

Islam and Muslims in the New York Times: Two Versions, Two Camps

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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the coverage of Islam and Muslims in the New York Times (NYT) in the wake of the 9/11 events and the ensuing two years. The study shows that coverage of Islam and Muslims takes a new trajectory regarding their representation by which the NYT departs from a monolithic representation towards a fragmented perception. It stays away from the previous themes that have been constantly projected about Islam and Muslims in the western media and provides a more diverse picture. As such, it showed Islam to have two versions, moderate and extremist, and portrayed Muslims based on these two versions. A myriad of diverse themes are manifested and projected in relation to the different versions and camps of Islam and Muslims. From another perspective, the NYT utilizes the essentialization strategy to affiliate extremism to all Islamic movements operating in the domain of politics. It lumps all of them together, portraying them as a threat without concern as to whether they seek political means or use violence to achieve their goals. No distinction is made among these movements in regard to whether they are traditional, modern, violent or peaceful. In adopting this strategy, it thus becomes unclear where moderate Islam ends and where extremism or fundamentalism begins. This dichotomy of Islam and Muslims camps and the essentialization of political Islam are revealed in the light of a multi-disciplinary approach of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) in which a textual analysis and a critical linguistic approach are adopted.

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INTRODUCTION

Through the course of the last three decades, the coverage of Islam and Muslims in the Western media has become the focus of many researchers all over the world. It has been the subject of much debate amongst academics, media institutions, Muslim organizations and the general public (Sameera, 2006). However, the topic becomes exceptionally salient following the 9/11 events. As these events were powerful and influential, they contributed to create a climate that allowed the Western media to reinforce and conceptualize new hybrid images about Islam and Muslims. Poole (2002) shows that though many of these images are drawn from old colonial caricatures, the more intensive media coverage on the religious identities and motives of the perpetrators of the events have opened new windows on some of the complexity and dimensions of Islam and the Muslim societies. For instance, Akbar (2001) demonstrates that these events provided the media the immediate opportunity to provide the public with plenty of stories and commentaries about Islam and Muslims.

Thus, the focus of this study is to provide empirical evidence to substantiate claims relating to the diverse themes that are projected about Islam and Muslims in the wake of the 9/11 events, followed by two years of coverage on them. Within this focus, the representation of Islam and Muslims after the 9/11 events in the NYT is not considered as a matter of reporting facts but a matter of constructing

institutional ideologies that are immersed in and projected through language (Fowler, 1991). The rationale behind this creed is that language produces ideology or as Fowler (1991, p. 10) puts it, anything said or reported in the media is articulated from an ideological point of view. In the light of this creed, the language of the NYT is not seen as abstract grammatical categories that can be used in a contextless vacuum. Rather, it is seen as a representational tool that operates within the social context to convey meanings, depict images, and maintain ideological patterns in the world of the press (Simpson, 1993).

METHODOLOGICAL AND THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS

News articles on Islam and Muslims that were published in the NYT in the aftermath of the 9/11 events from September 2001 to September 2003 formed the data base for the study. The published articles were collected from the British Council library, Malaysian link. The archive of the NYT was located and selectively printed from the British Council Newspapers Database on line via the Thomson Gale Newsstand Database found under INFOTRAC NEWSPAPERS. INFOTRAC NEWSPAPERS is a selection of UK and US international newspaper databases with an archive stretching back to January 1996. After selecting the NYT archive, the words 'Islam' and 'Muslims' were keyed in and searched in two separated processes. Then, the full text option was chosen and the specific data ring from September 2001 to September 2003 was

entered. As the main focus of this study was to examine ideologies embedded in the articles on Islam and Muslims, it was seen as vital to organize the data in a manner that would help to clarify and make plain the kinds of ideologies that are projected about Islam and Muslims in the NYT.

As such, each of the searched key terms was considered a category by itself. These categories are, after all, regarded as topics of references within which many themes and issues on Islam and Muslims are derived and created. The main categories that are classified within the data are 'Islam and violence', 'modern Islam' 'extremist Islam', and 'modern Muslims' versus 'extremist Muslims'. These topics represented the guidelines to identify the main themes that dominated the representation of Islam and Muslims in the NYT. The articles that were published in the period from September 2001 to September 2003 were categorized based on these topics in a way that created a certain perspective of understanding of the content of the whole discourse. The following table shows the number of articles for each of the topics.

TABLE 1
Distribution of Articles on the Classified Categories

Category	No. of Articles
Moderate Islam	13
Extremist Islam	46
Moderate Muslims	24
Extremist Muslims	82

These topics reflected the main information that was projected about Islam and Muslims in the whole discourse. More

specifically, they carry certain cultural and political portrayals and representations.

Once the data had been collected and classified into categories, they were analysed for a general thematization of the whole representational discourse of Islam and Muslim in terms of the diverse camps in the NYT to reveal evidence on the themes projected about them. Within this focus, the study adheres to the analytic methodological approach of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). CDA, with its origin in a sociological approach to media studies, attempts to understand how hidden ideologies permeate linguistic structures, or how various thematic concepts seep into the whole discourse (Teo, 2000). Based on the primary theoretical influences of CDA, a wide multi-disciplinary methodological approach of Fowler's (1991) Critical Linguistics and Fairclough's (1995) Textual Analysis were adopted for this study. The consideration of these two approaches is based on their view of the centrality of ideology in language analysis. As a preeminent manifestation of the social constitutive ideology, language is dealt with by the two approaches as the primary instrument through which ideology is transmitted, enacted and reproduced (Simpson, 1993). Further, the general theoretical views of the two approaches are constituted based on Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG) theory. This is a lexico-grammatical theory premised upon the notion of choice where language is construed as a "network of interlocking options" (Halliday, 1994, p. xiv). Yet, the way Fowler and Fairclough utilize the SFG

Grammar theory differs theoretically. On the one hand, Fowler (1991, p. 70) relies on the SFG theory to describe linguistic structures in terms of functional labels which are needed to make the linguistic analysis ideologically revealing. He, therefore, utilizes the SFG theory to construct a system of representation which is realized through certain linguistic functions embodied in some linguistic tools (Fowler, 1991, p. 70). The main analytical tools listed by Fowler from Halliday's model of language are transitivity, nominalization, and particular lexical choices. However, the linguistic tools which are constructed by Fowler (1991) have their analytic lens trained primarily on revealing the meaning at the clausal level and not the meaning at the macrostructure or larger discourse level. By drawing upon these tools we would be able to achieve only a one-sided analysis that emphasizes the ideologies embedded in the linguistic structures, while leaving the main themes that dominate the whole discourse opaque and unidentified (Teo, 2000).

