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" The image of Muslims in American Cinema: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Selected Movies"

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ABSTRACT

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This research paper aims to investigate the linguistic features used in the Republican or Right-Wing representation of Muslims in some selected Hollywood movies and the effect of these linguistic features on shaping the image of Muslims in the audience's minds. By using Norman Fairclough's critical discourse analysis CDA model, the research aims to investigate the relationship between text and social practice. It will examine how the discourse used in these movies is shaped by the social order and the attitude of the American society toward Muslims by placing this discourse within its cultural and sociopolitical context and then interpreting the findings in the light of Abdel-Wahhab El- Misiri's and Edward Said's ideas. The data selected for the analysis is taken from a number of Hollywood movies that were produced in the period around the attacks of 9/11.

Introduction:

The American attitude toward Islam and the Islamic world cannot easily be limited to a monolithic perception since the relationship between the United States and the Islamic world often veers from one direction to another. Based on the American pragmatic philosophy illustrated in Henry Kissinger's statements that "America has no permanent friends or enemies, only interests", America is not totally hostile to Islam, but rather to the resistant Islam that rejects the American policy and interference in the Islamic world. What illustrates this point is that during the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, the Afghan mujahedeen movement was within the "anti-communism" camp and America was supporting them calling them "freedom fighters". After the end of the Cold War and the rejection of the Islamic resistance movements to any American military presence in the Islamic countries, these movements were placed within a new framework, which is the "pro-terrorism" camp, in other words a camp hostile to America's interests. It is noticeable that the anti-Muslim attitudes and feelings among many of the American officials and decision makers are remarkably salient throughout the course of history. These anti-Muslim feelings and attitudes are usually adopted by conservative/republican Americans. They are associated with more conservative ideologies and policies about certain issues such as the rights of the minor ethnic groups whereas the Democrats seem to adopt more tolerant attitudes toward Muslims. Regarding the issue of Muslims, the American Right has often identified Islam with violence, misogyny, backwardness, intolerance, hatred, terrorism and referred to it as the main nemesis of America's security. This Islamophobic republican rhetoric that is bellicose toward Muslims regarding them as barbaric, savage, uncivilized, brutal, violent, and fanatics has escalated tremendously after the attacks of 9/11 and the declaration of the so-called "War on Terror". According to some surveys that have been conducted prior to 9/11, it can be noticed that the public in America were quite unfamiliar with Islam and have little knowledge of its basic principles at that time. After the attack, the news media and government officials started disseminating certain

ideas about the Islamic menace and America's War on Terror. To legitimize the discriminatory procedures that the American government imposed as a backlash against Muslims and to provide justification for America's military intervention in the Middle East, many American officials, mainly republicans, linked these attacks to Islam blurring any other political reasons. At the top of that list, during this era, was the Republican US President George W. Bush. To incite the American public's feelings against Islam and rally their support for the military war in the Middle East, he adopted the "they hate us for our freedom" discourse alleging that America's security has been shaken and targeted by the forces of evil in the world. Following the same attitude, a wave of republican statements that generate feelings of hatred and resentment toward Muslims has become widely spread in several American platforms. For instance, the popular author and columnist Ann Coulter responded to the terror attacks by declaring in her article 'This is War': "We should invade their countries, kill their leaders and convert them to Christianity." (Coulter, 2001). Moreover, this type of discourse about Muslims has been used in Republican populist campaigns because it is thought to strike a chord in the easily manipulated audiences who have little knowledge of Islam. This is well illustrated in Donald Trump's statements about Islam. He broke with other Republicans by calling for a complete ban on Muslim immigration to the United States. On March 22, 2016, soon after three suicide bombings in Brussels tied to a group of French and Belgian Muslims, Trump told Fox Business: "We're having problems with the Muslims, and we're having problems with Muslims coming into the country." (Trump, 2016)

The American media has espoused the same attitude. Jack Shaheen asserts that Hollywood has a long history of depicting Muslims in a negative way even long before the terrorist attacks of 9/11 (Shaheen, 2001). However, the negative images that are portrayed of Muslims by Hollywood movies in the pre-9/11 movies were out of the context of terrorism. In the aftermath of 9/11, the American silver screen has started producing certain stereotypes of Muslims as fundamentalist, fanatic, radical, brutal, savage terrorists.

