

THE RISE OF THE FIFTH WAVE OF GLOBAL TERRORISM (ISLAMOPHOBIA)

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Abstract

Post-9/11 framing of Islam in western intelligentsia and policymakers have given birth to a new way of global terrorism, i.e., Islamophobia, revolving around unfounded fear of Islam. Islamophobia is an internationally driven predominant energy – hatred against Muslims – which continues to shape the character of this new wave and relations among the perpetrators belonging to various parts of the world. Politically-driven framing of Muslims, Islam and one of its key tenants – Jihad – by the western media has heralded transnational terrorism (the Fifth Wave of terrorism), which fulfils all the essential prerequisites. Therefore, the theoretical framework of this paper peeps through the Four Waves Theory of modern terrorism put forth by David Rapoport to examine whether the current rise of Islamophobic violence in different parts of the world qualifies to be the Fifth Global Wave of terrorism. The paper delineates how Muslims have been discriminated against and demonized worldwide. It also unfolds how religious-linked terrorism has been exploited, resulting in Islamophobia, which has turned into a transcultural and transnational threat.

Keywords: Islamophobia, Four Waves Theory, Terrorism, Extremism, Islam.

Introduction

The phenomenon of terrorism has become one of the most dangerous embodiments in contemporary times that produces hazardous socio-political activities inducing consistent negative emotions with a scary display. It constitutes religious-political subjects; correspondingly, it is considered a cultural taboo that became a myth and an object that prompts fear and hatred. Over the past few years, terrorism has caused severe damages worldwide due to its transcultural and transnational characteristics. It has been discussed in different forms and types in literature for a long time. Various authors have contributed literature on different religions as it remained an area of interest for many. However, after the 9/11 incident, the interest in studying religion-based ideologies fuelling terrorism and violent extremism has been renewed.

In his book titled “Not in God’s Name,” Jonathan Sacks argues that religion has been used as a tool to fuel extremism and violence.¹ Sathianathan Clarke’s book titled “Competing Fundamentalisms: Violent Extremism in Christianity, Islam, and Hinduism” also provides insights about extremist religious organizations.² It provokes

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thoughts on further exploring the genesis and origins of religious extremist violence and ideologies. Several books have also been written on religious militancy by western authors. Some adequately describe various militant organizations and their motives, while others explain their doctrines. The works of Raymond William and Jon Witt sufficiently explain the importance of ideology in stimulating a movement. Some Pakistani writers like Dr. Sheharyar Khan and Irshad Hussain have funnelled down the focus of their work to religious doctrine and narratives in their articles titled “Counter Terrorism: The War of Narratives” and “Ideology or Religion,” respectively.³ All these works provide new dimensions in understanding extremist religious ideologies and thoughts.

David C. Rapoport, in his article “The Four Waves of Modern Terrorism,” has explained various motivations and ideologies rooted in the perusal of terrorism and violence by multiple organizations. He constructed a model of four waves to simplify this complex phenomenon. Each wave of terrorism in Rapoport’s model depicted a specific timeframe and ideologies associated with it.⁴ The first wave of terrorism can be attributed to anarchists, who remained involved in violent and terrorist acts from the 19th to 20th century. The second wave of terrorism followed the emergence of anti-colonial and nationalist movements. Ideological terrorism during the 1960s and 1970s made up the third wave of terrorism. While the fourth wave of terrorism was religiously-motivated terrorism, according to Rapoport, starting with the wake of 1979 and continuing to date. Each wave, according to Rapoport, lasts for a generation, roughly 25 to 40 years on average.

