



**RESEARCH PAPER**

**Media Representation of Islam and Muslims as a Security Threat**

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**ABSTRACT**

This study aims to provide a summary of the research on the security dimension of Islamophobia and the recent portrayal of Islam and Muslims in the Western media as a security threats. The study attempts to present a review of the findings as well as the theoretical and methodological frameworks used in various studies to analyze the representations of Islam and Muslims as a security threat that are being produced by western news media. Drawing on various approaches, research shows that discussions and discourses about Islam and Muslims are frequently produced using a variety methodologies. The research has confirmed that there is a "security threat" rhetoric that promotes and contributing towards the securitization of Islam and Muslims. The findings also showed that Western news media contained securitized images of Islam and Muslims.

**Keywords:** Islam, Islamophobia, Media, Muslims, Securitization

**Introduction**

In the context of Islamophobia, the term "Islamophobia" implies an irrational or extreme fear of Islam and Muslims, but does not represent Muslims and Islam as victims of hostility. Islam is associated with terms such as fundamentalism and extremism, fear of Islam and Muslims (Meer, 2015); (Shooman, 2014). In the western world, the west turned Islam into terror, intimidation. According to Singh (2016), in the United States, the effects of Islamophobia are designated as a matter of concern (Singh, 2016).

In the West, there is a long history of disparaging depictions of Islam and Muslims in the media. Due to the significant role that mass media has played in the creation, dissemination, and transmission of various ideologies and cultural knowledge (Poole & Richardson, 2010). The news media play a crucial and important role in shaping and then maintaining a certain discourse that has an impact on our everyday lives and fosters the atmosphere in which we acquire opinions about ourselves and the world around us. Furthermore, Jaspal, & Cinnirella (2010) argues that Islamophobia's representation in the press is one of the main reasons and potential causes of prejudice. The press fosters social and psychological manifestations of prejudice (Jaspal & Cinnirella, 2010). After the event of 9/11 event a number of films were released regarding Islam and Muslims. Diverse researches completed on portrayal of Muslims in movies found that there was an immense difference between Muslims portrayal on pre and post 9/11 event (Vanhala, 2014).

Therefore, several opposing political and social discourses are reflected, made evident, and supported by the mass media, which has an impact on how meaning is created and how society develops as a whole. Islam has been the focus of racial and religious prejudice due to the rapid spread of the religion around the world. The political, cultural, and religious beliefs of the West were put to the test by the Islam's rapid expansion (Iqbal, 2010).

A conflict of civilizations is exposed and included in US media coverage of Muslims and Islam. The treatment mentioned above calls particular attention to the conflict between Islam and the west. The Islam as a religion and culture is specifically linked to the distinctions that already exist. Abdulla's study (2007) showed that Westerners and US media were heavily focused on portraying Islam, Muslims, and Islamic nations in a bad light (Abdulla, 2007).

Furthermore, a lot of words like radicalism, international terrorism, totalitarianism, fundamentalist, and Jihadism are used to describe Muslims in Western media, which leads to the creation of so-called Islamophobia. Due to inaccurate reporting and mischaracterization of Islam as ideology and Muslims as community and stereotyping, the notion that all Muslims are "terrorists" and Islam as a 'Fascist ideology' has emerged. These media reporting is aggressive and objectionable for democratic norms as well as human morals. Some characters may be exposed as anti-Islam ideology and anti-Islamophobia (el-Aswad, 2013).

## **Literature Review**

### **Islam and Muslims as a Security Threat in Western media**

Literature available on the representation of Islam and Muslims suggest and point out A study looked at how Muslims were portrayed in the two French newspapers, Le Figaro and Le Monde, using both qualitative and quantitative methods. It has been discovered that the majority of Western media report on Muslims and Islam using Orientalist viewpoints (Edward Said, *Orientalism*, New York: Vintage, 1977). Due to the numerous attacks that have supposedly been committed by Muslims in France, this minority is demonised and subjected to prejudice (Ait Abdeslam, 2019).

Another study conducted detailed semi-structured interviews, discovered that after the 9/11 attacks, unfavourable stereotyping, insulting language use, and sensationalism greatly contributed to the observed spike in anti-Muslim violence and led to violations of civil freedoms. A common worry was the portrayal of Islam as "violent" and cruel toward women. Many believed that the media had helped to spread the "clash of civilizations" theory (Ahmad, 2006).

