

**BOOK REVIEW- “ISLAMOPHOBIA: HISTORY, CONTEXT AND  
DECONSTRUCTION” (2019) BY DR.ZAFAR IQBAL**

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**ABSTRACT**

Islamophobia can be understood as a phenomenon which existed in history but in contemporary construction, it has its own mediated and symbolic constructions based of different countries. The book<sup>1</sup> talks about the issue of Islamophobia and attempts to break the myths that exists due to unaware literatures. The book tries to measure the impact of Islamophobia among the epistemological spheres by marking the nexus between history and media along with other social antecedents. Through the journey of eight chapters, the book explores through the historical context to explain how fear of Islam travelled through ages. The expedition on how this fear was only escalated with time adding more ills and conservative notions leading to generalized fear from and of Islam as it is today. The book “Islamophobia: History, Context and Deconstruction”, efforts to identify the theories and envisages upon the idea of Edward Said’s view on prejudice towards Arbo-Muslim people. The book manifolds various dimensions to measure Islamophobia in order to diagnose the problem and suggest a prognostic solution to tackle the issue.

**Keywords:** Discrimination, Islamophobia, Race, Religion, Social Exclusion

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<sup>1</sup> Zafar Iqbal, *Islamophobia: History, Context and Deconstruction* (1<sup>st</sup> Edn., 2019)

## **INTRODUCTION**

Islamophobia is usually construed as a media devised tool. The word was however crystalized post 9/11 and recently at the time of Covid-19 outbreak. The study on the matter is underwork since 1970s i.e., post Iranian Revolution. Many celebrated authors like Edward Said in his much-appreciated work “Clash of Civilization” marks the theories of Islamophobia but the book fails to trace the historical relations on roots of Islam or to have a prognosis suggestion towards peaceful future. This book however, attempts to analyze the in-depth outlook onto the Islamophobic issues and evaluate how it became a corpus bundle of phobias with multiple facets. The book contains some interesting debates and examples which helps the reader to understand the contemporary unrest among targeted community.

## **OBJECTIVES OF THE BOOK**

### *Chapter wise summary*

Chapter 1 gives a detailed examination and construct of the idea of Islamophobia. For understanding any dimension, the history of the issue is really important, therefore this chapter aims to form a basis for the book as well as the issue of Islamophobia. The issue which seems to be simple but is exceedingly perplex and intricate. The chapter gives comprehensive idea on the issue along with its historical and contemporary take on the same. The second chapter talks about the socio-cultural dimensions, the profoundly discussed literature in this aspect. The chapter envisages upon continued historic hatred towards a particular community leads to cultural divide. “*The Islam is looked as destroyer of other cultures and religions...*” this gives the brief idea as to what the debates on sociocultural and economic domains seems to have construed from their essence. The third chapter, talks about the Prejudice, an idea on the understanding of Islamophobia. The author includes the works of various eminent authors to explain the rather complex bundle of episteme word to define this construct. The definition of the word was also given by Christopher Allen, who termed it as, “*fluid, protean and largely inconsistent*”.<sup>2</sup> The ambiguity in the term and its meaning has been pointed out by many scholars in their

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<sup>2</sup> Christopher Allen, *Islamophobia: Contested Concept in the Public Space* (2005) (Ph.D Thesis, University of Birmingham)

works like Clive Field in his work published in 2012.<sup>3</sup> The fourth chapter discusses about cultural and religious racism, a systematic practice from its very beginning. The chapter envisages into historical perspective from Christian-Jew times of medieval history. The term 'race' as explained in the chapter have huge significance to the literature. The fifth chapter discourses about the scrutinization of the terms Islam and Muslims. The chapter discusses the major component of Islamophobia, i.e., the threat. It takes into account the works of Rychnovska<sup>4</sup>, who mentions about the threat construction and kinds of scrutinization to understand the facets of terrorism during 9/11. The chapter heavily relies on the literature from the west to explain the issue of threat from a particular minority community along with examples and case studies of Palestine Issue and Al-Qaeda issues. Another connotation was marked from the article by Jocelyne Cesari<sup>5</sup>, where he discussed about 'war on terror' to analyze political consequences of terming terrorism as religious issue. The sixth chapter of the book is about the political threat surrounding Islamophobia, the concept which gained prominence during early 1990s. this chapter looks into the different factors where political authorities used this concept to draw attention against Islam. The chapter also speaks about the history, dimensions, causes and consequences of anti-Muslim and anti-Islamic sentiments. The penultimate chapter gives critical analyses of the term 'othering' as Islamophobia, it talks about the scapegoating and vilification of the community, and how their human rights are ignored and disregarded. Through Greek 'barbarian' example, it explains the core issues of other as a concept and violation of human right. The last chapter is a comparative analysis with work of Said on 'Clash of Civilization' and the critical take of Islam in west. Through various case studies of the contemporary period including ongoing Afghanistan crisis and emergence of Deish, ISIS, the author tries to point the ongoing conflict.

## **CRITICAL ANALYSIS**

### **A. Comprehensive literature**

The book gives an overall idea on the issue of Islamophobia, as the name suggests, Islamophobia: History, Context and Deconstruction, it inculcates all the major aspects

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<sup>3</sup> Marc Helbling, *Islamophobia in The West: Measuring and Explaining Individual Attitudes* 147-161 (Routledge Publication, 1<sup>ST</sup> edn., 2014)

<sup>4</sup> Dagmer Rychnoska, "Scrutinization and the power of threat framing", 22 *IIR* 9-31 (2014)

<sup>5</sup> Jocelyne Cessari, "Securitization of Islam in Europe", 52 *DW des Islam* 430-449 (2012)

around the topic to give in-depth understanding on the issue. History plays a key role in developing the inclusive impression on the issue, this book not only includes the historical development of the term 'Islamophobia' but also mentions about the key events in medieval history to identify the key areas of contention which lead to threat and scrutinization of a community. The book also discusses the varied dimensions from, socio-cultural, economic to political to ensure that every major component is covered for readers to have a subjective view.

