British Muslims and the Rise of Ethnic Media in the Digital Age a Case Study of 5Pillars

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Abstract

For a long time now, the media representations of British Muslims, in particular, are the central focus of academic studies. Especially, the terror attacks often receive bias coverage that connects Islam as a faith to such incidents. Notably, the attack on the Manchester arena in May 2017 by an ISIS recruit by the name of Salman Abedi shocked the nation. In the aftermath of the crisis, UK and Western media dominated national and international press coverage. However, little attention was given and received in relation to the coverage provided by British Muslim media by 5Pillars.

This article aims to provide a case study of the 5Pillars media coverage of the attack on the Manchester arena in May 2017. Also, it examines the increasing role and impact of ethnic media as a challenger to the mainstream media. Furthermore, it asks significant questions including: Can Muslim media ownership makes their representation better? And is the media really that powerful that it causes harm to the reputation of Muslims worldwide? It proposes to establish alternative news media platforms alongside the mainstream media that dominate news and often either misrepresents or underrepresents the British Muslims.

Keywords: ISIS; Manchester terror attacks; 5Pillars; Ethnic media; British Muslims

Introduction

Since 1980s, many academic studies have traced the presence of anti-Muslim sentiment in the media reporting that too often features them as 'problematic', 'threat', 'backward', 'cruel', 'lustful', 'outsiders', 'enemy within', and 'incompatible' to the western way of life (Morey and Yaqin 2011; Raja, 2016; Said, 1997; Warsi 2017). Until this time, such problematic representations and negative connotations of the Islam and Muslims are widespread in mainstream Western media. In the current climate, it is evident that the media reporting particularly related to the mosques, sharia, veil, extremism, radicalization and terrorism are under-reported, misinterpreted or misrepresented. As a result, there is a constant rise in anti-Muslim feelings in the western societies. Arguably, it happens because of a fraction of hate-filled far-right politicians that receives more time and space in the media.

Many scholars believe that some sections of the western media reporting of Islam and Muslims demonstrates reckless behavior that has in turn contributed towards increasing hatred against Muslims and the ever-growing Islam phobia.

Questionably, there is a mind-set in both sections of the western media and polity that often use Islam as a pretext of terrorism to such an extent that they describe it as "Islamic terrorism". Recently, Imran Khan said that since 9/11, many western leaders began to associate Islam as a religion with terrorism and frequently use terms such as "radical Islam" to convince the world that Islam is the problem (Youtube, 2019).

Indeed, Khan is right in that there is overwhelming evidence that such negative references discussed above has contributed to increasing anti-Muslim hatred that has led many in the West to conclude that veil wearing Muslim women and bearded Muslim men are bad guys. Evidently, far-right hate-filled anti-Muslim ideology is behind growing attacks on Muslims in the West for example, Christchurch attacks [1-4]. More worryingly, many western mainstream politicians including the American president Donald Trump and the sections of the media like The Sun are evidently quick to blame Muslims for any terror attack even before the initial investigations start but are less prepared to condemn similar attacks on Muslims [5,6]. Hence, this scenario shows that that the West is reluctant to admit that terrorism is a universal problem that has got nothing to do with Islam.

We can ask ourselves the question that how can the representation of Islam and Muslims be improved? Does the

answer lie in appointing well-educated journalists, greater Muslim participation in the media, as new producers rather than consumers only or by establishing more Muslim owned news channels and newspapers? Today, we see that the rising phenomenon of fake news and the manipulation of stories related to ethnic minorities relating to British Muslims have further raised questions on the role of the traditional media in the West.

In such circumstances, many scholars have sensed the growing need of alternative mediums that provide news and commentary on issues relating to the victimized communities say Muslims. The question that we ask here is that whether Ethnic Media can be a constructive option in the grand scheme of things? Can Muslim media ownership make their representation better? If it is so then why there is growing problem of anti-Muslim hatred and Islam phobia? Is the media really that powerful that it causes harm to the reputation of Muslims worldwide? This article embarks upon a case study of 5Pillars, a UK online-based Muslim media platform that in many ways demonstrates that ethnic media can positively challenge mainstream British news media reporting.

