

Securitisation of Islam in the West: Analysing Western Political and Security Relations with the Islamic States

*Hedayatullah Siddiqi**

Abstract: The contemporary securitisation of Islam owes its main sources to a series of post-Cold War, Muslim associated terrorist attacks in the Western world. The flagrant atrocities of the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks in the United States followed by a new phase of similar attacks in 2004 and 2005 in Spain and the United Kingdom provided a new spectrum along which a wide array of discourses – through the lenses of politicians, academics, as well as the popular media – quickly securitised Islam as an existential threat to Western liberal democracies. This article explores issues surrounding a growing negative perception of Islam and whether or not the process of institutionalising the notion of Islam as a security threat to the West impacts Western political and security relations with Islamic states. To grasp the theoretical perspective of the issue, this undertaking employs securitisation theory as a method to demonstrate whether the changing perception of Islam as a matter of security threat to Western societies developed pertinent to Western hostile political relations with Islamic states or are they paradoxical to the contemporary Western political and security relations with Islamic states.

Keywords: Islam, politics, securitisation, threat, the West.

1 Introduction

The contemporary securitisation of Islam owes its main sources to a series of post-Cold War, Muslim associated terrorist attacks in the Western world. Within this context, the flagrant atrocities of the 11 September 2001 (hereafter 9/11) terrorist attacks in the United States (US) followed by a new phase of similar attacks in 2004 and 2005 in Spain and the United Kingdom (UK) provided a new spectrum along which a wide array of discourses – through the lenses of politicians, academics, as well as the popular media – quickly securitised Islam as an existential threat to Western liberal democracies. Nonetheless, Islam since its advent as a religio-political power in the 7th century threatened the very existence of Western Christendom (Bakircioglu 2014: 4). However, the contemporary political and scholarly debates on the notion of securitisation of Islam

* Visiting Scholar, Migration Policy Center, Ankara Yildirim Beyazit University
noqra@ipakyol.com

exhibit unprecedented diversity for a variety of reasons: from seeing Islam as an archenemy of liberal democracy, and secular order, to growing fears of providing states with the right to extraordinary powers to adopt emergency measures and the impacts of radical measures of counter-radicalisation on the Muslim diaspora in the West (Shadid and Koningsveld 2002; Cesari 2010; Beck 2011; Edmunds 2011; Mavelli 2013; Eroukhmanoff 2015; Clubb 2016). But, there is widespread agreement amongst Western policy makers and scholars including politicians and the popular media that Islam ontologically and intrinsically poses a threat not only to Western civilisation but also to international security (Hough 2004: 43; Krauthammer 2005: 189; Lincoln 2003: 16; “Radical Islam is world’s greatest threat” – Tony Blair, BBC, 2010).

This article – contrary to the mainstream argument in which securitisation of Islam is generally discussed through radicalisation and terrorism theories and practices (Konrad 2011; Alferai 2015; Halverson 2011; Cesari 2010; Mavelli 2013; Eroukhmanoff 2015) – explores issues surrounding a growing negative perception of Islam (in itself) and whether or not the process of institutionalising the notion of Islam as a security threat to the West impacts Western political and security relations with Islamic states. To grasp the theoretical perspective of the issue, this undertaking employs securitisation theory as a method to demonstrate whether the changing perception of Islam as a matter of security threat to Western societies developed pertinent to Western hostile political relations with Islamic states or are they paradoxical to the contemporary Western political and security relations with Islamic states. In other words, important issue in this article is whether heated political and scholarly discourses of Islam as existential threat in the West impact Western political and security relations with Islamic states or not.

Before I turn to discuss the impacts of the securitisation of Islam on Western relations with Islamic states it is necessary to note that this article only assesses the subject from a Western perspective. This is because, first, the term securitisation is a Western academic construct and largely practised – theoretically and practically – in the Western world. This does not mean that Islamic world has not practiced securitisation – theoretically and practically. For example, the Hanafi School, founded by Numan Ibn Thabit, well known as Abu Hanifa (d.767), – relying on Qur’an and *Sunnah* through the lens of analogical reasoning, *qiyas*, consensus, *ijma*, and custom, *al urf* (Ramadan 2009: 54) – crafted principles governing Islam’s relations with non-Islamic world, based on assumption that although normal state of war exist between Muslims and unbelievers, jihad is legitimate only as defensive force against unprovoked war (Khadduri 1966: 57-58). However, the *Shafi’i* School criticising analogical reasoning, patterned jihad as normal basis of Muslim relations with non-Muslims world (Khadduri 1966: 58). In fact, such analysis of jihad has divided the world into two abodes; the realm of peace, *dar ul-Islam*; and the realm of war, *dar ul-harb*. According to this doctrine, Islamic world was in principle justified in conduct of jihad against non-Islamic world. Islamic securitisation of the West requires in-depth analysis of why different Islamic schools of thought (*Sunni*, *Shafi’i*, *Hanbali*, *Maliki*, and *Shi’i*) employing diverse interpretations of Qur’an and the Prophetic tradition exhibited contradictory securitisation theories, which exceeds limitation of this article. Second, when it comes to Western relations with Islamic world, the West exercises political, economic, and security control over Islamic countries. Since Islamic states in the contemporary era politically and militarily are not in position to pose threat to the West, – although a

unanimous anti-Western oil policy by oil exporting Muslim states may trigger some serious energy security concern in the west – securitisation of Islam in this paper is seen from Western perception of ideological threat.

It is also important to note that this article does not criticise Western securitisation of Islam as a general anti-Islamic Western policy per se – even though it is largely exploited and manipulated primarily under domestic and foreign policy politics in certain Western states. Important question in this context is how the process of institutionalisation of Islam as a security threat has impacted Western political and security relations with Islamic states. In other words, securitisation of Islam in this paper is seen as a method employed by securitising actors through consensual alignment with academics and popular journalism to gain political interest at both domestic and foreign spheres. Thus, it is not in the interest of this paper to assess desecuritisation theory, moving Islam into normal politics – assessing context and compatibility of Islamic social and political order with Western democratic and secular order. Similarly, it exceeds the limitation of this article to see securitisation of Islam in the context of cultural and structural violence through peace studies theories, since this article mainly concerns securitisation of Islam as tool to serve political and security ends.

