

Concept of Jihad and Terrorism in Post-9/11Era: Critical Analysis of Media as a Platform for Discourse Development

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Abstract

Media plays an important role in making and shaping of public opinion across the states and societies. The media debates regarding jihad and Islam, following the events of 9/11, introduced Islam at the world stage as a violent faith. The worldwide media discourse of 'Islamic' militancy identified the concept of jihad as a source of extremism and terrorism across the world. In media debates, Islam, jihad and terrorism have since been generally discussed and projected as singular phenomena. Research into the phenomenon proves quite the contrary to the common perceptions framed in the media. In the context of media framing, this paper employed the secondary data analysis to study the role of media in construction of image of Islam and Muslims with militancy. This study finds that the concept of jihad is also abused by the terrorists as well who used the media platform to express their violent ideology with religious references. The study also identifies that the concept of jihad is the most misunderstood and misrepresented subject matter worldwide. The purpose of this writing is to explain, understand, and dispel the notion that terrorism or any kind of violence can be justified in the name of jihad or Islam as a faith, as projected by the media and the terrorists as well.

Key words: 9/11, Islamic Militancy, Jihad, War on Terror, Media platform

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Introduction

The dawn of the new millennium emerged with the watershed events of 9/11 that have changed the course of history and warfare. The post-9/11 period introduced new actors to fight with and new dynamics to international peace and stability in the form of non-state actors, religious extremism and terrorism. The current study finds that since the 9/11 incidents, the concept of jihad stands at the center of the discourse of 'Islamic' militancy worldwide. An effort to trace the history of global terrorism and concept of 'global jihad' leads to Osama bin Laden's call of global 'jihad' in 1996. The call was given in the form of a FATWA (a religious decree) for Muslims across the world to attack American armed forces and civilian alike, wherever they are found, to avenge Muslim's political miseries in their own homelands (Laden, 1996).

This call not only initiated the concept of global 'jihad', but also directed the global media attention towards Islam as a violent faith and jihad as a way of indiscriminate warfare that disregards the inviolability of civilian lives and properties. Terrorist attacks in Kenya and Tanzania on American embassies in 1998, attributed to Al-Qaeda further strengthened this perception. With this background in place, September 11, 2001 attacks on American soil proved to be a defining moment at the dawn of new century. These attacks unveiled the malicious nature of the enemy in the name of Islam. By that time, revolution in communication technology in the form of cable news and live coverage had already taken place, thus, people watched the horrific attacks and listened to the associated debates across the globe. Responsibility of the attacks was placed on Al-Qaeda headed by bin Laden and stationed in Afghanistan. Rarely known to public at large, Al-Qaeda, since then became a household name. Jihad is known a way of indiscriminate warfare and Islam as an intolerant faith.

Employment of the framing theory for this study is inspired by the fact that entire discourse of the War on Terror revolves around the perception of Islam as a source of violence and that is constructed strategically through international and national print and electronic media throughout the world. Media was used as a platform by both the parties involved in the conflict; Western governments, mainly the USA and United Kingdom and non-state actors like Al-Qaeda. Western officials used media platforms to identify Islam with terrorism and terrorists also communicated

their violent and distorted ideology of 'jihad' through the same media platforms. While media itself also played a central role in the image construction of 'Islamic' militancy and 'jihadi' threat through selective media debates and lack of critical analyses over the subject.

Writing in 1997, Edward Said observed that "instead of scholarship, we often find only journalists making extravagant statements, which are instantly picked up and further dramatized by the media (1997, p. xvi). That was the case years before the 9/11 incidents. Patterns, however, have been transformed drastically since then. 9/11 provided the rationale for extravagant statements from the highest political offices in the United States and Great Britain as well. Along with Al-Qaeda and other terrorists' self-proclamations, statements from government officials, politicians, and activists, unprecedented media coverage and debates further established the image of 'Islamic' terrorism and violent 'jihad'. Invention and continuous repetition of the adjectives like 'Islamic radicals', 'Muslim terrorists', 'jihadi militants' and Islamic fascists, etc., in everyday media discussions constructed an image of 'Islamic' threat.

