Understanding Islamophobia

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Introduction

Islamophobia is a worry for the whole international community, not just the Islamic world. Although anti-Muslim views existed long before September 11, 2001, the terrorist attacks and the response to them heightened anti-Muslim stereotypes, such as the assumption that Islam is intrinsically violent or that Muslims are predisposed to terrorism. Since 9/11, a few individuals have turned Islamophobia into a business, using Muslims as scapegoats to advance their own objectives. It poses a clear threat to global peace and security. It is not, however, a novel notion. Rather, it has resurfaced as one of the world community's key issues.

The contemporary increase of islamophobia runs counter to the international community's principles and resolve to promote a culture of peace and harmony among all cultures, civilizations, and religions. Islamophobia has risen as a result of radical and extremist elements attempting to distort the image of Islam and Muslims. The actions of some minority groups have been politicized under the guise of freedom of expression, and as a result of these manipulations, islamophobia has become institutionalized.

The article provides an overview of the global condition of Islamophobia, including its definition, stages, examples of islamophobia in legislation and the media, implications for Muslims and the greater international community, and finally, recommendations for the future.

Defining Islamophobia

The first step towards comprehending islamophobia is to comprehend what it comprises. Individual acts of rudeness and antagonism appear to be on the rise for the majority of individuals. Islamophobia, on the other hand, is far more than isolated acts of violence or hatred directed towards Muslims. In basic terms, it refers to the overt, covert, and occasionally unknowingly discriminatory treatment of persons of Muslim descent. However, a closer examination of this definition reveals broader concerns, such as the social and economic exclusion to which Muslim communities were and are subjected, ranging from as heinous as physical attacks on Muslim families and businesses to the grave impact of both subtle and open acts of social exclusion and segregation. As a result, according to the definition, anti-Muslim prejudice and hatred is an issue that requires governmental, social, and individual solutions.

It's also crucial to know what islamophobia isn't and how the term is commonly misinterpreted. The most egregious example is the description of Islamophobia as "based in racism" and "a sort of racism that targets displays of Muslimness or perceived Muslimness" — a definition of Islamophobia that "racializes" Islam in its own words.

Racializing Islam poses three challenges. First, Muslims themselves rejected the notion that they form a single distinct "race" in the same manner that, example, black Africans do. In truth, it is a basic premise of Islam that those who adhere to the faith, regardless of origin, nationality, or region, are equal in God's sight.

Second, Muslim people across the world have a remarkably diverse spectrum of Muslim groups. They come from a variety of places, including the Indian subcontinent, the Middle East, Sub-Saharan Africa, Central and South-Eastern Asia, and Europe.

Finally, race is not a question of personal choice; we cannot simply declare ourselves to be white, black, or Asian when our relatives and friends already know we are not. On the other hand, most Muslims are proud of the fact that they have voluntarily chosen to follow their religion.

If we believe that Islamophobia is an issue that all Muslims face as a group because of their "Muslimness," it will be difficult to claim that this is a case of "racism," because Muslims are a multiracial community. They're also diverse; some are secular, while others are deeply religious; some consume alcohol, while others do not; some wear head coverings, while others do not. Accepting this extremely limited definition has the drawback of reflecting an agenda that is unrepresentative of many Muslims' expressed concerns and a lack of understanding on how to deal with their difficulties at the policy level.

Phases and premises of Islamophobia

According to most experts, the growth of Islamophobia in the West has gone through three distinct periods. The first is the abuse of freedom of expression; the second is the politicization of Islamophobia by pro-extremist and right-wing parties in order to increase their electoral support; and the third is the institutionalization and legalization of Islamophobia. Various cartoons depicting Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) were published in Denmark under the guise of freedom of speech in 2005-2006, and a hate campaign led by a Dutch politician was utilized by some right-wing political parties and organizations, resulting in a ban on minarets in Switzerland. The ban on Muslim entry by the Trump administration, the hijab ban by Modi regime in India and the consecutive counter-extremism policies by many western countries are examples of the legalization of islamophobia. All of these actions have neglected, degraded, and inflamed religious emotions among the world's 1.6 billion Muslims. To tackle Islamophobia, the international community must work together in a timely and coordinated manner at many levels, as well as in a unified and comprehensive manner.

One of the things is to understand the premises, rather false premises on which Islamophobia is perpetrated and instigated. One of them is the topic of Muslim immigration resonates among those who indulge in nostalgic nationalism, religious prejudice, or even right-wing extremism -- but also among those with an understandable fear of sudden social change. It is a subject ready-made for sensationalist journalists, resulting in a public debate poisoned by misinformation.

