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Securitization of Islam and Muslims Through Social Media: A Content Analysis of Stopislam in Twitter

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Abstract: *The main objective of this paper is to examine the securitization of Islam and Muslims on Twitter. Therefore, whether and to what extent securitized images of Islam and Muslims have been produced on Twitter and to analyze the dominant securitized themes and their sub-dimensions. The methodology used for this purpose consisted of quantitative and qualitative analysis and analyzed hashtags #stopislam trending on Twitter. It was found that #stopislam produced securitized images of Islam and Muslims. Totalitarianism as a sub-dimension of ideological threat in the context of Securitization of Islam is dominating than Sharia Law and Jihadism while no evidence has been found in Whababism Category. Similarly, in the existential threat category in the securitization of Muslims sub-dimension, general Muslims are dominating than Women's, immigrants and refugees on #stopislam. #stopislam produced less neutral and favoring Muslims Tweets evident that hashtag produced securitized images of Islam and Muslims.*

Key Words: Islam, Muslims, Securitization, Islamophobia, Twitter, Anti Islam, Anti Muslims Social Media

Introduction

A Runnymede Trust report (1997) described Islamophobia as a groundless and immediate fear and hatred of Islam or Islamic traditions and values. Definition finds some factors as a feature of Islamophobia in this way: The report described Islamophobia as "an unfound hostility towards Islam" and Islamophobia events as anti-Muslim and anti-Muslim. It also raises serious concerns

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about this hostility in the form of discrimination against Muslim communities, in particular, the discrimination of Muslims from major social and political issues. In fact, geographically by nature, the report has made Muslims and Islam appear as a 'Security Threat'. Islam is considered immoral, irrational, and old-fashioned. Muslims are seen as threatening, violent, aggressive and helpful of terrorism. These claims that Muslims are divided between "us" and "them", "us" that we are civilized, artfully crafted and enlightened while "they" are old-fashioned, violent and senseless [\(Runnymede, 1997\)](#).

The report by United Kingdom-based charity 'Forum against Islamophobia and Racism' founded in 2001 with the mission of eradicating Islamophobia and discrimination in British society. The FAIR report sees Islamophobia as a system of racism and believes the phenomena have many basics such as 'anti-Semitism.' The report recognizes the appearance of Islamophobia in the form of written and verbal harassment, discernment in workplaces, schools and violent occurrences on individuals and mosques [\(FAIR, 2001\)](#).

According to a report by the European Center for Monitoring of Racism and Xenophobia, feelings of anti-Muslim sentiment have been increasing in Europe and especially the USA. Recently, the different levels of Islam phobia have been revealed many times. For example, few are debates on the construction of an Islamic center near Ground Zero. Similarly, mosque debates in different states in the USA, legislation in France about anti-veiling, in Switzerland "minaret" row, and the massacre of Turkish immigrants in Germany are one of the most well-known examples. The receipt of the report indicates that Muslim communities and other groups have been the victims of escalating hostilities since 9/11. Extreme levels of fear among the general public have exacerbated existing prejudices and increased acts of violence and harassment in the many European Member States. At the same time, efforts to alleviate fear have, in turn, led to a renewed interest in Islamic culture and religious systems [\(EUMC, 2002\)](#).

Additionally, [Iqbal \(2010\)](#) explained that discourses related to Islamophobia are complex phenomena's. Also, this construct has historically deep roots. While considering an ongoing debate and academic criticism of Islam and Muslims, 'blood' and 'religion' are considered as similar to 'race' in Spanish literature while discussing Islam. Furthermore, discussing the areas of Islamophobia and divided into three major parts of the Islamophobia model. The first one includes manifestation, which refers to threat perception and hatred. Secondly, its level refers to the attitude structure. Lastly, it's determining factors [\(Iqbal, 2010\)](#).

In addition, the 'European Islamophobia Report' (2016) reveal some more insights into current Islamophobia dynamics in western countries. According to this report 'Islamophobia has become a "real threat" to the European Union democratic foundations. Reports covering almost every European areas indicate that the situation of Islamophobia in different areas of life such as politics, media, education, employment, the justice system and on the internet is increasing [\(European, 2016\)](#).

