Muslims and Islam: Freeze Framed Discourses in Hollywood during 1978-2013

Abida Noureen*   Sajjad Ahmad Paracha†

Abstract   *Hollywood movies have revealed dramatic and varying status of Islam and Muslims, calling them as magical carpets to mummified leadership and, ultimately global bastion of terrorism. Various researchers consider Hollywood film industry as a reflection to construct public opinion in the cinema industry and, it creates crucial slots that rely on emotive and evocative imagination adjustable to stereotypic approach. Many other researchers believe that such stereotypical conception against Arabs (Muslims) roles in US movies later 11th of September attacks prove damaging depictions, notorious recognition of Arabic ethnicity and Islamic religion like harming ideology contrary to past perceptions. However, majority of these researches stress mostly on the movies' narratives and could not get triumph or understanding or evaluating the audiences or their reaction to it. Moreover, majority of researchers stress mere the Arabic identity at suitable time to analyze the representation of Islam in movies, neglecting other nations where, Islam is being followed.*

Key Words: Hollywood. Muslims, Islam, Freeze Frame, Discourse

Introduction

The Freeze Frame's crux is extremely clearer in Hollywood movies' contents as such Muslim Freeze Frames are incorporated rightly in the beginning (Davis & Sardar, 2010:242). The silent films of such frames about Muslims began with *The Sheikh* (1921), copied by *The Thief of Baghdad* (1924). After that, it is designed with the high budget by Raoul Walsh. The movie narrates a character of a hero and his American dream role to develop temptations and to win the heart of a princess. To fulfill these desires, he dares as a magician to do extraordinary courage as to fly by the magical carpet and the horses with the help of pinions.

Mr. John Mandeville, in his book *Wonders to the Travels* expresses accurately the western philosophy shaped to imagine such described subjects (Davis & Sardar, 2010:242).

Macfie (2007) interpreted a movie that's much debated on stereotypic title Sam Spiegel's and David Lawrece of Arabs that's tremendous Hollywood genre "*the Sun and Sand*" release. It promoted oriental of Arabs as "other" like sensual, tyrants and exotic ones (Macfie, 2007:83).

The movie is similar to actual biographic events of T.E Lawrence who is a British Major in 20's. The movie judgment of Macfie consumes Oriental Framework of Said for demonstrating Orient film image. The another release, *Lawrence of Arabia* reveals a typical "white man" who controls the Orients and even making them Orientals for royal Western capability (Macfie, 2007:84)

It is quite similar to Said's stance of Orientalism "the Western way of domination, restructure and power over the Orients" (Said, 1978:3).

Objectives of the Study

To know the freeze framed aspects of:

- Muslims and Islam in Hollywood during 1978-1991

- Muslims and Islam in Hollywood during 2001-2013

---

* Assistant Professor, Department of Media Studies, The Islamia University of Bahawalpur, Punjab, Pakistan.
Email; Abidas84@gmail.com
† Associate Professor, Department of Media Studies, The Islamia University of Bahawalpur, Punjab, Pakistan.

Theoretical Framework

The research work revolves around the Social Identity Theory (Us and Them)**,** Henri Tajfel's theory of social identity states that the world is to be divided into them and us that based on social categorization. To heighten the self-group image, the in-group often differentiates against the out group that is a negative point may be risen confidently to enhance the in-group position around the globe, and it is the central hypothesis of this theory. The distinctiveness of an assemblage contains a variety of extents like religion, geography and class. (Tajfel, 1981)

As for as its application towards Islam and West is concerned, a number of authors have confirmed the presence of strong US and Them relationship between West and Islam by using the continuous use of discriminative terms by means of politicians, academics and more specifically in the media. (Said, 2006; Huntington, 1996)

Research Questions

Q.1 What was the depiction given by Hollywood movies to Muslims and Islam before 9/11?

Q.2 What was the depiction given by Hollywood movies to Muslims and Islam after 9/11?

