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TABLE OF CONTENT

Preface:

Tulus Warsito, Professor on International Politics Director of Post Graduate Program of UMY

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Hassanudeen Abd Aziz, Center of Postgraduate Studies International Islamic University

Foreword:

Ir. Dasron Hamid, Rector University of Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta

Prof. Dato' Sri Dr. Syed Arabi Idid, Rector International Islamic University

Sex Trafficking And Islamic World: A Curse Or Blessing, Adam Andani Mohammed, pp 1-14

Global Media And Muslim Representations, Ahmad Murtada Busair, Abubakar Ibrahim Yusuf, Mustapha Lambe Kayode, pp 15 – 26

Globalization, MNCs and The Post Invasion Reconstruction in Iraq: A Critical Appraisal, Angga Yudhiyansyah, pp 27 – 35

“ILO’s Contributions to Labor Law - Towards Improving Working Conditions in the Globalized Muslim World”, Adnan Trakic, pp 36- 48

Terrorism, Internasional Law And Islam, Anindita Tiastata Yunarsa, Yordan Gunawan, pp 49 – 55

The Muslim Youth And The Challenges Of Globalization, Adeyemo Lateef Kayode, pp 56 - 66

The Polemic of Iran Nuclear Proliferation in International Law Perspective, Damas Bariek, Yordan Gunawan, pp 67 – 73

Globalization and the New Economic Order: Islamic Economic Perspective, Dian Sandi Utama, pp 74 – 80

Improving Students’ TOEFL Score through Games to Face Global Challenges, Eko Purwanti, pp 81 – 92

Developing Lecturers’ Islamic Leadership And Management To Face The Challenge Of Globalization, Endro Dwi Hatmanto, pp 93 – 105

Overlapping Utility, Between Globalization And Islamic Thought With Special References To Economic, Febryan Mujahid Panatagama, pp 106 – 116

Globalization, Financial System, and Economic Development In the Developing Countries, *Felisma Choirunnisa, Masyhudi Muqorobin*, pp 117 – 125

Where Muslim's Stance Amidst Globalization: Will Benefit From Or Be Harmed By? *Fiqih Risallah*, pp 126 -137

Is The Ngruki A School Of Terrorism? *Homaidi Hamid*, pp 138 – 149

The Effects Of Organizational Justice On Employee Reaction And Attitude: Constructing Proposition, *Heru Kurnianto Tjahjono*, pp 150 – 156

Promoting Disease Detection Behavior Using Message Framing And Level Of Involvement, *Indah Fatmawati*, pp 157 -168

Globalization: Reconciling *Halal* Regime, Transmigration, International Law, And Multiculturalism, *Isiaka Abiodun Adams*, pp 169 – 184

The Implementation of Shari'ah in Nanggroe Aceh Darussalam in the Indonesian Legislation System, *Iwan Satriawan, Nanik Prasetyoningsih*, pp 185 – 196

Globalization: Its Role and Impact on TCK (Third Culture Kids), *Mariya Khan*, pp 197 – 208

Turning the Direction of Globalization: From Capitalism to Islamic Economic Ideas, *Masyhudi Muqorobin*, pp 209 - 219

Challenges Of Globalization On Human Resource Development And Management In The Developing Muslim Countries. *Muhammad Awwal Ibn Usman, Mohamad Johdi Salleh, PhD*, pp 220 - 229

Dialogue Of *Din-Daulah-Dunya* In Islamic Political Thought, *Muhammad Azhar*, pp 230 – 238

Globalization And Efforts To Shift Peripheral Position Of Islamic Civilization, *Mohammad Mas'udi*, pp 239 – 247

The Challenge of Transnational Terrorism for Indonesian Political and Economical Sovereignty, *Muhammad Zahrul Anam*, pp 248 – 253

Corporate Social Responsibility in Indonesia : Regulation and Implementation Issues, *Mukti Fajar ND*, pp 254 – 271

The Impact of Globalization in Muslim World on Social Values, *Md. Sayed Uddin*, pp 272 – 283

A Comparative Assessment On Indonesian And Malaysian Legal Regime To Control Deforestation And Attaining Sustainable Forest Management, *Nasrullah*, pp 284 – 293

Impact of Globalization on Women's Political Participation in Muslim World, *Nur Azizah*, pp 294 – 304

Irving Kristol And War Minded Of Neoconservatism, *Nostalgawan Wahyudhi*, pp 305 – 313

Strengthening Islamic Accounting Standards Toward Globalization Challenges , *Rifqi Muhammad, Peni Nugraheni*, pp 314 – 330

Globalization, its impact in Health Care System in Indonesia Case Study of Complementary and Alternative Medicine (CAM) and Islamic Medicine, and how to anticipate it. *Sagiran*, pp 331 – 336

The Impact Of Globalization To The Muslim Country's Welfare Study Case Indonesia and Malaysia, *Shochrul Rohmatul Ajija, Mia Fathia*, pp 337 – 346

The Impacts Of Globalisation To Human Health And Environment In The Muslim World, *Sri Wartini*, pp 347 – 358