In summary, we can conclude all the various aspects and the definitions of Islamophobia, as given above. Islamophobia consists of viewing Muslims and Islam as political, cultural, and

security threats on the basis of apartheid. This view sometimes translates into hostile and aggressive actions against Muslims. While racism compels part of the concept of Islam phobia, and in some cases, Islam phobia may be identified by discrimination in certain institutions, there are certain aspects of the concept as well.

Because of this reason, this study is to analyze whether and to what extent Twitter produced securitized images of Islam and Muslims in the case of #stopislam and used quantitative and qualitative techniques (Awan, 2014) to analyze the hashtag #stopislam.

Literature Review

In the context of Islamophobia, Islam and Muslims as a threat, its Security Dimension, after a tragic period, concerns about Islamophobia have increased, and terrorism is now considered a major threat to the protection of world peace and security. A report by Runnymede Trust, 'Islamophobia: A Challenge for All of Us', (1997) listed Islamophobia events as anti-Muslim and anti-Muslim. It also raises serious concerns about this hostility in the form of discrimination against Muslim communities, in particular, the discrimination of Muslims from major social and political issues. In fact, geographically by nature, the Runnymede Trust report has made Muslims and Islam appear as a 'Security Threat' (Runnymede, 1997).

Feelings of anti-Islamic and anti-Islamic sentiment are increasing in the USA and Europe. Therefore, Muslims and Islam are protected at different times in Europe and the USA. Terrorism, terrorism and violence are at the forefront of these discussions about Islam and Muslims. The use of this form of a demonstration by Muslims and Islam in academics and basic acquisitions has established a contradictory policy of state-sponsored programs and promotes radicalization through the 'defense' process of Muslims and Islam (Cesari J., 2012)

As Eid (2014) pointed out that in the western me, Muslims have been portrayed illogically as 'social deviants' from westerners with negative connotations and as posing a security threat to the west. As part of the discussion on terrorism and security, the connection and association of Islam and Muslims with terrorism, violence has come to be accepted (Eid, 2014) . Such as the terms "Muslim" and "terrorist" have become practically identical". Another one of important writers from Australia found that "Muslims mosques and Islamic centers in Sydney have been portrayed as alien 'Others': as unknown, unfamiliar, foreign, mysterious and as threatening" (Dunn K. M., 2001).

Similarly, Sabri (2012) shows that a large segment of western societies considered Muslims opposite to the western public as Muslims are passionate, violent and support terrorism because they see that Muslims threaten their well-being and culture. Westerners have more opportunities to compare Muslims with terrorism (Sabri, 2012).

These terms, however, represent Muslims as a systematic dissimilar to the Western, like the advanced, the noble, and other side Arabs and Muslims as extremists, undeveloped, inferior. Feldman (2012) found that fundamentalism is related to Muslims and Islam, and now Islam as a religion is no commonly known for its ideologies but is actually regarded as violent, aggressive

and negative for on whole society. He added that the factors that incite violence and hate are the use of such language in which depicts someone negatively in favor of other factors. (Feldman, 2012).

Furthermore, (Halliday, 1999) has taken the threat of Western Islam as a fraud. He also describes the animosity between Western Muslims and Islam and therefore includes elements of racism, xenophobia, and superstition, which is what Halliday calls anti-Muslimism. The anti-Islamic rhetoric is based on the idea that the enmity expressed against Muslims is more specific to Muslims as a group. Similarly, (Leibold, 2010) elaborates that Muslims related threats (i.e. symbolic and physical threats combined) are strongly linked to Islamic racism.

The authors elaborate on the fact that Muslims are “organized” and organized according to the common people, such as pagans, fundamentalists, and terrorists. In addition, the real threat posed by Muslims is often seen and expressed in terms of terrorism. (Halliday, 1999) explain that to many Americans, Muslims and non-Muslims create social anxiety or fear and recognize the “threat of Islam”. It is a false connection between Muslims and danger. It is marked as “Islamophobia”.

Another study supports the view that terrorist threat can take to the discrimination and prejudice. (Oswald, 2005) presented that the apparent personal risk to become an object of a terrorist attack was linked to prejudices, discrimination and stereotypes of Arabs. Similarly, he also pointed out the relation between terrorist threat and severer punishments of wrongdoings are not to terrorism such as rape. The concept of “others” has been developed with biased coverage of Western media and has become a similar case with the emphasis on the demonstration and image of cultural minorities in the British media.

