

Chapter 3

The Normalisation of Islamophobia through Social Media: Facebook

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Introduction

The norms of society are challenged by new technologies which create new ways of perpetrating crime and avoiding detection. These types of challenges, though highlighted in terms of the internet revolution (Protocol to the Convention on Cybercrime 2003), are not unique to it and have also occurred with previous paradigm shifts such as invention of the automobile (see the case of *Brooks v US*, 267 US 432, 438–9 1925). The challenges posed by a paradigm shift in society necessitate a careful re-examination of the weight given to competing rights and interests. As with the advent of the automobile, the social media revolution may well require new treaties, laws and regulations in the pursuit of peace, order and good government.

Online vilification, bullying and incitement against individuals and groups through social media are key challenges society faces in this new social media driven world. This chapter examines the specific problem of religious vilification targeting Muslims on the social media platform Facebook. The author examined the way Facebook was being used to normalise hate against Muslims, and looked at a variety of anti-Muslim ideas that are prevalent on Facebook. Through communications promoting those ideas, we consider the way Facebook can be used to enforce the twin messages of hate speech where victims are told they are unwelcome in society, and potential supporters of the hate are told that others share their views, and that such views are acceptable (Waldron 2012).

Lack of interest from platform providers emboldens those already using platforms like Facebook to target the Muslim community. This fuels online anti-Muslim hate, but like other forms of online hate, it is unlikely to remain purely virtual. Online Islamophobia is likely to incite religious hatred and xenophobia leading to real world crimes and a rise in political extremism both on the far-right and from the radicalisation of Muslim youth in response to messages of exclusion. This is a serious problem which social media companies, governments and communities need to tackle.

The Challenge of Hate Speech

As noted in Chapter 1, hate speech is traditionally defined as speech that vilifies a protected group, or a member of a protected group, due to their group identity. What constitutes a 'protected group' varies with context, but religion is usually included. The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, for example, states in article 20 (2) that: 'Any advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence shall be prohibited by law' (UN General Assembly 1966).

The Harm in Hate Speech by Jeremy Waldron (2012) opens with a story of a man taking his two young children for a walk. A sign saying, 'Muslims and 9/11! Don't serve them, don't speak to them, and don't let them in' is displayed along their route. The family is Muslim, and Waldron relates how the father struggles when his daughter asks what the sign means, and instead of replying, hurries them home. Waldron's story is fictional, but highlights the nature and purpose of hate speech. Waldron's analysis demonstrates that while racism is one form of hate speech, there are others as well. Anti-Muslim bigotry is clearly a form of hate speech.

Waldron goes on to identify two dangerous messages in hate speech. These messages work to undermine the public good of an inclusive society; they do this by removing the 'assurance [of the targeted group] that there will be no need to face hostility, violence, discrimination, or exclusion by others' as they go about their daily life (ibid. 2). The first message is directed at the group being targeted and says: '[d]on't be fooled into thinking you are welcome here' (ibid. 2). The second message is aimed at the rest of society, it says, '[w]e know some of you agree that these people are not wanted here ... known that you are not alone ... there are enough of us around to make sure these people are not welcome ... [and] to draw attention to what these people are really like' (ibid. 2–3). Waldron's twin messages of hate can target any identifiable group in society. The hate may, however, take on different flavours depending on the group targeted, the reasons given for excluding them from society, and the negative stereotypes used to represent 'what these people are really like'.

The Online Hate Prevention Institute has looked at some of the ways hate against Muslims manifests in social media and has suggested that, 'content be considered anti-Muslim hate speech when, for example, it: dehumanises Muslims, stereotypes all Muslims, for example as terrorists, advocates the exclusion of Muslims from society, such as content claiming Muslims can't be a part of society; denies human rights to Muslims, holds all Muslims responsible for the acts of extremists, or applies a double standard to Muslim communities or Muslim countries, for example making demands which would not be made of other countries in similar circumstances' (Oboler 2015). This definition mirrors some of the ideas around anti-Jewish hate as seen in the Working Definition of Antisemitism (US State Department 2008).

The Challenges in Co

There are three reasons why this is a problem for society. On the one hand, fundamental freedoms of expression and religion are at stake. On the other hand, hate can become a self-reinforcing cycle. The anger, and may result in a mismatch between necessary funding. For many, it may not be available to addressing this problem through self-radicalisation.

Combating anti-Muslim hate speech is a challenge, common to all societies. It is a challenge to differentiate between the expression of the ideas of the people on the basis of their people's human rights. The expression of the religion is a challenge to freedom of speech.

The various controversies surrounding Mohammed are in part a result of religion and controversy was provoked by the publication of 12 cartoons in 2006. The initial incident of cartoons of Mohammed were in turn followed by a response (The Telegraph). The cartoons, however, were not an attack on Mohammed, but a representation of Mohammed wearing a turban. The cartoon, the Muslim world, and Mohammed were used to represent the religion. We can see the use of the Muslim decedent gun powder had a significant role in Mohammed.

The Challenges in Combating Anti-Muslim Hate Speech

There are three reasons why anti-Muslim hate should be considered a problem for society. One is the impact of such hate on the human rights and fundamental freedoms of individuals; another is the negative impact such hate has on the public good of an inclusive society; and a third is the fact that such hate can become a self-fulfilling prophecy contributing to the problem of violent extremism. These three groups approach the problem from different angles, and may result in different strategies and emphasis. It may also lead to a mismatch between effective response programmes, and the availability of necessary funding. For example, funding whose purpose is tackling extremism may not be available to tackle bigotry targeting Muslims, despite the fact that addressing this problem would remove a significant factor that can push some towards self radicalisation and extremism.