According to Edward Said, the movie making industry in America is governed by the “financial interests” and the ultimate objective is to keep as many viewers watching as possible. Thus, the American cinema created an image of Muslims that corresponded to the American political interests at that time to legitimize America’s War on Terror.

Investigating the language used in Hollywood movies and conducting a textual analysis help in grasping the hidden ideologies that underlie the text and reveal the image of Muslims that American movie makers tend to present to the audience. Therefore, the following section is dedicated to the linguistic analysis of certain excerpts from Hollywood movies produced around the period of 9/11. The textual analysis is conducted in the light of Norman Fairclough’s analytical model and approach.

Textual Analysis

A. Vocabulary:

1. What *experiential* values do words have?

1.1. Ideologically contested words:

Fairclough asserts in his book, *Language and Power* (1989) that some words are ideologically contested and that they show ideological struggle. The ideologically contested word is a term used by Fairclough to refer to words that have several meanings. Different people have different understandings of what they mean. These ideologically contested words have an experiential value which means that the text producer’s ideology is reflected in favoring one meaning of the word representing it as the only true one.

Drawing on ideologically contested words is one of the salient linguistic features that appear in several Hollywood movies. One of the frequently used words in American movies is the word “jihad”. The word “jihad” is an Islamic term that has several core meanings. However, the American movie makers tend to focus on one of these meanings representing it as the only true one. The word jihad is used literally to refer to struggle or effort. One of the core meanings of jihad in Islam is the Muslim’s internal jihad. In other words, it refers to the Muslim’s effort to live his life in a way

that pleases Allah. So, he has to struggle with his selfish desires. The other meaning of jihad in Islam is usually referred to as Al- jihad fi sabilillah (struggling in the path of Allah). Jihad in this sense means the struggle to defend Islam. When Muslims, their faith, or territory are under attack, Islam allows its adherents to wage military war to protect them. However, the Islamic religious scriptures (Quran and Hadith) have set certain rules for the conduct of such a war. This is well illustrated in several verses from Quran) such as in verse of Al-Baqarah [2]: 190, which means: "Fight in the way of Allah those who fight you but do not transgress. Indeed. Allah does not like transgressors."

For several Westerners and Americans, the term jihad is usually used in reference to the destructive, violent acts committed by Muslims. For them, jihad is synonymous with terrorism. By presenting a series of terrorist acts conducted by Muslims in the name of jihad in Hollywood movies, the similarization of the word jihad with the word terrorism in the Western perception is strongly reinforced. To clarify this point the following instance seems in order:

GIB

(reading from a file)

This guy is really hardcore, highly fanatical, ultra-
fundamentalist. ---

FAISIL

Now he's formed his own splinter
faction called CRIMSON JIHAD.

(Cameron, 1994, 42:02)

The above excerpt from *True Lies* (1994) is a conversation between two members of an anti-terrorism organization called "The Omega Sector" discussing the information they gather about Salim Abu Aziz, the leader of a Muslim terrorist group". Despite the various meanings of jihad, they use this word to refer to the acts of fighting against Americans and committing violent acts, this is intensified by combining the word "jihad" with the word

“Crimson”. Describing “jihad” as “Crimson” indicates that the intended meaning of the word “jihad” is the bloody acts committed by the members of the group. In addition, the group referred to as the “Crimson Jihad” appears in the movie as a group of terrorists whose members are trying to smuggle four MIRV nuclear warheads into the country to detonate them in American cities without any sensible reasons.

Other examples of using the word jihad in an ideologically contested way appear in *Rules of Engagement* (2000) and the *Kingdom* (2007). In *Rules of Engagement* (2000), the phrase “declaration of Islamic Jihad against America” appears in an audio cassette played by Col. Hayes Hodges while interrogating a Yemeni physician about the chaos and violence which occurred outside the U.S embassy in Yemen. Utilizing the frequently used word “jihad” in such a context creates a negative perception of Muslims. It attributes terror to Islam by using the word “Islamic Jihad” in reference to the chaotic and violent acts conducted by the Yemenis outside the U.S. embassy.

