

## Representations of Islam and Muslims in Press Coverage

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**Abstract:** This paper focuses on the symbiotic relationship between the media in one respect and the motion picture industry, educational institutions and policy-makers in perpetuating misrepresentations about Islam. The scope of this paper will be on the representations associated with Islam and Muslims primarily in the United States of America and the United Kingdom. Much news coverage about Islam and Muslims in the media today is inherited from historical representations. From European writers, to the French song of Roland, Dante, Martin Luther and historical grudges have crafted misrepresentations on Islam and Muslims. Many of them are resurrected in popular press coverage today. The motion picture industry and particularly Hollywood has taken part in framing misrepresentations as well. From 1896, Muslims and Arabs have played antagonistic roles in popular cinema in over 900 movies. These images are bolstered by the news media in many cases. The education system also takes part with news agencies in propagating misinformation about Islam and Muslims. The presence of academics such as Samuel Huntington, Bernard Lewis, Daniel Pipes and many others in higher centres of learning contribute to the hate mongering about Islam and Muslims. Groups such as the American Council of Trustees and Alumni and the Washington Institute for Near Eastern Studies have vested interests in delivering stereotypes in an academic setting. The media in many instances adheres to government policy developments in the United States and the UK. Press ownership and censorship of tycoons or the Creel Commission formed under President Woodrow Wilson, coverage during and after the Iranian Revolution and policies surrounding the Palestine Question are examples of government-media relationship in promulgating misinformation. In the end, the production of misrepresentations by the press are harmonized by the motion picture industry, education system and government institutions. They provide support to one another in demonizing Islam and Muslims.

**Key words:** Representations • Media • Motion picture industry • Education • Policy

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### INTRODUCTION

The masses generally rely on the media as the sole recourse to other sources of information about current events. As Walter Lippmann observed, representations and 'pictures in our heads' are primarily reflected in 'pseudo reality' from press coverage' [1]. These very images are disseminated to audiences as 'clear and present' facts. This process takes place on a recurring basis by many media institutions.

As Poole and Richardson note, Islam and Muslims make for newsworthy subjects especially in a post-9/11 world [2]. In most cases, Islam and Muslims are also generally associated with underdevelopment, illiteracy,

homelessness and failed states. It is viewed as a threat to liberal and secular societies. Democracy is seen vociferously as an elusive reality. In seldom instances, success stories about Muslims as followers of Islam are published. As the reader can fathom, without generalizing, the media does frequently operate under a discourse that is simplistic and myopic. The diversity and complexity commonplace to a religion and its followers are malformed almost into a homogenous entity. Richardson holds that much of this information is nuanced and in actual fact discriminatory [3].

In the context of this paper, the term media will be defined as the broadcast component, which encompasses television and radio news as well as print news and the

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internet unless otherwise specified. The focus of this paper will be on the representations associated with Islam and Muslims primarily in the United States of America and the United Kingdom. Brief references will however be made to other countries in the West. Covering media representations in each country in the West is beyond the scope of this paper.

In an integrated approach, this paper will cover external influences on media agencies. Influences include stereotypes from inherited historical misrepresentations which integrally dovetails with those found in popular Hollywood blockbusters. Next, media images conjured in educational institutions and in government policy are also factors that shape narratives for many news stories. United States and United Kingdom media coverage after the events of 9/11 will be detailed. Lastly, internet and alternative media and attempts on clearing these depictions will be looked at briefly. An overarching theme of this paper is that there are attempts by media and external influences aforementioned to maintain structures of normativity in formulating misrepresentations.

**History and Media Coverage:** Many news stories about Islam and Muslims in the media today are inherited from historical depictions. As early as the 12th century C.E. European writers acquired knowledge of Islam for inimical reasons. For instance, writers disseminated information about the death of Muhammad asserting that he died while drunk or killed by pigs. Muhammad is also depicted as a heathen 'idol who is worshipped like a Greek god' from the French Song of Roland[4]. Another report contends that he was a false cardinal who strayed from the Catholic Church and subsequently founded a new religion[4].

