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"NEITHER 'ISLAM' NOR 'MUSLIM' IS A RACE": ISLAMOPHOBIA, RACISM AND FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

Muhammed BABACAN[a]

Abstract

There are objections to the definition of Islamophobia as a form of racism. Objections center around two main themes of Islamophobia: "Islam" and "Muslims". Some detractors argue that the former should not be given protection against various debates and criticisms that should be considered legitimate within the scope of freedom of expression. For others, the latter cannot be considered a racial minority because being a Muslim is a religious identity that is seen as being voluntarily chosen. This paper argues that definitions other than racism would miss a vital issue, one that helps capture and understand how Muslims and those who are simply perceived as being Muslim are excluded, subordinated, and exploited with reference to phenotypical and cultural differences. This is the issue of racialization of Muslims. This study aims to explore the following questions: What should be the legal limit of freedom of expression? Is it possible to distinguish Islamophobia from reasonable criticism of Muslims and Islam? Does racism really depend on the actual existence of races? If the hostility to Islam and Muslims can be regarded as a form of racism, then, what kind of racism might it be? What are its specific qualities, how does it function? How have Muslims been racialized? To answer these questions, this paper draws on a study of Islamophobia experiences of thirty-nine first and second-generation young Turks aged between 18-35 in London in 2019. This study has made clear that Muslims are racialized not based on biological or phenotypical features, but also ethnic and cultural features. I argue that making sweeping generalizations is more likely to be Islamophobic. One should have the right to critique ideologies and religions, but the manner and decorum in which individuals express themselves are vital. The speech should not intentionally demonize a religion, or humiliate, devalue, or stigmatize a diverse group of

[a] Ph.D., ASBU University, muhammed.babacan@asbu.edu.tr

people. Moreover, being Muslim is not a racial identity reflects the idea that race is the pre-condition for racism and confines racism to a narrow understanding. Regardless of physical appearance, nationality, ethnicity, or economic situation, Muslims are homogenized, humiliated, and marginalized through Islamophobic discourse and practices in their daily lives.

Keywords: Sociology of Religion, Islamophobia, Racism, Racialization, Islam, Muslims, Cultural racism, Freedom of speech, United Kingdom.



"İSLAM DA MÜSLÜMAN DA BİR IRK DEĞİLDİR": İSLAMOFOBİ, IRKÇILIK VE İFADE ÖZGÜRLÜĞÜ

Öz

İslamofobi'nin bir ırkçılık biçimi olarak tanımlanmasına itirazlar var. İtirazlar, İslamofobi'nin iki ana teması etrafında şekilleniyor: "İslam" ve "Müslümanlar". Bazı muhalifler, ifade özgürlüğü kapsamında meşru sayılması gereken çeşitli tartışma ve eleştirilere karşı "İslam"ın korunmaması gerektiğini savunuyorlar. "Muhammed sübyancıdır ve dokuz yaşında bir kızla evlenmiştir", "İslam kılıçla yayılmıştır", "Örtünmek kadınları insanlıktan çıkarır, aşağılar, nesneleştirir" gibi ifadelerin ifade özgürlüğü kapsamında meşru görülmesi gereken teolojik tartışmalar bağlamında değerlendirilmesi gerektiği ileri sürülür. Dolayısıyla, bu eleştiri haklarının İslamofobi'nin bir ırkçılık biçimi olarak tanımlanmasıyla sınırlandırılmaması gerektiği vurgulanır. Diğerleri için, "Müslümanlar" ırksal bir azınlık olarak kabul edilemez çünkü Müslüman olmak, gönüllü olarak seçilen dini bir kimliktir. Bu yaklaşım, cinsiyet ve ırksal kimlikleri doğuştan veya istem dışı kimlik kategorileri olarak kabul ederken, Müslüman olmanın kişinin kendi iradesine bağlı olduğunu ve bu nedenle Müslümanların bu diğer kimlik kategorilerine göre çok daha az yasal korumaya ihtiyacı olduğunu veya olması gerektiğini varsayar. Bu makale, ırkçılık dışındaki tanımların, Müslümanların ve Müslüman olarak algılananların fenotipik ve kültürel farklılıklara atıfta bulunularak nasıl dışlandığını, tabi kılındığını ve sömürüldüğünü yakalamaya ve anlamaya yardımcı olan hayati bir konuyu gözden kaçıracağını savunuyor. Bu, Müslümanların ırksallaştırılması meselesidir. Bu makale şu soruları keşfetmeyi amaçlamaktadır: İfade özgürlüğünün yasal sınırı ne olmalıdır? İslamofobi'yi Müslümanlara ve İslam'a yönelik makul eleştirilerden ayırmak mümkün mü? Irkçılık gerçekten de ırkların gerçek varlığına mı bağlı? İslam ve Müslüman düşmanlığı bir ırkçılık olarak değerlendirilebilirse, bu nasıl bir ırkçılık olabilir? Spesifik nitelikleri nelerdir, nasıl çalışır? Müslümanlar nasıl ırksallaştırıldı?

[Geniş Öz, çalışmanın sonunda yer almaktadır.]

Anahtar Kelimeler: Din Sosyolojisi, İslamofobi, Irkçılık, Irksallaştırma, İslam, Müslümanlar, Kültürel ırkçılık, İfade özgürlüğü, İngiltere.

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Introduction

> "We must not introduce new blasphemy laws…The clampdown on 'Islamophobia' poses a grave threat to free speech…Criticizing what is thought to be a symbol of Muslim culture – the hijab, for example – could, under this definition, be perceived as targeting expressions of Muslimness. Sounds unlikely? Ofsted was accused of racism last year after it raised concerns about very young female pupils wearing the hijab to school (girls wearing the hijab from a young age can be construed as a form of sexualization). For this, it was accused of Islamophobic racism (Emma Webb[1], 2019)".[2]

In 2018, the All-Party Parliamentary Group on British Muslims[3] through extensive consultation with parliamentarians, experts, community activists, lawyers, and victim-led organizations, proposed its definition of Islamophobia as being "rooted in racism and a type of racism that targets expressions of Muslimness or perceived Muslimness." The APPGBM's definition has been adopted formally by all Westminster political parties except the British government, which rejected the proposed definition of Islamophobia, alleging that it "has not been broadly accepted…This is a matter that will need further careful consideration".[4] Moreover, Martin Hewitt, the chairman of the National Police Chief's Council (NPCC), wrote a letter to the prime minister which contended that adopting this proposed definition could "be used to challenge legitimate free speech on the historical or theological actions of Islamic states" and that it could "undermine counter-terrorism powers, which seek to tackle extremism or prevent terrorism".[5] Apart from that, another letter that addresses similar concerns to that of the NPCC and which was signed by over 40 prominent people from a wide variety of religious groups, including Christians, atheists, Sikhs, and others,

[1] Emma Webb is the deputy research director at the Free Speech Union (FSU). FSU is a UK-based organization founded by British columnist Toby Young on February 24, 2020. Although the union counters a perceived 'cancel culture', which is used in debates on free speech and censorship, it sometimes targets Islam and Muslims under the name of freedom of speech.

[2] Emma Webb, "We must not introduce new blasphemy law", *Spiked* (26 July 2019).

[3] All Party Parliamentary Group on British Muslims (APPGM), *Islamophobia Defined*, Report on the inquiry into a working definition of Islamophobia/anti-Muslim hatred (2018), 11.

