

Ideological Islamophobia: Conception and Function, ‘Normative Truths’ and ‘New Reality’

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Abstract

This article is a theoretical case study that explores the notion of ideological Islamophobia and its function at the global level in the contemporary setting. As scholarly inquiry into this topic remains relatively embryonic, this article seeks to contribute new thinking and ideas about how to better conceive, conceptualise and subsequently understand Islamophobia. This article is premised on the basis that Islamophobia can be positioned within what Zemmi (2011) describes as a ‘new reality’. Providing an overview of the emergence of Islamophobia in the political and spaces of the United Kingdom as a means to challenge existing notions of contestation, this article continues by presenting an overview of the existing academic literature. Setting out how the phenomenon has – to date - been conceived, conceptualised and understood, Allen’s (2010) notion of an ideological Islamophobia is given particular consideration. Exploring the resonance that exists between ‘new reality’, ‘normative truths’ and ideological forms and functions of Islamophobia, the complexity required to better understand global and ideological Islamophobia is considered from a theoretical perspective. Utilising recent developments in the context and discourses of the political mainstream in the United States to illustrate theoretical thinking and application, this article concludes by considering what additional thinking might be required as regards ideological Islamophobia. In sum, this article can be positioned within the newly emergent field of critical Islamophobia studies.

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Introduction

This article sets out to consider ideological Islamophobia and how it functions at the global level as is evident in various political settings across the contemporary world. Acknowledging that Islamophobia remains a relatively embryonic topic for scholarly investigation, this article positions itself within the newly emergent field of critical Islamophobia studies, setting out to contribute new thinking in order to better conceive, conceptualise and subsequently understand Islamophobia. This article sets out by providing an insight into how Islamophobia can be perceived as a ‘new reality’ in the contemporary setting. Challenging existing notions of contestation, this article continues by presenting an overview of the existing academic literature. Considering how the phenomenon has – to date - been conceived, conceptualised and understood, notions of an ideological Islamophobia are given particular emphasis. Exploring the resonance that exists between the ‘new reality’, ‘normative truths’ and ideological forms and functions of Islamophobia, the complexity involved in trying to counter global and ideological Islamophobia is given some consideration. Acknowledging recent developments in the context and discourses of the political mainstream in the United States and the illustrative value such afford, this article concludes by considering what additional thinking might be required as regards ideological Islamophobia.

Method and Approach

This article can be understood as a theoretical case study. As Gomm et al (2000) note, case study approaches enable unique opportunities to draw together different types of data and information and also methodologies and approaches in order to deepen knowledge and improve understanding. In this respect, Simons (2009) evidences how case study approaches are particularly useful in this respect, they allow “an in-depth exploration from multiple perspectives of the complexity and uniqueness of a particular project, policy, institution, program or system in a ‘real life’ context” (2009, p. 21). For Thomas (2011), this is especially useful when seeking to engage “analyses of persons, events, decisions, periods, projects, policies, institutions, or other systems that are studied holistically by one or more methods” (2011, p.513). Building

on this and Thomas' (2011) typology of case studies, this article confirms to the requirements of a theoretical case study: most appropriate for exploring the theory and concept of ideological Islamophobia. While so, Yin (2013) is right to note that the findings and conclusions drawn from case studies are rarely generalizable. Noting these criticisms, Hewson et al. (2003) are also correct to point out how social and behavioural sciences routinely use selective approaches that in turn limit the bounds of generalisability. Consequently, a theoretical case study approach is wholly appropriate.

