

# The Typologies of Global Islamophobia and its Manifestations Across the Global North and South

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## **Abstract**

*The “War on Terror” ushered in a new era of anti-Muslim bias and racism globally. Anti-Muslim racism is influenced by local economies, power structures, and histories. However, the War on Terror, with a homogenized Muslim “Other” framed as a perpetual enemy, has contributed to a global Islamophobic narrative. This paper examines the connections between interpersonal and institutional forms of anti-Muslim racism that have contributed to the growth and emboldening of nativist and populist protest movements globally. By examining different national contexts across the Global North and South, this article demonstrates how Islamophobia has become a global phenomenon. The purpose of this article is to map out categories or typologies of Islamophobia. These are the localized histories, politics, conflicts, and present-day geopolitical realities in the context of the War on Terror, which have influenced and textured the ways that Islamophobia has manifested across the Global North and South.*

**Keywords:** *Islamophobia, War on Terror, anti-Muslim racism, securitization, global Islamophobia*

## **Introduction**

The “War on Terror” ushered in a new era of anti-Muslim bias and racism globally. Anti-Muslim racism, also referred to as Islamophobia in this article, is textured and influenced by local economies, power structures, and histories. However, the War on Terror, a conflict undefined by time and place, with a homogenized Muslim “Other” framed as a perpetual enemy, has contributed to a global Islamophobic narrative, creating transnational sites of struggle. Several academics and commentators have examined Islamophobia as a historical phenomenon. These works view anti-Muslim racism as a continuum through historical moments including the Crusades, European colonialism, the 1973 Oil Crisis, the Iranian Revolution, the Gulf War, as well as other instances in which there were conflicts and tensions between Muslim-majority nations and the West (Itaoui & Elsheikh, 2018; Kumar, 2012; Sheehi, 2011). These works provide a historical grounding to understand Islamophobia but are overwhelmingly framed through a dichotomist relationship between the West and Islam. In the War on Terror, a broader meta-narrative of Islamophobia has emerged, transcending Global North and South barriers.

This article explores manifestations of Islamophobia across three global contexts: Canada, France, and Myanmar. Though not exhaustive, the purpose of this analysis is to demonstrate the emergence of globalized Islamophobic pathologies from the global North, in combination with the global South, which is often overlooked in the literature (Beydoun, 2023; Aziz & Esposito, 2024) and to discuss these global trends through broad categories or typologies for which the nation states of Canada, France, and Myanmar are emblematic of (Bakali & Hafez, 2022). Discussing Islamophobia within these nation states entails exploring the localized histories, politics, conflicts, and present-day geopolitical realities in the context of the War on Terror, which have influenced and textured the ways that Islamophobia has materialized in these spaces. Interpersonal forms of Islamophobia such as racial violence, vandalism of religious structures, and satirical and racist portrayals in media have been well-documented prior to and since 9/11. However, Islamophobia is also an institutional form of racism that has become endemic in political rhetoric and legislation and in state security apparatuses. Both forms of Islamophobia in the War on Terror are intimately connected and have contributed to the growth and emboldening of nativist and populist protest movements in Canada, the United States, Australia, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, France, Brazil, Argentina, the Philippines, India, China, Myanmar, and other spaces across the Global North and South (Bakali & Hafaz, 2022).

### **The Frontiers of Islamophobia**

This article will explore how Islamophobia exists interpersonally and institutionally across three international settings. The cohesion between private actors of racism and targeted state policies and actions, within localized histories of cultural supremacy, coloniality, race, and current day geopolitics provide insights into manifestations of Islamophobia across the Global North and South. This article asserts that the interrelationship between institutional and interpersonal forms of Islamophobia can be better understood through typological categories of Islamophobia ranging from Islamophobic manifestations, which are openly contested through political activism and grassroots mobilization in what the article refers to as *settler societies*, to Islamophobia that draws from violent histories rooted in colonialism from *former imperial states* from the Global North, to Islamophobia at a breaking point—years of relatively unchallenged Islamophobia that has culminated in ethnic cleansing and genocide, which has manifested in *states under authoritarian rule*. *Settler societies* in this article entails nation states like Canada, the USA, and Australia, which were formally colonized by imperial powers and were settled through the displacement and ethnic cleansing of local indigenous populations. *Former imperial states* in this exploration are referring to states that have had historic legacies as imperial powers that have historically colonized Muslim-majority lands. These include France, the UK, the Netherlands, Austria, as well as other Western European nations. Examples of *states under authoritarian rule* include nations that are governed by authoritarian leadership such as China and Myanmar. To discuss these categorizations in a concise and coherent manner

within the word length restrictions of an academic article, only one nation state from each of these categorizations will be discussed. These are the nation states of Canada, France, and Myanmar. Before discussing these typologies in further detail, the article will provide a historical grounding of Islamophobia and the scholarship that has explored this phenomenon, followed by a discussion around the need to rethink and expand scholarship on Islamophobia to understand its global character in the War on Terror.