As such, Textual Analysis is considered to complement Critical Linguistic Analysis in order to reveal various aspects of the structure of texts at the macro-level (Fairclough, 1995, p. 7). Textual Analysis utilizes the strength of the SFG theory to consider the analysis of ideologies at the macro or discursive level. It focuses on a macro-level analysis as it has the advantage of tying parts of texts together into a coherent whole and the advantage of tying texts to their situational and discursive contexts (Fairclough, 1995, p. 6). Textual

Analysis does not view a text as a discursive unit that can stand alone, but views it within the whole discourse determining its place within past and current events. In that, Textual Analysis provides us with tangible insights on a thematization analysis through which the contents of texts can be sorted and handled textually (Fairclough, 1995, p. 5). This thematic analysis cannot work when only the text is positioned in the representational discourse and in relevance to the context in which the text exists. This is to indicate a kind of prominence or foregrounding of the ideological or thematic priorities embedded in them (Teo, 2000). In this way, a thematic analysis will give us an account of how texts, which are established through various linguistic patterns and structures (micro-level notions), work in their contexts to convey certain ideological themes. These themes are embodied, packaged, and manifested within the representational discourse in a way that gives us a certain representation of events, issues and groups.

At the same time, forcing Textual Analysis into thematic analysis would represent a more tangible analytical grounding for the identification of discursive strategies utilized in discourse (Fairclough, 1995, p. 202). These are the discursive strategies that can be exploited to naturalize and perpetuate, whether consciously or sub-consciously, a particular ideological proposition or concept (Teo, 2000). Discursive strategies are regarded by Fairclough (1995) as contributing to the social functions of the ideologies

of institutions or groups of people. In other words, Fairclough (1995) views these discursive strategies as serving to transmit the ideologies and attitudes of the newspaper to the readers through various linguistic forms and patterns. Therefore, within the thematic analysis, discursive will provide a glimpse into themes that dominate discourse.

Therefore, the methodological approach of Textual Analysis and Critical Linguistics are used to yield separate yet related discussions about the way diverse themes about Islam and Muslims are represented in the NYT discourses. Both approaches together represent a methodological guide through which we can detect the main themes, the discursive strategies and linguistic structures that help to manifest these themes in the discursal representation itself.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The representation of Islam and Muslims in the Western media has been a topic of discussion and debate among academics for the last three decades. As far back as 1981, the eminent scholar Edward Said voiced a concern about the negative representation of Islam and Muslims by the Western media. He pointed to the oil crisis of the 1970s, for which the Middle East was blamed and the overthrow of the Shah of Iran in 1979 as events that constituted the modern political factors behind the early representation of Islam and Muslims in the Western media.

Many scholars consider the tumultuous events of September 11, 2001, as a landmark

date that opened a new relationship between the West and Islam in relation to the Islamic images portrayed in the Western media (Poole & Richardson, 2006). Whittaker (2004) writes that as these events were carried out with a new horrifying weapon and targeted the heart of the most powerful country on Earth, they gave the media a giant story to cover. The immediate shock, horror, pain and human tragedy of these incidents were conveyed to the world in real time by a vast array of newspapers, television networks and other media channels. The media, in turn, played a very important role in analyzing and reporting these events given the fact that they projected many images about Islam and Muslims (Karim, 2003).

However, Said (1981) was the first to express his resentment about the way the media covers Islam and Muslims. He points out that the representation of Islam in the West, since his time, has portrayed a lot of unpleasant images that are presented in sweeping attacks and erroneous generalizations. He attributes this to media coverage which he judges to be biased and unbalanced. He asserts that the Western media coverage of Islam plays a significant role in creating a dichotomy between Islam and the West. Besides, he considers that dichotomy to be homogeneous due to a consequence of distorted stereotyped and damaging images along with a series of binary oppositions in which the West stands for the attributes of being rational, human, developed and superior, and Islam for terror, violence, and the attributes of

being aberrant, undeveloped and inferior (1981, p. 10). Therefore, the opposition, according to Said, tends to be defined within these conceptual categories of Islam against the West.

Said's views, though dated, are still dominant and capable of adapting to new events and realities. These views have been recently highlighted by Albakry (2006), who studied the representation of Islam and Muslims in the editorials of American and German newspapers, namely, the Times, the Post, the Monitor, *die Zeit*, *die SDZ* and *die Welt*. In his study, Albakry (2006) finds that the editorials in these newspapers fall into the trap of misinterpreting Islam with its own peculiar culture. They tend to depreciate Islam and its people, and in the process, connect them with ignoble traits. Most notable among these traits are extremism, terrorism, despotism, chaos and fanaticism. In addition, Albakry (2006) asserts that these editorials take for granted the common images portrayed, that is, the West is superior, modern, civilized and democratic, and Islam is inferior, backward, barbarian and chaotic. Thus, Islam for the most part is portrayed as nothing more than a faith that is still mired in its dominant realization and backwardness. In other words, these editorials reduce the representation of Islam to a small number of changing characteristics, while at the same time, ignoring the other elements pertinent to its history and tradition.

Many other scholars in the field of representation have expressed their scepticism and resentment about mainstream

media coverage and portrayal of Islam. Such coverage is believed to be behind the negative portrayals and discriminating images that are perceived about Muslims all over the world (Shaheen, 1997; Siddiqi, 1997; Poole, 2002). Sameera (2006) states that the overall feelings among Muslims is that the mainstream media is biased against them and their faith as they (the media) generate misleading perceptions among the general public about their religion. For instance, Nacos and Torres-Reyna (2003, p. 1) report that Muslim Americans have long been convinced that the news about them is coloured by negative biases. They further report that this conviction of American Muslims is clearly expressed by Muslim New Yorkers who participated in Focus Groups well before the events of September 2001. In those Focus Groups, Muslim women show their resentment of the media's tendency to stereotype Muslim males as violent and Muslim women as submissive. While the belief in a widespread anti-Muslim news slant was very common among American Muslims and Arabs before the events of 9/11, it did not weaken thereafter.

