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Prejudice, Politics, and Islamophobia: How Hatred Reshapes Democratic Societies

Prasangka, Politik, and Islamofobia: Bagaimana Kebencian Membentuk Ulang Masyarakat Demokratis

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ABSTRACT: In the past few years, there has been an extensive rise in Islamophobia-related cases in Western democratic countries. This study, through the lens of prejudice theory, explores the factors that have increased pervasive hatred toward Muslim community, due to social fragmentation, political polarization and hate-motivated speeches **initiated by the political parties and state**. The hatred in a democratic society is the result of political narratives which later reshaping policy to target Muslim minority. The research aims to analyze and examine how deep-rooted bias against the Muslim communities through institutional, ideological and political hatreds continues shaping public, state, and media perception **to discriminate from the main society**. This study has applied qualitative content analysis to understand the increasing pattern of hate-motivated crimes. The objective behind the study is to trace historical and present narratives through hate speeches that fuel anti-Muslim sentiment, including how terrorism is linked with security threat, which reinforce prejudice against the Muslim community**. This study, with the help of prejudice approach, explains that what are the factors and circumstances that make political parties and the state to increase their hatred towards the Muslim community through hate speeches which promote islamophobia in society.** The findings of this study explore that the hatred through political speeches not only fragmented the Muslim minority from the mainstream society but also discriminatory changes in the policy, legitimizing the activity. The hatred in the democratic countries has increased criminal activities, surveillance, exclusion from society, and institutional biases.

ABSTRAK: *Dalam beberapa tahun terakhir, terjadi peningkatan kasus Islamofobia yang signifikan di negara-negara demokrasi Barat. Studi ini, melalui sudut pandang teori prasangka, mengeksplorasi faktor-faktor yang meningkatkan kebencian terhadap komunitas Muslim, akibat framentasi sosial, polarisasi politik, ujaran bermotif kebencian yang digerakkan oleh partai politik dan negara. Perubahan ini dihasilkan melalui narasi politik yang kemudian membentuk ulang kebijakan untuk menyasar minoritas Muslim. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis dan mengkaji bagaimana bias yang telah mengakar terhadap komunitas Muslim, melalui kebencian institusional, ideologis, maupun politis, terus menerus membentuk persepsi public, negara, dan media sehingga memisahkan mereka dari masyarakat utama. Studi ini menerapkan analisis knten kualitatif untuk memahami pola peningkatan kejahatan yang bermomtif kebencian Tujuan utamanya Adalah untuk menelusuri narasi historis dan kontemporer dalam ujaran kebencian yang memicu sentiment anti-Muslim, termasuk bagaimana terorisme dikaitkan dengan ancaman keamanan yang memperkuat prasangka terhadap komunitas Muslim. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan prasangka, studi ini menjelaskan faktor dan kondisi yang mendorong partai politik dan negara untuk meningkatkan kebencian mereka terhadap komunitas Muslim melalui ujaran kebencian yang memperkuat islamophobia di masyarakat. Temuan studi ini mengeksplorasi bahwa kebencian melalui ujaran tidak hanya memecah belah minoritas Muslim dari Masyarakat umum, tetapi juga mendorong Perubahan kebijakan yang bersifat diskriminatif, yang melegitimasi praktik-praktik tersebut. Kebencian yang tumbuh di negara-negara demokratis telah meningkatkan tindakan criminal, pengawasan berlebihan, eksklusi sosial, serta bias institusional.*

Keywords:
islamophobia; democracy; hatred; Europe; prejudice theory

Kata Kunci:
islamofobia; demokrasi; kebencian; Eropa; teori prasangka

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1. Introduction

Islamophobia is an unfounded fear, hatred, or bias against Islam and Muslims. It includes a variety of negative attitudes and discriminatory actions aimed at individuals or groups because of their Muslim identity.

A phobia manifests as a persistent dread of an object or situation. In the case of a phobia, one experiences anxiety upon encountering the feared subject, leading them to evade it. This avoidance is a key sign of phobia, or specifically, Islamophobia. Islamophobia goes beyond mere fear; it encompasses stereotypes, bias, and mistrust directed at Muslims, particularly in Western democratic societies. Hate speech and hate crimes are among the most serious criminal offenses, driven wholly or partially by the offenders' biases based on perceived or actual attributes such as religion, race, nationality, and origin.[1] Hate Crimes manifest in various forms such as violence, attack, harm, persecution, attempted murder, and even murder.[2] The motive for hate crimes often stems from the offender's prejudice and animosity towards the victim's perceived group rather than any particular grievance.

The experiences of Muslims in Western democracies are often affected by various forms of hatred, discrimination, and prejudice, which significantly impact their safety and well-being.[3] Political rhetoric often worsens these sentiments, as some leaders and political parties take advantages of the hatred and to express anti-Muslim biases for electoral gain, thereby legitimizing societal prejudices. Political influences are also changing the voice of media, which frequently depicting Muslims negatively, particularly in the context of terrorism and cultural clashes, that reinforces harmful stereotypes and fuels public fear and hostility. Manifestations of this hostility range from hate speech, exclusion, bullying, and discrimination to more extreme acts like assault, murder, bombings, arson, vandalism, abductions, and public protests directed against Islam-related individuals and institutions.[4] In some cases politicians, in their hate speeches, stigmatize Muslims by calling them "terrorists" and ignore their positive contributions to their communities and countries, such as paying taxes, contribution in workforce, social development activities, etc. Thus, several incidences reported in which Muslim are victimized by hate crimes, including physical assaults, vandalism of mosques, and verbal harassment, all driven by religious bigotry.[5] Muslims were socially excluded from the main stream society, social exclusion further marginalizes Muslim communities, limiting their access to education, employment, and housing, which perpetuates cycles of poverty and disadvantage. Cultural misunderstandings and a lack of understanding of Muslim practices contribute to intolerance and discrimination, while the rise of far-right extremism in the democratic countries poses an additional threat, as these groups often target Muslims with their xenophobic and racist ideologies.[6] Often acts of terrorism committed by Muslim individuals were linked to the Islam which is creating Islamophobia atmosphere.

