to the marginalization and punishment of approximately four million of its citizens of Muslim origin or faith. He criticizes French political circles that are trying to solve their problems by instrumentalizing social issues such as immigration and national identity, the causes of which come among other things, from the colonial past of France: “A spiral has developed over the past three decades, with Islamophobia at its core, as political elites have attempted to compensate for a lack of positive affiliation to their core economic project by resorting to negative themes based on the scapegoating of immigrants, Roma people and Muslims”.^[39] Wolfreys argues, that secularism or laicism (*laïcité*) is an undeniable value for most French citizens, so strong that it can be compared to a state religion professed by political and media figures’ use of the term *laïcité* to mask their own Islamophobia to justify state racism: “Put bluntly, France’s problem is not *laïcité* but racism. *Laïcité* has simply

^[35] Louati, Yasser and Syeda, Seema. Islamophobia in France: Causes, Responses and Lessons for the UK and Europe. London. Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung: 2022. p. 3.

^[36] Ibid, 5.

^[37] Ibid, 8–9.

^[38] Ibid, 16.

^[39] Wolfreys, Jim. The Republic of Islamophobia: The Rise of Respectable Racism in France. Published in the United States of America by Oxford University Press: 2018. p. 10.

become the most 'respectable' and therefore effective means for it to be expressed today".^[40] Reflecting on the problem of inequality as a fundamental economic and social factor influencing the growth of Islamophobia in contemporary France, Wolfreys writes: "Profound inequalities have provided the context for the hardening of republican orthodoxy and the emergence of Islam, or rather Muslims – with their immigrant past, hijabs, run-down housing estates, and rioting – as the perfect scapegoats for a society increasingly disfigured by the ruthless communitarianism of the wealthy."^[41]

The position of French authors is that they are not inclined to recognize the close connection between the colonial past of France and the emergence of Islamophobia. In the works of these researchers, one can most often find the version that this phenomenon arose during the Iranian Revolution of 1978–1979 as a definition by the imams of the category of women who refused to wear the hijab. In this case, Islamophobia means "Muslim fear in the face of Islam", which once again emphasizes the ambiguity of the term itself.^[42]

In the conclusion of the European Network Against Racism's report (2016) "Forgotten Women: the impact of Islamophobia on Muslim Women", covering eight European countries: Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Sweden, and the United Kingdom, states that in employment, Muslim women are being discriminated at different stages, being victims of indirect discrimination that is difficult to prove. In reality, along with religious discrimination, multiple cross-discrimination takes place. The fact speaks for itself that "in an interview with French media, France's Minister for Women's Rights Laurence Rossignol compared Muslim women who wear the headscarf to American "negroes" who accepted slavery".^[43]

Gordon writes that the adherents of the modernization of Islam in France have to resolve the most complex inter-civilizational problem since the Muslims of France in their mass feel themselves as part of the Muslim world. The problems of Muslim integration in French society are complicated by the severe and protracted crisis of the latter. Recalling the death of innocent victims by Islamist terrorists in France, he notes that among these victims there were many representatives of the Muslim community: out of 86 crushed in Nice on the Promenade des Anglais in Nice, France, there were 30 of them.^[44] He points out that Sarkozy proceeded from the recognition of the fact that France "became multicultural, multi-ethnic, poly-confessional". True, he did not have enough firmness in defending the course towards the cultural diversification of French society. In 2011, Sarkozy, having paid tribute to public sentiments with the "phenomenologist" inherent in those, declared the failure of multiculturalism. Meanwhile, the direction of movement indicated by him was continued. President Macron who follows the course outlined by Sarkozy has a similar understanding of the multiculturalism of France: Islam

^[40] Ibid, 93.

^[41] Ibid, 121.

^[42] Kotovich K.A. Islamofobiya vo Fransii: trudnosti opredeleniya. // *Sotsialniye i qumanitarniye issledovaniya seqodnya: nepredskazuyemoye proshloye, neopredelennoye budushee*. Sbornik materialov XVI Vserossiyskoy (s mejdunarodnim uchastiyem) nauchnoy konferentsii studentov, maqistrantov, aspirantov I molodikh uchenikh. Vipusk 16. Izdatelstvo Tomskoqo Gosudarstvennoqo Universiteta: 2021. Pp. 393–393. (In Russian). pp. 397–398.

^[43] *Forgotten Women: The impact of Islamophobia on Muslim women*. Published by the European Network against Racism (ENAR), with the Support of the Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme of the European Union, the Open Society Foundations, the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust and the ENAR Foundation. Brussels: 2016. p. 31.

^[44] Gordon A.V. Islam vo Fransii: opit inteqrasii. // *Sotsialniye I Gumanitarniye nauki. Otechestvennaya i zarubejnaya literature*. Ser. 9, Vostokovedeniye I afrikanistika: Referativniy jurnal, № 3, pp. 5–53. (In Russian). p. 46.

in France should become “French Islam”.^[45] The author also notes that Macron, at a meeting with the American president, demonstrated unanimity in a negative attitude towards the Muslim world, with a certain sarcasm said that the French managed to make Islamophobia the dominant direction of political discourse. However, is French society itself, which is even more divided on this issue than the community of “Muslim origin” ready to accept his integration plan? 30% consider the practice of Islam in France unacceptable, 44% consider Islam a threat, and this is a common position both for the right-wing radicals, for whom it is a threat to national culture and for the “new Republicans” from liberals and leftists, who see it as a threat to laicism. Still, 36% do not consider Islam a “threat”, and 22% do not consider Islam a “factor of cultural enrichment”. The author emphasizes that historically the sign of ethno-confessional affiliation (*jus soli*) was not a priority in determining French identity.^[46]

In February 2017, Macron told an Algerian television station that the French colonization in North Africa was a “crime against humanity.” That might have signaled a shift in official discourse on colonial history if the speaker would be true to his words, but only four days later, he apologized not to the victims of colonization but to the *pieds-noirs*. Thus, in the 2017 election, as in the history wars of 20 years ago, colonial history has once again become political.^[47] “There will be no repentance, there will be no apologies,” an adviser to French President Emmanuel Macron said ahead of the release of a much-anticipated report on the history of colonization and the Algerian War.^[48]

Conclusion

In 1830, the French invasion of Algiers marked the beginning of the widespread colonization of Africa and Asia, reaching the scale of genocide and war. However, in the colonized spaces there have always been forces that were in opposition to the colonizers. The peoples of the Maghreb resisted fiercely, putting forward several outstanding fighters and leaders both from the popular and the aristocratic (*sharīf* / ‘noble’) and intellectual strata. French North Africa ended in March 1962 however, instead of managing the colonial population, France is trying to westernize it by its colonial policy of assimilation of Muslim peoples. France has not yet returned several territories subject to decolonization to their legal owners and is pursuing a policy of annexing these territories in the spirit of neo-colonial policy. Deep-seated old resentments, as well as France’s rejection of the many injustices associated with its colonial history, cause tension with the French of Algerian and North African origin, which further divides French society and contributes to the use of this factor by certain circles as a tool of radicalization.

Based on the analyzed facts, it can be concluded that it was the French authors who introduced the word “Islamophobia” into scientific usage at the beginning of the 20th century when this term was first used in the works of the French colonialists in the context of studying various spheres of Muslim life in the colonial empire of France. Although the term “Islamophobia” is now widely accepted, its definition and use remain the subject of academic debate and controversy.

^[45] Ibid, pp. 42–43.

^[46] Ibid, pp. 43–44.

^[47] Why the French presidential candidates are arguing about their colonial history. April 19, 2017. <https://theconversation.com/why-the-french-presidential-candidates-are-arguing-about-their-colonial-history-75372>

^[48] Momtaz Rym. France won't apologize for Algeria colonization. By Politico. Newsletter. January 20, 2021. <https://www.politico.eu/article/france-apologize-algeria-colonization/>

Talking about the integration of Muslims into French society, one can state the failure of the French integration multicultural model, due to its connection with racial discrimination and the idea of the superiority of European values and culture. The idea that Muslims are irreconcilable and militant seems to be a key and current motive in the demand to stop or limit Islamic migration in France. In addition, one can argue about the existence of gender Islamophobia in France. In French society, through various ideological tools and media structures, prejudices and the negative image of Islam and Muslims are formed and promoted, and Muslims suffer discriminatory and unconstitutional practices. Such an integration policy violates the freedom of Muslims to practice their religion, and even marginalizes them, preventing them from becoming fully engaged citizens of French society and contributing to the growth of hate crimes and hate speeches against Muslims.

Secularism (*laïcité*), which was originally the principle of progress and tolerance at the heart of the French Republic, advocated by political leaders of all persuasions and trends, as a result, has become today a tool for disidentifying and discriminating against the Muslim minority. It seems that shortly the contradictions discussed above will hardly be resolved. Actions in the internal politics of the current leadership of France, which some Muslim leaders already consider Islamophobic, require more caution and possibly cooperation with the French Muslim community, which would lead to a consensus in the interpretation of such a controversial term as “Islamophobia”.

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Islamophobia in Western Europe: The influence of politics and government

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ABSTRACT

The definition of Islamophobia has changed over the years, with Islamophobia becoming more prominent after the attacks on the World Trade Center in New York on September 11, 2001. Opponents of the use of the term see it not as an exaggerated fear of criticism of Islam, but as a means of protecting Islam from criticism. Muslim discrimination stems from factors sometimes called anti-Muslim racism, Muslim hatred, or Islamophobia. This results from a combination of generalizing ideas, symbols, and texts that systematically attribute negative connotations to “Muslims” and/or “Islam”. Opponents also point out that religious minorities in Islamic countries face more religious discrimination than Muslims in Western countries. Islamophobia is viewed within local, national, and geopolitical developments. Attacks on democratic institutions through terrorism and polarization in Western Europe must be fought. This can be reinforced by the organizations seeking to suspend human rights and international human rights treaties.

Keywords: Islamophobia, Muslim discrimination, religious minorities, Islamic countries, terrorism, human rights

1. About Islamophobia

About the terminology: Muslim discrimination, Muslim hatred, anti-Muslim racism, Islamophobia. Many terms are used to describe the exclusion of Muslims. And there has been a lot of discussion about these terms for years (Butter, Van Oordt, van der Valk, 2021). So there is no unambiguous definition of Islamophobia. The definition of Islamophobia has changed over the years. Islamophobia has become more prominent since the September 11 attacks of 2001, the day of the attack on the World Trade Center in New York.

The European Monitoring Center on Racism and Xenophobia EUMC defines Islamophobia as discrimination against Muslims: “*Manifestations of Islamophobia range from verbal threats to physical aggression against people and their property.*” Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan aligns against Islamophobia and blasphemy within Islam’s sacred concepts. Groups campaigning against Islamophobia sometimes also campaign against blasphemy, for example, the 2020 banned group CCIF, which incited the beheading of French teacher Samuel Paty.

Opponents of the use of the term see it as a way to dismiss criticism of Islam as exaggerated fear and to protect Islam from criticism. These opponents also point out that religious minorities in Islamic countries generally suffer more from religious discrimination than Muslims in Western countries.

In the Fourth Muslim Discrimination Monitor (Butter, Van Oordt, van der Valk, 2021), the authors use the following descriptions: "Muslim discrimination involves treating, excluding or discriminating against individuals or groups based on their (alleged) Islamic faith. Muslim discrimination arises from what is sometimes referred to as anti-Muslim racism, Muslim hatred, or Islamophobia: a combination of generalizing ideas, images, symbols, and texts that systematically and consistently give a negative meaning to 'Muslims' and/or 'Islam'. As a result, Muslims, but sometimes also non-Muslims who are (wrongly) seen as Muslims, are treated negatively and/or excluded, often partly based on external characteristics such as name, language, physical appearance, and clothing."

Muslim hatred is not only directed against individuals but also against the buildings of Muslims. Since the 1970s, there has been arson, graffiti, destruction, etc. of mosques. The perpetrators are often anonymous, but in recent years they have more often operated from small radical or right-wing extremist groups.

2. Perspectives on Islamophobia

Wassif Shadid (Professor at Leiden University) distinguishes Islamophobia 4 frames:

a. The ethnocentrism frame

The Greek word *ethnos* means people. Ethnocentrism means that you judge other cultures by the norms and values of your society. Because you focus on your own culture as a benchmark, other cultures are automatically seen as inferior imitations of your own culture. Ethnocentrism always involves making a value judgment about other cultures.

Ethnocentrism is other cultures are inferior, own culture is superior. Tendency to disapprove of foreign cultures; also the resulting sense of own superiority. Within this frame, Muslims are placed in an us-them opposition, in which Muslims, as an ethnic minority, have to adapt themselves to the culture of the indigenous majority. Every society is more or less multicultural. That means there is always cultural diversity within societies in the world. In a multicultural society, all cultures should be equal. Traditionally, the incumbent population believes that they have more rights than the newcomers. This certainly applies in the Western world to newcomers with a non-Western cultural background.

Elaboration

Anthropologists assume that an assessment, for example in terms of good or bad, depends on the norms and values of one's own culture. In other words, normative concepts such as good and evil are learned concepts. Assessing a cultural phenomenon is therefore pointless for the anthropologist. It is better to look into why people in a culture consider certain phenomena good or bad (or beautiful, ugly, valuable, educational, superfluous, etc.). Source: Web class Anthropology.

b. The stigmatization frame

Stigmatization is the process by which people label, condemn, and exclude a group with common and deviant characteristics and/or behaviors. This often happens due to misunderstandings. The exclusion concerns, among other things, rights, obligations, and participation in social activities. It may concern openly discriminatory behavior or incorrect or incomplete knowledge and stereotypical views or prejudices.

Research into stigmatization and discrimination of Muslims in Utrecht (Omlo, Butter, 2020) shows that about two-thirds of people who experience Muslim discrimination experience this on the street or in the public space. Furthermore, Muslim discrimination is often experienced in the labor market (52%), on the internet (51%), in shops and on the market (40%), in public transport (32%), and in education (24%). In addition, media and politics were often mentioned. This research shows that non-Muslims can also be victims of Muslim discrimination.

Within this frame, immigrants and Muslims are presented as problem groups. In the media and politics. In the media and the political debate, Muslims in particular are treated as an over-represented category in crime, social benefits, assault on women, etc.

In her dissertation on the representation of Muslims and Islam on Dutch public television, Andrea Meuzelaar identified two competing narratives about the religious identity of Muslims: one about the well-adapted and successfully integrated Muslim and one about the maladjusted and barbaric Muslim. Both are stereotypes according to her.

These frames and stereotypes also recur in an analysis of nearly 4500 photos of Muslim women in the ANP image database (Yüksel, Butter, 2020). The researchers conclude that a one-sided image of Muslim women is given: almost all Muslim women wear a headscarf or a niqab and are almost always photographed outdoors and largely passively. They are rarely visible as citizens who actively contribute to society, but also not in their social environment, for example as a mother helping her child with homework. The words used to describe the photos often refer to socio-political debates on themes such as civic integration, integration or political frames such as Islamization. This mainly portrays Muslim women as 'the other'.

c. The Lay Frame

The main characteristic of this is that immigrants and Muslims are given relatively little opportunity to express their opinion and that they are mainly presented as laymen and not as experts. (..) As a result, they have little chance of asserting themselves in the social and political discourse.

d. The generalization frame

In this frame, Muslims are seen as a homogeneous group in which their religious identity overwhelms all other social identities. This frame does not take into account the great diversity among the followers of the Muslim religion.

3. Globalization and beyond

In previous considerations, Islamophobia emerges as a complex concept. In the globalized world and the developments that occur therein, we see two basic attitudes toward immigration in Western democracies:

1. The advocates for the open society: open borders and human rights
2. The Advocates for the Closed Society: Closed Borders and “Our Current Residents First”

A distinction can be made here between the developments of the balance of power at the global level, in which Western European countries on the one hand advocate democracy and human rights. On the other hand, this creates tensions with neoliberal market thinking, because trade relations take place via different rules.

The impact of geopolitical power shifts in the world has not yet sufficiently crystallized. In any case, democratic societies and values as we know them in the West will no longer be universally valid.

Freedom of expression as a democratic value

The attacks in Paris on Wednesday 7 January 2015 are nothing new. There had always been a struggle between the fundamentalists and freethinkers. The “construction” of a democratic society has been accompanied by strife, war, and terror through the ages. It is also important how the process of democratization within the scale levels remains intact. As scale levels increase, maintaining democratic values based on the global constitution (the universal declaration of human rights) becomes more and more difficult due to the complexity of global society and the lack of an authoritative global government. How do we as citizens deal with globalization? Globalization and globalization is an ongoing process of global economic, political, and socio-cultural integration. These developments have led to two ways of thinking. On the one hand, the globalists, and on the other, the nationalists, who reject all interference from outside the country's borders.

Western Europe

Western European society has been confronted since 1960 by the ‘former’ guest workers with other religions such as Islam. Islam is now an established religion in Western Europe. The question is how Western societies deal with Muslim groups.

Policy models used are: return to the country of origin, integration, and assimilation was seen as a solution. When all these policy options came to naught, the concept of a multicultural society was developed, in which all ethnic groups lived together harmoniously. This concept of a multicultural society has also failed. There is still discrimination and discrimination against ethnic minorities. In the polarized thinking and the unrest in society, this has degenerated into an Islamophobic cocktail.

Within Western Europe, the borders have been lifted internally. Western Europe has borders. However, there is a discussion about how these external borders should be guarded. In Italy, Greece, and Hungary, every effort is made to stop refugees from across the Mediterranean, albeit with little success. In the Netherlands, England, and other Western European countries, the parliaments are talking about a migration crisis. For the most part, these refugees are people with a non-Christian background.

Legislation and closed national borders are trying to get a grip on this development. In these, European laws and universal human rights are problematized mainly and in particular by right-wing populist parties. The ordinary right-wing parties are also becoming increasingly receptive to this problematization.

This has increasingly led to a problematization of non-Western emigrants. The outlined perspectives on Islamophobia have contributed to this. This has also contributed to the growth of right-wing populist political parties. Values such as diversity, inclusion, and solidarity are central to government policy, but in practice, this is a stubborn task that is difficult to get off the ground. In the Wok movement, this is blamed on institutional racism.

In general, the populist right-wing political parties see Islam as a reprehensible religion in Western Europe: Geert Wilders and Thierry Henri Philippe Baudet in the Netherlands and Marine Le Pen in France, Filip Dewinter in Belgium, National Democratic Party of Germany (NPD) in Germany, Giorgia Meloni of the Fratelli d'Italia party and, Populist Matteo Salvini of the Lega in Italy in Italy, Rasmus Paludan of the Sweden Democrats (SD) in Sweden, Stram Kurs in Denmark, FPÖ party in Austria, and so on. These parties are experiencing significant growth in national parliaments. In their political actions, they reject Islam and its adherents. In practice, Islam and non-Western migrants are lumped together. In this way, they create unease and fear, and prejudice against Islam and Muslims in society. This polarizes society. Fact and fiction are intertwined in the political debate. Positions are often about stereotypes: compare the distinction between a well-adjusted and successfully integrated Muslim and a maladjusted and barbaric Muslim.

4. Conclusion

In my reflection, I have sketched a picture of the meanings of Islamophobia, the frames from which Islamophobia is viewed, and Islamophobia in a globalizing world. In a world flooded with news and fake news where people live within their information bubbles. With globalization, a new era has begun in the world. This affects local, national, and international forms of society. Social networks from Europe/the West are expanding all over the world. The whole world is becoming one big network society. That raises the question of how you deal with each other. Especially when it comes to populations with different values and norms. On a Western European scale, this leads to clashes between globalists and nationalists. Right-wing populist parties in particular use Islam and its followers as the great evil and the cause of the problems in society. Through these populist parties, national problems are associated with terror based on radical Islam and its adherents both in Western Europe and around the world. Characteristically, this approach affects all adherents of Islam. Although these populist parties are still a minority within the Western democratic order, their ideas are gaining more and more followers within parliaments. Attacks on democratic institutions by terror and polarization in Western Europe must be combated. It must be prevented that a living environment is created in which radicalizing Islam followers can thrive. This can be fueled, among other things, by right-wing populist parties that want to suspend human rights and international treaties on human rights.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.



INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE
ON ISLAMOPHOBIA
BAKU, MARCH 15-16th

SESSION 3

ISLAMOPHOBIA IN FRANCE

March 15, 2023 – 14:30-15:45

Moderator: Anastasia Lavrina
Political analyst, Researcher, Azerbaijan

How to tackle Islamophobia in Europe? A holistic approach to address the upcoming challenges

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ABSTRACT

This paper critically examines whether the concept of Islamophobia is inherently influenced by ideological biases. The perspectives of numerous thinkers are explored in the ongoing discussions surrounding this topic. Violations and hate crimes against the religion of Islam and Muslims in many European countries, especially France, continue to be alarming. Freedom of religion in Europe is protected by the European Convention on Human Rights, the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, and various other laws. Despite the existence of laws, many Muslims still face significant challenges in openly expressing their Islamic identity not only in social spheres like work, education, and housing but also economically. Islamophobia must be addressed through areas, including but not limited to, education, media, and politics. Thus, addressing Islamophobia in Europe requires a comprehensive approach.

Keywords: Islamophobia, Muslims, European countries, Human Rights, social area

Islamophobia under the guise of freedom and security

Although Islamophobia is now disputed by various thinkers whether the concept is influenced by ideological biases or not, the violations and hate crimes against the religion of Islam and Muslims in many European countries and France, in particular, remain alarming.

This is further proven by far-right parties fiercely advancing and demonstrating their hatred and violence against Muslims and migrants in general. Freedom of religion in Europe is indeed acquired fundamental rights that different religious groups use to live out their religion. Despite this, we see extremist groups within society, under the guise of the same freedom, such as freedom of expression, treating Islam negatively and seeking to hurt Muslims unnecessarily.

Freedom of religion in Europe is protected by the European Convention on Human Rights, the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, and various other laws. Despite the existence of laws, many Muslims still face significant challenges in openly expressing their Islamic identity not only in social spheres like work, education, and housing but also economically.

Islamic institutions and businessmen of Islamic backgrounds bearing Islamic names have recently been severely discriminated against. Under the guise of applying anti-money laundering and anti-terrorism laws, mosques, Islamic institutions as in Belgium and the Netherlands, and other EU countries are systematically refused to open bank accounts or deposit money from fundraisers, sometimes even without any justification. More than 105 reports and complaints were registered with Muslim Right Watch in the Netherlands. Rabin Baldewsingh, national coordinator against discrimination and racism in the Netherlands also called for the use of ethnic profiling by financial institutions to be investigated and addressed.^[49]

In a democratic state governed by the rule of law, anti-Semitism, Islamophobia or hatred towards Muslims and all other forms of discrimination and racism based on race, colour, religion, sex, and gender should not be given any space. After all, history teaches us that these excesses only lead to conflict and threaten European public safety.

Fear of Muslims

This growing hatred of Muslims in Europe is partly due to the visibility of Muslims in European societies that can no longer be ignored. Islam in Europe and its 25 million Muslims are part of European societies today, just like other religions found in all other European cities.

Spaak's famous speech^[50] " Nous avons peur "^[51] repeats itself today among the vast majority of Europeans who are either misinformed about Islam or continue to resonate with the media's portrayal of Islam following the 2015 terror attacks by jihadists in the name of Islam. This has resulted in a very distorted picture.

Imagery (combination of word and visual language) is, as we know, undoubtedly linked to power and is a historically grown social and ideological phenomenon. Identifying Islam and Muslims with terror, jihad, and violence are just a few examples of processed stereotypes and prejudices.^[52]

Phobia is a non-rational fear of something that is not normally experienced as such by others, phobia of certain animals, such as spiders, mice, and tunnels and lifts are among them. The Dutch anthropologist; Martijn De Koning defines Islamophobia as follows: when a strong we/they distinction is made between Muslims and others, such as Europeans. This creates a generalizing and negative image of Muslims, which can lead to them also being treated as inferior.^[53]

^[49] Ghaemina Somajeh , Nieuw toeslagenschandaal ontstaat in de omgang van banken met moslims, Trouw , NL 6 April 2023.

