IS THE ISLAM IN ISLAMOPHOBIA THE SAME AS THE ISLAM IN ANTI-ISLAM; OR, WHEN IS IT ISLAMOPHOBIA TIME?[8]

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Abstract: Through an exercise of discourse genealogy, this paper addresses the concept of Islamophobia as far as the users and object of the concept concerns. By analysing the different political contexts in which Islamophobia has appeared and has been used in Britain and elsewhere, I argue that it is a politically powerful concept for the structuring and strengthening of Islamic subjectivities in Europe, namely because it is a concept with its origins in an Islamic perspective. Rather than what it intends to denounce – a new, more or less obvious hate for Muslims – it shows the construction and affirmation of a Muslim political subjectivity in Europe.

Key words: Islamophobia, Muslim subjectivity, Islamic perspective, Britain

> to invoke the history of a concept is not to uncover its elements, but to investigate the principles that cause it to be useful – or problematic.
>
> Ian Hacking

When can one speak of Islamophobia? In a nutshell, the approach in this paper is to ask not when the term Islamophobia was coined but what political language was required for the concept of Islamophobia to be meaningful. If Islamophobia, *a la*

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[8] This paper was first published in Sayyid, S. and Vakil, AbdoolKarim (eds) (2008), "Thinking Thru' Islamophobia Symposium Papers", *CERS e-working papers*, 12 (Available at: http://www.sociology.leeds.ac.uk/research/ethnicity-racism/cers/working-papers.php).

Runnymede[9], "(was) coined because there (was) a new reality that need(ed) naming", and, more crucially, "so that it (could) be identified and acted against", *contra* Runnymede, what is significant is not *what* it names, which is also not a centuries old fear and dread of Islam and Muslims (much less the "unfounded(ness)" of such hostility), but rather *that* it names; and in naming, the namer it bespeaks rather than the named. Quite the opposite of victimhood, then, Islamophobia is about contestation and the power to set the political vocabulary and legal ground of recognition and redress. It is about the subjectification of Muslim political subject(ivitie)s. What is called for, then, is less a history of Islamophobia than its genealogy. What are the conditions of possibility of the wielding of Islamophobia as an epistemological machine of war? In cipher: on the one hand, the de-theologisation of Islam, and de-racing of racism; on the other, the de-centring of the West and the forging of a Muslim (Islamist) politics. Laying clues to the cipher is the purpose of this paper.

FROM THE SCOURGE OF GOD TO AKI'S G-HAD

One crucial step which Edward Said emphasised was the restructuring of Orientalism out of the prison-house of Christian theological categories into secular, historical, comparatist, classificatory and ultimately civilisational ones – a restructuring which involves both the secularisation of categories, but also, their re-habitation by a "reconstructed religious impulse": M. H. Abrams' "Natural Supernaturalism" (Said, 2003: 116-122). This is not the place to revisit the secularisation/reoccupation debate, but we must remain alert to its unresolved subsumption here. Moreover, if we carry from Gil Anidjar the unsettling provocations that it was "Hegel who invented the Muslims", or that it is to the Nazis that we owe the recognition of Islam as "the paradigm of religiosity", both these considerations will considerably caution against a too rushed, or linear, periodisation of what is involved in the process Said was getting at (Anidjar, 2003: 133; 2008: 19).[10]

LOCATING THE WHEN: READING BIN LADEN WITH D. QUIXOTE

In a eulogy to the late Edward Said, Ania Loomba recalled his answer to the charge of *Orientalism*'s willful disregard of the heterogeneities of imperialist conceptions of the Orient. His answer reiterated the book's argument about the enduring deep

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[9] (Editors' note: A reference to the influential definition of Islamophobia proposed by the Runnymede Trust Commission on British Muslims and Islamophobia chaired by Gordon Conway, whose landmark report was published in 1997).