Acts of hate against Muslims have taken many forms, including verbal insults, physical attacks, gun violence, slayings, bomb attacks, and the vandalism of treasured Muslim properties like mosques, schools, and graveyards. This escalation in hostility against Muslims is often reflected in how Islam is portrayed negatively in media outlets, books, and public debates, risking global harmony. Western media often ties Islam with negative connotations and prejudice. George Gerbner criticized that the media trades in promoting terror and violence.[7] While global counterterrorism actions have made people more security-conscious worldwide, they have also led to harmful stereotypes against Muslims through name-calling and unfounded accusations. This kind of stereotyping is an unintended consequence of the fight against terrorism.

Western countries' media portrays Muslim communities as different than the rest communities, the voices of media is mostly aligned with the state narratives, particularly in those countries where right-wing political parties are dominant. It has been noticed widely that during election campaigns, political parties depict Muslim

1 K. Sun, "The legal definition of hate crime and the hate offender's distorted cognitions", *Issues in mental health nursing*, 27 (6), (2006): 597-604. https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1080/01612840600642877

2 J. Weinstein, "First amendment challenges hate crime legislation: Where's the speech?" *Criminal Justice Ethics*, 11 (2), (1992): 6-20. https://doi.org/10.1080/0731129X.1992.9991917

3 P. Weller, "Addressing religious discrimination and Islamophobia: Muslims and liberal democracies. The case of the United Kingdom". *Journal of Islamic Studies*, 17(3), (2006): 295-325.; T. F. Pettigrew, "Reactions toward the new minorities of Western Europe". *Annual review of sociology*, *24*(1), (1998): 77-103.; D. Meet, Muslims in Europe and in the United States, under the book *'When Islam and Democracy Meet: Muslims in Europe and in the United States*' by Jocelyne Cesari, (London: Springer, 2004).

4 M. H. Khan, et. al. "Muslims' representation in Donald Trump's anti-Muslim-Islam statement: A critical discourse analysis Religions", *Religion*, 10(2), (2019):115.

5 R. Ussif, & K. Salifu, "Islamophobia: The Issues And Challenges Faced By Muslims", *International Journal of Academic Multidisciplinary Research* ,Vol. 4 Issue 10, October, (2020): 198-205.

6 F. Husain, & M. O'Brien, "Muslim communities in Europe: Reconstruction and transformation", *Current Sociology*, 48(4), (2000): 1-13.

7 G. Gerbner, *Stories of violence and the public interest. The Media in Question: popular cultures and public interests,* (London, California, New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1998).

community as a threat and link to the social security, economic security and cultural factors. Entman's theory of media illustrated the media frame their own stories to emphasis certain issues and oversights other issues to produce skewed perceptions.[8] This kind of interpretation and negative role of media is continuous on rise in which Muslim communities are living with fear and facing structural discrimination on daily basis. In such circumstances if state, judiciary, legislative, and media all side with one voice then they impose other restrictions to make them complete outsiders in the community which affect, immigration policy, citizenship amendment, restriction of religious practices etc.[9] All these discourses is already highlighted by the Said's in his work Orientalism, which shows that how the West constructs Muslim community as the perpetual "other" to control them.[10]

2. Method

The present study is qualitative as well as theoretical, which is based on the collected data from the secondary sources to analyze and examine the rise of Islamophobia in Western democracies. The researcher has applied prejudiced theoretical approaches, which included institutional and ideology-based animosity, security concerns based on terrorism narratives, and discrimination based on historical prejudice of anti-Muslim sentiment. This research is based on the data collected through qualitative content analysis, which has collected data of hate-motivated crimes from various sources, books, articles, magazines, media reports and policy documents. Theoretical-based thematic approaches in included to understand and examine how pervasive hatred is legitimized by right-wing governments in democratic countries through hate speeches which marginalize Muslim communities. All the collected data from media sources have been examined and verified through other sources as well to produce genuine data to interpret and identify the reason behind the structure of hatred in the democratic society.

3. Findings and Discussion

3.1 Theoretical Approaches on Prejudice and Islamophobia

Gordon W. Allport's influential work on prejudice, particularly his book "The Nature of Prejudice," presents a comprehensive framework for understanding the operation and impact of prejudice on groups, including Muslims.[11] Allport's theories are essential in explaining how prejudices form, persist, and affect targeted communities. One significant contribution from Allport is his definition of prejudice as an aversive or hostile attitude towards individuals based solely on their group membership, attributing objectionable qualities to the entire group.[12] This highlights the irrational and generalizing nature of prejudice, where people are judged based on stereotypes associated with their group rather than their individual characteristics. In Western societies, Muslims have often been unjustly accused for various social and economic problems, as well as security concerns, particularly after terrorist attacks on World Trade Centre. This misplaced blame perpetuates negative stereotypes and fuels further discrimination. Allport also emphasizes the role of social norms and institutional structures in perpetuating prejudice.[13] Societal norms that endorse negative views of Muslims create an environment where discriminatory behaviors are tolerated or even encouraged. This is exacerbated by institutional policies such as profiling and surveillance, which disproportionately target Muslim communities, reinforcing the perception of Muslims as threats. Allport emphasizes the psychological necessity for individuals to categorize their social environment, which may result in oversimplifying and stereotyping groups.[14] This categorization often leads to a mentality of "us versus them," where the in-group (non-Muslims) regards the out-group (Muslims) with suspicion and hostility. This phenomenon is frequently observed in Western societies, where Muslim are often perceived as fundamentally different and incompatible with the dominant cultural values.

