



ROOT CAUSES OF WESTERN ANTI-ISLAMIC  
ANTAGONISM: JUDAISM, CHRISTIANITY AND THE  
SECULAR

BY

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## ABSTRACT

This research seeks to examine the root causes of Western anti-Islamic antagonism in the three main realms of the West, *i.e.* Judaism, Christianity and the secular. The prime question is what exact causes motivate Jewish, Christian and secular subjects within the West to anti-Islamic narratives, attitudes and actions. The existing literature mainly concentrates on consequences and manifestations of the phenomenon without analysing its root causes. The findings of this thesis indicate that Jewish anti-Islamic antagonism is observed to stem from the ethno-centric self-perception and eschatological agenda of Judaism; Christian anti-Islamic antagonism from the ontological instability and eschatological scenarios of Christianity; and secular anti-Islamic antagonism from the ideals of the secular to imagine a paradigm, society and world order free of religion. As a conceptual-analytical research, the thesis contains analyses of present material including scriptures, historical and more recent monographs, essays, articles, seminars, speeches, documentaries, newspapers, online sources and other relevant materials in numerous Western and Islamicate languages obtained from various libraries and online sources. *Root Causes of Western Anti-Islamic Antagonism* expects to establish the theological-philosophical basis for tackling the problem of anti-Islamism, as well as conducting further studies about anti-Islamic phenomena.

## خلاصة البحث

يهدفُ هذا البحث إلى دراسة أسباب مناهضة الغرب للإسلام من ثلاث مُنطَلقات: اليهودية والنصرانية والعلمانية. نسعى في المقام الأول إلى الكشف عن الأسباب الدقيقة التي تبعث اليهود والنصارى والعلمانيين في الغرب على تبني خطابات وتصرفات وأعمال معادية للإسلام. إن الأدبيات الراهنة تسلط الضوء على تداعيات هذه الظاهرة وتجلياتها دون تحليل الأسباب الجذرية المؤدية إليها. تبيّن نتائج هذه الأطروحة أن عداة اليهود للإسلام يعود إلى التصور القائم على المركزية العرقية وعلى أجندة القيامة حسب مفهومهم وأنّ عداة المسحيين للإسلام ينتج عن اضطراب وجودي وسيناريوهات القيامة لديهم فضلا عن العداة العلماني للإسلام الذي يصدر من تحيّل العلمانيين لمجتمع ونظام علمي مجرد من الدين. تحتوي هذه الأطروحة، بصفتها بحثا ذات طابع مفهومي وتحليلي، على تحليلات الوثائق الراهنة بما في ذلك الكتب المقدسة والدراسات التاريخية والأكثر حداثة والمقالات والندوات والخطب والأفلام الوثائقية والصحف ومصادر الإنترنت وغيرها من الوثائق ذات الصلة، وبعدها لغات غربية وإسلامية، تم الحصول عليها من مختلف المكتبات ومصادر الإنترنت. تتوقع الأطروحة بعنوان " الأسباب الجذرية لمناهضة الغرب للإسلام" إلى إرساء الأسس اللاهوتية والفلسفية للتعامل مع مشكلة معاداة الإسلام مع إجراء المزيد من الدراسات حول ظواهر معاداة الإسلام.

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## DECLARATION

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*“And my success comes only from Allah.”*  
(Q. 11:88)

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*"Dernekler toplanıyor dıřta tutmak için  
Kanat vuruřlarını yumuřak tutan etkeni"*

İsmet Özel, "Naat"

This humble effort is dedicated to all Muslims  
who have been victimised by anti-Islamic  
hatred and hostility.

