

# The Power of Propoganda and the Muslim World

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Since the birth of Islam to the modern age, propoganda has been a persistent thorn in the side of the Muslim world. Strong measures are needed to defeat propoganda and unite the Muslims.

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Approximately 1400 years ago, in the heart of an old Arabian desert, a caravan, headed by a powerful commander, was headed north. As is natural in desert campaigns, the caravan slowly split up; some ahead of in their journey than others. The wife of the commander got stuck at the tail of the caravan, and eventually got lost. The young lady, surrounded by the merciless Arabian sand, feared for her life. It was only when a young traveller saw her wandering alone and escorted her to her husband, that her fears were assuaged. However, upon arrival, she faced a different challenge. Opponents of the commander decided to use propoganda to besmirch the character of this fine woman, as a means to psychologically harms the commander, and weaken his campaign. That

commander was the Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) and his wife was the Mother of the Believers Ayesha (RA). In order to defend her honour, Allah sent down a series of Ayat or instructions in the Quran: 4 of which were meant to soothe the heart of the Prophet (PBUH) and eighteen of which highlighted the dangers of slander, back-biting and propoganda. This ratio, according to Islamic scholars, is one of the most powerful indications of how dangerous the power of propoganda is. Indeed, history has been reflective of this reality. Propoganda has often been used as a tool to weaken the Muslim world, from the inside and outside. This essay intends to highlight powerful instances where the power of propoganda against the Muslim world was on full display. A series of robust measures are also presented. It can, therefore, be effectively argued that since the birth of Islam to the modern age, propoganda has been a persistent

thorn in the side of the Muslim world. Strong measures are needed to defeat propaganda and unite the Muslims.

Before diving into the impact of propaganda on the Muslim world, it is helpful to lay the groundwork of what propaganda is and what are its forms. Propaganda is defined as the spread of misinformation about a person, people or state infused with malicious intent. It is designed to sway a public's opinion against something, in order to damage or lower its impact. It takes many forms such as propaganda through print media, word of mouth, social media campaigns, cyber initiatives and projects etc. and more. These various forms of propaganda have historically damaged the image of the Muslim world and served to divide the Ummah.

Firstly, the power of propaganda against the Muslim world is most apparent during the campaign of the

Prophet Mohammad (PBUH). Opponents of Islam left no stone unturned in their attempts to discredit Islam and its followers. Allama Shibli Noumani delves deep into the propoganda techniques devised at both Mecca and Medina by the Quraish and the Jews. The Quran, particularly in Surah Al-Baqarah discusses this propoganda at length and advises Muslims to be strong. This propoganda caused much damage to the nascent Muslim community, causing the young men to be demoralized and stained their international image. Therefore, even at the birth of Islam, propoganda was a thorn in the side of the Muslim world.

This power was visible even during the era of the Caliphs. Propoganda between different factions reached an all-time high during the time of Caliph Ali (RA). Disinformation and smear campaigns against the leader

of the Muslim world culminated in his assassination at the hands of Ibn Muljim. Such was the magnificent power of this propaganda that upon the assassination of Caliph Ali (RA) in a mosque, people openly questioned what the Caliph was doing in a mosque. These details are presented in a book titled "After the Prophet." Events like these highlight the power of propaganda against the Muslim world.

Furthermore, the power of propaganda is visible even during Islam's empire in Spain. The Muslims had a culturally rich empire in south Europe. At times, it was deemed a super-power. The Muslims there made magnificent contributions to arts, architecture and science. However, forces inimical to the strength of the Muslim community used the power of propaganda to weaken them from the inside, contributing to its loss. This event sent shockwaves throughout



the Muslim world. It was a vivid indication of the power of propoganda and the vulnerability of the Muslim world to it.

In addition to Spain, propoganda was also used as a tool to disintegrate the Ottoman empire.

The Ottomans were depicted as the "Sick Man of Europe"; unable to keep pace with the rapid technological advancements made ~~with~~ by the rest of Europe at the time.

External forces during World War I thought of an invasion against the Ottomans an easy victory.

Furthermore, the Lawrence of Arabia used propoganda to cause division, weakening the Ottomans. Therefore, propoganda has been used to weaken the Muslim world externally and internally.

