

# Global Character Assassination, Anti-Muslim Chauvinism and the Contemporary Muslim Challenge

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Abdulrazaq Kilani  
Ibrahim Suberu

## Abstract

*The global character assassination is a euphemism for Islamophobia. Islamophobia is propagated by negative stereotyping and profiling of Islam and Muslims and it is the cotemporary challenge confronting the Muslims 'ummah globally. Therefore, the aim of this paper is to study the genesis, dynamics and the effects of the global character assassination on the Muslims. In this work, historical approach and sociological factors are considered. It is established that the major factor for the current character assassination of Muslims by the West and non-Muslims is the culture of manufacturing bigotry with a view to alter the demographic projection of Muslim population. It is also established that the damage is being done on Muslims from various fronts but that it is incumbent upon the Muslim leaders to improve access and quality of Islamic knowledge and create awareness about the true image of Islam. More so, the Muslim leaders and the generality of the Muslims need to be more actively involved in social engineering and global governance.*

**Keywords:** *Islamophobia, character assassination, Islam, Muslims, terrorism*

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**Prof. Abdulrazaq Kilani**, Department of Religious and Cultural Studies, Faculty of Humanities, University of Port Harcourt, Nigeria <[abdulrazaq.kilani@uniport.edu.ng](mailto:abdulrazaq.kilani@uniport.edu.ng)>

**Dr. Ibrahim Suberu**, Department of Religious and Cultural Studies, Faculty of Humanities, University of Port Harcourt, Nigeria <[ibrahim.suberu@uniport.edu.ng](mailto:ibrahim.suberu@uniport.edu.ng)>

## Introduction

Since 9/11, the public spotlight on Muslim *Ummah* globally has been intense, and mostly the experience has been negative. The level of scrutiny and in section son Muslims ubiquitously has increased over the years. There have been global controversies on Muslims everywhere, from US to the Roghinya Muslims in Myanmar. In 2010 for example, a Florida-based pastor, Terry Jones, sought to burn the Qur'an publicly; in the same US, a national controversy erupted over plans to build a Muslim community centre near the World Trade Centre; and Louisiana and Oklahoma adopted anti-Islam legislation seeking to prohibit Muslims from practicing their faith.<sup>1</sup> Hence negative stereotyping and profiling of Islam and Muslims is a long time and cotemporary challenge confronting the Muslims globally and this needs to be addressed for redress. Therefore, the study undertakes to explore the history and current state of Islamophobia in generally and Nigeria particularly. Drawing insight from colonial histories and contemporary scholarship, the paper examines how the perceptions of Muslims are shaped and distorted, leading to fear and prejudice.

## 2. What Is Islamophobia?

Islamophobia is regarded as fear, hatred or hostility directed towards Islam and Muslims<sup>2</sup> which is propagated by negative stereotypes, resulting in bias, discrimination, and the marginalization and exclusion of Muslims from social, political, and civic life.<sup>3</sup> Islamophobia affects all of aspects of Muslim life and can be noticed in several ways including: attacks, abuse and violence against Muslims; attacks on mosques, Islamic centres and Muslim cemeteries; discrimination in education, employment, housing, and delivery of goods and services; and the lack of provisions and respect for Muslims in public institutions.<sup>4</sup>

Etymologically, the word Islamophobia is a neologism formed from Islam and -phobia, a suffix used in English to form "nouns with the sense 'fear of', 'aversion to'." The compound form *Islamophobia* contains the thematic vowel 'o', and is found in earlier coinages such as *Islamophobia* from the 19th century.<sup>5</sup> It is used to describe the 'fear and dislike of all Muslims, and thus, results in discrimination against Muslims through

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<sup>1</sup> Alejandro Beutel and Saeed Khan, (2014) *Manufacturing Bigotry: A State-by-State Legislative Effort to Pushback Against 2050 by Targeting Muslims and Other Minorities* (Washington, DC, Institute for Social Policy and Understanding, (ISPU) )

<sup>2</sup> Chris Allen, (2010), *Islamophobia (USA, Ashgate Publishing Limited)* 5.

<sup>3</sup> Alejandro Beutel and Saeed Khan, *Manufacturing Bigotry*,

<sup>4</sup> Allen, *Islamophobia* (5) *Ibid*

<sup>5</sup> "Oxford English Dictionary: -phobia, comb. form". Oxford University Press

their exclusion from the economic, social, and public life of the nation.<sup>6</sup> The first use of the word in English in print appears to have been in an article by Edward Said in 1985 and brought into common English usage in 1997 with the publication of a report by the Runnymede Trust condemning negative emotions directed at Islam or Muslims<sup>7</sup>. It should however be pointed out that, this is not the time the phenomenon of Islamophobia began.

The culture of character assassination or Islamophobia against Muslims globally has been accentuated by many factors and there is no way we can exonerate US and her allies with the preponderance of anti-Muslim culture in their media, literature, public discourse and narratives. It is apposite to x-ray factors that have accentuated the culture of global character assassination against the Muslims.

