ISLAM IN THE AGE OF WESTERN MEDIA

Mass media have emerged as a social institution, assuming many of the functions formerly served by traditional social institutions, such as the church, school, government, and family. Today, media has an important role in modern society as the main channel of communication. It is in fact the fourth pillar of Democracy. The population relies on the news media as the main source of information and the basis on which they form their opinions and decisions. If it is asked to the common man how he knows something is true, he will say that he reads it in the newspaper, watched it on television. So, the media does have this public credibility and therefore have a very strong influence on us both as individuals and as a society.

In a democracy, legislative, executive and judiciary have very important roles to play. If at any time any of these three wings malfunctions or cross its jurisdiction, the media tries to expose the malfunction, so that no section of society may be at a disadvantage or get exploited. So the media does have the trust of the people which is central to its own legitimacy.

MEDIA: A PROFIT SEEKING ORGANIZATION

It is an important point to remember that like any other business, media is also run primarily to make money. This means that the media must continuously attract readers’ listeners and viewers, keep their interest and also attract advertisers. It would not exist; it would go bankrupt very quickly if it didn’t take its business responsibilities seriously.

One more aspect of business interests is that most media are run by businessmen and business families, who have little understanding of what the media’s role should be, especially towards the weaker sections of society particularly minorities (who are easy targets of injustice and exploitation. The media has a duty to ensure that such vulnerable segments of society get justice and due place under the sun. The majority community and the government remained indifferent to their pitiful conditions primarily due to ignorance and lack of interest). They are interested only in making profits. When people talk of the commercialization of the media, which is a kind of catchphrase for all evils, what they are getting at is that the media are only interested in making profits and that their social responsibility has been diluted.
COMPETITION:

It is one of the important factors which have become increasingly keen in the area of the mass media as they keep fighting for the attention of the readers, listeners and TV viewers. The life and death of each newspaper and TV station is at stake here when the income from advertising and sponsoring in proportional to the number of readers or viewers. Infact newspapers get more than half of their revenue from advertisers and most radio and TV stations get all their revenues from advertising and sponsoring.6

TRENDS OF MEDIA BUSINESS:

Nowadays a new trend been setup for media business is that Muslims have been treated by the international press more as news, particularly as what could be called hot news. Some Asian and African countries have been a rich source for such news with their wars (Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, Sudan and so on), their factional fights, terror and violence inside them or across their borders (Israel-Lebanon, Pakistan-India) and trouble and turmoil (for e.g., in the Israel-occupied Arab territories) But the simple news value of Muslims is of little importance.7

Sometimes Political leaders also try to put pressure on the management of newspapers. for example- a correspondent in Kashmir may think twice before writing the truth about some human rights violations for fear that he could be dubbed an anti-national or on the ISI payroll and so on. In case the correspondent happens to belong to a particular community which is in firing line since some centuries, the pressure of self censorship may be trebled. This is especially true after 9/11, where those who wanted to criticize the American reaction were equated with Osama Bin Laden’s Al-Qaeda or its sympathizers.8

Siddarth Varadarajan accepted in an article that ‘in the English print media, bias against Muslims is not intentional but exists as a result of the concerted efforts of the RSS as well as because of residual biases journalists and editors officially joined the party or flirted with it, so their bias can be understood. He added later that “of course, because of stereotypical images, the coverage is certainly anti-Muslim at times”.9

CONCENTRATION OF OWNERSHIP AND PRIVATIZATION:

It is another aspect of mass media which are accompanied by commercialization of news and other cultural products, a trend that is
characterized by aesthetic, technical and professional standardization at the global level. The owners and shareholders of news media may have their own opinions in different fields like political, economic, judiciary etc. that shape their broadcasting decision.

Since the media ownership has passed into fewer and fewer hands. Mark Crispin Miller, professor of film and media studies at Johns Hopkins University, has written extensively on the media and the increasing concentration of ownership of media companies in the United States. Miller has created charts that trace the holding of four major conglomerates: Time Warner, Disney/cap cities, General Electric and Westinghouse. Each of these conglomerates owns a news network, CNN, ABC, NBC and CBS, respectively. And not only do they own news networks, but also radio stations, magazines, cable TV, motion pictures, music and news papers. Furthermore, the (non-media) holding of these conglomerates create “ alarming conflicts of interests”.10

The demand for economic efficiency and short time schedules compels the journalists to print the message from their sources with little or no editing. The thorough going investigative journalism takes place more in myth than in reality.11 Herman and Chomsky, in his book Manufacturing consent locate five filters or factors that determine the news production and dissemination process. They count these determinants as emergence of media conglomerates and their interests’, advertisements, anticommunism, dependence on official news sources and strong legal check. These elements interact with and reinforce one another. The raw material of news must pass through successive filters, leaving only the cleansed residue fit to print. They fix the premises of discourse and interpretation, and the definition of what is newsworthy in the first place, and they explain the basis and operations of what amount to propaganda campaigns.12

USA, being the most developed nation of the world, also dominated the flow of news content across the globe that has turned it into the world’s most communicating nation.13 The US media not only contribute significantly to the process of foreign policy making, it also disseminate Americans standpoint on various international issues and explain the fundamental objective of the US foreign policy to the domestic and international audience.14

Karim had explained that “They (Americans) are led by the nose by a media that is dominated by the Jews. CNN belong to a Jew and Larry King is a hardcore
Zionist jaw. There is hardly any independent media in the U.S....And even if there is what chance do they have to be really independent when even good old BBC succumbs to Jewish pressure?"  