On the other hand, Self proclamations of militants and terrorists themselves also played the key role in the construction of this violent image of Islam that prioritizes the sanctity of human life above anything. This is an important subject to be explored because the entire discourse of 'Islamic' militancy revolves around this subject around the world. This study is an attempt to investigate and analyze the Islamic concept of jihad in the light of diverse academic scholarships to determine how far jihad as a concept of violence and struggle is investigated and understood by the objective analysts (Enein & Zuhur, 2004; Esposito, 2002; Esposito & Mogahed, 2007; Fadl, 2001, 2005; Tagg, 2009) and how despite these luminary scholarships, media representation remained unchanged throughout the years.

For the purpose of analysis, English language literature from US and Britain is selected to determine the crucial role of media in image building of Islam and jihad as sources of violence.

Literature Review

Analysis of post-9/11 media reveals that it acted as a platform for most wanted but hidden in Afghan mountains terrorists, to air their poisonous ideology worldwide. Had media not provided that crucial platform they would have remained little to unknown. Live calls, video messages, interviews to BBC, CNN, Voice of America, and MSNBC, etc., introduced barbarian criminals to the world as 'jihadis', causing havoc 'in the name of God'. Critical aspect is that media never questioned what they were spewing in the name of religion. Their claims and assertions were never questioned, and information was never crosschecked in the light of great scholarly work that was being produced at the same time, exploring the religion victimized in the media as a guiding principal for violent ideology of terrorists.

Plato recognized in his *Republic*, "those who tell the stories also rule societies" (Shaheen, 2009, p. 11). Pintak asserted that "societies are shaped by media. So, too, has been the world's relationship with terrorism, which could not have emerged in its present form and influence without television" (2006, p. 36). This seems quite true while analyzing the role of media in construction of militant 'Islamic' threat in Western societies and resultant Islamophobia. Said (1997, p. ii) observed that the image of Islam in the U.S. media has always been influenced by a framework of politics and hidden interests and is therefore laden with "not only patent inaccuracy but also expressions of unrestrained ethnocentrism, cultural and even racial hatred, deep yet paradoxically free-floating hostility".

Jack Shaheen's analysis of US entertainment industry, also endorsed what Said had observed. He analyzed over 1100 pre-9/11 Hollywood films and found all of them containing Arab stereotypes that even extend to Islam (2009, p. 2). These observations reflect that anti-Islamic content of American media industry was a prevalent phenomenon and not the construction of post-9/11 era, while this is also widely observed and analyzed that since 9/11, the anti-Islamic discourse has further strengthened in daily news media.

Christensen examined that the spread of Islamophobia in the West is at least in part the responsibility of distorted and imbalanced media

coverage. He argued that “it is not a lack of coverage that makes Muslim nations misunderstood, it is how the information gathered by journalists is presented to, and then interpreted by, readers, viewers and listeners” (2006, p. 68). Pintak termed the bias of American media in case of post-9/11 Afghan and Iraq wars as “jihad journalism” (2006, pp. 42, 44).

A media research institute, Media Tenor’s study of ten years is reported to have compared the level of reporting and construction of images in American media about Islam covering the period from 2001 to 2011. The study identified that in 2001, 2% of all new stories in the Western media focused on Muslim militants while just over 0.1% reporting covered average mainstream Muslims, but by 2011 the 2% of militant’s coverage had been risen to 25% while the coverage of ordinary Muslims remained at the same level of 0.1% as it was in 2001 (Shipoli, 2018, p. viii). British academic and journalist, Mehdi Hasan (2009) criticized the British media for over-reporting of terror related incidents perpetrated by Muslims. He referred to a senior British minister saying privately to him that, “he wished the British media would give greater coverage to non-Muslims on trial for terrorism and terror-related offences”. He further referenced the findings of a Europol report on terrorism in Europe, that disclosed that, in 2006, one out of 498 documented terrorist attacks across Europe could be classed as “Islamist”; in 2007, the figure rose to just four out of 583 – that’s less than 1 per cent of the total. By contrast, 517 attacks across the continent were claimed by or attributed to nationalist or separatist terrorist groups, such as ETA in Spain. But media coverage simply ignores these figures. Norton also observed this phenomenon and argued that every year there are hundreds of terrorist attacks in Europe but the ones that immediately receive the media attention through headlines of every news outlet, are ironically the ones carried out by Muslims (2015).