Combating anti-Muslim hate speech comes with a variety of challenges. One challenge, common to all hate directed against religious groups, is the need to differentiate between hate-speech targeting people who follow the religion, and criticism of the ideas and doctrine of the religion itself. Where speech targets the people on the basis of their religion it is a form of hate speech, violates those people's human rights, and ought to be condemned. Where the speech is critical of the religion itself, it is not hate speech and would usually be protected under a freedom of speech principle.

The various controversies in public discussion over cartoons of the Prophet Mohammed are in part a failure to differentiate between, on the one hand, criticism of religion and, on the other, vilification of its followers. The original controversy was provoked by a Danish newspaper, *Jyllands-Posten*, which published 12 cartoons of Mohammed on the 30 September 2005 (BBC News 2006). The initial incident has sparked a cycle of events with the publication of cartoons of Mohammed being followed by threats and violence, which were in turn followed by further publication of cartoons of Mohammed in response (*The Telegraph* 2015). Such cartoons are not in and of themselves necessarily an attack on people who are Muslim (Oboler 2015). The original Danish cartoons, however, did include an image which crosses into hate speech. The most famous of the Danish cartoons is by Kurt Westergaard and depicts Mohammed wearing a turban that morphs into a lit bomb. On the turban is the *shahada*, the Muslim declaration of faith which reads 'There is no deity but God and Mohammad is His prophet'. In this case, the imagery of Mohammed was used to represent all Muslims, and the message was that all Muslims are terrorists. We can see that the image represents Muslims generally both by the use of the Muslim declaration of faith, and by the fact that in Mohammed's time gun powder had not been invented, so the bomb is an anachronism and can't refer to Mohammed himself. The Online Hate Prevention Institute has

recommended that, 'cartoons portraying Muslims through negative stereotypes, using Mohammed to symbolise all Muslims, should be considered a form of hate speech' (ibid.).

The word 'Islamophobia' itself poses another challenge as discussed in Chapter 1. While in popular usage it means hate against people who are Muslims (Oboler 2013), a valid human rights concern, its origins rest in efforts that were far broader and which stretched beyond protecting the human rights of Muslims and into infringing on the human rights of others. This overreach came from efforts, using the word Islamophobia, to create an international law basis to protect against what is sometimes called the 'defamation of Islam' (Socolovsky 2012). This concept is not based on human rights, but is about protecting religious ideas from criticism, something that fundamentally clashes with both religious freedom and freedom of speech. These efforts to protect against 'defamation of Islam' are no longer being pursued, but a person using the phrase Islamophobia to refer to hate against Muslims may receive a response about the illegitimacy of the concept of Islamophobia. This will hopefully fade in time, but in the meantime it is important that those using the term Islamophobia clearly state what they mean, and that what they mean is limited to hate against people who are Muslims.

The line between words and action can also be blurred. Efforts to prevent food manufacturers having their products certified as halal are designed to have a real impact on the ability of Muslims to live within a society. Similarly, efforts opposing the construction of mosques and Muslim schools serve to keep Muslims away from the neighbourhood. These efforts to exclude Muslims from society directly reflect the messages Waldron highlights and these campaigns are often based on anti-Muslim hate. These efforts are coordinated through social media with supporters often coming from around the world. The anti-Muslim hate campaigns have become a social movement powered by platforms like Facebook.

Anti-Muslim hate speech is a threat not only to the Muslim community, but to the broader community as well. The hate not only excludes Muslims, particularly Muslim youth, from society, but can also push them towards radicalisation and extremism. Former Attorney General of Australia, The Hon Mark Dreyfus QC MP, stated in 2013 that the issue of online hate targeting Muslims was raised with him both by Muslim community leaders and by Australia's security agencies. He explained the concern of the security agencies by warning that, 'in demeaning, threatening and generally seeking to exclude members of the Muslim community from our multicultural society, online hate increases the risk factors associated with the marginalisation and radicalisation of Muslim youth' (Dreyfus 2013). Efforts to combat anti-Muslim hate speech must be explained in these terms as well. Below the chapter explore the normalisation of hate through social media.

The Normalisation of Hate

The problem of anti-Muslim human rights of individual and communal level. Facebook abusive comments and posts to public good of an inclusive community, and anyone standing and these posts are then spread. Muslim hate also takes place one click away from a path to violent extremism. The environment of offline engagement and of such hate becoming

The combination of hate to make that content viral, is to spread the content to also make such content hate against a particular or worse, for example, that such hate can be openly expressed in the fabric of the online environment, and hostility for normalisation of attitudes in daily life (Oboler 2013).

The concept of Hate 2.0 proposed in 2008 (Oboler 2013) is that hate network 2.0 on Facebook is that hate about page declaring to page itself, before continuing. This promotes the normalisation of hate being promoted where the victim group is dehumanised less than human which ultimately see hate 'acceptable' within an online

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The Normalisation of Hate through Social Media

The problem of anti-Muslim hate speech is particularly acute online. The human rights of individuals are subjected to attack at both the individual and communal level. Facebook pages for Muslim organisations regularly receive abusive comments and posts. The message to exclude Muslims, attacking the public good of an inclusive society, is trumpeted across social media with images, videos, pages and Tweets. Anti-Muslim blogs publish libels against the Muslim community, and anyone standing up against attacks on the Muslim community, and these posts are then spread virally through multiple platforms. Online anti-Muslim hate also takes place in an environment where the recipient may be only one click away from a path towards self-radicalisation and ultimately towards violent extremism. The environment itself is therefore higher risk than many forms of offline engagement. The greatest danger, however, comes from the risk of such hate becoming normalised; this is the danger of Hate 2.0.