It follows, then, that the public sphere is neither inclusive nor above status and necessarily critical. It is controlled and monopolized by a given category of people to meet and further its own set of interests – religious, not secular, as Habermas would have us believe. In his perception media as a vital institution of the public sphere; e.g., CNN and the BBC, are so thoroughly dominated by the Jews that there is no space whatsoever for a Muslim viewpoint there. The public sphere is thus religiously exclusive rather than secularly inclusive.

So when the public sphere becomes a puppet in the hands of the corporate media, whose profits and losses are often determined by friendly relations with the state, then a meaningful change in the lives of peoples of democratic societies, are simply untenable. Grabber advocates, the American mass media apply different standards while dealing with the coverage of similar events in countries with favourable and unfavourable relations with the USA.

In these scenarios, could the normal innocent public be fully confident to rely upon the news which the different channels of media in the national and internal level produce? Do the media along with different factors like business, tight time schedule, competition, political pressure, commercialization and along with bias feelings been able to produce cent percent real report?

THE SPIRIT OF MEDIA:

The spirit of journalism should be people oriented coverage. Such orientation focuses on the suffering of men, women, children and the elderly, strengthens the voices of the voiceless, uncovers all procedural mistakes; and pushes all parties to make peace. But irrespective of this, now a days media is eager to expose ‘our’ suffering to ascribe mistakes to ‘them’ and to position itself as a mouthpiece of the elite indulging in statements that lead to violent acts. The media uses ‘us’ verses ‘them’ spectacles. It always positions ‘them’ as the problem makers.

Dahlgren says, ‘the systematic coercion and terror’ that many of these governments use to maintain their power is usually not termed as ‘violence’.....what develops is a case of ‘them’ and ‘us’, ‘they, the people of the
third world and 'we' the industrialized West typified by order and stability, a higher form of civilization.\textsuperscript{18}

Control over information is one of the biggest concerns of modern states. For Giddens 'surveillance', that is the 'collection and storage of information' used to coordinate populations, that is in fact the control of information, along with centralized control over the means of violence, is the key to the organization of modern state system.\textsuperscript{19}

Therefore, media makes use of views as a means to shape perception, to manipulate awareness and to mobilize actions fitted to a certain party (propagandist). It sees the use of force as legal and as a reactive means to defend/save themselves. It uses the momentum of the outbreak of war or violence as a standpoint to start reportage and condition the situation more adverse by sharp running commentary.\textsuperscript{20}

The author well written in his book that 'Sometimes media covers conflicts as if they were making a report on a spreading disease, which does not consider the treatment and therapy. Can a report on the spread of cholera for e.g. - be considered complete if the journalist simply describes briefly the suffering of the sick, reports the number of dead bodies, but leaves out everything that might bring the epidemic to a halt? The answer is besides reporting facts on the conflict; the job of media is to unveil the question like, why does the conflict occur? Who is involved in the conflict? What are the goals of those involved? What are the roots of the conflict, and the structural, cultural and historical background? and finally, how the situation will change gradually\textsuperscript{21}

By the views of author, conflict/war/violence/ should be seen as a common human problem so the coverage is aimed at making conflict transparent by putting forward views of all parties being emphatic and understanding the problem. The aim of this media coverage is to create a new effort among media people and readers to make the world safer place.\textsuperscript{22}

\textbf{MEDIA FRAMING AND STEREOTYPING:}

Framing is considered one of the most important factors in news coverage, which play key role in uplifting or distorting the image. According to Entman, framing means selecting some aspects of a perceived reality and making them
more salient in a communication text. Gitlin described media frames as persistent patterns that enable symbol-handlers to organize their discourse.

Mass media is believed to create positive or negative image of the world in the mind of the people. Media frames play a substantial role in presenting, shaping or destroying the picture of an event. The media make use of stereotypes to portray common beliefs and gain the confidence of the audience when the stereotypes appear to fit reality and create credibility. This terribly powerful medium, which admittedly shapes what most people, think about the world, performs a kind of brainwashing function, including a worldview that has little to do with reality.

MEDIA PORTRAYAL OF ISLAM:

As modern technology is radically transforming the reach and speed and methods by which individual and organizations communicates, it is useful to inquire whether this new global web can be used to hold communities together or whether it is serving the needs of modern-day empires exclusively.