On the issue of jihad, Kirchner studied that because terrorists depict violence against civilians as jihad, the majority of American media attention constricts its application of the term to descriptions of violence. He documented that, since 2001, the U.S. press has referenced jihad between approximately 6,000 and nearly 12,000 times per year; television and radio programs mention jihad an average of 6,000 times per year. In contrast to the way the U.S. media has publicized violent jihad, internal

jihad has been largely ignored, with a mere 56 combined total references from 2001 to the present (2010).

A distinguished American professor, Christopher Bail (2016) has also analyzed the role of public statements and their extensive media coverage in construction of violent images of Muslims in US media by analyzing 1084 press releases from 120 organizations which included Muslim and Christian groups and found that the press releases that were more emotional, had focused on violence and were more sensationalized tended to be the press releases that essentially got published into media sources. He analyzed that small network of fringe organizations in the wake of 9/11 attacks captivated the media through emotional appeals. These organizations were once a peripheral actor now exerting great influence and shaping anti-Islam public opinion.

Washington Post's research is also reported to have examined the period of 5 years from 2011-2015, and found that out of total 89 attacks committed by different perpetrators in the United States, 12.4 percent of those attacks were committed by the Muslims while they received 44 percent of the news coverage. The research also revealed that people are more likely to consider an attack to be terrorism when the perpetrator is Muslim (Betus, Kearns, Lemieux, 2017).

A study conducted by the Centre for Media Monitoring in Britain (2018) covered the period of October to December 2018 and analyzed around 11,000 newspaper articles published in mainstream British newspapers. The study found that 59 percent of all published articles associated Islam with negative behaviors; nearly a quarter misrepresented Muslims; and 14 percent made generalizations.

While these aforementioned studies document the extensive but negative coverage of Islam and Muslims in the Western media, a parallel academic and scholarly effort had also been underway, both in the West and Muslim world to understand the true nature of the concept of Jihad and to challenge the militant discourse of "Islamic" militancy. Fadl contended that the terror aspect of militants has any religious justification in Islam and regarded the use of religious justification by militants as *The Great Theft* (2001; 2005). Enein and Zuhur (2004) in their scholarly work documented the Islamic rulings on warfare and found them in total contrast of what was

being propagated and perpetrated by the terrorists in the name of Islam. On the basis of their empirical research, Esposito and Mogahed have also concluded that “calling acts of terrorism jihad risks not only offending many Muslims, but also inadvertently handing radicals the moral advantage they so desperately desire” (2007, p. 21).

Pakistani religious scholar, Tahir-ul-Qadiri issued a 600-page *Fatwa* (2010), against terrorism and suicide bombings and also published it in a book form (2011). Based on his extensive research and documentation from Quran and Sunnah, he concluded that terrorism and suicide bombings are in total violation of Islamic spirit. Similarly, another Pakistani religious scholar, Javed Ahmed Ghamidi (2012; 2014, pp. 577-605) deconstructed the concept of Jihad in the light of Islamic teachings and documented it as prerogative of state and not of individuals as claimed by variety of militant organizations. He claims to be advocating this opinion since the days of Afghan Jihad against the Soviet Union (2012).

This documentation provides enough evidence of trends that prevail in media since 9/11. There is an abundance of literature that studied the role of media in construction of Islam and Muslims as threat to West and its civilization, while there is a wealth of academic literature as well that through objective research and independent scholarship presented the information in contrast to the dominant discourse constructed through the media. Covering every research is beyond the scope of this study but the above-mentioned chronological order of selected but diverse literature review reveals that the process of media distortion is ongoing and public opinion formation is still subject to negative media coverage.

Objectives of the Study

- 1.To thoroughly analyze and understand the concept of jihad to determine the nature of much debated ‘Islamic’ militancy worldwide.
- 2.To enhance the understanding of this most misunderstood and misrepresented subject matter that has misguided many among the Muslims and has caused worldwide friction among Muslims and non-Muslim communities
- 3.To distinguish terrorism from jihad with the help of insights provided by the Muslim and non-Muslim scholars alike.

4. To challenge the dominant discourse about 'Islamic' militancy that basis its argument on jihad as a way of indiscriminate warfare.

Research Questions

Does Islam support terrorism as widely project in the media?

Has concept of jihad been misinterpreted in the media to be equated with terrorism?