^[50] Then Belgian prime minister and foreign minister; Paul-Henri Spaak in 1948 to the delegation present from Moscow and USA , during the 3rd general assembly of the united nations

^[51] Vermeylen Kamiel, Van Hecke Steven , Why Europe? Small history of a big project, Lannoo Publishers, Tielt, 2021, p.20

^[52] Maly Ico , De beschavingsmachine wij en de Islam , uitgeverij EPO, Antwerpen, 2009 , p. 8 -9

^[53] Martijn De Koning, vijf mythes over islamofobie , Yunus Publishing, kikif Antwerpen , 2019, p.8

If someone searches the internet via Google on the keywords Islam and Muslims in Europe, you get more than 389 million links and references, which in itself creates more confusion and disinformation. Unfortunately, some writers encourage Islamophobia by not bothering to present Islam with all its diversity and schools of thought objectively and scientifically. Those who constantly associate Islam and Muslims with fanaticism and extremism and view the Islamic religion as a dangerous ideology continue to sow and feed hatred and Islamophobia.^[54]

Islamophobia must be fought first and foremost because it is a violation of human rights and simply racial discrimination based on religion, which can never be tolerated or normalized.

All discrimination is prohibited by law, yet European regulation as the European Commission has done with the appointment of an EU coordinator to specifically address Muslim hatred and discrimination in the short and long term is a step in the right direction.

Holistic approach

This phenomenon requires attention because it further alienates Muslim youth and fuels extremism in Europe and around the world. Therefore, a comprehensive and holistic approach is important.

Islamophobia must be addressed in several areas: through education, the media, the judiciary, and politics. Addressing it unilaterally or only the symptoms of this problem cannot advance this form of racial discrimination. Of course, the images created by religious extremism are also highly polarizing. The terrorists who sow atrocities and fear in the name of faith and Islam are also guilty of further polarization and stereotyping.

Islamophobia as a term was first mentioned in Alain Quellen's 1910 book, *la politique musulmane dans l'Afrique occidentale* and in Maurice Delafosse's article, *l'état actuel de l'Islam dans l'Afrique occidentale*.

Delafosse sees Islamophobia as a form of governance (or part of governance) of colonies that discriminates between religions. The term was also used in English in 1926 in the *Journal of ideological studies* and later in 1976 in the *International Journal of Middle East Studies*.

The evolution of the term is admittedly multifaceted and can have the following meanings: Fear of Muslims against Islam, Hostility of Europe against Islam, and The pathological fear of non-Muslims. It is also sometimes wrongly used to block criticism of Islam, but especially often instrumentalized by anti-Islam movements to discriminate against Muslims.

Islamophobia was not described with a clear definition in the British report "Islamophobia: A Challenge for Us All," launched in November 1997 and known as the Runnymede Trust report.

^[54] Edward W. Saïed, covering islam , How the media and the experts determine how we see the rest of the world ?, pantheon books. N.Y. 1981, p. 33

This report takes into account comments and suggestions from a wide range of people and institutions and addresses the phenomenon not from a definition but from eight criteria, which, according to the report, if different characteristics occur among individuals, institutions, governments, or groups, can indicate a distinct and problematic, Islamophobic attitude.

The eight criteria, which can be ideas, motives, or actions, can be summarized as follows:

1. Islam is different and not like other religions
2. Islam is not adaptive and is monolithic and static
3. Islam is inferior to the West, barbaric, and irrational
4. Islam is violent and threatening
5. Islam is a political ideology
6. Radical rejection of criticism of the West because of Islam
7. Hostility to Islam is used as an argument to justify discrimination against Muslims.
8. Viewing hostility towards Muslims as a common and normal phenomenon

Conclusion

Therefore, Islamophobia in Europe can only be effectively fought by addressing it holistically and seeing it as a real danger to our European open societies, where diversity is part of European communities.

Apart from the fact that the term itself, hatred against Islam and Muslims remains a fact, millions of Muslims in Europe suffer daily in various sectors just because they are believers or bear an Islamic name. It is a great challenge to boldly put this kind of discrimination on the agenda and make every effort to ensure that hatred and discrimination are never tolerated, under any argument or reason.

Disclosure statement

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Islamophobia in France: A new tool for stigmatizing Muslims and danger for republican values and fraternal coexistence

Speaking notes by

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ABSTRACT

Islamophobia in France has manifested itself in recent years, becoming commonplace under the banner of freedom of expression, secularism, and a certain «manipulated» republic. Today, Islamophobia is based on republican values: intellectuals, political and media leaders who call themselves advocates of secularism and republican values point the finger at Muslims and throw them to pasture in the popular vindictiveness: Muslims are portrayed as anti-Republicans, anti-secularism, separatists and potentially accomplices of the terrorists who struck France.

The paper also deals that they saw that Muslims living in France do not feel like French. They felt more French in other countries than in France. Strangely enough, there is Islamic paranoia in this country right now. Muslims are seen as separatists. However, we must not forget that Muslims also have rights. When a terrorist act is committed in the country, arrows should not be aimed at Muslims. Unfortunately, this is the situation with Islam in France.

Keywords: Islamophobia, France, Muslims, human rights, “Manipulated” republic

In France, a country that prides itself on having declared human rights, hatred of man can now express itself freely in the name of freedom of expression with variable geometry. Fantasized, in bulk and mass, as a homogeneous, inherently dangerous, threatening, and pervasive community, Muslims are the ordinary and emblematic target of this restored and assumed racism. Muslims have become the scapegoat appointed by a certain political-media class.

Xenophobic or racist prejudices, Islamophobia are not new in the country of human rights. As has just been mentioned, Islamophobia has its structural springs and draws its sources from a long history of relations between the Western world and the East (8 crusades between 1095 and 1270, colonization, war of Algeria). There are also conjectural springs (economic, social, and political crises) that fuel and reinforce Islamophobia.

The great novelty is the legitimization of Muslim hatred in public space and debate. Freedom of expression is not freedom to stigmatize and Islamophobia is not a right as some claim by playing on etymology (ISLAMOPHOBIA) It is the hostility and hatred of the Muslim or related Muslims that is expressed in the aggression of veiled women, the desecration of mosques, Muslim cemeteries, intimidation and death threats against Muslim intellectuals who call for vigilance and denounce amalgams, reject the myth of the Great Replacement and advocate the dialogue of religions and civilizations.

The novelty is to invite to the stage so-called specialists of Islam (sometimes Muslims) who support Samuel Huntington's clash of civilizations, who repeat in a loop that Islam is violent by nature and that Muslims are potential terrorists: in a word, a good Muslim should be according to them the one who ceases to be a Muslim. Even non-Muslims, upright intellectuals who condemn these amalgamations and stigmatization are called "workouts" or "Islamogauchistes" (ie. "Islamogauchistes"). In the middle of the presidential campaign, the red carpet was rolled out to some politicians who spewed their venom on the Muslim community, accused of being responsible for all the problems of France. Obsessive hatred of the Other is now freely expressed in the media and political and economic system. Identity ideologies now have the right to be the conductor of French political life, as demonstrated by the last presidential campaign with Zemmour. Thanks to this character promoted by the media, France has gone from Islamophobia to Islamo psychosis.

Islamophobic hatred has been reinforced and trivialized by many political and media leaders and other intellectuals who have found in Islam and Muslims an important market share, both financially and in terms of notoriety. In France, without any exaggeration, if someone wants to earn money and fame, it is enough to write a book denigrating Islam or to intervene in the media to stigmatize Muslims.

Freedom of expression is not freedom to stigmatize and Islamophobia is not a right as some claim by playing on etymology (ISLAMOPHOBIA). It is the hostility and hatred of the Muslim or related Muslims that is expressed in the aggression of veiled women, the desecration of mosques, Muslim cemeteries, intimidation and death threats against Muslim intellectuals who call for vigilance and denounce amalgams, reject the myth of the Great Replacement and advocate the dialogue of religions and civilizations.

Ten years ago, I wrote a book «Dictionary of Islamophobia» but it brought me neither wealth nor glory! Ten years later, I had to rewrite another book ("Marianne and her Muslims: the fracture"). In this book, I bitterly note and illustrate the loss of confidence of Muslims in the Republic as well as the fracture that has deepened.

As a former International Secretary General of the GRIC (Islam-Christian Research Group), I am convinced that interreligious dialogue is fundamental for inter-knowledge, respect for otherness, and the promotion of tolerance. In France today, we can legitimately (and fortunately many of us do so) denounce racism, anti-semitism, and hatred of others in general but strangely when it comes to pronouncing the term «ISLAMOPHOBIA» there are tensions and crispation. Whoever uses this notion is almost immediately suspected of being a radical militant or even an accomplice of jihadists! I remember a French Minister from the left saying to me «We know that those who denounce Islamophobia do so for political purposes: they are Islamist militants or friends of these »!

In France, my country, the historical land of human rights there is a special department in the Ministry of Interior: DILCRAH with a delegate in charge of the fight against racism, a delegate in charge of anti-Semitism, another dealing with homophobia but nothing about anti-Muslim hatred! It is no longer only in the streets, in café conversations, or neo-Nazi groups, that the call for the return of Muslims «home», in «their country» is expressed today in France. I have made it clear on TV sets that «Muslim Land» does not exist! And that these Muslims some want to deport were born in France and are full French citizens, that «their country is France» ! Mothers veiled in front of schools are suspected, middle school students speaking Arabic to each other at school are poorly perceived, sometimes even sanctioned. For some French politicians, it would no longer be normal to call his newborn «MOHAMED» because Muslims must «assimilate»! The phrase «ALLAHU AKBAR» is reduced to a jihadi war slogan while every Muslim pronounces it many times during the day or in prayer. A «religious practice exacerbated in the period of Ramadhan» according to the formula of a French minister of the Interior, the wearing of the beard or the veil would be signs of radicalization... Even among some leaders and in parties that claim to be committed to equal rights, this racist drift is underestimated or tolerated, in a mixture of complacency and complicity. When it is not relativized at the highest level of the state, some prefer to be alarmed by a so-called «separatism» too often correlated with Muslim associations or mosques.

The law passed in August 2021, described as «Law reinforcing the values of the Republic» was the ultimate avatar that deeply shocked the Muslims of France and impacted the 1905 Law as well as a secularism instrumentalized for the occasion. France but also Europe is experiencing the rise of xenophobic forces, of racist parties, whose battle axis is no longer, as in the 1930s, anti-Semitism, but Islamophobia. An unhealthy climate has become established and ideas hostile to immigration and especially to Muslims are spreading in the right and left formations.

The prejudices against the Muslim religion, which have been repeated enough, are draped in the most beautiful republican robes, from the defense of gender equality to that of secularism. However, these subterfuges cannot hide the substance of the discourses, namely a slow but sure degeneration of the criticism of Islam towards the stigmatization of its practitioners.

The uneasiness of the Muslims of France is great and perhaps finds its illustration through the new «HIJRA» of the Muslims of France, often graduates, nation executives, artists, entrepreneurs, scientists, and writers towards other heavens: Canada, USA, Kingdom-United Kingdom, Emirates, Turkey ...: The phenomenon has increased especially during the last presidential campaign. A study by the New York Times in February 2022 shows that these French women and men are tired of identity debates that constantly challenge them and question their citizenship, and their belonging to the French nation. Paradoxically these exiles feel more French abroad than in their own country where they no longer feel safe. For these exiles, the social lift is often faster than in France where they suffer more social and professional discrimination. Women and men are considered in France as «CITIZENS APART» and «FULL CITIZENS» when they are not reduced to their religion.

It is necessary to denounce and fight tirelessly all the thurifers of hatred, whatever they may be, in the name of Islamic principles, in the name of republican fundamentals, in the name of humanity, while being very vigilant and concerned to preserve our living together. The democratic stakes in France and Europe are immense and there is a great risk of burying our fundamental freedoms. But, confronted with real problems, we must

develop real answers in the long term. It is dangerous to sink into liberticidal devices that would legitimize a new witch hunt. The democratic challenge we face is immense. It is a question of finding the right slider to combine freedom and security, respect for rights, and increased surveillance without falling into excesses. But the filing of so-called "radicalized" students by the Ministry of Education, the pressure on Muslim or supposed Muslim officials such as abusive house arrest of imams or faithful, the project of deprivation of nationality of binationals, supposed to fight against terrorism (which targeted de facto under François Hollande the Muslim component of the country and introduced the idea of a second-class citizenship), the closure of mosques under the pretext of apologizing to hatred of some misguided preachers (who must be sanctioned individually according to the law) give the impression of a COLLECTIVE PUNISHMENT and reinforce the suspicion towards Muslims. ... All this does not go in the right direction and does not bode well for the cohesion of French society.

I am among those who are concerned that the legitimate fight against terrorism is turning into a long procession to bury our fundamental freedoms. Muslims in France are an important sociological component and do not have to choose between their citizenship and their Islam. They are equal citizens for the vast majority and Muslims at the same time! They contribute to the country's wealth and represent a pool of skills. They are now worried and their concern is justified.

They will fully assume their responsibility through increased civic engagement, and intellectual, artistic, and even political investment. I advocate the "jihad" of knowledge, living together, and citizenship. We see increased hostility and distrust towards the Muslims of France taken hostage by terrorists and Islamophobes, in an objective alliance. In a sense, terrorists and Islamophobes are two sides of the same coin and they feed each other. It is important in these anxious times to deconstruct prejudices. That is why the dialogue of cultures, civilizations, and religions remains fundamental. Promoting a culture of peace is imperative today more than ever. Dialogue must be sincere and not synonymous with smoothing differences. The Qur'an itself proclaims :

"O men, We have created you with a male and a female and have established you in peoples and tribes so that you may know each other."

It is well-known that the greatest enemy of man is ignorance. God wanted difference, otherness, and *"if God had wanted it, He would have made you one community"* (Qur'an, s. 5, v. 48).

It is equally urgent that the French Republic recognize ALL its children (none is illegitimate). The best way is to concretize on the ground (in the suburbs, at school, at work, in the administrations...) the motto "Freedom, Equality, Brotherhood", which is being undermined today and discredited by haters on all sides. The French Republic must implement justice, citizenship, and equality for all! It must also sanction all manifestations of hatred and Islamophobic speeches and acts are part of it. That political leaders, faced with their pitiful and perilous electoral calculations, stop considering Muslims as scapegoats! We must review our civilizational software, anticipate fires to better circumscribe them, and make every effort to perpetuate a peaceful coexistence now in danger.

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Islamophobic trends in the modern liberal world (Example of France)

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ABSTRACT

The article provides a brief overview of the history of relations between the French state and Muslim diasporas formed in France in the middle of the 20th century. The history of each of the Muslim diasporas of Western Europe is different and has its historical background which can be traced back to the colonial period of each region. As already mentioned, unlike many EU countries in France, secularism is the official ideology of the state and that is why the presence of a large number of religious people and their gaining political rights runs counter to the political ideology of the state and poses a direct ideological threat to it. Islamophobia in France takes many forms, both explicit and implicit, and often emerges to be sanctioned by the governing bodies themselves. In the article, the problems in these relations are investigated both from the point of view of Islamophobia and the reasons for such policy from the point of view of secularism, as well as from the point of view of the conflict between traditionalism and secularism.

Keywords: Islamophobia, France, Muslim, EU countries, secularism, conflict

Introduction

As a result of the intensification of migration processes in the 20th and 21st centuries, Islamic religion and its values, have gone far beyond its traditional area of distribution established over the centuries. Of course, at certain stages of history, Islam reached the Far East and the Iberian Peninsula, where there were Muslim communities and even states, but generally dominated the Middle East.

The industrial leap of Europe in the twentieth century served as an impetus for the mass migration of cheap labor from the so-called third-world countries, as a result of which diasporas began to form in developed European countries. It is these diasporas, consisting of people from the traditional Muslim area, that serve as the locomotive of the process of globalization of Islam. [13]

According to some estimates, the European country with the highest percentage of the Muslim population in 2002 was France (4/5 million to 56 million, that is, 8/9%), [21] which is why political trends in France are a special subject worthy of observation and are extremely important for Muslim communities in particular and in the relationship between Western and Muslim civilizations in general.

The background of Muslim diaspora formation in France

France is one of the first Western European countries to import foreign labor. Initially, the state focused on the import of migrants from neighboring states. The reason for this was two factors: firstly, the ban on the mass migration of the so-called “colored” population from the colonies, and secondly, the need to increase the working population of the country at the expense of migrants who have similar linguistic and cultural similarities to the French. But with the beginning of the colonial war waged by France in Algeria in 1954–1962, the situation with immigration changed. After Algeria gained independence in 1962, the structure of immigration to France began to change; In this period sometimes called post-colonial immigration, in addition to able-bodied men, the families of former French soldiers of Algerian origin, the so-called “harks” have been added to the list of migrants. In addition to migrants from Algeria, people from other countries of the Maghreb, such as Morocco and Tunisia, also rushed to France. Mass flow of Maghrebians in the 1950s–1970s became the reason for the formation of the largest French diasporas. Algerian, Tunisian, and Moroccan.[23;14]

Of course, the desire to control certain processes did not begin today. In general, the course of France’s policy towards the newly formed Muslim community can be divided into 2 stages. The first is an unsuccessful attempt to stop migration made back in the 70s. The second is a partially unsuccessful attempt to bring Muslim communities under the full control of the state through local Muslim organizations. This process continues to this da

(In July 1974, the French government decided to stop immigration, and since 1978 a five-year immigrant repatriation program has been introduced. It was assumed that during this time about 500 thousand people would leave France. However, just like in Great Britain and Germany, these measures did not bring the desired result to the French government: their families began to come to the immigrants.) [19]

French political secularism and problems of adaptation of religious and ethnic minorities.

In addition to measures to curb immigration, European countries have different approaches to the adaptation of immigrants. The French model seems to be more complex. Here, at first glance, we also see ethnic “ghettos”, but these are not Londonistans, but working-class neighborhoods and outskirts with cheap municipal housing. In France, there is no targeted policy or concept for the preservation and cultivation of national, confessional, and cultural characteristics. , on the contrary, there is a course toward the unification of the French nation, the propaganda of French civic identity, the basis of which is laicism, where the state plays a more active role in excluding religious visibility from the public domain. It can be noted that this French secularism traces back to the traditions of the French Revolution of secular totalitarianism and preceding many of

today's concepts and values historically has little to do with the 20th-century concept of freedom of religion declared in the Human rights declaration.

The specifics of the policy of the French state for the unification of the nation can also be explained from a historical point of view. The fact is that one of the results of the French Revolution was the formation of the national idea of France around the concept of citizenship. Ethnicity and self-identification of the country's indigenous peoples (Picardians, Flemings, Burgundians, Gascons, Bretons, Provençals, etc.) were excluded from the political lexicon. Minorities themselves were not recognized as potential subjects of political law, they were citizens of the emerging French state. That is to say, French political philosophy denies to perceives a member of French society in a way other than, as an individual and denies recognizing it as a part of any ethnic group. Belonging to French society is realized through adherence to the universalist values of the republic, the basis of which is secularism and is defined as a civil national identity. [22;14]

As a result, of imposed secularism and the rejection of ethnic identity when declaring internationalism, and national integration, we see the emergence of modernized ghettos, from which the traditionalist system of positive values is withdrawn, humanization is taking place indifferent confessional and cultural environment, which automatically turns out to be more conflictogenic.

Conflictogenic society

Since the 1980s, French-born children of Maghribin immigrants began to declare themselves as Muslims more often, for many of whom the return to Islam was compensation for their inability to integrate into French society, a reaction to manifestations of hidden or overt xenophobia. The riots that swept France in November 2005 in the suburbs inhabited by immigrants from Africa and the Middle East indicated that the French model of adaptation did not help many immigrants properly adapt to life in France and integrate harmoniously into French society.[11;20] Small excesses also become an integral part of everyday life. So as the result of the failure of the political course to push the secular philosophy to at least a part of society, there is a situation where part of society refuses to accept those values, but the state finds nothing better than to continue to force it, provoking potential future conflicts.

Muslim organizations and the Politicization of Islam

As already mentioned, unlike many EU countries in France, secularism is the official ideology of the state and that is why the presence of a large number of religious people and their gaining political rights runs counter to the political ideology of the state and poses a direct ideological threat to it. The pronounced secular course of the French state, continuing with some interruptions since the French Revolution, was originally aimed at combating Catholicism, the acute phase of which lasted until 1924, when the Vatican recognized the law of 1905, and the French Republic, in turn, recognized the hierarchy of the Vatican.[4;9] And only in the 80s of the twentieth century, with the advent of such concepts as "Christian democracy" in the position of the European clergy and the French authorities, some rapprochement began to emerge. All this cannot be said about Islam, which penetrates much deeper into the everyday life of its bearers. Moreover, the French authorities are always wary of organizations, one way or another openly with foreign countries, especially Muslim ones.

After the victory of the Islamic revolution in Iran in 1979–80s, the French government, in which representatives of the traditionally loyal party to migrants, the FSP (French Socialist Party), played a leading role, increasingly faced demands from Muslim migrants to recognize them the right to practice their religion. This began to worry the authorities. The first alarm bells sounded in the early 80s.

The French authorities began to seriously deal with the “Muslim issue” in March 1989, when, in response to the demands of Muslim migrants, and to “discuss the organization of the Muslim community of France”, the Minister of the Interior, Pierre Joxe, initiated the convening of the “Public Collegium”, consisting of the most famous and respected representatives of the Muslim community from the French cities with the largest percentage of Muslims. Based on discussions and proposals, in March 1990, the “Council for the Discussion of the Question of Islam in France” (Conseil de Reflexion sur l’Islam en France – CORIF) was created.[13]

The creation of CORIF is a clear example of how the French authorities tried to limit the influence of Muslim organizations associated with abroad, in particular the Grand Mosque of Paris, which had close ties with the Algerian authorities and most of the Muslim organizations, in particular, the Grand Mosque of Paris accepted the creation of CORIF as an attempt to “control the Muslim religion.” After the opposition forces led by Jacques Chirac, who were allies of the BPM, won the parliamentary elections in 1993, the new Minister of the Interior, Charles Pasqua, being an opponent of CORIF, maintained a privileged relationship with the BPM and proposed his project for the integration of Muslim society which is known as.[1;7]

“Charter of the Muslim cult in France”, which was developed on the initiative of Pasqua. the “Representative Council of Muslims of France” (Conseil representatif des musulmans de France – CRMF) was also created. Pasqua tried to use the historical experience of Napoleon I about the French Jews, as a result of which the Jewish community was given the right to organize itself under certain state supervision. The new Minister of the Interior, Jean-Pierre Chevènement, who took office in 1997, continued to deal closely with the “Muslim question” and contributed to the opening in Paris of the Institute for the Study of Islam and Societies of the Muslim World (French: L’Institut des etudes de l’islam et des societies du monde musulman – IISMM). Subsequently, IISMM became part of the Higher School for the Study of Social Sciences (French: L’Ecole des hautes etudes en sciences sociales – EHESS) In October 1999, Chevènement invited the heads of the most famous Muslim organizations and imams of major mosques to the consultation process.[18;22]. In January 2000, all participants in the consultation process signed the final document “Principles and legal bases governing relations between the administrative power and the Muslim cult in France.” On March 15, 2004, France passed a law on the “secular nature of society”, which prohibits the wearing of signs demonstrating religious affiliation in public institutions and schools. And although on paper this applied to all religions it was part of the deliberate policy of the French state to counteract the spread of Muslim education. The adoption of this law, which essentially restricts the rights of believers and carries elements of religious intolerance, then caused a storm of discontent in the Muslim community.

Emmanuel Macron's l'islamophobie institutionnalis  (institutionalized islamophobia)

The so-called "law of separatism", later renamed the "Law strengthening respect for the principles of the Republic", was announced by President Emmanuel Macron on October 2, 2020. In December 2020, just a week before presenting to the Council of Ministers the draft of what would later become the law "consolidating respect for the principles of the Republic", the French Minister of the Interior G rald Darmanin announced in the media "to launch a massive and strong action" against 76 mosques. In parallel with this bill, Macron called on the leaders of Muslim organizations to sign the "Charter of the Principles of Islam", which, among other things, rejected the use of Islam for political purposes, as well as enforcing state interference in the practice of Muslim religion.

After the adoption of the law on July 23, 2021, by the deputies of the National Assembly by a majority of votes, it was redirected to the Constitutional Council due to criticism. Where are articles 16 (suspension of the activities of religious associations if they failed to prove their adherence to national values) and 26 (according to which any foreigner may be denied issuance or renewal of a residence permit or a residence permit may be revoked if the person "expresses opposition" to the law in question .) were found to be inconsistent with the principles of the republic.

