

Citation: Shah, H., & Islam, S. U. (2023). Examining Western Media Bias and Framing in the Coverage of the 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar: A Counter Response Analysis from Arab Media and Social Media Perspectives. *Global Digital & Print Media Review*, VI(III), 8-15. [https://doi.org/10.31703/gdpmr.2023\(VI-III\).02](https://doi.org/10.31703/gdpmr.2023(VI-III).02)

- Vol.VI, No.III (Summer 2023)
- Pages: 8 - 15
- p- ISSN:2788-4988
- e-ISSN:2788-4945

▪ URL:[http://dx.doi.org/10.31703/gdpmr.2023\(VI-III\).02](http://dx.doi.org/10.31703/gdpmr.2023(VI-III).02) DOI: 10.31703/gdpmr.2023(VI-III).02



Hassan Shah *

Saif Ul Islam†

Examining Western Media Bias and Framing in the Coverage of the 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar: A Counter Response Analysis from Arab Media and Social Media Perspectives

Abstract: *FIFA world cup is a popular and attractive event for the sports lovers around the globe. This event organized in different countries of the world after four years. As a matter of fact, mostly western countries have hosted the games since 1930. Qatar is the first country of Arabian Peninsula which hosted FIFA world cup 2022. Western media coverage for football matches overwhelmingly negative since before the tournament even began. Western media blamed Qatari administration on the issues of human rights abuses and inhuman restrictions expected on foreign audience. The reaction of western media biased and one sided which demonstrated a negative picture of the Qatar and Arab World. But the subjectivity of western media hypocrisy challenged by social media and Arab media. This study is an attempt to identify ways and means that used western media against Qatar and Arab world.*

Key Words: FIFA 20222, Qatar, West, Media, Hypocrisy, Social Media, Bias

Corresponding Author: Hassan Shah (Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science, University of Buner, KP, Pakistan. Email: hassanshah-st@uop.edu.pk)

Introduction

The term "medium" refers to a vehicle or channel via which various types of information are transferred to individuals or communities. This definition of "medium" includes concept information, education, and so on, according to IGI Global Publishers. It is described as the entirety of tools—both aural and visual—that perform fundamental tasks. We consider media in two types i.e., one sided information media and second Social media

(Ismail, 2023). The later type of media included electronic media and print media. However the second type of media included Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Whatsapp etc. I classify media in these two types because in the previous type of media information is disseminating without engaging the audience, while in the social media the audience has the right to criticize or correct the information if it is fake or wrong (Paschyn, 2023).

Media is the most powerful mode of communication. It shares news and

*Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science, University of Buner, KP, Pakistan.

†Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science, University of Buner, KP, Pakistan.

information with the audience. Even though media is also spreading false news contents with the audience. Moreover, media helps to share knowledge and attract a large number of people. Media is the most vigilant institution that keeps an eye on every segment of the society (R). That is why media has become an integral part of our lives. Due to media the world has become a global village. There is coverage of all the important news of the world on different media channels. In the present world, every individual has easy access to any news and media information. Media also plays a constructive role in the development of a society. It raises awareness about different social issues for example corruption, terrorism, human rights violation, violence and drugs addiction. Media can play a positive role and has a corrective impact if it works justly (Husain, [2012](#)).

Agenda-setting and portrayal are the media's most crucial responsibilities. The media, particularly in the West, tends to consistently present Islam in a bad light. Islam is negatively depicted by evoking images of violence, fanaticism, terrorism, and animosity against the West. A more recent trend of Western media toward Islam is the fanning of "Islamophobia," a sort of concerted efforts meant to frighten the globe of the hate and enmity imposed by Islam. Such explicitly antagonistic depictions of Islam require a response from the Muslim community. Islam is a religion that advocates and supports individual peace as well as obedience to Allah, in contrast to how the West generally perceives it. It's a religion that advocates for individual tranquility and demands surrender to Allah. The media has the ability to undermine the Muslim community as a whole as well as restore and further educate the public about the real face of Islam (Ishak & Solihin, [2012](#)).

