

Offensive Depictions of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and Muslim Response

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ABSTRACT

The Crusade is an iconic event in history, and violent clashes between Muslims and Christians are still continue in different parts of Europe. In this regard, Western media along with some arrogant people, are playing a central role in provoking the situation towards an unending crisis. The wave of anti-Muslim sentiment and Islamophobia is prevalent in various forms, and media is portraying Islam as a violent religion and Muslims as arrogant or terrorists. Scholars define this moment as the rise of Islamophobia and Xenophobic against Muslims. The controversies and provocations became more severe when the Western media published depictions of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), along with the display of historical artwork. Although it was a longstanding tradition within Islam and Christianity to publish or redraw the pictures of prophets. In contemporary times, Muslims perceive this as offensive. This action not only hurt but also provoked the Muslims around the world. They claimed that visual depictions of the prophets should be prohibited and are particularly averse to visual representations of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). In this context, the key concern is with newspapers, i.e Charlie Hebdo and Jyllands-Posten, which used the images and encouraged idolatry, whereas Islam does not permit depictions of Prophet Muhammad. So, this analysis comprises the work of Western and Muslim scholars and also includes moderate views about the depiction. Nonetheless, there is a need to promote the notion of coexistence based on mutual respect and without that, peace and harmony cannot prevail, which is the beauty of all religions.

Introduction

The clash between Muslims and Christians is centuries old phenomenon and despite many commonalities within the religions, both communities have failed to understand each other. Throughout history the apprehension is prevailing in the West about the Muslim stem from a complex process where historical and political factors are intertwined. Since the Middle Ages, the relations between the Christians and the Muslims imply the handing over of an historical memory of conflicts. The rivalry between Islam and Christianity triggered conflicts of the interests and ideologies tending to turn the other into a Devil (Ismael and Rippin, 2010). Moreover, modern and contemporary developments by West and their cultural superiority have created cultural gap

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and has given rise to deep seated political hostility (Brockopp, 2010). Further, the September 11 (2001) incidents has also dramatically altered the political environment of Muslim and the Western world. Although in all the religions including Islam, the politics and culture are intertwined in a complicated way but because of the publications of the blasphemous caricatures (Cartoons), this development has radically changed the religio-political landscape between the two major ideologies and has also altered the trends in the Muslim world that are most likely to affect Western political and economic interests and security (Williams, 1996).

Caricatures of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) in Western Media

The Western scholars have argued that there is something in the essence of Islam that predisposes its adherents for a violent conflict with the West. Search for “the something” might anyway be an exercise in futility, given that the essentials of the faith are so hotly contested. The negative images of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) in Western media are not a recent phenomenon. It has been operational in Western conceptualization ever since the ideological clash between Islam and Christianity (Halicks, 2006). From the Middle Ages, especially during the Crusades and along the Muslim expansion in Europe till the Third Millennium, the West has promoted almost the same stereotypes of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). They were mostly hostile and most often appeared in illustrations of Dante’s poetry. During the Renaissance and early modern period, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was sometimes depicted, typically in a more neutral or heroic light. It has been noticed that since long Christian world have been negatively portrayed Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and Muslim in books and church sermons by scholars, in paintings, litterateur, poetry, folklore and religious discourse. In the contemporary forms of media - print, radio, TV, video and the Internet are also replete with biases. They have reinvigorated Islamic discourse, developed a series of misconceptions and built up a huge anti-Muslim audience throughout the world which seems fully affected by its historical baggage. However, in the present time, these depictions began to encounter protests from Muslims in the age of electronic media (Internet) and a handful of caricature depictions printed in the European press caused global protests and controversy, and eventually led to violence.

The visual images and cartoons of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) in the West were always infrequent where they have given presentation of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) in terms of images which invented through the printing press and shown in an unflattering manner, often influenced by a brief mention in Dante’s Divine Comedy (Alighieri, 1952). Sometimes, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) presented in Western depictions of groups of influential people in world history and can be found at the United States Supreme Court building in Washington, D.C. (created in 1935), which frieze includes major historical lawgivers and places Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) alongside Hammurabi, Moses, Confucius, and others. There are numerous Western books which has illustrated picture of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) but other than that the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) is also portrayed in a 15th-century fresco *Last Judgement* by Giovanni da Modena and the drawing, Dante’s The Divine Comedy, in the Church of San Petronio, Bologna, Italy, and artwork by Salvador Dalí, Auguste Rodin, William Blake, and Gustave Doré (Buaben, 2011). In the same way, *Der Spiegel* (*The Mirror*), the German news magazine in 1999 printed a picture of “Moral Apostles” - Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), Prophet Jesus (PBUH), Confucius, and Immanuel Kant (Arnold, 2002). In 2005, an episode of 30 Days with Morgan Spurlock, titled “*Muslims and America*,” depicted Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) twice, in a cartoon explaining the origins of Islam. However, the Lars Vilks Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) drawings controversy began in July 2007 with a series of drawings by Swedish artist Lars Vilks which depicted Prophet Muhammad

(PBUH) as around about dog but many art galleries in Sweden declined to show the drawings on ethical and moral grounds (Stone, 2015).

Drawing of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and Calligraphy in Muslim Literature

Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) images in Islamic literature and Art of Calligraphy is a continuous tradition in Islamic history, literature and science. As early as the 8th century, such art flourished during the Abbasid Caliphate (c. 749 - 1258, across Spain, North Africa, Egypt, Syria, Turkey, Mesopotamia, and Persia). Historically, the dominant forms in Islamic art have been geometric, swirling patterns or calligraphic - rather than figurative art. During Ottoman era, the Hilya developed as a decorated visual arrangement of texts about Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) that was displayed as a portrait. Moreover, depictions of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) could be found in Persian manuscripts in the Timurid and Safavid dynasties, Turkish Ottoman Art in the 14th - 17th centuries, and beyond. Perhaps the most elaborate cycle of illustrations of Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) life is the copy, completed in 1595, of the 14th-century biography *Siyer-i Nebi* commissioned by the Ottoman Sultan Murat III for his son, the future Mehmed III, containing over 800 illustrations (Khan, 2014). So, throughout Islamic history, depictions of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) in Islamic art are common and exists a "notable corpus of images of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) produced, mostly in the form of manuscript illustrations, in various regions of the Islamic world from the 13th century to modern times" (Gruber, 2008). Depictions of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) date back to the start of the tradition of Persian miniatures as illustrations in books. The illustrated book from the Persianate world contains the two earliest known Islamic depictions of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). These depictions of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) normally appeared almost exclusively in the private medium of Persian religious art (calligraphy) and other miniature book illustrations. Furthermore, the elaborated form of the calligraphic tradition was founded in the 17th century by the Ottoman calligrapher Hafiz Osman (Peters, 2011). The format customarily starts with a Bismillah, shown on top, and is separated in the middle by the Holy Quran 21:107: "And we have not sent you (Muhammad PBUH) but as a mercy to the worlds" (Brockopp, 2010). Four compartments set around the central one often contain the names of the Rightly-Guided Caliphs, Abu Bakr, Umar, Uthman, and Ali, each followed by "radhi Allahu anhu" (May Allah be pleased with them).

