

# **STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT IN COMBATING ISLAMOPHOBIA**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Any issue involving a "struggle" must necessarily be guided by a strategy. A struggle should be accompanied by a strategy. It must be foreseen that any struggle without a defined strategy would result in failure.

Struggle against a critical issue like Islamophobia should necessarily involve a strategy, which is to be well-defined and properly structured. The absence of a strategy poses a risk, while an improper strategy constitutes another threat. Therefore, struggle against Islamophobia must be conducted through a strategy, which should be well-defined and adopted in an efficient, effective and qualified manner.

The strategy to combat Islamophobia should be developed gradually from the very beginning, progressing step by step and stage by stage. Besides, the issue should be addressed systematically, and all components of the whole should be accurately and properly aligned. The systematic approach to be adopted in resolving this issue should encompass the cause-and-effect relationship, the finding-and-diagnosis method, as well as solutions for resolution.

In combating Islamophobia, the issue should be addressed through a systematic and holistic methodology, and the struggle process should be managed using a strategic management approach.

## **BASIC ASSUMPTIONS IN THE STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT OF COMBATING ISLAMOPHOBIA**

### **1. DEFINITION AND SCOPE**

How should the term Islamophobia be defined? First, the phenomenon of Islamophobia should be accurately identified, with its existence, manifestation, and its current state clearly elaborated. Based on these elements, the definition should be one that is recognised, comprehensible, and agreed upon.

The scope of this term should be precisely outlined, and the boundaries of its spectrum should be determined. Islamophobia covers a wide spectrum, ranging from acceptable criticism of Islam and the behaviours and conduct of Muslims that falls under the freedom of thought and expression, to violations of fundamental rights and for being subjected to discrimination, hostility and hatred, attack against physical and spiritual integrity, as well as to physical violence inflicted for being a follower of Islam.

This wide extent of Islamophobia spectrum entails the development and implementation of distinct strategies to combat it. Nowadays, on one side of the spectrum, there is a form of Islamophobia that falls within the scope of freedom of thought and expression, whereas the opposite side is occupied by another form of Islamophobia amounting to anti-Muslim prejudice and hostility, which leads to infringement of individuals' fundamental rights and freedoms, as well as disturbance of public order and safety. These two distinct ends of the wide spectrum of Islamophobia must now be clearly distinguished from one another. They must be addressed separately, which requires adopting distinct methods of struggle.

The strategy to combat the non-criminal dimension of Islamophobia, which falls within the scope of freedom of thought and expression, should be clearly defined. There must be a separate strategy for combating the criminal dimension of Islamophobia, which infringes upon the fundamental rights and freedoms of Muslims, victimises them, and disrupts public order and safety.

## **2. CURRENT MEANING AND FORM OF ISLAMOPHOBIA**

Currently, Islamophobia has two distinct dimensions: on the individual level, the violation of fundamental rights and freedoms; and on the societal level, disturbance of public order and safety.

Islamophobia has become an issue that disrupts public order and safety, posing a threat to social peace at local, regional, and global levels. It causes harm to Muslim individuals forming a part of the society and causes them distress. Therefore, States are expected to take measures against Islamophobic phenomena and protect Muslims. Islamophobia is a global problem that poses a threat to public order and safety.

## **3. SYSTEMATIC APPROACH**

Following a well-structured definition of Islamophobia -what it is and what it is not- a strategy to combat it must be developed by adopting a holistic approach that addresses the

nature, extent, scope, elements, and processes of Islamophobia; establishes connections between its parts; places these parts in their proper context; and considers the whole along with its components.

#### **4. STRATEGIC INSIGHT**

The fight against Islamophobia must be approached with a strategic mindset. In this respect, a dedicated struggle policy should be established. A comprehensive and well-informed study must be conducted so as to develop an effective and solution-oriented policy.

In developing a policy to combat Islamophobia, the mission, vision, and objectives of the initiative must be precisely defined. The policy should clearly distinguish between what is important and what is not. The steps to be taken and those to be avoided should be indicated. Short-term and long-term objectives should be clearly articulated. In this way, a strategic management of combating Islamophobia can be effectively ensured.

#### **5. GENERALISATIONS SHOULD BE AVOIDED**

Every step to be taken in combating Islamophobia should be based on concrete data, evidence, and facts. All actions in this regard should be tailored to the geographical regions, culture of each society, and legal system of the respective State. In adopting behaviours and approaches, the nature and particular circumstances of each sector, field, and case should be taken into consideration. The information and data forming a basis for the struggle must be up-to-date, concrete, and objective.