This law to which French Muslims gave the name l'islamophobie institutionnalis  (institutionalized Islamophobia) entered into force in France on August 24, 2021.[7;14]. The law has been criticized by the international community, non-governmental and human rights organizations, mainly the UN because it targets Muslims and promotes discrimination.

It was planned that the law should become Emmanuel Macron's main trump card in the election race for the presidency in 2022. It is worth noting that the promulgation of the text came at a time when a dispute flared up about whether or not France should let in refugees from Afghanistan. The world community demanded that the president provide asylum to the Afghans, persecuted by representatives of the Taliban movement. The head of the Fifth Republic himself, on the contrary, called for protecting the EU "from significant irregular migration flows", emphasizing that "destabilization in Afghanistan threatens the emergence of unregulated migration flows to Europe" and the Old World must "secure itself in advance." Almost simultaneously with the promulgation of the bill, Macron's government took action.

As part of the anti-Islamic campaign launched by the French Minister of the Interior G rald Darmanin, according to his interview with the Italian publication La Figaro a third part of the 89 mosques in France has been closed since November 2020, when subjected to police checks this period. In general, according to Darmanin, 650 Muslim religious worship places were closed, and 24,000 were inspected by the security forces for "extremism". In addition, bank accounts of 205 still legal Muslim organizations were seized, and two imams were deported. As part of the anti-Islamic policy, France has limited the number of visas that may be issued to citizens of Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia. In late 2020, the French government's decision to dissolve two of the most prominent and respected Muslim NGOs in the country, Baraka City, and the CCIF (Collective Against Islamophobia in France) by decree, shocked both French and European Muslims. While unknown at the time, this decision was to be the opening salvo for a draconian crackdown on Muslims and Muslim civil society in France.[1;5]

CCIF was declared an “enemy of the French Republic” and liquidated in 2020 by the Macron government. CCIF (Collectif contre l’Islamophobie en France), was established in 2003 and has become one of the most popular Muslim organizations in the country. In 2011, the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) gave CCIF the status of an official consultant. The leaders and members of the Committee like Sami Deba and Marouane Muhamma have worked closely with European democratic institutions. To promote their ideas, CCIF activists actively used both French-language and English-language media, from CNN to the BBC.[10;11] The Committee enjoyed a strong reputation in international organizations such as the OSCE, whose leaders were annually invited to human rights conferences organized by the Committee. Critics, including researcher Jean-Christophe Moreau, emphasized that the French Penal Code does not provide for articles for blasphemy or insulting religious feelings. On the contrary, they accused the activists of the Committee of using the term “Islamophobia” as an instrument in the fight against Islamic fundamentalism. Baraka City, liquidated by the Macron government was an international humanitarian organization founded in 2008 by Idris Siamedi and which was helping the poorest Muslim populations around the world.[23;3]

They are the latest examples of a state-sponsored crackdown on Islam and Muslims that have been accelerated under the Presidency of Macron. A total of 718 Muslim organizations have been closed or dissolved by the French State (including schools, mosques, and businesses). As much as €46,000,000 (\$51,089,670) millions of pounds worth of property has been seized, indicating the stringent restriction of Muslims’ right to assets according to CAGE, an independent advocacy organization that seeks to empower communities impacted by the War on Terror policies worldwide, the recent French politics against Muslims fits the definition of “Persecution” under international law, as set out in Article 7 of the Rome Statute treaty, which established International Criminal Court. It is commonly mentioned by French-speaking Muslim communities that the closures of associations, schools, and mosques, recurrent intrusions into Muslim worship, and repressive measures against imams that followed by Emmanuel Macron’s, so-called “separatism” law marks a clear decline in freedom of worship, conscience and association in France. There is a big concern held by Muslim societies that many shops, businesses, and associations are identified, targeted, and harassed by French state services, not because of subversive activities or links with terrorism, but probably because run by Muslims[8;4].

Contacted by journalist Camille Polloni, the Commission for Access to Administrative Documents (CADA) considered “that the Ministry of the Interior did not have to transmit [17] the list of hundreds of places suspected of “separatism “having been closed by the authorities”. This obstruction, voluntary and assumed, suits the government, which can thus continue to unfold its communication without giving any account or allowing journalists in the first place to verify the results of this “anti-separatism” struggle. Yet so quick to criminalize and repress a whole section of society, Emmanuel Macron like his most zealous ministers, Gérald Darmanin, Jean-Michel Blanquer, and Marlène Schiappa, have hardly given a voice against the violent actions of an uninhibited extreme right or historical separatists who ostensibly claim their desire to secede from France.[20; 6]

Smart colonialism and traditional values

European civilization, now called Western, has achieved undeniable success in scientific progress. Scientific and technological progress as well as rich colonial experience helps Western civilization to maintain its first place in the world political arena. However, judging by the trends in world politics, little has changed in terms of the essence of Western politics since the colonial era. The flows of refugees from East to West as a result are caused by the expansion of the West to the East in the past, and the ongoing manipulations in the present, and not vice versa, but this fact is never taken into account by those who are dissatisfied with the influx of refugees into their countries. Today France does not play the leading political role, but historically France left a great impact on political processes which formed today's reality and the birth of many "new values" of today was given by French Revolution and spread to other countries with the Napoleonic expansion. Mentioning colonialism, it should be noted that although it is officially considered that the era of colonialism has gone, the methods of modern hegemonic countries seem to be copied from the methods of the colonial era. [14; 13]. Therefore, calling modern society post-colonial is not always correct, since the main signs of colonialism in our era are not only present but also intensified. Only the tools have changed, becoming more sophisticated, and the essence has remained unchanged.

The merger of trading companies (regulated and joint-stock partnerships) with the ruling elites was a characteristic feature of the politics of the colonial era. Today, the era of transnational companies can be called smart colonialism, which captures not only commercial and industrial but also educational, medical, research, and other areas with financial embraces. Traditional cultural and religious values stand in the way of new forcibly introduced values, against which an undeclared war is being waged. And one of the clearest examples of this undeclared hybrid war is the anti-Islamic campaign in France.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

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INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE
ON ISLAMOPHOBIA

BAKU, MARCH 15-16th

SESSION 4

CONSPIRACY THEORIES ABOUT MUSLIMS IN WESTERN CULTURES: THE GREAT REPLACEMENT THEORY

March 15, 2023 – 14:30–15:45

Moderator: Sajjad Karim

CEO of Brussels based Haider Global, United Kingdom

Conspiracy Theories and the Lack of Training for a Strategic Action Plan

Remarks by

Imam Mohamad Bashar ARAFAT

Founder & President, Civilizations Exchange & Cooperation Foundation - CECF,
United States of America



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ABSTRACT

The author briefly touched on six main issues in the speech. Teaching comparative cultures helps people better understand and appreciate the diversity of cultures around the world. Comparative cultures refer to the study of beliefs, values, and customs of different societies, which can help people, recognize similarities and differences between them. This will help Imams, Religious leaders, and community leaders develop a more comprehensive understanding of the world around them and become more culturally sensitive and aware of the communities they will serve. For this reason, it is important to keep in mind the “moral strategy” when developing and nurturing spirituality among the citizens of Muslim societies. This can be achieved through a variety of means, including education, community programs, and religious institutions. By doing so, Muslim societies can contribute to a more peaceful and harmonious world while ensuring the well-being of their citizens.

Keywords: Beliefs, Muslim societies, moral strategy, diversity of cultures, community programs

What is our strategy?

As an Imam in the U.S., a professor of Islamic Studies in different universities in Maryland, and a Speaker through the U.S. International Speaker Bureau, I have come to realize that the Shari’ah curricula in many predominately Muslim and Arab countries lack courses that teach strategies on best ways to communicate and convey their message(s) to the societies in America and Europe, which are different from their societies. That is creating a gap between what students in various Islamic universities study and what the realities are in American and European societies. Unfortunately, graduates of Shari’ah universities and Islamic Studies, also have a deficiency of “internships” and “practical training” that are required from university students of other majors in the U.S. and Europe. That results in the absence of understanding “what his / her strategy should be” when these graduates are exposed to jobs in America, Europe, or Australia.

What are the new “Global & Transnational Challenges” that we are living in today? The way I see it, some of these challenges are:

- issues that are the results of the current war between Russia & Ukraine
- issues that are creating a threat of conflict between America and China
- impacts from the rise of regional powers such as Turkey, India, Iran, and others in South America
- the new reality for millions who became refugees and immigrants in Europe between 2010 and 2020 due to the “clash of interests”, which funded what has been falsely called – “The Arab Spring”
- the consequences of all of these refugees and immigrants, who chose to settle “primarily” in Western Europe
- creating and promoting hatred, xenophobia, Islamophobia, and violence similar to what happened in New Zealand, America, and other European countries

In this short paper, I will briefly touch “only” on six main issues of many, due to time constraints. A separate program could be built upon each topic on its own. I will end my paper with a brief description of one of CECF’s projects that I felt complemented the topic.

In America and Europe, the people, media, universities, hospitals, and law enforcement look to Islamic centers and the Imams as the first place to go when they have questions or concerns. Not all Imams and Islamic centers are:

- *ready and well-equipped to respond on certain topics*
- *have the academic background to provide “accredited” services within their cities and states*
- *have no strategy at a state or national level, let alone an international level, since most of the Islamic centers are autonomous and independently run.*

To have a strategy(s), we must keep in mind that as we teach our Shari’ah students “Comparative Religions”, we must also teach them “Comparative Cultures.” The Qur’an is full of verses talking about the culture of different people, their lifestyles, and how each prophet should move forward with each nation.

Teaching comparative cultures helps individuals develop a better understanding and appreciation of the diversity of human cultures around the world. Comparative cultures involve the study of the beliefs, values, customs, and traditions of different societies, which can help individuals recognize the similarities and differences between them. It will help the Imams, religious leaders, and community leaders develop a more comprehensive understanding of the world around them and become more culturally sensitive and aware of the societies they will be serving.

Comparative Cultures are essential to developing a well-rounded education that promotes cultural awareness, understanding, and sensitivity. It can help students become better global citizens who can communicate and work effectively with people from diverse cultural backgrounds.

This topic is essential to foreign-born Imams and community leaders, to understand the need for multi-culturalism. Key components of developing a “strategy(s)” to countering Islamophobia will be limited to six points in my talk and PowerPoint presentation. These points can vary according to the place, societal circumstances, position, career, or type of organization developing a strategy, existing needs within the society, resources available, etc...

1. How to reach out to non-Muslim international youth?

Having programs for non-Muslim youth is extremely important. Through my power point, you will see that CECF developed and has been conducting our *Better Understanding for a Better World (BUBW) Conferences* since 2006. Our annual BUBW season normally includes 2-3 BUBW conference opportunities, during which we welcome youth representing up to 78 countries, many of whom are “cultural exchange” students in the U.S. for an academic year in America.

These youth have often been impacted “one way or another” by Islamophobia so the structure of these 5-day “human” conferences helps to expel much of the negativities, misunderstandings, and misconceptions about many religions and cultures, even though it is not a “religious” conference. Our program helps the global youth to look at the world through proper lenses, which will help them to succeed in life, regardless of which major or career they choose or where they live. I have included the following from my organization, Civilizations Exchange and Cooperation Foundation’s BUBW Conference Material:

The five-day BUBW conferences focus on important issues such as:

- Multi-Cultural Competency
- Leadership Development
- Civic Engagement
- Diversity Training
- Interfaith Experience
- Community Service

Vision:

A world of multicultural/religious understanding and cooperation.

Mission:

To provide multi-cultural youth-oriented leadership and interfaith programs for life-transforming opportunities

Goals:

- *Emphasize worldwide citizenship and cultural competency development*
- *Focus on leadership development and being ambassadors of goodwill, reconciliation, and justice*
- *Encourage civic engagement among program participants*

Conference Objectives:

- *To facilitate dialogue that fosters mutual understanding and cooperation between American and international exchange students from diverse economic, social, religious, cultural, and ethnic backgrounds*
- *To expose students to the beauty of diverse faith practices in a pluralistic society with emphasis on respect, common values, and our shared humanity*
- *To discuss the dangers and solutions for discrimination, radicalism, ethnic nationalism, and religious extremism, which have historically been recipes for war and conflict for many civilizations*
- *To introduce various aspects of leadership including those central to entrepreneurship, innovation, and social business*
- *To cultivate ties of friendship and encourage the future leaders of tomorrow to utilize the best of their American experience towards fostering and seeking out a better world and a better future for all*

While the interfaith segment of the conference is principally focused on the Abrahamic faiths of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, participation is open and welcome to all students, irrespective of their faith tradition, and is also open to students who may not be active in any faith tradition.

2. Reaching out to seminaries

Outreach to seminaries must be part of the strategy and training on how to:

- reach out to and connect with seminaries in America & Europe*
- develop opportunities for dialogue and possible avenues of cooperation to serve the needs of their communities*
- differentiate between theology & morality and values*

Reaching out to seminaries in America and Europe is crucial. It is the place where people form deeply held-concepts and opinions. In the curricula of many Islamic universities, there is no training on “how to communicate, visit, or partner with seminaries”.

- Several weeks ago the Templeton Religion Trust reported that 88% of evangelical pastors in America do not know an imam or rabbi. Christianity and Islam, the report said, are the two religions most widely spread across the world, yet they often do not know one another.

Through my power point, you will see several slides of CECF’s established program “**Spirituality & Giving in Ramadan**” for Christian and Jewish seminaries, churches, synagogues, and other religious institutions in the U.S. The first program took place before COVID in Morocco. The following is a sample of the “objectives” for the upcoming program in Indonesia.

Program Objectives

This program is ideal for Christian and Jewish clergy involved in interfaith relations and programs with Muslim communities throughout the U.S., Canada, and Europe.

- *Participants will gain a deeper understanding of Islamic theology, spirituality, and its relationship to the daily lives of Muslims in Indonesia*
- *Commonalities and differences among Christians, Muslims, and Jews will be identified*
- *Participants will learn about the rising economic, political, and religious influence of Indonesia in Southeast Asia*
- *Islamic scholars and civic leaders of this ancient predominately Muslim region will share their religious and cultural perspectives on various issues with the delegation*
- *Participants will interact with Hindu and Buddhist communities in Indonesia and learn about their important contributions to the legacy of spirituality that exists in the region*
- *The delegation will also share their perspectives and experiences on various issues with the Indonesian leaders – a true experience of cultural exchange.*

3. Working through the system

Many Muslims, who are now naturalized citizens of the U.S. and Europe, have no training on how to “Work through the System” that welcomes their citizens to submit “cultural programs” to “cultural missions” of embassies around the world. An important point here is to show the new country and new home that the person values it and is making a positive contribution. These attitudes and actions contribute to building bridges throughout the entire society over time.

4. Think Tanks

You may have heard of the term “think tank” -- which usually refers to a policy or research institute where scholars provide insight and advice on political, social, or economic issues. Training on how to reach out to different Think Tanks is essential and will have mutual benefits.

As I was preparing for this conference, I came across a study that was made on April 9, 2018, by Voice of America: “There are more than 1800 think tanks in the United States, nearly 400 are based in Washington.” Voice of America. (<https://www.voanews.com/a/think-tanks-us-policy/4338913.html>)

5. Funding

Any project or program needs to have a funding sponsor. This could be through typical fundraising efforts through the local communities. From my experience living in the Baltimore Washington metropolitan area, I have not seen many seminars for Imams and community leaders that will help them understand the opportunities and processes for securing state and federal grants.

Understanding the federal and state grant process is important for several reasons:

1. *Access to Funding: The federal and state governments provide grants to a variety of organizations and individuals for various purposes such as education, research, community development, and social welfare. Understanding the grant process and requirements can help individuals and organizations identify funding opportunities and apply for them effectively.*
2. *Compliance: Applying for and receiving grants requires compliance with specific rules and regulations set by the funding agency. Understanding the grant process can help individuals and organizations stay compliant with these rules and regulations, ensuring that they meet the necessary criteria and guidelines.*
3. *Accountability: Grant recipients are required to report back to the funding agency on how the funds were used and what results were achieved. Understanding the grant process can help individuals and organizations understand their obligations and responsibilities to ensure that they meet the reporting requirements and provide accurate and transparent information.*
4. *Competitive Advantage: Understanding the grant process and requirements can also provide a competitive advantage in the grant application process. It can help individuals and organizations identify opportunities that align with their goals, develop competitive proposals, and increase their chances of receiving funding.*

Overall, understanding the federal and state grants process is crucial for anyone seeking funding opportunities and for organizations looking to fulfill their mission and objectives.

6. What is the spiritual strategy?

Finally, I would like to say that I do not see an organized effort to help regulate the very powerful "Spiritual Strategy."

In America and the West, we often hear people say: "I am **not** religious, but I am spiritual!" Many Americans are turning to Hindu and Buddhist practices for meditation, reflection, and Yoga!! Our Islamic heritage is full of spirituality that for some time was called "Sufism".

"Spirituality in the Qur'an" brought the highest level of "Spirituality" to humanity. Unfortunately, Islamic centers are afraid to open their doors to it and be labeled "Sufi", due to the stigma that was brought to the U.S. under the influence of the "Salafi" school of thought.

The lack of spirituality is contributing to some young Muslims, born in America or the West in general, becoming Atheists or seeking other types of faith practices.

This deficit can lead to a range of dangers, including:

Moral Decay: Without a strong spiritual foundation, individuals can become disconnected from their values and principles, leading to a breakdown in morality. This can manifest itself in various ways, including increased crime, corruption, and unethical behavior.

- *Mental Health Issues: A lack of spirituality can also contribute to mental health issues such as depression and an increase in Extremism & Radicalism: A lack of spirituality can also contribute to the rise of extremism, as individuals become*

more susceptible to radical ideologies that promise a sense of purpose and meaning. This can lead to increased violence and instability in Muslim societies. This was clear during the recruitment by ISIS for male and female Muslim youth in Europe and other countries among the youth.

- *Disunity and Division: Without a strong spiritual foundation, Muslim societies can become divided along political, ethnic, and sectarian lines. This can lead to increased conflict and instability, making it difficult for these societies to progress and thrive.*

Therefore, Muslim societies need to keep in mind the “spiritual strategy” as it cultivates and nurtures spirituality among their citizens. This can be achieved through various means, including education, community programs, and religious institutions. By doing so, Muslim societies can help to ensure the well-being and prosperity of their citizens, as well as contribute to a more peaceful and harmonious world.

Through my power point, I was delighted to share the various spiritual programs that we at CECF have been conducting. A key program is called: The Sultan and the Saint. We use the example of St. Francis and his spiritual encounter with the Sultan of Egypt, Al Kamil Mohammad, in 1219 AD as a training program to connect with non-Muslim communities in America and Europe.

School of religious diplomacy (SRD)

In light of everything I just mentioned here and much more, I established the School of Religious Diplomacy for Leadership and Global Cooperation (SRD) in the U.S. These 6 topics and others are part of the lengthy curriculum to train clergy and community leaders on how to build and be part of a peaceful and harmonious society locally and to take the lead on developing efforts and initiatives leading to cooperation on an international level.

A Word of Thanks

I would like to congratulate the Baku International Multiculturalism Center and the Center for Analysis of International Relations for conducting an excellent conference on this topic, which coincided with the 1st Anniversary of the Adoption of the United Nations General Assembly Resolution Proclaiming March 15th as the “International Day to Combat Islamophobia”.

This conference was very timely and well-organized, as well as contributed to combating hatred and xenophobia all over the world. On behalf of CECF and the Islamic Affairs Council of Maryland, I would like to thank the government and the people of Azerbaijan for hosting such an important conference.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

The Myth of Great Replacement: Islamophobia Meets anti-black Racism

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ABSTRACT

Muslims in Western countries and around the world are increasingly faced with more and more conspiracy theories, such as the myth of the Great Replacement theory. In his speech, the author discussed this myth of the Great Replacement in the context of its discursive predecessors and assessed its impact. As we know, Muslims are a minority group of 5% of the population in the Netherlands and Western European countries in general. In recent decades, Islamophobia as a form of racism has developed against the background of negative views towards Islam and Muslims in the context of international tensions affected by Islamic terrorism and the war on terrorism. Islamophobia includes expressions such as institutional racism, interpersonal and political racism. The ideology of Great Replacement has a high potential to accelerate far-right mobilization.

Keywords: Muslims, Western countries, Great Replacement, terrorism, political racism

[55] Monitor Islamophobia Project The Monitor Islamophobia Project is an independent longitudinal monitoring project that collects data on Islamophobia in the Netherlands. It was launched in 2011 by Dr. Ineke van der Valk. The project analyses this phenomenon and its manifestations. It highlights contexts and backgrounds. The objectives of this project are:

- to increase insight into Islamophobia as a form of racism, its causes, incidence, impact, and consequences;
- to obtain public and official recognition of Islamophobia as a separate form of discrimination comparable to anti-Semitism, to better monitor it in the future;
- to contribute to the development of counter policies and practices to be used by municipalities, national governments, civil society organizations, and the public at large. These objectives are achieved through data gathering, empirical in-depth research on specific issues (desk research, interviews, surveys, discourse analysis), secondary analysis of research data of academic and specialized institutes, dissemination of research outcomes via publications, lectures, academic conferences, (press)interview and advocacy activities and through contributing to capacity-building by empowering ethnic minority civil society organizations with the knowledge, insight and policy recommendations. Until now five reports have been published in the Dutch language. Some are translated into English, German, French, and Italian. Special issues have been: aggression against mosques, anti-Muslim attitudes of youngsters and secondary school pupils, the representation of Muslims in textbooks, Islamophobia in social media, and Muslim discrimination in the labor market. The idea behind the Monitor Islamophobia Project is in short that hate speech and acts must not take place without a reply based on facts and voice.

Muslims in Western countries and worldwide are increasingly confronted with conspiracy theories such as the theory or rather myth of the Great Replacement. In my contribution to this conference, I will discuss this Great Replacement myth in the context of its discursive predecessors and assess its impact.

Muslims are a minority group in the Netherlands (around 5% of the population) and in Western European countries in general. Minority groups always face the risk of social exclusion and the related, or more often preceding, processes of stigmatization. Fear and aversion among the majority population may develop from observing differences, other attitudes, and other forms of behavior, and from the feeling of being under threat. The tendencies to stigmatize and to be prejudiced are universal, founded in evolutionary patterns, and may target different social communities dependent on socio-historical conditions. In the last decades, Islamophobia as a form of racism has evolved against the background of a negative climate of opinion towards Islam and Muslims in the context of international tensions that are influenced by Islamic terrorism and the war on terror.

Islamophobia is a contemporary form of racism that takes shape in social processes of stigmatization in which prejudices and stereotypes play a central role. The term Islamophobia, to denote discrimination against Muslims, refers to a historically and socially determined ideology that ascribes a negative connotation to Islam and Muslims.^[56] It does so with the help of images, symbols, texts, facts, and interpretations. This influences the meaning people give to Islam and how they perceive Muslims, as well as their attitudes and behavior toward them. It does so in a way that promotes the social exclusion of Muslims and favors discriminatory and unequal treatment in cultural, social, economic, and political domains. This discriminatory behavior also often includes people who are presumed to be Islamic on the grounds of their outward appearance or ethnic origin, but are not Islamic and do not define themselves as such. As a form of racism, Islamophobia is primarily ideological in character. Islamophobic dimensions of discrimination are often interwoven with other dimensions that are related to origin, ethnicity, or gender.

Expressions of Islamophobia and racism, in general, may be divided into three components: institutional racism, so-called everyday racism, from person to person, and political racism. The main actors of political racism may be found on the extremist right fringes of politics. It is here that the myth of the Great Replacement has strongly invaded the narrative in recent years. At the same time, this ideological myth is trickling down into the mainstream. Renaud Camus, a French author, coined the term in the first decade of this century and it was further spread by the Identarian Movement in which he initially took part. The term gained attraction internationally in particular after the attack on a mosque in Christchurch New Zealand in 2019, the perpetrator using it in his Manifesto.

Although the myth of the Great Replacement employs new terminology, it is not as new as it suggests. It strongly builds on comparable myths of 'white genocide' and 'Eurabia', but in a more comprehensive way.

