

## **FROM ISLAMOPHOBIA TO NEO-ISLAMOPHOBIA: A NEW STYLE OF GOVERNANCE IN THE WEST**

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### **Abstract**

Islamophobia is thought to be a modernized version of Orientalism, which was initially used to justify European political actions against the Ottoman Empire and, later, after its decline, to support their imperialist pursuits in the Muslim world. It is now used as a strategy for governing Western societies, particularly the United States, where people are forced to live with historical prejudices against Islam and Muslims. The nature of this animosity points to a new form of Islamophobia, which, like the old one, appears in discourses and practices alike. This study aims to ascertain how Islamophobia manifests as new Islamophobia in the modern West. It investigates the presence of this phenomenon in US media discourse using the theoretical framework of securitization. The researchers employed an analytical framework adapted from Discourse-Historical-Approach and studied 3153 news and opinion pieces from US newspapers and wire services between November 2016 and January 2017. This study has revealed an Islamophobic society where Muslims were the targets of hate crimes due to their Islamic identity. It has been found that Trump's anti-Islamic rhetoric during his presidential campaign contributed to the emergence of this new societal syndrome. It concludes that "neo-Islamophobia" is a name for a new style of governance adopted by some Western politicians who capitalize on Islamophobia as a political strategy to gain power, thereby shaping the existing social order into an Islamophobic one.

The researchers recommend similar inquiries into other contexts too.

**Keywords:** *Islamophobia, Neo-Islamophobia, Securitization, Governance, Social Order.*

## 1. Introduction

This study is part of a larger project on "Islamophobia," which the researchers assume has evolved into a social order in some Western countries where everyone fears Islam and is thus forced to dislike this religion and everything it represents. Earlier work on the project demonstrated that this fear or hatred, identified as an ingredient of "Islamophobia" in the late 20th century by the Runnymede Report (1997), actually took birth with the re-birth of Islam in the 7th century, which shook the religious and systemic foundations of early medieval Europe in general and the Byzantine empire in particular. The Orthodox Christian hierarchy of the time, considered the spiritual arm of the political forces of Byzantium, saw the emergence of the early Islamic empire as a unique "problem" to its legacy and strove to solve it. What the clergy could offer was a discourse of a polemical nature that developed a "heresy" syndrome with major practical ramifications for Muslims, such as the crusades, culminating in a policy "solution" at the Church's General Council in Vienne between 1311 and 1312, which concluded that an academic and political assault on Muslims was their future strategy to deal with Islam.<sup>1</sup> It was the fear of Islam, more than any other single factor, that, according to Bernard Lewis, led to the beginnings of Arabic scholarship in Europe, a discipline that centuries later was named "Orientalism,"<sup>2</sup> which is now renamed "Islamophobia."<sup>3</sup> This study aims to investigate this phenomenon and determine how it manifests as neo-Islamophobia in the modern West.

## 2. Literature Review

Contemporary Islamophobia is viewed as a modern offshoot of Orientalism,<sup>4</sup> which began its formal existence with the Vienne Council's decision to establish chairs in Oriental languages<sup>5</sup> and initially served as a discursive strategy parallel to European political powers' fight against Ottoman expansionist threats into Europe.<sup>6</sup> Since the Ottomans' challenges were not religious but structural in nature,<sup>7</sup> "Islam ceased to be viewed as a formidable political and theological adversary" in the new emergent world. It, rather, came to be portrayed and perceived as "the religion of primitive nomads, devoid of intellectual or cultural sophistication."<sup>8</sup> As a result, different perceptions of Muslims as an existential threat to European political domains have emerged. However, the Ottomans' integration into Europe was short-lived; they began to lose military and political

control over European territories, culminating in the second unsuccessful siege of Vienna in 1683, marking the end of what Lewis calls a thousand-year-old Islam's threats to the Christian world and the beginning of European challenges to the Muslim world in the shape of "colonization."<sup>9</sup>