During the last two decades, the world witnesses a meteoric rise in the role played by the media in influencing human perceptions of other people, places and things. This tremendous influence has had both beneficial and detrimental consequences for individuals and communities across the global. Muslims have experienced firsthand the harmful impact of the media and its ability to negatively influence public opinion. It focused on Muslims as the cause of menace or a threat to the west and often stereotyping all Muslims as terrorists.

The national and mainstream media today draws conclusions on the basis of suspicions and prejudgments, painting Muslims black as a daily routine. The same trend had also been adopted by Hindi and English press which has also become tinted in a particular colour and they have forgotten their primary duty to serve the down-trodden and check the misuse of powers and more fundamentally to get at the truth.

Bayoumi noted that Muslims as a group are unfairly held responsible for the actions of any other Muslim world wide. They are treated as “guilty until proven innocent and their guilt are premised almost exclusively on their birthplace or birth religion”. The widespread nature of this continuous suspicion and hateful rhetoric can even be seen in the comments of well established public figure such a
Franklin Graham (Son of evangelist Billy Graham), who said during an NBC news program: “The God of Islam is not the same God. He’s not the son of God of the Christian or Judeo Christian faith. It’s a different God and I believe it is a very evil and wicked religion”. Furthermore, Pope Benedict XVI’s reference to Muhammad’s offerings as being “evil and inhuman” and commanding his followers “to spread by the sword the faith he preached”. Dionne cautioned that Muslims “need to know that non-Muslims are willing to engage with the best and not just the most extreme current of Islamic thought”.

Since 2001, being or being perceived to be Muslim seems to be sufficient grounds for legal or cultural suspicion. Misinformation or the lack of accurate information, engendered by television, radio programs and the influence of Hollywood, plays a significant role in the American perceptions, attitudes, behavior and misunderstanding of Muslims and Arab-Americans.

The stereotypes of Muslims in Hollywood movies, where Muslims are shown as terrorists and fanatics are many. These are not art films, but mainstream “blockbusters” seen by millions. The fanatical Muslims surfaced in mid-1980s televising movies such as Hostage flight (NBC, 1985) Sword of Gideon (HBO, 1986), Under Siege (NBC, 1986). The taking of Flight 847 (NBC, 1988), Terrorist on Trial: the United States vs Salim Ajami (CBS, 1988), and Hostages (HBO, 1993). These and others like them are constantly rebroadcast on cable and network systems. What is considered particularly disturbing was that they effectively showed all Muslims and Arab Americans as being at war with the United States.

Such negative propaganda coupled with what is seen as the indifference of the west to the outstanding political problems in the Muslim world, combine to create a focus on the west as the root cause of Muslim problems. Muslims have lost their honour, the honour of their faith and tradition and have no power to correct the wrongs of their own world. In a July 2006 USA Today Gallup poll, 39 percent of Americans admitted to holding prejudice against Muslims and thought Muslims-US citizens included- should carry special IDs. More than 20 percent did not want a Muslims neighbour and almost 60 percent had never met a Muslim.

In a broad survey of Australian newspaper images of Islam, covering the period 1980-96, Howard Brasted identified three salient features. First Islam had been treated as if it were essentially monolithic. Thus Muslims whether in Mecca, Madras or Melbourne were lumped together as an identikit species, and Muslim
states, regardless of cultural diversity or geographical location, were envisaged as sharing similar turbulent environments. Second ‘Muslimness’ was invariably associated with what was happening in the Middle East such as terrorist activity, war and oil embargoes and was mostly defined by middle eastern patterns of Islamic culture. Third, there was a similarity and resilience about the geographical portrayal of Islam throughout the sixteen year period under review. The equation of Islam with fundamentalism, religious regimes, shariah punishment and the inhuman treatment of women was mooted time and again.  

The same author concluded after surveying the image of Islam in the Australian press from 1950-2000 that “in somewhat ironic development, journalists have themselves become self-critical, decrying this staple imagery of Islam as unbalanced and stating that it should cease some selected headlines, will suffice to convey this message”.  

- Perils of Islamic stereotyping –Paul Collins and Salabuddin Ahmed, Sydney Morning Herald, 14 October 1996.  

However, if the Australian press was directly implicated, it was not alone. Similar criticism levelled at mainstream newspapers in Britain, Canada, Europe, and the united States suggest that this attitude of Islam was widely shared, and that its creation of stereotypical imagery was universally Western.  

