

The Politics of Phobia in the West: and the Response of Pakistan

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Abstract

This article delves into the historical backdrop of Islamophobia and the pervasive fear of Islam in the Western world, exploring the associated misconceptions and hostile attitudes. When examining the roots of this fear and prejudice, it becomes evident that the Crusades played a pivotal role, though events in the twentieth century further contributed to its exacerbation. In the contemporary era, the aftermath of the 9/11 incident intensified this negative sentiment. Anti-Islamic sentiment manifests not solely in the beliefs of ordinary Western individuals but also within the institutions of Western states. This collective societal and governmental mindset often translates into efforts to foment political and economic unrest in numerous Muslim-majority

countries. This article aims to address the prevalent lack of trust between the Western world and Islam and seeks to propose solutions that are mutually applicable to both the Western world and the Islamic world.

Keywords: Islamophobia, Westernization, Politics of phobia.

Introduction:

Islam and the West have long been subjects of intense scrutiny and analysis due to their complex historical, cultural, and political interactions. In recent years, however, the relationship between Islam and the West has become increasingly strained, with the emergence and persistence of Islamophobia as a significant concern. This research article aims to explore the politics of phobia surrounding Islam and its impact on the dynamics between Islam and the West. By examining the historical context, socio-political factors, cultural perceptions, and the role of political actors, the article seeks to shed light on the root causes and consequences of Islamophobia. Additionally, it will propose strategies for countering this phobia and fostering a more inclusive and tolerant society.

Definition of Phobia

Fear of any object or action is called a 'phobia'. Different terms are used for it, for example, a person who is afraid of water is called 'hydrophobia'. Similarly, a term is 'photophobia'. The person with this disease is also afraid of an accident. Some people are afraid of heights, they are 'acrophobic' patients, while 'monophonic' is also the name of a psychological disease in which the patient is afraid of being alone.

Phobia is a state of intense fear or dislike of something. It is the name of this morbid state of mind, which is manifested in the form of fear or hatred by someone. The meaning of 'phobia' is mentioned in Chambers dictionary: a fear, aversion, or hatred esp., morbid and irrational. 'Phobia' is the name of an

illogical and pathological mentality, which is based on fear, aversion, and hatred.

Definition of Islamophobia

Islamophobia is the combination of two words which is the “Islam” and “phobia” according to the Cambridge Dictionary: unreasonable dislike or fear of, and prejudice against, Muslims or Islam”². Islamophobia is irrational dislike or fear and prejudice against Muslims or Islam and according to the Oxford Dictionary: “Islamophobia refers to the fear of and hostility toward Muslims and Islam, as well as the discriminatory, exclusionary, and violent practices arising from these attitudes that target Muslims and those perceived as Muslims”³.

Islamophobia refers to fear and hatred of Islam and Muslims, and therefore people are incited against Muslims and Islam- The roots of hatred and extremism of Islam and Muslims on the part of some elements in the West and Europe are quite old, but after 9/11, the word Islamophobia began to be used frequently in the West- After this incident, Muslims were not only seen with hatred, contempt and prejudice, but Islam began to be associated with extremism and terrorism.

When the word "phobia" is connected with Islam, its meaning is: "fear, fear or hatred of Islam", which has settled in the hearts and minds of the opponents of Islam and the protestors. Distorting the true image of Islam, giving Muslims a bad name, presenting them as ignorant and fearful, and making them look mentally and physically, subjecting them to violence, attacking mosques and Islamic rituals, specific clothes of Muslims. But taunting and depriving them of their cultural identity and legitimate and fundamental

rights, etc., there are different forms of 'Islamophobia'. If stated in concise terms, it comes out as follows: Islamophobia refers to the expression and practice of hatred and fear of Islam, Muslims, and Islamic civilization and culture. "Islamophobia" is the view that all or most Muslims in the world are fanatics who have violent views of non-Muslims.

The Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) defines Islamophobia as: Islamophobia is a combination of fear, hate, and prejudice against Muslims as well as against any object or place associated with Islam—as a faith or religion—such as Mosques, Islamic centers, Holy Qur'an, Hijab, halal food, name that sounds 'Arabic', men with beard, Azan (prayer call), Minarets, Domes, and so on. It also constitutes hatred, stigmatization, racism and discriminations on daily life, on Media, at workplace, at political sphere, etc⁴. Similarly, 'Islamophobia' includes harassing Muslims psychologically, socially and culturally and expelling the followers of Islam from the economic, social, political and daily life of the country. The Muslim minorities are being treated in the same way in the world. The defenders of Islam also repeat this ignorant thing that: Islam has no civilization and even if it does, it is inferior to Western civilization in every way. Besides, they believe themselves to be superior and Muslims to be inferior.