History of Western Media

The printing press was created in the fifteenth century, which marks the beginning of several centuries of Western media history. This

invention made it possible to produce printed materials in large quantities, including as books, newspapers, and pamphlets, which aided in the dissemination of knowledge and information throughout Europe (Widdop et al., [2022](#)).

The growth of newspapers and magazines in the 19th century further expanded the reach of media, and the emergence of radio and television in the 20th century revolutionized the way people received news and entertainment. The United States and the United Kingdom were at the forefront of these technological innovations, and their media organizations became some of the most influential in the world (Hardy, [2010](#)).

In the United States, the first newspaper was published in 1690, and by the mid-19th century, there were thousands of newspapers being published across the country. Newspapers grew rapidly as a result of the late 19th and early 20th centuries' industrial and urbanization trends, and they eventually became a vital source of news and entertainment for Americans. In the early 20th century, the emergence of radio changed the media landscape once again. The first commercial radio station began broadcasting in 1920, and by the 1930s, radio had become a dominant form of entertainment and information dissemination in the United States. The growth of television in the 1950s and 1960s further expanded the reach of American media, as television shows and news programs became a staple in households across the country (McKerns, [1976](#)).

In the United Kingdom, the history of media dates back even further. The first newspaper in the English language, the *Weekly News*, was published in 1622. The growth of newspapers in the 19th century coincided with the growth of the British Empire, and newspapers became an important means of disseminating information about the empire to the British public.

The BBC, which was founded in 1922, became one of the most influential media organizations in the world. Its radio and

television programs provided news and entertainment to millions of people in the UK and around the world, and its impartiality and reliability made it a trusted source of information (Rutenbeck, [1994](#)).

The dominance of Western media was further solidified in the latter half of the 20th century, as the United States emerged as a superpower and the English language became the dominant language of business and diplomacy around the world. American media organizations such as CNN and the New York Times became some of the most widely read and watched news outlets in the world, and Hollywood movies and television shows became popular in countries around the globe (Golan, [2008](#)).

However, the dominance of Western media has not been without criticism. Some argue that the Western media has a bias towards Western interests and that it has been used as a tool of propaganda and soft power. Others argue that the rise of digital media and the internet has led to a democratization of the media landscape, allowing voices from around the world to be heard and challenging the dominance of Western media (Widdop et al., 2022).

Why Western Media dominated the World?

There are several reasons why Western media has come to dominate the world media landscape:

1. Historical factors: Western nations, particularly the United States and the United Kingdom, have been at the forefront of media technology and innovation for several decades. This has allowed them to develop strong media organizations that have been able to expand their influence globally.
2. Economic factors: Western nations are some of the wealthiest countries in the world, and this economic power has allowed their media organizations to invest in infrastructure and technology that has given them a competitive edge

over media organizations in other parts of the world (Demir & Ayhan, [2023](#)).

3. Cultural factors: Western culture, particularly American culture, has had a significant impact on popular culture around the world. This has led to a greater demand for Western media content in other parts of the world.
4. Language: English is the dominant language of global business and diplomacy, and many Western media organizations produce content in English, making it accessible to a wider audience.
5. Political factors: Western nations have played a dominant role in global politics for several decades, and their media organizations have been able to leverage this influence to expand their reach and influence around the world (Eastin, [2013](#)).

It's worth noting, however, that while Western media may dominate the global media landscape, there are still many other media organizations in other parts of the world that produce high-quality content and have a significant influence in their own regions (Harvey, 2014).