All tell much the same story- that Islam has received a less then fair, and at times a farcical press; and that it has been encapsulated through a number of stereotypical images which have been simplistic and prejudicial. Many such stereotypical representation of Islam has resulted based on mental and material images of Muslims at war and under challenge: as Arabs, as terrorists, as mullahs, as veiled and veiling women as passive and proselytizing communities of
believers, as aggressively militant, intrinsically fundamentalist, ideologically anti-modern and socially repressive.\textsuperscript{40}

The author viewed this prejudice towards Muslim as no doubt handwork of world media especially CNN & BBC which is thoroughly controlled by Jews, and there is no space whatsoever for a Muslim viewpoint.\textsuperscript{41} According to author, Jews have earmarked Muslims and Christian as their enemy number one since the advent of these new faiths. As Christians are very strong and powerful in every field today, so Jews did not target them but through their grip on media, they have successfully stereotyped Muslims as terrorists. An analysis shows that nearly one hundred years back about a hundred news agencies were functional internationally which shrank to only 20 at the beginning of the 21\textsuperscript{st} century. Jews control 66 percent of these 20 news agencies. All over the world, these agencies provide news, views and analysis which are published without verification all over the world.\textsuperscript{42}

It is also an open fact today that the Western media rarely resort to such stereotypes with other religious groups, when it comes to Islam they appear only too eager to shed their thin veneer of objectivity. Journalists are trained to report the ‘who, what, when, where, why and how of stories’. The “who” in stories of Christians and Jews is a human being often described by friends, family, teachers, neighbours, if relevant to the story very seldom is their religion mentioned. In the case of Muslims religion is invariably mentioned and it is about the only thing mentioned of this “other being”. In the case of Christians and Jews there is usually much discussion of why the person did what he or she did? In the case of Muslims all the readers are told is that the person was a militant or extremist or fundamentalist, as if that were sufficient explanation.\textsuperscript{43}

The media appears to have excruciating difficulty writing about Muslims without mentioning their religion. In Through the Minefield of political Islam Stephen S. Rosenfeld describes his difficulties in writing about Muslims and Islam. He has no such difficulty in writing about other faiths. The author is very inquisitive as to why not write about Muslims and Islam the same way; one writes about Christians and Christianity.\textsuperscript{44} In an article entitled “Beyond fundamentalism” Peter Fray, the religious affairs writer for the Sydney Morning Herald, conceded that Islam was misunderstood in a way that other religions were
not. And he was in no doubt who was responsible.....virtually every day the media reinforces the idea that Islam is somehow different, difficult, even dangerous. 45

Generally Muslims are rarely seen as civilized individuals or as people; only as problems to be solved or confined. In so doing, the global media often provides western readers with proof of their inherent superiority since Muslims are not quite as human as other westerners; they are less worthy of various political economic or religious rights and freedoms.

Enhancement of such attitude is more supported by Huntington (1993) world famous thesis of “clash of civilization” declares the cultural division between western Christianity and Islam as the new fault line for conflict. 46 Khan concludes in his finding US media does not support the media conformity theory but instead conform more closely to a cultural difference theory. 47

Such stereotyping has served to heighten religious tension and discrimination between Muslims and non-Muslims. As a result of barrage of negative stereotyping of Muslims in the media, the Muslim youth living in a country in minority has developed low self-esteem and lack of self confidence. According to a survey conducted in the fall of 2006. The survey was designed to explore respondent' attitudes towards Muslims in the united states using the independent variables of religion, age, ethnicity, vocation, area and gender. Survey reports that fifty-two percent mentioned that media bias could cause depression in Arab/Muslim families. 48 Mughees argues that conventional Islam –Christianity rivalry and stereotype concept about Islam play key role in negative depiction of Islam and Muslim in the US press. 49

CERTAIN STEREOTYPES OF MUSLIM IN THE MEDIA:
1. There is widespread misconception in the media about the role of Madrasa. The general feeling is that, it is a place where one can get the fundamentalist education of Muslims very easily. Certainly this perception is wrong. After September 11, 2001, there has been a lot of coverage of Madrasas (all over world especially in India) and its activities, on assumed lines based more on, imagination than field work and visits to the prestigious Islamic university. To the great disappointment of correspondent of the media they found nothing of what they had actually visualized. 50
Half a million Madrasas exist in India, where 50 million full-time students are enrolled. These 50-million students do not include part-time students, who attend the Madrasas. There are lots of Muslim students who go to regular schools and attend the Madrasas part time to study the Qur'an and Islamic tenets. It should not be a matter of great concern if one studies their own religion and its tenets. So instead of blaming Madrasas, media intellectuals should suggest something that can enable better Muslim educational empowerment, because most of the Islamic countries have a high illiteracy rate.51

2. The painting of images is not only in terms of terrorism or Madrasa, there are other issues with wider social ramifications like women subjugation in Islam or the issue of triple talaq in one sitting, on which reams have been written in English media in the last ten or twelve years.

