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Language in the service of ideological and political struggle. Instrumentalization of the term Islamophobia

Abstract: The text analyses the term of *Islamophobia* in the political, social and scientific discourse. It integrates contributions from the fields of political science of religion, linguistic pragmatics and social communication to prove that in various contexts the term “*Islamophobia*” is deprived of a cognitive value due to its ambiguity, semantic imbalance and pejorative character. Author investigates the problem of institutionalization of the term “*Islamophobia*”.

In the context of international practice, the Author indicates that the Organization of Islamic Cooperation aims to strengthen the prohibition of “discrediting Islam” in the United Nations and the European Union. He analyzes the use of the term by the authoritarian regime of R. Erdogan. The background for the reflection is the following axiological issues: freedom of speech, separation of religion and state, the right to criticize social manifestations of religiosity and the Islamic social doctrine.

Keywords: Islam, Islamophobia, linguistic manipulation, freedom of speech

Abstrakt: Artykuł analizuje pojęcie „islamofobii” w dyskursie politycznym, społecznym i naukowym. Łączy w sobie wkład z dziedzin nauk politologii religii, pragmatyki językowej i komunikacji społecznej, aby udowodnić, że termin „islamofobia” używany w różnych kontekstach jest pozbawiony wartości poznawczej ze względu na jego dwuznaczność, nierównowagę semantyczną i charakter pejoratywny. Autor bada problem instytucjonalizacji terminu „islamofobia”.

W aspekcie praktyki międzynarodowej Autor wskazuje, że Organizacja Współpracy Islamskiej dąży do wzmocnienia egzekwowania zakazu „dyskredytowania islamu” na forum ONZ i Unii Europejskiej. Analizuje także

wykorzystanie tego terminu przez autorytarny reżim R. Erdogana. Tłem refleksji są następujące kwestie aksjologiczne: wolność słowa, rozdział religii od państwa, prawo do krytykowania społecznych przejawów religijności oraz islamska doktryna społeczna.

Słowa kluczowe: islam, Islamofobia, manipulacja językowa, wolność słowa

1. Preliminary remarks

This work focuses primarily on an attempt to identify, describe and analyze the instrumentalization of the term Islamophobia, i.e. on other than strictly reference or cognitive functions of the term. Due to limitations resulting from the size of the text itself, the paper is not and cannot be an in-depth analysis of this phenomenon, it is rather an attempt to outline its framework, or metaphorically speaking, to create a kind of „map” on which key points are marked. I understand instrumentalization here in a primary sense as making the concept of a tool for achieving particular goals, in this case political and ideological.

Reflecting on this concept, remember that its use is entangled in a number of theoretical problems. In addition to typical semantic considerations such as content, scope of the concept, the possibility of its operationalization for the needs of empirical research; there is also the question of politicizing this term. Erich Bleich meta-analyzes the concept of Islamophobia¹, at making it an analytical tool, while enabling it to be used for empirical research. As a result, he proposed that Islamophobia be understood as “ill-considered.”² negative attitudes or emotions directed against Islam or Muslims “ [Bleich 2011: 1593]. At the same

¹ The scholar took into account the numerous definitions of this term appearing in political and, above all, scientific discourse, used by: Peter Gottschalk and Gabriel Greenberg, Vincent Geisser, Pnina Werbner, Sherman A. Lee, Tahir Abbas, José Pedro Zúquete, Mehedi Semati, Jocelyne Cesari and Jörg Stolz. A review of the scientific literature allowed to formulate the following conclusions: Islamophobia is treated as a manifestation of “social evil” [Bleich 2011: 1538], manifesting itself as fear of Islam and Muslims, which translates into the spread of a new form of “racism”. Islamophobia is also to be characterized by stereotyping of Islam and Muslims and an essential approach that treats Islamic values as by definition incompatible with Western axiology. There is a dispute among scholars who reach for this concept whether mental processes are included in the concept, or only actions that are exclusive and hostile to Muslims. Others, in turn, call for a distinction to be made between what concerns Islam and what concerns Muslims; for the distance to the doctrine is different and hatred for a particular religious group is different [ibid.: 1538-1585].

² In the original this definition is: “indiscriminate negative attitudes or emotions directed at Islam or Muslims”. The English adjective indiscriminate can also be translated as thoughtless, uncritical, and unscrupulous.

time, the scholar is aware of the threats arising from the abuse of this concept, especially when it comes to justified criticism of negative phenomena occurring in Islamic communities.

Bleich's project, though dictated by concern for the precision of the scientific language and methodological correctness of research, assumes that the evolution that the term has undergone "from a political concept" to a tool "used for political purposes" allows its ideologically burdened use. It is difficult to agree with this assumption. First, the term Islamophobia was introduced to the public debate as part of an ideological project, and secondly, the "scientific" meaning of *nolens volens* still coexists with both ambiguous and purely rhetorical language implementations, which usually connects the *genus iudiciale* (accusatory tone) with the *genus demonstrativum* (rebuke). From this point of view, there are convincing objections raised by John Bowen, arguing that the use of Islamophobia as "an analytical term is somewhat risky" because it is used "in a too broad sense and is highly polemic" [Bowen 2005, quoted from: Bleich 2011: 1584].

Some researchers are willing to research prejudices and stereotypes without referring to the term Islamophobia. José Pedro Zúquete proposes to use harsher categories such as "anti-Islamist" [Zúquete 2008: 324], Fred Halliday prefers the term "anti-Muslim", while Kenan Malik is inclined to use the concept of "anti-Muslim prejudice" [Bleich 2011: 1584]. These suggestions result from a concern to preserve the conceptual nature of the dictionary of social sciences without giving up research on socially harmful phenomena at the same time. In addition, they impose on the researcher reaching for these concepts the need to demonstrate both the irrationality of attitudes towards Islam or Muslims, and to reach for tools to identify prejudices on the psychosocial level.