The combination of hate speech content and a social media platform able to take that content viral, is what creates Hate 2.0. The aim of Hate 2.0 is not only to spread the content that contains messages of hate through social media, but to also make such content appear a normal part of the online environment. If hate against a particular group is seen as just another opinion, no better or worse, for example, than having a view on a favourite football team, then such hate can be openly expressed. This embedding of the messages of hate in the fabric of the online world makes social media a place of intimidation, exclusion, and hostility for targeted groups. There is a real danger that the normalisation of attitudes of hate online will see these attitudes migrate into daily life (Oboler 2013).

The concept of Hate 2.0 is based on the idea of 'Antisemitism 2.0' first proposed in 2008 (Oboler 2008). The aim was 'to create social acceptability' for hate content, and to thereby allow the content to 'be spread, public resistance lowered, and hate networks rapidly established' (ibid.). One feature of Hate 2.0 in Facebook is that hate pages will often contain a leading sentence on their about page declaring the page to be against hate, and certainly not a hate page itself, before continuing with a statement which is blatant hate speech. This promotes the normalisation effect by arguing that the content on the page should be deemed acceptable, either because it isn't hate, or because the specific type of hate being promoted should be an exception. Like dehumanisation, where the victim group is denied basic human rights on the basis that they are considered less than human, Hate 2.0 create a slippery slope of acceptability which ultimately see hate comments calling for violence being deemed 'acceptable' within an online community.

The Online Hate Prevention Institute's 2013 report into Anti-Muslim Hate noted that a number of pages on Facebook explicitly used the Hate 2.0

formulation (Oboler 2013). One example, the page 'People against Islam' (ibid. 10), describes itself as: '[a] page that should instantly have over 1 million. No posts are to be racist, in any way. We all want islam out of our countries and need to group together for this cause'. It continues by saying, 'Use this page as the international gateway for eliminating islam [sic]. Like and share page as much as possible!' (ibid.). These statements combine an anti-hate message, 'no posts are to be racist', with a xenophobic call to expel people, and a message of genocide calling for the total elimination of the Islamic religion and culture. The page's cover image highlights that this is not about ideas, but rather about people. It contains the word 'Muslims' in bright, dripping, blood red as part of a message that 'Muslims are not a race, they are made up of many different races. Hating Muslims does not make you a racist'.

The purpose behind the Hate 2.0 approach is to make it more difficult for social media company staff to quickly reach a decision that a page should be closed. The staff are tasked with reviewing content users report for breaching community standards, but are often given mere seconds in which to make a decision. There is also a strong bias against removing content. These two factors mean a simple statement against hate may be as much as a staff member looks at before feeling confident that they can reject the hate complaint and move on to the next one. The result is that individual images or posts are more likely to be removed than entire pages dedicated to hate. Where such pages are eventually removed, it usually follows the posting, and then removal, of multiple individual items of content. The administrator of the 'People against Islam' Facebook page, for example, complained that, 'the Savages have forced FB Police to remove many of my posts how pathetic when all I do is post actual facts, there are 2 rules in our society and Pisslam is gaining the upper hand' (ibid. 11). The page had 1,168 supporters in December 2013, and despite content being removed, and as of February 2015 it was still online and had grown to 1,827 supporters. The removal of the content from a dedicated hate page, while leaving the page online to spread further hate, is not an appropriate response.

As discussed there is an important difference between criticism of ideas, including the beliefs of Islam, which must be permitted online, and attacks inciting hate against people which need to be prevented. The Community Standards and Terms of Service of platforms like Facebook are clear in prohibiting hate speech. This includes attacks on the basis of religion. The difficulty then is not the policies, but in their implementation. The danger of Hate 2.0 is a specific threat to society. Social media companies can self-regulate to reduce the risk associated with this threat, but if they don't Governments can and must step in. As the author of this chapter warned almost five years ago, 'if companies get it wrong, if they insist on harboring hate either by rejecting valid complaints or through excessively slow response rates, it should be governments who hold them to account' (Oboler 2010a). There are a number of models for

intervention which governments can examine, and some governments are now starting to investigate these. François Hollande, Interior Minister of France, has, for example, recently called for a legal framework with sanctions to make social media companies 'face up to their responsibilities' (Oboler 2010b; 2011).

The Messages of Anti-Muslim Hate

In 2013, the Online Hate Prevention Institute conducted a major study into anti-Muslim hate crime on Facebook (Oboler 2013). The resulting report examines 401 anti-Muslim items on Facebook. The items included: 349 posts, most of which involve images, 50 Facebook pages that were explicitly anti-Muslim, and 2 pages which did not direct attack Muslims but focused on attacking halal certification (ibid. 6). The report found that out of the 349 posts, there were 191 unique items, once duplicates and closely similar images were grouped together (ibid.). These images were sorted thematically and seven themes emerged. These themes were:

- Muslims as a security threat or threat to public safety (42 items);
- Muslims as a cultural threat (29 items);
- Muslims as an economic threat (11 items);
- Content dehumanising or demonising Muslims (37 items);
- Threats of violence, genocide and direct hate targeting Muslims (24 items);
- Hate targeting refugees/asylum seekers (12 items);
- Other forms of hate (36 items)

A 2014 report by the Online Hate Prevention Institute also found that while 6 of the 50 hate pages had been closed prior to the report being published, in the year since its publication only 10 additional pages were closed (Online Hate Prevention Institute 2014). Key hate images in the report were also found to still be online, often in multiple places. This longitudinal analysis indicates that Facebook is getting it wrong initially, and is systematically failing to get it right even after a significant time has elapsed.