The discovery of America by Christopher Columbus in 1492 marked the beginning of colonization. The Portuguese and Spanish established large colonial networks in North and South America in the following century. By the 17th century, they had been joined by the French, Dutch, and British, and by 1920, they ruled millions of Muslims and large territories in Africa and Asia. Accordingly, Christianity appeared to be the modern world's first global order. Orientalist discourses, primarily based on the "othering" of Muslims, were used to justify Western colonial domination. The academic inquiry (Orientalism), working with colonial (imperialist) powers, yielded fresh interpretations of Islam. The novel emergent standards of thinking were not only postulated and established as intellectual and reasoned, but imperial powers also sanctioned them. Following the Western expansion into Africa, Asia and America, Islam came to be viewed from a more dominant Western perspective.<sup>10</sup> Allen pointed out that the West was becoming more powerful in these colonized lands—a power that was tied to the processes of colonization.<sup>11</sup> A sense of Western superiority, characterized by imperialism, pragmatism, and absolute contempt for Islamic civilization, predominated. The mythical East enchanted the West, whose growing poverty and backwardness only added to its allure; this was aided by specialized scholarship known as "Orientalism," which focused increasingly on the great ages of the past.<sup>12</sup> In other words, the colonized lands of the Muslim world became a golden goose for the colonial masters' geopolitical agendas.<sup>13</sup> Perhaps, that is why Edward Said defined Orientalism as "a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient (geographical entity)"—a geopolitical strategy.<sup>14</sup>

While turning the pages from the 18th to the 20th centuries, Loomba found that possibly there had never been a time in history when "the West" and "the East" had been so divided as this period has witnessed. The scholar said that through romanticized and fetishistic stories, the East was becoming everything that the West was not. The establishment of the "Orient" in relation to the "Occident" created a separate notion of "them" (Arabs and Near Eastern people) and "us" (Western people), and as a result, the Orientals were assigned the features of "Otherness." Despite their underlying differences, the colonial enterprises of various Western nations exhibited similar behaviour and developed a distinct sense of "outsiders"—both those who roamed far away on the fringes of the world and those who (such

as the Irish) lurked uncomfortably closer to home. Consider the English, French, Dutch, Spanish, and Portuguese colonialists who, among other things, blamed Turks, Africans, Native Americans, Jews, Indians, and the Irish for "laziness, aggression, violence, greed, sexual promiscuity and deviance, female masculinity and male effeminacy, bestiality, primitivism, innocence, and irrationality."<sup>15</sup> One of the consequences of this blame game was that Western administrators became prejudiced against the Muslim population within the West. To explain this newly emerging hostile attitude of French administrators toward the Muslim population, Alain Quellien used the French term "*islamophobie*,"<sup>16</sup> which the Runnymede Report defined as anti-Muslim prejudice.<sup>17</sup>

In essence, prejudice is a negative attitude that stems from two emotions: "ignorance" and "fear," with the former causing the latter.<sup>18</sup> However, modern "fear" of Islam is not caused by ignorance because Nathan Lean's work (2017) demonstrates that "some people purposefully nurture it and use it as a political strategy."<sup>19</sup> In fact, it is "a contrived fear fomented by the existing Eurocentric and Orientalist global power structure" directed at a perceived or real Muslim problem.<sup>20</sup> This implies that as Orientalism gave way to new Orientalism,<sup>21</sup> "the Orient" was perceived and portrayed as a "problem" within the West (the Occident), rather than a geographical entity beyond the Western border.<sup>22</sup> This marks the end of old Islamophobia (Orientalism), which has served as a geopolitical strategy, and the beginning of "neo-Islamophobia," which now serves as a bio-political strategy of governance in which Michel Foucault claims the subject is the administration of life and populations, with the ultimate goal of ensuring, sustaining and multiplying life to put life in order.<sup>23</sup> Though its political agenda appears to have shifted, its operational style appears to have remained consistent. It operates as "discourses" combined with "practices" that first appeared in the political and public spheres with the integration of Muslim immigrant communities into Western societies and have intensified since the tragedy of 9/11.<sup>24</sup>

Islamophobic discourses define Islam and/or Muslims as a problem that needs to be solved, while Islamophobic practices legitimize and normalize these definitions in the collective consciousness of a given society. This points to the state-centric process of securitization, which begins with discourse and ends with practices.<sup>25</sup> And hence, this study examines Islamophobic discourses within the framework of securitization theory to determine what causes Islamophobia to manifest as neo-Islamophobia—a world in which fear of and hatred for Islam become the new normal.