[4] ITV News, "Government rejects controversial definition of Islamophobia after warning from terror police" (15 May 2019).

[5] The Guardian, "Police chiefs in row over definition of Islamophobia" (15 May 2019).

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was written to the home secretary, Sajid Javid. This group also criticized the proposed definition, arguing that it "is being taken on without an adequate scrutiny or proper consideration of its negative consequences for freedom of expression, and academic or journalistic freedom." The concern is that the adoption of this definition of Islamophobia would be "used to shut down legitimate criticism and investigation," furthermore positing that "no religion should be given special protection against criticism".[6]

The APPGBM's proposed definition of Islamophobia was also the subject of various TV programs in the UK and discussed by various academics, activists, and politicians. For instance, on an episode of the Big Questions television program presented by Nicky Campbell on BBC One on February 16, 2020, the question that "Does defining Islamophobia as a form of racism undermine freedom of speech?" was discussed and detractors such as Emma Webb and Peter Tatchell, a British LGBTQ activist, assert that "neither 'Islam' nor 'Muslim' is a race" and that negative attitudes and behaviors towards Islam and Muslims cannot be evaluated as racism.[7] While gender and racial identities are regarded as innate or involuntary identity categories, it is often stated that being a Muslim is related to one's own will and therefore Muslims need or should have much less legal protection than these other identity categories.[8] They further claim that statements such as "Muhammad is a pedophile and married a nine-year-old girl", "Islam was spread by the sword" or "Wearing the veil dehumanizes, humiliates and objectifies women" should be considered as theological debates that should be seen as legitimate within the scope of freedom of expression and that these rights of criticism should not be restricted by defining Islamophobia as a form of racism.[9]

Accordingly, objections to the definition of Islamophobia as a form of racism are shaped around two main themes of Islamophobia: "Islam" as a religion and "Muslims" as believers. It would be easy to see Islamophobia as a matter of everyday political debate or in the context of religious hatred, fear of religion, anti-Muslim hatred, and prejudice, but this would miss a much more vital issue, one that helps capture and understand how Muslims and

[6] Christian Concern, "Open letter to Home Secretary rejects Islamophobia definition" (17 May 2019).
[7] BBC One, "The Big Questions: Nicky Campbell will be asking: Should Britain be ashamed of its deportation policies? And, will defining Islamophobia undermine free speech?".
[8] Nasar Meer, "The politics of voluntary and involuntary identities: are Muslims in Britain an ethnic, racial or religious minority?", *Patterns of prejudice* 42/1 (2008), 63.
[9] BBC One, "The Big Questions: Nicky Campbell will be asking: Should Britain be ashamed of its deportation policies? And, will defining Islamophobia undermine free speech?".

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those who are simply perceived as being Muslim are excluded, subordinated and exploited[10] with reference to phenotypical and cultural differences.[11] This is the issue of racialization of Muslims. In short, in this article, I argue that it is vital to evaluate Islamophobia as a form of racism by attempting to tackle the following questions: What should be the legal limit of freedom of expression? Is it possible to distinguish Islamophobia from reasonable criticism of Muslims and Islam? Does racism really depend on the actual existence of races? If the hostility to Islam and Muslims can be regarded as a form of racism, then, what kind of racism might it be? What are its specific qualities, how does it function? How have Muslims been racialized? To answer these questions, semi structured in-depth interviews (N=39) were conducted amongst 18–35-year-olds in London in 2019. I contacted as many Turkish organizations and institutions as possible in order to find a vast array of informants possessing as many different traits or qualities as possible. I employed thematic analysis to identify and analyze patterns of meaning in the dataset.

It is first set out in more detail the historical background of the concept in the context of colonial, imperialist, and Orientalist ideology, highlighting how Muslims have been described as "ideologically hostile, racially and culturally different, and militarily strong enough to pose a credible threat"[12] to the West. Then, the effort of some detractors is discussed that suggests that "Islam" should be removed from the meaning of Islamophobia because the proposed definition[13] would censor legitimate criticism of Islam, and it is also addressed how to distinguish between Islamophobia and reasonable criticism of Muslims and Islam. Subsequently, drawing upon findings from a study of Islamophobia experiences of young Turks in Britain, Islamophobia is evaluated in a broader context of racism and conceptualized as a form of cultural racism, and it is discussed how Muslims as believers are racialized although Islam is a religion and not a race.

A. Islamophobia in a Historical Context

It is generally said that historical events have provided powerful

[10] Michael Banton, *Racial and ethnic competition* (CUP Archive, 1983).
[11] Tariq Modood, *Multicultural politics: Racism, ethnicity, and Muslims in Britain* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005); Jon E. Fox, "The uses of racism: whitewashing new Europeans in the UK", *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 36/11 (2013), 1871-1889.
[12] Samuel P. Huntington, *Who are we?: The challenges to America's national identity* (Simon and Schuster, 2004), 262.
[13] All Party Parliamentary Group on British Muslims (APPGM), *Islamophobia Defined*.

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references to the current relations between Islam and the West and, concordantly, how the contemporary Islamophobic discourse in the West has been constructed.[14] This argument might be reflected in the Runnymede Commission's first report[15] that cautiously pointed out "a continuous line from the Crusades of the medieval times through Ottoman Empire and European colonialism to the Islamophobia of the 1990s". Nasar Meer[16] reads these Islamic-Western encounters as "a kind of discursive historical institutionalism that has established a path for relations that are continually reproduced anew." It is argued, then, that there is a continuity in historical colonial dynamics in a way in which the colonial ideas and values are reactivated in postcolonial and imperialist practices. What is striking here is how the colonial mindsets and norms towards cultural and political descriptions of Muslims have continued, even after the dismantlement of colonialism. As Meer asserts, it is observable that the postcolonial mindset is intertwined with Islamophobia.[17]

Islamophobic feelings, discourses, and actions again Muslims are connected to modern racist stereotypes and Orientalist[18] discourses that emerged from colonialism, decolonization, and post-war migration.[19] Said treats Orientalism as a "style of thought", which refers to a distinction made between "the Orient" and "the Occident", and as a European style that serves the purposes of "dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient." The West has distinguished itself from the East through Orientalist narrative, reports, and studies that have contained a slew of generalizations and probes such as barbarism, despotism, sexuality, emotionality, art, and spirituality. Most significantly, the orientalist ideas that describe the East and Islam as the enemies of Western civilization in the works of Western authors and historians have kept alive anti-Muslim sentiments in Western society. It

[14] Runnymede Trust, *a Challenge for Us all: Report of The Runnymede Trust Commission on British Muslims and Islamophobia* (London: Author, 1997); Fred Halliday, "'Islamophobia' reconsidered", *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 22/5 (1999), 892-902; Tahir Abbas, "British South Asian Muslims: State and multicultural society", *Muslim Britain: Communities Under Pressure*, ed. Tahir Abbas (London: Zed Books, 2005), 3-17; Ali Rattansi, *Racism: A very short introduction* (Oxford University Press, 2007); Meer, "The politics of voluntary and involuntary identities"; Claire Alexander, "Raceing Islamophobia", *Islamophobia: Still a challenge for us all*, ed. Farah Elahi - Omar Khan (Runnymede Trust, 2017), 13-15.
[15] Runnymede Trust, *a Challenge for Us all, 5*.
[16] Nasar Meer, *Key concepts in race and ethnicity* (Sage, 2014), 502.
[17] Meer, *Key concepts in race and ethnicity*.
[18] Edward Said, *Orientalism Vintage Books* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979).
[19] Alexander, "Raceing Islamophobia"; Benjamin Opratko, "Islamophobia: The bigger picture", *Historical Materialism* 25/1 (2017), 63-89.