In order to support the argument presented in this paper, this study will examine contemporary accounts on Islam as existential threat to Western security from a theoretical perspective in which it will assess how securitising actors depict the process of institutionalisation of Islam as security threat to the West and what are the social and political implications of securitisation of Islam within Western societies – both at the public and state level. It will then follow adopting a historicist analysis to see whether the Western negative perception of Islam has been pertinent to its political and security relations with the Islamic world or not. Following this, it will then assess how the institutionalisation process of Islam as security threat impacts the established political and security relations of the West with the Islamic world since the post-Cold War era.

2 Contemporary Accounts on Islam as Existential Threat to Western Security: A Theoretical Perspective

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union in December 1990, key threats to Western security were no longer conventional in nature and the US' 'containment doctrine' was no longer applicable in the post-Cold War era. Islam as an ideological threat replaced the major Cold War threat – Soviet communism – to Western security. Unlike conventional threats, Islam as an ideological threat to Western security has become multidimensional in structure, promiscuous and unpredictable in character. For example, the shocking atrocities of 9/11 were not caused by biochemical, nuclear, or Sarin gas attacks – they were caused by hijacked commercial planes used as WMD by 19 Al-Qaeda linked terrorist militants who simultaneously crashed the planes into the World Trade Center in New York and the Pentagon in Washington D.C. The 9/11 terrorist attacks were an unprecedented assault on US soil that killed about three thousand people in a single day (Hoffman 2002: 304).

The Al-Qaeda led 9/11 attacks on the US homeland, in fact, showed that non-state Islamic radical militants are “one step ahead of not only authorities but also counterterrorist technology” (Hoffman 2006: 252).

The 9/11 attacks forced the US National Security Council to redefine its security measures against any possible threats to US security. Moreover, the consequences of the terrorist attacks on the US were immense in terms of human loss, economy, and international security and politics that put the world on maximum alert. As reactions to 9/11, countries around the world started to draw up new security policies and adopted counter terrorism measures. The German Chancellor Gerhard Schroder described the attacks as “a declaration of war against the civilised world”. The European states including the UK held emergency meetings and “placed the security forces on high alert” (The New York Times 2001).

Furthermore, since 9/11 the term security has evolved into a multidimensional, elastic concept (Siddikoglu 2016: 830). Scholars of different schools of thought (realist, neo-realist, liberalist, feminist, constructivist and environmentalist) started redefining security from different but interrelated aspects. The analyses and theories that gained considerable recognition in the modern era were those that critically criticised the traditional International Security Studies, ISS (ibid). In this context Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver and Jaap de Wilde’s (Buzan et al 1998) notion of “Securitisation and Desecuritisation” has become markedly amplified as a new framework of security studies, which was later termed as the Copenhagen School’s Securitisation and Desecuritisation in ISS (Emmers 2013: 131).

According to the Copenhagen School of thought a politicised concern can be securitised by an act of securitisation, that is, the securitising actors – state, non-state actor, military, politician and elites – portray a politicised issue as an existential threat to the referent object – individuals, society, state (Buzan et al.1998: 23-24). In other words, securitisation is the art of convincing an audience (individuals, society, state) of an issue as an existential threat by a securitising actor. Thus, security according to the Copenhagen School is a “self-referential practice, because it is in this practice that the issue becomes a security issue – not necessarily because a real existential threat exists but because the issue is presented as such a threat” (Buzan et al. 1998: 24). As will be seen later in detail, this approach is largely employed by the contemporary securitising actors in the West to securitise Islam as an existential threat to Western civilisation. In fact, such securitisation discourses are largely justified with reference to non-state actors such as Al-Qaeda and Daesh or their affiliates’ linked terrorist attacks against the West.

In order to build on existing critical literature on the securitisation of Islam, this article demonstrates theoretical and practical perspectives of securitising Islam in the West. To meet this goal, this article firstly discusses (a) *creating a stage of concern* and then it will follow with the impact of (b) a *speech act* in securitising Islam as threatening others (Emmers 2013: 133). These two stages are essential steps in order to understand the process of securitisation, before explaining the impacts of the securitisation of Islam on contemporary Western relations with Islamic states.

2.1 Creating a Stage of Concern

In theory, a politicised issue – “meaning the issue is part of public policy, requiring government decision” – becomes a security issue when a securitising actor frames the issue as an existential threat to the referent object

(Buzan et al. 1998: 23-24). However, what is important to note here is that in theory and practice, not all public issues are politicised and thus there is a stage of politicising a non-politicised issue (Buzan et al. 1998: 24). However, what this article seeks to demonstrate is the process of creating a stage of concern of an already politicised Islam. In other words, Islam has never been out of politics in the West.

Creating a stage of concern is a very important phase in the securitisation process, because, it is in this stage when securitising actors convince an audience of an issue as existential threat (Emmer 2013: 134). To create a stage of concern, it is not the language of security per se that plays an important role. Rather, authorised, well-respected orators – for example, leaders of states, prime ministers or presidents, high-ranking security officers, or other non-state influential actors – are indispensable actors that provide an impetus to the process of creating a stage of concern before the audience. However, this does not mean that audience has to accept leader's interpretation of an event as an existential threat (Collins 2005: 570-571). While it is possible for a non-state leader to start the securitising move and initiate popular revolt such as Gezi Park movement in Turkey, and clean movement, *bersih*, in Malaysia, it is more common for state to securitise an issue as existential threat (Ibid). In other words, issue/issues should qualify for official status – a matter of political debate that requires policy implication. In the process of securitisation, the privilege of the governing elites – in both democratic/authoritarian regimes – over non-state actors is the possession of legitimate authority (Ibid). For example, the former President of the US, George W. Bush, in his address to the Joint Session of Congress on 20 September 2001, defined the 9/11 attacks as an act of war against the US (President Bush's address to Congress, 20 September 2001). The authorisation for the use of military force against terrorists was passed by Congress and officially established the War on Terror (Kundnani 2015: 7). It was only then that President Bush acquired a *carte blanche* to draw a road map to counter so called Islamist non-state terrorists.