Earlier to that, Poole (2002) pointed out that whatever that climate of media coverage of Islam could be, its rhetoric propagates only the same negative meanings and values that have been attached to Islam in the past. According to her, these old concepts that have been conceptualized in the past about Islam do not seem to be only present, but also persistent, dominant and potentially in operation in the media coverage. Thus, she

finds most of the images that are projected about Islam and Muslims in the Western media relevant to terror and violence (2002, p. 41).

There are many researchers who tend to view the Western media coverage of Islam to be derogatory, and replete with many discriminating and racist images. For instance, Richardson (2002) views the Western media representation of Islam to be entrenched for every Muslim, irrespective of his or her social, ethnic and cultural orientation. He states that Muslims feel there is a kind of conspiracy against them; they feel betrayed whenever they watch and read about their religion, culture, and beliefs as they find that they are negatively and discriminately presented to the Western audience.

Van Dijk (2003) points out that there is a new kind of discrimination and racism that has emerged against Arabs and Muslims in the Western media. He demonstrates that this new kind of discrimination and racism appears as the Western media associate Muslims closely to violence and terrorism. According to Van Dijk, such a connection becomes the most prevalent among Western politicians and the media. He states that “[t]his amalgamation perfectly fits the age-old polarization, studied by the late Edward Said and many others, between US in the West and Them in the (Middle) East, between Occidentalism and Orientalism, between Christendom and Islam” (Van Dijk, 2003, p. 24).

Similarly, Denton (2004) feels that media coverage has created a suspicion

about Islam and its adherents among people all over the world. He points out that soon after the 9/11 events, Islam as a faith and its principles and adherents have all been put under investigation. He reports that the media coverage following the 9/11 attacks provides the public with contextual stories and commentaries about Islam, much of which reflect an unfavourable side of Islam. Further, Denton (2004) claims that most of these contextual stories and commentaries are meant to question whether Islam and Muslims fit in the Western culture. Chilton (2004) asserts that when the media focus on such contextual information, they aim at creating a particular explanation and understanding of the 9/11 events. However, he points out the information offered by the media gives the impression that there is a threatening enemy behind these events. He further asserts that the enemy is understood to be Islam and Muslims, and hence discrimination is created against them.

In an analogous way, Sundas (2008, p. 33) demonstrates that the Western media has been playing a considerable role in the social construction of Islamic fundamentalism. She reports that the western media, through various representational practices, contribute considerably in giving ‘meaning’ to the culture of radical Islamists. In her study of the representation of British young Muslims in the NYT and the Guardian in relation to the events of 9/11, 7/7 Madrid bombings, and 2007 London and Glasgow bombings, she finds that the reporting on the three violent attacks in these newspapers gives

a discursive attention to Islamic terrorism. Besides, Islamic fundamentalists were associated significantly with negative notions such as bombing, extremism, radicalism and terrorism. Sundas (2008) notes that the frequent association of terms such as ‘extremist’, ‘radical’, ‘Islamist’ (and very often of ‘Muslims’) to Islamic fundamentalists contribute to transmit a negative discourse of a disillusioned people seeking, for instance, revenge or virgins in heaven. In addition, she observes that any attempt to put rationalization in the heads of the lost youthful Muslims in these newspapers was followed by a statement which discredited any such truth. In this sense, Islamic fundamentalism is portrayed as an ideologist cult. At the same time, associating Islam to ‘terrorism’ gives this concept some personality which the reader can understand and relate to (Sundas, 2008).

This view has been previously acknowledged by Yenigun (2004) who conducted a study meant to investigate if there is a shift in the representation of Muslims by the American media in the post-9/11 period. Using the tools of postcolonial analysis, Yenigun (2004) analyzed the coverage on Muslims in the mainstream media following the 9/11 attacks and found a shift which is represented in the form of a differentiation between moderates and fundamentalists. That is to say the mainstream media’s coverage of 9/11 does not disparage Islam itself; rather, the media followed a complicated course by praising Islam as a peaceful religion while simultaneously defaming

“fundamentalism” whose meaning is left intentionally fuzzy. Yenigun (2004) finds that the whole media coverage can be read from the essential distinction between (moderate) Islam and fundamentalism. Additionally, he reports that the same tropes used to represent Muslims in the colonial discourse are employed to represent the fundamentalist “Other”. Yet, Yenigun (2004) views the presence of a significant Muslim minority important to offer opportunities for broadened boundaries of “American” citizenry that can be realized by growing activism to this end.

From another perspective, Eltantawy (2007) attributes the negative representation of Islam and Muslims in the Western media to the selection of certain materials that serve biased orientations. She argues that the Western media exaggerates exceptional problems in the Muslim societies in a way that make them to be perceived as the only features that dominate the region. For instance, the Western media continuously focus on issues like female genital mutilation, honour crimes and forced marriages. The focus on a narrow aspect of Muslim women’s identity confirms that the American media are still ignorant of Islamic and Muslim communities. Besides, this focus proves that the American media have little interest in learning about the lives of ‘ordinary’ Muslim women, but they have an insatiable desire to be reminded of the great social and cultural gulf that exists between themselves and the Muslim world (Eltantawy, 2007, p. 318). Thus, their reportage on Muslim and Arab women

strengthens the frame of these victimized and helpless women and fails to give the same attention to the positive exceptions among them. Eltantawy's study (2007), for instance, illustrates how the American media sometimes gloss over news of an exceptionally intelligent Muslim woman, or of a liberal Muslim husband that supports his wife rather than oppresses her. Such shortcoming in the coverage, therefore, leads one to believe that it is necessary to examine weaknesses in journalistic practice that could lead to distortion or exclusion.

Projected Themes

It is revealed from the textual analysis that Islam is represented to have two versions and Muslims to be divided between two camps, the moderate and the extremist. The NYT highlighted diverse themes with regard to these versions and camps.

Moderate Islam versus Extremist Islam

From the discourse analyzed, it is clear that the NYT pursues a classification strategy to formulate a distinction between two versions of Islam, the moderate and extremist. In the light of that strategy, the NYT represents the moderate version of Islam as a faith that encourages peace and tolerance. As a peaceful faith, it is also represented to embrace modernity and to support the building of progressive Islamic societies (see A-1). Within this representation, it is suggested by the NYT that all Muslims around the world should embrace the moderate version of Islam in order to enjoy prosperity and pursue progress. On the

other hand, extremist or fundamentalist Islam is represented to hamper progress and civilization in Islamic societies. The moderate-extremist dichotomy is thematized through the classification strategy and the linguistic structure of transitivity as shown in Excerpt A-1.