### **Placing Islamophobia in Context**

Arguably the most influential work from which the term “Islamophobia” acquired the greatest currency and usage that relates to current understandings arose from a report titled *Islamophobia: A Challenge for Us All* by the Runnymede Trust in 1997. The report described Islamophobia as the “shorthand way of referring to dread or hatred of Islam—and therefore, the fear or dislike of all or most Muslims” (Runnymede Trust, 1997, p. 1). The report argued that Islamophobia produced “closed views” of Islam, which could be understood as viewing Islam monolithically, and as an ideological adversary which needed combating and disciplining (Lewis, 1997). The Runnymede Trust report was greeted with mixed reactions. There was both praise and criticism from Muslim and non-Muslim groups and organizations. One critique suggested that in the process of condemning biases and racism toward Muslims, the report simultaneously reproduced derogatory narratives of Muslims by consistently linking Muslims with terrorism (Bakali, 2016). Another criticism was that it often conflated racism specifically directed toward ethnic groups with prejudices against Muslims and Islam in general (Allen, 2010). Despite its shortcomings, the report and its model of Islamophobia laid the foundations for the most common and widespread definitions and conceptualizations about Islamophobia. Though the term “Islamophobia” became popularized through the Runnymede Trust, it traces its origins to over a millennium ago as an ideology.

Islamophobia is a relatively new term that draws its etymological roots from Europe in the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Fourest & Venner, 2003). However, fear and mistrust toward Muslims and being perceived as a diametrically opposed “Other” has much deeper and enduring roots. As Weller et al. (2001) observed, “Islamophobia is undeniably rooted in the historical inheritance of a conflictual relationship that has developed over many centuries involving the overlap of religion, politics and warfare” (p. 8). Outsider perceptions of Muslims and Islam began to form as early as the seventh century, when Muslim armies began to make inroads into the Eastern Roman/Byzantine Empire, at the early inception of the faith.

As the Islamic empire conquered vast territories and key cultural sites of the Byzantine Empire, including Egypt, Damascus, and the venerated holy city of Jerusalem, Islam was perceived as a threat, specifically by the Church in Western Europe. Europe, in large part due to the influence of the Roman Catholic Church, viewed Islam as a three-pronged threat to its stronghold and well-being. First, Islam was both a social and religious ideology that could

challenge Europe's relative stability. Second, it was a proselytizing faith that had the ability to challenge the ascendancy of the Roman Church and the spread of Christianity. Finally, through the rapid political expansion and conversions to Islam, concerns began to grow over the potential threat the faith posed in gaining a social foothold within Europe's borders, confining Christianity to the spiritual and theological hinterlands (Allen, 2010).

Muslim armies managed to make advances within some Western European territories, including the Iberian Peninsula and parts of southern France in the eighth century. However, for the most part, Islam was known to Europe in absentia (Sheehi, 2011). Eventually, by the turn of the 11<sup>th</sup> century the perceptions of this threatening "Other" would be used as a tool to gain political authority and ascendancy by the Catholic Church through the Crusades (Mastnak, 2002). The first Crusade, a call to arms by Pope Urban II that led to the fall of Jerusalem from Muslim hands in 1099, was propagated as a militaristic pilgrimage to reconquer and liberate the holy lands of Jerusalem from the perceived heathens of Islam. Christians who returned to Europe from the Crusades told tales of idolatrous pagans possessing extravagant wealth and luxuries living sensual and lecherous lifestyles.

These stories of the near East fueled misconceptions in European societies and eventually fomented a narrative that justified a civilizing project in light of shifting power dynamics between Europe and the Orient (Kumar, 2012). These perceptions "opened the way for the Occident to begin to identify what was seen as the need to begin 'civilizing' the Orient: something that many have suggested found credence and gained fruition through colonial expansion in the following few hundred years" (Allen, 2010, p. 30). Thus began another chapter in Europe's interaction with the Orient—colonialism. Though colonialism was not exclusive to Muslim-majority lands, due to Europe's historical interactions with Muslims it took on a unique form of expression, as colonial powers perceived Islam as a civilization condemned to backwardness and barbarism (Ahmed, 1999). Thus, the colonization of Muslim-majority lands was construed as an act of magnanimity by civilizing an antithetical "Other." Analysis of the colonial project and colonial encounters produced literature that greatly influenced contemporary understandings of Islamophobia. One of the central texts from this genre is Edward Said's (1979) *Orientalism*.

### **The Impact of *Orientalism* in Framing Islamophobia**

Said's (1979) *Orientalism* was a critique of Orientalism—the Western study and depiction of the Orient through a colonial gaze—and has informed many of the current analyses of anti-Muslim racism. According to Said, Orientalism is "a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between the 'Orient' and (most of the time) 'the Occident'" (p. 2). Said noted the presence of Orientalist thought in the works of European scholars, artists, and academics throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Through examining canonical European literary works from this era, Said noted the existence of misrepresentations, over-simplifications, and

binaries that constructed the West as being diametrically opposed to the East. Said argued that Orientalists viewed the East or the “Orient” as being overly sensual, primitive, and violently opposed to the West. According to Said, these views of the Orient perpetuated a constant ensemble of images and stereotypes that completely ignored the diversity across the Orient.