A separate issue is the awareness of the limitations of research autonomy; whether we want it or not, the processes of society also affect the world of science. The already mentioned José Pedro Zúquete sees in (over) the use of the concept of Islamophobia a threat to an open, democratic and pluralistic scientific debate. In his opinion, "unfettered use of terms such as" Islamophobia " , which are undoubtedly moralizing, can stigmatize and push the" Islamophobic "periphery of public debate to those who criticize and even try to understand some aspects of Islam in a manner inconsistent with current trends. The conflict (sometimes open, often latent) of legitimate criticism or important points of view with demonization has consequences in the form of ending any truly democratic and open debate on any

topic, silencing voices, fearing stigmatization, in practice it facilitates the actions of those who actually [the issue – PŚ] they demonize. (...) In recent decades there has been a lack of public debate and interaction between rulers and rulers on key issues (such as immigration), which in turn has increased the attractiveness of parties that claim to represent the nation and call for the establishment of “real” democracies. In this light, the term “anti-Islam” seems to be a more appropriate analytical category to be used in some Islamic discourses, especially those on the far right, because at least it begins the necessary (and long overdue) process of distinguishing Islamic discourses: those who arouse irrational fears and treat Islam as a monolithic block from those who may be critical of certain aspects, but are not ipso facto “anti-Islamic” because of the criticism being carried out “ [Zúquete 2008: 324]. Too wide use of the term Islamophobia, therefore, blurs the line between justified and avoided unauthorized generalization of explanations and analyzes about Islam or the influence of Muslims on contemporary Western societies, from extreme attitudes that operate on stereotypes. Traces of awareness of these problems can also be found in Polish science.

Ryszard Michalak notes that the researcher describing the relationship between religion and politics is under particular pressure, both from the inside of the environment and from the outside [Michalak 2017a: 156-159]. To highlight this problem, the scholar refers to the category of political correctness, which can be understood both as an ideology serving to build a model of a multicultural society [Scruton 2002: 287], as well as a social phenomenon manifested, among others “Social ostracism and fierce ideological struggle” [Chechłowska-Lipińska 2003: 9] directed at those who do not share the belief in the possibility of creating a coherent multicultural society, or who do not agree with far-reaching cultural relativism, manifested in the prohibition of assessing individual cultures “according to objective and comprehensive criteria, especially truth, good and beauty” [Chechłowska-Lipińska 2003: 9]³. Researchers dealing with Islamic issues are aware of the pressure of political correctness. Mirosław Sadowski notes that even researchers writing about jihad “as an armed struggle with infidels to spread Islam are accused of Islamophobia” [Sadowski 2017a: 136]. This example shows that in scientific research, Islamophobia – on the one hand, is used to identify “hostility to Islam, which is the basis for fear and aversion to all or most Muslims” [definition

³ Not only the term ‘Islamophobia’, but also concepts with an analogous word-formation structure, researchers identify as a tool for specific political purposes, consisting in shaping social processes and even the vision of man and humanity in the ongoing cultural dispute [Gierycz 2017: 460-465].

of Julian Jeleński, quoted from: Sadowski 2017a: 136] and to stigmatize statements on Islam, including those scientifically entitled.

The discussion on the term Islamophobia is embroiled in the current dispute regarding the condition of the multicultural society, the nature of Islam itself, as well as phenomena related to Muslim immigration, integration of Muslims, or reflection on the reasons for the development of extremist attitudes – those Islamic and those far right. The controversy surrounding the relationship between the Muslim world and the West is also important.

Two main positions can be distinguished in this dispute. One – recognizes Islamophobia as an element of social reality, manifesting itself in unjustified fears of Islam and Muslims, the other indicates that fears of the growing political influence of Muslim organizations, as well as the actual failure of the model of multicultural society, have their rational, not prejudicial, grounds.

On one side, therefore, we have Islamosceptic attitudes, usually selective⁴, resulting from various ideological orientations: criticism of radical Islam Ayaan Hirsi Ali [Ślusarczyk 2017: 122-139] is based on liberal ideas, even Christian Sookhdeo [2009] emerges from Christian and anti-totalitarian positions. The recently deceased Bernard Lewis occupies a unique place in this group. This precursor of political Islam research [Lewis 1988], as one of the few orientalists, broke with the ideas proclaimed by Edward Said, recognizing that the constant positioning of Muslims as a victim of Western imperialism, US or Israeli policy «favors tyranny and at the same time is ineffective governments of the Middle East, which in this way justify a misery that they cannot overcome. And they want to direct the growing anger of their subjects to other, external enemies « [Lewis 2016: 125-126]. Lewis was skeptical about some of the Turkish diaspora's use of the common sense of guilt over the Rhine in Germany, resulting from the fascist past, to «prevent measures being taken to protect the German identity, which, I would say, is endangered like other

⁴ I use this term in the sense proposed by Ryszard Michalak, who defines this attitude as follows: Islamoscepticism is understood here as any – individual and collective – critical attitude towards Islam (full Islamoscepticism) or any element characteristic of this religion or the phenomenon it generates, e.g. ideology, social movement, political party (selective Islamoscepticism). The assumption is that this attitude results from rational reflection and skepticism / skeptics' doubts about the possibility of achieving a state of permanent and harmonious coexistence of Muslims with non-Muslims due to the axiological contradictions that exist between them. In European conditions, this discrepancy is primarily based on the incompatibility of democracy with Sharia [Michalak 2017b: 287].

national identities in Europe» [Lewis 2007]. This Middle Eastern expert openly stated the third wave of Islamization in the form of «terror and migration» [ibid.].