### **3. Theoretical Framework**

*George Orwell once said, "Do you begin to see then, what kind of world we are creating? It is the exact opposite of the stupid hedonistic Utopia that the old reformers imagined. A world of fear and treachery and torment, a world of trampling and being trampled upon, a world which will grow not less but more merciless as it refines itself."<sup>26</sup>*

The climate of fear and cultural mistrust is one of the grim aspects of contemporary Western societies, but Mark Juergensmeyer believes it is not by chance.<sup>27</sup> In everyday life, fears and phobias are thought to have influenced the way we perceive, behave, and treat others, particularly those who happen to be the "other." The preceding section explained how the West has long portrayed Muslims as the "Orient" - the "Other." Phobias also play an important role in politics as a governance strategy by eliciting popular sentiments and (re)actions in a given society.<sup>28</sup> Koutrolidou found out that Agamben's discourse on the "state of exception" (2005), Furedi's discourse on the "politics of fear" (2005), Klein's "shock doctrine" (2007), Foucault's discourse on "safety and security" (2007) and on "bio-power" (1998), all have discussed the use of phobias in the governance domain.<sup>29</sup> Then contemporary Islamophobia, of course, stands as no exception. It is currently one of the most popular governance strategies in the West. This governance style arose due to the developing of a discourse framing securitization as a "risk" society.<sup>30</sup> Take Belgian Prime Minister Charles Michel, for example, who claims, "When we speak about Europe, we speak only about the crisis: the refugee crisis, budgetary crisis, financial crisis."<sup>31</sup>

Also, the extant literature depicts a picture of the Western world rife with Islamophobic thoughts and actions that have surfaced or resurfaced as a result of crisis narratives, with securitization serving as the primary crisis narrative.<sup>32</sup> For Copenhagen School scholars, "securitization" is an extreme version of politicization with two dimensions: discourse and practice.<sup>33</sup> The former initiates the securitization process, while the latter "locks in" the securitization.<sup>34</sup> However, Basar Baysal divides this process into three phases, the first of which is crucial because securitization cannot start without a security "definition." In this phase, political leaders and high-level decision-makers play a critical role and have a significant discursive impact because they have a voice.<sup>35</sup> Media, the machinery of representation,<sup>36</sup> plays an important role in this process because they expose those voices to a larger audience, resulting in greater acceptance, rejection, and reactions.<sup>37</sup> When an issue is securitized, it

is said to be an "existential threat," it takes on a distinct character based on a "friend-vs.-enemy" dichotomy and urgency.<sup>38</sup>

In this case, neo-Islamophobia could be defined as a hostile attitude toward Muslims based on the image of Islam as an "enemy" threatening Westerners' well-being and even the survival of the West.<sup>39</sup> Though the Western imagination had long held an image of Islam as an enemy, the modern story of Islam as a new enemy of the West began with the framing of the 1979 Iranian revolution as a "return to an extreme orthodoxy in Islam" and the assertions like Islam is "anti-Western in nature."<sup>40</sup> Given the historically hostile and polarised relationship between the Western and the Islamic worlds, this was a crucial chapter in the modern history of Islam that offered reasons for Western powers to define it as a "new enemy".<sup>41</sup> Then, the media, the government, geopolitical strategists, and academic Islam experts all of the belief that Islam was a "threat to Western civilization."<sup>42</sup> They portrayed Islam as a "security problem", problematizing this religion as being "ideological" and its followers as an "existential" threat.<sup>43</sup> The first seems to be the continuation of a historically inherited perception of Islam as a "political threat," in which it was seen as a political religion and Muslims as those who exploit religious dimensions for political or military gains.<sup>44</sup> In contemporary political and security debates, as well as media discourses, the identification of Islam with violence perpetrated by Islamist groups was common, with terms such as Islamic fanaticism, Islamic extremism, and Islamic terrorism frequently used to associate Islam with the phenomena of fanaticism, extremism, and terrorism, rather than Islamist groups such as al-Qaeda.<sup>45</sup> As a result, Islam and Muslims have both been associated with a wide range of negative qualities. The second threat perception concerns only Muslim immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers. Take the phenomenon of political Islam, for example, which was also considered a "civilizational-cultural awakening" and thereby framed as a "revolt against the West"—an immediate threat to the dominant culture.<sup>46</sup> Framing Islam as a hostile ideology may cause significant concerns for local culture and, in the long run, pose significant threats to the dominant cultural (social) order; Muslims may pose similar threats to the dominant social order because they practice Islamic culture.<sup>47</sup> In this context, Muslim immigration has become a hot topic in Western political, security, and media debates.<sup>48</sup> In these debates, Muslim immigrants were framed as a threat to the survival of Western ways of life in Europe and the United States; Europeans saw the threat of immigration as Muslim or Arab, whereas Americans saw it as Latin American and Asian, focusing on Mexicans.<sup>49</sup> Once an issue is securitized, it becomes a top priority, and extraordinary measures against that security problem are legitimized.

