

"Power of Propaganda and the Muslim world"

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“If you repeat a lie often enough, it eventually becomes the truth”, said Joseph Goebbels, Hitler's close aide and Nazi Germany's Minister for Propaganda. This similar tactic is employed by anti-Islamic forces all across the globe to systematically construct and reinforce a false image of Islam. From historical grievances to perceiving Islam as a religion of terrorism, there are various reasons of propaganda directed at Islam by the west. Moreover, false propaganda is directed against Muslims by using social media, print media, political speeches and various other tools. Consequently, Muslims face hatred and lack of opportunities at different stages. Furthermore, the vulnerability of Muslims to propaganda is not without reasons. From division among Muslim countries to no meaningful media presence, all are contributing to the weakness of Muslim nations. Power of propaganda has inflicted enormous amount of damage upon the Muslim

world. It has some serious implications on muslims all across the globe. However, certain measures could be taken by the Islamic world to confront the propaganda directed against them.

To understand the roots of this persistent portrayal, it is essential to explore why propaganda has been strategically directed at Muslims.

The Historical grievances of west against Islam is the first and foremost reason.

Before the advent of Islam, Christianity was dominant in the world. When the spread of Islam peaked, Christians felt threatened and an instinctive prejudice grew among them against Islam. Continuous Muslim expeditions in the non-Muslim territories further fueled the growing contention. From Sultan Mehmed of the Ottoman Empire conquering Constantinople to Sultan Saladin Ayubi dominating Jerusalem, many examples are present in the history.

Thus, historical grievances of non-Muslims are the primary reason of propaganda against Islam.

Second, using propaganda against Islam for political gains is in practice across the globe. Politicians use anti-Muslim rhetoric in campaigns and rallies to increase their vote bank.

This dangerous practice has serious implications and it results in increased hatred against Muslims. While evil politicians gain temporary success, this practice sets a dangerous precedent. Yogi Aditya Nath, the extremist politician of India, labelled all Muslims of India as 'Taliban terrorists' in his election campaign. This clearly shows how anti-Islamic practices are used for political gains.

Third, Islam is perceived as a misogynic religion and oppressive against women. Western scholars and feminists, without understanding and studying about the women rights in Islam, blame

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and label Islam for misogyny. This labelling is done by cherry picking the events and generalizing them through tools like media. Depiction of suppressed women in Afghanistan and their right to education being rejected is one of the examples. Hence, false image of Islam in the west is one of the reason of propaganda directed against Islam.

Moreover, Islam is labelled as anti-democratic and not conforming to the pluralistic values. People in the west perceive the dictatorships in Islamic regimes as true image of Islam. From dictatorship of Saddam Hussain and Muammar Gaddafi to Monarchy in Saudi Arabia and Qatar, all are fuelling this narrative. As per Hollywood's LA survey, majority of films casted showed dictators as muslims. Aladeen, a hollywood film featuring a muslim dictator with beard, is one of the examples. Therefore, false image of Islam is fuelling the reason also

why Muslims are facing propagandas.

Furthermore, Islam is considered as the religion of terrorism. This is the most important reason of why propaganda is directed at Muslims. Post world trade center attacks or 9/11 attacks, western propaganda machine immediately started to blame Muslims for all the terrorist acts going ~~at~~ around the world. This led to shattered image of Islam. Moreover, terrorist organizations ~~like~~ such as ISIS, and Al-Qaeda became visible on every TV screen. Christian or non-Muslim organizations that spread terror such as Ku Klux Klan and Tamil Tigers were ignored on the whole. Therefore, considering Islam as a terrorist religion is also the reason of propaganda against Muslims.

After identifying the driving forces behind anti-Muslim propaganda, attention must now be given to the tools and techniques used to spread it globally.