Expansion of field on Freeze Framed aspects of Muslims and Islam

Khatib (2010), in her scholarly written book, *Filming the Modern Middle East: Politics in the Cinemas of Hollywood and the Arab World*, inspected the cinema portrayal of fundamental politics. In this effort, he explored Gulf War disputed matters of Arabs and Israelis, fundamentalism in Islamic demonstrations, films of various countries such as American, Tunisian, Morocco, Egyptian, Lebanese, Syrian, and Palestinian and, he further interpreted his research on Hollywood control over Arab cinemas in Middle East and their politics.

On the other hand, many others focused the cultural meaning of US interrelation style and the functioning of media while depicting foreign politics. McAlister (2005) adopted similar approach in his book named as *"Epic Encounters: Culture, Media, And U.S. Interests in the Middle East since 1945"*. He analyzed the way of famous cultural design according to the minds of US conceptions for their own "interests" in Middle East soil. In*"Now brought up-to-date to include 9/11 and the Iraq war"* he dealt nature of American international affairs policy in which he interpreted the ground realities and military affairs in depth. Moreover, he defined the US conception for religion, news coverage and about renowned cultures.

This argumentative and logical research provides useful readings of movies, media functioning and the music in a US international policy making critical way, the race politics, historical context of religions broadly. The new chapter "9/11 and After: Snapshots on the Road to Empire," expresses and finds 5 various iconic frames:

(1) Firemen in New York, raises the American national flag from the detritus of World Trade Center, (2) the repeatedly photo of Usama-Bin-Laden on TV, (3) the installed image of Afghani girls wearing Naqab, (4) the toppling statue of Saddam Husain statue in Baghdad, Iraq, and (5) in Abu Gharib, a strange hooded & wired hostage. These all 5 described steps are to interpret the contexts of these images both simultaneously. These happenings are linking to correspond the current events and to fulfill all extraordinary events from bygone to new wave of incidents; we are contesting nowadays to look backward at something that is still proceeding ahead.

Edward (2014) explores in his scholarly written book *Orientalism* placed arbitrated frames in brief context of "American Orientalism"

Many others researched how Arab Muslims were pushed back and were harmed their identity through consistent attacks of negative frames. Very similarly, Jamal and Nabar (2008) collectively wrote in their book *Race and Arab Americans Before and After 9/11:* from non-visible natives to visible titles finds the useful discussion in a tremendous style that race meaning the study of Arab American bygone, experiences and emerging necessary queries such as what can be the relation among American imperialism in Arabic states and anti-Arabic sentiments in America? In which way the angles of nations, religions, classes and genders cross the Arab American ethnic creations? What is the real value of white studies to Arab-US? The transformation multicultural discussions have surely "added on" a category as "Arab American" to American ethnical studies after 11, September incident in 2001. The described incident proved to be a turning point not a beginning in context to Arab-US sundry engagement with respect to "ethnicity".

Mahdi (2014), 2016), Morey and Yaqin (2011), Ramji (2016) Semmerling (2006) and Rashid (2015) commonly researched better than Shaheen(year?) with certain illustrations consumed in movies and TV for delineating similar modes of recognition and detail of the audiences.

In current age, Evelyn Alsultany is seemed to be the amazing successor for shaping upcoming Arab-Muslims' study in contemporary media coverage. The mentioned studies finds comparable to Shaheen's fundamental approach that's called one of the most useful theoretical content and analytically fit. Alsultany (2012) explores in her study, *Arabs and Muslims in the Media: Race and Representation after 9/11*, where in sots of researchers belong to similar terrain do not agree with Shaheen whereas, demand considerable evaluation of media style to discourage the routine negative stereotypic images while productions. Moreover, she realized too that after September 11, there's a tendency of solicitous Islamic recognition that has seemed an offensive negative depiction.

