

Inherent Difficulties in Countering Islamophobia

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Abstract : Islamophobia, which is a billion-dollar industry, is widespread, especially in the United States, Europe, India, Israel, and countries that have Muslim minorities at odds with their governmental policies. Hatred of Islam in the West did not evolve spontaneously; it was methodically created. Islamophobia's current format has been designed to spread on its own, find a space in the Western psyche, and resist its eradication. Hatred has been sustained by neoconservative ideologues and their allies, which are supported by the mainstream media. Social scientists have evaluated how ideas spread, why any idea can go viral, and where new ideas find space in our brains. This was possible because of the advances in the computational power of software and computers. Spreading of ideas, including Islamophobia, follows a sine curve; it has three phases: An initial exploratory phase with a long lag period, an explosive phase if ideas go viral, and the final phase when ideas find space in the human psyche. In the initial phase, the ideas are quickly examined in a center in the prefrontal lobe. When it is deemed relevant, it is sent for evaluation to another center of the prefrontal lobe; there, it is critically examined. Once it takes a final shape, the idea is sent as a final product to a center in the occipital lobe. This center cannot critically evaluate ideas; it can only defend them from its critics. Counterarguments, no matter how scientific, are automatically rejected. Therefore, arguments that could be highly effective in the early phases are counterproductive once they are stored in the occipital lobe. Anti-Islamophobic intellectuals have done a very good job of countering Islamophobic arguments. However, they have not been as effective as neoconservative ideologues who have promoted anti-Muslim rhetoric that was based on half-truths, misinformation, or outright lies. The failure is partly due to the support pro-war activists receive from the mainstream media, state institutions, mega-corporations engaged in violent conflicts, and think tanks that provide Islamophobic arguments. However, there are also scientific reasons why anti-Islamophobic thinkers have been less effective. There are different dynamics of spreading ideas once they are stored in the occipital lobe. The human brain is incapable of evaluating further once it accepts ideas as its own; therefore, a different strategy is required to be effective. This paper examines 1) why anti-Islamophobic intellectuals have failed in changing the minds of non-Muslims and 2) the steps of countering hatred. Simply put, a new strategy is needed that can effectively counteract hatred of Islam and Muslims. Islamophobia is a disease that requires strong measures. Fighting hatred is always a challenge, but if we understand why Islamophobia is taking root in the twenty-first century, one can succeed in challenging Islamophobic arguments. That will need a coordinated effort of Intellectuals, writers and the media.

Keywords : islamophobia, Islam and violence, anti-islamophobia, demonization of Islam

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