Historical Background of Islamophobia

When we examine the history, we find that anti-Islamic behavior is not only present in the present era, but if we look into the past, we find that this propaganda has been going on for centuries. Enmity, hatred and fear against Islam started from the time of the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ). When the prophet (ﷺ) started to convey the message of Allah to the people, the enemies of Islam took a strong front against Islam. They reached every place where the prophet (ﷺ) used to deliver the message of Allah. He used to make unnecessary

accusations and objections on the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) that he was a Priest and a poet etc.

An example of such a time is that of Hazrat Tufail bin Umar Dosi. At the time when Hazrat Tufail came to Makkah, those people of Quraysh who used to prevent people from coming to the Prophet came to him and said: "You have come as a guest in our city. Therefore, with best wishes, we inform you that this person has created a rift in us. We don't know what charm is in his tongue, by the force of which he makes son fight against father, brother against brother, and wife against husband. Therefore, it is our friendly advice that you do not meet him and do not listen to him⁵". However, these people prevented him from meeting the Prophet by explaining in every possible way. Tufail Dosi, thinking that the voice of the Prophet may not fall into his ears, put cotton in both ears, but finally he was amazed to hear the verses of the Qur'an from the mouth of the Prophet and embraced Islam.

As the fierce caravan progressed, the fear and threat of the enemies of Islam against Islam and Muslims and their hatred also increased. After the era of Prophethood, in the Farooqi era, when Muslims conquered Jerusalem and Syria, which was the center of Christians and Jews at that time, they started various conspiracies against Islam and its followers. After that, in the second century AD, Muslims turned to the western part of Europe and brought the enlightened teachings of Islam. Later, Sultan Muhammad Fatih (March 30, 1432-May 3, 1481) extended it further and raised the flag of the Islamic government. In addition, he also conquered Constantinople (Istanbul).

Before this, when after 1099, the Christian and Jewish worlds used fear, hatred, threat and negative psychological effects against Islam and Muslims in the Crusades⁶. The period of the Crusades was the most critical period in

Islamic history. The entire Christian world was eager to destroy the Muslims and their religion, but they fought them with courage and bravery and neutralized their intentions. It can be called a very golden achievement in their history.

Islamophobia systematically started with the Crusades, because the Christian world did not gain anything despite the abundance of the army and countless resources. The famous writer and nun Karen Armstrong admitted that: "The history of Islamophobia begins with the Crusades".⁷

Islamophobia Incidents after 9/11

The West's hostile attitude towards Islam and Muslims reached its peak at the end of the 20th century and after September 11th (September 11, 2001). The West described Islamic teachings and values as being in conflict with the ideology of liberal democracy presented by the West, saying that Islam and the Muslim world are not compatible with Western thought, values and civilization. New methods are being used against. On September 11, 2001, when the World Trade Center of the United States was attacked (which cannot be justified in any way). After that, the West and the forces influenced by the West did not consider any rules, principles, justice and ethics in targeting the teachings, civilization and history of Islam. Since then, Muslim educational and cultural institutions, along with mosques, schools and Islamic centers have also been attacked.

In the West, the same thing is being repeated again and again that Islam is the source of 'extremism'. It was the opinion of 25 percent of people in the United States in March 2002, while in 2014 it reached 50 percent.⁸ The situation is the same in the United Kingdom.

Karen Armstrong writes: "Pope Benedict's controversial speech in Germany on the fifth anniversary of 9/11 fueled the wave of Islamophobia."

This gives the impression that the Islamophobia movement is gaining momentum and the West is moving towards a new crusade.”¹⁰ In the West and Europe, Islam and the Prophet of Islam are ridiculed, because they know that Muslims have great faith in the Holy Prophet and his teachings. That is why in the West and in the Europe, there are attacks on the Messenger of Allah at all times. In this matter, every class is at the forefront. Whether it is the class of rulers or policy makers, intellectuals, and writers, because the activists of every group or class are engaged in trying to attack Islam and the Holy Prophet (ﷺ).

