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## Pakistan's Global Role in Combating Islamophobia: Policy, Diplomacy, and Advocacy Efforts

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### ABSTRACT

Islamophobia has emerged as a critical global issue, shaping political narratives, media discourses, and interfaith relations in ways that threaten social harmony. The problem lies in the persistence of anti-Muslim stereotypes and discriminatory practices, which continue to marginalize Muslim communities worldwide. This research addresses the question of how Pakistan has contributed to global efforts in combating Islamophobia through its policies, diplomacy, and advocacy initiatives. The purpose of the study is to evaluate Pakistan's strategies in promoting tolerance, safeguarding Muslim identity, and challenging hate-driven narratives at international forums. The paper highlights Pakistan's diplomatic achievement in spearheading the United Nations resolution that declared March 15 as the "International Day to Combat Islamophobia," alongside its advocacy for international legal frameworks against religious intolerance. In responding to this challenge, Pakistan has sought to position itself as a global voice for Muslim concerns while promoting dialogue and coexistence. The research adopts a qualitative approach, relying on document analysis of official statements, speeches, and international resolutions, complemented by secondary literature on Islamophobia and global politics. Pakistan's initiatives have contributed significantly to shaping global awareness and policy discourse on Islamophobia. However, challenges remain in translating these initiatives into practical international mechanisms. The study concludes that Pakistan's role demonstrates how state-led diplomacy, combined with advocacy, can function as an effective instrument in addressing religious intolerance in a globalized world.

**Keywords:** Pakistan, Islamophobia, Policy, Diplomacy, Advocacy & Religious Studies.

### Introduction

Islamophobia emerged as a widely recognized concept in the late twentieth century, particularly following the report of the Runnymede Trust in the United Kingdom, which defined

it as “unfounded hostility towards Islam and Muslims.”<sup>1</sup> Since then, it has become a major global issue that undermines religious freedom, equality, and international peace, not only in the context of humanistic teachings regarding Islam. Hate crimes and discriminatory practices against Muslims have increased globally.<sup>2</sup> but also more subtle online trends such as semi-coded slurs and hostile narratives against Muslims.

This development highlights how Islamophobia is no longer limited to isolated incidents but has become a systematic challenge that affects political discourse, media portrayals, and interfaith relations around the world.

In this global context, Muslim communities are particularly vulnerable, facing structural discrimination, stereotyping, and marginalization that threaten their socio-political inclusion. For Pakistan, the increasing intensity of Islamophobia is of great importance, which is why the country actively supports the rights and protections of Muslims at the international level. Pakistan’s policies against Islamophobia, diplomatic strategy, and its policy, diplomatic, and advocacy initiatives aim to assess Pakistan’s role in shaping global awareness, its successes and challenges, and its efforts in public diplomacy to counter negative narratives, ultimately to strengthen recommendations for Pakistan.

Pakistan has undertaken several strategies and diplomatic efforts to combat Islamophobia globally, aimed at defending the rights of Muslim communities and eliminating hateful attitudes towards them. The main objective of this research is to understand Pakistan’s policies, diplomatic strategies, and public advocacy, and to examine Pakistan’s role in international forums. To achieve this objective, *qualitative documentary analysis* has been used, which includes a detailed study of official statements, international resolutions, and relevant literature, to clarify the successes and challenges of Pakistan’s efforts.

### **Literature Review**

Global research on Islamophobia identifies it as a complex and multidimensional issue that operates at social, political, legal, and institutional levels. Early foundational work by the Runnymede Trust (1997) defined Islamophobia as “unfounded hostility towards Islam and Muslims,” which laid the basis for later academic discussions. Building on this, Beydoun (2016) argues that Islamophobia is not merely a form of religious prejudice but is embedded within state structures, where Muslims are often portrayed as suspect or threatening citizens. Similarly, Imhoff and Recker (2012) explain that Islamophobia consists of emotional fear, negative stereotypes, and discriminatory behavior, which together form a broader system of exclusion.

In recent years, scholars have expanded their understanding of Islamophobia by linking it to global power structures and historical processes. Bayrakli and Hafez (2019) highlight that Islamophobia is deeply influenced by colonial legacies and contemporary geopolitical tensions, while Modood (2023) emphasizes that it should not be reduced only to racial prejudice but must also be understood in its religious and cultural dimensions. These studies show that Islamophobia is not an isolated phenomenon but relates to wider political, historical, and ideological contexts.

Another important dimension of literature focuses on the role of media in shaping and reinforcing Islamophobic narratives. Kumar (2012) and Pozzi (2020) argue that Western media

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<sup>1</sup> Runnymede, T. “Islamophobia: A Challenge for Us All. London United Kingdom.” *British Library Document Supply Centre* (1997).

<sup>2</sup> Kumar, Deepa. *Islamophobia and the Politics of Empire*. Haymarket Books, 2012.

has played a significant role in portraying Islam as the “other,” often associating it with violence, extremism, and backwardness. Such representations not only influence public perception but also affect policy discussions and legitimize discriminatory practices. More recent studies have also pointed to the rise of digital Islamophobia, where online platforms amplify coded language, hate speech, and exclusionary narratives against Muslims.<sup>3</sup>

In the context of Muslim-majority states, existing literature has started to examine how countries respond to Islamophobia through policy, diplomacy, and advocacy. In this regard, Pakistan has been identified as an active and vocal state in raising the issue at international forums. Ahmad et al. (2023) note that Pakistan incorporates its Islamic identity into its foreign policy to advocate for Muslim concerns globally. Similarly, Asma (2019) highlights Pakistan’s engagement within the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), particularly in the post-9/11 context when Muslim identity became increasingly securitized. Further studies by Shah and Ahmad (2023) and Khan and Waheed (2024) show that Pakistan has played a role in promoting international resolutions, diplomatic statements, and initiatives such as the recognition of the “International Day to Combat Islamophobia.” Hammad Uddin et al. (2022) also point out that countries like Pakistan and Turkey have adopted more initiative-taking strategies compared to some other Muslim states.

