The Portrayals of Islam through Global Media

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ABSTRACT
The media construct reality by presenting a mass mediated view through framing, shaping and portrayal. They also play a vital role in structuring the audience perspective about the issues that happen around the world. For this matter, they are believed to portray a just picture on any issues take place both at the local and international level. However, in portraying Islam, particularly after the detrimental saga of September 9/11 attack media with all integrity tend to negatively depict Islam by associating it with terrorism. Negative messages about Muslims have received more media attention than positive ones. The nature of the information thus communicated and the manner in which it is dispensed through media certainly have a profound influence on people's perception of the world around them. It is vividly seen that international media play a vital role in creating a relationship between Islam and terrorism. It is a contention that the media campaign against Islam is politically motivated, is led by powerful quarter in the western society, who sees Islam a potential global power and civilization alternative capable of challenging western hegemony. Based on this view, this study seeks to ascertain how nobility and positivity of Islam is being manipulated in order to give expression to blind prejudice against Islam and Muslim.
KEYWORDS: Portraying Islam, Terrorism, Media attention, western Hegemony

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I.   INTRODUCTION

We are living in the age of the media. Media by definition is means of mass communication. Before the advent of the modern media there were large numbers of people in the world who know nothing of Islam. With the invention of the printing press and the electronic media it is difficult to find today a single person who is unaware of it.

But there is a clear difference. In previous ages it happened that whenever Islam spread people were so impressed with it that most of them accepted it as their religion. That is why today we find more than one billion Muslims throughout the world. Strangely enough the present day publicity given to Islam has produced only a negative effect. People are now generally allergic to Islam rather than being interested in it.

Why is there this difference? The answer is very simple. In previous centuries Islam was introduced to the people of the world through its scriptures, as it is without the slightest change in its original message. Whereas in modern times, Islam is being introduced through the negative practices of certain Muslim as reported by the media.

There is a further and more severe problem that of selective reporting. According to their own criteria the media is interested only in hot news, although so much soft news is available about the Muslim people. Because of their ingrained professionalism, they do not allow this soft news to find its way into their columns of their broadcasts.

Today we have to agree that media is one of the most important tools or rather you can say media today is one of the most important weapons. This media can convert black to white, it can change day into night, and it can convert a hero into a villain and a villain into a hero. This media means of mass communication can do wonders. And depending upon how science and technology advance the methods of media is also advancing. Today the means of mass communication that is media can be broadly classifies under four headings. First, we have the print media which is further divided into non periodical and period media. Second, Audio media. Third is video media. The last type of media is the computer media or information technology.

Today's scientific research tells us that the retention of each type of media, it keeps on differing. Where an average human being when he reads the print media he retains approximately 10 percent of what he has read on an average, when a person hears the audio media an average human being retains around 20 percent of what he heard. When a human being sees the visual any picture, an average human retains approximately 30 percent of what he has seen. But when human being sees and hears simultaneously that is audio and video together, an

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average human being retains approximately 50 percent of what he has heard and seen. So the best in terms of retention is the video media. Today we know that the international media whether it be the print media, the audio media the video media all international newspapers, magazines, or television satellite channel, we find there is virulent propaganda about Islam.

ISLAM THE RELIGION OF NATURE.
Islam is the religion of nature, it were to be presented in its original form, people would turn to it quite naturally, for example, a recently converted American by the name of Gary Miller was asked why he had converted to Islam, he replied "I did not convert to Islam I have rather reverted to my original religion".

Unfortunately, a section of Muslims is engaged in violent and aggressive activities, wrongfully indeed, in the name of Islam. It is such news as, through the media, has a great impact upon the general public and creates serious misunderstandings. People have come to take Islam as a militant religion. Since modern man is in search of peace, he finds no appeal in a religion which, as presented by the media, is one of hatred and violence. These violent activities of the Muslims reach the people through the media. As modern media is a hot news based industry, these violent events are flashed in the media. For this reason, people come to regard Islam as a religion of violence.