From completely different positions, there are researchers referring to the post-colonial category, who in Muslims, both those living in Europe and North America, see the victims of prejudice and discrimination, while warning against the rise of xenophobic and far-right moods. In addition, they are willing to parallel the contemporary Muslims and Jews who are victims of Nazism. Due to the fact that these scholars form a quite substantial and diverse collection both in terms of the fields they represent and the languages in which they publish, in this paper I limit myself to indicating those who are the most influential⁵. These scholars consider the concept of Islamophobia as reference.

According to the French sociologist and political scientist Vincent Geisser⁶ in Europe, we can observe a new form of Islamophobia, which, in addition to the “folk” strata, includes “also the media and intellectual strata, and its media today become media leaders and moral authorities (publishers, philosophers, writers, scientists)”

⁵ The dispute is also about Poland. In 2017, the thematic issue of the philosophical journal *Practice Theoretical* was published, devoted to Islamophobia [Islamophobia. Contexts, *Practice Theoretical* 2017, No. 4]. The inspiration for this publication was the reaction of Polish society to the refugee crisis, which, as Monika Bobako wrote in the main text, became an opportunity for “exposed elements of nationalist discourse” [Bobako, 2017: 9 Przemysław Wielgosz analyzes the phenomenon of Islamophobia in the neomarkist spirit, claiming that the fueled fear of Islam is “a tool of the neoliberal policy of” sharing and ruling “subordinate classes in Europe and North America” [Wielgosz 2017: 38]. Interestingly, Wielgosz believes that *Gazeta Wyborcza* lends its columns to spread Islamophobic content [ibid.: 39]. Jarosław Gowin and Witold Waszykowski, who “justifying the anti-refugee policy of the Polish government in the media and on the international forum” [ibid.]. Marcin Starnawski treats Islamophobia as a component of radical nationalist as well as racist and populist discourse [Starnawski 2017: 62-84]. Ryszard Michalak discussed critically the Polish scientific narrative operating on the problem of Islamophobia [Michalak 2019: 201-213; 2017a: 156-174]. There is also a broader bibliography on the subject.

⁶ As a side note, it is worth noting that the Polish edition of this book was published in cooperation with the Muslim Association of Education and Culture, i.e. the community associated with the Muslim League. This information may contribute to a deeper reflection on the impact of stakeholders, in this case a Muslim religious organization, on scientific discourse. Islamic communities represented by Saudi Arabia attempted to conclude an agreement with the University of Warsaw regarding the construction of an Islamic study center and mosque. This offer was ultimately rejected. As she admitted in an interview with *Rzeczpospolita*, prof. Jolanta Sierakowska-Dyndo, then the dean of the Faculty of Oriental Studies of the University of Warsaw “such proposals for financing the construction of a center for Islamic or Arabic studies are submitted to many universities in Europe and are often accepted” [Rybak, Czeladko 2010].

[Geisser 2009: 128]. He accuses some academic critics of Islam of igniting fear, which the scholar calls “alarmist tone”, as well as creating phantasms about the religion of Muhammad and its followers. In his opinion, instead of focusing on “Islam experienced and experienced by his followers,” some intellectuals are building his unreal image, often doing so in the name of ideological struggle [ibid.: 129-130].

Some scholars go a step further, arguing that the modern West is flooded with a wave of “post-fascism” (National Front in France, Northern League in Italy, Pegida in Germany), which is a mutation of colonial and totalitarian ideology. Under the influence of extreme-right moods, “Islamophobic laws were to be created prohibiting wearing headscarves in public places.” According to Enzo Traverso, an ally of Islamophobia as ‘new Western racism’ in today’s Europe remains the ‘neo-colonial and discriminatory concept of secularism’ [Traverso 2016: 19].

Similar voices coming from the world of science can also be heard in the United States. One of the most important researchers using the concept of Islamophobia is prof. John Esposito, who in view of the growing population of Muslims in Europe and the US, sees the need for their integration [Esposito, 2002: 245-256], at the same time recognizes as an obstacle in this process of prejudice against Muslims, and also believes that it is Islamophobia, “having long and deep roots” [Esposito 2019: 15], drives Islamic fundamentalism and translates into an increase in anti-Western sentiment in Islamic diasporas [ibid.: 15-33]. Katarzyna Brataniec situates the position of an American scholar in opposition to the concept of a clash of Huntington’s civilization, reporting his position as follows:

According to John Esposito, the tendency to see the world in a convention of simple opposites leads either to disregard and ignore different traditions and cultures, or to treat them as strange, strange, mysterious, inferior to their own culture. The world of civilization in conflict inevitably becomes a world of double standards: one for countries from the same civilization circle and the other for foreign countries [Brataniec 2009: 83].

A professor specializing in religious studies and international relations is also considered one of the most influential Muslims in the world [Drembkowski 2012: 124], who popularizes his theses in the opinion-forming press.

In 2010, the Huffington Post published his article on Islamophobia. In the text *Islamophobia: A Threat to American Values?*. He argued that “the legacy

of terrorist attacks of September 11 and after September 11 was used by media commentators, hardened Christian Zionists and politicians whose goal of inciting fear is Islam and Muslims. Islamophobia is fast becoming for Muslims what anti-Semitism is for Jews. Rooted in hostility and intolerance towards religious and cultural beliefs and a religious or racial group, it threatens the democratic structure of American and European societies” [Esposito 2010]. This voice was criticized by a liberal Muslim living in Canada, Hasan Mahmud [2013], who accused the scholar of “ignoring the fact that in our global village the West is regularly flooded with reports of violence from Muslim communities; these acts of violence are committed in the name of Islam, citing the Koran and citing the Prophet, for example”. This discussion also reveals a broader interpretative aspect, namely the role that Muslim texts legitimize or can legitimize violence, and what role Western media and politicians have in driving anti-Muslim sentiment, and which Muslim fundamentalists.

Despite many attempts to define this term, we do not have a clear and uncontroversial concept of “Islamophobia,” and we do not have criteria to separate “Islamophobia” from rational and objective critique of Islamic doctrine (including the impact of Islam’s political on global and local political reality, social and cultural)⁷.

