

POLICE POSITIVE RESPONSE TO ISLAMOPHOBIA IN EUROPE: HISTORICAL IMPACTS ON MIGRATION

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Abstract

Islamophobia is embedded migration systems. In the post 9/11 Islamophobia perceptions of race and religion have intersected with western immigration policies to create hostile, and even violent, treatment of migrants, including refugees, from predominantly Muslim countries. There is resistance of discussing or even acknowledging the existence of systemic Islamophobia in Europe, this is according to a historian Asrida Adetry in his book "Islamophobia in Europe and its Global Impact". In addition to a lack of knowledge about what Islamophobia is or how it manifests in system, structures and institutions, and in the daily lives, Islamophobia is a form of racism that constructs Muslims as dangerous suspects, expressed through dehumanization of Muslims in Europe and other continents. Meanwhile, the Metropolitan Police been hit with a scandal involving Islamophobia and misconduct in UK, following revelations in a BBC Panorama documentary. Muslims have long been one of the targets of British racism, which was particularly visible through orientalist writings and policies during the colonial era. In short Islamophobia conceives Muslim men as irrational, violent and oppressive. They are portrayed as not understanding democracy, being innately hostile and oppressive of women and minorities, For Muslim women, then, they are seen as uniquely, oppressed, but also dangerous through the way many choose to veil. With is, this research intends to explain the key issues and implications that explain racism and migration phenomenon. This research is going to adopt qualitative method, while recommendations and suggestions are going to be mentioned for further studies.

KEYWORDS: Islamophobia, Migration, Minorities, Police, British, Muslim, Immigration.

FULL PAPER

Recent surveys conducted in Europe indicate a rise in Islamophobia since 2015, namely since the beginning of the refugee crisis, Islamophobic incidents have been taking place across the whole continent, even in places where Muslim communities are almost absent, for example, in some Central European states. Islamophobia is exacerbated by some European governments and right-wing politicians who openly express anti-Muslim opinions. Should such sentiments find their ways in power through elections across Europe, they may reshape E.U. policy toward the Middle East and some African Islamic countries, for instance, the intake and treatment of Middle Eastern and African refugees and migrants. Although the so-called Islamic state is losing the war in Iraq and Syria, it continues to wage a “clash of civilizations” in Europe. Today, ISIS seeks not only to intimidate civilians in order to affect decision-making processes in European states, but also to incite conflict between Muslims and Christians in Europe. ISIS defectors report that the organization is sending its fighters to infiltrate refugee communities. Perhaps as a result of this strategy, an increasing number of Europeans are blaming Muslim refugees, especially Syrians, for terrorist attacks conducted after 2011, despite the fact that the majority of perpetrators have been citizens of Western European states. According to the most recent annual European Islamophobia Report, published in 2017, Europe’s average public opposition to further migration from predominantly Muslim states is 56%, ranging from 40% in Spain to 70% in Poland. The report states, “Islamophobia has become a real danger to the foundations of democratic order and values of the European Union. It has also become the main challenge to the social peace and coexistence of different culture, religions and ethnicities of Europe. In the shifting political and security climate, right-wing politicians and organizations across the European Union are taking advantage of the migration crisis, driving many non-Muslim Europeans to wrongly perceive Muslim refugees and Muslims in general as grave threats to their safety. Surprisingly, such anti-Muslim movements are found in countries with refugee friendly policies, including Germany, Sweden and Denmark. As German federal elections approach, polls indicate a rise in anti-immigration public opinion. According