Portraiture of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) in Islamic History

Historically, there are number of literature available in the early Islamic period in which portraits of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) appear and it also happened in other occasions. According to Ibn Wahshiyya and Abu Nu'ayn, Meccan merchant visiting Syria is invited to a Christian monastery where a number of sculptures and paintings depict prophets and seen the images of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and Abu Bakr, as yet unidentified by the Christians (Asani, 1995). In another occasions Al-Maqrizi tells a story in which Muqawqis, ruler of Egypt, meets with Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) envoy and asks the envoy to describe Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). He checked the description against a portrait of prophet on a piece of cloth and description matches the portrait. In a 17th-century Chinese story, the king of China asks to see Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), but Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) instead sends his portrait and the king seen the portrait and converted to Islam (Leslie, 2010).

The study of Christiane Gruber, associate professor of Islamic Art at Michigan University mentioned that many of the images of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) which date from the 1300s were intended only to be viewed privately, to avoid idolatry. He further said, "In some ways they were luxury items, perhaps in libraries for the elite" (Gruber, 2014). The prohibition against

depiction did not stretch everywhere though - many Shia Muslims appear to have a slightly different view. So, the differences in approach among Muslims can be seen along traditional Shia/Sunni lines, but Gruber says that those who claim a historical ban has always existed are wrong (McManus, 1980). Thus, contemporary pictures of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) are still available in some parts of the Muslim world, as Hassan Yousefi Eshkavari, a former Iranian cleric based in Germany mentioned that the images of Prophet Muhammad hang in many Iranian homes: From a religious point of view there is no prohibition on these pictures. These images exist in shops as well as houses. They are not seen as insulting, either from a religious or cultural viewpoint (McManus, 2015). In the same way, Azzam Tamimi, former head of the Institute of Islamic Political Thought (London) told the BBC, “The Quran itself does not say anything,” but it is accepted by all Islamic authorities that the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and the other close companions cannot be drawn and cannot be produced in pictures because they are, according to Islamic faith, infallible individuals, role models and therefore should not be presented in any manner that might cause disrespect for them (McManus, 2015).

However, after the fall of Baghdad, collapse of Ottoman and Mughal empire, Muslims scholars become rigid and decline the depiction or images of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and also avoided visual depictions of others religious personalities such as Prophet Abraham, Prophet Moses or Prophet Jesus. So, the act of drawing pictures of Prophets including Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) becomes unacceptable and intolerable to majority of Muslims. For common Muslims masses this practice seems vilest of sins and a serious religious offence. On the other hand, the western media have been negatively portrayed Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) just to provoke the Muslims for their petty interests. In fact, the problem is not religion but its political use because West desires to find a way out and it seems as if the world inhabited largely by Muslims has now come into conflict with the world inhabited largely by the Christians. However, in this context, Francis Fukuyama is right in claiming that we have reached the “end of history” and whether capitalism has truly triumphed or socialism has merely lost the first round (Broder, 2007). This statement is based on logical arguments when Huntington’s claim that “Islam is a serious potential threat to the West and one of the greatest sources of violence” is clearly debatable. Significantly, the Western people believe that Huntington’s prediction is more disposed to perceive religious Muslims as enemies rather than friends. As a result, this fear of the spread of Islam, whether it is based on reality or not, has the characteristics of a self-fulfilling prophecy that may either cause or exacerbate the spread of conflicts involving political Islam across borders. According to Professor Mona Siddiqui (from Edinburgh University), there's no ruling in the Quran explicitly forbidding the depiction of the Prophet (PBUH). Instead, the idea arose from the Hadiths - stories about the life and sayings of Muhammad gathered in the years after his death. He argued that the depictions of Muhammad, drawn by Muslim artists - dating from the Mongol and Ottoman empires were allowed. In some of them, Muhammad’s facial features are hidden - but it's clear it is him. She says the images were inspired by devotion: “The majority of people drew these pictures out of love and veneration, not intending idolatry” (Siddiqui, 2015).

Depictions of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and Companions in Movies

Muslims have always explicitly prohibited the depiction of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and claimed this act is wrong (haram), and it is not permissible even if some Muslims do that in movies. In 1976 director Mustafa Akkad produced film *‘The Message’*, (known as Muhammad), Messenger of God but never directly showed Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) rather where ever the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was essential to a scene, and the camera would show events from his

point of view (Grabar, 2003). In this context, Islamic scholars of the Azhar and the Shia Council of Lebanon prohibited any representation of Prophet Muhammad and his family as well. The controversial American animated television comedy programme *South Park* depicted Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) as a superhero character in the July 4, 2001 episode “Super Best Friend.” They have also shown Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) in the episode “Cartoon Wars Part II” and handing a salmon helmet to Peter Griffin, a character from the Fox animated series *Family Guy*. On the other hand, director Richard Rich produced an animated film on Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) in 2004 and it was screened in a limited number of movie-theatres in the United States and the Britain (Stevens, 2004). In October 2008, Producer Oscar Zoghbi, who worked on the original “*The Message*,” stated that he would be shooting a remake called *The Messenger of Peace*, to be shot around the holy cities of Mecca and Medina (Gruber, 2008 & 2013). Moreover, the films, which are financed by a Qatari media company and will be supervised by the Egyptian cleric Yusuf al-Qaradawi, are unlikely to depict Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) at all on screen as per Sunni tradition which sees all renderings of the Prophet as blasphemous (Safi, 2010). In fact, many movies were based on the early period of Islam and opposed by many Muslim organisations. However, the video clip on *The Real Life of Prophet Muhammad* (PBUH), popularly known ‘*Innocence of Muslims*’ (14-minute duration) created by Nakoula Basseley Nakoula and produced in July 2012. It was perceived as denigrating of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and become cause of violent protests against the video among the Muslims in the world. On the other side, depictions of other Prophets and Sahaabah or companions are also common in western movie culture. There are many movies in which Hollywood shown Jesus Christ and produced idea on the crucifixion, in accordance with what is mentioned in the Holy Qur’an (Four Movies on life of Prophets). Although Muslims believe that the Christ was not crucified and killed, and the Holy Qur’an clearly states that we do not agree that this should be presented in theatrical or cinematic form in which a person acts the part of the Christ.

Danish Newspaper and French Magazine Cartoons

“The clash of civilizations” among the Muslims and Christians is an effort to lay out elements of a post-Cold War paradigm. As the civilization paradigm accounting for trouble citing when in October 2004 one of the lecturers at the Niebuhr Institute at the University of Copenhagen (Sweden) was assaulted by five assailants who opposed Bluitgen’s reading of Quran to non-Muslims (Serensen, 2006). On 30 September 2005, the Danish newspaper *Jyllands-Posten* (*The Jutland Post*), the first paper to publish 12 offensively racist caricatures under the title of “*Muhammad Ansigt*” (The Face of Prophet Muhammad) were a direct attack on the Muslims for their faith, culture and self-determination (*Jyllands-Posten*, 2005). Most of the cartoons were significantly provocative in which three drawings portrayed the “Prophet Muhammad” as a pedophile devil, with pigs’ ears and having sex with a dog (Asani, 1995).

