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Politics of Identity: The Face of Islam in the International E-Media

Abstract:

The portrayal of Islam in a hostile relationship with rationality, liberty, and tolerance, leads to a politics of identity where a marginalized community embattles to re-affirm and resist the tarnished face. The bigoted perception of Islam as a political, economic, and social threat reinforces the unfounded Islamophobia and needs production of counter-narrative by scholars and researchers believing in humanity and equality. This paper aims to explore the discursive construction of Islam through the use of E-media caricatures. Discourse historical approach (DHA) is used to analyze the discourse of 16 E-media caricatures disseminated on the World Wide Web in the years 2017 and 2018. The analysis demonstrates the discursive strategies namely referential strategy, predication, argumentation and intensification used in the (mis)representation and (de)legitimization of the face of Islam in the E-Media. This study gives a deeper insight into the issue of the negative identity construction of Islam using caricatures.

Key Words:

Discourse Historical Approach (DHA), Discriminating Discourse, Socio Semiotic Analysis, Polarizing Discourse.

Introduction

Amidst the current omnipresence of discourse on Islam, it is hard to imagine that merely four decades ago, Islam was not the main concern occupying a peripheral place on the western consciousness. If the news reports during the cold war era are explored, mostly the western representation of Islam as a benign ally of the forces of freedom confronting the Empire of Evil in Afghanistan is found. After the events of 9/11, Islam at once became a local and global issue portrayed in numberless daily images reflecting Euro-American preoccupations. In doing so, the International media is continually building an association of Islam with war, repression and instability creating a false stereotype. Rarely a day goes by without hearing, reading, or watching a terrifying Muslim-related event report. Today's global world is governed by the power of the media. The question is not what has sparked a particular event or an incident but the way it is captured by the lens and shown to the broader world community. Media does not merely reflect the existing reality and the lens is neither neutral nor objective. Today's lens is set to pre-defined choices and calculations, which decide in advance what to show and what not to show to the public. Thus, the media role is not simple and passive transmission but of active creation and manufacturing.

Prisms of Perception of Islam

Lisa & Mendes (2012) explain this complicated process by suggesting that the west seems to have created its own "machinery of truth" about Islam and Muslims. The titles, mediums, and genera may vary, but all of them lead back to a narrow ring of notions, which define Islam and Muslims to suit the needs of the manufacturers. These notions eventually boil down to violence, irrationality, fanaticism, emotiveness, stagnation, subordination, and despotism. Said[§] used the term Orientalism to explain a historically constructed ideology or perspective that the 'West-and-

Islam' exists as dualism. It also included the idea that 'Others are less human than Us'. The notion of orientalism rests on analyzing the unquestioned assumptions of the West about Islam and the Middle East.

Distorted Identities: A Form of Political Violence

Since the publication of Orientalism in 1978, the dramatic change in the socio-political global scenario has moved Islam has been made the center of international politics instead of lying at the peripheries (Said, 2001). To name a few incidents of international importance, the Islamic Revolution in Iran in 1979, the unresolved Palestinian question and continued resistance in the course of

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intifadas, the resistance in Afghanistan over the foreign occupation and the acts of terror worldwide using the name of Islam. Noticeable among them is the 9/11 incident and subsequent response of the West. Two academic trends have emerged from the above dramatic changes. First is an increased tendency to think that Orientalism is a past ideology now and the world is moving 'beyond Orientalism' (Dallmayr, 1996). Some, in fact, termed it the 'post-Orientalism' era suggesting that owing to the fast global communications system the sharp contrast between Occident and Orient is completely out of date. The second academic trend holds that it would be naive on the part of researchers to believe that the past patterns which had shaped the West-and-Islam dualism have disappeared. Instead, the patterns responsible for orientalism have been modified, reconstituted and redeployed in a new paradigm called 'neo-orientalism'. Dag Tuastad (2008) considers this new way of political violence of Muslims in Western media as the 'new barbarism' which simply implies that violence is explained in such a way that political and economic interests of the external world are omitted and violent situation is presented as a result of traits of local people and local cultures. These waves of neo-orientalism and new barbarism serve as hegemonic strategies in the production of the enemy and legitimize the western intervention (Dag Tuastad 2008).