In *The Kingdom* (2007) the word “jihad” appears in a message sent by Abu Hamza, the leader of a terrorist group, commenting on a terrorist operation that has targeted AL-Rahma housing compound of foreign workers at Saudi Arabia. Abu Hamza describes the operation saying in Arabic:

Abu Hamza: Amaliyyat mugama’a al Rahma kanat ghazwa mubaraka wa
jihad Azeem wa hadhihi al-bidaya faqat

Al-Rahma Housing compound operation was a blessed incursion and a
great jihad, and this is just the beginning.

(Berg, 2007, 00:29:05)

Describing a terrorist operation that has targeted several civilians as “great jihad” distorts the image of Islam because the meaning of jihad in Islam does not indicate targeting those who are not involved in fighting Muslims or attacking their property and religion. Therefore, using the word jihad in this sense creates a negative image of Islam and Muslims because it presents to the audience a visual embodiment of what several American movie makers believe about Islamic jihad

The word “Caliphate” is another significant example for ideologically contested words. It is mentioned in a scene from *Body of Lies* (2008). After the explosion that took place in Sheffield, Ed Hoffman, chief of CIA's Near East Division, discusses with his superiors the circumstances surrounding the incident. Hoffman gives a long speech in which he expresses his evaluation of the situation after the attack. In referring to the executors of the attack, Hoffman draws on certain linguistic features that have ideological dimensions. He states:

“What I need you to fully understand is that these people, they do not wanna negotiate. Not at all. They want the universal caliphate established across the face of the Earth... and they want every infidel converted or dead.”

(Scott, 2008, 00: 06: 05)

The word “caliphate” is an ideologically contested word. Caliphate is the political-religious state comprising the Muslim community, the lands and people under its dominion in the centuries following the death of the Prophet Muhammad (632 CE) (Afsaruddin, 2020, para.1). The common assumption that the Western world, in general, has of the term "caliphate" is to impose Islamic law by force of arms across the face of earth and to kill non-Muslims. In this sense, the movie makers ignore the fact that Muslim caliphs usually had a tolerant attitude to non-Muslims, and many of whom prospered under the Islamic rule. From the time of the Rightly-Guided Caliphs, non-Muslims were treated well. They were granted the freedom to practice their own rituals and not to renounce their religious beliefs. Their lives, wealth, property, churches, land, and all that they possessed would be secured. Not only were non-Muslims treated well during the reign of the Rightly Guided Caliphs, but this fair treatment also continued during the time of the Umayyad and Abbasid Caliphs. Many of the non-Muslims even held public offices.

1.2. Overwording:

In his book, *Language and Power*, Fairclough (1989, p.115) refers to the term “Overwording” and defines it as “an unusually high degree of

wording, often involving many words which are near synonyms.” He adds that “Overwording shows preoccupation with some aspect of reality- which may indicate that it is a focus of ideological struggle.” There are several instances of overwording in Hollywood movies that are illustrated in the following quotes:

Al-Saleem: Wa kamā fajjarnā nāqilat al-rukāb fī hayy Sheffield alusbū‘ al-mādī sanakūn jāhizin li-‘amaliyya biritaniyya. Sawf nantaqim min harb americā allatī tashunnuaha ‘alā al-islām. sanakūn lahum bi-al-mirsād. Wa sayakūn ‘iqābuna li-urūbā wa amricā ‘ashwā’ī. dimā’unā nazafat wa hāna waqtuhum

As we destroyed the bus in Sheffield last week, we will be ready and prepared for an operation in Britain. We will avenge the American wars on the Muslim world. We will come to them everywhere. We will strike at random, across Europe and then America, continually. We have bled. And now... they will bleed

(Scott, 2008, 00:01:00)

The Above quote is taken from *Body of Lies* (2008). In this scene, Al Saleem, the leader of a terrorist group, sends a message to take credit for an attack that took place in Sheffield, England and to declare that the group is prepared for another attack. Words like “destroy”, “avenge”, “strike”, and “bleed” are examples of overwording as they indicate similar meanings. They are used to reinforce the stereotypical image of Muslims as violent fanatics. Another example of overwording is the use of the words “everywhere”, “random”, and “continually” to describe the scale of these terrorist attacks. These words, also, suggest that Muslims hate all the Americans and that their violent acts are random and insensible.