The sole purpose of media campaigns is to distort the image of Islam with iniquity and aggression. In this context, four precise strategies of international media are prevalent in this context. First, strategy is the distortion of Islamic performs worldwide. Secondly, the presentation of the practices of the public as individuals and radical Muslim as groups with Islam. Thirdly, they think Islam a “social threat” to Western society. Lastly, it is significant to rationalize the aggression against Muslims. The above mention points, Islam is strapped towards oppression and violence with negative power (Safi, 1996).

As Mirza (2013) argues and asserts the similar point that in the west, the hardship, complexity and independence of Muslim women’s are ignored, and the prejudiced categories of “oppressed” and “dangerous” are coined by the west to define Muslim women are ignored. These controversies ignore the movement of women in Muslim societies and the personal explanations and meaning for ding Hijab or Niqab. Particularly in the West, veil coverage can be a way to express identity. As Mirza points out, the veil is a “pride” for Muslim women in Europe and Britain. However, Muslim women, especially those who prefer to cover the veil, face discriminatory practices in the west, such as unequalled access to employment and the prohibition of coverage by the veil in a public place. Stereotypes affect largely the lives of Muslim women in Europe (Mirza, 2013).

According to a study carried out by Alanazi (2015) on the Spanish newspaper El País, 90% of the sources used to talk about Islam are Western, and only 4% of the Islamic terms appear in positive contexts. Most references the incompatibility of Islam and democracy; Islam is sensational and exaggerated, excessive use of false science, the instrumentalization of Islam and Islam as a military ideology (Alanazi, 2015).

Islamophobia and Social Media

The literature on Islamophobia and social media suggests that the internet provides new and a lot of opportunities for cyber-bullying and cyber hatred [\(Jaishankar, 2008\)](#). The expansion and growth of the internet have generated many constructive and positive opportunities for the public to connect, communicate and get knowledge in a manner. On the other hand, it has also served as a dual-edge sword for the Public and Governments [\(Back, 2010\)](#).

The process of Securitization of Islam and Muslims through #stopislam is largely done by presenting Is and Muslims as a security threat. Whereas Muslims as a performer of criminals acts, terrorists, extremists as in case of 'Fitna' a documentary launched by Duch MP (2008). Furthermore to this showing, Muslims as disrespectful, unethical and have problems while integrating with the western public (Mihelj, 2011).

According to (Awan, 2014) online defines Islamophobia as "anti-Muslim hatred for persecution, promoting intolerance through harassment, threatening behavior, exploitation or intimidation by the individuals on social media.

Similarly, [Clarke \(2003\)](#) explain that Muslims are being labelled and facing real offline violence is existing and promoted as a means of targeting Muslim communities. Also, the concern is that these online communities and groups will use the support of the public to promote and accelerate offline extremist narrative. It has been noticed that a bundle of online and internet-based content available that can lead to crime and could cause offences is not necessarily illegal in the UK [\(Clarke, 2003\)](#).

The internet is, therefore, an influential tool; by using this, people can easily be influenced to perform a certain or specific task. It is also important in the context of direct impact, as it impacts on local communities and how this violence may establish acts offline [\(Douglas, 2005\)](#).

Furthermore, [Evolvi \(2018\)](#), while doing the analysis of the tweets, argues that Islamophobia exists online, greatly enhancing the anti-Islam discourses available offline, also linking the narratives that negatively frame Muslims as backward, violent, and unable to adjust with Western principles. Tweets related to Islamophobia have some unique characteristics, like can, Islamophobic tweets also have some peculiar characteristics as they stand-in global networks, contain messages and have a role in fake news t spreading. The author further argues that, in order to counteract Islamophobia related to online news media platforms, take into the social media account and networked connections and offline spaces [\(Evolvi, 2018\)](#).

According to Tell [Mama \(2016\)](#) report point out many occurrences and features available on Twitter with respect to Online Islamophobia. For example, a hashtag trending in 2015 spreading tweets under #KillAllMuslims, hashtag #Pakemon related to “Pakistan” on the name of the game to spark anti-Muslim campaign offline [\(Mama, 2016\)](#). In addition, [Ekman \(2015\)](#) explaining the outcomes of internet-based anti-Islam campaigns, racism, spreading on the internet, contributing in diffusing the image of Islam as unsuited with Western culture and values. As a result this may enhance and contribute against Muslims in the form of physical actions [\(Ekman, 2015\)](#).