Literature Review

The Shifting Nature of British Media

Evidently, the British media landscape has been in flux since its very inception. Brian McNair (1999) captured some changes in the British press, such as the national press entrance into local markets and its editorial support that he described as "editorial bias" towards political parties and groups [7]. McNair predicted that "with European currency union and other issues rising up the agenda, the honeymoon will eventually come to an end and normal business resume" Ibid). For a long time, several authors have been persistent to pinpoint towards shortfalls and in-discrepancies within mainstream British media. These include the media ownership and control, state policies, editorials content and racism. Jeremy Tunstall (1989) wrote that for decades the British media world has been so "muddled" and "confusing" that it created "inequality and ambiguity" as far as "news values" were concerned [8]. Tunstall cited leading British media critics Denis McQuail and Jay Blumer who have also identified such aspects in their research and were "quite explicit about the hierarchical nature of news" within British media generally [8].

Irfan Raja (2008) quoted a British author and thinker Aldous Huxley who wrote in his novel Brave New World that, "one day ordinary citizens would write their own news stories and have their own newspapers" and after 80 years the world is witnessing a growing presence of a movement known to us as "citizen journalism"; "new media" "social media" and sometimes also refer to as "alternative media" (Raja, 2008, p.1). Katharine Sarikakis (2004) explained "other" within the media circle that she believes should not be the norm [9]. One may understand 'Other' as different from the existing media that is mainstream. Sarikakis defined 'alternative' as "other than the dominant" and mainstream as that is "in accordance with the normal" and a "standard" (Ibid). In the current climate, the need for an alternative media space is essential for several reasons. Sarikakis rightly assumed that an alternative media gives assurances to "counter-balance" the dominant ideas of state and authorities through the help of "media contexts and forums".

Furthermore, Sarikakis also concluded that the ordinary public participation in the mainstream media is limited to "letters to editors" which she supposed are somehow "filtered systematically" [9]. Today, the layout of British newspapers is dominated by modern features known to us as new technologies and social networking sites that allow ordinary citizens to actively shape cutting edge content. Some of the popular options include readers' opinions in the form of comment threads underneath the articles. Also, people can share opinion pieces and feature articles through using new forms of networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter, Interest, Whatsapp, Skype, and LinkedIn. To be frank, sometimes there are reasons why comments need to be filtered in the comments sections as they may contain abusive and inflammatory language for that matter.

Despite these developments, some critics often point out the systematic flirting in the process of news production. David Miller wrote that governments particularly the United States funds PR companies to produce "fake news" in order to manipulate its policies, especially about wars currently waged in foreign lands (The Guardian, 15 February 2006). Regarding Muslims, there is growing evidence that authorities some politicians and even journalists create "fake news" to scapegoat them and the Islamic faith.

Worryingly, the appearance of "fake news" stories particularly relating to Muslims in Europe suggests that "false flag" operations are often designed to demonize Muslim migrants (see The Guardian, 2 December 2016; Financial Times, 15 February 2017 and The Independent, 9 May 2017). Such situations pave the way to develop the need of ethnic media organizations that not only promote competition, but also somewhat provide an alternative platform to halt and challenge the dilemmas of "fake news" and "false flag" operations using media spaces.

The Rise of Ethnic Media in the Age of Internet in Britain

Matthew, D. Matsaganis, et al (2011) noted that "history tells us that ethnic media have been part of our media landscape for centuries" [10]. These authors have provided an in-depth analysis of the rise of ethnic media throughout Europe, America and beyond. They assumed that ethnic media caters the needs of specific communities and therefore sometimes it may be produced in number of different languages (ibid, p.5). To elucidate the term 'ethnic media' these authors cited two scholars (Georgiou, 2001b, and Malonga, 2002) who have suggested a rather more appropriate term to brand it as "minority media" (ibid, p.8). These authors also stated that Britain is evidently a larger country within Europe with at least "100 ethnic daily and weekly newspapers and periodicals" whilst the British citizens also "tune into over 15 ethnic radio and 30 television channels" (ibid, p.4).