Theoretical Framework

Since this study highlights the role of media in constructing the image of 'Islamic' militancy and jihad as a way of indiscriminate warfare, therefore, it draws upon the Framing Theory of communication studies. The power of the mass-media to organize and present information is powerful in distributing ideologies through framing (Gitlin 1980). Reese and Lewis identified that in the context of War on Terror, news media have been active participants in propagating the framing (2009, p. 778). So, what is framing and how it works? Framing is identified as the organization of information into news stories written for an audience that enables them to comprehend events, peoples, religions, etc. through a focus, lens, or frame (Shook 2000, pp). Entman explained that framing involves selection and salience and "to frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for item described"(Entman, 1993, p. 52).

In construction of framing in the media, it is explained that when the prominent elements in discussion take the central stage, a frame is formed that further expands with identical reporting that makes it a dominant discourse with one dimensional account of events (Entman 1989). Reese further elaborated that when a frame becomes established, it becomes, "organizing principles that are socially shared and persistent over time, that work symbolically to meaningfully structure the social world" (Reese 2001, p. 9). Entman also emphasized the importance of frames in political news

by highlighting that framing “plays a major role in the exertion of political power, and a frame in a news text is really an imprint of power” (1993, p. 55).

Role of media in construction of frames is also highlighted by Chaudhry who critically analyzed the role of media in construction of hegemonic discourses circulated by governments. To her, media act as a “fourth branch of the government and a mouthpiece through which these narratives are normalized and brought into our homes” (2016). Thus, Framing Theory provides the analytical foundation to evaluate the subject matter in the light of collected information over the concept of jihad and the role of media in construction of the image of militant ‘jihad’.

Methodology

This research draws from the secondary data analysis to study the concept of jihad, as it is researched, understood and documented by diverse international researchers and scholars who are considered an authority on Islamic research. Same analytical method is also employed to review and examine the diverse media studies that analyzed the role of popular media in the development of discourse of ‘Islamic’ militancy and in representation of Islam with violence. There is general identification of the popular media with the news media and mainstream film and entertainment (Tagg, 2009. p. 320; Stack & Kelly, 2006, p. 9). For this purpose, popular media sources, particularly news media comprising both print and electronic and mainstream film industry are consulted. This secondary data analysis helped to identify that negative media coverage and representations of Islam with terrorism greatly contributed to the construction of the image of “militant” Islam as an overwhelming threat bent upon destruction of Western civilization. Same method also assisted to analyze that media discourses were in support to the United States policy over War on Terror and media received and transmitted the information over Islam, jihad and Muslims as it received from the state officials and selected group of scholars and from the terrorists as well, without critical analysis and objective investigation on to the subject matter.

Does Islam Support Terrorism as project in the Media?

Islamic rulings on warfare are quite clear and unambiguous not just from Quran but from Hadith (saying of the Prophet) as well; the two principal

sources of Islamic law. Practices and teachings of early Muslims are also acknowledged as a model reference in Islamic thought about warfare.

Enein and Zuhur (2004, p. 15) classify Quranic verses on warfare into three. They explain specific verses that sanction fighting against persecution are called the Sword Verses, other verses speak of fighting in a just manner, and still others could be termed Verses of Peace and Forgiveness.

The Quran ordains, “whoever kills a human being for other than manslaughter or corruption in the earth, it shall be as if he killed all mankind, and whosoever saves the life of one, it shall be as if he saved the life of all mankind (Quran, 5:32).

In the same chapter, Quran also commands to believers, “Do not let your hatred of a people incite you to aggression”; and “And do not let ill-will towards any folk incite you so that you swerve from dealing justly. Be just that is nearest to heedfulness” (Quran, 5:2; 5:8)

In chapter six, a verse clearly commands, "do not take any human being's life (the life) which God has declared to be sacred otherwise than in (the pursuit of) justice: this has He enjoined upon you so that you might use your reason (Quran, 6:151).

In case of war, Quran also commands to “fight in God's cause against those who wage war against you, but do not transgress, for God loves not the transgressors (Quran 2:190).

From the examples of the Prophet Muhammad’s (Peace be Upon Him) life, it is narrated that a woman was found killed in one of the battles fought by the Messenger of God. He disapproved of the killing of women and children. (Muslim Book 19, hadith No. 4319). Enein and Zuhur (2004) documented that this incident prompted the code of conduct for Islamic warriors that included:

- No killing of women, children, and innocents—these might include hermits, monks, or other religious leaders who were deemed noncombatants;
- No wanton killing of livestock and animals;
- No burning or destruction of trees and orchards; and,
- No destruction of wells.