Ideologically contested words and overwording are two properties of language that have experiential value. Fairclough (1989) asserts that by looking at the experiential values, CDA attempts to show how the “text’s producer’s experience of the natural or social world” affects and is shown in the text. Therefore, the aforementioned examples show that the movie makers’ ideologies and beliefs color the language they use in the movies. By using

ideologically contested words the American movie makers tend to manipulate the mind of the audience and present the content that often corresponds to the policies of the state and the American decision makers.

2. What *expressive values* do words have?

A text producer evaluates the reality the text treats through vocabulary, namely the expressive values. Fairclough (2001) states that expressive values are interconnected with experiential values; “the experiential values represent the text producer’s knowledge and ideas, while the expressive values represent the text producer’s way of judging” (Fairclough, 2001,p.99).

Investigating the language used in the movies indicate that there are several cues to words that have expressive value in Hollywood movies about Muslims. The preference of words that have negative connotations and represent a dreadful image of Muslims is one of the main features of Right Wing media.

In the following quote from *True Lies* (1994) when the “Omega Sector” members are discussing the information they gather about Abu-Aziz, the leader of the terrorist group:

GIB

(reading from a file)

This guy is really hardcore, highly fanatical, ultra-fundamentalist. The man is a real psycho. Linked to numerous car-bombings,

FAISIL

They call him “the Sand Spider”

(Cameron, 1994, 42:02)

In this quote, several expressive words are used in reference to the terrorist e.g. “really hardcore”, “highly fanatical”, “ultra-fundamentalist”, “linked to numerous car-bombings”, and “sand spider”. These words express the text producer’s evaluation of a Muslim character that appears in the movie as the leader of a terrorist group. The attributive nominal phrase “sand spider” used to describe Aziz evokes Aziz’s origin. The word “sand” indicates that Aziz is Arab, because the image of Arab countries that Americans and the

West, in general, have in mind is that of a land completely covered with sand, primitive, inhabited by Bedouins, and with no sense of modern civilization. Therefore, the message that the audience receives is that the terrorist that frightens and threatens the Americans' lives must be of Arab origin. The terrorist is introduced through other people's eyes, actually through American eyes, and this is reflected in the choice of certain evaluative words that have expressive value. We never 'hear' him. We do not have a sentence that reads 'He says' or even 'He believes'; we are just given descriptions of him as 'hardcore' and 'fanatical', but we are not given anything deep or serious about his ideology. We have to believe what we are given by American movie makers without questioning it.

Some words that have expressive value are drawn upon in a scene from *Unthinkable* (2010). This scene is a conversation between Agent Helen Brody, an FBI special agent and a black-ops interrogator named "H". They are arguing about the legality of using torture. Agent Brody is against H's brutal ways of interrogation, whereas he believes that America's values result in the death of many innocent people.

H: It's not about the enemy. It's about us, our weakness.
We're on the losing side, Helen. We're afraid, they're not.
We doubt, they believe.

Helen Brody: We have values.

H: And our values have cost us how many lives?

(Jordan, 2010, 00: 36: 58)

In this conversation with agent Brody, H provides an assessment of the situation from his own point of view which may be in accordance with the prevailing one among the American movie makers and officials, and this is illustrated by the significant linguistic features that the text draws on. As for the vocabulary, the word "enemy" is an example of an evaluative word that is used to describe Muslims. Another example of evaluative words is the words "weakness", "losing", "afraid", and "doubt" that are used in reference to the Americans. Unlike the majority of Hollywood movies that tend to represent the image of Muslims as cowards, idiots, and naïve in contrast with the image