Secondary research and existing scholarly sources constitute the evidence base for this article. Thinking and argument therefore are founded on the need to revisit and review thinking and arguments – as also data and evidence – put forward by others, a process Johnston (2014) justifies as being wholly viable and effective for research. As she goes on, this is because they are founded on the same basic – and necessary – research principles as primary research and methodological approaches. The secondary research and sources drawn upon here are varied. Primarily, these are drawn from the existing scholarly canon relating to Islamophobia. In addition, relevant policy and legislative sources are also drawn upon as are news sources – both online and offline – and necessarily, social media. Such sources lend themselves to the illustrative nature of the case study approach preferred here. In designing and implementing an appropriate mode of analysis, applied social research analyses were preferred. As Davies et al (2008) explain, applied social research analyses are best when seeking to identify and question general or perceived assumptions, challenge tacit and accepted knowledge, or probe what they refer to as 'taken for granted' components of problem-framing and solution-finding process. Such an approach is therefore wholly appropriate.

Islamophobia in Flux: Local Transcending the Global

In 2005, Sayeeda Hussain Warsi – the daughter of Pakistani migrants to the United Kingdom (UK) – became the first Muslim woman to be selected by the country's Conservative Party as a parliamentary candidate. Despite losing in her bid to become a Member of Parliament (MP), she was appointed soon after as Special Adviser to the then leader

of the Party with a remit for overseeing and duly improving community relations. Duly appointed Vice Chair of the Conservative Party, she was bestowed a Life Peerage. As Baroness Warsi of Dewsbury, she became the youngest member of the House of Lords when she joined on 11 October 2007. Being afforded an increasingly high profile in the political spaces, she came to public prominence through mediating for Gillian Gibbons, a British teacher prosecuted and jailed in Sudan for naming a teddy bear Muhammad (BBC News, 2007). Coinciding with the Conservative Party leading the UK's Coalition Government in 2010 – under the auspices of the then Prime Minister, David Cameron - Warsi was appointed Minister without Portfolio and Chair of the Party. Becoming the first Muslim woman to serve in a British Government Cabinet she made news headlines having attended her first Government meeting wearing a *shalwar kameez*, a traditional South Asian style of attire.

For some, Warsi has been a controversial figure. In November 2009, she was pelted with eggs by a group of British Muslims during a walkabout in Luton for allegedly not being a 'proper Muslim' and for supporting the death of Muslims worldwide as a result of British military activities in Afghanistan. As one of the protestors at the time put it, "She is not a practising Muslim. Clearly by looking at her she does not represent Muslims" (BBC News, 2009). In spite of the controversy attracted, Warsi has continued to be outspoken on a number of issues pertinent to Islam and Muslims in today's Britain. Most prominent of these has been her championing of the need to address Islamophobia. First voiced in 2011, she announced that Islamophobia had passed what she referred to as the 'dinner table test' in the UK (Allen, 2013b):

"Islamophobia has now crossed the threshold of middle class respectability...For far too many people, Islamophobia is seen as a legitimate – even commendable – thing. You could even say that Islamophobia has now passed the dinner-table-test...Islamophobia should be seen as totally abhorrent – just like homophobia or Judeophobia – because any phobia is by definition the opposite of a philosophy. A phobia is an irrational fear. It takes on a life of its own and no longer needs to be justified." (Warsi, 2011)

While her speech was a watershed moment in the political recognition of Islamophobia in the United Kingdom (Allen, 2017), what was being inferred would seem to transcend national borders. To this extent, it might be suggested that Islamophobia has in fact acquired a new level of social and political acceptability in many other national settings across the contemporary Western world (Semati, 2010; Lean, 2012).

