Islamophobia Phenomenon in the Western Democracies

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Abstract

Islamophobia is a combination of hate, fear, prejudice against Islam and Muslims, and against anything associated with the religion, such as Mosques, Islamic Centres, the Holy Qur'an, Hijab, etc. It also constitutes hatred, stigmatization, racism, and discrimination in daily life, media, workplace, political sphere, etc. It rests in the mind, and it reflects in attitudes. It could be manifested through violent actions, such as burning mosques, vandalizing properties, abusing women wearing scarfs, or insulting the Prophet or sacred symbols of Islam. This is a brief definition of Islamophobia. Moreover, Islamophobia is not restricted to incidents only; rather, it is also found in perspectives, statements, behaviour, and gestures. Over the last two decades, Islamophobia has kept growing in some parts of the world, through intensive campaigns and public discourses disseminating fear of Islam and through a significant number of incidents targeting Muslims, mosques, Islamic attires, and Islamic most-revered figures. Several organizations have been mandated to monitor the Islamophobia trend and provide periodical reports to the Member States. It is also encouraged to take necessary measures to address the phenomenon in coordination and cooperation with Member States, international communities, and the UN Human Rights mechanism, as well as with other international entities whenever possible. The study has adopted an exploratory, descriptive research design. It has used a qualitative method in the form of a literature survey and analysis. The study has concluded with several points; among them, the fear of Islam or Islamophobia is only an illusion. It was invented by Western intellectuals and politicians for political and economic reasons for serving the western approaches to control and dominate the world and to demonstrate Western superiority.

Keywords: *Islamophobia phenomenon, Islamophobia, Fear of Islam, Anti-Muslim hatred*

ظاهرة الإسلاموفوبيا في الديمقراطيات الغربية

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ملخص

الإسلاموفوبيا عبارة عن الخوف من الإسلام ومن المسلمين، أو بشكل أدق، الخوف المفرط من الإسلام والمسلمين، أو أي شيء مرتبط بدين الإسلام، مثل المساجد والمراكز الإسلامية والقرآن الكريم والحجاب، إلخ. وتُعَد هذه الظاهرة شكلاً من أشكال العنصرية والتمييز في حياة الناس اليومية، سواء تمت في وسائل الإعلام أو في أماكن العمل أو في مجال العمل السياسي وغير ذلك. إن فكرة الإسلاموفوبيا تكمن في ثنايا العقل البشري، لكن ممارساتها تتجلى في مواقف الناس وتصرفاتهم، بحيث يمكن أن تتجلى في ارتكاب أعمال عنف، كحرق مساجد وتخريب ممتلكات وإساءة معاملةٍ للنساء المرتديات للحجاب أو الإساءة إلى النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم وتشويه رموز الإسلام المقدسة وكراهية المسلمين. إن ظاهرة الإسلاموفوبيا وتجلياتها لا تقتصر ملاحظتها من خلال الأحداث والوقائع فحسب، ولكن كذلك من خلال وجهات النظر، والتصريحات، والسلوكيات، والإيماءات. وعلى امتداد العقدين الماضيين، ازداد نمو هذه الظاهرة في بعض أنحاء العالم، وتجلى ذلك من خلال الحملات المكثفة والخطابات العامة التي تنشر الخوف من الإسلام، ومن خلال العدد الكبير للحوادث التي استهدفت المسلمين والمساجد والزي الإسلامي والشخصيات الإسلامية المبجلة. لقد أُنيط بالعديد من المنظمات الإسلامية مهمة رصد اتجاهات الإسلاموفوبيا وتقديم تقارير دورية إلى دول العالم من أجل اتخاذ تدابير من شأنها معالجة هذه الظاهرة وذلك بالتنسيق والتعاون مع الدول الأعضاء والمجتمع الدولي ومنظمات حقوق الإنسان التابعة للأمم المتحدة والكيانات الدولية الأخرى. اتبع الباحث في هذه الدراسة المنهج الوصفي الاستكشافي، وذلك من خلال مسح وتحليل للأدبيات المتعلقة بظاهرة الإسلاموفوبيا. وقد توصل الباحث إلى مجموعة من النتائج أهمها أن الخوف من الإسلام أو الإسلاموفوبيا، هو مجرد وهم، اخترعه المفكرون والسياسيون الغربيون لأسباب سياسية واقتصادية لخدمة النهج الغربي للسيطرة على العالم، وإثبات التفوق الغربي، وقد استخدم الغربيون وسائل إعلام فعالة لإظهار الإسلام على أنه وحش يهدد أمن الغرب وقيمه.