It’s not a hidden fact that Islam allowed women to have the right to be educated and the right to participate in political, economical and social activities in their community. This created upward mobility in their community. Women were also given the right to vote, something the U.S. did not allow until 1919. Women were given the right to inherit property and take charge of their possessions while most of these rights are denied to Muslim women today as a result of cultural tradition and male dominance in society. Media should not associate this with Islam.52

3. Islamic women wearing veils is another commonly misunderstood concept in the west. Westerners often think that this is a harsh custom that Islam requires of women. They often say these women have no freedom or dignity for wearing these veils. But in fact these veils actually help protect women and help them remain in chastity.53

In Islamic societies there are few rape cases and AIDS victims as opposed to the western societies where there are thousands of rape cases and AIDS infected victims in a year. In some Muslim countries it is seen that women are forced to wear veil. Such excessive forms of this kind of dress are not mentioned in Islam. Islam requires women to wear veil for their own safety but if a women chooses not to wear, it is her choice and it is between her and her God.54

Muslim women are indeed supposed to be granted these rights and infact the Western media would be able to better present women’s issues in Islamic countries, if they identified how and why governments have limited women’s
rights that are guaranteed to them by the Qur'ān. But the media often fails to inform its audiences about this fact, it instead falsely portrays Muslim women as victims of a harsh and suppressive religion. Today the power of the media is such that any custom which is deemed to be abhorrent or unorthodox can be exposed to literally millions of peoples so being on the course of construction, media rather slanted to suggest negative images of whole community.  

Moreover if Islamic law would have suppressed women, then media should remind their audiences that there are Islamic countries that have female heads of states. In contrast most western nations such as United States, who condemn Islamic countries for their oppression of women, have recently made its first non-white “male president” since the creation of the country, let alone a female”.  

Right now two Muslim countries have women as head of State or heads of Government. Indonesia, the largest Muslim country in population, has a women as President – Megawati Soekarnoputri. In Bangladesh, both the head of government and the leader of the opposition have been women – Sheikh Hassina and Begam Khalida Zia have alternated in political power for more than a decade. Two other Muslim countries have had a women chief executive at the top of the political process. Benazir Bhutto has been Prime-Minister of Pakistan twice and Ms. Tansu Ciller has been Prime Minister of Turkey. All these cases of Muslim women at the top have occurred long before the United States has had a women President or Germany a woman Chancellor, or Italy a woman Prime Minister, or Russia a women President.  

4. Most of all the concept of Jihad presented by media is totally alienated with the Qur’ānic concept. Jihad has now been reduced to single meaning of ‘Holy War’. This translation is perverse not only because the concept’s spiritual, intellectual and social components have been stripped away, but it has been reduced to war by any means, including terrorism.  

So instead of building bridges between communities’ media sometimes provokes violence by offensive advertisements also, which have become more prevalent since the launch of America’s ‘war on terrorism’. ‘Arab American groups helped to prevent a billboard ad, designed by the coalition for a secure driver’s License, which showed a man in a traditional Arab Keffiyeh holding a grenade and a driver’s license’. The message clearly intended to show that Arabs are dangerous and therefore should not get driver’s licenses. Another ad for a car
dealership in Columbus, Ohio called for a “Jihad on the automotive market”, and further the theme by the salespeople’s wearing of Burqas and giving swords to children on “Fatwa Friday”. Clearly when such misleading concepts are promulgated in society the potential for stereotyping is significant.

In the October 4 issue of Time, Muslim soldiers were shown performing prayers with guns. The caption on the bottom of the picture said “Guns and prayer go together in the fundamentalist battle”. The part that the reporters omitted or failed to state was that the Muslims soldiers have to remain armed at all times in case of an ambush at any time. This is a clear example of the media bias and inaccurate reporting.

Current Journalism ignores the most important part of the story that by quoting such ads what message they wish to convey to the world? Without a doubt, one of the dangers of continuously portraying Muslims in a negative light is that it only serves to create or increase Muslims’ hostilities against the media and against westerners in general. This in turn may encourage more radical or extremist groups to rise up in order to protect their religion, their land and their freedom. As one can see throughout the world there is confrontation between Muslims and people of other religions, in South Asia between Hindus and Muslims (India and Pakistan) in the Middle East between Jews and Muslims (Israel and the Arabs) in Africa between Christians and Muslims (Nigeria and Sudan). In Bosnia Muslims once again confront Christians, and in Azerbaijan Azeri Muslims fight it out with Christian Armenians.

In the opinion of the convener of the Islamic Sydney Website ‘things could not get much verse: “The media’s portrayal of Muslims has been so bad for so long that we just don’t care anymore”. There is a siege mentality and it’s justifiable.’

HISTORICAL PRESENTATIONS OF MUSLIM IMAGES:

Over the last half a century, having focused on a narrow segment of Muslim activity, media has constructed from a piecemeal knowledge of the Muslims world, a version of that world which is dominated by recurrent ferment and fervour. Very rarely has this narrow view been balanced against the larger perspective of the normal, stable social existence experienced by the vast majority of Muslims. In effect, Islam has been captured in a series of single snapshots of its
episodic history, which have spotlighted only the conflicts, charismatic leaders and the more contentious aspects of revivalist Islam. It is these snapshots which have captured world attention.⁶⁵

The image of violence in both nationalists and terrorist forms prevailed throughout the 1960s and 1970s. This was replaced by the image of fundamentalist revolution and insurgency in the 1980s, personified in the dominant figure of Ayatollah Khomeini. In the 1990 the image of the veil has emerged as the symbol of Islam as Islam has come to be judged in terms of women’s position in Muslims society.⁶⁶ In the post colonial setting however a completely new typology of image emerged to categorize Islam in a way that is altogether different -aggressively militant, intrinsically fundamentalist, ideological anti-modern and socially repressive. Today, the focus is very much on Islam as an assertive, reviving civilization, a civilization to be once again taken seriously rather than scorned.