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Over the period following the Second World War there has been observed a paradigmatic shift in the West with respect to religion. Some political developments such as the illegitimate occupation of Palestine motivated by Jewish Zionism, the Iranian Revolution against the pro-secular Shah regime and the events of 9/11 followed by a number of Western military attacks to Muslim countries have made some premises of the secularisation thesis questionable. Yet most importantly, the unexpected renaissance of religions in both theoretical and practical spheres of life, particularly that of Islam, has brought the issue of religion back to the agenda of the erstwhile disenchanted-secularised West. Within this context, parallel to the increase of curiosities and sympathies towards Islam, timeworn hostile feelings towards Islam have been re-aroused, reproduced and re-brought to the *agora*. In the contemporary West, for some few (e.g. Nasr, 1975; Garaudy, 1981; Hofmann, 1992) Islam constitutes an alternative and antidote to the crisis of modern people, while being perceived as the foremost rival and archenemy by many others. According to a myriad of scholars who publicised about the perception of Islam in the West, no other religion has faced the Islamic *kismet* of being severely denigrated and maligned. To point to the “alleged” existence of anti-Islamism, three-hundred and fifty-six mosques have been attacked and desecrated in Europe in the year 2016 alone (Yılmaz, 2017). Various studies (e.g. CAIR, 2016) observe a sharp rise in individual anti-Islamic attacks in the West. On several occasions, it is reported by the media that Muslim passengers have been prohibited their travel rights by being taken out of airplanes since they spoke Arabic words (Revesz,

2016) or “stared” at flight attendants (Morris, 2016). In some European countries, Muslim pupils have been denied their education rights because they refused to take off their *hijāb* or wore “too long” skirts (Ware, 2016). French “secular morality policemen” forced Muslim women on beaches to take off their Islamic swimsuits (Dearden, 2016). Mosques have been shut down in various European countries (McGuinness, 2016; Agerholm, 2016). Upon the 2017 executive order numbered 13769 of the Trump administration, also known as the “Muslim-ban”, valid visa and green-card holders, and even five-year-old children, have been detained at airports while being restricted from entry to the United States (Khoo, 2017). In sum, anti-Islamic propaganda and actions have been widely spread to Western societies, whereas only a small number of them are legally sanctioned. Considering the claims of the West of being a rational and science-led civilisational entity that is founded on the principles of the legitimacy of human rights, democracy and critical thinking, this outrageously unique position of Islam in the West is intriguing and promising for further scholarly insights and theorisations.

## **1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

Given the Muslim protection of Jews throughout the Middle Ages, the tolerance principle of Christianity, as well as the claims of the post-Enlightenment secular values, the perception and treatment of Islam and Muslims in the West should ideally be positive. Besides, since it is known through historical studies (e.g. Saliba, 2007) that Muslims contributed a great amount to the civilisational progress, the expectation is that their faith and perspectives are respected, they are seen as equal and valuable human beings, at least not stigmatised, dehumanised and demonised. However, it is observed that the *de facto* situation tragically differs from the expectations. Islam is mainly regarded and treated as “the other” by these actors in the West.

The negative treatment of Islam by the West causes devastating problems for humanity. Episodes of history where Muslims, Jews and Christians coexisted peacefully, such as in the Osmanlı State or Andalusian Spain, paved the way for the development of a fruitful intercultural exchange and civilisational progress. The contemporary hostility, on the other hand, has been causing turmoil in world affairs. Once it is assumed that the Iraq and Afghanistan invasions, in which millions of Muslims were killed, displaced and traumatised, could not have taken place as smoothly as they have without the anti-Islamic discourse, the consequences of anti-Islamic antagonism become self-apparent. Anti-Islamic hostility also is found to feed the phenomenon of radicalisation among Muslims (Mitts, 2017), turning the issue into a vicious circle. Furthermore, anti-Islamism not only justifies these direct attacks, but also serves to the strategy of “blaming the victims” by creating a twisted perception that Muslims are aggressors and anti-Islamic aggressors are victims.