الكلمات المفتاحية: ظاهرة الإسلاموفوبيا، الإسلاموفوبيا، الخوف من الإسلام، كراهية المسلمين.

1. Introduction

Colonial historians trace the first use of the concept of "Islamophobia," which means the fear of Islam, to the early twentieth century. A study conducted by Georgetown University in the United States considered that recent years had witnessed a "cultural war" against studies of Islamophobia in European countries such as France, Germany, and Austria. Governments, political parties, and intellectuals in these countries have denied the existence of a problem of Islamophobia in their societies.

However, Over the last two decades, Islamophobia has kept growing in some parts of the world, through intensive campaigns and public discourses disseminating fear of Islam and through a significant number of incidents targeting Muslims, mosques, Islamic attires, and Islamic most-revered figures. Therefore, over the past two decades, Islamophobia studies have increasingly emerged as an academic sub-field that documents and challenges racism, discrimination, hate speech, and violence against Muslims worldwide. Significant books, magazines, forums, media reports, and opinion polls have dealt with the causes and effects of Islamophobia. Yet, several European governments are still trying hard to deny the existence of this phenomenon in the first place. In France, for example, the government and its supporters do not accept critical study and discussion within the emerging field of Islamophobia studies, arguing that this intellectual framework is responsible for creating and promoting a dangerous social gap within society.

The importance of the topic lies in the fact that the phenomenon of Islamophobia has become a tangible phenomenon that goes beyond theorizing to the reality of practice and daily life in the West. The phenomenon of Islamophobia rests in the mind and reflects in attitudes. It could be manifested through violent actions, such as burning mosques, vandalizing properties, abusing women wearing a scarf, or insulting the Prophet or sacred symbols of Islam. That is more or less how Islamophobia is identified. It can be seen not only from incidents but also through perspectives, statements, behaviour, and gestures. Therefore, this paper aims to provide an overview of this phenomenon and clarify the concept of Islamophobia in terms of its reality and contents.

The study has adopted an exploratory, descriptive research design to achieve the desired objectives. It has used a qualitative method in the form of a literature survey and analysis based on the following steps. Firstly, it used the literature survey for works on the phenomenon of Islamophobia. Secondly, it has conducted a meta-analysis to identify issues and trends in the phenomenon of Islamophobia. Thirdly, it has used a thematic analysis to identify gaps for future research.

This study is structured into seven sections. After the introduction, the second section reviews the extant literature. The third section provides an overview of the phenomenon of Islamophobia. The fourth section discusses the War on Terror, while the fifth section presents political Islam. Section sixth touches on the threat to values and culture, and the last section concludes the study and suggests the way forward.

2. Literature Review

This section reviews the literature that has discussed the phenomenon of Islamophobia. According to the researcher's knowledge, the studies on this subject are still very few. The writings on Islamophobia are still scattered, either in the form of articles or seminars or implicitly in books that talk about the relationship of the West with Islam. Hence, the researcher believes that the situation the phenomenon is going through will bring several pieces of literature in the coming years.