Western Media Biasness against East

The Western media has raised concerns about Qatar's human rights restrictions, citing the ban on the sale of alcoholic beverages within stadiums and the prohibition on players displaying LGBT symbols during matches (Chappell, 2022). Despite the fact that the restriction only applied to stadiums, Western media has demonstrated that it was and still is a widespread prohibition. The religious and cultural values of the Qatari state and its people have frequently been disregarded by the Western media and politicians. The Qataris have been the target of several attempts by Western politicians and media sources to impose their ideals (Kugelman, [2012](#)).

The Western response and criticism exhibit bias and an imperialist viewpoint. Most of the present critics were silent when nations like France and Russia

enacted comparable limitations. That is to say, anytime a Western state acts, it is regarded as logical and supported. However, if a Muslim or Arab state does something, it is ridiculed and seen as unreasonable. Thus, they continue to denigrate non-Western peoples like Muslims and Arabs while retaining the Orientalist viewpoint. According to Edward Said, Orientalism started from the Enlightenment period and Arab world's colonization. Said further elaborated the impact of Orientalism which justifies European Colonization rationally. The construction of Western World and Eastern World also labeled. The West is considered more educated, civilized, industrialized and modern society of the world while Eastern World is dominated by poverty, illiteracy, fundamentalist and traditional society. To abolish the Eastern values the west need to colonize and promote their values in East. In 19th and 20th centuries the painting of western artists depicted a black picture of Arab/Eastern world. The painting presented a mysterious and exotic culture of Arabs (Said, [1978](#)). When the science invented camera and audio video recording started which also helped in Television and Radio invention. Television brought a revolution in the world. Television provided an easy opportunity to share the culture of one community with the other. For example, dramas, advertisements of different products and movies connected the world cultures with each other. Western media has opportunity to disseminate their propaganda, culture and values with the rest of the world. West always tries to dominate other cultures of the world. Most of the websites owners are Europeans and Americans. Youtube channels, Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and other social media accounts are dominantly run by western people. The Asian and other eastern people are learning from them and then develop their own accounts. It means the information disseminated on social media has a lot western influence (Harvey, [2014](#)).

Islamophobia is a thread to western culture is common phenomenon in the west. The main reason behind this phobia is western media. It showed a negative picture of Muslim World. After 9/11 incident the western media further exaggerated the Islamic Culture negatively. Western media presented Islam is a religion of violence, terror and

destruction. This project successfully completed and achieved its objectives eventually the insult of Muslims and Islam started in the globally. Muslims are considered terrorist in the rest of the world. But in reality West is responsible of this terrorism. In Cold War era, western world and the United States of America wish to challenge USSR and its allies. Both leading powers USSR and USA made bloc against each other in different regions of the world. Pakistan joined the capitalist bloc against communist bloc. In 1979 when USSR intervened in Afghanistan, USA and its allies militarily and financially supported *Mujahidin* against Soviet forces. Pakistani arms forces also supported Afghan *Mujahidin* to fight against communist forces. Eventually, USSR disintegrated which was the destruction of communist bloc and capitalist bloc got victory. World converted into uni-polarity and USA became the sole super power of the globe. After success in the Cold War project USA left Afghan *Mujahidin* unsupported. Later on in 1996 those *Mujahidin* reorganized and occupied the Kabul and establish their government which was criticized by Western world and media (Abbas, [2023](#)). The roots of those *Mujahidin* were strengthened by US and its allies in Afghanistan. Once again after 9/11 twin towers attack turned the global politics to Pak-Afghan region. The importance of the region increased therefore, US and its allies returned to Pakistan to control Afghan Taliban. Here we can see that US supported Gen. Musharraf dictatorial regime in Pakistan. Gen. Musharraf government became Non-NATO ally of the US in war against terrorism. Similarly, US always supported dictatorial regimes in Middle East to get their national interest. The US dual policy in global politics raised questions in academic debate. Noam Chomsky world renowned political scientist also criticizes US policies in Eastern part of the globe. The US foreign policy is interest oriented. Therefore the policymakers prefer their national interest in any stage of the global politics (Mohd. [2012](#)).

Is Western Values are Universal?