The Role of Management Instruments in Improving Local Government Performance in Indonesia, *Suryo Pratolo, Rizal Yaya, Alek Murtin*, pp 359 – 369

Farmers' Perception Toward Management of Zakat At Karang Duwur Village, Petanahan, Kebumen, Central Java, *Triyono, Siti Yusi Rusimah, Agus Sepdubagiyo*, pp 370 – 378

Intra-regional Integration among Selected OIC Countries: The Role of Market Liberalization, *Wisnu Wardhana, Nafiu Oladokun, Rahmat Heru Setianto*, pp 379 – 389

The Impact of International Monetary Fund and World Bank Policies on the Implementations of States Parties' Obligations under Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (An Indonesian Case Study), *Yordan Gunawan*, pp 390 – 400

The Effects Of Globalization On Water Privatisation In The Muslim Countries, *Yuni Yulia Farikha*, pp 401 – 415

Freedom Of Religion In The Perspective Of Islam And Indonesian Legal System, *Muchammad Ichsan*, pp 416 – 432

Globalization and Revival of Islam in Indonesia, *Akhmad Jenggis Prabowo*, pp 433 – 439

Arabic Language In The Globalization Era, *Mahmud Hamzawi Fahim Usman*, pp 440 - 444

Global Media and Muslim Representations

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Abstract. The contemporary global economy and the role of the global media in shaping people's opinions towards its accommodation have great implications for Muslims' culture, values and image, considering the secularizing tendency of the project on one hand and pejorative portrayal of Muslims on the other. By their reach and pervasive nature, global media penetrate all civilizations and alter their entire structures and potencies, by blurring, bending and blending the audiences' perspectives with the megalomaniac Western values and decimating other perspectives that run counter to them. Most prevalent is their assaults on Islam and Muslims through various informational and cultural framings that have gained sustained prominence in the absence of a credible alternative response system. In view of the implications of the ongoing on the Muslims and the fatality of creating unnecessary division in the already culturally-inclined fragile globe, this paper contributes to the ongoing debate on creation of responsible global media regime, by awakening the stakeholders on desirable roles, that will be beneficial to all in the short and long run.

Keywords: Globalization, Global Media, Muslim World, Muslim Representations, Western Values

Introduction and conceptual framework

To an average observer, the most important function of the mass media is to disseminate information and facilitate exchange in the society. This simplistic approach to media functionalism is what the *communicologists* refer to as a linear and mechanistic approach to communication, assuming only the existence of a sender using a channel to communicate to a receiver without considering the context. Harold Lasswell in his pioneering work, *The Structure and Function of Communication in the Society* gave the Master Key to the understanding of the functions of mass communication in the society when he posited that communication performs three basic functions in the society: Surveillance of the environment...; correlation of the part in relation to the whole... and transmission of cultural inheritance. Wright and Schramm respectively added the functions of entertainment and mobilization to the original three Lasswellian functions (McQuail, 2002). These expanding functions of the media dichotomised the paradigm for mass communication power and effect into the transmission and ritual models. While the transmission model views communication from microscopic prism, assuming extension of message at distance and geography for the purpose of control, the ritual model macroscopically sees communication as extension of communication in space for the maintenance of society in time; that is communication is not act of imparting information but representation of shared beliefs (Carey, 1975; McQuail, 2005 and Baran and Davis, 2006). Carey (1975, p. 177) posited further that "communication is a symbolic process whereby reality is produced, maintained, repaired and transformed.

The mass media do more than just disseminating information and facilitating entertainment. They are part and parcel of the societal framework and function significantly in socializing the members of the society to the norms, values, ethos and nuances of their society, not only by making matters within the society to become common knowledge but through reproduction and representation of the issues and personalities. The media have contributed to virtually all human civilizations,

facilitating urbanization at the wake of industrial era, secularization in the electronic age and cosmopolitanism in the ongoing information age. So enormous is the power of communication technologies that Harold Innis concluded in his *Empire and Communication* (1950) that great empires such as Egypt, Greece and Rome expanded not only by their militaristic strengths but their control of epochal communication media by which they disseminate information order from the capital cities (in Baran and Davis, 2006; West and Turner, 2007). Marshall McLuhan, who was described as 'High Priest of Pop Culture', the 'Metaphysician of Media' and the 'Oracle of Information Age' (Baran and Davis, 2006) must have a powerful notion of the media at the arrival of television medium to conclude that media don't only extend human senses but will create a village of the vast world (West and Turner, 2007, p. 463). McLuhan conception of global village was said to be an hasty conclusion with the arrival of supersonic information technologies that have not only blurred time and space difference, but facilitate high fidelity in data (text, sound and picture) transfer. Indeed, these technologies are said to have created a condominium rather than a global village (Hierbert in Uche, 1996, p. 307).