Propoganda was also used as a tool by the British to cement their strongholds over.

their colonies. The Muslims in particular, were susceptible to this. Indeed the British used propoganda to paint Muslims as weak in India. They convinced the Muslims of their own superiority and forced them to believe in their own capacity as mere slaves. Such depredation of the Muslim image and self-worth helped ensure long-term domination of the British in India. This serves to lend currency to how powerful propoganda can be against the Muslim world. Instances of this vulnerability can be found even in modern times.

Furthermore, the power of propoganda against the Muslim world is also apparent in the War on Terror. The US lauded a strong media campaign to paint the US armed forces as the saviors of Islam in Afghanistan after 9/11. This gave legitimacy to the invasion and justified the interventionist policy in

the eyes of the Muslim world as a battle for the freedom of Afghanistan. Unfortunately, the pages of subsequent history are inked with the blood of martyrs and the instability faced by Afghanistan. This goes to show how the truth can be shrouded behind the mask of democracy and freedom through propoganda. The Muslim world has plenty of propoganda shaped chinks in its armour.

Similar instances of propoganda causing damage to the Muslim world can also be found in Iraq. Hardly anywhere is this more apparent than in Fox News' campaign to allege weapons of mass destruction present in Iraq. Pentagon itself bent to the tide and the US launched an armed campaign against Iraq. In this way, propoganda can be used to stoke fears, perpetuate the Clash of Civilizations doctrine, and even compel

pre-emptive measures against the Muslim world.

The massive power of propoganda and its application against the Muslim world are not just visible from the outside. Indeed internal forces can also use propoganda to serve interests detrimental to the Muslim world.

Terrorist networks have been known to spread an unjust "Jihadist" mentality and grow their numbers. The various ads of ISIS and Taliban regimes spread propoganda, create faultlines, exacerbate divisions, increase their numbers, and prove to be damaging for the Muslim world. Hence propoganda may also be used against the Muslim world from the inside.

Another avenue where propoganda finds roots against the Muslim world is in stoking sectarian rifts. Waves of misinformation, misrepresentation and misquotation turn Muslims against each other. Such sorrowful state of affairs are powered by propoganda. Examples of such rifts are

are found in the Muslim world, even today. Pakistan too has suffered great loss at the hands of the Shia-Sunni split. Such a state of affairs emphasizes the power of propoganda against the Muslim world.

Another egregious manifestation of the effect propoganda has on a vulnerable Muslim community, is the promotion of mob violence and unjust lynchings. Propoganda against an individual or group stokes the emotions of others, inviting mob formation and justice to be circumvented. An example of this lies in the Sialkot incident, where a person was lynched to death after being accused of blasphemy. The power of propoganda was so massive in this instance that no trial was awarded and a man was unjustly and brutally murdered. Therefore, the power of propoganda is so massive that it can incite violence and senseless chaos in the Muslim world.

Furthermore, propoganda has also been used against the Muslim world to delegitimize legitimate security concerns. The west, at large, has tried to dispel Pakistan's nuclear ambitions by claiming that, Pakistan is making a "Muslim Bomb". Such allegations are designed to erode a perfectly legitimate security initiative by Pakistan. It also fails to highlight the west's hypocrisy and instead points all its canons against the Muslim world. Therefore, propoganda can be used as a strategic weapon against the Muslim world.

In addition to this, one of the cruelest outcomes of unchecked propoganda is the promotion of genocide. False news, social media campaigns and a culture of hatred collectively promotes bigotry and violence against a particular group. This was apparent when Facebook was used as a platform to spew hatred against the Rohingya Muslims.

This eventually led to a dangerous attempt at genocide, as well as the mass expulsion of the Rohingya Muslims. This phenomenon is a vivid representation of the power of propaganda and how it has been used against the Muslim world.

Moreover, propaganda has also been used to create fogs of confusion that hinder efforts at peaceful resolution of disputes. Without agreed-upon facts and in the absence of a shared reality, diplomacy loses its footing. The Muslim world has suffered because of this, particularly in the case of Palestine. The existence of conflicting narratives over October 7, differing analysis, divergent historical understandings and a strong emotional bond of various sections of the world with this conflict create a haze of confusion and hinder any international efforts at resolving the issue. This ensures the continued persecution of Palestinians. In this

way, propoganda can be looked upon as a tool against the Muslim world.

Modern propoganda against the Muslim world is now so effective and so widespread, it has even incited violence against Muslim communities in countries like New Zealand. Case in point would be the Christchurch massacre, where a single individual, influenced by propogandist forces on the internet, laid waste to many Muslims in a mosque by shooting them. Such is the tragic power of propoganda and its effectiveness against the Muslim world.