Though, she has argued with demand that the stereotypic frames of "good or bad Muslims" are unfair for completion as merely positively Muslim's images accordingly to limited conception of U.S state dreams that contain patriotic or loathe-crime victims. In her research, she actually showed that arbitrated Islamic followers could merely be patriotic ones while, the helpful civilians, yearn to eradicate terrorism, its victims, to be harassed or loathe-crimes, expelled out from the flights, or treated with injustice. She considered the described aspects "simplified complex representations" as they are not successful to turn beyond the narrowest and well defined identity. The "good" Muslims and "bad" Muslims images are not useful for attracting the multiplication of Muslims and makes tough to the artificial grounds of Hollywood Muslim, that accurately give their introduction. Her research emphasized that there's a splendid diversion among Muslim as the average US would not be revealed in the technicalities of Muslims simultaneously. The facilitation and recurrence build roles for developing wider social impacts that shape U.S politics and national policy. The media industry refused substitute concocted content and to frame public assumptions against Muslims and for their own edges. It is because they are not thought fairly for American community.

Muslims in Hollywood Movies from 1978-1991

The Black Stallion by Carroll Ballard is adventure/ family / sport film. Young Alec was fascinated by an Arabian Stallion during a travel with his father. The film depicted few characters of Muslims which were Arab Sheikhs. Researcher found only negative characters, dialogues and scenes in the films. In Farestadeh Drama film, directed by Parvaiz Sayyad, set on the plot when an Iranian Assassin sent to US for executing a former Iranian official job under the Shah of Iran. The thematic overview of the film was anti-Muslim and Islam too as it framed a lot of confusion among fair and unfair Muslims and Islam. Once, the target was already been killed by a Muslim American, then his mission is shifted for killing a famous mullah residing in the US region. Bolero, directed by John Derek, a Romantic/Comedy movie, expresses a young girl's tale who is in quest of her actual partner. In the film, the encounters contain an Arabian Sheikh and Spanish bull-fighter wherein the role of sheikh was lothario containing Islamic slogans Allah-Ho Akbar, Alhamdulillah consistently used in the film to staple Islam with negative characters. In the movie, Sheikh was shown as unfairly connected with the girls. Protocol, directed by Herbert Ross is a comedy/political thriller movie that is related to an innocent cocktail waitress who accidentally stopped a terrorist shooting someone and saved the life of Emir Khala'ad of Othar, considered extremely useful for US officials as they wanted for perusing him to give a consent for an US force bases in his strategic realm. In this movie, Muslims and Islamic religion are projected as very backward and considered politically and culturally 'others'. Consistently, Sunny, a major role of this movie commented negatively on Muslim biography and especially their ladies' lifestyle. The movie, The Delta force, directed by Menahem Golanis is an Action/Adventure/war/drama thriller based movie that is stimulated by the actual incident of June 1985 when TWA airplane is hijacked. The story shows how the hostage cries when the passengers are enslaved in Beirut, Lebanon. The movie is related to an air flight that is flying from Ethan's to Rome and later, to New York City where it is hijacked by Lebanese terrorists. The story got intense situation when commandos were called for eliminating terrorists from the jetliner. The commandos team led by Major McCoy (Norris) and Colonel Alexander (Marvin) who put their full energies to do best to handle the situation before terrorists killing the prisoned crewed passengers. In this movie, Muslims are interpreted as stereotypic. They are depicted as the space