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might be argued that to some extent the concept of Orientalism has been replaced by Islamophobia. At the core of both Orientalism and Islamophobia are the common features according to which Islam is a fearful religion and incompatible with Western values and beliefs[20] and Muslims responsible for violence and terrorism.[21]

Today's narratives and perceptions with regard to Muslim-West relations and Muslims' integration into Western society have been advanced by the thesis of Fukuyama[22], Lewis[23], and Huntington[24] that historically and necessarily there has to be a clash of civilization between the West and Islamic civilizations. According to Huntington, for instance, the fundamental source of conflict among humankind will be primarily cultural. Yet, he pays more hostile attention to Islam than to any other civilization.[25] Huntington's attitude towards other civilizations, particularly Islamic civilization, implies a desire to maintain the ideology of Western supremacy. This aggressive attitude, thus, views Islamic civilization as problematic and a fundamental cause of the conflict.

Rooted in deep histories of colonial, imperialist, and Orientalist ideology and at the same time Huntington's clash of civilizations thesis, Muslims, especially following the tragic occurrence of September 11th and its aftermath, have been identified as a threat[26] to both American and European security. The denigrating images of Muslims emerge not just in the policies of the War on Terror and securitization of Muslims in the West but have become part of everyday discourse and popular culture.[27] The media, politicians, and some others have associated Muslims with negative images and stereotypes such as barbarism, primitiveness, violence, irrationality, terrorism, intolerance, inequality, fanaticism, pre-sexism, pre-Enlightenment, and so on.[28] Indeed, the mainstream media and politicians

[20] Magdalena Gilewicz, *The construction of Muslim community and British Muslim identity in two British Muslim newspapers* (University of Aberdeen, PhD Thesis, 2012).
[21] MD Shafiqur Rahman, *Transnational media reception, Islamophobia, and the identity constructions of a non-Arab Muslim diasporic community: The experiences of Bangladeshis in the United States since 9/11* (Southern Illinois University at Carbondale, 2007).
[22] Francis Fukuyama, "The end of history?", *The national interest* 16 (1989), 3-18.
[23] Bernard Lewis, *Islam and the West*, 1993.
[24] Samuel P. Huntington, "The clash of civilizations", *Foreign Affairs* 72/3 (1993), 22-49.
[25] Huntington, "The clash of civilizations", 49.
[26] Huntington, *Who are we?*, 262.
[27] Opratko, "Islamophobia".
[28] Runnymede Trust, *a Challenge for Us all*; Runnymede Trust, "Islamophobia: Still a challenge for us all", ed. Farah Alahi - Omar Khan, 2017; Rahman, *Transnational media reception, Islamophobia, and the identity constructions of a non-Arab Muslim diasporic*

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generally give mutual clues to each other in order to manipulate public policy. The media-politician relations have created an environment where anti-Muslim sentiments have been incessantly kept alive.

When Muslims respond to the historical roots of anti-Muslim hostility, the current empirical facts in media and political discourses, and the negative attitudes and behaviors they encounter in everyday life, through a concept of Islamophobia referenced to racism, they are faced with denial by public figures, journalists, and politicians. Objections center around two main themes of Islamophobia: "Islam" and "Muslims". Some detractors argue that the former should not be given protection against various debates and criticisms that should be considered legitimate within the scope of freedom of expression. For some others, the latter cannot be considered a racial minority because being a Muslim is a religious identity that is seen as being voluntarily chosen and thus Islamophobia cannot be evaluated in the context of racism.

B. Fieldwork

In the first instance, the empirical case of young Turks that this article draws on is described. This article draws on a study of the narratives of thirty-nine first and second-generation young Turks aged between 18-35 in London in 2019, addressing aspects of experiences, perceptions, and identity strategies in the context of Islamophobia. There is a main reason for choosing this demographic. I assumed that younger people interact socially with British society and culture more than older generations. Particularly, second generations and some first-generations who had to come to Britain at an early age interact more with others seeing as they (potentially) were born and raised in the country of settlement and have been educated in British schools, made British friends, and, thereby, have been much more engaged with British society in their everyday lives. I aimed to recruit respondents that were diverse enough to represent the variation known to exist in the Turkish community of London. To be more precise, Turks are not homogenous in terms of their social life and practices, their religious views, the level of their relationships with British society, etc. For this purpose, I contacted as many Turkish organizations and institutions as possible in order to find a vast array of informants possessing as many different traits or qualities as possible. The intention to elaborate upon the experiences of

community; Nasar Meer - Tehseen Noorani, "A sociological comparison of anti-Semitism and anti-Muslim sentiment in Britain", *The sociological review* 56/2 (2008), 195-219; Alexander, "Raceing Islamophobia".

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Islamophobia necessitates that this study adopts the semi-structured in-depth interview method as the means by which the data would be collected. Employing the semi-structured interview method, I sought to explore – rather than impose – respondents' perceptions, views and feelings with more nuance and depth. I conducted the interviews in London from December 2018 to April 2019. All interviews were recorded with the permission of the interviewees. All participants have been given pseudonyms.

I spent a long time before and after the interviews with many participants, had the opportunity of having informal conversations with them, and observed their social environments overtly, including their workplaces, universities, and local pubs. Whilst I did not deploy participant observations as a method of data collection, all these observations and informal conversations helped me to understand the interviewees' behaviors and social interactions with others in their natural settings. Since the human brain has a finite memory, I took notes of what I encountered during the data collection. I did not take notes openly, though, as it was felt that that would have made the participants feel uncomfortable. To protect the identities of my respondents, I used pseudonyms and recorded my notes in an encrypted Word document on my computer immediately after the observations.

To facilitate the coding of the transcripts, I used NVivo. I employed thematic analysis to identify and analyze patterns of meaning in the dataset.[29] The thematic analysis creates "key themes, concepts and emergent categories"[30] with which to classify, organize, and understand the phenomena under study.

My interview questions included sensitive topics, such as Islamophobia, identity practices and ethnicity. The complexity of these topics hampers discussion and disrupts the exploration of its meaning by the respondents. The difficulty is that these issues are directly associated with the private and public spheres of their lives. Therefore, I avoided making judgmental statements, gestures, and facial expressions during the interviews.

Having discussed the objections to the definition of Islamophobia as a form of racism, the historical roots of Islamophobia, and the fieldwork, in the next sections, I will present a theoretical discussion by offering some brief

[29] Virginia Braun – Clarke Victoria. "Using thematic analysis in psychology", *Qualitative research in psychology* 3/2 (2006), 77-101.
[30] Jane Ritchie vd., "Carrying out qualitative analysis", *Qualitative Research Practice*, ed. Jane Ritchie vd. (London: Sage, 2003), 220.

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illustrative fieldwork in response to the objections to the definition of Islamophobia as a form of racism.