Being aware of the theoretical problems and controversies described above, I propose a critical reflection on the functions of the concept of Islamophobia, which it fulfills not only in scientific discourse, but also as a component of a specific ideology or tool of political influence. In the dispute about the place of Islam and Muslims in Europe and the world, the term is used by the identifying communities with the left; they are also used by Muslim countries in international disputes. I abstract here from the genre differences of the material being analyzed (scientific statements, documents issued by non-governmental organizations, or media statements). Behind this decision is the intention to show that, despite formal

⁷ During the sessions of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, attempts were made to adopt a clear and sharp definition of the concept of “Islamophobia”. Neither the additional panel in 2013, nor the discussion that took place in 2016 in this respect were fruitful. Stephan Cougulin drew conclusions from the discussion on this term during the session, who generalized the current position as follows: “Asking for a clear definition of Islamophobia, we received the following answers: 1) the concept of” Islamophobia “does not apply to normal disputes; 2) manifestation of Islamophobia is the question about the definition of “Islamophobia”; 3) no definition will be given because everyone knows what it means; 4) Islamophobia should be criminalized” [Couglin 2016].

differences, one can indicate a common space to use the term Islamophobia. Of course, the “systemic” analysis of individual discourses requires separate research.

Currently, the most influential organization fighting Islamophobia is the Organization for Islamic Cooperation (formerly the Organization of the Islamic Conference), which, bringing together fifty-seven Muslim countries, undertakes actions aimed at extending international prohibition on “discrimination” of Islam, resulting in “penalisation of the crime of blasphemy manifested in disrespect for a given faith” [Gieryńska 2017: 126]. Turkish leader Recep Erdoğan and NGOs such as Siyaset, Ekonomi ve Toplum Araştırmaları Vakfı (SETA) are also active in the field of “fighting Islamophobia”. At work, I critically analyze the Islamophobia study – a challenge for everyone⁸ from 1997 constituting one of the first documents on this subject, the “report” for 2016 created at the request of the Turkish think-tank Foundation for Political, Economic and Social Research, representing the interests of the Turkish AKP [Bayrakli, Hafez 2017], as well as the latest book publication by Monika Bobako, which partly based its argument on the document of a Turkish organization [Bobako 2017: 359]. This material will be used to develop a typology to use the instrumental of this concept.

2. The term “Islamophobia” in public discourse

The very sources of this term remain unclear. It seems reasonable to look at its genesis in the literary and journalistic work of the French painter, Islamic neophyte Étienne Dinet and writer Silman Ben Ibrahim, who jointly wrote the text *The life of Muhammad – the Prophet Allah*. Islamophobia was intended to call the intentional and misrepresentation of Islam in a bad light by journalists, orientalists and politicians. The very concept was to fit into the semantic field of racism [Piwko 2016: 161-165].

The analyzed term is referred to in various contexts and even loses its conceptual focus. And so we come across him reading about the subject of literary work embedded in a social context. The issue of Islamophobia is raised in relation to the work of Oriana Fallaci or Michel Houellbecqu as the author of *Submission* [Modrzejewska 2017: 97-105]. However, with the difference that Fallaci is sometimes treated as the founder of anti-Islamic discourse [Górzna 2015: 213-214], while Houellbecqua’s writing is spoken of as being ‘able to capture social change’ [Modrzejewska 2017: 105].

⁸ This document was created as a result of an analysis – Islamophobia – its features and threats. See *Islamophobia a challenge for us all. Summary* (<https://www.runnymedetrust.org/uploads/publications/pdfs/islamophobia.pdf>)

Perhaps one of the differences in the reception of the work of both writers is due to the context in which they appeared in the circulation of their books. Critical of Islamic publications of the Italian journalist were accompanied by protests from the Muslim community. There were even attempts to bring the writer suffering from cancer at the time to court. The premiere of the book by the French writer looked completely different. At dawn on January 7, 2015, the cover of the “Charlie Hebdo” magazine appeared as part of the promotion of the novel *Submission*, and at 11:30 Islamic terrorists killed satirists in the editorial office of the magazine.

Another context in which the concept of Islamophobia is used is Christian-Muslim dialogue. Aldona Piwko drew attention to the problem of Islamophobia, on the one hand noticing the problem of prejudice against Muslims, and on the other noticing the phenomenon of Islamic terrorism, which drives these attitudes partly [Piwko 2016: 161-182]. Michał Łyszczarz, a member of the Joint Council of Catholics and Muslims, attributes the concept of Islamophobia to a broader phenomenon, i.e. religious intolerance. At the same time, he indicates that this problem in Poland concerns immigrants, not Polish Tatars, as they constitute a group well integrated into society [Łyszczarz 2012: 80-82].

Islamophobia, according to some researchers and commentators, is to characterize Polish society. Katarzyna Górak-Sosnowska puts forward the thesis about «platonic Islamophobia» [Górak-Sosnowska 2006, 2011], according to which Poles should not be afraid of Islam, because Muslims are a very small minority on the Vistula. At this point, the author overlaps two phenomena – criticism of Islamic doctrine and dislike of Muslims [ibid.].

Adam Balcer speaks in a similar vein. In his opinion, the manifestation of Islamophobia is the reluctance of Polish society to accept Muslim immigrants, as well as the position on this issue expressed by the government of Beata Szydło or the leader of Law and Justice. The presentation of Muslims «as the eternal persecutors of innocent Christians» [Balcer 2016: 13-27] is to characterize the editorial line of conservative magazines – the weekly «Do Rzeczy» and «wSieci». According to the analyst, who made himself known to a wider audience as a supporter of Turkey's integration with the European Union, Polish anti-Islamism favors Moscow's interests.

