

## Kitâbiyat Book Reviews

---

### **Islamophobia: The Challenge of Pluralism in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.**

Ed. John L. Esposito - Ibrahim Kalin.

Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011, 236 sayfa.

---

Is Islamophobia a tangible reality in the West? The short answer is yes. A Muslim student of mine once conceded that whenever he went to a mosque to pray, he tried to get in and out stealthily so that he would not be seen by his colleagues and non-Muslim friends. It was Islamophobia that instigated this highly educated, Western-born person to harbor an ignominy of his religious identity. Notwithstanding its nebulousness, Islamophobia has become a widely used term in scholarly and everyday parlance to identify the negative attitudes and discrimination towards the Muslims. The term is rather new but the notion it conveys is not. The West has reckoned Islam as “the other” and this otherness has fueled anti-Islamic discourses throughout history for centuries. The 9/11 attacks and United States-led war on terror have further obstructed a fair understanding of Islam in the West, and instead, exacerbated the fear of it.

This is exactly why this collection of essays entitled *Islamophobia: The Challenge of Pluralism in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* and edited by John L. Esposito and Ibrahim Kalin, both renowned scholars of Islamic studies, is a timely and significant contribution. The broad scholarly range of the contributors including sociologists, historians, and political scientists renders this volume a multidisciplinary work. Understanding that Islamophobia has historical, social, cultural, political, and economic constituents, a multidisciplinary approach to this issue is extremely beneficial for the reader.

The foremost merit of this volume is that numerous lucidly-written essays scrutinize the term Islamophobia and analyze its causes, scope, and effects. The volume aims to unfold the Western narratives about Islam and the Muslims by focusing on the past, present, and future of Islamophobia. The articles included in this volume convey that Islamophobia has proliferated in response to the aforementioned events and become a behemoth problem with social, cultural, and political dimensions, stonewalling the integration of Muslims living in the West into their host societies and stimulating the already strong anti-Western sentiments in the Muslim world.

The volume under review consists of three parts and eleven articles. The first part ("The Context of Islamophobia": pp. 3-46) offers a framework for the contextualization of the term Islamophobia. The second part ("Case Studies": pp. 47-108) examines it through case studies focusing on the Netherlands, Austria, Germany, Britain, and the United States. The last part ("Manifestations": pp. 109-210) explicates how Islamophobia manifests itself in politics, society, culture, and literature. The contributions to this volume are admirably cohesive, but expectedly some more innovative and outstanding than others. Nevertheless, each article approaches the issue at hand from a different angle with diverse methodologies, meaningfully contributing to the integrity of this volume. As such, it would be invidious not to comment on each of these articles.

In his well-argued essay, "Islamophobia and Limits of Multiculturalism (pp. 3-20)" Ibrahim Kalin states that the roots of Islamophobia lie in the secular ideals of the European Enlightenment, which inexorably exclude Islam on the grounds of being a non-Western religion. He correctly observes that the lack of basic knowledge on Islam renders the Western public unable to contextualize the portrayal of the Muslims by media. Kalin also argues that the current fear of Islam determines the limits of multiculturalism in the West as well as marginalizes the Muslim communities while precluding them from engaging in self-criticism. Without tackling these issues, the author concludes, a healthy dialogue cannot be commenced.

Jocelyne Cesari's "Islamophobia in the West: A Comparison between Europe and the United States (pp. 21-46)" is an innovative article pointing out that Islamophobia overlaps with certain other common forms of discriminations in the West such as xenophobia or anti-immigrant policies. The author successfully demonstrates how Islamophobia and these other forms of discrimination are intertwined, especially in Europe. Claiming that the Muslims in the United States are more integrated into the American society compared to the Muslims in Europe where they are marginalized, Cesari suggests that a "societal culture," similar to the American model, should be instituted to further enable the integration of the Muslims into European societies.

Analyzing Islamophobia in the Netherlands, Austria, and Germany, Sam Cherribi holds the populist media largely responsible for the discriminatory attitudes towards the Muslims in Europe. His article entitled “An Obsession Renewed: Islamophobia in the Netherlands, Austria, and Germany (pp. 47-62)” stresses that the three recent developments (German unification in 1990, Austrian accession to the European Union in 1992, and the murder of Theo Van Gogh in 2002) have contributed to the propagation of Islamophobia. Moreover, pointing out that Islamic threat replaced the Soviet threat in the eyes of the Europeans, Cherribi says that the Bosnian war constitutes a good example. The Bosnian war was, indeed, an interreligious conflict, however, its background and causes go way deeper than those recent developments that the author lists. As it may be remembered, it was the West that eventually intervened and put an end to the ethnic cleansing of the Muslim Bosnians.

Tahir Abbas contributed to this volume with his “Islamophobia in the United Kingdom: Historical and Contemporary Political and Media Discourses in the Framing of a 21<sup>st</sup>-century Anti-Muslim Racism (pp. 63-76)” in which he examines the phenomena of Islamophobia in Britain. The author’s conceptual framework to explain the use and application of the term Islamophobia is particularly successful. In “Islamophobia and Anti-Americanism: Measurements, Dynamics, and Consequences (pp. 77-92)” Mohamed Nimer demonstrates that Islamophobia and anti-Americanism are organically linked; namely, the proliferation of Islamophobia effectuates the rise of anti-Americanism in the Muslim world. The article is enhanced by the charts and statistics that are easy to read and support the author’s arguments. Despite a slightly challenging organization and lack of adequate analysis of the interconnectedness of Islamophobia and anti-Americanism, the article remains thought-provoking. Nimer concludes his piece by suggesting some measures that can be taken to address the anger directed at the Muslims in the United States and the anger directed at the United States in the Muslim world.