The famous Orientalist Professor Montgomery Watt has written about the negative role of the West in terms of slandering the Holy Prophet, saying: "No great figure in history has been presented in the West as defaming as Muhammad (ﷺ)".¹¹ The same atmosphere is being fostered in the West, as the other name of everything related to Islam and Muslims is extremism and terrorism. Wherever Muslims are in the minority in the world, questions about their citizenship, suspicious passports, women wearing niqab and hijab are subject to suspicion. The religion that is being criticized the most is Islam. According to the CSEW (Crime Survey for England and Wales), "Muslims are the most victims of hatred and animosity, accounting for 8.3 percent. On the contrary, the ratio of Hindus is 0.3%, Christians is 0.1% and other religions are 0.5%."¹² and it has been increasing continuously. After 9/11, there have been numerous incidents of violence against Muslims. According to CAIR (Council on American Islamic Relations) in America: "172 during 2005, while in 2006 there were 2472 accidents and attacks against Muslims"¹³. Expanding the same thing, in the West after 9/11, when a Muslim commits a crime or wrongdoing, it is not only viewed with suspicion, but also brought under the law and fingers are pointed at Islam. On the contrary, if a person belonging to

another religion commits a crime or murder, then only his caste is criticized. Which is a hypocritical attitude of the West towards the Islam.

Islamophobia and the Western Media

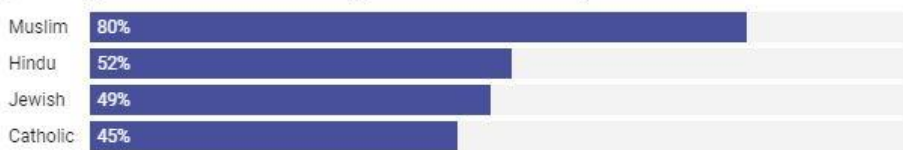
Western media is playing a key role in strengthening and spreading the root of 'Islamophobia' both domestically and internationally. Muslims are portrayed as violent, using poisonous language against Islam and its followers.

Thus, two political experts, Maurits van der Veen, and Professor Erik Blaich, after analyzing more than 784,000 newspaper articles published over 21 years, concluded that portrayals of Muslims are on average "significantly" more aggressive than coverage of other ethnic groups. According to the two researchers, they analyzed 256,000 newspaper stories from the United States and 528,000 news stories from the United Kingdom, Canada and Australia between 1996 and 2016. According to their opinion: "To answer these questions, we used media databases such as LexisNexis, Nexis Uni, ProQuest and Factiva to download 256,963 articles mentioning Muslims or Islam – for which we use the shorthand "Muslim articles" from 17 national, regional and tabloid newspapers in the United States over the 21-year period from Jan. 1, 1996, to Dec. 31, 2016."¹⁴ -

Chart: the conversation, CC-BY-ND.¹⁵

Negative US news articles by religion

A review of 17 U.S. newspapers compared articles mentioning four world religions over 30 years and found a large majority of references to Muslims or Islam were negative. Each bar shows the percentage of news article mentioning that faith that were negative.



Articles are from 1996 to 2016

The main point of the research was that an average article that mentions the debate and Islam in America is 84 percent more negative than a random sample of articles. This means that it is possible for someone to read up to six articles in American newspapers for an article that averages about an equally serious article.

Chart: The conversation/CC-BY-ND.¹⁶

Negative news mentioning Muslims or Islam, by country

A review of 528,444 news articles mentioning Muslims or Islam over 30 years found the proportion that were negative was nearly the same in the U.S., U.K., Canada and Australia.



Articles are from 1996 to 2016 from a range of newspapers

In the same way, when a person or woman in the Muslim world tries to spoil the image of Islam and the Prophet of Islam, the Western and European media present him as a 'role model' for the Muslim Ummah. On this behavior Karen Armstrong wrote: "Western scholars openly denounced Islam as a blasphemous and slanderous religion and repeatedly accused the Prophet of Islam of lying and founding a violent religion based on the sword."¹⁷

This negative attitude of Western Media, which they call 'freedom of expression', is limited only to Islam, the Prophet of Islam and Muslims. But whenever someone criticizes their thought and culture, culture, politics and ethics, they call it an attack on freedom of expression.

Hijab and the Islamophobia

In Western and European countries, not only Islam and the Prophet of Islam, but also mosques and Islamic centers are becoming the target of this hatred, but there is also an increase in cases of defamatory behavior towards Muslim women in daily work, travel and offices.

A 2013 report cited the example of a 21-year-old pregnant woman who was wearing a hijab when she was attacked. Two men took away her scarf. "Then they cut her hair, then kicked her in the stomach, causing her to miscarry"¹⁸ Many women told the story of their abuse in the same way. Similarly, a shameful incident took place in London in which "a veiled Muslim girl was attacked on the basis of racial bias in a crowded train."¹⁹