Summarizing the above discussion, Islamophobia on Internet is communicated through verbal violence that sees Islam as mismatched with the west and demeans Muslims by arguing that Muslims should be eliminated from western society. It is found that Islam as a religion on social media depicted in a negative way. The dominant discourses on social media are jihad, bullying, a threat to peace, hate speech and threats of violence, hijab, mosque, terrorism, and anti-Muslim hate speech are the most common discourses on social media platforms. The crux of these dominant tones realizes Muslims as dangerous creature, barbaric, threatening and inhumane.

Securitization of Islam and Muslims

The last few decades have seen a tremendous upsurge in the number of scholars and journalists' coverage of Islam and Muslims, and this increased attention has been largely due to international developments, especially political and conflict. These include the stories of Rushdie, the Iranian Revolution, the Gulf War and the Afghan War [\(Shadid, 2002\)](#). This section will look at how Muslims and Islam are protected from scholarly discourses in western countries.

According to the paper, [Cesari \(2009\)](#) work summarizes the ideas and findings of research on the security of Islam. It includes the process of “securitization of Islam” not only as an act of speech but also as a policy-making process that touches on the making of foreign laws, multicultural policies, anti-apartheid policies and security policies many others related to internal peace and security also concerning with foreign policy. The results show significant differences between the views of policymakers and the political and social reality of Islam and Muslims throughout Europe. Islam is still regarded as a foreign and dangerous religion. In this situation, Islam wants form Europeans to understand and welcome their restrictive concept of religion while on other side civil society and citizenship. A paradigm shift required for this.

Furthermore, [Uenal \(2016\)](#) emphasizes that in discourses existing among the German public, Muslims and Islam are classified as a symbolic form of threats (Threats to values, customs and traditions), real nature of threats (Threats to work, Social Welfare program, political and security system), and terrorist threats (Security and well-being) [\(Uenal, 2016\)](#).

According to [Asad \(2003\)](#), the use of certain images in Islam portrayal of Islam in professional and academic debates has established a complex policy for both European governments that fear, encourage and accelerate the process of ‘securitization’ of Islam. Circumstances leading to this development already exist. The European Union views Muslim groups as a threat to their survival

and is taking steps to encourage citizens that they will not tolerate terrorism. However, the politicization of this issue is actually deprived and threatens its survival *(Asad, 2003)*.

According to Wæver (2003) point out that leading and prominent Muslims feels hate form the interference by non-believing actors. Therefore, preventing measures aimed at escalate radicalization actually create dissatisfaction and this produced discontent and make the conservatism ideology religion into a fundamentalist ideology. This is a “securitization” process. It includes actors who argue that Islam is a threat to political, European values (existential threat) and secular norms, and thus justifies astonishing measures against it. He further well describes the consequences of such actions: “When mobilized, religion is more oppressive than it is. Fear and trembling are replaced by absolute certainty” *(Wæver, 2003)*.

Furthermore, the 9/11 attacks have shown significant and important security implications and have highlighted the problem of Islam in Europe under the “Securitization’ and as new security paradigm. The status of Muslims in Europe is can be understand in the international context so that Muslims and Islam become not only an “external threat”, “foreign threat” but also a “domestic threat”, from within. The political involvement of foreigners or ethnic subgroups, especially Muslims, is itself considered a threat *(Vogel, 2008)*.

Moreover, Many terms such as radicalism, global terrorism, totalitarianism, fundamentalist, Jihadism are used to portray Muslims in Western media as a result so-called Islamophobia is constructed. The idea come that all Muslims are “terrorists” due to distorted coverage and misinterpretation of Islam and Muslims as a result of extreme stereotyping. Some characters may be exposed as anti-Islam ideology and anti-Islamophobia. These proverbs of the media are aggressive and objectionable for democratic ideologies as well as human morals *(El-Aswad, 2013)*.

As Hansen (2016) pointed out that the securitization of Muslims is actually due to the lack of Islam and Muslim unity in Western societies, which thrive through many factors such as the state, politicians, policy makers and the media. Discourses on Islam and Muslims have also led to public debate by moderate politicians and attempts to preserve Islam alongside Islam for Western civilization *(Hanson, 2016)*.

Thus, in American and European discussions, Muslims and Islam were protected as a security threat and a phenomenon that can be further studied under two broad categories.