Muslims have been portrayed illogically in Western media as social misfits who reject Western values and the public, as well as being uncivilized, backward, and as threats to Western countries and the general public. It is well accepted that Islam is associated with terrorism and extremism; phrases like "Muslim" and "terrorist" are now nearly synonymous. Muslims' mosques and Islamic centres in Sydney have been discovered to have been portrayed as alien "Others" who are unknowable, exotic, mysterious, and menacing (Eid, 2014).

One of the most pervasive preconceptions about Muslims in the larger media is their alleged involvement in terrorism. The media and popular culture have created notions that "Arabs" and "Muslims" are terrorists. Additionally, the media has created anti-Muslim content, cartoons, news, and movies (Merskin, 2004). The creation of Islam in society was mainly presented in most news as a "post-Soviet" global threat (Karim, 2003). Baker (2013) findings in UK media context that that Media frequently makes connections between Muslims, extremism and terrorism, feeding various views that Muslims are unfaithful to Britain and do not aspire for a happy future. The impression that Muslims are dangerous, unsettling, and distinct from the rest of society is supported by research that portrays Muslims in a highly bad light (Baker et al., 2013).

According to the (Kurzman & David, 2015) Although lots of evidence that such racial content is inappropriate, Muslim Americans are frequently presented and divided as dangers to the public order. Since the 9/11 attacks, the scope and complexity of the threat

posed by jihadist terrorists have changed. Rather than being primarily an external threat from foreign terrorist groups, there is now a growing component of domestic terrorism. Islamist terrorism's threat to Western civilization "has evolved from a small to a major, notable and systemic concern for current western nations," (Kurzman & Schanzer, 2015).

The second phase saw the west associate Islam with terms like radical philosophy. The third phase saw Islam transformed in the west into a serious threat, phobia, and source of fear. According to Singh (2016), Islamophobia has stereotyped effects in the United States. Muslim has been portrayed as an unchanging, dark-skinned individual who commits crime that is inspired by traditional popular religious beliefs. A thorough analysis of American news programmes revealed that Muslims were predominantly portrayed as terrorists. Numerous studies on the subject of how Muslims and Islam are portrayed in the media have found that these images help to perpetuate negative perceptions about Muslims (Dixon & Williams, 2015).

The findings of Ghauri (2020) confirmed the existence of the "securitization" discourse in The Australian Press editorial materials. Islam and Muslims were very openly presented in the Australian media as being a "security danger" to Australia, Europe, and the West. This study looked at editorials from two major Australian newspapers using Van Dijk's ideological square and lexicalization methodologies inside the CDA paradigm. The research shows that the editorial materials created a "securitized" perception of Islam and Muslims. The newspaper's "securitization" narrative featured recurring themes including "security," "social menace," "fear," "Islamic terrorism," and "jihadist recruitment." This study supports a discernible shift in how Muslims are perceived in the Australian press, which now sees them as aggressive, radical, and a danger to Australian values and way of life (Ghauri, 2020).

Tsagarousianou (2016) elaborates by conducting Cross-Cultural Analysis the steady shift in rhetoric from a "exotic Islam" to a "dangerous Islam" that damages European values and security as a result of "securitization" of Islam. According to her, acts of terrorism and political violence have indiscriminately associated Islam and Muslims, both inside and outside of Europe, with "terrorist aggression" that is irrational and unyielding. The "securitization" of Islam has been made possible by political and terrorist violence, as well as "public safety" worries. Islam as a religion, Islamic communities, culture are not only viewed as a huge "societal threat" in Europe but also as an "irritating anomaly." Consequently, when discussing Islam and Muslims in Europe, politicians, legislators, and other influential figures frequently use the terms "terrorism," "fundamentalism," "Islamic militancy," and "jihad" (Tsagarousianou, 2016).

Muslims make up with a large portion of the population in Western Europe, and it is a major concern that Islamophobia is pushing these Muslims out of society. While the role of sensationalistic media and Far Right organisations in creating Islamophobia has received considerable attention, mainstream politicians' participation in this process has received less notice. An analysis of speeches given between 2001 and 2007 by Tony Blair's government found that both Islam and Muslims were frequently portrayed in Islamophobic ways. The investigation examines 111 speeches delivered by these powerful ministers using discourse analysis. It is claimed that the speeches contain threatening Islamophobia based on generalizations, presumptions, and stereotypes (Moosavi, 2014).

Studies on Islam reveal incorrect images in Western media that ignore the Muslim voice in the global media landscape. He examined the rising trend of "Islamic terrorism" stories in the New Zealand media and critically examined five news articles from the years 2014 to 2016, their use of negative, positive, and neutral news content through random sampling. It is evident that Muslim voices were either absent from or manipulated in news reportage (Rahman, 2018).