For Ansari (2012), this is evident in how discourses that overtly and covertly reinforce notions of Muslims and Islam being ‘Other’ and thereby posing a ‘threat’ are routine across much of the contemporary European and North American political mainstreams. An illustration of this can be seen in how the former leader of France’s *Front National* (National Front) Jean Marie Le Pen spoke about Muslims in France; stating that irrespective of whether a goat is born in a stable or not, the goat will never be a horse¹. In other words, irrespective of how long Muslims reside in Europe – even if they were born there – they will be eternally Muslim and thereby upholding of all that is alleged to entail. Political discourses like these can be highly seductive. The self-declared Dutch ‘socialist’, Pim Fortuyn is a useful example. Having established the political party, *Lijst Pim Fortuyn* (Pim Fortuyn List) it was successful in gaining unprecedented public support on the back of promoting discourses and ideas which sought to accentuate the perceived incompatibility of Muslims and Islam with Dutch values, in particular Dutch liberalism. Much the same can be seen in the relative successes of *Vlaams Belang* (Flemish Interest) in Belgium, *Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs* (Freedom Party of Austria) in Austria, *Dansk Folkeparti* (Danish People’s Party) in Denmark, and *Sverigedemokraterna* (Swedish Democrats) in Sweden. Such are far from exclusive to the political spaces of Europe and North America. Similar is evident in the socio-cultural spaces also. Again, France provides a useful setting by considering two books that have been hugely successful in recent years. The first, a novel by Michel Houellebecq titled *Soumission* (Submission) which imagines a France governed by a Muslim political party. The

¹ <http://www.independent.co.uk/voices/comment/le-pens-attacks-on-islam-are-no-longer-veiled-8181891.html>

second, a non-fiction work titled *Le Suicide Français* (The French Suicide) which questions the impact of Muslim immigration and the extent to which this will eventually overrun France and its traditional culture.

One way of explaining this is to consider Islamophobia in the context of what Zemmi (2011) refers to as ‘new realism’. Argued as the preserve of certain white, middle class and middle-aged people and by consequence, the political elites of the Western world, the notion of ‘new realism’ goes further than Warsi’s conversational civility and social acceptability by seeking to explain how underpinning the discourses of Islamophobia’s protagonists exists a very real and deliberate desire to convey discriminatory and hateful anti-Muslim narratives as political, social and cultural ‘truths’. Alleging to be the only source from which ‘truth’ emerges is a recurrent and widely cited discourse of far-right, neo-Nazi and alt-right groups and movements in both Europe and the United States. Reciprocally, it might even be argued that a bastardised manifestation of this can be seen in the dramatic rise of the charge of ‘fake news’ since Donald Trump became President of the United States of America in 2016 (Allcott & Gentzkow, 2017). Blurring the lines between fact and fiction, as also the legitimacy and illegitimacy of news stories and their sources, charges of ‘fake news’ can also be used to dismiss out of hand that which fails to fit or align with the ‘truth’ political elites seek to uphold.

To consider this in more detail, it is possible to illustrate thinking via Trump’s ‘Muslim Ban’ (Shear & Cooper, 2017) and more importantly, the arguments put forward to subsequently justify and rationalise it. Throughout, the ‘Muslim Ban’ was argued as a necessity on the basis that Muslims from these countries – originally Iran, Libya, Somalia, Syria, Yemen, Chad, Iraq and Sudan (the last three having been removed since the policy was implemented through executive order) – present a real and tangible threat to the national security of the United States. As a ‘truth’, the inference that all Muslims from each of these countries without differentiation pose a very real threat to the security of the country and its people is both dangerous and insidious. In seeking to demonise an identifiable group of humans for no other reason than their

Muslim faith – Trump has repeatedly preferred to speak about a ‘Muslim Ban’ as opposed to bans that target specific nation states of which North Korea and Venezuela are included in its latest iteration – Trump is essentialising and thereby reducing Muslims to little more than a unidimensional and homogenous whole. One where all are rendered invalid at the expense of their perceived and constructed ‘Muslim-ness’. In line with his ongoing use of what he determines to be ‘truth’ – that the United States and its people are threatened by ‘Muslims’ – so it becomes possible for others to utilise similar notions of ‘truth’ to justify, rationalise and legitimise their own personal prejudice, discrimination and hate. Trump – like Le Pen in France and Fortuyn in the Netherlands among others – is giving permission to think and duly speak about Muslims in the same way he does, whether globally, locally and individually. ‘Truth’ and ‘new reality’ then resonate with Ponyting’s (2002) theory that socio-political processes have the potential to afford ‘permission to hate’.