Two broad categories related to the security dimension of Islamophobia help to understand the conceptual threat process, Ideological threat, an existential threat. The ideological threat can be studied and understood in four sub-dimensions as Totalitarianism, Jihadi, Wahhabism and Sharia law. Similarly, the existential threat aspect is classified as a threat to immigrants, refugees and local Muslims *(Iqbal, 2020)*.

Previous studies and scholars have pointed out a prominent negativity in the portrayal of Muslims and Islam in global Media. Similarly there is a plethora of research available as evidence that the portrayal of Muslims and Islam in Social Media platform is problematic. This trend of negativity all around the world regarding Islam and Muslims is increasing. All around the world

the researchers have explored and identified different kinds of negative discourses associated with Muslims and Islam by the Media. Similarly, it is pertinent to find out the weather and to what extent Twitter have securitized Islam and Muslims. Therefore, this study is an attempt to address, explore whether Islam and Muslims are securitized on Twitter and to analyze the themes under which Islam and Muslims are securitized.

In particular, twitter, this study makes a significant contribution in serving us and providing a better understanding about Islamophobia as a security threat their themes and sub-dimension on Twitter. RQ1. Whether and to what extant securitized images of Islam and Muslims have been produced on Twitter? RQ2. What are the dominant securitized themes and their sub-dimensions pertaining to Islamophobia on Twitter?

Theoretical Framework

Securitization theory was applied in the 1990s by security study theorists Ole Weaver, Zap de Wilde and Barry Buchen (1998) from the Copenhagen School (McDonald's, 2008). This theory redefined the conceptual framework in security studies dealing with state and military organizations. This theory deals with the problems, distribution and disappearance of people (Richnovska, 2014). In particular, Balzac (2010) argues that this theory contains not only the language 'but outside', but also that social reality (Balzac, 2010).

Non-Politicized > Politicized > Securitized

The Process of Securitization

Source: Krume (2010)

Clearly, this theory has the first two main dimensions, the securitization process of an issue, which can be regulated before saving an issue—secondly, the successful politicization of solitude from political neutralization to eventual politicization (Weaver, 2003).

The objects represented by the process of "securitization" that occur through language and social relations are considered a threat to society. This theory, applied to congressional rhetoric about Islam, suggests that secular actors (speaking from positions of political power) tried to behave differently from the general rules and practices associated with discourse about Islam, as well as aspects of Islam. As national security issues, fear is central to the process of creating a threat (Van Rythoven, 2015).

Speaking from positions of authority, Elite assures audiences that the threat is captured by the use of speech measures, "not only by describing the existing security situation but also by successfully representing the security situation." Can be brought into form (Williams, 2003).

Hence, the securitization theory will provide great theoretical bases, context to analyze the process of securitization regarding Islam and Muslims as previous literature shows that Islam and Muslims are posing a security threat to the west in many ways. A large number of people considers Islam and Muslims as violent individuals, feel a threat to their physical and cultural

existence, promoting terrorism (Sabri, 2012). “Islam” and “Muslims” can be seen such as global terrorism, fundamentalist, Islamic jihad, authoritarianism and totalitarianism. Irrational fear for Muslims around the world is created with the depiction of Muslims with labels of these terms. This theory will help us in contextualizing and analyzing this issue.

Research Methodology

Investigating the Twitter platform can help us and provide a better understanding of how people express and disseminate their opinions about certain events because Twitter is a public forum, user-generated and free (Conover, 2012). Users can inscribe their tweets with 280 characters, embedded with links, images and quote other users (via "@ username" or "Hashtags"), and distribute tweets written by others user in their profiles (a practice called "re-tweeting"). They can also tweet on embed hashtags, which are the names of people who give emphasis to the "#" symbol. We may be able to find tweets using the same name by clicking on a hashtag; by doing this, we may enter into a conversation with other Twitter operators who are tweeting the same issue. Hashtags become a “habit” when they achieve a certain level of popularity and reaches because users regularly write and re-post tweets within a set time.

In this study, quantitative and qualitative content analysis has been selected for exploring the securitized images of Muslims and Islam on Twitter.