The bureaucratic response to 9/11 was the creation of the Uniting and Strengthening of America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism (USA PATRIOT Act) and the Department of Homeland Security. Within this context, the immediate counterterrorism actions were raising high-security alerts in different key locations (transportations, ports, airports, governmental departments) as well as intelligence gathering on local, regional, federal and state levels. Moreover, under the umbrella of the global war on terror, a great deal of international military involvement led by the US and its allies started asymmetric warfare targeting non-state terrorism in different Islamic countries around the world. This trend has been followed by other major Western nations in response to each Al-Qaeda and Daesh or their affiliates' linked terrorist attacks against the West. The Western military response to Muslim linked non-state terrorist attacks since 9/11, in fact, explicitly demonstrated authorisation of a vaguely defined war against loosely defined enemies – terrorists, radicals and extremists. However, the only thing considered assured was the link between terrorism and Islam. Arun Kundnani in his book, *Muslims are Coming*, defines the global war on terror as an “open-ended” war against a “set of ideas – Radical Islam” (Kundnani 2015: 7). However, as will be seen later in detail, it is noteworthy that Islamic states not only collectively condemned and demonised the contemporary Muslim linked terrorist attacks against the West, but also remained strong allies in the Western war against terror.

In the contemporary West, securitisation of Islam has become an elastic concept that is employed in furtherance of both domestic and foreign policy interests. For instance, in domestic context, creating Islam as a stage of concern has become a popular agenda for Western political leaders to win a majority of votes in national elections. One of the flagships of US President Donald J. Trump's election campaign that secured him a majority of electoral votes in the US presidential election in 2016, was his electoral speech that "[y]ou are not safe, radical Islam is coming to our shores" (Trump, Washington Post, 13 June 2016). A series of Muslim linked terrorist attacks in the US, including the Orlando terror attack in June 2016, provided Trump with an extreme political platform to logically convince his audience of Islam as an extreme security concern to US national security. This does not mean that the audience in the US collectively have to accept Trump's securitisation of Muslims as existential threat to American vital interests, as there have been nationwide public protests and legal challenges against Trump's anti-Islamic move – imposing temporary travel ban on people from seven Muslim majority countries, and halting refugee admission. However, ultimately, it is Trump's administration that has the right to make securitising move.

Following the footprints of the President Trump, the flagship of Norbert Hofer's – leader of right-wing Freedom Party of Austria – electoral campaign was to build fence on southern borders of Austria to stop 'Muslim invasion' (Faiola 2016). In a speech to launching campaign for presidential election, the leader of the right-wing French party of Front National, Marine Le Pen, said, "Islam is threat to France's liberty and democratic values" (Farand 2017). Such anti-Islamic rhetoric by right-wing political leaders has been successful in resonating considerable amount of audience in Western societies. Those who were galvanised by securitising moves of far-right political leaders have led to violent anti-Islamic protests including attacks on mosques – for example a shooting that killed worshipers at a mosque in Quebec City, Canada (Palazzo and Rothwell 2017).

Here, it is also important to note that there exists an ample amount of criticism, particularly in regard to securitisation of Islam as foreign policy preoccupation– in the literature, political reports, media – in the larger context criticising Western unilateral military interventions targeting so called terrorist sanctuaries in Islamic states (Ayoob 2005; Dombrowski and Payne 2006; Roth 2006; Label 2006). In fact, the notion of military interventions against terrorist sanctuaries in Islamic states moved the stage of security concern beyond the national level. In other words, Islam is no longer a national security concern for the Western states. Rather it has become a salient collective security concern in international relations and politics, which the Copenhagen School predicts to be a "*macrosecuritisation*" issue of the West in future (Buzan and Hansen 2009: 214). Such invocation of security concerns provided Western powers carte blanche to manoeuvre special powers to handle so called Islamic radicalism, Islamic extremism and terrorism. For example, the former President of the US, along with the Prime Ministers of the UK and Australia, justified the invasion of Iraq as a legitimate act of war to eliminate existential threats to Western security (Bellamy 2004: 134).

2.2 *Speech Act*

Language performs a key role in the process of choreographing certain issue as an existential threat to a referent object (Emmers 2013: 133-134). Important in this perspective is the way in which a securitising actor articulates about an issue as an extreme threat to the referent object. In fact, convincing an audience of a politicised issue being an existential threat largely depends upon the linguistic usage of the securitising actors. In other words, framing a politicised issue as a security concern is in line with the linguistic usage (verbal/textual) of securitising actors. The language used by the US government demonising the atrocities of 9/11 – terrorist, extremism, enemies to freedom, radical Islam – has gained ground as discursive contexts have provided scholars with different outlooks and angles of analysis to securitise Islam as an existential threat to Western civilisation. For example, in his address to the joint session of Congress on 20 September 2001, the former President of the US, George W. Bush stated that

On September the 11th, enemies of freedom committed an act of war against our country. The evidence we have gathered all points ...terrorist organisation known as al Qaeda...The terrorists practice a fringe form of Islamic extremism... The terrorists' directive commands them to kill Christians and Jews, to kill all Americans and make no distinctions among military and civilians, including women and children...Our war on terror begins with al Qaeda, but does not end there (President Bush's address to Congress, 20 September 2001).

The verbal expression used by President Bush to describe the 9/11 attacks in fact answered some of the fundamental questions of who were the perpetrators, what sort of enemy were they? Where were they coming from? What was their intention? Not surprisingly, European leaders' use of language demonising the 9/11 terror attacks resonated a similar reflection. The former British Prime Minister, Tony Blair, stated "democracies must 'fight this evil'" and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) Secretary-General George Robertson called it "intolerable aggression against democracy" (CNN World 2011). According to Eroukhmanoff (2015: 250), the state counter-radicalisation language "takes the form of a sanitised vocabulary... never 'slipping' into inappropriate sentences, words, adjectives or nouns". Moreover, Eroukhmanoff (ibid) writes that employing such language provides a "symbolic power that underlines the assumption that Islam is inherently a religion of violence". Again, Eroukhmanoff (ibid) stresses that euphemistic metaphors help securitising actors to securitise Islam without "directly securitising [it] in Copenhagen School sense". Politically speaking – contrary to Eroukhmanoff's (2015: 249) theory of "the higher the position of the speaker... the higher the chance of euphemism" – most Western leaders with high-ranking position are likely to be less vigilant of their anti-Islamic metaphors – for example, the language used by European leaders to demonise an act of terror repeatedly employed words such as "Islamist virus, swamp, Muslim terrorism" (Kundnani 2015: 17-18, 39). This means, the Western leaders with higher positions do not necessarily use euphemistic metaphors or not meticulous of their language in securitising Islam. In other words, Islam in the

West is moving towards being an established threat.