The solution suggested within this thesis is theoretical. The premise is, if one aims to solve the aforementioned problems, it is primarily necessary to understand their root causes accurately. For that scope, it should first be analysed why the Western Civilisation has been producing anti-Islamic feelings and actions. What are the theological and philosophical backgrounds of the problem? What roles do the Jewish, Christian and secular approaches towards Islam play in the emergence of anti-Islamic antagonism? Unless these questions are answered, peripheral approaches will only touch the tip of the iceberg, offering prescriptions for symptoms while not dealing with the disease itself. Briefly, the solution lies in discovering the essential reasons of anti-Islamic antagonism, which can be acquired by a theological-philosophical reading of its root causes.

### **1.3 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

The study aims to achieve the following objectives:

- 1- To examine the root causes of the hatred and hostility of Jewish subjects towards Islam in their manifestations during the Medīna period, Middle Ages and Contemporary era by examining Jewish scriptures, writings and their perceptions.
- 2- To analyse the root causes of the hatred and hostility of Christian subjects towards Islam in their Eastern and Western versions by examining their scriptures and writings about Islam and Muslims during the early, medieval and contemporary periods.
- 3- To investigate the root causes of the hatred and hostility of secular subjects towards Islam by examining the concept, narratives and methods of the secular with respect to anti-Islamism.
- 4- To construct a general conclusion apropos Western anti-Islamic antagonism, where the findings of the research will be evaluated and concrete coping suggestions will be made.

### **1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

- 1- What data do Jewish scriptures and their perceptions by various Jewish figures contain on the subject of anti-Islamic antagonism?
- 2- In what sense, extent and degree do Christian scriptures and their perceptions by various Christian figures contribute to Western anti-Islamism?
- 3- What does the secular mean and how does it serve to produce anti-Islamic hatred and hostility within the West?

4- In light of the findings, what effective coping methods can be developed to tackle the problem of Western anti-Islamism?

### **1.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

The present literature on anti-Islamism concentrates on various related issues and provides numerous theories to explain the phenomenon of anti-Islamic antagonism, mostly under the concept of “Islamophobia”. For instance, most European studies mainly focus on immigration issues while anti-Islamism in the United States is largely understood as an ideological instrument in the service of foreign policy (in the so-called “war on terror”). The literature provides a number of causes that deal with the manifestations of the problem. However, it does not deal with its backdrop, which is constituted by the three main realms of the West that are Judaism, Christianity and the secular. This appears to be a significant scholarly gap to be filled, to which this study is devoted.

### **1.6 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

Since it is evidently impracticable, this thesis does not aspire to cover the subject of Western anti-Islamism with the totality of its actors, reasons and dimensions or contain all events and literature related to it. Thus, the study is limited to the root causes of anti-Islamic antagonism among Jews, Christians and secular people under their respective periodisations. It is attempted to select major figures among them to represent dominant veins by focusing on the root causes through the analysis of some of the manifest examples.



Secondly, the study is mainly confined to the Western literature, although the works of some Muslim scholars are quoted when necessary. The reason for that choice is the hypothesis that an unbiased and genuine understanding of a Western phenomenon is only possible through the works of Western scholars themselves.

Thirdly, the phenomenon of Western anti-Islamism also proves to have psychological aspects, but the present study does not include them except for brief references. Particularly the concepts of anxiety, narcissism and projection seem to be relevant in various ways and degrees. For that reason, it proves to be fruitful for scholars to focus on some psychological features of Jewish, Christian and secular people.

Finally, the study dedicates itself to understand the causes of hatred and hostility. Further factors such as prejudice, bias, ignorance and fear are not included, since it is argued that they are to be understood under the category of another concept, “Islamophobia” (see 1.7 and 5.1.2).