Said (1979) contended that Orientalism was a tool that was used by Western academics, scholars, and artists to assert dominance over the East. As he stated,

Orientalism can be discussed and analyzed as the corporate institution for dealing with the Orient—dealing with it by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it: in short, Orientalism [is] a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient. (Said, 1979, p. 3)

The ideas of control and domination discussed by Edward Said in *Orientalism* originated from the history that European nations have had in dominating Arab and Muslim-majority nations throughout the period of imperialism in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. In another one of his works, *Culture and Imperialism*, Said (1993) discussed how the practices of imperialism persisted throughout the postcolonial era. Said noted, “In our time, direct colonialism has largely ended; imperialism ... lingers where it has always been in a kind of general cultural sphere as well as in specific political, ideological, economic, and social practices” (p. 12). This mindset of superiority is believed by Said to have laid the foundations for Orientalist thought throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries and that in turn constructed the “Orient” as inferior and subordinate to Europe.

There have been several criticisms in response to Said’s ideas, most notably from the historian Bernard Lewis (1993), who Said had labeled as a key Orientalist scholar. One of Lewis’s contentions was that Orientalism developed independently of the European imperial project, as the French and English both studied Islam prior to the period of imperialism in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. As such, Lewis contended that Orientalism did not advance the cause of imperialism. However, as Said (1979) observes in *Orientalism* “[t]o say simply that Orientalism was a rationalization of colonial rule is to ignore the extent to which colonial rule was justified in advance by Orientalism, rather than after the fact” (p. 39). In other words, Said acknowledged that there were European scholars studying Islam prior to the period of imperialism, and it was precisely the attitudes developed by these earlier scholars that created a theoretical pretext for an imperial project. Another critique of Said’s work was that within his analysis of selected canonized Western texts, he reproduces the same essentializing discourse that his work sought to undermine, by portraying Western scholarship as homogeneous. In other words, some charge that Said used the same broad brush when describing those whom he was criticizing by not engaging with critical and dissenting views within European scholarship (Ahmad, 1992).

Said’s work, though predating a number of other studies examining anti-Muslim racism continues to be indispensable, as lingering Orientalist myths continue to endure in dominant Western discourse about Islam. These include

the notion that Islam is a monolithic religion that perpetuates gender-based discrimination (Bakali & Soubani, 2021), that Muslims are incapable of reason and rationality or democracy and self-rule, and that Islam is an inherently violent religion (Kumar, 2012). Undeniably, Orientalist thinking has profoundly shaped contemporary Islamophobic discourse. Most scholars and theorists that describe and explore Islamophobia draw from postcolonial scholarship, largely from the ideas developed by Said in *Orientalism*. In many ways, this positionality has framed Islamophobia in a dichotomist relationship between Islam and the West. In other words, it is a form of racism that is overwhelmingly constructed through Western discourse, actions, and perceptions of Muslims and Islam. However, the geopolitical realities produced by the War on Terror require a nuanced shift in our thinking about Islamophobia. If critiques of Orientalism organized thinking around Islamophobia as an antagonistic relationship between Islam and Muslims with the West in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the War on Terror has reformulated Islamophobia as anti-Muslim bias and racism that extends beyond the West and intersects across global sites in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

### **Defining “Islamophobia” as a Global Phenomenon**

As this article will demonstrate, Islamophobia transcends Global North and South barriers. As such, there is a need to develop a functional definition describing Islamophobia as a global phenomenon. Several academics and intellectuals have attempted to define Islamophobia, referring to it as intolerance toward Muslims’ religious and cultural beliefs (Esposito & Mogahed, 2007). Some have argued, however, that the term “Islamophobia” is somewhat problematic in and of itself as it is latent with the assumption that negative views toward Islam and Muslims arise from psychological traumas synonymous with other phobias such as agoraphobia and arachnophobia rather than arising from social anxieties toward a distant “Other” (Gottschalk & Greenberg, 2008). Therefore, the term Islamophobia may be imprecisely used to describe a “diverse phenomenon, ranging from xenophobia to antiterrorism ... [grouping] together all kinds of different forms of discourse, speech, and acts by suggesting that they all emanate from an identical ideological core, which is an irrational fear (a phobia) of Islam” (Cesari, 2011, p. 21). Some theorists have broadened the ideas implicit in the term Islamophobia to include “the practice of prejudice against Islam and the demonization and dehumanization of Muslims...generally manifested in negative attitudes, discrimination, physical harassment and vilification in the media” (Mohideen & Mohideen, 2008, p. 73). These definitions, though useful in many respects, only describe part of what Islamophobia entails. They fall short of a comprehensive understanding of Islamophobia, particularly when it is understood as a global phenomenon.

Islamophobia, like other forms of racism, exists institutionally and interpersonally (Beydoun, 2018). Institutional Islamophobia can be understood as the ways in which Islamophobia has been sanctioned and legalized by the state. In other words, it is how state power has been able to use legislation, policy, and programming to subordinate and oppress Muslims and vilify Islam.

Interpersonal Islamophobia is the fear, mistrust, and violence enacted on the Muslim subject by private actors. These private actors can be individuals or institutions that are not directly associated with the state. Beydoun (2018) describes another dimension of Islamophobia, which he refers to as “dialectical Islamophobia.” Dialectical Islamophobia describes the interrelationship between institutional and interpersonal forms of Islamophobia.