However, despite this growing body of literature, several limitations can be observed. First, much of the existing research remains descriptive in nature, as it focuses on explaining Pakistan’s initiatives without critically examining their effectiveness, limitations, or long-term impact. Second, there is limited effort to connect theoretical understandings of Islamophobia—such as structural discrimination, media narratives, and securitization with the actual policy and diplomatic strategies adopted by states. This creates a gap between theory and practice. Third, the literature on Pakistan is often fragmented and lacks a comparative perspective, as it does not sufficiently analyze Pakistan’s role in relation to other Muslim-majority countries.

Therefore, this study addresses these gaps by moving beyond descriptive explanations and providing a critical analysis of Pakistan’s policy, diplomacy, and advocacy efforts. It evaluates the effectiveness and limitations of these initiatives, particularly at international platforms such as the United Nations and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation. In doing so, the study connects theoretical discussions of Islamophobia with practical state responses and offers a more comprehensive understanding of how state-led efforts can contribute to combating Islamophobia in global politics. This approach moves beyond existing descriptive accounts and introduces a more analytical and comparative perspective.

## **Islamophobia in Global Politics**

### **[1] Conceptual understanding**

Islamophobia is a complex and multifaceted concept that has become central to global socio-political discourse in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. The term primarily describes negative perceptions, prejudices, and discriminatory attitudes toward Muslims and Islam. It is based on feelings of fear and hatred that portray Muslims as alien and threatening at a social and political level. The Runnymede Trust report played a fundamental role in introducing the term, although it was a 1997 study; since then, many scholars have shed light on its various aspects and defined it with greater clarity and depth. According to it,

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<sup>3</sup> Mustafa, Raza Ul, Roi Dupart, Gabrielle Smith, Noman Ashraf, and Nathalie Japkowicz. "Analyzing Islamophobic Discourse Using Semi-Coded Terms and LLMs." *arXiv preprint arXiv:2503.18273* (2025).

Islamophobia should not be understood simply as an irrational fear but rather as an attitude that presents Muslims in a negative and unrealistic perspective.<sup>4</sup>

In the twenty-first century, scholars have further expanded the term. According to a recent study, Islamophobia consists of three main components:

- First, hatred or fear at the personal level.
- Second, prejudiced and stereotyped ideas about Muslims and Islam at the cognitive or intellectual level.
- And third, discrimination and injustice at the practical level.<sup>5</sup>

Thus, Islamophobia was considered a social and institutional phenomenon that has its effects at different levels, rather than being considered a purely emotional or individual problem.

Other studies have described Islamophobia as “irrational hostility and hatred against Muslims” that often stems from unfounded fears and negative assumptions. (Rehman, I., & Hanley, T: (2023) An important point added to this discussion is that some academic works have considered Islamophobia only in the context of racial or cultural racism while ignoring the religious aspect. In this context, Sealy writes that it is not correct to view Islamophobia in isolation from the context of religion, as it is also rooted in negative attitudes towards Islamic beliefs and religious symbols.<sup>6</sup>

From a legal perspective, Beydoun has offered a comprehensive definition of Islamophobia, according to which it is a framework in which Islam is presented as an inherently violent and alien religion. He further states that Muslims are often associated with security threats and extremism, and this attitude can be seen at both state and non-state levels.<sup>7</sup> This definition also makes Islamophobia a global problem in legal, policy, and human rights contexts.

In modern discourse, Islamophobia has also often been seen in colonial and post-colonial contexts. One study also made it clear that the term is not simply a cultural or racial bias but also a result of global power structures and colonial legacies. In this context, it is not enough to define Islamophobia in terms of racial prejudice alone, but it is also necessary to connect it with the historical and power structures that have always presented Muslim societies as “others.”<sup>8</sup>

Islamophobia cannot be limited to individual attitudes but is also deeply embedded in spatial and social institutions. Its effects can be seen in Muslim homes, places of worship, educational institutions, and other public spaces. Kumar 2019 writes that these effects of Islamophobia create daily difficulties for Muslims at the geographical and social levels and isolate them socially. (Kumar, D. (2012) At the same time, research in the field of health has also

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<sup>4</sup> Rehman, Ishba, and Terry Hanley. "Muslim minorities' experiences of Islamophobia in the West: A systematic review." *Culture & Psychology* 29, no. 1 (2023): 139-156.

<sup>5</sup> Imhoff, Roland, and Julia Recker. "Differentiating Islamophobia: Introducing a new scale to measure Islam prejudice and secular Islam critique." *Political Psychology* 33, no. 6 (2012): 811-824.

<sup>6</sup> Sealy, Thomas. "Islamophobia: with or without Islam?" *Religions* 12, no. 6 (2021): 369.

<sup>7</sup> Beydoun, Khaled A. "Islamophobia: Toward a legal definition and framework." *Colum. L. Rev. Online* 116 (2016): 108.

<sup>8</sup> Modood, Tariq. "“Decolonising islamophobia”: some misunderstandings." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 46, no. 13 (2023): 2893-2896.

made it clear that Islamophobia causes mental stress, psychological problems, and social stigma for Muslims.

The biggest turning point in the development of this concept came after 9/11, when Islam and Muslims were associated with terrorism around the world. As a result, Islamophobia has not only entered political and legal discourses but also played a major role in media representations. Pozzi 2020 writes that Muslims are often portrayed in the media in Europe and the United States as terrorists, backward, and uncivilized.<sup>9</sup> This process has not only increased public fear but also pushed Muslims further to the margins of society and politics. Contemporary discussions of Islamophobia have also seen that the concept is also linked to other social elements such as gender, immigration status, and economic position. Some scholars have called this “gendered Islamophobia,” where Muslim women are specifically targeted because of their hijab or other religious symbols. These attitudes are not just personal animosity but are embedded in social structures and have legal implications.<sup>10</sup>

## **[2] Relevance to international peace and coexistence**

Understanding nature and spread of Islamophobia is essential for the survival of global peace and harmony, as it is not only a matter of religious and cultural prejudice but also affects international relations, security policies, legal norms, and social cohesion. Some of the important aspects of international peace and coexistence regarding Islamophobia are as follows.