^[56] For a more elaborate discussion about islamophobia as a complex social phenomenon and its definition see I. van der Valk, *Islamophobia in the Netherlands*, Amsterdam University Press 2012, pp 17–34; I. van der Valk *Monitor Muslim Discrimination*, second report, IMES Report Series, University of Amsterdam, 2014; I largely follow the definition made by C. Allen based on theory formation about racism in general and its detailed development into Islamophobia: C. Allen, *Islamophobia*, Farnham [etc.]: Ashgate 2010

Eurabia

For around two decades, there has been an extensive level of campaigning in Western European countries against what is described as 'Islamisation'. This process of Islamisation is substantiated using a particular interpretation of history. The history of Islam is said to have been characterized by violence and repression.

The process is said to have occurred previously in history and to now be repeating itself. Reference is made to historic conquests (Poitiers 732; Vienna 1683!) to support the notion that 're-Islamisation' is, in fact, a more accurate term than 'Islamisation'. Islam is represented as wanting to undo Europe's Judeo-Christian identity and undermine the foundations of the Enlightenment.

This alleged aim of Islam's wanting to dominate Europe is sometimes expressed by those who employ international Islamic rhetoric as 'Eurabia', a combination of Europe and Arabia. The term was used in 2005 as the title of a book by a British writer with the pseudonym Bat Ye'or.^[57] It denotes a supposed Islamic project in which Europe, which is seen as a doomed and decadent continent, is turned into a colony of the Islamic/Arabic world. It is said to be a secret project that was developed by European and Arabic politicians during the oil crisis of the 1970s, as part of the Euro-Arabic dialogue. Politicians in the past were said to have exchanged oil and guest workers for the acceptance of and subsequent subjugation to the authority of Islam. Since then, Muslim immigrants are said to have flooded Europe, with the consent of the same politicians, to destroy Western culture and civilization and replace democratic governments with autocratic regimes.^[58]

The Eurabia thesis has been heavily criticized internationally because of its lack of any basis in reality, the lack of any scientific substantiation, and the conspiratorial character that recalls anti-Semitic conspiracy theories. In this context, the book by Bat Ye'or has often been described as the 'The Protocols of the Elders of Mecca'. This is a reference to the book entitled 'The Protocols of the Elders of Zion', the anti-Jewish conspiracy theory which played such a major role in the development of anti-Semitism into an ideology of genocide.^[59] Nonetheless, this dangerous fantasy about Eurabia has found its way into the mainstream, thanks to among others politicians like Geert Wilders in the Netherlands.

White genocide

The second myth on which the Great Replacement ideology builds is the myth of White Genocide. White genocide is a white supremacist conspiracy myth that states that the extinction of white populations is deliberately sought after by the promotion of mass migration, interracial marriages, abortion, and violent genocide. Jews are often seen as the masterminds in this secret plot. The myth of White Genocide is a more explicitly racist ideology. It originated and gained popularity in the United States during the nineties and subsequently spread over the world.

So far about the discursive predecessors of the Great Replacement.

^[57] Bat Ye'or, *Eurabia: the Euro-Arab axis*, Madison, NJ [etc.]: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press 2005

^[58] For more information about the main international players in this ideological discourse, see: M. Car 'You are now entering Eurabië', *Race & Class*, 48 (2006) 1, pp.1-22

^[59] K. Smelik, *De zeven levens van de protocollen van de wijzen van Zion: de paradoxale geschiedenis van het belangrijkste antisemitische geschrift*, Soesterberg: Aspekt 2010.

The Great Replacement

Renaud Camus who coined the term *le Grand Remplacement* (the Great Replacement) is an adherent of *La Nouvelle Droite*, the French right extremist movement that has existed since it was created in the sixties by Alain de Benoiste. The movement focused particularly on the creation of a more acceptable, culturalist discourse to favor the mainstreaming of the extreme right. Renaud Camus himself created a political party with a program based on the ideology of the Great Replacement. Camus used the term to denote a change in the population or rather, in his own words, 'the ethnocultural, civilizational substitution' that is taking place as a result of demographic changes due to immigration imposed by Western elites. He accuses 'the cosmopolitan cultural Marxist elites' of 'dogmatic antiracism' and of undermining society and its ethnocultural coherence by actively promoting immigration. He hails antiracism the only official doctrine of France, 'our République', as well as of Western societies in general. For him, the government in place is a 'regime dogmatic- antiracist'.

As I am not only trained in social political sciences but also in Critical Discourse Analysis I have read and analyzed the collection of presentations and speeches of Camus published in the book *Le Grande Remplacement*.^[60] In these papers he also refers to this process of replacement in less euphemistic, more explicit terms as ethnic war, colonial conquest or recolonization. Common to his work on the matter is the disappearance of French/European/western identity. Being French he says is already becoming 'a formality', related to formal citizenship, a weak identity compared to Arab, Muslim, and Jewish identities that are widely perceived as natural and strong. The threat is also that France as a whole will become a suburb (a *banlieue*) by a process of 'multicultural deculturalisation' and 'puri ethnic decivilisation'. In the elaboration of his theory, he abuses and scapegoats the problems of the French suburbs and suggests that these problems are characteristic of immigrants in general and Muslims in particular. In this process of gradual replacement, two kinds of what he calls arms are used: the belly or procreation by immigrant families and violence. Note well how women's bodies are integrated and given a central position in a war-like narrative. In this narrative, too the delinquent youth of the suburbs are represented as the soldiers in this ethnic war. A war that is not only expected but actively sought after.

Remarkable is that Camus embraces the concept of race. He opposes the tabulation of the terminology that has been going on in Europe since World War 2, in particular in France. The people for him are also the race, people equal race. He considers the concept of race indispensable for the protection of Europe and wants to officially reintroduce it.

How should this replacement threat be remedied in his view? This is also an issue that he discusses several times in his presentations. He strongly promotes a lot of changes in rules and regulations concerning citizenship. He also suggests a program of remigration, again a euphemistic lexical item, to counter this process of replacement. Note that he explicitly declines to be specific about the implementation, leaving this, he says, to 'the more practical members' of the identitarian movement. He does not want to get too much in trouble because he already faced a trial. Anyway, he insists again and again in his speeches, the answer cannot be to make as many children as Africans do but rather to urge them not to have so many children – not in Europe. They should get back to Africa.

^[60] R. Camus, *Le Grand Remplacement* (troisième édition), Plieux 2015

The Great Replacement ideology has a high potential to accelerate extreme right mobilization. With its crisis narratives, the myth inspires a sense of urgency that is widely supported by different strands of the Far Right. Davey and Ebner found that 1,5 million tweets referred to this ideology between April 2012 and April 2019.^[61] The perceived danger of the mythical Replacement legitimates the adherents of accelerationism among others in pushing their project to violently provoke a civil war. The so-called accelerationist movement glorifies violence to create chaos and launch and provoke racial civil war. It wants to replace multicultural societies with white national socialist ethnic states. Ethnic cleansing, remigration in their euphemistic discourse, is high on the agenda. The Replacement Theory not only inspires far-right proponents but also more mainstream politicians as Davey and Ebner showed in their study.

Conclusion

The Great Replacement myth builds on the Eurabia discourse and the idea of White Genocide. It uses a narrative that inspires the radical right in its actions and is at the same time more acceptable to sections of more mainstream audiences. At the same time, it is more comprehensive. While Camus argues that Islam will be the main religion in the replaced society, he wants all immigrant communities, Muslims and black African communities alike, to remigrate, a euphemistic word for what is elsewhere known as ethnic cleansing.

The euphemistic approach and the targeting of all immigrant communities and communities of color may be important factors in understanding why Camus' discourse, facilitated by social media, has obtained a greater echo across the world, to a greater extent than the myths of Eurabia or White Genocide. In comparison, the first is often considered too vague and the second too extremist by less extremist and more mainstream audiences.

When islamophobia meets anti-black racism as it does in the Great Replacement Myth, antiracism and anti-Islamophobia should do so too to strengthen their fight against all forms of discrimination.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

^[61] J. Davey & J. Ebner, 'The Great Replacement': The violent consequences of mainstreamed extremism, London: Institute for Strategic Dialogue 2019.



INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE
ON ISLAMOPHOBIA

BAKU, MARCH 15-16th

SESSION 5

THE INTERSECTION OF COLONIALISM, NEW IMPERIALISM, AND ISLAMOPHOBIA: HISTORICAL AND CONTEMPORARY PERSPECTIVES

March 16, 2023 – 10:00–11:00

Moderator: *Farid Shafiyev*

*Chairman of the Center of Analysis of International Relations
(AIR Center), Azerbaijan*

Confronting Islamophobia and hatred: Principles and actions

Remarks by

Mohammed BECHARI

Secretary General of the World Muslim Communities Council, United Arab Emirates



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- Despite the convergence of civilizations and the intermingling of cultures in our present era, the cultural and historical divide between the Arab-Islamic and Western intellectual systems has allowed deeply rooted tribal prejudices and stereotypical images in the Western mindset to dominate some media and intellectual platforms.

- The persistent recall of the collective consciousness in Western societies of the repugnant and derogatory stereotypical images of Islam and Muslims, embedded in history, coupled with the exploration of the sources that nourish these stereotypes, necessitates a deep examination of the prominent historical factors that played a significant role in shaping these distorted images of Islam and Muslims, as well as the varied means used throughout history to craft and perpetuate this image.

- Mass media in the West, with its extensive reach, has managed to make the distorted stereotypical image of Islam and Islamic civilization a topic of interest for Western individuals, even becoming a subject of discussions and forums.

- Contemporary media manipulation represents a tactic against Islam and Muslims, positioning them as a threat to the West and its civilization. This draws from a range of discourses spanning from the medieval period to Orientalism, including journalistic Orientalism, all founded on a misleading and hate-inciting discourse of Western textbooks.

Now is the time to move beyond mere diagnosis and description, and transition towards strategic management by developing appropriate plans and programs to counter these entrenched stereotypes about Islam and Muslims. This can be achieved through:

1. Producing media content capable of bridging the cultural and intellectual gap between different cultural systems.
2. Showing courage and boldness in addressing issues related to Arab and Islamic heritage and the ability to correct and adjust them.
3. Focusing on correcting the stereotypical image of 'the other' in textbooks.
4. Enhancing the contribution of Muslim scientific competencies in Muslim communities' countries to deepen the bridges of cultural and civilizational dialogue with Western media and cultural institutions, in a way that serves the principles of mutual respect, and consolidates the values of understanding, coexistence, and non-aggression towards others' beliefs and convictions.
5. Implementing deterrent legislation against all forms of intolerance, extremism, takfir, hatred, and contempt for religions, and pursuing all violators through legal and human rights avenues.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

Historical and Contemporary aspects of Islamophobia

Speaking notes by

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ABSTRACT

In the speech, he states that the main goal of Islam is to ensure that all people living in the world live in peace and tranquillity. The word "Islam" itself means peace and tranquillity. The verses of the Holy Quran and the hadiths of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) constantly emphasize the importance of peace. Upon reviewing history, we can see Crusades launched by Western countries against Islamic countries. These historical studies are also about the occupation of Arab and Islamic lands by Western countries. At the same time, it also reveals the fact that he organized a conspiracy with Armenians and that it resulted in important tragedies. An example of Islamophobia is the crimes committed by Armenians against the Azerbaijani people and their cultural heritage in the last 30 years. During the Second Karabakh War, Armenians targeting innocent people with long-range missiles in areas far from Karabakh is another example of Islamophobia.

Keywords: Islam, tranquillity, Crusades, Arab and Islamic lands, Armenians, Karabakh

Introduction

From the time of Islam's emergence, there have been persistent, unjust attacks against it. These attacks have tended to intensify whenever Islamic countries have experienced periods of weakness. Nevertheless, Islam was given to humanity as a religion of peace. Anyone studying the life of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) can see the high regard he held for all human beings.

The primary aim of Islam is to ensure that all people live in peace and security. The word "Islam" itself signifies peace and security. The Holy Quran's verses and the Hadiths of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) consistently emphasize the importance of peace.

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) stated, "I have been sent to perfect good moral character." Allah Almighty communicated to the Prophet in Surah Al-Anbiya, "We have sent you only as a mercy for the whole world." Additionally, in Surah Al-Ma'idah, it is stated (summarized): "If anyone kills a person undeservedly, it is as if he kills all mankind. And if anyone prevents an undeserved killing, it is as if he gives life to all mankind."

Louis IX, the King of France, once stated, 'It's impossible to rule over Muslims by war or force. They do not hesitate to give their lives while fighting to protect their lands and honor.'

This fact is also emphasized in a confidential letter from 1820, written by Patriarch Gregory, the Bishop of Greece during the Ottoman Caliphate, to the Russian Tsar. It's worth noting that the Ottoman Caliphate granted Patriarch Gregory all privileges and protection. In his letter, Patriarch Gregory wrote, 'It's impossible to defeat the Ottoman Turks by military means. They are very faithful, brave, and fearless, ready to engage in jihad. Their strength comes from their devotion to their religion.'

These writings make it clear that the primary deterrent against the invaders achieving their goals was Islam. Upon reviewing history, we see numerous Crusades initiated against Islamic countries by Western nations. These studies also reveal instances of Western countries conspiring with Armenians to invade Arab and Islamic lands, resulting in significant tragedies.

In my research on the Ayyubids, I came across various episodes where Armenians allied with enemy forces against them.

Hadiya Dajani, in her book about Qadi Al-Fadil, Saladin's vizier, wrote, 'In Cairo, Armenian militants fought against Saladin, and Saladin dispersed them and banished them to the south of Egypt.'

In his book 'Mufarrij Al-Kurub,' the eminent historian Jamaluddin ibn Wasil reported that in 1180, an Armenian military leader named Ibn Lavun betrayed the Turkmens and murdered them. This act led Saladin to enter the fortress known as 'Managir,' where the Armenians resided, in retribution for the Turkmens. Ibn Wasil also detailed instances of Armenian betrayal in his book, noting their alliances with enemy forces in their regions.

The atrocities committed by Louis IX, the King of France, in the Middle East, especially in Egypt, are innumerable.

Napoleon's Attack on Egypt

The brutalities and genocide committed in Egypt by Napoleon, the Emperor of France, who invaded Egypt in the mid-18th century, are horrific beyond words.

The author of the book 'Idaatul Al-Wey,' Sanusi, wrote, 'When Napoleon realized he could not extract what he desired from the Egyptian people, he fired upon the Al-Azhar Mosque (a global institution combating radicalism for centuries and renowned for its religious and scholarly importance) and charged it with his cavalry, trampling the Quran and all religious texts underfoot. He transformed the mosque into a stable for his horses and threatened the studying scholars and students with his swords on their throats.'

The distinguished Egyptian historian Al-Jabarti wrote, 'The French captured prominent Egyptian religious scholars, stripped them, and threw them off the fortress walls after killing them. Their fate was discovered a few days later.'

Professor Ahmad Hafiz, in his book about Napoleon's invasion of Egypt, stated that Napoleon commanded the capture of numerous religious scholars and ordered their execution at night, with their bodies thrown into the Nile River.

Another scholar, Sheikh Ali Gomaa, highlighted in his notes, 'Napoleon mentioned in his diary that they killed five Egyptian scholars daily, which means Napoleon is responsible for the tragic death of around 1500 Egyptian scholars.'

Not only did the French ruthlessly torture and murder scholars, but they also massacred thousands of students pursuing religious education. Undoubtedly, one of the key motives behind the Crusades was animosity towards Islam. Crusaders stoked the fires of hatred against Islam by manipulating religion to fulfill their devious political and personal agendas. Yet, for centuries, Christians and Muslims have lived in harmony in Muslim countries.

This peaceful coexistence is because Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) ingrained in Muslims the importance of conducting themselves appropriately towards others. He (PBUH) said in his Hadiths: 'Whoever kills a Dhimmi (a non-Muslim citizen of a Muslim state) shall not even smell the fragrance of Paradise.' In another Hadith, he said: 'Whoever harms a Dhimmi, it is as if he has harmed me, and I shall be an adversary to him on the Day of Resurrection.' There are numerous Hadiths from Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) in this context.

Historian Ahmad Adduni notes in his book about Saladin: 'Saladin was not only beloved by Muslims but also by Christians. Christians hung his picture in their churches alongside their sacred figures. The Christians of Egypt fought shoulder to shoulder with Muslims against the invading French.'

The Ayyubids and Zengids are Azerbaijani

I want to draw your attention to the fact that all the Ayyubids and Zengids were Azerbaijani. Ibn Khallikan, who lived in the early 16th century, reported in his work 'Wafayat Al-Ayan' that, according to historical sources, Sultan Saladin and the Ayyubid dynasty originated from the city of Dvin in Azerbaijan, a fact unanimously agreed upon by historians. Additionally, Imam Dhahabi ('Siyar Al-Alam Al-Nubala'), who lived and created works in the 14th century, Taghribirdi ('Mawrid Al-Latafah'), who lived in the early 15th century, and others also believed that Saladin Ayyubi was from Azerbaijan.

The historian Ibn Al-Athir ('Al-Kamil Fi Al-Tarikh'), who lived in the second half of the 13th century, noted in his book that the reason for the Ayyubids' alliance with the great military leader Nur al-Din Zengi was that he too hailed from the city of Dvin in Azerbaijan.

Karabakh War

For centuries, the people of Azerbaijan have been affected by Islamophobia. The transgressions perpetrated by the Armenians against the Azerbaijani people and their cultural heritage over the past 30 years serve as a stark example of Islamophobia. The Armenians not only occupied Azerbaijani lands but also committed the horrific Khojaly genocide, brutally murdering people, be it an infant, the elderly, or a woman. The fact that Armenians targeted innocent civilians in areas far removed from Karabakh with long-range missiles during the Second Karabakh War underscores the dehumanizing nature of Islamophobia.

In Karabakh, the Armenians converted 63 of the 65 mosques into pigsties and cattle sheds, desecrating them. The actions of the French in Egypt's Al-Azhar Mosque and those of the Armenians in the mosques of Karabakh are both manifestations of a shared Islamophobic ideology.

Despite these tragedies, in a demonstration of humanity reminiscent of Saladin's treatment of prisoners centuries ago, Mr. Ilham Aliyev, the Supreme Commander-in-Chief of the Azerbaijani people, treated Armenian prisoners—despite their genocidal acts against the Azerbaijani people—according to humanitarian and international law, returning them to Armenia. This display of humanity is a testament to our people's longstanding values. Azerbaijan is an exemplary nation where diverse communities live in harmony. Although this subject could be explored for hours, I have endeavored to communicate my perspective through these examples.

Conclusion and suggestion:

I propose that we strive to include the study of Islamophobia in university curriculums worldwide. Let us not spare any effort in working towards a world where all people can live in prosperity and peace. May the Almighty Allah guide us to success in our endeavors to serve humanity. Amen!

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

The September 11 Generation and a Hip-Hop Response to Islamophobia

Speaking notes by

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ABSTRACT

The speech deals with the book titled “Representing Islam: Hip-Hop of the September 11 Generation” which builds on the speaker’s previous book, Globalized Muslim Youth in the Asia Pacific, and examines the problems facing Muslim youth today and how they respond to them through popular culture. While it is important to correctly present the structures, devices, and tools of Islamophobia, it is equally important for us to acknowledge the agency of individuals, citizens, and solidarity groups in the fight against Islamophobia. Given the worldwide popularity of hip-hop music, this does not mean that Muslim hip-hoppers have free access to these programs. As an Australian Muslim hip-hop artist, Matusé said he was singled out by white Australians for his ethnicity rather than his lyrical skills. Among Muslim hip-hop practitioners, such a brotherhood is formed by the sense of identity that comes from being part of the “9/11 generation.” This “9/11 generation” is a concept he uses repeatedly in his recent works.

Keywords: Islam, youth, 9/11 generation, sense of identity, hip-hop practitioner

In light of the focus on contemporary perspectives to understanding Islamophobia, I have chosen to speak on an aspect of a book that I published a couple of years ago called, *Representing Islam: Hip-Hop of the September 11 Generation*. The book builds on my previous book, *Globalized Muslim Youth in the Asia Pacific*, which looked at the challenges faced by Muslim youth today and how they respond to them via popular culture. The case that I would like to make today is, while it is important for us to accurately call out the structures, apparatuses, and instruments of Islamophobia, it is equally crucial that we recognize the agency of individuals, the citizenry, and solidarity groups in fighting Islamophobia.

My book, *Representing Islam*, is about young Muslims who have embraced and appropriated hip-hop music as their anthem in response to the surging Islamophobia following September 11. Contemporary hip-hop music is used by diverse social groups who find themselves at the margins of society to battle public misconceptions of Islam as well as to articulate everyday injustices experienced by Muslims locally or globally. The term “represent” can be understood in at least two ways. Firstly, it can be used in the

form of hip-hop jargon, meaning to front a cause, to carry the flag, and to champion the cause of a particular social group. Secondly, young Muslims are also “representing” Islam in novel ways, contextualizing their piety to the conditions of the times, and advancing conversations that might have been prematurely stunted in different spheres.

This is not to say, given the popularity of hip-hop music globally, that Muslim hip-hopppers get a free pass in their practice of hip-hop. Australian Muslim hip-hopper, Mause, for example, rapped about being singled out by a section of white Australia for his ethnic background rather than his lyrical skills. This is despite proclaiming his allegiance to his country of residence in tracks such as “Sydney versus Everybody.” As if on cue, and as predicted, following the release of the track, Mause was singled out for online abuse. One commentator put it bluntly, “I was enjoying it until the Muslim reared his head.” This criticism of Mause, hating him for his religious beliefs, led to a strong pushback from the hip-hop fraternity in support of their fellow artist. Sounds of the Zulu Nation anchor, Johnny Bell, also known as DJ Host MK-1, articulated his disappointment with the episode and expressed his unequivocal support for Mause via a lengthy Facebook write-up (Kamaludeen 2016: 97).

September 11 Generation

Such a fraternity among Muslim hip-hop practitioners is forged through a sense of identity from being part of the “September 11 generation.” This concept of the “September 11 generation” is something that I have utilized several times in my recent works. What does it mean to be part of a generation? According to academics like Edmunds and Turner (2005), generations identify themselves in terms of historical and cultural traumas, which are produced by a diversity of social processes by members of national, social, or global groups. Generations also act strategically to bring about change. In the case of Muslim youth, terrorist attacks in New York City on September 11, 2001, had revitalized and extended Huntington’s “clash of civilization thesis... to include the stigmatization of an emergent generation of young Muslims (Kamaludeen 2020:1). Just in the United States, for example, the Human Rights Watch reported that Muslim hate crimes increased by an unprecedented 1,700 percent after September 11. The passing of the Patriot Act a month after September 11 institutionalized discrimination against Muslims, whose legal rights were diminished amid an increase in intense surveillance by the state. September 11, therefore, marks an important epoch in the social and cultural history of this generation of youth.

Unsurprisingly, references to September 11 are abundant in the lyrics of Muslim hip-hopppers. Leading the charge is Medine Zaouiche from France, whose first solo album, “11 September”, takes a critical look at the treatment of Muslims after September 11. An article published by The Guardian in June 2016 entitled “The French Hip-Hop Stars Fighting the Far Right” named Medine as one of the flag-bearers of the movement. For nearly two decades, he has worked tirelessly at countering Islamophobic ideologues. Just a year after his album dropped, he published an article in Time magazine entitled, “How Much More French Can I Be?” lamenting the othering of people of color and the continual questioning of their national allegiance. Medine’s rap is interwoven with messages about the fates of the destitute, migrants, and Muslims in Europe. Unfortunately, the misery described by Medine is all too familiar to young Muslims in France who are trying to carve an identity for themselves amid relentless assaults from the Far Right.

I am not here to glorify hip-hop culture. Many of us are cognisant of the criticisms of hip-hop culture, which is often embroiled with vices such as violence, drugs, and misogyny, among others. However, there is ample evidence of young Muslims attempting to reconcile hip-hop with their Islamic piety and sensibilities. I provided quite a bit of evidence on this in *Representing Islam*. In this presentation, I list a few key ones:

The September 11 Generation Fights Back

Firstly, the potency of hip-hop culture is that it cuts across social class, gender, and ethnicity with relative ease. Many scholarly works point to these. These lead to a vibrant cultural exchange between diverse groups, in addition to new social networks and solidarity groups being formed.

Secondly, while references to Islam and Muslims in hip-hop have been documented since the birth of the genre, the globalization of hip-hop provides the Muslim ummah all over the world with a ready-made vocabulary from which to draw elements for local repertoires of resistance. Writing about England's Fun-Da-Mental and France's IAM, Ted Swedenburg states: "In both countries, Muslims are attempting to construct cultural, social and political spaces for themselves as ethnic groups (of sorts), and are massively involved in anti-racist mobilizations against white supremacy. Hip Hop activism has been an important arena for anti-Islamophobic mobilization for both French and British Muslims." "Fun-Da-Mental's expressions of pride in Islam appealed to Muslim youth who had been raised on British popular culture yet also felt wounded by British Islamophobia" (Swedenburg, 2001:58).