Excerpt A-1

World Briefing Asia: Pakistan: President Urges Moderate Islam
(*The New York Times*, June 11, 2003)

President Pervez Musharraf visited the heartland of the country's growing hard-line Islamists to tell them they needed to make a choice between modernity and "Talibinization." Pakistanis "have to decide what kind of system" they want, he said during a visit to North-West Frontier Province, where its assembly, dominated by an alliance of religious parties, voted unanimously last week to introduce Islamic law. He warned that the recent hard-liner moves would damage Pakistan's image abroad and hamper progress.

The term 'moderate Islam', in the headline of Excerpt A-1, appears as a goal or a direct object for the agent (subject) 'President Musharraef'. This agent is assigned to the verb 'urges' which is categorized in functional terms as a verb that represents the experiential meaning of a verbal action. The

verb 'urge' is chosen to represent 'moderate Islam' as an urgent necessity for Muslims to solve their problems of backwardness and extremism. This solution (moderate Islam) is 'urged' by Musharraf, the President of Pakistan, as he believes that moderate Islam would bring modernity and prosperity to the Islamic society. Therefore, the lexical choices for the headline are meant to thematize moderate Islam as a solution for Muslims to relinquish their backwardness and to get rid of extremism. In this, moderate Islam is portrayed positively and as the brand of Islam that should be embraced by Muslims.

Excerpt A-2

Pope condemns extremism behind terror. (Pope John Paul II on visit to Kazakhstan, heavily Muslim) (*The New York Times*, Sept 25, 2001)

At a meeting with local artists and scientists, Pope John Paul II drew a sharp distinction tonight between 'authentic Islam' and the extremism that led to the recent terrorist attacks in the United States.

"I wish to reaffirm the Catholic Church's respect for Islam, for authentic Islam: the Islam that prays, that is concerned for those in need," said the pope, who is nearing the end of his four-day visit to the heavily Muslim and Orthodox Christian country in Central Asia.

Contrary to moderate Islam, extremist Islam is portrayed as a menacing threat in the pages of the NYT. As shown in Excerpt A-2, this version is represented as one that embeds backwardness and fundamentalism in Islamic society. In addition, it is represented as a threat to the world. In particular, it is pronounced by the NYT to be the enemy of the West. These concepts are thematized in many reports published in the pages of the NYT. For instance, the militant version of Islam is explicitly adopted through Pope John Paul II's words to be the ideology behind the 9/11 attacks. As this version is represented to be behind the extremist and terrorist ideology that led to the attacks (Excerpt A-2), it receives a wider coverage in the NYT than moderate Islam. In the final version of the selected data for this paper, it is found that 46 articles reported on extremist Islam, while only 13 articles reported on moderate Islam. However, what is mainly thematized about extremist Islam in these articles is the concept of 'threat'. Extremist or militant Islam is portrayed as a global menace that represents a real and serious threat to many parts of the world. For instance, it is accused of creating havoc and trouble in many countries; it unsettles Indonesia and its region as shown in Excerpt A-3.

Excerpt A-3

Militant Islam unsettles Indonesia and its region. (*The New York Times*, Sept 21, 2001)

Southeast Asia knows what havoc militant Islam can create. With mass

kidnappings in the Philippines, "holy warriors" in Indonesia and armed cells in Malaysia, governments have learned they can never relax.

This wave of Islamic extremism is reported to have reached America to threaten its stability and to loom over its social harmony. This is revealed in the headline in Excerpt A-4.

Excerpt A-4

Opening Western eyes to a view of Islam. (Militant Islam Reaches America.) (*The New York Times, August 28, 2002*)

With the terrorist attacks in the United States, some Western diplomats are expressing heightened fears that these groups may be cooperating and may be receiving increased support from militants in the Middle East.

At the same time, it is shown that the linguistic structures of the headlines in Excerpts A-3 and A-4 are selected by the NYT to reinforce the thematization of the moderate-extremist dichotomy. In using the linguistic tool of transitivity, militant Islam is represented as an evil ideology that can cause havoc in many places in the world. From a critical linguistic perspective, 'Militant Islam' is positioned in the headlines of Excerpts A-3 and A-4 as an agent. In other words, the agent in each case

is represented in the noun phrase 'Militant Islam' in both excerpts. The phrase 'Militant Islam' in Excerpts A-3 and A-4 is assigned to the verbs 'unsettles' and 'reaches', respectively. The verb 'unsettles' in Excerpt A-3 represents the experiential meaning of an action. As mentioned earlier, in assigning militant Islam to the action verb 'unsettles' makes the noun phrase 'Indonesia and its region' a goal or a direct object for it. It is implied through this linguistic structure that the unsettlement of 'Indonesia and its region' is caused by 'Militant Islam' deliberately. This strategy represents militant Islam as the main agent responsible for the chaotic situation in Indonesia and its region. On the other hand, the verb 'reaches' in the headline 'Militant Islam Reaches America' in Excerpt A-4 represents an action process (Lock, 1996, p. 78). The agent for this verb is the noun phrase, 'Militant Islam', and 'America' on the first sight seems like a goal or an object for the agent. However, it would be very odd to ask questions about the second participant (America) in this clause such as 'what happened to America?' That is because 'America' cannot be characterized as the participant on the receiving end of an action. Rather, it provides information about the extent, range, or scope of the process 'reach' that is assigned to 'Militant Islam'. The technical term for this participant in functional terms is "a range" (Lock, 1996, p. 78). Thus, the verb 'reaches' represents militant Islam as a real threat to many places and countries including even America.

However, it is revealed from the discourse analyzed that the NYT does not

only pursue the classification strategy to make the dichotomy between moderate and extremist Islam distinct based on the themes of threat and turmoil to refer to the latter. It further represents the problematic scenario of extremist Islam in the context of religion and politics. This is revealed from the various political labels the NYT uses to describe extremist Islam. These religious-political labels are represented in 'Islamic fundamentalism', as reported in the headline of Excerpt A-5; 'militant Islam', (headline, Excerpt A-6), 'extremist Islam' (headline, Excerpt A-8); and in the term 'radical Islam' which appears in a report about extremism in Nigeria (Line 4, Excerpt A-7).