In 1993, The Clash of Civilizations (COC) proposed by [political scientist Huntington](#) became a topic of debate. He suggested that the main source of conflict in the world after cold-war would be people's cultural and religious affiliations. The controversial phrase was not being used for the first time and there is a long history of its use in the previous literary and political cannon. Said issued a critical response to Huntington's proposition and named his article The Clash of Ignorance (2001). He criticizes the omission of dynamic interdependence of civilizations in Huntington's work and calls it "the purest invidious racism, a sort of parody of Hitlerian science directed today against Arabs and Muslims" (Said, 2001, p. 293). Noam Chomsky used even stronger words to criticize the idea and saw it as a new justification for the United States "for any atrocities that they wanted to carry out" because after the Cold War the Soviet Union was no more a viable threat (Chomsky, 2015).

Stating the Problem

This paper addresses important dimensions of representation of Islam through discourse historical approach of CDA (Critical Discourse Analysis). CDA assumes that having access to the media is a form of empowerment because it provides the opportunity not only to perpetuate ideologies but to maintain them too. Usually, the group without access to media is considered powerless. These observations gain more importance when we see that the construction of negative-other representation is widely used as a weapon to naturalize and legitimize the biased stereotypes of Muslims in the international E-media. Consequently, the social actor (which in this case is Islam) is left at the mercy of the Media.

Limitations of the Study

DHA focuses on the importance of contextual analysis taking into account the historical, socio-economic, and political foundations of the issue. However, limitations of word and space do not allow an in-depth comprehensive investigation into all these contexts in the research at hand. For this reason, this study explores the only historical context and linguistic co-text. The data for this research consists of 16 caricatures disseminated on the World Wide Web in the year 2016-2017. The caricatures are filtered for the presence of at least one linguistic unit in it and only those caricatures are selected which have a caption or a thought bubble or a speech bubble.

Aims and Objectives of the Current Research

The aim of this research is to gain an understanding of the ways in which the face of Islam is (mis)represented in the international media. This involves examining linguistic strategies and identifying different semiotic signifiers used in caricatures to structure and restructure perceptions about Islam and to construct the negative-other representation of the social actor. Wodak (2006) describes strategies as a "more or less intentional plan of practices (including discursive practices) adopted to achieve a particular social, political, psychological or linguistic aim." (p.no, 180). The objectives of this research are as follows:

- To recognize what image of Islam is created in the current electronic media
- To explore which images are recurrent and why
- To identify the discursive strategies and topoi used in the collected sample of e-media caricatures to construct this identity

System of Data Analysis

It would be appropriate to explain that the system of analysis adopted for the current research is in accordance with the framework used by Wodak (2006). She stresses adopting a three-dimensional approach to carry out the analysis in DHA (Discourse Historical Approach).

1) The content of the data

The first step involves identifying the distinct contents/topics of a particular discourse by discussing its historical context. The historical context of the collected sample of e-caricatures is analyzed to gain an understanding of the issue underhand.

2) The discursive strategies employed

The second step involves identifying the discursive strategies by answering the corresponding questions listed in table 1. The questions postulated are corresponding to the discursive strategies.

3) The linguistic realization of these contents and strategies

Finally, the linguistic means and the context-dependent linguistic realizations are examined by focusing on the topoi. The last section of the analysis investigates and identifies the meaning constructed by different topoi used in the caricatures.

Identifying the Historical Context

To carry out the discourse analysis, we start by providing some contextualizing remarks on the history of the representation of Islam in the past years. The publication of the groundbreaking book "Orientalism" by Edward Said made the social scientist interested in the role of different types of media in the construction of identities of Islam (1979). Researchers have explored the ways Western media maintains a distinction between the Western "Us" and the Eastern "Other". Said suggests that Orientalism has provided a rationale for the European colonialism (1979). The rationale is based on a "self-serving" history in which the West constructed an identity for the east as exotic, backward, uncivilized, inferior, and finally dangerous. The picture of the east, thus portrayed, is in need of western intervention and rescue. Samiei suggests that after World War II, the concept of orientalism transformed into modernization theory or neo-orientalism (2010). This concept rests on the foundational assumption by the western world that Western culture is a prerequisite for worldly progress. The mainstream Western electronic and print media propagated the idea that in order to make progress, the underdeveloped or third world countries needed to evolve into Western-style institutions and used it as an argument for the inherent superiority of the Western way of living to establish a case against Islam (Bullock, 2002).

