

THE RISE OF ISLAMOPHOBIA IN THE POST 9/11 ERA: CAUSES, GLOBAL IMPACT, AND STRATEGIES FOR MITIGATION

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.17471415>

Keywords:

Islamophobia, Securitization Theory, Post-9/11 Discourse, War on Terror, Media Representation, Discrimination and Civil Rights, Interfaith Dialogue

Article History:

Received: 10 September 2025

Accepted: 16 October 2025

Published: 29 October 2025

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Abstract

The present research investigates the development and continuity of Islamophobia after the September 11, 2001 (9/11) terrorist attacks in order to investigate their causes, manifestations worldwide and methods for reducing them. Islamophobia is defined as fear of, prejudice against, or hatred towards Islam and Muslims and has developed from sporadic xenophobia to become an institutionalized, international problem. The September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks increased negative representations of Islam in political rhetoric, media, and national security policy as part of the War on Terror. Through an interpretative, qualitative research method, the study examines secondary literature from scholarly books, refereed journal articles, government policy documents and mass media reports using discourse analysis to analyze how Islamophobia has been socially and politically constructed. The study also examines the social, political, financial, and psychological impacts of Islamophobia to demonstrate how they shape public perceptions, justify discriminatory governmental policies and limit civil rights and freedoms while creating anxiety and fear in addition to social disconnection among Muslim populations. Additionally, the study utilizes the Securitization Theory to critically assess the ways in which institutions construct Muslims as security threats and provides recommendations for large-scale interventions such as educational programs, media literacy training, inter-faith dialogue programs, legal protections and accountable government to promote equality, understanding and peaceful coexistence.

Introduction:

The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, were an epitome of the world politics of the present day. Besides their immediate destruction, the events triggered an ideological and cultural change that redefined the politics of global security and the politics of religious identities. Among the most significant impacts was increased dramatically the change of Islamophobia, which refers to unreasonable fear, suspicion, or enmity towards Islam and Muslims. Even though anti-Muslim bigotry had been there since time immemorial, the 9/11 tragedy turned it into an

epicentre turning Islamophobia into a mainstream socio-political phenomenon.

It was in the post-9/11 context that Islam and Muslims were perceived in a securitized way. The confusion of Islam with terrorism, extremism and backwardness became viral in the political rhetoric, news media and entertainment sectors. The United States and Europe, in particular, had become the targets of increased hate crimes, discrimination, and the level of suspicion towards Muslim citizens and immigrants. This prejudice did not just confine itself to the West, but also had an effect on the world

policies, travel limits, and foreign policies between the Muslim majority and non-Muslim states.

Political populism and use of religion as an instrument to elect has further enhanced the normalization of Islamophobia. Far-right parties in Europe, the United States, and some regions of Asia have used the fear of Islam to gain followers and justify the exclusionary policies. At the same time, the global media have also been complicit in increasing the levels of Islamophobia discourse and constructing Muslims in terms of repeat adverse representations, which have simplified a complex religion into the form of a monolithic danger.

The consequences of Islamophobia are not only ideological, but also social, economical, and psychological in nature. Muslims existing in diaspora societies tend to experience issues of belongingness, identity negotiation as well as stigmatization. Furthermore, the concept of Islamophobia defies the concept of equality and pluralism, which are the key principles of democratic societies. Discrimination of the 1.8 billion Muslims all over the world is against international law as stipulated in the United Nations Charter, Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other conventions that bar religious discrimination.

This paper attempts to approach Islamophobia not as a phenomenon in isolation but as a process that takes place in the world through the interplay of structures of power, media, and law. The paper will explore the beginnings and the dissemination of Islamophobia, critically evaluate its effects, and provide a detailed plan of mitigating the problem through an interdisciplinary method.

Research Questions:

1. What was the way Islamophobia began and grew stronger following the events of the 9/11 attacks?
2. What are the political, social and psychological impacts of Islamophobia to Muslim people and communities across the world?
3. What role does the abuse of the securitization theory play in systematized Islamophobia?
4. Which policy and practical suggestions would be effective in the global and local levels to fight the phenomenon of Islamophobia?