The second phase is the construction phase, where the problem is constructed as a unique security threat. To do that, the audience (public) is persuaded of the security definition established in the first phase, and this security understanding is normalized and routinized through security practices.<sup>50</sup> In the wake of the Islamic revolution in Iran, for example, defining Islam as an "enemy" of the West has reinforced the perception that Islam poses an ideological threat to the survival of Western socio-political systems and that Muslims in the West constitute a threat to the cultural and economic health of Western society.<sup>51</sup> These perceptions not only provided substance and a definitional framework for what was perceived to be Islamophobia in the late 20th century but also justified anti-Muslim practices that persist in the West today, such as "discrimination" and "exclusion". However, the societal impact of these practices in the West after 9/11 went beyond what the earliest and most recent Runnymede Reports identified as Islamophobia.<sup>52</sup> Consider exclusionary practices, which keep excluded subjects (in this case, Muslims) from contacting, communicating with, or working with mainstream society. These practices typically involve structural operations such as using extraordinary measures, such as violence, which can violate fundamental human rights.<sup>53</sup> Western states, for example, instilled irrational fear of Islam and mainstream Muslims in the aftermath of 9/11 and the subsequent "war on terror" rather than focusing on a dangerous and lethal minority of religious fanatics and terrorists.<sup>54</sup> As a result, the United States enacted strict immigration laws aimed specifically at Muslims, increased airport surveillance, and random questioning upon arrival, resulting in detentions.<sup>55</sup> Similarly, in Europe, Belgium's ban on the Burka/veil, Switzerland's proposal to prohibit the construction of minarets (or mosque cupolas) as a sign of "Islamization," French President Nicolas Sarkozy's declaration that French citizenship requires full integration or assimilation into French culture or lifestyle, his government's subsequent refusal to grant citizenship to a Muslim woman because she insisted on wearing the Burka, and German Chancellor Angela Merkel's emphasis that "mosque cupolas" should not be higher than "church steeples".<sup>56</sup> These were not isolated incidents of Muslim securitization; they were manifestations of state-driven Islamophobia based on Islam's enemy image. On the other hand, these incidents point out that the securitization of Islam is, in effect, the securitization of Muslims.<sup>57</sup> According to securitization theory, security practices directed at Muslims may exacerbate others' fears of Islam, thus normalizing and routinizing Islamophobic tendencies among the people.<sup>58</sup>

The last phase focuses on how the securitization of one group (in this case, Muslims) leads to insecurity consequences for others (in this case, Westerners) in a given society.<sup>59</sup> Consider the

surveillance of Muslim subjects, for example, which has been engrained in Western societies “from online to onlife” functioning as a security apparatus of control and a source of insecurity.<sup>60</sup> Surveillance practices are critical in global population management and containment, resulting in the emergence of a global “banopticon” aimed in part at containing foreigners (Muslim immigrants) on the margins. It has become a new form of governmentality of liberal regimes that Didier Bigo calls a banopticon dispositif. That dispositif is characterized by “exceptionalism” within liberalism, a logic of “exclusion” resting upon the construction of profiles that frame which is “abnormal” and upon the imperative of freedom transformed into a “normalization” of social groups whose behaviours are monitored for their present and their future.<sup>61</sup> This logic means that the surveillance of those characterized as “suspects” and “dangerous” sits at the heart of policing rather than the universal surveillance of wider society.<sup>62</sup> Currently, Muslims in the US and European societies are being profiled, monitored, and targeted for sting operations by law enforcement; mosques, Islamic institutions, Muslim civil rights organizations, and charity organisations are all being watched, suspected, and accused of defending or supporting extremists without clear evidence.<sup>63</sup> On the other hand, using surveillance technologies to contain the Muslim population is a prelude to a larger strategy of social engineering and discipline aimed at “inclusion” into mainstream society. Using surveillance to manage and contain a given population, according to Qurashi, provides the detailed knowledge required to see the population and break it down into manageable units. Likewise, the surveillance gaze makes it possible for a population to be understood, which is required for it to become a site of action: identifying the “risks” that must be neutralized; unacceptable, abnormal behaviours and ideas that must be disciplined using extending social norms to shape thoughts and behaviours.<sup>64</sup> This process corresponds to Foucault's concept of “soul training,” which he identified in his “panopticon model,” which aims to transform individuals so that they monitor their own behaviour in accordance with prescribed social order, to the point where the boundaries between “acceptable” and “unacceptable,” as well as “normal” and “abnormal,” are realigned.<sup>65</sup> In this way, surveillance practices paved the way for the neo-phenomenon, distorting the lens through which Muslims are viewed in the West to the point where even their identity has become unacceptable and is seen as an existential threat.<sup>66</sup> Contemporarily, the fear of Islam has become so common in Western popular culture that it has come to represent an Islamophobic social order in some parts of the West—a neo-phenomenon where hate for Islam is the new normal.