According to Beydoun (2018), dialectical Islamophobia is the process by which institutional Islamophobia “shapes, reshapes, and endorses views or attitudes about Islam and Muslim subjects inside and outside America’s borders” (p. 40). In other words, dialectical Islamophobia is a process where popularized Islamophobic narratives are legitimized through state policies. Consequently, dialectic Islamophobia emboldens private actors of Islamophobia. When the state designates the Muslim subject as a threatening force that needs policing through institutional processes, principally in relation to countering and preventing violent extremism, it prompts and stirs the suspicions of private citizens, giving them a pretext to act. This occurs through nativist street protest movements, hate crimes, racial violence, vandalism of Muslim structures, as well as bias and discriminatory portrayals of Muslims in media (Bakali, 2019).

Beydoun’s (2018) discussion of dialectic Islamophobia predominantly describes a top-down relationship between institutional and interpersonal Islamophobia in the context of the US. Through power exercised by the state to police the Muslim subject, private actors are emboldened and signaled to take actions. However, institutional and interpersonal forms of Islamophobia, as well as Beydoun’s notion of dialectical Islamophobia, extend beyond Western contexts. These forms of Islamophobia exist globally, and in the present context are entangled with the politics, policies, and rhetoric of War on Terror. In this article, I will employ a definition that considers these realities and can be applied when discussing Islamophobia across the Global North and South.

As such, Islamophobia can be understood as a way of thinking or ideology that has been shaped by the earliest encounters between Muslim and non-Muslim cultures and is continuously evolving. Contemporarily, Islamophobia undergirds state policies and actions that target the Muslim subject, as well as the actions, beliefs, and speech of private individuals, groups, and organizations who construct the Muslim subject as “Other” across global sites. These beliefs, speech, and actions at the hands of the state and private actors are interrelated. Furthermore, they are influenced by local economies, power structures, and histories, as well as contemporary domestic and international geopolitical realities. Manifestations of Islamophobia are underscored by tropes surrounding Muslims and Islam, which perpetuate a mythology of Muslims being violent, backwards, oppressive, and misogynistic.

In the current climate these tropes are connected to rhetoric associated with the War on Terror. An important aspect of the above definition is that Islamophobia, as an ideology and through its manifestations, exists globally and is not limited to Western contexts. Additionally, Beydoun’s (2018) discussion of dialectic Islamophobia within this framework is expanded to

describe a codependent relationship between institutional and interpersonal Islamophobia. This entails circumstances where there is a top-down, bottom-up, or symbiosis between institutional and interpersonal Islamophobia. In other words, when examining Islamophobia across global sites, there are instances where state actions embolden private actors, where the mass mobilization of private actors and influencers empower the state, as well as situations where there is a synergistic relationship between the state and private actors in promoting Islamophobia and its manifestations.

### **The Typologies of Islamophobia**

To engage in this analysis, the article will put forth a “typology of Islamophobia.” This typology does not simply view Islamophobia on a linear spectrum ranging from Islamophobia light to more severe manifestations. Rather, the focus of this typology is to place Islamophobia within historical and geopolitical realities in the country contexts discussed in the following section. This approach differs somewhat from other approaches that have examined the globalization of Islamophobia into various “zones,” based on characteristics of Islamophobic manifestations (Bazian, 2022). The aforementioned approach is useful in gathering a sense of the characteristics of Islamophobia across the Global North and South and its underlying causes. However, such an approach is more descriptive and less explanatory in nature. The typology put forward in this article describes three categorizations for understanding global manifestations of Islamophobia: *Islamophobia in settler societies*, *Islamophobia in former imperial states*, and *Islamophobia under authoritarian rule*. These categorizations are not comprehensive, nor do they describe all the possible categorizations of Islamophobia across the Global North and South. Indeed, much evidence suggests that Islamophobia also manifests in nation states from the Global South that were formally colonized (Bakali & Hafez, 2022), which will not be discussed in this article. The purpose for limiting the discussion to these three categorizations is simply to demonstrate how Islamophobia can be discussed through typologies across the Global North and South and how the interrelationship between institutional and interpersonal forms of Islamophobia are essential characteristics in the globalized Islamophobic realities produced by the War on Terror.

The first category, *Islamophobia in settler societies*, are those nation states that have been imagined as nations “founded” through European colonialism and historically were settled for the purposes of being permanent outposts for imperial states. These include nation states such as Canada, Australia, and the USA. In more contemporary times, these states have been imagined as “multicultural” nations, which perpetuates the myth that they are post-racial societies. Post-racial societies are those that advocate that racism is a concern and problem of the past and ultimately mask and whitewash the historic systemic and institutional forms of racism that continue to persist in these nations (Bakali & Hafez, 2022). Settler societies are underscored by racial supremacist complexes that have constructed the Muslim subject as “Other.” This projection of Muslims is often politicized to reinforce power hierarchies.

As such, Islamophobia within settler nations is organized and codified through white supremacist mythologies, which perpetuate the notion that Muslim presence in these states is a divergence from the character, tradition, and norms of these nations (Bakali, 2018a). Within these spaces, the failure of the multicultural state is exemplified through the presence of the backwards and violent Muslim “Other.” In this article, the example of Islamophobia in Canada will be discussed to further understand *Islamophobia in settler societies*.