Explaining Islamophobia

Some of the ongoing contestation about Islamophobia evolve out of claims about what it is and how to define it. For some, these claims are perceived to be inherent, unmoveable and irreconcilable ‘truths’ (Allen, 2010). As regards the process of defining, some dismiss Islamophobia out of hand on the basis a single and thereby what they conceive, a suitably established definition has failed to materialise (Shyrock, 2010). Such a claim is something of a hollow objection. If one considers other similar discriminatory phenomena – racism, Anti-Semitism or homophobia for instance – all are similar to Islamophobia. This is because across the political, advocacy and academic spheres, different definitions of different phenomena are necessarily required and subsequently referred to (Allen, 2017). Because different spheres have different requirements in terms of language, function and application, so different definitions are necessary if they are to be meaningful (Afridi, 2015). Given this has not seemingly hindered the significant advances made in rightfully recognising and subsequently countering racism and other discriminatory phenomena, then so too must this be applicable to Islamophobia. The non-existence of a single definition is therefore far

from being a valid reason for contestation let alone dismissal. While there is always space for further thinking as regards the process of definition it cannot be deployed as a means of denying that Islamophobia exists.

Another criticism and cause for contestation relates to the term or descriptor Islamophobia. When began to be recognised in the political and public spaces, it was a phenomenon that was interpreted and understood in wholly literal ways. Ground-breaking in the British political spaces, while the Runnymede Trust report into Islamophobia (Commission on British Muslims and Islamophobia, 1997) was integral in shaping and informing thinking about the phenomenon in the UK and more widely (Allen & Nielsen, 2002) it was also culpable of encouraging literal understandings; focusing on the fear of Islam that by consequence, resulted in a fear of Muslims (Allen, 2010). A similar literal understanding remains evident in some political and public discourses about Islamophobia, reflected in many of the arguments put forward by critics and detractors of Islamophobia. As many suggest, it is neither unfounded nor hateful to be ‘fearful’ of Islam (Allen, 2010; Shyrock, 2010). Some further consideration is however necessary. First, for those who neither like nor find the term Islamophobia appropriate, it is highly unlikely that merely substituting Islamophobia for ‘anti-Muslim hatred’ or ‘anti-Muslim racism’ would change views or perceptions about the existence of Islamophobia. Substitution is unlikely to bring about change as many critics and detractors refuse to accept that a real and tangible Islamophobia – irrespective of how it is named or defined - exists. Debating which term or descriptor is most appropriate is therefore something of a worthless endeavour. Given the term Islamophobia is now firmly established in political and public lexica, trying to change the term at this stage could also be counter-productive with those having begun to acknowledge and counter Islamophobia asking what the difference might be between what might appear, two different phenomena being in existence. Islamophobia is appropriate in that it just needs to name in the same way that Antisemitism and homophobia does.

The final consideration is how some seek to contest and subsequently dismiss Islamophobia by claiming their right to question

and subsequently challenge religion (Tyrer, 2013). The two are quite separate issues however. Nonetheless it is worth stating that making claims or charges of Islamophobia as a means of limiting or deterring legitimate and proportionate criticism, disagreement or condemnation of Muslims and the religion of Islam can never be justified. In illustrating this, it is far from Islamophobic to state that you do not uphold or agree with the religious beliefs and practices of Muslims. Nor is it Islamophobic to condemn atrocities or violence when committed by multiple or individual Muslims claiming to act in ‘the name of Islam’. It is far from Islamophobic therefore to condemn the perpetrators of terror attacks in Madrid in 2004, Paris in 2015 or Manchester in 2017 among others, each of which saw innocent people killed while going about their everyday lives. It is quite different however if those atrocities committed are deployed as ‘evidence’ to demonise or vilify all Muslims or their communities without differentiation. Here, such actions and processes do indeed have the potential to be Islamophobic or at least be informed by Islamophobic attitudes and prejudices.