Contrary to historical linguistic usage where Western negative discourses on Islam were largely built on an ethnic description of Muslims as dark-skinned evil born barbarians, the contemporary literature including political remarks and journalistic discourses on Islam are based on a religious description of Islam itself as ontologically aggressive, anti-Western, and a warmongering religion. In other words, the anti-Islamic discourses have collectively portrayed the religion of Islam as threatening others through demonising language of utterly debased, fanatic, ontologically aggressive, undemocratic, anti-liberal and un-modern that expresses itself in history (Krauthammer 2005: 190; Shadid and van Koningsveld 2002: 74-75). In fact, everyone who has come to discuss Islam as a security threat to the West uses a specific language, culture, beliefs, and preconceptions and comes with specific life-experience.

In the context of Islam as a security threat to the West, Krauthammer (2005: 189-190) stated that, “Islamist cells are being discovered regularly in just about every European capital... this time not a shoe-bomb but a nuclear suitcase or consignment of anthrax”. The linguistic usage of Krauthammer equating the dangers of Islam to a nuclear bomb or deadly doses of anthrax in fact shows the potential power of linguistic discourses in securitising Islam. Indeed, securitising orators associate a politicised issue to already accepted existential threats to the referent object such as WMD, the nuclear bomb and deadly viruses. From political perspectives, such discourses are largely based on an effort to secure a right to extraordinary power that is claimed to be a legitimised measure to eliminate the presupposed existential threat to the survival of the referent object.

Although, security strategists and policy makers have taken various preventive, counterterrorism actions and have adopted new security policies to protect Western security, given the irrationality, unpredictability and variable nature of terrorism, Western security strategists face persistent difficulties in developing accurate and effective counterterrorism strategies to meet these challenges. Particularly, the outbreak of a new phase of terrorist attacks against the West – random shooting against civilians after a suicide attack and/or turning commercial vehicles into deadly weapons – in recent years have raised serious negative discourses against the Muslim diaspora in Western societies. In other words, the rising Muslim linked terrorist attacks in the West nurtured Islamophobic ideas and discourse that swept across the world.

According to Shadid and Koningsvel, anti-Islamic discourses encompassing xenophobic stereotyping and racist elements in the West indeed are self-interested distortions (Shadid and Koningsvel 2002: 176). For example, the media exploits it to attract attention, the politician to attract votes, the scholar to enlarge his/her influence (ibid). Yet, the premise of such exploitation lies in the ‘freedom of speech’, which indeed forms one of the fundamental pillars of democratic societies in the Western world (Bakircioglu 2008: 3). Importantly, what is intended here is not to say that freedom of speech should be restricted. It is also not in the interest of this paper to open a new discussion on the protection of freedom of speech nor to outline its limitations. What is important here is to emphasise that the right to free speech has remained as an important tool that leveraged anti-Islamic discourse under various political interests.

On the other hand, in practice, anti-Islamic sentiments have nurtured the rise of far-right political parties in Western societies. Particularly in France and the Netherlands, far right political parties use anti-Islamic

discourses as a staple of political discourses (Cesari 2009: 4). According to Cesari (2009: 5) dividing Islam into radical ‘bad’ and ‘good’ Islam – where good Islam is law-abiding Muslims who accept that Islam is a potential threat to society – and using “Muslim spokespeople” to criticise Islam have become two important anti-Islamic trends that are employed by Western political discourses. Writing about how Muslim spokespeople are used as legitimate critics against Islam, Cesari (ibid) stated that Ayaan Hirsi Ali’s (Somali born Dutch legislator) Muslim identity is used by Western political discourses as legitimacy to express her criticisms of Islam that is “denied to non-Muslim critics of Islam. However, importantly, Ali’s critical remarks on Islam have made her an exemplary model of a moderate Muslim, which at the same time gained her popularity in the Western media and the political arena (ibid).

3 Sources of Securitisation: Mass Media and Literature

3.1 Role of Academia

The process of persuading the collective audience of Islam being an existential threat requires consensual alignment between securitising actors, academics and popular journalism. The academic response was the arrangement of a number of conferences, seminars and policy-oriented workshops around the world in which scholars of social science gathered to develop a comprehensive understanding of the process, mechanism and dynamics of Islamic radicalisation, violent extremism and terrorism. A theory of great importance, in regard to securitisation of Islam, which should not be overlooked, is Samuel P. Huntington’s (1927-2008) Clash of Civilisation theory that asserted the world in post-Cold war era will be divided along cultural lines and Islam will replace the major Cold War threat to the Western security (Huntington, 1993). The contemporary analysis and perceptions of Islam as existential threat to western civilisation are mainly if not in general demonstrate Huntington’s negative analysis of Islam as unanimous bellicose cultural unit against the West.

Recent research articles have discussed various causes and factors in play in Islamic radicalisation. Colonel John Matt Venhaus distinguishes four broad factors, (a) revenge, (b) status, (c) identity and (d) thrill for adventure, of radicalisation (Venhaus 2010: 8). Moreover, one of the fundamental debates is how to identify young Muslims before they turn jihadist. Some academic theories suggested that by analysing a set of socio-cultural and religious behaviours of an individual or a society one could detect and prevent violent extremism. However, some researchers such as Kundnani argue that to identify one with non-criminal signs such as having a beard, wearing traditional Islamic clothing, taking part in pro-Islamic social activities as radical extremist is susceptible to undemocratic (Kundnani 2015: 12). Parallel to this, another argument on the role of ex-Islamist militants as a conveyor-belt or firewall to violence (Clubb 2016) in Western Islamic societies have become markedly amplified as an important subject amongst Western policy makers, academicians and analysts of security studies. Academic theories that attempted to explain, “Why Muslims become terrorists” remained key to counterterrorism policies in the West (Kundnani 2015: 10). In other words,

the “academic and official models of radicalisation... [develop] as a preventive approach to counterterrorism, in which an attempt is made to identify individuals who are not terrorist now but might be at some later date” (Kundnani 2015: 11).