### 3. Projected Demographics of Global Muslims

A major factor of the current character assassination of Muslims is the culture of manufacturing bigotry with a view to alter the demographic projection of Muslim population. According to PEW,<sup>8</sup> the world's Muslim population is expected to increase by about 35% in the next 20 years, rising from 1.6 billion in 2010 to 2.2 billion by 2030. Globally, the Muslim population is forecast to grow at about twice the rate of the non-Muslim population over the next two decades – an average annual growth rate of 1.5% for Muslims, compared with 0.7% for non-Muslims. If current trends continue, Muslims will make up 26.4% of the world's total projected population of 8.3 billion in 2030, up from 23.4% of the estimated 2010 world population of 6.9 billion. While the global Muslim population is expected to grow at a faster rate than the non-Muslim population, the Muslim population nevertheless is expected to grow at a slower pace in the next two decades than it did in the previous two decades due to late marriage among Muslims, improved awareness on child spacing and global economic climate.

By 2043, USA is predicted to give away its “white establishment culture”. The culture of people who have been marginalized due to race/faith will become the majority group in USA. The white establishment will become the minority group. America will no more be the traditional America cowboy.<sup>9</sup> In the United States, for example:

<sup>6</sup> Ayesha Ullaq, (2016), “The rise of Islamophobia and anti-Muslim experiences in the U.S.” CERS Working Paper 1

<sup>7</sup> Robin Richardson, *Islamophobia or anti-Muslim racism – or what? – concepts and terms revisited*(n.d.)

<sup>8</sup> PEW, *The Future of the Global Muslim Population: Projections for 2010-2030* (Pew Research Centre, a Forum on Religion & Public Life. Pew Templeton, Global religious Future Project, 2011)

<sup>9</sup> Alejandro Beutel and Saeed Khan, *Manufacturing Bigotry*

The population projections show the number of Muslims more than doubling over the next two decades, rising from 2.6 million in 2010 to 6.2 million in 2030, in large part because of immigration and higher-than-average fertility among Muslims. The Muslim share of the U.S. population (adults and children) is projected to grow from 0.8% in 2010 to 1.7% in 2030, making Muslims roughly as numerous as Jews or Episcopalians are in the United States today. Although several European countries will have substantially higher percentages of Muslims, the United States is projected to have a larger number of Muslims by 2030 than any European countries other than Russia and France.<sup>10</sup>

More so, in Europe as a whole, the Muslim share of the population is projected to increase by closely one-third over the next 20 years, rising from 6% of the region's inhabitants in 2010 to 8% in 2030. In absolute numbers, Europe's Muslim population is projected to grow from 44.1 million in 2010 to 58.2 million in 2030. The greatest increases – driven primarily by continued migration – are likely to occur in Western and Northern Europe, where Muslims will be approaching double-digit percentages of the population in several countries. In the United Kingdom, for example, Muslims are expected to comprise 8.2% of the population in 2030, up from an estimated 4.6% today. In Austria, Muslims are projected to reach 9.3% of the population in 2030, up from 5.7% today; in Sweden, 9.9% (up from 4.9% today); in Belgium, 10.2% (up from 6% today); and in France, 10.3% (up from 7.5% today).<sup>11</sup>

This development has led to promulgation of over 102 anti-Shari'ah law across USA. From 2010 to 2013 at least 32 states introduced anti-shari'ah bills. In France, anti *Niqab*(veil) Law was promulgated and anti-Muslims rallies in Germany by the far right *pegida* group were organized in many cities while in UK, the policy of moderating the curricular of Islamic schools was initiated by David Cameron's government. What Muslims are witnessing today is a concerted effort to stop the moving train of Islam. The Qur'an has fore stated this:

يُرِيدُونَ لِيُطْفِئُوا نُورَ اللَّهِ بِأَفْوَاهِهِمْ وَاللَّهُ مُتِمُّ نُورِهِ وَلَوْ كَرِهَ الْكَافِرُونَ

*Their intention is to extinguish Allah's Light (by blowing) with their mouths: But Allah will complete (the revelation of) His Light, even though the Unbelievers may detest (it).*<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> PEW, *The Future of the Global*, 2011, 15

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>12</sup> Quran 61:8, (Yusuf Ali English Translation).

#### 4. Muslim Population Projection in Africa

The Muslim population in sub-Saharan Africa is projected to grow by nearly 60% in the next 20 years, from 242.5 million in 2010 to 385.9 million in 2030. Because the region's non-Muslim population also is growing at a rapid pace, Muslims are expected to make up only a slightly larger share of the region's population in 2030 (31.0%) than they do in 2010 (29.6%). As for the size of religious groups in Nigeria, there are various and differing figures, which appears to have roughly equal numbers of Muslims and Christians in 2010. In a 2019 report released by Pew Research Center in 2015 the Muslim population was estimated to be 50% and by 2030, Nigeria is expected to have a slight Muslim majority (51.5%)<sup>13</sup>.

In Nigeria environment, the Christian ideology of dominionism<sup>14</sup> which is a Christian plot for domination has been in existence. Dominionism is therefore a belief among Christian evangelicals and fundamentalists that encourage them not only to be active political participants in civic society, but also seek to dominate the political process as part of a mandate from God and that Christians have a God-given right to rule all earthly institutions.<sup>15</sup> In many ways, dominionism is a combination of political phenomenon and theological narrative. It cuts across Christian denominations, from stern, austere sects to the signs-and-wonders culture of modern mega churches like Redeem, Winners, and Christ Embassy etc. The concept of dominionism is reaching mainstream audiences through the ubiquitous activities of the Pentecostal churches in Nigeria.