[10] For a useful introduction to Anidjar's project in his own words, see the "Introduction" to *Semites* and the earlier Q&A Asia Source interview http://www.asiasource.org/news/special_reports/anidjar4.cfm.

structure of Orientalism, and the recurrence of its basic premise; a recurrence which, for the interview, he illustrated by reference to the re-appropriation of the civilisational boundary making in Huntington's *Clash of Civilizations* – it's "been there all along, I mean, for hundreds of years", which "doesn't mean its the same" (Loomba, 2003: 12-14).[11] In what was intended as a tributary exploration of the legacy of Said to postcolonial critique, Loomba went on to develop his point in respect of the relation between racism and colonialism and its repeating and appropriation of images and tropes. As in both her previous and subsequent work, she did so by drawing on Etienne Balibar's discussion of neo-racism. Two points may be noted. Firstly, as elsewhere, Loomba, following Balibar's lead in tracing the prefiguration of cultural racism to the Spanish Inquisition, suggests that in this respect it is useful to go back to a consideration of Renaissance cultural stereotypes, and insists on the articulations between colour and religion in Renaissance England and wider European imperial circulations, to explore continuities and discontinuities of the kind a terminological historicism would foreclose. Second, and more narrowly to the point here, to this Loomba adds that "Balibar is thinking of contemporary anti-Semitism, but also of the rise of Islamophobia". Now, Balibar, both in the text cited, of 1991, as indeed since, does refer to Arabophobia (and its confusion of "Arabness" and "Islamicism"), but not of Islamophobia (Balibar, 1991: 24).

Briefly, three points can be made here. First, that, as the very term and strategy of postcolonialism and postcolonial critique entails, we eschew linear readings and the logics of contained periodisations in our approach to problematics such as racism and Islamophobia. For the project of a more comprehensive exploration of the genealogy of Islamophobia this means two things: that we do not merely extend *back* to a consideration of articulations of the exercise of power, categorisation and exclusion (in the workings of the medieval persecuting society, Renaissance "encounters", conquest and Slavery, Early Modern state formation and Inquisitorial practices, Enlightenment universalism and imperialism, through to nineteenth century colonialism and scientific racism), but read them *sideways*, as a "contrapuntal copresence" to reading the contemporary.[12] But also, that we do so through different grids: if, with Loomba, we read race back to, and for, tropologies of difference (ideologies of otherness in "ideas about skin colour, location, religion, rank and gender")[13] in the Balibarian mirror of the naturalisation of culture; with Barnor Hesse,

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[11] For the original full text of the passage quoted see Edward Said, 1998: 84.

[12] The phrase is Ato Quayson's (2005), drawing on Said (though, strangely, race is entirely absent from his discussion).

[13] See particularly chapters 1 "Vocabularies of Race" and 2 "Religion, Culture, and Racial Difference" in Ania Loomba (2002).

what we are tracing in race is, rather, following Fanon, colonial categories and techniques of social administration as a "relationship of governance", and through the counterposition of this subaltern reading of racism, read for the "creolisation" of "political formations".[14] The difference, for us, can be put thus: with Loomba, race is opened to encompass the racialisation of religion; with Hesse, via Talal Asad, "religion" is itself a product of articulations of governance. The two other points will come across more clearly in re-citing more fully the passage from Loomba's eulogy to Said:

> Etienne Balibar has suggested that we are faced with the resurgence of neo-racism (or what he calls "racism without race") […] In suggesting this, Balibar is thinking of contemporary anti-Semitism, but also of the rise of Islamophobia which since his essay was written, and especially after 9/11, has indeed become a global phenomenon. The language of such Islamophobia invokes the Crusades, freezes the Islamic world in a medieval past, and depends upon the recirculation of a very old repertoire of images, a division between "us" and "them" that does not reflect but seeks to manage a far more complex reality. Of course this division is not static and today it cannot be mapped onto a simple East-West binary, as some of the most pernicious articulations of anti-Muslim sentiment is now to be found among Hindu fundamentalists (both in India but also elsewhere). (Loomba, 2003: 13)

The first point concerns Loomba's use of "Islamophobia". On the one hand, that it is deployed re-descriptively to designate what Balibar refers by other names or in different terms; on the other, that Loomba's use of the term, the coalescing of the term in her own work is itself, like the visibilisation of the phenomenon, "especially" a 9/11 effect.[15] If, as I have been arguing, the genealogy of Islamophobia is that of the legitimacy of speaking the name, the re-description is what matters here. To a genealogy of Islamophobia, what is at stake is not whether Loomba is faithful to the "spirit", let alone the fact, of Balibar's text, but Loomba's own use of the term.