MEDIA AS PRIMARY SOURCE OF INFORMATION
Undeniably, much of what is known about Islam and Muslims in western societies is derived from the mass media. Multiple Researches have shown that over three-quarters of people in western societies rely on the mass media, mainly television, as their primary source of information about Islam and Muslims.[1] The role of media is to shape opinions and presenting particular version as reality. According to Roger Fowler (1991) "real events are not intrinsically newsworthy, but only become news when selected for inclusion in news reports. This vast majority of events are not mentioned and so selection immediately gives us a partial view of the world"[2]. The aftermath of the 9/11 terrorist attacks, the sustained intensity of media coverage of Islam and Muslim resulted in an almost universal awareness of the religion and its adherents. What it does mean is that a media version of Islam became widely known; what we are familiar with are media generated Muslims.

Issues concerning the way international media, especially in the US and UK, equate Islam with terrorism have been tremendously debated. Studies showed that after the September 11 attack, terrorism has been repeatedly associated with Islam. The definition of terrorism at the moment is too narrow because it only depicts Islam and Muslims in an irrelevant manner.[3] This current obsession in tinged with negative signifiers with the global median's predominantly negative portrayal of Islam and Muslims. The portrayal overwhelmingly cast Muslims as violent, irrational terrorist.[4] Muslims are considered as fodder for the front-page news in US and at the same time one can find rare percent of individual follow Islam in a positive portrayal.[5]

To describe the criminals activities of terrorists, the adjective 'Islamic' is being heavily used by journalists. In relation to this, the issue of fighting again terrorism has been the most important agenda prioritized by international media. The mass media in the US and its counterpart, UK such as Cable News Network (CNN), British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), some mainstream news magazines namely Newsweek, and Time, as well as other media have played a significant role in influencing the whole world to morally support the US in protesting against terrorism.

Obviously, western countries are prone to identify terrorism with certain groups that are labeled as extremist, militants or Muslim extremists. Such an effort today is seen to focus on Muslim groups which coincidentally accused to be responsible for the September 11 attacks, and this baldly affects the whole Muslim society worldwide due to an accusation made by the US government on Islam, though most of western media for the tragedy at the world trade center.

DISTORTED IMAGE OF ISLAM

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[1] *Rane, Halim; Ewart, Jacqui; Martinkus, John (2014), Rane, Halim; Ewart, Jacqui; Martinkus, John (eds.), "Media-Generated Muslims and Islamophobia. Media Framing of the Muslim World: Conflicts, Crises and Contexts*, London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, pp. 29–46,

[2] Roger Fowler, Language in the News; Discourse and ideology in the press (1991).

[3] Berita Harian, June 5th 2008

[4] Manning, P. (2003). Australians Imagining Islam. In Muslims and the News Media (pp. 1234.135). London: I.B. Tauris.

[5] Karim, K.H. (2006). American Media's Coverage of Muslims :the historical roots of contemporary portrayals. In Muslims and the News Media (p.126). London: I.B. Tauris.

On the seventh of April, 2010 President Obama urged his advisors to omit prejudicial religious terms such as "Islamic terrorism", "Islamic extremism" and "jihad" from the central document outlining the national security strategy[6]. Such action describes the Obama's government understanding of how knowingly these prejudicial terms have been used in the west to refer to all Muslims. The underlying role of western media, especially in the USA and Britain, can be held responsible for planting seeds of prejudice and irrationality, and creating a distorted picture of Islam and Muslims in westerns' minds.

Islam has been portrayed as a religion that breeds terrorism, violence and global threat. The anti-Muslim representations in western media have been blamed for inciting many to commit violent crime, offenses, and attacks against Muslims who live in western countries.

In a content analysis study a report found five negative discursive frames that have been employed by the western media to represents Islam 1) Islam is a monolithic religion 2) Islam is uniquely sexist religion 3) The Muslim mind is incapable of rationality and science,4) Islam is inherently violent and 5) the west spreads democracy, Islam spawns terrorism.