Literature Review:

The socio-political nature of Islamophobia is multi-disciplinary and as such is reflected in the literature on Islamophobia. Historical, cultural, and theoretical analyses of the phenomenon have been made by scholars who follow the evolution of the concept of the Orient since colonial depictions of the Orient to the present global politics.

Islamophobia could be traced to the European colonial experience with the Muslim world. His masterpiece book *Orientalism* (1978) developed by Edward Said conceptualized the construction of the East (Islam, in particular) as exotic, inferior and threatening by Western discourse. According to Said, such a binary representation justified imperial domination. Halliday (2011) and Sayyid (2018) and other post-colonial theorists subsequently applied this criticism, arguing that contemporary Islamophobia still reproduces colonial hierarchies of knowledge and power.

According to Helbling (2014), Islamophobia can also be described as a form of structural racism against Muslims and those who are prejudiced against not only at the level of individual prejudices but also at the level of structural exclusion in the form of laws, institutions, and social practices. Gottschalk and Greenberg (2008) also emphasize the development of Islamophobia to a cultural form of racism replacing race with religion in the name of protecting secularism or national identity.

The 9/11 attacks had the effect of taking the cultural panic and changing it into a political and security agenda. According to scholars like Kundnani (2014) and Esposito and Kalin (2011), the institutionalization of Islamophobia took place by means of the policies, which were implemented in the context of the War on Terror. Monitoring of Muslim communities, discriminatory immigration legislation and counter-radicalization efforts placed the Muslims in a role of constant suspects. According to Brown (2016), political discourse at this time created the dichotomy of a moral difference between the civilized West and the barbaric Muslim other that supported the thesis of Samuel Huntington regarding the clash of civilizations.

According to Innes (2018) and Perry (2019), the criminal justice systems contribute to the prevalence of these narratives as Muslims have been excessively targeted as anti-terror laws. The increment of security,

like the USA PATRIOT Act and counter-terrorism directives of Europe, did not only reduce civil liberties, but also justified state-level discourse of Islamophobia.

A rich literature highlights the contribution of the media towards promoting Islamophobia. Al-Daraji (2018) and Hafez (2015) show that the Islamic religion is often represented in the Western news through violence, extremism, and terrorism. Muslims are depicted as a homogenous nation and the identity of Islam is equated with danger. This story is strengthened by the entertainment media such as the films, the television, and the digital media that portray the Muslims as villains, fanatics, or oppressed women in need of rescue. According to media studies theorists, this kind of framing leads to the formation of moral panic, the fear of Muslims is used to justify policies leading to restriction and hostility among the populace. The presence of these frames repeatedly works out a normalizing effect, Islamophobia seems as a common sense, not prejudice. Furthermore, social media algorithms contribute to the amplification of extremist or sensationalist information and generate echo chambers that reflect anti-Muslim biases on the global level.

The psychological consequences of Islamophobia are overwhelming to the Muslim communities. Gardell (2013) and Zine (2008) explain that being exposed to prejudice all the time results in identity crises, anxiety, and alienation. In the case of young Muslims that are raised in Western cultures, Islamophobia influences their identity, and the fear is internalized or there is an effort of deemphasizing their religious identity. The social psychology body of research associates Islamophobic climate with lower social cohesion, intergroup tension, and diminished mental Health among the minority groups.

Islamophobia causes social exclusion, underemployment and spatial segregation at the community level. According to Vertovec and Wessendorf (2010), economic discrimination is commonly established in the name of national security, yet it ends up marginalizing the Muslim population in the long run.

The Copenhagen School of securitization has been extensively applied to the study of post-9/11 Islamophobia. Buzan, Waiver and de Wilde are of the opinion that the act of securitization happens when

political actors present a certain problem as a security threat and justify extraordinary actions. But, regarding Islamophobia, this framework is under criticism. Securitization discourse obscures the distinction between religion and terrorism by defining Islam as a danger in itself. Researchers believe that such a misuse promotes the idea of Muslims being existential threats, which justifies discriminatory actions.

Sayyid (2018) and Halliday (2011) argue that Islamic securitization promotes the essentialism of culture, making Muslims mere categories instead of acknowledging the diversity. In turn, Islamophobia reinforces itself: the security practices that are supposed to be used to combat terrorism instead promote prejudice and alienation.