In 2005, Danish newspaper *Jyllands-Posten* published a set of editorial cartoons, many of which depicted Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). In late 2005 and early 2006, Danish Muslim organizations ignited a controversy through public protests and by spreading knowledge of the publication of the cartoons. According to John Woods, Islamic history professor at the University of Chicago, it was not simply the depiction of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) that was offensive, but the implication that Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was somehow a supporter of terrorism. Moreover, an online caricature competition was announced in support of *Jyllands-Posten* but Foreign Affairs Ministry and the Swedish Security Service pressured the internet service provider to turn down. Moreover, the controversy gained international attention after the Orebro-based

regional newspaper *Nerikes Allehanda* published one of the drawings on August 18, 2006 to illustrate an editorial on self-censorship and freedom of religion (*The Times*, 2002). While several other leading Swedish newspapers had already published the drawings, this particular publication led to protests from Muslims in Sweden as well as official condemnations from several foreign governments including Iran, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Egypt and Jordan, as well as by the inter-governmental Organisation of the Islamic Countries (OIC). The controversy occurred about one and a half years after the *Jyllands-Posten* Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) cartoons controversy in Denmark in early 2006. In the subsequent weeks, the magazine received protests, petitions and threats against publishing the picture of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). In 2002, Italian police reported that they had disrupted a group of people out to destroy a church in Bologna, which contains a 15th-century fresco depicting an image of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) (Bluitgen, 2005).

Moreover, in different cartoons the artist has shown the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) wearing a bomb shaped turban with a burning fuse, depicting the caricature of Muslims as terrorists. The artist showed Muslims as representatives of Islam and has attempted to paint their prophet as terrorist. This action plays into a widespread perception among Muslims across the world that many in the Western world harbour hostility and create fear of Islam and Muslims. Flemming Rose, the cultural editor of *Jyllands-Posten* commented on the cartoons. In this regard, Muslims demanding special consideration on their religious feelings and claims that depiction is incompatible with contemporary democracy and freedom of speech. It is certainly not always attractive and nice to look at and it does not mean that religious feelings should be made fun of at any price, but that is of minor importance in the present context. So, Muslims are on their way to a slippery slope where no-one can tell them how the self-censorship will end.

Before the publication of cartoons on September 17, 2005 the Danish newspaper *Politiken* published an article “*Dyb angst for kritik af Islam*” (Profound fear of criticism of Islam) and the author discussed critically about Islam. He was unable to find an illustrator who was prepared to work with Bluitgen on his children’s book *Koranen og profeten Mubammeds liv* (The Quran and the Life of the Prophet Muhammad) and described that Islam is based on fabricated ideas (*The Middle East Times*, 2006). The supporter of the cartoons claims that they illustrate an important issue in a period of Islamic extremist terrorism and that their publication is a legitimate exercise of the right of “free speech”. They also claim that the similar cartoons about other religions including Christianity are frequently published in different parts of the world and in the Danish newspaper the followers of Islam were not targeted in a discriminatory way. The cartoonist who had drawn the *bomb in turban* picture, the most controversial cartoon during February 2006 explained:

“There are interpretations of it [the drawing] that are incorrect. The general impression among Muslims is that it is about Islam as a whole. It is not. It is about certain fundamentalist aspects that of course are not shared by everyone. But the fuel for the terrorists acts stem from interpretations of Islam. [...] if parts of a religion develop in a totalitarian and aggressive direction, then I think you have to protest. We did so under the other isms” (Akkoc, 2015).

In March 2013, Al-Qaeda’s branch in Yemen, commonly known as Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, released a hit list in an edition of their English-language magazine *Inspire*. The list included Stéphane Charbonnier, Lars Vilks, three *Jyllands-Posten* employees involved in the Prophet Muhammad’s (PBUH) cartoon controversy, Molly Norris from the “Everybody Draw Mohammed Day” and others whom Al-Qaeda accused of insulting Islam.

In the same way, the French satirical weekly magazine *Charlie Hebdo* published a series of crude caricatures of the Prophet Muhammad on July 17, 2015 under the title “*The Innocence of Muslims*,” in which printed the illustrations, some of which depict Prophet Muhammad naked and in pornographic poses. The establishment of Charlie Hebdo announced that they would make a comic book on the life of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) (*Jyllands-Posten*, 2005 & 2006). The absurd video and printing images viewed as a provocation and strong emotions have been awakened in many Muslim countries. In this regard, the explanation from the publishers of *Jyllands-Posten* and *Charlie Hebdo* is not enough because soon after the publication of cartoons, a video surface showing members of the Danish People’s Party’s (DPP) youth wing drawn pictures that insult the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and this action also led to renewed tension between Muslims and Christians. In this regard, Danish artists group “Defending Denmark” claimed responsibility for the video and claimed that it had infiltrated the Danish People’s Party youth which is part of extremely right-wing association (Al-Maqdesi, 2004). A few days later a new episode surfaced, when a member of the Social-Liberal Youth Movement (SLYM) stated that members of the party had also drawn pictures of “Muhammad” in party meeting. Moreover, the Western conservatives and orthodox-Catholics used Muslims reaction to prove in a bad-light to the masses that Muslims and Islam are emotional, ignorant, intolerant and narrow-minded. Most of the anti-Muslim elements framed the matter as one between Islam and freedom of expression which was useful banner under which the most diverse sectors of society can unite in the name of Western values (European values). The office of *Charlie Hebdo* was attacked again on January 7, 2015 and 12 people were shot dead including Stephane Charbonnier, the editor. The attack was widely reported and drew worldwide condemnation. However, the attack itself and the reaction to it also exposed the divisions in French society as well as the hypocrisy of what is called the civilized world. It is also fact that cartoons of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) on cover pages of Charlie Hebdo magazine were outrageous, provocative and intended to hurt the sentiments of Muslims across the world.

Muslim *Shariah* and *Hadith* on Depictions

Muslims views about visual depictions of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) are not acceptable; however, oral and written descriptions are readily accepted by all traditions of Islam. There are many *Hadith* which have explicitly prohibited drawing of images of Prophet Muhammad and also banned visual depictions of figures. In general, Muslim *Shariah* does not allow insulting the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) or for that purpose even no other prophet and it is considered one of the most heinous crimes attracting major penalty. The Prophet’s life and thoughts, as revealed through the *Hadith*, (Traditions), is central to Islam and a model for Muslims to emulate. Thus, the sayings of the prophet, all depictions of Muhammad (PBUH), however complimentary, are idolatrous. As such, the image of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) cannot be depicted. Some interpretations of the *Shariah*, in particularly the *Salafi* group claimed that “any insult to Prophet Muhammad warrants death” (Sallaabee, 1996). The Holy *Quran* also condemns idolatry but has no direct prohibitions of pictorial art as such in which Muslims should follow strictly. However, Ibn Umar reported Allah’s messenger (Prophet Muhammad) having said: “Those who paint pictures would be punished on the day of resurrection and it would be said to them: Breathe soul into what you have created (Atil, 1995). Thus, the majority art concerning Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) which is calligraphic in nature is not allowed because the tradition of aniconism in Islam is not permitted (Arnold, 1982). Islamic art is an outgrowth of Late Antique art that does not mean that Islamic art is only late Antique art, or even that most of Late Antique art survives in Islamic art.