At the scholarly level, some similar contestation has been evident. Shyrock (2010) for instance notes that Islamophobia is used in ways that tend to be simplistic, simplified and “impervious to nuance” (2010, p.9). Sayyid (2010) offers similar, differentiating the analytical - a nebulous and perpetually contested category - from the polemical - locked within discursive processes of venting grievances, smugly pontificating, or seeking the ear of politicians and policymakers. Vakil (2010) has gone so far to question whether it would be best to suspend engagement with Islamophobia, both as a term and phenomenon. Klug (2012) offers a counter view however; that scholarly inquiry into Islamophobia has ‘come of age’. Agreed with by Moosavi (2014), he argues that Islamophobia no longer necessitates contestation but just better understanding. Noted by Allen (2014) as a new paradigm of ‘critical Islamophobia studies’, he points towards a newly emergent scholarly canon that seeks to achieve this goal. These include Allen (2010), Sheehi (2011), Kumar (2012), Lean (2012), Taras (2012), Carr (2015), Green (2015) and Saeed (2016) amongst others. Within this canon, Islamophobia is being developed beyond something that can be easily – and inappropriately – reduced to a mere phobia or fear. Some such as

Carr (2015) are doing so in terms of better understanding Islamophobia when manifested in day-to-day experiences and encounters. Others such as Saeed (2016) are seeking to improve understanding by locating the phenomenon with wider social processes, within security and counter-extremism measures in her given example. Others such as Lean (2012) are taking the study of Islamophobia into broader and far more politicised environs, considering the role of the American right in the manifestation of Islamophobia in the American setting. All are far more critically engaged than what was evident a decade ago.

It is important to stress how scholarly studies are exploring Islamophobia in different settings and contexts in order to better understand how best to define the phenomenon. Rather than a single definition emerging – as before – what these studies illustrate is how Islamophobia can be understood and manifested in myriad ways. In Austria for instance, Hödl (2010) somewhat simplistically understands Islamophobia as “a hostile attitude toward or hostile practices against Muslims and Islam that is accepted or embraced by large parts of the society” (Hödl 2010, p.443). In Belgium, Zemmi (2011) offers even less explanation albeit recognising that one of Islamophobia’s most significant impacts can be seen in the “constant dehumanisation of Muslims” (Zemmi 2011, p.39). For some, Islamophobia is far less distinct. In Switzerland for example, Helbling (2010) adopts the position of those such as Kühnel and Leibhold (2007) who confer Islamophobia and xenophobia are as being one and the same. Schwarz and Cauchon (2012) disagree, arguing that different social, political and cultural settings render Islamophobia distinct and different from xenophobia. In their study of Nordic countries, they differentiate Islamophobia from xenophobia by highlighting how the latter is specifically informed by five hundred years of a Lutheran-Protestant state church. As they explain, the same does not inform Nordic xenophobia per se.

Ideological Islamophobia: A New Reality

Some, notably Allen (2010) and Sheehi (2011) have sought to transcend the limitations of national settings and contexts with their scholarly investigations. Both in this respect have alluded to the need to understand Islamophobia in a broader, more conceptual way. According

to Allen (2010), this is because a number of characteristics relevant to Islamophobia in all its different settings and manifestations can be identified. First, Islamophobia is neither consistent nor uniform, suggesting the possibility of a plurality of ‘Islamophobias’ or at least a multiplicity of understandings and interpretations. Second, whilst there is some asymmetrical shifting between notions of Muslim and Islam for it to be Islamophobia (as opposed racism of which there is evidence of some overlap) it is essential that a distinct ‘Muslim’ or ‘Islam’ identifier or identification process is evident whether explicit or implicit, overt or covert. Third, Islamophobia can be made known through meanings that are theological, social, cultural, racial and so on, at times not even necessarily naming or mentioning either ‘Muslim’ or ‘Islam’ but providing enough nuanced meaning to ensure identification. Fourth, such expressions and manifestations are typically shaped and determined by the national, cultural, geographical and socio-economic conditions within which such become known. Meanings therefore may be the same but the manifestation quite different. What might be said about Muslims in Germany and the Netherlands may be underpinned by the same meanings while being shrouded in notions or constructions of Turkishness in the former and Moroccan-ness in the latter. Finally, Islamophobia is able to draw upon certain historical legacies both real and perceived and irrespective of whether accurately or inaccurately remembered as per the Nordic example previously.