There are several research that tries to cover the phenomenon of Islamophobia. However, among the comprehensive literature are the following: "Islamophobia, the ideological campaign against Muslims, by Stephen Sheehy". The author stated that Islamophobia permeates all levels of American life, from right to left, religious to atheist. Those obsessed with Islamophobia believe every Muslim is a "stupid idiot" and a subversive terrorist. The feelings of Islamophobia are evident in many sectors of American society, spewed by the media, think tanks, so-called "experts", malicious academics, lobbies, and activist organizations.

Another research was conducted by Said El Laundi, titled "Islamophobia - Why is the West afraid of Islam?". The author attempts to monitor the real reasons behind the excessive fear of Islam, Muslims, and Arabs in the West. The writer identifies the role of Arab

immigration to Europe as one of the factors affecting the emergence and spread of this phenomenon, especially in several European countries, such as France, England, Switzerland, and Belgium. The researcher also dealt with the reality of the cultural and civilization clash in European societies different from the culture of Muslims, for example, the issues of the Hijab.

Based on the review of the extant literature, it is apparent that the research gap lies in the existence of studies that discuss the subject of Islamophobia in detail in terms of its origin and goals. Therefore, the present paper aspires to fill in this research gap. It will touch on different aspects of the topic in order to enrich this critical topic.

3. Overview of Islamophobia

Islamophobia is a concept invented by the West to consolidate the fear and hatred for all things related to Islam and Muslims. Obviously, this concept consists of two words: Islam – phobia. The term phobia is derived originally from psychopathology; it reflects the kind of compulsive neurosis, so that the patient does not have the ability to control his reactions when exposed to something that scared him (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). Moreover, the patient's phobia fears are not necessarily based on a real threat (Clark, & Wells, 1995). For example, a patient may be afraid of a small domestic cat, a high place, or even of a particular fruit, which means that the disease expresses psychological and cognitive turmoil.

Islamophobia is a term that deals with Islam and Muslims. However, it is not a modern term; it came to existence in the twentieth century, when it was used in the literature to express the relationship and deal of Western colonizers with Islamic and Arab peoples (Cesari, 2011; Bravo, 2011; Green, 2015). However, the era of the 1990s can be considered as a point spread of the term Islamophobia, especially after a report entitled "Islamophobia: A Challenge for Us All", conducted by Runnymede Trust, he defined islamophobia as "dread or hatred of Islam… unfounded hostility towards Muslims, and therefore fear or dislike of all or most Muslims" (Trust, 1997). In this sense, Islamophobia literally means collective phobia of Islam and Muslims; however, it is, in fact, a kind of racism consisting of a set of actions, feelings, and thoughts stereotypical hostile to Islam and Muslims.

Numerous studies and research have relied on this report, as the term Islamophobia has become a vital topic and is not confined to intellectuals but also used by politicians, media, universities, and others. However, the term Islamophobia itself is controversial; for example, some intellectuals argue that the term Islamophobia is misdirected, where they believe that racism is the foundation of Islamophobia, and they believe that the most accurate expression is "cultural racism" (Modood, 2000; Taras, 2012; Semati, 2010). Cultural racism, as such, includes hatred and anti-others who differ in religion, customs, traditions, culture, and ethnicity. According to Tariq Modood (2000), Muslims as a victim of cultural racism differ from Westerners in their cultures, customs, and other differences within the framework of Culture.