8 Entman, R. (1993). *Framing: Toward Clarification of a Fractured Paradigm*. Journal of Communication, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.1993.tb01304.x

9 Kumar, D. (2012). *Islamophobia and the Politics of Empire*. Haymarket Books.

10 Said, Orientalism Reconsidered

11 Gordon W. Allport, *The Nature of Prejudice*, (London: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1954)

12 I. Katz, Gordon Allport's" The nature of prejudice", *Political Psychology*, (1991): 125-157.; R. Brown, *Prejudice: Its social psychology,* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 2011).

13 Allport, The Nature of Prejudice

14 Allport, The Nature of Prejudice

3.2 Institutional, Ideological, and Political Animosities

In today's world, we heavily depend on the media for understanding people, cultures, and events globally. However, we often overlook the media's influence and become numb to its tendencies of stereotyping and framing. These media frames shape public perceptions in society. Mainstream media remains a primary source of information about Islam and Muslims for Western audiences. Muslims worldwide make up about one-quarter of the global population, with one-fifth residing in countries where Islam is not the majority religion.[15] In Western societies, Islam is the principal minority faith, and Muslims are the fastest-growing religious group.[16] Despite the diversity within Islamic traditions, Islam is often misunderstood and misrepresented in various contexts.[17]

Western civilizations are having institution animosities towards Muslim people due to their ideologies, policies and agenda which they use to gain electorate.[18] For example, it can include travel bans,[19] hijab ban,[20]boycotting traders, ban on religious practices[21] and increase surveillance[22] on them. Most of these policies create a hatred environment which make Muslim communities as 'out-group' those who were excluded and marginalized from the main community.[23] It has been noticed that even democratic countries law enforcement agencies are heavily influenced by political parties which discriminate Muslims community and give judgement in the favor of 'in-group', which further fuel the hatred and violence environment in the society.[24] Individual as well as group target Muslim communities. It has been seen that the minorities students often face bias policies which discriminate against their religious belief and practices. For instance, in hijab ban, lack of accommodations, through biased education curricula are often excluding the secular idea and creating space for in-group and out-group in societies.[25] If the law remains silent in any country it gives vigilantes as opportunity to commit crimes. Muslim often due to these out group approaches excluded from the workplaces, political parties' representation. For instance, around 46 million Muslims population is residing in Europe,[26] which is roughly 6 percent of the entire population, but if we see their representation in the parliament is almost negligible. The UK parliament

15 Grim, Brian J., and Becky Hsu. "Estimating the Global Muslim Population: Size and Distribution of the World's Muslim Population." *Interdisciplinary Journal of Research on Religion* 7 (2011).

16 Fardila, Ucik Ana, Fardan Mahmudatul Imamah, and Intan Sari Dewi. "Why islam is the world fastest growing religious group despite of terrorism issues? An initial research of terrorism issues and islam awareness." *JARES (Journal of Academic Research and Sciences)* 5, no. 1 (2020): 1-13.

17 M. Eid, *Perceptions about Muslims in Western Societies. In: Eid, M., Karim, K.H. (eds) Re-Imagining the Other,* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014),

18 S. Sheehi, *Islamophobia: The ideological campaign against Muslims*. (Sydney: SCB Distributors, 2010).; Robinson, Francis. "Islam and the West: Clash of civilisations?." *Asian Affairs* 33, no. 3 (2002): 307-320.

19 Egwuonwu, Nnamdi and Prindiville, Tara "Trump Announces Sweeping U.S. Travel Ban for 12 Countries." 2025. https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/trump-administration/trump-announces-new-travel-restrictions-19-countries-12-outright-bans-rcna211073.

20 Reporter, Guardian Staff. 2025. "Burqa Ban Bill Approved by Portugal's Parliament Seen as Targeting Muslim Women." The Guardian, October 17, 2025. https://www.theguardian.com/world/2025/oct/17/burqa-ban-bill-approved-by-portugals-parliament-seen-as-targeting-muslim-women.; Amnesty International. 2025. "France: Hijab Ban in All Sports Would Violate Human Rights and Target Muslim Women and Girls." February 19, 2025. https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2025/02/france-hijab-ban-in-all-sports-would-violate-human-rights-and-target-muslim-women-and-girls/.; Fatima, Sakina. 2022. "European Court of Justice Bans Headscarf in Workplaces." The Siasat Daily, October 15, 2022. https://www.siasat.com/european-court-of-justice-bans-headscarf-in-workplaces-2434925/.

21 Burgen, Stephen. 2025. "Outrage as Spanish Town Bans Muslim Religious Festivals From Public Spaces." The Guardian, August 7, 2025. https://www.theguardian.com/world/2025/aug/06/spain-local-authority-ban-muslims-public-facilities-religious-celebrations; Giuffrida, Angela. 2024. "Italian Town in Turmoil After Far-right Mayor Bans Muslim Prayers." The Guardian, February 18, 2024. https://www.theguardian.com/world/2024/feb/18/italian-town-monfalcone-rightwing-mayor-muslim-prayers-ban

22 France. 2020. "France to Investigate Dozens of Mosques Suspected of Radicalisation." France 24, December 3, 2020. https://www.france24.com/en/europe/20201203-france-to-investigate-dozens-of-mosques-suspected-of-radicalisation; Grieshaber, Kirsten. 2025. "Germany Bans Muslim Group | AP News." AP News. November 5, 2025. https://apnews.com/article/germany-raids-muslim-group-banned-6cebdda84a6e543cee15f7f6b6bd9d92.

23 Verkuyten, Maykel. "Justifying discrimination against Muslim immigrants: Out-group ideology and the five-step social identity model." *British Journal of Social Psychology* 52, no. 2 (2013): 345-360.

24 C. M. Warner, & M. W. Wenner, "Religion and the political organization of Muslims in Europe", *Perspectives on Politics*, 4(3), (2006): 457-479.

25 ShiaWaves. 2025. "87% of Muslim Students in Germany Face Racism in Schools and Public Spaces." Shia Waves, January 31, 2025. https://shiawaves.com/english/news/117957-87-of-muslim-students-in-germany-face-racism-in-schools-and-public-spaces/.; A. Abdelgadir, & V. Fouka, "Political secularism and Muslim integration in the West: Assessing the effects of the French headscarf ban". *American Political Science Review*, 114(3), (2020): 707-723.; A. Hamdan, "The issue of hijab in France: reflections and analysis". *Muslim World Journal of Human Rights*, 4(2) (2007): 1-27.