Now that Muslims seem variously engaged in attempts to “Islamize” their states and restore them to former greatness, a quite different Islam has begun to be projected.⁶⁷ A further refinement on this theme is the image conjured up in 1993 by Samuel Huntington of an Islam primed for the ultimate jihad against the type of civilization exhibited by the West: secular, materialistic, and largely Godless. In this doomsday scenario, Islam manifests as a frightening, formidable, religious force a match for the West in contesting the shape and trust of the ultimate world order.⁶⁸

According to Susan B. Maitra the campaign of western press in building up Islam and Muslims as the new public enemy number one began with the revolution in Iran in 1979, and was carried forward during the early 1980s via periodic crisis over Libya. It got a final big boost with the western assault on Iraq in 1990. The propaganda campaign is taking roots in the fertile ground of the ignorance of westerners about Islam and its history and in the midst of a worldwide crisis of economic stagnation and moral and institutional breakdown an environment in which scapegoats are eagerly sought by discredited and corrupted governments. In the meantime the collapse of the soviet union and the Berlin wall signalled the end of the post-cold war era and public perceptions of the so called new world order are increasingly coming to be associated with a confrontation between Islam and the west.⁶⁹
For the author this conformation is not real conflict, the problem is not a clash of religious views and beliefs. The problem is geopolitics or the rule of international relations by the overt and covert activity of private elites who use religion (like money and other things) as a tool of manipulation of entire peoples in the game of maintaining world dominance, endlessly pitting one group or region against the other. Now in the absence of the east west (communists versus non-communists) conflict, these elites are trying to set up the ‘Muslims world’ as the chief adversary of the ‘Christian west’. 70

As Robert Higgs puts it “if the ideology of anti-communism can no longer serve to justify a permanent war, let us put in its place the overarching rationales of a “war on Terror”. In fact, this substitution of what President Bush repeatedly calls “a new kind of war” amounts to an improvement for the leading actors, because whereas the cold war could not be sustained once the USSR had imploded and international communism had toppled into the dustbin of history, a war on terrorism, with all its associated benefits, can go on forever”. 71

FACTS: EASILY IGNORED BY MEDIA

1. Reason of terrorism:

Graham E. Fuller, former vice-chairman of the National intelligence council at the CIA and Charley Reese, self described ex-soldier, now a columnist for the Orlando sentinel, are right on target in their recent articles following the U.S missile strikes on Sudan and Afghanistan in retaliation for the bombing of the U.S embassies in Kenya and Tanzania.

Mr. Fuller writes “It is dangerous to divorce terrorism from politics yet the U.S. media continue to talk about an abstract war against terrorism without mention of the issues or context that lies behind them”. 72

Mr. Reese writes “terrorism is a political act, a response to US foreign policy. It is an act of war waged by people too weak to have a conventional army or one large enough to take on the United States”. 73

Fuller & Reese identified the realities of U.S. foreign policy, Muslims perceptions and media obfuscation that serve to perpetuate the cycle of violence. 74
Terrorism has no place in this world but distinguishing the freedom fighter from the terrorist is a matter of perspective. And what we call real politic or power politics is merely a euphemism for terrorism of another kind.

Horgan John, in his book *The psychology of Terrorism* discusses the root causes which leads to the emergence of terrorism. Among these....

- Lack of democracy civil liberties and the rule of law;
- Failed or weak states;
- Rapid modernization;
- Extremist ideologies of a secular or religious nature;
- Historical antecedents of political violence, civil wars, revolutions, dictatorships or occupation;
- Hegemony and inequality of power;
- Illegitimate or corrupt government;
- Powerful external actors upholding illegitimate government;
- Repression by foreign occupation or by colonial powers;
- The experience of discrimination on the basis of ethic or religious origins;
- Failure or unwillingness by the state to integrate dissident groups or emerging social classes;
- The experience of social injustice;
- The presence of charismatic ideological leaders;
- Triggering events.

Since the west considers its own development as the only acceptable path for all other people of the globe, those who do not subscribe are branded as backward and identified with other pejorative labels. Then how come the west still not identified the reasons behind terrorism? Why not these issues be discussed widely including members of every community routinely include Muslims with diverse views in debates at the level that U.S. foreign policies are made? Why criticisms of U.S wars in Afghanistan and Iraq have been largely excluded from the tele-visual frame? Why not serious efforts been taken to search out the real cause of the problem, if U.S government genuinely wanted to root out terrorism from the surface of the earth?

media points to an intensifying crisis of democracy in the United States: while the media are supposed to debate issues of public importance and present a wide range of views during the epoch of terror war, they have largely privileged the U.S. administration and Pentagon position.... Most of the rest of the world, and significant sectors within U.S. society invisible on television, however opposed Bush Administration policy and called for more multilateral approaches to problem like terrorism”.