We will now examine the themes of hate, largely based on those categories, and with examples from Facebook which can be found in the 2013 report. In this chapter the idea of 'cultural threat' and 'economic threat' have been grouped together under the concept of Muslims being 'an attack on our way of life', a broader concept which has led to events like the reclaim Australia rallies (RT 2015). Two themes which emerged from the category 'other' are also presented: the first is the idea of Muslims as manipulative and dishonest, the second relates to the use of messages which aim to undermining resistance to anti-Muslim hate. We also consider a new category of 'seeking to exclude Muslims from

Society' which covers the anti-halal campaign as well as efforts to prevent planning approval for new mosques, Muslim schools or other infrastructure to support the Muslim community within society. The final additional category relates to 'bigots pretending to be Muslims', this is often done as part of an effort to stir up hate against Muslims.

Each of the themes outlined reflects a significance strand of anti-Muslim hate as seen on Facebook. These themes are significant both as a way to recognise and categorise anti-Muslim hate, but also as a first step in producing counter-speech responses to challenge and undermine these messages of hate. Counter-speech is not a solution on its own, but it is one part of the response, along with efforts by platform providers to remove hate speech, and efforts by government to hold both users and potentially platform providers accountable. Whatever the approach used, recognising the hate is the first step to countering it. Further discussion of anti-Muslim hate on Facebook is covered in Chapter 10.

Presenting Muslims as Terrorists and a Threat to Public Safety

The hate theme most people will be familiar with is the portrayal of all Muslims as terrorists. In a broader context this also includes the portrayal of Muslims as violent, lawless and generally dangerous. The broadest context builds on traditional themes of racism historically directed against the black community. The fear, and resulting hatred, from the representation of Muslims as a threat to public safety is a mix of Muslims being collectively represented as 'the enemy', of Muslims being individually presented as dangerous people. The collective claim is that the Muslim community represents an organised threat to society, and the infrastructure of the Muslim community contributes to this threat. The individual claim is based on the idea that being violent is an inherent part of being Muslim. The attribution of these violent tendencies to Muslims is more like racial vilification than religious vilification, in that it seems to suggest certain characteristics are innate to Muslims. In both bases the negative message is that Muslims are a threat to life and property.

These messages of hate have a corollary, which is that those who would promote coexistence, multiculturalism and tolerance are aiding the enemy. This leads to attacks against not only the Muslim community, but also against anyone who would speak up against such attacks. This is sometimes extended to food manufacturers who are certified to produce halal food, and shops that stock halal food, as will be discussed later in this chapter.

Some representations of this theme on Facebook include: A picture of a mob attacking a car with crowbars and fire, with the text, 'how dare you people make fun of our peaceful religion'; a picture of the bombing of the Boston Marathon with the text 'it isn't Islamophobia when they really are trying to

kill you'; a picture with the coexist slogan made up of the symbols of various religions with a sword slicing it in half and the message 'you can't coexist with people who want to kill you', a variant of this image adds 'foolish infidels' and a quote 'Sura 4:89 "seize them and slay them wherever you find them ..."', while an accurate quote, this is taken out of context as the surrounding verses make it clear this is in the context of a war, and there are no grounds for such action when people live together in peace.

Other representations on Facebook promote the message that 'Islam is not a religion! It's the world's largest death cult'. The message that not all Muslims are terrorists is twisted in a series of messages; one declares 'not all Muslims are terrorists, but why are all terrorists Muslims?' Another says: "Not all Muslims are terrorists" Agreed! But as long as a Muslim believes the Quoran is the word of Allah, with the right push, they are all potential candidates'

Cartoon images of violent Muslims, typically combined with the slogan that Islam is a religion of peace, are also common. A typical one shows a Muslim drenched in blood, holding a sword dripping with blood, standing on top of skeletons labelled 'Hindus', 'Christians', 'Pagans', 'Jews' and 'Atheists', saying 'Islam is the religion of peace. See? No one talks back!' Another example shows a rage filled Muslim with the text 'Muslim: We are peaceful, if you don't agree, we will kill you'. Other examples shows a Muslim holding a knife with the words 'Islam means peace' and below it the text 'stop means go, up means down, left means right'. A range of images promote ideas such as 'beware! Halal food funds terrorism', pictures of specific food brands that are certified halal and the text 'funding terrorism'. Also common are images from a website that documents the number of people killed of groups claiming to be Muslim, compared to the number kill by groups claiming to be from any other religion. Images promoting the idea that Muslims are terrorists or a threat to public safety are common on Facebook and make up a significant part of the anti-Muslim hate in circulation (Oboler 2013).

The Promotion of Threats and Violence Against Muslims

Most social media platforms are based in the United States and are bound to remove content which breaches US law. The very broad interpretation given by the Supreme Court to the First Amendment to the US Constitution means only 'true threats' or 'incitement' are unlawful. True threats are those 'where the speaker means to communicate a serious expression of an intent to commit an act of unlawful violence to a particular individual or group of individuals' (see *Virginia v. Black* 538 U.S. 343 2003; 359). True threats must be distinguished from hyperbole, but the law aims to protect people not only from the risk of harm, but also from the 'fear and disruption that threats of violence engender'

(Gilbert 2003). Incitement has a higher standard and only occurs when there is 'an intent to produce imminent lawless action, and a likelihood that such action will occur' (Gilbert 2003: 865–6).