C. Islamophobia and Freedom of Speech

One of the objections is essentially related to removing "Islam" from the meaning of Islamophobia. Indeed, it can be argued that some of those detractors acknowledge the existence of hatred and discrimination against Muslims. Their main objection is that their right to criticize Islam would be suppressed by recognizing Islamophobia as a form of racism. For instance, the National Secular Society (NSS), a British campaigning organization, found APPGBM's definition of Islamophobia as ambiguous and impracticable and urged the Conservative government not to adopt this definition in a letter they submitted to Sajid Javid, Home secretary. According to the NSS, the main reason for the ambiguity is that the definition combines hatred and discrimination against Muslims with criticism of Islam.[31] Therefore, this organization opposes the idea that any set of beliefs should be protected from criticism. Stephen Evans, the CEO of the NSS, emphasizes that it is problematic to stigmatize criticism of Islam or Islamic culture as racist. He argues that "there is a lot in Islam that deserves criticism: attitudes to free speech, the treatment of women, LGBT people, Ahmadiyya Muslims, and non-believers are frequently at odds with a modern secular liberal society."[32]

The fact that both some right-wing groups and the New Atheists (the leading names are Richard Dawkins, Sam Harris, Christopher Hitchens and Daniel Dennett)[33] target Islam more than Muslims in their discourses is in line with efforts to exclude Islam from the concept of Islamophobia and not evaluate it in the context of racism. The common feature of those who criticize the term Islamophobia on the basis of so-called religion is this avoidance of religion. For example, some progressive liberal discourses are much more comfortable with anti-racism than religion, and they stand up to racism when they see it necessary. However, religion is seen as a danger to anachronistic and even liberal debates and processes in contemporary society. There is an often-expressed aversion to the public manifestation of religion. We can see this, for example, in the negative impact on Muslim women or why certain practices, such as wearing the hijab or veil, are perceived as anti-feminist by many feminists. The hijab is read

[31] David Torrance, *General Debate on the definition of Islamophobia* (14 May 2019).
[32] Stephen Evans, "Islam, like any other religion, must be fair game for criticism" (22 August 2019).
[33] Richard Dawkins vd., *The Four Horsemen: The Discussion that Sparked an Atheist Revolution Foreword by Stephen Fry* (Random House, 2019).

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unproblematically as an outward sign of oppression and as a symbol of patriarchy. Hakan, one of my respondents, believed, for example, that the hijab is not just something that they disliked; more importantly, it is seen as a symbol of patriarchy.

> "They are questioning why Muslim women wear it. They smile at you, but you can understand their actual feelings. I mean, they think that those women only wear headscarves due to family pressure. They think that I force her [my wife] to wear it. I think that is one of the main problems in this country (Hakan)."[34]

Hakan thus noted that living in a society where there are such judgments against Muslim men is also difficult for him. Many feminists see Muslim women with the hijab as being in need of saving from backwardness and fearful subordination, forgetting that feminism "is about celebrating difference and respecting the choices that women make".[35] Underlying these views is a dangerous and oppressive ideology whose main purpose is to perpetuate traditional power structures that oppress certain groups, especially women.[36] This ideology claims that identities based on racial, ethnic, or gender (i.e., those seen as involuntary) rather than religious identity (voluntary) need staunch protection. This is what constitutes the liberal defense and why Muslims are seen as the "illiberal other".[37]

There is no doubt that freedom of expression in the West and any modern liberal democratic society is a high public interest and an important social value, supported by legal and ethical norms. It is enshrined not only in the values and principles of society but also in international human rights documents. For example, article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1976)[38] ensures that "Everyone shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of his choice."[39] However, the fact that the limits of freedom of expression in a

[34] Muhammed Babacan, *Young Turks in Britain and Islamophobia: perceptions, experiences and identity strategies* (University of Bristol, PhD Thesis, 2012), 112.
[35] Haleh Afshar, "Can I see your hair? Choice, agency and attitudes: the dilemma of faith and feminism for Muslim women who cover", *Ethnic and racial studies* 31/2 (2008), 420.
[36] Babacan, *Young Turks in Britain and Islamophobia*,112.
[37] Thomas Sealy, "Islamophobia: With or without Islam?", *Religions* 12/6 (2021), 369, 4.
[38] The Covenant was adopted and opened for signature, ratification, and accession by General Assembly resolution 2200A (XXI) of 16 December 1966 and entered into force 23 March 1976.
[39] International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, "Article 19", (1976).

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multicultural democratic society were not determined in this article of the Covenant paved the way for unlimited criticism of individuals and groups under the name of freedom of expression. Many of those who are against the definition of Islamophobia as a form of racism advocate that freedom of expression should be legally guaranteed and protected against criticism of Islam and Muslims. They, unfortunately, do not adopt as a principle that freedom is not absolute and that the rights, freedoms, and differences of others should be properly recognized and protected while exercising their own freedom.

So, what should be the legal limit of freedom of expression? Should insulting and humiliating discourses against Islam and Muslims be considered within the scope of freedom of expression or should Muslims be legally protected from such discourses? Some argue that restrictions are necessary when discourses are inconsistent with core values such as tolerance, respect for others, and participation.[40] Others argue that freedom of expression can be limited under the "harm principle" introduced by J. Stuart Mill (1806-1873).[41] Verbal attack, insult, and slander fall within the scope of this harm principle. It is argued that the exercise of freedom of expression can be reasonably limited if the rhetoric causes harm to others.

According to the logic of Islamophobia, there is an understanding where the dominant culture does not perceive another culture as being in any way, shape, or form its equivalent. The issue on which anti-Islamophobic thought stands is not whether individuals use their right to criticize other cultures and societies; on the contrary, it is about its re-definition and reproduction of their own conception of Islam and Muslims. I argue then that, rather than engaging in an intercultural dialogue[42] and mutual learning about each other's differences, dictating one's own truths and perceiving criticism as a right to humiliate, devalue, and hate the other party is not a reasonable criticism of Muslims or Islam, but rather a reflection of Islamophobic intent.[43]

In distinguishing between Islamophobic speech and free speech, one would need to consider whether the speech relates to the expression of

[40] e.g., Anthony Gray, "Racial vilification and freedom of speech in Australia and elsewhere", *Common Law World Review* 41/2 (2012), 188.
[41] e.g., Paul Sturges, "Limits to freedom of expression? Considerations arising from the Danish cartoons affair", *IFLA journal* 32/3 (2006), 186.
[42] Tariq Modood, "Islamophobia and normative sociology", *Journal of the British Academy* 8 (2020), 45-46.
[43] Babacan, *Young Turks in Britain and Islamophobia*, 22.