The most obvious difference between the two is the lack of figural representation in Islamic religious art and a shift in the use of figural representation in secular art in the Islamic world.

Moreover, Muslim never welcomed painting or physical presentation of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) as Buddhism and Christianity have done. Mosques have never been decorated with religious pictures, nor has a pictorial art been employed for the instruction of the heathen or for the edification of the faithful (Huntington, 1993). In this regard, a statue of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was removed in 1955 from a courthouse in New York City after the ambassadors of Indonesia, Pakistan and Egypt requested its removal. The monumental sculpture of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) perceived to be offensive to Muslims, as the statue is the classic form of idols, and fear of any hint of idolatry is the basis of Islamic prohibitions. In this respect, Muslims are criticizing lofty principles of west and believed that the imaginary and insulting caricature of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) is an insult and teasing satire on the faith of billion Muslims. Furthermore, ridiculing and insulting the holiest figure in Islam is intolerable and unacceptable to majority of Muslims. The abominable act of drawing hurtful cartoons of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) by the Western media from time to time have shown willful disrespect to Muslim emotions across the world. For Muslims, portrayal of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) is the vilest of sins and a serious religious offence. But in the contemporary time, the Western media have made it their profession to provoke the Muslims, and defame the religion of Truth and its Prophet Muhammad.

The Clash of Civilization Controversy

Samuel Huntington's argues in the "Clash of Civilizations" that future wars will be fought not on ideological lines, but due to cultural and 'civilizational' differences and affinities (Huntington, 1993). Huntington's declared that "in the new phase of global history the fundamental sources of conflict are not economic but cultural in nature." For Huntington, all civilizations have a primordial cultural identity and in future "major differences will be clearly rooted in their different cultures." He warned that the rivalry of the superpowers has replaced by the clash of civilizations" and it will be the fault lines between civilizations and it will be the battle lines of the future." In this regard, the two civilizations are more importance in this narrative of battles and these are Islam and the West because Islam and the West are two different thoughts and "highly opposite civilizations" (Fuller, 1999). The cartoon of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) published by a Danish newspaper and French magazine, which provoked angry reactions and protests in the Muslim world, is just one of the hundreds of incidents that reflect, if not prove, an inability to communicate and co-exist. This lack of co-existence of cultures, religions and civilizations follows waves of hatred and fighting over centuries, with some short moments of reconciliation. "Clash -vs- co-existence" has defined the relationship between Islam and the West, which is might difficult but not impossible because there are chances that people from both religion can live together with "reconciliation" and can provide a solid foundation to stay under one umbrella. In this regard, the United States has its share of "holy men" who claim that Muslims are evil and that morality has no place in a war against an evil enemy (Ruthven, 2016). At the moment, it seems that the conflict driven by xenophobes based on anxieties and existential fears generated in a rapidly changing world and the clash of civilizations theories make sense of their basic alienation by incriminating others who are involved to convert the world into a disturbed mess. Nonetheless, there are difference in values, perspectives and opinions on many issues and it perceived that the current political differences are beyond human capacity to solve. Moreover, Muslims all over the world also condemned the attacks, as did a number of mainstream Islamists

organizations in the world denounced the “criminal attack” and stating that “true Islam does not encourage violence” (Kirabaev, 2001).

Cultural Tolerance in Islam

Cultural tolerance is one of the beauties of world religions including Islam and Abbasid era in Islamic history was cited as a golden model for cultural tolerance because at that time Muslims, Christians and Jews worked together and contributed significantly towards socio-cultural development. They produced an Islamic synthesis and renaissance that served as a bridge between all religious communities including Greek, Roman, and Persian cultures and modern European Renaissance. This was principally accomplished by the establishment of a Dar al-Hikmah by Khalifa Mamun operating during the third and fourth centuries of the Islamic era. However, after the emergence of new nation states, Islamic art does not give intellectual scope and power of antique art, which is derived from its human interest as well as its own abstract qualities. Islamic art moved away from its classical heritage by leaving artistic narrative to speech and written work rather than displaying it in pictures, which alluded to the world of ideas by way of emblematic reference or explicit words: cycles and inscriptions. The allusions were to a literary tradition that like so many others is healthy in metaphors and are learned by memory, so that it could be called to mind at any time.

Thus, Islamic or Muslim culture did not lack human interest but it did not look for it in a modern standpoint which is pleased to call art, a category not really applicable to the subject at hand. Moreover, the non-figural Islamic art is concerned with control, balance, and regularity; it is severely self-referential. The focus is on pattern rather than on organic forms. There is plenty of freedom of execution, ambiguity, and harmonic imbalance in Islamic art. But even when figures are involved, the viewer’s reflexive comparison of them to the real-life appearance of people is not what gives the figures artistic interest (Broder, 2006). Further, the development of an Islamic art distinct from other post-antique Western traditions is the result of a profound cultural redeployment in which Muslims steeped in “Late Antique” culture reorganized the Near East’s network of cultural contacts and slowly cut loose from its Late Antique past. While language of Arabic defined the limits of its new empire, an aniconic religion left no central cultural story to be told by visual narrative (Miller, 2015). In this regard, early Islamic civilization was essentially not hostile or indifferent to images. If one considers the Mediaeval West or Byzantium and ignores their religious art, where stories are narrated constantly and even urgently, there is hardly more figural art to be found than in the Islamic world. It is not until the Renaissance that the humanistic focus of the art of antiquity was regained, and the humanistic culture that had made antique art possible had died long before Prophet Muhammad. However, there is no dearth of secular Islamic figural art, a field in which there is much cultural variation around the world. The non-figural art of the Islamic world is much more than mere decoration; it is a serious and visually intriguing exploration of pattern. Thus, despite differences in perspectives, dialogue between West (European) and the Muslims is possible, provided it is not accompanied by cultural and political domination. In the recent past, the dialogue between Ayatollah Taskhiri (Iran) and Archbishop of Canterbury (Church of England) is the best example of cultural harmony. Moreover, “war is easy peace is difficult” (Vallely, 2006).

Status of Images in Islam

The understanding of Islam is sorely lacking in the West and the cultural gap has roots in the fact that Christianity—like Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism—is essentially an iconographic religion, San Fernando Valley observed and said, “Islam has traditionally prohibited images of humans and

animals altogether which is why much Islamic art is made up of decorative calligraphy or abstract arabesque patterns. Throughout history Muslims have cast out, destroyed or denounced all images, whether carved or painted, as idolatry” (Arnold, 1928). In fact, the traditional Muslim theological objection to images, which may have been observed more in the breach than in ordinary life, was eventually codified in quite a rigid form and extended to the depiction of all animate beings. It is captured in the prediction that “on the Day of Judgment the punishment of hell will be meted out to the painter, and he will be called upon to breathe life into the forms that he has fashioned; but he cannot breathe life into anything....In fashioning the form of a being that has life, the painter is usurping the creative function of God” (Grabar, 1955).