Internet technology has revolutionized the world in many ways from people buying and selling habits to their lifestyle and information consuming patterns. For instance, it has connected people at distant lands that can learn, share and exchange

views on different subject matters. Today, various marginalized groups have access to different online platforms such as online forums, websites, blogs, weblogs and social networking pages where they can discuss, debate, post, share and challenge views, news, information and opinions on issues affecting them. More profoundly, the ethnic media sector is evidently embracing digitalized technologies in order to expand its operations and connectivity with audience, viewers and readers. Of course, one of the significant reasons of the rise of ethnic media is the fact that the mainstream media mostly either ignores or misrepresents ethnic groups such as Muslims for that matter.

Take for instance, the history of the British media shows a constant presence of an imaginary enemy in a distant land be it Russians or other Communists. Alongside this trend, the British media also portrayed certain groups within British society, as threat is they immigrants of certain ethnic groups, such as the Irish, Scottish, Jews, Blacks and present day Muslims. It is evident that most of the literature written about ethnic minorities in Britain until the Rushdie Affair (1989) largely demonstrates the social and cultural problems stemmed in ethnicity, and race with particular reference of ethnic groups such as the Irish, Jews and blacks [11,12].

Liz Curtis (1984; 1996) pointed out that the stereotypical representation of the Irish in fact reflects "Nothing but The Same Old Story" of "anti-Irish racism". Six caricatures on the front page of Curtis book shows how racism against the Irish community survived since 13th century to 1982 and so on. Curtis suggested that for a long time Britain has been known as the "imperialist and capitalist" nation whose governments has "vested interests in trying to: (a) justify their plunder and oppression… (b) Divide and rule the workers of different nationalities in Britain" [13].

Prior to the occurrence of 9/11, and to an extent until 7/7 attacks, the discourses and debates on racism surrounding the representation of the British and American black people and their place in these societies were a common feature of the academic inquiry [14-16]. Bhikhu Parekh (2006) drew our attention to the Rushdie Affair (1989) and wrote that the British Muslims were presented as "' barbarians', 'uncivilized', 'fanatics' and compared to the Nazis" [17]. Furthermore, Parekh disclosed that just a few months before the Bradford Muslims protest and burning of a copy of satanic verses. "Only a few months earlier, several Labor Members of Parliament had burnt a copy of the new racist immigration rules outside the House of Commons without raising so much as a murmur of protest" (ibid, p.300).

In short, the mainstream media reporting of minority groups has opened avenues for the British Muslims and their fellow ethnic groups to establish their own digitalized media outlets. Initially, these organizations may operate on a small scale, but these platforms allow marginalized groups to raise awareness of issues that often went unreported and also challenge misleading stories and facts featuring minority groups.

British Muslims Image in the British Media: Pros and Cons

Over the past few years, most sections the British media both print and broadcast have shown an apparent attitude towards the Muslims that is to blame them instantaneously for most terrorist attacks perpetrated at home and abroad. The immediate response of the Norway shootings and bombings took place on 22 July 2011, Britain's widely circulated tabloid, The Sun published a front-page story with a headline, "Al Qaeda massacre: Norway's 9/11" suggesting that it was an act of "Islamic terrorism". Outside Britain, such trends are also commonly found in many countries including in America. For instance, in the aftermath of "The Oklahoma City Bombings" in (1995) the American Muslim community was immediately linked and was held responsible for the bombings [18].

Such hostile and derogatory perceptions of British Muslims are common as far as some British broadsheet publications are concerned. As far as tabloids are concerned, press coverage of issues and events surrounding terrorism, violence, social disturbances and protests in which tabloids often establish links of events and issues with the British Muslims that aims to present them in a negative light time and time again. However, in recent times, this practice has been actively challenged in some sections of the media such as The Guardian, The Independent, BBC and Channel 4.

The point here is that much of the news stories are based upon the violence, terrorism and radicalization surrounding radical imams, hatemongers, controversial figures such as Anjem Choudary, Omar Bakri Muhammad, Abu Hamza al-Masri, Abu Qattara al-Filistini, Ed Husain, and Maajid Nawaz who are known in the Muslim community as being 'self-declared' and self-appointed' scholars of British Islam. These figures receive more coverage, space and time in broadcast and print media that consequently produces an image of Islam that is intolerant and increasingly out of touch with secular western culture.