Excerpt A-5

Living in a world without women. (Islamic fundamentalism) (*The New York Times*, Nov 4, 2001)

... Since 1979, radical Islamic movements have toppled or challenged governments from Iran to Egypt to Pakistan. Their growing popularity has many causes: poverty, the dissatisfaction with regimes viewed as corrupt and irreligious, the dislocation of modernity and unease with women's independence.

Excerpt A-6

Where Muslim traditions meet modernity. (Force of militant Islam) (*The New York Times*, Dec 17, 2001)

A husband can prevent his wife from traveling abroad, and the police will back up his legal right to stop her. A father can marry off his daughter against her will, and she, by law, must obey. A woman is trapped in a loveless marriage; with few exceptions, her husband is free once he declares himself divorced.

Excerpt A-7

Rising Islamic power in Africa causes unrest in Nigeria and elsewhere. (*The New York Times*, Nov 1, 2001)

In East Africa, in Kenya and Tanzania, where American embassies were bombed in 1998, Muslims have long been shut out of power. That has given rise there, as well as in Uganda, to the emergence of radical Islam. Radicals have organized themselves politically and some have received military help from the Islamist government of Sudan.

Excerpt A-8

A Rock Star's Struggle Where Militant Islam Rules. (*The New York Times*, July 17, 2003)

As these terms conjure negative meanings, the NYT selects them to thematize negative concepts about militant Islam. It is obvious that these terms are used to

equate the meaning of extremist Islam to radicalism, extremism and violence. Poole (2002) views these terms to be judgmental and their choice to be biased, particularly when used in a political atmosphere. She demonstrates that the Western media intend by these terms to equate extremist or militant Islam with politics, and to equate its politics with fundamentalism and fundamentalism with terrorism. In the same manner, Khleif (1998) points out that terms such as ‘fundamentalists’ and ‘terrorists’ may invoke a prejudiced representation in the Western media. They constitute negative myths on or about Islam that are taken for granted and never questioned or re-checked.

In the same manner, extremist Islam is represented to be a radical, harsh puritanical version due to its concern of applying the *Sharia*’a law in Islamic societies. The NYT reports that extremist Islam endorses forcefully the application of *Sharia*’a law to authorize the amputation of hands and to decree the flogging and stoning as punishment for crimes like theft and adultery (see for e.g., Excerpt A-10). This is shown in the case of a Nigerian woman who has been sentenced to death by stoning for having sex out of wedlock. The same article also reports on a teenage girl who was given 100 strokes of the cane for premarital sex; and in another case of cow thieves, who have had their hands cut off. These cases are all reported in the Excerpt A-10.

Excerpt A-10

Nigerian woman condemned to death by stoning is acquitted.

(Safiya Hussaini) (*The New York Times*, March 26, 2002)

A Muslim appeals court today acquitted a Nigerian woman who had been sentenced to death by stoning for having sex out of wedlock, a case that prompted protests at home and abroad and raised fears of religious unrest in the troubled West African nation.

The 35-year-old mother of five was the first of at least two women sentenced to death by stoning since a dozen Nigerian states began implementing Shariah, or Islamic law, two years ago.

Cow thieves have had their hands cut off. A teenage girl was given 100 cane strokes for premarital sex; another woman has just been sentenced to death by stoning for adultery.

Said (1981) reports that as the term *Sharia*’a prevails in the Western media coverage of Islam and Muslims, it becomes something of a hate term along with terms like *mullah Jihad* and *fatwa*. However, he points out that the meanings of these terms are treated negatively in contemporary times due to the ignorance of the media of Islam and its biased selection of topics that shed unpleasant light on certain practices in Islamic societies. On the one hand, Said affirms that due to media ignorance and lack of actual knowledge

about the peculiarities of Islam and Muslims communities, the content of the media becomes inaccurate and fully misleading. On the other hand, Said reports that due to the biased selection, the representation of these practices appears to reflect more the Western political and cultural interests than the practices themselves or the subject itself (1981, p. xv). Said suggested that the Western media should not represent terms like *Sharia 'a* out of the Islamic context and according to the Western cultural standards. Applying the Western standards to judge or evaluate any other culture is judged by Said to be practicing a kind of social hegemony (1981). Khawaja (2000) demonstrates that, by practicing this social hegemony, the Western media have contributed to portraying Muslims as those who do not fit into the Western society as it represents them in a way that alienates and racially discriminates against them. However, when the content of the excerpts that appear in this section are analytically and systematically compared to each other, it is revealed that the NYT utilizes the classification strategy to represent moderate Islam as a legitimate version of Islam and extremist Islam as an illegitimate one.

However, it is revealed from the discourse being analyzed that the NYT has not shed light on the social and political contexts that had led to the uprising of militant Islam. The NYT, just like any other Western media, hides the fact that militant Islam arose in retaliation to the acts that were committed by the West against Muslims since the period of colonization

(Siddiqi, 1997). It also does not report the academic views that point to the frustration of Muslims with America's unjust and double standard policies in the Middle East which have resulted in more adherents to embrace this version of Islam (Siddiqi, 1997). However, the moderate-extremist Islam dichotomy is reinforced by classifying Muslims into moderate and extremist, as shown in the following section.

Muslims: Moderate versus Extremist

It is shown in the earlier section that the NYT does not treat Islam to a monolithic discourse; rather it pursues a differentiation strategy to distinguish between two versions of Islam; the moderate and the militant. The NYT used the same strategy to make a distinction between two camps of Muslims: the moderate and the militant. Terms such as 'moderate' and 'mainstream' are used to describe the former camp which the West does not need to fear while terms such as 'extremists' (Excerpt A-4), 'militants' (Excerpt A-14), 'fundamentalist(s)' (Excerpt A-11) and 'radicals' (Excerpt A-15) are used to describe the latter. These terms are generally used in many articles that juxtapose 'extremists' and 'moderates' together in order to show a wide divide between them (see Excerpt A-11), where the noun 'mainstream Islamic society' (Lines 8-9) is juxtaposed with the noun 'extremists' (Line 9). The juxtaposition of these nouns together serves to reinforce the moderate-extremist Muslim dichotomy.