The second point pertains to the distabilising problematisation that her last claim poses back to Said's opening response. He argued that the basic premise redeployed anew repeated the same basic gesture of mapping as ontological distinction of West and East. Even while repeating this very claim in respect of contemporary Islamophobia's reiteration of anti-Islam(ic) tropes, Loomba throws that

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[14] See the interview with Barnor Hesse (2003) by Patricia A. Lott for the quotations, and Hesse (2004) for development.
[15] Absent from Loomba (1998), but present in its 2nd edition (2005, p.217); absent from Loomba (1999, reprinted in 2000), but present in the *Shakespeare* book (2002), which otherwise recycles the same points and references (including Balibar).

mapping out of joint with the claim that a Hindu fundamentalist discourse of Islamophobia re-centres the lines of battle onto different histories, narratives, symbols and geographies. Two possible responses can be suggested: one, Indian nationalist and Hindutva Islamophobia, while not reducible to it, were, particularly in their historical narratives, grafted onto British colonial historiography of India.[16] But, second, nevertheless, the argument does opens up to a necessary location of Islamophobia. Here, a tentative answer advanced by Sayyid and Vakil (2008) is a fourfold siting of the structures of Islamophobia: western plutocracies, Muslimstan, and the Islamicate and the non-Islamicate Most of the World.

THE BEGINNING OF HISTORY AND THE FIRST ISLAMOPHOBE

Returning, yet again, to the question of the legitimacy of speaking the name of Islamophobia, we come now to a different prospection: first uses of the term "Islamophobia". First use, to paraphrase Bernard Bernasconi (2001: 11), depends on "what one takes to be significant about the concept" and whether one believes what defines the moment it is introduced is "the first usage of the word in the required sense or the definition that secures its status and influence". Clearly, whatever weight may be attached to claims by some (such as Zaki Badawi, and Fuad Nahdi – AAVV, 2002: 182[17]) to having coined the term, the case that may be made for the possible influence of Edward Said's use of the term in print in 1985 (in three different print contexts reaching, crucially, both an academic and an activist anti-racist readership)[18], or its by now conventionally cited first use in wider readership media in 1991[19], it remains the case that what secured its status in the present usage was its adoption by the Runnymede Trust Commission on British Muslims and Islamophobia, in its title and terms of reference, in 1996, and, especially, in its Report, the following year.

On this, four points. First, while the Commission's use of the term secured its international currency, the term emerged among Muslims. As the Commission's Chair, Gordon Conway (whose personal dislike for the "ugly word" was several times

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[16] See Amalendu Misra's discussion of "The legacy of British Historiography" (2004: 189-229) for an overview of the texts and topics; and Patrick Wolfe (2002: 374), for a concise statement of the point and the way it continues to structure the terms of such critical interventions as Spivak's, with whose *Critique of Postcolonial Reason* Wolf is here concerned; for how the colonial categories connect with the related extensive debate on the construction of communalism and Hindu-Muslim conflict in India, see Peter Gottschalk (2007).

[17] I am indebted to Jamil Sherif for this reference.

[18] For a skeptical take on Said's twinning of Islamophobia and Antisemitism (which, moreover, pits anti-semitism on the Zionist lines of a transhistorical hatred) as a rhetorical flourish with strategic intent, see James Pasto (1998: 472).