to one poll, alternative for Germany, a far-right populist party that boasts a clear anti-immigration program, can count on 10% or more of Germany's votes. The Anti-immigration Sweden Democrats are also showing signs of increasing public support, and the party already holds 15% of seats in the Swedish parliament. And the anti-immigration, anti- Brussels Danish People's Party, with 20% of the vote and thirty seven seats in the parliament are gaining momentum as well. Everything indicates that all three parties will take control of more seats in the European general election in future. In Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic, national governments openly refuse to accept Muslim refugees whom they believe to be a security threat. In addition, public controlled media in these countries seeks to justify anti-immigrant and anti- Muslim rhetoric. In 2016, Polish Prime Minister Beata Szydlo said that his country would accept Christian refugees from Syria rather than Muslims, implying that the latter are potential threats. Soon after the Brussels attack in 2016, Szydlo declared that Polish authorities would accept no refugees for security reasons. Such a policy only fuels anti-Muslim sentiments. An interesting paradox also appear to be a play, according to a survey by the Polish Centre for Public Opinion Research (CBOS), Poles are the biggest Europhiles in the European Union,. And yet clear majority would rather lose European Union funds than accept Muslim refugees as part of relocation processes. At least 30% of respondents said they believe refugees intend to "Islamize Europe" and 22 percent perceive them as potential terrorists. And according to the most recent poll, the ruling, anti-immigrant Law and Justice Party will take 43% of votes. What's more, the average Polish citizen believes that Muslims constitute more than eight percent of society, while in reality Muslims make up less than 00.1% of the population, more than 71 times less than the perceived number. Such misperception can be observed in other European Union member states as well. In 2016 Ipsos Mori survey that measured gap between public perception and reality in over forty countries illustrated that public estimates of the size of Muslim communities were more than four times the actual level in the United Kingdom and five times in France. No doubt these overestimates are increasing steadily for various reasons, lack of education, security concerns, and, finally, lack of personal contact with Muslims. Particularly given recent political shifts, it seems that the refugee crisis could become a key obstacle for further European integration and a potent threat to European Union unity. In July 2017, the

European Commission acted against Hungary, Poland, and the Czech Republic for refusing to take refugees from Muslim countries. According to some analysts, this step opened the debate over the independence of European Union states from Brussels. The connection between the Middle East's refugee crisis and Europe's rising Islamophobia is cyclical. As long as the refugee crisis persists, brought on by the various conflicts in the region, Europe will face an influx of migrants, thus spurring anti-Islamic sentiment on the continent. And should Islamophobia influence decision-making in Europe, those decisions are likely to be the detriment of incoming refugees. It is in Europe's immediate interest to pursue long-term peaceful solutions to conflicts in the Middle East and Africa. Only through concerted efforts to tackle the refugee crisis as its roots will Europe find a sustainable path to stem the tide of incoming refugees and halt the rise of Islamophobic thoughts and politics. Islamophobia is embedded in immigration systems, in the post 9/11 Global North, Islamophobia perceptions of race and religion have intersected with Western immigration policies to create hostile, and even violent, treatment of migrants, including refugees, from predominantly Muslim countries. There is resistance of discussing or even acknowledging the existence of systemic Islamophobia in the United Kingdom, in addition to a lack of knowledge about what Islamophobia is or how it manifests in systems, structures and institutions, and in daily lives.

ISLAMOPHOBIA: A FORM OF RACISM

Islamophobia is a form of racism that constructs Muslims as dangerous suspects, expressed through dehumanization of Muslims in Europe. Muslims have long been one of the targets of British racism, which was particularly visible through Orientalist writings and policies during colonial era. In short, Islamophobia conceives of Muslim men as irrational, violent and oppressive, they are portrayed as not understanding democracy, being innately hostile and oppressive of women and minorities. For Muslim women, then, they are seen as uniquely, oppressed, but also dangerous through the way that many choose to veil. This is why a core part of Islamophobia in Europe has surrendered unveiling and compelling Muslims to perform acts deemed against their religion in the name of 'liberalism' and 'liberation'. This perception of fundamentalism and repression, then, has formed the foundation of the British state's approach to British Muslims through the lens of control through

counter-terrorism, including policies like prevent. As British politicians continues to whip-up Islamophobia around areas with large Muslim populations, which often also have large migrant populations, it is more important than ever to ensure that we recognize Islamophobia as a form of racism and challenge it as such. It is racist to say there are areas of Tower Hamlets that are 'no go zones', just as it is to invent 'Trojan horse' narratives around alleged religious extremist infiltration in schools with large number of Muslim students.

