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Islamophobia in the United Kingdom and France, a Comparative Study

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Dedication

I dedicate my dissertation to my family and my friends. A special feeling of gratitude to my loving parents whose words of encouragement always pushed me forward, and to my wonderful brother Abderrahim and my adorable sister Fatima who have never left my side.

Kachour Salima

Dedication

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my beloved parents, who have been my source of inspiration and for their continuous support and patience. And for constantly encouraging and motivating me throughout my studying journey. I would not have done it without them.

To my family, my brothers Abduallah, Soufiane, Mohammed, and my sister Hadjer, who have always been there for me, motivating me to achieve my best.

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Abstract

The primary focus of this research is to examine the extent and level of Islamophobia that is present in the United Kingdom and France, specifically in the areas of education and the workplace. The objective is to shed light on the discrimination faced by French and British Muslims in both countries. Accordingly, a comparative study was conducted to gain insights into the governments' attitudes toward the Muslim minority in each nation. The findings reveal that Islamophobia continues to be a significant and contentious issue in the Western world. Thus, its existence will continue to provoke critical discussions and debates.

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List of Acronyms

ABC News: American Broadcasting Company (Television)

APPG: All-Party Parliamentary Group

BBC: British Broadcasting Corporation

CCIF: Collective Against Islamophobia in France

CFCM: Conseil Français du Culte Musulman (The French Council of Muslim Faith)

EUMC: European Union Military Committee

EHRC: Equality and Human Rights Commission

FBI: Federal Bureau of Investigation

ISIL: Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant

LMN: Labour Muslim Network

LREM: La République en Marche (The Republican on the Move)

MAMA: Measuring Anti-Muslim Attacks

MCB: The Muslim Council of Britain

ONDES : Observatoire National des Discriminations et de l'Égalité dans le Supérieur (Higher Education Discrimination and Equality Monitoring Agency)

RN: Rassemblement National. (National Rally)

General Introduction

General Introduction

Islamophobia, a term that has gained significant attention in recent years, remains a concerning issue in the Western world today. Despite progress in promoting cultural understanding and religious tolerance, there are instances where prejudice, discrimination, and negative stereotypes persist. In Britain and France, Islamophobia has become a significant social and political issue, impacting the lives of Muslim individuals and communities.

This research consists of a comparative study in which it tackles Islamophobia in France and the United Kingdom, and the treatment and representation of Muslims in each country discussing the various factors that contributed to the emergence of this issue as well as the impact of government policies that can vary, and some policies may unintentionally contribute to Islamophobia or disproportionately target Muslim communities. Two research questions were formulated based on the already stated problematic situation to guide the work and clarify its directions.

1-   What are the main causes that led to the raise of Islamophobia in the west in general, and Britian and France in particular?

2-   To what extent does Islamophobia affect the Muslim community in Britain and France and how do the policies of each government impact them in both the employment and education sectors?

In terms of the overall structure of the research study, two major chapters were discussed, entitled Historical Background of Muslims in the West and Islamophobia in Britain and France. The first chapter aims to define the term Islamophobia and provides a brief history of Muslims in the West covering the migration process of Muslims towards the UK and France. How Muslims live in a

multicultural society. The second part of this chapter focuses on the main factors that contribute to the rise of Islamophobia.

Moreover, the second chapter tackles the core principle of this research which is to compare the effect of Islamophobia between two countries with the highest Muslim population in Europe. Giving an overview of the different secularism policies present in both nations as this contrasts with the restrictions and obstacles Muslims face in the employment and education field.

Chapter One

Historical Background of Muslims

in the West

1.1 Introduction

Islamophobia, or the fear of Muslims, is a problem affecting Muslims worldwide, chiefly in the West. The present chapter aims to shed light on the theoretical background of the entire research about Islamophobia in the UK and France. In doing so, the present research uses a descriptive approach to presenting the historical facts related to the Muslims who reside in these countries. This chapter starts by defining Islamophobia giving a brief overview of the Muslim community in the West, more importantly how Muslims started to migrate toward Britain and France, and discussing the beginning of Islamophobia mentioning the main reasons that contribute to raising the attention towards this phenomenon. This chapter also discusses the situation of having different ethnic groups in one multicultural society where Muslims have to integrate or assimilate into the dominant group. Finally, it intends to discuss the many Western stereotypical ideologies of Islam and Muslims proceeded to give false representations of them.

1.2 Islamophobia Defined

Islamophobia is not an entirely new phenomenon, considering it would be difficult to identify given that many usages of the phrase had been used before the 1990s. It initially appeared in 1918 in a book by the painter Etienne Dinet under the French name Islamophobia, in which during the last decades the term has integrated itself into public and political discourse (Green 9).

The fear of Muslims is an international phenomenon that portrays Muslims as terrorists, backward, or even oppressors of women's rights because of the misrepresentation claimed by the West. The term Islamophobia has several definitions, but according to the *Oxford Learners Dictionaries*, it is defined as a "dislike or unfair treatment of Islam or Muslims ". Whereas the Open Society Foundation issued an article entitled *Islamophobia in Europe*, which defines the term as a form of racism and as active discrimination against Islam, Muslims, and Islamic culture. Therefore, it

is having a fixed view of Muslims as a social group and emphasizing negative descriptions embodied in every individual within that group.

It was hugely popularized in 1997 by the Runnymede Report entitled *Islamophobia: A Challenge for Us All*, which talked about Islamophobia and described it as "dread or hatred of Islam" ,which implies "fear or dislike of all or most Muslims" . It states that Islamophobia has grown to a point where intervention is needed.

Acts of discrimination against Muslims can take many different forms, they usually take the shape of verbal and physical abuse, for example, Islamic institutions, Mosques are occasionally attacked and vandalized. Additionally, there are rules or laws that discriminate against Muslims and impose limitations on their freedom to practice their religion. (Esposito and Kalin 9- 11).

On the other hand, some scholars like Chris Allen suggested that the term has become widely used to describe anti-Muslim and anti-Islam sentiments in public discourse. The term Islamophobia is in dispute since it is frequently and inaccurately used to describe a wide range of phenomena, from xenophobia to terrorism. It combines a wide range of various discourses, speeches, and behaviours by arguing that they all stem from the same intellectual base, which is an irrational fear (a phobia) of Islam (Esposito and Kalin 21).

1.3 Muslims in the West, a Brief History

The encounter between Muslims and the West has a long and rich history of conquest collaboration, tensions, and disagreements. Since the beginning of Islam's influence as a religious force, Muslims expanded into parts of Europe, particularly Spain and central France in the first century of Islam. Pope Urban II's attempt to regain Jerusalem for Christianity during the time of the Crusade provided a foundation for the continuing "Crusader and anti-Crusader" mindset, defining the perspectives of the Christian West and Islamic East towards each other over centuries. In addition,

Westerners drew knowledge and inspiration from Islamic sciences, philosophy, and medicine during the fifteenth century. Particularly during the golden age of Muslim civilization in Spain (Haddad 3).

The first interaction with Muslims in the West was often different on the basis that they were distinct from Western people, Muslims always faced stereotypes to be judged by others on many criteria such as appearances, culture, beliefs, etc. These factors with time created what is called Islamophobia. Muslims have been in the West due to immigration, which emphasizes this problem. More than that, numerous reasons lead Muslims to migrate and settle in the West due to capitalism, trade, industrialization, liberalism, and World Wars 1 and 2.

The nineteenth and early twentieth centuries saw the re-invasion of Western forces and influence in the Middle East through the effects of colonialism that still have a significant impact on how Muslims interact with Europe and America. The twentieth century also saw a new type of Islamic movement toward the West, one in which people from Muslim countries started to migrate in growing numbers in search of work, safety, acceptance, and in some cases, religious freedom. Motivations changed into a settlement for economic and political reasons (Haddad 4).

Muslims and Europeans have frequently opposed one another due to the tension that occurs between them as a result of religion. Thus, the two civilizations have different paradigms (Lewis 9). Finally, Islam now has more followers than Christianity in almost every Western nation such as France and the UK creating a whole new set of problems for both the Muslims who have made the decision to immigrate as well as the host cultures, who are under increasing pressure to accept the newcomers.

1.3.1 Muslim Immigrants in the UK

Britain is regarded as a great country in Europe and is widely known for its cultural diversity, which is a result of the variety of its ethnic groups and immigrants from around the world, specifically Muslims, a population that is growing quickly and has reached 3 million according to The Office for National Statistics of 2021.

British Muslims come from all over the world, increasing the country's population and fostering multiculturalism. It is possible to trace the ancestors of the vast majority of Muslims in the United Kingdom who belong to more than 15 countries such as Pakistan, Bangladesh, Somalia, India, Turkey, Iraq, Afghanistan, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Algeria, Kenya, Morocco and Nigeria (Iqbal).

Muslims from Egypt and Yemen began to arrive and establish their own communities in the UK due to the growing need for Labor in ports and ships. Therefore, there is an estimate of 70 and 80,000 Yemenis in Britain making them the county's oldest Muslim population noted by the BBC article named *History of Islam in the UK*.

The total increase in Indian and Pakistani communities in the UK can be traced back to Great Britain's 200-year colonial rule over India, which lasted from 1858 to 1947 (Balaji 2023). Furthermore, in times of war, Britain moved Indians to its territory to labor for the British or fight alongside them in World Wars 1 and 2, and many of them did not return to India. Instead, the majority remained in Britain. While many immigrants moved to Britain seeking better life prospects. The descendants of immigrants are making significant benefits to the nation's economic growth.