The Distorted Representation of Islam – A Prevailing Phenomenon

Akbarzadeh and Smith (2005) have explored Media power as a significant social agent influencing community perceptions in recent years. Identifying the (re)creation of Orientalists' notions through a collection of articles from *The Age* and *Herald Sun*, they emphasized that through lurid and insidious depictions of Arabs, Muslim identity is being equated with fanatics, terrorists, aliens, and extremists. This role of media as image-makers makes the Muslim surface as the threatening cultural "Other." In the same context, Shaheen (2003) discusses the role of the distorted lens of Hollywood moviemakers in vilifying Arabs and Muslims as insidious, brutal and lascivious. By analyzing more than 900 movies, he explores a defamatory history starting from the earliest days of cinema to the 21st century Hollywood blockbusters that frequently characterize "machine gun-wielding and bomb-blowing evil-Arab." (Shaheen, 2003, p. no 173).

Social Caricatures: A Visual Rhetoric Used as a Powerful Weapon

While asserting that visual communication has acquired a dominant place in our lives, Berger (2004) anticipated that they would play a dominant role in shaping public discourse in the future. The print is not dead yet and it is not expected that it will ever die but today's language dominated culture has moved toward the iconic. When this recent increased interest makes use of the modern electronic media, the resultant electronic interface is fluid and blurred the informatics realm.

The term caricature, rooted in the Italian word "caricare". It is a form of graphic satire, used for the purpose of oppression, suppression and revealing the subject's inner nature (Walker, 2003). Caricatures may target individuals exaggerating their personal traits or groups ridiculing the corporate characteristics of that group. In this case, the caricature becomes a stereotypical representation of the qualities attributed to an ethnic, religious or social group. In the current research, the caricatures, representing stereotypical qualities of Muslims as a group, are focused. In any case, these visual images are never innocent, naive or neutral reflections of reality and an authorial intentional interpretation is always involved (Walker, 2003). What adds to the genera's importance in molding public opinion is the fact that its seemingly innocent humor helps its absorption quickly without much reflection or resistance although it is often unabashedly one-sided

Identifying the Discursive Strategies

While analyzing the discourse about national, religious, racial and ethnic issues, there are certain analytical tools and strategies that demand particular attention. In discourse historical approach, the researcher identifies the following strategies and the corresponding questions.

Table 1

	Strategy Used	Corresponding Questions
Positive Self representation and Negative Other Presentation	Reference	How are persons/places named and referred to linguistically in the caricatures?
	Predication	What traits, Characteristics, qualities and features are attributed to them?
	Argumentation	What arguments and argumentation schemes are used for specific persons or social groups and how these schemes try to justify and legitimise the exclusion, discrimination, suppression and exploitation of others?
	Perspectivation and Involvement	From what perspective or point of view are these namings, attributions and arguments expressed?
	Intensification and Mitigation	Are the respective discriminating utterances articulated overtly, are they even intensified or are they mitigated?

Referential/Nomination Strategies: Wodak suggests that referential strategies or nomination strategies are deployed to construct and represent social actors (Wodak and Meyer, 2009). The social actor in the collected caricatures is Islam and Muslims. Their identity as an outgroup is clearly observable in the caricatures. These strategies, once identified, help us to find out how persons, phenomena/events, objects, actions and processes are given names and referred to in the discourse under examination. It is found that in the 16 caricatures there are many instances of the Negative-Other Representations of Islam, Muslims, actions of Muslims and Islamic rituals. The referential strategy consists of many sub-strategies, which label social actors either positively or negatively. Direct references made to the social actor's physical qualities and personality traits create an image in the mind of the skimmer. In the identity construction of Islam and Muslims in these caricatures, many identity markers are used which carry prejudices and function to marginalize them. Wodak has outlined many discourse structures, which make up a referential strategy (Wodak & Meyer, 2009). In the current research, mainly two structures related to referential strategies are identified and discussed. These discourse structures are ethnonyms and xenonyms. In the next section, we discuss how the caricaturist has used these to express the bias against Islam and Muslims.