THE EUROPEAN IMMIGRATION AND ASYLUM SYSTEM VIEW ON ISLAMOPHOBIA

Muslims are positioned outside the realm of Europe, as the opposite of a vague and poorly defined set of 'European values', which has increased as a hostile immigration system and counter-terror apparatus visible with deprivation of citizenship laws, rapidly expanded policies that European Muslims bear the brunt of. Deprivation of citizenship is also linked to counter-terrorism legislation. The disproportionate impact of citizenship deprivation on Muslims and people of colour is amplified by the European's counter-terror measures that contribute to heightened Islamophobia. Together, citizenship deprivation and counter-terror powers intensify the ideal that Muslims and migratised groups are an 'anti-Europe'. As war on Terror-era Islamophobia constructs Muslims as a foreign threat, Muslim migrants face an added burden of suspicion in an environment where politicians and commentators have been increasingly keen to describe migrants as 'invaders'. Within this context, migrants, particularly those without access to safe routes, are treated with an inherent mistrust, regardless of their reason of migrating as demonstrations outside hotels accommodating refugees are increasing, we must also remember that majority of people in Home Office accommodation are from majority Muslim countries and are people of Colour, often from South Asia, the Middle East and Africa. This leaves Muslim asylum seekers in a disadvantaged position, where the 'burden of proof' policy often amplifies the prejudice of an Islamophobic, anti-migrant system. Following the independent Review of Prevent, it has been recommended that the Prevent Duty be expanded into the immigration system. Prevent is a form of state surveillance that disproportionately impacts radicalized people, specifically Muslim communities. This is a fundamentally flawed and discriminatory

mechanism that leads to thousands of people mainly Muslims being treated with suspicion on the basis they are assumed to be more likely to commit or support an act of terrorism. This could result in greater surveillance of Muslims, migrants and migratised Muslims in particular, and more removals of citizenship and or visa status from Muslims in Europe. For Muslims seeking asylum specifically, this could increase the already high degree of suspicion and distrust from Home Office assessors. Given the Islamophobic assumption that positions Muslims in inherent proximity to terrorism, the expansion of Prevent Duty into the European immigration system would undeniably further embed racism and Islamophobia in borders, this research aim is to highlight the experiences of people faced at the intersection of another or multiple system, where structural prejudice like Islamophobia can increase the precocity of certain groups of migrants. Ignoring the impacts of other systems of oppression does a disservice to people like Muslims seeking asylum who are subjected to both Islamophobia and the hostile immigration system in Europe, by acknowledging these intersections, there can be a better effectively challenge the ideologies and structures that 'Other' people and make them feel less welcome. Europe's history with religious diversity has been shaped by centuries of state- controlled Christianity and recent decades of multicultural expansion. In some part of Europe like Sweden was predominantly Lutheran country for much of its past, as Lutheranism became the state religion in the 16th century after the Protestant Reformation. The Sweden Church held significant influence over social norms and state policies until the separation of church and state in 2000. In the mid-20th century, Sweden transformed from a country of emigration to one of immigration. After World War II, labour migration began to shape Swedish society, with a significant influx of workers from Finland, Greece and the Balkans. Since the 1990s, the country has seen a rise in refugee immigrants from Syria, Somalia, Iraq and other conflict-affected regions, introducing various religions, such as Islam, Catholicism, and Orthodox Christianity, diversifying the Swedish religious landscape, with immigrants establishing roots in Europe, family reunification has become one of the primary reasons for immigration. Approximately 40 percent of the Swedish population for example is either foreign-born or has a foreign background, with origins spanning various globally. The countries of origin or the parent's country of origin vary from different parts of the world. Around 1.2 million people in Sweden came