Enver Masood wrote in his book that “In all my years managing research programs and projects for the U.S. government and around the world, I can not recall a single issue as broad as terrorism on which experts did not have opposing views. Only by shifting through opposing views can one hope to arrive at the truth”.

In another place the same author seemingly finds an answer that “the US media not known for accuracy and fairness when it comes to Islam and Muslim hides behind meaningless labels cites the rhetoric of hate monger’s, and then bemoans the divisions within the U.S. that are tearing apart the very fabric of our society. The enemy is not out there. It is here, it is among us”.

2. US BUDGET:

The international institute for strategic studies calculates that the $262 billion U.S. defence budget accounts for about 37 percent of global military expenditures. Russia, Japan and China will spend about $80 billion, $42 billion and $7 billion respectively. The six “rogue states” Cuba, Iran, Iraq, Libya, Syria, North Korea have a combined annual military budget of $15 billion. The U.S. budget for covert operations (i.e. terrorism and support of terrorism) alone is double this amount i.e. $29 billion.

Likewise Robert Higgs mentioned that, “the military component of the military – industrial complex has entered into fat city. During fiscal year 2000, before Bush had taken office, department of defence outlays amounted to $281 billion, just four years later, assuming that congress gives the president what he has requested for fiscal year 2004, the department’s budget will be at least $399 billion an increase of 42 percent”.

“No other country is in the same league in military spending as the United States” reports the centre for defence information (CDI). According to CDI: “It is
nearly eighteen times as large as the combined spending of the seven countries often identified by the pentagon as our most likely adversaries (North Korea, Iran, Iraq, Libya, Syria, Sudan, and Cuba), and the united states and its close allies spend far more than rest of the world combined. They spend more than thirty three times as much as the seven potential ‘enemies’ combined”. 82

Eugene Carroll, USN (Ret.) Deputy Director at the Centre for defence information narrates that The US already spends substantially more for military forces than any other nation, with no significant threats to our national security we are engaged in an arms race with ourselves. “Americans don’t need to spend more money for military security” says Admiral Carroll. He adds, “What we should do is to quit wasting money on forces and weapons. We don’t need to fight nonexistent enemies abroad instead we ought to use the same dollars to address pressing national needs such as improved education. Medical care, housing and law enforcement right here at home”. 83

Former U.S. Presidential candidate Patrick J. Buchanan, writing in ‘The American cause’ asks “with the cold war over, why invite terrorist attacks on our citizens and country, ultimately with biological, chemical or nuclear weapons? No nation threatens us”. 84

Mr. Buchanan cites a paper by the Cato institute’s Ivan Eland, “Does U.S. intervention overseas breed terrorism?” The Historical records which documents, ‘how attacks on the U.S. or on U.S. citizens were a direct result of U.S. intervention. Mr. Buchanan’s examples include Pearl Harbour, Viet Nam, Palestine, Lebanon, Libya, Iran, Somalia, and Saudi Arabia’. Says Mr. Buchanan “America is the only nation on earth to claim a right to intervene militarily in every region of the world. But this foreign policy is not America’s tradition, it is an aberration. During our first 150 years, we renounced interventionism and threatened war on any foreign power that dared to intervene in our hemisphere”. 85

Anxious to protect cold war levels of defence spending the pentagon manufactured the threat of Islamic fundamentalism, 86 rogue states and nuclear out laws. 87 The accompanying chart based on information from SIPRI (Stockholm International Peace Research Institute) shows annual defence spending in billions for the US, its allies and potential adversaries.
Defence spending in local currency (start of financial year, October) (m dollars)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>U.S spending</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>U.S spending</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>293,093</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>301,697</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>304,085</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>312,743</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>306,170</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>356,720</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>280,292</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>415,223</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>305,141</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>464,676</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>297,637</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>503,353</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>288,059</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>527,660</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>278,856</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>556,961</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>271,417</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>621,138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>276,324</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>668,604</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>274,278</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>698,281</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>280,969</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The USA has increased its military spending by 81 percent since 2001 and now accounts for 43% of the global total, six times its nearest rival China. All 4.8 percent of GDP. US military spending in 2010 represents the largest economic burden outside the Middle East, states Dr Sam Perlo-Freeman, Head of the SIPRI military expenditure project. 88

The continuing increase in South America defence spending is surprising, given the lack of real military treats to most states and the existence of more pressing social needs; states Carina Solmirano, Latin American expert of the SIPRI military expenditure project. 89

In Patterns of Global terrorism: 1998, the US department of state says “the numbers of international terrorist attacks actually fell again in 1998, continuing a downward trend that began several years ago”. But media hype about terrorism and the budget for the war against terrorism has been on an upward trend. 90