Theoretical Framework:

The analysis of Islamophobia in the post-9/11 period is well examined with the help of the Securitization Theory created by the Copenhagen School of Security Studies, and, in particular, by Barry Buzan, Ole Waiver, and Jape de Wilde (1998). The Securitisation Theory says that security is not an objective reality, but a process, which is socially constructed by political, media, and institutional actors to make some issues appear to be existential threats to a cherished referent object, like the state, society, or national identity. Using a speech act, securitizing actors convince audiences to conform to unprecedented actions outside the normal mode of politics to respond to the perceived threat. This theory is applicable to Islamophobia in terms of how the religion and its adherents have been discursively portrayed as a security threat. Since the events of 11 th of September, 2001, the political leaders, policymakers, and media institutions in Western societies created Islam as a source of terrorism, violence, and cultural incompatibility. The U.S. Patriot Act (2001), the Prevent Strategy in the U.K. and other restrictions on Islamic clothing in Europe serve as an example of the working effects of securitization, as they show how the legal and institutional means are targeted at the Muslim communities in disproportionate ways. These narratives are further perpetuated with media amplification which presents Muslims as natural threats and encourages a sense of fear as usual. The theory of Securitization offers a sound analytical approach towards Islamophobia as a political, social

and institutional phenomenon, and it puts into the spotlight the mechanisms by which the exclusionary practices and the biased perceptions are justified.

Research Methodology:

The research is a qualitative study that will use a securitizing approach to the study of how Islamophobia is constructed and institutionalized socially. It is a descriptive, analytical and interpretive study, which tries to make sense of the phenomenon of Islamophobia emerging as a phenomenon around the world and also its socio-political, cultural and psychological impact. The research is based on the secondary data used, such as academic books, peer-reviewed journal articles, state and policy documents, media reports, and publications by the international organizations, such as the United Nations, European Union, and Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). The documentary and discourse analysis of data collection will help the researcher to investigate how language, narratives and policies construct the perception of Islam as a security threat. The analysis is divided into three steps, including first, placing the socio-political environment after 9/11 into perspective; second, the application of the Securitization Theory to the process of interpreting the Muslim faith as a security problem; and third, the impacts of securitization on civil liberties, social unity, and psychological health, as well as looking at de-securitization strategies. Ethical principles are also followed to the letter, and the neutrality, cultural sensitivity, and precision are emphasized since the study does not imply direct involvement of the human subjects. The approach offers an in-depth structure of Islamophobia as a discursive, structural, and political phenomenon, and offers the understanding of the possible ways to contribute to inclusivity and reduce fear-related prejudice.

Discussion and Findings:

Securitization Theory can be critical in explaining how Islamophobia has emerged and continued to exist in the post-9/11 period as security is not a reality but a product of social construction. This theoretical opinion allows us to observe Islamophobia not just as a personal prejudice or cultural bias but as a coordinated, politically and socially determined process, in which Islam and Muslim communities are

created as existential threats. It is a valid construction that justifies extreme political, legal and social actions that go beyond the norms of governance into which fear and suspicion are instilled. The debate provides a multi-layered structure of Islamophobia, which involves political, social, cultural, psychological, and international aspects of Islamophobia, all of which work in interdependent relations to maintain discriminatory practices and attitudes.

Political Speech and Action

The securitization of Islam has been facilitated by political rhetoric that has happened after the 9/11. In the United States, the United Kingdom, and Europe in general, leaders tended to generalize Muslims in the public as vectors of terrorism, social instability, and insecurity to the nation. The example of the U.S. President George W. Bush declaring a global War on Terror effectively changed the image of threat that is presented by extremist groups into a more generalized threat that is inherent in the Muslim population. The performative impact of such rhetoric is enormous and it shapes reality in a way that justifies discrimination. The actual implications of securitization can be seen through policies that have been implemented in this regard. Patriot Act (2001) increased powers of surveillance, detention without trial and investigation authority which has failed to protect the public because of its disproportionate application in Muslim communities in the name of counterterrorism. On the same note, the Prevent Strategy used by Britain to counter radicalization often stigmatized the Muslim youth to those who might pose threats, and as a consequence, this led to increased social vigilance and isolation and deteriorated trust between communities and institutions. In Europe, some states like France, Germany and Belgium took steps that curtailed religious expression and this included banning the burqa or niqab, surveillance of the mosques and restrictions on immigration of the Muslim majority nations. Such interventions are such examples of how securitization can be practiced: the experience of an existential threat is the rationale of extraordinary policies that tend to bypass the normal rules of democracy, embedding Islamophobic assumptions into the system of governance. The study concludes that these policies do not only institutionalize fear but even provide normalizing effects of suspicion that

establish long-lasting structural arrangements that sustain Islamophobia at the societal level.