[19] The conventionally cited reference, following the OED, being an article in the US magazine *Insight* of 4 February 1991.

publicly expressed) acknowledges in his Forward to the Report, the Commission "did not coin the term Islamophobia. It was already in use among sectors of the Muslim community" (Conway, 1997: iii).[20]

Second, and reinforcing the point, Muslim mobilisation around the term (as even cursory perusal of the *British Muslims Monthly Survey* reveals) was immediate and widespread finding expression in media monitoring, seminars, Muslim media features on the Report, and the visibility of the term by ordinary Muslims to describe and denounce incidents and patterns of discrimination.[21]

Third, the repertoire of dismissive and critical responses to "Islamophobia" can also be discerned in the immediate responses to the Consultation Paper and the Report: as exemplified by the Reverend Dr. Patrick Sookhdeo's repeated charge that it fails to distinguish between race and religion, and that it will be deployed to stifle "legitimate" criticism against Islam and Middle Eastern governments; Fay Weldon, who in a replay of her Rushdie affair polemics reduces the issue to fundamentalisms decontextualised of relations of power and racism and sees the Report's thrust as paving the way to stifling reasonable criticism; and Polly Toynbee's "In Defence of Islamophobia" which, in addition to separating religion entirely from race, equates "Religiophobia" with rationality itself.[22]

Lastly, while the dynamic set off by consultations and fact-finding missions of the Commission's working group, the publication of the Report, and its reception, contributed positively and enormously to framing the realities of Muslim life through the concept of Islamophobia, the conceptualisation of "Islamophobia" itself was, and has remained (as a number of constructive sympathetic critiques have already advanced[23]) "undertheorised".[24] One such weakness concerns the formulation and conceptualisation of "phobic" views as "closed views". It should be noted, of course, that the Commission itself moved to strengthen areas of weakness of the original 1997 Report in its second incarnation, now for the Uniting Britain Trust and under the

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[20] In the "Introduction" to the Report (p.1), it is stated that the word "was coined in the late 1980s".
[21] See the *BMMS*, vols IV and V for 1996 and 1997: examples include, the Muslim News launch of media monitoring in September 1996; a public meeting organised by the Wycombe Race Equality Council in March 97; a seminar on "Islamophobia – its features and dangers" organised by the Indian Muslim Federation and the London Borough of Waltham Forest in May; a Q-News "exclusive" on the Report's findings ahead of its publication in October 1997; the conference "Islamophobia – the oldest hatred", organised by the Muslim Parliament on 19 October which brought together Muslim leaders from across Europe to discuss the problem of Islamophobia; and the founding of the Islamic Human Rights Committee by the Muslim Parliament that year, to pursue cases of Islamophobic discrimination.
[22] Weldon, cited in the *Independent on Sunday* (02.03.97) (which should be read with Weldon (1989]; Dr Patrick Sookhdeo in *Church Times*, (28.02.97), and the *New Christian Herald* (22.03.97); Polly Toynbee, "In defense of Islamophobia" *Independent* (23.10.97): *BMSS*, vol. V (1997).
[23] Precisely the situation which the CERS Workshop sought to address (see Sayyid and Vakil 2008 for the draft papers presented).
[24] See for example Chris Allen (2007).

Chairmanship of Richard Stone. Thus besides confronting the new realities of the post 9/11 and "war on terror" contexts and climate of Islamophobia (which includes acknowledging that "combating Islamophobia within Britain necessarily involves engaging with the neo-conservative views of world affairs"), the 2004 Report explicitly considers the notions of "Institutional Islamophobia", and "anti-Muslim racism", problematising the objections, particularly from the liberal left, centred on a distinction between race and religion. But discussion of these is minimal, and ultimately without consequence to its conceptualisation of Islamophobia or its workings which remains tied to the dichotomy of open and closed views and the bedrock of "reasoned" and "blind hatred against all of Islam".[25]