Misrepresentations can also be found in Dante's *Inferno* (canto 28:31-36), 'where Muhammad and his cousin Ali appear in Hell with the "disseminators of scandal and of schism" with demons splitting their heads open in punishment'[4]. Muslim philosophers, Avicenna and Avarroes in contrast are placed in limbo with other Greeks and Romans, 'but he was not troubled by this particular inconsistency'[4].

The Protestant Reformer, Martin Luther, called Muhammad the devil's son among other derogatory names. Other writers labelled Muhammad as the Antichrist[4]. In 1742, Voltaire espoused that his own legends about Islam. To him, 'Islam is about Muhammad who rose to heaven and having received there part of this unintelligible book which affronts common sense on every page' [3].

Carl Ernst contends that the chief reason for antagonistic works against Islam in the Middle Ages was to advance the crusades and conquer holy lands that were ruled by Arabs and Turks. The same was the case for the Spanish Conquest in 1492 and English works of the early 1600s 'viewed the Ottomans with fear and alarm, seeing them as a superpower threatening to overwhelm all of Europe' [3].

In the first part of 20<sup>th</sup> century, the US supported self-determination against colonialism. The 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the century looked on third world populist movements with suspicion from Soviet influence. Truman, Eisenhower and Kennedy administrations formed alliances to contain Soviet expansion [5].

From 1955-1970, United States policy in Arab world was framed in opposition to secular Arab nationalism, particularly Gamal Abdul Nasser. In the late 50s and 60s, the US formed alliances with Muslim majority states to counter godless communism [5]. However, US policy towards these regimes changed as the explosion of political Islam emerged in the 1970s. Perceptions changed all of a sudden stemming from events such as the Arab-Israeli war, subsequent oil embargo and the Iranian revolution[5]. The term 'extremist' was applied to Muslims after the revolution and the image of the harem unearthed from the oil embargo[6]. The image of the harem is conveniently invoked hitherto.

Misrepresentations about Islam and Muslims would emerge in future decades. A myriad of images were promulgated historically in the motion picture industry which is arguably the most influential medium of influencing public sentiment.

**Hollywood and the Representations of Islam and Muslims:** As one observer remarked, 'the racism that led to the internment of Japanese-Americans during World War II was created partly by the motion picture industry...and partly by the press...The Arab has now become the latest victim of media stereotyping' [1]. The impact of Hollywood films on media images is clear and present.

Jack Shaheen in 'Reel Bad Arabs: How Hollywood vilifies a People' holds that the majority of films produced by Hollywood containing Muslim and Arab characters are generally depicted unfavourably [7]. Edward Said holds that the purpose of these movies is to first 'demonize and dehumanize Muslims in order, second, to show an intrepid Western, usually American hero killing them off' [8]. After reviewing 900 films with Muslim and Arab characters, Shaheen found that cultural and religious images are

predominantly distorted. Since 1896, Muslims played the role of caricatures and antagonists in films. They were viewed as the source of all evil, belittled and ridiculed by Hollywood. This is a common Hollywood character assassination tactic.

Productions such as the Manchurian Candidate, Federal Agents vs. Underworld Inc. Air Force One, Black Sunday, Delta Force, Executive Decision, Ishtar, Killing Streets, Navy Seals, Rosebud, Rules of Engagement, True Lies and hundreds of other films are loaded with misrepresentations [9].

From 1906 to the present epoch, only a handful of movies depicted Islam, Muslims and Arabs positively. The Muslim protagonist, however, is rarely found in cinema. Some notable examples include: 'Prince Feisal (Alec Guinness) in *Lawrence of Arabia*, Omar Mukhtar (Anthony Quinn) in *Omar Mukhtar*(a.k.a. *Lion of the Desert*), the Mahdi (Laurence Olivier) in *Khartoum* (Lewis 1995)... Malcolm X (Denzel Washington) in *Malcolm X* (Carson 1995), the noble Moor, Azeem (Morgan Freeman) in *Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves*, the adventurous Arab courtier, Ahmed IbnFahdlanIbn Al Abbas Ibn Rashid IbnHamad (Antonio Banderas) in *The 13th Warrior...*' [9].