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negativity against all Muslims.[44] Making sweeping generalizations is more likely to be Islamophobic. One should have the right to critique ideologies and religions, but the manner and decorum in which individuals express themselves are vital. The speech should not intentionally demonize a religion, or humiliate, marginalize, or stigmatize a diverse group of people. Having said that I acknowledge that sometimes it is difficult to adjudicate the legitimacy of criticism against Muslim groups as Islamophobic and thus what counts as Islamophobic critique may remain probabilistic. This is mainly because in some cases, we may not have access to critics' full range of attitudes and perceptions about Muslim groups to adjudicate whether their judgments might be deliberative or arise from systematic conditioning or prejudice.[45]

D. Does Racism Really Depend on the Actual Existence of Races?: From Modern Racism to Cultural Racism

For the detractors, the statement that Islamophobia is rooted in racism and is a type of racism is predominantly perceived as the main problem since they argue that Muslim is not a race. Based on this logic, they, therefore, claim that negative attitudes and behaviors directed against Muslims cannot be racially stimulated.[46] This approach assumes that being a Muslim is a voluntarily chosen religious identity and thus Muslims need or should have much less legal protection than these other identity categories.[47] For example, British journalist and writer Polly Tonybee, in a column in the Guardian, suggests that race is an identity that people cannot choose, but beliefs are something people identify with, and that it is nonsense to call negative discourses against Muslims as Islamophobia. According to her, it is legitimate to call people a fool because of their beliefs, but it is a fatal mistake to brand them as a fool because of their race. So, for her, race and religion are different and religious hatred should not be banned.[48]

Tonybee's approach is based on the distinction between voluntary and involuntary identities. However, one of the points she ignores is that people cannot choose to be born or not born into a Muslim family.[49] Moreover,

[44] All Party Parliamentary Group on British Muslims (APPGM), *Islamophobia Defined*.
[45] Babacan, *Young Turks in Britain and Islamophobia*, 21.
[46] Salman Sayyid, "Racism and Islamophobia" (International centre for Muslim and non-Muslim Understanding, University of South Australia, 2011).
[47] Modood, "The liberal dilemma"; Meer, "The politics of voluntary and involuntary identities".
[48] Polly Tonybee, "My right to offend a fool" (10 Jan 2005).
[49] Nasar Meer - Tariq Modood, "Refutations of racism in the 'Muslim question'", *Patterns of prejudice* 43/3-4 (2009), 345.

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individuals born in a Muslim country may be subject to Islamophobic attacks, even if they voluntarily identify as non-Muslims. Rumeysa, for instance, identified herself as being a non-Muslim but could not elude Islamophobic language due to her ethno-religious signifiers, viz. ethnicity and Muslim name.

> "People project their own assumptions [on me]. On purpose, I try not to tell people that I am Turkish because, if I do, I may receive racist comments. Indeed, I have had people say "Oh! Are you okay with your Turkish identity?" "You are the first Turkish person I have made an acquaintance with," etc. … There was a person that I had met and had felt quite safe with her. I did not believe that she was judgmental. And then she asked me "Where are you from?" And I was like "I am Turkish," and then she said "Oh! Your parents are Muslim, so you grew up as a Muslim?" And then she asked me, "Are you a terrorist?" and I was like "What!?" If you say you are a Muslim or Turkish, they make assumptions like "You are a terrorist" or "You are an extremist." (Rumeysa)."[50]

Although anti-Muslim racists base religious identification on a voluntary basis, their attitudes and behaviors towards Muslims assume that the individuals they associate with the religion of Islam are born with their Islamic identity and, more importantly, that it is given and immutable. In this respect, this understanding is no different from the modern understanding of racism. In this context, before making an argument about a possibility of racism in the case of Islamophobia, it would be very useful to begin with description of racism and its modern forms (biological racism and anti-Semitism).

From colonialism until the mid-twentieth century, supposed biological and moral inferiorities were main markers for stigmatizing and alienating various racial and ethnic groups.[51] For much of the 19th and 20th centuries, race was deemed as natural and taken to refer classifications of humankind with biological features[52] and European society had developed a serious racist manner of discourse. Modern racism based mainly upon biological

[50] Babacan, *Young Turks in Britain and Islamophobia*, 106-7.
[51] Howard Omi - Howard Winant, *Racial formation in the United States: from the 1960s to the 1980s* (New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1986); Steve Fenton, *Ethnicity: Racism, class and culture*. (London: MacMillan Press, 1999); Neil MacMaster, *Racism in Europe, 1870-2000* (New York: Palgrave, 2001); Nazita Lajevardi - Kassra AR Oskooii, "Old-fashioned racism, contemporary islamophobia, and the isolation of Muslim Americans in the age of Trump", *Journal of Race, Ethnicity, and Politics* 3/1 (2018), 112-152.
[52] Fenton, *Ethnicity*.

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features was, indeed, carried to a more extreme point in Nazi Germany under the leadership of Hitler in the 1930s and 1940s when the term racism was coined mainly as a response to the Nazi racism against Jews.[53] As such, the Nazi view of race embraced the belief that the German, or Aryan, race was superior to alien bloods and values.[54] Prejudice against Jews was based on the idea that they were a biologically distinct race whose racial characters are inherently inferior.[55] This genetic-based understanding of race, thereby, gave Jews an "immutable biological destiny"[56] and because of that, anti-Semitism, detached from its religious background, is regarded as a form of racism, especially in continental Europe.[57]

The crucial question here is if racism really depends on the actual existence of races. Whilst, historically race has been a biological or quasi-biological concept[58], since the second half of the twentieth century, there has been a growing body of scholarship seeing racism as a social construction and conceptualizing it as cultural racism. The historical transition from biological to cultural racism was associated with events of the defeat of Nazi Germany, the anti-colonial struggles, and the civil rights movement of colonies in the West. Shifting the meanings and discourses of race as a response to new challenges emerging mainly from colonial and guest worker migrants in the post-Second World War context of labor shortage, the white elites of the world-system have continued their racism.[59] The relatively homogenous cultural and social characteristics of Western Europe began to change with the intense immigration including substantial numbers of Muslims from South Asia, North Africa, the Middle East, Central Asia, and so on. The immigrants have been depicted as "Others"-Blacks, Jews, Asians, Muslims- and become subjects of destroying the social order of the nation and thus the message apparently is that "other must be effaced and

[53] George M. Fredrickson, *Racism: A Short History* (Princeton University Press: Princeton and Oxford, 2002); Rattansi, *Racism*.
[54] Fredrickson, *Racism: A Short History*.
[55] Rattansi, *Racism*.
[56] Matti Bunzl, "Between anti-Semitism and Islamophobia: Some thoughts on the new Europe", *American Ethnologist* 32/4 (2005).
[57] Modood, *Multicultural politics*; Nasar Meer - Tariq Modood, "For 'Jewish' read 'Muslim'? Islamophobia as a form of racialisation of ethno-religious groups in Britain today", *Islamophobia Studies Journal* 1/1 (2012), 34-53.
[58] Tariq Modood, *Multiculturalism: a civic idea* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2013).
[59] Ramon Grosfoguel - Eric Mielants, "The long-duree entanglement between islamophobia and racism in the modern/colonial capitalist/patriarchal world-system", *Human Architecture: Journal of the sociology of self-knowledge* 1/Fall (2006), 1-12.