Thirdly, the global Muslim hip-hop movement in particular, and popular movement in general, bring to light a better understanding of global processes. It concurrently unveils a provincializing of Islam from its conventional Middle Eastern center and a provincializing of hip-hop from its American center. Recognizing the Muslim hip-hop ummah as part of the September 11 generation presents a more critical perspective of its status and identity that goes beyond a nation-state narrative, allowing us to see connectivity on a global platform (Kamaludeen 2016, 2020).

Hip-hop culture has since evolved as it is appropriated as a form of cultural identity for youth all over the world.

Fourthly, if you were to read the interviews with Muslim hip-hoppers and scrutinize their lyrics, you will realize that Malcolm X feature quite heavily in their tracks. One of the main ways the thinking of Malcolm X has permeated Muslim hip-hop culture is his representation of the civil rights struggle of African Americans as one of the human rights, which is encapsulated in this quotation of his

...Your problems will never be fully solved until and unless ours is solved. You will never be fully respected as free human beings until and unless we are also recognized and treated as human beings. Our problem is your problem. It is not a Negro problem, nor an American problem. This is a world problem; a problem for humanity. It is not a problem of civil rights but a problem of human rights.

So, in a similar vein, one strategy that a significant number of Muslim hip-hoppers have adopted is not to merely focus on so-called Muslim causes. As Mos Def eloquently puts it,

If Islam's sole interest is the welfare of mankind, then Islam is the strongest advocate of human rights anywhere on Earth... It's about speaking out against oppression wherever you can. If that's gonna be in Bosnia or Kosovo or Chechnya or places where Muslims are being persecuted; or if it's gonna be in Sierra Leone or Colombia—you know, if people's basic human rights are being abused and violated, then Islam has an interest in speaking out against it because we're charged to be the leaders of humanity.

Fifthly, another interesting aspect of the Muslim hip-hop movement is how many hip-hoppers see their work as continuing the work of the Prophet. I termed this in my book as engaging in “poetic jihad.” Many Muslim hip-hoppers see themselves as progenies of the Prophet referring to the poetry of the Quran and their rap as an extension of that tradition. Emulating the prophet, hip-hoppers make use of Islamic idioms to connect with the youth of today.

With these examples, I will end on this note that we should empower our youth and look beyond the normal corridors that we are comfortable engaging with. Throughout this conference yesterday, we've heard about the importance of engaging state actors and getting “a seat at the table”. In our fervor to chase that, we should get young people and diverse social actors who are already doing the tough work of fighting Islamophobia, on our side.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

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INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE
ON ISLAMOPHOBIA
BAKU, MARCH 15-16th

SESSION 6

ISLAMOPHOBIA AND CALLS FOR HATE IN THE MEDIA

March 16, 2023 – 10:00-11:00

Moderator: Rufat Hamzayev

Deputy Chairman at Azerbaijan State Television, Azerbaijan

Mainstreaming anti-Muslim bigotry: Media and the Islamophobia industry

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores Western public opinion and the extent to which fear and prejudice exist against Islam and Muslims, a phenomenon called Islamophobia. There is still more work to be done to uncover the mechanism of how Islamophobia simmers in the media in different media and geographical regions. To assess the role of the media in this phenomenon, we examine the dominant representations of Islam and Muslims as identified by a growing body of scholarly research. In the article, two main frameworks, namely the Orientalist framework and the Terrorist framework, were particularly effective in spreading Islamophobia. Master frames are based on deep-rooted norms, values, myths, and beliefs. As we have seen in the research, both feed off and reinforce each other.

Keywords: Islamophobia, Muslims, Orientalist framework, Terrorist framework myths, beliefs

Islamophobia in the media has been studied for decades, perhaps since Edward Said published "Covering Islam" in 1981. While studies abound about anti-Muslim messaging across different outlets and geographic locations, there is still much work to be done on uncovering the mechanics of how Islamophobia simmers through media. One thing is certain: it is time to go beyond superficial studies and more into a detailed analysis of the 'Islamophobia industry,' as coined by Nathan Lean (2012), and its modus operandi.

Therefore, three central areas are of particular significance:

First is the issue of framing. When this concept was put forward in the 1950s, it examined how people thought and behaved during situations of cooperation and conflict. Subsequently, a body of literature emerged across many disciplines, including political science, psychology, sociology, and linguistics, that shaped this concept. In a nutshell, media framing selects and highlights some facets of events and makes connections between them to promote a particular interpretation, evaluation, and/or solution. Some consider that the essence of framing is "to mobilize potential adherents and constituents, to garner bystander support, and to demobilize antagonists."

"Master frames," are based on deep-seated norms, values, myths, and beliefs. Two master frames were particularly potent in mainstreaming Islamophobia, namely the Orientalist master frame and the Terrorist master frame. Both feed from each other

and reinforce each other. The Orientalist master frame is very potent. Many studies have explored these deep-seated stereotypes about Islam and Muslims, portraying Muslims as heartless, brutal, and uncivilized. These clichés regularly find their way to a worldwide audience through various media types, such as film, news, cartoons, and television (Hafez, 2000; Said, 1981; Suleiman, 1988; Kamalipour, 1995; Wolfsfeld, 1997). As a result, very little about Muslims' human density is ever discussed.

The Terrorist master frame is equally potent. It was used in unison with Orientalist mythology to reinforce Samuel Huntington's so-called "clash of civilizations" theory (1996), largely debunked in Academia (Chiozza, 2002) but still pervades journalistic circles and popular culture. The Terrorist master frame is very reductionist and simplistic. It reduces all forms of resistance, including legitimate ones, to blind terrorist activity. Very little meaningful analysis, context, or historical background is offered. The explanation is that these armed attacks stem from Muslim "rage", which hates others for their freedoms and affluent lifestyles.

Consequently, these master frames use simple language that provides perspectives for the common people on interpreting events and situations. These frames get stronger with proximity and repetition. Enough repetition can make them permanent. Even negating a frame circuit activates and strengthens it at that juncture. A memorable incident was a case in point when Nixon said, "I am not a crook," but people still thought of him as a crook.

Accordingly, no matter how frequently Muslims affirm their goodwill, law-abidance, and keenness for dialogue, these master frames will still define them in the media and public sphere.

Hence, trying to reinvent the wheel at every turn or sticking to defensive postures or denial has proven counterproductive. Therefore, a first recommendation is to call upon Muslim academics, experts, and practitioners to give more attention to this concept and learn about framing and counter-framing strategies. This recommendation extends to the Muslim community and opinion leaders.

The second point is about the role of think tanks in propagating Islamophobia. Many people, including academics, have a shallow view of how the media works. One way the media consolidate their framing is via media sources. Corporations and special interest groups often get sources readily available for the media. These experts offer their views, arguments, explanations, and policy suggestions, influencing news reporting significantly.

Immediately after 9/11, there was a profusion of "alarmist" literature, which included publications such as Bernard Lewis, *The Crisis of Islam* (2003); Steven Emerson, *American Jihad: The Terrorists Living among Us* (2003); Daniel Pipes, *Militant Islam Reaches America* (2003); Robert Spencer, *Islam Unveiled: Disturbing Questions about the World's Fastest Growing Religion* (2002); Serge Trifkovic, *Sword of the Prophet* (2002); and Anonymous, *The Terrorist Hunter* (2003).

These writings adhered to medieval-style Orientalism, and their recommendations were often aggressive. Authors such as Norman Podhoretz called for the United States to remake the entire Middle East region by "forcibly re-educating the people" to follow the thinking of America's leaders (Podhoretz, 2002).

Daniel Pipes exemplifies the fusion between Orientalism and counter-terrorism discourses and how they cascade to the media via think tanks. In the 2002 edition of "In the Path of God," Pipes stated that Muslims represent "a hostile population." Therefore, he believes there should be no mercy for Muslim civilians during military strikes. He argued that the "distinction between terrorists operating in the name of Islam and ordinary Muslim' moms and dads'...is a true and valid distinction, but it goes much too far, and if adhered to as a guideline for policy, it will cripple the effort that must be undertaken to preserve our institutions' (Pipes 2002: 102, 124).

In 2011, the Centre for American Progress (CAP) produced a report which examined sources propagating Islamophobic ideas in the public sphere. While these bigoted ideas reached and influenced millions of Americans, the report uncovered that, in fact, "a small, tightly networked group" orchestrated this perception-management operation. This group was sustained by 'funding from a clutch of key foundations' pumping large amounts of money into this network. The details can be found in the CAP report (Fear Inc., 2011).

The conclusions mentioned by the CAP report are not restricted to the United States. British neo-conservative think tanks give their cues on Islam/Muslims to the media and policymakers. In December 2013, the UK Prime Minister called for an end to gender segregation by Islamic societies at universities, and Education Secretary Michael Gove asserted a link to 'extremism' (Young, 2013). Their statements followed a report about alleged instances of the practice by a pressure group called Student Rights, a project of the neoconservative Henry Jackson Society think tank. By May 2014, the far-right group Britain First had begun a series of 'mosque invasions', and its leaders filmed themselves demanding "the removal of sexist mosque signs' designating separate entrances for men and women.

Consequently, it is primordial for anti-Islamophobia researchers and advocates to fully grasp how sourcing works and how think tanks help frame policies and influence the news agenda. Therefore, a second recommendation is for Muslim communities, opinion leaders, and think tanks to allocate their utmost attention to media training, provide media-trained sources, and engage proactively with the media and the think-tank industry.

The final point is about the importance of bloggers and influencers. Many bloggers were initially dismissed in the post-2001 environment as being too fringe and having a minimal impact (Kaczynski & Massie, 2015; Sales, 2016). The reality is that these individuals have turned the internet and then social media into a breeding ground for Islamophobic information, memes, and imagery. Their presence has slowly moved from the dark corners of online forums to becoming influential and increasingly central to the worldviews of leading political figures, especially in the United States. By the 2016 presidential election and the election of Donald Trump to the White House, the transformation from the fringes to the mainstream had become complete.

Two examples are Robert Spencer's Jihad Watch website and Barbara Geller. While Spencer himself may have been a lesser-known figure, the subsequent financial means he received helped him mobilize hundreds of trolls and triggered considerable flak against Muslims in the US and overseas. Similarly, Barbara Geller plays a leading role in the Islamophobia industry (Gardell, 2014). Business Insider has described Geller as a "promoter of anti-Muslim conspiracy theories" (Relman, 2018), whereas Snopes has

fact-checked several of Geller's assertions about Muslims and Islam and found them to be false (LaCapria, 2015). Still, her vitriol has put Islamophobic themes in the front and center of public discourse.

These examples and many others have proven how seemingly fringe actors may grab the national spotlight and gain mass attention for their ideological program. Notably, Georgetown University's Bridge Initiative revealed in a 2015 article that Geller and Spencer's group increased their funding drastically between 2012 and 2013.

Additionally, these bloggers became later enmeshed with the Trump administration promoting anti-Muslim prejudice at the helm of the White House. Several detrimental policies were subsequently considered, including domestic surveillance of Muslim communities, curtailing immigration from Muslim-majority countries, and otherwise dismantling Islamic institutions within the US that they perceived as threatening.

Hence, a third recommendation is to engage with bloggers/influencers proactively and use fact-checking tools to debunk those who spread fallacies and other conspiracy theories while being ahead of the curve instead of dismissive.

Disclosure statement

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Confronting and containing the phenomenon of Islamophobia in the Media and Public Space

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ABSTRACT

This paper argues that addressing the issue of Islamophobia will prove insufficient if we rely solely on adopting theoretical intellectual approaches to understand the dimensions of this racist phenomenon and identify its roots. Islamophobia can be based on ideas about Islam as a religion and ideas about Muslims as a citizen and ethnic group. Nevertheless, researchers and those interested in various disciplines should also provide realistic visions and practical plans resulting from in-depth and serious analytical and field studies to deal with the spread of Islamophobia, especially in the media and in the public space in general, to reduce its repercussions, prevent it from spreading to other societies and exacerbating its effects on Muslim communities in the world.

In this context, very important questions arise regarding the options of confrontation to respond to the growing Islamophobia, to determine whether the knot lies in the vocabulary of the discourse directed at the other, and who are the parties behind fuelling the growth of the new wave of hatred of Muslims and Islam.

Keywords: Islamophobia, racist phenomenon, ethnic group, Muslim communities, intellectual approaches

Introduction

"Islamophobia"—a new word for an old fear, is a branch of racism, which is so deeply ingrained in society that it can be present in any type of communication exchange. Islamophobia is an old phenomenon that has returned to the forefront in the Western media and the Western public space as well and has even become an integral part of the agendas of some far-right political parties in the West. This coincides with the emergence of extremist organizations claiming affiliation with Islam and claiming responsibility for carrying out a series of bloody attacks in France, Britain, Belgium, and America...This has led to the rise of a new and dangerous wave of Islamophobia.

An in-depth reading of the contents of the new wave of hostility against Islam, coinciding with the occurrence of numerous and repeated attacks in several Western countries and the subsequent accusation against people of Arab and Islamic origins,

increases the need to conduct new studies and adopt forward-looking visions aimed at containing the repercussions of the current situation, and facing the trend of some Western countries to institutionalize Islamophobia. This can be done by adopting a parallel strategy that is up to the existing challenge and confronts what has become known as the industry of fear and hatred directed at offending Islam and Muslims. How long will Muslims remain in a state of defense of their lives, beliefs, and culture? What role can governments play? Is there a real political will and vision to confront, and then contain, the new wave of anti-Muslims and Islamophobia? What are the mechanisms to counter Islamophobia at various levels and tracks? A concept should also be developed to enable periodic monitoring of performance and evaluation rates in this context.

In this context, the Baku – Azerbaijan conference entitled “Islamophobia as a specific form of racism and discrimination: global and transnational challenges” represents one of the advanced forms of addressing the issue of Islamophobia in innovative ways, especially since it is jointly organized by the International Center for multiculturalism in Baku, the Center for analysis of international relations and the G20 forum for Interreligious Dialogue.

In this brief paper, we will try to present a vision to counter the growing phenomenon of Islamophobia, in general, whether it is in the media or the public space. I am not claiming that I am presenting here an executive action program or a roadmap to confront Islamophobia, but rather a modest attempt to participate in the collective effort that has been made and is still being made, to propose solutions to the problem of Muslim hatred and Islamophobia.

In the following paragraphs, we will discuss only three of many possible ways to approach the issue, namely the legal, political, and media approaches.

The legal path to Combating Islamophobia

The legal option comes at the forefront of the roadmap to confront the growing Islamophobia, as it is a neutral factor and provides a solid ground for confrontation, ensuring the activation of official institutions, as well as individuals, in the face of the phenomenon of hostility to Islam and Muslims.

There are many forms of attacks on Muslims and Islamophobia in Western societies, and these acts amount to crimes legally described as an attack on Islam and Muslims, including: Enacting laws that restrict the freedom of Muslims to move, dress and practice religious rites, preventing or complicating the procedures for issuing licenses for the establishment of mosques and Islamic centers, discrimination and exclusion from obtaining employment opportunities due to race, religion or appearance, refraining from providing health, social and cultural services to areas inhabited by a Muslim majority, adopting a general approach to exclude Muslims, individuals and groups, from participating in the management of Public Affairs and economic and political life, multiple verbal and physical attacks on Muslims, especially against veiled women, assaulting mosques, desecrating Muslim cemeteries and burning the Holy Quran in repeated scenes in different Western countries. Campaigns of ridicule and disparagement of Muslims, attempts to defame and publicly abuse their religious symbols in the media, threats of deportation and deportation of people, including those who obtained the citizenship of the country from which they were deported by birth, the

reduction or withholding of aid and scholarships for Muslim students, the imposition of unfair and often humiliating restrictions on the travel and residence of Muslims, as well as tightening asylum procedures and imposing strict restrictions on the reunification of refugee families.

There is no doubt that the legal approach to combating Islamophobia requires the joint efforts of various governments in Islamic countries, civil society organizations, and Islamic centers legally recognized in Western countries. The legal path can start from coordination and communication with international human rights organizations and civil society organizations in Western countries to monitor various abuses and violations of human rights charters and declarations, and joint work to pressure Western lawmakers to enact laws criminalizing contempt for religions, punishing perpetrators of hate crimes, and preventing defamation of Muslims in the media and the speeches of politicians.

Human rights observatories or specialized centers can also be established to monitor and document hate crimes and manifestations of Islamophobia, and then assign lawyers to take legal action against those involved in these crimes, from private individuals to politicians and government officials, before the judiciary in the countries where these crimes occur, or before the European Court of human rights... The role of embassies and consulates of Islamic countries is also very important in this context to support efforts in combating the phenomenon of Islamophobia.

The political approach to Combating Islamophobia

The seriousness of the phenomenon of Islamophobia on societies, and the possibility of reflecting its negative effects on security and peace in general, requires the unification of the efforts of all governments and official institutions in the Arab and Islamic world. This Baku conference is one of the most prestigious platforms to unite efforts and put forward possible solutions to counter the calls of some Western rulers (for example, Viktor Orban, prime minister of Hungary, or the proposal of the British government to adopt a discriminatory policy of forcing refugees to carry colorful bracelets identifying their hobby, or the call of the French presidential candidate, Marine Le Pen, to get rid of Muslims in France by expelling them from it and restricting them...). The involvement of Islamic and Arab governments in this effort gives it an official character and gives the strategy of confronting and absorbing the phenomenon of Islamophobia more weight in Western and international official circles as well.

Governments, Islamic official institutions, and civil society organizations working in the West can work on developing an action plan based on positively influencing Western public opinion towards Islam and Muslims by organizing conferences, coordinating promotional campaigns, and holding educational events to familiarize the wide Western public with Islam, and working to strengthen what is common between Muslim communities and their Western counterparts.

In this context, it is possible to propose that Islamic governments adopt a joint diplomatic action plan that represents a mechanism for dialogue and discussion of issues related to Islamophobia with Western partners to find practical solutions to reduce the effects of the phenomenon of Islamophobia on both Muslim and Western societies.

The Western media arena, in general, reflects the hysterical state of Western public opinion towards Islam and Muslims, which was fueled by slogans, fallacies, and tendentious media campaigns behind it and funded by media tycoons, some extreme right-wing parties, and Islamophobic politicians. The Western media has become the only source that feeds the Western public opinion with misleading information about Islam and Muslim issues and therefore provides the Western public with false and fabricated narratives to scare them away from Islam and push them to hate and reject Muslims, and the Western media, with great regret, has achieved many of its goals in this.

The misinformation message has helped spread Islamophobia in both Western and Eastern societies. When false and fabricated narratives and truthful information are not allowed to be available and people of truth are absent from the arena of defending their rights, the environment becomes perfectly suitable for spreading any misleading information or deliberate fabrications to achieve various political, economic, nationalist, and populist goals.

Therefore, as an Arab-rooted media organization with a global message, the Al Jazeera media network sought to find for itself a media approach that enhances the defense of the public's right to know the truth and access information without falsification. Therefore, AJMN founded a neutral and ethical professional media school that finds nothing wrong with defending just causes. Al Jazeera Media Network believes that professional media and ethical journalism will make journalists practice their profession and perform their mission with high professionalism. The AJMN has developed two journalistic guides, one editorial and one technical, to ensure the quality of the content it provides to the public, whether through its TV channels or its various digital platforms. The following is a summary of the most important pillars of ethical journalism in the Al Jazeera Media Network:

Ensure that all editorial staff working in the Al Jazeera network (journalists, workers in the basic editorial production areas, and those working in the digital technology sector) receive a basic training course on journalistic ethics, freedom of expression, and the challenges of obtaining information in the digital age.

Ensure that feedback received from participants in these training forums – designed to promote ethical journalistic practices and ethical content – is adopted and integrated into a broader comprehensive review and reform process to establish a mechanism for how standards are maintained within the various components of the Al Jazeera network.

- The training activity will be organized in such a way as to make the participants of the courses more connected with the broader and sustainable goal of reforming Al Jazeera's internal regulatory systems and introducing more transparency in programming.

- A full consultation with the newsrooms and production departments will take place long before the start of the training activities to ensure that the training content is appropriate, and effective and encourages the interest of Al Jazeera network employees working in various sectors and at all levels.

There will be sessions for those involved within the network to share feedback and detailed feedback on the results of the training work.

Therefore, Al Jazeera proposed the following activities to achieve its goals:

- Provision of training courses similar to a wider number of employees in Doha and other channels and offices of the Al Jazeera network (Sarajevo, Mexico City, and elsewhere).
- Provide training that includes the elements of the basic introductory course, including:
 - Ethical journalism, hate speech, freedom of expression, and how to define the “public interest” in the diverse regions and cultures where the Al Jazeera network operates and broadcasts its content.
 - Include good journalistic practices in storytelling, such as sharing validation techniques and verifying news before it is published.
 - Provide a general and concise introduction to international humanitarian law and Human Rights.
 - Bringing together experts-observers from outside the network within the departments and newsrooms to enable them to better understand how Al Jazeera works and provide ideas on where and how there may be opportunities to incorporate good journalistic practice into the journalistic production process.
 - Organizing meetings with external production companies on the importance of high standards of journalistic practice and editorial decisions followed in the completion of programs.

Conclusion

Finally, the AJMN seeks to cooperate with researchers and “dictionaries” on different types of hate speech, Islamophobic narratives, and other types of misinformation, to strengthen and improve internal resources and materials related to the development of editorial standards:

- Development of materials explaining the practice of “hybrid journalism” – training on the integration of journalists between artificial intelligence and social intelligence. The Al Jazeera Center for public freedoms and Human Rights will work with relevant stakeholders in the Al Jazeera network to consider whether terminology for hate speech and other issues such as Islamophobia, Immigration can be integrated with CMS and editorial processes in newsrooms to enable journalists to make better decisions about the words they use.
- Identify areas where Al Jazeera can cooperate with researchers who have analyzed Al Jazeera content and interact with them. For example, analysis of media coverage of migration issues in cooperation with the International Organization for Migration and UNHCR.

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Phobia stops where the conversation starts

Speaking notes by

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ABSTRACT

The speaker mentions that at the beginning of the 20th century, Azerbaijan with 4.5 million population was declared the “first Muslim democracy” in the world. The Azerbaijan Democratic Republic (ADR) has shown itself as a secular parliamentary system with universal, free representation. With this, radical changes began in all spheres of social life. However, its short-lived 23-month existence was ended by the Russian invasion. After the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, the Republic of Azerbaijan was established and preserved the statehood traditions of the ADR. However, surveys also show that although the vast majority of people in the country identified themselves as Muslims in the early post-Soviet period, a small fracture of them had an understanding of the pillars of Islam. The national identity of Azerbaijanis is secular with the separation of the state from religion established in the Constitution, and religious groups are never separate from the state. We know that Islamophobia exists in the Western media because of sufficient evidence-based reporting. These reports have the same essence as creating stereotypes about Muslim migrants, promoting their inability to integrate into the secular societies of the West, and portraying them as potential terrorist hotbeds or hotbeds of radicalization.

Keywords: Republic of Azerbaijan, Soviet –Union, Islamophobia, national identity, migrants

“Azerbaijan is a country with a predominantly Muslim population that constitutes around 95% of the demographics. The Muslim population is approximately 85% Shi’a and 15% Sunni; differences have not been traditionally defined sharply”- this short encyclopedic description is what you get with a quick online search on Azerbaijan. However, left unseen behind these lines is an incredible process of rediscovery of its religious identity that the country has undergone since regaining independence in 1991. The process is so solid and consistent that it could be only compared to its remarkable economic transformation. In both of those cases, the impressive outcomes came from the employment of the right policies and the building of the right institutions that brought the emergence of “the Azerbaijani model”.

At the dawn of the XX century, Azerbaijan was declared “the first Muslim democracy” in the world with a population of 4.5 million. The Azerbaijan Democratic Republic (ADR) positioned itself as a secular parliamentary rule with universal, free, and proportionate representation that allowed the launch of fundamental progressive changes in almost all fields of public life. However, its short-lived 23 months existence was brought to an end by the Russian occupation. Communists saw religion as a hindrance to building a socialist society. Thus, for eight decades Azerbaijanis in the Soviet Union were deprived of their basic rights to practice religion. The numbers paint a stronger picture- before being incorporated into the Soviet Union Azerbaijan had around two thousand mosques functioning on its territory. As a result of the organized Soviet policy of repressing the religion, they were downsized to only 15 with the remaining ones being used mostly as storage facilities or misappropriated. Naturally, this prompted many people to exercise their religion secretly in their homes.