As Shaheen notes, the diverse lifestyles of Muslims and Arabs 'defy these stereotypes' [9]. Furthermore, Dr. Shaheen found in his study that since the 1980s, TV Guides have recycled movies such *The Sheik*, *The Mummy*, *Rules of Engagement* among many other blockbusters that impose an unfavourable image of Islam, Muslims and Arabs. This influences not only media coverage, but also public sentiment.

The portrayal of Arabs and Muslims as the 'prototypical other' is troubling. According to DayaThussu, characters in Hollywood movies constitute either one of the 3 B's: billionaires, bombers, or belly-dancers. This is what Thussu calls the 'Hollywoodization of Islam' [10]. Movies produced in Nazi Germany portrayed Jews as money-grabbers, looking for Aryan blondes, out for world domination and believing in another God [9]. Large scale indoctrination of this nature engendered xenophobia and harsh anti-Jewish sentiments in Germany. The end result was the eventual genocide of many Jews in Europe.

Regrettably, Jack G. Shaheen notes: "Arabs are depicted in the images of Hitler's SS and Attila's hordes. The Arab lurks in the shadows with AK-47, bomb, or dagger in hand to seduce, beat, rape and murder innocents" [23]. These images are broadcasted by many media institutions. On this wavelength, the media is inextricably connected to educational institutions in conveying misinformation about Islam and Muslims.

### **Education and Representations of Islam and Muslims:**

Recent studies have shown that the formation of beliefs and emphasis by information providers tends to manipulate public perceptions. This may play a critical role for projecting representations to the masses. A various array of media and educational institutions also have divergent effects on beliefs [11].

In general, Islam and Muslims are alien to the West. Scant educational information is broadcasted over media and film. Stereotypes are ingrained in American culture. Inherited colonial hostility and geopolitical events such as the Suez crisis, the Arab-Israel conflict, the subsequent oil embargo and the Iranian revolution are reasons for common representations.

According to Susan Douglass and Ross Dunn, another chief reason for misrepresentations about Islam is a lack of public education. The authors noted above relate that Islam was excluded from the curriculum when new United States' educational programs were introduced in the 1960s [12]. Later in 1988, Islam was introduced into public education when the Willamsburg Charter was ratified by W.D. Mohammad and witnessed by the Islamic Society of North America [12]. Henceforth, Islam entered the system much later and the lack of education available about Islam ensued.

Harvard professor Samuel Huntington developed a clash of civilizations thesis, envisioning a clash between the West and Islam. According to ErvandAbrahamian, the media uses this paradigm frequently. Interestingly, academia had initially rejected this theory [13]. News sources such as *Foreign Affairs* were also initially critical of Huntington, but later ran articles in his favour. The agency then conveniently ran a special issue, the 'long war in the making', promoting a war between civilizations [13].

Abrahamian proposes that there was more of a clash of interests over a clash of cultures. However, Huntington told NY Times that the clash was hastened by bin Laden. The US media after 9/11 showcased Huntington's triumph in presenting a cultural conflict [13]. He points to the bellicosity in Chechnya, Kosovo, Kashmir and Bosnia. Pursuant to further misrepresentations, Huntington wrote in Newsweek in 'Age of Wars', 9/11 rendered an extension of wars into America and a rise of Islamic consciousness [13].

Another academic on the Middle East is University of Pennsylvania professor emeritus Bernard Lewis. He authored 'What went wrong' after 9/11 in which he looks at the roots of Muslim rage. He has heavily influenced government policy as well as media outlets. A former deputy secretary under the Bush administration, Paul

Wolfowitz hailed him as a great Anglo-American scholar. He parroted the same arguments of his predecessors - Islam and democracy are incompatible, the separation of church and politics and the bolstering of historical grudges such as the crusades and the word 'assassin' originating from Middle East. He therefore concludes that it is natural for 'them' to hate 'us'. Lewis is also of the view that there is Muslim resentment over the destruction of the Caliphate.