Another thought-provoking article, “Muslims, Islam(s), Race, and American Islamophobia (pp. 93-108)” by Sherman Jackson elucidates the reasons for current Muslim exclusion from the construct of “Americanness.” He asserts that perhaps due to the nature of Islam promoting the *ummah* (the community of believers) and dismissing racial exclusionism, the Muslims cannot relate themselves to a racial category. This, the author concludes, makes the Muslim immigrants in the United States “un-American.” Jackson proposes that the Muslims in the United States should embrace the racial reality in order to fulfill this requirement of the American society. The author’s call, however, begs the question of how the Muslims in the United States can raci-

ally categorize themselves. Jackson seems to ignore the racial diversity within the Muslim world. Can an Indonesian Muslim and a Syrian Muslim consider themselves to be of the same race?

Sunaina Maira's "Islamophobia and the War on Terror: Youth, Citizenship, and Dissent (pp. 109-126)" is an engaging article employing an ethnographic approach. Briefly mentioning Islamophobia's genealogy with reference to the discourses of Orientalism, the author observes how young Muslims living in the United States assess the American attitude and policy towards the Muslims and Muslim countries after 9/11 and how this attitude affected their Muslim identity. For this, she interviews South Asian Muslim high school students in a small town in New England. The author defines the Muslim youth's association with the United States as "dissenting citizenship," while stressing that the Muslims were the contemporary subordinated community in the United States.

Juan Cole, in "Islamophobia and American Foreign Policy Rhetoric: The Bush Years and After (pp. 127-142)" analyzes the usage of Islamophobic rhetoric by President George W. Bush, Donald Rumsfeld, and Dick Cheney. The author is very critical of the Bush administration's foreign policy discourses pertaining to the Muslims and Islam. He argues that this Islamophobic rhetoric has damaged the American image in the eyes of the Muslims to a great extent. Nevertheless, Cole concludes that the failure of the Republican candidates, who adopted the same rhetoric during the presidential elections, and President Barack Obama's abandonment of the aforesaid foreign policy rhetoric are signs for a possible rapprochement between the United States and the Muslim world.

In "Islamophobic Discourse Masquerading as Art and Literature: Combating Myth through Progressive Education (pp. 143-172)" Anas Al-Sheikh Ali looks at how widely circulated classics; for example, "The White Men's Burden," *The Lustful Turk*, *Don Quixote* have negatively contributed to the image of the Muslims in the West. Analyzing the construction of Islamophobic myths based on these classics and contemporary literature, he concludes that it is not viable to deconstruct these myths once they are firmly established. Kate Zebiri's "Orientalist Themes in Contemporary British Islamophobia (pp. 173-190)" observes Islamophobia rooted in the intrinsic oriental themes found in British culture. Interviewing British converts to Islam and drawing from their experience, she assesses the British attitudes towards the Muslims with a focus on the issues of gender, violence, and foreignness. In "From Muhammad to Obama: Caricatures, Cartoons, and Stereotypes of Muslims (pp. 191-210)" Peter Gottschalk and Gabriel Greenberg examine Islamophobia as

reflected in the caricatures and cartoons published by the Americans. Focusing on the delicacy of the satire and the pervasiveness of the negative images that are associated with Islam, they analyze numerous cartoons depicting Muslims or the Middle East while discussing the reactions of Muslims to some of the infamous ones. They conclude that the majority of the American cartoons bolstered Islamophobia in the United States.

The articles in this volume present excellent examples of overt or subtle Islamophobic discourses that are perceptible in politics, society, and culture of the West and expressed by individuals, institutions, political leaders, and sometimes governments. While attempting to shed light on the complex constituents of Islamophobia, this volume offers solutions to deal with this irrational fear deeply rooted in the West and its culture. In sum, this collection of essays is a welcome contribution to our understanding of Islamophobia, putting forward insightful analyses of this fear and the Muslim responses to it.

Murat Yaşar\*

---

### **Prophetic Niche in the Virtuous City: The Concept of Hikmah in Early Islamic Thought**

Hikmet Yaman

Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2011, 316 sayfa.

---

İslâm düşüncesi ve İslâm düşüncesine özgü kavramlar hakkında son dönemde gerek Türkiye’de gerekse Batı’da çeşitli ve mukayeseli çalışmalar yapılmaktadır. Bu önemli çalışmalardan biri de Hikmet Yaman’ın *Prophetic Niche in the Virtuous City: The Concept of Hikmah in Early Islamic Thought* adlı doktora çalışmasıdır. Yaman, eserinde İslâm düşüncesinin “klasik dönem” diye de adlandırılan erken döneminde hikmet kavramını, eklektik bir zeminde analitik bir şekilde tahlil etmiştir. Yazara göre hikmet, İslâm düşünce tarihi boyunca İslâm düşünürlerinin metinlerinde yaygın bir şekilde kullandıkları ortak bir kavramdır. Ayrıca bu kavram, insanın ulaşabileceği bütün bilgileri içerdiğinden dolayı İslâm bilim disiplinleri arasında karşılıklı etkileşimi sağlama niteliğine sahiptir. Yazar “Giriş” kısmında, erken dönem İslâm düşünürlerinin metinlerindeki teknik kavramların analizinin hem

---

\* University of Toronto, Department of Near and Middle Eastern Civilizations.