The Western Rulers and Islamophobia

In the West and Europe, along with the media, literature, and intellectuals, the ruling class is also actively participating in promoting Islamophobia. Many examples of this have become proverbial in America. In Europe, France is the country where the largest number of Muslims (10%) lives. "Marine Le Pont the head of the anti-Muslim conservative party "Front National" there, stated in 2010 that "when Muslims worship in the streets and on the streets, it seems to me that the Nazi Germans will occupy France again."²⁰ She is constantly demanding the government to ban the hijab and the arrival of Muslim refugees. Among the anti-Islamic European rulers, Geert Wilders of the Netherlands is well-known and is also the head of the party of the freedom (PVV). The action plan of which is: "The time has come when the European societies are cleansed of Muslims and we should close our borders on Muslims".²¹

Islamophobia and Ethnic Prejudice

According to some experts: Islamophobia is the name of ethnic prejudice against Muslims and Arabs. "Religious and ethnic prejudice is most common in Denmark, Germany, Hungary, Switzerland, Sweden, Estonia, Greece and

Italy”²². In the Western and European world, the word 'Others' is used for Muslims. Dr Mubarak ali writes: “Americans believe that this century is America's century, so it is important for them to bring the world under their control and establish lasting peace”²³. Especially on the basis of development, nation, individual and secularization, the West marks a permanent gradient, under the influence of which Islam is associated with uncivilized behavior, and is seen as an internal enemy in the form of a threat to the values and identity of Muslims. Along with this, Western civilization is also considered as an external enemy.

In Australia, Muslims were face discrimination and religious intolerance at almost three times rather than the other minorities. About 60 percent of people said they had experienced some form of 'Islamophobia'²⁴. Similarly, Muslims are viewed with suspicion when boarding and disembarking from planes at the airport. In November 2015, two passengers on a flight from Chicago to Philadelphia in the US were prevented from boarding the plane because they were speaking Arabic to each other. Attacks on Muslims in Britain have increased by 300 percent²⁵. And Muslims are feeling somewhat isolated in Western and European countries.

Pakistan's Role in Smoothing Public Opinion against Islamophobia at The Global Level.

The Islamic Republic of Pakistan (which is based on the ideology of Islam) has always played an important role in solving the challenges faced by the Islamic world and for unity and unity - Pakistan's foreign policy is based on these principles as per the vision of the founding fathers of Pakistan. - After 9/11, especially in the West and Europe, in the name of freedom of expression, the publication of blasphemous cartoons in honor of our beloved

Prophet ﷺ or the growing hatred and prejudice-based sentiments and violent actions against Muslims. A strong and powerful voice against Islam has always been raised from Pakistan - apart from the government level, also at the public level in Pakistan, whenever there is an insulting act or oppression of Muslims on the basis that they are followers of Islam, The incident of Islamophobia in Christchurch, New Zealand in March 2019 proved to be a turning point not only in the international community but also in the Islamic world. Compiled in - The Pakistani leadership launched a campaign to smooth public opinion in Islamic countries and globally to remedy Islamophobia - The former Prime Minister of Pakistan, Imran Khan, in September 2019, raised the issue of Islamophobia on the United Nations platform. - The Prime Minister of Pakistan, while talking about the problem of Islamophobia in the whole world, made it clear that:

"We want freedom of expression not to be used to mock and insult us ﷺ because it hurts us (Muslims)"²⁶

Pakistani leadership has always emphasized in bilateral meetings before the heads of states, prime ministers and foreign ministers of various Islamic countries such as Iran, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Indonesia, Malaysia, Egypt, United Arab Emirates and Qatar etc. How steps can be taken to remedy Islamophobia - In this regard, the Prime Minister contacted the leaders of the OIC member states through two letters on October 28 and November 18, 2020 - similarly to the international community. The issue of Islamophobia was raised with all intensity in the side meetings - Prime Minister of Pakistan while talking about Islamophobia in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization Council of Heads of State (SCO-CHS) conference, drew the attention of all the heads to the fact that the Shanghai Cooperation Organization All member states of the organization should join hands to oppose divisive policies based on bigotry and discrimination and focus on building interfaith and intercultural

harmony-He also appealed to the Council to "call for mutual respect for all religions and beliefs" ²⁷building on its call for world peace and harmony.

The positive aspect of Pakistan's repeated attention to this issue was that the world took the issue of Islamophobia seriously and made statements against Islamophobia, which smoothed the public opinion against Islamophobia all over the world.

The Responsibility of Daw'ah and Propagating Islam

All prophets were commanded by Allah. The last Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, also received this command, as Allah Almighty has said in the Qur'an:

"يَا أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ إِنَّا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ شَاهِدًا وَمُبَشِّرًا وَنَذِيرًا وَدَاعِيًا إِلَى اللَّهِ بِإِذْنِهِ وَسِرَاجًا مُنِيرًا" - ²⁸

"O Prophet! We have sent you as a witness, and a deliverer of good news, and a Warner, and a caller to 'the Way of' Allah by His command, and a beacon of light".