It is generally accepted that the international currency of the term "Islamophobia" was established by the Runnymede Trust and debates in Britain; from here, it entered other national contexts and debates, both re-shaping and being shaped by its deployment in particular configurations of power, and was adopted by international monitoring bodies. This raises some minor and some important questions which it is largely beyond the scope of this paper to deal with. One concerns the sense in which the various transliterations of the term into other languages (e.g. *islamophobie* in French, *islamofobia* in Spanish, *Islamofobya* in Turkish) come to re-articulate existing mobilisations of community activisms and anti-racist struggles and alliances (whose previous rallying terminology reflected both the vernacular anti-Muslim/Islamic and racist vocabularies, and colonial categories, and the layered terrain of national political, anti-immigrant, anti-clerical histories, and, not least, Muslim public voices[26]), with debates and agendas sited from the British context. And whether, neologism aside, in each context such reclustering through and around the Runnymede concept and agenda represent a move forward for Muslims. Another, returns us to the core of the argument here. It is not, nominalistically, the term Islamophobia per se that has been argued for here, but the meaning it relationally configures in tension with the terms, and conceptions, it is privileged over and against (xenophobia, racism, intolerance, anti-Islam, anti-Muslimism, etc), and specifically so, in respect of the performative, and the enunciator it legitimates. In the British context, this work is, today, done by the term "Islamophobia"; but elsewhere, it may be done by different words. Conversely, the

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[25] *Commission on British Muslims and Islamophobia* (2004).
[26] Vincent Geisser's mapping of the French case, structured by French Republican laicism and fractured by the traumas of the two Algerian complexes, the colonial war and the Islamist civil war, featuring prominent walk-on parts for the "moderate", "enlightened", "arabophile but islamophobe", native informant "Muslim islamophobes", or "Muslim facilitators of Islamophobia", whose rabid "islamistophobia" gives manifest expression to latent Islamophobia, is a good example (Geisser, 2003).

mere fact of the same word elsewhere or at other times, does not mean it does the same work.

Actually, the term Islamophobia was first used in print in French ("islamophobie") in the last days of the First World War and in its immediate aftermath. Several points are significant in respect of this first use. Firstly, the term is used by its authors, Étienne Dinet and Sliman Ben Ibrahim, twice, and consistently, in two complementary works: a biography of the Prophet (on which Dinet had been involved since around the time of his taking the Shahada and the name Nasr-ed-din, in 1913), published in 1918, and again in a companion essay, conceived and announced at the same time, but concluded in 1921. Second, both authors were Muslims, and the works assume an explicit Islamicate register. It is from a desire to produce a specifically Muslim perspective, free of Orientalist distortions, that *La Vie de Mohammed, Prophète dʾ Allah* (*The Life of Muhammad, The Prophet of Allah*, significantly dated as completed 27th Ramadan 1334/ 28 July 1916) results. And it is in the course of confronting such orientalist distortions, of delegitimating the claims of critical erudition and scholarly neutrality of such authors by exposing at work rather a willful negation of the Islamic perspective – the transcendence of the Qurʻanic revelation and prophetic mission, no less than the islamicate traditional corpus – that the term Islamophobia is employed. Thirdly, the term, first employed in the Preface to *La Vie*, consubstantiates and is informed by the critique of such orientalist perspectives fleshed out in the essays of the 1921 companion piece, *Lʾ Orient Vu de L'Occident* (The Orient Seen from the West).[27] It is but provocatively that Dinet and Sliman's *Critical Essay* has been compared, for its "sainte colère" (righteous anger), to Said's Orientalism (Poillon, 1997: 122), and it would be preposterous to suggest any comparisons in their respective critiques of Orientalism, but a critique of a textual Orientalism (l'orientalisme qui travaille exclusivement "*sur le cadaver*"), it is. And (for all that it embodies a belated ethnographic Orientalism of its own) not only does Dinet and Sliman Ben Ibrahim's work write –and paint– back to Western Orientalist representations, it articulates these in an avowed and wider frame of political representation of Muslims, in connection with both Muslim loyalty and sacrifice in the cause of the Great War (and besides practical assistance, and advocacy on behalf of convalescing Muslims and Islamic funerary observances for the dead, *La Vie* was dedicated "A la mémoire des musulmans morts pour la

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[27] The 1918 English translation of *The Life* translates that works' reference to this forthcoming pamphlet under the English title of "The East Seen from the West", but I have here used Orient as more in keeping with its explicit critique of Orientalism. The reference, targetting the Belgian Jesuit Orientalist Henri Lammens, is in justification of the need to expose "à quel degré d'aberration l'Islamophobie pouvait conduire un savant", (p.26).