The establishment of the laws and regulations enforced throughout the immigration process over the years is one of several causes for the rise in the number of Muslims in the UK. Enoch Powell a British politician stated in one of his speeches back in 1968 that "In 15 or 20 years, on present trends, there will be in this country three and a half Commonwealth Immigrants and their descendants" depending on the Registrar General Office. He expressed that due to the large scale of immigrants, the number of

incomers will become the majority making the British nationals the minority.

The British Nationality Act of 1948, which made it possible for people who had lived in former colonies to become Commonwealth citizens, was one of the key laws that played a significant role in boosting the number of immigrants. This act comes into use after the majority of the British colonies gained independence. It initiated the government to draft the Commonwealth Act in 1962 which limited acceptance to people with work permits and removed the automatic right of entry for Commonwealth Citizens. Therefore, this new law made traveling to Britain too challenging ("History of Islam in the UK").

1.3.1.1 Immigration Statistics in the UK

Islam is the second most widely practiced religion in the United Kingdom. According to the 2021 census, the Muslim population in the UK has rapidly increased, reaching 3.9 million, or 6.5 percent of the total UK population in 2021 which doubled compared to 4.9 percent in 2011 (Roskams).

The census results from 2011 show an overall population of 2.786.635 million of the total UK population, whereas the most recent census results as of 2022 show inhabitants of 3.801.186 million Muslims living in England. Additionally, Muslims make up 4.9 percent of the total population in England and Wales, according to the 2011 Census. This figure indicates that 68% of Muslims are of Asian descent, with Pakistani Muslims constituting the majority. 38% are Indians, while 7.8% are not published by the Muslim Council of Britain (Roskams).

The following diagram and table present the comparison between the several religions that exist in the UK from 2011 to 2021. According to the Office of National Statistics. As the overall population of the UK and Wales grows by 3.52 million between 2011 and 2021, Muslim communities grow by 1.16 million, accounting for 33% of the increase.

	2011	2021
Buddhist	0.4% (249.000)	0.5 (273.000)
Christain	59.3% (33.3 Million)	46.2% (27.5 Million)
Hindu	1.5% (181.000)	7.7% (1.0 Million)
Jewish	0.5% (265.000)	0.5% (271.000)
Muslims	4.9% (2.7 Million)	6.5% (3.9 Million)
Sikh	0.8% (423.000)	0.9% (524.000)
Other religion	0.4% (241.000)	0.6% (348.000)
No religion	25.2% (14.1 Million)	37.2% (22.2 Million)
Not answered	7.1 % (4.0 Million)	6.0% (3.6 Million)

Table 1.1: Indicates a comparison between religions in the United Kingdom according to the official national statistics of 2011 and 2021

In comparison to other minority faith groups, Muslims are becoming more spread across England and Wales, As British Muslims spread in the top 5 locations know a higher percentage of them. Birmingham has 341,811 Muslims, Bradford has 166,846 Muslims, London Borough of Tower Hamlets has 123,912 Muslims, Manchester has 122,962 Muslims, and London Borough of New Ham has 122,146 Muslims ("Muslim Council of Britain").

In a nutshell or what has been stated about Muslim immigrants in the UK, it has significant importance in shaping the British population as the immigrants come from various countries sharing a multicultural society. The Muslim community in the UK has a great number yet France holds the highest Muslim population in Europe.

1.3.2. Muslim Immigrants in France

France today has approximately four or five million Muslim inhabitants, including one million who are French citizens. According to his article entitled *The Muslims of France*, Milton states that it is generally agreed that France has more Muslims than either Protestants or Jews, Islam has become the country's second religion after the Roman Catholics. Furthermore, the development of the shipping industry by the fourteenth century brought the French into contact with Islam in the Ottoman Empire, West Africa, and the Indian Ocean. With the growth of its empire, France assumed the role of "protector" or colonizer in numerous areas with a high percentage of Muslims including Egypt, Algeria West Africa, Tunisia, Morocco, Syria, and Lebanon (Aramata 86).

The change has come through immigration mostly from former French North African colonies which are also called the Maghreb region that consists of Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia. In the 1960s and 70s, Muslims arrived in large numbers in France, those of Algerian origin who most arrived during the post-war economic boom after the North African independence with a huge demand for manual labor bringing a million more Muslims. Within a decade the economy started to decrease rapidly however, Muslims were already living in nearly all of France's cities mostly in Paris, Lille, and Marseilles, by then France realized the growth of the Muslim community that had settled. In the mid-1970s, France released zero immigration laws which restricted immigration from its former colonies but the Muslim population continues to rise as Milton mentioned in the same article (Milton 78).

Immigrants started building mosques, opening halal butcher shops, and claiming territory for Muslim parts in cemeteries in the early 1980s, generating fears about a "return of Islam" and highlighting the fact that France, as a secular country, has a *Laicité* system, which resulted in the separation of religion and state in 1905. It restricted religious belief to the private domain and restored discussion over religious liberty (Haddad 36-40).

As mentioned before, about five million people in France are of Muslim descent, and up to half of them are thought to be under 24 years old (Milton). To be more precise, resources like shelter were limited and immigration was occurring far too quickly. On the outer edges of the larger cities, migrant workers built bidonvilles or shantytowns. Both the residents and the migrant workers felt unhappy as a result of the circumstance. Trichardt (1992) notes that during the oil shocks of the 1970s, Because of the Great Depression and growing worries about workers' rights, European countries limited the number of migrants they allowed. In 1974, France ceased to accept new foreign laborers and adopted a policy encouraging current migrants to go back to their home countries (Fetzer and Soper 2 – 3).

However, they did not return and instead took their families to reside in France. Children born in France were granted citizenship due to the jus soli ("right of the soil") established by French nationality law. Furthermore, migrants from newly independent Sub-Saharan African nations travelled to France in search of work. This happened when France stopped allowing new migrants, forcing them to labor in poor conditions and lead unstable lives. As a result, France developed an immense number of internal ethnic communities (Aramata 87).

1.4. Multiculturalism, Assimilation, and Integration

The flow of immigrants to new nations is one of the primary causes that gave rise to the term multiculturalism. This establishes a brand-new civilization in which numerous individuals from various ethnic origins and religions can live together in harmony. They have the choice to decide whether they would like to assimilate or integrate into the dominant group. Multiculturalism is the response to ethnic diversity, both nationally and locally. It can occur organically through immigration or artificially when various cultural jurisdictions are brought together by legislative decree. As it did in the case of French and English Canada. Sociologically speaking, multiculturalism describes how a society deals with cultural diversity (Longley).

Multiculturalism is characterized as "the preservation of different cultures or cultural identities within a unified society, as a state or nation" *("The Dictionary")*. Longley further explained that multiculturalism's main goal is to take into account the ideas and efforts of many socioeconomic groupings. While preserving respect for their individuality and preventing pressure to conform to societal norms from being applied to them.

On the one hand, some academics argue that multiculturalism benefits people by allowing them to express their distinctive customs and ways of life in a single community where they accept each other. Randa Abdel – Fattah pointed out "In a multicultural, diverse society there are countless ways in which people negotiate the everyday lived experience and reality of diversity". She demonstrated that if people were willing to be helpful while living in an environment of diversity, they could respect one another and resolve any issues. The special slogan of Nelson Mandela stated that "My dream would be a multicultural society, one that is diverse and where every man, woman, and child is treated equally. I dream of a world where all people of all races work together in harmony" ("Nelson Mandela Quote").

He sincerely wants a world of peace in every diverse community, one in which everyone is treated equally avoiding the general stereotypes. Contradicting the previous idea Steve King an American politician argued that the multicultural policy intention of treating all ethnic groups the same way, was never objectively true.

There is at least one minority group in most nations, and while they may be able to coexist peacefully, it is more likely that there will be some prejudice and discrimination, which may lead to tensions and violence. For instance, Britain is known to be the most multicultural nation as the majority of the UK cities are multicultural, and that technically means that residents of several nations or religions live there leading to the Muslim community residing in the UK that are facing this issue. In fact, there is a perception that multiculturalism threatens the country's citizens because of cultural separatism and British Muslims' self-imposed segregation, and therefore causes tensions between them and the rest of society ("The Challenge of Multiculturalism Societies in the UK").

On the other hand, other researchers view multicultural policy as unfavourable, claiming that it is a strategy to rule over the minority, most of whom are immigrants. It controls their way of life using many policies to integrate them into the dominant group. Ntozake Shange a feminist and poet addressed the point saying that "Multiculturalism isn't about culture, it's about power" ("Ntozake Shange Quotes"). This means that each country can use these policies in a way to work for their own interests while supporting the government benefits as the prime source. In the same line of thoughts, Claire Fox a British journalist and writer clarified; " If you challenge multiculturalism you are seen to be a racist. But it's a political philosophy that needs to be looked at. If you don't, you're taking it on trust, which is intellectually dishonest"("Claire Fox Quotes"). Her statement clearly explains how much it's important for the government to not let anyone come across their work. For example, in France, although they claim to be a multicultural nation yet small ethnic group.

suffer from racism and many issues and are treated differently. Many Muslims specifically suffer from attacks from others accusing them of being terrorists. The main policies that control the system of a diverse society are Assimilation and Integration.

1.4.1 Assimilation

According to Oxford's definition, it is "The absorption of a minority group into a majority population, during which the group takes on the values and norms of the dominant culture ". It explains that Individuals change and adapt to the culture and beliefs of the dominant nation, abandoning their own cultures and values, that's why many people think it's not recommended to live in a multicultural community. In one way or another people can be affected by other cultures. A British novelist named Martin Amis explained that " the deal with multiculturalism is that the only culture you're allowed to disapprove of is your own" (*A Quote by Martin Amis*) , he demonstrates how a single individual is only permitted to be distinct from his own in various and diverse communities.