Ethnonyms- Identity as a Muslim

The word ethnonyms suggest discrimination based on ethnicity using specific words e.g European, American etc. In the collected sample the discrimination is not made because of the ethnic background rather it is made because of religion. Both linguistic and semiotic signifiers are used as the identity markers of Muslims. Except for fig 4-8, all the other caricatures have used the word Islam or Muslims in addition to the semiotic symbols such as turbans, loose robes, beard, burqa and minarets of mosques shown in the background. In fig. 4-8, the whole burden of meaning-making lies on the semiotic symbols and the indirect references used in these caricatures as the words Islam or Muslims are not mentioned in these caricatures. The indirect references used for Muslims include Islamic concepts of prayer and concept of virgins after death especially in figure no 03-08. The explicit references made to create an in-group and out-group polarization in identity construction is evident in the figure no 09-16 by the use of word Islam and Muslim. Uses of these words make it clear that identity traits portrayed by the caricaturist are considered the collective qualities found in the Muslims.

These explicit references remind the viewer that the target of ridicule is the whole group of Muslims who are presented as outsiders. In figure 03 and 09, Muslim architecture is used to make sure that the social actors in the images are recognized as Muslims. The arches shown in figure 03 remind us of mosques whereas in figure 09 the black image of holy Kaaba is very clearly referring to Muslims. The linguistic captions highlight the difference between the people of Muslim nations and the leaders of Muslim nations. In figure 13, the semiotic symbol used is unique and is discussed in detail in the section storytelling. Some of the linguistic terms used to refer to Islam and Muslims and the corresponding figure are given in appendix (at the end of the article).

The above-mentioned words along with the visual identity markers like a robe, beard, turban, crescent, and minarets confirm the identity of the human images as Muslims.

Xenonyms - Explicit dissimulation

Xenonyms, as explained by Reisigl and Wodak, are particular choices of lexemes that dissimilate and discriminate the social actor in an explicit way in the discourse by putting him/her in a category, distinct from the In-group (Reisigl, 2017). The caricatures identified as an expression of xenonyms are discussed under the next heading.

2. Predication

Predicational strategies are realized by using stereotypical, evaluative attributions of negative and positive traits as implicit or

explicit predicates. In the caricatures, these strategies are used to label the social actors (Muslims and Islam) negatively and deprecatorily. There is a lot of overlap in these two strategies and to draw clear-cut boundaries is not possible. The predication strategies can not be separated from the nomination strategies. However, in the predication strategy, the linguistic choices show prejudice towards a social actor. Usually, the word choices carry stereotypical, positive evaluative attributions of the in-group and negative evaluative attribution of the out-group. This strategy often results in the construction of negative-other categorization. Most of the collected sample of caricatures carry a linguistic or symbolic identity marker for Muslims and Islam. They can be predicated through their social activities, for example, the religious beliefs are ridiculed in figure 03-08. The religion Islam is blamed directly and the characteristics are described in such a way that the whole religion appears to be a collection of absurd and impractical beliefs. In the following section, some of the caricatures are discussed in detail for the use of referential strategies such as ethnonyms, xenonyms and predication.

Examples from the Sample

The caricatures included in this section deal directly with the identity construction of the religion Islam and show that instead of mocking Muslim men or Muslim women, now the target of ridicule is the ideology of Islam, the religious practices and the holy book Quran.

The first caricature of the sample shows the image of a book on which the title “Koran” is visible. The morbid and farcical mocking tone of the artist can be felt by the details written under the title. The caption says “A Grimm Fairy tale” (Fig 01). The artist did not consider the barefaced caption enough and added another separate box carrying the insolent details about the book. The text box states “Government Health Warning Reading this can Seriously Damage your Mental Health” (Fig 01). Expressing such bodacious views about the holiest religious book of almost one-third of humanity is definitely not accidental and reveals the politics of identity constructions of Muslims. The article 20 (2) of International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights states, “Any advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence shall be prohibited by law” (Christian Tomuschat, 2008).