villains and they are usually shown as cruel, extreme and anti-American roles in the movie. The dialogues, scenes and characters of Muslims and Islam were highly projected ideologically, religiously and culturally as 'others'. Another anti-Muslim movie, Iron Eagle, directed by Sidney J. Furie is an action/thriller/war film that is on US air force's pilot who is found shortly dead by radical Middle Eastern. In this movie, Muslims and Arabs are framed as worst opponents of US people. Majority of Muslim roles, scenes and dialogues related to Islam and Muslims are negatively mentioned. The another terrorists subject movie, Wanted Dead or alive, directed by Gary Sherman is seemed as an action/crime/drama/thriller that's to search a declared terrorist named, Malik Al-Rahim under the instructions of former CIA agent Nick Randall. In this film, the terrorist attack by Malik got lives of more than 140 people. During investigating, Randal knew the Malik's plan as he wanted to blow up a dynamite chemical factory and yearning to kill above 30 thousand locals. The movie got twists at many occasions and got dramatic ups and downs during attempting Randall revenge. 'Killing Streets' by Stephen Cornwell is an action/adventure film that is another anti-Arab/anti-Islam movie which revolves around a young marine who is being made hostage by terrorists in Lebanon where her brother tried a lot to get necessary information. Prince of Thieves, directed by Kevin Reynolds is an action/adventure/drama and romance movie that's considered as one of the films, remained positive when describing Muslims and Islam. It is the story of repaying the favor when a character, Robin of Locksley and Azeem (who was black African Muslim) were made hostage by Turks while Crusade wars, then they escaped back to the England where both Azeem and Robin were there until they paid back to Robin to save them.

Depiction of Muslims and Islamic followers in Hollywood Movies from 2001–2013

Munich (2005) by Spielberg is a thriller on factual events on Israeli athlete's assassination while Munich Olympics in 1972. This movie is produced for haunting the Palestinian terrorists by Moussed team of 5. In this film, all the Muslim characters are mentioned as tyrants, odd, brutal and terrorists. In the story, all of the Muslims are shown terrorists wherein majority of them are framed lothario and inhuman connected to Roman, French, Cyprus, Lebanese named WaelZwaitu, Muhammad Hamshare, Hussain –ulChir, Arfner, Kamal Adwen, Kamal Nasser. United 93, by Paul Green grass was set in context of 9\11 incident and in same subject another movie named *Traitor*(2008) directed by Jeffrey Nachmanoff is an action/crime/ drama thriller .It has Sudani and Yemanian history in which lots of content related to terrorism and brainwashing is used as a tool against Muslims. *Visitor* (2008) by Tom McCarthy is a drama film and relates to traitor's subject. After September 11, national security interests of the states was the basic concern regarding security problems. In the movie, it is observed that some of the aspects are aroused as national, cultural ethnic and racial issues. In *Unthinkable*, by Gregor Jordan that is a psychological thriller on a terrorist who is recently converted into Islam named as Yousuf. In the film, he is framed as sending a video in which he revealed about 3 places where nuclear weapons were installed. Helen Brody, a joint FBI and CIA agent called as "H" were assigned to deal the target. In this movie there are lots of inhumane scenes containing torture and bloodshed. A drama/history/thriller based film, *The Hurt Locker*, directed by Bigelow received the academy award for the best picture wherein the story is set on the background of Iraq War in which a Sargent was assigned in an army death squad. Ben Affleck has directed a movie named as *Argo* (1980), a biography/ drama/ thriller /history film that has got 3 Oscars, randomly others 89 while 146 nominations. This movie is set on Iranian hostage crises' bygone in 1980. In 1979, in the film, the Iranian fundamentalists attacked US embassy and prisoned the people there. Majority of the Iranian officials shown as fanatical or keeping long beards and the girls as wearing Hijabs. *Zero Dark thirty* (2012) by Kathryn Bigelow is a drama/ history and thriller movie in which a character named "Maya" was recruited as CIA operative. In the beginning of this movie, she is reluctant and hesitated to use inhuman tactics based on terrorism (which were all shown Muslims). In this film, sentimental torture of terrorists are justified as correct doings and, showed that Muslims called torture a good deed. The Muslims are shown as violent and rivals of Western and US citizens. They are framed negatively in context to western policies and, all the characters are shown as Usama Bin Laden agents. Further, the story revolved around the real terrorist incidents. The film connected the story with the events of May 29, 2004 attack, July 7, 2005 attack, September 20, 2008 Marriott Hotel attack, December 30, 2009 attack and the Naval SEAL team operation of Abbottabad in 6th of May, 2011.