The endemic nature of this ideology explains why the Christian fundamentalist<sup>16</sup> groups are always quick to accuse any Muslim leader of trying to Islamize Nigeria even when such a leader attends Church service with them at regular intervals. It is this ideology that explains their opposition to *hijab* by Muslim students in schools and nurses in hospitals. They do not want Islam to be visible in the public space. However, in their quest to make Christianity a dominant faith, many fellowship groups have been established among uniformed men, banks officials, public institutions and corporate bodies and organizations. Jobs are given out to their

<sup>13</sup> PEW, *The Future of the Global*, 2011, 20.

<sup>14</sup> According to Chip Berlet, *Dominionism is a tendency among Protestant Christian evangelicals and fundamentalists that encourages them to not only be active political participants in civic society, but also seek to dominate the political process as part of a mandate from God. He said it is based on the Bible's text in Genesis 1:26: "And God said, let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth."* (King James Version).

<sup>15</sup> Chip Berlet, (2008) "What is Dominionism? Palin, the Christian Right & Theocracy". *Theocracy Watch*, <[www.theocracywatch.org](http://www.theocracywatch.org)> (Last assessed: 23.5.2020)

<sup>16</sup> By this we mean the extremist groups or individuals among the Christians.

brethren in these fellowship centres. Many vulnerable Muslim graduates in Nigeria precisely have been lured away from Islam through this scheme in cosmopolitan cities like Lagos, Port Harcourt, Warri, Ibadan and Abuja.<sup>17</sup>

### 5. The Hijab: Ban and the Fight against Terrorism

Hijab is an Arabic word which means “veil”, “Covering” “screen” or “curtain. In Islamic terminology, hijab refers to the covering of the head (including ears), hair, neck and bosom or covering of the entire body or parts of the head and face of Muslim women.<sup>18</sup> The *hijab* is the most striking and apparent symbol of a Muslim Woman. The Muslim women who have accepted to obey Allah’s injunction by using the *hijab* were represented in Christian dominated media as meek, powerless and oppressed or, after 9/11, as sympathetic to terrorism.<sup>19</sup> The narratives against them changed after the 9/11. The *hijab* now in the stereotype of the critics of Islam “marks” them as representatives of the suspicious, inherently violent, agents of suicide bombers who use the *hijab* to cover Improvised Explosive Device.

In Europe and America, the Muslim woman in *hijab* is considered in the above descriptions but in addition treated forever foreign “terrorist other” even when such a person is a blue eyed American or European. For example, in research conducted by Pew Research Center’s 2017 survey, it is discovered that more Muslim women than men say that there is a lot of discrimination against Muslims in the U.S. today, that they have personally experienced discrimination and that it has become more difficult to be Muslim in the U.S. in recent years.<sup>20</sup> In Nigeria, the Muslim women suffer in the hands of Immigration officials for international passport, Federal Road Safety Corps (FRSC) for driver license, Independent National Elections Commission (INEC) officials for voter’s card, Joint Admission and Matriculation Board (JAMB) centres, school administrators and extremist and bigoted Christian lecturers.<sup>21</sup>

The security challenge in the North East has even made the Muslim women easy prey of overzealous security officials. This has lead to call for the ban of Hijab. One thing that comes to mind is the call to ban *hijab* as a

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<sup>17</sup> Akintola, interviewed on the 7th/5/2015 at his office, Lagos State University, Nigeria

<sup>18</sup> Claudia Mitchell, Jacqueline Reid-Walsh (ed.), *Girl Culture: An Encyclopedia* [2 Volumes]: An Encyclopedia, (Greenwood Publishing Group 2007)

<sup>19</sup> Sahar F. Aziz, *The Muslim “Veil” Post-9/11: Rethinking Women’s Rights and Leadership*, (the Institute for Social Policy and Understanding and the British Council 2012)

<sup>20</sup> PEW, Findings from Pew Research Center’s 2017 survey of U.S. Muslims. <<https://www.pewforum.org/2017/07/26/findings-from-pew-research-centers-2017-survey-of-us-muslims/>> (Last assessed: 23.05.2020)

<sup>21</sup> Mrsodofin, and MrsYekeenldiat (personal interviewed on 05/12/2019) shared their respective different experiences with Data capturing officers in Port Harcourt, South-South, Nigeria.

means of fighting insurgency. It is too simplistic to see *hijab* ban as the needed tonic for Nigeria armed forces to defeat Boko Haram.<sup>22</sup> The question is that, is it the use of *hijab* by Boko Haram suicide bombers that have not made Nigeria military to defeat Boko Haram or the diversion of over \$2.1 billion arms fund now called *Dasukigate*?<sup>23,24</sup> Should the head be cut off because of headache? Would there be a call for the ban of military uniforms as is it being used by armed robbers, and militants? Hence, it is sufficing to say that banning *hijab* is it not the solution to Boko Haram or other neo-Khawarij group to emerge again?