3.2 Role of Mass Media

When it comes to popular journalistic rhetoric in the West, it has always been one step ahead of all other dissertations in choreographing appealing anti-Islamic reports. In fact, in the way in which the media started choreographing a negative image of Islam, the Western linguistic usage once again was largely equivalent to an identity description of Muslims beside a religious description. For example, BBC’s Nick Robinson’s report on the Woolwich attack describing that attacker as being of “Muslim appearance” (Halliday 2013), he was a dark-skinned man wearing a hoodie (Kundnani 2015: 23), strikingly echoed vintage Western negative perception of Islam. Moreover, the Arabic language in the contemporary media has become deeply associated with terrorism. Particularly, the most commonly used Arabic words in the Islamic world such as, *Allahu Akbar*, God is Great and, *Inshallah*, God’s will, were shown as signs of Muslim terrorism. A series of news reports published with headlines of terrorists “shouted Allahu Akbar” (De La Mare et al. 2016; Oliphant 2016). Similarly, there are reports on the experiences of Muslims who have been victims of securitisation policies only because of their language or racial appearance (El Baz 2016). Beydoun in his article to *Aljazeera News* states that the securitisation of Islam in the West has led to “irrational fear” (Beydoun 2016). Irrational fear according to Beydoun (2016) is “[a]nything associated with ‘Muslim terrorism’, whether it can be an article of clothing or a routine conversational phrase. For example, removal of an Arabic-speaking or ‘Muslim-resembling’ passenger” from a commercial flight, due to a fear that someone with such a racial identity is more likely to be a terrorist (ibid). As stated earlier, such choreography of Islam owes its main source from recent cursory interpretation of Islam in the light of terrorist attacks against the Western world by non-state Islamic militant groups such as al-Qaeda and Daesh.

Other important source that plays key role in the process of resonating audience of Islam as existential threat to Western secular societies is the mass media such as news (electronic/print), TV, movies, magazines (electronic/print), Internet, and video games. According to McCombs “[t]he media not only can be successful in telling us what to think about, they also can be successful in telling us how to think about” (McCombs 2005: 546). What is important here is to assess whether or not news media employ similar patterns of homogeneity in the process of choreographing similar issues as threat to a referent object. For example, reporting on Quebec City mosque attack in Quebec City, Canada, in which six prayers were killed and nineteen people were wounded, the BBC reported the attacker as a student known as Alexandre Bissonette (BBC 2017). Yet, reporting on a similar attack on a church in suburb of Rouen city of France, the BBC reported the attackers as Islamic State militants (BBC 2016). There is an extensive diversity in the agenda that are being presented by media – for example, as seen above, religious identities of the church attackers precede their citizen identities. Such settings of Islam as violent militancy in fact securitised Islam as a religion of violence and threat to

Western societies. Abreast to this, entertainment industries like films and video games have remained important tools in the process of securitising Islam as a security concern to the West. For example, a Hollywood movie, 'True Lies', in which a group called 'Crimson Jihad' acquires nuclear weapon and threatens US with nuclear missile attacks. Similarly, the movie of *Fitna*, conspiracy, crisis – made by Geert Wilders', founder of right-wing Dutch Party of Freedom– in which Islam is shown as a religion of violence, has been an offensive move to securitise Islam as a religion of terror.

4 Western Negative Images of Islam and its Political Relations with the Islamic World in the Medieval Era

Since its advent as a universal religion, Islam has experienced a series of problems in dealing with the non-Islamic world. In other words, like its precursor divinely revealed religions such as Judaism and Christianity, the universal approach of Islam in the form of establishing world order under a divinely ordained legislation has never gone peacefully. Khadduri stated that the Islamic military discourse, jihad, remained at the "very basis of Islam's relationships with [non-Islamic] nations" (Khadduri 1966: xi).

Thus, the very basis of the Western image of Islam during the Middle Ages was shaped under hostile political and military milieus. Shortly after the Prophet Muhammad's demise (570-632), the Islamic Caliphate threatened Western supremacy in eastern Mediterranean regions (Pears 1886: 17) by capturing Syria and eastern territories of European Christendom. Moreover, by 668 the Islamic Caliphate directly engaged in combat with Constantinople (ibid). In 711, Islamic forces under Tariq bin Ziyad – a Muslim commander serving Umayyad Caliphate, 658-750, (Bowering 2015: 4) – invaded southern Spain (Halverson 2011: 4). The persisting hostile political and military milieus largely shaped the foundation of the Western negative perception of Islam in the medieval era. This is not to say that wars between the Islamic Empire and Byzantine have never ended, there were short-term peace agreements after each failed siege or active military combat between European Christendom and Islamic caliphates (La Monte 1949: 108). Nevertheless, the Mediterranean region remained dominated by crusades between Islamic Caliphates and Western Christendom during the medieval era.

Beside military success, Islam inherited a diverse culture and advanced knowledge as it grew bigger in size – geographically/religio-political power – through conquests. Islam's cultural and scientific reach encompassed "Egyptian and Mesopotamian civilisation, Persian statecraft, and Indian philosophy" (Bowering 2015: 2). In other words, Islam's astonishing progress in the fields of the military, scientific knowledge, and culture, threatened Western Christendom – "for a variety of reasons including economic, military, and religion" (Bakircioglu 2014: 4; Bowering 2015: 2-3). Bakircioglu (2014: 4) states that Islam and Christianity "not only posed mutual threats to one another's very existence, but also presented ideological and moral challenges to one another's outlooks, for both claimed monopoly on truth, with their alternative visions of religion".