The Republic of Azerbaijan which emerged after the breakdown of the Soviet Union in 1991 upheld the statehood traditions of ADR. However, the damage was done- surveys show the vast majority of people in the country identified themselves as Muslims in the early post-Soviet era, yet a small fracture of them knew or had a basic understanding of the pillars of Islam. So, in the past thirty-plus years Azerbaijanis had a lot of “catching up” to do to bring the country to the position of a qualified host of the International Conference on Islamophobia.

The leadership of the country under President Ilham Aliyev continues adhering to the policy of “multiculturalism” founded by the national leader Heydar Aliyev in the 90s. The country has turned into a recurring platform for international forums to promote peaceful, tolerant, and multicultural coexistence between all religions.

The national identity of Azerbaijanis is secular with separation of state from the religion enshrined in the Constitution. However religious groups are never apart from the state. All represented religions in the country, including those in extreme minority have a space in the public debate and proper representation. Religious institutions have adopted strict policies to prevent radicalization.

There’s a State Committee on Work with Religious Entities that is responsible for implementing state policies and facilitating the dialogue between religious communities and the state. The Azerbaijan Institute of Theology is of importance, where young clerics and teachers of religious studies are educated within the local cultural context and curb the influence of the outside extreme groups.

In short, for the past three decades since Azerbaijan regained its independence, it has strived to truly take ownership of its freedom to exercise religion. Similar action needs to be taken on Islamophobia in media- bigger ownership for representation of Islam in the Western media. One-sided venting on Islamophobia can not be allowed, rather turning it into a conversation to encourage open public debate. Because one thing to remember is that

“radicalization and phobia stop where debate and more information start.”

When we let media fill the information space with one-sided arguments without responding, the public gets more fearful and receptive to those arguments. We do know that Islamophobia in the Western media exists. There are more than enough evidence-based reports. They all come back to the same points: stereotyping of Muslim migrants,

promoting the idea that they are unable to integrate into Western secular societies and depicting them as a potential cell of terrorism or a hotbed of radicalization. All of this generalization and irrelevant connections spill into “honor killings” being unnecessarily depicted as “Islamic honor killings” or “militants” unnecessarily becoming “Islamic militants”. In its turn, it builds harsher narratives, brings a more aggressive tone, and results in wrong attitudes among citizens who feel a certain way toward their fellow Muslim citizens. Restricting the liberties of the latter group becomes just a matter of time.

The statistics show that in the US, monitored attacks between 2011–2015 with the Muslim perpetrator received almost five times more coverage in media compared to the cases with non-Muslim perpetrators. This occurred even though the overall number of Muslim perpetrators was less than that of non-Muslims. Hence, less crime got more negative coverage. What is wrong with this picture? Media paints a deliberate picture of a perpetrator in society’s mind – even if the perpetrator of the attack is not Muslim, media-generated stereotype draws early and unsubstantiated conclusion for us. That, in turn, leads to friction in societies toward Muslim communities, discrimination, and overall resistance to knowledge.

These stories need to get an extra perspective- A comparative one

One of the recurring cases we see- the burning of the Holy Qur’an that takes place in Western societies. It is customary to see the cases being “excused” as an exercise of freedom of speech in the West. What comes after is almost predictable – a violent reaction from Muslim groups that gives the Western media more evidence to paint Muslim culture as “non-tolerant”. A bit more careful analysis of these cases would show that the far-right activists that perpetrate disrespectful acts of burning the Holy Book have their “beef” not with Muslim communities. Their issues will certainly not be solved by eliminating Muslim communities from their surroundings, because those issues run much deeper. The far-right in the West protest globalization, decreased industrial capacity, and stalled economic growth- they take a stand on issues irrelevant to Islam and Muslim communities. In that sense, calling issues as they are will clear the air. On the other hand, Muslim communities are being argued that free speech in the West should be protected at all costs- even at the expense of religious sensitives. This is simply not true, particularly in democratic societies, where “your freedom ends where mine begins.” If European societies are trying to market this “absolutist” view of freedom of speech, it would be good to recall none other than one of the fathers of the Age of Enlightenment –the French philosopher Montesquieu. In his “Spirit of Laws” book he claimed that “it is not the words that are punished, but an action in which words are employed”. Thus, words that incite violent action should be restricted. The “Absolutist” view of freedom of speech is destructive to the harmonious societies, political harmony that Europe is trying to achieve.

Once again, all of this can be added to a conversation when there’s a debate, instead of a one-side narrative. There has to be a broader space today in media for Muslim perspectives. More journalists of a Muslim background should be present on the editorial boards. By no means, Muslims should be immune to criticism, however, the conversation should be held fairly without generalizations. The public expects the media to inform them about the events without exaggeration, generalization, or resorting to sensationalism.

What can we do to expedite the process? Increasing the number of Islamic fact-check pages that would be a great reference point for the Western media can be a good start. Cultivating more experts that would speak on contemporary agenda and give comparative views on issues could remedy the problem.

Muslim communities need to start building better “public relations” between themselves and their fellow non-Muslim communities.

Unless we take ownership of the international representation of our faith, just like we are doing at this conference, we will continue playing defense in this matter.

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Islamophobia and anti-Muslim tendency: In the context of the problem of Western Azerbaijanis

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ABSTRACT

Western Azerbaijanis expelled from Armenia and their descendants have the right to return to their native lands, but the Armenian government does not demonstrate a constructive position on this issue, trying to present the right to return in the context of territorial claims. This unprecedented injustice created a sense of impunity among the ruling circles of Armenia and encouraged them to raise territorial claims, use force, conduct military occupation against the internationally recognized territories of the Republic of Azerbaijan, further large-scale ethnic cleansing, and other crimes against humanity. For a better future for the South Caucasus and lasting peace between the two countries, it is necessary to stop ethnic discrimination, Islamophobia, and anti-Muslim tendencies, which will never lead to peace and stability anywhere in the world, including the South Caucasus.

Keywords: *Western Azerbaijanis, ethnic cleansing, military occupation, anti-Muslim tendencies, Armenia*

Introduction

The people of Azerbaijan have suffered greatly from armed conflicts, occupation, ethnic cleansing, forced relocation, and genocide during the last two centuries. The complete expulsion of Azerbaijanis from the territory of Armenia, where they once constituted an absolute majority, was completed in 1991. As a result of the ethnic cleansing, which includes also the elements of Islamophobia, that area is now inhabited by explosively ethnic Armenians.

The ethnic cleansing committed against Azerbaijanis in most cases was carried out with systematic efforts of state authorities by committing violence, genocidal acts, massacres, and other crimes against humanity and gross violations of human rights. This process was particularly violent and cruel in 1905–1906, 1918–1921, 1948–1953, and 1987–1991. During these massacres and deportations, Armenian nationalists used to call this process “Armenian – Muslim”, “Armenian – Turkish” and “Armenian – Azerbaijani” tension. The results of these acts, especially the deeds of the entities called the Republic of Armenia and “the Republic of Mountainous Armenia” in 1918–21, the Soviet Union, in particular, its notorious leader Joseph Stalin, who transferred Zangezur and other Azerbaijani-majority areas to Armenia in 1921 and signed a racist order on the

deportation of a hundred thousand ethnic Azerbaijanis from Armenia, as well as the actions committed by the Armenian SSR in 1987–1991 remain unredressed. The fact that more than 300 000 Western Azerbaijanis were expelled within 11 days in 1988, reveals the scale of deportation and how systematically it was organized.

Azerbaijani historical and cultural heritage, including mosques and graveyards in Armenia, were destroyed on a large scale, toponyms were changed, and systematic racial discrimination was carried out against Azerbaijanis. The persons involved in ethnic cleansing and other crimes against ethnic Azerbaijanis and their deeds are glorified at the state level in Armenia.

The victorious self-defense operation conducted by the Republic of Azerbaijan in 2020 against the military attack and occupation of Armenia is a milestone event in restoring justice and increasing the prospects of peace between the two countries. On the other hand, the inability of Azerbaijanis who were expelled from the territory of Armenia to return to their homeland, the continuation of the policy of mono-ethnic statehood, ethnic cleansing, and systematic racial discrimination in this country represent an immense injustice, which represents a great obstacle to the establishment of lasting peace.

Armenia's systematic and widespread Islamophobia has led to the targeted destruction of mosques and other Islamic shrines in Armenia and the occupied territories of Azerbaijan.

This destructive approach by Armenia towards Azerbaijani cultural and historical heritage has resulted in the loss of mosques and graveyards, and the changing of toponyms. The extent of the destruction is staggering, with hundreds of Azerbaijani mosques destroyed in Armenia, including Demirbulag, Zal Khan, Abbas Mirza, Sardar, and many more. The Blue Mosque of Azerbaijanis is the only mosque that survived out of the 300 mosques that were once present in the area, and even it has been presented as a heritage of Persians.

Destroying 300 mosques is a clear indication of Islamophobia, but Armenia's disrespect for Azerbaijani cultural heritage goes beyond the destruction of these holy sites. It is simply inhumane to present the heritage of one country as belonging to another.

This attitude has also led to the obliteration of mosques during the 30-year occupation of Azerbaijani territories by Armenian troops. During this time, more than 100 mosques were destroyed, and others that were only partially damaged were left to decay, with some being used as stables for pigs – a demonstrative disrespect to Islam – in cities like Zangilan, Gubadli, and other areas of the Karabakh region of Azerbaijan.

This widespread destruction of Azerbaijani cultural heritage and the targeted destruction of Islamic sites is a clear indication of the level of intolerance and disrespect that the Armenian regime has shown towards the Azerbaijani people and their culture. The international community must take steps to ensure that this destructive attitude is not repeated in the future and that cultural heritage sites are restored and protected for future generations.

The organization, which was established as the “the Society of Azerbaijani Refugees” in 1989 and was renamed to “the Western Azerbaijan Community” in 2022 deals with the protection of the rights of Azerbaijanis expelled from the territory of Armenia.

Right To Return:

The Community does not accept the injustice committed against Western Azerbaijanis during the last two centuries and rejects its consequences. Based on the right to return enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, and other important international acts, the Community declares the creation of conditions for the return of Azerbaijanis expelled from the territory of Armenia to their homeland and ensuring their individual and collective rights after the return as its primary goal.

The Concept of Return which the Community adopted on 26 January 2023, is based on international law, relevant domestic law, and historical facts, and serves to ensure justice and peace. All Azerbaijanis expelled from the territory of nowadays Armenia and their descendants have the right to return to their homeland. With the help of population registry services of the Republic of Azerbaijan and other countries where Western Azerbaijanis reside and using the relevant international methodology, the Community will carry out a census of its members. Noting that one of the effective tools in such a census is voluntary self-introducing of the persons concerned and to encourage them to take this step, a wide public information campaign will be conducted to explain the forceful expelling from the homeland as a serious unlawful act, and to elucidate the essence of the safe and dignified return to a wider public.

As Western Azerbaijanis were forcibly expelled from the territory effectively controlled by the political and legal entity called the Republic of Armenia, they were deprived of the opportunity to participate in the formation of this state, the formation of its constitutional framework as well as national and legal character.

The Community is aware that the Republic of Armenia is a member of the United Nations (UN), recognized by the majority of other states, and considers the Republic of Armenia as a political-legal reality. The fact that Armenia has joined the relevant international legal documents, including the UN Charter, places concrete obligations on this country in the field of restoration and protection of the rights of Azerbaijanis expelled from its territory, including creating conditions for their safe and dignified return to their homeland. The Community sees the possible individual and collective activity of Western Azerbaijanis within and within the framework of the legal system of Armenia as a practical matter and rejects the interpretation and acknowledgment of such interaction as acquiescence to any injustice and illegal action committed against Azerbaijanis, as well as renouncing their legitimate interests on the territory of this country.

The Republic of Armenia should make its national legal framework accessible to the Azerbaijani community, ensure equal rights for Azerbaijanis, enable them to study in their mother tongue, use the Azerbaijani language in legislative, executive, and judicial branches of Government, and begin a constructive dialogue with the Community within the framework of the legal advice, monitoring and supervision mechanism of relevant international organizations for the improvement of the country's legislation to fully ensure the protection of the rights of Azerbaijanis.

The Role of the International Community in the Return Process:

Because the Armenian government has committed large-scale and systematic violence against the Azerbaijani population due to their ethnicity, the Community does not trust this country in security matters, and therefore, considers the deployment of an

international security mission with an appropriate mandate comprised of the forces of countries trusted by Western Azerbaijanis in the areas to be returned to as an essential condition.

The mandate and capabilities of the international mission will depend on the security situation. Taking into account the fact that threat assessment requires appropriate information gathering and analysis capabilities and that the Community lacks these capabilities, the Community will seek assistance from the Government of the Republic of Azerbaijan in this matter. The Community will rely on the threat assessment to be presented by the Government of Azerbaijan. The mission should be deployed before return, take control of relevant areas, have civil-military coordination capability, police component, and civil administration powers, and operate as long as the Community deems necessary. The Community should be represented as an interested party in the mandate formulation and management format of the international security mission.

Given that adequate participation in law enforcement and justice matters is a necessary condition, Azerbaijanis shall be entitled to form local security forces and take an appropriate role in courts.

Other issues regarding the return process:

As with other violations of law committed against Western Azerbaijanis, the Armenian government is responsible for eliminating the consequences of the violation of their property rights. The Armenian government shall ensure the return of property and communal lands belonging to Azerbaijanis and pay compensation for property damage and losses caused by preventing the use of the property. The Armenian government shall pay all the costs arising from the restoration of the property rights of Azerbaijanis and take other necessary measures.

The Community believes that its mission is not limited to the issue of return. The Community intends to continue its activities as an organization, including its concerted efforts to ensure the interests, rights, development, and security of the Azerbaijanis returnees, as well as a dialogue and interaction with the Republic of Azerbaijan, foreign countries, and international organizations, and with the Armenian government and the Armenian public to this end, even after the return of the expelled Western Azerbaijanis to their historical homeland.

The ongoing international activity of the Community towards the return process:

On **31 January 2023**, The United Nations Secretariat released the appeal by the Western Azerbaijan Community to the international community as an official document of the UN Security Council, the General Assembly, and the Economic and Social Council.

The appeal was published in all the official languages of the UN (English, French, Russian, Chinese, Arabic, and Spanish), under the agenda items of the aforementioned main bodies on prevention of armed conflicts, peacebuilding, protection of refugees' rights, elimination of racial discrimination, promotion of human rights, as well as prevention of genocide, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity.

The circulation of the appeal is a great success in bringing the issue of the rights of Azerbaijanis expelled from the territory of present-day Armenia to the international level. Connecting the issue with the mentioned items of the agenda of the most authoritative bodies of the UN is confirmation at the international level that the return of Azerbaijanis to

their homes is necessary for the protection of basic human rights and the establishment of global peace, security, and cooperation. This success further inspires the Western Azerbaijan Community to continue its efforts toward a peaceful, safe, and dignified return.

On the 1st of March, The Western Azerbaijan Community sent a letter to President of the European Council Charles Michel, asking the European Union to support the peaceful, safe, and dignified return of Azerbaijanis expelled from Armenia to their native lands, and the EU mission in Armenia to implement appropriate confidence-building measures in the field of ensuring their rights.

The letter welcomed the EU's efforts to promote the normalization of relations between Azerbaijan and Armenia and emphasizes that the return of Azerbaijanis expelled from Armenia is a necessary condition for establishing a lasting peace.

The letter noted that the mandate of the EU mission includes ensuring respect for human rights in Armenia without ethnic discrimination and building confidence. The Community called on the mission to deal with the rights and security of Azerbaijanis expelled from Armenia, including creating conditions for them to visit their homes, cemeteries, shrines, and cultural monuments.

In its letter, the Community also affirmed its readiness to cooperate with the EU mission in Armenia on such topics as human rights, humanitarian issues, and the protection of civilians.

On the 3rd of March, The Community called on the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) to start monitoring the rights of Azerbaijanis expelled from Armenia to return to their homes.

"The Western Azerbaijan Community believes that the issue of the rights of Azerbaijanis expelled from Armenia should become the subject of PACE monitoring on the fulfillment of its commitments by this country.

Taking into account all of the above, the Western Azerbaijan Community sent a letter to the co-rapporteurs of the Committee on the Honoring of Obligations and Commitments by Member States of the Council of Europe (Monitoring Committee) Kimmo Kiljunen (Finland) and Boriana Åberg (Sweden) with a request to monitor the implementation of Armenia's obligations in the field of ensuring the right of return of Azerbaijanis expelled from Armenia.

It was noted that the community is ready for dialogue with the PACE Monitoring Committee on this issue.

The Western Azerbaijan Community sent a letter to Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan on the 11th of March. The letter said:

"Western Azerbaijan Community has developed a concept of safe and dignified return based on international law. The Community is determined to achieve the return process by peaceful means and has chosen the path of dialogue for its implementation. In this context, the Community brings its position through political and diplomatic channels to international organizations and other states. Undoubtedly, an important part of the return process, which should be carried out on the political plane, should be a dialogue with the Armenian government. Along with preserving the great troubles caused to us by the Armenian side in memory, we understand that the way to ensure peace lies through

dialogue. In this regard, the Community has sent a letter to Armenian PM Nikol Pashinyan, in which it called on him to start a dialogue on the issue of return," the Community said.

Also, the Community, noting that it is always ready for dialogue with the Armenian government on issues of mutual interest, emphasized that the rights of Azerbaijanis in the process of return should be ensured within the framework of an appropriate international mechanism.

"In the name of justice and reconciliation, we have chosen a peaceful approach based on human rights and reintegration and appealed directly to the Armenian government with a call for dialogue. Now the Armenian government must respond to this and start a dialogue with good intentions, putting an end to the injustice it has been subjecting Azerbaijanis expelled from their homes by the Armenian side for decades. The community will resolutely continue its peaceful efforts based on international law to ensure the right of the exiled Azerbaijanis to return," the message read.

On March 27 The Western Azerbaijan Community sent a letter to UNESCO Director General Audrey Azoulay. The appeal, which was signed by the leadership of the Community, as well as intellectuals, cultural and artistic figures, poets, and writers from Western Azerbaijan stated the following:

"Therefore, we seek the support of UNESCO in restoring and preserving our cultural heritage. Sending a fact-finding mission to Armenia to assess the state of Azerbaijani cultural heritage in this country, as well as the level of compliance of Armenia with its international obligations relating to the protection of cultural heritage and cultural rights, would be an invaluable contribution to reversing the damage to the cultural heritage of mankind and thereby attaining the lasting peace. Our organization stands ready to collaborate with UNESCO in carrying out activities aimed at assessing, restoring, preserving, and protecting Azerbaijani cultural heritage in Armenia, and ensuring the cultural rights of Azerbaijanis expelled from Armenia to access and enjoy their cultural heritage."

Later on, on the 28th of March, the UN Secretariat circulated the Return Concept of the Western Azerbaijan Community as an official document of the Security Council, General Assembly, and Economic and Social Council of the UN.

The concept was circulated in all official UN languages (English, French, Russian, Chinese, Arabic, and Spanish), by the agenda items of these major bodies on the prevention of armed conflict, peacebuilding, the protection of the rights of refugees, the eradication of racial discrimination, the promotion of human rights, the prevention of genocide, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity.

The concept's circulation among documents of the main UN bodies is a great success on the path of the peaceful return of Western Azerbaijanis to their native lands and further reduces the ability of the Armenian government to distort the issue of Western Azerbaijan. Besides, the document calls on Armenia to start negotiations with the Community and encourages the start of an international process on this issue. Linking the Concept with the mentioned agenda items of the most authoritative UN bodies is an international confirmation that the return of Azerbaijanis to their homes is necessary to protect fundamental human rights and establish international peace, security, and cooperation. This success further inspires us to continue our work for a peaceful, safe, and dignified return to our homes.

On April 8th of 2023, The Western Azerbaijan Community sent a letter to UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, requesting him to send a special UN mission to Armenia for launching the process of safe and dignified return of Azerbaijanis expelled from this country.

“Therefore, we kindly request you to support our cause with your good offices as the UN Secretary-General, and send a UN interagency mission to Armenia, which could perform the following tasks:

- *to assess the overall situation and identify steps for the creation of conditions that are conducive to voluntary return in safety and with dignity;*
- *to identify needs for the repatriation process in terms of international humanitarian assistance, and long-term rehabilitation, reconstruction, and reintegration programs;*
- *to identify legislative and executive measures that Armenia has to implement to ensure the rights, liberties, and security of Azerbaijani returnees, and their re-integration, as well as steps required to achieve reconciliation;*
- *to assess the state of Azerbaijani cultural heritage and identify steps required to restore the damaged and obliterated pieces of heritage;*
- *to carry out an inventory of illegally seized property belonging to Azerbaijanis;*
- *to gather information on the impact of the conflict on the rights of ethnic Azerbaijanis, who were forced to flee their homes in Armenia;*
- *to devise and implement Confidence Building Measures, including but not limited to, enabling the expelled Azerbaijani inhabitants of Armenia to visit their homes, cemeteries, sacred places, and cultural heritage in this country;*
- *to conduct a technical field assessment of the security situation with a view to a possible international security role in support of the repatriation.*

As the interested party, we remain ready to interact with the UN in carrying out activities to ensure the right to return of Azerbaijanis expelled from Armenia, and thereby help the maintenance of justice, peace, and security in the region”.

On the 11th of April, A group of women from Western Azerbaijan sent an appeal to Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission, in which they informed her of the ethnic cleansing and other crimes against humanity, and requested practical support from the European Commission for the safe and dignified return of Azerbaijanis to their homes while taking into account the specific needs of women and children.

“The return process will also require substantial practical support from the international community. We would appreciate relevant practical assistance from the European Commission for our return, particularly for devising and implementing programs for addressing the special needs of Azerbaijani women and girls during their repatriation, rehabilitation, and reintegration in Armenia. Finally, we count on your support and understanding, as a woman and mother, of the plight of Azerbaijani women and girls who are suffering as a result of the ethnic cleansing carried out by Armenia. We believe that with your involvement, we can work towards enabling the safe and dignified return of and thereby ensuring a brighter future for expelled Azerbaijanis, particularly women and girls”.

And on the 13th of April, the Western Azerbaijan Community sent a letter to the US Secretary of State Antony Blinken requesting the support of the United States in enabling the peaceful, safe, and dignified return of Azerbaijanis expelled from Armenia.

“While we appreciate the ongoing efforts of Armenia and Azerbaijan to normalize their inter-State relations and commend the US efforts to facilitate this process, we strongly believe that addressing the right to return of Azerbaijanis in the agreement to be concluded between the two countries is essential for making the peace between the two countries durable. We would like, however, to make it clear that enabling our right to return is necessary for the success of the ongoing negotiations between Armenia and Azerbaijan, not the other way around. The right to live in one’s homeland is inherent and inalienable, and Armenia must respect this right regardless of the nature of its relations with Azerbaijan or the pace of the negotiations. Just because Armenia has political disagreements with Azerbaijan does not give it the right to expel ethnic Azerbaijanis and prevent their return. It would be immensely unjust and wrong to make the return of Azerbaijanis subject to the consideration of Armenia. This would be in contravention of the very idea of the supremacy of human rights, and tacitly acquiesce the racial discrimination by Armenia”- the letter said.

The community kindly requested the United States to firmly and consistently uphold their human rights by facilitating a peaceful, dignified, and safe return of Azerbaijanis expelled from Armenia to their homeland through the launching of appropriate political and security initiatives and socio-economic assistance programs.