When examining the second category, *Islamophobia in former imperial states*, the emphasis is shifted to nations that have had an imperial history, which entails the colonization of Muslim lands. These include nations such as the Netherlands, Austria, the UK, and France. Here the complexities of colonial histories of ruling over the Muslim “Other” textures the interpersonal and institutional Islamophobia manifested in these nations through fears and conspiracies of the “Islamization” of Europe in the War on Terror. In these spaces, white supremacist ideologies are sanitized through political rhetoric and discourse under the pretense of promoting assimilation and integration within these nations. Hence, Islamophobia becomes institutionalized through legislation and policies, particularly by right-wing and far-right political parties as a means of stomping out “Islamic separatism” (Burgat, 2022) or “political Islam” (Hafez, 2022). These are vaguely defined terms that have been employed to criminalize Muslim political agency and public expressions of Islam and Muslimness. To further illustrate this point, the case of Islamophobia in France will be discussed in the article.

In the exploration of the final category, *Islamophobia under authoritarian rule*, the article also includes fragile democracies, such as Myanmar, which saw its democratically elected government since 2015 relapse into an authoritarian military dictatorship in 2021. These spaces promote extreme forms of nativism and the notion of a strong homogeneous national identity. Islamophobia under authoritarian rule includes nations such as China and Myanmar. In the context of the War on Terror, there has been a growth of far-right politics within these states that have been operationalized to manufacture the image of an existential threatening Muslim “Other” through War on Terror logic. War on Terror logic is a paradoxical way of thinking that imagines terrorism and other forms of political violence as existing exclusively through Muslim “Otherness,” while simultaneously sanitizing state-sponsored forms of terror as a requirement for policing the supposed Muslim terrorist threat (Bakali, 2022a). These global sites produce extremely severe manifestations of Islamophobia, which teeter on a tipping point of violence, ethnic cleansing, and genocide at the hands of private actors, the state, or both. Islamophobia in these spaces, if left unchallenged, leads to an escalation of violence, abuse, and loss of life. This became a reality in the case of the Rohingya Muslim population of Myanmar in August 2017 through a state-sponsored genocide at the hands of the Myanmar military (Bakali, 2021), which will be explored more thoroughly in this article. The article turns now to discuss the typologies of Islamophobia beginning with *Islamophobia in settler societies*.

## **Islamophobia in Settler Societies**

To understand Islamophobia in settler societies, the Canadian context will be explored. Islamophobia in Canada is not a recent phenomenon, but rather it is an extension of a long history of racist treatment and management of subaltern “Others” located within the nation building project of the state. In describing this racist legacy, through which Islamophobia has taken hold and flourished in the War on Terror, Jamil (2022) discusses the racialized logics of coloniality, which underscore the nation state of Canada. The land mass referred to as Canada was colonized by the British and French empires in the 1500s and was constructed as a settler society (Bakali, 2022b). The formation of Canada as a settler society was predicated on the killing and dispossession Indigenous communities, an injustice that continues to this day. Throughout Canada’s early history, strident efforts were made to keep it as a white settler society.

This was reflected in early immigration policies established in the 1800 and 1900s, which prevented non-white migrants from settling in the land. Some of these measures included the Immigration Act of 1910, which prevented people of African descent from immigrating to Canada on the basis of “climatic unsuitability” (Williams, 1997); the Chinese Head Tax (1885 to 1923), which effectively discouraged and prevented Chinese migrants from settling in Canada (Chan, 2016); and the Continuous Journey Clause, which prevented Asian immigrants from settling in Canada if they did not travel directly from their home nation on a continuous journey to arrive to Canada (Hawkins, 1989).

These examples appear here not to draw false equivalences between the discriminatory laws and actions faced by “Otherized” communities throughout Canadian history, but rather to demonstrate that Canada has a long history of institutionalized racism aimed at preserving an imagined Canadian identity predicated on white supremacy dating back to the colonial period. These are the racialized logics that underscore Islamophobia in Canada today (Jamil, 2022). In the context of the War on Terror, Muslims have been the most recent iteration of “unwanted” communities that contaminate the nationalist space that have been policed by state policies and legislation. The most prominent examples of these targeted laws can be seen in the anti-terrorism legislation passed in the aftermath of the US-led War on Terror.

The Anti-Terrorism Act (2001 and 2015) and the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act are both examples of the targeted laws that have securitized Canadian Muslims (Bakali, 2016). Through these legislation, Canadian Muslims have been racially profiled, intimidated by Canadian Security Intelligence Services (CSIS), and, most notably, provisions within these laws allowed for the illegal detention, extraordinary rendition, and torture of Maher Arar, a Canadian citizen of Syrian descent in 2002 (Mazigh, 2009). The Immigration and Refugee Protection Act authorizes the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration in conjunction with the Solicitor General to issue a security certificate. A security certificate permits

...the detention and expulsion of non-citizens who are considered to be a threat to national security. Detainees have no opportunity to be heard before a certificate is issued, and a designated judge of the federal court reviews most of the government's case against the detainee in a secret hearing at which neither the detainee nor his counsel is present. (Razack, 2008, p. 26)

Security certificates, like the provisions in the Anti-Terrorism Act, suspend rights and due process for non-citizens residing within Canada. Additionally, detainees deported to their countries of origin as a result of a security certificate face the possibility of torture there. Muslims detained on the grounds of security certificates since the onset of the War on Terror include Hassan Almrei, Mohammed Mahjoub, Mohammed Jaballah, Mohamed Harkat, and Adil Charkaoui. All men have at some point languished in prison for several years and have spent varying amounts of time in solitary confinement (Razack, 2008). More recently, the stigmatization of Muslims has been further cemented in the French-speaking province of Canada, Quebec, through the passing of Bill-21 in 2019, which banned religious clothing and symbols to be worn by public employees in positions of "authority." Though this law is framed in neutral terms, it has disproportionately affected Muslim women since its onset (Jamil, 2022). Institutional forms of Islamophobia have provided fertile ground for the growth of interpersonal forms of anti-Muslim bias and racism.