Todd H. Green traces the history from medieval times to locate the origin of hatred against Islam in his book titled “The Fear of Islam: An Introduction to Islamophobia in the West.” He highlights the prevailing illogical fear of Islam in the West. Salman Sayyid’s book titled “Thinking through Islamophobia: Global Perspectives” also deals with the origins of Islamophobia and endeavours to define it and relate it with Orientalism and racism. Scholars are also writing various articles to bring the phenomenon of Islamophobia to light. A few such authors have indicated an impending clash of civilizations behind the phenomenon. While the focus remains towards the West, there has already been a rise in extremism in India. Secondly, there are gaps in formulating a strategic response to this phenomenon, transcending from non-violent extremism to violent extremism and terrorism against communities of Muslims, appearing to emerge as a new wave of global terrorism. Despite these factors, much less work has been done on Islamophobia as a worldwide phenomenon, examined through the prism of transnational and transcultural terrorism.

Islamophobia, as an extension of contemporary terrorism, is possibly discussed in the backdrop of evolving trends of extremism. Today, the non-aggressive social constructs have become belligerent and violent, with religion turning into a phobia. Exclusivity is becoming a global trend, and humanity gets detached into contesting groups and factions. It is, therefore, imperative to analyse Islamophobia as a social construct and evaluate its future direction, the primary focus of this paper. It unfolds

social construct and ideological underpinnings behind terrorism and extremism while employing David Rapoport's 'Four Waves Theory' as a conceptual framework, analyzing through critical terrorism prism to build the rationale for an emerging wave of transnational and transcultural terrorism, i.e., Islamophobia. It is different from previous waves, but the consequential tides have one commonality in violence.

Islamophobia – A Social Construct

Ideology is a complex phenomenon that shapes conceptual and social constructs in a historical setting. Ideologies represent and shape the interests of social groups by forming different frameworks. Shepherd et al. quote Eagleton while discussing three concepts related to underpinnings of ideology: the presentation of ideas, values, and beliefs, the operationalization of ideas, values, and moral concepts to promote specific vested interests of a segment as against others, and the interests of the powerful protected through distortion and misrepresentation.⁵ Likewise, Purvis and Hunt (1993) view ideology as a result of stature or orientation held by different groups, classes, and agents of influence within societies. Whereas, Davoudi, using the work of Michael Freeden (1996), declares ideology as the outcome of ideas, values, and beliefs, constructed historically and socially, over vibrant and flexible patterns.

In contrast, Sager (2020) sees the structure of political ideas aimed at political change as ideology.⁶ All these conceptual underpinnings of ideology have one common characteristic, i.e., the association of power with the notion of ideology to bring change. Going further, Donald Holbrook and John Horgan, in their article "Terrorism and Ideology: Cracking the Nut," hold that the question of "what causes terrorism?" has a standard answer – the ideology. They believe that some hostile ideology drives terrorists in the most general sense in carrying out violence.

Linking the two dimensions above, it seems safe to state that ideology is a powerful driver in the social construction of ideas. At the same time, ideology may also motivate a terrorist to initiate acts of violence. Inconsequential terms, the social construct of ideology and associated concepts and ideas generally bring change in society, and the worst form, breed terrorism. In any case, the social construction of ideas seemingly impacts the concepts, interests, values, and behaviour of individuals, segments, and societies. For example, the rise of Islamophobia as an idea and social construct has reflected signs of extremism and violence, resembling terrorist ideologies described in Rapoport's waves of terrorism. Following Rapoport's fourth wave's footsteps, the inception of Islamophobia and its emergence as an idea is a dangerous wave of global terrorism (the Fifth Wave), as it seemingly qualifies all the prerequisites. However, it is pertinent to mention that the Fifth Wave (Islamophobia) differs from the fourth wave in many aspects. Firstly, non-state actors are the spearhead of religiously-motivated violence. Secondly, the fourth wave enforces non-state actors' understanding and interpretation of religion. In comparison, the Fifth Wave drivers are lone wolves charged with hatred and fuelled by policymakers, media, and intelligentsia.