Islamophobia hinders the promotion of global peace because it creates hostility and distrust. When Muslims are seen as “others” or “threats,” there is concern that they are not full partners in social and political systems. A recent study, “*Islamophobia, Populism, and Peace in the Perspective of Relinquished Financial European Economies*,” has shown that in European countries, in times of financial difficulties and political uncertainty, Islamophobia and the division of public sentiment promote the concept of “us” and “them,” which undermines social cohesion and affects the structure of peace.<sup>11</sup>

The effects of Islamophobia are clear in the light of human rights and international law. In Western societies, Islam and Muslims are often represented negatively through media, politics, and legal structures. Such representations influence the identity of Muslims internationally and encourage discriminatory policies and behaviors against them. The paper “*Anti-Muslim tribalism: a new framework for analyzing Islamophobia*” states that Islamophobia is not only a personal or cultural prejudice but also clashes with other identities such as ethnicity, class, and residential status and rationalizes discrimination against Muslims within and across countries.<sup>12</sup>

The negative role of Islamophobia for social stability and inter-communal peace is further exacerbated when Muslim communities face social and political inequalities. Targeting individuals on ethnic or religious grounds for religious expression or religious dress reduces their social inclusion, which also has an impact on mental health, access to education, and employment. The study “*The Typologies of Global Islamophobia and its Manifestations*” notes

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<sup>9</sup> Cervi, Laura, Santiago Tejedor, and Monica Gracia. "What kind of Islamophobia? Representation of Muslims and Islam in Italian and Spanish media." *Religions* 12, no. 6 (2021): 427.

<sup>10</sup> Zempi, Irene, and Neil Chakraborti. *Islamophobia, victimisation and the veil*. Springer, 2014.

<sup>11</sup> Weinhardt, Jolita, Tariq Hussain, Ahmed Raza Ul Mustafa, and Hira Abdul Rawoof. "Islamophobia, Populism and Peace in the Perspective of Relinquished Financial European Economies: A Systematic Review." *International Journal of Islamic Thought* 27 (2025): 92-104.

<sup>12</sup> Ejiófor, Promise Frank. "Anti-Muslim tribalism: a new framework for analysing Islamophobia in contemporary times." *Patterns of Prejudice* 57, no. 3 (2023): 133-160.

that various forms of discrimination at the state and non-state levels are exposing Muslims to social isolation and economic disadvantage, weakening the social fabric.<sup>13</sup>

It is also important for global peace to consider the impact of Islamophobia in international relations. Relations between Muslim-majority countries and Western countries are often strained when Islamophobia is used, legitimately or illegitimately, in the guise of state policies, border immigration laws, or counter-terrorism measures. The stigmatization of Muslims in global forums creates a lack of international cooperation and trust, which affects negotiations and peace processes.

Cultural and educational exchanges and dialogues play an important role in building peace. Where different religious and cultural groups strive to understand each other, Islamophobia is less common. For example, the study "*Identifying Islamophobia in Societies to Help Sustain Global Peace*" has shown that positive representations in social dialogue and media are helpful in creating a climate of peace, especially among young people.<sup>14</sup>

The digital age has increased the visibility and impact of Islamophobia, but it has also created opportunities for peace and inclusion. Machine learning and artificial intelligence methods are being used to monitor the use of Islamophobic discourse and terminology on online platforms. The study "*Analyzing Islamophobic Discourse Using Semi-Coded Terms and LLMs*" found that certain words or coded terms are indicators of active Islamophobia online, but if they are identified and alternative discourses are promoted, their impact can be reduced.<sup>15</sup>

It is essential for peace and coexistence that international and intercultural organizations are active. Efforts such as the International Day to Combat Islamophobia are a sign that the international community is not ignoring this issue. Such initiatives raise awareness at the communication level and increase efforts for social solidarity.

The examples of the cases of Syria, Palestine, and Israel show that if an element of Islamophobia is added to local and regional conflicts, peace negotiations and the reconciliation process are affected. A study, "Using Collective Dialogues and AI to Find Common Ground Between Israeli and Palestinian Peacebuilders," showed that through collective dialogues and the use of creative technology, a path between dialogue and consensus can be found, even in an environment of intense tension.

The principles of Islamic law and international law also play a role in international peace efforts. "*Emilia Justyna Powell's book Islamic Law and International Law: Peaceful Settlement of Disputes*" writes that the principles of Islamic jurisprudence are reflected in the decisions of international courts and international tribunals, especially in the matter of dispute resolution, and these principles can to some extent be a means of strengthening intercultural relations.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Bakali, Naved. "The Typologies of Global Islamophobia and its Manifestations Across the Global North and South." *Journal of Muslim Philanthropy & Civil Society* 8, no. 2 (2024).

<sup>14</sup> Yusha'u, Muhammad J. "Identifying Islamophobia in Societies to Help Sustain Global Peace, Journalism, and Communication." *The Handbook of Conflict and Peace Communication* (2025): 369-381.

<sup>15</sup> Mustafa, Raza Ul, Roi Dupart, Gabrielle Smith, Noman Ashraf, and Nathalie Japkowicz. "Analyzing Islamophobic Discourse Using Semi-Coded Terms and LLMs." *arXiv preprint arXiv:2503.18273* (2025).

<sup>16</sup> Rydberg, Agnes Viktoria. "Islamic Law and International Law: Peaceful Settlement of Disputes, written by Emilia Justyna Powell." *International Community Law Review* 24, no. 5 (2021): 553-557.

## **Pakistan's Policy and Diplomatic Initiatives**

### **[1] National and International Strategies**

Pakistan has adopted various national and international strategies and diplomatic initiatives against Islamophobia to strengthen its position in the inter-Muslim world and to ensure the cooperation of the international community in preventing prejudice, hatred, and discrimination against Muslims. These initiatives are not limited to political statements but also include resolutions, legal policies, cultural and diplomatic interventions, and Pakistan's active role in international forums.

