
Exploring Connections between the Threat of Islamophobia & Global Immigration

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Abstract

The geopolitical tensions, socio-economic disparities, and historical contexts all over the globe has given rise to the threat of Islamophobia. However, rise in global immigration movement further localizes its impact, influencing narratives of diversity and multiculturalism. Intersecting with racism and xenophobia, Islamophobia often results in compounded discrimination against Muslim immigrants based on religion, ethnicity and immigration status. This study examines the multifaceted nature of Islamophobia, highlighting the need to address these intersecting forms of prejudice. It explores strategies for countering stereotypes, fostering intercultural dialogue, and combating exclusion, while emphasizing the importance of education, advocacy, and community engagement in promoting inclusive, diverse societies that uphold religious freedom and human rights.

Keywords: Islamophobia, Immigration, Anti-Muslim Racism, Terrorism, Us Vs Them, Hijab, Ethno-Religious Nationalism

Background

The anti-Islamic and anti-Muslim sentiment that has historically existed is the basis of the Orientalism model (Said, 1978). Henceforth, the scholars' definition of "Islamophobia" has been greatly influenced by its use as a tool for study (Runnymede Trust, 1997; Esposito & Kalin, 2011). Islamophobia as a threat emerged on the world scene in 21st century that ultimately led to the foundation of cultural fault-lines on a global scale. The intolerance and chauvinism against a certain religion/ group rose to pit one part of the humanity against the other. This was accentuated with the rise of Muslim immigration in multi-cultural societies over certain period of time. 'Islamophobia' has thus been both slackly defined and largely applied (EUMC, 2006a; Nimer, 2007).

The threat of Islamophobia has developed as an intricate phenomenon that necessitates to be comprehended from the outlook where West stands in contrast with the East. The Muslims have been hounded in pre- 9/11 times and as a potential threat with the 9/11, the domestic and foreign policies congregated which led to the creation of overarching "Islamic terrorist enemy" that must be fought abroad and at home. Muslims are both immigrant workers and individuals with distinctive cultural standards. Principally, the resistance of Muslims to incorporate in the European context may upsurge the degree of perceived symbolic threat and henceforward breed stronger negative attitudes. Mutual suspicion between Muslim immigrants and mainstream European societies is embedded with a thought that 'We' cannot embrace *the 'Other'* based on '*Difference*', rather '*Sameness*'.

Islam as a religion has had a huge impact on Western Europe. According to Spektorowski and Elfersy (2020), it has changed European democratic principles by igniting an extreme liberalism that is currently meeting resistance from an extreme conservatism. Razack (2022) asserts that, seen through the lens of racism, the

Muslim figure depicts a society, split between the deserving and the disposable, with those of European descent belonging to the former group and everyone else being subjected to disposability regimes in one way or another. With roots in critical race theory and a connection to Islamophobia and critical religious studies, it shows how anti-Muslim racism can provide light on how White Supremacist Ideology functions on a worldwide scale. Fekete (2009) contends that while the EU implements selective immigration policies, it also forbids entry to asylum seekers, who were the first casualties of the security state's expansion to include Muslims. She looks at

- How anti-terrorist laws have been used to push out unwanted immigrants?
- How deportation policies commodify and dehumanize the weakest members of society?
- How these issues are closely related to the ways that racism is changing, especially with regard to Islamophobia?

Research Questions

1. What are conceptual challenges of Islamophobia?
2. How can we rethink diversely about the connections between global immigration and Islamophobia?

Sub Question(s)

1. Is Islamophobia threat only religion based or an underlying/ structured racism?
2. Who is responsible for widening the gaps between the religions?

Justification/ Rationale

This research aims to contribute to the broader academic debate within security studies and among the critical researchers to look at the ways in which Islamophobia can be shunned and resisted while inter-connecting theories like perceived threat (Out-group, In-group rationale), social identity and cognitive capabilities. The research intends to examine that identity based extremism is far more dangerous than faith-based radicalization. The study will reasonably contribute for peaceful societies in the days to come.

In this research, the point of departure is how and why Islamophobia has surfaced as existential threat and it is the innocent people and humanity, who pay the prices of ravages of the realms. To assess this, critical analysis of global immigration is proposed to reveal that it is a social and political issue and not a religious since no religion teaches radicalization. However, the anti-Muslim discourses are linked to radical ethno-nationalist narrative more broadly. To answer this, it is argued that Islamophobia is about politics rather than religion- it therefore needs to be fought on that terrain. This threat is a tragic reality and a test to West's claim to uphold the most noble of human values. The study intends to discover its roots from epistemological and historical outlooks, drawing the political and cultural dynamics backing its rise, its intellectual framework, and the motives for its extensiveness. It will sight see the socio- and psychological anxieties faced by the notion of othering (Bashir, 2025).