The current problematic is not the inherent power of the media but the responsibilities that accompany their usage, particularly against the backdrop of the fact that media technologies are products of social, economic and political considerations. The marriage of conventional media with telecommunication has, in conjunction with computer, produced global media and facilitates information dissemination that defies temporo-spatial differences. But because the technologically advanced nations have upper hands in the production of these inventions, they have been used to the disadvantage of the other side that provided the resources used in industrializing the so called developed nations. Aside from the fact that this state of affairs creates asymmetrical information exchange between the North and the South, the political, economic and social spaces of the nations of the South have been dominated by the culture of America and Europe. These two characteristics dominate the world mass media system and indeed are responsible for uneven treatment of events, imbalance in news and information and also the unequal distribution of power in the world system (Mowlana, 2008, p. 283). With the triumph of capitalism sequel to the end of Cold War, the United State-championed 'Free Flow' doctrine has made this domination to be a seeming consensually agreed system among the nations of the world. This perhaps explains McQuail's (2005, p. 255) position that unlike the international propaganda efforts of previous time, the new 'media imperialism' seemed to be carried out at the willing request of the mass audience for popular culture and was thus much more likely to 'succeed'. This position was funning in the sense that it came after McQuail condemned the ethnocentric nature of global communication flow. Therefore, the contemporary global media system that made the globalization to become a well grounded phenomenon cannot be divorced from inherent imperialistic posture of the West.

It is a popular saying that "if you are not at the table, you [are] not part of the deal" (McChesney, 2004, p. 20). The absence of the Muslims in the global media system, as owners and as professional gatekeepers, makes the Muslims and Islam to become the whipped ones in the global media sphere. Hence, events and happenings in the Muslim world are usually being reported with great deal of bias, distortion and ethnocentrism (Mowlana, 2008, p. 283). Aside from what is coming from the news genre of the media, other contents such as advertisements, feature films, documentaries, etc are laden with Western secularized values constituting assaults on the Islamic culture. Fazal, Azmuddin and Ahrari (2009) in *Global Media Image of Islam and Muslim and the Problematic of a Response Strategy* extensively detailed how negative portrayal of Islam and Muslims in the globalized Western media has resulted in sustained negative public image of Islam and Muslims, creating a body of *Islamophobia* in the West. Having integrated the media organizations within the firmament of the global capitalism (McChesney, 2004; McPhail, 2007), they now operate like any other industrial organizations with efficiency, economic imperatives and bottom-line as major considerations. Indeed, what matter to the media today is to target the lowest common denominators with a view to bundling mass audience for the advertisers, *a la* McQuail's publicity model. Islam and the Muslim world thus succeed to the victims' position following the demise of communism that used to be the major Western media concern in the twentieth century. The concern of this piece is not only to chronicle various cultural assaults being meted out to Muslims as people and Islam as a community, but also to highlight their microscopic and macroscopic implications and counsel on the need for various global

stakeholders to evolve a global mass media regime that will prevent the Samuel Huntington's calamitous prediction- The clash of civilizations.

Globalization, global media and globalized media: The Muslims' stake

According to Giddens (1997, p. 19), "globalization is the intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa". Globalization has attracted a deluge of researches, writings and discourses that one might begin to consider that it merits standing alone as a field of study even with its multidisciplinary outlook. To some, it is mere triumph of capitalism and its market economy while critics see it as a cover concept for global capitalism and imperialism (Durham and Kellner, 2006, p. 579). In a similar vein, Berger (2002, p. 2) contends that globalization for some implies the promise of an international civil society, conducive to a new era of peace and democratization and for others a homogenized world resembling a sort of metastasized Disneyland...though he was of the view that both views have been greatly exaggerated. Ali Mazrui (in Ibrahim, 2002) construes globalization as "all forces which are turning the world into a global village, compressing distance, homogenising culture, accelerating mobility and reducing the relevance of political borders (P. 11). Globalization therefore is the global integration of political, economic and cultural differences to produce a monolithic culture for the entire human race.

Globalization is not new to Islam and Muslim as it has been ordained in Qur'an (Chapter 2 verse 213): "Mankind were one community, and Allah sent (unto them) Prophets as bearer of good tidings and as warners, and revealed therewith the Scripture with the truth that it might judge between mankind concerning that wherein they differ..." This verse no doubt confirms the unification of human race, albeit not in the version being pursued by the current champions of globalization, which centred on unbridled liberty, materialism, consumerism and sensual pleasure. The undisputed hegemony of Western culture for a long time has created a kind of aura that primed its civilization as desirable for the entire human race. Even as its domination of the global media (news agencies, book publishing, television news and entertainment, film, computer hardware and software, etc) is being vigorously challenged by those at the receiving end, Western nations will stop at nothing to dig deeper into the information and cultural space of any region of the world. For this reason, Uche (1996) concludes that "globalization poses some contradictions, dilemmas and confusion to mankind in the area of social, economic, political and cultural sphere of life, affecting the people of every race, region, culture, religion and social status. And because of the fact that Islam cherishes values and good behaviour and it is not only a religion but a way of life (AbdulRahman, 2002; Mowlana; 2008), Western and Islamic conception of globalization cannot synchronise.