Since 7/7, reporting on British Muslims has come to such negative point as   Hickman et al, (2011) study finds that British Muslims community is being labelled as "suspected terrorist" [19]. Maybe, because most of the news reporting of the terrorist organizations such as al-Qaeda, and ISIS frequently accuses religious teaching of being the catalyst for terrorism

A notable feature of the British news coverage of terrorism often reflects a connection of Islam and terrorists that in other words suggest that if not all most "Muslims" are terrorists. This description of Islam is pre-9/11 and the 7/7 tactics that is highly visible in several writings. Yasmin Alibhai-Brown (2001) explained that there were several various reasons why the press presents Muslims in a negative light. Alibhai-Brown provided an example centering upon the media coverage of the Oklahoma bombings that associated Muslims with the bombings. Alibhai-Brown states, "When the bomb exploded in Oklahoma, Bernard Levin fulminated against Muslims, accusing them of wanting to create 'Khartoum on the Mississippi'" [20].

Furthermore, Alibhai-Brown set aside a section titled "Distorted Image" in which she cited leading journalists and critics such as John Pilger and noted that, "Enormous influence lies with those who run and service the massive media operations" in Britain, She wrote that, "The narrowness of the British media is a national disgrace" and that the British media had "promoted a white perspective" [20].

Recently, the most circulated and published official accusation of the Iraqi government possessing 'weapons of mass destruction' was yet another misleading and manufactured news story that brought enormous destruction and human loss in the twentieth century [21, 22].

Although there is no denial of considerable positive changes happening within the British broadsheet press and broadcast media. Elizabeth Poole (2006) study that examined the British Muslims press coverage concluded that, "The huge shift to focus on terrorism now unifies coverage within the orientalist global construction of Islam. One image dominates that of 'Islamic terrorism' [23]. Since the publication of Poole's findings little has changed with regards to the news coverage of terrorism that in the main solely focusses on "Islamic terrorism".

However, Poole also traced some positive changes within the British press particularly about The Guardian that began to question discriminatory attitude towards the British Muslims [23]. Besides, Irfan Azhar Raja (2016) unpublished doctoral thesis titled, "Reporting British Muslims: The Re-Emergence of Folk Devils and Moral Panics in Post-7/7 Britain (2005-2007)" also found a considerable amount of positive coverage within The Guardian in relating to the British Muslim portrayals in post-7/7 Britain.

But it is fair to say that a number of factors have contributed into the production of negative reporting of Islam and British Muslims as a whole. These include frequently appearance of like-minded and selected experts and self-appointed scholars on Islam, a distinct lack of investigative reporting, and 'willful ignorance' of Islam within Western and Islamic journalist communities.

Most tabloids even as we speak still practice duplicity in their coverage of the British Muslims. Over the years, several forged stories about the British Muslims have raised concerns within the liberal-minded press and the British Muslim community. Paul Lewis provided an example of Daily Star reporter Richard Peppiest who resigned over the "anti-Muslim" coverage and accused tabloids "of inciting racial tensions" (The Guardian, 4 March 2011).

Similarly, the "Trojan horse school" scandal that caused panic and blamed British Muslims intentions to "take over" and "run schools on strict Islamic principles" turned out to be nothing more than false accusations (The Guardian, 7 March 2014; 23 June 2016). Ever since the Rushdie Affair (1989) and 9/11, Muslims in Europe are constantly being demonized through a misinformation campaign be it the publication of misleading information about sharia and veil, louder calls to ban mosque minarets and making fun of Muslims halal food options (slaughtering), interfering in mosques and pressurizing Muslims to change and adopt secular schools curriculums.

In short, everyday bigotry of British Muslims has evidently become normal practice. Worse still, press stories relating to Muslims fill the newspaper front pages, cartoons, features and columns sections suggesting that the media have no other business than questioning and vilify Islam and Muslims. Nesrine Malik captured the tabloid and the conservative as well as a few sections of the liberal British press and broadcast attitude towards the British Muslims as, "In Britain, there is now a cycle of Islamic scare stories so regular that it is almost comforting, like the changing of the seasons".