In this regard, to explain the *aniconism* of Islamic religious art, it is necessary to set early Islamic religious art in its historical context, to understand at least partly its manifestation in the mosque and also to indicate why later Islamic religious art did not cast-off *aniconism* and adopt figural representation. So, there is a clear contrast with official “Byzantine Iconoclasm” on this point: in Byzantium it was pictures of the saints, of Christ, and of God that were forbidden because they might be worshipped; these images could be replaced with scenes of the circus or hippodrome, which certainly do not lack animate subjects (Allen, 1988). However, within Muslims views have varied regarding pictorial representations. Shia Muslims have been generally tolerant of pictorial representations of human figures, including Muhammad. The contemporary Sunni Muslims or Sunni *Shariah* generally forbids any pictorial representation of Muhammad but has had periods allowing depictions of Prophet Muhammad’s face covered with a veil or as a featureless void emanating light. A few contemporary interpretations of Islam, such as some adherents of *Wahhabism* and *Salafism* are *aniconistic* and condemn pictorial representations of any kind of images of Prophet Muhammad (Rose, 2006).

With this background, the publication of cartoons is described Islamophobic or racist. Muslim scholars claim that people who did that are blasphemous towards the people of Muslim faith who have intended to humiliate a Danish minority, or have a manifestation of ignorance about history of the Western imperialism, colonialism to current conflicts in South and Southwest Asia. The *Washington Post*, explained the matter that “the cartoonists treated Islam the same way they treat Christianity, Buddhism, Hinduism and other religions” (Jarvis, 2006). The US State Department spokesman, Sean McCormack, pronounced that the display of “anti-Muslim images” is just as “unacceptable” as that of anti-Semitic images, anti-Christian images, or images attacking any other religious belief (Clinton, 2009). Bill Clinton also condemned publication of blasphemous caricatures in the western media and urged the concerned countries to prosecute the publishers. He mentioned that it was a time to promote inter-faith harmony in the world and religious convictions of the people should be respected at all costs and no media should be allowed to play with the religious sentiments of people of any religious faith (*The Dawn*, 2006). In the same way, Pakistan’s former President Pervez Musharraf said, “I have been hurt, grieved and I am angry.” Egyptian former President Hosni Mubarak said “the cartoons will fuel terrorism” and warned about the long-term repercussions of the campaign of insults against the noble Prophet and irresponsible management of these repercussions will provide further excuses to the forces of radicalism and terrorism.” The Turkish government also condemned the publication as a “mistake”. Ibrahim Kalin, senior political advisor to Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan, wrote on Twitter that “to transform the life of the prophet of Islam into a cartoon is in itself a mistake,” and “Whatever the people at Charlie Hebdo say, this is a provocation” (Nomskey, 2006).

However, the reaction of Muslim world was obvious which led to worldwide protests and unrest. It was merely a taste of what was to come, a dress rehearsal for the kinds of disputes, the West could expect to face in the future if it does not rethink its current policy of annoyance. Moreover, in many Western countries they have laws against anti-Semitism which are exclusive while they do not protect other cultures from racial attacks. However, they have given an opportunity to “others” to insult the prophet of Islam with offensive cartoons and have created an atmosphere of hatred for Muslims but dare not tread on the special rights and protections they have formed laws to protect Semitism. Thus, Western media defended the freedom of speech in the name of opposing “radical Islam” and deliberately stirring up hatred against the Muslims. According to Noam Chomsky, the West has used freedom of speech as a weapon against the Muslims and oppressed people and has justified their actions to incite religious and ethnic hatred (*BBC News*, 2006). Moreover, these kind of incidents do not invalidate a civilizational approach rather it is historical significant precisely because it is between two different civilizations who have ideological conflict for a long time and which still continues (Hansen, 2015).

Ironically, Western people perceived that in the contemporary time, only the West have most modern society and their values are greater than the East and the clash of civilizations is replacing the central phenomenon of global politics (Fuller, 1995). The West also calculated that the existence of Western culture is threatened by the Muslims, although the situation is diametrically different. When the Muslims feel under particular intense cultural pressure by Western system of international marketing and the communication create freeways for the mass import of foreign cultural materials such as food, drugs, clothing, music, films, books, television programmes even Muslim values ultimately lose the control over their societies, symbols and myths. Such cultural anxieties are welcome fuel to more radical political groups that call for cultural authenticity, preservation of traditional and religious values and rejection of the alien cultural antigens (Game, 2006). In this regard, Graham Fuller’s arguments are very different and made it assumption that the “next ideology” who will oppose to West will be Third World regimes whose will in likely to represent an amalgam of opposition to its values and institutions. Thus, civilizational clash” is not so much over Jesus Christ, Confucius, or the Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) as it is over the unequal distribution of world power, wealth, influence and the perceived historical lack of respect accorded to small states and peoples by large ones. So, culture is the vehicle for expression of conflict, not its cause. But the problem with the Western people is that they assumed that Western culture, in all its aspects, is superior to other cultures including Muslims as John Game mentioned that the West imagining that Muslims belongs to “inferior culture” (Esposito, 2003). Moreover, for the West, there is less escape from the existing realities of the world; the chaos and turmoil in various regions have created serious ripple effects that will not leave the rest of the globe untouched: wars, refugees, sanctions, weapons of mass destruction, radical ideology and terrorism all emerge from the crucible of the failing state order and within their own societies on practical as well as moral grounds.

The Western Islamophobia and Muslim Reaction

The confrontation between Islamic and Western civilizations narrative are rooted both in history, geopolitical tensions and in the politicized cultural legacies of the past. In this regard, inter-group relations and self-perception plays a profound role of conditioning the ways as the Western people perceived against the Muslims. Moreover, material issues and national interests also played a significant role within inter-group conflict, cultural differences and ultimately powerfully affect the way in which conflict symbolized and conducted. In this context, culturally charged

perceptions determine the meaning that estranged groups give to their conflict and the meaning that groups give to their real and imagined differences defines the quality of relations between the West and Muslims (Mamdani, 2004). It is interesting to note that Islam has been a factor in the definition of Western identity for centuries, consistently playing the role as a “rival” and theological or ideological “other” and presented by early Christians with both a political and a theological challenge. This eventually gave rise to the conception of Islam as a religion of the sword. So, the images of Islam have been shaped by the perception that Muslim or Islamic culture represses women, encourages intolerant fundamentalism and excuses terrorism. So, the West has remained preoccupied with the previous ideas grown in cultural prominence during times of direct political conflict, while Islam is viewed as alien, intrusive, and aggressive.