Commitment to Islam and the Muslim Ummah has been a fundamental element in Pakistan's foreign policy. "Pakistan's Foreign Policy Towards the Islamic World: An Analysis" Tooba Ahmad has made it clear in her article that Pakistan has tried to highlight its Islamic identity on the global stage through the conventions, relations, and anti-Islamophobia measures it has established. She further says that Pakistan has used the narrative that it will raise its voice against the harm of the Muslim Ummah, especially in its relations with Muslim-majority countries, such as Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Iran, and other OIC member states.<sup>17</sup>

It has been seen in the announcements of the Pakistani Ministry of Foreign Affairs that the government emphasizes legislation and the promotion of media, education, and intercultural dialogue to address religious intolerance. This strategy is part of Pakistan's domestic policy, which includes measures to promote the rights of religious minorities, religious teachings, and social harmony at the civic level so as to strengthen the effectiveness of the country's foreign policy. At the government level, these interventions aim to create a positive international image for Pakistan and to speak out on the strength of its demands in Muslim countries.

Cultural and educational projects are also part of these strategies. "Cultural Diplomacy and Islamic Identity: Pakistan's Outreach in the Muslim Community" notes that Pakistan has used international Islamic book fairs, Quranic exhibitions, and educational and cultural outreach to strengthen Islamic identity, which raises awareness against religious disharmony and Islamophobia. These projects are not limited to diplomatic forums but are part of public relations, soft power, and the public image of religious identity.<sup>18</sup>

Pakistan's strategy also has legal and constitutional aspects. Pakistan's participation in and support for the UN resolution "Measures to Combat Islamophobia" is an effort by Pakistan to implement international law and human rights principles. This resolution called on member states to amend their domestic legislation in line with international standards to criminalize hate speech, religious insults, or discrimination against Muslims. This initiative is an important part of Pakistan's diplomatic strategy.

It is worth noting that Pakistan has also given importance to media and public narrative and diplomatic statements to draw international attention to reporting on incidents of Islamophobia and to highlight the Muslim community on the global stage. Embassies and representatives often express their position that Muslim communities should not be subjected to pressure.

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<sup>17</sup> H. R. Ahmed, S. Amir, and F. Ahmad, "A Speech Act Analysis of the Prime Minister of Pakistan Imran Khan's Speech at UNGA with Respect to Islamophobia," *International Journal of Social Sciences & Humanities (IJSSH)* 5, no. 2 (2020): 59–71.

<sup>18</sup> Khan, Saqib Ullah, and Sabira Iqbal. "Cultural diplomacy and Islamic identity: Pakistan's outreach in the Muslim community." *Journal of Religion and Society* 3, no. 01 (2025): 100-114.

## [2] UN, OIC, and global platforms

Dr. Ommeh Asma writes in her article "The Role of Organization of Islamic Cooperation after 9/11" that the OIC has provided Pakistan with a platform where it can raise its voice against Islamophobia in global politics, especially after 9/11 when the stigmatization of Muslim identity and the accusation of terrorism had a negative impact on the Muslim world. Pakistan's efforts include bringing resolutions in the OIC, increasing international moral pressure, and building alliances with Muslim countries.<sup>19</sup>

Pakistan has tabled resolutions at the international and regional levels. For example, in 2024, official sources in the parliament stated that Pakistan tabled a resolution on "Measures to Combat Islamophobia" at the UN General Assembly on behalf of the OIC, which was adopted with a majority vote. Pakistan tabled this resolution in the backdrop of the increasing incidence of Islamophobia based on stigma and hatred across the world, and the resolution demanded that member states take relevant legislative and policy measures and monitor incidents of religious intolerance, hate speech, and insults to religious symbols.<sup>20</sup>

Pakistan has raised a comprehensive voice as the representative of the OIC at the UN. Pakistan's Permanent Representative Munir Ikram, while addressing the General Assembly, said that the international community should take decisive steps and bring clear religious tolerance in laws and policies. He said that the identity of Muslims should not be underestimated, and their religious identity and freedom of worship should not be restricted in the name of freedom of expression. Such statements are part of Pakistan's international strategy, which gives Pakistan the status of a moral leader in the Muslim world.<sup>21</sup>

Pakistan has formulated specific resolutions at OIC forums. For example, in the meeting of the Council of Foreign Ministers of the OIC, Pakistan presented a resolution condemning the desecration of the Quran, the desecration of Islamic symbols, and attacks on Muslim places of worship. This resolution decided that March 15 would be observed as the "International Day to Combat Islamophobia" and that OIC member states and permanent missions would launch awareness campaigns at the global and national levels (MOFA Pakistan: "OIC unanimously adopts Pakistan-sponsored resolution regarding Islamophobia."<sup>22</sup>

In March 2025, Pakistan addressed the United Nations General Assembly, stating that Muslims around the world are being systematically marginalized and that laws and policies do not reflect religious tolerance. These statements, presented at the UN and OIC platforms, reflect Pakistan's commitment to mobilizing global awareness and institutional cooperation against Islamophobia.

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<sup>19</sup> Asma, O. "The Role Of Organization Of Islamic Cooperation After 9/11 International Politics." *Journal of Int'l Affairs* 2, no. 2 (2019): 65-81.

<sup>20</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Government of Pakistan, "Pakistan Welcomes the Adoption of UN General Assembly Resolution Titled 'Measures to Combat Islamophobia,'" March 2024, [mofa.gov.pk](https://mofa.gov.pk).

<sup>21</sup> Pakistan Today, "FO Hails UNGA's Adoption of Pakistan-Sponsored Resolution on Combating Islamophobia," March 16, 2024, <https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2024/03/16/fo-hails-ungas-adoption-of-pakistan-sponsored-resolution-on-combating-islamophobia>.