It is past time for the West to acknowledge that its values are not "universal" and that not all non-Western cultures share them, as Qatar 2022 has shown. It is not the place of any Western state to

force its values on non-Western people or countries. For example, a lot of these beliefs contradict the core values of the state that is hosting them. Thankfully, not all Westerners hold such an imperialist and Orientalist perspective. For example, Qatar has the ability to impose these limitations (ban alcoholic beverages at the stadiums), as stated by FIFA President Gianni Infantino. Infantino contends that the West is morally incompetent to impart human rights knowledge to other civilizations. "I think we Europeans should be apologizing for the next 3,000 years before starting to teach moral lessons to people," he says, referring to the harm that Europeans have caused the world over the past 3,000 years (euronews.com, November 19, 2022).

Despite all of the Western engagement in the games, Qatar has been managing the organization effectively thus far. The Doha administration has taught the West a great lesson about respecting diversity in cultures, civilizations, and religions. The West's long-standing narcissistic self-perception should give way to an acceptance of multiculturalism and variety. All nations and cultural backgrounds should be represented at international events like the Olympic Games and the World Cup (Kugelmann, 2012).

Western Media Controversy against Qatar

"More than 6,500 Migrant workers from India, Pakistan, Nepal, and Sri Lanka have died in Qatar," according to an article published in The Guardian (2022). SimorKuper writer of The Guardian also reported that, "The ethical case for watching this possibly un-ethical World Cup" (The Guardian, 11th November 2022). SBNATION an online newspaper reporter Ryan Rosenblatt stated that, Tournament in Qatar is a moral debacle (Rosenblatt, 21/11/2022). Newspaper said across the Europe to boycott the world cup 2022. Some media channels depicted that Qatar is Orientalist and *Islamophobic* troops. UK based news agency Daily Mail reported on 21 September 2022 that, "Human Rights groups feel the FA have not taken strong enough stance against inhumanity behind this year Cup in Qatar". It is also observed that more than fifty percent of articles on western media were negative about the FIFA World Cup 2022 in Qatar. They criticize the Qatar government and its Islamic culture. Moreover, the

media channels also try to sensitize '*Islam phobia*' as a challenge in this international event. Qatar's Security Minister Major General Abdulaziz Al Ansari interview statement to Associated Press said that, "his government is not against individual freedom, but Qatar cannot change the religion for 28 days WC". Western media highlighted this statement in different platforms to criticize Qatar's government (Tribuna.com, April 1st, 2022). The reaction of western media was biased and western interest oriented. As response Qatari government and people gave a very positive response and remained their culture greatness. It is observed that FIFA world Cup 2022 organized successfully with any mismanagement. Local Qatari people presented their cultural hospitality to foreign guests. They provided food freely to the foreign guests in different phases of the event which is a cultural code of Qatari people (). There was even no single sexual harassment case reported in whole event. Alcohol allowed only in Bars and Hotels which maintain this event peaceful. Those people who attended this international event of FIFA Football World Cup admired Qatar government arrangements to successfully organize it. The assessment of the foreign audience response on social media about the arrangements and people of Qatar were totally different from western media predictions. The audience responses on social media challenged the western media narrative and they present a positive image of Arab culture in general and Qatari culture particularly (Demir & Ayhan, 2023).

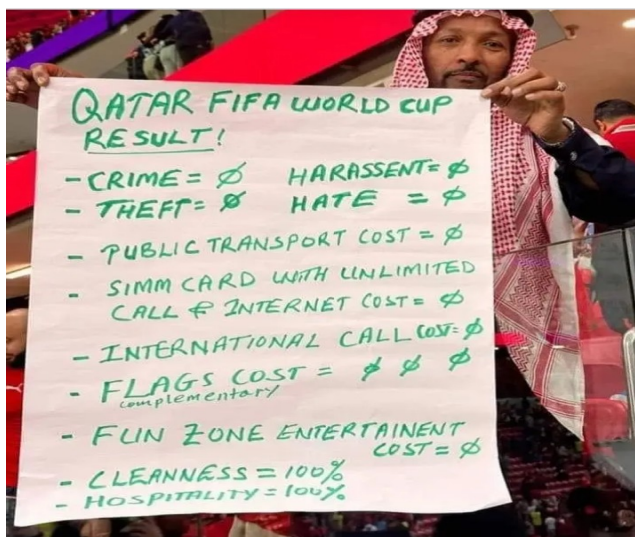
Response of Social Media Users to Western Media Hypocrisy