Historically, the principal factor of Muslim retaliation vis-à-vis the West began with the loss of Spain in the 15th century and later the collapse of Ottoman Empire over a large swath of Eastern Europe. Moreover, contemporary Muslims remember the year 1492, due to the fall of the kingdom of Granada which was the last Arab Islamic presence in the West. So, this year marks the beginning of the end of Islamic era in the East and rise of European state system as a non-Western phenomenon. That time also marked to decreased the Muslim influence in Europe and in general this factor also reduced their power position in international politics, leaving the European for reshaping the modern world. During that era Muslim faced grave difficulties to establish political legitimacy, not only on account of the cultural and ethnic diversity of their subject peoples but also because Islam has traditionally sought to subordinate the principles of nationality, ethnicity, and territoriality to the bonds of religious solidarity. Moreover, Muslims become frustrated and started to abuse the West in term of moral decay, disintegration of family values and ignored that Westerns accentuate the value of individual freedom in their critiques of contemporary Islam. On the other hand, Western society educate themselves and developed freedom of the individual from political, religious, and cultural coercion is enshrined in a social system that limits arbitrary abuses of personal power. Thus, in response of the West, the Muslims did not modernize itself and start criticism and deeply involved with political conflict and the politics of ideological self-justification, in which the ideal invoked matters more than the effects of the act undertaken.

The Western rhetoric on freedom and democracy has often accompanied support for repressive leaders; just as invocations of Islamic spiritual and community values have been used to defend actions that constitute their antithesis. Moreover, in the Muslim world, there is not a single, static image of the West, but rather an assortment of images and associations. As political disputes become acute, the politics of identity becomes heated and adversarial images move from the background of awareness to the foreground. Further, the West also portrayed Islam through a prism of intolerance and violence, to such an extent that many of those who seek to add complexity to ideas of an “Islamic threat” end up staking out a simplistic “Good Muslim,” “Bad Muslim” dichotomy (Akbar, 2002). Moreover, the dominant image of Islam in the West conveys the idea that the religion of approximately one fifth of humanity is an intolerantly ideological and prone to violence. As a result, the Western attitudes toward Islam and Muslims overwhelmingly on threads of hatred and fear articulated through religious discourse without reflection on the complex and deeply conflicted situations in which these sentiments emerge.

The notion of struggle between “Islamic civilization” and “the Western civilization” is a recent transmutation of a much older theme, in which the terms of reference for Christian cultures have been redefined by secularization of the public sphere and of collective identity and by the simultaneous definition of an “Eastern” or “Orient” through which Western and their descendants

on other continents might come to know their own contrasting distinctiveness. Likewise, the Muslims in the world have developed a greater sense of their own identity and values based only on religion just to defend itself. Apart from the historic bitterness between the Muslims and Western Christians, there are many self-created visions and ills that afflict both communities and generate much of the extremism in which both are concerned about derive from—and contribute to—economic and political failure. Thus, in the Muslim world this situation leads to the concept of structural anti-Westernism. This concept also holds that Muslim anger has deep roots in the political and social structures of Muslim countries and support by the United States policies merely provides the content and opportunity for the expression of reaction. Moreover, the decentralization of religious authority in Sunni Islam, which makes it vulnerable to manipulation by extremists with scant religious credentials, is also responsible for extremism in the Muslim world. Moreover, the myths of the Crusades are powerful indeed in the minds of Muslims and Christians. As late as the 1920s following the battle of Maissaloun, when the French General Henri Gouraud entered Damascus (Syria), and visited the famous tomb just outside the Omayyad Mosque where he knocked on its door and said to its inmate: “Saladin, listen, we have returned” (Marsham, 2021).

In this regard, the book written by John Laffin, an expert of religion, politics and commentator is entitled “*The Dagger of Islam*” invoking the memory of the Crusades to understand the nature of extremist Christians (Laffin, 1988). Analysts believe that the Crusaders returning to Europe from Syria in the 12th and 13th centuries brought with them the word assassin, the name which they gave to an *Ismaili* sect led by Hassan Bin-Sabbah (The Old Man of the Mountain) practicing religious terrorism under the influence of hallucinatory *hashish*, derived from marijuana (Renan, 1996). The terrorists were called *hashashin* (hence assassin). Gradually, the word became synonymous with murderer, though assassin is the stronger term. Seven centuries after the Crusaders startled Europe with the first stories of the assassins (a religious sect often referred to as a Hashshashin), the world is now viewing Muslim assassins at work again through global television networks such as the CNN, BBC, Fox T.V and other Western media. Thus, such a media image of Islam represents a universalist and humane world religion as parochial, monolithic, reactionary, and pathological with a crusading spirit. And to offer irrefutable evidence in defense of this sometimes explicit and sometimes implicit message, the media uncritically assumes that the Islamic religion is based on the pursuit of domination and power. In the situation, the sarcastic and ironical views about Islam and the West pragmatic scholars seems dichotomized, dramatized, and demonized. A careful reading of Islamic and Western histories and ideologies would teach us that we cannot make grand generalizations about their inherent and unchanging qualities (Akhavi, 2003). Ideologies are inextricably tied to the historical conditions out of which they emerge; they evolve with the changes in the historical conditions to which they have to adapt. The truth is that Islam began as a *universal* rather than parochial message of hope in the Judaic and Christian prophetic traditions. Some scholars call Islam by the name of Muhammadanism as some Orientalist scholars have done is misleading and from a Muslim point of view, a sacrilege (Kalmar, 2012). The Islamists split into factionalism and civil war soon after the death of Prophet Muhammad and has not to the present day recovered from the deep ideological divisions that pluralize Islam. Thus, ideas of Islam as a monolithic ideological and political force, therefore, fly in the face of historical as well as contemporary realities.

Moreover, Islam and the West have been caught up in a fourfold vicious round of misunderstanding: such as the Western misunderstandings of Islam, Islamic misunderstandings about the West. The root causes of these misunderstandings are historical as well as contemporary.

However, Islamic militancy has been a blessing in disguise (Bar, 2004). Western singular inability to the acknowledge their own part in bringing about such tragedies as the ones in Palestine-Israel, Kashmir-India, Iran, Iraq, Algeria and Afghanistan presents another obstacle to the reconciliation. Short-sighted economic and political policies in the Middle East or Persian Gulf, for instance, have often created Frankenstein monsters such as Saddam Hussein whose greed and ambition violated their own people as well as their neighbors. Furthermore, confined and anachronistic interpretations of Islam continue to strip this young religion of its ability to deal imaginatively and creatively with the problems of religious faith and practice in the modern world (Rahman, 2001). By succumbing to the totalitarian temptation, some factions of Muslim militants or extremists also run the risk of alienating the most intelligent and patriotic sectors of the population away from Islam and towards rival ideologies, cynicism and opportunism. Thus, as a religious faith and as a social and political worldview, Islam has a vital part to play in the contemporary world alongside those competing and complementary worldviews embedded in modern sciences and ideologies.

Causes of Muslims Hatred

After the incidents of cartoon portrayals of Muhammad (PBUH) in Western countries newspapers, the Muslims strongly protested in many European and Muslim countries. They also shown resistance against the policies of Western countries including the United States who imposed wars on Iraq, Iran, and Afghanistan. The immediate causes adduced for anti-Western feelings among the Muslims that the United States and European countries overwhelming supporting Israel, India who are involved in atrocities and brutalities against the Muslims. They emerged as a de facto and de jure defender and supporter of Israel who is involved in brutal killing of helpless people.