26 World Affairs. 2025. "Muslim Population by Country 2025." Human Assistance & Develop Intl. May 4, 2025. https://www.islamicity.org/104639/muslim-population-by-country-2025/

has only 25 Muslim MPs out of a total of 650 MPs, which contributes 3.8-4 percent.[27] The German Parliament, Bundestag, has only 6 MPs in the parliament out of 700 MPs, which contributes less than 1 percent.[28] France has 19 Muslim lawmakers out of 577 deputies, which represents 3.29 percent.[29] Similarly United States in its 119th US Congress has only 4 Muslim members in the House.[30] Lack of representation in the parliament sidelined their voice, due to that Muslim minorities experiencing unfair treatment from both government and law enforcement agencies to address this discrimination which further entrench animosities.[31]

Ideological enmities are extremely fueled at social and cultural levels and stereotypes that have continued to be portrayed in media. Due to stereotypes, often it portrays as violent, conservatives, backward, untrustworthy which have been linked to the historically, which continuously reinforce negative perception among society. It has been noticed that the scholarly works also citing and linking Muslim communities with terrorist attack. This religious bigotry and extremism contribute to the spread of Islamophobia.[32]

Political campaigns reveal how Islamophobia is used to unite and energize supporters. The media significantly influences public perceptions and opinions of Muslims through biased reporting, sensationalism, and misinformation, which contribute to the vilification of Muslim communities. Populist and nationalist movements amplify these sentiments, using anti-Muslim rhetoric to foster unity among their supporters while promoting division and exclusion. Political changes have reshaped the media landscape, increasing hostility towards Muslims.[33] Media debates justify or downplay mob lynchings, targeting Muslims, reflecting a growing acceptance of violence and discrimination against this minority. Discrimination is widespread in public discourse and is amplified by political parties and media outlets that openly criticize Muslim practices and beliefs differing from the majority culture. Influence from Western media, colonial history, and secular values often leads to criticism of Muslim customs or ways of dressing, framing Muslims as outsiders or threats to national identity, thereby legitimizing Islamophobia.[34]

3.3 Terrorism Narratives and Security Concerns

Political parties used terrorism as a narrative in Western countries, which intensifies Islamophobia and portrays the Muslim community as a security threat to their country. Sabri Ciftci expressed that society in Western countries links Muslims with terrorist activity when they feel threatened with "Physical and cultural existence."[35] Muhammad Tariq found cyclical process of "neo-Islamophobia: which impediments to the progress of Muslims and make them as out group.[36] Khan stated that "Media Representation of Islam and Muslims as a Security Threat" which confirms pervasive hatred toward them as well labeled as "security threat."[37] Jelang Ramadhan et al. observe that "triggering events like 9/11 and media propaganda have significantly fueled Islamophobic sentiments across Western Europe."[38]

The relationship between terrorism narratives and security concerns greatly heightens Islamophobia in Western democracies. According to Dauda, the clear signs of Islamophobia are the daily hate crimes, hostility,

27 Cracknell, Richard and Baker, Carl. 2024. General election 2024: Results and analysis, House of Commons Library. https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-10009/CBP-10009.pdf

28 Hertz, Joachin Meisner. 2025. "How Many Catholic Parliamentarians Are There in Germany? This Is the Religious Composition of the German Parliament." ZENIT - English. June 2, 2025. https://zenit.org/2025/05/31/how-many-catholic-parliamentarians-are-there-in-germany-this-is-the-religious-composition-of-the-german-parliament

29 Mirror, Muslim. 2024. "French Elections: 19 Muslim Lawmakers Elected, Left Coalition Tops Results - Muslim Mirror." Muslim Mirror. July 19, 2024. https://muslimmirror.com/french-elections-19-muslim-lawmakers-elected-left-coalition-tops-results

30 Diamant, Jeff 2025. Faith on the Hill: The religous composition of the 119th Congress, Pew Research Cetre. https://www.pewresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/20/2024/12/pr_2025-01-02_faith-on-the-hill_report.pdf

31 T. Abbas, (Ed.). *Muslim Britain: communities under pressure*. (London: Zed books, 2005).

32 C. Ogan, et. al. "The rise of anti-Muslim prejudice: Media and Islamophobia in Europe and the United States", *International communication gazette*, 76(1), (2014): 27-46.

33 F. Hafez, "Shifting borders: Islamophobia as common ground for building pan-European right-wing unity", *Patterns of Prejudice*, *48*(5), (2014): 479-499.

34 Ogan, The rise of anti-Muslim prejudice: Media and Islamophobia in Europe and the United States

35 Ciftci, Sabri. "Islamophobia and threat perceptions: Explaining anti-Muslim sentiment in the West." *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 32, no. 3 (2012): 293-309.

36 Tariq, Muhammad, and Zafar Iqbal. "Neo-islamophobia: A new western social order." *Journal of Islamic Thought and Civilization* 13, no. 1 (2023): 133-156.

37 Khan, Raja Arslan Ahmad, and Faryal Umbreen. "Media Representation of Islam and Muslims as a Security Threat." *Annals of Human and Social Sciences* 3, no. 2 (2022): 255-263.