of Americans as powerful, organized, and chivalric heroes, *Unthinkable* does not follow this trending notion. This is obvious in H's words as all the seemingly positive features are attributed to Muslims whereas the negative ones, i.e. "weakness", "losing", "afraid", and "doubt" are related to Americans. The explicit meaning that these words and phrases have and the reason for depending on them is that H wants to challenge some liberal ideas such as political correctness. The movie, despite presenting various opinions, directs the audience to the preferred belief that political correctness can be fatal and racial policies like using torture and racial profiling of a certain group can be justified in facing "the presumed other". What supports this claim is the final scene in which a fourth bomb explodes proving that Youssef, who says in the videotape that he has planted only three bombs, is a liar. "H" appears in the movie as the only one who is right as he thinks Youssef is deceitful and there must be a fourth bomb.

3. What metaphors are used?

Fairclough (1989) refers to metaphor as "a means of representing one aspect of experience in terms of another". (Fairclough, 1989, p.119) Metaphors play a decisive role in shaping public opinion. Social and political problems, for instance, take wide public attention through using distinguished metaphorical expressions. Metaphors help people to visualize problems that otherwise may remain invisible. It can be noticed from analyzing Hollywood Movies that the American Movie makers draw on certain metaphorical expressions in order to represent certain portrayals of Muslims that fulfill certain political functions.

The first instance that illustrates the foregoing point is a scene from *Unthinkable* (2010) when Agent Brody is interrogating Youssef about the bombs' location. Youssef does not answer Brody's questions but instead he bursts out angrily declaring the reasons for placing the bombs. Youssef ends his statements with these sentences "You are blight! You are a cancer." (Jordan, 2010). These two sentences are instances of metaphor used by Youssef to

describe not only Agent Brody but also all the American people. Again this asserts the American ideological assumption that Muslims hate the Americans. These words are uttered by a Muslim character, so they may evoke in the audience certain feelings like hatred, fury, and rage toward Muslims in general.

The metaphorical representation of a particular group of people or particular social problems as diseases is remarkably common in any rhetoric discussing a political issue. The ideological significance of disease metaphors is that they tend to take tremendous interest making it the interest of society as a whole. So, using the disease metaphor in the aforementioned scene compels the audience to believe that Muslims consider the Americans as cancerous cells that need to be removed. So, it instills in the audience the feelings of hatred towards Muslims and makes the audience believe that the American presence in the Middle East or any racial procedures against Muslims is for the sake of national security are self-defense procedures.

Another noticeable example of using metaphor occurs in the opening scene of *American Sniper* (2014). In a conversation that takes place at the opening scenes as a flashback from Chris' childhood between Chris Kyle's father, Chris, and his little brother, Chris Kyle receives a lesson about life from his strict Texan father. According to the father, people in the world are divided into sheep, wolves and sheepdogs, those rare, righteous souls that have to protect the innocent from the wicked.

Wayne Kyle: There are three types of people in this world; Sheep, wolves and sheepdogs.

(DINING ROOM 9: Wayne lectures his boys)

Wayne Kyle: Some people prefer to believe that evil doesn't exist in the world, and if it ever darkened their doorstep they wouldn't know how to protect themselves... those are the sheep... Then you got predators who use violence to prey on the weak. They're the wolves. Then there are those blessed with the gift of aggression and an overpowering need to protect the flock. They are the sheepdog... Now we're not raising any sheep in this family and I will whoop your ass if you turn into a wolf... But we take care of our own. And if someone picks a fight with you or bullies your brother,

you have my permission to finish it.

(Eastwood, 2014, 00: 04: 52)

The above quote is metaphorical. Kyle's father is giving his boys a lecture which metaphorically describes the political situation around the world according to the American view point. This quote appears at the beginning of the movie to summarize the whole situation conveying to the audiences that the rationale behind launching a war in Iraq, from the American point of view, is to protect the nation from the terrorist acts committed by Arabs/Muslims. The word "wolves" is used in a metaphorical way in this quote to refer to Muslims. Muslims are described as wolves that tend to use violence. What supports this assumption is the image of Muslims/ Iraqis that appears in the movie as villains carrying out terrorist operations that have targeted America. The word "sheepdog" is also metaphorical. It refers to the Americans describing them as the guardians. They do not tend to use violence without reason. They use violence to protect the weak "sheep".

