

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

A significant new challenge has arisen in today's world, and it is the issue of Islamophobia. Political activist initially developed the word "Islamophobia" as a concept referring to any actions directed at Islam or Muslims in Western countries.¹ Back in 1997, after a British Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) called the Runnymede Trust created a report entitled "Islamophobia: A Challenge For Us All" the word Islamophobia started to become popular in the media, political world, and academy in Britain, France, and the United States (US) communities.²

The word-usage of Islamophobia is now representing the rising trend of global issue where irrational prejudice, hatred, and fear aimed towards Muslims and Islam.³ This understanding is based on negative stereotypes of Muslims, especially with terrorist attacks or violence happened in the name of Islam which resulted in discrimination, rejection, and exclusion of Muslims not only in the social life, but also in state policies.⁴

¹ Erik Bleich, *"Defining and Researching Islamophobia,"* 2nd ser., 46:180-89. Accessed February 26, 2019. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41940895>.

² *Ibid.*

³ Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu, *First OIC Observatory Report on Islamophobia.* Jeddah: OIC, 2008.

⁴ *Contextualizing Islamophobia: Its Impact on Culture and Global Politics.* Proceedings of International Conference on Islamophobia. Istanbul. Istanbul: Izu Alkali Campus Center For Islam and Global Affairs. Accessed February 26, 2019. <http://izu.edu.tr/docs/default-source/ciga/ciga---islamophobia-conference-program.pdf>. (accessed August 27, 2019)

Nowadays, the word Islamophobia can be found within the discussion on the field of international relations especially by international organizations such as the United Nations (UN), or Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). The prominence of the term indicates that there are general acceptance and reaction of that arguable concept. Although the concept started to reach the public sphere, yet there is still no legal or widely-accepted definition from the word Islamophobia, since a lot of people still against this conceptualization.⁵

As an intergovernmental organization with 28 member states, located primarily in Europe, the European Union (EU) has a deep and complex relationship with Muslim migrations and Islam, whether in the past or present.⁶ The EU states are geographically located close to many Muslim majority countries. Recently, many asylum seekers from Syria and other conflicting Muslim countries fled to Europe in searching for a safer place to stay. It was predicted that Muslim populations living in Europe would double in years to come.⁷

The co-existence condition of Muslims in EU countries has long been arduous and complicated. It has shaped the assumption where Muslims are regularly under generalized suspicion due to how they are presented; associating

. (accessed August 27, 2019)

⁵ Ergin Ergul. *Islamophobia And The Counter-terrorism Strategies*. Report. IPHRC. 1-20. Accessed February 25, 2019. <https://www.oic-iphrc.org/en/data/docs/studies/818084.pdf>.

⁶ Maurits S. Berger, *A Brief History of Islam in Europe: Thirteen Centuries of Creed, Conflict, and Coexistence*. (Leiden: Leiden University Press, 2015)

⁷ "Muslim Population Growth in Europe." Pew Research Center's Religion & Public Life Project. Pew Research Center, November 29, 2017. <https://www.pewforum.org/2017/11/29/europes-growing-muslim-population/>.

them to violent acts in the name of Islam.⁸ Many people in Europe views the element from the act of Islamist extremist groups are synonymous to Muslim community entirely.⁹ Another point leading to this condition is the fact that many actors such as Antal Rogan, Hungarian Fidesz parliamentary club leader, claims that the EU is facing a “refugee crisis” to the point where the idea of Muslims are invading Europe and destroying European cultural identities are emerging.¹⁰

However, there are still some misconceptions to the understanding of Islamophobia even though it is already considered as a great risk with adverse impacts for EU democratic constitutions foundation.¹¹ Therefore, the EU realizes the urgency to overcome this issue. The EU policymakers should comprehend the Muslims position as human beings as they are prone to be targeted as the object of discriminatory whose fundamental rights can be violated and not a potential radical or terrorist.¹²

The OIC is an institution that plays a vital role in collecting the voice of Muslims around the world and become the representative in expressing it.¹³ The OIC claimed to be the second-largest intergovernmental organization after the United Nations (UN) with 57 member states. Other than protecting and expressing the interest of the Muslim world, they play a part in promoting peace in the

⁸ Enes Bayrakli and Farid Hafez. *European Islamophobia Report: 2015*. Washington: SETA, 2016.

⁹ *OSCE High-Level Conference on Combating Discrimination and Promoting Mutual Respect and Understanding*. Bucharest: OSCE/ODIHR, 2007 (accessed August 27, 2019).

¹⁰ Bayrakli and Hafez, *European Islamophobia Report: 2015*.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² “NGO Coalition Statement Following 4th European Commission Round Table on Anti-Muslim Hatred.” NGO coalition statement following 4th European Commission (...) - European Network Against Racism, n.d. <https://www.enar-eu.org/NGO-coalition-statement-following-4th-European-Commission-Round-Table-on-anti>.