To summarize, the securitization of Islam, and therefore of Muslims as a new social and political order, is a manifestation of

“neo-Islamophobia”, a population-ruling strategy that leads to establishing an Islamophobic society. This strategy is a three-part process: first, discursive practices to define Islam as a source of terror and to convince the audience (public) of Muslims being a horde of chained devils ready to attack the West at any moment; second, normalizing and routinizing these definitions through security practices directed at Islamic subjects or objects; and third, the public’s insecurities about Islam and Muslims as a result of these practices. Arguably, the net outcome of this process is a social order replete with Islamophobic thoughts and actions, in which everyone fears Islam and is thus forced to dislike this religion and everything it represents, regardless of personal inclinations. However, securitization is a phenomenon that, according to Baysal, lasts until the issue is fully de-securitized.<sup>67</sup> In this sense, “neo-Islamophobia” could be regarded as an ongoing phenomenon in the West, especially in light of the literature cited above, which indicates rising fears and insecurities about Islam and Muslims in Western societies, particularly the United States. This necessitates an investigation into neo-Islamophobia in the United States, which manifests in stereotypical media coverage of Islam and Muslims, just like old Islamophobia.<sup>68</sup> To investigate that, the current study looks at the representations of Muslims in the US media and how neo-Islamophobia is manifested in these representations. The researchers use the following methodology to answer this question.

#### **4. Methodology**

This study looks into “neo-Islamophobia” as a result of Islam and/or Muslims being securitized. Securitization analyses generally employ a diverse set of data. The starting point for researching the securitization of Muslim migration by the far-right, for example, is to begin with the far-right parties’ programmes, manifestos, and, in general, all official documents in which they express their position on Islam and Muslim migrants. However, this may not be enough because the language can be strictly controlled.<sup>69</sup> Thus, the researchers collected data from the mainstream US press, including newspapers and wire services, and also because Gerlinde Mautner claims these are the most obvious sources for studying dominant discourses, in this case, Islamophobic narratives.<sup>70</sup> The data was searched through the “*Lexis-Nexis*” database by using the terms “Muslim” and “Islam”, which yielded a total of 3153 articles (including news reports and leading articles) published in the US wires and newspapers during the three-month period from November 2016 to January 2017. This time period is significant in news coverage because it includes Donald Trump’s announcements about halting Muslim migration to the United States to combat Islamist terror. This period may be considered a critical discourse moment,

and such moments can challenge the established discursive positions.<sup>71</sup>

There are several approaches to studying media discourses, but the content and discourse analysis are two of the most common. The researchers employed the Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA) since it provides the methodology for studying how prejudiced ideologies, such as Islamophobia or neo-Islamophobia, are linguistically constructed, as well as how discriminatory or exclusionary practices are prepared, legitimized, and normalized through discourse.<sup>72</sup> This methodology employs two levels of qualitative analysis: entry-level, which concentrates on content and related “surface” aspects, and in-depth analysis, which focuses on pragmatic, rhetorical, and argumentative features and patterns of discursive representations.<sup>73</sup>