The analysis of the examples cited shows that the use of the term Islamophobia is to legitimize specific ideological attitudes or justify the theses, which are not

so much a diagnosis of social reality, but a voice in current political disputes. For proponents of the idea of ecumenism, expressed in the openness of some Catholic communities to dialogue with Islam, the term Islamophobia will be used to mark a distance to those who either do not believe in the value of Christian-Muslim dialogue or are skeptical about it. In contrast, Katarzyna Górak-Sosnowska's concept is used to express the belief that the Polish society is closed, which instead of following the path marked by European elites, is subject to stereotypes and unjustified fears. Adam Balcer, on the other hand, uses Islamophobia to mark his dissatisfaction with the immigration policy of the Law and Justice government and to define himself in opposition to conservative circles, understood both in strictly political (ruling party) and journalistic (Do Rzeczy weekly categories)».

3. Distortion (disruptive) nature of the concept of “Islamophobia”

The notion of “Islamophobia” was introduced to the public discourse on a large scale by the British NGO Runnymede Trust with the support of the Committee on British Muslims and Islamophobia, publishing the report *Islamophobia challenge for all*. According to its provisions, the media, scientists and politicians should write about Islam in a predetermined manner, coordinated by the authorities, which in 1997 implemented a project of social change in the spirit of multicultural ideology. According to the provisions of this document, the “open” way of writing about Islam has been contrasted with the “closed”. The vision of this concept in Polish political science research was approved by, among others Sylwia Górzna [2015: 203-224] and Katarzyna Górak-Sosnowska [2010: 191-202]. This document replaces the true – false opposition, with an open – closed dichotomy. For its authors, not cognitive reliability was important, but “ideological correctness”. And so Islam should be presented as:

- 1) „Diverse and constantly evolving, of which differences, debates and disputes are an integral part”;
- 2) Influenced by other cultures and religions, as well as influencing other cultures and religions – (Islam) a) has common values and aspirations (with the West); b) willingly interacts with other cultures; c) enriches (Western culture);
- 3) «Different, but not defective, and deserving of respect»;
- 4) «Seen as a potential or actual partner in joint ventures»;
- 5) «True religious faith honestly practiced by his followers»⁹;

⁹ *Islamophobia a challenge for us all. Summary*, <https://www.runnymedetrust.org/uploads/publications/pdfs/islamophobia.pdf>, access: 19.11.2017

The proposed regulation also included a peculiar procedure for dealing with criticism of Muslims made for Europe, Western society or the wider occidental lifestyle, as well as reservations raised against Islam. According to the report, disagreeing with Islam should go hand in hand with counteracting the exclusion of Muslims and acts of hostility directed against them, while criticism of the West formulated by Muslims should be carefully considered before anyone decides on its legitimacy. The most controversial record from the point of view of Islamic research was the order to treat Islam as a religion, while rejecting the definition of Islam in ideological or political terms. The concept of “clash of civilizations” as well as theses about the pursuit of political Islam to gain political advantage in Europe should have been recognized as an expression of Islamophobia. Of course, this document did not have the power of a legal act, but it was an instruction for entities operating in public space – both for NGOs and public institutions. These recommendations are (also today) a point of reference for many NGOs, expert groups and journalists. It is worth noting that the text was widely disseminated, giving the “anti-Islamophobic” recommendations a leaflet. Undoubtedly, the image of Islam contained in the document was clearly positive. To avoid being accused of Islamophobia, Islam should be portrayed as diverse, compatible with Western society, partner-like, honest and reasonably criticizing the West. According to this political project of shaping social consciousness, Islam appears to be unequivocally positive and its criticism is not only undesirable, but also unethical.

The Islamophobia documentary challenge should be treated as an attempt to create a kind of taboo. In a free society, it is difficult to imagine formulating the same recommendations for presenting any other religion or ideology. In a word, the concept of „Islamophobia” has a distortion function, which manifests itself in „providing arbitrarily controlled, transformed, fragmentary information” [Markowski 2010: 1630] and disregarding postulates of semantics and language logic [Jeziński 2009: 52-53]. This disregard is manifested in the rejection of postulates fundamental for scientific methodology, such as the logical function of the concept, the sharpness of the term, its predictive and objective nature [Frege 1977: 19-88]. In this case, it imposes a priori specific cognitive categories that de facto make it impossible to formulate other conclusions about the studied reality, in this case Islam, than those adopted in advance and recognized as binding, and also forces positive evaluation of Islam. The image of the Muslim world created on the basis of Islamophobia criteria, in principle, makes it impossible to take up such problems as, for example, the authoritarian nature of Islamic legal doctrine [Sadowski 2017a: 111-275; Sadowski 2017b: 105-115].

4. Ideological and disparaging nature of the concept of “Islamophobia”

This concept is present not only in social discourse in the West, but also in Poland. In 2012, the National Science Center decided to co-finance research on the phenomenon of Islamophobia by awarding Dr. Monika Bobako a grant. In 2017, a publication entitled *Islamophobia as a technology of power*. This item also does not solve the definition problems. So how is Islamophobia understood in this publication?

Monika Bobako recognizes that „Islamophobia” is „a manifestation of fear, hostility, contempt for Islam and Muslims” [Bobako 2017: 16]. This definition of the term makes us decide on the motivation of individual entities, let’s add motivation, which is not always given to us directly. By using this concept in this way, it is not possible to distinguish legitimate criticism of Islam, e.g. as legal or political doctrine, from hostility towards Muslims themselves. After all, there is a difference between writing a critical review and showing contempt for the author, not to mention acts of violence against him. This approach to the problem makes it impossible to separate the allegations resulting from „fear, hostility and contempt” [ibid.], from those dictated by concern for democracy or freedom guaranteed in the European and Polish legal order. Interestingly, Monika Bobako considers Islamophobia as a belief in „significant incompatibility of Islam with democracy” [ibid.: 119], as well as reservations raised in relation to the status of women in Islam. In no way, however, the author shows the compatibility of Islam and democracy, while ignoring the extensive bibliography on the constitutional organization of Muslim societies and the social role of women in Muslim communities [ibid.: 119-120]. The author claims that identifying the contradictions between Islam and the values of Western societies is nothing but a projection of fears. Let’s look at the quote:

Islamophobia can therefore be understood as a form that articulates the fears and frustrations present in societies that have undergone neoliberal change, and thus the mechanism that processes these fears and then redirects dissatisfaction and anger to the scapegoat of Islam. According to this mechanism, Islam becomes a screen on which Western societies project negative phenomena, i.e. political objectification, degradation of women, irrationalism, and at the same time is a contrast, a negative reference point, allowing these societies to maintain the belief that in their essence they are free of these phenomena. [ibid.: 120].