In a rather crude manner, the tabloids headlines, cartoons and features on Muslims show a rather confronting and ill-mannered attitude towards Islam and Muslims. **Figure 1**

Figure 1   Daily Mail, 19 September 2010.

Most stories on Muslims reflect ill-informed and apathetic way of reporting for example, the Daily Mail front page headline "Britain goes halal... but no-one tells the public: How famous institutions serve ritually slaughtered meat with no warning" published on 19 September 2010. It further reinforced to the ill-informed public that, "Sharia law expressly forbids knocking the animal out with a bolt gun, as is usual in British slaughterhouses. Instead, it must be sentient when its throat is cut, and the blood allowed dripping from the carcass.

The British media storm vented its rage against the halal adulteration process and presented Islam as cruel and Muslims as backwards because they eat halal food. Yet, in these targeted campaigns in which Muslims were willfully demonised, but most sections of the same press deliberately spare the Jewish community that eat kosher meat. However, the Muslim press portrayals also signifies that whilst a large part of the British press discriminate Muslims, the liberal press such as The Guardian challenge such bias, prejudice and scaremongering stories by offering investigative and authentic scholarship.

Furthermore, random headlines of the Muslims in the British tabloids and mainstream newspapers evidently show a designed campaign to defame Islam and less of a tendency to discuss matters of real importance. **Figures 2 and 3**

Closer observation of the above images from British newspapers collected and published in the media and accessed by typing the word 'Muslim' on Google is often seen as the tip of the iceberg in many quarters. Ideally, the inclusion of the above images is to provide a visual illustration of how most sections of the British press represent Muslims and their religion. In other words, such a bad press is a root cause of apprehension not only among the British Muslims and also in other ethnic communities. Miqdaad Versi proclaimed that "the British media is responsible for the rise in Islam phobia in Britain" (The Independent, 4 April 2016). Frankly speaking these examples also provide evidence that

Figure 2 5pillars, 2016.

Figure 3 Source Bare Naked Islam, 2016.

whilst most sections of the British press are attacking Muslims alongside their counterparts, but only a few continue to offer alternative opinions and challenge bigotry against Muslims.

Not only are most sections of the print media incessantly demonising British Muslims, but also feature films, dramas, sitcoms and short documentaries show British Muslims as backwards, misfit into secular society, uneducated and radicalized and fundamentalists who pose a threat to British way of life. A long list of media productions that reinforces this view include: Yasmin (2004); Gay Muslims (2006); Blitz (2007); Brick Lane (2007); The Infidel (2010); Four Lions (2010) and Citizen Khan (2012). Maybe, because of more negative and bad press apparently young British Muslims are losing faith in the mainstream British media that they feel portray them as 'radical', and 'terrorists' for that matter [24]. Hence, this in turn could many readers towards alternative media reporting platforms in the near future.

Methodology

A long list of scholars believe that case-study is a useful method to examine any particular event or a phenomena that is also a recognized practice in all disciplines including sociology and media studies (Chell, 2004; Gibbs, 2007; and Hartley, 2004). According to John Gerring (2007) a case study can be based upon an experiment or it may be "observational" and like other research methods it has both "virtues and flaws" [25]. Therefore, Gerring defines a "case connotes a spatially delimited phenomenon (a unit) observed at a single point in time or over some period of time. It comprises the type of phenomenon that an inference attempts to explain" (ibid, p.19). Furthermore, "each case may provide a single observation or multiple (within-case) observation.

This article chooses a case study method to examine 5 Pillars website that commissions stories and news reports relating to the British Muslims of wide-raging topics. As 5 Pillars slogan reads: "What are Muslim thinking?" it indicates that 5 Pillars presents Muslim views, sound bites and opinions on sensitive issues that are often missing in the mainstream media. Notably, one of the selection criteria was that 5 Pillars claims to practice challenging journalism. This is a significant development in Muslim minority press because most often Muslim related stories are in the mainstream press are dominated by non-Muslim experts on Islam and Muslims. Another reason of choosing 5 Pillars was to gage the constant developments occurring in the British Muslims press and resulting impact on the Muslims representations in the media.