The global media serve as the vehicles for the actualization and entrenchment of globalization and globalizing culture. From the news agencies to the contemporary global media conglomerates, the Western world has glaring dominance over the global communication scene and has never stop to exploit it to the disadvantage of the 'have-nots'. The Western media, particularly those of the United States have maintained a stronghold that will be difficult if not impossible to challenge. Be it on television (CNN, Disney World and MTV), Film (Hollywood), Internet (Google), software (Microsoft) and even satellite technology, United States is comfortably in the lead, selling the idea which is most antithetical to Islam- usury. Not only has America succeeded in making capitalism to become the global economic structure the media were tremendously deployed, during the battle of supremacy, against the defunct Soviet Union communism. Following the demise of communism and disintegration of Soviet Union, Islam which represents another ideological obstacle remains the surviving enemy of capitalism that must be annihilated. Hence, a dog must be given a bad name to justify its hanging. AbdulRahman (2002, p. 2) captures brilliantly the Western media disdain for Islam in response to their governments' desires:

The spread of Western culture has been aided by a systemic vilification of Islam and everything associated with Islam... Ever since the oil crisis and Iranian revolution of the late 1970's Islam has been treated to the most gross (sic) form of reductionism by the Western press and orientalist (sic) scholars. Not only has Islam been demonized as a danger and

threat, it has been denigrated as a religion with followers who are backward and devoid of modernity.

This has been the lots of Islam and Muslims throughout the several triumphs and travails the Muslim world had underwent and still undergoing. It is thus important to see reason with Mowlana (2008, pp. 283-284) when he graphically explains the filtration of news that gets to the reader, with emphasis on event on Muslim world. According to him "this Darwinian law of selectivity, once translated and applied to events and developments in the Islamic world (which constitutes one-fourth of the world's population) can indeed have enormous impact on individual and collective perceptions about Islam and its followers. The representation of Islam and Muslims in the Western media, particularly after the 9/11 crisis has been anything but salutary. This has not only stamped a leprous identity on the religion of Islam and its adherents but psychologically browbeaten the Western sympathizers of Islam in the same manner of the McCarthyism Red Scare of the Cold War era.

Globalized Media represent efforts at taking local media and cultural artefacts to the global realm through the instrumentality of information superhighway. This has remained the means by which alternative voices that cannot match those on the global media could be heard at the global level. Many local media now have presence on the Internet either through websites, bloggers, and other networking mode affordable on the cyberspace. Moley (in Khatib, 2008) opines that "cyberspace has created communities that are not necessarily physically or nationally bound but which transcend the sacred boundaries of home and nation". Much as this avenue can assist in the presentation of alternative viewpoints, it is highly constrained given the fact that both the hardware and the software that facilitate it are under the control of the same hegemony that have literally asphyxiated the developing world consisting the bulk of Islamic nations. Khatib (2008) extensively detailed how several Islamist sites are hacked, closed down or being trailed. For this reason, Muslims like any other groups in the margin of global communication scene are at the mercy of the Western cultural imperialists brandishing globalization as a panacea for global problems they have caused and yet exacerbating.

Theoretical framework

While there are as many scholastic approaches to theorizing globalization and global communication, this paper configures its theoretical explanation against the backdrop of *information society* theories of globalization and *framing* theory of mass communication. Information society, as a subject of discourse within the context of globalization, outwardly speaks of impacts of information technology on the global society with emphasis on mass production and distribution of technological, electronic, and computing appliances, which will enable interconnectedness, at a fastest speed, among people on every location in the world (Thussu, 2002, p. 73). Nevertheless, information society is essentially an attempt by the industrialized nations, notably the United States to revamp her dwindling economic power owing to the imminent loss of her strong manufacturing base (Roach, 1996, p. 29). This implies that information society, also termed as 'information economy' (Roach 1996, p. 29) or 'knowledge economy' (Thussu, 2002), symbolized by mass production and distribution of technological hardware serves two purposes: domestic and international. Domestically, information society is aimed at the massive introduction of computers in the American workplace in order to increase the amount of information, at the fastest available speed, as well as flood the market with consumer information equipments (Roach, 1996), which could digitally link all homes through the internet (Thussu, 2002). Internationally, information society is predicated upon the expansion of the transnational corporations market to the developing countries. Those nations are made to believe that with the transfer of modern communication technologies such as the radio, television, Internet facilities and digital printing system to them, they could 'leap-frog' over the industrial stage of development and therefore better their lots (Roach 1996, p. 29).

Technologically-determinist outlook of information society is embedded in McLuhan's rhetoric of the 'global village' suggesting that new communication and information technology would transform the world into a global village (McLuhan, 1964). McLuhan had earlier averred that media technology had more social impact on different societies and cultures than media content, citing how

printing technology had brought about development and universal literacy. The idea of global village seems to be actualized by the advancement in international communication with the emergence of direct satellite television broadcasting which was championed by Ted Turner's Cable News Network, in the 1980s and the discovery of Internet as a new media of communication in 1990s. Yet, the notion of the global village was discredited by Schiller (1996) and Mattelart (1991) who observed that in a real village people speak to each other, unlike the American self-centred approach of the CNN to coverage of global events, crises, and issues (Soloman, 1991). This dimension of satellite television broadcasting seems to amplify Webster's observation that the so-called enrichment of the developing nations with information technology has less consideration for the social, economic, and political growth of those nations (Webster, 1995) because globalization at its two extremes is characterized by winners and losers, thus depicting the reification of existing power structures in international politics (Risse, 2007, p. 142).