mostly from regions where Islam is the main religion. Since Swedish law prohibits the statistical measurement of religious affiliation, there only exist uncertain estimates of the number of Muslims and secular Muslims living in the country. For example, the registered members and participants in different Islamic faith communities in 2021 were 224,459 people representing 2.1 percent of the population. It makes Islam the second-largest religion in the country. However, this number does not say much about the Swedish population with a Muslim background. The estimated number had been approximated between 500,000 and 800,000 individuals with a Muslim family background, with the majority being secular Muslims. Muslims all over Europe have background from different countries, ethnicities, class positions, and educational levels. The most significant number of nationalities who immigrated to Europe since the 1980s were Iraq, former Yugoslavia, Somalia, Afghanistan, Nigeria, Syria and Kurds from diverse countries (Turkey, Iran, and Iraq), most of these nationalities are of Middle Eastern and Africa origins and have overrepresented in statistics of lower socio economic housing segregation and ethnic discrimination in the labour market as well as in other social and health services. Whether they self-identify as Muslims or not, immigrants from these countries have been addressed in politics and media as a threat to European culture, values, democracy and gender equality. Freedom of religion is protected as a human right following the European Convention on Human Rights, which is observed as Law in some other countries like Sweden. Accordingly, every individual has the right to practice their religion alone or in the company of others, e.g. through worship, teaching, rituals and customs. The law prohibits forcing individuals or groups to belong to any religious body. Many European integration policies are based on equal rights, responsibilities, and opportunities for all residents, irrespective of cultural and ethnic background. Emphasis has shifted from multiculturalism to cultural pluralism and civic integration, allowing immigrants to maintain their cultures while conforming to European values and laws. Therefore, freedom of religion in Europe can be observed insofar as it does not interfere with public safety, order, health, morals or the protection of the rights and freedoms of others. There are conscious attempts to create the necessary prerequisites of minority groups and immigrants to live a life free from discrimination. For example, the European Discrimination Act aims to promote equal rights and opportunities irrespective of religion, age, sex, gender identity, ethnicity, or

other beliefs. Complaints about discrimination within the public domain can be reported to the government agency mandated to fight discrimination and promote equal rights and opportunities. However, the agency notes that perceptions about religion and religious beliefs are significant drivers of discrimination in the European Labour market, disproportionately affecting Muslim or individuals presumed to be Muslims

ISLAMOPHOBIA AND THE SECURITISATION OF MUSLIM MIGRANTS

Although the phenomenon of enmity against Islam and Muslims in the West can be traced back to the Christian Crusades, it is during the European colonial expansion in 1492 that the grounds for the new structures of colonial cartography apply as a hierarchical world system. It means that the colonial structures of race and religious hierarchies, along with epistemological conceptualizations of civilized/uncivilized, Christian/non-Christian, modern/traditional, centrum/periphery, etc., reframe power relations through racializing, culturalizing, and otherizing those outside the Western racial logos, expelling them as semi-humans or non-humans at all. Political and media narratives often manufacture immigration as a social problem, framing the construction of meaning through the discourses of cultural differences as social, political and security problems. The meaning-making processes of certain segments of the European population primarily target immigrants and their children from Middle Eastern and African countries, emphasizing cultural and racial distinctions. Immigrants, particularly those from non-European backgrounds, are politically portrayed in the media as individuals whose issues, circumstances, and problems are explained primarily through cultural differences rather than the context of structural and institutional factors related to their personal and societal positions. While Islamophobia is often referred to as the irrational fear, prejudice, and discrimination against Muslims and Islam, although the definition is not wrong, it lacks a historical, political and epistemic context on which these irrational fears, prejudices and acts of discrimination and violence against Muslims and Islam are grounded. In this regards a philosopher made a point of conceptualizing Islamophobia not as mere hostility or hatred towards Muslims but as form of radicalized governmentality. Its involves disciplining Muslims according to Westernizing norms, effectively denying them rights, this perspective leads an author to

assert that Islamophobia specifically targets Muslims as subjugated political subjects, with particular emphasis on the securitization and racialisation of Muslim migrants, often from former European colonies and those who arrived in waves of post-war migration. Islamophobia cannot, in that case, be understood only as prejudices and stereotypes about Islam and Muslims but as part of an ongoing colonial epistemology configuring conceptualizations and understanding of who the subaltern other is and ought to be handled. Islamophobia in Europe follows the step of Western dominance in the global political arena since the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991. In the 1991 Swedish election, a new anti-immigrant political party *Ny demokrati* (New Democracy), won a seat in the Swedish parliament with other right-wing political parties. Ny Demokrati's political programme was anti-immigrant, mainly anti-Muslim and anti-establishment in other concerns. Although it lasted for a term, the political resonance and legacy were followed by other right wing parties during the whole decade. During the beginning of the new millennium, its legacies were reformulated by a much more extreme right wing party, the *Sverigedemokraterna* (the Sweden Democrats) having immigration politics as its main political programme, and framing it precisely with a stark.