Another study used a Critical Discourse Analysis methodology and analyzed The Guardian, The Independent, and The New York Times, three of the most prestigious

newspapers in Western print media. The study combined Van Dijk's sociocognitive technique with his "ideological square" concept, which is defined by "positive presentation" of oneself and "negative presentation" of others. The study also took Van Leeuwen's linguistic discourses on "representation social actors and social behaviours" into account. It has been shown how certain lexical terms and grammatical constructions are used by Western media to distort the notion of impartiality regarding Islam and Muslims (REZAEI et al., 2019).

Another research examined at how the media routinely misrepresents concepts and theological terms related to Islam, including "Islamist," "Fatwa," "Sharia," "Jihad," "Hijab," and "Islamic State," all of which are based on what Edward Said refers to as the "ideology of difference." Such ideas have come to imply only particular negative connotations and associated with the War on Terror and its effects. These Islamic terms have become deeply ingrained with the frames and meanings of fear and threat (Miladi, 2021).

A systematic analysis was conducted to provide insight on how Islam has been portrayed. There was a theme analysis. In Australia, problematic media portrayals of racial and religious minorities continue to influence popular views and political discourses on immigration and cross-cultural challenges. The paper asserts that despite much research and criticism, mainstream media still frequently dehumanises racial and religious minorities by defining them in terms of stereotyped traits of crime, violence, and antisocial behavior (Weng & Mansouri, 2021).

Focusing on the online editions of the two most important newspapers in each nation from 2015 to 2020 (Corriere della Sera and La Repubblica for Italy, El Mundo and El Pas for Spain), it was discovered that Muslims in both nations are primarily framed in terms of terrorism or within the broader discourse on immigration. They are depicted as "others" in both situations (Cervi et al., 2021).

Moreover, Iqbal (2020) elaborates the US media role, considers Muslims are similar to Arabs. Although it is assumed that all Muslims are Arab, but only 24% of Muslims are Arab. The media in the US does not adequately distinguish between Muslims and Arabs. Because they hardly acknowledge the ideological differences among Muslim sects, they all receive the same treatment. But when it comes to Christianity, distinguish it from many sects like protestant, catholic, and Baptist (Iqbal et al., 2020).

A critical discourse analysis The New York Times from 2000 to 2016 during a 17-year period analysis was conducted. In The New York Times stereotype and negative portrayals of Islam and Muslims have come to light. Muslims are portrayed as the negative recipient while Islam is portrayed as the unwanted outsider and troublemaker. Stereotypes like westerns are "us" group and fear of the "them" group are examples of how stereotypes contribute to prejudice (Li & Zhang, 2022).

An examination of how "The New York Times" covered Islam and Muslims historically during a certain time. The analysis showed a consistent strategy with a strong emphasis on the issues of terrorism and extremism. Terrorism, ISIS, and Al Qaeda were dominant on this period's (Alzyoud, 2022).

The study analysed newspapers from six nations, including Pakistan, Canada, Australia, Canada, India, and the United States. The framing of significant terrorist occurrences targeting both Muslims and non-Muslims was examined using the content analysis method. Certain foreign media outlets have portrayed Islam in the context of an anti-Muslim insurgencies by portraying Muslims and Islam in a negative light and frequently associating them with violence and non-Muslims as being the targets of terrorism rather than Muslims. (Saleem et al., 2021).

## Securitization Theory

Security research theorists Ole Weaver, Zap de Wilde, and Barry Buchen (1998) from the Copenhagen School utilised securitization theory in the 1990s (McDonald's, 2008). The conceptual framework in security studies that focus on governmental and military institutions was redefined by this theory (Buzan et al., 1998).. This theory addresses issues related to the dispersion, disappearance, and problems of individuals (Rychnovská, 2014).

Non-politicized > Politicized > Securitized

The Process of Securitization

Source: Krume (2010)

The securitization of an issue, which can be controlled by presenting an issue as security problem, is one of this theory's primary dimensions. Second, the effective politicisation of issue, which led from political neutralization to eventual Securitization (Wæver, 2003). Elite ensures audiences that the threat is contained through speech while speaking from positions of authority, "not only by describing the existing security situation but also by successfully representing the security situation"(Williams, 2003).