France"[28]). And this advocacy, and the politicisation of the frustration over the French failure to recognise and translate recognition of Muslim sacrifices into parity of citizenship, while never leading to sympathy for the independendist cause, found (mostly private but passionate) expression in criticism of France's colonial relation to Algeria.[29] Considered together with Dinet's understanding of the ummatic dimension of Islam, dramatically represented (in terms of religious fraternity but not without political overtones[30]) in the culmination of the pilgrimage rites on the plain of Arafat, the coining of Islamophobia acquires a deeper resonance.

Lastly, two further things should be noted. Such is the compelling consistency and fullness of Dinet and Sliman's use of the term Islamophobia that in her study of Dinet, his biographer, Denise Brahimi, comes to use it herself. And does so, not merely to describe what she plainly sees as the ideological standpoint of the project of *La Vie de Mahommed*, which, in characterising it as "de récuser la fausse science islamophobe et l'erudition" she may be said to be merely paraphrasing their own words, but, more significantly, in her description of Dinet at the end of his life, and of his politicised understanding of Islamophobic colonial relations, where she plainly has made the term her own (Brahimi, 1984: 138 and 154[31]).

Second, though when the book was translated into English that same year of 1918, in the English translation "islamophobie" is rendered as "feelings inimical to Islam", and thus failed to make it into English from the French, the first use in print in English is, arguably, of francophone inspiration, but what is of interest, is its diametrically opposite deployment from Dinet and Sliman's. It occurs in the context of an article by the Egyptian Dominican islamicist (with long missionary experience in Algeria) Georges Chahati Anawati, engaging the work of Gustav von Grunebaum. What is of interest here is that his use of the term recalls that by Dinet and Sliman, and its meaning, but inverted: it names not the fanatic orientalist assault on the Islamic corpus, such as that by Lammens which Dinet denounced, but the Muslim interdiction of legitimate orientalist scholarly textual critique, for "what makes the task

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[28] A patriotic dedication which the English translation, literally reinscribes and re-sites as: "This work is dedicated by the author and his collaborator to the Memory of the Valiant Moslem Soldiers particularly those of France and England who, in the Sacred Cause of Right, Justice and Humanity have piously sacrificed their lives in the Great War of the Nations".

[29] In one biographer's words, "Dinet est véritablement ulceréré de l'ingratitude dont la France fait preuve vis'à'vis des musulmans qui se sont battu pour elle" (Brahimi, 1984: 140).

[30] 'Quoth the Prophet: "The Moslems are as one body: the pain in any single limb gives rise to fever and insomnia in the whole of the frame". On the Arafa, Islam has nothing to fear from enemy spies; it can make good its losses and prepare its future. Despite its disasters, it is more alive than ever!". My reading of Dinet's discussion of the decline of Islam is considerably at odds with Ruth Roded's in her stimulating critique of Dinet and Sliman's gendered representations in the Life of the Prophet (Roded, 2002).

[31] The latter reads: "Sur le plan politique, nous savons dejá qu'à la fin de sa vie, il n'a pas d'illusions. Il a pu se rendre compte, dés son retour à Alger, que l'islamophobie y régnait avec virolence".

difficult, perhaps impossible, for a non-Muslim is that he is compelled, under penalty of being accused of Islamophobia, to admire the Koran in its totality and to guard against implying the smallest criticism of the text's literary value" (Anawati, 1976: 124). While, between them, Dinet and Sliman's and Anawati's uses of the term already configure the current battles over the (il)legitimacy of the concept; for all that, neither prefigures the contemporary meaning which interests us here. To reiterate, what interests us, therefore, is neither the historical use of the term, or its nominalistic usage, but its deployment in terms of a particular genealogy, one which bespeaks a Muslim making.

Not, then, when is it legitimate to speak of *islamophobia*, but when is it legitimate *to speak* of Islamophobia? That is the question.[32]

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[32] See 'Talking Back Muslim', a contribution to a working bibliography on Islamophobia compiled by Vakil for Sayyid and Vakil (2008).

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