I have collected the tweets embedded with hashtag #stopislam from 1 July 2020 to 30 December 2020, this time, and marked "known" by the Twitter search software API. Initially, to find out the total number of tweets during this period, analytics has been generated by using sprout social. The API, short for "Application Program Interface," is a program that makes available access to Twitter for social information. A purposive sampling method was used. I have collected tweets written in English, but I did not set geographical boundaries; the Twitter user was in different geographical locations of the world. To get the results within these limitations, I collected the information and selected 1000 Tweets as a sample.

Methods and Data Analysis

A coding sheet has been formulated. All tweets are not Islamophobic, as some tweets show support and empathy for Muslims, while others are unbiased. I have coded Islamophobic/securitized Tweets after examination of tweets according to their content towards Muslims and Islam.

For the measurement of the data, we have divided this study into two main themes as “Securitization of Islam” and “Securitization of Muslims”. Two broad categories related to the security dimension of Islamophobia help to understand the conceptual threat process, Ideological threat, an existential threat. The ideological threat can be studied and understood in four sub-dimensions as Totalitarianism, Jihadi, Wahhabism and Sharia law. Similarly, the existential threat aspect is classified as a threat to immigrants, refugees and general Muslims (Iqbal, 2020) and an

additional sub-dimension, 'women as a security threat', are added by me. Have adopted these categories to explain and interpret the available data while putting it into certain sub-dimensions.

This methodology helps to get knowledge of how much rage image of Muslims, Islam and how it is produced on Twitter. The statistical analysis was carried out for frequency distribution, the volume of tweets, and the percentage of proportions. The results of the study were presented in tables and charts.

Conceptualization

A conceptual definition tells us what the concept means. A conceptual definition tells what our constructs are by explaining how they are related to other constructs. This explanation and all of the constructs it refers to are abstract.

Totalitarianism

Textual tweets showings Islam as whole religion, fascist ideology, anti-feminist, Islam enforced conversion of non-believers to the religion of Islam with power, authoritarian, a threat to ruling forces and against the freedom of speech will be considered as a totalitarian threat.

Jihad

As sub-dimension of Ideological threat from Islam, textual tweets showing militant interpretation of Islam, a threat to the western nation and Muslim governments, guides Muslims to fight local jihad with their governments.

Sharia Law

As a sub-dimension of Ideological threat from Islam, textual tweets showing Sharia commands violence and Islamic terrorism, Sharia Law, demands supremacy, especially 'political', over the constitution forcefully and Sharia guides for terror and illegal activities.

Whahabism

Textual tweets showing Whahabi Islam or Whahabi ideology as an ideological fuel for violent, extremist organization especially in the context of ISIS and other organization.

We Can Conceptualize the Sub Dimension of Existential Threat as:

Immigrants

Tweets showing immigrants, threat to human security and national sovereignty, national security, peace, ethnic imbalance_(Wohlfeld, 2014) particular security checks at airports and official buildings for Muslims and Arab people _(Mullen, 2004) , negative perception of immigrants as the enemy.

Refugees

As the sub dimension of existential threat as showing textual tweets, refugees, refugees link with extremist, charged with ideology of jihad [_\(Hoffman, 2015\)](#) as direct threats to national security.

General Muslims

As the sub-dimension of existential threat as showing textual tweets Muslims women’s as wearing Security and well-being [_\(Uenal, 2016\)](#), as a matter of concern: such as a beard, dark skin, passionate, violent and support terrorism [_\(Sabri, 2012\)](#).

Muslims Women’s

As the sub dimension of existential threat as showing textual tweets Muslims women’s as wearing hijab, potential security challenge, supporter of terrorism, demanding ban on Hijab or Niqab, prohibition of coverage by veil in a public place [_\(Mirza, 2013\)](#).

Finding of the Study

Below tables sows the finding of the study.

Table 1. Distribution of Tweets on Stopislam Regarding their Tweets

	F	%
Securitized tweets	408	41%
Favoring Muslims / neutral	314	31%
Supporting trend	278	29%
Total	1000	100%

Table 1 shows that the tweets on trend #stopislam: 40.8% of the tweets are Securitized , 31.4% tweets are favoring Muslims or neutral and 27.8% tweets are supporting the trend #stopislam which cannot be securitized into any of above category. From the sample of 1000 tweets 40.8% tweets are found securitizing Islam and Muslims on Twitter.