The idea of digital capitalism offers clear explanation of the economic determinist perspective of information society, placing the control of global economy in the hands of few persons. This is informed by technological dependence of the southern nations on the American transnational conglomerates, which are at the extreme end of production and distribution of communication technology. Favouring the digital or information capitalism notion, Castells (1998) observes that information capitalism is aimed at global integration by operating at a faster speed and on global basis via exchanges between electronic circuits linking up informational systems without which social processes and political activities cannot be achieved. An antithesis of Castells' submission is somewhat revealing in Schiller's view that digital capitalism is a means by which the 'megacorporations' supplant smaller nations' economy and dominate the global economy with ever-increasing nature of production, distribution, and consumption of their technological products and services (Schiller, 1999).

Ideology-determinist view of information society is obtrusive in the words of Toffler (1980), tagging information society as the third wave of human civilization after the agricultural and industrial waves. As the wave of interconnectedness of global cultures, information society is explained as having the potential to promote ideological pluralism and decentralized control of communication with the introduction of audio, video and electronic text communication (Neuman, 1991). This notion of ideological pluralism and personalized utilization of communication runs divergent to the early 90s electronic colonization of the developing nations significantly characterized by the so-called liberalization and privatization conspiracy that put the those nations' state-controlled and state-owned media under the siege of two strong and pervasive communication forces: the cable and satellite broadcasting systems and avalanche of Western, primarily American, television programming (McPhail, 2002, p. 22). It cannot be gainsaid that the homogenized and hegemonic Western culture of Murdoch's sky TV, Time Warner's CNN, BBC's satellite TV, and the Internets are not only communication machineries put in place to nip in the bud the glory and beauty of cultural diversity characteristic of the world (Uche, 1996, p. 10), but also as the instrument for supplanting the cultural identity of the weak nations, which is regarded as a social potential for cultural self expression and a source of activation (Kivikuru, 1996).

Global media's propagation of western values and culture and demystification of competing cultures and values are strategized by framing. Framing is a means of spinning an issue in a positive or negative connotation. Framing a news story about a public issue or event or crisis creates a slant or spin that may affect the audience understanding of such issue, event or crisis. A frame is believed to be the central organizing ideas for making sense of events in the news. That is to suggest that news itself has no intrinsic values unless it is made to be meaningful in a context. The core assumption of framing theory suggests that the media draws the public attention to certain topics, it decides *where* people think about, and the journalists select the topics. A frame refers to the way media and media journalists, reporters, and editors organize and present the events and issues they cover, and the way audiences interpret what they are provided. Frames are abstract notions that serve to organize or structure social meanings. (Johnson-Cartee, 2005). Fairhurst and Star cite some means of framing such as the use of metaphor to "give an idea or program a new meaning by comparing it to something else ... [and to] ... frame a subject by anecdote in a vivid and memorable way". They also observe that framing is used to "pattern and define an organization at regular time increments to confirm and

reproduce organizational values ...and to illuminate corporate values through physical vestiges" (Fairhurst and Star, 1996). Framing deals with selection, inclusion or seclusion of certain facts in the news, based on the prejudice or bias of the gatekeepers. Framing focuses attention of the audience within a field of meaning. It suggests how news about issues and events is presented to the audience so as to influence their choices (Reese, Gandy and Grant, 2001).

Framing effects of television news on political and cultural issues have been noted to have the potentials to shape audiences' understanding of the causes and solutions central to such issues. Episodic framing and thematic framing are two concepts that explain how television news represents issues to the public. Thematic framing exists when television news is consistently reported in the form of specific events or particular cases. Episodic framing, on the other hand, has to do with mass media coverage of issues and events in some general context (Iyengar, 1991). Iyengar categorically says that: "episodic framing depicts concrete events that illustrate issues, while thematic framing presents collective or general evidence. In an earlier research, he finds that people who are exposed to episodic reports are less likely to consider society responsible for the event, and those audiences who are exposed to thematic reports are less likely to consider individuals responsible. He demonstrates that subjects who viewed stories about poverty, which feature homeless or unemployed people (episodic framing) are much more likely to blame poverty on individual failings, such as laziness or low education, than are those who instead watch stories about high national rates of unemployment or poverty (thematic framing). He concludes that viewers of the thematic frames were more likely to attribute the causes and solutions to governmental policies and other factors beyond the victim's control (Iyengar, 1987).

Iyengar's scholastic world view of such behaviour of television news presents a veritable challenge to standard journalistic procedure which is assumed to be likely contaminated by subjective tendencies of those who might be involved in news processing. Similar observation had earlier been made by Schudson who pointed out "that objectivity became an ideal in journalism "precisely when the impossibility of overcoming subjectivity in presenting the news was widely accepted and ...precisely because subjectivity had come to be regarded as inevitable (Schudson, 1978)."