Muslim have logical opinion that the United States forcefully and decisively protected Israel to secure their vested interest. Another important factor which has created more hatred against the West among the Muslims is the US support and backing to the Muslim corrupt, tyrannical and undemocratic regimes. Moreover, most of Muslims believe that Western nations' disrespect for the Islamic religion without any sound reasons. Muslims also feeling the prevailing economic as well as cultural disparity is also one of the severe causes of frustration between Muslims and the West (Ciftci, 2012). So, the words Islamic fundamentalism in the West conjures up images of bearded men with turbans and women covered in black shrouds. With this background, Muslims generally assumed that Westerner government seems to be selective, immoral and inhuman in dealing to Muslims. The Western media portrayed that Muslims are aggressive, fanatic, and have no tolerance. On the other side, some scholars believe that majority Muslim countries are economically weak, governments and elites are corrupt, common masses are lacking education and governance system is very bleak. Moreover, the truth of Islam rests not so much on its current social and political doctrines as on its ability to give solace to humanity perennial ontological insecurities. Religion is the sigh of the oppressed and the hope of disenfranchised (Esposito, 2003). On that score, Islam seems to have proved itself of sufficient depth and adaptability to suit different historical and social circumstances ranging from the most primitive to the most advanced. Nevertheless, militant interpretation of the faith is, therefore, just another phase in the evolution of Islam that has to be understood not so much in terms of abstract notions of what a utopian "Islamic Society" is as in terms of the historically specific circumstances out of which these interpretations have emerged.

The Contemporary Muslim World

The contemporary Muslim world is radicalized by the political Islam and it perceived that the modern Islamist movements are the main vehicle for this perception and the break-up of the old “dinosaur” regimes (Omilusi, 2021). For radical Islamist, religion cannot be limited strictly to the realm of personal faith and private life: Islam has things to say about society and what it sees as the just political order that has strong implications for contemporary politics. Unlike Christianity, Islam was concerned with politics and governance from the start: the Muslim rule that developed in the lifetime of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) required attention to principles of community life, justice, and administration, relations with non-Muslims, defence and foreign policy (Hakim, 2005). Moreover, the Prophet came not to protect the status quo, but to reform and change and Women, for instance, were given legal status and concrete legal protection within society.

The majority of Muslim looks at the status quo in the Islamic world and do not like it. In place of good governance, they are looking authoritarianism, repression, corruption, incompetence, social and economic hardship-an unacceptable situation that calls out for change. The Western norms were derived from the British Magna Carta, the French Revolution, or the principles of the American Declaration of Independence; but in Islam they are derived from ideas in the Quran and the sayings and the doings of the Prophet Muhammad (*Hadith*). It is, therefore, quite normal for Muslims to speak in non-Western terms. They look to the past as a philosophical model, not as a mode of daily life to be emulated today. And they differ about what to do, other than honour the basic principles of Islam. The ideas of democracy are gaining ever greater prominence among large numbers of Muslim thinkers. But they do not advocate uncritical acceptance of Western systems. Instead, they seek to derive democratic principles from Muslim concepts of *shura* (consultation)-the idea that government must reflect the wishes of the people, to whom God has given the gift of reason. On the other hand, most of the Muslims are active in promoting extremism and sectarianism which is the ultimate reaction of present days failed, incompetent or repressive regimes. They demand the right to criticize ruling elites and a voice in the governing process. As a result, Muslim extremists support and even practice violence in all over the Muslim world and particularly in Afghanistan, Algeria, Egypt, Iran, and Pakistan, they have often been denied access to the political system and are subjected to state violence. Muslims are currently among the most active forces in the Islamic world in calling for change of undemocratic system and respect for human rights but one way and another way things are habitually denied.

The role of women is one of the features most frequently criticized in the Western media, sometimes with good reason. For instance, the Taliban and extremist views on women in Afghanistan and Iran is particularly primitive and is rejected as non-Islamic by many Muslims, who are currently engaged in a great debate about the role of women in society. They have a conservative vision that places emphasis on the special place of women as guardians of the home, rearing the children and transmitting moral values (Haj, 2013). There is a fear of the perceived corruption of Western societies in which women turn into “sexual objects” or are commercially exploited, leading to a breakdown of social and family values. It is only in Afghanistan (as an Islamic state), however, that women are not permitted to work and not allowed for education. Thus, the dilemma of women’s positions in Muslim society stems not so much from the principles of Islam itself, but from extremely conservative interpretations of Islam or from the practice of traditional customs considered to be “Islamic’ or “Muslim.”

A new breed of Islamist feminist is emerging in many countries, including Iran, Pakistan, Turkey, Malaysia, and Egypt that demands “real” Islam, not tradition. Women are studying the *Quran* and Islamic law in order to challenge conservative, male-dominated interpretations, reject

tradition and demand application of true Islamic norms. Moreover, defining the role of Muslim women in Islamic society is very critical as the matter of *Hijab* (head cover) is a hot issue of the present day. In fact, *Hijab* or *Scarf* for Muslim women is not mandated in the *Quran* because it is only the subjective interpretation and never impose in any party of Islamic history as today some religious section interpreted (Haj, 2013). According to interpretation of *hadith*, a woman should cover her whole body, except her face and hands. The majority of Muslims do not know in which *hadith* permitted to the Muslims and this has been mentioned in *Sunan Abu Dawud*. Thus, Muslim woman does not have to take the veil, it is not in the Koran. According to Abu Dawud this is a *mursal* tradition that when a woman reaches the age of puberty, she must observe *pardah* and have a thick veil which conceals her beauty but she may unveil her face and hands up to the wrists. According to Queen Rania al-Abdullah of Jordan, "Islam does not require women to wear veils and Islam neither requires one to be practicing, nor to dress in one way or another. So, imposing the veil on the woman is contrary to the principles of Islam" (Euben, 1999: 89). Moreover, it is interesting to note that no one within the Muslim scholars ever mentioned that this is a *mursal* (weak) *hadith* and the weak (*da'if*) *ahadith* have no value for the purpose of *Shari'ah*. In this regard, no Muslim government can pass laws or use pressure on a Muslim woman who does not observe *hijab*, particularly covering the hair on her head. Nevertheless, religion is the sigh of the oppressed and the hope of disenfranchised. On that score, Islam seems to have proved itself of sufficient depth and adaptability to suit different historical and social circumstances ranging from the most primitive to the most advanced.