According to the state department report, the total international terrorist attacks by region are as follows:
### Total International Terrorist Attacks by Region (1996-2003)\(^91\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Africa</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asia</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eurasia</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latin America</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>192</td>
<td>194</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle east</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North America</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Europe</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Other useful statistic from the department of state report, the total US citizen casualties caused by international attacks are as follows:

### Total U.S. citizen casualties caused by International attacks (1998-2003):\(^92\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1998</th>
<th>1999</th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>2002</th>
<th>2003</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dead</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>2,689</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wounded</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Perhaps, the more interesting statistics as far as “Islamic terrorism” is concerned, appear in “Total anti U.S. attacks, 2003” which lists attacks by region as follows: Africa- 2, Asia- 6, Eurasia -1, Western Europe 16, Middle East -11 and Latin America 46. \(^93\)

From these statistics it is evident that American has little to fear from terrorism in the U.S. and even less from “Islamic terrorism”. And given the statistics for the Middle East and Latin America one wonders why one does not hear about “Christian terrorism” at least as often as one hears about “Islamic terrorism”.\(^94\)

Further more according to John Mueller and Karl Mueller “on average far fewer Americans are killed each year by terrorists than are killed by lightning, deer accidents, and peanut allergies. To call terrorism a threat to national security is scarcely plausible”.\(^95\)

So this decade ended with a continuation of the media hype about “Islamic terrorism” while mass murder of Muslims goes unpunished and in the guise of helping Muslims, their countries are exploited as seen in Bosnia, Chechnya, Indonesia, Kosovo and the Middle East. The majority of those killed or made
refugees are Muslims. In Bosnia alone thousands of mosques were destroyed by Christians. Yet it is Muslim who are labelled as terrorist.

OTHER IMPORTANT ISSUES FOR MEDIA:

These questions like whether the media has been fair to Muslims or not? Have the media portrayed Muslims with sensitivity and objectivity, keeping in view the problems they face? Have they paid too much attention to the Maulavis and mullahs? Have they given 200 million Muslims a bad press and painted them as rabid and fundamentalist? Should be highlighted and seriously considered by the media.

If it is so, then the media should correct itself. Biases do exist everywhere, but just as there are biases, there are also people who go out of the way to try and correct them. Journalists should widen their space, widen secular participation in the media and have more people taking about real issues of Muslims, going beyond those issues that unfortunately help intensify stereotype of a particular community.

Such issues should be highlighted that will bring about fundamental changes: like ‘issues of the Muslims socio-economic growth, progress, and educational empowerment and achievements’. The reality is that, issues that are not really germane to the genuine problem of the Muslim community get undue attention from the media. There are other issues that are of greater relevance other than Terrorism or Madrasa or triple Talaq or the Shah Bano, or the treatment of women in Afghanistan during Taliban rule. Complete disappearance of such news from the media is impossible but the disproportionate amount of space and time that goes into the over-simplified analysis intensifies stereotypes.

There are issues like how many Muslims students go to primary school? What is the dropout ratio of Muslim students after secondary and senior secondary examinations? How many Muslims have been inducted into the police force at higher or lower levels? How many get entry through the administrative services examination conducted by the subordinate staff selection commissions in the states? If the proportion of Muslims in government services is low why is it so? These are the real issues to read or reflect upon in the media, debated and discussed again and again. The media is the only forum for interaction and greater participation; both for intra-community or inter-community dialogue between all.
communities that together can lead to a better, prosperous and cohesive environment.\textsuperscript{98}

NOTES AND REFERENCES:
9. ibid, p- 110


37. Howard Brasted, pp. 59-60.

38. ibid, p. 60


40. Howard Brasted, pp. 62-76.


42. ‘US Media Barons’; The Milli Gazette, Delhi, 84, vol-4, No-14, 16-31 March 2003, p. 21

43. ibid, p. 7


51. Ibid


54. Ansar Hasan, at http://psirus.sfsu.edu/IntRel/IRjournarl/sp95/hassan.html


56. Ansar Hassan


60. ibid


62. Muslims Seek to counter Prejudice’, BBC Online, 6 November 2000.

63. Akbar S. Ahmad, p. 229


65. Howard Brasted, p. 76.

66. Ibid

67. Ibid, pp. 62-63

68. Ibid, p. 63


70. Ibid, pp- 214-215

71. Robbert Higgs “Battle on terrorism is an excuse for permanent war” *The Milli gazette*, Delhi 84 Vo. 4 No. 14 16-31 July. 2003 p -27. The print media and minority Images.


74. Enver Masood, pp 77-78.


80. Ibid, p- 20
82. Enver Masood, p- 57.
85. Ibid.
87. Michael T. Klare, Rogue States and Nuclear outlaws also quoted in Enver Masood, P- 102
89. Ibid
91. Total international terrorist attack accessed from http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/31951.pdd
92. Ibid
93. Enver Masood , p- 151
94. Ibid, p- 225