Media Depiction and Culture Amplification

The media institutions are very crucial in securitizing Islam as both securitizing agents and as enhancers of political discourse. In media post-9/11, televisions, print, and even the digital media continued to associate Islam with extremism, terrorism and cultural incompatibility. Muslims were often portrayed in uncomplicated dichotomies: Muslim men were aggressors, extremists or victims of oppression and Muslim women were victims of oppression, as well as mosques and Islamic organizations were discussed as a possible source of radicalization. These descriptions distort subtle realities and paint the complexity of Islamic religion and Muslim social existence in a manner of danger and fear that is easy to feed on.

The emergence of online media and social networks has made these processes even more intense. Islamophobic stories propagated via online content, which is not usually fact-checked, are propagated quickly, reaching large audiences, and form an echo-chamber where bigotry thrives. The amplification of social media, which is guided by algorithms, makes it so that fear-based and sensationalist contents will spread more, instilling Islamophobia in the cultural mindset. Besides, movies, documentaries, and other entertainment media often support these stereotypes, which leads to an extensive culture ecosystem where Islam is inseparably linked with insecurity. The results show that these media discourses serve a two-fold role: legitimizing the policy of securitization of the state and at the same time shaping social consciousness, creating an endless spiral of fear and bigotry that goes beyond the official policy factors.

Social and Psychological Effect

Securitization has its effects in the society and in individual minds. Islamophobia takes social dimensions in the form of discrimination in the area of employment, education, housing, law enforcement, and access to the services of common interests. Constant surveillance, profiling, and institutional marginalization of the Muslim communities in question have the effect of undermining trust in state institutions and civic engagement. Such structural marginalization strengthens the feeling of social

alienation and injustice, indicating that Muslims are seen as foreigners or a threat to the community instead of being considered members of the community.

Psychologically, securitization of Islam has enormous effects on identity formation, mental health and interpersonal relationships among Muslim communities. Constant exposure to fear-driven discourses in the media, politics and the general population breeds anxiety, fear and internalized suspicion. Muslim youth, specifically, complain of marginalization, stress and aloofness, which may destroy self-confidence, interpersonal interactions and unity in society. Securitization Theory describes these processes as due to the popularization of a made existential threat, that is, fear is internalized into the behavioral patterns, attitudes, and social relations. The study shows a multi-generational effect on structural exclusion and social stigma creating a psychological harm compound of both consequences.

Economic Repercussions

The economic marginalization of Muslim communities in the post-9/11 period is a disturbing reality as to the impact of the dominant Islamophobia that has been endemic in different sectors of the society. There have been the subtle and overt forms of discrimination that have led to unequal access to economic opportunities among the Muslim population. Based on stereotypes and prejudices, workplace discrimination may be exhibited in the hiring process, promotions, and career development in general. Prejudiced beliefs about Muslim religious identity can also put them in a situation where they face job opportunities.

Furthermore, the economic effect does not just feel the individual lives but covers more economic inequalities within the Muslim communities. Islam being stigmatized has also helped in ghettoization of Muslim communities denying them a quality education and resources needed so that they could access socio-economic mobility. This segregation combined with discriminatory policies limits the potential of economic development and creates poverty cycles.

Moreover, with the emergence of Islamophobia, there has been a positive relationship between surveillance and scrutiny of Muslim-owned businesses, which has

affected their growth and sustainability. Innovations in the Muslim communities can be more prone to suspicion, regulations, or prejudice, causing economic instability. The marginalization of the Muslim populations economically is not just a personal tragedy, but one of a system which requires a wholesome solution. The solution to this issue requires the breaking down of discriminatory practices in the work place, introduction of inclusive economic policies and the establishment of mechanisms that empower the Muslim entrepreneurs. Creating a climate that allows Muslim communities to get equal access to economic opportunities is inseparable to social justice and the development of a successful and just society.