Excerpt A-11

Experts on Islam pointing fingers at one another. (*The New York Times*, Nov 3, 2001)

“There are two camps,” said John L. Esposito, a leading American scholar of Islam and the founder of the Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding at Georgetown University, who is among the scholars criticized by Mr. Kramer. “One of them believes that all Islamic fundamentalist groups or movements are a threat. The other, represented by myself and several others, would say that you have to distinguish between mainstream Islamic society and extremists, who attack people in their own societies and now in the West.”

It is also revealed from Excerpt A-11 that as the NYT reports Esposito’s views in order to portray competing themes and images about Muslims. Through Esposito’s views, moderate Muslims are represented as peaceful believers practising a tolerant version of Islam. They are even represented to be disappointed to have the 9/11 events associated to their religion. They denounce and speak loudly against these events considering the ideological stance behind them to be a distorted version of Islam and different from their faith in all respects, as shown in Excerpt A-12.

Excerpt A-12

Moderates start speaking out against Islamic intolerance. (*The New York Times*, Oct 28, 2001)

After years of quietly watching a harsh, puritanical strain of Islam enter America, many moderate Muslims are speaking out in favour of a more tolerant form of their faith. They are emboldened by their sense of anger at the Sept. 11 attacks and embarrassed by what they see as a distorted vision of their religion.

It is revealed from the above excerpt (A-12) that the NYT gives moderate Muslims a chance to condemn the attacks, to emphasize the peacefulness of their religion, and to reject the connection of Islam to the 9/11 events. This is shown through the verb phrase ‘start speaking’ which involves two processes being linked to the logical relationship of the purpose ‘Islamic intolerance’. The first process ‘start’ (headline, Excerpt A-12) is actional, while the second ‘speak’ is verbal. They are, therefore, more accurately regarded as two clauses, the second being dependent on the first as the second verb can still take the form of *to-verb*. Both of these processes are used to portray a good image of moderate Muslims represented in their strong opposition to the intolerance of Islam (see for e.g., Lock, 1996, p. 111). In fact, the NYT tried its utmost to depict a positive image of moderate Muslims. It

gives moderate Muslims a chance to speak for themselves and to represent them as role models for all Muslims. It represents them to be tolerant and peaceful and it detaches them from any violent acts.

Extremist Muslims

Extremist Muslims are represented in relation to themes of violence, fundamentalism, militancy, destruction and vandalism. The manifestation of these themes portray extremist Muslims as hijackers, suicide bombers, Jihadists and holy warriors as shown in Excerpts A-13 and A-14, respectively.

Excerpt A-13

A day of terror: the Arabs; condemnations from Arab governments, but widely different attitudes on the street (*The New York Times, September 13, 2001*)

In arguing against an Arab link, officials and local experts on extremist groups pointed to the complex choreography of the attack. But in the Middle East, as elsewhere, intense speculation focused on Osama bin Laden or related organization, partly because the attacks involved suicide pilots. Suicide bombers from extremist Muslim organizations generally believe that they are fighting for their faith and are promised paradise if they die for the cause.

Excerpt A-14

Al Qaeda: sprawling, hard-to-spot web of terrorists-in-waiting (*The New York Times, Sept 30, 2001*)

Like the suspected hijackers who attacked New York and the Pentagon on Sept. 11, the militants of Al Qaeda's infantry may remain invisible for months or even years. They may slip quietly back into their homelands to await orders, or infiltrate into European cities or American suburbs as 'sleepers' before being mobilized to wage what they see as Jihad, or holy war.

At the same time, extremist Muslims are represented to be globally problematic. They are represented as a menacing threat to the US (see Excerpt A-14) and Europe (Excerpt A-14). They are reported to threaten the public in Indonesia, a country that is professed to be secular by its leaders (see Excerpt A-15). Extremists are represented as rebels who threaten the stability of the Philippines (see Excerpt A-16). They are also represented as a threat to the regimes in Pakistan (see Lines 1-2, Excerpt A-17) and the Middle East (see for e.g., Excerpt A-20). Since 1979, they have either toppled or challenged the regimes and in the former, have established states which they can apply the *Sharia*'s law. These negative aspects are reported in Excerpts A-5, A-15, A-16, A-17 and A-20 which are taken from different articles published in the NYT.

Excerpt A-15

Indonesia radicals issue threats of holy war. (Islamic Youth) (*The New York Times*, Sept 29, 2001)

Excerpt A-16

Muslim rebels raid town in southern Philippines. (*The New York Times*, Oct 6, 2001)

Excerpt A-17

Islamists bring out followers against U.S. (A Nation Challenged) (mullahs in Pakistan). (*The New York Times*, Oct 8, 2001)

In cities across Pakistan in recent weeks, thousands of party followers have thronged into the streets to deliver fiery and furious anti-American messages. They waved the distinctive black-and-white flag of the party and chanted "Death to America" and "Death to Bush."

From the headlines of Excerpts A-15, A-16, and A-17, it can be seen that extremist Muslims are portrayed to be radically different from the more general and politically moderate Muslims. The NYT preserves their thematic representation in relevance to negative concepts like violence, turmoil, and vandalism. These themes are consolidated through the linguistic structures that are chosen to report them.

The critical analysis of the linguistic

structures in the above excerpts shows extremist Muslims taking the role of the agent in the transitive clauses. Each of these clauses has two participants that can be described in functional terms as agents and objects (Fowler, 1991, p. 71). The agents of these clauses are represented in terms like 'Indonesian radicals' (headline, Excerpt A-15), 'Muslims rebels' (headline, Excerpt A-16), and 'Islamists' (headline, Excerpt A-17). The objects for these agents are represented in 'threats of holy war' in Excerpt A-15, 'town in southern Philippines' in Excerpt A-16, and 'followers against U.S' in Excerpt A-17, respectively. The role of these agents and the effect received by the objects are commonly determined by the type of verbs that are assigned to them. The verbs that are assigned to these agents are 'issue', 'raid', and 'bring out' respectively. The verb 'issue' in Excerpt A-15 represents the experiential meaning of a verbal action. Thus, assigning this verb to 'Indonesian radicals' makes the term 'threats of holy war' a direct object of the radicals. The effect received by the object 'holy war' becomes clearer through the word 'threat' (headline, Excerpt A-15), thus representing extremist Muslims to be prone to violence. On the other hand, the verb 'raid' represents the experiential meaning of an action being carried out to a 'town in southern Philippines'. The clause represents extremist Muslims in relation to the concepts of vandalism and destruction. In a similar way, the phrasal verb 'bring out' represents the experiential meaning of an actional process (Lock, 1996, p. 78).