The first and foremost tactic to spread propaganda against Islam is by using social media. Applications such as Twitter and Facebook are exploited to propagate Islamophobic content. Adding further to the contention, algorithms of social media applications repeatedly show negative content regarding Islam while ignoring fact checking mechanism. A study carried out by University of Cambridge showed that Islamophobic content spread four times faster than other ones. Hence, it is evident that social media is used to spread propaganda against Islam.

Second, electronic and print media is also used effectively to intensify the anti-Islamic propaganda. News channels and papers, specially in the west have continuously been building false narrative against Islam. A 2024 Analysis by Al-Jazeera showed that news channels like BBC and CNN, when featuring news

headlines, wrote 'Islamic or Muslim terrorist' for Muslims. When similar actions were done by non-Muslims, the news read 'mentally retarded person'. Hence, electronic and print media is used to spread anti-Islamic propaganda.

Third, anti-Islamic rhetoric is prevalent in political rallies and campaigns to spread propaganda in many western countries. The US senators who were silenced to invade Iraq before 9/11 attacks got a more reason to use anti-Islamic rhetoric to invade Iraq by blaming Muslims. Similarly, when Zohran Mamdani, a Muslim, was elected as Mayor of New York, White House's Deputy Chief of Staff said 'This is what happens when a country fails to stop immigration'. Therefore, the anti-Islamic political propaganda machine does not miss a chance to blame Islam for everything.

Furthermore, Biased National Curriculum in the west are further brain washing.

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the children. While ignoring the fact that this very tactic will give birth to hate and prejudice in upcoming leaders, western governments form such curricula nevertheless. State curriculum of the Texas is one of the examples. It describes Islam as 'violent and oppressive religion'. The above evidence clearly shows how curricula are used to spread anti-Islamic propaganda.

While the methods of propaganda are deeply concerning, their consequences on Muslims across the world are even more alarming.

To begin with, Muslims are faced with hatred at different events. People, who are prone to propaganda, easily get manipulated through news channels, papers, and other tools. This results in growing hatred among people who were once friendly to Muslims. "Now I am fine" were the last words of seven years old Palestinian girl Waleed after she was stabbed by

her house owner. This event followed the owner watching an anti-Islamic podcast. Above incidents reflect how anti-Muslim propaganda is making hate against Muslims.

Moreover, propaganda against Islam plays a significant role in systematically denying Muslims the opportunities in education and jobs. Companies, specially in the west, form policies that systematically deprive Muslims of their opportunities. A survey showed that applications with Islamic names were given less call backs than others in UK and France. Further, Muslim workers in USA faced work place discrimination post 9/11.

Similarly, Muslim students are also facing problems. From students being expelled from US universities to Hijabi girls being strip-searched for security reasons, Muslim students are harassed.

Therefore, all the above incidences show how anti-Islamic propaganda is used resulting in depriving Muslims of opportunities.

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To add on, growing prejudices among Muslims regarding the western world is further widening the gap and worsening the situation. It is one of most overlooked yet a serious consequence. The continuous mal treatment of Muslims by the hands of the western world by blaming everything on Muslims is further fuelling the fire. Gallup's "Who speaks for Islam" Report 2023 showed that majority of Muslims dislike westerners not because of their lifestyle but because of their double standards. Thus, prejudices among Muslims have grown against the west.

After discussing the consequences of propaganda against Muslims, it becomes imperative to analyze the underlying factors that make the Muslim world vulnerable to such propaganda.

The primary factor of Islamic world being vulnerable to propaganda is deep rooted divisions within and between the Islamic countries. Without

a unified front, it becomes impossible to contain such sophisticated propaganda machine. Multilateral Islamic organizations such as OIC and GCC are seen silenced when there is an attack on Islamic countries. The best they have done so far is condemning or urging the oppressors against Islam for restraint. The ongoing propaganda against Palestinian statehood and silence of divided Islamic countries is visible. Hence, division among Islamic countries is a vulnerability towards propaganda.