Apart from the legitimacy of the parallel between the status of women in Islamic communities and those in Europe, we can conclude that Monika Bobako is also

subject to a kind of projection of fears of „continuation of the darkest threads of European history” [ibid.: 378]. Let us add that in recent years Europe and the United States are Muslims responsible for numerous acts of violence, and these acts also fall under the „darkest” pages of Muslim history, about which the author of Islamophobia... does not want to remember building her anti-accidental narrative.

The term is a scholar entangled in a worldview dispute, seeing the sources of Islamophobia in the belief that there is an „impassable alienation of (Muslim) religion and culture, as well as a” substantial „incompatibility of Islamic values with Western or (Judeo) Christian values” [ibid.: 17]. This assumption is in fact a controversial thesis that can by no means become a cognitive axiom in social sciences. First of all, this definition does not explain what values we are talking about – axiological theory knows a number of different classifications; secondly, can the statement that the concept of Quranic law is logically contrary to the democratic order be considered a manifestation of hostility towards anyone? Using this construction, one should indicate precisely what values and why should be considered common to Islam and the West.

According to Monika Bobako, Islamophobia is a manifestation and discourse about Islam that has little to do with reality. Rather, they are a projection of fears and prejudices, and thus a self-assertive cognitive structure „ [ibid.: 17]. The question here is who and how decides which theses or concepts should be considered as factual and which are „projections of fears and prejudices” [ibid.]? Understanding the capacity and complexity of numerous problems associated with the presence of Islam, this task, in fact, becomes difficult to do in one generation, even for a large group of researchers. This approach to the problem allows usurping practices to decide which theses or concepts can be cognitively accepted and which should be rejected. Each of them should be considered and rejected if convincing counterarguments are found.

The author also states that the problem of Islamophobia „occurs in parallel with other forms of xenophobia or racism” [ibid.: 18]. Here, there is no clear distinction between ethically reprehensible acts of violence against anyone and critical of Islamic doctrine. After all, it is impossible to recognize every dispute between social groups as a potential incentive for violence. After all, the maximum limit for any dispute is the health and life of the individual. Openly and unambiguously condemn all acts of violence of which Muslims are the victims and whose

perpetrators are Muslims, as well as those of which are the „indigenous” inhabitants of Poland, Europe or any other country.

Meanwhile, analyzing terrorist attacks, violent or discriminatory practices committed by followers of Allah, in connection with or against specific ideas rooted in Islamic tradition, may be considered an unlawful generalization, ergo manifestation of Islamophobia. In principle, this „peculiar sanction” leads to the prohibition of contextual analysis of the activity of members of the Muslim community, while accepting the analysis of individual actions of the inhabitants of Europe in a very broad context – from colonial experiences, criticism of patriarchy or capitalism, to broadly understood anthropological studies. In a word, the actions, texts or ideas of a non-Muslim can be analyzed slowly through the prism of maximum suspicion of racism, xenophobia or colonial impulses, but the use of similar contextual tools to study supporters of jihad, sharia or broadly understood political Islam – will be an example of hostile narrative for an activist fighting Islamophobia and prejudice.

Undoubtedly, the concept of „Islamophobia” is a term – out of focus, abstract, emotionally negative as well as ideologically burdened. Its use opens the door to „psychologizing speculation,” allowing even arbitrary speech about explicit motivations, and also puts the subject using this term in a „doubly” privileged position – once – cognitively – *so I decide who speaks according to facts and who only expresses his prejudices* – two – morally privileged – *I decide about it, which theses or concepts are ethically acceptable and which “create a climate of consent” for racism and xenophobia*. In a word, the concept of “Islamophobia” allows to discredit in principle any critic of Islam who challenges or does not share the thesis proposed in the Islamophobia report. This concept becomes a tool in the ideological and political struggle that gives the possibility of a specific psychiatrization of the opponent (phobia), compromising his thesis cognitively and morally himself. The institutionalization of this concept by introducing it to scientific discourse in Poland raises ethical doubts, as this concept can be used as a justification for limiting the debate and freedom of scientific research. In addition, it destroys the conceptual order characteristic of rational discourse, because it replaces the opposition ‘truth – false’, or more broadly ‘fortune – unfortunate’, an emotionally colored and manipulative discussion of Islam in the false categories of ‘Islamophobia’ – ‘reliable knowledge of Islam, without prejudice’. Meanwhile, from a linguistic point of view, the antonym of the concept of “Islamophobia” is “Islamophilia”, which can be described as “a penchant for Islam”. So maybe it would be worth, next

to Islamophobia, to examine the consequences of Islamophilic attitudes. Given the primary and etymological meaning of the word phobia, it means “unreasonable fear of something.” Well, to use this concept responsibly, it must be proved that these fears, and neutrally speaking, fears are groundless.

The specific ‘career’ of the concept of ‘Islamophobia’, which includes circles of journalists, NGOs, politicians, as well as analysts and scientists, creates an intellectual climate that can be negative from the point of view of security interests. Attempts to provide a reliable description of the ideological background of Islamic terrorism, as well as activities for the social cohesion or integration of Muslims in Europe, sometimes hinder the discourse in which the concept of Islamophobia appears as a discrediting term – cognitively and morally [Adamska-Rękawek 2016: 10-18].