## 6. The Muslims and the Masjid (Mosque)

The 'Masjid' or The 'Mosque,' is the base and foundation stone for the Muslim population. It is the place where Muslims congregate, get to know each other and become a solid community as exemplified by the Prophet. The famous Orientalist, William Muir said about mosque:

*Here [in Masjid], the Prophet and his companions spent the greater portion of their time: here the daily service, with its oft-recurring prayers, was first publicly established: and the great congregation assembled every week, and trembled often while they listened to the orations of the Prophet and his messages from Heaven. Here he planned his victories. From this spot he sent forth envoys to kings and emperors with summons to embrace Islam. Here he received embassies [...] and from hence issued commands....*<sup>25</sup>

Hence, Mosque symbolizes the unifying spirit of Islam where collective efforts in building the society are largely emphasized.<sup>26</sup> A Muslim does not belong to a mosque in the way that a Christian might belong to a specific church. Therefore, the mosques represent the heart of any Muslim community globally. The mosque is a place of adoration, invocation and prostration to Allah.

<sup>22</sup> Professor Lakin Akintola, interviewed (7/5/2015) at his office, Lagos State University, Nigeria

<sup>23</sup> *Dasukigate* is a derivative of the alleged diversion of 2.1 billion US dollars meant to fight Boko Haram insurgency by Col. Sambo Dasuki (rtd) to facilitate the 2015 presidential election of incumbent Dr. Ebele Goodluck Jonathan.

<sup>24</sup> Patrick Udende, *An Analysis of Daily Sun, Daily Trust and The Nation Newspapers Framing of Dasukigate. Nigeria's political changes and future of democracy in Africa*, Book of Proceedings edited by R. Ciboh & R. Awopetu, publication of the Faculty of Social Sciences, (Benue State University, Makurdi) 15-35.

<sup>25</sup> William Muir, *The Life of Mahomet: from Original Sources*, 186.

<sup>26</sup> Reazul Karim, *Effective Utilization of Our Mosques*. Institute of Hazrat Mohammad (SAW). n.d., 1 <[www.ihmsaw.org](http://www.ihmsaw.org)> (Last assessed: 24.05.2020)

وَأَنَّ الْمَسَاجِدَ لِلَّهِ فَلَا تَدْعُوا مَعَ اللَّهِ أَحَدًا

"And the places of worship are for Allah (alone): So invoke not any one along with Allah.<sup>27</sup>"

The war against Islam and Muslims globally has changed the image of the Mosques in the minds of many non-Muslims. Today, the Mosques across the globe are classified as bastions of political extremism. Muslim scholars are placed under global watch while many mosques are wired in order to tap *khutbah* (sermons) and activities of Muslims inside the mosques. The security networks no longer perceive mosques as merely houses of worship. Instead, they view them as hotbeds of extremism. Before now, Mosque is a place for spiritual as well as social and physical protection; a sacred and respected point by all and sundry where safety is always sought for and guaranteed. Behold! To the opponents of Islam, mosques are fair game for law enforcement infiltration or public attacks and undeserving of religious protections.

## 7. Stereotyping and Profiling of Muslims

There is no gainsaying the fact that many Muslim names today full the data base of global security network like FBI,<sup>28</sup> M15,<sup>29</sup> CIA,<sup>30</sup> KGB,<sup>31</sup> MOSSAD<sup>32</sup> and others. Many Muslims are stereotyped and profiled across the world.<sup>33</sup> Muslims men are suspected if they keep beard, put their wrist watches on their right hands, they do not shake hand with women, they do not drink or patronise night clubs, which *Masjid* do they attend for their spiritual growth and development. They are faced with institutional, social and economic discriminations.<sup>34</sup> Ashley added that Muslim workers have been victims of employment discrimination and that workers suffer name calling by co-workers, such as "terrorist", "Osama", Boko Haram, and there are complaints that employers bar Muslim women from wearing the headscarf or participating in prayer times"<sup>35</sup>The Muslim women who wear

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<sup>27</sup> Quran 72:18, see also, Q22:77, (Yusuf Ali English Translation).

<sup>28</sup> The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) is the domestic intelligence and security service of the United States.

<sup>29</sup> Secret Service Bureau. It is the domestic intelligence agency of the United Kingdom, which operates in secret and whose primary function is to spy

<sup>30</sup> The Central Intelligence Agency is a civilian foreign intelligence service of the federal government of the United States.

<sup>31</sup> Translated in English as Committee for State Security, it was the secret police that was the main security agency for the Soviet Union from 1954 until the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991. In 1991, after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the KGB split into the Federal Security Service and the Foreign Intelligence Service of the Russian Federation.