“Lastly, we would like to reiterate that our lawful demand from Armenia to respect our right to a safe and dignified return may not be misinterpreted as detrimental to the territorial integrity or sovereignty of Armenia. We firmly believe in supremacy of the international law and the value of dialogue. This clear stance of ours deserves to be applauded, especially given the broader context in our region, which is plagued by aggressive separatism and forceful acquisition of territories under the pretext of minority rights. In this regard, we would like to refer to the positive approach of the Government of Azerbaijan, which pledged and took actionable measures to ensure the rights of and reintegrate Armenian inhabitants of the Karabakh region of Azerbaijan within its territorial integrity and sovereignty. We believe this should encourage the Government of Armenia to uphold its obligations under international human rights and humanitarian law to guarantee our rights. We are confident that the impartial and comprehensive efforts of the United States will facilitate respect for the rights of Azerbaijani expellees from Armenia to return to their homes, thereby upholding the universal value of human rights and attaining lasting peace. We stand ready to dialogue and cooperate with the relevant structures of the United States on issues relating to the facilitation of the peaceful, safe, and dignified return of Azerbaijanis expelled from Armenia to their homeland” – Western Azerbaijanis emphasized in their letter.

Conclusion

Western Azerbaijanis expelled from Armenia have the right to live in their homeland, this right is inherent, inviolable, absolute, and decisive factor. Western Azerbaijanis were subjected to an immense injustice. This injustice is not limited to ethnic cleansing. Azerbaijanis faced racial and religious discrimination also. They were called in an abusive way with different offensive expressions due to their racial and religious affiliation. More

than 300 mosques and hundreds of historical and cultural monuments were destroyed, and thousands of Azerbaijani toponyms were changed. While keeping this painful past in its historical memory, the Community accepts that the way to ensure peace and development goes through reconciliation. Western Azerbaijanis are ready to live peacefully and side by side with Armenians in Armenia.

The process is currently going on and we hope that the day that we will peacefully return to our homes and coexist with Armenians in peace is not so far away!

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.



INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE
ON ISLAMOPHOBIA

BAKU, MARCH 15-16th

SESSION 7

JOINT COOPERATION IN THE FIGHT AGAINST ISLAMOPHOBIA AND THE ROLE OF INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

March 16, 2023 – 14:30–15:45

Moderator: Aytan Gahraman

Counselor at Baku International Multiculturalism Center, Azerbaijan

Islamophobia: A human rights violation and a contemporary manifestation of racism

Remarks by

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ABSTRACT

The author expresses that the globalized world has brought people of different races, ethnicities, and religions closer to living together and strengthening the bonds of humanity through mutual respect and tolerance today. Although Western countries unanimously oppose racism, intolerance, and discrimination, their understanding of Islamic values is still incomplete. In many societies, religious beliefs or moral values form an integral part of an individual's identity. Thus, disrespecting their religious beliefs can be considered an attack on their identity. In the context of Islamophobia, the author thinks that what is happening in the West is not a clash between religions and civilizations, as some have claimed in the past. This should be examined from a broader perspective as the tendency of increasing xenophobia in the West because of the failure of integration policies to assimilate migrants. In conclusion, he notes that the West and the Muslim world must bridge the gap of misunderstanding that has led to the rise of stereotypes of Muslims and related acts of intolerance and discrimination.

Keywords: Western countries, the Muslim world, misunderstanding, intolerance, Islamic values, discrimination

Today's globalized world has brought people of all hues and colors, races, ethnicities, and religious backgrounds closer to living together and nurturing bonds of humanity through mutual respect and tolerance. However, the rise of far-right populist politics and extremist movements in many parts of the world has strengthened the narrative of 'us' against 'them'. It has led to a gradual increase in xenophobia, manifested and promoted through hate speech, negative stereotyping, and discrimination based on race, religion, ethnicity, or social origin.

In the past two decades, we have witnessed a series of unfortunate events where Islam and its holy personalities have been the target of defamation, negative stereotyping, and even insults. Some of the unfortunate examples include the publishing of sacrilegious caricatures of Prophet Mohammad (PBUH), the burning of the Holy Quran, and defamatory movies against Islam that distort the facts about Islam. Such stereotypical projections have resulted in sheer discrimination, hatred, and violence against Muslims both in their individual and collective capacities in different aspects of their daily lives.

I wish to share an interesting analysis by Mr. Craig Considine, an American sociologist^[62] who has researched that out of more than 1,000 Hollywood films depicting Arabs, 932 of these films depicted Arabs in a stereotypical or negative light as bearded, dark-skinned, turban-wearing terrorists. While Western countries unanimously oppose racism, intolerance, and discrimination, their understanding of Islam and its pristine values remains incomplete. The manifestation of this lack of understanding is reflected in the assertion by some countries to introduce European Islam under the guise of 'Laicite' which is the negation of multiculturalism. Accordingly, mosques and places of worship are being closed, placing a ban on hijabs and associations that do not adhere to EU values. Such attempts will serve no good other than to further polarize European societies and endanger the spirit of multiculturalism.

It has to be understood that in many societies' religious convictions or spiritual and ethical values constitute an integral part of an individual's identity. Hence, disrespect for their religious beliefs could be considered an attack on their individual and collective identity. It is, therefore, essential to draw a line between free and hate speech to maintain social cohesion.

In the context of Islamophobia, I think that what is happening in the West is not a clash between religions and civilizations as some have argued in the past. It should be seen from the wider perspective of the rising trend of xenophobia in the West as a result of increasing immigration and the failure of integration policies to assimilate the migrants.

There is no denying the fact that freedom of expression is a key human right, which is vital for the development of stable, peaceful, and progressive societies. However, the scope of freedom of expression as provided in the Holy Quran and all other international human rights instruments stipulate that this right is not 'absolute' rather its exercise is subject to 'special duties and corresponding responsibilities' based on the principle of 'avoidance of harm to others'.

IPHRC's position on Islamophobic hate content is firmly grounded in Articles 19 and 20 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which provide clear limitations, including the duty of the State to prohibit, by law, "any advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence".

In this spirit, the OIC and IPHRC have been active in engaging in constructive debate at the international level to further delineate boundaries between free speech and hate speech to strike a balance for public order and social cohesion. Our position on the need to protect the sanctity of religions and their symbols is not to accord them exceptional protection but to avoid stereotyping and insults that result in negative profiling of their adherents leading to undue discrimination, hostility, and violence against them. IPHRC

^[62] The Racialization of Islam in the United States: Islamophobia, Hate Crimes, and "Flying while Brown" Craig Considine
Department of Sociology, Rice University

has always upheld the principle of openly discussing all ideas, values, or beliefs in an environment of tolerance and respect. IPHRC's efforts and its continued engagement at all levels have paid dividends in terms of raising awareness and creating institutional support through consensus UN resolution 16/18 and the adoption of the UNGA resolution on combatting Islamophobia. It has created an atmosphere where the irrational and hate-motivated agenda of extremists is being exposed.

Also, the work of the OIC Islamophobia Observatory has contributed enormously in bringing to the fore the dangerous and malicious campaign of Islamophobia. Furthermore, the OIC has initiated the project of 'The Voice of Wisdom-Sawt al Hikma' to delegitimize and deconstruct extremist propaganda and to project the true message of Islam for better understanding in the West.

However, given the scale of the challenge, the efforts of the OIC and IPHRC alone are not enough. It requires concerted collaborative efforts by the OIC Member States, the international community, civil society, intelligentsia, and media. There is a need for an intellectual and ethical strategy both in the West and in the Muslim world to bridge the perceptual gap. The international community, despite challenges, has to adopt a unified stance in combating religious intolerance and discrimination to isolate extremist acts and discourse from both the Muslim and Western sides. The starting point in this regard could be measures for the full and effective realization of UN Resolution 16/18.

We cannot remain silent spectators; hence, must play our role to combat this phenomenon.

There is a need to formulate additional legally binding instruments to cover the new manifestation of racism. While legal response involving affirmative punitive action is of key importance, a 'multilayered approach' which promotes human rights and tolerance, encourages dialogue and understanding, and builds the capacity of national authorities, security officials, and media to prevent acts of incitement to hatred is of vital significance.

There are some specific recommendations to be taken in the short term which include:

- a. *Strengthening of OIC General Secretariat Islamophobia Observatory to collect data and guide policy actions by OIC and Member States;*
- b. *OIC Member States must show unity and solidarity to resort to "collective action" in the form of protests or boycotts against countries, which promote, encourage, or tolerate acts of Islamophobia ;*
- c. *Need to establish a TV channel and also formulate a media strategy to effectively promote Islamic values and its rich cultural heritage to counter misperceptions and stereotypes about Islam and Muslims;*
- d. *OIC and UN must expedite the appointment of Special Rapporteurs on combating Islamophobia to coordinate efforts to counter Islamophobia.*

In the long term, there is a dire need for political engagement to foster a culture of peace based on mutual respect, understanding, and dialogue among civilizations and cultures to overcome 'ignorance' and 'fear' which are the main instigating factors behind Islamophobia. The West and the Muslim world need to bridge the gulf of misunderstanding which has led to the rise of stereotyping of Muslims and associated acts of intolerance and discrimination. Intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, civil society actors, the media, local communities, and others have an important role to play.

I am confident that today's deliberations will have open and constructive discussions that will address both the legal and human rights aspects of this important topic as well as help find practical solutions to this challenging issue that can be universally applied.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

Approaches to countering Islamophobia

Speaking notes by

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ABSTRACT

The speech states that it is important to understand the causes, evolution, and spread of Islamophobia. It is necessary to find systematic and unified means to oppose the attitudes and actions that hurt the soul of Muslims when showing hostility towards Islam and its followers. If we look back at history, we can see anti-Islamic movements as a propaganda reaction against the expansion of Muslim power across continents, the desire to seize territory and resources and maintain this control. This action is an attempt to portray Muslims and their holy personalities as barbaric and uncivilized. The UN Special Representative for Freedom of Religion and Belief acknowledged in his latest report that the rise in discrimination and outright hatred against Muslims is at "epidemic proportions." As Muslims, we also need introspection and accept partial responsibility for the rise of Islamophobia.

Keywords: Islamophobia, hostility, anti-Islamic movements, discrimination, propaganda

The word Islamophobia entered the active discourse in the later part of the 1990s, although hostility towards Islam has existed since the Middle Ages. The term was coined by two French researchers in 1918. They used the term to define what they saw as a political effort by colonial powers to undermine Islam. I am not sure if the term Islamophobia accurately describes the issue that has been under discussion. We, however, are sufficiently clear about what we are talking about here. In any case, there is now sizeable scholarship on the historical roots and contemporary manifestations of Islamophobia, particularly in the West.

More than the terminology, however, it is important to understand the causes, evolution, and spread of Islamophobia. It will enable us to come up with systematic and holistic remedies to counter the attitudes and actions that hurt the very soul of Muslims when an act, demonstrating animosity towards Islam and its followers, is committed.

Historically, anti-Islam actions could be seen as a propagandist reaction to the expansion of Muslim rule across continents, Crusades, colonization, and the desire to usurp territories and resources and maintain that control. Hence, the effort to paint Muslims and their sacred personalities as barbaric and uncivilized. The decolonization

and the resultant first wave of immigration were to service the mines and industry. By and large, those 'unfamiliar' people were not accepted as a permanent part of society. The Muslim emigrants also did not make a serious effort to assimilate.

The later immigration of Muslims, for the most part, has been for economic reasons or to flee from violence and war imposed by the recipient countries and their allies. They are seen as a burden demanding a share in the economic pie and fear mongers play on the fears that "breeding like rats" as Italian Journalist/writer Oriana Fallachi put it, they will ultimately take over.

Terrorist events like 9/11, ostensibly perpetrated by a group of Muslims representing a particular mindset and modern-day political and economic agendas have all contributed to fear and animosity towards Muslims and Islam. An interesting aspect of this phenomenon is that the historical competition between the West and the Muslim world abated with the fall of the Ottoman Empire. With diminished power, most Muslim populations came under colonial occupation, yet the propaganda against Islam increased. It is estimated that since World War II approximately sixty thousand books have been written against Islam.

Over the last two decades, many far-right parties in the West and countries like India have adopted very strident anti-Islam rhetoric. In some cases, it has gone beyond rhetoric and there have been violent attacks against Muslims and in the case of India and Myanmar systematic violence, backed by the state apparatus. In India, history is being rewritten to tarnish the image of Muslim reign. Their contribution to India, economy and civilization is being obliterated. Muslims are being forced to convert if they want to live in India. Myanmar, on the hand, has chosen to deprive Muslims of their nationality and identity.

The UN Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief, in a recent report, has conceded that the rise of suspicion, discrimination, and outright hatred towards Muslims is of 'epidemic proportions'.

The outreach of social media and visual arts expands the impact of every slur and every insult. Media has a big role in building and spreading the negative image of Islam. There is a distinction between the fear and suspicions of ordinary non-Muslims and institutional and lobby-based agenda-driven campaigns to instill fears about Islam. The response to counter the two, therefore, has to be tailored.

We, as Muslims, also need introspection and accept partial responsibility for the rise in Islamophobia.

Firstly, because we have not been very efficient in presenting an effective counter-narrative. For instance, we adopted the narrative that emerged after the 9/11 attacks with slight tweaking here and there. We were trapped in terminologies like moderate Islam, extremist Islam, good jihadists, and bad jihadists equal to terrorists. Terrorism is terrorism period. We couldn't draw that distinction.

Similarly, after 9/11, the UN erected a counter-terrorism structure and adopted a plethora of resolutions. Since there is no agreed definition of terrorism in the UN, certain organizations were identified as epitomizing terrorism. As a result, the predominant number, almost all, of enlisted persons were and are individuals associated with organizations that claimed to be Islamist. This has sent out a very strong message that Islam tends towards violence or that the Quran somehow encourages violence, our verbal denials notwithstanding.

Thirdly, the reaction to acts of desecration, cartoons, and caricatures has largely been left to the street. The government response, by and large, has not gone beyond statements. And that too not unanimously by all OIC members. The street reaction and individual acts have enforced the very image that we have sought to dispel.

This is not to say that there has been no progress to counter and roll back Islamophobia. The adoption of Human Rights Council resolution 16/18, and UN GA resolution 66/167 are two important milestones on the issue of intolerance and religious discrimination. {Resolution 16/18, aims to combat intolerance and discrimination based on region or belief through a range of measures including criminalizing incitement to hatred that leads to imminent violence by international human rights law.} UNGA resolution proclaiming March 15 as an international day to combat Islamophobia presents an opportunity we can build on.

What else can be done to stem the rising tide of anti-Muslim actions and propaganda:

1. OIC member States, individually and collectively, should press for political commitment for full and effective implementation of the Human Rights Council and UN General Assembly resolutions. The political pressure needs to be backed by other measures;
2. The role of the OIC observatory could be expanded. It should not only monitor and document discrimination but pre-empt and counter the disinformation against Islam. The member States should also do likewise;
3. Muslims represent a sizeable portion of the population in many countries. Their influence needs to be channeled. They should be advised and educated, particularly those with legal background to study the religious freedoms enshrined in the laws and constitution of the host country to invoke them when needed;
4. Engage human rights organizations, NGOs, mainstream and non-mainstream and social media;
5. Examine the legislations that provide space for anti-Muslim rhetoric and actions. Educate ourselves about built-in discrimination in the legal field. Also, collaborate with other impacted groups to strengthen their voice and seek abolition of discriminatory laws to ensure equality and objectivity;
6. Develop media literacy and learn how media perpetuates the anti-Islam narrative. Where need be call them out on doublespeak and double standards, encourage educated Muslims to join mainstream global media;
7. Develop our narrative and employ success-worthy media approaches. In this context, it is important to study and understand the history of anti-Semitic legislation in the US, European Union, and other countries, which designate agencies with timelines and penalties for such hate crimes. And where reasonable, draw lessons.
8. Similarly, lessons can be drawn from legislation on holocaust history.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.



INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE
ON ISLAMOPHOBIA
BAKU, MARCH 15-16th

SESSION 8

**BUILDING HARMONIOUS SOCIETIES BY PROMOTING
RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY AND INTERFAITH RESPECT**

March 16, 2023 – 14:30-15:45

Moderator: Agil Shirinov

Rector of Azerbaijan Institute of Theology, Azerbaijan

Islamophobia as a specific form of Racism and Discrimination: New global and Transnational Challenges

Keynote speech by

H.V Sheikh Ul-Islam Haji Allahshukur PASHAZADE

Chairman, Caucasus Muslims' Board, Azerbaijan



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Abstract

Muslims, Orthodox and Catholic Christians, Jews, and others, who are faithful to their national, religious, cultural, and spiritual traditions, live in the conditions of friendship and brotherhood in secular, democratic Azerbaijan, and are under the care and protection of the state. Thanks to the wise political will of the President of Azerbaijan, Ilham Aliyev, along with many achievements, Azerbaijan is known in the world for its Multicultural model. Mehriban Aliyeva, the First Vice-President of Azerbaijan, presents universal humanitarian projects and our spiritual heritage at the highest level with the mindset of statesmanship. At present time, Azerbaijan is implementing a program called "Great Return". We know that during the occupation of the ancient lands of Azerbaijan by Armenia and the relocation policy there, it destroyed cities and villages, displaced more than one million Azerbaijanis as refugees and internally, and exposed them to violence.

Manifestations of Islamophobia, inhumane, racist, aggressive, and xenophobic attitudes toward Muslim immigrants are increasing in Europe. France, with its geopolitical interests and neocolonial ambitions, is known as a country where Islamophobia and Turkophobia are increasing in the European Union, and insults against Islam and its Prophet.

Keywords: Islamophobia, Azerbaijan Multicultural model, Armenian occupation, immigrants, geopolitical interests

Praise to the Almighty, our country enjoys a unique example of interreligious solidarity. Being faithful to their national, religious, cultural, and spiritual traditions, Muslims, Orthodox and Catholic Christians, Jews, and followers of other beliefs live in friendship and fraternity in secular, democratic Azerbaijan and enjoy the care and protection of the State. Thanks to the wise political will of His Excellency President Ilham Aliyev, we, along with a lot of other achievements, are well-known worldwide for our pleasing to the Great Allah multicultural life model. We witness the First Vice-President of our Country, Mrs. Mehriban Aliyeva, presenting at the highest level with the mindset of statehood universal humanitarian projects, and our spiritual heritage.

In the Holy Quran, Almighty Allah tells us:

“Do not spread corruption in the land after it has been set in order.” (Araf, 56).

Unfortunately, the tragic events recently happening in the world provoke the outbreak of radicalism and extremism on religious and national grounds. Manifestations of Islamophobia are increasing in Europe, as well as inhuman, racist, aggressive attitudes and xenophobic approaches towards Muslim migrants. Due to its geopolitical interests and neo-colonial ambitions, France stands out in the European Union as a country where Islamophobia and Turkophobia are on the rise, and where cases of insulting the religion of Islam and its Prophet are going on.

Charlie Hebdo magazine’s sick-minded insults, “Islam, leave Europe!” slogans, and anti-Islamic and neo-Nazi graffiti on mosque walls, this is a reality of France. The whole world keeps in memory of colonial aspirations and genocide committed by France against the Muslim population in the Arab Maghreb. It should also be noted that the foundation of the Armenian terrorist network was laid in France as well.

It is extremely necessary to prevent the threats and calls for hatred arising from the misuse of the name of religion for political purposes, and the insult of religious values, symbols, and sanctities, which are especially sensitive for millions of people. The burning of the Holy Qur’an in Sweden and the Netherlands in recent months is clear proof of the calls for hatred that encourage clashes on religious grounds, this should be strongly condemned by every sane society.

The world community must strongly condemn all forms and manifestations of terrorism and calls for hatred. The human family can be saved from all these threats and dangers only by their joint efforts. Meanwhile, we shouldn’t forget human tragedies caused by natural disasters that threaten the entire Humankind. We pray for Allah’s mercy on the victims of the recent horrible earthquake in Turkey and Syria, for healing the injured, and we wish the people of those countries patience and hope in the Almighty, and we share their sadness and sorrow.

At present time the State of Azerbaijan is implementing the program under the name of “Great Return”. As you know, during the period of aggression on ancient Azerbaijani lands committed by Armenia and its deportation policy there, our towns and villages were destroyed, more than one million Azerbaijanis were forced to live as refugees and internally displaced persons, and our compatriots were subjected to ethnic cleansing.

In 1992, Armenia committed the Khojaly genocide and the human tragedies in Aghdaban and Bashlibel against our people. In 2020, under the leadership of our victorious Head of State and the power of our brave army, Azerbaijan put an end to the Armenian occupation of twenty percent of our lands, which lasted for nearly thirty years. At present, our state is restoring more than ten thousand square kilometers of destroyed territories, ruined cities, and villages, and demolished historical, religious, and spiritual sites. During the occupation, 65 out of 67 mosques were destroyed by Armenia, while the identity of the churches was subjected to falsification. Not content with the destruction of Muslim mosques, Armenia also expropriated and Gregorianized the “John the Baptist” Orthodox Church in Shusha, in addition to the historical Albanian temples in the occupied territories, and destroyed the Orthodox Church located in Khojavend.

Unfortunately, despite our numerous invitations, the UNESCO mission has not visited our country to register our religious, cultural, and spiritual heritage, vandalized in Karabakh and Eastern Zangezur. During the occupation, hundreds of Azerbaijanis died due to the launch of more than a million landmines by Armenia, and today innocents are still losing their lives or health due to the mine terrorism. It is morally necessary to reestablish a connection with the historical lands of Azerbaijan in Western Zangezur, to ensure the ties with the historical places of hundreds of thousands of Azerbaijanis who have been deprived for many decades of the opportunity to visit their native lands, graves, and shrines of their ancestors.

Let me bring to your attention that in the late 70s of the last century, when I was working as the governor of Nakhchivan and Iravan of the Caucasian Muslims Department, I had the opportunity to preach in numerous places of worship and mosques in Armenia, not only in the cities but also in the villages. Armenian Prime Minister Pashinyan, who does not say anything about the fate of these mosques, wants to blame the Soviet atheist regime for the painful statistics of the destruction of Muslim mosques and religious temples that existed in the territory of present-day Armenia and Azerbaijan during the occupation. As the Sheikhu-Islam of the Caucasus, I would like to remind Mr. Pashinyan that during the Soviet era, when atheism was the official ideology, mosques, churches, and synagogues were not insulted, on the contrary, they were registered and protected as historical monuments.

Sacred spaces were used as cultural establishments – clubs, cinemas, libraries, and at worst, warehouses. Armenian chauvinists went further than the Bolshevik atheist thinking and went down in history with examples of cruelty and barbarism. It is proven by facts that they use mosques as cattle sheds, insult them by keeping pigs, which are forbidden in Islam, destroy mosque buildings, and destroy our cemeteries. This is a manifestation of the Islamophobic essence of the terrorist Armenian state. It is nonsense for the prime minister of such a country to suggest populist ideas about mosques in Baku. Azerbaijan is a country that treats its religious and spiritual monuments with attention and care, not demolishing mosques, but building mosques. Demolition of the dilapidated buildings of Fatemei-Zahra and Haji Javad mosques and building them in a more suitable place in a more magnificent manner is an indication of the state's care and patronage. The attempt to create a negative opinion against Azerbaijan at the international level by deliberately abusing this fact is a behavior that stems from the need of Pashinyan and the Armenian religious leaders who slander Azerbaijan from time to time to justify the vandal and barbaric actions of Armenians. We are aware that Mr. Pashinyan, who does not argue against the strong arguments presented by the President of Azerbaijan at the Munich Security Conference, has no choice but to spread slander. Instead of inviting and encouraging its people to peace, peaceful coexistence, and neighborliness in the region, the Armenian church made inflammatory statements, encouraged revenge, addressed letters full of slander and countless false information against Azerbaijan to religious centers of the world, even Muslim religious leaders, calls for war by Armenian politicians and diaspora. acting as an active propagandist, as well as attempts to describe the peaceful action on the Lachin-Khankendi road as a humanitarian disaster, do not bode well for the Armenian people and the state.

The Non-Aligned Movement, the 10th Baku Global Forum, as well as the 15-year-old Baku Process platforms, which recently held their next Summit in Baku, contribute to the solution of the current problems that concern the modern world, as well as create additional opportunities in terms of conveying the truths of Azerbaijan to the world and strengthening the place and position of our country in the world. Azerbaijan, which does not spare its practical efforts in the direction of the failure of the policy of Islamophobia in the world, defends the sacred values of the Islamic religion and the ideas of multiculturalism at the international level, makes important contributions to the work of expanding the structure of these institutions and increasing their organizational support. Worthy appreciation and support of the valuable initiatives and effective efforts of the Azerbaijan state by the international community will increase our success in the field of Islamic solidarity and interreligious cooperation, I hope!