Online content which is either a 'true threat' or 'incitement' under US law should be immediately removed by a platform provider based in the United States. This, however, leaves a range of content which promotes threats and violence, but in a non-specific or hyperbolic manner. Such content is still hate speech, and where a platform prohibits hate speech it will contravene a platform's terms of service and should still be removed. Action on such content is seen as less critical for platform providers as the removal is voluntary, rather than an action to mitigate the use of their platform in the commission of a crime. This can lead to less effective and slower response times.

One example of the content which falls under this category is a post that reads, 'what's red and orange and looks good on a Muslim ... FIRE'. The comment is expressing a positive sentiment towards harm against Muslims, but it doesn't directly call for such harm to take place. Another example is a picture of a nuclear explosion with the text, 'some cancers need to be treated with radiation ... Islam is one of them'. This image glorifies the idea of genocide against Muslims. Another image shows increasing population below a heading 'Muslims in India', and decreasing population below a heading 'Indians in India', and concludes with the text, 'It's only a matter time – eugenics may be not such a bad idea after all', another example promoting genocide.

One image which meets the legal criteria for incitement was an image of a Muslim flying through the air, with a boot that has kicked them at the edge of the frame, with the text, 'Thursday is kick a Muslim in the nuts day'. The image also contains the words, 'join the fun, find a Muslamic and wallop the bastard in the balls'. The threats and incitement this form of hate speech promote are designed to make Muslims feel not only excluded from society, but also to put them in fear for their physical safety. A surprising volume of such content is either not removed, or only removed after unreasonable delay.

The Dehumanisation and Demonisation of Muslims

Dehumanisation and demonisation has long been a tool in war. As James Forsher, assistant professor of mass communications at California State University, explains, 'when you demonize, you dehumanize' and that 'when you dehumanize, it allows you to kill your enemy and no longer feel guilty about it' (James 2003). Dehumanisation and demonisation also have a long history in racism, making it easier for attacks on a target group to take place. The target group is painted as a serious threat to the fabric of the perpetrator society in a way which necessitates their destruction as legitimate, as necessary, and as self-defence' (Savage 2006).

The demonisation of Muslims encountered on Facebook included the literal representation of Muslims, or the source of Islam, as demonic. In one such image the devil character is handing over a Quran to a figure in green Middle Eastern dress with only their eyes showing. The text in the image reads, 'take my teachings and deceive the world with lies and deception, the very foundation of Islam'. Another image shows a demon with tattered wings emerging out of a red mist and the text, 'Mohammed created Allah in his own image, intolerant, sexist, homophobic, and violent'.

Modern forms of demonisation, showing Muslims as an evil in society, were also present. One image showed a man flicking through a book that was about 2 meters thick. The text in the image reads, 'Muslim paedophile register finished. Part 2 will be released next week'. Others draw on Nazism as the symbol of evil, showing mixtures of Nazi and Arabic symbolism; one shows Jihadists on the left, and Hitler at a Nazi parade on the right, and then a mixture of black and white Nazi parades and coloured pictures of Jihadist parades, all showing a Nazi style salute. The text above the image says, 'Find the difference' and contains an image with a blood splash, a crescent and a swastika, below the words 'the Islamofascist Crescent and Swastika'. In another example, an image with a billboard containing a woman's face, covered by a Niqab, carries the text, 'Islam is a crime against women'. Other images list a range of deviant behaviours and crimes and attribute them to Muslims in general. This is part of the negative stereotyping that forms part of the 'what these people are really like' hate speech message which Waldron (2012) describes.

When it comes to dehumanisation, one common form is to compare the Muslim women in a Niqab to rubbish. One such image shows a mother and daughter both wearing a Niqab, and on either side of them a bag of rubbish. The text reads 'I told her she had three beautiful children. She didn't have to get all pissed off and threaten me with a bomb. It was an honest mistake ...' Another image shows a woman in a blue Niqab sitting next to a pile of rubbish bags, it has the text, 'Women, can't live with 'em ... Can't trick the garbage man into taking 'em'.

Another form of dehumanisation is to portray Muslims as animals. One image shows a picture of two Muslim men behind the bars of a fence at the park. The image is captioned, 'If they act like animals, treat them like it' and a sign has been photo edited onto the fence reading 'Please don't feed the animals. They survive only on a diet of hate'. Another image shows a plane carrying a large wooden crate. The plane is labelled 'humans' and the crate is labelled 'Muslims'.

One of the underlying themes in the demonisation and dehumanisation of Muslims is an attempt to dismiss the human rights of some to freedom of religion by accusing the religion itself of being against human rights. The premise of the argument is that the target is evil and has therefore forfeited the right

to peacefully exist in society (Oboler 2013). The messages of dehumanisation and demonisation have much in common with racist propaganda and should be treated the same way by society.

Presenting Muslims as a 'threat to our way of life'

The anti-Muslim theme which presents Muslims as a 'threat to our way of life' has been seen in three basic forms. The first is the idea that Muslims want sharia law to replace the law of the land. The second presents Muslims as a 'cultural threat' for not fitting in, and the third presents Muslims as an economic threat, and in particular as a drain on the welfare system. The imposition of sharia law, on all citizens, is seen as the likely result of a significant Muslim population in a country, and particularly if that population doesn't 'integrate' and remains a cultural threat. Integration in this sense does not mean participating in, and contributing to, society, but rather giving up Muslim values such as eating halal food.