Table 2. Distribution of Tweets on Ideological Threat and Existential Threats

Ideological Threats	%	Existential Threats	%
Totalitarianism	55%	General Muslims	48%
Jihadism	24%	Immigrants	34%
Sharia Law	21%	Women’s	13%
Whahabism	0%	Refugees	5%
Total	100%		100%

Table 2 illustrates the tweets on ideological threat dimensions: 57.5% of the tweets are on Totalitarianism sub dimension, 0% percent tweets are on Wahabism, 24.2% tweets are on Jihadism while 21% of the tweets on trend are on Sharia Law dimension of Ideological Threat s related to Islam. While, tweets on existential threat, Sub dimensions related to Muslims: 47.7% tweets are on general Muslims, 34% tweets are on immigrants, 12.8% tweets are on women’s and 5.3% tweets on Refugees.

Table 3. Distribution of Securitization themes regarding Tweets and Tweets reach

	Tweets	Tweets Reach
Ideological Threats	68%	94%
Existential Threats	32%	6%
Total	100%	100%

Table 3 elaborates that the dominant Securitization themes regarding securitization of Islam and Muslims on the bases of tweets: shows that the 67.6% tweets are on Ideological threat that Islam related to Islam and 32.4% tweets are on Existential threat that is related to Muslims. While, 93.4% reach of tweets are on Ideological threat and 6.4% reach of tweets are on Existential threat.

Discussion and Conclusion

The present study was conducted to explore the Securitization of Islam and Muslims on Twitter and to analyze the themes and sub-dimensions under which Islam and Muslims have been securitized. The main and fundamental conclusion of this paper is evidence that how #stopislam produced securitized images of Islam and Muslims. Twitter produced a higher number of Tweets, likes, re-tweets and replies regarding the ideological threat category rather than the existential threat category. In the context of the Securitization of Islam, Totalitarianism as a sub-dimension of ideological threat is dominating Twitter. In this category found tweets like the following:

"Islam is the only kind of barbaric mentality", "Islam is a terrorist organization.", "Islam creates terrorism for all", "Islam is a criminal religion", "Stop Islam. It will destroy us", "Islam is cancer", "religious extremists", "violent radicalization", "threat of terrorism", "Islam is very dangerous", " Islam is Devil".

The study endorsed the finding of [_\(Hirsi, 2010\)](#) findings that Islam and the West are presented as opposing to each others with diametrically opposed ideals and values. Where Islam suppresses the individual and subjugates women, the west liberates women’s. Where Islam teaches inflexibility, authoritarianism, and ideological closure values, Western rationalism promotes freedom of thought, speech, and opportunity (Alanazi, 2015).. Islam is also labelled as totalizing religion and because of this universalistic tendency, Islam controls every aspects of the private, social and political life of humans [_\(Bonansinga, 2018\)](#).

Similarly, Twitter produced a securitized image of Islam relatively less in other dimensions like Jihadism, Sharia Law and Wahhabism. Tweets on Jihadism found such as the following:

"Jihad involves killing and shedding the blood of men,"Jihad Nothing else as evil", "Jihad means to war against non-Muslims both offensive and defensive", "Jihadists are ruining your country wanting to change it into a caliphate".

Jihadism has posed significant security challenge throughout the world. The global jihadist ideology driven by the militant interpretation presents Islam as the persistent and significant threat to the western nation and also Muslim governments like the Al-Qaeda movement and ISIS, the driving forces of jihad movement globally. Moreover, extremist ideology urges and guides Muslims to fight local jihad with their governments. It has already proven by Gunaratna (2017) that through the internet, this global jihadist movement will reach out to the Muslims migrants/refugees and diaspora. The new Jihadism ideologies and movements combined with Islamist ideology seeks to globalize Islam and is also a challenge to international security.

Thirdly, the paper found third dominating category of Ideological threat is Sharia Law. In the negative category found tweets like the following:

"Quran Approves Terror, Sex Slavery and Taxing Non-Muslims", "hateful misogynist Sharia, it is legal for a man to rape his wife", "Forced conversion is the sunna of Muhammad - like in "convert or die".

The study endorsed the finding of [\(Ahmed, 2020\)](#) the Sharia Law discourse on social media, found large content available which is directly related to the threat to ideology. A key finding of the report [\(CAP, 2011\)](#) includes that Sharia commands violence, Islamic terrorism and. As Zaid [Jilani 2011](#) argues that in a number of analysts have recognized a growing threat to the United States like 'Sharia', or 'Islamic religious law'. The purpose of using 'Sharia' or 'Islamic religious law' is to transform the United States into an Islamic state [\(Jilani, 2011\)](#). A number of European states, a number of national politicians has adopted this understanding and now considering the adoption of legislation banning Sharia.