On the other side, since 1980, US has occupied or invaded more than 14 Muslim countries that caused hundreds of thousands of deaths but the same have never been designated as an act of terrorism despite some overwhelming evidences.[7]

Similarly, the initial coverage of 9/11 attack put the broadcast journalist disoriented as they found themselves scrambling to deliver a coherent commentary. A research by Karim in 2006 quotes "*Following the 11 September attacks, there was only one story and generally one perspective on the multiple TV networks of the USA. Most experts interviews responded to security matters did not seem interested in the larger political social and economic caused of the attack sinded most media, stunned by the events of the day seemed all too willing to accept the governments' lead. As the hunt began for the Islamic terrorists journalist narratives failed to prove a nuanced and contextual understand of Islam. Muslims or the nature* of the Islamic peril"[8].

DIFFERENT STRATEGIES APPLIED TO MALIGN ISLAM

We find that the international media they are bombarding misinformation about Islam. We find that there are various misconceptions that are spread on this international media. International news channel war on terror, or some of them saying war for peace actually, what they are doing is not war for peace but war on peace, in other words war on the religion of peace, on Islam. The international media as whole today we find that they are projecting Islam, as though it is a religion of terror; it is a religion which does not promote peace. International media practice different strategy to portray Islam a wrong way.

First strategy used by the media to malign Islam is many a time they pick up the black sheep among the Muslim community and they project as they are exemplary Muslims, indicating that Islam is a religion which encourages these things. They give a vivid picture to the world that Islam promoting these illegal activities, these activities which are against humanity.

Today international media proclaim that Islamic madrasa should be banned, they produce human beings who cause terror and disrupt the piece of this world. History tells us today, that the human being that has killed the maximum number of mankind in this world is "Hitler". Which madrasa did Hitler pass from? And if we go down history, we know "Mussolini"; he had murdered thousand of human being which madras did he pass from? Take a list of all top criminals of the world those who have been proofed to destroy the harmony of the world, not what media portrays, after going through their background we will not find even one percent of them who have passed from madrasa. They have passed from these universities. A person should not judge Islam by what individual Muslims do or what the Muslim society does, but it needs to be judged from authentic sources, Quran and Hadith.

Any human being can't point a single teaching from the Quran or the Sahih Hadith which is against humanity as hole. For instance, if a person wants to test a new car launched in the market, and a person who does not know how to drive a car, sits behind the staring wheel and he bangs up the car, who will he blamed the car or the driver, naturally the driver. If the driver does not know how to drive a car, you will not blame the car. If you want to judge how good a car is, you have to look at the specification of the car, what is its pick up, what are the safety measures, what is speed, what is gayer ratio and then only you can tell how good the car is. And really if anybody wants to have a test drive he has to up an expert driver behind the staring wheel similarly if anybody wants to observe a Muslim regarding how good Islam is the best example we have is Prophet Muhammad.

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[6] obama bans Islam 2010

[7] Dabashi, H. (2015, July 2). Terrorism: For Muslim crimes only? Retrieved August 25, 2016, from Al Jazeera English: http://www.aljazeera.com

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The other strategy used by the media to malign Islam is , they quote many Quranic verses out of context, and one of the most common verse quoted by the critic of Islam, is from Surah Toubah (Chapter 9;5) which says wherever you find a kafir (infidel) you kill him. This is out of context, the context is, when we start a few verses before, it is mentioned that there was a peace treaty between Muslims and infidels of Mecca, and this peace treaty was unilaterally broken by the Mushrik of Mecca, by the time Allah reaches verse of Surah Toubah, he is giving an ultimatum to the Mushrik of Mecca that you put things straight in four months otherwise a declaration of war would be there, and in the battle field, Allah says to the Muslims that do not get sacred, fight wherever you find a Mushrik, kill him. Any army general , to boost up the moral of his soldiers naturally say that wherever you find an army kill him, he will not say that wherever you find an enemy be killed. So this is in the context in the battle field.