This view of integration reflects the more extreme interpretations of the French idea of *Laïcité*, a form of official secularism written into French law in 1905 (Sayare 2015). Gérard Biard, Charlie Hebdo's editor-in-chief, explained his view of concept when he said, 'you're not supposed to use religion for your sense of identity, in any case not in a secular state' (ibid.). Any distinctiveness, be it in dietary requirements, dress, accommodations for prayers or holidays, or not participating in mainstream holidays, which are often Christian based, is seen as part of an attack on mainstream culture.

Attempts to integrate, while staying within Muslim values, are also seen as offense. One example of this is the strong objection to the halal certification of the iconic Australian food Vegemite, some anti-Muslim Australians find the certification symbolically offensive. Indeed, any efforts to actively participate in society are dismissed as efforts to infiltrate and sabotage mainstream culture. This is connected to the themes of Muslims as untrustworthy manipulators, and any appearance of integration or participation in multicultural activities is seen as no more than a manipulative pretence. This cultural threat argument is particularly prevalent amongst the English Defence League (EDL) and its offshoots in other countries. It follows the traditional racist arguments of the Far Right and the associate imagery about the values of society is often linked to the crusades (Oboler 2013).

A Facebook comment from the page 'Petition to ban the Birqa in Australia' reads: 'Muslims are evil pigs who are infiltrating our Western society, so they can destroy our civilisation, our laws, and our freedoms ... They must be deported and soon!' A similar idea is reflected in a picture of the Trojan horse with the words 'Halal is a Trojan horse of Sharia law, say no to Halal, look for non-Halal'. The attack on halal food is particularly fierce, and another

image is headed, 'Muslims are urged to "conquer the word" through Halal' and carries the message that, 'It is becoming apparent that halal is being used as an instrument of Islamic mission (dawa), bringing the oblivious non-Muslim world increasingly under the authority of sharia law', and that, 'a leading European Muslim cleric has urged the international Muslim community to conquer the world through the Halal movement'.

The economic threat argument is often based on the idea of Muslims as parasites living off welfare, having large families, and shifting the demographics of a country to make it more Muslim. One Facebook image, for example, shows a man with 4 women and 13 children under the title 'one Muslim family, sucking on your welfare state'. Another uses toys to represent a Muslim man and woman, a plus sign, a pile of money, an equals sign, and an angry group of protesting toys with signs such as 'Sharia law for England'. The added text on this image reads 'welfare: feeding the enemy within'. The economic argument is also used to attack halal certification, referring to it as a Muslim tax that everyone is forced to pay. In reality the cost of certification on many processed goods is less than a cent per item and had no bearing on the price (Oboler 2013).

Other examples of Muslims as a cultural threat include a picture of World War I soldiers in trench with the text, 'we paid a heavy price for your freedom, don't let Muslims take it from you!' and one showing two lists of countries and 'happy' and 'unhappy' Muslims. The second image suggests that Muslims come from countries with sharia law, where they are unhappy, then seek to change the countries they come to by introducing sharia law in an effort to make these countries more like the countries they left.

Presenting Muslims as Manipulative and Dishonest

The presentation of Muslims as manipulative and dishonest is an approach used to spread animosity against Muslims. This theme ranges from very basic images with slogans such as 'never trust a Muslim' through a variety of images referring to what is claimed to be the Muslim doctrine of Taqiyya. A number of different images use the text: 'When Muslims are few in number, "we are from the religion of peace". When Muslims are numerous, "Islam deserves special status". When Muslims outnumber those around them, "Islam or else"'. (Oboler 2015). One common image of this form is headed 'The practical application of Taqiya (deception)'.

Another image pictures a man at prayer in front of a large flag of the United States with a crescent and star superimposed on it. The text contains a heading, 'True Islam ... Deceptive by nature' followed by, 'There are two forms of lying to non-believers that are permitted under certain circumstances. Taqiyya – Saying something that isn't true. Kitman – Lying by omission' (Oboler 2013).

Taqiyya is a Shia doctrine which its literal translation means is to 'to shield or to guard oneself' (Enayat 2005: 175). Under the practise of Taqiyya, Shia Muslims may pretend to be Sunni Muslims, including by following Sunni prayer rituals, jurisprudence and by directly claiming to be Sunni rather than Shia. The practice arose as means of protection from the persecution of rulers hostile to the minority Shia sect of Islam, but continues to be practised in places like Indonesia not out of fear, but as a means of establishing greater unity within the Muslim community.

Xenophobia against Muslims

As mentioned, some of the dehumanisation of Muslims uses classic racist arguments. This is also part of a broader theme of xenophobia which sees all Muslims as 'the other'. This form of hate has difficulty with the idea of locally born Muslims being equal members of society, but largely focuses on opposition to immigration of Muslims. This opposition often focuses on refugees (those who have been granted refugee status by the United Nations) and asylum seekers (those seeking to make a claim for refugee status), but when pushed, often degenerates into a general form of hatred and fear of all Muslims using other lines of argument already discussed.

One image on Facebook contains a Lego man with a belt of grenades, a gun in each hand and a Muslim-styled head covering, and reads 'Common English mistakes: using your instead of you're; using their instead of they're; allowing Muslims into the country'. Another is a picture of a wall of anti-immigration posters. One poster reads 'No welfare for asylum seekers', another says 'deport asylum seeker sexual predators', a third says 'you are entering a Sharia Free Zone', a fourth reads 'stop the illegal trade in asylum seekers' and a fifth reads 'No asylum, secure the borders, deport illegals'.