According to a study by Perry and Scrivens (2016), there are no less than 100 far-right extremist groups in Canada. These groups vary in size, ranging from three members to a few dozen. However, there are some groups that have an exceptionally large following. One group based out of Quebec called "La Meute" (the Wolf Pack) has over 40,000 followers on Facebook (Montpetit, 2016). La Meute very openly expresses grievances against Muslims and the Islamic faith and perceive it as an existential threat to Quebecois culture and identity (Montpetit, 2016). Ultimately, members of this organization fear an Islamization of Quebec and believe that Muslims living in Canada want to impose sharia. As such, the group advocates for the banning of halal food and are critical of Canadian multiculturalism policies.

Far-right extremist groups in Canada are overwhelmingly white supremacist in nature. These groups tend to be transitory and unorganized, but have been on the rise since the early 2000s, when War on Terror rhetoric and anti-terrorism legislation targeting Canadian Muslims was in its infancy stages (Perry & Scrivens, 2016). Much of the anti-Muslim racism espoused by far-right groups in Canada have become increasingly present through online platforms. A study commissioned by the Canadian Broadcasting Company (2017) suggests that the frequency of language that is Islamophobic, sexist, racist, or xenophobic has increased by 600% from 2015 to 2016. The same study found that language expressing far-right and white supremacist views increased by 300%, while anti-Muslim language online increased by 200% in Canada during this period (CBC News, 2017). The substantial growth of white supremacist and far-right groups and individuals possessing anti-Muslim sentiment in Canadian

is not unconsequential. It has brought about a rise in targeted hate crimes against Muslim communities in Canada, the most severe of which was a mass shooting in a Quebec city mosque, killing 6 and injuring 19, in 2017 (Montpetit, 2019) and the vehicular murder of the Afzaal family in London Ontario in 2021. The article now turns to explore Islamophobia in former imperial states.

### **Islamophobia in Former Imperial States**

Similar to Islamophobic manifestation in settler societies, to understand Islamophobia within former imperial states, there needs to be a discussion of colonialism and its lingering residue. For this examination of Islamophobia in former imperial states the article will be focusing in on France. France, as a colonial power, had a long and troubling history with its Muslim colonial subjects. Much of this relates to the French approach of administering the colony and stamping out cultural symbols and reminders of Islam and Muslimness. In his critical essay “Algeria Unveiled,” Franz Fanon (1965) discusses the French colonizers’ project of removing the Muslim head scarf from Algeria in the 1930s. According to him, the colonizers perceived the headscarf as a cultural identifier, believing that by eliminating it they would be taking steps toward destroying Algerian culture in the colony.

Dismantling Algerian culture was essential, as the colonizers viewed themselves in stark contrast to the colonized. According to Al-Saji (2010), “[t]he representational apparatus of colonialism not only constitutes the image of the ‘native’ but posits this image in opposition to a certain self-perception of colonial society and against an implicit normalization of gender within that society” (p. 883). It is through this dichotomizing gaze that a civilized self emerged in contrast to a barbaric “Other.” This perception of the “Other” constructed the Muslim head veil as a deviation from French society and was therefore deemed unacceptable and needing to be exterminated. Similar practices of policing Muslim dress and stamping out signs of Muslimness have become observable in the current climate in France, which have been justified through the state dogma of French secularism.

Laïcité, or French secularism as the term will be employed in the article, can be understood as a normative political culture in which there is a strict separation between church and state on matters of public policy (Baubérot, 2012). It differs from the term “secularism,” which some have described as the coexistence of multiple religious and non-religious perspectives in a given social context (Taylor, 2007). Laïcité has traditionally been rooted in separating Catholicism from the state. In more contemporary times it has been geared toward labeling Muslims as “Other” in French society. As Selby (2011) notes, “[i]f during the first half of the twentieth century the separation of church and state was intended to displace Catholicism, in recent decades Islam has been increasingly depicted as the new challenge for French secularism” (p. 442). The consistent growth of Muslim migrants to France over the decades has brought about tensions, as state discourses have framed Muslims as threats to French culture and society.

This was apparent in the Stasi Commission Report (2003) published by the French government in 2003, which examined the application of secularist principles in France. The report emphasized *laïcité* as a fundamental pillar of French society and essential for national unity and cohesion (Stasi Commission, 2003). However, the Stasi Commission Report positioned “Islam as overly ‘political’ and ‘patriarchal’ and describe[d] Muslim women as ‘oppressed’ by their religious tradition” (Selby, 2011, p. 445). Additionally, the report associated Islam with polygamy, genital mutilation, and forced marriages (Stasi Commission, 2003). This report led to the French government passing a law banning conspicuous religious symbols in public schools in 2004. The majority of cases in which the law was applied involved young Muslim women wearing the head scarf (Al-Saji, 2010). Hence, Muslims have become the direct targets of French secularism through discourses of “liberating” Muslim women from their oppressive religious beliefs and practices. This anti-Muslim animus can be seen across the political spectrum, from France’s far-right parties like Marine Le Pen’s National Rally (formally the National Front), to more centrist parties, like the current President Emmanuel Macron’s *La République En Marche* (LREM).