38 Ramadhan, Jelang, Karomah Widianingsih, Eva Achjani Zulfa, and Imam Khomaeini Hayatullah. "Media and Islamophobia in Europe: A Literature-Based Analysis of Reports 2015–2023." *Religions* 16, no. 5 (2025): 584.

and unfair treatment against Muslims, encompasses biases (thoughts) and aversions (feelings) towards Islam and its followers, more than just fear or hatred. It manifests in many forms, including discriminatory policies, actions, and language.[39]

The influence of terrorism narratives and security concerns goes beyond immediate policies, shaping societal attitudes and leading to increased hate crimes and discrimination against Muslims. These narratives foster fear and suspicion, creating a climate where anti-Muslim sentiment thrives, resulting in assaults, mosque vandalism, and other violence. For instance, the French government inspected around 24,000 Muslim organizations and businesses and several hundred shut down. Collective Against Islamophobia in France (CCIF) in their report disclosed that in one month, 76 individual incidents targeted 76 mosques, labelling with 'Islamist separatism.'[40]

This hostile environment profoundly affects Muslim communities, causing fear, isolation, and marginalization. Based on these facts, Sayyid identifies five main types of Islamophobic actions. First, physical or verbal aggression against those perceived as Muslims. Second, damage to Muslim-related property like mosques or workplaces. Third, organized intimidation tactics such as protesting at Islamic cultural sites or Qur'an burnings. These actions are notable for their organization and required resources. Fourth, institutional discrimination against Muslims, including unfair tasks, workplace bullying, humiliating jokes, and pressure to violate religious norms. Fifth is frequent public mocking or derogatory comments about Muslims or Islam, such as misuse of sacred texts or biased political rhetoric online.[41]

Several studies have been conducted which demonstrate that the Western media portrays Muslims as out-group members. Muhammad Riaz Khan et al. in their study explained that the Muslim community, due to cultural differences, considered an outsider as a threat to society.[42] Similarly, Mahmoud Samaie et al. found that the US media predominantly link Islam and Muslims with terrorist activity and religious violence.[43] Nazita Lajevardi et al. in their empirical study revealed that American media coverage towards Muslims is more negative compared to any other ethnic group living in the United States, and their negative portrayals increase hatred in society towards them.[44] Saifuddin Ahmed et. al. conducted a meta-analysis of 345 studies to validate that "Muslims are predominantly negatively framed, with Islam often portrayed as a violent religion. These findings span multiple methodologies and timeframes, underscoring the systematic nature of this media representation."[45] The constant depiction of Muslims as terrorists in news, films, and other cultural products entrenches these biases, leading to widespread public fear and mistrust.[46]

Political parties exploit terrorism narratives to justify rigorous security measures and garner public support. Politicians frequently evoke the threat of terrorism to advocate for policies that restrict immigration, enhance surveillance, and limit religious freedoms, claiming these actions are essential for national security.[47] This rhetoric is particularly prevalent during election cycles, as candidates leverage public fears to secure votes. Framing Muslims as security threats in political debates legitimizes Islamophobia and normalizes discriminatory policies. The Washington post in their report examines the casualties post 9/11 in which around 4.5 million died. The same reports mentioned that out of these total casualties around 3.6 million to 3.7 million were "indirect deaths caused by the deterioration of economic, environmental, psychological and health conditions.....vast majority of those killed in the fighting were locals: more than 177,000 uniformed Afghans, Pakistanis and Iraqis and Syrian allies

39 K. O. Dauda, "Islamophobia and religious intolerance: Threats to global peace and harmonious co-existence", *QIJIS (Qudus International Journal of Islamic Studies)*, *8*(2), (2020): 257-292.

40 Hafez, Farid. 2025. "State-sponsored Islamophobia in France Encourages Violence." Al Jazeera, July 5, 2025. https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2025/7/5/state-sponsored-islamophobia-in-france-encourages-violence

41 S. Sayyid, "A measure of Islamophobia", *Islamophobia Studies Journal*, 2(1), (2014): 10-25.

42 Khan, Muhammad Riaz, Zuhana Bt Mohamed Zin, and Wan Farah Wani Wan Fakhruddin. "Media Representations of Islam and Muslims in Global Contexts (2002-2022): A Systematic Literature Review." *Studies in Media and Communication* 13, no. 1 (2025): 284-300.

43 Samaie, Mahmoud, and Bahareh Malmir. "US news media portrayal of Islam and Muslims: a corpus-assisted Critical Discourse Analysis." *Educational Philosophy and Theory* 49, no. 14 (2017): 1351-1366.

44 Lajevardi, Nazita. "The media matters: Muslim American portrayals and the effects on mass attitudes." *The Journal of Politics* 83, no. 3 (2021): 1060-1079.

45 Ahmed, Saifuddin, and Jörg Matthes. "Media representation of Muslims and Islam from 2000 to 2015: A meta-analysis." *International communication gazette* 79, no. 3 (2017): 219-244.

46 C. Nickerson, "Media portrayal of terrorism and Muslims: a content analysis of Turkey and France", *Crime, Law and Social Change*, 72, (2019): 547-567.; Ogan, The rise of anti-Muslim prejudice: Media and Islamophobia in Europe and the United States

47 C. M. Warner, & M. W. Wenner, "Religion and the political organization of Muslims in Europe", *Perspectives on Politics*, 4(3), (2006): 457-479.

had died as of 2019, according to the Costs of War project, alongside a vast count of opposing combatants and a disputed civilian toll."[48]

3.4 Historical Evidence of Hatred towards Muslims

Western historical testimony shows that there has been a long history of hatred of Muslims which dates back to the Middle Ages and has been based on political, cultural, as well as religious animosity. The traces of Islamophobia go back to many historical eras: T. Green et al., 2019 dates the onset of the Islamophobia phenomenon to the medieval political disputes between the Islamic empires and the European Christian kingdoms, where each of the parties portrayed the other as inferior.[49] Tatia Tavkhelidze et al., 2021 contend that the origins of anti-Muslim sentiments date back to 9 /11, which was founded on the dehumanization of colonies and the Holy War.[50] Dr. Olowo A conflicted relationship between the west and the Muslims between the 8th century and the 20th century,[51] as recorded by Sanaa Refat Alrefai et al., describes a varying yet always unhealthy interaction. The bias progressed in various phases: the clash of religions, to the othering of the colonists, to the present-day discrimination based on security, and thus, it is clear that the anti-Muslim bias has always existed in history in various forms.[52]