Framing theory faces some challenges of criticism and rigorous scrutiny by scholars who might see the assumption and findings as vague and inconclusive about the role of the news media in presentation of events and issues to the public. A contender of the theory, Josh Ozersky, observes that Iyengar "has come up against the inability of blunt analytic instruments to map perception across different subjects. . . . Television criticism is an inexact science [that does not] lend itself to elegant neologisms, computer-generated diagrams, or other professional tropes" (Ozersky, 1992). For these reasons, the ongoing characterization of Islam and Muslims in the global media goes beyond reporting the actual events. It mostly aims at narrowing the audiences' perceptual field with a view to create blur, blend and bend their perception of the religion and its followers.

Islam, Muslims and globalization

As mentioned above, globalization is not alien to Islam. Many verses of the holy Qur'an makes allusion to this fact. Qur'an (Chapter 21 verse 107), for example, says "And we have sent thee (O Mohammad) not, but as mercy for *all creatures*" (emphasis intended). This explains why Prophet Mohammad (SAW) extended the coverage of his preaching and teaching beyond the Arab tribe, reaching as far as Ethiopia in Africa and Rome in Europe. Upon his death, his successors followed the same pattern, ensuring the spread of Islam as far China and Russia.

In the course of his prophesy, the Holy Prophet Mohammad (SAW) used the available communication means that were predominant in that epoch. Hence, discussion with groups, open sky preaching and written messages to nations and empires were used. This continued until weakness set in during the European Renaissance of the 16th century. In the introduction to AbuSulayman's book, *Towards an Islamic Theory of International Relations: New Direction for Methodology and Thought*, Al Faruqi (1993, pp. 3-4) chronicled the gradual setback that befell the Muslim world, culminating

into the learning of European technology, establishment of institutions along the European pattern and invitation of Europeans to serve as instructors in these institutions. All these led to the dilution of Islamic culture and values, sowing seed of secularism that eventually become a cultural malignancy in the Islamic society,

The secularization of Islamic community sniffed life out of the then moribund Islamic education and intellectual system. Glories associated with Islam such as astronomy, philosophy, medicine and mathematics during the golden era changed as Muslims are till now passive recipients of Western knowledge (AbdulRahaman, 2002, p. 5). For these reasons, modernization crept in unchallenged to prepare ground for secular globalization. To rub insult on injury, Daniel Learner, a leading light of modernization paradigm ridiculed Islam in his seminar work, *The Passing of Traditional Society* saying that the elites of the Islamic nations, used as laboratory for testing modernization theory, has to choose between "Mecca and Mechanization" (In Thussu, 2000). Having penetrated the Islamic world unchallenged, globalization was received with the ease and being exploited to weaken the remaining pride left of the Islamic civilization. Hence, the continuous orchestration of negative image in the global media about Islam and Muslims.

Global media image of Islam and Muslims

Idid and Galander (2002, p. 84) submit that global news generally characterized Islam as a monolithic entity, synonymous with terrorism (Citing Said, 1996). This negative characterization synchronises Bunt's (2000) belief that "...Islamic beliefs are what an individual who describe him- or herself as Muslim undertakes in the name of Islam, whether the practice is approved by authority or not" (cited in Maguire, 2007). This blanket assessment of Islam is obviously illogical, yet it has remains the parameter by which the Western media represent the religion and its adherents. Therefore, tying Islam to aversive activities is a cut and dry case anytime it suits the mood of whoever is interested. And since many local media houses in most developing countries, even among Muslim one, source their news from the Western news agencies, they more often than not amplify the claims of the West unknowingly thus resulting into "permeation of negative image about self" (Idid and Galander, 2002, p. 88).

The Western hostility against Islam and Muslims historically predates globalization era. Accounts have it that the church and the European ruling class had launched attacks on Islam from 1100s when it made incursion into Europe. Publications and other propaganda apparatuses were deployed to distort the original messages of Islam by branding it as a religion of swords and wars. Islam was able to win converts, however then and still growing till now to the consternation of the conservative Westerners. With the demise of communism, Islam fundamentalism was constructed and seen as the only obstacle to the capitalistic hegemonic order of the West that must be fought to a standstill. The growth of Islam as a religion force and political ideology "has been defined as a challenge to America's position as global power and hegemonic (Eltheshami, 1997, p. 180). The public related against Islam was further institutionalized in the post-September 11 attack of the Twin Tower in the United States. Hence, Muslims and Islam have been respectively clothed in the garbs of terrorists, who love to kill innocent people, and a political ideology that is anti-West.

The increasing hostilities towards Islam and Muslim as championed by the media have led to Islamophobia. The media have helped sustain the hostilities of the Western power thus perpetrating the Islamophobia (Pole, 2008). Islamophobia, a neologism referring to prejudice or discrimination against Islam and Muslim, which has been used since 1980s was resuscitated at the wake of September 11 attacks (Wikipedia, 2007). For this reasons, Islam and Muslims have been vilified at the slightest opportunity. British Runnymede Trust (1997), for example, denounced Islam any value in Islam and described it as an inferior political ideology rather than a religion (cited in Muzamni, 2005). By the same token, an American writer, Stephen Schwartz condemned Islam in its entirety, denying the existence of moderate Muslims and regarding Islam as a problem for the world (FrontPage Magazine, April 28, 2005). These and many more have been the lots of Islam and Muslims in the Western world.