<sup>22</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Government of Pakistan, "OIC Unanimously Adopts Pakistan-Sponsored Resolution Regarding Islamophobia (Press Release, 47th Session of OIC Council of Foreign Ministers, Niamey, Niger)," 2025, <https://mofa.gov.pk/press-releases/oic-unanimously-adopts-pakistan-sponsored-resolution-regarding-islamophobia>.

### **Advocacy and Public Diplomacy**

In Pakistan's struggle against Islamophobia, the role of advocacy and public diplomacy is also very important, along with diplomatic measures. Where resolutions and policy measures are taken at the official level, shaping the public narrative, influencing global public opinion, and establishing dialogue with the international community are an integral part of Pakistan's strategy. Through advocacy, Pakistan has tried in global forums, media, and academia to ensure that Islamophobia is not considered a problem of Muslims alone but rather a challenge to global peace, human rights, and interfaith tolerance. Under public diplomacy, Pakistan not only effectively presented the speeches and statements of its leaders but also gave the message to the world through cultural, educational, and interfaith projects that Islam teaches peace, tolerance, and coexistence. The aim of these measures is to address the negative perception that exists about Islam and Muslims at the global level and to link the identity of Muslims with a positive and constructive aspect.

#### **[a] Leadership speeches and narratives**

Pakistani leaders try to raise global awareness against Islamophobia through their speeches and narratives. Language, narrative, and critical stance are important in these speeches, through which Pakistan not only condemns the incidents but also raises the issue of Muslim oppression, religious identity, and global justice.

One important speech that took place recently was the speech of Pakistan's Permanent Representative Munir Ikram, who represented the OIC at the UN General Assembly. He said that the entire world should take "decisive" steps against the increasing incidents of Islamophobia.

Munir Ikram also stated during the conversation that the religious identity, worship, and symbols of Muslims are being subjected to oppression and discriminatory decisions in many countries. He demands that international laws be solid, that narratives against Muslims should not be legitimized in the name of freedom of expression, and that hateful content and legislation be monitored.<sup>23</sup>

Similarly, the message of the Head of State is also noteworthy. On March 15, 2025, Acting President Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani delivered a message on the "*International Day to Combat Islamophobia*," in which he mentioned the misconceptions and negative propaganda spread about Islam and Muslims in the global and Western media and said that this is causing identity and social harm. He criticized those countries that have worked to insult sacred places and spread hatred under the guise of freedom of expression. In his speeches, he highlighted the need for interfaith dialogue and legislation.<sup>24</sup>

And other political leaders also stressed the need for global and regional justice on the occasion of the International Day to Combat Islamophobia. He said that hateful incidents in the world, insulting sacred places, attacks on places of worship, and restrictions on religious clothing are not just a matter of the dignity and rights of Muslims but a matter of global human rights.

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<sup>23</sup> Javeed, Muhammad Farooq, and Shafaq Fayyaz. "Islamophobia and International Peace: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Religious and Political Themes of Imran Khan's Speeches at United Nations General Assembly as Prime Minister of Pakistan." *Journal of Ecohumanism* 4, no. 1 (2025): 839-850.

<sup>24</sup> Acting President of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, "Message on the International Day to Combat Islamophobia," by Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani, Presidential Secretariat, Islamabad, March 15, 2025, <https://president.gov.pk/acting-president-of-islamic-republic-of-pakistan-syed-yousuf-raza-gilani-message-on-the-international-day-to-combat-islamophobia-15-march-2025-2>.

Such statements send a message that Pakistan is a moral and effective element that represents the Muslim community globally.

A research study titled "*Islamophobia and International Peace: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Religious and Political Themes of Imran Khan's Speeches at United Nations General Assembly*" states that former Prime Minister Imran Khan presented Islamophobia as a systemic global problem in his speeches at the UNGA. He emphasized the rights of Muslims, the protection of their identity from misconceptions and accusations of terrorism, and the need for cultural exchange, dialogue, and global partnership. These speeches show that Pakistan adopts not only a defensive but also an argumentative approach, and that positive global engagement is necessary to change the prejudices against Muslims.<sup>25</sup>

On the other hand, the narrative seen in the speeches is that Islam and Muslims should not be considered synonymous with terrorism or extremism. Pakistani leaders have emphasized on several occasions that Islam is a religion of peace, justice, love, and tolerance, and that portraying the identity of Muslims in a limited or negative light is injustice. For example, Munir Ikram said that Islamophobia is no longer just a regional issue but is widespread in both the East and the West and is being used for certain political purposes.

The importance of language is also prominent in speech. The leaders used words like "fraternity," "tolerance," "human dignity," "justice," and "tolerance" to create a sense of shared humanity in the audience. Yousaf Raza Gilani's message attempted to raise "a united voice," "prevent hate propaganda," and highlight the "truth-based teachings of Islam," which drew people's attention to a constructive and connecting narrative.

In the speeches, Pakistan has also highlighted certain specific events and topics such as the sanctity of the Holy Book, the glory of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW), violence and discrimination against Muslims, the treatment of Muslims as second-class citizens in Western countries, and the media's actions. All these topics create a common narrative that it is necessary to recognize oppression and injustice and that the international community must give a serious and practical response.

### **[b] Interfaith dialogue and global awareness**

Interfaith dialogue and global awareness campaigns in Pakistan have given a modern and effective direction to the fight against Islamophobia. The aim of these efforts is to dispel misconceptions through religious and social discourse, promote the rights of minorities, and increase respect and mutual understanding among all religious communities.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said on "*World Interfaith Harmony Week*" that the visionary of the establishment of Pakistan, Hazrat Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, created a haven for all believers, and even today, Pakistan is determined to protect the right to religious belief, dignity, and equality of every citizen under its constitutional responsibility. There is a need to promote harmony among diverse religious communities through dialogue, tolerance, and cooperation. The government has taken the path of giving practical comprehensiveness to the

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<sup>25</sup> Ahmed, Hazhar Ramadhan, Shamaila Amir, and Fayyaz Ahmad. "A speech act analysis of the Prime Minister of Pakistan Imran Khan's speech at UNGA with respect to Islamophobia." *International Journal of Social Sciences & Humanities (IJSSH)* 5, no. 2 (2020): 59-71.