Bukar,[53] suggested that the longstanding tensions and negative perceptions that influence media stories, public opinion, and policy decisions have roots reaching back to the seventh century. During Islam's golden age from the seventh to tenth centuries, Muslim influence spread to parts of Europe like Spain, Sicily, Portugal, and even France. However, the Crusades shifted power again from the eleventh to thirteenth centuries. The Ottomans later gained control over regions such as the Balkans and Constantinople during the fourteenth to seventeenth centuries and even tried to seize Vienna twice. Colonialism followed, with European powers dominating Muslim-majority countries like Egypt, Algeria, and Libya. These nations eventually gained independence through nationalistic movements.[54]

Said in his book "Orientalism describes how Western scholars, from a variety of fields, historically portrayed the Muslim world as a place of strangeness and otherness. This portrayal laid the groundwork for Western nations like Britain, France, and the U.S. to eventually dominate these regions. The tension between the West and the Muslim world is sustained by three factors. First is the aforementioned Orientalist depiction which casts the Middle East as unchanging and exotic. Second is the Arab/Israeli conflict coupled with American Jewish community interests. Third is the absence of significant Western cultural voices advocating for fairer representation of Islam and its people. Said, however, overlooks the impact immigration to Western countries, socioeconomic status of these immigrants, and rising crimes such as terrorism have had on media portrayals, often unfairly attributing them solely to Arabs or Muslims.[55]

The bias against Islam grew stronger in the latter half of the 20th century. In a Boston-based debate by the Middle East Studies Association in 1986, Leon Wieseltier, a Jewish American journalist, acknowledged the existence of US institutional pressures to maintain a distorted portrayal of Islam in the media and suppress alternative views. Edward Said has consistently argued that such misrepresentations of Islam as violent and fundamentally incompatible with Western society endure.[56] He pointed out that Middle East experts have done little to dispel these myths by providing insights into the culture, history, and society of Islamic regions, rather than just their political aspects. As a result, this one-dimensional view of Islam has infiltrated various forms

48 Berger, Miriam. 2023. "Post-9/11 Wars Have Contributed to Some 4.5 Million Deaths, Report Suggests." The Washington Post. May 15, 2023. https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2023/05/15/war-on-terror-911-deaths-afghanistan-iraq/.

49 Green, Todd H. *The fear of Islam: An introduction to Islamophobia in the West*. Fortress press, 2019.

50 Tavkhelidze, Tatia. "Historical Origins of European Islamophobia." *Journal of the Contemporary Study of Islam* 2, no. 2 (2021): 142-162.

51 Olowo, Adam Folorunsho. "Islamophobia: A new phenomenon or part of a continuum." *Astrolabe: A CIS Student Research Journal* 3 (2021): 1-19.

52 Alrefai, Sanaa Refat. "History of Western image of Islam and Muslims." *Review of History and Political Science* 3, no. 1 (2015): 135-142.

53 A. A. Bukar, The political economy of hate industry: Islamophobia in the western public sphere. *Islamophobia Studies Journal*, 5(2), (2020): 152-174.

54 A. A. Bukar, The political economy of hate industry: Islamophobia in the western public sphere. *Islamophobia Studies Journal*, 5(2), (2020): 152-174.

55 A. A. Bukar, The political economy of hate industry: Islamophobia in the western public sphere. *Islamophobia Studies Journal*, 5(2), (2020): 152-174.

56 Said, Orientalism Reconsidered

of media including newspapers, TV, movies, and educational materials. The increasing occurrence of terrorist attacks linked to Islam in the Western media, especially after September 11, has further deepened these biases.[57]

As the negative views of Islam grew more common, politicians in Europe and the United States began to exploit them more aggressively to tarnish their opponents (accusing them of being soft on terrorism or having weak security measures, for example) and to connect with voters' emotions. J. Haynes et al. disclose that the right-wing populists strive to demonize Muslims and Islam in order to shape the opinion of the population, stating that Muslims are unable to adjust to the norms of the West and thus they have to be either excluded or harshly contained.[58] This approach is validated by Ferruh Yilmaz et al., who demonstrate how far-right groups managed to shift immigration to the center of the political agenda by introducing a cultural menace of Muslim immigrants.[59] G. Peri et al. are based on empirical evidence, as the authors establish that international terror attacks contribute to higher shares of the vote for nationalistic parties in Europe.[60] Abdulkader Sinno et al. also report on particular examples of politicizing the anti-Muslim discourses, such as the use of racist speech and the status of Muslims as a threat to the values of the society.[61]

3.5 Hate Crimes Rooted in Prejudice

In the United States between 1950s and 1960s, severe racism against African Americans sparked a backlash with terms like "white devil" and resulted in works highlighting the cycle of hatred.[62] This kind of trends are more visible in Western countries, where Muslims are in minority. They are often wrongly portrayed as unreasonable, at odds with Western values, and as security risks, leading to harsh laws and policies against them.[63] Kiara Alfonseca stated that, hate crimes against Muslims in the United States surged by 16 to 17% from 2000 to 2001,[64] including 67% increase hate crimes in 2015 alone.[65] For instance, US president Donald Trump made headlines for his strong stance against Muslims and immigrants, which would later shape his policy decisions. Among his most shocking claims was his call for a "total and complete shutdown of Muslims entering the United States."[66] He also stated, "I think Islam hates us."[67] Shortly after winning the presidency, he implemented a travel ban on several Muslim-majority countries—Iran, Libya, Somalia, Syria, and Yemen—which many saw as fulfilling his campaign pledge.[68]

A study from 2016 by the Council on American-Islamic Relations and the University of California, Berkeley, highlights that 33 organizations got over $205 million between 2008 and 2013.[69] The Center for American Progress disclosed that seven donor groups spent over $42 million to promote Islamophobic ideas in the US from 2001 to 2009.[70] These groups are well-funded, have strong networks, and have established themselves online and in mainstream media. An advocacy group has reported a substantial 56 percent rise in anti-Muslim complaints in 2023 compared to the previous year, marking the highest level in the US in nearly thirty years, driven by Israel's conflict with Gaza.[71]