A hadith is also narrated to have said, “you are neither hard-hearted nor of fierce character, nor one who shouts in the markets. You do not return evil for evil, but excuse and forgive.” (al-Bukhari, Vol. 6, Book 60, hadith No. 362).

Enein and Zuhur (2004, p. 22) also documented the detailed set of rules formulated by the first caliph Abu Bakr, after the death of Prophet Muhammad. His instructions to a Muslim army setting out for Syria, which was then governed by the Byzantine Empire, were as following:

Stop, O people, that I may give you ten rules for your guidance in the battlefield. Do not commit treachery or deviate from the right path. You must not mutilate dead bodies. Neither kill a child, nor a woman, nor an aged man. Bring no harm to the trees, nor burn them with fire, especially those which are fruitful. Slay not any of the enemy’s flock, save for your food. You are likely to pass by people who have devoted their lives to monastic services; leave them alone.

All these original sources referring to rules of warfare reflect that Islam as religion does not supports any kind of indiscriminate violence, not even during the war and upholds the dignity of human life, property, and honor. In the light of these injunctions, militant challenge should be analyzed that how far it is ‘Islamic’?

Concept of Jihad

Tagg observed that Westerners misunderstand jihad (2003, p. 3). Being a sacred concept in Islam, exploited by the militants and greatly misunderstood in the West, the term jihad deserves a comprehensive introduction mainly because this is the concept that has been employed and distorted by the militant groups to legitimize and justify their violence in the name of Islam. Similarly, it is also represented in popular media and political analyses as a violent religious philosophy. Distinguished

Pakistani religious authority, Ghamidi (2017) explained that the concept of jihad is one of the most debated concepts in the modern era like polygamy, veiling and slavery. It incorporates diverse meanings as it would become evident in the following discussion.

General meaning of jihad identified and explained by a diverse scholars and writers is that it means to ‘struggle’ or to “strive” for a cause.

Generally, it is perceived in the West as a concept of ‘holy war’ while this is not the accurate translation of the word (Knapp, 2003; Fadl, 2005). Fadl explained that, “‘Holy war’ (in Arabic *al-harb al-muqaddasa*) is not an expression used by the Qur’anic text or Muslim theologians. In Islamic theology, war is never *holy*; it is either justified or not”. (2005, p. 222).

Armstrong elaborates that the word jihad, “occurs only 41 times in the Quran and only 10 of those instances does it refer unambiguously clearly to warfare, yes, all other times it means an effort, it is a struggle” (2016). Ghamidi explains that the meaning of jihad is to exhaust all available energy for a task (2017), while another noted Pakistani religious scholar Israr Ahmad further adds to this by identifying that Arabic word “jihad” is derived by the root word “*jehed*” which means to strive for, or to struggle while the word “Jihad” in the context of Arabic Grammar means to “struggle against” that involves two opposing forces or parties that are in mutual struggle or in jihad against each other for a cause (1984). This implies that the word jihad by its simple definition is also applicable to non-religious causes and non-religious forces as well involving any struggle, for any cause by any opposing individuals or groups. A French historian and anthropologist, Boivin, who is also known to have an expertise in Islamic Studies also acknowledged that “the Arabic word jihad comes from the verb *J-H-D*, meaning making an effort (2007, p. 105).

A hadith which is widely quoted by scholar’s state that “the best jihad is against the selfish desires of one’s own self”. Streusand (1997, p. 5) explained that Warfare is only one interpretation of the concept of jihad. The root meaning of “effort” never disappeared. Jihad may be an inward struggle (directed against evil in oneself) or an outward one (against injustice). It is also widely identified that ‘until about the 11th century, Muslim mystics considered there were two *jihads*: *jihad al-saghir* or small jihad, namely, to fight the infidel, and the *jihad al-kabir*, the great jihad, or

fight against the self (Streusand, p. 5; Boiven, p. 105). A well-known prophetic tradition is also referred in this regard which informs that when Muhammad (peace be upon him) returned from a battle, he told his followers, “We have returned from the lesser jihad to the greater jihad” and when asked “what is a greater jihad?, he replied, “it is the struggle against oneself” (Streusand, p. 5; Esposito, 2002, p. 28). The greater jihad is

identified as the more difficult and more important struggle against one's ego, selfishness, greed, and evil (Esposito, 2002, p. 28). Similarly, once, upon an inquiry about what is the best jihad, the Prophet stated that "a word of truth spoken before an unjust ruler" is the best jihad (Nasai, p. 140).