B. Grammar:

1. What *experiential* values do grammatical features have?

As previously mentioned, the experiential value is related to the way the writer or the speaker experiences the world. At the level of grammar, the experiential values are concerned with the grammatical features of a text, such as nominalization, passivization, negation, and types of processes and participants. As Fairclough (1989) asserts in *Language and Power*: "the experiential aspects of grammar have to do with the ways in which the grammatical forms of a language code happenings or relationships in the world, the people or animals or things involved in those happenings or relationships, and their spatial and temporal circumstances, manner of occurrence, and so on." (Fairclough, 1989, p. 120).

1.1. The process types and participants:

When text producers tend to textually represent certain aspects of reality, ideas, or events, they have a variety of choices concerning the grammatical process types and the participant involved. Their choices are not

arbitrary but ideologically significant. This can be illustrated through several examples from Hollywood movies that utilize the process types in order to fulfill certain ideological functions. Fairclough (1989) defines three major process types i.e. actions, events, and attributions.

The first process type is the action process that involves two main participants namely- the agent and the patient. It usually answers the question “what did the subject do?” The action sentence may or may not have an object after the verb. The second process type, which is the event process, involves only one participant; the agent, and it represents an answer for “what happened?” The third type is the attribution process that also involves just one participant, but there is, also, some sort of attribute after the verb, either a possessive attribute if the verb is a form of have, or a non-possessive attribute with other verbs such as be, become, seem, look, sound ... etc.

M.A.K. Halliday’s systemic-functional grammar (1985, 2004, 2014) that represents the base for Fairclough’s theoretical approach introduces a more elaborate and comprehensive categorization of the English transitivity system. He proposes six different process types that are necessary to identify while analyzing the experiential aspects of meaning. They are the material, mental, behavioral, verbal, relational, and existential processes.

Investigating the language used in the movies under study and the selection of the process types indicates that these types are employed by the movie makers in an intentional and organized way to provide an image of the world that goes in accordance with their beliefs and ideologies. To support this argument, the following examples are significant:

In *True Lies* (1994), the action processes are utilized in statements uttered by Salim Abu Aziz, the leader of the terrorist group.

Aziz

You have killed our women and
children, bombed our cities from
afar like cowards,
--- But now the Oppressed have

been given a mighty sword, to
strike back at their enemies.
Unless the US pulls all military
forces out of the Persian Gulf
area, immediately and forever,
Crimson Jihad will rain fire on
one major US city each week until
these demands are met...

(Cameron,1994, 01:33:14)

Aziz utilizes certain verbs like “Killed”, “bombed”, “have been given”, “pulls”, “strike”, and “rain fire” to express his thoughts. The three verbs “killed”, “bombed”, and “pulls” are parts of action processes, particularly material processes, conducted by the Americans who are the agents of these sentences whereas Muslim women, children, and cities are the patient. The last two verbs are instances of material processes to be conducted by the “Crimson Jihad” group. These words help to make the audiences understand and reach Aziz’s mental perspective as a Muslim terrorist. Aziz initiates his message by naming the acts done by the Americans against Muslims. This sustains a widely common and repeated notion in American movies and in American society, as a whole, that Muslims hate the Americans and regard America as the “greatest Satan” responsible for Muslims’ troubles and plight. Then, Aziz uses action verbs to refer to Muslims’ reaction to America’s aggression against Muslims. Since these words are uttered by a Muslim character, it is noticeable that he utilizes verbs that have negative connotations in describing the acts done by the Americans like “kill” and “bombed”. When he refers to the actions to be conducted by his group he uses verbs that reflect the great extent of their power which confirms Muslims’ hostility and aggression. The preference for the material process type is salient in the sentence “But now, the oppressed have been given a mighty sword” that could have been structured this way “But now, the oppressed have a mighty sword” or “But now, the oppressed possess a mighty sword”. Structuring the sentence

in this way denigrates Muslims as it asserts that they do not have the ability to possess their own power by themselves, but they are more like machines that only perform material acts.