When it comes to the linguistic usage of medieval Europe in defining Islam as its archenemy, Muslims were collectively considered as threatening ‘others’ primarily through racial demonisation as dark skinned evil born Moors, or Turks (Vitkus 1999: 225). It should be noted that since the Muslim tradition of jihad in regard to expansion – political and territorial – was not a matter of conquest, rather the “expansion was a matter of ‘opening’ or ‘liberating’ territory in order to create opportunities for human beings to hear the call to practice Islam” (Kelsay 2015: 90), Islam’s image was constructed as a collective religio-political system (Bakircioglu 2014: 44). Thus, otherisation of Islam, during the medieval period, was not based on the assumption that Muslims represent non-religious political establishment. In other words, although fraternal wars in regard to legitimate succession, after the era of Prophet and his companions’, gave rise to conflicting religio-political divisions within Islamic world (Bowering 2015: 6), the Western image of Islam, collectively, in the medieval period was threatening ‘others’. As will be seen later, otherisation of Islam based on political establishment emerged when the European Christendom encountered rival non-Arab Islamic empires such as Seljuks and Ottoman Turks.

According to Vitkus (1999: 225), the darker skin colour of Moors and Turks was deemed as a sign of “evil darkness, barbaric ignorance”. Alferai (2015: 138) stated that Turks were never considered as an ideological archenemy to Western civilisation, rather, the perception of Turks as others was constructed as culturally and politically dangerous. Felix Konrad (2011), in his analysis of the European orientalist discourse on Ottoman Turks from religious perspectives, stated that the linguistic usage of medieval Europe (religious sermons, media, including scholarship) defining Turks as the ‘Turkish menace’ or ‘dread of the Turks’ or Turks as barbarian. In this context, Shakespeare’s *Othello* is one of the striking examples of early orientalist definitions that show how racial discourses of Muslims preceded their religious identities.

*Are we turned Turks? And to ourselves do that
Which heaven hath forbid the Ottomites?
For Christian shame, put by this barbarous brawl
(Othello cited in Poisson 1967: 68)*

In Vitkus’ (1999: 225) words,

‘Moor’...is one of a whole group of terms that were... associated, in the minds of early modern Europeans, with the worship of Mahomet... Islamic Other... blacked-skinned African Moor, or... turbaned Turk... the external difference of Islamic Other was often read as a sign of demonic darkness and barbaric ignorance... it is associated with black magic, occult power, and the worship of devils or idols

Blanks and Frassetto (1999: 4) find two factors key in constructing the negative image of Islam in medieval Europe, the conflict-laden relationship and, the “cultural inferiority” of Europe. The cultural inferiority

preconceived the West to critically define and understand Islam. The source of knowledge that crafted Western views of Islam during the medieval period was not that of scholarship, but the oral accounts of Western travellers – from different classes of Western society – who had travelled to the Islamic world (Blanks and Frassetto 1999: 2). For example, Islam was portrayed as radically liberal and intrinsically promiscuous (sexual freedom in this world), allowing men and women to marry several times (Vitkus 1999: 223-224). In fact, medieval accounts on Islam show the Western challenges of defining and understanding Islam per se.

However, in theory, a concern can only be securitised when securitising actors (state, ruling elite, religious leader) convince the audience (society, individuals, state) of an issue as an existential threat to their very existence. From this perspective, securitising actors in medieval Europe justified the securitisation of Islam in reference to Islamic expansionist expeditions that threatened the very existence of European Christendom. In fact, the negative sentiments and securitisation are more likely to happen in rival conflicting societies. The Copenhagen School defines security as “above politics” and “securitisation as extreme politics” (Buzan et al. 1998: 23). Thus, an issue only become a security concern when it qualifies the state of extreme politics – public/state levels. It is only then that states acquire the right to make emergency policy responses (ibid). For example, the United States (US) national security strategy manifested Soviet communism as an “international conspiracy directed generally against the inherent dignity, freedom and sacredness of the individual; against all God-given rights and values; against the Judeo-Christian code of morals on which...western civilisation rests” (NSC-17, The internal security of the United States, 28 June 1948, cited in Campbell 1992: 29). The premise of the US Cold War security strategy was based on this very notion that Soviet communism was an existential threat to Western liberal democracy.

Importantly, some researchers like Sanaa Rafet Alrefai and Lauren Beck argue that the contemporary securitisation of Islam “reflects the medieval image of Islam” in the West (Beck 2011: 94; Alrefai 2015: 135). Moreover, examining the representation of Islam as a security threat in Spain, Beck (2011: 94) stated that the West remained entrenched in “its Islam past by imposing... historiated and antiquated visions upon modern-day Islam”. However, although negative views of Islam in the pre-modern period seem to have some resemblance to the contemporary perception of Islam in the West, the way in which the medieval views of Islam were shaped diverge in at least two ways when compared to the contemporary Western perception. First, the negative views of Islam in medieval Europe were primarily incorporated by racial discourses, not religious. Some of the examples of racial discourses can even be found in modern age scholarships such as Edwin Pears, Late President of the European Bar at Constantinople, in his book, *The Fall of Constantinople*, published in 1886, he stated that the terms Scythians and Turks were “synonymous with barbarians” (Pears 1886: 14). Second, European Christendom was militarily and politically involved in active combat with Islamic caliphates in medieval times. Thus, there is no doubt that the medieval negative sentiments about Islam as an existential threat to Western security were in line with Western hostile political and military relations with the Islamic world. To summarise, Western negative views of Islam revolved around changing hostile political and military relations with the Islamic world, which is in contrast with the modern strong political and security alliance of the Western world with Islamic states.

When it comes to Western nonviolent relations with the Islamic world during the Middle Ages, besides the popular caricaturisation that largely informed the Western audience of Islam as archenemy, there were some alternative uncontroversial discourses on Islam in medieval times. Some records exist that show an exchange of scientific knowledge between the Western and Islamic civilisations in the medieval period (Blanks and Frassetto 1999: 4). Most importantly, Harun al-Rashid's diplomatic relation with Charlemagne and the Franks through the exchange of ambassadors in the mid 9th century is mentioned as one of the important examples of peaceful relations between medieval Europe and the Islamic world (Al Monte 1949: 112; Maxime Rodinson 1974: 28-32). Nevertheless, the Western relation with the Islamic world in the medieval era was largely dominated by a conflict-laden relationship.