Social media is a power tool of communication in the modern world (Parckard, 2013). It has millions of users which use it for news, information and financial purposes (online business). We selected three social media networks to analyse its contents. These are Facebook, YouTube and Twitter. All these social media networks have millions of users in west and east. The news which shared on these social media networks has the highest ratio of its authenticity. Some people registered through fake accounts and disseminate fake news and information. It is also observed that majority of the information is reliable and authorize. Electronic

media and press disseminate one way information to the audience that cannot not criticizes directly. However, the users of social media have the power to add their feedback directly. Those people who attended FIFA World Cup 2022 in Qatar their information about the arrangement would be more authentic rather than those who prepare it one-sidedly. Ms. On twitter said that we really enjoyed the international event in Qatar. And I hope that Qatar will arrange such kind of event in future. Another Facebook user said that the weather of Qatar is not like Europe but its citizens are more generous and humble. Another media influencer channel on YouTube AZ40K which has 22500 subscribers prepared a fifty nice seconds video (entitled Amazing Works from Qatar) on the arrangements and local hospitality of Qatari government in FIFA [2022](#) world cup (AZ40K YouTube Channel, 2022). This video watched by 482000 viewers and more than thousand people commented on it. Most of the comments admired Qatari people and government on the successful arrangement of this global event. One of the comments is, "The Arabs are such amazing people. My cousin is there now and he told me that as soon

as he entered the country he instantly felt a feeling of safety and reassurance. I love Qatar". Another comment criticizes western media and said, "This will anger the western media more. Please keep rubbing it in". Such kind of statements of the spectators reveals that western media present a negative picture of the Arabs and Muslims. Another YouTube channel iERA (343K subscribers) took the opinion of football fans of different countries in Qatar in which majority satisfied from the arrangements and they enjoyed it well (iERA YouTube Channel, 2022).DawahTo Islam YouTube Channel (162 Subscribes) recorded an American female interview which exposes Western Media lies. She said that my family happily enjoying this world in Qatar. There were issues and problems for us. This world cup will be a memorable occasion for us. Similarly a large number of Facebook and Twitter users posted the positive image of Qatari people and their culture. Qatar which is a small country of Middle East changed the global narrative about the Arab Muslims. The sketch which already designed presented wrong and bias (Martin et al., [2023](#)).

Figure 1



Conclusion

The study sheds light on the pervasive

influence of Western media, particularly its bias and framing in portraying Qatar and the

Arab world. The negative coverage leading up to the event, where Western media criticized Qatar for human rights abuses and restrictions on foreign audiences. This biased portrayal, however, faced challenges from social media and Arab media, which provided alternative perspectives and countered the one-sided narrative. The historical overview of Western media's evolution highlights its significant impact on global communication, with the United States and the United Kingdom leading technological advancements. The dominance of Western media worldwide is attributed to historical, economic, cultural, linguistic, and political factors. Despite the criticisms of bias and propagandistic use, the rise of digital media has allowed alternative voices to challenge Western media hegemony.

The study underscores the biased portrayal of Islam, exemplified by the term "Islamophobia," perpetuated by Western media. This bias extends to the coverage of the 2022 FIFA World Cup, where criticisms of Qatar's cultural and religious values were viewed through an imperialist lens. The examination of historical events, such as the Afghan conflict and the Cold War, underscores the selective nature of Western support for certain ideologies and regimes.