Then there are cases that actively demonize and vilify Islam's teachings in order to inspire fear and hostility against its adherents. For example, Islamophobia perpetrators frequently describe the Qur'an as "a source of inspiration for, and justification of, hatred, violence, and terrorism across the globe, Europe, and America." This was first mentioned by Geert Wilders, a Dutch politician and right-wing populist. The British conservative political analyst Douglas Murray thinks that the United Kingdom needs "a little less Islam" to minimize terrorism. Anti-Muslim rhetoric also includes statements like "most Muslims either seek or are indifferent to the death of the societies in which they live," which was written by Mark Steyn, a Canadian conservative author and typical right-wing Islamophobe.

In certain circumstances, the western media exacerbates anti-Islam attitudes. In general, the news coverage of Muslim communities by some Western media organizations is non-objective, selective,

unilateral, and simplistic. Prejudices that all Muslims are aggressive, harsh to women, authoritarian, and monolithic are reinforced by such off-balance news. Other prejudgments propagated by the media indicate that Islam is an impediment to democracy and that it is a civilization that does not fit into the modern world by defaming Muslims.

The Way Forward?

Clearly a lot needs to be done, multipronged actions needed to be taken at multivariate levels such as organizational, policy, national, and others.

One, international cooperation is required to work in a fashion to eliminate discrimination and create equal opportunities for communities and peoples. For this there is a need to establish an international observatory to monitor new trends and outbreaks of racism, discrimination, xenophobia and intolerance. For this, the prerequisites are such as the international discourse leading to Islamophobia should not be politicized. Second, collect and analyze data for an effective combat against new trends of discrimination and its outbreak. Third, the international community should be further informed with regard to current liabilities and the experts-level mechanisms should be reinforced to put them into effect.

In media, there is a need to debunk deliberate manipulation and framing of Muslim communities as scaremongering tactics, for instance, reports about emergent Muslim majority. Similarly, there is a need to disprove the notions that Islamic culture is impossible to assimilate and that most Muslim immigrants hold violent anti-Western views. Media of Muslim countries can play a positive role in combating Islamophobia.

Today, the ideological clashes that matter most are taking place within Islam, and the central imperative is to create more economic and political opportunities for Muslim newcomers -- an area in which Western governments have as much responsibility as the immigrants themselves.

The Wrong Way to Stop Terrorism, an article by Claire L. Adida, David D. Laitin, and Marie-Anne Valfort, was published in Foreign Affairs. Rightly critique most Western nations' policy responses to terrorism and extremism. Fear, they believe, is a normal response to the threat of terrorism, but policies based on fear that target people based on their religion or region of origin are ineffective. Citing the poor integration of Muslim immigrants in France as an example, their piece warns that such policies might feed into a vicious cycle that harms national security. French Islamophobia, which is a reaction to cultural differences, has led Muslim immigrants to retreat from French culture, which feeds back into French Islamophobia, worsening Muslims' isolation. Indeed, the failure of French security in 2015 was largely attributable to police practices that scared rather than welcomed immigrant youngsters, an attitude that makes it difficult to acquire important information about possible threats from community members.

There is a need for policymakers to understand that effective integration of a varied population, such as Muslims, willing to become productive members of society is critical to a country's security. This type of integration fosters trust. Also, it is important to mention that terrorism is horrifying to a large number of immigrants and refugees from the countries that were listed by the Trump administration's order, and many of them have been victims of it. The executive order renders the country less safe by neglecting the fact that their motivations are aligned with those of the United States.

Lastly, given that the issue is becoming increasingly politicized and institutionalized, there will be no end to the acts of groups and individuals seeking to sow hatred. It is critical to mitigate the negative consequences of such activities that are likely to cause confusion, fear, and hostility. Hence, all countries must work together to overcome this issue of prejudice towards Muslims. The

Ray of hope

The world community has agreed to eradicate components that lead to violence, regardless of how justified the acts of some organizations are. Of course, no one can deny that encouragement to violence is prohibited by legal systems all over the world. Different countries have different legal procedures and approaches to this issue. Some countries place a greater emphasis on provocative elements, while others emphasize future or current effects, but we do see an emerging discourse on tackling islamophobia with the goal to develop free and equal societies based on pluralism, tolerance, and respect in whatever scenario.