Another contentious polemic, Daniel Pipes of the Foreign Policy Institute and CampusWatch notes that 'the key issue is whether Muslims will modernize... Should they fail to modernize, their stubborn record of illiteracy, poverty, intolerance and autocracy will continue, or perhaps worsen' [14]. Pipes and others who espouse similar views do not represent the fringe. Their views influence the media and public sentiment. Daniel Pipes and proponents of these views have attempted to marginalize 'dossiers of academics who posted anti-American comments on CampusWatch' [13]. As Edward Said notes, polemicists such as the aforementioned 'excoriate Islam for its terror, despotism and violence, while assuring themselves profitable consultancies, frequent television appearances and book contracts' [8]. There is a cycle of media agencies substantiating harmful views in academia and vice versa.

Exclusionary right-wing entities such as the American Council of Trustees and Alumni headed by Lynne Cheney published a pamphlet entitled 'Defending Civilization: How our Universities are failing America' which vouched for topics on the Middle East to be removed from curriculum [8]. The pamphlet accused academics of 'questionable' opinions. In media reviews, the pamphlet was praised by *Wall Street Journal* and *Washington Times* [8]. Many popular media institutions emerged as supporters for this Council.

In a similar study, the Washington Institute for Near Eastern Studies published 'Ivory Towers on Sand: the failure of Middle Eastern Studies in America' by Martin Kramer. He accused Edward Said of undermining Middle Eastern studies in America. In his understanding, if it wasn't for views of such scholars, it could have allowed the United States to prevent disasters such as 9/11 [8]. As a result, he urged Congress to stop funding to Middle Eastern studies in Universities. The *New Republic* praised Kramer and accused MESA of supporting bin Laden [8]. Hence a symbiotic relationship emerged between the media and educational institutions which portray problematic representations to the public. Historical developments, the motion picture industry, educational

institutions and the media at large also play a role in swaying government institutions. This is reflected in policies enacted.

**Government Policy and Media Coverage:** The media is considered to be the fourth estate after the executive, legislative and judicial organs of government emanating from the degree of influence that it harnesses in society. For all intents and purposes, perhaps one of the reasons for unfavourable representations of Islam and Muslims is media control. Corporate ownership plays a central role in censorship. In the United Kingdom, Rupert Murdoch's *News International* owns 35% of the daily news.[6] The role of media in contemporary politics raises questions about the control of public sentiment and its implications on stifling democracy.

Woodrow Wilson was elected into office during World War I on the platform, 'peace without victory' [15]. Generally, the US population was also pacifistic and felt there was no need to engage in a European war. Little did they know that the Wilson administration had already committed to it. In an attempt to militarize the population, the Creel Commission was formed. After six months, the Commission succeeded in largely turning a pacifistic nation into a bellicose one. Americans were convinced that war was necessary to save the world against their adversaries [15]. Walter Lippmann, who was the dean of the American journalists and directly involved in the Commission, argued that 'a revolution in the art of democracy could be used to manufacture consent, to bring about agreement on the part of the public for things that they didn't want by the new techniques of propaganda' [15]. Here, the media was used to indoctrinate Americans into supporting World War I.

The media and policy-makers play a complimentary role in perpetuating misrepresentations. An instance of this occurred during the Shah's rule in Iran and the sudden change in regimes after the Iranian revolution. When the revolution took place, government policies and media representations shifted with it. In later developments, the media was disinterested in covering the 1994 report on Human Development which found Iran to be among the top ten performers of human development. Neither was the International Atomic Energy Agency report considered in suggesting that Iran was producing nuclear power for peaceful reasons [10]. A US official noted that the 'Iranian experience extremely conditioned US thinking about the violent, anti-American nature of fundamentalist Islam' [5].

As DayaThussu notes, news coverage generally mimics policy language [16]. For example, US presence in various parts of the world is justified under the pretext of combating fundamentalism or the Islamic threat as a former NATO general put it. The media plays into this policy jargon. Richard Bulliet also espouses the impact of academic works on government policy and subsequently media coverage. After following the New York Times, the Washington Post and the Los Angeles Times, Mughees-uddin concluded in his report that 'most media follow and support the administration's approach in foreign policy issues related to Muslims and Islam' [14]. Again, there is a lack of critical analysis and independent thinking by media agencies.

