

MEDIA@LSE MSc Dissertation Series

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Ideological Trafficking of God and the Other

INTRODUCTION

"Death to the man who breaks my law"

- (Lessing, trans. 2005, 1.2.14-15)

Religions have long been communicated through mythology, symbols and storytelling. History bears witness to ruling powers subduing, editing, glorifying and carefully positioning

Moreover, while all Muslim sects adhere to peaceful preaching and condemn extremist discourse, there still remains a fraction that seems to leverage theological preaching and religious text to rationalise and attempt to normalise the antagonistic narrative against the Other (Said, 1978).

Muhammad, the last prophet of Islam united the Arab tribes of the time under his religious message (Esposito, 2002). However, his death in 632 AD resulted in conflicts over the succession of leadership. Muhammad's companion was declared his political successor; thereby establishing the Islamic Caliphate. Another group refused to accept the Caliphate, citing historical events whereby Muhammad had mentioned to seek his cousin and son-in-law, Ali's guidance after his death. The conflict divided the Muslim world in sects namely Shiites and Sunnis, with Sunnis forming 60% percent of Islamic population today. The differences largely exist on historical and political grounds. After the first four Caliphs, the power and leadership turned into monarchies. Caliphate spread drastically with the establishment and expansion of *Ummayyad*, *Abbasids*, *Fatimids*, and *Ottoman* empires -36-2 8esC T(

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who disagrees with their interpretation; where "Othering" is defined as "a course of action whereby society labels an inferior group into existence" (Matusitz, 2012, p. 142).

Bauman in his work outlines three levels of Othering which he titles "Grammars of Othering" (Baumann & Gingrich, 2005, p. 27) wherein the first of it has been derived from Edward Said's exploration of orientalism. According to Bauman (2005), negative mirror imaging can be attributed to the construction of the self and the other, whereby the good in self is what the other lacks and some of the elements in the other is what the

and the recent rise in Islamic extremism in South Asia are attributed to the *Deobandi* movement.

The *Deobandi* movement was initiated in 1867 in Northern India by Shah Wali Ullah, a strict interpreter of Islamic jurisprudence with considerably vast research and strong views on declaring Shiites as *infidel/kafir* (Wolffe, 2002).

By the 1930's, tremendous literature had penetrated the Indian Muslim society propagating

Bearing no official affiliation with Afghani Taliban, Tehrik-e-Taliban (TTP) formally announced it

It is speculated that 12,000 religious seminaries with extremist ideological setup are

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organisations that propagate an ideological mandate to the mainstream population by way of their communication.

With the

There are various ways of undertaking CDA. Fairclough's three-dimensional approach helps analyse the text on textual, discursive and sociocultural level. The dimension of discourse helps establish the connection between the textual and sociocultural level (Fairclough, 2005). At the first dimensional level, the research will attempt to evaluate the narrative construction of the self and the other. At the second dimensional level, it will attempt to extract the interaction of ideological process. At the third dimensional level, the research focuses on understanding how the origins of narrative embedded in various social, cultural and political paradigms are leveraged by authors to position the Other while attempting to normalise the narrative.

Challenges

Neither Critical Discourse Analysis nor this research can help establish the motivation, reasoning and exact intention of the producer of the communications (Mayr & Machin, 2012). While the same can be speculated and the messages studied, it can still not ascertain impact on the audience with absolute assurance; which inevitably serves as the limitation of the scope of current research while paving way for such possible studies in the future. A supplementing research of extremist communications analysing the audience reception through ethnographic means, as suggested by Fairclough (1999), can further the current research scope to determine as to how knowledge production c q 0.h etodn gekne w -1 (w -88 (c q () -8 ()

Sample

The last ten years have seen a drastic rise and confident expression of hate speech against Shiites in Pakistan online (Haque, 2014). While most of TTP's official narratives are composed of various "Others" including Americans, Jews, Pakistani armed forces and Shiites

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LeJ particularly serves to normalize its content which can be deduced from its digital presence and involvement in national politics facilitated with its strong electoral support in the Punjab province, despite the ban on the organization's operations (Naqvi, 2014).