Given that Islamophobia is shown to be neither consistent nor uniform thereby having a multiplicity of understandings and interpretations that asymmetrically shift between markers relating to Muslim as indeed Islam, Allen (2010) argues that instead of trying to reduce this to a single definition it is more appropriate to try and understand Islamophobia in conceptual and theoretical frames. Drawing primarily on the work of Miles (1989), Miles and Brown (2003) and Wieriorcka (1995) and their scholarly inquiry relating to racism, Allen (2010) identifies three components necessary to understand Islamophobia. The first is that Islamophobia necessarily needs to be understood as an ideology and importantly, that it also functions ideologically. The second relates to the prejudices, opinions and attitudes held by certain individuals, groups, organisations and communities that

are informed by the overriding ideology. The final component is exclusionary practices that include but are not limited to acts of violence. Again informed by the overriding ideology, exclusionary practices can be understood as manifestations of prejudices, opinions and attitudes.

Revisiting the notion of ‘new realism’, Allen’s (2010) ideological component of Islamophobia can be seen to have resonance in that it can be understood to be conceived and embedded in individual, communal, social and global patterns of thought and meaning that exist and find form about Muslims and Islam. In this way, that which becomes known – and subsequently understood – about Muslims and Islam is made known through various systems of signifiers and symbols which duly influence, impact, and inform the social consensus. Overwhelmingly, that social consensus revolves around meanings and understandings that identify Muslims and Islam not only as ‘Other’ but more so as threatening ‘Others’ (Allen, 2010). Through this lens, Trump’s use of ‘Muslim’ in conjunction with ‘Ban’ can be understood to be ideologically Islamophobic because of the way it taps into and duly reaffirms and reinforces wider – Islamophobic - notions about Muslims and Islam. As Clarke (2003) explains, meanings and understandings about Muslims and Islam – as indeed all ‘Others’ - are almost entirely reduced to a series of widely accepted and largely unquestioned negative attributions and characteristics that are not only irremovable and eternally fixed but so too attributed without differentiation. Allen (2013a) has since gone on to explain these as ‘normative truths’: ‘truths’ about Muslims and Islam that are reinforced and reified through a vast array of symbolically functioning actions, utterances, images and texts each of which are recognised, meaningfully understood and problematically used to shape and inform attitudes, opinions and more. Trump’s ‘Muslim Ban’ functions in this way. In this way, it can be seen as a tangible piece of legislation that symbolically at least, conveys an underlying ideological Islamophobia

Drawing on Thompson (1990), this can be explained as ideological legitimisation where meanings and understandings – in this particular example, that Muslims and Islam are threatening ‘Others’ – become justified through the sustained perpetuation and recognition of dominant

and unquestioned discourses. In doing so, the meanings and understandings that are justified in these dominant discourses acquire a sense of natural or normative order that help to 'make sense' of the world around us (Thompson, 1990). Ideological legitimisation is entirely compatible with the notion of 'normative truths'. To illustrate this if a 'normative truth' about Muslims and Islam is that they are threatening 'Others', when Trump calls for a 'Muslim Ban' on the basis of the threat posed by Muslims and Islam to America – irrespective of whether any threat is real or perceived – it will be received and duly understood by some to 'make sense'. If desired, Trump could add further credibility and credence to his 'Ban' by drawing on other 'normative truths' about Muslims and Islam. Some illustrative examples might include drawing on 'Islam versus the West' dichotomies put forward by Huntington (Moghaddam, 2011) or utilising America's recent history, notably the terror attacks of 9/11, the 'War on Terror' or military conflict in the Middle East, to suggest that Muslims and Islam are violent and barbaric. There are numerous other 'normative truths'. In understanding the process of legitimisation, no justification or supporting evidence is required on the basis they draw on 'truths' that in turn immediately conjure notions of 'making sense'. Ideological Islamophobia therefore not only helps to 'make sense' of the world around us but so too contributes and subsequently legitimises the 'new reality'.