<sup>32</sup> MOSSAD, short for HaMossad leModi'inuleTafkidimMeyuhadim, is the national intelligence agency of Israel

<sup>33</sup> Kazi Mahmood, "CIA, Mossad Infiltrated Muslim Organizations": <<https://archive.islamonline.net/15278>> (Last assessed: 23.05.2020)

<sup>34</sup> Ashley Moore, *American Muslim Minorities: The New Human Rights Struggle*. Human Rights & Human Welfare, Topical Research Digest: Minority Rights, ND) 93

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid*.



the *hijab* are also treated with the same level of suspicion and even contempt by dressing modestly in the society. There is so much attention drawn to people being Muslim and symbols of Islam, *hijab* being one of them. We have to take extra caution scanning our surroundings – know where we are, who is around and what kind of thoughts they might hold for Islam, about Islam or against Islam.<sup>36</sup>

## 8. Terrorism and War on Terror: The Truth That Needs to be Told

The term terrorism has more frequently been associated with violence committed by disenfranchised groups desperately attempting to gain a shred of power or influence. It is the adoption of strategy of fear to achieve political objectives.<sup>37</sup> The wars in Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Yemen, Libya, Syria, Boko-Haram in Nigeria etc have portrayed the countries with as violent in nature. The truth that needs to be told is that, US and her allies invaded these countries and germinated the seed of violent extremism among them.<sup>38</sup> Iraq was destroyed, Libya is now a failed state and Syria's six years' war has created the greatest refugee crisis in Europe.<sup>39</sup> The one sided adoption of violent acts of some as act of terrorism while the same acts perpetrated by people of other faiths are not considered as such is the unjust nature of the global politics that have put numerous Muslims into ridicule and harassment. It is often said that one man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter<sup>40</sup>.

### 8.1 Suicidal Terrorism

Suicidal terrorism is primarily a weapon of psychological warfare. Terrorists choose targets that horrify and traumatize the wider community. A major goal of all forms of suicidal terrorism is to cause fear. Suicidal terrorism is the deadliest form of terrorism known so far in human history. This ugly act was not invented by Islam. The world's first suicide terrorists were two militant Jewish revolutionary groups, the Zealots and the Sicarii while the leading instigators of suicide attacks are the Tamil Tigers in Sri Lanka, a Marxist-Leninist group whose members are from Hindu families but who are adamantly opposed to religion. Followed by

<sup>36</sup> Pew, Findings from Pew Research Center's 2017 survey of U.S. Muslims. <<https://www.pewforum.org/2017/07/26/findings-from-pew-research-centers-2017-survey-of-us-muslims/>> (Last assessed: 23.05.2020)

<sup>37</sup> Mark Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God the Global Rise of Religious Violence*. (Berkeley/ Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2003) 5.

<sup>38</sup> Anthony Cordesman, *U.S. Wars in Iraq, Syria, Libya, and Yemen: What Are the Endstates?*. A working draft, Centre for strategic and International Studies (CSIS) 2016.

<sup>39</sup> Anthony Cordesman, *U.S. Wars in Iraq, Syria, Libya, .. Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> Former U.S. President Ronald Reagan told the American people in a 1986 Radio Address to the Nation. Obtained from the article of VildeSkorpenWikan (2018). Is "One Man's Terrorist Another Man's Freedom Fighter"? in *E-International Relations* ISSN 2053-8626. <<https://www.e-ir.info/pdf/76622>> (Last assessed: 23.05.2020)

the Kamikazes of Japan, the PKK<sup>41</sup>, a Marxist-secularist party has adopted it several times up till March 2016 as a war tactic against the Turkish government.<sup>42</sup>

However, the current trend of insurgency cum the adoption of suicide terrorism by Boko Haram in Nigeria has put the pronounced dignity of Nigerian Muslims to the lowest ebb. Every woman in *hijab* today is viewed as a terrorist or a suicide bomber. There are some pertinent questions that are begging for responses from the Emirs and community leaders in the Northern part of Nigeria, who are the parents of the children being used for suicide bombings? What are the sources of these children? Why are children allowed to roam about the streets without parental guidance?

### **9. Globalization and Information Flow: Positive and Negative.**

Globalization simply means global connectivity. In the age of globalization, information has replaced territoriality as the primary basis for social interaction; the virtual inter-activeness of computer technology with its e-mail and chat-rooms is substituting for face-to-face contact. The same important news is read, though in different languages, the same day, in the entire world. Isolation is no longer possible. Nation can longer be indifferent to any other. This development has made Muslims to be under the media microscope. Every scandal, controversy, or violent terrorist attack perpetrated by some disgruntled Muslims is more than before under the microscope. There are magazines, the internet forums, the web blogs, the blogs, the social blogs, microblogging, the wikis, the social networks, podcasts, photos, videos to spread rumours, half-truth and falsehood.<sup>43</sup>

Since 9/11 Islam and Muslims have been vilified and simultaneously victimized. There seems to be two extreme reactions to the *din*(religion) itself. One is sincere curiosity and interest that motivates education and the other is blind hatred and misunderstanding that leads to scapegoating and stereotyping. Many far right groups against Islam have also increased in UK, Germany, US and France due to falsehood disseminated against Islam. We remember the Adebolajo's case in London and the role of UK security network to recruit him,<sup>44</sup> the drinking and clubbing guys attack on

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<sup>41</sup> *PartiyaKarkeran Kurdistan (Kurdistan Workers Party), which fights for an independant Kurdish state.*

<sup>42</sup> Robert Anthony Pape, *Dying to Win the Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism* (New York, Random House, 2005) vi