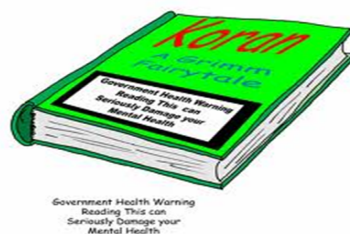


Figure 1

Definition of Hate Speech

(The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) (Temperman, 2015)

- It creates a distinction between one’s own identity and the group outside it.
- This type of speech makes a moral comparison based on the distinction established.
- It involves devaluation or dehumanization of the members of the other group and gives evidence for the personal superiority of one’s own group.
- It advocates and naturalizes/neutralizes the racist or biased attitude reflected in treating outsiders.
- It usually contains material that can be termed a call to violence against members of other groups.

If fig 01 is analyzed in the light of the above-mentioned points, it becomes clear that such a practice incites hatred and shows the highest level of impropriety. In the light of the above-mentioned points, the vilest allegations made in fig 02 are noteworthy. In this image, the absence of a moral perspective is shocking. One thing is clear that no one should be harassed for his or her religious beliefs. This caricature not only picks apart the Muslims but also condemns Islam as a code of conduct. The word ISLAM, written with drops of blood dripping from it, creates an appalling image of Islam in the mind of the viewer. The skull shown on the left-hand corner adds to the overall horrifying effect of the image. This image meets every criterion by which hate speech is defined. This message not only inspires loathing but also shows disregard for others. The image directly blames the ideology of Islam and tries to establish that this is “not just another religion, but a way of tyranny and death” (Fig 84). This racist and biased discourse suggests that neither fanaticism nor lack of Western tolerance is responsible for the unrest in the world and puts the whole of the blame on the ideology of Islam.

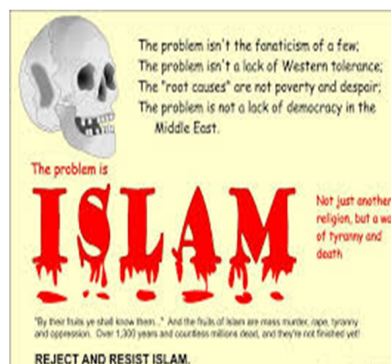


Figure 2

3. Argumentation

The third strategy identified in the caricatures is argumentation which is used along with a fund of topoi to justify the negative attributions. This argumentation justifies and naturalizes the social and political inclusion or exclusion. For example, the argument built in these caricatures is that Muslims are facing discrimination or biased treatment because of their religion which teaches them hatred and intolerance. According to Wodak & Meyer (2009), this strategy justifies the allocation of negative-other attributes to the social actor with the help of three main discourse structures. These discourse structures include topos, fallacy and storytelling. A deeper look at the data helps to understand how this is done in the collected sample. Since argumentation also involves perspectivation and involvement, so both Fallacy and storytelling are explained under the next heading.

4. Perspectivation and Involvement

The fourth strategy used in building an identity is perspectivation, which mainly involves framing. With the help of this strategy, speakers express their opinion in the discourse, and position their point of view in the reporting, description and narration. Analyzing this strategy helps us find out whose voice is this. This technique along with argumentation makes the discourse appear trustworthy, authentic and value-laden. The genre of caricatures is unique in the sense that they ridicule and mock the religion Islam but at the same time pretend to be produced by informed knowers and based on legitimate sources. The reference to Sahih Bukhari in figure 02 is noteworthy in this context. This reference serves the purpose of authenticating the information used for creating ridicule.

Fallacy

The fallacy is used to ascribe negative qualities to the social actor (Wodak & Meyer 2009). It does not provide any logical evidence for this negative picture of the out-group and thus, lacks the rational basis for the argumentation. The collected caricatures manifest this discursive strategy many times to paint a negative picture of Islam. The hateful claims made in the first two caricatures (fig 1 & 2) do not provide any logical basis for this hatred expressed so explicitly. Similarly in fig 4-8 scenes from the next world are depicted but the caricaturist did not feel the need to give any logical reasoning or rational evidence to prove them.