## **1.7 DEFINITION OF TERMS**

### **Anti-Islamism**

Anti-Islamic and anti-Muslim antagonism. The concept of “anti-Islamism” is used in the present thesis in the sense of hatred and hostility towards Islam and Muslims, which manifests itself in discriminatory, derogatory, vilifying, dehumanising and demonising approaches towards Islam and Muslims. It includes both the ideology and manifestations of anti-Islamism, that is to say verbal and physical attacks on Islam and Muslims. Since it denotes active, deliberate, planned and organised attacks, it signifies more than the passive notions of “fear”, “prejudice”, “ignorance” or “bias”. Insofar it conforms to the German concept of “*Islamfeindlichkeit*” or the Turkish concept of “*İslam düşmanlığı*” that both signify hostility towards Islam.

## **Islamophobia**

“Islamophobia” is defined by contemporary scholarship as an unsubstantiated or irrational fear, dread and hatred of Islam (Runnymede Trust, 1997). It is a “softer” concept than anti-Islamism, insofar it primarily focuses on the element of “fear”. Thus, it also denotes people without any deliberate agenda. Yet, some definitions of it also cover hostility and hatred and suggest using it as an umbrella concept. Therefore, the boundaries between Islamophobia and anti-Islamism as they are used by the literature are not strict. However, it proves to be problematic to use “Islamophobia” as an umbrella concept due to various reasons (see 5.1).

## **The Secular**

Anti-Islamism is usually identified with “secularism” by the present literature. However, secularism is an ideology deriving from “the secular”, which is larger than “secularism” itself. It is accordingly asserted, “The secular has become a central modern category—theologico-philosophical, legal-political, and cultural-anthropological—to construct, codify, grasp, and experience a realm or reality differentiated from “the religious.” This definition is adapted from Casanova (2009, p. 1049-1050).

## 1.8 TRANSLITERATION SYSTEM

Arabic Letter/Unit	Transliterated	Arabic Letter/Unit	Transliterated
ء	‘	ع	‘
ب	b	غ	gh
ت	t	ف	f
ث	th	ق	q
ج	j	ك	k
ح	h	ل	l
خ	kh	م	m
د	d	ن	n
ذ	dh	ه	h
ر	r	و	w, ū
ز	z	ي	y, ī
س	s	ا	ā
ش	sh	ـَ	a
ص	ṣ	ـِ	i
ض	ḍ	ـُ	u
ط	ṭ	ة	ah
ظ	ẓ		

## 1.9 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In one sentence, the ultimate purpose of the present thesis is to explain the root causes of Western anti-Islamic antagonism. The main question follows, what motivates “Westerners” to perceive and treat Islam in a hostile way? From which source or sources do these feelings, attitudes and behaviours of hatred and hostility towards Islam stem? What body is concealed under the visible tip of the iceberg?

An initial obstacle to answering these and similar questions is constituted by the opacity and ambiguousness of the term “Western” in “Western anti-Islamism”. Albeit used freely, there is no consensus among scholars about what “the West” denotes. Hence, dividing this enigmatic whole to its less ambiguous constituents will provide a clearer image on the ultimate motivations of the various actors in it. Seen from the perspective of religion or *Weltanschauung*, which might be regarded as the most decisive factor in one’s vital existence, the three paramount *modi vivendi* in the West

prove to be Judaism, Christianity and the secular. For this reason, the thesis is structurally split into these three realms that focus on the anti-Islamic inclinations, attitudes, behaviours, narratives, publications and further expressions within the frameworks of each one.

There are numerous ways, *i.e.* methods, to seek an answer to the aforementioned main research question. The most direct and solid one is a conceptual-analytical approach based on the sources of religious sciences and philosophy, reinforced by a historical-genealogical reading of the three realms mentioned above. According to that, scriptures of and texts about Judaism, Christianity and the secular will be carefully examined in order to seek the root causes of anti-Islamic antagonism. In the respective chapter, it will be first sought to define what the terms “Judaism”, “Christianity” and “the secular” denote in order to be able to examine how their adherents define themselves and their *Others*. Subsequently, their historical interactions with Islam and Muslims will be analysed in which the anti-Islamic contents in these will be examined more closely. While doing that, the research will concentrate on the genesis, genealogy, spirit and *telos* of the anti-Islamisms of each actor. Typical, representative and recurrent elements in various manifestations of anti-Islamic beliefs and attitudes of a given actor will be then induced to a general theorisation and definition about the anti-Islamism of that actor in the end of the respective chapter.