This analysis began with a review of all 3153 articles to determine their relevance to the topic of the study. For this review, each article was read critically several times. It enabled the researchers to reduce the data set to a manageable sample size of 187 articles, then processed for entry-level and in-depth analyses. Within the entry-level analysis, the main category is discourse topics, defined in DHA as units summarising the meaning of entire texts.<sup>74</sup> This analysis involves several open-ended reads of every article, with special attention given to headlines and leading paragraphs to determine the discourse topic of an article.<sup>75</sup> Whereas in-depth analysis entails investigating discursive strategies of “positive self” and “negative other” presentation. These strategies include nomination strategies that employ membership categorization devices, like biological, naturalizing, and depersonalizing metaphors, metonymies, and synecdoches, to represent social actors, particularly in-groups and out-groups; predictional strategies that attribute positive and negative stereotypical characteristics to these actors; and argumentation strategies that justify and legitimize these positive and negative attributions to the social actors.<sup>76</sup> The expressions, which are part of the argumentation, collectively constitute a complex “speech act” aimed at persuading a certain audience and changing behaviour.<sup>77</sup>

## **5. Key Findings**

At the entry-level, this analysis looked at all 3153 articles to determine their relevance to the study and to identify dominant discourse topics. It has already been established that Islamophobia (and neo-Islamophobia) emerges from negative representations of Muslims and/or Islam.<sup>78</sup> So all those articles that simply mentioned the terms “Muslim” or “Islam” were excluded from the analysis. This

revealed 187 articles that contained negativities towards Muslims or Islam. Following that, these articles (187) were investigated for dominant discourse topics. The table below summarizes the findings of this investigation, indicating the number of articles classified under each topic as well as the absolute percentage:

Table-1: Discourse topics identified in the entry-level analysis: number of articles and percentage		
Discourse Topics	No. of Articles	Percentage (N=187)
Muslims in Burma	02	01.07
Veil/Burqa/Hijab Ban	06	03.21
Islamist extremism and terrorism	21	11.22
Mosques and Religious Noise	08	04.28
Hate Groups	02	01.07
Muslim immigration	62	33.16
Hate Crimes	86	45.99
<b>Total</b>	<b>187</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 1 shows that “hate crimes” against Muslims were the most frequently discussed topics in the US press discourse, followed by “Muslim immigration” and “Islamist extremism and terrorism”. A hate crime is a criminal offence against a person or property motivated in whole or in part by an offender’s bias against a race, religion, disability, sexual orientation, ethnicity, gender, or gender identity.<sup>79</sup> The “hate crimes” reported in the US press ranged from verbal and physical abuse against Muslim students, headscarves, and hijab-wearing women and girls in schools and public places to harassing or beating Muslims on the street. They also included sending hate mail to Islamic centres and mosques, spray painting slurs on mosques, and vandalizing mosques. Given the commonly held belief that the media portrays social reality, it is reasonable to conclude that the most frequent coverage of hate crimes in the US press presents a picture of a society where enmity against Islam and Muslims is a public attitude, pointing to a neo-phenomenon. These findings raise the question of what motivated these hate crimes, or more specifically, whether fear of Muslims or fear of Islam motivated the collective anti-Muslim behaviour of US society. The section that follows attempts to answer this question in light of the data that has been analyzed.

## 6. Discussion

In-depth analysis of the articles classified as “hate crimes” revealed that fear of Islam was the motivating factor behind all of these crimes, regardless of whether they were committed against Muslim individuals, Muslim objects, or Muslim places. Consider the

anonymous threatening letter sent to mosques in the US, in which Muslims are described as “vile”, “evil”, “filthy people”, “the children of Satan”, and “worship the devil”.<sup>80</sup> Or, consider the “Open Letter to Muslims in America”, published in the News-Leader, in which the writer (Rush) questions Muslims, saying, “Do you not realize [...] that people claiming affiliation with your faith (Islam) are killing innocent people all over the world and boast about doing it at the behest and approval of your god (Allah), your prophet (Muhammad) and many of your religious leaders (imams and Islamic clerics)?”<sup>81</sup> Or, take a man, for example, who once yelled at a Muslim player (Shalaby), “Nobody, nobody, nobody wants your evil cult in this county”.<sup>82</sup> These are just a few examples from US society reported in the press that show how fear of Islam transforms people into bigots and drives them to commit acts of verbal and physical aggression against Muslim individuals and Muslim objects and places. These findings prompt the question of “who and why” enforces or reinforces this fear in a society’s general cognitive framework.