Throughout the world the same thing happening either they put a full or jump to another verse. Arun Shourie a critic of Islam writes in his book 'The world of fatwa' after quoting verse number of 5 of Surah Toubah he jumps on to verse number 7, he did so, because verse no 6 has the reply to his problem. Verse number 6 of Surah Toubah says: *"If one amongst the Pagans asks thee for asylum, grant it to him, so that he may hear the word of Allah; and then escort him to where he can be secure. That is because they are men without knowledge".*

Third strategy used by the media to denounce Islam is to give wrong meanings of the Quran and the Sahih Hadith of Prophet Muhammad. The fourth strategy, they quote things which are alien to Islam. It does not exist in Islam but they attribute it to Islam.

Fifth strategy, they quote things about Islam which are correct, but they give it a different angle. Media portrays some Islamic teaching to be the problem for humanity which in fact is the solution for humanity. These are the various strategies used by media to defame Islam.

Moreover, we find Muslims are tagged as Fundamentalist, extremist and terrorist. We need to know what the word fundamentalist means. Fundamentalist by definition means a person who follows fundamental of one particular subject. Merriam – Webster dictionary states the word fundamentalism was first used to describe a group of protestant Christianity in America in the early period of 20th century. According to oxford dictionary, the word fundamentalist means a person who strictly adheres to the ancient doctrine of any religion.

But the latest edition of oxford has slight change, it says that fundamentalist is a person who strictly adhere to the ancient doctrine of any religion especially Islam. The word especially Islam has been added to the definition. The moment a man hears the word fundamentalist image of a Muslim pop in front of him.

THE SOARING ISLAMOPHOBIA

Islamophobia fear of Islam and Muslims, like any other phobia, is an irrational fear without its basis in reality[9]. It has intensified with the 9/11 bombing of the world trade center in New York. It is fear that makes terrorism distinct form war[10]. Terrorism, in its advanced form, has it origin in the mid to the 19th century. It is the same era that was the spread of both the mass media and democracy. Without the media information, a small number of people would know that an attack has taken place, and without democracy, those manipulating power would have little reason to heed the sentiments that such violence provokes[11].

Global media is depicting a mediated image of Islam to the world. Philip Bump's writes in the Washington post that the term terrorism has become so central with Muslim that associating it to a white person dismantles the entire lexicography of AAMERICA and Israeli political culture. On the other hand, actual evidence shows more than one percent of terrorist attacks from 2009 to 2013 were religiously motivated. In 2013, out of 152 terrorist attacks just one percent was religious in nature (NORTAN, 2015)

According to a study, Australian imagining Islam of international news articles, the proportion of overwhelming image associated with word Muslim/Islam is violence. Number of articles citing Muslims was 1175 and the number of article that mention Muslim and terror over this period was 625. The dramatic change of narrative could be judge from the fact that prior to September 11, only 11 percent of all articles mentioning Muslim and terror together, whereas after September 11 event, 89 percent of them did (**Manning**, 2003)

In 2018, the Washington Post completed a study to examine newspapers' coverage of Muslims compared to Catholics, Jews, and Hindus. The study first established a baseline for neutrality by analyzing 48000 newspapers from various US newspapers between 1996 and 2015. Next the study analyzed 850,000 articles of which about 28% mentioned "Muslim" or Islam, about 41% that mentioned "Catholic", about 29% that mentioned Jew and about 2% that mentioned Hindu. This study found that 78% of all the articles that

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[9] Sudan, R. (2015, December 8). Increasing attacks on Muslims caused by media-hyped Islamophobia. Retrieved September 1, 2016, from http://www.rt.com

[10] Hawthorne,S.(2012). How Terrorism is wrong: Morality and Political Violence. Virginia Held: Black Publishing.