Islam, like other religions, cannot be confined to a specific geographical location and not in a single ethnic group. Christianity, for example, appeared at the beginning in the Middle East but has spread around the world, including the European and American continents, as well as Islam, which emerged in the Middle East, but has spread since ancient times to all countries of the world. As such, the followers of Islam at the present time are descended from diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds (Esposito, 2010; Kundnani, 2014; Sheehi, 2011). Therefore, the claim that there is no discrimination based on religion cannot be accepted, especially with the presence of explicit confessions and calls from politicians, intellectuals, missionaries, and journalists. Westerners believe that Islam is a faith that calls for violence and hatred see, e.g. (Lewis, 1990; Nixon, 2013; Huntington, 1997; Fukuyama, 2006). Moreover, according to Mahdi Semati (2010), Westerners perceive Islam that is stuck in the hearts and minds of its followers, and "Muslim" is never changed and cannot be a "good citizen"; it must be treated as an enemy. Surprisingly, some thinkers consider that hatred, fear, violence, and terrorism among Muslims are due to biological or genetic nature. For example, Norman Cigar (2003) pointed out that the Serbian intellectuals propagated that Muslims in Bosnia were born with characteristics of biological and genetic that make them behave violently. The reality is that Muslims in many countries of the world, especially the West, is suffering from persecution and discrimination just because they are Muslims. This is despite the slogans of freedom advocated by those countries, the West often presents itself as a global example of respect for the rights of minorities and people in general, but the truth It is not always as portrayed by the West.

There are some intellectuals who believe that religious racism that existed in the past no longer exists in the present, which means that the term Islamophobia adopted by the Runnymede Trust report is not accurate. Halliday Fred, for instance, claims that Islam as a faith is no longer a reason for hostility or rejection. However, there is anti-Muslim; therefore, instead of using the term Islamophobia, it is more appropriate to use the term anti-Muslim (Halliday, 2002). This view, in fact, is based on the Western doctrine that denies the other; although the Jews were native citizens in some European countries, however, because of the different ideological affiliations, millions of Jews were exterminated by the anti-Semitic movements (Gager, 1985; Poliakov, 2003). As such, Westerners claim that Islam and Muslims are not compatible with Western civilization; for that, there are active movements calling for anti-Muslim, arguing that Muslims do not belong and cannot conform to Western life and values.

Despite the fact that the spread of anti-Muslim movements, the fundamental problem lies in the West's view of Islam as a faith and a religion; Islam, in the eyes of many thinkers, theorists, and politicians, is a threat to Western civilization. Edward Said has summarized the Western view of Islam "Islam represents not only a formidable competitor but also a late-coming challenge to Christianity" (Said, 1980). So, the problem of the West lies in the essence of Islam, as already noted in statements by some politicians and thinkers such as former US President Richard Nixon and Bernard Lewis. Therefore, one can say that the West's conflict with Islam, as Western intellectuals predicted intentionally, is not up to the end, and it seems there will be no approaches to lasting peace because the West, on the one hand, will not stop view Islam as a threat and always treated as an enemy, on the other hand, will certainly not able to eliminate Islam.

Islamophobia, in fact, is more than just cultural racism or anti-racism. One could say that Islamophobia launched from anti-Islam as faith and take different forms of culture and race and everything to do with Islam. More importantly, the word Islamophobia in terms of semantics is commensurate with the case of unjustified fear. As the fear of Islam is not based on real concerns, Islamophobia is, in fact, similar to the fear of a small domestic cat.

4. The War on Terror

September 11, 2001, attacks on the World Trade Center is considered one of the most important events in the history of the United States' relationship or the West in general and Islam. After the attacks, Congress gave the green light to the American administration to launch a pre-emptive war, all that could threaten US security. In turn, the US administration's response to launch an unprecedented military campaign to attack Islamic extremist groups like al-Qaeda and political systems supported. Moreover, the war on terrorism campaign has been multifaceted, including economic, intellectual, media, legal, and political campaigns (Jackson, Jarvis, Gunning, & Breen, 2011). Furthermore, intellectuals and media have portrayed Islam in general and radical Islamic groups especially, as a threat to global security, in order for America to seek to rally international support, which contributed to the revival of Islamophobia and anti-Muslim movements (Woodward, 2006; Sheehi, 2011; Esposito, & Mogahed, 2007). Indeed, Western foreign policy, as Jonathan Lyons (2014) expressed, is influenced by theories and intellectual trends drawn by theorists and thinkers. So, for example, the clash of civilizations theory espoused by both Bernard Lewis and Huntington was the backbone of the war on terror (Green, 2015). A considerable number of media and Western intellectual institutions contributed to the shade of public opinion and the revival of anti-Islamic movements that have been able to mobilize much effort to distort the image of Islam and to link it with violence and underdevelopment.