A Case Study: 5 Pillars Coverage of the Manchester Terror Attacks

On the 22nd of May 2017, the city of the Manchester in the United Kingdom experienced one of the deadliest terrorist attacks on British soil. Salman Abedi was eventually named as the terrorist who detonated a suicide bomb injuring 120 people and killing 22 people in the process [26]. A great deal of debate and examination of how and why a young Libyan took his own life and that of others has been described at great length. The Muslim community again came under the spotlight from the media and the government and again was pressed into arguing that these heinous attacks were not condoned by Muslims and Islam as a faith was not directly responsible for these actions [27]. The MCB (Muslim Council of Britain), an umbrella body that includes the vast majority of mosques and Muslim community organization's was at pains to add that Muslims were peace loving people and that ISIS/ISIL/Daesh would not divide the British public (Muslim Council of Britain, 2017) In terms of the extensive news coverage of a heinous terrorist act on British soil, the mainstream UK media dominated the headlines leaving a void in the form of there being little attention being paid to how British Muslim media outlets were covering these unfolding events

However, this article aims to explore the news media coverage provided by 5Pillars, a relatively little-known British Muslim media news organization in the days, months and weeks in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks in Manchester earlier this year. 5Pillars (5P) was launched in 2013 in response to the lack of Muslim organization's presenting news from the grassroots community perspective. The foray into the news market enabled 5Pillars to make inroads into becoming the leading organization

representing British Muslim public and political opinion. The organization claims that it wishes to present opinion in an 'independent and professional manner and provide a community media platform [27]. To harness appeal from wider sections of society, 5 Pillars has launched many platforms particularly on social media to disseminate British Muslim media opinion in a positive light. Today, 5Pillars offers media commentary on several social media online platforms ranging from the internet to Facebook, Twitter and Instagram (Ibid).

5Pillars was set up by two renowned journalists Roshan M Salih, a renowned journalist who is currently editor of the organization. In addition to his work at 5Pillars, he is also employed by the Iranian news channel Press TV. Dilly Hussain at present is the Deputy Editor of the organization and describes himself as pundit, journalist and media consultant. He has appeared on several news channels such as the BBC, Al Jazeera and writes for the Huffington Post and Middle East Eye offering his insight into stories affecting the Muslim community on a regular basis.

After the tragic events of Manchester in May 2017, 5Pillars published a news piece titled 'the shameless pushers of Prevent' in response to certain Muslim organizations such as Inspire and the Quilliam Foundation and individuals including Adam Deen, Dr. Usama Hasan, Amina Lone, Shahista Gohir, Majid Nawaz and Sara Khan that blamed the wider UK Muslim community for being wholly responsible for the attacks in Manchester (5Pillars, 2017) Prevent was launched by the then Communities Secretary Hazel Blears under the Labour Government headed by Prime Minister Tony Blair in response to the devastating attacks on the London public transport system on the 7th of July 2005 in London in order to combat extremism, radicalization and to minimize the Islamist terrorist threat on the British mainland.

Dilly Hussain writing in 5 Pillars and Dilly's Desk argued that some Muslim personalities and organizations were pointing the finger of blame at Muslims in the UK in order to secure and increase funding from the Home Office. Furthermore, these individuals and organizations were supportive of the Prevent strategy in that it was an effective tool in combating the scourge of Islamist terror in the UK [28, 29]. Hussain stated that the Pro-Prevent lobby and the British Government had failed to address the root causes of extremism, radicalization and extremism in the UK since 9/11 and 7/7. Hussain in the article presented in 5Pillars made a stark observation that the mainstream media failed to reflect upon that centered upon the fact that Abedi the mastermind behind the Manchester atrocity was reported several times to the police for his erratic pronouncements expressing solidarity with Jihadist groups but no action was taken by the authorities.

The Hussain paradigm makes the distinction that foreign policy was the elephant in the room no one wanted to discuss and that more importantly it was a major factor in radicalizing several British Muslim individuals who went on to carry out terrorist attacks in mainland Britain since September 2001 until now that directly followed military interventions in Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria (Ibid). Hussain goes further and adds that the British government were to admit that foreign policy was the main driver for the triple entente namely extremism, radicalization and terrorism then it would run the risk of losing huge revenues

from arms sales as well as putting at stake its global influence and potentially allow its rivals on the international stage to steal a march on the global stage [29].