In order to find an answer, the researchers looked at external voices (arguments) that were made part of US press discourse in the form of direct and indirect quotations. The researchers found that Donald Trump’s anti-Muslim rhetoric during the 2016 presidential campaign sparked a flood of anti-Muslim sentiments in communities across the US.<sup>83</sup> Some survey reports reported by the press also confirm these findings. For instance, many texts cited the Southern Poverty Law Center’s (SPLC) report, which reported an alarming number of incidents of hateful intimidation and harassment against Muslims nationwide since the November 8, 2016 elections and claimed that many of these incidents involved direct references to President-elect Trump’s campaign and slogans.<sup>84</sup> Jeanette Mendez, head of Oklahoma State University’s political science department, was quoted in a text and believed that “Trump’s victory is inspiring individuals to openly launch threats against their perceived enemies” and “exposing long-standing racism and bigotry in American culture”.<sup>85</sup> In another quotation found, Muslim commentator Anis Shakirah Mohd appeared to support this viewpoint, saying that Trump’s victory legitimized and normalized Islamophobic tendencies in many communities, raising them to new heights and empowering some to commit hate crimes against Muslims.<sup>86</sup>

The above findings are consistent with those reported by Khaled Beydoun, who claimed that Trump capitalized on Islamophobia as a “full-fledged campaign strategy” to become the 45th President of the United States.<sup>87</sup> He also dubbed Trump the first “Islamophobia president”, accusing him of ushering in an Islamophobic society in which people with an Islamic outlook have become unacceptably foreign to Americans.<sup>88</sup> Consider a note left by

unidentified assailants after attacking the car of a woman wearing a hijab, calling her a “bitch” and telling her to “get the F- out” because “this is our nation”,<sup>89</sup> or another incident in which a woman screamed at a female shopper wearing a hijab, “You’re a terrorist”, “Get out of here”.<sup>90</sup> On one hand, these public manifestations of anti-Muslim prejudice demonstrate that “with an increased fear of Islamic extremist terrorism, the symbol of the hijab has become associated with fear.”<sup>91</sup> And on the other hand, this fear seems to be the direct result of Trump’s rhetoric, which was publicized by the media. He “repeatedly made comments about Muslims that demonized an entire faith and community”,<sup>92</sup> such as, “I think Islam hates us” and said it’s difficult to separate “radical” Islam from Islam itself.<sup>93</sup> In his public statements, he often used the term “radical Islam” to refer to “threats posed by terrorist groups” such as the Islamic State.<sup>94</sup> At one point, he advocated for a ban on people from terrorist-infested countries to protect the country from terrorism, arguing that “there are territories, terror states, and terror nations that we’re not going to allow the people to come into our country”.<sup>95</sup> While at another point, he advocated for a total and complete ban on Muslims entering the US, proposing that “anyone who believes Shari’ah law supplants American law will not be given an immigrant visa”.<sup>96</sup> Trump’s politicized fear of Islam, as well as his publicized calls for a Muslim ban, all point to a mediated process of securitization. According to the facts revealed thus far, this mediated process has resulted in a new Islamophobic reality in US society, where hatred for Islam seems to be the new normal. How did the media contribute to this neo-phenomenon?

According to Stuart Hall, the media has the power to include those voices that align with their agendas and exclude those that do not, and that wider publicity may get wider reactions.<sup>97</sup> A close examination of the discursive strategies used for Muslims in the US press revealed that they frequently represented leading politicians’ and high-level decision-makers’ anti-Islam sentiments in order to make their personal prejudices against Muslims general. Consider the arguments of former Czech President Milos Zeman, who once “urged citizens to arm themselves against a possible “super-Holocaust” carried out by Muslim terrorists”.<sup>98</sup> Or think about the assertions made by Mr. Fillon, a former French prime minister, that radical Islam represents “totalitarianism like the Nazis”.<sup>99</sup> He proposed that “we’ve got to reduce immigration to its strict minimum” because “our country is not a sum of communities; it is an identity!”<sup>100</sup> Or consider Trump’s nominee for attorney general, Sen. Jeff Sessions (R-Ala.), who has backed the president-elect’s demand for a temporary ban on Muslim immigration, claiming that a “toxic ideology” lies at the root of Islam.<sup>101</sup> Or, consider Trump’s designee for national security

advisor, Michael T. Flynn, who describes Islam as a “political ideology” and compares it to “malignant cancer”.<sup>102</sup>