Such an analytical work will also establish the semantic and philosophical frameworks of the problem in question so that further qualitative or quantitative studies can base themselves on this ground. As it will be defended in the section of literature review, the present literature does not host such an attempt that reproduces a theoretical framework of Western anti-Islamic antagonism under these three categories. The absence of a meaningful background handicaps studies that focus on more visible

aspects of the problem. This is the main reason of preferring an analytical approach and methodology in order to establish the frameworks of the problem.

To achieve this purpose, the researcher will make use of scriptures, historical and more recent monographs, essays, articles, seminars, speeches, documentaries, newspapers, online sources and other relevant materials in numerous Western and Islamicate languages. Textual, historical-genealogical, theological, linguistic and philosophical analysis will be conducted through library and online research.

### **1.10 LITERATURE REVIEW**

To begin with, numerous studies related to anti-Islamic phenomena contain conceptual discussions. “Islamophobia”, “anti-Muslimism”, “anti-Muslim prejudice”, “anti-Muslim racism”, “intolerance against Muslims” and “anti-Muslim bigotry” are several other suggestions to express various aspects of the phenomenon of “anti-Islamism”. Detailed studies investigating the etymology, genealogy, historical transformation of these concepts and debates among scholars were conducted, among others, by Halliday (1999), Werbner (2005), Richardson (2009), Allen (2010), Bravo López (2010, 2011), Bleich (2011), Klug (2012), and Cheng (2015).

An examination of the existing literature discloses that neither anti-Islamism *per se* nor the discourse thereof are new-sprung. As Hourani (1992, p. 7) argues, Islam has always been a problem for – and its believers enemies of – Christian Europe since its first appearance in history. Furthermore, anti-Islamism might effortlessly be traced back to the hostile attitudes of certain Jewish and Christian figures such as ‘Aṣmā’ bint Marwān and Ka’b ibn al-Ashraf (see 2.4.5), John of Damascus (see 3.4.2), as well as Meccan polytheists of the early Islamic period. Secular anti-Islamism is a more recent phenomenon, although there are numerous Qur’anic passages that are interpreted in a

relevant way (Akhtar, 2007). Further points of intersection between Islam and the West, such as the ones during the medieval period, the Andalusian State in the Iberian Peninsula, early modern period, and finally the modern and contemporary periods have not only been witness to pacific and flourishing periods of mutual understanding and *convivencia*, but also caliginous chapters of history.

In this context, the history of anti-Islamism studies can mainly be segmented into three phases. (I) The earliest known analyses of the Western anti-Islamic bias dated in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries gave birth to the first definitions of anti-Islamism under the term of “Islamophobia”, such as one can find in the works of French scholars below. They regarded the phenomenon as a European-Christian hostility towards Islam and Muslims (Bravo López, 2011, p. 570) that was manifested within the context of French imperialism and colonialism. (II) The second phase (1960-1997) is essentially demarcated by the works of Norman Daniels, Richard Southern and Edward Said. Daniel’s *Islam and the West* (1960) portrayed, from the perspective of a historicist, the Western attitude towards Islam going back to the earliest periods, but mainly concentrating on the medieval period. Southern (1962) developed Daniels’ insights in his *Western Views of Islam in the Middle Ages*. A number of studies devoted to the “Western perception of Islam” have been published since (Blanks 1999). Finally, Said (1978) developed an extensive theory titled “Orientalism” concentrating on some Western scholars’ (the Orientalists) attitude towards the *Oriental* that mostly consisted of Muslims. (III) The third and most pervasive phase following the Runnymede Trust’s report in 1997 has launched thorough debates on the issue. These debates proved that the problem of anti-Islamism could be discussed within numerous disciplines including history, political science, psychology, media studies, law, minority and multiculturalism studies and decolonial/postcolonial studies.

