

The New Far-Right: The Social Construction of Hatred against the Contemporary Islamic Community in Multicultural Australia

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Abstract : In Australia, the contemporary social construction of hatred against the Islamic community was facilitated through the mainstream media. Australian public figures who have depicted Muslims and Islam not only as potential terrorists but also as incompatible with the country's values and identities have helped to increase the level of fear against the Islamic community, leading sympathetic far-right movements to shift discussions towards anti-Islamic and anti-Muslim rhetoric. Political opportunities combined with a socially constructed narrative of fear of the 'other', introduced during the White Australia Policy of 1901, has allowed extreme and radical far-right movements to justify hate against the contemporary Australian Islamic community. This study aims to answer the following question: How does Australia's founding provide a fertile environment to the spread of hatred against the contemporary Islamic community? The paper demonstrates that a forged social construct of grievances concerning the Islamic community in Australia has led to a surge in supply of far-right activism to combat what has become a perceived 'national threat'. In essence, Australia's history of a fear of the 'other' brings challenges to a multicultural society, and can potentially lead to a more unstable socio-political environment where abuse and violence are normalized and more likely to develop. Furthermore, the paper aims to bring a more nuanced understanding of what is considered 'new far-right' discourses with shared anti-Islam and anti-Muslim agendas in Australia. The political opportunity structures theory was the mechanism used to determine how new forms of far-right groups have become more mainstream in Australia. Previous studies on far-right groups in Australia have relied on qualitative data, but further empirical research in this area is sorely needed. Above all, this paper clarifies how hatred against minorities can have a negative impact on wider communities and allow a global narrative of 'us' versus 'them' to erupt from the fringes of society in Australia.

Keywords : Australia, Islamophobia, far-right, nationalism, political opportunity structures, political violence, social construction

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