The Collapse of the Securitization Theory on the Islamophobia Case:

The Copenhagen School of Security Studies formulated the securitization theory, which states that it is possible to present some problems and treat them as security threats so that to justify taking extreme action. In discussing the use of securitization theory in the context of Islamophobia, there are some criticisms of the theory application:

False designation of Islam as a Threat: The theory argues that actors may create a problem of an issue of threatening security, but in the scenario of Islamophobia, it is concerning that Islam is being presented as a problem in itself. Islam is a rich and multifaceted religion, which is practiced by more than a billion people in the world. Reducing it to a single-dimensional issue of security of states simplifies a complex network of beliefs and practices.

Failure to Separate Islam and Terrorism: The theory of securitization often includes the association of a given group or ideology to security risks. A major failure of Islamophobia is the confusion of Islam as a faith with terrorism attacks done by extremist groups. The stereotypes and discrimination of the Muslims continue to exist due to the perception of Islam as a natural security threat.

Cultural Essentialism: The theory also tends to simplify the complex issues by use of cultural essentialism, where particular group of people are

assumed to have fixed attributes. This can be decentralized to the context of the Islamophobia implying that this can make Muslims into a homogeneous security threat and it does not regard the tremendous diversity of Muslim communities.

Recommendations:

Education and Awareness:

Dissemination of the correct information regarding Islam and Muslims is one of the crucial approaches in the current fight against the Islamophobia. By eliminating any misunderstanding and refuting any stereotypes, accurate information provides a subtle perception of Islam with its rich history, variety of cultural traditions, and essential core values of the peace. This will foster a true understanding, it will open a new channel towards constructive communication between the Muslim and non-Muslim communities and would challenge the Islamophobic discourse that is perpetuated by different parties, including the media and political leaders. Notably, it teaches people to think critically, which enables them challenge stereotypes and find credible sources of information. In the learning context, the adoption of programs that provide the right information regarding Islam will see to it that the future generation is well prepared with a comprehensive world outlook. Finally, the dissemination of the true information is the stimulus of social peace, which creates synergies between different communities and leads to the development of the society of religious pluralism and mutual respect.

Media Literacy:

Media literacy is a powerful weapon to fight Islamophobia that includes two important elements. To begin with, responsible media reporting encouragement includes the establishment of an environment where the journalist and media houses put the emphasis on accuracy, fairness, and contextual subtlety in handling the stories concerning Islam and Muslims. This deters the sensationalism and enhances a more balanced story that is over and above the stereotype reinforcement. Second, it is essential to promote a multicultural and a non-discriminatory representation of the media. Raising the demand of genuine and good representations of Muslims in

different types of media including news, entertainment among others presents a more realistic picture of the variety of the Muslim experience. This is in opposition to the monolithic and somewhat negative picture promoted by Islamophobic discourses. A combination of responsible reporting and inclusive representation can not only contest with the prevailing prejudices but also create the media environment conducive to the larger objectives of the society to conceive of social understanding, tolerance, and overcome the biased attitudes towards Islam and Muslims.

Several effective anti-Islamophobia campaigns illustrate the strength of online initiatives used to contest negative stereotypes and foster empathetic understanding. One such example involved Donald Trump's remarks, and Muslim women's social media activism, in response to Ghazala Khan at the Democratic National Convention. This campaign effectively dismantled a dominant stereotype of the oppressed Muslim woman while giving a space for their voices and experiences. A different campaign also used humor and satire, #MuslimsReportStuff, to poke fun at Islamophobic assumptions as a means of promoting awareness and increasing engagement through viral content. Other campaigns, such as the American Muslims: Facts vs. Fiction video by the Unity Productions Foundation and the Pro Islam Billboard Campaign, have taken a more traditional approach to challenging a lack of understanding about Muslim communities by presenting the facts in an accessible way. Combined, these examples illustrate effective anti-Islamophobia approaches to address prejudice and promote social awareness and understanding, which utilize media literacy and creativity aimed at specific audiences.