An understanding that promotes the implementation of actions appropriate to the respective conditions and circumstances should prevail. Actions to be avoided should be precisely indicated, and no improper steps should be taken.

#### **6. DATA FROM VARIOUS DISCIPLINES SHOULD BE UTILISED**

In combating Islamophobia, data from various disciplines should be used. There should be interdisciplinary joint initiatives and studies. As being multi-faceted, comprehensive, and complex in nature, Islamophobia falls into the shared scope of multiple disciplines. Data from the fields of sociology, psychology, communication, theology, economics, political science, and administrative science should be utilised. Legal arrangements should be introduced both at national and international level, and dedicated units should be established to implement preventive measures and eliminate right violations.

## **7. COLLABORATION AMONG STAKEHOLDERS IS ESSENTIAL**

Combating Islamophobia requires the cooperation of multiple actors which should act in a coordinated manner and undertake joint efforts. In this struggle, various actors need to take part for the performance of different functions. Collaboration among individuals, non-governmental organisations, local governments, states, and international organisations is essential.

## **8. FIELD-BASED STUDIES SHOULD BE CONDUCTED**

Field- and sector-based studies should be conducted in combating Islamophobia. Since professions, fields of occupation, and sectors have varying qualifications, mentalities, and conditions, they entail distinct activities and operational procedures tailored to each specific profession, occupation, or sector. Different activities should be adopted in various countries and regions, taking into account gender and age.

## **9. PRACTICAL AND SOLUTION-ORIENTED POLICIES**

The policies to be introduced, the means to be employed, and the activities to be performed in combating Islamophobia should be practical and solution-oriented. In this respect, every step taken, every piece of writing produced, and every word spoken should have a purpose, underlying objective, impact and consequence. Initiatives that are far from offering solutions inevitably lead to despair and indifference in the long term.

## **10. FUNDAMENTAL CROSSROADS**

The strategy to combat Islamophobia involves a fundamental crossroads that should be consciously and deliberately identified and chosen. The way forward requires taking steps through two distinct routes, two separate trajectories.

The strategies to combat Islamophobia should differ according to its form and nature. There should be different strategies for two distinct forms of Islamophobia: the first form, which does not cause individual victimisation and constitute an offence and which directs criticisms at Islam and Muslim behaviours at a theoretical and doctrinal level, thus being considered to fall into the scope of freedom of thought and expression; and the other form, which infringes upon individuals' fundamental rights, causes harm to them, leads to physical and material interferences, and constitutes an element of offence.

In combating the form of Islamophobia, which gives rise to violations of fundamental rights and freedoms, victimisation of individuals, and unjust harm, international and national legal avenues may be resorted to. Such recourse likely to be welcomed and supported by individuals, organisations, and public administrations that respect for rights and rule of law. In this sense, the nature, scope, and methods of the concrete actions capable of offering solutions to current problems, which are intended to prevent individual victimisation, offer redress, and ensure restitution, should be precisely outlined.

The fight against the other form of Islamophobia, which falls into the scope of freedom of thought and expression - merely directing criticism towards Islamic faith, religious practices, and Muslim behaviours- requires explaining, clarifying, and defending Islam and Muslim conduct. Therefore, such acts and actions may be regarded as propaganda, promotion, expansionist initiative, and even missionary activity of Islam. Such perceptions can lead others to interpret these actions differently, which may result in resistance.

Accordingly, a distinct strategy should be adopted and followed in combating the critical dimension of Islamophobia, where Islam and Muslims face criticism. These efforts should be associated with civilisation and culture, which should be performed in a long-term and comprehensive manner. These initiatives should be long-term, interesting, varied and comprehensive in nature, which aims at addressing the criticisms directed towards Islam, responding the counter-arguments, as well as accurately introducing and explaining Islam and Muslims. In this regard, there may be a need for contributions from theologians, as well as scholars from other disciplines.

The fight against the anti-Muslim dimension of Islamophobia, which infringes upon fundamental rights and freedoms of individuals, should concentrate on more concrete and result-oriented measures and prioritise public activities, judicial bodies, and legal regulations. Therefore, there may be a greater need for jurists in this field.