Undermining the Resistance to Hate against Muslims

An indirect form of hate involves those efforts designed to make the anti-Muslim hate more socially acceptable. These lines of argument directly contribute to the Hate 2.0 effect discussed earlier in this chapter. An example of this is the series of images on Facebook promoting the idea that Muslims are not a race, so it isn't racist to promote hate of Muslims. This is of course a false argument, one could as easily say it isn't racist to murder people at random; it may be true, but that doesn't make murder right. A twist on this theme is an image which reads 'Fighting the enemy used to be called war, now it's called racism'. This is similar to one which shows a picture of soldiers with a speech

bubble reading 'we fought and died for your freedom, and you won't speak out now because you're scared of being labelled a racist?!'

Freedom of speech arguments are also twisted and abused in order to justify and defend hate speech. One image uses the messages that it isn't hate to question a religion. The image on Facebook shows four very different looking Muslims, of different ethnicities, each with the label 'Muslim' below their picture. The image is headed 'It is not racist', and below the images continues, 'to criticize a religion (so nice try)'. The problem with this image is that while it talks about 'a religion', which is a set of ideas, the images used are clearly about people not ideas.

Another image is split into two parts; on the left are various stylised images of people and the text 'people have rights', and on the right is a collection of stylised symbols of religions, political parties and ideologies, and the text 'ideas don't have rights'. Further text on the image says 'Every Ideology must be subject to open, free discussion in regard to its value or otherwise, without fear of reprisal. No exceptions. "Islamophobia" is not racism, any more than "Communistophobia" or "Fascistophobia" would be, because Islam is an *idea*, not a *race*. In a civilised society, no idea – religious, political or philosophical – can claim any special treatment, or be set beyond the reach of empirical evidence. Support free speech. Support people'. The image by itself is not hate speech, but in this instance it is used to support the page's message which reads: 'Listen up muzzies, after reading some of the lovely messages to the page I would like to explain AGAIN why criticising Islam is not racist. Maybe if you could refrain from breeding with your cousins, future generations of Muslims would find this easier to understand' (Oboler 2013: 120–31). The post is clearly bigoted, but in its references to genetics, it is also classically racist. The image posted only highlights how the comments made are an attack on people.

Other images attack the idea of moderate Muslims. One shows a huge bomb with the word Islam on it being carried by three people labelled 'Moderate' while four people and standing on each other's shoulders so the top one can reach the fuse with a lit match (ibid. 120). The message is that all Muslims are a problem. Another image suggests there are no moderate Muslims, it shows an empty street with the text 'moderate Muslims demonstrating for peace' (ibid. 131). Another says 'The only difference between a radical and a moderate Muslim is ... the distance they place between themselves and the bomb'; it shows one cartoon Muslim character with a remote control bomb, and another dressed as a suicide bomber.

Another form this theme takes is that Muslims are an exception and will never fit in to a multicultural society. One image shows people of different ethnicities dancing in a circle and holding hands, the Muslim figure in the circle is wearing a suicide vest, the text reads, 'Multiculturalism – Islam will never be a part of it' (ibid. 15). Similarly, another image shows a square peg not fitting into

a round hole; it reads 'the Cult of Islam has no intention of fitting in, Muslims will never become a part of civilised society' (ibid. 74).

There are also examples of cartoons of Mohammed being used to spread hate. The character of Mohammed is used in order to engage freedom of speech sympathies in light of attacks on those who have drawn such cartoons in the past. The images we refer to here, however, are specifically those where the image is not just of Mohammed, but of Mohammed as a representation of all Muslims, and where all Muslims are presented using a negative stereotype. The primary example is the now infamous Kurt Westergaard cartoon which features a picture of Mohammed with a bomb in his turban and the Muslim declaration of faith also on the turban (Oboler 2015). The Online Hate Prevention Institute has argued that 'a cartoon should not be considered hate speech merely because it depicts Mohammed', but that 'Cartoons portraying Muslims through negative stereotypes, using Mohammed to symbolise all Muslims, should be considered a form of hate speech' (ibid. 18).

Efforts aimed at undermining resistance to anti-Muslim hate make it harder for the wider public to comfortably in speaking up against hate directed against the Muslim community, or to participate in activities designed to build bridges with the Muslim community. The lack of action by Facebook in relation to the many examples found in the Online Hate Prevention Institute's report also sends a negative message that such content is acceptable. This message is reinforced each time Facebook informs people that it did not find their report to be valid.

Seeking to Exclude Muslims from Society

Another more indirect form of anti-Muslim hate seeks to exclude Muslims from society by removing or preventing the development of the infrastructure a Muslim community needs. This form of anti-Muslim hate includes attacks on the certification and stocking of halal food, as well as political action at the local government level in an effort to prevent planning approval for mosques, Muslim schools and other infrastructure needed to support a Muslim community. These efforts are largely coordinated and promoted through Facebook.

The anti-halal campaign began as astroturfing, with many fake local branches established by the same small group of people. It has, since grown into a real international online movement. The anti-halal campaign has three points of focus: the first is online negative publicity campaigns against companies and brands that are halal certified; the second is direct contact and lobby the companies; and the third is a campaign against shops that stock halal foods.