One of the main drawbacks of adopting other people's behavior, language, attire, and other characteristics is the person practicing it entirely alters from who he is and becomes unrecognizable. However, Linda Chavez an American author stated "Britons seem to have given up on assimilating their Muslim population, with many British elites patting themselves on the back for their tolerance and multiculturalism" ("Linda Chavez Quotes").

1.4. 2 Integration

The *Cambridge Dictionary* defines integration as "The action or process of successfully joining or mixing with a different group of people". which explains that integration gives more room for individualism. The immigrant is not the only one who changes as a result of absorption into society. Through his personal influence on society, he also alters it to some extent. So, Assimilation and multiculturalism are therefore qualitatively opposites of one another (Joachim).

Furthermore, Integration is a two-way street that requires both the person who wishes to integrate and the society that is willing to welcome this person. It means that everyone in a particular nation, regardless of where they originate from or what religion they practice, has a place in the altogether; it entails adding to the current culture, which in turn alters and strengthens society. Integration entails retaining one's identity and beliefs but also being able to celebrate diversity and collaborate with others in social life (Keris 2:29-3:00).

1.5. Western Perception of Islam

In psychology, the comfort zone plays a crucial role in keeping anyone in a certain routine and closed off to anything new. This is the same situation that prevents most Westerners from searching for the true meaning of Islam as they are too engaged in consuming what the mainstream press portrays of Islam, which largely promotes fear of it and create a great deal of enmity toward it. In a similar vein, Saeed explained: "a framework through which the West examines what it perceives as the foreign or alien, consistently figuring the East as the West's inverse: barbaric to its civilized, superstitious to its rational, medieval to its modern ". He suggests that Westerners view the Orient which is Muslims as dangerous and savages and backward not only perceived them as outsiders but as threats to them.

The reality of Western perceptions, and frequently fears, of Islam, is one of the most important problems for both immigrant Muslims and the societies in which they have established. Naturally, the historical legacy left in the Middle Ages by the Crusades as well as present notions of an "essentialized," violent, and changeless religion have a significant influence on how the West views Islam (Haddad 3-5).

Muslims are frequently portrayed in Western countries as outsiders, although there are accurate and well-informed stereotypical discussions and depictions of Muslims in the media are common. Muslims are thought to be incapable of participating as equal citizens. Western political discourses and media representations frequently promote racialized oriental images of Muslims as an enemy and portrayed as unreasonable, backward, frightening, corrupt, and repressive (Eid & Karim 100) .

Stereotypes perpetuated by the West about Muslims lead to a naturalized split in which Western civilizations and cultures are seen as superior and normative in comparison to Eastern civilizations and societies, strengthening the political, economic, and cultural dominance of "the West" over "the East." The common belief that people from the East can't take care of themselves and need to be controlled or terrified is supported by these depictions of Muslims. (Eid & Karim 100-101). This reflects back to Karl Marx a German author and philosopher who emphasized this viewpoint back in the 18th century when he said, "They cannot represent themselves, they must be presented," applying the Western vision of the Orients. Islam is portrayed as dictatorial and ambiguous by the polarization of "the West" and "Islam" as two distinct entities, whereas "the West" is seen as a source of freedom and stability (Eid & Karim 100- 104).

According to an article entitled *How Westerners and Muslims View Each Other* stated that most Muslims and Westerners believe that there are no poor ties between them. As Muslims are frequently stereotyped as terrorists, violent, and backward. Because of some significant factors, such as the misinterpretation of Islam and Muslims in media, literature, news cover, or even in social media.

This study examines how Muslims and Westerners interact and perceive one another. In the West, stereotypes of Muslims as aggressive, terrorists, and intolerant

are common. While Muslims in the Middle East and Asia frequently perceive Westerners as fanatical, arrogant, self-centered, and selfish.

The following chart shows the relationship between Muslims and Westerners and how they view each other as a general overview. For instance, considering the 9/11 terrorist attacks in the United States and past perceptions it revealed about 55% view Muslims as generally bad and 32% view them as generally good. Whereas, France's attitude toward Muslims is even more negative than the U.S. with a rise to 66% and 23% voted generally good. Britain on the other hand, voted 61% on the generally good scale compared to generally positive outcomes of 28%. Therefore, it reveals that out of the main countries, the U.S. voted the lowest.

In the second section of the figure, Muslims who reside in the West also cast ballots, and the results show that the British Muslim population has a very negative view of the West, with 62% voting for the generally bad and 23% for the generally positive compared to French Muslims that voted 58% for usually negative opinions and 41% for positive ones.

Relations Between Muslims and Westerners

□ Generally good ■ Generally bad

	Generally good	Generally bad
U.S.	32	55
Germany	23	70
France	33	66
Spain	14	61
Great Britain	28	61
Russia	18	53
British Muslims	23	62
German Muslims	29	60
French Muslims	41	58
Spanish Muslims	49	23
Turkey	14	64
Egypt	31	58
Jordan	39	54
Indonesia	39	53
Pakistan	30	25
Nigerian Muslims	10	77
Nigerian Christians	24	52
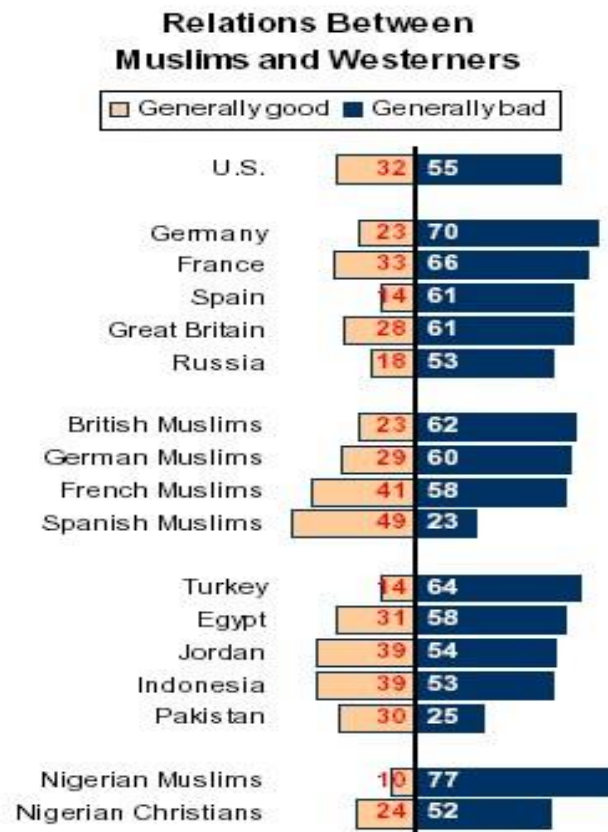
Figure 1.2: The Pew Research Center's Global Attitudes Project conducted on June 22, 2006

Since the attacks of September 11, 2001, Islamophobia has become pervasive in British and European political discourse, evoking aspects of Orientalist ideology and perceptions of Muslims as menacing while mobilizing imaginaries of a variety of different kinds. Many attitudes, sentiments, and behaviors encourage enmity toward Muslims. (Alam, Y. & Husband. C qtd. in Eid and Karim 101).

1.5.1. The Main Reasons behind the Emergence of Islamophobia in the West

Islamophobia has witnessed a significant surge in recent years, primarily attributed to public tensions surrounding immigration and the integration of Muslims in Europe, as well as instances of terrorism perpetrated by individuals or groups claiming to act in the name of Islam. This increase of Islamophobia has several reasons like the following.

1.5.1.1 The 9/11 Attack

In recent years, Islamophobia has been rising on a high scale due to public tensions over immigration and the integration of Muslims into Europe. However, September 11, 2001, signaled the beginning of a new era for Muslims in the United States and Europe. It was the main trigger that fueled Islamophobia. The incident led many Muslims to become the focus of hostility and prejudice soon after the Twin Towers and the Pentagon were struck by al-Qaida terrorists (Alfonseca).

In the weeks that followed the bombings, mosques were destroyed or damaged, and many Muslims experienced harassment and death threats, according to evidence given before Congress in 2011 by the Southern Poverty Law Center, several victims were assaulted, beaten, or held at gunpoint simply for being considered as Muslim.

Ilhan Omar, a Muslim congresswoman from Minnesota, spoke with ABC News about 9/11 and the discrimination that followed, she says that "As Americans, as people who are living here, we were also attacked," she also says "This is our community, this is our country, and there were Muslims who lost their lives in those towers, who were Muslim firefighters, who lost their lives." She argued that even Muslim Americans were affected by the attack as there was no coverage dedicated to them in media outlets.

Some of the highest rates of Islamophobic hate crimes ever documented in the United States, according to the FBI, increased 16-17% between 2000 and 2001 against Muslims (Kishi). Muslims who live in the European Union were seen as threats to the European way of life due to the myth of a European "Islamization" widespread by

xenophobic, populist parties. This caused panic which changed public opinion towards Muslims.

According to the Open Society Foundations, it stated that terrorism has heightened dread and anxiety, as evidenced by the violent jihadist assaults in London, Paris, Brussels, and Barcelona. Many Europeans view Islam as a threat and consider Muslims as the enemy as a result of extremists using Islam to excuse their terrorist actions. It also challenged the secular principles and presumptions that dominate most of public and political life in Europe today. Therefore, Islam's existence and growth thus provoke conflict and the majority of current disputes between Muslims and the people of the West in general are fueled by this tension.

1.5.1.2 The London Bombings of 2005 7/7

July 7, 2005, the London subway system was the target of a coordinated series of suicide bombings known as the "7/7 attacks," which resulted in the destruction of three trains, the deaths of 39 people, and the injuries of over 700 more (Ray).