'Islamists' appears as the agent for this actional process and the term 'followers' is characterized as the participant on the receiving end of the actional process. The term 'followers' along with its complement 'against US' represents America as the target of the Islamists. In addition, the verb 'bring out' implies a warning against extremist Muslims as they are perceived as the real enemies of the United States of America. The verb 'topple', used in the article from which Excerpt A-5 was extracted, represents metaphorically the experiential meaning of an actional process being directed towards governments in the Middle East. This verb shows that the scope of extremist Muslims' threat is wide and may know no limit.

The threat of extremist Muslims is also strengthened through the evaluative terms 'radicals' (Excerpt A-15), 'rebels' (Excerpt A-16), and 'Islamists' (Excerpt A-17). These terms have contributed to create a dichotomy between 'moderates' and 'extremists' in a number of articles that represent almost 35% of the total number of the articles analyzed. The frequent use of terms like 'radical', 'extremist', 'moderate', 'Muslim rebels', 'fundamentalist' and 'Islamists' accounts for 118, 105, 90, 76, 59 and 51 occurrences, respectively. The liberal and frequent provision of these terms is meant to represent extremist Muslims in association to violence and turmoil. From another perspective, the use of these terms verges on a deep prejudice and xenophobia in the NYT against Islam and Muslims (see for e.g., Fowler, 1991, p. 78). These lexical terms with their

associated negative connotations (with the exception of 'moderate' indicate that the NYT has a xenophobic ideological stance. This xenophobic ideology emerges as the discussed terms are used to sort Muslims into discriminatory categories. However, this raises the issue of the typology itself and makes the terms perceived with scepticism. It seems that the NYT uses these terms to create a fear-based discourse about extremist Muslims. The objective seems to be to convey a message that we should fear extremist Muslims as they are represented to be involved with violence, turmoil and terrorist acts. This makes them to be perceived as a source of worry and anxiety among the readers and the public.

The peril of extremist Muslims becomes especially evident once they are represented as fundamentalists who distort Islam to justify their violent acts and to promote their political agendas, as shown in Excerpt A-18.

Excerpt A-18

More extremists find basis for rebellion in Islam. (*The New York Times*, Sept 22, 2001)

"You have extremists who years ago might have appealed to a nationalist or secular ideology," said John L. Esposito, an expert on Islam at Georgetown University in Washington. "Now you have people who are prone to create acts of violence and who are justifying it in the name of Islam."

For the most part, the NYT is preoccupied with the peril of extremist Muslims and their fundamentalism by reinforcing them with references from scenes in the Islamic world. For instance, in order to perpetuate these images about extremist Muslims, the NYT associates them to the Taliban, Al Qaeda and Osama bin Laden (Excerpt A-19). Al Qaeda, the Taliban and Osama bin Laden are always reported to follow a very extremist but distorted version of the Islamic faith that advocates Jihad and holy war against the West (Excerpt A-19). Thus, the fundamentalist and threatening images of Al-Qaeda and the Taliban are used by the NYT as the best examples to flash out the picture of fundamentalism and to associate it to extremist Muslims.

Excerpt A-19

Speaking in the name of Islam
(*The New York Times*, Dec 2, 2001).

Since Sept. 11, Muslim leaders have repeatedly said that extremists like Osama bin Laden and his Al Qaeda network have distorted religious teachings to justify terrorism. In Arabic, the word "Islam" means surrender, and Islamic scholars say there is nothing in the teachings of the religion that could justify barbarity against so many innocent people. But still, since long before Mr. bin Laden, extremists have used Islam as a mandate for their actions.

However, Goody (2004) points out that as the representation of extremist Muslims in the Western media spins on the issue of fundamentalism, it obscures, on another hand, the realities of widespread political grievances held by extremist Muslims against the US. There are rare instances in the NYT, where lucid explanations of Bin Laden's demands are explicitly laid out: pull US troops out of the Arabian Gulf, work towards securing the Palestinian right to self-determination, and lift the sanctions imposed on the Iraqi people (Esposito, 2002, p. 176). These demands are expressions of protest against the policies which are pursued by the US and considered offensive to many of the global Muslim communities. Esposito (2002) points out that bin Laden uses these demands to provoke feelings of hatred among Muslims against the West and to gain more supporters. The issue of fundamentalism is essentialized to all Muslims who operate within the political discourse with Islamic agenda, as shown in the following section.

Essentialization

Essentialization is a term used to refer to the identical coherence of representation of a certain group of people due to their identical interests and homogeneous properties (Modood, 2006). On the other hand, Hansen (2006) points out that essentialization is used by the Western media as a strategy to construct a homogeneous image of European Muslims but without considering the different backgrounds they have or the larger set of cultural norms they have

acquired from the communities they live in (Hansen, 2006, p. 4). In the context of this study, it is found that the NYT utilizes essentialization as a discursive strategy to attribute all Islamic movements that operate within the Islamic discourse to extremism without a concern as to whether these movements are traditional or modern, violent or peaceful. Rather, it lumps all these movements together painting them with extremism and fundamentalism, as shown in Excerpt A-20.

Excerpt A-20

Egyptian group patiently pursues dream of Islamic state. (*The New York Times, Jan 20, 2002*)

All fundamentalist groups have one goal: setting up an Islamic state with no borders," said Muhammad Salah, a journalist who writes about Islamic movements in Egypt. He believes that the Brothers are content to bide their time. "They are not in a hurry," he said. "They believe they can achieve their goal in 50 or 60 years when the whole society becomes Brothers and they will end up running the country.

"Most Islamic groups, the extremist groups that appeared here, all came from the same womb," said Nabil Osman, head of the State Information Service. "They can claim that they are not shooting now, but instead of bullets they are shooting concepts of extremism and deception.