### **B. Highlights one of the most contentious issues of recent times**

Islamophobia was earlier construed as a phenomenon and later on as a threat. The book discusses this issue and investigates into the past events that led to igniting it to become a peril to peace. The author with the help of the writings of various prominent scholars gives a wide listing on the theories discussed by writers in past and in contemporary period. The book also envisages into the social media construct to understand its effect in a millennial era. The book runs into the historical as well as sociological materials of the issue to examine its impact in public spheres. The language used is vivid to help readers understand the different facets and diversities of the issue.

### **C. Identifies key theories and elements of Islamophobia**

The book takes a responsible shift into superfluity and identify the issue from theoretical and empirical angle along with moral adequacy. The lens of subjective understanding supplies readers with policy vision towards Islam. The books with its nuanced perspective give thorough outlook upon the different elements like social, cultural, religious and economic of Islamophobia. The inclusion of the extracts of the poem by Rabindranath Tagore, makes the reader introspect on inclusive world with no hatred and more acceptance. The book is comprehensive in itself to recognize solidarities of community and to have constitutional rights for everyone and every community.

### **D. Missing factors**

The book dashes into the past to dig the historical prejudice against the community and compares the situation with contemporary literature and notions. The book includes almost all major elements into account. However, there are also psychological and legal elements involved into the event. The issue of Islamophobia can be traced into the

seventh century with the birth of Islam but the negative effects of the practice can be witnessed even today. The social exclusion in employment and education sectors causes a layered psychological trauma. The book however discusses the impact from international space, the examples and discussions mentioned are the events of past. The recent examples would have helped readers to connect with the issue. In conclusion, it can be said that book covers the major instances relating to security and threat which affected thought process of masses against a particular community.

### **SUPPORTING LITERATURES/BOOKS ON SIMILAR ISSUE**

A. “Islamophobia and the Politics of Empire”<sup>6</sup>, is masterpiece with the similar discussion. The book is a critically acclaimed analysis with a broad theme of anti-Muslim discrimination from sixteenth century till date. The book contains detailed note on the approach of the big capital guns of the world against a minority community.

B. “Fear of a Muslim Planet”<sup>7</sup> is latest edition to the discussion on hatred and threat from a religious community. The book circumscribes the major questions of why Muslims are targeted along with dialogue on contemporary issues like Hijab ban, republican jihad and so on.

C. “Madrasas in the Age of Islamophobia”<sup>8</sup>, is an eye-opener on the critical issue of discrimination faced by young citizens. The book contains some really crucial topics which needs an objective understanding need for modernization and acceptance.

D. “Islamophobia: Roots, Consequences and solutions”<sup>9</sup>, is a comprehensive literature dealing in all facets of Islamic discrimination in Europe and America. The book also refers to the media reports that are based on military operations, topics such as religious identity, citizenship and social cohesion forms a structure of systematic discrimination against a particular minority community.

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<sup>6</sup> Deepa Kumar, *Islamophobia and The Politics of Empire: 20 Years After 9/11* (2<sup>nd</sup> edn., 2021)

<sup>7</sup> Arsalan Iftikhar, *Fear of A Muslim Planet: Global Islamophobia in the New World Order* (Skyhorse Publishing, The United States of America, 2021)

<sup>8</sup>Ziya us Salam and Md. Aslam Parvez, *Madrasas in the age of Islamophobia* (Sage Publications, India, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. 2021)

<sup>9</sup> Refaat Mahmoud, *Islamophobia: Roots, Consequences and Solutions* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed. 2020)

E. “Reconfiguring Islamophobia”<sup>10</sup>, the book in its three parts gives holistic idea about racism and manifestations in terms of political and general context. From case studies about Osama bin Laden to distinction between past and present concepts of Islamophobia, the literature provides overall analysis of working definitions on the issue along with survey reports conducted globally.

F. Apart from these book, number of articles in national and international journals discuss the various facets of Islam and Islamophobia, the article published in 2005 speaks about the use of violet language which became rampant against a community post 9/11<sup>11</sup>. A research article by Dr. Rahman discusses on the notions of democracy and how it hampers the liberal and traditional facets of religion and democracy<sup>12</sup>.

## **CONCLUSION**

The book is a thesis in itself which covers the major components that are needed to be understood about Islamophobia. The history guides the readers towards the evolution and introduce the topic from its core, the following chapters one by one removes the layers of detailed analysis which includes socio-cultural aspects as well as human rights issue involved. The book although in brief discusses the much-needed topic of human dignity which is often infringed due to the issue of Islamophobia. The book highlights the subject of systematic discrimination against the particular religious community from multi-dimensional angles.

The book is a must read to understand the issue of Islamophobia in its entirety and to comprehend how it poses a threat to the secular fabric of democracies around the world. It is available on various e-commerce websites and offline stores.

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<sup>10</sup> Chris Allen, *Reconfiguring Islamophobia: A Radical Rethinking of A Contested Concept* (2020)

<sup>11</sup> Sajid Abduljali, “Islamophobia: A New Word for an old fear”, 12 *PIJ* (2005)

<sup>12</sup> Farhat Rahman, “Is democracy compatible with Islam?” (2016)