The online campaigns against halal certification have unfortunately had some small successes. In late 2014, for example, an Australian dairy company

stopped certifying its products in response to such a campaign. This, however, raised the attention of their industry body, the Dairy Farmers Association. The association hit back saying that, in this case a 'small milk company, without the resources to defend themselves ... decided it's easier to walk away' and that it was 'particularly unfair to put that sort of pressure on a small, little milk company that's just trying to operate' (ABC News 2014). The association urged other companies facing such campaigns to seek help.

The anti-halal campaign is often based on the false claim that money paid for certification is used to fund terrorism, and that as a result everyone involved in the support of halal food is a material supporter of terrorism. Another argument is that the certification costs are a religious tax being imposed on non-Muslims, and are part of an effort to apply sharia law across society. The tax argument could equally be made about user forms of certification, from Kosher certification to fair trade certification, or health related certifications like Australia's 'Heart Foundation tick of approval' (Oboler 2013: 21–2). The argument only has weight if there is a real price increase.

While some certifications, like fair trade, rely on a percentage based fee, halal certification tends to be based on a fixed-cost model. The cost passed on to consumers is likely to be swamped by other fixed costs such as advertising and marketing. As the impact of a fixed cost on each item sold decrease with an increase in sales, the opening up of new markets, locally and internationally, through halal certification can actually end up reducing the ultimate costs to consumers. Given Australia's large halal export market to Asia, the tax argument has no merit.

When it comes to local government action to block planning approval for Muslim buildings, research by the Online Hate Prevention Institute has shown that such efforts may not be local at all. Research into a Facebook page called 'Stop the Mosque in Bendigo', for example, showed that only 3% of the pages supporters were actually from the city of Bendigo. In total 80% of the supporters of the page were from outside the state, and that included 14% of the page's supporters who were from outside the country (The Bendigo Mosque 2014). Media reports also highlighted how non-local anti-Muslim organisations were supporting the anti-mosque push, including with financial support, and by providing materials and information for those wanting to fight planning approvals (Johnston 2014). There are numerous 'Stop the Mosque' style pages and they have become particularly organised in Australia.

Bigots Pretending to be Muslims

False flag pages pretending to be Muslim, but taking positions designed to outrage and upset the wider community, are another form of anti-Muslim hate.

A common theme for such pages is to attack commemorations for soldiers who have died in wars. Another approach used by anti-Muslim haters is to pretend to be Muslim while engaging in explicit support for terrorism and violence. During the Lindt Café siege in Sydney in December 2014, which left four people dead, a number of pages pretending to be run by local Muslims, and expressing support for the attack, were created. These pages are designed to create a hatred and fear of the local Muslim community and to potentially spark a breakdown of public order and potentially lead to riots.

In the case of the Sydney siege, the Online Hate Prevention Institute was able to notify both police and Facebook when the pages appeared, and then advise the public to ignore the pages as they were being dealt with by authorities. This post was seen by over 260,000 people and played a significant role in preventing the situation potentially getting out of hand. False flag pages need to be rapidly exposed and removed as they can pose a real danger to public safety.

Improving Responses to Online anti-Muslim hate

The problem of anti-Muslim hate is particularly acute due to its prevalence and growth in recent years, but also due to difficulties in applying existing mechanisms against hate speech in this area. Part of the difficulty comes from the challenge of identifying what is hate speech, and what must be protected as criticism of religion. Part of the problem, however, is structural and requires legal reform both at the national level and through international treaties.

One structural problem is that anti-hate rules and systems have traditionally been based on the narrow concept of racism and xenophobia, rather than the broader concept of bigotry against a group in society. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights clearly regards religion, like race, sex, and nationality, a factor which cannot be used to limit human rights (Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948 Art 2). There is a universal human right to teach, practice, worship and observe one's religion both in private and in public (Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948 Art 18). Despite this, many laws and policies do not explicitly cover religion and it can be difficult to get online religious vilification removed from social media platforms.

Social media platforms such as Facebook provide an environment that supports the creation of communities, and haters take full advantage of this facility. Social media platforms also let the haters gain ready access to victims, anything with the word 'Muslim' or 'Islamic' in its name may be targeted. Despite public policies against hate speech, those responsible for enforcing community standards at Facebook appear uninterested in doing so when it comes to anti-Muslim hate. The lack of response, after 12 months, to the report by the Online Hate Prevention Institute highlights the problem.

Some online attacks require more than just the suspension of an account. It can be difficult for law enforcement to access the data, such as IP addresses, which they need to enable a prosecution. This problem is not unique to crimes against the Muslim community, but increasingly it is Muslims who are being targeted by organised online campaigns. These campaigns, which seek to exclude Muslims from society, can also spill over to the streets and pose a threat to public safety. They can also cause Muslim youth who become disillusioned, and blame society as a whole for the hate spread by anti-Muslim extremists, to look for a way to hit back. The risk of self-radicalisation of Muslim youth online, as a result of anti-Muslim hate they are exposed to, is not insignificant.

Conclusion

Anti-Muslim hate is a growing problem. This is strongly reflected on Facebook where a wide variety of hate messages are shared and spread. Within social media, such hate can be normalised creating a risk that such views will also be normalised in wider society. Social media platforms need to do more to identify and remove online hate against Muslims. Offline systems also need to be improved to deal with the worst offenders. The Muslim community has an important role to play in responding to anti-Muslim hate, but this is not solely a Muslim community problem. Anti-Muslim hate is an attack on the inclusiveness of society, on multiculturalism, and on democracy itself. It is an attack on all of us. Governments, social media platforms and community groups must act together to better tackle the problem of anti-Muslim hate speech, as well as the problem of hate speech online more generally.

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