POLICE PHENOMENON ON ISLAMOPHOBIA

Police in the United Kingdom investigated a suspected arson attack on a mosque in Southern England as a "hate crime" as a spate of violent crime against religious sites. Police officers were called to the site of an arson attack on Phyllis Avenue in Peacehaven, East Sussex, just before 10pm on Saturday, 05 October, 2025. The fire damaged the front entrance of the mosque and a car, they said, adding that no one was injured. Images and footage shared by police show a burned-out car at the entrance of the mosque. Sussex Police also shared images of two masked men dressed in black clothing, and appealed for help from the public to identify them. According to the report on CNN, which quoted a volunteer mosque manager, two people were inside the building when two people in balaclavas tried to force the mosque door open and poured petrol onto the steps, setting the building alight. A spokesperson for the mosque said in a statement to the police that the community was "deeply saddened" by the shocking attack. While the incident has caused damage to our building and vehicles, we are profoundly grateful that no one was injured.

Police Detective Superintendent said the attack had caused concerns within the Muslim community. “There is already an increased police presence at the scene of event, and there are also additional patrols taking place of worship across United Kingdom.

More so, the Metropolitan Police has been hit with a fresh scandal involving Islamophobia and misconduct, following revelations in a new documentary, the documentary alleged that several police officers expressed support for a far-right anti-Muslim activist who made derogatory comments about Muslims and women, and used excessive force against detainees in custody. The incidents reported occurred between August 2024 and January 2025 at Charing Cross Police Station. In response, Scortaland Yard announced that suspension of nine officers pending investigation. The independent Officer for Police Conduct (IOPC) has launched a former inquiry, while two others- a civilian staff member and a former officer-also face related allegations.

RECOMMENDATION

Following the independent Review of Prevent, it has been recommended that the Prevent Duty be expanded into the immigration system. Prevent is a form of state surveillance that disproportionately impacts radicalized people, specifically Muslim communities. This is a fundamental flawed and discriminatory mechanism that leads to thousands of people (mainly Muslims being treated with suspicion on the basis they are assumed to be more likely to commit or support an act of terrorism. This could result in greater surveillance of Muslims, migrant and migratised Muslims in particular, and more removals of citizenship and or visa status from Muslims in Europe. For Muslim people seeking asylum specifically, this could increase the already high degree of suspicion and distrust from Home Offices, given the Islamophobic assumption that positions Muslims in inherent proximity to terrorism, the expansion of the Prevent Duty into the European immigration system would undeniably further embed racism and Islamophobia in borders. It is important to highlight the experiences of people faced at the intersection of another multiple systems of oppression and the immigration system, where structural prejudice like Islamophobia can increase the precocity of certain groups of migranrs ignoring the impact of other system of oppression does a disservice to people like Muslim people seeking asylum who are subjected to both Islamophobia

and hostile immigration system in Europe, by acknowledging these intersections, we can better effectively challenge the ideologies and structures that other people and make them feel less welcome.

CONCLUSION

The recent surge of migration caused by war and instability means those seeking shelter as migrants, refugees or asylum seekers are affecting the socioeconomic, in general migrants contribute as much to public finances in taxes as they receive benefits, that is the net fiscal impacts of immigration are minimal. The European social survey (ESS) conducted between 2002 and 2023 across eleven waves, explored native-born Europeans's perceptions of immigration. Respondents expressed their opinions on the impact of immigrants in three key areas: economic effects, cultural life, and general perceptions. Additionally, participants were asked about their preferences regarding the number of immigrants allowed into their countries, considering different categories of immigrants. From the start of the new millennium, the order of perceptions regarding the impact of immigrant remained consistent in the European Union; the belief that immigrants enrich cultural life ranked highest, followed by perceptions of economic benefits, and lastly, the view that immigrants make the country a better place to live, in the last 20 years, the perception of economic benefits saw the largest improvement, increasing by 14% points, followed by the belief that immigrants make the continent a better place to live. The view that immigrants enrich cultural life experienced that smallest increase of 3.5% points. In the last five years, positive opinions slightly declined for Islamophobia due to the general acceptance of Palestine as a recognized state on its own against Israel, while views on economic benefits remained steady.

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