The EUMC released an article entitled *The Impact of 7 July 2005* that revealed an analysis of events in the UK in the aftermath of the London bomb attacks. It stated that after two days, the British government's response was to consider the London bombings as terrorist actions, use legal and operational means to track down the culprits and work to prevent any additional incidents of this nature. In Addition, Muslim leaders immediately condemned the bombings and emphasized that such actions were against Islamic principles (10). For instance, Sir Iqbal Sacrainie, secretary general of the Muslim Council of Britain (MCB), clarified that any true Muslim would not carry out such acts because they were obviously against Islamic principles (11).

Almost shortly after the attacks, there was an increase in incidents against Muslims or individuals who were thought to be Muslims. The Metropolitan Police in London reported a substantial rise in incidents of what is defined as verbal or minor

physical assaults directed at the Muslim community, including attacks on mosques and property damage.

In a communication to British Imams and Muslim Organizations on July 11, 2005, the MCB Secretary General Sir Iqbal Sacranie criticized some media for disseminating "Islamophobic propaganda," expressing the opinion that some of the journalistic reports ran the risk of exacerbating the situation.

1.5.1.3 The Paris Attacks 2015

The Paris attacks are the deadliest in the European Union overall and one of the bloodiest coordinated terrorist attacks on France since the Second World War. The attacks, which targeted 15 distinct areas at nearly the same time, happened in Paris, France, on November 13 and 14. A total of nine individuals from various countries carried out six separate attacks between 21:16 and 21:53, including three suicide bombers in one incident, a fourth suicide bombing in another, and gunshots at four different places. Civilians made up 137 of the victims and at least 416 of the injured due to various forms of attacks. Earlier attacks in the region have been blamed on ISIL and its affiliates (Seibt).

Since 2015 according to A Vision of Humanity, Dlewis stated that France has experienced waves of terrorist attacks that have increased Islamophobia across the nation and the number of hate crimes committed against Muslims, particularly in the immediate wake of terrorist acts. In the week following the Charlie Hebdo attack, 54 anti-Muslim acts were reported. An atmosphere of extreme insecurity has gripped the French Muslim community. According to a Fondation Jean Jaurès survey published in 2019, 42% of French Muslims and 60% of Muslim women who wear headscarves reported experiencing discrimination because of their religion.

The article proceeds to explain that concerns have been raised over the government plan for a "bill on Republican principles" which is formally known as a bill against separatism intended to combat Islamist extremism, in the wake of the most

recent round of assault in October 2020. However, many believe that this bill is aimed to stigmatize the Muslim community. Recent changes to the law might impose limitations on Muslim religious practice, such as prohibiting females under 18 from wearing a headscarf in public places as a bill was hung on the government. This new bell sparked worries about the possibility of institutionalized Islamophobia as well as the wider implications for French society (Dlewis).

1.5.2. The Impact of the Mainstream Media on the Image of Muslims

The media depiction of conflicts in Muslim nations is a prime illustration of how perception affects reality. Even though there are numerous violent conflicts occurring around the world, the ones that receive the greatest media attention are those that occur in Muslim-majority countries. This is partially due to the fact that the majority of them are connected to Western interests, but it is also related to a persistent cultural bias (Esposito & Kalin 14).

In the modern world, a lot of our knowledge and information about people, cultures, and events worldwide comes through media outlets. Unfortunately, we frequently overlook the media's influence and grow numb to its propensity for stereotyping and framing. For Western audiences, the mainstream media remains a major source of knowledge on Islam and Muslims. Almost 25% of the world's population is made up of Muslims, One-fifth of all Muslims live in nations where Islam is not the dominant religion, including Western societies where Muslims are the fastest-growing religious grouping. Islam is the main minority faith in these communities as well, and Islam is misrepresented in numerous circumstances. It is believed that for many years, the Western mainstream media has been spreading inaccurate information about the Islamic world. Associating it with negativity in the West as a result of the distorted perceptions created and managed by the media. It's

widely known that Islam and the Islamic world are frequently misrepresented, interpreted, and depicted wrongly in the Western mainstream media (Eid & Karim 100-101)

According to an article entitled *Portrayal of the Muslim World in the Western Print Media*, Shahwar stated that the media coverage of Islam and Muslims peaked at a high rate during recent decades, through the main tragic events of the Al-Qaeda attack on the World Trade Center in 2001, and the London and Madrid bombings in 2004 and 2005. These events lead to attacking Muslims and targeted them as the most responsible, as a result, these were covered by the media leading to severe consequences labeling the Muslim identity in relation to these events which were devastating. This comes to show that the media is a powerful tool in conveying messages and influences its audience giving a false narrative. Since these incidents, Muslims have been subjected to unfair stereotypes in the media and therefore tainted the public's opinion on the faith and its adherents. The 9/11 attack created a "Clash of Civilizations" between Islam and Christianity on a worldwide scale.

Since September 11, 2001, Islam has been depicted in the media as a religion that requires modification in order to survive. Christianity, Judaism, Hinduism, and Buddhism have never faced such harsh criticism in the modern world, even when members of these communities have committed horrific crimes against the United States or the Western world in general. Therefore, the Western media's misrepresentation of Islam and Muslim society is typically always connected to terrorism and extremism (Shahwar).

1.6 Conclusion

In a nutshell, this chapter attempted to give a historical background of Islam in the West, specifically the Muslim Immigration growth in Britain and the UK. It revealed the negative perception of Westerners of the Muslim community through several incidents, one being the 9/11 attack followed by the London Bombings and France Attacks that led to defining the rise of Islamophobia, where there is a fear or

prejudice against Islam and its followers. The Western media reinforced the general stereotypes by spreading inaccurate negative views that all Muslims are terrorists perpetuating a harmful narrative. The next chapter attempts to show a comparison between how Muslims are treated in the United Kingdom versus France, and how each country has specific laws in dealing with the Muslim community in many fields such as religion, politics, and society.

Chapter Two

Islamophobia in UK and France

2.1 Introduction

The present chapter attempts to discuss the extent of Islamophobia through a comparison between the United Kingdom and France focusing on how each country treats its Muslim minorities. This chapter begins with the presence of Islamophobia as a result of numerous instances that occurred and contributed to the prejudice Muslims experience. It proceeds to define the secular policy used by both nations, as the UK follows an open secularism approach, which allows freedom of religious diversity. On the other hand, France follows a closed secular approach, emphasizing the strict separation of religion from the public sphere. Emphasizing the different laws implemented by both countries led to the restrictions and obstacles Muslims face in the employment and education fields.

2.2 Islamophobia in Britain

The increase in Islamophobia in the United Kingdom in recent years has been a cause for concern as Sayeeda Warsi, a former Conservative Party chairman and one of the top Muslim leaders in the nation, raised red flags in 2011 when she claimed that anti-Muslim prejudice had grown so common that it had "passed the dinner table test". Unfortunately, things have only gotten worse for her and the larger British Muslim community (Zaheer, par. 1). According to an article entitled *In the United Kingdom, Islamophobia Is on the Rise*, a document including 300 charges of Xenophobia involving Prime Minister Boris Johnson and Conservative Party members was sent to the Equalities and Human Rights Commission in the year 2020 by the Muslim Council of Britain.

In contrast to racism, the term Islamophobia is unfamiliar because it has only been used meaningfully in policy discourse for the past 20 years. Despite numerous high-profile initiatives, including those made in 2018 by the All-Party Parliamentary

Group (APPG) regarding islamophobia, there is still no agreement on what exactly defines it. In the same line of thoughts, Chris Allen a British sociologist considers "Islamophobia as being an ideology similar to racism" (190). Many people often confuse or associate these two concepts, thinking they are the same thing. Allen continues, saying that "Islamophobia is similar as complex as other discriminators phenomena e.g., racism, Anti-Semitism, disablism, and so on", yet he focuses on the question of "how Islam and Muslims are thought about, spoken about, written about, and referred to" (191). He lays out the term more broadly, highlighting the main concerns of how others view Muslims and Islam and how texts and books historically describe them.

Furthermore, Islamophobia is often seen as a mode of discrimination against Muslims, referring to how they are viewed and treated. Islamism is becoming more widespread in the UK as Muslims experience more stigmatization and prejudice. This sort of injustice through which Muslims are frequently verbally and physically harassed and subjected to institutional discrimination because of their religion, has become embedded in daily life in the United Kingdom.

This phenomenon in the United Kingdom has been rising in the last few years. According to a report by the Muslim Council of Britain, there has been a significant increase in Islamophobic incidents, ranging from verbal abuse to physical attacks. From 2021 to 2022 hate crimes in UK and England and Wales recorded over 155.841 crimes, 42% were against Muslims minorities due to religious reasons (Flatley).

The following table presents the number of religious hate crimes reported by the police between 2021 and 2022. It reveals that Muslims are the most affected by these crimes, accounting for the highest percentage at 42%. There were over 3,495 recorded offenses against Muslims, surpassing other religious groups. Jews came in second with

1,919 recorded offenses, while Buddhists had the lowest number of hate crimes recorded, with only 36 offenses (Home Office).

Numbers and percentages		England and Wales
Perceived religion of the victim	Number of offences 2021/22	% 2021/22
Buddhist	36	0
Christian	701	8
Hindu	161	2
Jewish	1,919	23
Muslim	3,459	42
Sikh	301	4
Other	403	5
No religion	209	3
Unknown	1,426	17
Total number of targeted religions	8,615	
Total number of offences	8,307	

Source: Police recorded crime, Home Office.