Katie Hopkins, a well-known socialite and former media pundit on LBC news called for the 'final solution' for Muslims echoing Nazi era language used by Hitler against the Jewish community in the 1930's in the aftermath of the atrocities in Manchester [29, 30]. Hussain argued that the incendiary language used by Hopkins coupled with the fact that senior police officials were calling for the mass internment of innocent Muslims on the basis that they may commit acts of terrorism further inflamed an already toxic environment that the Muslim community were living in made worse by the events in Manchester. 5 Pillars has been at pains to add that Muslims are now very much in the firing line now and treated as 'suspect communities targeted by the spectra of securitization today in the UK (5Pillars, 2017).

In the days after the Manchester attacks, 5 Pillars found itself coming under a barrage of criticism for refusing to back a joint statement signed by no less than 37 groups condemning the Manchester attacks (The Sun, 2017). Shahista Gohir, head of the Muslim Women's Network (MWN) censured 5Pillars for refusing to work with the government and for being part of an active network comprising of groups, organizations and individuals actively working against the fight against the Islamist terror threat (BBC News Night, 2017). In response, Roshan M Salih, the editor of 5 Pillars argued that his organization was not duty bound to condemn or apologies for an attack that neither he nor his fellow Muslims were responsible for (The Sun, 2017)

Hussain stated that since 9/11, mainstream Muslims have condemned and even apologized for acts allegedly carried out in the names of Muslims and Islam, yet they find themselves sixteen years on from 9/11 as the enemy. Moreover, Hussain makes the point that Prevent has indeed made schoolchildren criminals and has been attempting to silence free speech and police thoughts and then on the other hand people who have committed real crimes have got away with it due to a lack of action from the authorities (Ibid). Muslims now find themselves under attack from the outside and the inside as far as Hussain is concerned in that he argues that the government and the British media portrays them as people who are not be trusted and to be wary of for good reason. The situation is made worse when Pro-Prevent Muslims attack fellow Muslims for not doing enough to combat the so-called Islamist terrorist scourge affecting the UK and further fuel is added to the fire when the latter finds it extremely difficult to survive daily against an Islam phobic onslaught that has raged on and off since September 11, 2001 [28,29].

Conclusion

Ethnic Media is going through challenges and still it is not in a position to compete or otherwise take position of a mainstream media. These challenges include reaching to the audience, trustworthiness, investigative ability, quality reporting, in-depth and authoritative analysis, lack of advertising and public support. One of the emerging trends is that many newspapers are now appealing their loyal readers to contribute financially so that they

could continue investigative reporting that is free of any control and do not depends upon advertisements. At the same time fake stories, anti-Muslim hatred and bias reporting has left number of readers with no choice then to look for an alternative medium which takes the place of mainstream media that is ethnic media.

Constant negative portrayal of Muslims by the British media since 2001 has left them demoralized and in a position where it has been looking for its own media communication platforms that can provide alternative, nuanced, balanced and latest cutting-edge narratives that projects their unique voice. Despite all these difficulties, British Muslims have started to raise awareness of the need to create their own media outlets that cater for the needs of young British Muslims who feel marginalized, disengaged and often unreported in the mainstream media platforms.

Notably, the 5 Pillars serves as a rare example of having revolutionized Muslim new media in the UK and around the world punching above its weight in a fiercely competitive market. It is in a healthy position to challenge decade's old domination of news media coverage enjoyed by mainstream British newspapers and news channels in years to come. However, 5 Pillars like with other small independent media outlets faces an uncertain future considering the current turbulent economic headwinds affecting the world at this very present time. Despite these challenging headwinds, the generosity of the public at large through regular private donations allows them to meet the challenges of running an online news media platform year on year.

This study suggests that it is vital that alternative news media platforms such as 5Pillars continue to survive and thrive in a world dominated by the big news corporations and tabloid and broadsheet press that rarely project the authentic voice of under-represented and marginalized groups such as Muslims per say. Manifestly, in post-7/7 Britain, 5Pillars has emerged as an influential voice of young savvy British Muslims looking to be informed and be given space and direction in an environment that poses a multitude of challenges that faces them in the coming days, months and years.

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