Story-telling

The strategy of telling uncorroborated stories to paint a good or bad image of in-group and out-groups is usually done as personal anecdotes in the case of individuals or as group characteristics in case of group identity construction. One important feature of this strategy is that the listener is not present to defend himself and thus the intended damage to the identity of Islam is done in the collected caricatures. This technique of narration is especially visible in fig. 3-7 and 13. All these caricatures are set in a situation where the viewer can guess the events, which might have happened in the recent past. For example in fig 13, the viewer cannot challenge the authenticity of the story of Islamism + 9/11 = 2,996 murders. (fig.13) This discursive strategy allows the caricaturist to use a platform where he can propagate his view about Islam without the viewer being able to challenge the factual accuracy of the portrayed 'reality'. The viewer is not able to challenge either because the reader is not present when the said event took place or the reader does not know the third party. The event in the case of these caricatures is reporting the news of deaths and blaming Islam for these deaths (fig 13), a scene from the next world which falsifies the Islamic beliefs (fig 05-08), showing an angry mob of Muslims (fig. 11 & 12) and a scene from an eye specialist's clinic (fig 16). Most of the target audience does not have a real-life interaction with Muslims or is not aware of the ideology of Islam. Moreover, the involved party i.e. Muslims' point of view is never explained.

5. Intensification / Mitigation

The fifth strategy used by the caricaturists to qualify and modify the epistemic status of a proposition by intensifying or mitigating the illocutionary force of racist, Islamophobic, nationalist or ethnically biased utterances. These strategies can play an important role in the discursive presentation in as much as they operate upon it by sharpening it or toning it down. Figure 11 is a good visual manifestation of intensifying the Other's negative attributes. The caption stated inside the speech bubble reinforces the visual message but the most eye-catching feature of this caricature is the violent facial expressions and the aggressive body movements shown by the human figures. The fierce human figures stay in the memory of the viewer longer than the accompanying words. Analyzing lexicalization helps to identify this strategy. It involves studying individual lexical items and their connotations and denotations. Such analysis is significant because naming and lexical choices are value-laden and ideologically charged.

Topos/Topoi

In the analysis of the caricatures, the common themes identified are Islam as a threat to the whole world, ridiculing the Islamic concept of the afterlife and related beliefs, ridiculing the literal meaning of the word Islam i.e., the religion of peace. The data in the

appendix is arranged according to the theme dominant in the caricature. The meaning in fig 1 & 2 revolves around the identity of Islam as a menace to the entire world. Fig 4-8 expresses opinions about the Islamic concept of the afterlife and related beliefs whereas fig 9-16 ridicule the literal meaning of the word Islam and portrays how the world views Islam and Muslims.

Topoi are explained as the explicit or inferable themes that are employed to single out the social actor and establish his status as an entity that is unlike the members of the In-group. In the collected caricatures, three topoi are identified. These are topos of hatred and rejection of the Islamic philosophy (fig. 1& 2), the topos of ridiculing beliefs (fig. 3-8) and topos of danger and/or threat (fig. 10-16).



1. Hatred and Rejection of Islamic Philosophy

Fig 01 & 02 clearly assert this idea. It is already discussed in the referential strategy so it is not repeated here.

2. Ridiculing Islamic Beliefs

Discourse analysts have pointed out many representational moves that characterize the ethnically prejudiced discourse (Batts, 1982). Some of them include apparent sympathy, populism or apparent democracy and blaming the victim. Of these strategies the third one i.e., blaming the victim (the victims are themselves to be blamed for their condition) is obvious in Fig. 04-08. All these caricatures revolve around the same dominant topos of ridiculing the Islamic belief of reward in the next world.

These figures present the viewer with an imaginary scene of life after death. In Fig. 04 and 05 the burning flames denote that it is a scene from hell where a suicide bomber has just arrived hoping for 72 virgins. This figure is a reference to a hadith (saying of Prophet SAW). In the above mentioned four figures the humor is created through the ironic statement that what awaits these suicide bombers is not in accordance with their expectations. In one of the figures, fig 05 a hideous looking creature claims that he may be taken as a virgin. In fig 06 the dressing of women as nuns is an iconic representation of Christianity. This semiotic symbol tries to establish the credibility of Christian religious creed over Islamic ideology.