However, the advent of the Enlightenment in Europe in the 18th century "reversed the relationship of the Islamic world to the West – from... expanding offensive movement to a defensive posture" (Esposito 1998: 43). By the 19th century most of the Islamic world – stretching from North Africa, the Middle East, South, Central and East Asia – became colonies of Western Imperialism. However, it is important to note that the political milieu within the Islamic world, in the 18th century, was strikingly resemblant to that of Byzantine during the medieval era. In other words, Islamic dynasties were busy battling for supremacy in the early modern period. Thus, Islamic Empires politically and militarily were not in a position to defend the expansionist expeditions of Western imperialism across the world in the modern era. Therefore, Muslims during the colonial era were not in position to pose security threat to Western world.

The European powers colonised majority of the non-European world under an international law known as the doctrine of discovery (Miller 2012: 848). The legal principle of this doctrine was created on the assumption that European Christians possessed superior civilisation and culture over non-Christian people (Miller 2012: 849). Under this legal principle European colonists set out to colonise vast geographies across the world from 15th to 20th centuries. Importantly, in the context of legal justification for colonisation of the Islamic world, although Muslims, as stated earlier, reached a higher point in regard to developing legal principles of statecraft, administration of domestic, and foreign affairs (political, economic and economic) than Christianity during the medieval era, European colonists' perception of Muslim world as 'other', during the colonial era, was on the basis of the presumed cultural superiority of the 'self', not security threat to the European Christendom (Stuchtey 2011: 855-856).

The rise of Western industrialisation, which started with the British Industrial Revolution in the 18th century (Dean 1996: 14) not only transformed economies, societies and politics in Europe, but also, in respect to scientific knowledge, it was a paradigm shift that changed the centre of knowledge from the Islamic to the Western world. According to Phyllis Dean, the British Industrial Revolution was rooted in the transformation of state power from totalitarianism (king, religious leader, Puritan, Catholic) to the "English aristocracy", which was known as the Glorious Revolution, which resulted in the establishment of a new form of government, in which decisions of national interest (economic, implementing legislation, waging wars) were taken by the House of Commons, an elected body (Dean 1996: 20), not the king or a religious leader. This development detached religion from politics in Britain. The rest of Western Europe, such as France and

Belgium, followed the British industrial path. By 1913, states outside the European boundaries, such as the US, Russia and Japan, had acquired industrial techniques and brought essential reforms to their constitutions in order to compete with the advanced European states (Frieden 2007: 59). The revolution came with the arrival of the Western Empires in the Islamic world in the late 18th century. In this context, most of the Islamic nations failed to acquire technological advancement, particularly in restructuring and reforming political systems. Nonetheless, some Islamic countries, such as Turkey and Iran, found educational backwardness and flaws as reason for their defeat by the advanced West. However, in countries such as India Muslims believed that “Muslim decline had been believers’ neglect of God’s law” (Henfer 2007: 17-19). The Islamic world’s response to Western domination was diverse, some decreed holy war, jihad, (for example, in the Indian subcontinent, Afghanistan) calling “cooperation with the West or adaptation of its culture as betrayal and surrender” while others followed the West in modernising their politics, law and education (Esposito 1998: 44). To summarise, the Western Enlightenment not only transformed the economy, military and culture in the Western world, but also, in respect to the Islamic world, it was a paradigm shift that shifted the commanding heights from religious institution to a Western style of non-religious governments. However, this process did not happen adequately and smoothly. Some Islamic states (for example, Egypt and Islamic societies on the Indian subcontinent which later became the independent Islamic states of Pakistan and Bangladesh) largely remained divided between religion-centred independent non-state powers and secular pro-Western governments. Hence, the Western perception of Islam and its relations since the end of the colonial era evolved around the changing political circumstances within Islamic states.

5 Securitisation of Islam: Paradoxical to Western Relations with Islamic States

The Western relations with Islamic states relevant to politics and security policy patterns vary on the bases of economic and strategic interests. When it comes to foreign policy imperatives of West, for example, although the Western states put their initial emphasis on liberalism and democracy, the West has cordial political and security relations with the Islamic states that are authoritarian and less democratic in form such as Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Qatar, and Kingdom of Jordan. From this perspective, it can be said that security concerns of the West varies in its importance as well as not all “threat agendas, are of equal political importance” (William 2013: 9).

The Islamic states such as Iraq, (during Saddam Husain’s regime), Afghanistan (during Taliban regime), Libya (during Qaddafi’s regime) and Syria under Bashar Assad’s regime were termed as ‘rogue states’. The ‘rogue state’ is a loosely defined political term (state with high degree of social cleavage and violation of human rights, inequality, economical downturn, sanctuaries for non-state terrorist groups, undemocratic and with ambitions of acquiring Weapons of Mass Destruction) that is abused by Western powers under different political, economic, and strategic interests (Rose 2011: 5-10). Politically speaking, the Islamic states such as Afghanistan, Libya, Iraq, and Syria were not considered as a direct threat to Western civilisation. Rather,

securitisation of these states, particularly in the context of military invasions/interventions, were claimed to be on the assumption that Western led military operations aim at liberating people from brutal oppressive governments by changing regimes or destroying terrorist sanctuaries. For example, Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) against Taliban, supported by most of the powerful Islamic states including Pakistan and Northern Alliance of Afghanistan, non-Taliban Islamic factions, was based on the assumption to liberate Afghans from oppression of Taliban regime as well as to destroy terrorist safe havens in the country.

In fact, the military operations against the Taliban, Saddam and Assad's regime support the main argument of this article on the bases that the military operations were carried out only after the powerful Islamic countries (Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Pakistan, Turkey, Egypt) including Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) vowed their political and security support to the West. In other words, Western strong multilevel relationship across the broad spectrum of politics and security with Islamic world exhibit paradox to its securitisation of Islam as existential threat to Western democratic societies.