LeJ has been prominently issuing threats to Shiites in Pakistan. The *Hazara* community¹⁴ has served as a recent example of ethnic and religious genocide given its regional location and nearness to LeJ's operational base. *Hazaras* are predominantly the only Shiite community in the region surrounded by Sunni *Pashtuns* and other tribal agencies. According to Human Rights report, nearly 50% of Shiites targeted in 2013 belonged to the *Hazara* community (Watch, 2014).

Two sample messages of LeJ were selected for the purpose of understanding the structure of the narrative. First is the pamphlet citing reasons to excommunicate and wage jihad against Shiites; second is a set of continuous prose available on LeJ's website.

Both the texts are similar in terms of textual construction and frequent usage of words such as "*Kafir*"¹⁵, "*Impure*", "*Jihad*" and "*Shias*". Subordinating the other with labels is often evident in literature that serves to penetrate mainstream structures with the new position on the other. Repetitive usage can then be seen as a strategy of addressing a problem in the society rather than as mere eradication of another human being (Hillgruber, 1989). As one progresses from one text to another, the pattern begins emerging. The texts are explicit, categorical in linguistic expression and communication. For example, "Just as our fighters have waged a successful *jihad* against the *Shias Hazaras* in Afghanistan and butchered them" (Jhangvi, n.d.).

It is a two paragraph communication drafted in a letter format. With an opening signature signifying the

Further, the text switches between first and third person language. When it is speaking of destroying *Shias*, it seems to sustain the tone of agency and ownership; for instance “we will make Pakistan their graveyard” (Jhangvi, n.d.). On the other hand, when the message speaks of origination of orders, it seems to nominalise with sudden switch to passive sentence structure; for instance, “awaiting orders to operate across Pakistan” (Jhangvi, n.d.).

Adopting a stance on “them”, while the message is directed to a non-*Shias* audience, it has a

every village, every nook and corner of Pakistan” (Jhangvi, n.d.). Repetition of the word “every” reflects the emphasis that the author is trying to assert along with the detailing of author’s stance. Further, the author’s stance on Islam has an antagonistic discursive pattern which becomes more apparent in the latter part of the statement. For example, “we will only rest when we fly the flag of true Islam on this land” (Jhangvi, n.d.).

In the socio-cultural context, the message was issued within a month’s period of LeJ’s former leader Malik Ishaq’s release from prison. After taking responsibility of several attacks, he was imprisoned with the court cases and charges against him.

He was released in July 2011 by the court citing insufficient witnesses to prove the charges (Watch, 2014). Amidst charges against him, he reportedly accepted responsibility for several murders; terror attacks on the *Hazara*

However, in TTP's narratives, there is a comparatively stronger sense of insistence on *Jihad* evident from the repetition of Jihadi discourse, cited with Quranic texts to add credibility.

Shiites as the "thorn in the heart of the Muslim ummah..an ulcer" (Rawalpindi Massacre, 2013)

2005) between the self and the other, often defining the "other" as "impure" by way of positioning the lack of purity as presence of the same in the "self".

Western imperialism, foreign collaboration and practicing of historical communal rituals are viewed as diseases that have "corrupted" a community which "calls itself Muslims". The emphasis of both narratives lies on Shiites as a conspiracy to weaken Muslim unity in the world. The perception has further been reinforced with the Middle Eastern crisis. For instance, American support for Saddam Hussain's execution was an

Further, both organisations bear striking similarity to the ideology of Islamic State (IS), focusing on regional conflict and sectarian struggle as opposed to global jihadist strategy. While sophisticated penetration of digital platforms and applications reflects the professional yet explicit mandate of IS; TTP and LeJ remain comparatively diplomatic with gradual penetration of ideological differences in the country (Rashid, 2014).