Implications

The association of Islam and Muslims with terrorism on the Western global media has created a serious conflict and mistrust between the Muslims and the West. Muslims have been the subject of intense and pejorative media coverage that has served to cultivate and perpetuate increased public concerns. Hostile attitudes towards Muslims have become normalized, particularly in the press. As Muslims are demonized in the dominant stereotypes, they have become the subject of hostility, racial violence and hate in various Western nations. Muslim women are being subjected to different kinds of verbal and physical attacks on daily basis for putting on *hijab* or veil. Hostilities against Muslim settlers in the West, especially in the United States, Britain and France have become normal attitudes. Muslim children are subjected to discriminative laws and social harassment. In addition to cultural conflicts and socio-economic problems facing them, Muslim ethnic minorities and their children are also subjected to various types of disgrace and psychological wars the extent to which some parents had to withdraw their children from schools. In addition, Islam is portrayed as a violent religion that undermines the Western values and norms and which constitutes a great threat to the identity and security of the Western nations.

Islam has been framed not only as ideological opponent to Western civilization, but also as a source of instability that threatens the world peace. If framing according to McQuail (2005, p. 378) is a way of given some interpretations to isolated items of fact where the source defines problems, diagnoses causes, make moral judgement and suggest remedies, then the choice of denigrating texts and icons to explain events in the Islamic world falls squarely under intentional but negative characterization and representation. Since 9/11 enters the global system lexicon, the kinds of icons that have been used to symbolise terrorists are those that are Islamic by religious calculation. If terse-looking and turbaned and bearded men are not involved, it will be fully-covered women with guns protruding from under their dresses. These iconographs speak volumes for the extent to which men and women of good faith have been framed as terrorists and societal trouble shooters.

All these have both microscopic and macroscopic impacts on Islam and Muslim in the global society that has been created by technology-assisted global integration. At individual level (microscopic), Islam and Muslims are bound to be loathed by those who are pervasive consumers of those media and who relish negative portrayal of the duo. At the macroscopic level, the inflow of persons and capital that globalization promises will not only elude the Muslim world but drives it into the farthest part of the margin. Ways of attaining cross-cultural communication such as tourism and foreign investment will necessarily elude the portion of the globe painted as *black* as people will always want to tread such areas with caution if not suspicion. All these will contribute in no small measure to blocking people from having a firsthand experience of Islam and Muslims and by so doing sustain the negative image portrayed by anti-Islamic media.

Response strategies

Situating the current image of Islam in the media within the context of globalization and framing, Muslim scholars need to shift away from the much talk-about pejorative portrayal of Islam and the Muslims in the Western media, to focusing on how to correct such image and thereby put the record straight.

Instead of pinning blame on the West and its media, the focus of Muslim Scholars and professionals in the field of mass Communication as well as their colleagues in related fields such as political science, Sociology Psychology, Anthropology, and History, ought to be geared towards thinking about, and writing on, how to effectively use the mass media and its adjuncts to correct the impression and the negative message created about the Muslims worlds. Supporting this humble notion is the statement of ALLAH (SWT) which reads: 'God will not change the condition of a people until they change what is within themselves.'

Research papers in academic journals and write-ups in newspapers and magazines, on the negative representations of Islam and the Muslims in the Western mass media, speak volumes. Undoubtedly those writers have been very consistent in their emotional but objective writings about the extent to

which such media have gone in creating wrong perception about the Ummah through the mainstream Western media of mass communication.

However it should be asserted that intellectual response in that direction cannot cause the big media to change their negative coverage of Islam and the Muslims nor can they change the wrong pictures of Islam and the Muslims in the heads of their heterogeneous audience on different locations across the globe. Lest such concerted scholarly efforts become a sort of 'much ado about nothing', Muslim scholars thinking and researches ought to be concentrated on how to solve the problem of the negative image and how to change these challenges posed by such a problem to prospects. It should be noted such media depressing depiction is part of the Western ideological war against the Ummah through the process of agenda-setting and framing –all in order to create Islamophobia in the audience. The big media tell the audience what to think about Islam (agenda-setting) and how to think about it (framing) through the print media of books, newspapers, and magazine and through the broadcast media of radio, television and the Internets. The myriad of messages encoded for the innocent readers, listeners and viewers, are well-packaged or commoditized in forms of news and its genres such as editorials, opinions, features, cartoons, commentaries, documentaries, films, drama, and talk-shows. Response to those challenges needs not to be made in the negative and aggressive manners but rather in the positive and objective way. This will take us to the sphere of solving the problems in two ways: the unity of the Ummah despite the internal differences, thus saving the image from external misrepresentation.