The process of Securitization of Muslims through #stopislam is largely done by presenting Muslims as a security threat. Whereas Muslims as performer of criminals acts, terrorists, extremists as in case of 'Fitna' a documentary launched by Duch MP (2008). Furthermore to this showing Muslims as disrespectful, unethical and have problems while integrating with western public (Mihelj, 2011). in this category found tweets such as the following:

"Muslims can't live peacefully anywhere in the world", "Muslims trying to destroy freedom n peace in", "Muslims like virus because that's what Islam makes them to be", "Muslims murdered non-muslims in paris", "Islamists riots", "Stop Muslims before it gets too late", "Muslims are Dangerous"

West considered Muslims opposite to western public as Muslims are passionate, violent and support terrorism because they see that Muslims threaten their well-being and culture. Muslims are considered suspicious, dangerous, and terrorists sees Muslim a anti-democratic, obstacle to progressiveness and inherently violent.

The paper found the second category of existent threat is Muslim Women's as a threat. In the category found tweets such as the following:

“Dog hijabs coming soon in a mosque near you”, “Muslim women cover their face and hair, not their brain”, “No more hijab cage for women”.

As Muslim women, wearing hijab becomes a potential security challenge also a showing supporter of terrorism. Particularly in the West, veil coverage can be a way to express identity. Muslim specifically in religious spaces. Aggression against headscarf-wearing by Muslim women is strongly accelerated Islamophobia by online anti-Muslim content and has a strongly gendered dimension. It has been observed that recently many European countries adopted burqa bans but did not prohibit the veil, and some prohibit the veil.

Immigrants as a threat also been found on Twitter. In this category found tweets such as the following:

“Culture can't mix, we cannot have more Muslims coming in the west”, “ Stop Muslim Immigration”, “Islamic migration to the west and their explosive demographics is an atomic time bomb against the west”,

Existential threats posed by migration to human security and national sovereignty. The perception of migrants as a threat has made its way to the forefront that and the securitization process of immigrants a contributing factor in creating migration as a threat to national security. Hence, the security agenda has been linked to many aspects of policy measures against immigrants. Moreover, transnational threats and war on terrorism have been linked to migration in western debates. (Wohlfeld, 2014). The labeling of immigrants as a security threat creates chaos and does more harm to the American society than it does to protect them, as it develops racist attitudes and a negative perception of immigrants as the enemy.

Tweets also found on Refugees as a threat sub dimension. As for as national security of Europe is concern, refugees have come to be seen as direct threats for states. Among refugees some communities are alleged to support armed conflicts in their countries of origin and some are alleged to support terrorist activities. As he examined the hundreds of refugees charged with ideology of jihad [\(Hoffman, 2015\)](#). Syrian refugees reportedly face ISIL recruitment in Tusrkish, Lebanese, Jordanian camps [\(Schmid, 2016\)](#).

Finally, the paper found that on Twitter in the process of Securitization of Islam and Muslims, the ideological threat is dominating rather than existential threat. Islam has acquired a level of salience in the public debate through the securitization process. Consequently, Islam is being equated with totalitarian fascist ideology, migration, extremism terrorism and framed as a security threat in these dimension. Islam is also labeled as totalizing religion and because of this universalistic tendency, Islam controls every aspects of the private, social and political life of humans [\(Bonansinga, 2018\)](#). The representation of Muslims as a threatening religious ideology could raise serious concerns. As a result of securitization, a number of European states, national politicians has adopted this understanding and now considering the adoption of legislation

banning Sharia, Burqa ban, immigration policies, refugees ban, security checks at airports and many other initiatives.

However, as one of the limitations of this study, it is noteworthy that the total proportion of Securitized Tweets on Twitter is unknown, as this analysis is a study of #stopislam. Secondly, the researcher only English language tweets retrieved for this study. The researcher unable to get the location of tweets/areas.

For further research, it is proposed to further explicit and identify the sub-dimensions of ideological and existential threats. The researcher can further extend this study to other communication means like Tv, Films, Newspapers and other social media platforms. The researcher can extend this study to analyze the connection between different hashtags on Twitter and handlers.

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