Hollywood Trends

In successful movies, more than two common ideas are thought as trend that reveal the uncovered and hided major affairs containing terrorism are the trends in contemporary film content as, *American Sharia* (2015) is the script of an officer Richerdson in which each Muslim individual expressed as a terrorist and similarly, another film *American Sniper* (2014) also reveals the same tendency. Trending wise, in US movies, assortment, adventurous fantasy, the autobiographical Comics, the dramas related to medical, generation-gaps, historical events and such content show that US priorities are fresh trends of Hollywood. (Imdb.com, 2013, 2014, 2015)

The US movies' depiction keeps a complex historical past as the Hollywood has also released the real global events. *The Deer Hunter* (1978), by Micheal Cimino, and even *Coming Home* (1978) *Apocalypse Now* (1979) are also formed in similar taste and have won 5/6 top Oscar awards simultaneously. *Operation Thunderbolt* (1978) and *Delta Force* (1986) are completed in the meaning of Arab-Israel dispute in the 70's era. *All the President Men* (1976) deals with the results of Nixon Resignation and the scandal of Watergate. The fall of Berlin Wall and disintegration of USSR make it full of thrill and spy one. *Red Dawn* (1984) indicates the story line as Communism is no more threat than the bowing of the Russia. In the film, US military troops and intelligence members focused to fight against drug traffickers, Norco or terrorists. The 1990's semi-sequel to *Delta Force*, *Delta Force 3*: *The Colombian Connection* produced it in backgrounds. It is a time when the term of Terrorism used as a movie element by some of the cleverer criminals in *Die Hard* (1988), *True Lies* (1994) James Cameron's action plus comic release. After September, 11 incident, Hollywood took a sensitive turn to the portrayal of world trade center attacks, later, the images and the concerned material of twin towers and World Trade Center attacks were deleted. The last production of *Spider Man* has not any depiction of such attacks in background. It is also seen that Hollywood has also hidden the plights and destructions in Afghanistan and Iraq. *Operation Balikatan* (2003) inspired by the true events such as Mingled line of the oil, the western business interest and the wave of terrorism in the Middle East were the incidents that later also copied by the movie *Syriana* 2006. *United 93* (2006) directed by Paul Greengrass was made in context of 9/11 hijacking planes to cover the terrorism and being confronted from plane passengers. The Ground Zero horror constructed by Oliver Stone named as *World Trade Center* (2006). While, another movie *Day Night Day Night* (2006) constructed in the context to hire a girl to do terrorist attack in New York Square mainly, the real Attack of national PC system directed in Die *Hard* (2007), Saudi Arabian bomb attack portrayal led to the formation of *The Kingdom* (2007), a depiction of fictitious based movie of investigation by FBI agent of Al Qaeda members who harmed a local worker. Hollywood also dealt the German Red Army Faction (RAF) the period of bombings, kidnapping robberies and assassinations in 60s and 70s containing, *The Baader Meinhof Complex* (2008). The attack at OPEC meeting in 90s and Saudis kidnapping Represented in the film *Carlos* (2010).Various films released in the context of Muslims in terrorist activities grilling people to obtain information about nuclear weapons in *Unthinkable* (2010), *Hurt Locker* (2010) and *Source Code* (2011). The 9/11 incident, US advent in Afghanistan in 2001 while in Iraq in 2003 brought societal impacts largely and, it also affected Hollywood content. Similarly, in other incidents and school of thoughts are present as in one stance, Hollywood stopped depicting such events on societal issues while, other yearns more fuel against described disputes. The dark genres turned Hollywood producing thrillers, combat films, sci-fi that made the pre 9/11 era explicitly.