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

The Experience of Nahdat Al-Ulama Association in Combating Islamophobia

Speaking notes by

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ABSTRACT

In the speech, information was given about the Nahdat Al-Ulama organization, and it is stated that this organization is a religious and social association with more than 90 million followers of Ahli Sunna Wal Jamaat in Indonesia. This organization is an independent organization that performs important services in civil society and has significant political and social influence. Islamophobia can be divided into two different types. First, marginalization against anything related to Islamic identity is called passive Islamophobia, and active and violent Islamophobia. Nahdat Al-Ulama Association uses all propaganda opportunities to bring Islamic values closer to people's hearts. This propaganda process includes reviving the famous prayers of our Prophet Muhammad and displaying the traditional arts inherited from scholars in a way that will gain wide acceptance by the artistic taste of the modern generation. In this period, we must reconstruct the jurisprudence of Islamic civilization, intelligently rationalize the changes taking place at the local and international levels, and intelligently fight against the renewed challenges in our world, including the phenomenon of Islamophobia.

Keywords: Islamophobia, Nahdat Al-Ulama, Islamic values, propaganda, social influence

Nahdat Al-Ulama is a religious and social association that shelters over 90 million followers of Ahl Sunnah Wal Jama'ah (Sunni Muslims) in Indonesia. It is an independent organization with significant political and social influence and serves as a prominent element of civil society. The association is a true heir to the benevolent Islamic approach characterized by balance and moderation, which has been passed down from generation to generation. It traces its roots back to the nine holy saints of the 13th century, who called people to the path of Allah and successfully spread Islam peacefully throughout the archipelago of Southeast Asia, through good manners and conduct, not by the edge of the sword or bombing. They adhered to the practice of treating others with kindness, showing respect for the deeply ingrained traditions within their society. These traditions, representing noble human values, originated from diverse pre-Islamic cultures.

This association has faced strong challenges, both internally and externally, as it strives to preserve the unified and peaceful nature of Indonesia on one hand, while also safeguarding the majority of Muslims who follow its creed, encompassing matters of faith, jurisprudence, and spirituality. It upholds a methodology characterized by moderation, tolerance, and accepting others while preserving the nation's identity without compromise or excess.

We now seem to be living between the jaws of a 'millstone of extremism': between the extremism of fundamentalism from within, and the extremism of those harboring hatred for Islam from without. The former is referred to by Sheikh Yahya, the leader of Nahdat Al-Ulama, as "Kafirophobia," while the latter is what is meant by the trend of hatred against Islam or "Islamophobia" here.

The association and its members have been at the forefront of recognizing the rights of non-Muslims and various ethnic minority groups. The late President Abdulrahman Abdulwahid, who was one of the leaders of the association, officially recognized these rights, which were previously denied during historical periods before his relatively short presidency. The association has continued to follow this path.

Islamophobia can be divided into two distinct types: passive Islamophobia, which manifests in acts of marginalization or unconscious bias against anything related to Islamic identity, and active and violent Islamophobia. The Nahdat Al-Ulama Association has utilized all its promotional capabilities to bring Islamic aspects closer to people's hearts. This includes reintroducing the popular supplications for our Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, and showcasing the traditional arts inherited from scholars and saints in a way that garners widespread acceptance. It suits the artistic taste of the current millennial generation.

The association strives to maintain the Islamic identity while also dedicating its resources to protecting the rights of other religious and ethnic minorities, whether politically, socially, or religiously. The Islamic faith, in the view of this prestigious association, is valid for all times and places. It possesses internal elements that enable peaceful and natural integration with prevailing local customs while keeping up with the requirements of the modern era.

The association embraces the positive development of civilization, keeping pace with it and participating in cultural dialogue, and understanding the reasons for societal communication, provided it does not contradict religious principles. Muslims should not isolate themselves, nor should they adopt practices that contradict Islamic beliefs, principles, and ethics.

According to the members of the association, this requires the application of Islamic jurisprudence and the diligent efforts of scholars to regulate the actions of the nation, preventing deviation from the path of Sharia.

This draws us to active and violent Islamophobia, which is largely fueled by the self-isolation of some Muslims. It is also fueled by the behavior of extremists who tarnish the noble Islamic faith through their ignorance and extremism. Other significant factors include the fear of the rapid spread of Islam in various parts of Europe, accompanied by a deliberate media campaign, as well as the dissemination of misleading information about Islam through social media. All of this has led to distorting the true image of the tolerant Islam. People fear what they do not understand, as they say. All of this stems from

a rigid way of thinking, or rather, traditionalist jurisprudence held by certain Muslims who reject all the advancements of modernity altogether, refusing its political, social, and civilizational implications. Therefore, revisiting traditional jurisprudence has become a requirement in this era, as it contains principles that we must adhere to while adapting to the changing times, circumstances, and locations.

We need to rebuild the jurisprudence of Islamic civilization in this era, to rationalize the nation so that it is insightful in the face of changes in its local and international life, and to be fully capable of dealing wisely and gracefully with the renewed challenges of our time, including the phenomenon of Islamophobia.

In summary, Nahdat Al-Ulama Association, based on its experience, believes that addressing the challenges of Islamophobia requires three sequential steps:

Firstly, reform from the ground up, addressing the emotional and unconscious thinking of the nation that disconnects it from the lived reality. This reform necessitates recognizing the necessities of the modern nation-state and the legitimacy of the United Nations as a system that regulates human interactions, both as individuals and communities. This reform is referred to as "Reformulation."

Secondly, continuous education of the nation's members internally, to avoid the factors that lead to Islamophobia and to strengthen awareness about this unfortunate phenomenon. It is also important to promote the accurate image of Islam externally, to dispel misconceptions about Islam and Muslims.

Thirdly, the adoption of what we call "multitrack diplomacy" to showcase positive Muslim models, involving the collaboration of all those engaged in combating Islamophobia: the state, independent non-governmental organizations, scholars, researchers, educators, artists, cultural practitioners, businessmen, and others.

In conclusion, the issue at hand is profound, and the challenge of Islamophobia is complex. There is no escape from the concerted efforts of all of us.

Thank you for your kind attention.

Mardin city–region as rich for social, religious and cultural diversity

Speaking notes by

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ABSTRACT

In the speech, the speaker shared his sad feelings about the two earthquake disasters that occurred in Turkey and Syria. Unfortunately, tens of thousands of people were killed, so many people were buried under the rubble of collapsed buildings, and millions of people were damaged by earthquakes, as we heard from the media of Turkey and Syria. In this catastrophe, we, as brothers and sisters created in the image and likeness of God, witnessed a catastrophe that mercilessly slaughtered all its victims, regardless of whether they were Muslims, Jews, or Christians. Mutual respect's religions and traditions are indeed the right way to walk without stumbling. In this way, with the great richness of our identity, faith, nationality, language, and traditions, we become stronger as a whole by accepting each other as they are within the framework of love, tolerance, and respect.

Keywords: Earthquake, Turkey and Syria, identity, nationality, mutual respect, tolerance

Let me express my feelings about the two earthquakes that hit Turkiye and Syria. On February 6, two catastrophic earthquakes occurred at night – around 4:15 am when it was cold. These earthquakes, the epicenter of which is Kahramanmaraş in our country, hit ten provinces and Syria. As you are aware from televisions, press, and media outlets of the two countries, namely Turkiye and Syria, unfortunately, tens of thousands of people died, as many as this number were left under the rubble of collapsed buildings and millions were affected by the earthquakes. The horror of these tremors and the enormity of the ensuing aftershocks tormented the hearts and souls. If I were to describe my homeland, I would say that this earthquake was a massive disaster that hit homes and structures in the ten provinces of Turkiye.

Historical sites, particularly the churches, mosques, synagogues, and other historical artifacts in the ancient and historical city of Antakya, have mostly been destroyed indiscriminately. The hearts of all citizens, be they Christian, Muslim, or Jew, are filled with pain and sorrow. In this catastrophic disaster, we, as fellow brothers and sisters created in God's image and likeness, bore witness to a calamity that mercilessly slaughtered all its victims regardless of whether they were Muslims, Jews, or Christians.

Therefore, on this special and valuable day that brings us together, I would like to underline an issue of utmost importance: We should take care of each other and help one another materially and spiritually. We must be in harmony and solidarity within the framework of love, friendship, compassion, and mercy, regardless of one's belief, identity, culture, language, and nationality. We can thus build a dignified society for the future, where people will strive to do good for the benefit of all and where all faiths and peoples will be satisfied by enjoying local and national peace.

So, let us pray and extend a helping hand together in solidarity to heal the wounds of this brutal earthquake that hit the people in these countries both physically and psychologically. And let us be one heart and pray for each other's peace and tranquillity.

Following these remarks, which I deem important to remind, I would now like to focus on the subject matter of this conference, i.e. "building harmonious societies by creating religious pluralism and inter-faith respect". Because just like the bread and water we need in the world we live in, this is an essential issue for all of us who have different beliefs, nationalities, cultures, and languages.

The mutual respect we hold for each other's religions, beliefs, and traditions is indeed the right path we must walk upon without stumbling. For, in this manner, may it be clearly and distinctly seen that the holy image of God has been magnificently portrayed on us. This way, we are blessed and grow stronger altogether with the great richness of our identity, belief, nationality, language, and tradition and by accepting each other as we are, within the framework of love, tolerance, and respect.

For every people has unique characteristics. The characteristics, culture, and faith of each society are like a useful organs in the body of our entire humanity. Therefore, the prayers, requests, help, or solidarity we offer to one another, regardless of their religion or belief; is the medicine we need to treat the body of our mankind with the roots of mutual respect, friendship, and love.

Province of Mardin – A Living Example

Needless to say that it is the flowers and roses in it that make an orchard beautiful and bright. Because they provide the orchard its glamorous adornment, add to its riches with their splendor, as well as with the charming and fascinating fragrance they radiate. Yet if the orchard consists of a single flower or rose, then it is not quite a garden! By the same token in this ephemeral world of ours, society, people, or the state each represents an orchard hosting religions, cultures, languages, species/races, civilizations, and various faiths. Each of them is like a beautiful, sweet-smelling flower with its glamorous colors.

Each type of belief, language, and culture is the beauty of that society and that country in this civilized life we live in. Just as a cultivated garden gives blossoms roses and flowers for their beauty and richness, likewise, countries cultivate their citizens, whether individually or collectively, resembling flowers, roses, and striking trees, by molding them with tools of knowledge and science for their beauty and wealth. This cannot be completed without goodwill, a big heart, pure love, and mutual respect.

There is one particular point I am urged to remind and draw the attention of esteemed participants; discrimination and coercion against other races, religions, and faiths, run contrary to both God's will and God's image and likeness. This image and this likeness are we human beings! With our different languages, religions, and faiths...

Situated in the southeast of Turkiye, the province of Mardin is a living and tangible example of the co-existence of different religions, peoples, languages, and faiths. This region is rich thanks to its people and faiths, just like the garden is rich with its roses and flowers.

Peoples living in this province have a deeply historic tradition. Christians, Muslims, and others respect and celebrate each other's religious or public holidays in love and joy. This precious tradition has been carried on in the region for centuries. There is no doubt that Mardin and the region is a prominent example that should be highlighted. Its deep history tells us clearly that it has served as the cradle of civilization for centuries. Indeed every church, monastery, mosque, madrasa, place of worship, and particularly the Deyrulzafaran Monastery where I live, are all part of a heritage for Turkey as well as the entire world. There are cities in the East and the West that undoubtedly serve as the center and cradle of various civilizations across the world. They embrace different religions, cultures, and faiths and they have survived up until today standing as a major wealth for the world heritage. As the children of this huge heritage, we all undertake the responsibility to carry forward this rich heritage of our faiths, languages, and cultures.

The deep love of God guides us in this journey whereby as part of respect and tolerance we show one another as a deep wealth, we need to accept one another as we are with our faith, culture, and language.

We should stay away from religious and racist fanaticism for they are the fatal poison of self!

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

A dialogue of civilizations–The true way of coexistence and interfaith tolerance

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ABSTRACT

In the paper, the author expresses that ensuring the coexistence and peaceful coexistence of different religions and civilizations is the most important problem of the modern world, especially in our time when the process of globalization is expanding more and more. The difficulties we are experiencing in this regard are not new, as they arose centuries ago when nations, religions, and states were formed on Earth. Of course, considering all this, certain borders were established to separate the nations from each other. Faith does not limit the borders of the state and covers a wider geographical area, uniting the peoples of different countries. The conflict between religions and civilizations arises from the geopolitical interests of states, and for centuries, it seemed impossible for religions and civilizations to coexist peacefully. Nevertheless, since the 16th century, the conflict between faith and civilization gradually weakened, and it became possible to resolve this conflict. In terms of global security, religions should cooperate to create a tolerant environment without compromising their religious teachings.

Keywords: Globalization, tolerant environment, global security, conflict, religions

Ensuring the peaceful coexistence of different religions and civilizations is the most important challenge of the modern world, especially in our era, when there is an increasing process of globalization. The difficulty related to this issue is not new, it arose centuries ago, more precisely, when peoples, religions, and states appeared on Earth. It is natural that taking into consideration all of this, sharply delineated borders were established, which separated the peoples from each other. Faith was not and could not be confined within the borders of the state, it covered a wider geographical space and united the peoples of different countries. The conflict between religions and civilizations was caused by the geopolitical interests of the states, and for centuries it seemed that the peaceful coexistence of these two phenomena was impossible, however, since the 16th century, the opposition between faith and civilization gradually weakened and the possibility of their peaceful coexistence was revealed. In recent years, the concept of post-secularism has gained growing importance in social sciences. Charles Taylor and Jürgen Habermas devoted an important place in their studies^[63] to the analysis of the post-secular theory. Their works made a great contribution to the development of the mentioned theory. From their point of view, secularism is an instrument of power of the

^[63] Taylor Ch, A Secular Age. Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.2007

modern state, which was actively used in the post-colonial world^[64]. Brian Wilson believes that “secularism is a process when religious thought, practical activities, and institutions lose social significance”^[65]. Regardless of what definition we use to explain the concept of secularism, its main essence is still the same. It implies an extreme weakening of the influence of religion on people’s consciousness, or its complete elimination from public life. About the mentioned issue, several questions arise related to the essence of religion, its purpose and function, which require an impartial, objective research study along with all the factors that determine it, because a superficial approach to such issues becomes the basis for the development of a wrong strategy by certain groups, and this leads to confrontations and conflicts. Jürgen Habermas also argues over the extent to which the separation of religion and the state is a guarantee of the protection of religious freedom^[66]. The theory of secularization, according to Jeffrey Haynes, involves making religion and confession a private matter. He refers to the sociologist José Casanova, who believes that secularization may be the only theory that has truly acquired the status of paradigm in the modern social sciences. This happened partly because the leading thinkers in the social sciences of the 19th and 20th centuries – Emile Durkheim, Max Weber, Karl Marx, Auguste Comte, Sigmund Freud, Talcott Parsons, and Herbert Spencer believed that secularization is an integral part of mutability. Donald Smith claimed that secularization was a fundamental structural and ideological change in the process of economic development^[67]. The assumption that technological progress would reduce the influence of religion on society has not been borne out. On the contrary, its role in international relations is growing increasingly. Neither the development of science, nor technological progress, especially in the 20th century, nor totalitarian regimes, hostile to religion, could eliminate religion from people’s consciousness. “Each year, more and more leading scientists express their belief in God”, states John Templeton^[68]. Modern science is largely inspired^[69] by the belief that the study of nature reveals the Divine Truth which has redemptive significance for humanity^[69]. The process of globalization, which is characterized by several aspects, including economic, cultural, and political, is accompanied by challenges, which is why dialogue and cooperation between civilizations are becoming increasingly relevant, which largely depends on both politicians and religious leaders, on the recognizing by them of the multi-civilizational character of global politics and promoting relations based on mutual respect and tolerance. Experts of international relations point out that globalization also includes in itself the existence of different cultures and does not strive for uniformity^[70]. Otherwise, resistance to this process will be inevitable, taking into consideration that the primary objective for small or large nations with centuries–old history and traditions has always been and will be to protect their culture and spiritual values, which essentially define their identity, worldview, and way of life. Peoples and nations are trying to answer the most important question which has been essential in every era of human history, since

[64] Habermas J., Notes on a post-secular society, *New Perspectives Quarterly* 2008. pp. 17–29.

[65] Wilson B.R., *Religion in Secular Society. A Sociological Comment*, London 1966.

[66] Habermans J., “Religion in the public Sphere”, *European Journal of Philosophy* Volume#14, Issue N1, 2006, pp. 1–5.

[67] Hayness J., *An Introduction To International Relations and Religion*, 2007, pp.: 8, 9–10.

[68] *The Humble Approach*, Sir John Templeton, Templeton Foundation Press, Philadelphia and London, 1981, p.13.

[69] A noteworthy study by the University of Gottingen into the religious beliefs and practices of the lives of scientists in the 20th century is noteworthy. The study of the religious aspects of the lives of up to forty famous scientists – astronomers, physicists, chemists, biologists, mathematicians – clearly showed relationship between science and religion. *Spiritual Information, 100 Perspectives on Science and Religion, Eminent Scientists and Religious Belief*, Nicolaas A. Rupke, Templeton Foundation Press, Philadelphia and London, 2005, p. 80.

[70] Pippa Noris, Roland Inglehart, “*Cosmopolitan Communications – Cultural Diversity in Globalized World*”, Cambridge University Press, 2009. p. 401

it relates to the question of identity and self-determination. And as it is related to the issue of identity and self-determination, people define their identity according to their origin, religion, language, history, and traditions, as well as the system of their values, by which they are associated with cultural and ethnic groups, religious communities, nations, and civilizations. Many often turn to politics to not only pursue their interests but also to define their identity.

To clarify the position of Muslim religious leaders and Islam in general concerning violence, conflicts, and terrorism, we researched and studied the joint official statements that are reflected in the declarations and reports adopted at international conferences and religious summits. We consider that it is essential, as long as these declarations display the official position of the highest representatives of both Sunni and Shiite Islam, as well as other confessions^[71], which is an unequivocal answer regarding the fact that Islamophobia is devoid of any basis and is extremely unacceptable. Among them, suffice is to mention international conferences and summits held in:

Bern^[72] (Switzerland, 26.11.1992) and Bosphorus^[73] (Turkey, 9.02.1994)

Vienna (Austria) (30.03.1995^[74]; 18.03.1999^[75]; 19.11.2014^[76]; 19.07.2019^[77])

Brussels^[78] (Belgium, 19–20.12.2001)

Baku^[79] (Azerbaijan, 6–7.11.2009; 26–27.04.2010^[80]; 30.11.–2.12.2016^[81]; 15.03.2017^[82]; Baku (14–15.11.2019^[83])

Berlin^[84] (19.11.2018 Germany);

Moscow^[85] (Russia, 3–5.07.2011);

Athens^[86] (Greece, 3.09.2015); (It should be noted that the following is specifically mentioned in the declaration: According to the joint statement of the Christian and

^[71] It should be noted that inter-religious dialogue between Islam and Christianity has been going on for several years. These international academic consultations are organized, bilaterally, by the Royal Ad al-Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought (Amman, Jordan) and the Orthodox Center of the Ecumenical Patriarchate (Chambesy-Geneva, Switzerland). The aim of the academic consultation is to create an atmosphere of cooperation and trust between Islam and Christianity in order to ensure tolerance and peaceful coexistence.

^[72] <https://appealofconscience.org/berne-declaration/> – last seen – 02.03.2021.

^[73] <https://appealofconscience.org/bosphorus-declaration/> – last seen – 02.03.2021.

^[74] <https://appealofconscience.org/mar-30-1995-the-vienna-declaration/> – last seen – 02.03.2021.

^[75] <https://appealofconscience.org/kosovo-peace-and-tolerance-vienna-declaration/> – last seen – 02.03.2021.

^[76] <https://www.kaiciid.org/dialogue-knowledge-hub/resources/statements/vienna-declaration-united-against-violence-name-religion> – last seen – 02.03.2021.

^[77] <https://arbanonblog.wordpress.com/2019/07/02/1931/> – last seen – 02.03.2021.

^[78] <http://www.orthodoxa.org/GB/patriarchate/documents/BrusselsDeclaration.htm> – last seen – 05.03.2021.

^[79] Part.1:https://azertag.az/ru/xeber/V_BAKU_SOSTOYALAS_MEZHDUNARODNAYA_KONFERENCIYA_MEZHRELIGIOZNYI_DIALOG_OT_VZAIMOPONIMANIYA_K_SOVMESTNOMU_SOTRUDNICHESTVUCHAST_I-713275 – last seen – 05.03.2021.

Part.2: https://azertag.az/ru/xeber/V_BAKU_SOSTOYALAS_MEZHDUNARODNAYA_KONFERENCIYA_MEZHRELIGIOZNYI_DIALOG_OT_VZAIMOPONIMANIYA_K_SOVMESTNOMU_SOTRUDNICHESTVU_CHAST_II-713296 – last seen – 05.03.2021.

^[80] <http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/1147205.html> – last seen – 05.03.2021.

^[81] <http://www.br.az/society/20161202104718789.html> – last seen – 05.03.2021.

^[82] <https://dum-spb.ru/news/mezhdunarodnaya-konferenciya-islamskaya-solidarnost-vyzov-vremeni.html> – last seen – 05.03.2021.

^[83] <https://chisinau.mfa.gov.az/en/news/3447/baku-declaration> – last seen – 05.03.2021.

^[84] http://www.iiicdc.org/index.php?en_iiicdc-2018_overview – last seen – 05.03.2021.

^[85] <http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/123674.html> – last seen – 05.03.2021.

^[86] <https://www.kaiciid.org/file/12721/download?token=zf06DY0L> – last seen – 05.03.2021.

Muslim leaders, both religious and cultural heritage is a unique treasure and an integral part of Arab and Middle Eastern civilizations. Christian and other religious and ethnic groups are an integral part of the religious and cultural diversity of the Middle East, which has greatly contributed to the formation of a common Middle Eastern identity.

Abu Dhabi^[87] (United Arab Emirates, 4.02.2019); (It should be noted that the declaration is signed by Pope Francis (His Holiness Pope Francis) and Imam Al-Azhar Ahmad Al-Tayyeb (The Grand Imam of Al-Azhar Ahmad Al-Tayyeb). Even based on these declarations, it can be said unambiguously and clearly that Islam itself, as a religious doctrine, does not contain in its teaching a call to violence and that the facts of terrorist acts and manifestations of extreme radicalism do not derive from the Islamic doctrine itself, but from the tendentious aspirations of specific individuals and groups, who deliberately misrepresent Islam to use the religion to mask their criminal activities and justify acts of terrorism. Not only religious leaders, but also political scientists and experts unequivocally point out that it is unacceptable to equate terrorism with any religion, including Islam, or with one or another nation and people. Today, it is especially evident that the influence of religious leaders in the world is gradually increasing. Therefore, politicians and decision-makers realize that there is a great need for religious leaders to actively and effectively participate in the prevention of various conflicts and their peaceful resolution. The role of religious leaders is also special in leading a dialogue of civilizations, which should become the basis for cooperation and not a confrontation between different religions, cultures, and civilizations. The fact that millions of people profess one or another religion and that they hear the voice of their religious leaders more than politicians is an important factor, because the cooperation of religious leaders when it comes to such universal values as peace, tolerance, and peaceful coexistence, it is possible to achieve the avoiding of conflicts as well as regulating it without using violent methods. It can be said that all the major religions teach love, forgiveness, and kindness, and as confirmed by official data, the number of people who follow these religions is very large, however, instead of the result of all this being desirable, it is a sad fact that among the followers of religion, there are frequent contradictions and even fierce confrontations between them. The reason for the mentioned above may be the fact that there are radical groups in various religions and cultures which, willingly or unwillingly, contribute to the incitement of fanaticism and internal conflicts, and the positive role of the main religions has not been properly used to date so that the result might be if not perfect at least close to such. Religions, from the point of view of global security, can cooperate to ensure peaceful coexistence and a tolerant environment without any compromise concerning their religious teachings. In this process, the role of cooperative religious non-state actors is very significant, and they should spare no effort to promote peace processes and dialogue between civilizations, which, from the point of view of ensuring cooperative security, has no alternative.

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^[87] For the full text, see: Document on Human Brotherhood for Universal Peace and Coexistence, translation made at the Embassy of the Holy See, Tbilisi, 2019; http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/travels/2019/outside/documents/papa-francesco_20190204_documento-fratellanza-umana.html - last seen - 05.03.2021.



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