Table 2.1: year ending March 2022 Number and proportion of religious hate crimes recorded by the police, by the perceived targeted religion,

The rise in anti-Islam sentiment in the UK is caused by several factors. One of the key causes is media manipulation, which frequently depicts Muslims negatively and associates them with "terrorism" and other forms of "extremism". It is well known how pervasive Islamophobia is on social media like Twitter and Facebook as reported by *Demos* who recorded over 215,000 Islamophobic posts in the UK in July 2016 alone (Miller). Due to their policies on free expression, social media platforms like

Twitter and Facebook have been accused of "allowing Islamophobia to flourish". Posts have called for the killing of British Muslims and charged Muslims with the worst accusations or even equivalent to cancer (Wright).

.The monitoring group Tell MAMA has said in its annual report of 2018, two major incidents happened sparking the outbreak of anti-Muslim discrimination. The first was a response to the "Punish a Muslim Day" event, in which letters were delivered to Muslim residences, organizations, and places of employment. The letters claimed that certain acts against Muslims, such as removing a woman's hijab or assaulting a person can earn the participant points. However, on the political side, the second incident happened in August 2019 following Johnson's column in which he referred to veiled Muslim women as "letterboxes" and "bank robbers", and also mentioned that the "Burka" is oppressive (Parveen). After his comments, Muslim Conservative peer Baroness Warsi reiterated her request for the Conservatives to launch an impartial investigation into claims of Islamophobia inside the party. Johnson has been urged to apologize by Prime Minister Theresa May after she acknowledged the offense of his remarks (Soussi, par. 4 -5).

Despite the fact that the United Kingdom is a multicultural country and one of the most secularized in the world, which implies that it is a model nation that acknowledges how to handle a diverse society by accepting all ethnic groups and religions, Still, Muslims continue to be the most targeted, marginalized, and blamed minority in society.

2.2.1 Secularism in Britain

Religions from all over the world, including Christianity, Islam, Judaism, and Hinduism, have had an impact on the UK during the course of its long history of religious diversity. However, in recent years there has been a decrease in religious

identity and an increase in secularism, with more than 50% of the population identifying as nonreligious, secularism, which refers to the notion of separating religion and state as a growing concern in the United Kingdom (Sherwood, par. 5). An article entitled *What Is Secularism* explains that it is essentially a framework for ensuring equality for believers and non-believers in all spheres of society, such as

politics, education, the law, and other areas. As a result, religious persons have the right to openly express their ideas, and since secularism upholds the right to free speech, this right also extends to those who criticize or disagree with those beliefs ("*What Is Secularism*"). According to *The Cambridge Dictionary*, secularism is defined as "The belief that religion should not be involved with the ordinary social and political activities of a country".

Therefore, its main principle is separating state authorities and institutions from religious authorities and institutions. For instance, there are two main types of secularism as writers frequently discuss. Charles Taylor refers to them as "closed "and "open "secularism, while Rowan Williams calls them "programmatic" and "procedural" secularism. However, they both object to "programmatic" or "closed" secularisms and define them as those in which religion is completely rejected in the "public square" and only expressed in the private sphere (Rodell) .

Secularism has emerged as a significant topic in the UK in recent years, with debates around the role of religion in public life, including the place of religious symbols and practices in schools and the workplace. In reality, the UK is regarded as a model of "open secularism". No restrictions on the use of religious symbols in schools or the wearing of veils in public exist. "Individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance for those of different faiths and beliefs" are subjects that must be taught in all schools (Rodell).

While some claim that secularism is vital to ensure that everyone is treated fairly, regardless of their religious affiliation or their lack of it, others contend that it is an attack on religious freedom. Despite these disagreements, many in the United Kingdom continue to support a more secular society where religion and state are kept apart ("*What Is Secularism?"*). However, Muslims and secularism in the United Kingdom is a complicated issue that has generated a lot of discussion in recent years. The UK is a secular nation; therefore, politics and religion are separated and neither is officially supported by the government. But many Muslims in the UK have voiced worries about how secularism may affect their right to practice their religion and sense of identity (Iqtidar, par.6 - 7).

For instance, some British citizens believe that Muslims in the UK favor a bigger place for religion in the public sphere. However, it is important to note that many Muslims do not see any conflict between their religious beliefs and the framework of secular practices and institutions in the UK, especially in light of the current debate over secularism. According to Cambridge University's study Contextualizing Islam in Britain, which asked a diverse group of Muslim participants to respond to the question ''What does it mean to live faithfully as a Muslim in Britain today?'' affirmed their support for this model and noted that procedural secularism offers British Muslims several advantages, including religious freedom in practicing their religion in a respectful and secure environment (Kuttab, par. 2 - 3).

On the other hand, the debate over religious expression is frequently seen in the UK as one between those who favor the status quo of procedural secularism and "ideological secularists," who disagree with procedural secularism and argue that religious voices need to be suppressed or strictly regulated in both public and private institutions (Kuttab, par. 5). Reflecting this in a speech, the Welsh Secretary Stephen Crabb said that because mainstream religion is marginalized in public life, Britain's

"hard-edged" secularism is partially to blame for "aiding and abetting" extremism. As well as a Tory cabinet minister also stated that Britain's secularizing society runs the risk of ''pushing more young Muslims into the arms of Isis '' (Mason, par. 1 - 2).

Finally, this demonstrates that while some people in Britain believe that secularism is better for a diverse society because it allows for religious freedom for many different ethnic groups, others disagree, saying that secularism causes more problems for the country because it encourages people to act irrationally and should therefore be restricted and regulated.

2.2.2 Attitudes of the British Government toward Muslims

"Islamophobia is a complex phenomenon" (Jonathan Sacks), that stimulates people all over the world, each country has several Muslims who live and work alongside the natives, and many countries have their own approach to dealing with this phenomenon, and how to treat this matter. As the United Kingdom evolved into a secular country with an open policy accepting others' differences France is more involved in closed secular policy. Additionally, the multiple violent attacks on Britain in recent years, between 2015 and 2022, compelled the government to make new measures to confront the terrorism problem, which threatens national security. The new regulation, however, had an indirect influence on Muslims' lives in sectors such as the economy and education, as well as on the political and societal fronts.

Islamophobia, along with all other types of racism and hatred, has no place in politics or political life as the majority preaches. Regrettably, it's present in all parties and is probably more common in some than others. A report entitled *Defining Islamophobia* derived from The Muslim Council of Britain stated that it is present throughout various political parties and is structural in nature, it is pervasive at all levels within the Conservative Party, which has been in power for the previous ten years. According to a YouGov poll commissioned by Hope Not Hate, 47% of

Conservative Party members believed that "Islam is a threat to the UK way of life", while 57% of members had negative attitudes toward Muslims, which is more than twice the percentage of members who had negative attitudes toward Hindus and Jews (Bhatti 37).

This outcome emerged after a dossier detailing evidence of over 300 cases of Islamophobia at all levels of the Conservative Party, including the Prime Minister and Cabinet ministers, advisers to the Party, MPs, etc., was submitted to the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) by the Muslim Council of Britain in March 2020. Some examples shown were Andrew James Tagg, a former councilor for Calderdale, demanded "unconditional surrender" from Muslims, describing them as "brutes who beat, kill, young women" as well as, Leyton and Wanstead Conservative Association Chairman Thor Halland demanding the ban of Muslims (Bhatti 38).

While there has been widespread coverage of the presence of Islamophobia in the Conservative Party, the Labour Party, which is considered the country's largest anti-racist political party, has been in the news for the wrong reasons. The Labour Muslim Network issued a stinging assessment of the party's Islamophobia in 2020, saying that more than one in every four Muslim Labour members had faced discrimination inside party ranks and that half of the Muslim members did not trust the new party leadership to address the issue (Zaheer).

According to a report done by (LMN), one Labour supporter quoted in the report said: "Like in most institutions within the UK, as a Muslim it often feels as though we are towards the bottom of the list when it comes to human rights, being respected and having our best interests heard/advocated. It feels as though within all institutions within the UK it has become increasingly acceptable to condemn and even abuse Muslims" (Gayle, par.7)

They argue that Muslims are not taken into account or protected by the political parties, despite evidence that Islamophobic behavior is growing more accepted inside numerous institutions in the UK.

In the same line of thoughts, although the country's race laws afforded legal protection for the Sikh and Jewish communities based on their racial and ethnic identities, British Muslims were excluded. Reflecting this to the case of the Muslim appellant in Nyazi v Rymans Ltd in 1988 was denied protection under the Race Relations Act 1976 because "Muslims include people of many nations and colors, who speak many languages, and whose only common denominator is religion and religious culture" (Zaheer, par .6). This explains that due to the many differences within the Muslim community such as language, culture, and nations and only having religion in common they were denied. However, these all contribute to the main point of the Race Relation Act which shows that Muslims have always been treated differently than other minorities.

2.2.3 Discrimination against Muslims in Education and Workplace

Instances of Islamophobia in the British education system have been usually reported, including incidents involving students and teachers. These incidents can range from discriminatory behavior, verbal abuse, or harassment toward Muslim students to biased curriculum content or practices that marginalize or stigmatize Muslims.

The British educational system strives to foster inclusivity, equality, and respect for all students regardless of their cultural or religious background. As the government has put regulations in place to guarantee that everyone receives equal treatment and opportunity, including Muslims in the educational field. In schools, the government advocates for inclusiveness, diversity, and religious tolerance. For instance, The Equality Act of 2010 prohibits discrimination based on age, disability, race, and

religion or belief in the education sector. Islamophobia and all forms of prejudice must be prevented and addressed, and this expectation extends to schools ("UK Legislation - Equality Act 2010 - Local Offer").