Moreover, a reactive ^{Similarly} approach towards the crisis by Islamic organizations is also the cause for the vulnerability of Muslim world. To confront propaganda, one needs to be vigilant. Proactive measures help contain the propaganda and attenuate its impacts. However, such efforts are nowhere to be seen in the Muslim countries across the globe. Whether it be desecrating caricatures of Islamic prophets

in France, or Israeli genocidal oppression in Palestine, condemnation is what they have gotten so far from the Islamic world. Hence, a reactive approach has made Muslim countries weak.

Furthermore, there is no meaningful media presence of Muslim world to counter propaganda. While other regions and countries have got international news outlets such as Russia, ^{which} ~~has~~ got RT, Europe's narrative is depicted on BBC, America's propaganda is done by CNN and Fox News, Islamic countries have no unified media outlet. This has left Muslim Nations with no tool to counter propaganda. Therefore, lack of media presence has left Islamic countries vulnerable.

Having understood the roots of vulnerability of Muslim world towards propaganda, the focus must now shift to how it can be effectively countered. Underlying are the ways forward.

First, there is a need to build a unified narrative and an effective unified front. Muslim countries will have to set aside their grievances regarding each other, specially when it comes to the image of Islam. A collective approach by 57 Muslim nations will have an enormous effect. The power of unity among Muslim nations became ostensible when Nupur Sharma, party member of BJP India, uttered desecrating remarks against Muslims. Upon swift condemnations and summons by Indian ambassadors in different Muslim nations, BJP was compelled to eliminate Sharma's membership. Therefore, a unified approach by Muslim nations will become promising to fight propaganda.

Second, Cultural diplomacy must be leveraged to depict the true and soft image of Islam. At various events, Muslim countries must manifest how women are treated and respected

in the religion Islam, how murder of one person is considered the murder of whole humanity. These steps should be taken to remove misunderstanding regarding Islam present in the western world. Therefore, the above steps should be taken to depict soft image of Islam using diplomacy.

Third, media presence should be strengthened to counter false narratives against Islam by western anti-Islamic outlets. An International news channel of Muslim world will do just the job. A news outlet, coupled with experts on both the Islam and global affairs will have a great deal of positive reverberations on the image of Islamic countries. Ultimately, this news outlet will prove to be the shield wall of Muslim countries against propaganda.

Moreover, social media presence is also essential to counter the false narrative against Islam instantly. With

Islamophobic individuals growing around the world of social media, it is imperative to have an active social media presence. This will result in countering anti-Islamic content instantly by reporting the Islamophobic accounts, spreading awareness regarding ongoing propaganda, and answering them through own social media platforms by rejecting their claims. A trend on Instagram named 'All eyes on Rafah' regarding crimes of Israel in Palestine drew attention of whole world. This clearly shows the power of social media and its effective use.

lastly, education and critical thinking should be promoted to counter propaganda. Muslims scholars and workers are spread all across the globe. Equipped with right knowledge, they can counter the false narrative and can give effective response at all engagements using facts and figures. At numerous events Muslim representatives

have defended Islam vehemently. From Mehdi Hassan dominating opposite Islamophobe at Oxford debate to Dr. Zakir Naik winning debate from Campbell christian scholar using typical facts, knowledge has proven to be the ultimate tool for countering propaganda. Therefore, education and critical thinking should be promoted among Muslim countries.

In conclusion, vulnerability of Muslim world has empowered the anti-Islamic forces to inflict severe damage upon the Image of Islam. Division among Muslim nations, Reactive approach by them, and no meaningful media presence have resulted in this persisting problem. However, certain measures could be taken to defy the ongoing propaganda. These include building a unified narrative, leveraging cultural diplomacy, strengthening media presence, and spreading awareness. To

sum up, muslim nations have the responsibility to challenge the ongoing propaganda against Islam and present the image of it, the image of hope, peace, and rights. the pen may spread lies but it can also rewrite the truth. Muslims must now right their own true narrative.