Rapoport has divided modern terrorism into waves, and generational-gap determines wave's lifespan, wherein older generations' dreams and aspirations either become obsolete or lose their appeal to the next generation. A wave has the characteristics of expanding and compressing within a timeframe of 25 years on average. Rapoport has given approximately 40 years as the usual timeframe of a wave and estimates that the prevailing religious tide, which started in 1979, would recede in 2025. He draws this conclusion considering the lifespan of the previous three waves. While the fourth wave continues, the Fifth Wave (Islamophobia) has started ravaging the world. Although it carries the characteristics of social constructivism, the Rapoport theory of Four Waves would be better suited to explain this new phenomenon.

Discrimination against Muslims

There is no universally agreed definition of terrorism. It may be a threat to use violence (a coercive technique) and fear to achieve political or ideological objectives.⁷ Inter-faith and intra-faith animosities date back to pre-historical periods. Sicarii in the 1st century, Catholic-Protestant clash in Northern Ireland, and sectarian rift in the Muslim world show a spectrum of intra-faith violence on extreme ends. The inter-faith violence and hatred can be seen as early as the start of the last millennium in the form of crusaders. While capturing Jerusalem, the crusaders were fortified with extremism, hatred, and violence; thus, they massacred Muslims and Jews in 1099.⁸

It is believed that Islamophobia is a novel term for an old fear. It is one form of religious intolerance with deep roots in hostile ideology, "a theological heresy at the level of morals and practice in the 14th century."⁹ Moreover, in the 15th century, differences between Muslims and non-Muslims mounted like racial resentment towards Islam.¹⁰ Similarly, Muslims in India have faced immense hatred and violence ever since the partition in 1947. Demolition of *Babri Masjid* and massacres of Muslims following the Gujrat riots are all testimony of Hindu abhorrence towards Muslims due to charred history and psychological aspects. This exclusionism becomes more apparent as India drifts from secularism into an abyss of exclusivity due to the *Hindutva* ideology. Hinduism has a different outlook, as described by some of the pundits like M. S. Golwalkar in his books titled "Bunch of Thoughts" and "We or Our Nationhood Defined,"¹¹ and V. D. Savarkar in his works titled "Essentials of Hindutva" (also known as "Hindutva: Who is Hindu?") and "Hindu Rashtra Darshan."¹² Their thoughts, thus, gave rise to an extremist concept of *Hindutva*, being practiced in India under the BJP government.

The violent and non-violent animosity of religion became part of history; however, a new pattern appeared in the wake of the 9/11 incident when suspicion about Islam and Muslims surfaced within the US and Europe and later the rest of the world. To begin with, the US security apparatus and European states kept Muslim communities worldwide under constant surveillance as a potential threat. The official patronage of treating Muslim communities as a nuisance led to fear regarding Islam. Afterwards, a notion of hatred, simmering through a long history, was attached to Muslim

communities. Caleb Iyer Elfenbein analyses Islamophobia in the US as an outcome of 9/11 and the fear against Muslims in the country. His book titled “Fear in Our Hearts: What Islamophobia Tells Us about America” highlights the plight faced by American Muslims.

Similarly, Jorgan Denari Duffner, in her book “Islamophobia: What Christians Should Know (and Do) about Anti-Muslim Discrimination” described the harassment and attacks in the US and many other countries against Muslims. It led to further development of a dichotomy between Good Muslim and Bad Muslim. It complicated and damaged the very basis of Islamic ideology in the minds of Christians, Jews, and other non-Muslims. The hatred caused by exclusionism transformed into a phobia.

A few developments contributed more than anything else to give this social construct an anti-Islamic face – Islamophobia. An executive order by US President Donald Trump restricting travel from Muslim countries was a significant step impacting this new direction. Likewise, incidents of offensive religious-caricatures in France followed by the banning of *hijab* gradually became instrumental in the emergence of Islamophobia as a global phenomenon. The same is occurring in India, where a fascist state subjugates minorities to any extent. Besides, international media and intelligentsia appeared to fuel the fire by following the suit.