Legal protections:

Laws are central to the general quest to suppress Islamophobia. The reinforcement of anti-discriminatory laws and regulations is crucial to building a legal system that is explicit on religious prejudice and places the actors, both individuals and institutions, in check to discriminatory practices. These legal actions must cut across every aspect of the society such as employment, education and government services; hence, the Muslims would be treated equally in various areas. Moreover, the

necessity to provide equal protection in the process of justice is essential in order to reduce systematic biases that might pervade the justice system. The strengthening of such defenses sends a strong message on religious discrimination, and creates an atmosphere of equality, fairness and appreciation of religious liberties.

Interfaith dialogue:

Interfaith dialogue is a powerful force working in the general effort to combat Islamophobia. Its general purpose is to promote understanding and cooperation between the followers of various confessions. Through encouraging to communicate openly, respectfully and positively, interfaith programs aim at filling knowledge gaps, busting biased stereotypes, and fostering compassion. Communication between Muslim and non-Muslim communities, especially, is the key to breaking the stereotypes and establishing natural relations. Interfaith engagement is a potent remedy to the divisive narratives which Islamophobia is founded on and serves as a formidable counterpoint to defeat inertial societies which are not only tolerant of prejudices and discrimination based on religious identity, but are actively opposed to them through the share of narratives and through experience.

Political leadership:

The political leadership is essential in the collective action against Islamophobia, which has two critical dimensions. To begin with, persuading political leaders to denounce Islamophobia creates the moral standard, or in other words, it is an indication that they denounce the discriminatory rhetoric and behaviors that jeopardize the state of social harmony. The bias expressed verbally denounces the concept that intolerance can never be tolerated in the social setting. Second, insisting in creating inclusive and diverse policies is a visible dedication to developing a socially fabric that is tolerant and just. The political leaders should lead campaigns that break the systemic biases, end discrimination, and focus on protecting religious freedoms of all citizens regardless of religion. When combined in concert, these moves make political leadership an engine in the formation of people attitude, a set of laws, and shared reactions, which together will help to eliminate Islamophobia

and create the society of mutual understanding, respect, and solidarity.

Conclusion:

To conclude, the situation in the post-9/11 has seen a significant increase in the levels of Islamophobia which is a complex phenomenon caused by the events in history and which was exacerbated by the contemporary events. Through a thorough analysis of its causes, effects, and the ways to counter it, one realizes that there is a problem that cuts across various areas of society, such as media coverage, political rhetoric, mental health, access to economic opportunities, and legal regulations. The way Islam and Muslims have been framed in the media has contributed to the perpetual stereotypes and misinformation thus strengthening the negative perceptions that were already in place. The rhetoric of divisiveness and inflammation alongside political practices has only contributed to the escalation of hostility leading to discriminatory policies, which favor disadvantaged communities of Muslims disproportionately.

On the psychological level, Muslim people feel increased stress levels, anxiety, and the overall feeling of alienation. Marginalization restricts opportunities, and this creates a disadvantageous cycle in terms of economics. To solve Islamophobia, a comprehensive approach is therefore required: educational and awareness campaigns spreading the correct information; media literacy work to promote responsible journalism and provide equal treatment and challenge systemic biases; interfaith discussions that dismantle biases and promote common values. It is only with the help of this type of coordinated, multidisciplinary interventions that societies can break the pillars of Islamophobia and create an inclusive society in which Muslim as well as non-Muslim communities can empower each other. Political leadership is an important decisive factor of shaping societal attitudes whereby leaders are called upon to condemn Islamophobia and to advance policy agendas that pre-empt inclusivity, diversity, and wholesome religious liberty among the citizenry. Going forward, it is indispensable that the societies all come together to dismantle the institutional framework that propagates Islamophobia. This form of transformation requires paradigm shift in terms of

the media practices, education systems, law, and political language. Through the development of a culture of tolerance, understanding, and inclusivity, collective action can guide the society towards the denunciation of Islamophobia and peaceful coexistence of people of different communities. The acuteness of such a venture is added by the need to create avenues of comprehension and collaboration in a globalized environment which flourishes on shared values and mutual respect. This research paper aims at refining the understanding of the causes, effects and future solutions to Islamophobia and hence creating a culture of tolerance and respect in the post 9/11 setting.

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