[11] Burke, J. (2016). How the changing media changing terrorism. UK: Guardian News and Media Limited.

mentioned Muslim and Islam were negative in comparison with other religion adherents. The study further filtered the content by cross referencing with articles that included terrorism extremism, radicalism, fundamentalism, or fanaticism of their variants. This revealed articles that contain terrorism and extremism words are more negative than those that do not.

A London based writer, Richard Sudan (Whose writing has been published in many prominent publications, The Guardian, The Independent, Huffington Post and Washington Spectator) article's titled "*Increasing attacks on Muslims caused by media-hyped Islamophobia*"[12] Is an indicator suggesting the media-terrorism nexus against Islam. Media in US has often been far from objective, calm and prudent as it oozed hatred and panic, calling for an action mainly against Arabs and Muslims (Bilgen, 2015).

MEDIA FRAMING OF TERRORISM

Framing is the term used by the researchers to refer to how an event in a particular news story is portrayed. The manned of depicting events and news reporting, in words, tone visuals, similes and presentation constituted different frames. It involves selection and salience by identifying problems, diagnoses cause, make ethical judgment and safest solution.[13] Hacked pointed out that framing is not necessarily a conscious process on the part of media men; it may well be the outcome of the unconscious absorption of assumptions about the social world in which the news must be embedded to make it intelligible to its intended audience. The most common frames used by the media from center are associating Islam and Muslim with terrorism e.g. "*Islam caused violence*" and "*Muslims are terrorists*"[14].

Even such frames become the title of news story e.g. "*France's Charlie Hebdo blames ordinary Muslims for terrorism*"[15]. "*Muslim student at Texas school called terrorist by teacher*"[16]. And "*Muslim migration in France opens door to terror*"[17]. Following extract from The Economist on its issue (May 7th-13th, 2011) mirror such frame, it stated; "*Al Qaeda is still active, even without Laden. The alarming problems of Pakistan, Yemen and so many other places threaten to feed more violence.*[18] "

Frames for killing do vary. For instance, Moore (2003) said "When we kill civilians we should not call it "*collateral damage*" as the same act has been terrorism for others. Bombing, attacking and slaughtering Iraqi's in thousands received just an apology. In comparison the attacks on World Trade Center and Pentagon is framed as terrorism.

ANTI- MUSLIMS SENTIMENTS IN THE WEST

From the mainstream western media, have one ever heard Buddhist terrorists and Jewish terrorist. Or even Hindu terrorists? Never, when is the last time we heard about Christian terrorists? The war on terror is primarily directed towards the Muslims states like Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq, Syria and Iran safeguarding wests' dark impulses[19].

Extremists Buddhists have killed many civilians in Burma, In Sri Lanka some even went on a violent rampage burning to ashes Muslims homes and businesses. Or what about Jewish terrorists attacks on Palestinian causing deaths and injuries dismantling Masjids and Churches. The state department's report of 2013 on terrorism revealed that here were close to 400 acts of terror committed by Israelis' in what are known as price tag attacks.[20]

Anti-Muslim prejudice is extensive in the west. Religion in general and Islam particularly has been the focal points of policy, decision-making and constitutional politics in liberal west. Inaccurate self-reported

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[12] Sudan, R. (2015, December 8). Increasing attacks on Muslims caused by media-hyped Islamophobia. Retrieved September 1, 2016, from http://www.rt.com

[13] Hacket, R. A. (1984). Decline of a paradigm? Bias and objectivity in news media studies. In M. Gurevith & M.R. Levy ,Eds, Mass Communication Review Yearbook, 5 (pp.251- 274).

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[19] Moore, M. (2003) Dude, where's my country? London: Penguin Books.

[20] Obeidallah, D. (2015). Are All Terrorists Muslims? It's not even close. Retrieved from The Daily Beast: http//www.thedailybeast.com

knowledge about Islam and Muslims seems to affect the western's feelings of prejudice toward the religion and its follower.