5.1 Securitisation of Islam: Metaphors, Policy and Practice in Western Societies

The US Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) in their counterterrorism model believe that a Western born Muslim goes through four stages before turning out a terrorist (Kundnani 2015: 12). "First, identification and indoctrination; second, growing beard, starting wearing traditional Islamic cloth; third, increase pro-Muslim activities and fourth turning into active terrorist" (ibid). The immediate results of such preventive approaches were encroachments in civil liberties, the mandatory detention of terrorist suspects, random imprisonment, indefinite custody, and extraordinary rendition (Kundnani 2015: 2-7; Bakircioglu 2008-2009: 7). Moreover, this, in public spheres, increased the disparaging use of hate-speech against Muslim communities (Bakircioglu 2008-2009: 7). Over 68 % of people in major Western states such as the US, UK, France, Germany and Spain have a negative image of Muslims as a fanatical and violent entity (Pew Research Centre 2006). In fact, practising such an approach has undermined the core values of Western democratic and liberal societies in which one is allowed to practise his/her culture, religion, and ethnic tradition without any kind of discrimination. In other words, preventive counterterrorism policies of Western states against the suspected Muslim diaspora exhibited paradox to Western fundamental, important values of liberal and democratic rights. Further, this has raised concerns over the sustainability of multiculturalism in the West. As repeated earlier, the changing character of the institutionalisation of Islam as a security threat has remained in line with ongoing terrorist attacks against the West. For example, about 3,000 young Muslim migrants from different countries in the West have joined Daesh (Barrett 2014: 15-16). However, the prevailing perception of securitising Islam ontologically as threatening others in Western societies by a wide array of orators (state, non-state, scholarship and media) has in itself created serious security concerns to the minority Muslim diaspora in Western societies. To summarise, the contemporary Western counter-radicalisation or counterterrorism models and strategies demonstrate a problem rather than a solution.

5.2 Western Political and Security Relations with Islamic States

In the contemporary world, states have become crucially interdependent and extensively embedded in the international system (Siddikoglu 2015: 264). Particularly in the post-Cold War era, security and politics have linked states (regionally/internationally), regardless of their structure and cultural identity (for example people-centric, state-centric, authoritarian or kingdoms). The West has had cordial economic and political relations with Islamic states such as Malaysia, Indonesia, Turkey, the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Pakistan. Under the umbrella of the global war on terror, the Islamic republic of Pakistan became a frontline country in Operation Enduring Freedom and facilitated transport routes for US and NATO forces stationed in Afghanistan (Rizvi 2004; Bahadur 2007; Amin 2011). Furthermore, the Central Asian Islamic states, such as Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan, facilitated transportation routes and provided military bases for the US and NATO missions in Afghanistan. Moreover, Islamic states like Saudi Arabia, Qatar, including the OIC, remained strong allies in Western so called liberal military interventions in Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya. There is no faultline between the West and Islamic states when it comes to fighting the global war on terror. The Islamic states of Pakistan, Afghanistan, Qatar and Saudi Arabia are strong allies of the West in the global war on terror.

The Cold War relations between the West and Islamic world are important in the examination of how the Western alliance with the Islamic world resulted in containing the expansion of Soviet communism – Saudi Arabia and Pakistan aligned with the West and played an important role in defeating the Soviet Union in Afghanistan in 1989 (Tomsen 2011: 195-198). From the perspective of strategic alliance and economic importance, Muslim states have played a very important role in achieving Western supremacy since the end of the Cold War. However, the West and its allied Islamic states' policy of using Islam as a tool to accumulate human capital for the fight against Soviet communism backfired, leading to non-state religious extremism and terrorism in the post-Cold War era. As a result, the new era of non-state warfare took hold in the Islamic world. Afghanistan, Pakistan, Yemen and later Iraq and Syria lurched into religious, extremist, and terrorist warfare that took the lives of hundreds of thousands of men, women, and children.

Similarly, besides having military airbases in Islamic states such as Turkey, Qatar, Afghanistan, and Iraq, the trade volume between Western and Islamic states has increased manyfold since the end of the Cold War. For example, US–Saudi Arabia trade increased 313 % from 2003 to 2013 (Office of the US Trade Representative, Executive office of the President Executive of the US President). Further, Saudi Arabia is the 19th largest trading partner of the US (Executive of the US President). Moreover, according to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, Saudi Arabia became the world's second largest arms importer between 2012 and 2016 (Helton 2017). Further, in his report to Center For Strategic & International Studies, Cordesman, stated that the United Arab Emirates ordered some US\$ 17,200 million arms from the US and US\$ 2,300 million from the major European States during 2007 and 2014 (Cordesman 2016). Noteworthy in this context is the largest ever US commercial aircraft order made by the United Arab Emirates, which was worth \$120 billion (UAE Embassy, Washington). When it comes to Western political and security policies

including economic relations with Islamic states, the notion of the securitisation of Islam as a fundamental threat to Western civilisation demonstrates significant contradictions.

6 Conclusion

This article explored the theoretical and practical aspects of changing perceptions of Western securitisation of Islam from the Middle Ages to the modern era. It probed deeply into the way in which securitising discourses on Islam have diverged. Contrary to the medieval era where the securitisation of Islam in the West was constructed pertinent to its hostile relations with the Islamic world, contemporary negative images of Islam as threatening others in the West has remained utterly contradictory to its political and security alignment with Islamic states. Thus, the present securitisation of Islam in Western societies is paradoxical to its political and security relations with Islamic states. Such divergent anti-Islamic social and political perceptions in Western societies have created deep concerns on the future of Western relations with Islamic states. Rising far-right political parties have not only created ambiguity on the future of Western liberal values – on which Western civilisation rests – but also raised deep security concerns amongst the Muslim diaspora in the West. Importantly, securitisation of Islam, encompassing xenophobic stereotyping and racist elements in the West indeed are self-interested distortions employed by wide array of actors.

At the same time, the radical approach of securitising Islam in the context of counter radicalisation and counterterrorism in itself has become a security concern not only to the Muslim diaspora in Western societies, but also to the foundation of the political ideology of liberal democracy in the West. Moreover, the methods used under the pre-emption doctrine such as military intervention and detention and interrogations of terrorist suspects have been counterproductive on a large scale. Particularly, using Islam as tool to fights against the Soviet communism in Afghanistan and the invasion of Iraq backfired and emerged as one of the root causes of expansion of terrorism in the Islamic world. These facts should be taken into account when discussing the securitisation of Islam, as a homogenous cult that poses an existential threat to Western security. The contribution of this article will not only be a new framework of analysis on the Western paradox of securitisation of Islam but also to produce a new theme for further readings to which one can continue to assess how far the West can balance its growing domestic views of Islam as existential threat with its established political and security relations with the Islamic world.

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