Along with this, every member of the Muslim Ummah was charged with this responsibility:

"كُنْتُمْ خَيْرَ أُمَّةٍ أُخْرِجَتْ لِلنَّاسِ تَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَتَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَهُمْ مُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ ۗ وَلَوْ ءَامَنَ أَهْلُ الْكِتَابِ لَكَانَ خَيْرًا لَهُمْ ۚ مِنْهُمْ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ وَأَكْثَرُهُمُ الْفَاسِقُونَ" - ²⁹

You are the best community ever raised for humanity—you encourage good, forbid evil, and believe in Allah. Had the People of the Book believed, it would have been better for them. Some of them are faithful, but most are rebellious".

This verse reveals that the Muslim Ummah is a Ummah only on the basis of "Amr bi al-Mruf Nahi an al-Munkar". And every Muslim is made responsible for fulfilling the duty of calling to Allah.

"قُلْ هَذِهِ سَبِيلِي أَدْعُو إِلَى اللَّهِ ۚ عَلَىٰ بَصِيرَةٍ أَنَا وَمَنِ اتَّبَعَنِي وَسُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ
وَمَا أَنَا مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ".³⁰

“Say, O Prophet, “This is my way. I invite to Allah with insight—I and those who follow me. Glory be to Allah, and I am not one of the polytheists”.

Today, the importance and usefulness of Dawat-i-Allah has increased more than before because the seekers of truth in the East and the West are longing to take the true path, but there is no one to recognize the truth of this message.

Conclusion

We do not ask the people of the West not to criticize Islam, the Qur'an and Islamic civilization, but we demand that they not make false accusations by using baseless objections, propaganda and false language. Logical and constructive criticism plays a key role in the development of every society.

In the words of Professor Khurshid Ahmed: “They have generally adopted a biased and unscientific approach in presenting Islam. His information about Islam is wrong, incomplete and exaggerated”³¹. They have every right to criticize Islam but in a friendly, credible, serious and balanced manner. But Muslims must also come up with a new narrative, away from the traditional way to respond. In response to their objections, accusations and the attack on the life of the Prophet of Islam, there is no solution by merely protesting and demonstrating, nor should one avoid aggressive behavior by being carried away by emotions and anger in order to gain some benefit for Islam. There is a need to respond wisely and intellectually.

The other name of Islam is peace and justice and it strongly emphasizes the establishment of justice and peace. The main view of Islam is the establishment of peace and justice. At present, cruelty, violence, fascism, riot, war, murder, looting, etc. are happening on a large scale around the world. In this regard, there is also a golden opportunity to popularize Islam and its basic teachings. Because the world is longing for peace and its blessings at this time. Even today, the Western world is not only suffering from misunderstandings about Islam and the Prophet of Islam and his teachings, but also ignorance.³² According to a survey, 60% of people in the West say that we are not familiar with Islam, while 17% of people say that we do not know Islam at all". The Muslim Ummah not only needs to understand the challenge facing Islam in the form of 'Islamophobia', but there is also a dire need to make full efforts to convey Islam to humanity, so that the world becomes aware of the true teachings of Islam, and this trick of negative propaganda against Islam itself becomes a means of introducing Islam to the West.

Recommendations

1. As Muslims, it should be our effort to convey the message of Islam, because the Holy Quran is a book of guidance from Allah not only for Muslims, but for all humanity. Not many, but rather, Allah Almighty says in the Holy Qur'an: "This book was revealed so that you may present it to the people." Peace be upon him had brought".³³
2. As a good example, the blessed deeds of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) should be ground so that every aspect of his life is so bright that anyone who takes a fair look at his biography is surely impressed with great personality of prophet (ﷺ). An example of this is Michael H Hart, the author of the book called The Hundred, who is a

Christian and a biographer, but he too has accepted the blessings of the Holy Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, on top of the world's 100 eminent personalities.

3. There is a need for unity and consensus among the different schools of thought of the Muslim Ummah.
4. It is important to highlight the political consciousness in the Ummah so that they have the ability to feel the sensitivity of the situation, and it is easy to eliminate the religious differences in them.
5. All kinds of newspapers, advertisements, political and social forums and social media should highlight the achievements of Muslims and convey all the positive aspects of Islam to the people, which is the main purpose of Islam.
6. The Islamic media should be organized on a global level, every conspiracy of the Arabs and Zionists should be answered through proper channels
7. All Muslim countries must unite and mobilize to combat Islamophobia to protect all Muslims in the world.
8. There is a need to prepare intellectually and Cognitive for the development and construction of Islam.

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