The perception of Islam as a political religion, or the so-called “script” of Islamism, is not new to US society because it is the official version of the US authorities on Islam, particularly since the tragedy of 9/11. Consider US former President George W. Bush’s September 20, 2001, address to a joint session of Congress, in which he stated that “our enemy is a radical network of terrorists”.<sup>103</sup> However, the enemy is no longer the Muslim groups blamed for terrorism, but rather all Muslims, as reflected in Flynn’s statement found in US press discourse, in which he claimed that Islamism is the same as Nazism and Fascism, that it is a “vicious cancer inside the bodies of 1.7 billion people” that must be “excised”,<sup>104</sup> and that “fear of Muslims is rational”.<sup>105</sup> In this example, the disease metaphor described Islam as a whole rather than just the Muslim groups suspected of supporting terrorism. And, after the media (press, in this case) made such arguments and other anti-Islam sentiments of leading politicians, high-level decision-makers, and security experts public, it is reasonable to assume that anyone who appears to be Muslim in US society is accused of terrorism and is considered a terrorist, just like the hijab-wearing women who were targeted in hate crimes due to their Islamic identity. These facts reflect a new reality: Muslims are perceived by Americans as enemies, not friends, and this perception was created by leading politicians and those in positions of authority and now extends beyond the ruling class. Take, for example, an incident of hate crime reported by the US press in which a Longmont resident (Harry McNevin) displayed a homemade sign bearing an anti-Muslim message in front of his home: “Muslim’s kill Muslim’s (sic) if they don’t agree. Where does that leave you, ‘infidel’.” He said the message expresses his belief that Muslims are a threat and should not enter the country and that “They’re not our friends, they’re our enemies”.<sup>106</sup> These findings point to the following conclusion for this study.

## **7. Conclusion**

This study concludes that “Islamophobia”, also generally referred to be a form of Orientalism, is a historical construct that was officially sanctioned by the Vienne Council in 1312 as a discursive strategy to deal with the arising challenges of Islam in the form of the Ottoman Empire’s expansion into Europe. Later, it was used to facilitate European imperialist projects in the Muslim world, giving way to prejudice against the Muslim population within the West. It has now come to represent a governance strategy in which political elites and state functionaries use rhetoric to instill fear of Islam in the public, causing the general population to be prejudiced against

Muslims on a societal level, making Muslims in society unacceptably foreign to the dominant culture, and thus transforming the existing social order into an Islamophobic one.

The findings in the preceding section demonstrated an Islamophobic society in which Muslims were the targets of hate crimes primarily because of their Islamic identity and that this new societal syndrome was developed due to Trump and his advisors' anti-Islam rhetoric, which was widely publicized by the media. These signs and symptoms point to a new form of Islamophobia that goes beyond what is typically understood by the term. The term "Islamophobia" in the US requires the prefix "neo" to account for its new political functions and the resulting social symptoms that are taking the shape of an Islamophobic order in the US society. "Neo-Islamophobia" thus refers to a new style of governance adopted by some Western politicians (Donald Trump, in this case) who capitalized on Islamophobia as a political strategy to gain power, thereby shaping the existing social order into an Islamophobic one.

This means the West is entering a new phase of Islamic fear, where people are forced to hate Islam and everything it stands for. The researchers, therefore, recommend more research into this neo-phenomenon to find solutions. Perhaps it is not simply "neo-Islamophobia", social scientists must admit that this is an ideal state that is assuming the form of social order for the West, but it will be disastrous if it occurs. Consider: one cannot live in comfort and peace in the United States unless one dislikes and despises communism, Russia, and al-Qaeda/ISIS/Daesh; in Israel unless one despises Palestinians and does not consider Palestine to be a Jewish land; in the West, as a whole, unless one recognizes North Korea as a scar on the face of the globe; and the same has been developing in the West towards Muslims and Islam. Such a remorseful state of affairs has reduced respect for places of religious worship, people from other religious ideologies, and people of colour in the West.

This research may pave the way for Western policymakers to understand that this anathema has a huge potential to put their peace at risk and develop policies that prohibit state functionaries from using Islamophobic language. It could also urge the media not to publicize such language, in turn benefiting not only Muslims in the West but the West as a whole.

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