<sup>43</sup> Srijan Kumar, Usa Neil Shah, *False Information on Web and Social Media: A Survey.* (2018) Arxiv: 1804.08559v1 [Cs.Si]. <<https://Arxiv.Org/Pdf/1804.08559.Pdf>> (Last assessed: 23.05.2020)

<sup>44</sup> OGL, *Government Response to the Intelligence and Security Committee of Parliament Report on the Intelligence Relating to the Murder of Fusilier Lee Rigby.* Presented to Parliament by the Prime Minister by Command off Her Majesty 2015, 3&6 <[www.gov.uk/government/publications](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications)> (Last assessed: 21.03.2019)

Charlie Hebdo magazine editors in Paris in January 2015. Islam was blamed for the atrocities of these few elements while Brehvik the mass murderer in Norway was blamed for his act and not Christianity. This is the travesty of justice that Muslims witness daily in their quest to live their lives in accordance with the dictates of their faith.<sup>45</sup>

### **10. Attack on *Shari'ah* for Democracy to Thrive**

The Muslim activists are accused of not supporting democracy in their countries and where some Muslims have adopted democracy and even formed political parties to achieve their political objectives, they are vilified and treated with scorn by the advocates of democracy. There are bitter lessons for the Muslims of Algeria when Islamic Salvation Front (FIS)<sup>46</sup> was poised to win an election in 1992. The election was not only annulled but, thousands of FIS members and leaders were arrested, excluded from work, jailed and even killed.<sup>47</sup> How do we recount the experience of Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt during and after the Arab spring and how the country's first elected President was removed, sentenced into jail and the organization even labelled as a terrorist group by the political and religious establishments in Egypt and Saudi Arabia?<sup>48</sup>

The involvements of these Muslim groups in democratic struggle were viewed as mere deception to install 'Shariatocracy'.<sup>49</sup> But is that a crime? Are there no Christian political parties in US, Europe and Africa? For instance, The Republican Party in US does not hide its evangelical Christian ideals as making the party a conservative one<sup>50</sup>. Muslims politicians hence sacrifice the letters and spirit of Islam in order to satisfy New York, London and Paris to be called progressive/ liberal/ modernist Muslims. The truth is that there is only one Islam and any prefix to "Islam", such as moderate or liberal Islam, is not only derogatory but also an insult to the sensibilities of Muslims. The political development in the Muslim world indicates that when landmine is created for mainstream ideology in any society, the opportunities for the emergence of extremist groups have also been

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<sup>45</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>46</sup> *The Islamic Front of Salvation (FIS) was among the main political parties in Algeria. It scored important victories at local and provincial elections 1990 elections. In 1991 obtained a near majority of the parliament seats. The FIS was planning a social change and applying Islamic rule in Algeria and would have constituted more than a regime change*

<sup>47</sup> *Ali Kouaouci, Case analysis through the social integration lens: Using multi-stakeholder dialogue as a social transformation tool Algeria. (Université de Montréal, n.d) 2*

<sup>48</sup> *MasoudRezaei, "Egypt and Democracy Dilemma" African Journal of Political Science and International Relations, Vol. 9(6), (2015): 217-224*

<sup>49</sup> *Nwando Achebe, Claire Robertson (Ed). Holding the World Together: African Women in Changing Perspective (University of Wisconsin Pres, 2019) P105-106*

<sup>50</sup> *Jessica Rettig, The Religious Ties of the Republican Party. USNews 2010, <<https://www.usnews.com/opinion/articles/2010/12/02/the-religious-ties-of-the-republican-party>> (Last assessed: 23.05.2020)*

created. The aftermath is known to all as the precursor of militancy and violent religious extremism in these countries and beyond.<sup>51</sup>

## 11. Muslims and the Rise of Neo-Jahiliyyah

The Muslims lament that *Kufr*(infidelity) is being propagated at alarming rate in the media, offices, government agencies in the name of freedom and liberty as represented in gay rights activism, single mom, wife and husband swap Reality Show. *Shaytan* (Devil) is patronized in cults of politics, banking industries, corporate offices and educational institutions. The condemnation of atrocious and nasty acts at all levels is the mandate given to the Muslims by Allah; to vigorously command the good and vehemently prohibit the evils and not to blindly trail the dictates of the society:

ثُمَّ جَعَلْنَاكَ عَلَىٰ شَرِيعَةٍ مِّنَ الْأُمْرِ فَاتَّبِعْهَا وَلَا تَتَّبِعْ أَهْوَاءَ الَّذِينَ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ

*“Then We put thee on the (right) Way of Religion: so follow thou that (Way), and follow not the desires of those who know not.”<sup>52</sup>*

Also:

الَّذِينَ إِن مَّكَّنَّاهُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ أَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتَوُا الزَّكَاةَ وَأَمَرُوا بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَنَهَوْا  
عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَاللَّهُ عَاقِبَةُ الْأُمُورِ

*“Those who, if We establish them in the land, establish regular prayer and give regular charity, enjoin the right and forbid wrong: with Allah rests the end (and decision) of (all) affairs.”<sup>53</sup>*