The attack of September 11 is undoubtedly a crime against humanity; it also opens the door for reflection and reconsideration of the national security policies. The security breach caused by al-Qaeda, of course, if we accept that al-Qaida is the real one responsible for the attacks, could raise questions about the effectiveness of Western policies toward the Third World, especially Muslims, as well as the extent of the organizational and tactical power of the radical groups which are basically an American industry, created by the US intelligence agencies to wage proxy wars against the Soviet Union during the Cold War (Chossudovsky, 2001; Rashid, 1999). However, it seems that the West always resorted to the easiest possibilities to explain the causes of terrorism using a peg religion, causative agent, and catalyst for terrorism and violence. Politicians and media institutions have been quick to point the finger at Islam and the blame for the attacks. The war on terror campaign has focused on Islam,

showing that: a source of violence, a hater of women, and against democracy (Woodward, 2006; Kundnani, 2014). Indeed, linking the terrorist attacks to Islam does not help in finding practical solutions to the problem of terrorist threats. Surprisingly, Leaders of radical Islamic groups such as al Qaeda and the Taliban have indicated through audio clips and television interviews that their problem with the West is not because of the belief or lifestyle of Westerners but for various reasons such as the lack of fairness of the West in dealing with Islamic countries in particular and the poor in general, colonialism and exploitation of the people's wealth, and supporting dictatorial and authoritarian governments in the Middle East (Cavanaugh, 2009 Esposito, 2010). Unfortunately, politicians in the West do not seem to listen to the leaders of radical groups' statements, and the democratic institutions which the West trumpets so do not seem to be able to guide the foreign policies of their countries to address the real causes that threaten national security in the West.

The events of September 11 sparked widespread anger against everything related to Islam, whether inside or outside the Western countries. Muslims, whether they were Western citizens or others, have become, in the West, the enemies of the West; they looked stupid, radical, disliked, and spiteful of Western values (Nimer, 2002; Sinno, 2009). Moreover, plenty of TV shows and books have claimed that Muslims and Islamic countries did not condemn terrorist attacks; for example, Friedman (2005) has claimed that Islamic countries and organizations did not denounce or condemn terrorist attacks. However, the same newspaper that the same writer works have been published statements by officials and Islamist organizations such as the Organization of the Islamic Conference and "Fatwa" centers in a considerable number of Muslim countries, denouncing and condemning terrorist attacks (Esposito, 2010). However, unfortunately, inevitable confrontation and conflict between the West and Islam planned by intellectuals such as Bernard Lewis and Huntington are driving foreign policy in Western countries as they are driving citizens' relationships in the West, with Muslims both within the Western countries or in the Islamic state.

Showing hostility to Islam, increasingly, it has become a tool used by some authors and bloggers to gain fame and politicians to gain public support and access to leadership positions. Moreover, Social networking sites have provided a suitable environment for growing anti-Muslim movements, as politicians have exploited the events of September 11th heavily in order