The Dilemma of Muslims and the Western Civilisations

The conflict between Muslims and the West is basically the product of an inevitable clash of incompatible civilizations and values. In fact, the contemporary conflicts are not products of conflicting political interests and rational calculations itself but cultural differences matter, to such a degree that large groups of people in both the West and in the Muslim world believe that conflict is inevitable. In this regard, the Muslims have a contradictory image in the Western society and it is perceived that Muslim world is full of interminable religious conflicts (Nasr, 2018). Mainland additional Arabs (Bedouin) are enjoying luxurious life with expensive vehicles and camel caravans. Their military leaders with starched khakis entertained inarticulate veiled women and immodest belly dancers, shrouded saints in sandals and tyrants in palatial estates. On the other hand, Westerners are inclined to believe with an array of images and associations that the Muslim's image have at least a provisional basis in reality, but are often more representative of Western media including Hollywood rather than of day-to-day life. However, the dominant perceptions of Muslims and the Western cultural differences is exaggerated and distorted. Both experience the reality of the "other" vicariously; commercial programming and opportunistic political discourses mediate experiences of the "other" by accentuating the strange, the sensational, and the shocking, with a minimum of interpretive context. Moreover, Western media has given complex impression about Muslims, particularly women is totally negative and even provided disturbing interpretations of Islamic values which is not authentic and widely accepted.

In addition, the events such as the Persian Gulf War II, the incident of September 11 (2001), escalating violence between Israelis-vs-Palestinians and Indian atrocity in occupied Kashmiris has provoked anti-Western feeling among the Muslims. Ironically, after the events of 9/11 when Muslims from different parts of world most likely visited the United States and European countries, they faced humiliating treatment by the airports security and wide cross-section such as; cab-man (taxi drivers) students, street man, shopkeepers, and bazaar merchants. Thus, the problem

is not the cultural gap, miscommunication or misguided policies of governments but rather the innate hostility of the adversary; whether it is conceived as an entire culture or as a set of manipulative elements within an opposing social and political system. The problem, in other words is identity, not issues about the opposed values; not concerns, interests, and needs that often overlap. On the other hand, the Western commentators tend to view extremist groups as the evidence of inherent backwardness of a Muslim or Islamic culture of intolerance and an associated inability or unwillingness to assimilate into the international system by adopting Western liberal models of thought and governance (Merry, 2004). However, Muslim voices argue that cultural and political change proceeds best when people are allowed to learn from their own trial and error process, without external manipulation or control. Further, the Western analysts call for tighter controls on of the Arabs and non-Arabs governments and societies through a policy of force-able regime change in countries such as Iraq, Iran and Syria. The manifest assumption behind such policy convictions is that Muslims lack indigenous resources for democratic reform understood by the West in liberal terms (Uddin, 2022). Reform, then, must be imposed on the region, first by suppressing subversive regimes and movements and second by encouraging authoritarian and dictatorial leaders to adopt socio-cultural and economic reforms that might eventually proceed to freedom of speech after a process of secularization and growth.

Nonetheless, the crux of the matter is that the historical contradiction remains alive in the Muslims memory that the “renaissance” of their civilization came during the “dark” Middle Ages in Europe, a period characterized by religious oppression. Later, Islamic civilization spiraled downwards, from thriving to decaying progress to regression and from despotism and backwardness. This was just as Europe began its ascent, with great achievements in science, arts and creativity and promotion of freedom. Moreover, industrialism, technological advancement and human progress on every level led the West to be considered the peak of contemporary civilizations. According to the prominent Arab historian Abd al-Rahman al-Jabarti, the first direct encounter of the Islamic world and the West during France’s expedition into Egypt (May 1798), was called “Egyptomania,” a period of a true “cultural shock” (Mohammad, 1982). Since then all civilizations, including Islam has been racing to catch up with the West in a painful competition. Thus, the Islamic world has been caught in a complex situation and has perceived that it is impossible to defeat Western domination. Furthermore, there is no doubt that the West is the prison of their selective and biased perceptions and anti-Muslim orthodox Christians use its sensationalistic journalism and opportunistic domestic politics against Islam and Muslims. However, some scholars admitted that the Muslims have no courage to change and modernize itself or confront with the oppression of society and eventually left paralyzed, unable to turn their dreams into reality (Fuller, 1999). Syrian novelist Hanna Mina, who presents in “*Spring and Autumn*” that Muslims are representing deteriorated civilization and have a competition with the developed world and without possessing the courage to face the challenges of the West they cannot overthrow their domination.

A similar view was presented by Sudanese writer Tayeb Salih in his masterpiece “*Season of Migration to the North*” in which the author has expressed the tension between Arab (Muslims) and the Western world and described that there are less chances of commonality between the Muslim and Western civilization. Another distinguished scholar Taha Husain has written in “*Bird from the East*” (translated by Tawfiq al-Hakim), that East is declining and West is rising because of the spirit of hardship, truth, loyalty, commitment and the Muslims are unique nation who are happy to stay in the past glory (Syed, 1998). The same arguments have been raised by another Egyptian writer

Bahaa Taher in his novel *“Love in Exile”* in which the author has taken absolute perspective about the West and argued that “the values of honesty, justice, freedom and love, which made him to see the bright side of the world is only possible in the West and East is packed by hatred, arrogance and exploitation. In this regard, the renowned Islamic scholar Fazal also argued that unless Muslims will not come out from the paralyzation and stagnation they cannot face the challenges of the contemporary time. Thus, the idea that Islam is violence-prone among Westerners meets its counterpoint idea that the West is violent and that justice for Islam will require violence, among Muslims. In the final analysis, the prevailing thoughts in the West and Muslims world are adherence to double standards: one standard of morality may be applied for in-group members, and another for relations with dehumanized out-group members, be they “Muslim fanatics” or “Western hypocrites”. In the contemporary scenario, security threat or an insult to one’s dignity, and may be treated accordingly unless converted to in-group values and standards are the implications of the dominant narrative frame for conflict between the Muslims and the Western world is the story of “otherness” and rivalry.

Conclusion

The history of the West and Muslim is not pleasant and it is replete with the incidents of madness, hatred and the dehumanizing attitudes. Both have fought each other on various fronts but have also cooperated and coexisted on countless fields. Muslims, Jews and Christians coexisted for centuries in Bosnia and Spain, Muslims, Christians, Buddhists and animists lived together peacefully in Asia and Europe. However, Western imperialism and colonial legacy has left the Christian community with a sad heritage ranging from anger and distrust to outright hostility toward the Muslims. The West left Muslims with a mental and emotional imprint that Christians are consistently biased against them, hostile, domineering, and exploitive. Even the vilification and demonizing Muslims and deionization of Islam likely is to continue in the mainstream of Western society. However, the West should also not allow insulting the aspersions on the faith of a people under the cloak of freedom of expression. They should treat Islam the way it wants Islam to treat the West and vice versa. They should accept one another as equals and freedom of the press should not be an excuse for insulting religions because distorted interpretation of the religion is not a fair deal with any community. Nevertheless, Islam and the West have the ability to develop a new and mutually rewarding relationship. Both can learn from each other and cooperate in pursuit of humane values. So, inter-cultural dialogue could not complete without education, awareness and tolerance. The dialogue must be rational, avoid domination, and refrain from the kind of stereotyping that attributes. The West must work to defuse hatred against the Muslims and expend their energy needed to develop bridges of understanding between Christians and Muslims which counter the centuries of prejudice. Finally, there is a need to fill the gap between the West and Muslim values and between democratic values and the Western moral values. This discourse will emerge if the moderates within the Muslim society and in the West seriously begin collective exercises in self-reflection and self-criticism to bridge the chasm between values and actions, deeds and words, ideas and realities.

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