However, there is a serious pressure mounted on the Muslim youth to Islamize the modern *jahiliyyah* of gayism or lesbianism to be acceptable by the Muslims. This is an attempt to lure the youths to build new Islam in line with their desires but not in accordance with the prescriptions of the Law Maker (Allah). Pathetically today, there is now Gay Imam in New York, lesbian Muslim group and gay Muslims across the globe.<sup>54</sup> This is the result of persistent assaults of making *haram* beautiful for the believer.<sup>55</sup>

<sup>51</sup> Imran, *There is nothing like a "Moderate" or a "Radical" Islam, there is only one Islam.* (Daniel-Pipe, 2003). <<http://www.danielpipes.org/comments/10759>> (Last assessed: 23.05.2020)

<sup>52</sup> Quran 45:18 (Yusuf Ali English Translation).

<sup>53</sup> Quran 22:41 Ibid

<sup>54</sup> Habib, Samar. *Islam and Homosexuality.* ABC-CLIO. (2010) 217. ISBN 9780313379031. Assessed 26, May 2020.

<sup>55</sup> *Being Muslim, gay and an imam in Europe: "The Koran doesn't say anything against homosexuals"* (Elconfidential.com 2016)

## 12. Islam as the Last Man Standing and the Attack on It

By 2030, there will be more Muslims in UK than Kuwait.<sup>56</sup> A cursory look at the religious climate in most part of the world indicates that Islam is the last man standing and that is responsible for the calls for character assassination Muslims are experiencing globally. To achieve their objectives of the attack, they have adopted the gratuitous insult and wanton mockery of Prophet Muhammad in the name of freedom of expression.<sup>57</sup> A group of people who adopts free speech as defense for insulting the Prophet also have in their laws anti-Semitic law to protect Jews and Israel as a nation. The consequence of the reaction of Muslims on the mockery of Prophet Muhammad – was to further marginalize Muslim communities in Denmark and elsewhere in Europe. Mosques and other places of worship were particular targets of vandalism and arson globally. Human Right First gave a survey of some hate crime and attacks on Muslims and their places of worship: In Austria for instance, unknown attackers hurled rocks through the windows of a mosque on September 24, 2005 in Linz; also Rotterdam (in Netherlands), on June 15, 2005, a man set fire to the Surinamese DjamaMahidShaan-e-Islam mosque; In the Russian Federation, in September 2006, attackers broke windows and threw gasoline bombs into a mosque in the city of Yaroslavl as a prayer service was underway; In Spain, in Soria, on January 26, 2006, assailants burned a copy of the Qur'an and threw other religious books in a trash can outside a mosque; In the United Kingdom, a rash of attacks on mosques and Muslim religious centres are recorded; in Nigeria Muslims witness increase levels of hostility and harassment while several attacks have been unleashed on mosques under the disguise of Boko Haram artificially created to accomplish hidden agenda.<sup>58</sup>

## 13. Influences of Global Character Assassinations on the Muslims

The analysis given so far on global Islamophobia has many implications on Islam and Muslims. Among the implications identifiable include: (i) Inferiority Complex (ii) Apologetic Muslims (iii) Withdrawal Syndrome by some Muslims (iv) Apostasy or renunciation of Islam by recently reverted people to Islam (v) Putting strong Muslims on the defensive (vi) some Muslim preachers and many others are in prison (convicted on charges that they are incited young Muslims to wage war. (viii) Many Islamic centres are being closed globally. (ix) Transferring of money and other financial aids for *da'wah* activities and charities increasingly becomes so

<sup>56</sup> PEW, *Islamophobia*.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>58</sup> *Human Rights First, Islamophobia 2007 Hate Crime Survey. A Human Rights First reports. (Washington, 2007) 3-5*

difficult nowadays (x) and above all, weakness of the 'Ummah in all aspects. There is no doubt that there is a war being waged against Islam. What offense have the Muslims committed?<sup>59</sup>

وَمَا نَقَمُوا مِنْهُمْ إِلَّا أَنْ يُؤْمِنُوا بِاللَّهِ الْعَزِيزِ الْحَمِيدِ - الَّذِي لَهُ مُلْكُ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ  
وَاللَّهُ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ شَهِيدٌ - إِنَّ الَّذِينَ قَتَلُوا الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ ثُمَّ لَمْ يَتُوبُوا فَلَهُمْ  
عَذَابُ جَهَنَّمَ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابُ الْحَرِيقِ

*“And they ill-treated them for no other reason than that they believed in Allah, Exalted in Power, Worthy of all Praise!-. Him to Whom belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth! And Allah is Witness to all things. Those who persecute (or draw into temptation) the Believers, men and women, and do not turn in repentance, will have the Penalty of Hell: They will have the Penalty of the Burning Fire.<sup>60</sup>”*

### 13. What Needs to be Done in the Hostile Environment?

**(1) Wearing the Gab of Islamic Morals (Adab):** It is saddening to note that some youths today among the youth that the more knowledge they claim to have learnt about Islam, the less manner and characterless they become. Islamic knowledge is meant to adorn Muslims with excellent manners and characters. Many are satisfied with memorization of *fatawa* of scholars these days than doing the real learning. What is considered as knowledge is parroting an opinion from a corner of the world and trying to impose it on other people. People are very happy with mere look to appear Islamic only without recourse to the inner beauty of souls. Today, Muslims are divided along factional lines of making the scholars the celebrity to follow and love in opinions rather than the love of the Prophet. Hence, upholding the Islamic Ethics ('Adab) by all and sundry is a panacea to some of this social and moral decadence that have engulfed the society.