To quote an example, in June 2015, Omar Mateen, an Afghan origin US citizen, killed 49 people when he opened fire at a gay nightclub in Orlando. The incident was immediately compared with 9/11 and declared the worst terrorist attack in the US since 9/11. Although different eye-witnesses’ accounts indicated the incident as a hate crime against homosexuals, the US official authorities continue to declare it a terrorist attack by Muslims. The attacker was allegedly a closeted homosexual who frequently went to the club where he carried out the shooting. According to the account by his wife, his family already believed that he was a homosexual. He was an active member of many dating sites dedicated to homosexuals. He was also allegedly incited towards committing a crime due to the possibility of contracting HIV from a Puerto Rican gay. However, the FBI kept a spotlight on the 911 emergency call made by Mateen despite all evidence. The hate crime carried out by Mateen was deliberately labelled as an act of terrorism, despite evidence to the contrary.

On the other hand, in June 2015, Dylann Roof, a white supremacist, opened fire in an Afro-American church, killing nine people. This incident fits all the pre-requisites of terrorism as defined by US Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), yet was never treated as an act of terror but rather a hate crime.¹³ The attacker instilled fear amongst the public, received immediate publicity for his cause (white supremacy), targeted a high-profile landmark (oldest Afro-American Church and Civil Rights icon), and a public gathering. This incident was never declared an act of terrorism, despite fulfilling all definitional requirements for an act of terrorism, thus labelled as a hate crime instead.

Muslims face discrimination, suppression, threats, and attacks in many countries around the globe. In India and Palestine, this discrimination and intimidation are supposedly due to unfounded phobia against Muslims due to over-cooked history and detrimental political reasons. European countries' insensitivity towards cultural and religious norms is becoming a new normal. The racial-cultural prejudices against religion are visible in different ways, but the traces of Islam as a threat or threatening the 'other' could only be found in academic literature. In such a stereotype association, Muslims are portrayed as alien and foreign to western society.¹⁴ There is a fear that Islamophobia and anti-Islamic sentiments may convert into a clash of cultures and religions; combining both become a civilization. In the last two centuries, the western world has lived in unfounded fear of anti-Christian sentiment. First, the target of their suspicions were Jews, then Communists and Socialists, and now Muslims. Hollywood movies portrayed communist and socialist characters negatively for a long time. The characters portrayed as Muslims have replaced Hollywood's ruthless, stubborn, and relentless communist and socialist symbols. Even Bollywood is not behind in negatively showing Muslims, driven by anti-Pakistan drive and exclusivity of *Hindutva* ideology. Riz Ahmed, a British actor of Pakistan origin and an Oscar nominee, declared misrepresenting Muslims in the film industry as fuelling Islamophobia and called on to stop it.¹⁵

Nonetheless, the Prime Minister of New Zealand labelled it an act of terrorism when Christ Church terrorist incident occurred. Similarly, the Canadian Prime Minister declared killing a Pakistan-origin Muslim family in Ontario terrorism. Barring these two blatant incidents of terrorism, one hardly comes across the use of the term terrorism against the fiercest acts of violence towards Muslims across the globe. This wilful omission on the part of western governments and the international community warns of a dangerous trend, thus, warrants the Fifth Wave of terrorism as a new social construct.

Religiously-motivated Terrorism

The phenomenon of terrorism has been haunting humankind since time immemorial. History indicates instances of violence carried out in the name of religion; whether Sicarii using 'Sica' to spread terror or the terrorists of 9/11 hijacking the civilian planes and crashing them into Twin Towers and Pentagon or the fear of some terrorists' organizations stealing and smuggling a sub-kilo nuclear weapon into an urban area. The religious struggle (*Jihad*) started in Afghanistan, funded by the US and Saudi Arabia and trained by Pakistan, turned the warring Afghans and other foreign fighters into *Mujahedeen*. The Oval Office welcomed, entertained, and respected them. After the victory of supporting nations and the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan, the US abandoned the war-torn country into chaos. It left Afghan and foreign fighters alienated, instilled hatred, and motivated them to wage war (terrorist acts) against the US and other countries. The same *Mujahedeen* of the 1980s became terrorists for the US. The US reacted to the 9/11 incident and started a worldwide campaign to counter terrorists.