Jones and Unsworth (2022: 7) write that in the UK Muslims are considered the least liked groups, falling at second number, followed by Gypsy and Irish Travelers, with 25.9% of the British population who have negative sentiments towards Muslims (including 9.9% who feel 'very negative'). These statistics signify that a strong anti-migration behavior towards Muslims prevail in the UK, as compared to other ethnic and religious communities in the UK, underscoring the influence of Islamophobia. This shows two parallel narratives vis-a-viz terrorism in the Western world. The first narrative hypothesize that "all terrorists are Muslim," which so often evolves into the assertion that "all Muslims are terrorists." The second narrative asserts that "white individuals are never terrorists." Both claims are not true, however. Although these summaries are stark, they effectively encapsulate the prevailing tone of these pervasive narratives (Corbin, 2017).

1. Conceptual Ambiguity

a. Conflict of perspectives

The term Islamophobia carries no unanimous definition and that is a significant challenge. However the definition keeps differing from individual prejudice against Muslims to institutional discrimination and even critique of Islamic beliefs, sometimes named as a form of racism, while others frame it as religious intolerance. The Runnymede Trust's influential 1997 report defined Islamophobia as "unfounded hostility towards Islam," along with "practical implications of such enmity in unfair discrimination against Muslim individuals and communities, and exclusion of Muslims from mainstream political and social affairs." On one hand, this definition is more likely cited while has been criticized on the other hand, for showing discrimination against Muslims and their religion.

b. Differences of Perspective between Islam and Muslims

While Islamic theology and practices are sometimes criticized, it does not always translate into hatred or fear of Muslims themselves. People may have concerns or misunderstandings but that does not mean they feel personally threatened by Muslims. However, the term 'Islamophobia' often gets used in these conversations and sometimes it gets conflated with any criticism of Islam, which can lead to accusations of bigotry, even when the intention is not hatred, but rather a difference in perspective.

2. Race vs Religion

a. Islamophobia as Racism

A key discussion in the understanding of Islamophobia revolves around whether it should be classified as a type of racism. Given that Islam is a faith rather than a race, some critics contend that Islamophobia ought to be viewed as religious intolerance instead of racism. Nevertheless, numerous scholars and activists maintain that Muslims are racialized, perceived through stereotypes, cultural assumptions and phenotypical generalizations, particularly in Western societies. This process of racialization transforms Islamophobia into a variant of cultural racism, akin to antisemitism, like British Muslims are considered marginalized because of Muslim identity who indeed came as immigrants from South Asian, Middle Eastern or African backgrounds.

b. Intersectionality

When race, religion, ethnicity, gender and class converge, a conceptual challenge emerges. Muslim women for instance, face difficult situation because of wearing Hijab and veil. Therefore, in order to comprehend its full implications, a comprehensive framework is required.

3. Political Instrumentalization

a. Islamophobia as a Political Tool

The populist and far-right religion when it comes to political discourse, create a dichotomy between "us" and "them". This brings Muslims at odds with Western values. These tactics sometimes divert attention from domestic concerns, or rationalize foreign policy choices.

4. Global Variations and Contextual Differences

a. Islamophobia is Not Uniform

The global variations in regions and culture define threat of Islamophobia differently, connecting the issues of immigration, secularism and integration directly or indirectly, as in Western Europe. While in the USA, the issues of national security and foreign policy are inter-twined with the term. However, in certain parts of the globe, the ethno-religious nationalism and historical conflicts merge into this phenomena as in India (As in introducing Citizenship Amendment Act-CAA, 2019). Modi's Hindutva ideology turned Jammu & Kashmir into Federal Territory. This act carried out without consultation of any local authorities, wiped out the statehood of India's only Muslim majority State (Kossaify, 2020), challenging the Country's pluralist

traditions (Segelbaum & Ruland, 2019). All these scenarios make the situation complex to show unanimity over universal definition or framework. It would be doable when contextualized in specific socio-political settings.

b. State vs Non-State Actors

When the State and Non-State Actors come across each other, the situation worsens. The act of one individual or groups complicate the policies and practices already working on the subject. This conflicting system needs a review to study the societal attitudes and structural systems.