Accordingly, the struggle against Islamophobia should be waged through different strategies depending on the distinct dimensions of the struggle, which should involve different organisations, methods, and activities.

## **11. LEGAL FRAMEWORK**

First of all, the offensive behaviours faced by Muslim individuals should be identified, through field research, empirical observations, and bilateral interviews, based on their sources,

whether personal, social, public authority-related, or inflicted by civil society organizations. These offensive behaviours and acts should be categorised in two different terms.

First, among these offensive acts directed at individuals for being a Muslim, the ones that are already criminalised and punishable should be pinpointed. Protective and preventive measures should be necessarily taken against these punishable acts.

Second, the necessary legal steps should be taken so as to criminalise and penalise the offensive acts and behaviours against Muslims, which are not yet considered as criminal acts or punishable offenses. Initiatives should be undertaken to criminalise such acts and to designate the corresponding penalties in both domestic legal systems of the countries and international legal system.

It should be ensured that Islamophobic behaviours and acts be criminalised and subject to punishment. Such behaviours and acts may be qualified as offences within the following scope:

Prohibition of Discrimination,

Hate Crimes,

Racism,

Xenophobia,

Presumption of Innocence,

Violation of Freedom of Religion and Belief.

The States should be urged to fulfil their positive obligations regarding the protection of individuals' fundamental rights and freedoms. The decisions taken by the United Nations and other international organisations against anti-Muslim hatred and bigotry should be enforced by States.

The inseverable interrelation between the right to peace and freedom of religion should be acknowledged.

The States should respond to the United Nations' call for a global dialogue aimed at promoting a culture of tolerance and peace, founded on respect for human rights and the diversity of religions and beliefs. They should undertake the necessary legal arrangements accordingly.

## **12. GRIEF AND EMOTIONAL DISTRESS SHOULD BE AVOIDED**

There should be no Islamophobic elements in the thoughts, expressions, and behaviours of individuals within the society of the mainland country. Even behaviours and actions which imply discrimination but cannot be easily proven, through concrete and tangible evidence, to constitute an offence cause emotional distress and undermine trust in faith. For instance, cases when a Muslim is subjected to cold or distant treatment by an officer in the bank, market, municipality, or a transport staff, whereas the same officer displays a warm stance towards a European individual would trigger emotional distress and weaken confidence.

A Muslim should not be led to develop the perception or prejudice that “Muslims are always subjected to discrimination; there is no way out!”. Muslims who feels persistently discriminated against within society will hold the following stances:

1) They will resort to legitimate and legal means against the discriminatory behaviours inflicted upon them. If they are able to obtain a favourable result within the legal framework, they will continue living peacefully in the society, motivated by the hope of getting their due. For ensuring public order and safety, as well as individual well-being, the avenues to seek remedies should always be made available and accessible.

2) In case of failure to obtain a result within the legal framework, Muslims will adopt two different stances: In the first scenario, they will descent into desperation, become introverted and detach themselves from society, thus triggering the feeling of sadness and despair. In the second scenario, they may qualify the discrimination inflicted upon them as an unjust treatment but refuse to accept or internalise this injustice. Consequently, they may give different reactions to such discriminatory behaviours inflicted upon themselves and others who are in a similar situation. These reactions may, in some cases, give rise to illegal and excessive repercussions.

## **13. CONDUCTING ANALYSES**

Every stage of the struggle against Islamophobia should be equipped with scientific, technical, and measurement-based field studies, along with various evaluations and analyses. It should be properly analysed and assessed whether the procedures and methods that are currently in practice have gone smoothly and are efficient, effective and of high quality, as well as whether they should be replaced or there is a need for new practices. Accordingly, evaluation and analysis reports should be drafted.

## CONCLUSION

Islamophobia is a common global problem today. From the perspective of individuals, it is an issue leading to a human rights violation. From the perspective of societies, it poses a threat to public order and safety.

The fight against Islamophobia requires cooperation among stakeholders. Besides, interdisciplinary collaboration is also a necessity.

Determining which steps should be avoided is just as significant as determining which ones must be taken.

The struggle to combat Islamophobia entails a systematic and holistic approach, in which the links between its components must be clearly and accurately identified. A highly important issue like Islamophobia must be addressed with a strategic management approach.

**Objective:** to achieve happy individuals, peaceful societies, trusted public governance, and a stable, peaceful world through collective efforts.