to serve their attitudes and political and social agendas. Over the past decades, indeed, the popularity of far-right parties has increased significantly in both the United States and Europe (Wodak, 2015; Zúquete, 2008; Mudde, 2013). The far-right politicians have achieved political successes in the Western parliaments through extremist campaigns openly anti-Islam and Muslims. Moreover, the extreme right-wing parties have gained voter support by adopting radical policies such as anti-Islam, and anti-immigrant and ignoring the rights of freedom of expression, culture, and belief. For example, according to Kumar (2012), Peter King has been adopted in his campaign for membership of the Congress to launch a campaign against mosques, claiming they pose a threat to national security because they are run by Islamic extremists and have relied on Islamophobia to scare people away from the danger of Islam. Recently, Doland Trump, from the outset of his campaign, had followed anti-Islamic and immigrant slogans, which enabled him to mobilize millions of votes, which eventually led to his victory in the presidential election. Trump has been quick to prevent the citizens of six Muslim countries from immigrating to the United States (Parkes, 2017). Increasingly, far-right parties in the European countries have used the subject of increasing the number of Muslims in Europe, either through a natural increase in Muslim citizens or an increase in the numbers of immigrants and asylum seekers, as a means to influence public opinion and win votes (Semyono et al., 2006). The growing and the arrival of right-wing parties in the west to power gives clear signals to the exclusionary outlook inherent in Western doctrine. These extremist parties, in fact, not only threaten the minorities but also threaten the values and principles of democracy, multiculturalism, human rights, and national security in the West itself.

5. Political Islam

There is no doubt that fundamentalist movements have been found in all cultures and religions; there are, for example, Christian, Islamic, Jewish, Hindu, and Confucianism fundamentalist movements. Moreover, these fundamentalist movements should not be the ones that represent a certain religion or culture because they are, in fact, an exception that should not be circulated to everyone. According to Kurtz (2015), for instance, Ku Klux Klan is a Christian fundamentalist group and should not represent Christianity; this also applies to the fundamentalist Islamic groups, for example, Al Qaeda, the Taliban, and Bokouhram, which, despite they claim they are fighting on behalf of religion that probably not mean that the

problem lies in religion but in their wrong understanding and exploitation of religion. However, the West, in dealing with fundamentalist movements that take Islam as a reference framework for their terrorist operations around the world, including in Muslim countries, does not differentiate between those groups and other Islamist movements that adopt peaceful reform programs. Clearly, Islam does not call for violence. As Lyons (2014) pointed out, historically the period before the Crusades, Christians, and Muslims, in particular, were living in peace even during the Muslim rule in Spain in the eighteenth century. The US intelligence service 1980 has revived religion-based wars, for example, the Taliban, which is classified by the Western nations as an Islamic terrorist movement, created by the CIA and provided it with financial and logistical support to wage a proxy war against communism, in fact, the Taliban destroyed a considerable number of the Islamic heritage in Afghanistan and killed thousands of Muslims there (Chossudovsky, 2001; Rashid, 1999).

Many Islamic political movements, in fact, have gotten the support of large popular support from the community. These political movements have emerged to confront tyranny and address social, economic, and political problems that negatively impact society (Halliday,1995). Moreover, the Islamic political movements were not geared to fight external forces as nationalist movements were, but only to address the internal problems (Halliday,1995; Shadid & Koningsveld, 2002). For example, the Iranian revolution in 1978 occurred as a result of authoritarian rule, which neglected development and ridiculed the state's resources in order to follow the European secular model, which may not necessarily conform with Iranian culture (Hunter,1998). However, the West ignored the real reasons that prompted these groups to revolt against dictatorial regimes; Westerners, in fact, have interpreted these revolutions as driven by the teachings of Islam, which in their eyes, calls to violence and terrorism (Hunter,1998; Halliday,1995; Munos,1999; Kundnani, 2014). Indeed, the West has deliberately ignored the economic, social, and political reasons for the emergence of Islamic political movements. Moreover, the West has provided financial and military support to the dictatorial governments in Muslim countries to fight Islamic political movements (Hunter,1998; Halliday,1995).