When Dennis Ross, the former envoy to Middle East insisted that 'bin Laden's hatred had no relationship to Palestine, but it was really his hatred for modernity and the West, Ross failed mention that Al Qaida incorporated Palestine messages into videos released. In fact, the 2<sup>nd</sup> bin Laden video recording after 9/11 was not released in the press because he speaks about 'revenge for Palestine'. These remarks were subsequently not covered by much of the press [14]. Coverage of the Palestine question in relation to 9/11 was censored. Many news outlets felt that this was not newsworthy. The Republican Party-line became the official story for news coverage in much of the US media.

The media's dependence on government for news stories is quite evident. Many US officials however deny the connection between the press and US policy. Assistant Secretary of State Robert Pelletreau denounced the media for equating Islam to fundamentalism but does not agree that the press and US policy are connected in any way [5]. However, the state department policy making staff agreed that press coverage complicates constructive policy development [5]. Thus a degree of influence is ingrained in the policy-media relationship.

Media censorship by the US government also took place in many instances after 9/11. When Bin Laden stated that the attacks were in response for 80 years of war on the Middle East, the Bush administration asked the media not to broadcast 'inflammatory propaganda' [16]. The press gallery followed suit without questioning the administration. This again proves the bilateral relationship between the media and government in homogenizing press coverage.

**Broadcast and Print Media:** Looking at the full extent of representations on Islam and Muslims is beyond the scope of this paper. Not all of the coverage however

promotes misrepresentations. After the events of September the 11<sup>th</sup>, Nacos and Torres-Reyna in 'Framing Muslim -Americans Before and After 9/11' noted a wave of reports that focused the on the 'patriotism of American Muslims and Arabs and downplayed the stereotype that members of this group support terrorism' [1]. The report focussed on the coverage of 4 newspapers in New York (NY) including the NY Times, NY Post and USA Today.

Muslim-Americans received unprecedented press coverage. According to this study, broadcasting stereotypes and journalistic clichés was considerably reduced from the shifting of episodic coverage to thematic framing. As one expert in the field remarked against episodic coverage, Middle Eastern cultures and peoples 'are not easily explained in quick two-minute network news-stories' [16]. The print media was also more accepting of publishing columns, letters-to-the-editor concerning American Muslims. This ignited robust debates on various web pages. This balance in news coverage was not indicative nationwide however. New York is relatively a liberal and diverse state. The outlets covered in this study are not to be confused with coverage in the rest of the country.

*NY Times* did also however cover many misrepresentations on Islam such as social, economic and political ills; the absence of democracy, educational shortcomings; population explosions; economic stagnation; youth unemployment; failure of science in Middle Ages are some of the representations portrayed about Islam and Muslims [16].

Press coverage, for the most part provides shallow definitions of terms such as 'fundamentalism', 'shariah', 'radicalism' or 'extremism' without context. There should be a tendency, as Edward Said notes, to at the very minimum provide context. Beyond the strident rhetoric, by referencing statistics as to approximate a percentage of Muslims who are fundamentalists will help viewers better understand the nature of the threat.

This type of de-contextualization is commonly employed by academics such as Daniel Pipes. In many articles, he groups all fundamentalist Muslims into one entity without defining or citing any statistical evidence in his favour. For instance, in 1995, a think piece was published in *The National Interest* called 'There are No Moderates: Dealing with Fundamentalist Islam' [16]. His inclination towards collective guilt of Muslims comes out clearly from reading the title. The reader can almost know what to expect from such an article. For the past few decades, researchers have asked why there is so much polarized media coverage. The likes of Ghareeb, Haddad,

Said and Lee found that there is ‘a 1) cultural bias; 2) the conflict between Arabs and Israel;... 4) the political power of the pro-Israel lobby and its influence over the American media...’ [16].