Nevertheless, based on data from Tell MAMA (Measuring Anti-Muslim Attacks), a third-party reporting organization, there has been an increase in reported anti-Muslim animosity within schools in England and Wales after trigger events like the Manchester arena bombing. Parents claim that at the playgrounds of their children's schools, peers are calling them "terrorists" and telling them to "go blow up another town" in retaliatory anti-Muslim hostility and bullying. There were 839 cases of Islamophobia documented in 2017 alone, and 53 of those occurrences (or 6%) happened in educational institutions (Kidscape, par. 3).

On the other side, Islamophobia has existed in the British economy and can manifest itself in several ways, such as through hurdles to Muslim-owned businesses, job discrimination, unfair treatment, or other types of inequality. For instance, Muslim people have spoken out about encounters with discrimination in recruiting, promotion, and workplace relationships.

According to BBC News, a charity association in London that helps Muslims to face Islamophobia reported in 2022 that it had handled 387 incidents of discrimination during the previous four years. Such abuse, according to Mukith, "has a long-term damaging impact." She also says "In the beginning, we saw a lot of hate crime cases, a lot of physical assault, verbal abuse, harassment in the street, but now we're seeing a lot more discrimination, especially discrimination in the workplace," for example, Sheymaa one of the people who faced discrimination at her workplace stated "I was the only visibly Muslim person there and one of the only black people there," which led her to quit her job because of Islamophobia (Welsh).

On the contrary, The Equality Act of 2010, which also prohibits discrimination in the workplace implemented by the British government and ensures the protection and safety of everyone. Qualified and talented Muslims in the UK have access to employment in a wide range of public sector jobs, including those in education, civil service, healthcare, law enforcement, social services, and local government. For instance, an influential figure in British politics, Sadiq Khan was elected as London's first Muslim mayor in 2016. In the city, he has significantly influenced the direction of policies and programs (Hume). Furthermore, under the same Act, Muslims can practice their religion at the workplace such as praying or breaking the fast in the holy month.

Yet, in a recent study conducted by Savanta ComRes of 1,503 UK Muslims for the web platform Hyphen, 69% of UK Muslims who are now employed reported encountering Islamophobia of some kind (Welsh). Therefore, Muslims can experience positive and negative treatment within both sectors and vary between individuals. Even though there are policies from the government to combat discrimination, it still exists within society.

2.3. Islamophobia in France

While it is now widely acknowledged that the term "Islamophobia" specifically relates to prejudices and stereotypes toward Muslims in the world, the utilization of this expression continues to be up for debate in France where political leaders and the media play an important role in. As exemplified by the interview between former French Prime Minister Manuel Valls and journalist Jeffrey Goldberg from the *Atlantic Magazine*. During their discussion on the use of the term Islamophobia in France, Valls expressed that "There is a prejudice in society about this, but on the other hand, I refuse to use this term 'Islamophobia', because those who use this word are trying to invalidate any criticism at all of Islamist ideology.

The charge of 'Islamophobia' is used to silence people "(Goldberg, par. 1- 3)

Manuel Valls contends that the accusation of 'Islamophobia' is frequently employed as a means to silence individuals who criticize Islamism. In addition, Edwy Plenel a political journalist discussed this issue further in his book entitled *For the Muslims: Islamophobia in France* in 2016 when he referred to Manuel Valls's point of view of not accepting the term Islamophobia clarifying that the refusal of the use of this expression aims to "minimize the discrimination that this denotes, by telling a lie about its supposedly Iranian origin, whereas its invention is well and truly French, dating back to 1910" (36).

Based on Abdellali Hajjat and Marwan Mohammed's book entitled *Islamophobia in France, The Construction of the "Muslim Problem"* it highlighted that Islamophobia manifests itself in a variety of forms in France, both openly and privately, and frequently appears to have approval from the government. These cultural stereotypes demonstrate how the Muslim population is utilized as a scapegoat for France's overall harsh treatment of immigrants ("Georgia Press"). In addition, it is a complicated problem that has been linked to a number of issues, including media portrayals, political discourse, and the emergence of farright movements. Al Jazeera claims that prejudice against Muslims in France has increased since the country held presidential and legislative elections. This discrimination includes restrictions on burkinis and Muslim head coverings as well as claims that Muslims are disregarding French values (Zeidan).

Islamophobic attacks have also been on the rise in France. According to the French Ministry of Interior, anti-Muslim incidents increased by 54% in 2019, with 154 reported incidents. In addition, the Collective Against Islamophobia in France (CCIF) reported that Islamophobic attacks increased by 53% in 2019, with 235 incidents being

reported (Rosman). A huge concern about how Muslims are treated has structural and historical implications beyond specific instances of prejudice or discrimination. Islamophobia is defined as anti-Muslim racism in this context, as Muslims are systematically racialized as a "problem" that the White, non-Muslim majority should debate (Dawes).

One of the main incidents that fueled Islamophobia in France, On January 7, 2015, a terrorist attack against Charlie Hebdo occurred in France. The Paris headquarters of the satirical magazine Charlie Hebdo, known for its controversial cartoons and comments, was attacked by two Islamist militants. Two brothers, Saad, and Chérif Kouachi, used assault weapons during the attack to kill 12 people, including- two police officers and eight journalists. The attack was an appalling act of savagery that received criticism from all over the world (CNN). Following the brutal killing of a French history teacher who had discussed caricatures of Islam's Prophet Muhammad with his class, he was beheaded on the school grounds, the French president stated that "One of our compatriots was murdered today because he taught ... the freedom of expression, the freedom to believe or not believe" (Ganley, par. 1- 5). Macron expresses his shock and sadness over this tragedy while underlining one of the main goals of the Western nation, which is to embrace freedom of speech as a tool to combat injustice and terrorism.

According to an article by Dlewis entitled *A Snapshot Analysis of anti-Muslim Mobilisation in France* stated that since 2015, multiple waves of terrorist attacks in France have fueled an increase in Islamophobia and hate crimes against the Muslim population, particularly in the immediate aftermath of terrorist acts. In the week

following the Charlie Hebdo attack, 54 anti-Muslim acts were reported. An atmosphere of severe insecurity has gripped the French Muslim community. According to a 2019 Fondation Jean Jaurès study, 42% of French Muslims felt discriminated against because of their beliefs, with the figure jumping to 60% for Muslim women wearing a headscarf.

An article entitled, *Anti-Muslim Acts Escalate After Paris Terrorist Attacks* based on France 24, states that four bullets were fired at a mosque near the southwestern city of Albi just hours after the Charlie Hebdo anti-Muslim attacks were registered that evening. Another mosque was burned down that night in the central-eastern town of Aix-les-Bains, in what authorities assume was a criminal act. The phrases "assassins" and "dirty Arabs" were spraypainted on the walls of a mosque in the seaside city of Bayonne, and the words "Arabs go away" were also scrawled on a building of the Council of the Muslim Faith in the city of Ajaccio's suburbs. As a result of these attacks, the French Interior Ministry has increased security at Muslim places of worship.

To summarize, all of these causes contributed to an increase in Islamophobia and Islamophobic attacks on Muslims, characterizing them as radicals. Under the *Laïcité* (secularism) policy, the French government continues to impose rules and regulations that limit the rights of French Muslims and use this notion by invading their privacy.

2.3.1 Laïcité in France

Laicité, which broadly refers to "secularism," was established by The Law of 1905, formally separating the Church from the government. The French idea of secularism also pledged to protect "the freedom to practice religion" in exchange for separating the Church and State. The *Laïcité* principle emphasizes the freedom of conscience and religion rather than being inherently anti-religious.

According to the official French Minister of Foreign Affairs Office, secularism is more important than ever as France's population grows increasingly diverse in terms of culture to ensure that everyone may coexist peacefully and have access to "freedom of conscience". This concept has been frequently utilized in relation to the French Muslim population since the rise of terrorist incidents in France, even though the idea is universal (Tanzila, par. 2).

The principle of *Laïcité*, or the legal separation of church and state, is revered in France as the foundation of the nation. It has also generated debate on both a national and global level. The four guiding principles of French secularism, according to a report by the French news outlet The Local, are "state neutrality; respect for all beliefs and equality of all citizens before the law without distinction of religion; freedom of worship; and the absence of official worship". If secularism involves separating state concerns from religious matters, then the state also shouldn't have any involvement in religious matters. However, this isn't the situation in France because *Laïcité* has experienced several changes recently that have caused some communities, including Muslims, to feel out of place (L. France).

According to Louati, France has been in the worldwide headlines for years due to its contentious relations with its Muslim population. As Muslims are routinely singled out by specific legislation and debates across all political ideologies. While various politicians claim *Laïcité* is considered their core value, it has increasingly been accepted as an important marker of French identity and part of the national DNA, as former Prime Minister Manuel Valls put it (3).

Furthermore, in the inauguration of a European Center for Judaism, Macron discussed secularism, as it is known in France. He says "*Laïcité* is a tenet of fraternity that should live in each French person like a compass in their relationship to other citizens, that is essentially a form of French civility" (Chadwick). This viewpoint holds that it serves as a compass that directs citizen interactions, encouraging respect, equality, and tolerance for one another's uniqueness. It is seen as a core idea that supports the ideals of the French Republic and promotes peace and inclusion in society.

On the other hand, Rim-Sarah Alouane, a French legal researcher and commentator, writes in an article entitled *The Weaponization of Laïcité* that it has been associated with the modern French state, but in a way that displays the least savory features of French society. She says,

> Originally designed as a principle compatible with human rights, in which all individuals are equal regardless of their religion or belief, *Laïcité* in France has since become a tool for political identity, and Muslim women are paying a high price for it. This new form of illiberal *Laïcité* is a threat to human rights and religious freedom. Indeed, it imposes a uniform and restrictive vision of republican values and national identity, which is based on a rejection of diversity and a monolithic and biased understanding of the wearing of the headscarf by Muslim women. This modern and problematic definition of *Laïcité* is weaponized to push for the adoption of increasingly restrictive legislation and policies regarding the wearing of religious symbols, which now constitutes an acceptable form of legal discrimination against French Muslims (Berkley Center for Religion, Peace and World Affairs).