“Interfaith Harmony Policy and Strategy of Religious Tolerance” to prevent hate speech and protect all places of worship.<sup>26</sup>

The program “*Faith-Based Actors and Freedom of Religion in Pakistan: Capacity Building Yields Promising Results*” brought together religious leaders, legal experts, and government officials from seven religious communities (*Muslim, Hindu, Sikh, Christian, etc.*) in Abbottabad to promote interfaith dialogue. The program aims to bring respect and deepen the mindset of the people at a specific local level, especially among the youth. This suggests that dialogue is taking place not only at the formal level but also based on local communities.

The Youth for Humanity project is also worth mentioning, which involved young people from different religious communities in Karachi and Lahore to raise awareness of religious freedom and interfaith respect. The project’s activities included media campaigns, educational workshops, and regional dialogue forums to reduce social divisions and promote peace.

Peace Center Lahore recognized a Christian social worker with the “Peace and Interfaith Harmony Award,” and a seminar on “One Humanity, Many Faiths” was held in Lahore, attended by Christian, Hindu, Sikh, and Muslim leaders. The forum enabled the exchange of different religious experiences and perspectives and played a community-level role in promoting religious harmony.

Educational institutions are also great platforms for dialogue and awareness-raising. The study “*Current Challenges in Interfaith Relations within the Muslim Ummah*” highlighted that Islamophobia, xenophobia, and other external factors give rise to various interventions within the Muslim Ummah, and that educational and dialogue projects that include critical thinking, curriculum reform, and interfaith dialogue are effective in identifying and reducing these problems.<sup>27</sup>

The role of local civil society organizations in religious dialogue and global awareness campaigns is also important. “*The Contribution of Pakistan in Countering Islamophobia and Extremism: Issue Brief*” notes that Pakistan has provided an effective response to Islamophobia by engaging various non-governmental organizations and using public narratives in a concrete and positive manner. This includes the media, the internet, and local events that aim to promote religious identity and respect between communities.<sup>28</sup>

In addition, the theme of interfaith harmony is prominent in National Minorities Day and federal government celebrations. Such programs, which bring together different religious communities, raise public awareness through dialogue, sharing experiences and historical events, and convey the message that religious diversity is a social strength and not a basis for division.

All these efforts prove that interfaith dialogue and global awareness are prevalent in Pakistan, not only at the formal and high-level but also at the public and local levels. Dialogues, educational and cultural interventions, and social organizations are working together to reduce

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<sup>26</sup> “Dialogue Key to Promoting Inter-Faith Harmony: PM—Statement,” Dawn, February 1, 2025, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1889014>.

<sup>27</sup> Gilani, Syed Iftikhar Ali, and Abdul Waheed. “Current Challenges in Interfaith Relations within the Muslim Ummah: An Analysis of Muhammad Hamidullah's Contributions.” *Southern Journal of Arts & Humanities* 3, no. 1 (2025): 78-116.

<sup>28</sup> Aminuddin, M., and Abida Iqbal. “The Contribution of Pakistan in Countering Islamophobia and Extremism.” *Al-Kashaf* 5, no. 01 (2025): 1-10.

misconceptions and prejudices and create a social environment where respect, cooperation, and respect for human dignity are common among religious communities.

### **Impact, Challenges, and Comparative Insights**

Pakistan's diplomatic, policy, and public efforts against Islamophobia have had a significant impact both globally and locally. On the one hand, Pakistan has successfully brought the issue of Islamophobia into global discourse, particularly at platforms such as the United Nations, where it has been framed as a matter of human rights and international peace. On the other hand, these efforts continue to face serious challenges, including political resistance from Western states, competing interpretations of freedom of expression, and the complex internal politics of different countries.

Pakistan's initiatives have contributed to important developments, such as the adoption of resolutions at the OIC platform, the recognition of the International Day to Combat Islamophobia, and the emergence of legal and policy debates in various countries regarding the protection of religious identity. However, the effectiveness of these initiatives remains a matter of critical debate. While these measures have increased global awareness, their practical implementation has been limited, and many states have shown reluctance in translating these commitments into enforceable legal frameworks.

Moreover, Pakistan's position, when viewed in comparative terms, reflects a relatively distinct approach among Muslim-majority countries. Existing studies suggest that several Gulf states have traditionally prioritized economic cooperation, strategic partnerships, and geopolitical stability in their foreign policies, often aligning their diplomatic positions with broader political and economic interests.<sup>29</sup> Although these states have expressed concern over Islamophobia, their responses have generally remained cautious and less institutionalized at the global level.

In contrast, Pakistan has adopted a more consistent and vocal approach by framing Islamophobia as a global normative issue and actively pursuing its recognition through international institutions. Through its engagement at the United Nations and the OIC, Pakistan has attempted to institutionalize the issue by promoting resolutions, collective positions, and awareness initiatives. However, this role also invites critical reflection. While Pakistan has positioned itself as a representative voice of the Muslim Ummah, questions remain regarding the long-term effectiveness of its initiatives and the consistency between its international advocacy and domestic practices.

Therefore, Pakistan's role can be understood as both proactive and evolving. While it has achieved significant visibility and diplomatic success in raising the issue of Islamophobia globally, its impact must ultimately be evaluated in terms of policy outcomes, international acceptance, and its ability to sustain a coherent and credible position at both domestic and global levels.

#### **[1] Achievements and limitations**

Pakistan has played a significant role in combating Islamophobia at the national and international levels. This role is not based on political statements or ad hoc responses, but on a systematic strategy, which includes diplomatic initiatives, resolutions, policy interventions, and public awareness efforts. This section provides a detailed overview of the significant achievements and limitations of Pakistan's efforts.

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<sup>29</sup> Bayraklı, Enes, and Farid Hafez. *Islamophobia in Muslim majority societies*. London, UK: Routledge, 2019.