57 Bukar, The political economy of hate industry: Islamophobia in the western public sphere.
58 Haynes, Jeffrey. "Right-wing populism and religion in Europe and the USA." *Religions* 11, no. 10 (2020): 490.
59 Yılmaz, Ferruh. "Right-wing hegemony and immigration: How the populist far-right achieved hegemony through the immigration debate in Europe." *Current sociology* 60, no. 3 (2012): 368-381.
60 Peri, Giovanni, Daniel I. Rees, and Brock Smith. *Terrorism, political opinions, and election outcomes: Evidence from Europe*. No. 13090. IZA Discussion Papers, 2020.
61 Sinno, Abdulkader H. "The politics of western Muslims." *Review of Middle East Studies* 46, no. 2 (2012): 216-231.
62 Bukar, The political economy of hate industry: Islamophobia in the western public sphere
63 Bukar, The political economy of hate industry: Islamophobia in the western public sphere
64 Kiara Alfonseca, "20 years after 9/11, Islamophobia continues to haunt Muslims", 2021, https://abcnews.go.com/US/20-years-911-islamophobia-continues-haunt-muslims/story?id=79732049
65 FBI, Hate Crime Statistics 2015, 2016, https://www.fbi.gov
66 Jessica Taylor, "Trump Calls For 'Total And Complete Shutdown Of Muslims Entering' U.S", 2015, https://www.npr.org/2015/12/07/458836388/trump-calls-for-total-and-complete-shutdown-of-muslims-entering-u-s
67 Theodore Schleifer, "Donald Trump: 'I think Islam hates us'", 2016, https://edition.cnn.com/2016/03/09/politics/donald-trump-islam-hates-us/index.html
68 Ibid. Egwuonwu, 2025
69 "New CAIR, UC Berkeley Report Reveals Funding, Negative Impact of Islamophobic Groups in America." 2016. Cair.com. June 20, 2016. https://www.cair.com/press_releases/new-cair-uc-berkeley-report-reveals-funding-negative-impact-of-islamophobic-groups-in-america/
70 C. Considine, The racialization of Islam in the United States: Islamophobia, hate crimes, and "flying while brown", *Religions*, 8(9), (2017): 165.
71 TRT World, "Islamophobia in US hit record high in 2023 due to Israel's war on Gaza", 2024, https://www.trtworld.com/discrimination/islamophobia-in-us-hit-record-high-in-2023-due-to-israels-war-on-gaza-17613937

In France, the Collective Against Islamophobia recorded 800 incidents in 2019, including physical attacks, verbal abuse, and mosque vandalism.[72] The UK mirrored this trend with the Home Office noting that 52% of religious hate crimes targeted Muslims in 2017.[73] An estimated UK experienced a significant increase in violence against Muslims with over 1,200 incidents in 2017.[74] Far-right political rhetoric and media representation have worsened these tensions, creating an environment of fear and animosity. Scholars like Cesari and Allen have pointed out that European media often frame Muslims in ways that perpetuate harmful stereotypes leading to discrimination and violence.[75]

In studies carried out by Gallup in 2008, they investigated attitudes in Germany, France, and the U.K. regarding Muslim community integration. Although most adults in these countries believe minority groups enrich their culture, some still fear with Muslim culture and also consider them as threat to the national security. However, Muslim respondents in these nations were less inclined to see different religious practices as threatening compared to the general public.[76]

The English Defence League in UK protested against establishment of new mosques, spreading fear about Islamic practices becoming common in society, that is also affecting the Muslim students studying in UK to participate and creating barriers to engagement in any such activity.[77] Hatred against Muslim community can be reflected with Charlie Hebdo magazines, in the issue mocking the Prophet Muhammad sold an unprecedented around 1.9 million copies.[78] Salman Rushdie's "Satanic Verses" saw a surge in popularity following controversy, at one time becoming a best-seller.[79] These works often portray Islam in a blunt manner and depict Muslims negatively, suggesting ulterior motives behind their migration to Europe.

Among many Westerners, there is a deep-seated animosity towards anything related to Islam for several reasons, such as terrorism, human rights abuses, and the conservative nature of its society. Michel Houellebecq expressed in Lire magazine that "Islam is definitely the most foolish of all religions."[80] Oriana Fallaci's "La rage et l'orgueil" (Rage and Pride), in just four hours sold over a million copies in Italy and France, is filled with insults directed at Islam and Muslims.[81] That same year, the founder of the Le Point party openly declared himself an Islamophobe, describing Islam as "an absurd mix of ancient customs." On April 23, 2004, a Boston radio announcer even called for the extermination of all Muslims.[82] Price argues that the focus on political Islam, within the context of declining Islamic civilization compared to Europe's rise, colonialism, and US cultural dominance, provides Muslims with reasons to feel that the US spearheads a long-lasting Western campaign against their religion out of hatred.[83]

In 2023, an NGO reported that anti-Muslim incidents in Germany had doubled, with authorities frequently failing to address these crimes. Hate crimes surged by 114%, and instances of Islamophobia rose by 140%, with a record 1,926 anti-Muslim incidents documented.[84] The Alternative for Germany (AfD), which explicitly claims

72 The White House, 2024. The U.S National Strategy to Counter Islamophobia and Anti-Arab Hate, Washington. https://bidenwhitehouse.archives.gov/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/National-Strategy-Doc.pdf

73 Home Office, "Hate crime, England and Wales, 2016/17, 2017, https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/hate-crime-england-and-wales-2016-to-2017

74 Goddard, James (2018). Islamophobia in the UK. House of Lords Library, https://lordslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/lln-2018-0142/

75 J. Cesari, *When Islam and democracy meet: Muslims in Europe and in the United States*. (Delhi: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006).; C. Allen, *Islamophobia*, (London: Ashgate, 2010).