It might be observed that the first phase mostly concentrated on what might be called “Christian anti-Islamism” while the second phase demarcated a dual reading of “Christian” and “secular anti-Islamism”. Finally, the third phase mostly deals with “secular anti-Islamism”. However, the issue of “Christian anti-Islamism” is not conceptualised, and in comparison with the other two, “Jewish anti-Islamism” proves to be a largely neglected area in the literature.

To elaborate these three phases, albeit most scholars claim that the first usage of the term “Islamophobia” in print was by Diné and ben Ibrahim’s work *“L’Orient vu de l’Occident”* in 1921 or that it was invented earlier in 1910s by a group of French Orientalists who were known as *“administrateurs-ethnologues”* (Ezzerhouni, 2010; Bravo López, 2010, p. 192; Hajjat and Mohammed, 2012), the word “Islamophobia” appears as early as 1877 in one of the works of a Dutch author by the name of Rutger Eck on East India (p. 52). The word “anti-Islam” appears even earlier (Thomson, 1848, p. 688), however neither in the present sense of the word nor to refer to the Western context. Another usage of the word appears in an anonymous article published in Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine in the context of “polemical language” and an “anti-Islam crusade” (1882, p. 142). Other usages of the word “anti-Islam/Islamic” or anti-Moslem/Muslim/ Musulman/Muselmann” in similar or different contexts are to be found in Costenoble (1852, p. 77), American Cyclopaedia (“Mohammedanism”, 1861) Davis (1862, p. 321), The Illustrated London News (1862), Thompson (1876, p. 776), Guinness (1888, p. 229) and Nelson and Robertson (1888, p. 580). An interesting passage is found in Gandhi’s observations in *Young India*, where he claims, “The missionary journals are fanatically, I was going to say, criminally, anti-Turkish and anti-Islam.” (1924, p. 189). In sum, it is observed that the Western awareness of anti-Islamism dates back to the second half of the nineteenth century.

There are some pioneering authors (Percher, 1891; Binger, 1906) who point to the blatant anti-Islamic antagonism in the Christian West at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries. The first person to approach the issue in a theoretical way, however, is a French ethnographer named Delafosse (1910a). For him, “Islamophobia” is a tool of foreign policy to rule France’s subjects in its colonies. It is a matter of a decision-making process within the cadre of *Realpolitik* whether to encourage Islamophobia or Islamophilia (p. 57). He (1910b) additionally reveals a connection between the religious mind-set of Christian clergy and Islamophobia in his critique of Abbé Henry, whose spirit is controlled by a “ferocious Islamophobia”. That is to say, the belief that “everything what is not contained by the Judeo-Christian traditions is the work of devil” (p. 10).

On the other hand, Quellien (1910, p. 133) defines Islamophobia as a “prejudice against Islam widespread among peoples of Christian Western civilisation”. He states that this phenomenon has always existed in the Christian West, alluding to the long history of anti-Islamic antagonism in Europe. To support his statement he provides numerous examples from the works of well-known travellers and Orientalists and posits that “for some, Muslims are natural and irreconcilable enemies of Christians and Europeans, Islamism is the negation of civilisation and barbarism, bad intention and cruelty are all what one can expect from the majority of Mohammedans”. Last but not least, Marty, director of indigenous affairs in Rabat, published an article in the *Revue du Monde Musulman* in the year 1918-1919 about Islam’s status in Guinea. In this article, Marty introduces different Islamic groups in Guinea and provides historical and biographical information about various figures of influence. He introduces the concept of an “*islamophobie ambiante*” (p. 174), which according to Hajjat and Mohammed (2012) discloses that Islamophobia was not restricted to the circles of colonial