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subordinated-physically, culturally, economically and politically."[60]

The negative ascriptions and stereotypes rested mainly upon culturalist bases are read by some scholars including Fanon[61], Barker[62], Balibar[63], Wieviorka[64], and Taguieff[65] as cultural racism. Fanon, for instance, emphasizes that a group's belief that its own cultures and traditions are far superior and valuable than Others' cultures and traditions is the reason for the continuity of today's racism.[66] The attitudes of Western society against those immigrants are properly captured by Martin Barker, who coined the "New Racism" that referred to racist public and political discourses performed mainly by the Conservative Party against immigrants in Britain in the 1970s, argues that immigrants in Britain were regarded as those who "destroyed the cultural homogeneity of the nation and that, as it grew in size, threatened to 'swap' the culture of 'our own people'".[67] Barker, indeed, influenced by Franz Fanon's conceptualization of "cultural racism".[68] In this new racism, it was deemed natural for British people to discriminate against those not considered part of their community.[69]

Balibar argues that the new version of racism is "a racism of the era of decolonization" and "the division of humanity within a single political complex" and "a framework of 'racism without races'" that refers to the insurmountability of cultural differences in the Western societies rather than biological heredity. Balibar, thus, highlights that rather than the blood or genes of individuals, their belonging to historical cultures can explain their behavior and aptitudes.[70] This strong emphasis upon the cultural differences is indeed previously asserted by Taguieff who has clearly shown two levels of racism: "inegalitarian racism", based on biological scientism and referred to the ideas of inequality, domination, and exploitation, and "differentialist

[60] Pnina Werbner, "Islamophobia: Incitement to religious hatred–legislating for a new fear?", *Anthropology Today* 21/1 (2005), 6.
[61] Frantz Fanon, *Black skin, white masks* (New York: Grove Press, 1967).
[62] Martin Barker, *The new racism: Conservatives and the ideology of the tribe* (Junction Books, 1981).
[63] Etienne Balibar, "Is There a 'Neo-Racism'?", *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities* (London: Verso, 1991).
[64] Wieviorka, *The arena of racism*. London: Sage, 1995.
[65] Pierre-André Taguieff, *The force of prejudice: on racism and its doubles* (U of Minnesota Press, 2001).
[66] Fanon, *Black skin, white masks*.
[67] Barker, *The new racism: Conservatives and the ideology of the tribe, 61*.
[68] Fanon, *Black skin, white masks*.
[69] Robert Miles, - Malcolm Brown, *Racism* (London: Routledge, 2003), 61.
[70] Balibar, "Is There a 'Neo-Racism'?", 21.

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racism" based on culturalist bases and referred to the ideas of difference, purification, and extermination. What Taguieff wants to propound here is that the racialization of the culture, religion, traditions, and mentalities has created a surge of a diverse range of reformulations of racism that are not expressly biologizing. In this sense, the racist discourse has been culturalized leaving behind the explicit lexicon of race and blood.[71]

Islamophobia is a form of cultural racism that also emphasizes physical appearance and ancestry.[72] In this respect, it differs from biological racism, which is understood as antipathy, exclusion, and unequal treatment on the basis of human biological or physical differences attributed to skin color. Homogenizing Muslims as a mass and making generalizations about them is related to the concept of culturally, religiously, and ethnically constructed othering. Othering sometimes takes the form of attributing certain characteristics to a group that is allegedly found in all members of the group; "All Muslims are terrorists", "All Muslim women wear headscarves due to family pressure", etc. This point was clearly expressed by Yaren, one of the respondents, who mentioned that she was questioned for not wearing a headscarf through the assumption of religious homogeneity:

> "When I've told people at school that I am Muslim, they'll be like "Ahh! Really? Why are you not wearing a hijab, then?" They think that, if you are Muslim, you must wear it (Yaren)."[73]

Such questions convey an implicit message that all Turks/Muslims must behave and practice in the same way, while also implying that they – especially those Muslim women who cover their heads – are under family pressure, exotic or abnormal in British society. Even if there is not clearly biologically based ideology in these generalizations, they function in a quasi-naturalistic way, that is to say that, like the laws of nature.[74] South Asians in the UK, North Africans in France, and Turks in Germany were seen as Others on the basis of their religious and cultural characteristics and were subjected to negative treatment by the majority group. However, some (for example, South Asians) are marginalized on the basis of color racism as well as cultural racism. It also shows that black people can be culturally humiliated. Therefore, the color racism/cultural racism distinction is not simply a black/Asian distinction. Every racism, whether biological or cultural, is cultural in its essence and the main target is cultural, social, and religious

[71] Taguieff, *The force of prejudice*.
[72] Modood, "Islamophobia and normative sociology", 37.
[73] Babacan, *Young Turks in Britain and Islamophobia*, 107.
[74] Modood, "Islamophobia and normative sociology", 41-42.

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differences attributed to bodies (individuals).

Accordingly, the thesis that being Muslim is not a racial identity reflects the idea that race is the precondition for racism and confines racism to a narrow understanding. Race is not just about biology or even color, it is just a marker and does not necessarily indicate a determinism.[75] It is an object of racist discourse and not a scientific category. As such, it names a set of fictitious traits associated with genetic inheritance in which social domination and inferiority are maintained, and differences are justified by reference to genealogy.[76] Racism can work without race since the main goal is the essentialization/racialization of individuals through supposed differences. Individuals (physical bodies) are the ultimate site of racism, even if the path to these bodies passes through the socio-cultural terrain.[77]

E. The Racialization of Muslims

Using racialization as a core analytical concept helps us understand the fact that Muslims, regardless of physical appearance, country of origin, and economic status, are homogenized and humiliated by Islamophobic discourse and practices in their everyday lives.[78] Islamophobia is, therefore, a form of racism that socially categorizes people by dividing and ranking them using embodied properties in order to exclude, subordinate, and exploit them.[79] Islamophobia amalgamates all Muslims into one group, as well as those who are simply perceived as being Muslim. Racialization describes this process and thus allows us to understand how racism/Islamophobia works. Garner and Selod note a few functions of racialization as follows: "It draws a line around all the members of the group; instigates "groupness," and ascribes characteristics, sometimes because of work, sometimes because of ideas of where the group comes from, what it believes in, or how it organizes itself socially and culturally."[80]

The literature shows that racialized tendencies and dynamics were employed by the majority groups of Europe and America at different times.

[75] Meer - Modood, "For 'Jewish' read 'Muslim'?", 39
[76] Philip Cohen, "Gefährliche Erbschaften: Studien zur Entstehung einer multirassistischen Kultur in Großbritannien", *Die Schwierigkeit, nicht rassistisch zu sein*, ed. Anita Kalpaka - Nora Räthzel (Leer: Mundo, 1990), 97.
[77] Steve Garner - Saher Selod, "The racialization of Muslims: Empirical studies of Islamophobia", *Critical Sociology* 41/1 (2015), 9-19.
[78] Garner - Selod, "The racialization of Muslims".
[79] Banton, *Racial and ethnic competition*.
[80] Garner - Selod, "The racialization of Muslims", 14.

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Putatively White groups, such as the Irish in the mid-19th century[81], Jews in the US in the 20th century[82], and East European migrants in Britain[83] can all be said to have been racialized. These examples show that Muslim groups can also be racialized, whether their skin color is black or white. "This is not due to them all looking vaguely the same but is because of the unity of the "gaze" itself."[84] We can see a clear example of this in the narrative of one of my female respondents.