5. Fighting Islamophobia as a tool of political influence of Muslim countries

The Islamic Cooperation Organization, which associates fifty-seven Muslim countries, has been running the Islamophobia Observatory since 2008, which regularly publishes “reports” on this issue. In addition to the chronicle of events recognized as manifestations of Islamophobia, they also contain conclusions and recommendations, and in the first document Islamophobia was associated with “racial hatred, intolerance, prejudice, discrimination and building stereotypes [2008: 8]. At the same time, the Organization for Islamic Cooperation adopted the determinants of Islamophobia as the British proposal of 1997 discussed above, and used the definition included in the report of the UN Human Rights Council of August 21, 2007, according to which Islamophobia should be understood as “unfounded hostility to and fear of Islam, and dislike of all Muslims or most of them. “ OWI lists the following “root causes” of Islamophobia:

- 1) the belief that Islam spread with the sword (literally “lived the sword”), hates and uses violence against unbelievers, and persisted to challenge the Western way of life;
- 2) insufficient dissemination of information about Muslim victims of terror, opposition of Muslim politicians and Islamic religious authorities to terror and extremism;
- 3) abuse of freedom of speech by Western media, whose messages “hurt, insult Muslims and carry prejudices and discrimination”.
- 4) no legal regulations to prevent the propagation of literature and statements encouraging “religious and intercultural intolerance”.

5) limiting the debate on intolerance and discrimination against Muslims to an educated elite, which means that its content does not penetrate ordinary citizens.

6) the rise of anti-Muslim attitudes after the September 11 attacks by strengthening stereotypes, generalizations about Muslims, punishing all Muslims for the marginal, unfortunate actions of some Muslims who unlawfully claim to act in the name of Islam” [ibid.]. These theses become the basis for the postulates submitted by the OWI, they include, above all, postulates to limit freedom of speech, and especially criticism of Islam, hence the pressure on the international community to introduce regulations in Europe and North America to combat Islamophobia also understood as dissemination “negative narratives “about Islam. To this end, the Organization for Islamic Cooperation, referring to the provisions of the resolution signed A / HRC / RES / 16/18 of 24 March 2011 [UN Human Rights Council 2011], launched the so-called The Istanbul Process, aimed at making the international community recognize Islamophobia as a crime. Ultimately, these attempts, due to the indecisive attitude of President Obama’s administration, were unsuccessful, although the Organization for Islamic Cooperation is constantly postulating the creation of legal tools to fight Islamophobia. In the July 2017 report, an example of an “Islamophobic discourse” was the words of Francois Hollande, who said that “France has a problem with Islam” or the sentence of Geert Wilders, saying that “Islam and freedom do not interact with each other” [32]. It should be emphasized that OWI rightly condemns acts of violence directed against Muslims or the aggressive language of public debate, however, using the concept of “Islamophobia”, it attempts to limit freedom of speech, equating Islam critics with those who are ready to use direct violence, as well as stigmatizing politicians, who demand a restriction on immigration from Muslim countries and those who recognize the problems of the Muslim minority with integration.

OWI, using the term ‘Islamophobia’, among the victims of violence motivated by religious hatred, in some sense distinguishes Muslims [Gieryńska 2017: 123-124]. Meanwhile, Muslims are both victims and perpetrators of violence. It is impossible to stigmatize and combat manifestations of violence in public space, of which Muslims are victims as Muslims, and at the same time support the Muslim Brotherhood or other organizations seeking to introduce Sharia law in Europe, and tolerate hatred preachers or the occurrence of Islamic radicals under the sign of Yusuf Al- KaradawigoIf the same amount of efforts as OWI puts in the fight against Islamophobia would also put in the fight against anti-accidental attitudes, then indeed the organization’s activity would serve to maintain global

peace, and not strengthen Islam's position as a political and legal doctrine in the world. It should also be noted that if the members of the Organization for Islamic Cooperation instead of using the concept of "Islamophobia" would adopt a more general and non-differentiating religion, e.g. the concept of "religious discrimination", then it would appear that many of these countries would have to undergo very serious political changes, including on the rejection of Sharia law, which by definition is based on three fundamental inequalities – a woman and a man, a Muslim and an infidel as well as a free man and a slave [Sadowski 2013: 30].

6. "We understood too much, we questioned too little"

Reflection on the practical use of the concept of "Islamophobia" returned to the British press due to an opinion poll conducted on a group of Muslims between April 25 and May 31, 2015 commissioned by public television Channel 4. According to the presented data, 34 percent of Allah's British followers would inform the security service a loved one in the jihadist movement, 23 percent believe that British law should be replaced by sharia in places where the Muslim community is the majority, more than a third of Muslims are of the opinion that polygamy should be legal, in a group of Muslims between 18 and 24 life percentage of similar opinions is 35 percent. 39 percent of Muslims believe that wives should always obey their husbands, one-third rejects total condemnation of stoning for adultery, and 35 percent say that Jews in Britain have too much influence. More than half of Muslims believe that homosexuality should be outlawed¹⁰.

This data provoked Trevor Phillips, former chairman of the Equality and Human Rights Commission and co-author of the document *Islamophobia challenge everyone to verify their position on Muslim intercourse in Great Britain*. The activist in the essay being a commentary on the research results wrote:

This is a really scary discovery. Muslims with separatist views on how they want to live in the UK are far more prone to supporting terrorism than Muslims with opposite views. And there are too many separatist views to believe that we will be able to gradually overcome this threat. "Liberal Muslims have been saying for some time that our" live and let live others "approach has led to the development of a climate in which extremist ideas thrive in Muslim communities in Great Britain. Our politicians have tried to assure us that only an insignificant minority holds

¹⁰ The research data is contained in the document: Juniper Survey of Muslims 2015, 25.04 – 31.05.2015, ICM, <https://www.icmunlimited.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Mulims-full-suite-data-plus-topline.pdf>.

such dangerous views. “Meanwhile, girls are sent for cliteridectomy, young women and men are forced to enter into unwanted marriages, and teenagers are seduced to wear suicide vests or, in the case of girls, become jihadist brides.” We understood too much and questioned too little. In doing so, we have found ourselves in danger of sacrificing a generation of young British people to values that are contrary to the beliefs of most of us, including those of many Muslims” [Phillips 2016].