Several western countries share this sentiment saying that the west does not respect Muslim societies. Specifically more than 50 percent of the Americans and close to 50 percent of Canadians says the west does not respect Muslim societies. [21]. An FBI study looking at terrorism committed on US soil in the period from 1980 and 2005 revealed that 94 percent terror attacks were committed by non-Muslims.[22]

Such anti-Muslims sentiments and heavy media depiction proclaiming Islam and Muslims as elements of terrorism gripped western societies to Islamophobia- the concept existed in premise before the terrorist attacks 9/11.[23] Study conducted in 2014 by university of North Carolina found, since the 9/11 terrorists attacks, Muslim-linked terrorism has claimed the lives of 37 Americans nationals. In the same period, around 200,000 Americans were murdered[24].

On the other hand, Muslims suffered 82 to 97 percent of terrorist-related fatalities over the past five years[25]. Without distinguishing between mainstream Muslim and terrorists, Trump's newest proposal suspending immigration from regions linked with terrorism until a proven vetting methods is in place is the recent example of this effect. right from George W. Bush up to the Tony Blair, David Cameron and all those at the helms of affairs in the western part of the world spoke their mind on the 9/11 aftermath with remarkable frankness. Bush termed it "*Islamic fascists*" Blair called it "*a war not just against terrorism but a struggle between reactionary Islam and Moderate, Mainstream Islam*" Cameron labeled it "*the driving force behind the terrorists threat is Islamic fundamentalism*"[26].

II. CONCLUSION

In the aftermath of the terrorist attacks on US, a significant increase in media attention has been noticed. Prior to 9/11 terrorism was not as important as today and the media was focused on various types of groups. The post 9/11 scenario has witnessed a shirt to more focus and concentration on Islam and some western media organization made news coverage reports and published news article in which Islam and Muslims were targeted.

The media contents most of the time were depicting the mass mediated view away from reality that has influenced all of the media consumers by shaping their views of terrorism to mimic what is portrayed in today's media. On the other hand terrorist have hijacked the religion of Islam through impersonation supported by the media in their selfish and evil goals.

Spoken and written words, audio and video presentation matters in such situation because one of the ways to win a struggle is through the battle of hearts and minds. Putting the emphasis on Islamist instead on Violent extremist undercuts efforts as it is wrongly associate the core problem in the faith of over one billion Muslim who abhor violence. The concept of Islam is also vividly distorted by calling it as moderate or sometimes liberal Islam.

Explicit and implicit allegations of Muslims as being accountable for any terrorist attacks occurring in the world have been vividly pronounced in media discourse post 9/11. Due to this propaganda, many Muslim countries, especially Middle Eastern countries, have encountered considerable pressure for making new reforms and changes in their political and educational systems. Saudi Arabia, for instance, has faced considerable international and local pressures for change in recent years.[27] Because of the fear form producing more Islamic fundamentalists and the fear of losing its strong connection with the white House, the kingdom of Saudi Arabia has begun its first initial stage of intruding English and its culture to the primary schools.[28]

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[21] GALLUP. (2016, August 30). Islamophobia: Understanding Anti-Muslim Sentiment in the West. Retrieved from GALLUP: http://www.gallup.com

[22] Obeidallah, D. (2015). Are All Terrorists Muslims? It's not even close. Retrieved from The Daily Beast: http://www.thedailybeast.com

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From breeding the terrorists to the wane of terrorism and ongoing onslaught by the western dominated media with the connivance of the western capitalist class that owned almost everything in the world is a continuation of wrong policies and repletion of mistake at Vietnamese communist were on the run, defeated, or destroyed. It is a time to shun this insane Pandora's Box and stop supporting oppressive governments that the west have helping to keep them in power since long. Like communism Islam too been not a potential threat to the western interest. Restrain from viewing Islam as violent religion both as a policy and media depiction.

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