> "I spent a lot of time trying to understand myself here because obviously growing up in the UK you are not accepted as British right. We have lots of racism growing up because we are foreign, because we are Muslim, because we are Turkish. So, I lived in this area in Enfield. I was not allowed in the local park. They used to set dogs on us. They were NF (National Front) and they just used to tell us all the time fuck off back to your country. And then it came to a point one day they beat up my sister. They beat her up very badly and then we took them to court, but my sister lost the case and then we moved. I had a few times people have said to me fuck off back to your country (Sinem)."[85]

It is assumed that the cultural attributes of Muslims, which are usually tied to their religious appearance, practices, names, and ethno-racial appearance, are fixed and immutable.[86] This racialized understanding can be attached to a body or a culture, or both at the same time. People read the notion of Muslimness onto individuals (physical bodies) by the process of attributing to them an ensemble of symbolic meanings and associations.[87] In other words, the religious and cultural traits of Muslims — some of which are visible (clothing, religious practices, etc.) and some of which are not (accent, Muslim names, etc.) — have been interpreted as being a threat to national security; incompatible with Western liberal values, modern secular

[81] Noel Ignatiev, *How the Irish became white* (London: Harvard University, 1995); Steve Garner, "The uses of whiteness: What sociologists working on Europe can draw from US research on whiteness", *Sociology* 40/2 (2006), 257-275; David R. Roediger, *The wages of whiteness: Race and the making of the American working class* (London: Verso, 2017).
[82] Karen Brodkin, *How Jews became white folks and what that says about race in America* (NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1998).
[83] Fox, "The uses of racism"; Jon E. Fox - Magda Mogilnicka, "Pathological integration, or, how East Europeans use racism to become British", *The British Journal of Sociology* 70/1 (2019), 5-23.
[84] Garner - Selod, "The racialization of Muslims", 14.
[85] Babacan, *Young Turks in Britain and Islamophobia*, 23.
[86] Meer - Noorani, "A sociological comparison of anti-Semitism and anti-Muslim sentiment in Britain".
[87] Garner - Selod, "The racialization of Muslims".

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democracy and freedom of speech; incapable of being identified with a national identity; and so on.[88]

My empirical research, for instance, shows that the visible markers of Turkish Muslim women, like the hijab, function as socially constructed signifiers which materialize Islamophobic meanings and understandings. Visible Muslim women are represented as uneducated, oppressed, mysterious, extremist, etc. The hijab is being essentialized in the same way that skin color is. For instance, Rumeysa, a second-generation non-Muslim Turk, narrated how she witnessed how visible symbols associated with Islamic identity exposed Muslim women to various forms of racism, including assumptions of ties with terrorism or extremism.

> "One of my colleagues whom I had been managing made many racist comments about Muslim women. She said "They are wearing the hijab and you cannot see their hair. Can you believe this? How can I work with you if I cannot see your hair?" … If you are wearing it, they assume that you have been married young, that you have been forced into marriage by your parents, that you are a terrorist, or that you are an extremist…. I feel like even I have been apprehensive to say directly that I am Turk to people because, the thing is, people are indirect. They always perpetrate microaggressions (Rumeysa)."[89]

Although Rumeysa does not self-identify as a Muslim and does not carry any visible Muslim signifiers, she appears conscious of the negative perception of her identity, and thus she struggles with whether to disclose it to avoid adverse reactions. This quote is strong evidence of why attitudes and behaviors towards Muslims should be evaluated in the context of racism. Although racists claim that they criticize the beliefs, practices, and behaviors of Muslims, they do not target a group based on who they really are. Racism targets a racialized category of Muslims who exist only in the racist imagination. Therefore, perceived religious affiliation rather than religion itself is at the center of anti-Muslim racism. This perceived Muslim identity

[88] Elizabeth Poole, *Reporting Islam: Media Representations of British Muslims* (London: Tauris, 2002); Jonas R. Kunst vd., "Coping with Islamophobia: The effects of religious stigma on Muslim minorities' identity formation", *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* 36/4 (2012), 518-532; Garner - Selod, "The racialization of Muslims"; Irene Zempi - Imran Awan, "Doing 'dangerous' autoethnography on Islamophobic victimization", *Ethnography* 18/3 (2017), 367-386; Saher Selod, "Gendered racialization: Muslim American men and women's encounters with racialized surveillance", *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 42/4 (2018), 552-569.

[89] Babacan, *Young Turks in Britain and Islamophobia*, 111.

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was clearly present, for example, in the verbal assaults, physical violence, and even murder of many Sikhs during the war on terror in both the US and Canada.[90]

What appears to be problematic in the racialization of Muslim groups is that it treats what are clearly culturally and phenotypically distinct individuals as though they are homogenous entities and thus places all Muslim groups into the same box. Cultural racism ignores the differences/internal diversity in culture and cultural practices among Muslim groups and is far from capturing the different interpretations and ways of life among Muslim groups. To racially group all Muslims as a single cultural race or as an ethno-religious entity is to gather most internal cultural differentiations together in that targeted group. For example, non-religious or even non-Muslim Turks who do not show any visible biological, religious, or cultural markers may still be targeted by the host community because of their ancestry, nationality, or name.[91] This means that racialization occurs when the characteristics and values possessed by generalization are essentialized and seen as innate values. This point was clearly highlighted by one of my participants, Murat. He stated that

> The media makes fake news, especially by linking Muslims with terrorist groups in the Middle East. All Muslims are regarded as responsible for those terrorist actions. It is a constant war against Islam, against Muslims. This is changing the way people look at Muslims. I hesitate to tell people that I am Turkish or Muslim. Because they treat you as if you are responsible for all these terrorist attacks. Why are you blaming me? This annoys me (Murat).[92]

What Murat argues is that the media representation of Islam and Muslims was not only done out of political and economic interest but also for the construction of the "cultural other." Putting emphasis on "a constant war against Islam, against Muslims," he recognizes the concept of Islamophobia as "continuity".[93] He thus looked upon the representation of the "War on Terror" as a war on Islam and Muslims. Admitting the idea that there might be people who sympathize with the terrorist groups among Muslims, Murat

[90] e.g., Muninder K. Ahluwalia - Laura Pellettiere, "Sikh men post-9/11: Misidentification, discrimination, and coping.", *Asian American Journal of Psychology* 1/4 (2010), 303-314; Katy P. Sian, "Surveillance, Islamophobia, and Sikh bodies in the war on terror", *Islamophobia Studies Journal* 4/1 (2017), 37-52.
[91] Babacan, *Young Turks in Britain and Islamophobia*, 111.
[92] Babacan, *Young Turks in Britain and Islamophobia*, 85.
[93] Runnymede Trust, *a Challenge for Us all*; Meer, *Key concepts in race and ethnicity*.

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asserted that the main threat of the propaganda efforts of the media is that of generalizing the bad reputation of those terrorist groups onto all Muslims.[94]

Conclusion

Whenever hatred, crime, and discrimination against Islam and Muslims are evaluated in the context of racism, some public figures, journalists, and politicians object for various reasons. Objections to the definition of Islamophobia as a form of racism are shaped around two main themes of Islamophobia: "Islam" and "Muslims". For some, Muslim is not a race and that negative attitudes and behaviors towards Muslims cannot be evaluated as racism. While this approach regards gender and racial identities as innate or involuntary identity categories, it assumes that being a Muslim is related to one's own will and therefore Muslims need or should have much less legal protection than these other identity categories. In this respect, this understanding is not different from modern understanding that bases race on a genetic or scientific basis. Others argue that "Islam" should be removed from the meaning of Islamophobia. At the center of this contestation is that adopting the proposed definition would censor legitimate criticism of Islam, that is freedom of speech.