5. Media Representation and Cultural Production

a. The Media's Role

Media has been the main source in influencing public perception about Islam and Muslims. Most of the time, the terrorism is associated with the Muslims, generating anxiety and distrust among public, thereby reinforcing Islamophobic narratives. This eventually leads to the normalization of negative stereotypes (Azeez & Jimoh, 2023).

b. Pop Culture and Symbolism

Muslims and their culture is shown in the films and literature as a symbolism of villains and terrorists. This strengthens the ideas of "Othering", eventually leading to the negative image of the religion. This issue, if not tackled timely, would have grave consequences.

6. Conceptual Convergence with Other Forms of Discrimination

a. Islamophobia vs Xenophobia

Islamophobia and Xenophobia come across in case of immigrants and refugees, most often. The Muslim immigrants or refugees are not only viewed as believers of other faith but also as economic threat or a cultural outsider. The policy responses, as a result becomes difficult to implement with this kind of intersection.

b. Islamophobia vs Secularism

The situation becomes conflicting in secular societies, because of different values and the segregation between the two schools of thoughts. For example, discussions regarding the wearing of religious symbols in public institutions (such as France's prohibition of the *Hijab* in schools) are interpreted by some as a defense of secularism, whereas others perceive them as a form of institutional Islamophobia. The terrorist attacks (livestreamed) in the mosques of New Zealand Christchurch in 2019 showed that debate encircling 'Migration' and 'Anti-Muslim' propaganda gained attention during the European Parliament elections of May 2019 (Palma, 2020).

7. Policy and Legal Implications

a. Legal Recognition

A theoretical challenge remains persistent whether "Islamophobia" should be dealt under anti-discriminatory laws or not? Though, there are several countries working with the legal frameworks that address racial or religious discrimination yet fails to tackle the threat of Islamophobia. There are two different school of thoughts, one purposes that if it is included in the legal framework, it would certainly help combating hatred against Muslims; while others believe that it will accentuate the recognition is being favored over the other.

b. Measuring Islamophobia

Unless a clear definition and understanding of the term "Islamophobia" is structured, the situation will remain complicated, leading to the hate crime statistics, public opinion surveys and fabricated media analyses

Rethinking Diversely About the Connections between Global Immigration and Islamophobia

21st century emerged with the challenge of global immigration, encircled with economic inequality, political unrest, environmental decline and violent conflicts. This state of affairs has led Muslim immigrants to be

discussed in political and cultural debates, eventually leading to the rising threat of “Islamophobia”. Unless the policies and situation re-evaluated, the study of connection between global immigration and Islamophobia will not be analyzed. This all has to be embraced with intersectional, historical, and structural perspectives

Historical Context of Immigration and Islamophobia

Without exploring the historical context, the relationship between immigration and threat of Islamophobia cannot be studied, since it has century’s old routes, shaped by colonial histories, orientalist ideologies and geopolitical conflicts. Muslims were portrayed as irrational, primitive and violent, during the Colonial Era. After decolonization, those narrative embedded in the societies, further endorsed the perspectives regarding Muslim immigrants as culturally incompatible with Western values.

In post-World War II Europe, many Muslims migrated to Europe as the region was going through the reconstruction of war-affected economies. Initially, those people were welcomed as 'guest workers'. However, with the passage of time, they were considered as permanent outsiders and contributors to the racial hierarchies within European societies. The events of 9/11 aggravated the situation and the term “Islamophobia” emerged as a global debate and the Muslim identities were portrayed as a threat to national security. Eventually these steps led to the formulation of discriminatory immigration policies, surveillance and widespread societal anxiety.

Media and Political Narratives

Media has contributed its major role in the narrative building of linking one specific religion to extremism. This narrative has been politicized and used for the electoral purposes worldwide, connecting it to national security threats and social unity. The issues like migration, anti-Islam and ultra-nationalism led to the Far-Right Alliance in European Parliament of 2019 (Timmons, 2019). These narratives makes migration even more difficult for those who seek for genuine reasons like war, poverty, and global inequality with stringent immigration laws and border enforcement, while allowing states to evade addressing the fundamental causes of displacement.

The Intersectionality of Islamophobia and Immigration

The threat of Islamophobia has been connected with racism, xenophobia, classism and patriarchy. For instance, issue of Hijab and anti-Black racism require more inclusive narratives that accurately represent the diversity within Muslim communities and others as well, in order to avoid obstacles to integration and safety, faced by the immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers.

Islamophobia as a Structural Issue

The threat of Islamophobia has been deeply embedded in structures of governance, law, and global capitalism and should not be taken into account as a matter of individual prejudice or ignorance. The “Islamophobia” has been institutionalized thorough Western immigration systems (As in Visa restrictions, border policies, refugee quotas, surveillance programs and detention practices) which often disproportionately target Muslim-majority countries. In 2004, France was first European Country to ban *Veil*. While this ban affected various religious minority groups, Muslim women were primarily targeted by this legislation, which was often referred to in both public and political discourse as the '*Veil Law*.'