Furthermore, the study questions the universality of Western values, asserting that the West should acknowledge and respect the cultural diversity of non-Western nations. The controversy surrounding the World Cup in Qatar, as reported by Western media, is scrutinized, revealing a discrepancy between media narratives and the actual experiences of those who attended the event. Social media emerges as a powerful tool in challenging Western media's one-sided narrative, as users share positive experiences and opinions that contradict the negative portrayal.

In conclusion, the study underscores the need for a more nuanced and culturally sensitive approach in Western media coverage. It calls for a recognition of diverse perspectives and challenges the imposition of Western values on non-Western nations. The response of social media users further highlights the potential for alternative narratives to shape public opinion and challenge media bias. The study contributes valuable insights into the complex interplay between media, culture, and global events, emphasizing the importance of diverse voices in shaping a more balanced and accurate representation of the world.

References

- Abbas, H. (2023). *The Return of the Taliban: Afghanistan after the Americans Left*. Yale University Press.
- Demir, Y., & Ayhan, B. (2023). History or vanity? The first “female” referees in the history of the FIFA World Cup and its reflections on Twitter. *Feminist Media Studies*, 1-18.
- Eastin, M. S. (2013). *Encyclopaedia of media violence*. California: SAGE Publications, Inc.
- FIFA president slams Western ‘hypocrisy’ over Qatar criticism (2022). <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/11/19/fifa-president-slams-the-west-of-hypocrisy-over-qatar-criticism>
- Hardy, J. (2010). *Western media systems*. Routledge.
- Harvey, K. (ed.). (2014). *Encyclopedia of social media and politics*. I. Los Angeles: SAGE Publications, Inc. <https://tribuna.com/en/news/football-2022-04-01-rainbow-flags-could-be-confiscated-at-world-cup-qatar-official-warns/>
- Husain, N. (2012). The Role of Media in Pakistan, *Journal of South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies*, 35(4).
- Ismail, M. O. (2023). Countering Islamophobia through Sports: Qatar's Initiatives during the 2022 FIFA World Cup. *International Journal*, 10(1), 1568-1578.
- Kugelman, M. (2012). Social media in Pakistan: Catalyst for communication not change. *NOREF Report*. http://www.peacbuilding.no/var/ezflow_site/storage/original/application/70df3ab24b007358a91879dfd3354e96.pdf
- Martin, J. D., Alkazemi, M., & Sharma, K. (2023). A “regional halo effect”: Media use and evaluations of America's strategic relationships with five Middle East countries. *International Communication Gazette*, 17480485231165208.
- McKerns, J. P. (1976). The History of American Journalism: A Bibliographical Essay. *American Studies International*, 15(1), 17-34. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41278521>
- Mohd. (2012). Shuhaimi Bin Haji Ishak&Sohirin Mohammad Solihin, Islam and Media, *Asian Social Sciences*, 8(7). <https://doi.org/10.5539/ass.v8n7p263>
- Parckard, A. (2013). *Digital Media*. Sussex - UK: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- Paschyn, C. M. (2023). Orientalist narratives and subversive activism in the lead-up to the 2022 World Cup. *Global LGBTQ Activism: Social Media, Digital Technologies, and Protest Mechanisms*, 63.
- Rosenblatt, R. (2022). We Can't Ignore the moral dilemmas of Qatar's World Cup.
- Rutenbeck, J. (1994). The triumph of news over ideas in American journalism: The trade journal debate, 1872-1915. *Journal of Communication Inquiry*, 18(1), 63-79. <https://doi.org/10.1177/019685999401800104>
- Said, E. (1978). *Orientalism: Western concepts of the Orient*. New York: Pantheon.
- Widdop, P., Anagnostopoulos, C., & Parnell, D. (2022). *The Business of the FIFA World Cup*. Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group..