On the Middle East, there was scarce American media coverage on the issue of Palestine. In fact, only two articles in the NY Times discussed the correlation between Palestine and 9/11. The debate was further stifled by condemning anybody who entertained the relationship between Palestine and 9/11. The focus was on linking Islam to a totalitarian regime and avoiding connecting the issue to Palestine.

Not all coverage was uniform in the West however. Robert Fisk reported that the ‘American approach differed immensely from European coverage’ [16]. For example, Tony Judt was called a self-hating Jew for criticizing US foreign policy and the question of Palestine in *London Review* [16]. Pursuant to this fact, David Hurst of the *Guardian* reported that Palestine was central to this crisis. Fred Halliday in the *Guardian* also wrote that conflict ‘emerged from political tensions in Palestine, not nonsense talk of clash of civilizations’. Also in the *Guardian*, Michael Ignatieff wrote that the only way to solve the war on terrorism was to solve the Palestinian problem. The *NY Times* interpreted this to mean to there is no relationship between 9/11 and Palestine [16]. Moreover, an *Observer* reporter concluded that the attacks stemmed from ‘a wellspring of anger’ not a clash of civilizations which he found to be absurd. In an American context, it is interesting to note that immediately after the events of September 11th, 68% of Americans felt that 9/11 had to do with US ties with Israel [16].

After 9/11 in the United Kingdom, misrepresentations were also heightened. Britain partnered with the US and other nations in the war on terror. The ‘threat within’ emerged as a popular narrative in the press. Many articles focused on the movement of hijackers to the UK. Hysteria surged as coverage of a suspect resisting deportation in October 2001 came to the surface [6]. The overarching narrative associated Muslims with terrorist networks. On September 26 and 28, the *Guardian* held that anyone affiliated with extremist groups harbour terrorism. In fact, an article suggested that 500 British Muslims trained in terrorist camps in Afghanistan [6]. *The Times* reported Muslims looking for avenues to take part in military action abroad. The paper referenced fringe groups and the number of wars British Muslims took part in combat. On October 23<sup>rd</sup> 2001, an ‘FBI investigation found that the UK had no evidence of having al-Qaeda cells’ [6]. This news story was central to national security matters in the UK, but leading papers in the UK, including *The Times*

avoided publishing it. [6] Similar to the US media, coverage that is not ‘newsworthy’ in producing entertainment value is often derailed.

Pursuant to the facts noted above, on November 12, 2001 when the Anti-terrorism, Crime and Security Bill was enacted, similar rhetoric resurfaced. The tendency to amplify danger was maximized. In response, *The Times* argued that Muslims who preach hate should be censored by legislation [6]. The *Guardian* felt that Islamophobia was a form of censorship. It also supported counter terrorism legislation but duly noted that civil liberties may be curtailed [6]. Here hate towards Muslims was justified but Muslims who hate others should be condemned outright. Perhaps condemning hatred unequivocally on one standard would have been a better solution.

An independent self-regulatory body known as the Press Complaints Commission (PCC) [17] which deals with complaints about editorial content in the print media has opened the gates for a lack of meagre accountability on media agencies and as a result wholesale misrepresentations. By way of example, in 2002, 17.9% of complaints concerned discrimination. In the same year, 2630 complaints were lodged. 74% of complaints were found to be in ‘no breach of the code’ and only 2% were adjudicated and 1% upheld. [17] Similar statistics were found in 2003. Here, the implication is that there were an insignificant number of legitimate complaints against the press. In my view, the need for press freedom and a lack of censorship is essential. However misrepresentations that dehumanize minority groups enter into the realm of discrimination and hatred. These complaints should be taken seriously and adjudicated impartially.

**Internet and Alternative Media:** Many dominant misrepresentations can be countered with the internet. For parts of the Muslim world with access, the open source model enables the freedom of information, wiki-oriented Islam and feedback options, thus providing a voice against misrepresentations. Dr. Gary Bunt, author of ‘iMuslim: rewiring the house of Islam’, argues that ‘email lists and RSS feeds, podcasts and blogs means that Islam is always on, integrated to daily life’ [18].