To save the mediated image of Islam, some professionals might have suggested that the Muslims should establish media firms, print and electronic. This will always be a good suggestion, nevertheless the technical know-how or the method or the strategy to apply is another question. Even though the Muslims might set up as many television and radio stations, or as many newspaper and magazine firms, it will still take them many years to be equal with the West. The West, particularly the United States –the home-based of the transnational conglomerates, controls the media because they produced the technological gadgets that make up the media. That justifies their political, cultural and economic hegemony and dominance of the global public sphere. This reality lends credit to Karl Marx's statement that 'the class which has the means of production has control at same time over the means of mental production so that thereby, generally speaking, the idea of those who lack the means of production are subject to it...in so far, therefore, as they rule as a class and determine the extent and compass of an epoch, it is self evident that they ...among other things...regulate the production and distribution of the ideas of their age: thus their ideas are the ruling ideas of the epoch (Thusu: 2000, p. 54). It is a common fact that the media or the press is in the hand of the few and is no more serving the people's right to know, supplanting, slashing or misrepresenting the truth or the real pictures of an event, a people, race, and religion. Liebes (2003, p. 51) concurs when he says:

The expectation that journalist should provide the public with more information than the political institutions are ready to disclose is not easy at the best times. Ideally, the role of journalism in a democratic society is to serve the citizens' right to know, by contributing an independent voice to public debate, one in which is not motivated by the interest of the ruling elites to survive in power.

In his explanation on mythology of free press, McChesney (2004) argues that rather than having an adversarial relationship with government with a view to profit and benefit the public the more, the media are central to the emerging global economy as well as to any notion of political democracy, which are central to the contemporary global tension.

Specifically referring to what obtains in his country's media reports about Islam, Malashenko (2006) affirms that: 'What is even more worrying is that there are virtually no shows on Russian television that provide an honest and truthful account of Islam outside of politics, the "conflict of civilizations," and so forth. There is a pressing need for objective information.' The mediated image is not the real image of Islam, this is the truth everybody knows, and even the perpetrators of this black image know that most of what they put on the screen and on the pages of newspapers is nothing but figment of their imagination and a tale of lies. Malashenko (2006) further attests to this fact after he had blamed Islam for its false image: "But the 'Islamic threat' is not so much reality as the perception of reality. Cultivated in the media, reflected in artistic forms, and blown up by politicians and clerics,

it has become part of the Russian mass consciousness. This refers to the Islamic, not Islamist threat, which really exists. The difference between these two concepts did not begin to be appreciated until recently – due to the efforts of certain politicians, experts, and journalists”. In opinion polls conducted on Russians’ perception of Islam, Malashenko(ibid) was able to garner some facts from the respondents. He confesses that though his article had placed an emphasis on the negative perception of Islam, yet he ‘would like to draw the reader’s attention to the fact that some of the aforementioned figures could have a different interpretation: only 26 percent of respondents said that Islam was an alien religion, while about one-half did not see it as an aggressive religion.’

The Muslims have many ways to deal with harmful mediated image. One of the approaches is to be media owners not only in the Muslim countries but also in the Western world. They should invest in media ownership by establishing newspapers firms and broadcasting stations without including the word ‘Islamic’ in the phrases that make up the titles of such firms. This could be a good starting point. This is to subtly but surely attract audiences who are habitually averse to relating with the Muslims or associating with anything Islamic because of the picture they already have in their heads. By being exposed to well-packaged programmes covering different media genres, aimed at presenting Islam and Muslims in good light, that population of the audiences will be made to construct positive of social reality beliefs about Islam and the Muslims.

Reconstructing battered image is not always a task for the green horns. Therefore, recourse to professionalism is very essential, especially against the backdrop of the sophistication of the system that is interested in sustaining the status quo. That is, there is the need to have Muslims professionals, who are well grounded in communication theories, at the forefront of global image reengineering. This is because any response mechanism that is not research-based will only produce haphazard results. Aside, the media system is based on perfect response mechanism that requires keen knowledge of variables that best produce result from mediated communication, be it in setting agenda for public discourse or creating favourable image.

As parts of the working kits, professionals should master and perfect the application of the framing techniques by perfecting the techniques of selection, emphasis, exclusion, and elaboration. Intelligent application of these techniques will help a lot in projecting the truth as it is and without insulting the common sense of the diversified audience. The instruments of selection, exclusion, elaborations, and elaboration are words (choice of words), pictures, contextual reverences, reliable sources used to get into the psyche of the audience without being too obvious in doing so. All these are essential because there is a great need to shatter stereotypes and correct the misinformation about the Muslims in the minds of others in a bid to change the picture in the audiences’ heads. The existing Muslim TV channels and other media of mass communication should do away with showing the ‘Jihadists’ on the screen’ or airing their ‘message of threats’. Having such messages on the screen will only project a wrong image of the Ummah.

Conclusion

Examined in the foregoing is the dilemma of negative representations Islam and the Muslims are facing from the global media system that is Western-dominated. Attempts have also been made to showcase the causes and implications of the negative portrayals of Islam and the Muslims at the global level. In a similar vein, Ideological perspectives to this stereotypical imaging of the Muslim are identified in a bid to offer some response strategies that can reorder and salvage the image of Islam. However, caution must be made that necessary attention should be given to issues of domination being raised by the information ‘have-nots’ in order to evolve a just and balanced world information and communication order upon which every other matter in the globalized world revolves.

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