As per the Copenhagen School a politicized concern and issues can be securitized by the securitizing actors, state, non-state actors, military, lawmaker and elites depict a politicized issue as an existential danger to the referent article, people, society and state. Securitization is persuading a crowd (of people, society, or condition) to view an issue as an existential danger. Along these lines, security, as indicated by the Copenhagen School, is a "self-referential practice," since the issue turns into a security issue not really on the grounds a genuine existential danger exists but the issue is introduced as such a danger (Buzan et al., 1998).

## Islamophobia as a Security Threat Dimension

Security dimension of Islamophobia help us to contextualize the extraordinary measure regarding Islam and Muslims which led to the projections about institutional discrimination, particularly regarding extra security checks for Muslims and Arabs at airports and government buildings (Skitka et al., 2004). The relationship between immigration and terrorism has been confirmed and has taken centre stage in the counter terrorism agenda. After that, immigration in the USA turned into a national security issue. As far as the national security of Europe is concerned, Hoffman (2015) argues that in Europe and other Western states, refugees are coming in high numbers. That is accounting for a large percentage of terrorist plots and posing a considerable threat of violence in Western states. As he examined the hundreds of refugees charged with the ideology of jihad (Hoffman, 2015).

Furthermore, Bergen (2016) argues that "National Security Terrorist" and "Refugee Protection Policies" related offences in the US since 9/11 found that many people who travelled abroad had attempted to do jihad or join a jihadist group. He further argues that the "migration-related security threat" most frequently articulated in policy circles and the media involves the entry of foreign potential terrorist operators into states (Bergen, 2016). Many migrants to Europe have bad motives. Many migrants and refugees who entered Europe are potentially terrorists and have been arrested; others have died during attacks or are planning attacks. After several attacks by asylum seekers, Germany has gone through its processing mechanism for recently arrived migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers (Faiola, A & Kirchner, S, 2016). Campaigns against mass immigration and, inevitably, the "Islamization" of the Europe, with the latter being perceived as a security concern and a threat to "Western values" (Ajala, 2014)

Waever (2003) asserts that powerful and well-known Muslims experience hatred from the non-believing actors. It features actors who contend that Islam threatens secular norms, political norms, and European values (existential danger), and that justifies extraordinary actions against it. He also provides a useful description of the effects of such actions: Religion can become even more repressive when it is mobilised (Wæver, 2003).

Migration poses existential risks to country sovereignty and human security. The securitization of immigrants is a factor that has contributed to the notion that immigration is a threat to national security, as has the perception that migrants are a threat around the globe. All unwanted and unauthorised immigrants are viewed as threats to a state's. As a result, the security agenda has been connected to many elements of immigration policy. Additionally, in discussions in the West, migration has been connected to global dangers and the fight against terrorism (Wohlfeld, 2014).

## **Conclusion**

The representation, depiction, and construction of Islam and Muslims in the Western media can be concluded as problematic in light of this thorough literature analysis on media representation, securitization theory, and the security aspect of Islamophobia. The media has portrayed and constructs Islam and Muslims in stereotyped ways. The Western media portrays Islam and Muslims as threats in their reporting. Recent research have shown that there has been a noticeable change in the coverage and media representation of Islam from "exotic Islam" to "threatening Islam" in the western media's coverage of Islam and Muslims. Studies carried out in the majority of European countries suggests the importance of the agenda and ideology of the newspapers in how they cover Islam and Muslims. Through the worldwide framework, Muslims and Islam constitutes not only a foreign, external threat but also a domestic threat from within.

Many Westerners perceive Muslims as being aggressive people, and some say they financially support terrorist organizations. The reader consequently experiences anxiety, insecurity, and hostility as a result of news reporting. Factors, including the government, legislators, decision-makers, and the media considering Muslim populations as security threats rather than as "issue networks." Lawmaking, anti-discrimination policies, immigration rules in Europe, burqa ban legislation, refugee laws, security checks at airports, and security strategies are all impacted by the perceptions of Islam and Muslims.

Additionally, according to scholars from all around the world, Muslims and Islam are commonly referred to as "symbolic threats," "real threats," and "terrorist threats." Islam was frequently presented in the media as an antiquated, barbarous, and threat to liberal-democratic norms and values to west, as well as a terrorist threat from an Islamophobic perspective in relation to the 9/11 tragedy. Threats from terrorism are the main issue of discussion and policy in the West. As a result, Muslims and Islam were portrayed in American and European discussions as a security risk and a phenomenon that may be further researched under two broader dimension like Islam as an "ideological threat" and Muslims as an "existential threat."

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