Another effect of propoganda against the Muslim world that is visible in the West is its ability to bring about the conflictual side of conservative Western factions. Europe is already locked in the grip of a wave of nationalism. Propoganda supercharges this nationalism to act against the Muslim segments in European countries. It also leads to popular support and the



creation of anti-immigration policies in the continent. This creates problems for Muslim communities. In short, propoganda can be used to sway populations against the Muslim world.

Furthermore, propoganda helps bring about inaccurate understandings of Islamic teachings. Islam promotes honor, dignity and peace. Its fundamentals and teachings are divinely designed to promote such principles. However, such is the power of propoganda that it can cast shadows over this peaceful portrait. The absence of solid understandings of Islamic fundamentals, weak scholarship, and low representation fail to inhibit these confusions and even lead to the formation of policies that go against Islamic principles. An example of this is the Hijab ban in France, which is a direct consequence of this propoganda. Therefore, propoganda brings about inaccurate understandings of Islamic teachings.

In addition to this, propoganda

depicts Islam as fundamentally incompatible with western values. This can create harsher divisions between the Muslim and Western civilizations. A manifestation of this division is the recent ban on political Islam by Sebastian Cruz, the chancellor of Austria. Nationalist forces in Austria, under the influence of this propoganda, deemed Islam as fundamentally incompatible with Western values, and hence worked towards the expulsion of Islamic values and morals. This shows how propoganda can increasingly create divisions between the Muslim world and the rest of the globe.

Moreover, propoganda can even help invite the unjust persecution of Muslim communities. When Muslims are depicted as weak and uneducated, external forces make quick work of them, either eliminating them from the region, or by persecuting them. This hatred that stems from propoganda against

Muslims is apparent in the case of India, where lynchings over Muslims sacrificing cows, the demolition of mosques, and the expulsion of Islamic scholars is prevalent. The RSS mentality that causes these injustices feeds off this propoganda and emboldens its followers to hurt and torture the Muslim communities. This makes clear the link between propoganda and the persecution of the Muslim communities.

Particularly troubling is the effect propoganda has on the forces of democracy in Islamic countries. Propoganda serves to weaken such values, depicting Islam as a round peg in the square hole of democracy. This robs Muslims of representation and various other freedoms and installs corrupt leadership. An example of this is the impact of this propoganda on the Arab Spring, where despite the people rising up for democracy, no substantial change came in the Middle East.

Propagandist forces loosened the pressure in the tyres of these vehicles of democracy, and the political situation stayed the same. Therefore, propaganda helps weaken the forces of democracy in Muslim countries.

Finally, smear campaigns hinder effective diplomacy with the Muslim world. The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) promoted and practised an outward foreign policy. Cooperation was the cornerstone of the interaction of the Muslim communities with the outside world. However, propaganda helps to discredit any treaties made with the Muslim world. At times, this even leads to the termination of vital treaties. An example of this is how Fox News helped compel President Trump to revoke the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action with Iran. The misinformation presented against Iran ended up causing instability in the region and exacerbated hatred between the two sides. Enmity grew, while cooperation shrank. Therefore, diplomacy

finds itself overwhelmed under the insurmountable forces of propoganda against the Muslim world.

The massive power of propoganda against the Muslim world is therefore apparent. The Muslim world needs to develop resilience against this foe. A framework is needed to push back against these waves of propoganda.

Awareness campaigns by Muslim leaders and scholars are needed to bring about an understanding of the issue.

The OIC in particular has a key role to play in this regard. It needs to actively promote a soft image of Muslims in the world. Finally, there is an urgent need to learn from the example of the Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) in all facets of life. Courses on Seerah and on leadership, at an individual and collective level, are needed. All these measures would help clip the wings of propoganda and unify the Muslim world against this

threat.

In conclusion, propoganda is a very powerful tool and it has repeatedly been used to weaken the Muslim world.

This phenomenon has existed since the birth of Islam, and is even found today in the modern world. Not only is it used by external actors as a tool against the Muslim world, elements from within the Islamic community can also use it to stoke divisions and cause damage. Therefore, there is an urgent need for the entire Muslim community to band together against this threat and find strength in the teachings of the Quran and Prophet Mohammad (PBUH).