Islamic political movements in many countries are actively involved in the political movement, for example, the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, Hamas in Palestine, and the Liberation Party in Algeria. These movements have come to Parliament with the support of large segments of society (Shadid & Koningsveld, 2002). Despite the peaceful and democratic methods pursued by some Islamic political movements to access parliaments or the presidency of some countries, however, Westerners, for example, Friedman (2005), are sceptical about the intentions of those movements, and they believe that these movements adopted peaceful and democracy means because they do not have the power, but they claim this movement would use terrorist and violence means when they have power (Burgat, 2003; Bawer, 2007). However, Islam, contrary to what the West imagined, offers a comprehensive political, economic, social, and curriculum; this may be one of the reasons that contributed to the continuation of the Islamic civilization since the sixteenth century and access to all the countries of the world (Lyons, 2014). Moreover, the Islamic political movements are not inconsistent with civilian and development values, but the world should not be confined to a single ideology like liberalism, capitalism, or communism (Shadid, & Koningsveld, 2002). The Islamist threat is just an illusion, not based on logical reasons. Therefore, Islamic political movements must be given the opportunity to participate in the political movement in their countries. Hence, the West, under democratic values that believers should adopt a positive attitude toward Islamic political movements.

6. The Threat of Values and Culture

The West, in dealing and interacting with others, is pursuing the policy of the "West and the rest". In the West, it seems there is a desire for isolation, fear of a merger with other cultures, and not to accept others. Therefore, historically, Westerners have launched bloody wars, both those wars that took place between the European countries or those launched by various Western countries during the Crusades and colonial. Western thinkers and politicians have considered Islam as a threat to Western civilization; they judged that Islam does not fit or is not compatible with Western values (Lewis, 1990; Nixon, 2013; Huntington,1997). Moreover, a considerable number of writers, for instance, Caldwell (2009) and Bawer (2007), claim that Islam is not compatible with the values of democracy and freedom. Moreover, they claim that Muslim minorities in the West practiced rituals contrary to human rights, such as the hijab,

female genital mutilation, and marriage customs. Furthermore, Westerners are sceptical about even the loyalty of Muslim citizens in Europe; Muslims, as they claim, do not feel an affiliation to the nation in which they live but their loyalty only to the original homeland (Bawer, 2007). These allegations, in fact, confirm that the West deals with other societies through the principle of, either with me or against me; this in itself is contrary to the values of democracy and human rights stipulated by international conventions, for example, freedom of religion and culture.

Islam is not incompatible with democracy; however, while democracy has more than one meaning and way, the West narrows the scope of this concept without considering cultural differences. Esposito suggests that all cultures can adopt a democratic model that suits their circumstances and, of course, is not necessarily compatible with Western liberals (Esposito, 2010). Islam, in fact, has absorbed the democratic discourse for hundreds of years before Western democracy through the concept of shura "consultation", Ijma "consensus", and Ijtihad "independent interpretive judgment" (Esposito,2010; Rashid, 1999; Mamdani, 2002). Although the pace of democracy in Muslim countries is slow, that is not because of Islam but because of external influences such as colonialism and the global economic system (Hunter, 1998). The Western countries, especially America, do not seem to support democracy in the Third World countries because it simply could threaten their interests. (Hunter, 1998). The West, of course, does not want the participation of Islamic political movements. Still, the reality proved in some countries, for example, Egypt and Tunisia, that people, when given the freedom to choose the government, choose the Islamic movements that have made a clear political vision and state-building. Indeed, it can be said that Western support for authoritarian and dictatorship governments has contributed to the delay of democracy in Muslim countries.

Although the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and European Union laws provide for the individual's right to belief and expression, however, on the ground, it does not seem to be applicable in the communities that reject the idea of peaceful coexistence with different cultures (Directive, 2000). The targeting of Muslims in the West has become a dangerous phenomenon and takes a variety of methods such as distortion of religious symbols such as mosques, graphics depicting the Prophet Mohammed, and burning of the Holy Koran. In addition to continuing calls for a ban on Islamic headscarves, as did France, Belgium, and the Netherlands (Sinno, 2009; Nimer, 2002). Surprisingly, one could wonder whether this is

the Western freedom and democracy which should be spread around the world. Alarmingly, many Western parliaments allocate sessions just to discuss issues such as preventing women from choosing their clothing, such as headscarves, closing mosques, and other issues that are within the primary human rights. Muslims in the West are citizens; therefore, their rights must be respected equally to other citizens, and they contribute to the nation-building in which they live. An extensive study conducted by Cesari included several European countries and found that Muslim citizens in those countries feel loyalty to the countries in which they live (Cesari, 2013). The allegations raised by Western politicians and intellectuals are not based on facts and logical information but merely unacceptable doubts. Moreover, the West, in dealing with Muslims, whether inside or outside the Western countries, is violating international law, which provides for the protection of human rights, which are universal rights.