In his analytical essay ‘Algeria Unveiled,’ Fanon (2003) examines the efforts of the French Colonizers to eliminate the Muslim headscarf in Algeria during the 1930s. Fanon writes that the colonizers viewed the headscarf as a representation of cultural identity. They believed that by removing the headscarf, they would be advancing the destruction of Algerian culture within the colony. Since the colonizers saw themselves in stark contrast to the colonized, the Algerian culture was split eventually. Muslim immigrants more likely had been advantageous to the global labor markets, as on one hand, they are offered low-wages and on the other hand, face discrimination. For example, Kafala system in Gulf States is like modern-day slavery, offered to

many South Asian and African Muslims. Therefore this issue requires a comprehensive re-evaluation at structural, and institutional concern (Kinder, 2023).

In 2009, Switzerland had referendum on banning the construction of mosques in the country. Issues like face coverings in some European countries, Belgium, being the first-ever European Country to introduce ban on face covering in 2011, the decision of European Court of Human Rights in 2017 which declared that the rights to private and family life, freedom of religion, are not broken with those kinds of laws (Belgium/ European Court...2017). The countries like Bulgaria and Latvia imposed fines up to £660, for covering face with the fines of 150€. Such kind of legislation was introduced by Denmark also in 2018, incurring a fine of £115, while repeat offenders could face penalties up to ten times to that amount. The same year Netherland also put ban on face *Veil*.

Structural vs. Individual Islamophobia

The individual prejudices, verbal harassment or physical assaults falls under the domain of personal issues and threats. However the structural Islamophobia carries systemic discrimination embedded in legislation, policies, media portrayals, educational programs, and law enforcement methods.

Islamophobia in Institutions

a. Education- The discrimination in the schools through curriculum erasure, text books, stereotyping, or being punished for religious expression (e.g., wearing the hijab or praying).

b. Law Enforcement and Surveillance- The counter-terrorism policies like Prevent (UK), Patriot Act (USA) have been prevalent to disproportionately target Muslims

b. Media Representations- Muslims are portrayed as terrorists, skewing public perception and reinforces support for discriminatory policies.

d. Employment & Economic Discrimination- In certain cases, the systematic barriers at work places and in the job market show higher levels of discrimination in hiring and workplace interactions. For example, In France, laws banning religious symbols in public employment directly affect Muslim women wearing hijabs, forcing them to choose between faith and livelihood. The politicians portray Muslims as national security or identity threat.

Repercussions of Structural Islamophobia

- **Mental Health:** Stress, anxiety, and depression among Muslim populations.
- **Political Disenfranchisement:** Exclusion and under-representation in political ambit
- **Radicalization Risk:** Marginalization and reaction to injustice

Resistance and Solutions

- a. Stereotypes can only be defeated by the community empowerment to attain solidarity.
- b. Inclusive Curricula should be designed for educational reforms
- c. Representation will be effective when media's accountability is ensured
- d. The government's role is decisive in policy change
- e. Marginalized groups should be included while constructing alliances to help intersectional solidarity.

Policy Implications

Unless concrete policy changes are undertaken, no action will be fruitful; however, certain other issues like conflict resolution, climate justice and economic inequality should also be addressed simultaneously in order to avoid negative repercussions. The richest nations carry much responsibility to support humanitarian efforts

and resettling refugees. The global societies need grassroots movements, inter-cultural dialogues, interfaith coalitions, and advocacy organizations.

Conclusion

The threat of Islamophobia has emerged as structural and racial discrimination, extending beyond the religion-based threat and has surfaced as cultural racism. This situation legitimizes exclusion, surveillance and violence. Henceforth the term “Islamophobia” needs to be recognized and addressed as a systemic form of racialized oppression embedded within societal and institutional structures. It is essential to understand the sole actions by individuals, institutions and systems who misuse religion for power, control or division; and help widening gaps between religions under the disguise of political and ideological agendas. The lack of interfaith dialogue adds fuel to the fire. Therefore, it requires an inclusive effort and approach.

The deep-rooted cultural, political and historical connections between global immigration and Islamophobia are multi-pronged. This liaison can only be analyzed under structural, intersectional, and De-Colonial frameworks while going beyond narrow security discourses. Only this is the road to just and inclusive societies. The societies and nations need to realize that this applies to the whole world and not just for Muslims or immigrants; A world that is wished and dreamt by whole humanity where migration is not criminalized, where religious identity is not vilified, and where diversity is not feared but embraced.

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