**(2) Being "Engineers" By Muslims:** The primary job of an engineer is to identify a problem and fix the problem. Muslims should not be seen to be adding to the problem of the society but to be solving them. There are many children in Muslim society of Nigeria who have not seen a classroom in their lives. Appallingly, Muslims boast of 10million out of school children who roam about the street hawking fruits, sachet water, kolanut, or as cobblers, nail cutter, nasal hair removal etc. Many Muslims have children

<sup>59</sup> Shadid and van Koningsveld “The Negative Image of Islam and Muslims in the West: Causes and Solutions”. In: Shadid, and van Koningsveld (Eds.): (2002): *Religious Freedom and the Neutrality of the State: The Position of Islam in the European Union*. Leuven, Peeters, 174-196. See also : Fakhry Davids, The impact of Islamophobia, <[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/26862014\\_The\\_impact\\_of\\_Islamophobia\\_2009](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/26862014_The_impact_of_Islamophobia_2009)> (Last assessed: 23.05.2020)

<sup>60</sup> Q85:8-10 (Yusuf Ali English Translation)

who have never been taken to hospital in their lives for medical attention and women who have never delivered a baby under the care of qualified medical personnel. Muslims should be seen to be solving the problem of the society for that is the work/nature of a true vicegerent of God on earth as enunciated in the Glorious Qur'an:

إِنِّي جَاعِلٌ فِي الْأَرْضِ خَلِيفَةً

“Verily, I am going to place (mankind) generations after generations on earth.<sup>61</sup>”

**(3) Updating Knowledge in Da'wah Approaches and Methods:** The index of the crisis that has engulfed the 'Ummah today is that everybody who has memorised a few *ahadīth* and verses of the Qur'an are the preachers and Imams in most Mosques. Many of them disseminate undigested ideas thereby creating confusion and distortion in Islamic works. Everybody is an expert on Islam, from the one who has no formal education to the one who has primary or secondary Islamic education and to the armed chair professionals who depend on internet information for their knowledge of Islam. The emergence of extremist groups like *Maitasine*, *Kalakato*, *Darul Islam* in Niger state, *Boko Haram*, *LāJam'ah* and their likes was due to mischievous distortion of Islamic sources coupled with the availability of arrays of emotional and naive followership. Many religions have inferior product with sophisticated and well equipped salesmen while Islam parades a superior product but most of the visible representatives in the public space are inferior and counterfeit salesmen. It is also discernible in *da'wah* efforts that only 5% of Muslims are participants while 95% are spectators, 5% are assets, 95% are liabilities to the 'Ummah. Therefore, for effective *da'wah* activism, all must join the band of the good salesmen of Islam by dedicating to acquire knowledge of Islam and be ready for the dissemination of such knowledge among the teeming ignorant Muslims.

**(4) Developing Mentoring Scheme:** There is need for mentoring scheme by Muslim professionals in all fields of human endeavour. There should be plans to give back to the 'Ummah by replicating ourselves among the young Muslims to develop their potentials. This is one of the means of creating valued added personality (VAP) for the 'Ummah. It is disheartening to note that the stars, heroes and shining examples of the society are neither the teachers and the educated class, nor the thinkers and the ideologues but rather they are the artistes and footballers. The Muslims have failed according to Hakim Baba Ahmed<sup>62</sup>:

- i. to address poor governance,

<sup>61</sup> (Q2:30)

<sup>62</sup> Hakeem Baba-Ahmed (2016). “Mohammed, the Bishop and the Quarrel” *Newsdiaryonline.com*. 7<sup>th</sup> January, 2016.

- ii. to secure a firm position for Islamic and western education,
- iii. to address crippling social problems arising from massive expansion of the population and unacceptable levels of poverty among Muslims.

#### 14. Conclusion

The global character assassination or Islamophobia is a contemporary Muslim challenge. Islamophobia is the shorthand way of referring to hatred of Islam – and, therefore, to fear or dislike of Islam and all Muslims. The impact of the media cannot be underestimated in the struggle of the West to accomplish the hideous and heinous act of character assassination. In the context of the mass media, reporting and misrepresentation reinforced, and indeed reinvigorated the stereotypical and chimerical archetypes associated with Muslims and Islam. To a large extent, the damages have been done as earlier postulated and the effects of the ordeals are there for all to count. Therefore, Muslim leaders in all spheres must lead and improve the welfare, knowledge and unity of Muslims and make frantic efforts to redeem the image of Islam and the Muslims globally. They should work to reduce the distance between the state and faith, and the intra-Muslim tensions (through quality education) which create avenues for emergence of weakening tendencies. It is also incumbent to improve access and quality of Islamic knowledge. The Muslims need to become more actively involved in social engineering and global governance.

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