7. Conclusion

West's view of Islam has formed throughout history; western orientalists, thinkers, scholars, politicians, and media have varied visions depending on their methodology, religious, intellectual, political, and driveways backgrounds; however, despite the multiplicity of these visions, they often agree on a number of guideline principles that formed and integrated gradually, these principles represent West awareness and understanding of others. As part of this awareness, the West has given itself values of truth, force, center, mind, and progress, while the rest are weak, madness, and failure, therefore the West has practiced this approach in various forms, for example, military invasion, economic domination, and cultural, political hegemony.

Western thinkers and politicians have painted the image of Islam commensurate with their plans and a permanent quest for domination and hostility to others. That image certainly does not represent the truth of Islam, which calls for justice, peace, respect, and evolution. However, the anti-Islam movements have managed to use military, economic, social, and media means to spread fear of Islam as a threat to national security and Western values.

Moreover, following the events of September 11, Islam, in the West's eyes, has become a threat to the world. Islam, which exceeds one billion followers, which lasted since the sixteenth century and contributed to the formation of human civilization but has been linked to terrorism. The war on terror, which has been launched by the United States in cooperation with its allies, represents a new kind of anti-Islam. Indeed, it cannot be considered a natural response to the terrorist operations that targeted the World Trade Centre on September 11, 2001, because Western intellectuals and politicians, since the end of the Cold War, have decided that the new enemy of the West is Islam. Moreover, the war is not directed to the fight against terrorist groups that use Islam as a cover for their criminal operations but is directed to fight Islam as a faith, and all Muslims, whether inside or outside the West.

Muslims, whether in the West or in the Muslim countries themselves, have become targets of violence and terrorism. Indeed, Muslims in some Muslim countries such as Iraq, Libya, Afghanistan, Syria, Indonesia, and others, are suffering from terrorist groups that outburst homes, killing men, women, and children, targeting vital facilities and historical places. Likewise, Muslims in the West suffer from anti-Muslim movements that are growing dramatically, especially with the sharp rise in the popularity of far-right parties in several Western countries. These extreme right-wing parties have come to power by offering electoral programs focused on anti-Muslim and enacting laws restricting the freedom of minorities to practice their religious and cultural rituals. Surprisingly, while the West claims that it represents democracy and human rights, the reality is that people in the West are supporting the hard-line policies towards minorities, such as the ban on wearing headscarves, mosques, and religious schools for minorities, as they support the arrival of right-wing parties to power, as happened in America, for example, Trump arrived for the presidency of the United States, despite controversial election campaign by openly taking a hard line attitudes toward minorities.

The fear of Islam, or Islamophobia, is only an illusion and was invented by Western intellectuals and politicians for political and economic reasons for serving the western approaches to control and dominate the world and to demonstrate Western superiority. Westerners have used effective media to show Islam as a monster that threatens Western security and values. Islamic fundamentalist groups, which certainly do not represent the values of Islam, have become, unfortunately, represent Islam in the eyes of the West.

While the false fear and lack of confidence have contributed to widening the gap between the West and Islam, the world today is in dire need of understanding and acceptance of differences and diversity among peoples. Importantly, civilizations affect and are affected by each other; for this, politicians and intellectuals must seek to build on commonalities between civilizations, which are too many, rather than advocating the inevitability of confrontation and conflict.

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