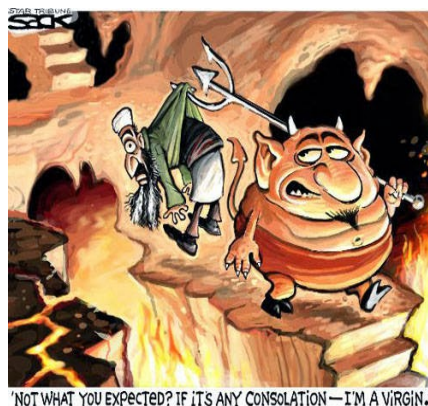


Figure 5

3. Mocking the Meaning of the Word Islam

The caricatures included in this section suggest that there is a deep-rooted hatred not only for Muslims but also for the religion Islam. The pun on the word Islam is a linguistic manifestation of it. The word "Islam" has its roots in the Arabic word salama. This word has its origin in the words Peace or Submission. The word submission means submission to God and peace refers to a system that can bring peace to all humanity. The word Muslim is derived from Islam and it means one who submits. The effective use of propaganda is making the word Muslim synonymous with angry mobs and suicidal bombers for many non-Muslims. The stereotyping of Muslims shown in the caricatures is inculcating hatred and is patently wrong. The target of this hatred and ridicule is the religion itself. The caricature (Fig 14) is set in the clinic of an eye specialist. The Snellen eye chart displays a disparaging statement that is an oft-repeated racial slur. "BEHEAD THOSE WHO INSULT ISLAM." (Fig 14) Almost similar words are found in Fig 11 & 12. The caricaturist is using the onomatopoeic quality of the font in the



Figure 14

fig. 14 and refers to the intensity of sentiments by writing it in bold large font. The chart is enormous in size and contains capital letters to highlight the anger and outrage.

The artist wants the skimmer to understand that the threat of Islamic terrorism and fanaticism is as huge as are the words on the Snellen eye chart. The veiled woman behind the chart is holding it but at the same time leaning against it. The role reversal of a Muslim doctor suggesting that even such a noble profession becomes biased when ISLAM contaminates them. The patient is either be fooled or forced to read the biased slur as “Religion of Peace”. The doctor has diagnosed that the eyesight of the patient is perfect and is marking it as 20/20. The caricature is making fun of the literal meaning of the word ISLAM. (Religion of peace) Light color background and yellow callouts emphasize the message.

4. Islam Presented as a Threat to the World Peace

The magnitude of threat and danger portrayed in the sample caricatures by the religion Islam and the portrayal of all the Muslims as potential terrorists is noteworthy. The use of numbers is very effective in creating a mental image of the magnitude as well as authenticating the damage. The sample caricatures construct a hyperbolized image of the danger that Islam poses to world peace. The images and accompanying words are carefully chosen to create a moral panic by depicting Islam as a destructive system for the world community. Fig. 13 is noteworthy in this context. This figure does not carry a single human figure. Still, it conveys a very powerful message. The image puts the blame of terrorism and massacre of 2,996 human lives on a religion, which comprises almost one-quarter of humanity. We see a blackboard with an equation written on it. The narrative form of this equation goes like this. When crescent, representing the religion Islam is added to twin towers on a specific date, the result is the death of 2996 human beings. This iconic equation is not only a generalized over-generalization but also a highly offensive one.

To understand this disparaging equation, the background of a crescent should be known. The early Muslim community did not own crescent as its symbol. During the time of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW), it was customary that Islamic armies and caravans flew plain solid-colored flags. These flags were generally black, green, or white for purpose of identification. The subsequent generations continued using simple black, white, or green flag with no symbols, markings or writings on it. The symbol seems to have entered Islam after the time of the Seljuk Turks. Their successors, the Ottoman Turks, continued using this symbol (Poorebrahim & Zarei, 2013). Some of the present Islamic states which have crescent as a part of their flags are Pakistan, Turkey, Libya, Mauritania, Algeria, Maldives Islands, Malaysia, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan. Today crescent is indeed a widespread motif in Islamic iconography. The fig 13 not only uses the image of crescent representing Islam but also reinforces it with the linguistic unit Islamism written under it. This image puts the blame on murdering a large number of people on the religion Islam without any concrete proof against it. The ideas disseminated in fig 13 are neither respectful nor free of bias. This type of discourse maintains a constant distorted image of Islam as a threatening ideology. It promotes fabricated stereotypes of Muslims as violent and unreasonable in such a way that it appears natural and universal. Legitimizing the prejudices and giving a sense of credibility is present at the core of dysfunctional racism (Wirsing, 2004). It is noticeable that the Western electronic media re-asserts their claims with arguments and pieces of evidence in order to demonstrate that the Muslims’ actions, thoughts and intentions are diabolic.