In this article, by making a detailed discussion of the concepts of racism, cultural racism, and racialization, it is argued that making sweeping generalizations is more likely to be Islamophobic. One should have the right to critique ideologies and religions, but the manner and decorum in which individuals express themselves are vital. The speech should not intentionally demonize a religion, or humiliate, devalue, or stigmatize a diverse group of people. It is further argued that being Muslim is not a racial identity reflects the idea that race is the pre-condition for racism and confines racism to a narrow understanding. Race is not a pre-condition for racism, that is, racism can work without race, since the main goal is the essentialization/racialization of individuals through supposed differences. Every racism, whether biological or cultural, is cultural in its essence and the main target is cultural, social, and religious differences attributed to bodies (individuals). Islamophobia is a form of cultural racism that also emphasizes physical appearance and ancestry. It amalgamates all Muslims into one group, as well as those who are simply perceived as being Muslim. The racialization process of the respondents shows that Muslims are racialized not based on biological or phenotypical features, but also ethnic and cultural

[94] Babacan, *Young Turks in Britain and Islamophobia*, 86.

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features. Regardless of physical appearance, nationality, ethnicity, or economic situation, Muslims are homogenized, humiliated, and marginalized through Islamophobic discourse and practices in their daily lives.

This article contributes to a better understanding of why Islamophobia should be evaluated as a form of racism. It is hoped that in assessing the discourse and behavior towards Islam and Muslims, the focus will be shifted from everyday political debate or hostility to religion, fear of religion, anti-Muslim hatred, and prejudice to the fact that Muslims are racialized.



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"İSLAM DA MÜSLÜMAN DA BİR IRK DEĞİLDİR": İSLAMOFOBİ, IRKÇILIK VE İFADE ÖZGÜRLÜĞÜ

Muhammed BABACAN[a]

Geniş Öz

İslamofobi'nin bir ırkçılık biçimi olarak tanımlanmasına itirazlar var. İtirazlar, İslamofobi'nin iki ana teması etrafında şekilleniyor: "İslam" ve "Müslümanlar". Bazı muhalifler, ifade özgürlüğü kapsamında meşru sayılması gereken çeşitli tartışma ve eleştirilere karşı "İslam"ın korunmaması gerektiğini savunuyorlar. "Muhammed sübyancıdır ve dokuz yaşında bir kızla evlenmiştir", "İslam kılıçla yayılmıştır", "Örtünmek kadınları insanlıktan çıkarır, aşağılar, nesneleştirir" gibi ifadelerin ifade özgürlüğü kapsamında meşru görülmesi gereken teolojik tartışmalar bağlamında değerlendirilmesi gerektiği ileri sürülür. Dolayısıyla, bu eleştiri haklarının İslamofobi'nin bir ırkçılık biçimi olarak tanımlanmasıyla sınırlandırılmaması gerektiği vurgulanır. Diğerleri için, "Müslümanlar" ırksal bir azınlık olarak kabul edilemez çünkü Müslüman olmak, gönüllü olarak seçilen dini bir kimliktir. Bu yaklaşım, cinsiyet ve ırksal kimlikleri doğuştan veya istem dışı kimlik kategorileri olarak kabul ederken, Müslüman olmanın kişinin kendi iradesine bağlı olduğunu ve bu nedenle Müslümanların bu diğer kimlik kategorilerine göre çok daha az yasal korumaya ihtiyacı olduğunu veya olması gerektiğini varsayar. Bu makale, ırkçılık dışındaki tanımların, Müslümanların ve Müslüman olarak algılananların fenotipik ve kültürel farklılıklara atıfta bulunularak nasıl dışlandığını, tabi kılındığını ve sömürüldüğünü yakalamaya ve anlamaya yardımcı olan hayati bir konuyu gözden kaçıracağını savunuyor. Bu, Müslümanların ırksallaştırılması meselesidir. Bu makale şu soruları keşfetmeyi amaçlamaktadır: İfade özgürlüğünün yasal sınırı ne olmalıdır? İslamofobi'yi Müslümanlara ve İslam'a yönelik makul eleştirilerden ayırmak mümkün mü? Irkçılık

[a] Öğr. Gör. Dr., ASBU Üniversitesi, muhammed.babacan@asbu.edu.tr

gerçekten de ırkların gerçek varlığına mı bağlı? İslam ve Müslüman düşmanlığı bir ırkçılık olarak değerlendirilebilirse, bu nasıl bir ırkçılık olabilir? Spesifik nitelikleri nelerdir, nasıl çalışır? Müslümanlar nasıl ırksallaştırıldı? Bu soruları cevaplamak için, 2019 yılında Londra'da yaşları 18-35 arasında değişen otuz dokuz birinci ve ikinci nesil genç Türk'ün İslamofobi deneyimleri üzerine yapılan bir çalışmadan yararlanılmıştır. Londra'daki Türk toplumunda var olduğu bilinen çeşitliliği temsil edecek kadar farklı katılımcılar bulmayı amaçladım. Verilerin toplanma aracı olarak yarı yapılandırılmış derinlemesine görüşme yöntemini seçtim. Veri kümesindeki anlam kalıplarını belirlemek ve analiz etmek için tematik analiz kullandım. Britanya'daki genç Türklerin ırksallaştırılması süreci, Müslümanların sadece biyolojik veya fenotipik özelliklere göre değil, aynı zamanda etnik ve kültürel özelliklere göre de ırksallaştırıldığını göstermektedir. İdeolojileri ve dinleri eleştirme hakkına sahip olunmalıdır, ancak bireylerin kendilerini ifade etme tarzları ve adaba uygun hareket etmeleri hayati önem taşır. İfadeler kasıtlı olarak bir dini şeytanlaştırmamalı veya farklı bir grup insanı aşağılamamalı, değerini düşürmemeli veya damgalamamalıdır. Ayrıca Müslüman olmanın ırksal bir kimlik olmadığı iddiası, ırkın ırkçılığın ön koşulu olduğu fikrini yansıtır ve ırkçılığı dar bir anlayışa hapseder. Biyolojik ya da kültürel her ırkçılık özünde kültüreldir ve asıl hedefi bedenlere (bireylere) atfedilen kültürel, toplumsal ve dinsel farklılıklardır. Bu nedenle, Müslüman karşıtı ırkçılığın merkezinde dinin kendisinden ziyade algılanan dini mensubiyet yer almaktadır. Müslümanlar, fiziksel görünümleri, milliyetleri, etnik kökenleri veya ekonomik durumları ne olursa olsun, günlük yaşamlarında İslamofobik söylem ve uygulamalarla homojenleştirilmekte, aşağılanmakta ve ötekileştirilmektedir. Bu makale, İslamofobi'nin neden bir ırkçılık biçimi olarak değerlendirilmesi gerektiğinin daha iyi anlaşılmasına katkıda bulunmaktadır. İslam'a ve Müslümanlara yönelik söylem ve davranışlar değerlendirilirken, odağın günlük siyasi tartışmalardan, din düşmanlığından, din korkusundan, Müslümanlara yönelik nefret ve önyargıdan çok daha hayati bir konu olan Müslümanların ırksallaştırıldığı gerçeğine kaydırılması umulmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Din Psikolojisi, İslamofobi, Irkçılık, Irksallaştırma, İslam, Müslümanlar, Kültürel ırkçılık, İfade özgürlüğü, İngiltere.



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