She argues that in France, *Laïcité* has become an excuse for political identification, and Muslim women are suffering the price. It imposes a unified and constraining view of republican ideals and national identity, endangering human rights and religious freedom. However, this concept remains a subject of ongoing debate in France, reflecting the diverse perspectives within the society.

Although one of the main principles of secularism is allowing everyone to practice their religion freely, it has been used to deliberately attack Muslim's way of life. Even conservatives and those of the extreme right have adopted the term " *Laïcité* " in recent years as an ideological weapon to attack Muslims' visibility in society (Louati 3).

2.3.3 Attitudes of the French Government Toward Muslims

The attitudes of the French government toward Muslims are complex and can change depending on the political parties. It is significant to highlight that the government's position is influenced by some elements, including secularism principles, concerns about national security, integration initiatives, and ongoing discussions about identity and cultural diversity.

It is difficult to see how Islam fits into France, a country where *Laïcité*, an assertive form of secularism, informs popular attitudes toward religion and aims to protect the French identity which the political parties preach this perspective. President Emmanuel Macron's political party *La République En Marche!* (LREM) (The Republican on the Move) promotes a combination of liberal and progressive ideals. During a 2016 rally held by *En Marche!* Macron stated, "No religion is a problem in France today" continue showing his position on the government in dealing with religion as he said "we have a duty to let everybody practice their religion with

dignity" (VOA News). He demonstrates that France attempts to uphold equality and defend people's freedom to practice their beliefs.

However, the government's actions and policies have generated a lot of discussion and criticism, both in France and abroad. Critics claim that these policies unfairly target Muslims. For example, French citizens who have conservative views on religion and diversity have shown xenophobia and hostility toward Muslims in France. In addition, the government has passed laws that discriminate against its Muslim citizens, such as the 2004 law that outlawed the burka and niqab in all public. The Right-wing Populist Party the National Rally (formerly National Front) led by Marine Le Pen, has been known for her controversial stance on Muslims and Islam. She declared that she would outlaw the hijab in all public places in France if she were to win the presidency (Chrisafis). She appeared in court for allegedly inciting racial hatred over comments in which she compared Muslims praying in the street to the Nazi occupation. Florian Philippot a French politician, reacted angrily on Twitter stating "The only people who should be sent before the court are those who allow prayers in the street that is illegal and against the principle of secularism!" defending her ideological Islamophobic speech against Muslims (Willsher). Eric Zemmour who is a French far-right politician also stated that French Muslims should "choose between Islam and France" insinuating there is no place for them which goes against the policy of secularism and interfering in their personal lives and religious beliefs (Welle).

On October 2, 2020, French President Emmanuel Macron makes a speech at *Les Mureaux* outside Paris to announce his anti-radicalization policy. In his speech, Macron referred to Islam as a "religion that is in crisis all over the world today ". This statement sparked anger and outrage among Muslims worldwide. Turkish President Erdogan responded to Macron's remarks with frustration, criticizing him for targeting Muslims and Islam with irrational and illogical accusations (Jazeera, "Macron Says

Islam 'In Crisis''). His generalization of referring to Islam was unjust and disrespectful, as Erdogan continues saying that the comment was "Beyond a disrespectful and clear provocation "(TRT World, 2:073:24).

Reflecting on the policy stated above, Macron passed a law tackling what he called Separatism as this legislation intends to provide the government with the tools it needs to combat Islamic terrorism. But it has been criticized for stigmatizing the French Muslim population (Jazeera, "Macron Says Islam 'In Crisis', Prompting Backlash from Muslims", par. 4). This act enabled the government to take action against any Islamic institutions, notably mosques, Islamic private schools, or organizations where they can close or put under supervision for any suspicious acts of terrorism. Based on a news article entitled *France has shut down dozens of mosques, Islamic schools this year* from a website named *The New Arab*, authorities in France have closed at least 73 mosques and Islamic private schools since January in an effort to combat "extremist Islamism" (Staff, "France Has Shut Down Dozens of Mosques, Islamic Schools", par. 1).

Even though the French government takes all these measures against French Muslims institutions, still their politicians claim to target "Islamist extremists" or even to protect their national security. for instance, Prime Minister Jean Castex reinforced this point by stating that "This legislation is not a legislation against religions nor against the Muslim religion in particular. It is a law of emancipation in the face of religious fanaticism" (Tidey, "Here's All You Need to Know About France's Controversial Separatism Law", par.4), he argues that the Act is meant to confront and combat religious extremism, with the goal of promoting liberty or freedom from the negative impacts of religious extremism.

2.3.3.1 Legislation Targeting Islamic Symbols

The French government decided to place further limitations on Muslim life in response to many terrorist actions committed, allegedly, in the name of Allah or Al-Jihad in Islam. President Emmanuel Macron's government took a leaf from China's book by implementing legislation aimed at constructing a state-approved Islam, resulting in widespread discrimination targeting Muslim civil society and curtailing the rights of French Muslims, especially women (The Bridge Initiative).

The French authority has put in place counter-terrorism measures in response to worries about radicalization and terrorism. These actions include stepped-up security and the closure of mosques thought to foster extremist ideology. Which refers to Muslims in France are under pressure to sign the French values charter. The French Council of the Muslim Faith (CFCM), which represents nine different Muslim organizations, has apparently been asked to include in the text a rejection of Islam as a political movement, a prohibition on foreign influence, and a declaration of France's republican values (Williamson, par.2).

According to the French values charter, the (CFCM) would compile a list of imams in France who have agreed to abide by the Charter in exchange for certification. French Islam scholar Olivier Roy argued there are two issues with the Charter. The first is discrimination because it only targets Muslim imams, and the second concerns the freedom of religion. Chems-Eddine Hafiz, vice-president of the CFCM and rector of the Paris Grand Mosque, stated, "We do not all agree on what this charter of principles is and what it will contain. We are at a historic turning point for Islam in France, he added, "and we Muslims are facing our responsibilities" (Williamson, par. 3).

The 2004 Law on religious symbols forbids the wearing of overtly religious items, such as the Islamic hijab, at public institutions. A few years later after the first law was implemented, the 2010 ban on face-covering veils was released which bans the wearing of veils that conceal the face, including the niqab and burqa, in public places like streets, parks, and governmental institutions. Also in 2016, the ban on Burkini was released, which is a full-body swimsuit that attempted to be outlawed at public beaches in some French municipalities. Nevertheless, the French Council of State later declared that such restrictions constituted a "serious and manifestly illegal violation of fundamental freedoms" (BBC News).

After the continuous restrictions and laws implemented toward Muslims specifically women living under constant pressure regarding the headscarf, referring to Al Jazeera an article entitled *Law Against Islam* mentioned in April 2021, The French Senate's attempt to outlaw hijabs for Muslim girls under the age of 18 in public has drawn criticism, and the hashtag #HandsOffMyHijab has gained significant social media support. The French Senate's action comes as Paris works to pass a so-called "anti-separatism" bill, which it claims will strengthen the nation's secular system but many have criticized it as discriminatory towards Muslims (Al Jazeera).

2.3.3.2 Discrimination against Muslims in Education and Workplace

France in recent years has faced several debates and challenges regarding integrating its Muslim population and Islam's role in public life, including education. The government has taken various steps to combat these concerns with the principles of secularism that are fundamental to French society. Reflecting on the 2004 law banning conspicuous religious symbols, including headscarves (hijabs), in public schools. This law applies to all religious symbols like the Jewish kippah, and large Christian crosses. It aims to maintain neutrality in the public education system. However, it is worth noting that this law has been controversial due to the different

opinions on whether it respects religious freedom or discriminates against Muslim students.

The law created controversies within the nation in which a group of people claimed it was only targeting Muslims. As an executive director of Human Rights Watch, Kenneth Roth explained that "For many Muslims, wearing a headscarf is not only about religious expression, it is about religious obligation." Similar to this point, International human rights law obliges explained that authorities should avoid coercion in matters of religious freedom. Therefore, when creating school dress regulations, this requirement must be taken into account. And relating this to the law stated above on the prohibition of headscarves in France that violates this principle ("France: Headscarf Ban Violates Religious Freedom"). For example, in case of a 16-year-old girl was expelled from class in 2015 by school administrators in an eastern suburb of Paris because she was wearing a long skirt that was seen to be an "ostentatious religious symbol" and an indication of one's allegiance to Islam, although it was acceptable when worn by a non-Muslim student as a fashion statement according to (Rfi, par. 3)

A majority of French people believe Islam is incompatible with the republic's ideals, according to Manuel Valls, the prime minister of France, who has suggested that the Muslim hijab should be prohibited in universities. His claims contributed to Islamophobic actions toward Muslim students as an incident took place in September 2015 where a lecturer at the Sorbonne questioned a student about continuing to wear "that thing" in class, referring to the student's headscarf. Later, the Sorbonne president issued an apology for the professor's remarks (Malykhina).

One of the most notable instances occurred in 2019, when Julien Odoul, a supporter of Marine Le Pen's National Rally (RN) party, sparked anger by releasing a video of himself addressing a woman wearing a headscarf who accompanied students on a field trip. He referred to "secular principles" to support his claim that school field trips should likewise be exempt from the headscarf prohibition. This demonstrates that Muslim women are the most easily targeted due to the headscarf and the constant restrictions from the government. However, Jean-Michel Blanquer, the nation's then-minister of education, responded by stating that "the law does not prohibit women wearing headscarves to accompany children." This shows that the majority of the time the far-right parties are always the ones attacking the Muslim community with the excuse of the secularism policy (Local).