It is revealed from the Excerpt above, that all Islamic movements are represented to share the same fundamentalist ideology, as shown in the word 'fundamentalist' in the first line of Excerpt A-20. From another perspective, these movements are represented to use Islam as a tactical weapon to achieve one common goal to establish one Islamic state without borders (Lines 8-9, Excerpt A-20). This means that they are working with the same political agenda that aims to reunite all Muslims and demolish the borders that separate them. However, these Islamic movements are essentialized once they are recognized to come from the same womb (Line 10, Excerpt A-20). This indicates that these movements adhere to the same ideology, principles and goals. All these together represent their identity to be the same and it could be argued, to be Islamic. This representation is explicitly shown in the NYT in Excerpt A-21.

Excerpt A-21

How in a little English town jihad found young converts. (How Muslims from Tipton, England, were captured with Taliban in Afghanistan). (*The New York Times, April 24, 2002*)

The goal of the radicals, of whatever stripe, is to make Islam a political force. To do this, they employ a potent mix of vivid imagery, Qura'anic scholarship, hard facts and soft-boiled conspiracy theories -- the Jews attacked the World Trade Center to discredit Osama

bin Laden; the C.I.A. did it to give America a way into Central Asia; Mr. bin Laden is an American agent meant to discredit Islam.

From the above Excerpt (A-21), it is revealed that the NYT attributes all sorts of Islamic revivalism to fundamentalism and radicalism. It essentializes their representation emphasizing that all Islamic movements regardless of their 'stripe' (Lines 1-2, Excerpt A-21) share the same political agenda. This has the effect of making Islam a political force to achieve their goals and interests. Such a representation brings to the fore, the ignorance of the NYT of the Islamic movements that work within the Islamic political sphere. It seems that the NYT is not aware of the fact that there are Islamic movements that adopt political and civilized means like democracy to participate and compete in the political sphere with other non-Islamic movements. In other words, the NYT fails to recognize any diversity among Islamic movements, but instead essentializes all of them as one camp that entails no differences. The essentialization of all Islamic movements is noticeably proven in the coverage of the Turkish election.

With such a representation, the failure of the NYT to recognize the diversity that exists among Islamic movements becomes obvious. It does not or could not draw a distinction between the Al-Qaeda and other tolerant and moderate movements like the brotherhood movement in Egypt and the AKP in Turkey. The NYT represents

all these movements as different faces of Islamic fundamentalism or extremism. Their political agendas are interpreted as an instance of extremism and, in turn, as indications of fundamentalism. With this strategy of essentialization, it becomes unclear where moderate Islam begins and where extremism ends.

Ayoob (2007, p. 116) reports the Western media's coverage of political Islam appears to be blurred and vague. This is particularly true, as they do not draw a line between militant movements and political ones. According to Ayoob (2007), this political line makes every Muslim a potential fundamentalist and it puts the burden on him to prove otherwise. On the other hand, he demonstrates that the Western media tend to easily label any kind of civil rights claimed by Islamically oriented people as an outer face of hidden agendas rather than as a struggle for democracy. He further points out that the Western media ignores the fact that there are many Islamic movements that reject violence as a political means to achieve their agenda but who would rather adopt democracy as a political choice or means to participate in the political sphere and to achieve their political agendas. The Brotherhood in Egypt, AKP in Turkey, Hamas in occupied Palestine and Al-Eslah in Yemen are excellent examples of such movements (Ayoob, 2007, p. 19). Ayoob further reports that though these movements are Islamically oriented, they began their political lives as resistance or opposition movements and then transmuted into political parties with a modernist outlook

while participating in the political sphere. In spite of that, he realizes that the West rejects any dealing with them as it perceives their agendas to be against its interests. In this perspective, the Western countries are perceived to be ‘hypocrite[s]’ as they have multi-faceted policies. The West promotes democracy where moderates win, but never pushes it where Islamists are likely to win as shown from the words of Mr. Pipes who is the president of the United States Institute of Peace (Excerpt A-4).

Excerpt A-4

Opening Western eyes to a view of Islam (Militant Islam Reaches

America) (The New York Times, August 28, 2002)

Mr. Pipes makes a strong case that Left and Right have approached both with impressive consistency. But sturdy, well-connected neo-conservative that he is, he argues just as forthrightly that the Left has been consistently wrong.

His policy guidelines are accordingly simple. Respect and support the moderate Muslims, who are Islam’s silent majority. Don’t push democracy where Islamists are likely to win. Don’t try to appease. It can’t be done

However, it seems that the American media organizations find themselves compelled to adopt the state slant, to support

its policies and to render them as common sense due to patriotic and national spurs. Following the 9/11 events, American media organizations designed political rhetoric to be deployed in the service of public policy. As the war on terrorism is formulated, familiar images and themes contributed to the consolidation and support for the Bush administration and for the war in Afghanistan (Silberstein, 2003, p. xi). This does not suggest that Americans or media audience and readers are simply dupes of governmental and media propaganda. As Fairclough (2002, p. 2) puts it, the media have the power to represent things in a particular way to shape government and parties’ views, and to influence knowledge, beliefs and values, and social relations as well as identities in a society. In order to shape attitudes and identities, Silberstein (2003) points out that the media exploit some cultural strains and produce carefully crafted rhetoric and imagery.

CONCLUSION

The analysis of the discourse in the NYT has shown that the newspaper makes a departure from a monolithic representation avoiding the negative implications of reportage that homogenizes Islam and shows Muslims as a monolithic block that entails no differences. In effect, it pursues a classification strategy to create a dichotomy of moderate and extremist Islam and Muslims. Within this dichotomy, diverse and competing themes are reinforced about these two versions and camps of Islam and Muslims. While the moderate camp is represented to be tolerant,

peaceful and progressive; the extremist camp is represented to be backward and a menacing threat to the West. At the same time, the moderate Muslims are represented as peaceful believers who practice a tolerant and legitimate version of Islam. In contrast to moderates, extremist Muslims are represented as zealots and violent militants who practice the extremist version of Islam.

However, the NYT fails to identify any kind of diversity within the representation of extremism. In fact, it utilizes an essentialization strategy to portray extremist Islam and Muslims as a uniformed camp that entails no differences. To this end, it lumps all Islamic movements together, portraying them as a threat to the West, and without any concern whether they are traditional, modern, violent or peaceful. It describes them to come from the same womb and to adhere to the same political agendas. Their political agendas are interpreted as an instance of extremism and, in turn, as different faces of Islamic fundamentalism. Through this strategy, it becomes unclear where modernism begins and where extremism ends.

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