After broadcasting a documentary *What do British Muslims really think?* over 200 complaints have been received by the UK telecommunications regulatory authority. There were also allegations of Islamophobia against the authors of the documentary film and the company that carried out the study, as well as attempts to discredit the methodology used. Accusations of methodological deficiencies were rejected by the Chairman of the British Public Opinion Research Council John Curtice, who said in an interview with the BBC journalist that the research company used the report to use standard methods used in research on minorities living in the UK [Greene 2016]. Maha Akeel, acting as Information Director of the Organization for Islamic Cooperation in an article that appeared in the *Independent*, found that publishing such data contributes to the rise of Islamophobic sentiment. In his opinion, the media should not disclose them, because, as he put it, “distrust between religious communities should be avoided” and that the results of these studies fall into the hands of those who “hate” [Akeel 2016]. In a word, methodologically correctly conducted research in his opinion should be hidden, because they show Muslims in an unfavorable light. The categories of truth and scientific reliability should give way to ideological orthodoxy.

Conclusions:

1. The concept of „Islamophobia” serves some supporters of various ideas (e.g. multiculturalism, liberalism, cultural relativism) to discredit the moral of the opponent;
2. The concept of «Islamophobia» often has a distortion function, a priori stigmatizing any voices critical of Islam as allegedly contradictory to the facts, thus preventing reliable understanding of this complicated matter of Islam and the influence of Muslim communities on Western countries. As Ryszard Michalak rightly notes:

The term ‘Islamophobia’ used in the scientific narrative of sociologists, political scientists, culture experts or philosophers must raise serious methodological and competence doubts. All references to phobia, i.e. anxiety [neurotic] disorder, are the exclusive diagnostic competence of practicing psychiatrists,

neuropsychiatrists and clinical psychologists (designations F40-F48 International classification of diseases and health problems ICD-10, developed by the World Health Organization). Islamophobia diagnosed by any of these specialists will then have the status of a specific disorder [or its stage], most often occurring within ecclesiogenic or ecclesiomorphic neurosis. The term 'Islamophobia' (here consciously written in quotation marks), used in the social sciences and humanities, however, results either from the reflective and uncritical methodological uncertainty of researchers, or serves to consciously express their ideological orientation (eg. Islamophilic, anti-eventalist, adhering to multiculturalism) and is then part of an attempt to discredit different positions. Another, non-medical context of reaching for «Islamophobia» and other «phobias» is to designate such concepts as a tool of political struggle [Michalak 2017b: 302].

It should be noted, therefore, that the term «Islamophobia» for the designation of a clinical unit does not raise methodological doubts, while as a term being a component of rational discourse on cognitive ambitions one should treat it with far-reaching reserve.

3. The concept of «Islamophobia» is detrimental to rational public debate, because instead of focusing on the relevance or reference of truth-false judgments about Islam and the Muslim community, it is proposed to introduce a kind of taboo ordering to present Islam and its followers in a predetermined way.
4. The institutionalization of the concept of «Islamophobia» especially in Europe and the United States is part of a broader strategy of most Muslim countries, which is to criminalize all positions critical of Islam and Muslim practices. It is no accident that the reports issued by the Organization for Islamic Cooperation [Gierczyńska 2017: 123-129] contain the names of conservative politicians whose goals should be considered contrary to the aspirations of many Islamic countries.
5. The notion of «Islamophobia» serves the purposeless reflection of criticism from European countries and governments against undemocratic actions by Muslim countries. The President of Turkey, responding to allegations of introducing authoritarian orders over the Bosphorus by European politicians, replied that «the Community's attitude towards Turkey is characterized by Islamophobia» [Lowe 2017].
6. A broad understanding of the concept of "Islamophobia" makes it possible to equate a researcher, politician or journalist whose attitude towards Islam is more critical than the one recommended in the British document from 1997 with a killing jihadist in the name of Allah. As Nilüfer Göle does, he writes: "Jihadists as well as people affected by Islamophobia fight cultural mixing and defend impossible identity, religious or national purity. That is

why they sabotage common life, preventing debate and destroying meeting places – some with verbal violence, some with physical violence “[Göle 2016: 285]. Well, it must be made clear that being an “Islamophobe” and criticizing even bluntly Islam or Muslims is not the same as killing random and innocent people. There is a difference in both the moral and legal classification of the act of verbal offending or even insulting anyone and killing another person. If we thoroughly analyze the scholar’s words, it should be said that by using the concept of “debate” he simultaneously excludes from it those who do not share the author’s enthusiasm in building a multicultural society, nor the proposal to build a “post-Western Europe” in which its basic values will be negotiated with Muslims e.g. the issue of Sharia [ibid.]. At this point, the author manipulates the concept of “Islamophobia,” which due to its indeterminacy and abstractness, easily undergoes similar operations.

7. The notion of “Islamophobia” falls not only into public debate, but also into legal acts. It serves politicians or pressure groups to restrict freedom of speech and sometimes even political or ideological persecution. Well, in a free and democratic Europe or North America, contrary to the demands of some researchers and representatives of many Muslim countries, no one is put in prison because he presents a “narrative hostile to Islam”.
8. It is absolutely necessary to apply the provision contained in the Polish Penal Code, penalizing incitement to violence, as well as to combat cases of discrimination regardless of who causes them and for what reasons.

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