In the lead up to Macron’s 2022 election bid, when it became increasingly clear that he lacked the popular support he needed from his centrist base to be reelected, Macron made attempts to recalibrate the voter base of the political right that was supportive of Le Pen’s nationalist and nativist agenda. In doing so, Macron delivered speeches and proposed legislation that squarely pointed the finger at France’s Muslims and “Islam” as underlying the tensions and rifts in French society (Burgat, 2022). More specifically, in an alarmist fashion, Macron lamented over the problems of “separatist Islam” and how it was at the heart of the disfunctions of French coexistence. Ultimately, the parameters of what “separatist Islam” entailed was so broadly defined that it essentially criminalized any form of Islamic expression in the public sphere.

In describing Macron’s intended reforms and how it framed French Muslims, Burgat (2022) observes that they were not simply discrediting and criminalizing a small and militant fringe of French Muslims, “but a great majority of practicing Muslims. Official rhetoric no longer criminalized the jihadi adepts of militancy that it had for a time.... It now took aim at nothing less than the entire activist spectrum of the Muslim community” (p. 138). Consequently, Islamophobia in France, as in other former imperial states, has organized around messages of Islamic separatism and “political” Islam, which in practice has criminalized Muslim political agency. As such, the proliferation of institutional Islamophobia through targeted laws and rhetoric across the political spectrum in France has curtailed French Muslim civil liberties and social life. Far more extreme manifestations of Islamophobia can be observed in nations that are governed by authoritarian rule in the Global South.

### **Islamophobia under Authoritarian Rule**

For this final categorization, the article discusses Islamophobia in Myanmar. The reason for discussing Myanmar in this section is because it represents an end point of Islamophobia when left unchecked and when there is a strong symbiosis between interpersonal and institutional forms of Islamophobia, the result of which is genocide (Bakali, 2022). When looking at the history of anti-Muslim bias in Myanmar, the Muslim minority, referred to as the Rohingya, had experienced various forms of prejudicial treatment in the post-World War II era and the end of the British occupation of then Burma (Bakal & Wasty, 2020). However, severe structural forms of Islamophobia began to emerge in the aftermath of the 1962 military coup, which brought the military dictator Ne Win to power (Ibrahim, 2018). The first major structural process instituted by the military government, which significantly restricted rights and freedoms of the Rohingya was the Emergency Immigration Act in 1974. This law introduced ethnicity-based identity cards that identified Burmese nationals. The Rohingya were issued Foreign Registration Cards designating them non-nationals.

Furthermore, Article 145 in the 1974 Constitution stated that “All persons born of parents both of whom are nationals of the Socialist Republic of the Union of Burma are citizens of the Union” (Ibrahim, 2018). These combined legislations made the Rohingya stateless. They were designated as foreigners in lands that they had been indigenous to for centuries. These severe citizenship laws sought to unify national identity along Burman Buddhist lines, solidifying the “Otherness” of the Muslim Rohingya population. Furthermore, a series of severe citizenship pogroms and various military abuses, which involved rape and other forms of violence, led to 200,000 Rohingya fleeing in 1978 and another wave of 250,000 between 1991 and 1992, seeking refugee status in neighboring Bangladesh (Wade, 2017).

In both instances, the Bangladeshi government sent most of the Rohingya back to Myanmar. Other structural processes that targeted Rohingya Muslims during military rule in Myanmar were measures that restricted freedom of movement. These policies prevented the Rohingya to freely move between townships within the Sittwe province of Myanmar, as well as limited access to healthcare, education, and, importantly, social integration and interaction with the Burman Buddhist majority (Bakali, 2021). The open state-led abuses of the Rohingya facilitated and encouraged various forms of interpersonal Islamophobia to flourish in Myanmar.

Within this climate of Burman Buddhist supremacy under military rule, several Buddhist supremacist movements of the Theravada tradition were able to emerge. The 969 Movement was an outgrowth of a 1988 Buddhist nationalist movement that sought to preserve Buddhist purity in Burma (Coclanis, 2013). One of the prominent leaders of this movement was Ashin U. Wirathu, who openly called for economic boycotts of Muslim-owned shops and advocated violence against Muslims of all ethnicities in Myanmar (Ibrahim, 2018). The 969 Movement claims that it does not directly command its followers to commit acts of violence against Muslims in Myanmar. However, if their speech leads to violence, that is an unintended consequence. Such violence, in 969’s view, is

acceptable if it preserves and promotes Burman Buddhist supremacy (Walton & Hayward, 2014). In the face of a crumbling infrastructure and economic crisis under the military regime, a number of these extremist Buddhist groups became major providers of basic education for Myanmar's poor (Walton, 2014). The Organization for the Protection of Race and Religion, abbreviated as MaBaTha, is one such organization.