Fadl described that in many ways, jihad signify a strong spiritual and material work ethic in Islam that encompasses from personal to social realms. He explains that personal attributes like "piety, knowledge, health, beauty, truth, and justice are not possible without jihad—that is, without sustained and diligent hard work" (2005, p. 221). He further explained that for warfare, Qur'an referred to the term *qital* that is conditioned with many strings attached to it. On the other hand, Qur'an's call to jihad is unconditional and encompasses the notions of individual moral improvements, knowledge seeking, charity, social work and standing up for truth and justice (2005, pp. 221-223).

But generally, the concept of "jihad" still understood to be violent and type of media coverage can be accounted for that. Lewis observed that, "Until fairly recent times it was usually, though not universally, understood in a military sense" (Lewis, 1993, p. 9). Ahmed highlighted that not every struggle even in military sense is jihad as generally perceived; Muslim's own association of the word with every Muslim military campaign has also developed this image of jihad as a violent mean only (1984). This same aspect has also been observed by Lewis who explained that Islam's rules of war have not always been respected by the Muslim rulers or other individuals, who in certain circumstance called for jihad, even when clerics, on the basis of their religious knowledge and authority, had refused to categorize the conflict a true jihad either "because the enemy was a Muslim force, or the leader who had declared war did not hold religious legitimacy"(Lewis, 1988, pp. 82-83).

These above-mentioned descriptions explain that there are variations of the meanings attached to the concept of jihad since beginning and it is not confined to military means as is generally perceived and portrayed. Even when it is attached to military means, there are clear

distinctions made between combatants and non-combatants, but this aspect generally never discussed in the popular media debates.

Jihad as State Responsibility

Important question surrounding the concept of jihad in contemporary times is that whether armed private militias can wage militancy in the name of jihad or not since private militias are at the forefront of this indiscriminate violent campaign? This question is explored in the light of religious scholarship. Ghamidi reflects on this debate by categorically declaring jihad or armed struggle as the prerogative of state and not the individuals' or groups' (2017). Another prominent Pakistani religious scholar of the twentieth century and founder of a political party Jamat-e-Islami (JI), Abul A'la Maududi also reported to have held the same opinion in the light of religious doctrine and declared Jihad as the right of the state with explicit use of force and declared policy and not through covert means (Ghamidi, 2017; Stern, 2000, p. 117). He opposed the call of jihad by non-state actors in the first war of Kashmir between Pakistan and India in 1947 on the basis of the same argument (Stern, 2000, p. 117). Similarly, Ahmed was also of the same view and regarded Jihad as the state's responsibility, with overt means and with multiple conditions attached in the light of Islamic teachings (Ahmad, 1999).

This opinion further gets strengthened by the historical observation made by a preeminent Islamic historian and scholar Ibn Kathir who observed that "early Muslims from the Meccan period were taught patience, forgiveness, and restraint, thus, confirming to the fact that the concept of jihad as an Islamic form of warfare did not develop until the Prophet Muhammad's Medinan period of revelation" (Enein, Zuhur, 2004, pp. 7-8). This was the period when the city state of Medina was formed and a political order was established, thus confirming the fact that declaration of jihad is state's obligation and not of armed militias. These

observations by renowned religious authorities support the fact that it is the state and not the private militias that have the authority to declare jihad. Thus, resumption of this authority to declare violent 'jihad' by armed militias has no religious foundation while this aspect of the post-9/11 terrorism has also been generally ignored in media discussions.