***[a] Making Islamophobia part of the global agenda***

Pakistan's greatest achievement is that it has made Islamophobia a recognized issue at the international level. Earlier, this concept was mostly discussed within the Muslim world, but Pakistan, through its diplomacy, made it a global agenda on the platforms of the United Nations (UN) and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). As a result of a resolution tabled by Pakistan in 2022, the United Nations officially recognized March 15 as the "International Day to Combat Islamophobia." Celebrating this day is a sign that Islamophobia is no longer just a Muslim state issue but a global human rights issue.

***[b] Approval of resolutions and global support***

Resolutions submitted by Pakistan have been approved on various platforms, notably the UN General Assembly and the OIC. In 2024, the UN General Assembly adopted the resolution "Measures to Combat Islamophobia" submitted by Pakistan on the OIC platform, which called on states to monitor incidents of Islamophobia and enact relevant legislation.<sup>30</sup> This resolution was not only symbolic but also included policy recommendations aimed at bringing religious freedom and respect within the legal framework.

***[c] Prominent role in the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC)***

Pakistan's role in the OIC has been very active. Pakistan presented a resolution at the OIC Foreign Ministers' Meeting condemning the desecration of the Holy Quran and insulting Islamic sanctities and agreed to observe March 15 as the International Day against Islamophobia.<sup>31</sup> This decision united the Muslim world on the OIC platform and highlighted Pakistan's diplomatic success.

***[d] Raising awareness at the public and diplomatic levels***

Pakistan has also raised the issue of Islamophobia at the public level. Government statements, media campaigns, and public gatherings have conveyed the message that Islam is a religion of peace, tolerance, and tolerance. In addition, speeches by world leaders, such as Prime Minister Imran Khan's address at the UNGA, have conveyed the narrative to a global audience that Islamophobia is a threat not only to Muslims but also to world peace. (Elahi, H., :2024)

***[e] Participation at the academic and research level***

Various universities and research institutes in Pakistan have conducted research on the trends of Islamophobia and their effects. One study analyzed the growing trends of Islamophobia in the Western world and proposed solutions considering the biography of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW). This research aspect also involves the academic community of Pakistan in the struggle against Islamophobia.

**Limitations**

***[a] Practical implementation of the resolutions***

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<sup>30</sup> Dawn, "FO Hails UNGA's Adoption of Pakistan-Sponsored Resolution on Combating Islamophobia," March 16, 2024, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1821903/fo-hails-ungas-adoption-of-pakistan-sponsored-resolution-on-combatting-islamophobia>.

<sup>31</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), Government of Pakistan, "OIC Unanimously Adopts Pakistan-Sponsored Resolution Regarding Islamophobia," November 28, 2020, <https://mofa.gov.pk/oic-unanimously-adopts-pakistan-sponsored-resolution-regarding-islamophobia>.

Although the resolutions submitted by Pakistan were passed, their practical implementation remains a major challenge. Many Western countries have refused to stop the desecration of religious sanctities in the name of freedom of expression. This means that despite the legality of the resolutions, practical change has been limited.

**[b] Resistance from the Western world**

Pakistan's efforts have faced resistance from the Western world. Many Western states consider the legislation against Islamophobia to be a restriction on freedom of expression. For this reason, Pakistan's diplomacy is sometimes criticized for not being able to bring about legal change at the global level.<sup>32</sup>

**[c] Criticism at the domestic level**

Pakistan's domestic policies are also questioned. Some critics say that while Pakistan talks about religious tolerance at the global level, it should take more effective measures to protect the rights of minorities at home. This contradiction is often used by Western media and critics as an argument against Pakistan.<sup>33</sup>

**[d] Media narrative and public perception**

Although Pakistan has attempted to de-escalate Islamophobia in the media, negative narratives about Muslims still dominate Western media. Initiatives such as the "*International Day to Combat Islamophobia*" are sometimes dismissed as merely symbolic, as they have had a limited impact on public attitudes.<sup>34</sup>

**[e] Comparative demarcation**

Research studies suggest that despite Pakistan's efforts, Islamophobia has not diminished and has even increased in some regions. One study found that coverage of the "*International Day to Combat Islamophobia*" differed between Western and Muslim media. Western media described it as an attack on freedom of expression, while Muslim media described it as a major success. This difference highlights the challenges in narrative construction.

**[2] Pakistan's distinct role compared to other Muslim states.**

Pakistan has adopted a role against Islamophobia globally that is in many ways different and distinctive from that of some other Muslim states. These lines of divergence are evident at all three levels: structural, diplomatic, and rhetorical. First, while many Muslim countries have made statements against Islamophobia, Pakistan's approach has been different for several specific reasons:

- The first is its consistent, prominent, and multifaceted diplomacy, which has been evident in forums such as the *UN* and the *OIC*.

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<sup>32</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), Government of Pakistan, "Pakistan Welcomes the Adoption of UN General Assembly Resolution Titled 'Measures to Combat Islamophobia,'" 2024, <https://mofa.gov.pk/press-releases/pakistan-welcomes-the-adoption-of-un-general-assembly-resolution-titled-measures-to-combat-islamophobia>.

<sup>33</sup> Hassan, Farooq, Riaz Ahmad Saeed, and Sabah Naz. "Rising Trends of Islamophobia from the Western World and Its Eradication: An Exploratory Study in the Light of the Seerah of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)." *Pakistan Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 2, no. 2 (2023): 86-97.

<sup>34</sup> Elahi, Haroon, Wajid Zulqarnian, and Muhammad Riaz Raza. "Examining the Impact of the International Day to Combat Islamophobia on Global Attitudes: A Comparative Content Analysis of Western and Arab/Muslim Media." *Pakistan JL Analysis & Wisdom* 3 (2024): 87.

- The second is Pakistan's attempt to keep its internal and external narratives coherent.
- And the third reason for its distinction is Pakistan's historical and geographical position, namely its large Muslim population in South Asia, its large diaspora, and its role in the context of Western policies.