MaBaTha has produced textbooks used in Sunday schools across Myanmar, which supplement state schooling. The key message of its textbooks assert that Islam threatens the preservation of Buddhism in the nation (Walton, 2014). In addition to spreading Islamophobic messages through supplementary education in Myanmar, the MaBaTha has also been at the forefront of campaigns to hinder the local Muslim economy. In conjunction with the 969 Movement, the MaBaTha has run several "buy Buddhist" campaigns, effectively creating economic boycotts of Muslim-owned businesses. Actions such as these have crippled Muslim-owned businesses. The hatred, paranoia, and misinformation disseminated by these groups not only creates economic and social obstacles but has also prompted private actors to engage in religious violence, attack religious structures, and use sexual violence against the Rohingya (Bari, 2018). This situation worsened once Myanmar transitioned into a democracy in 2015.

Aung San Suu Kyi was the democratically elected Prime Minister of Myanmar from 2015 to 2021. She came to power after decades of corrupt and incompetent military rule. A key factor that propelled Aung San Suu Kyi to power was the support she managed to gain from various Buddhist groups. This was a relationship that mutually benefited both sides; these groups consistently opposed the corruption of the military regime, while the alliance bolstered Suu Khi's political party, the National League for Democracy (NLD), as these Buddhist groups had popular support from the masses (Ibrahim, 2018). However, the former military regime created checks and balances to ensure that they retained substantial influence and power within this new fragile democracy (Ibrahim, 2018).

The former military regime retained 25% of the parliamentary seats through the Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) and effectively maintain dominance over the civilian administration of the state (Bari, 2018). Consequently, Aung San Suu Kyi and the NLD government were required to strike a balance between acquiescing to the demands of the military in administering the civilian population and pandering to the Buddhist extremist elites to maintain their base of popular support. In essence, the "democratically" elected government was entangled in a power relationship, which required the NLD to submissively accept the brutality of the military and Buddhist extremists toward the Rohingya to maintain the semblance of a democratically elected government. It was in this context that the Rohingya genocide in August 2017 was able to take place.

The Rohingya genocide was an organized campaign by the Myanmar military in conjunction with Buddhist extremist groups, which resulted in the death of approximately 24,000 Rohingya (Habib et al., 2018). The Myanmar

military along with Buddhist extremists destroyed entire Rohingya villages, engaged in mass rapes of women and girls, and indiscriminately murdered civilians (Médecins Sans Frontières, 2018). According to a survey by Médecins Sans Frontières (2018), approximately 9,400 Rohingya were murdered in Rakhine state between August 24 and September 24, 2017 alone, with at least 730 of the victims children. Some have contested the use of the term “genocide” in describing these events. However, several nations globally have identified them as such (Bakali & Wasty, 2020).

One of the tragic ironies of Myanmar’s transition to a democracy was that the persecution of Rohingya worsened because the NLD had to appease both the USDP, which commanded significant control of the country and Buddhist extremist groups, which had populist appeal. In this fashion, Islamophobia in Myanmar was a symbiosis between portions of the government/military and extremist Buddhist groups in civil society, which were advocating Burman Buddhist supremacy and the need to eliminate the Rohingya Muslim “Other” that was a contaminant to the purity of the nation. As the NLD was a mediator between the former military regime and Buddhist extremists, there was pressure to justify the actions of these groups, thus sanitizing these atrocities through the pretense of operating in the name of a democratically elected regime.

### **Conclusion**

The ideas presented in this article are timely and relevant, as the majority of scholarly works addressing Islamophobia limit its impact to Western contexts. They fail to highlight the similarities of how Islamophobia manifests across spaces from the Global North and South. At a very basic level there are fundamental similarities between contexts, which can be broadly characterized as interpersonal and institutional forms of Islamophobia. Within settler societies and former imperial states, there is a stronger top-down relationship between institutional and interpersonal forms of Islamophobia. In other words, the state and state institutions provide a fertile context for interpersonal Islamophobia to thrive and flourish. Under authoritarian rule there is a stronger symbiotic relationship and institutional and interpersonal forms of Islamophobia feed off one another to produce extreme Islamophobic manifestations. The relationship between these forms of racism helps to map out categorizations of Islamophobia, which have yet to be discussed in scholarly discourse (Bakali & Hafez, 2022). These categorizations outlined in this article, namely Islamophobia in settler societies, Islamophobia in former imperial states, and Islamophobia under authoritarian rule, are not exhaustive.

Exploring Islamophobia through typologies helps construct a more holistic understanding of this phenomenon and by doing so, can potentially create a more coherent and nuanced narrative of resistance and activism to challenge interpersonal and institutional Islamophobia. This can take on various forms for practitioners such as better directing grassroots activism, facilitating community organizing, as well as the development of educational

curricula, which aims to challenge systemic and interpersonal forms of discrimination and racism within various global contexts (Bakali, 2018b).

Due to word-length restrictions, this article limited the conversation to three different country contexts (Canada, France, and Myanmar) to examine the typologies of Islamophobia in settler societies, Islamophobia in former imperial states, and Islamophobia under authoritarian rule. These three nation states were selected, as they encapsulate a number of the trends, practices, and manifestations of Islamophobia within their respective categories, while acknowledging other nations can also be. A lengthier, more exhaustive study covering more country contexts would be better suited in a full-length academic book or multiple academic articles. Further explorations on global Islamophobic trends can potentially expand on the different country contexts to further codify the typology presented here and potentially create more categorizations of global Islamophobia.

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