Normalization of narrative in the society

In the bid to cover the radicalization of Pakistan, media groups have been providing extensive

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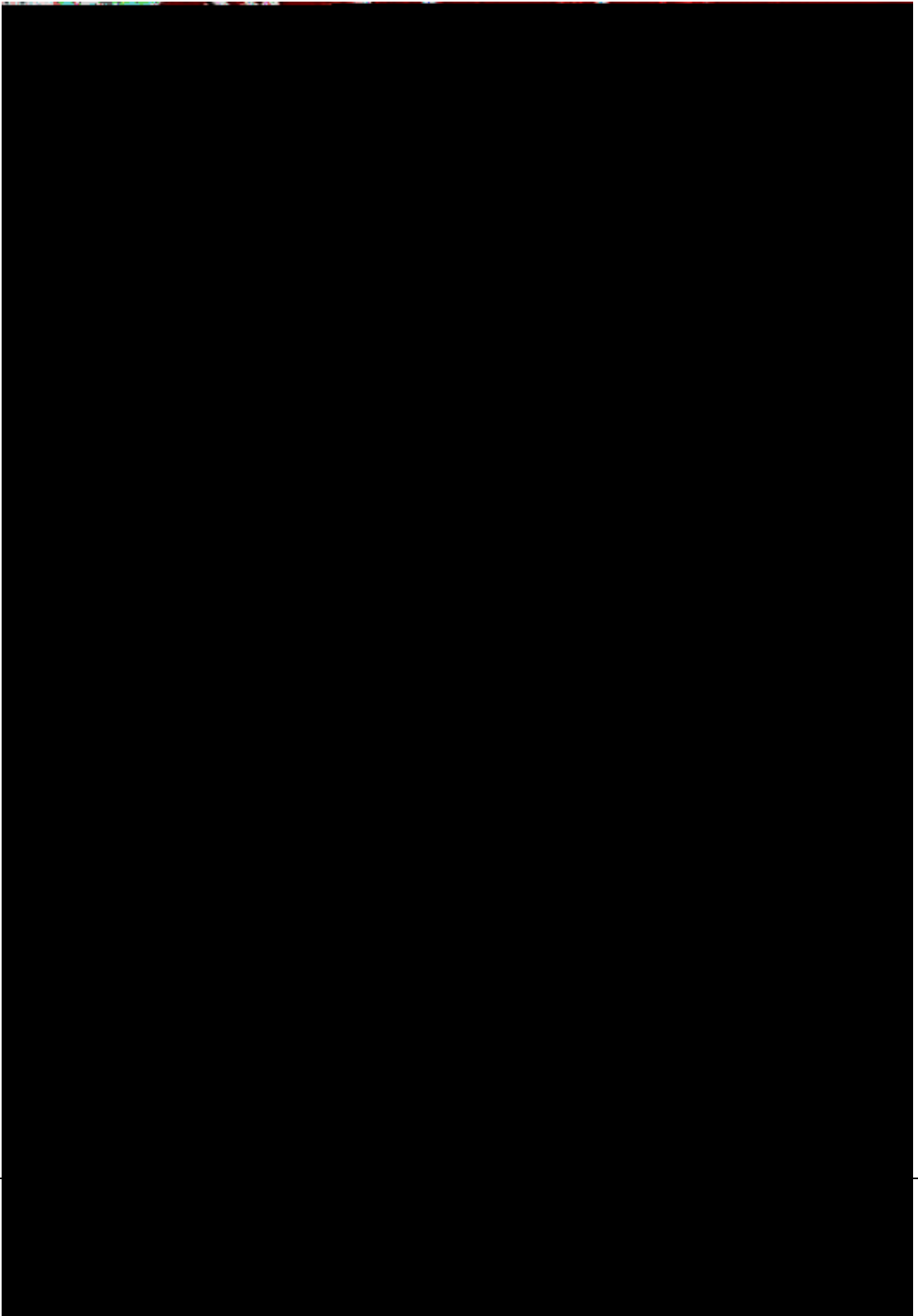
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APPENDIX 2



APPENDIX 3

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