These points can be briefly summarized as follows:

Pakistan's diplomatic strategy has extensively used the promotion of resolutions and international days as weapons, transforming Islamophobia from a purely personal or regional issue into a global human rights agenda. This strategy has included technical aspects (*e.g.*, *introducing resolutions at the UN, building consensus within the OIC*) as well as basic rhetoric, which seems to differ from the unconditional statements of support of some other Muslim states in a more practical and institutional direction.<sup>35</sup>

Many Muslim states, especially the Gulf states, engage in diplomacy against Islamophobia, but their actions are often limited to personal sympathy or regional interests; they also protect their geopolitical interests by intervening at the aid or financial level. In contrast, Pakistan has attempted to establish a consistent policy pattern by combining its internal political and religious narrative with external diplomatic efforts; that is, it appears to be not only condemning but also trying to influence both international law and the public narrative.<sup>36</sup> A prime example of this is the international days and resolutions that have sought to bring the issue within the ambit of international rules and rights, a strategy that has a more legal and institutional dimension than some other Muslim states.<sup>37</sup>

Another notable difference is the combination of soft power and public diplomacy. Turkey has taken a strong stance on Muslim rights and emerging issues in Europe through its state religious institution (*Diyanet*) and media channels, and Saudi Arabia has also reinforced the narrative through the OIC and international centers, but their priorities have often been limited to specific areas of regional influence and religious leadership. But Pakistan, for geographical, historical, and political reasons, has attempted to present this narrative not only in the name of Islamic democracy but also within the framework of universal human rights and interfaith dialogue, *i.e.*, Pakistan has adopted a combination of religious and secular narratives that in some respects makes it unique from other Muslim states (*DiVA* thesis on Turkey policy).

The third aspect is regional comparative posture. Some Muslim-majority states, such as Malaysia and Indonesia, place greater emphasis on religious harmony programs and social dialogue internally, but some Gulf states exert influence through large diplomatic campaigns and financial resources, while Iran distinguishes religious and political narratives in its foreign policy. Pakistan is unique in that it seeks to strengthen its position in an active, sometimes aggressive, global legal market, especially in UN forums and *OIC* meetings, while also introducing some formal policies at home to provide an internal balance to external pressures.<sup>38</sup>

Then there is a practical problem that makes Pakistan unique: internal contradictions, *i.e.*, despite external demands for Islamic solidarity and human rights, the country remains plagued by internal complications regarding religious minorities, the legal system, and media practices.

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<sup>35</sup> Bayraklı, Enes, and Farid Hafez. *Islamophobia in Muslim majority societies*. London, UK: Routledge, 2019.

<sup>36</sup> Gabsi, Dr Zouhir. *Muslim Perspectives on Islamophobia*. Deakin University, 2024.

<sup>37</sup> Hafez, Farid: 2019

<sup>38</sup> de Frutos, Sonia Valle. "Disinformation en el mundo Islamic. Analisis desde el factchecking internacional de contends." *Revista de Estudios Internacionales Mediterraneo* 37 (2024): 186-213.

Many other Muslim states also suffer from the same contradiction, but this contradiction has been so evident in Pakistan's foreign policy that critics have argued that, alongside the loud demands at the global level, internal reforms are also necessary to strengthen the moral argument. This critical point not only points out the limits of Pakistan's diplomacy but also places Pakistan's narrative in a particular bind compared to other Muslim states, which will require more coherent internal reforms to overcome.

In addition, the aspect of Pakistan's diaspora politics is also prominent. The Pakistani community, particularly in the UK, Canada, and the Gulf, is large and active. This diaspora has also effectively supported its country's foreign policy through local protests, lobbying, and cultural propaganda against Islamophobia, a factor that is reflected differently in the responses of many other Muslim states due to their different geographical and social settings.

### **Conclusion**

The study of this research revealed that Islamophobia is a prominent issue in global politics and international relations, which Pakistan has highlighted with a systematic strategy at the national and international levels. And this research also revealed that Pakistan has made Islamophobia a global agenda through resolutions and statements at forums like the United Nations and the OIC, an example of which is the declaration of March 15 as the "*International Day to Combat Islamophobia*." Pakistan has not only taken diplomatic measures but also adopted national measures such as media, education, legislation, and raising public awareness. By presenting a resolution at the OIC on the desecration of the Holy Quran and insulting Islamic rituals, Pakistan has highlighted its leadership and brought the collective voice of the Muslim world to the global stage. Leadership speeches, public diplomacy, and investigative narratives further strengthened Pakistan's policy; however, the research also shows that these efforts faced obstacles such as resistance from Western states, freedom of expression narratives, and criticism of Pakistan's internal policies. Thus, according to the contents of the file, Pakistan's role has been unique and proactive against Islamophobia, although many challenges remain in its practical implementation.

### **Recommendations**

- Legal measures: Pakistan should harmonize the resolutions passed in the United Nations against Islamophobia with domestic laws and enact strict legislation against hate speech, religious blasphemy, and discriminatory policies to make its global stance more practical and credible.
- International alliances: Pakistan should find allies in Muslim countries as well as non-Muslim states that agree on the agenda of religious harmony and human rights so that Islamophobia is not considered a problem of the Muslim world alone but can be presented as a global humanitarian issue.
- Media and digital diplomacy: Pakistan should make greater use of modern digital platforms and social media to establish an effective narrative in national and international media so that the stance against Islamophobia reaches the general public and policymakers quickly.
- Interfaith Dialogue: Pakistan should make interfaith dialogue more central to its diplomacy, especially by creating joint platforms with Christian, Jewish, and other religious leaders to create a collective narrative against Islamophobia.

- Educational Reforms: Universities and research institutions should be given more support on the issue of Islamophobia so that evidence and research can be produced at the academic level that can influence policymaking at the global level.
- Diaspora Engagement: The Pakistani community abroad should be systematically involved so that they can strengthen Pakistan's position against Islamophobia in Western countries through protests, awareness campaigns, and dialogue.
- Cultural Diplomacy: Pakistan can promote its soft image by presenting Islamic culture, history, and arts on the global stage so that a positive image of Islam and Muslims is presented to the world.

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