Cones (2012) discovers Hollywood pattern of bias while portrayal relative to the other cultures and societies but, with their own culture and society. He further evaluated that even US allies have raised objections for such biased and prejudiced treatment through Hollywood content. The researcher has tremendously dealt the issues which are treated with biasness briefly. The past researches mainly stressed on few ethnical, religious, cultural perspectives from different readily identifiable concerning groups but, this provides a comprehensive overview and the pattern of biased behaviors over time. This reveals that to solve the biasness issue in movies, the biased sources must be documented and demonstrated and there is a need to translate why such biased approaches exist. The foreign policy of international affairs is encouraged during Bush and Clinton tenure towards the American elite press while spreading the negative frame of Muslims and its followers. They both commonly believed Islam and Muslims as a constant threat for western freedom and democracy. As an illustration, the researcher has given the supporting statement of US Newspaper, New York Times' main Headline as The Red Menace is gone, but here is Islam.

Conclusion

Most of the literature of current work reveals Hollywood as spreading negative portrayal of Islam and the Muslim identity especially Arabs' negative image from a long time.

They are shown as individuals trying to attain as media conglomerates in (Network, 1977), demolishing global business in the movie (Rollover, 1981), the kidnapping of Western lady in (Jewel of Nile, 1985), the nuclear missile threats in Israel and US mentioned in (Frantic, 1988) and the dominant international politics in (American Ninja 4: The Annihilation, 1991).

Shaheen (1997) explores that in more than 150 films, the movie directors have consistently shown unpleasant and damaging dialogues and portrayal of Middle Eastern Arab Muslims in the entire content of the stories. Majority of Hollywood movies represent Muslims as "spoofs". In the plot, Muslim roles appear and instantly disappear to show them as a stereotypic character as in *Puppet Master 2* & *The Bonfire of the Vanities* (1990), *the American Samurai* (1992) and another one is *Point of No Return (*1993) showing such tendency. Other movies such as Hollywood block buster release *True lies* (1994) & *Executive Decision* (1996) wherein Muslim characters play protagonist role in the movies. The films even show Palestinians as cruel terrorists attempting to kill innocent US citizens (Shaheen, 1997:16).

Reference

Alsultany, E. (2012). *Arabs and Muslims in the media*. New York: New York University Press. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press

Cones, J. (2012). *Patterns of bias in Hollywood movies*. New York: Algora Pub.

Elouardaoui, O. (2011). *Arabs in Post- 9/11 Hollywood Films: A Move towards a More Realistic Depiction?* West Lafayette: Purdue University.

Huntington, P. S. (1996). *The clash of civilizations and the remaking of world order.* New York, Simon & Schuster

Jamal, A., & Naber, N. (2008). *Race and Arab Americans before and after 9/11*. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press.

Khatib, L. (2010). *Filming the Modern Middle East*. London: I.B. Tauris & Co.

Macfie, A.L. (2007) "Representation of Lawrence of Arabia" in *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, *43*(1), 77-87.

McAlister, M. (2007). *Epic encounters*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Morey, P. (2010) "Terrorvision" in *Interventions: International Journal of Postcolonial Studies*, *12* (2), 251-264.

Said, E. (2014). *Orientalism*. New York: Random House US.

Said, E.W. (1978) *Orientalism*. London: Routledge&Kegan Paul Ltd.

Said, E.W. (1978) *Orientalism*. London: Routledge&Kegan Paul Ltd.

Sajid, A. (2006). Islamophobia: A new word for an old fear. Retrieved on 22-10- 2015 from http://www.osce.org/item/9735.html

Sardar, Z & Davies, M. W. (2010). "Freeze Framing Muslims" in *Interventions: International Journal of Postcolonial Studies, 12*(2), 239-250.

Scott, A.J. (2002). A New Map of Hollywood: The Production and Distribution of American Motion Pictures. *Regional Studies, 36*(9), 957-975.

Shaheen, J. (1997). *Arab and Muslim Stereotyping in American Popular Culture*. Washington: Georgetown University.

Shaheen, J. (2001). *Reel Bad Arabs: How Hollywood Vilifies a People*. Northampton, MA: OliveBranch Press.

Shaheen, J. (2008). Guilty*: Hollywood's Verdict on Arabs after 9/11*. Northampton, MA: Interlink Publishing.

Tajfel, H. (1981). *Human Groups and Social Categories: Studies in Social Psychology*.