However Bunt identifies some challenges with respect to accessibility. He states, ‘not all aspects of Islam are represented online, especially among a demographic with low connectivity or quietist elements [18]. The Arab Human Development Report found that accessibility is limited in some countries but very high in others such as UAE, Bahrain, Qatar, Kuwait but lowest in Yemen, Sudan, Iraq [19].

In many cases, misrepresentations are exacerbated by nominal extremist elements in the Muslim community. Al Qaeda uses the internet to manipulate and publicize their message to larger audiences than ever before. The use of chat rooms and blogs are fertile breeding grounds for this sort of activity.

Alternative media also has a crucial role to play in debunking misrepresentations. It has provided and continues to provide another voice to the misrepresented. A pertinent example is Al Jazeera supplying a voice to Arab streets [2]. This unifying and mass mobilizing of opinion in the Muslim world entailed a greater democratic potential and loss of government-controlled media. Many misrepresentations are sporadically demythologized in the process.

### **CONCLUSION: THE WAY FORWARD**

The tendency of the media to reduce 'Islam to a handful of rules, stereotypes and generalizations about the faith, its founder and all of its people, then the reinforcement of every negative fact associated with Islam' is perilous and has harmful ramifications [8]. The animosity and reductionism found in these representations breeds the tendency to produce misinformed news when covering Islam and its followers.

Richard Bulliet feared that a new form of anti-semitism is now emerging. Any act of terrorism can be now associated with Islam. This is tantamount to religious discrimination and intolerance. Islamic Fundamentalism, a term coined after the Iranian Revolution is used indiscriminately without context.

Representations of Islamic and Muslim success stories, both past and present are rarely highlighted in the press. Muhammad Ali Khalidi, in the *Journal of Palestine Studies* (Winter 1996) reminds critics that 'Muslims, after all, adapted Greek philosophy for later European use, were pioneers in logic and astronomy, established medicine as a science and invented algebra' [8]. These facts are generally not covered by the mainstream media.

Today the religion and its followers are regarded as 'a plague now infecting the entire Islamic world from Morocco to India... a very real representation of anti-Western, anti-modern forces... Other images in the press include 'violence and terrorism intended to overthrow modernizing, more secular regimes...' [14]. There should be more emphasis placed on outlining the reality and diversity in the Muslim world to overcome stereotypes, better understand the 'other' so that it is no more. There should also be an open condemnation of ethnocentrism. As Elizabeth Poole notes 'dialogue and policy-making

become difficult when only view of Islam is irrationality' [6]. The onus is on both Muslims and the West to better integrate and engage in society to be understood beyond stereotypes. Inherited historical and contemporary representations of 'fortress Europe' against foreign invaders will be debunked significantly.

Many media agencies have expressed the need for more minority ethnic journalists [2]. The diversification of media staff may solve many of the problems insofar as misrepresentations are concerned. However editorial and corporate biases may still take precedence over journalistic coverage in many agencies. Furthermore, sensitivity training and education about Islam and Muslims should be provided to journalists, editors and media outlets at large to facilitate mutual understanding.

Hollywood can do much in the way of removing misrepresentations. The 'Hollywoodization' of Islam has etched the image of the stereotypical Muslim. Diplomacy can be achieved by humanizing and not demonizing Muslim characters. Incorporating references from scriptures and sacred subtexts are also of paramount importance [9]. More scholarly works should be funded and produced on the role of religion in film. In particular, scant scholarly attention has been accorded to cine-terrorism, the root of many misrepresentations [9]. There should be a radical reassessment of this area of production as well.

As Poole notes, a 'new stereotype needs to be established for Muslim communities; an acceptable Other, a Muslim that can be domesticated and not manipulated when he/she falls outside the framework of a liberal Muslim' [6]. By challenging current formulations, the apparent clash and misrepresentations can be appeased. John Spayde observed, 'a faith that is professed by fundamentalist misogynists in Iran and Egypt, feminists in Morocco and England, taxi drivers and kings in Ghana, Nigeria and Kenya, office workers in Malaysia, nuclear scientists in Kazakhstan, martyrs in Bosnia - and more than 6 million Americans - is as far beyond stereotyping as humanity itself' [14].

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