The 'War on Terror' brought about massive destruction for humanity across the globe destabilized various states and regions, including Afghanistan, Pakistan, and the Middle East. Although some states paid considerably in the form of loss of lives and material, it defaced the outlook of Islam as a religion around the world. In immense measures, Kinetic force was also applied to fight such terrorism. Any violent acts by Muslims became synonymous with terrorism. However, even qualifying terrorist acts by other groups were labelled as mere hate crimes or radicalism. Authors from the West introduced and propagated terminologies, such as Global Jihad, Jihadi, Five Star Jihadi, and Jihadists. They did not realize that in native Muslim languages (Arabic or Urdu), there is no word as Jihadi. The term used for a person waging *Jihad* is *Mujahid* (Holy Warrior). Consequently, the terms like Jihadi used by such ignorant authors to identify and demonize terrorists are motivating. They translate it as *Mujahid* or Holy Warrior to garner more support. Secondly, *Jihad* becomes a sacred obligation once declared by the state, a religious concept that cannot be defeated; writers should understand that it is not like epical stories.

The politically-driven framing of Islam and one of its key tenants – *Jihad* – as narrated by western media has heralded the Fifth Wave of transnational and transcultural terrorism, which fulfils all the essential pre-requisite. Islamophobia is international, driven by a predominant energy – hatred against Muslims – which continues to shape the character of this new global wave and relations among the perpetrators belonging to various parts of the world. As postulated by David Rapoport, this wave is likely to expand and contract in response to global events and their framing by western policymakers and media. If the West continues to 'otherwise' Muslims and Islam on issues, such as refugees' illegitimate invasions of Muslim land, this wave can intensify with an international character.

The most crucial aspect of panacea is that religion-based ideologies and narratives can only be addressed by a superior or more righteous doctrine and history. As violent religious ideologies base themselves on epics and holy texts, the counter-narrative must be constructed using similar sacredness. The deep roots of religious-based ideologically motivated terrorists in heavenly principles make these organizations like Lernaean Hydra – cutting one hand would grow two more. Such terrorist organizations can be defeated using superior ideology and narratives formed on similar principles. Thus, the reaction in the backdrop of religious militancy has resulted in another wave of terrorism, i.e., Islamophobia. Sometimes, responses are limited to benign, like hydrophobia, aerophobia, or claustrophobia, but irrationality remains critical. According to the website of Healthline, "a phobia is an excessive and irrational fear reaction."

Islamophobia is an irrational behaviour against a religion, which has a following of over one billion people across the globe. The irrationality of Islamophobia as a thought and concept lies in attempts at isolating and targeting one-sixth of the world population. Furthermore, suppose it converts into a religiously or racially based ideology, like Hindutva or White Supremacy, transforming into a social construct. The

exclusivism of such a social construct can be detrimental to peace and security, interfaith harmony, global social construct, and the international system. In that case, it can result in anarchy and probably lead to a clash between civilizations. There is a need to shift our gaze from relating terrorism only to Islam and Muslims.

Conclusion

The world is on the verge of entering the next wave, i.e., the Fifth Wave (Islamophobia) that can turn into transnational and transcultural terrorism following the wave theory. This new wave based on the social-ideological construct differs from the previous waves. The communication-led globalized world has become the catalyst for Islamophobia-based terrorism. It is also becoming a dominant and permanent threat to Muslim societies and metastasizing all the nation-states. It demands investigations, more research, and policy directions for national security to effectively counter the Fifth Wave of terrorism by deconstructing the societal construct of terrorism and its linkages while explaining, propagating, and defending the ideological grounds with more clarity.

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