Discussion

This study identifies that the discourse of 'Islamic' militancy in post-9/11 terrorist campaign revolves around the concept of jihad while this concept is the most misunderstood and misrepresented one, not just in the West but in the Muslim societies as well. In the light of objective scholarships, this research leads to the conclusion that the concept of jihad contains diverse meanings and practices while engaging in fighting is one of its components out of so many. This is also recognized during this study that this one component of war is state's responsibility and not of armed groups that is further attached to so many preconditions and responsibilities even during and after the conduct of war. This is also identified that Islamic rulings on warfare are unambiguous and by no means lead to indiscriminate violence against civilians. These rulings abhor any sort of indecent behavior even against the enemies while engaged in the war and conflict. Similarly, these rulings confine the war engagements to the battlefields and clearly distinguish between the combatants and non-combatants and strictly command the protection of lives and properties of enemy non-combatants. Thus, Islam as religion and concept of jihad, even as an armed struggle, by no means provides even an iota of religious justification to indiscriminate terrorism being committed by assortment of terrorist groups in the post 9/11 era.

The study also identifies that the diverse academic and objective scholarships over the subject also originated in the Western and Islamic world during the same post-9/11 time period that tried to deconstruct the media-established frame of "Islamic" terrorism. However, this great scholarly work hardly caught any attention of the popular media, thus, making no impact on public opinion.

It is also acknowledged that the media is an important mean of communication and "play a central role in informing the public about what happens in the world, particularly in those areas in which audiences do not possess direct knowledge or experience" (Happer & Philo 2013, p. 321). In the case of this study, media is identified playing the critical role in the construction of the image of 'jihadi' terrorism since general public lacked any alternative sources of information over the subject.

In the context of framing theory, the gathered information confirmed the pattern of selection and salience over the subject of Islam

and jihad in the western news media since 9/11. Media debates remained confined to discuss and project Islam as a source of terrorism and militancy and not the terrorists. Roots of the terrorism challenge was exclusively traced to religious philosophy of jihad and selective analysts subscribing to the official discourse were given time to air their selective opinions over the subject. Quranic references were also quoted out of the context and any serious discussion involving diverse academic scholars, investigating the subject in detail and with all dimensions were hardly consulted. Similarly, Islamic rulings on warfare and practices of the Prophet Muhammad and his followers during and after the wars were never talked about that extended peace and protection to non-combatants and limited the war to battlefields.

It is also important to keep in view that the same frame of “Islamic” terrorism was further strengthened and employed by the terrorists as well who perpetrated violence in the name of Islam as highlighted in the case of bin Laden’s “FATWA”. The same practice was also employed by the Pakistani terrorist groups especially Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) after the group’s formation in 2007. The group leadership’s live interviews to the Western media and calls and claims for attacks in the US were given out of proportion coverage, thus further constructed the image of violent and indiscriminate “jihad” against civilians.

In this context, it can fairly be concluded that media played the critical role as a platform that allowed terrorists to communicate their violent ideology, wrapped in religious precepts, further constructing the image of Islam as a source of violence. It is also imperative to consider and question why the pacifist voices in both Islamic and Western world like Ghamidi, Fadl, Armstrong and Esposito were not given the due coverage to challenge and discredit the terrorists quoting jihad as the source of their

indiscriminate violent campaign. Why in this case, more credence was given to the militants and not to the sane voices? Should it not be considered by this time, that had media not provided its platform, terrorist would have remained unnoticed and their violent ideology little to unknown? Similarly, had media not played its subjective role by concentrating exclusively on Islam as the problem and Muslim as the

potential threat, the public opinion about the Muslims and “Islamic” terrorism would have been balanced?

How any given issue is framed in the media shapes public opinions and perceptions about it. In the light of aforementioned media studies, this further gets established that amount and type of media coverage received by the post-9/11 terrorism in the context of Islam and jihad created the frame of “Islamic” terrorism through which every episode of violence was highlighted and broadcasted to the general public, hence constructing an “Islamic” threat.

Conclusion

The purpose of this writing is to explore, understand and explain the most misinterpreted subject of jihad in the media and its constructed association with the post-9/11 terrorism, with the help of diverse scholarly insights in the field of Islamic research. This effort is made to understand how far religion is responsible for the post-9/11 terrorism in the world and how media has played a critical role in the negative image building of Islam through its crucial platform. This study, in the light of diverse and credible academic scholarships concludes that media framing of Islam as a source of violence has developed a dominant discourse about “Islamic” militancy while in the light of objective academic scholarships, this discourse does not reflect any correspondence with the Islamic teachings of warfare as documented in this research. This study also identifies that terrorism is indeed a complex phenomenon but cannot be adequately studied under the exclusive lens of religion and selective lens of jihad due to the determined fact that these lenses are misleading to comprehend the multifaceted challenge.

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