Conclusion

In the current study, the delicate social issue of the identity construction of Islam takes place with strategies of impression management. Van Dijk describes it as “people present a positive “face” or try to avoid a negative evaluation from the recipient” (Van Dijk, 1997). This socio-cognitive dimension is evident in the fig. 10– 16. These caricatures are designed to make the message appear naive. They portray a negative image of the Islamic ideology and put all the blame on the unrest in the international political scenario on the adherents of Islam. The discursive strategies employed in these caricatures include not only predication, mitigation and intensification but also revolve around many topoi. The assertions are mostly made in a very subtle way but in these caricatures, the bias towards Islam is blatant and clamant. Any attempt to hide the prejudice towards Islam or Muslims is not made in these caricatures. This discursive marginalization of dominated groups which in this case is Muslims, not only constructs negative other presentations but also attempts discrimination by a systematic association of Islam with inherent problematic ideology.

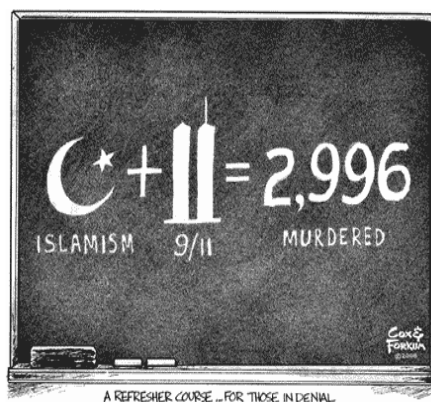


Figure 13

Appendix

The reference links are given under each caricature. Some of the caricatures are found on two websites. In such a case both the links are given. (Date of Retrieval July 2016)



FIG 01 <http://www.islam-watch.org/authors/89-other-authors/445-islamic-cartoons.html>



FIG 02 <http://dr1.com/forums/clown-bin/133560-car-muslim-women.html>

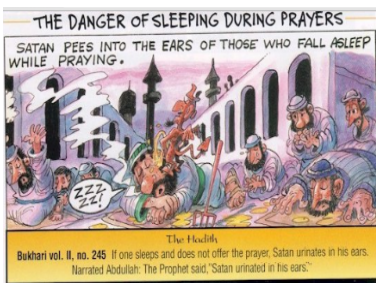


FIG03 <http://www.bibleprobe.com/waronterrorupdate.htm>



FIG 04 <http://www.bibleprobe.com/waronterrorupdate.htm>



FIG 05 <http://www.21st-century-christianity.com/index.html>



FIG 06 <http://www.funny-joke-pictures.com/2013/09/funny-muslim-adam-even-garden-eden.html>



FIG07 <http://www.funny-joke-pictures.com/2013/09/funny-muslim-adam-even-garden-eden.html>



FIG08 <https://www.cartoonstock.com/directory/i/islamic.asp>

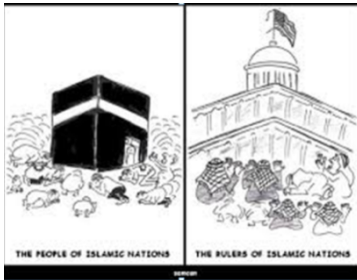


FIG 09 http://www.mfs-theothernews.com/2012_10_03_archive.html



FIG 10 <http://www.strange-cosmos.com/content/jokes.html>



FIG 11 http://ericbrazau.ca/wp_content/uploads/2013/10/Muslimcartoon100



FIG 12 <http://www.21st-century-christianity.com/index.html>

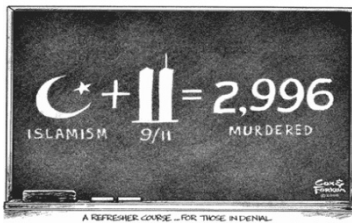


FIG 13 <http://www.bibleprobe.com/waronterrorupdate.htm>



FIG 14 <http://religiousfreaks.com/pope-insults-islam-cartoons-galore/>



FIG 15 <http://www.funny-joke-pictures.com/2013/09/funny-muslim-adam-even-garden-eden.html>



FIG 16 <http://www.tomgrossmedia.com/IsLAMicMilitancy.html> <http://www.irreligion.org>

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