According to Daily Sabah, a recent French study shows that applicants for graduate programs who have Muslim names and surnames face more discrimination than those who have names that are clearly French. In March 2021, researchers from Gustave-Eiffel University and the Higher Education Discrimination and Equality Monitoring Agency (ONDES) studied prejudice against foreign-born individuals and those with disabilities. According to the study, students with Muslim names were 12.3% less likely to hear back from their graduate schools after emailing them. For the Ministry of Higher Education, the researchers also spoke with the same educational directors three months after the study's conclusion. They discovered a double standard when it came to the directors' intention to accept diversity. Students who claimed to have physical disabilities were not the subject of any prejudice (Anadolu Agency).

Economy-wise, the French government advocates for workplaces that uphold the values of equality, diversity, and secularism. However, critics have cited instances in which concerns about how French Muslims are seen in the job market and the high level of Islamophobia prevalent in the workplace have been voiced.

French Muslims are less accepted when looking for work or even when they are employed. Most Muslims have their applications rejected at first glance and receive fewer calls for job interviews than other candidates because of their names that can be associated with their religion, Islam, such as Mohammed, Ahmed, Samira, etc. According to a survey done by associate professor of economics Marie-Anne Valfort, who said, "Yes, Muslims are discriminated against in France", French Muslims experience what is known as islamophobia or employment discrimination (Marie-Anne Valfort).

Furthermore, Yasser Louati, head of international relations at the Collective Against Islamophobia in France, explains that the "Lack of opportunity causes Muslims to withdraw from society; isolation causes them to receive fewer opportunities". He demonstrates that Muslim individuals are facing discrimination in the workplace and are suffering from Islamophobia. Along the same line, many skilled Muslims and professionals are being pushed to look for job opportunities abroad in more tolerant societies accepting of their religious beliefs. Based on a new study by the University of Lille led by Professor Olivier Esteves, highly educated Muslims are leaving France in large numbers for the UK, the US, Canada, and Dubai. For example, Natasa Jevtovic, a financial project manager, migrated to the UK from France in 2020 with the hopes of finding better employment possibilities that matched her talents and would make it easier for her to practice her religion (Islamophobia Pushing French Muslim Professionals to Look for Work Abroad: Experts).

2.4 Islam and Muslims in UK and France, Two Different Stances

The treatment of Muslims varied between the UK and France, as both nations adopted different approaches influenced by various factors, including historical, political, and sociological contexts. The following are some essential factors that

explain why their policies vary. As a result of their colonial pasts, both nations have seen large-scale immigration from those areas. For example, India, Bangladesh, and Pakistan are South Asian nations where the majority of Muslims in the UK are from (Price). While in France, the majority of the Muslim population is from Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia (Jank). Therefore, Muslim immigrants have had a significant influence on how each government has addressed its presence and needs, shaping both laws and policies.

The United Kingdom accepts and uses the term "Islamophobia" to denote prejudice and discrimination against Muslims in policy discourse, according to politician Lady Warsi, Islamophobia has grown widespread and socially acceptable in the UK (Batty). The AGGP (An all-party parliamentary group) utilized the term islamophobia, which was already widely used, to describe both institutional and individual acts of prejudice against Muslims. The Runnymede Trust Commission on British Muslims and Islamophobia put it into common usage in 1997. It has been discussed in public for decades (Bhatti 19). Unlike France, there is a continuing discussion concerning the definition and usage of the term "Islamophobia" where it is more divisive. Individuals who recognize racism and prejudice against Muslims strongly resist adopting the term "Islamophobia" in France.

Furthermore, critics see it as a negative ploy to silence religious or political Islam criticism. Anti-racist organizations and leaders such as *Délégation Interministérielle à la Lutte Contre le Racisme, l'Antisémitisme et la Haine anti-LGBT* (DILCRAH) is a French organization that is responsible for coordinating and implementing policies to combat racism, anti-Semitism, and hatred. However, does not even acknowledge or use the term Islamophobia. In a similar vein, Manuel Valls referred to Islamophobia as the "Trojan horse of the Salafists" suggesting that the term is being utilized as a strategy or tool by Salafists to advance their own agenda or gain

influence. Therefore, claiming that any individual who uses the term is a potential terrorist (Peace and Chabal, "Why the French Left Has a Problem with Islamophobia").

The UK has implemented several regulations designed to protect Muslims and the diverse ethnic communities that constitute its society, such as the Equality Act of 2010, for instance. In contrast, France has taken comparable measures to address discrimination against its diverse Muslim minority. However, questions have arisen regarding whether these laws are in favor of or against Muslims. As evidenced by various laws, including the 2004 law banning religious symbols, which prohibits the wearing of the Islamic hijab, followed by the 2010 ban on the burqa and the 2016 ban on the burkini. Additionally, a recent bill seeks to outlaw the hijab for Muslim girls under 18 in public. It is evident by these laws that they're deliberately targeting only the Muslim minority. Still, the French government claim to target extremist when implementing laws, for example, the "anti-separatism" law which aims to combat radicalization also attacks Muslims by directing it specifically to them as Macron called it "Islamist separatism".

France and the UK both have a long history of secularism, which strives to keep religion and government apart. This may impact the legislation directed towards Muslims and their faith, such as limitations on the use of religious symbols in public areas in France. However, the UK embraces an open secularism where religious diversity is more tolerable and permits more religious expression in public life ("What Is Secularism?").

Throughout the twentieth century, Britain continued to adopt a more liberal approach to religion, and it became a society where individuals could freely practice their faith. Contemporary migrants to the United Kingdom have contributed a wide range of religious practices to the country's multicultural culture. The policies

regarding integration in the UK emphasize the value of tolerating and respecting many religious and cultural identities in its integration policies. Promoting interreligious conversation, diversity education, and antidiscrimination programs are a few examples of this ("Racism and Its Opponents in Britain").

Contrarily, France has historically favored assimilation and the development of a single French identity, which has been seen as posing a threat to the visibility of religious symbols and practices, particularly those of Muslims. Edwy Plenel, a French author, elaborated on this point by saying "The imperative of assimilation is a euphemism for disappearance. A way of desiring that the Muslims of France, to whatever degree they are Muslim, should no longer be so. Their religion is neither to be mentioned nor claimed, expressed nor practiced"(44-45). He clarified that the pressure for assimilation can lead to the suppression of diversity and the denial of the right to freely practice one's religion. As Muslims in France are expected to assimilate, which suggests a subtle rejection or devaluation of their religious and cultural heritage.

2.5 Conclusion

Finally, this chapter attempted to explain how the treatment of Muslims differs in the United Kingdom and France based on the political approaches and regulations that each country has adopted. The UK fosters a multicultural perspective that values diversity and the freedom to follow any religion one wishes while religious symbols and expressions are forbidden in different public locations in France since the country's major priority is assimilation under the umbrella of closed secularism. This creates an aggressive public debate pretending that Islam is a threat to French culture and identity. The current chapter focused on Islamophobia in two main areas in the workplace and education

General Conclusion

General Conclusion

The primary objective of this research was to investigate the significant and complex issue of Islamophobia, which involves prejudice and hostility towards Islam or Muslims as a global concern. The main focus was to compare the prevalence of Islamophobia in the United Kingdom and France, specifically in the realms of religion, politics, workplace, and education. The research aimed to address two key questions: What are the main causes that led to the raise of Islamophobia in the west general, and Britian and France in particular? and to what extent does Islamophobia affect the Muslim community in Britain and France, and how do the policies of each government impact them in both the employment and education sectors?

The research findings led to several main conclusions. Firstly, the emergence of Muslims in the UK and France can be attributed to their colonial histories that encompassed various regions with significant Muslim populations. After the decolonization process, many individuals from former colonies migrated to their colonizer's countries in search of better economic opportunities or the majority was to reunite with family members who had already settled there.

Furthermore, the integration of Muslims into multicultural societies is often hindered by negative stereotypes perpetuated by the mainstream media, portraying them as backward and associated with terrorism. Significant events such as the 9/11 attacks and the 2005 bombings and Paris attacks have further contributed to the rise of Islamophobia, which is reinforced by biased portrayals in Western media.

Regarding government approaches, the UK and France exhibit different attitudes towards their Muslim communities, influenced by historical, political, and sociological contexts. The UK follows a more open secular policy, showing greater tolerance towards religion and respecting the beliefs and practices of the Muslim minority. The British government has implemented laws, such as the Equality Act of 2010, to protect the rights of diverse ethnic groups, including Muslims, in

employment. Despite occasional Islamophobic incidents, the government encourages Muslims to report any discriminatory actions and has specific organizations to support the British Muslim community.

On the other hand, France adheres to a more restrictive closed secular policy, emphasizing the protection of French identity through its principle of *laïcité* . However, this has resulted in numerous obstacles faced by Muslims, including laws banning religious symbols since 2004 and the recent controversial separatism law. The implementation of the separatism law has led to the closure and investigation of various Islamic institutions, with authorities accusing them of extremism without sufficient evidence. These policies have sparked significant debates and concerns that increased the levels of islamophobia in France.

The research indicates that Muslims face more discrimination in France compared to the United Kingdom. The French government's policies targeting Muslims in the name of secularism have been a subject of widespread concern. In contrast, while Muslims in the UK may encounter islamophobia from individuals, the government's actions are not directly aimed at targeting Muslims.

Overall, the comparison highlights the disparities in the treatment of Muslims between France and the UK, with French policies raising greater concerns regarding discrimination against Muslims. Critiques of French and UK policies toward Muslims will continue to persist.

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