¹³ OIC History, n.d. https://www.oicoci.org/page/?p_id=52&p_ref=26&lan=en#. (accessed August 20, 2019)

international scale. Thus, the OIC opinion regarding Islamophobia should be consider by the EU in providing the Islamic views of this issue. The OIC members rely on this institution to overcome this issue that happened in some countries including in the EU member states, and therefore cooperation with other intergovernmental organizations is important for the OIC.¹⁴

From its very first Annual Report on Islamophobia, the OIC definition of the word is “irrational or very powerful fear or dislike of Islam and the feeling as if the Muslims are under siege and attack.”¹⁵ The OIC defines the term of Islamophobia from two different point of views; the standpoint of the protagonist and the victim. By using these two perspectives, OIC will be able to find practical solutions. Furthermore, the OIC themselves contends that the protagonist essence of Islamophobia is a religion-based hatred that considered ignorance and detrimental.¹⁶ The increasing trend of Islamophobia in EU member states is one of the OIC's main concerns because almost all EU members seem to ignore this fact and do not apply direct sanctions or policies to regulate and resolve this matter. Evidence of racist violence and crime reported in almost all EU member states comes continuously wherein also found in some reports that state agents have committed malpractice against Muslims in Europe.¹⁷

By seeing the urgency for the EU to stop the spread of Islamophobia in their member states, the EU and OIC are aware that they must strengthen their partnership. Until now, several European countries have continued to show

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu. *First OIC Observatory Report on Islamophobia*. Jeddah: OIC, 2008.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Report on Racism and Xenophobia in the Member States of the EU*. Wien: European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2007.

positive signs in their desire to create efforts to fight Islamophobia. Therefore, the EU needs to make substantial policies so that each member country can have a basis for starting or overcoming the problem of Islamophobia.¹⁸ Until this time, the two institutions have held several joint meetings with the aim of finding common ground regarding their desires and goals in overcoming the root of this problem and finding the best solutions to solve it.¹⁹

Since the main subject of this thesis is an international organization, I intended to adopt the international relations theory of neoliberalism since neoliberals see the important role of international organizations as third parties in the global world.²⁰ Along with that theory, the concept that will be applied in this research is the concept of globalization, international organization, immigration, and Islamophobia.

1.2 Research Questions

From what has been discussed in the background, I suggest two questions within the following limits:

1. How did the EU and OIC views Islamophobia? What are their perspectives about the concept of Islamophobia? Are there any differences or similarities in the perspectives?

¹⁸ The Runnymede Trust. *Islamophobia: A Challenge For Us All. Commission on British Muslims and Islamophobia*, 1997.

¹⁹ OIC History, n.d. https://www.oicoci.org/page/?p_id=52&p_ref=26&lan=en#.

²⁰ Scott Burchill. "Theories of International Relations," *Liberalism*, 3rd Edition, (Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013)

2. What are the efforts of the EU and the OIC in tackling Islamophobia issues in Europe? Is there any collaboration between the two IO's?

These questions will serve as the basis and the boundary to write this thesis, which will explain in subsequent chapters.

1.3 Research Objectives

The main objective of this research is to understand the differences and similarities of the EU and OIC perspectives on Islamophobia and how this views affected their definition and understanding to the concept of Islamophobia. One's position on this issue might influence the difference in understanding Islamophobia, whether they are in a place that can raise suspicion on Muslims and Islam or as the victim of the Islamophobia itself. Therefore, I will analyze the mutual understanding of EU member states about Islamophobia and how the EU reacts to it. Another aim of this research is to see how the OIC as the largest Islamic organization, opposes the trend of Islamophobia in the EU. Therefore, this study will also analyze collaboration between the two institutions in combating Islamophobia in the EU.

1.4 Significance of the Research

The results of this study will provide a better understanding of how Islamophobia affected Muslims in Europe and EU policy responses. It is essential to see it from the perspective of the EU because they have a close and intense

relationship with Islam, especially with a large number of Muslim immigrants living in Europe. If the EU establishes policies relating to Islamophobia, meaning that the policy will be implemented all over its member states which will have a massive impact on Muslims living throughout Europe. Also, the results of the analysis of how the OIC helped the EU in overcoming Islamophobia could show the possible gap on their method in stabilizing the spread of Islamophobia in the EU communities.

This study also contributes as a supporting element for consideration of how institutions, countries, or other actors in the international arena can collaborate and strengthen partnerships when dealing with serious problems such as Islamophobia. This topic is not only important for students studying International Relations, but for everyone to spread the awareness of Islamophobia and minimize the number of Islamophobic incidents and proponents.

1.5 Structure of Writing

The thesis will consist of five chapters, which are:

CHAPTER I Introduction

The first chapter of this study will provide an introduction to the topic as a whole; including background, research questions, and research objectives. In this chapter, I emphasize a brief detailed explanation of Islamophobia and the reason why I chose EU and OIC as the study subject. Therefore, I also provide a brief background on EU and OIC along with the highlighted overview of how they response to Islamophobia that continues to emerge in the European community.

CHAPTER II Theoretical Framework

In the second chapter, I will describe research studies in the context of a literature review based on the research questions That I prepared regarding Islamophobia in the EU and the role of OIC on this issue. I will also review this literature review together with the neoliberal theory approach and the concept of globalization, international organization, Islamophobia, and immigration as a framework.

The CHAPTER III Methodology

In chapter three, it discusses the techniques that has been used in the making of this study based on the qualitative approach. This chapter will provide the research approaches, methods, and data collection techniques used in gathering the data for this study.

CHAPTER IV Discussion and Analysis

This chapter is the culmination of this thesis because this chapter will contain a compilation of all data that is collected, as well as discussion and analysis of the overall research results in accordance with the theories and concepts of international relations used. The analyzed and compiled data will be used as a basis for systematically answering the research questions of this study.

CHAPTER V Conclusion

In the last chapter, I will combine and conclude all the findings throughout this research and present all the relationships from section to section. This chapter

also includes recommendations for solutions from me personally to answer the needed needs of the problem of Islamophobia in the EU.

In the next chapter, it will discuss the literature reviews of previous studies and also other related source that will be use to answer the research questions along with the explanation of theories and concepts used in writing this thesis.