Countering the New Reality

Countering ideological Islamophobia necessarily requires an approach that is different and differentiable from the other components of Islamophobia identified by Allen (2010). As regards the latter, interventions will need to be necessarily shaped and determined by national and local conditions. The same is untrue of ideological Islamophobia. One approach worthy of further consideration might be the concept of universal rights. For Langlois (2009), at the core of the concept of universal rights exists the protection of dignity, reason, autonomy and equality. Such rights establish a clear set of moral principles or 'norms' that not only ascribe certain standards of behaviour and action but are so too inalienable in that every individual is entitled to them without differentiation. Simple and straightforward, they can be

universally applied to all irrespective of nationality, status, language, ethnicity, religion or indeed any other marker that may be comprised within an individual's identity. Not only are they applicable in all spaces, all locations and at all times but so too are they egalitarian in that they are consistent and coherent for all, irrespective of whatever differences we might either choose to self-identify with or have attributed by others. Universal rights therefore are as relevant and subsequently applicable to those who identify or are identified as being Muslim as indeed those who are not.

The concept of universal rights would appear to have a number of distinct positives when considering ideological Islamophobia. First, using the language of universal rights would bring international attention to the global relevance and resonance of the 'new reality' of Islamophobia. Second, it would go some way to aligning the need to address and duly counter Islamophobia with the need to counter the oppression and inequalities experienced by others around the world. Finally, framing Islamophobia within the context of universal rights would go some way to bringing pressure on those such as the United States to uphold and respect not only the ideals and freedoms inscribed in its Constitution but so too the various international universal rights treaties and declarations it is a signatory to.

That the United States Supreme Court recently ratified the third iteration of the 'Muslim Ban' (Siddiqui, 2018) can be seen to illustrate the complexity involved in trying to counter ideological Islamophobia not least because the boundaries that exist between the global, regional, national and local are far from fixed. Countering ideological Islamophobia, challenging the 'normative truths' and changing the 'new reality' is therefore extremely complex. In this way, while the 'Muslim Ban' is primarily a domestic issue – a United States legislative measure – its reach and ramifications are much wider. Accordingly, any move to counter should be necessarily focused on the need for national interventions. Because of the global reach of Trump and the 'Muslim Ban' however, it functions both symbolically and ideologically at the global level to the extent it fulfils the process of legitimation that in turns reaffirms and reinforces the 'normative truths' and the 'new reality'. To

this extent, it is right to question the extent to which, the concept of universal rights – or indeed anything else – offers potential to establish a foundation upon which the need to counter ideological Islamophobia might be premised.

Understanding Islamophobia as global and subsequently ideological means that we can no longer restrict our understanding to seeing the phenomenon as being something that merely relates to incidents that solely impact and affect individuals and their communities in various localised settings. While the focus of much of the scholarly literature has been concerned with these localised forms (Chakraborti & Zempi, 2012; Allen, Isakjee & Young, 2013; Allen, 2015; Awan & Zempi, 2016), there is a very real need to better understand Islamophobia in all its component forms, especially at the global ideological level. At this level, the means by which Muslims and Islam are conceived and subsequently referred to have the very real potential to underpin and thereby shape and inform a whole range of different prejudices, discriminations and hatreds as also exclusionary practices in vastly different settings and locations. Irrespective of whether true or untrue, fact or fiction, real or imaginary ideological Islamophobia has the potential to transcend that which separates the local, national, regional and global. Whether contextualised socially, politically or economically, ideological Islamophobia is that which contemporarily informs and provides meaning about Muslims and Islam, whether through operation, dissemination, reception or perpetuation. It is also that which we have the least knowledge about and worryingly, the least means by which to challenges and subsequently counter. This is the ‘new reality’.

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