76 Bukar, The political economy of hate industry: Islamophobia in the western public sphere

77 H. Ghani, & I. Nagdee, Islamophobia in UK universities, in the book *The Routledge International Handbook of Islamophobia*, (London: Routledge, 2019).

78 Kh디지털. "Charlie Hebdo Sells 1.9 Million Copies - The Korea Herald." *The Korea Herald*, January 18, 2015. https://www.koreaherald.com/article/344765

79 Hart, Robert. "'The Satanic Verses': Salman Rushdie Books Climb U.S. and International Bestseller Lists after Attack on Author." *Forbes*, August 16, 2022. https://www.forbes.com/sites/roberthart/2022/08/15/the-satanic-verses-salman-rushdie-books-climb-us-and-international-bestseller-lists-after-attack-on-author/

80 O'Rourke, Breffni. "FRANCE: Reference to Islam as 'Most Stupid' Religion Lands Author in Court." *RadioFreeEurope/RadioLiberty*, April 9, 2008. https://www.rferl.org/a/1100847.html

81 Caldwell, Christopher. "The Fallaci Affair." Commentary Magazine, September 3, 2015. https://www.commentary.org/articles/christopher-caldwell/the-fallaci-affair/

82 Jocelyne Cesari, *When Islam and Democracy Meet: Muslims in Europe and the United States*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006: 400).; Sumant Kumar, *Human Rights and Islam: A Study of West Asia*, (New Delhi: SSDN Publisher, 2017).

83 Daniel E Price, *Islamic Political Culture, Democracy and Human Rights*, (Westport: Praeger Publishers, 1999:162).

84 Marsh, Sarah. "Anti-Muslim Incidents Double in Germany but Overlooked by Authorities, NGO Says." *Reuters*, June 24, 2024. https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/anti-muslim-incidents-double-germany-overlooked-by-authorities-ngo-says-2024-06-24/

in its program that Islam does not belong in Germany, has risen to second place in polls over the past year. This shift has pushed mainstream parties to adopt stricter migration policies. The NGO also pointed out the lack of monitoring institutions, noting 90 attacks on Islamic religious sites, cemeteries, and other institutions.[85] Anadolu staff stated that, in the year 2022 alone, German police documented around 610 hatred and Islamophobic cases, in which attacks on 62 mosques, injuries of 39 individuals.[86] In the first 90 days of 2023 alone, Germany witnessed 124 attacks on Muslims and mosques, averaging more than one attack daily, as revealed in a recent parliamentary Q&A session.[87] These incidents encompass cases of intimidation, vandalism, and property damage. Burhan Kesici, chairman of the Islamic Council for the Federal Republic of Germany, noted a surge in mosque attacks in recent months.[88]

Europe reports the highest levels of Islamophobia-related violence triggered primarily by Islamophobia along with racism, xenophobia, extremism, and retaliatory motives.[89] Despite long-standing biases against Islam and rising discrimination against Muslims in Europe, Muslim populations there are growing. In France alone, there are approximately five million Muslim residents, the highest number in Western Europe. This increase has unfortunately fueled xenophobic movements linked to Islamophobia. Political leaders interpret the case with the fact that both Germany and France are holding largest Muslim population in Europe, this is why the number of cases is high. Germany hosts nearly 5 million Muslims out of a total population exceeding 84 million, making it the second-largest Muslim population in Western Europe after France, according to official figures.

4. Conclusion

Electoral politics in democratic countries have increasingly moved their attention to intentional mobilization of hatred through hate speeches, which has made Muslim communities easy targets for majority consolidation. Incidents of terrorism in past are present today to interpret political discourse, which is being silently accepted by the state and media, which further continue hate-motivated narratives which justify the exclusion and security as factors. The pervasive hatred by the states has left Muslim communities segregated from the main society, which continues facing discrimination, cultural stereotyping and social marginalization. This political trend is being noticed in several countries in Europe, which shows how historical prejudices and institutional bias are shaping ideological hatred among political parties to deal with security concerns, which are shaping hate-based discrimination and policy changes. Right-wing political parties across Western democratic countries have transformed their narrative in the political discourse, which has changed the perception of media and state toward reinforcing the image and identity of Muslim communities as a security threat. These international institutions are also not effective, as most have their own embedded security priorities, which are quite similar. This paper applies prejudice theory, examine that Islamophobia in Western democracies is not merely a social and political attitude but a structural political change which undermines pluralism, affects the democratic structure and reshapes democracy through systemic exclusion of Muslim Communities.

Samuel Huntington, in “The Clash of Civilizations?” and “Age of Muslim Wars,” suggested that future global conflicts will likely center on cultural divides, with significant civilizational coalitions challenging Western interests. His predictions emphasize the need to tackle the root causes of Islamophobia to prevent further conflicts and ensure long-term social cohesion. To address this widespread hatred and discrimination, several key interventions are essential. Governments, international organizations, and civil society must enforce strong anti-discrimination laws, ensure fair representation of Muslims in political and social spheres, and promote inclusive policies to build a fairer society.

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85 Sarah Marsh, “Anti-Muslim incidents double in Germany but overlooked by authorities, NGO says”, 2024, https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/anti-muslim-incidents-double-germany-overlooked-by-authorities-ngo-says-2024-06-24/

86 “‘Islamophobia in Germany Underreported Because Muslims Distrust Authorities,’” n.d. https://www.aa.com.tr/en/europe/-islamophobia-in-germany-underreported-because-muslims-distrust-authorities-/2925913

87 Ibid.

88 Anadolu staff, “Islamophobia in Germany underreported because Muslims distrust authorities”, 2023, https://www.aa.com.tr/en/europe/-islamophobia-in-germany-underreported-because-muslims-distrust-authorities-/2925913#

89 I. Yilmaz, The Nature of Islamophobia under the book. *Fear of Muslims?: International Perspectives on Islamophobia*, edited by Douglas Pratt and Rachel Woodlock, (London: Springer, 2016: 19-29.

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