Some other instances of material processes that are conducted by Muslims also appear in other movies like *Rules of Engagement* (2000). On several occasions in the movies, Muslims are represented as brutal, savage, and hostile people through introducing their evil, violent acts such as “A Yemeni sniper fires from 100 meters away”, “We call on every Muslims who believe in God and hopes for reward to obey God’s command, to kill Americans and plunder their possessions whenever he finds them” (Friedkin, 2000). “Fires”, “kill”, and “plunder” are all examples of the material processes supposed, according to the movie makers, to be committed by any Muslim who believes in Allah. This asserts the widespread thought that Muslims’ hatred of the American is part of their faith and makes them good Muslims. Therefore, they are worthy of Allah’s rewards

It can be illustrated from the previously mentioned examples that the American movie makers prefer to depend on the material processes in the language used to represent Muslims. Many Hollywood movies do not represent the other side of Muslims as complete human beings. In other words, we barely find sentences that use the mental, verbal, or behavioral processes uttered by Muslims or attributed to them throughout the turning of the events in the selected movies. The effect of this on the image of Muslims in Hollywood movies is that this practice turns Muslims, who represent the “other”, as something far from being human and closer to being a killing machine or animal. Thus, using certain features of language that signify the dehumanization of Muslims can be regarded as a colonial practice which employs the power of media to make it acceptable and legal to impose power and hegemony of “the other”.

1.2. Nominalization:

Fairclough (1989, p.124) suggests that nominalization is “a process converted into a noun (or a multi-word compound noun). It is reduced in the

sense that some of the meaning one gets in a sentence is missing as there is usually no tense, for example, so there is no indication of the timing of the process. In addition to the tense, modality can be missed from a sentence and often an agent and/or a patient.” Fairclough (2001, p.112) adds that “A lot of nominalizations in a text ...make it very abstract and distant from concrete events and situations.” Using nominalization is ideologically motivated and reflects the writer’s viewpoint of the topic. One aspect of nominalization includes the deletion of the participants in order to evade responsibility, on the one hand, or to create a state of generalization, on the other hand.

There are several examples of using nominalization in Hollywood movies that are highly significant and well representative of the ideologies and beliefs of the American movie makers.

In the opening scene of *Rules of Engagement* (2000), the Yemeni protestors appear outside the American embassy holding banners on which certain sentences are written. One of these sentences is “fighting against America is a sacred duty”. This sentence is an example of nominalization. The use of nominalization blurs the agency. The doer of the action “fight” is indefinite. This may indicate that this is a call to all Muslims to fight America since it is a “sacred duty”. Using nominalization may also be for the purpose of instilling in the audiences a state of hatred and fury against all Arabs and Muslims not just the Yemenis as it is unclear whether this act of fighting is conducted by the Yemeni demonstrators or by all Arabs /Muslims.

Other examples of nominalization occur in another scene in *Rules of Engagement* (2000). In the court room and during the trial of Col. Childers for being accused of opening fire at the Yemeni demonstrators, Col. Hodges plays an audio cassette. This audio cassette is one of the clues that lead to Col. Childers’ acquittal of the murder charge. It includes certain statements that are used to show the real motivation for the violent acts committed by the Yemenis. The first phrase mentioned in the audio cassette is “declaration of Islamic Jihad against the United States”. Using nominalization in this sentence blurs the agency. It is unclear who declares jihad, and to whom they speak.

This creates a state of generalization so that the call should be to all Muslims. In addition to the agency, the tense of the action is also obscured by using nominalization. There is no indication of the timing of the process, so what will be understood is that Muslims hostility against the United State is insensible and unjustifiable.

2. What *relational* values do grammatical features have?

As previously mentioned, Fairclough asserts that a relational value traces the social relationship that is enacted through texts. It is mainly concerned with social relations. At the level of grammar, relational values refer to the grammatical features of the text which reflect social relations among participants as expressed in modality (i.e. necessity, obligation, or probability), pronouns, and the modes of sentences (declarative, interrogative, or imperative). The selected movies employ both the mode and the pronouns in a way that affects social relationships.

2.1. Pronouns:

Pronouns are one of the linguistic features that have a relational value. Investigating the personal pronouns used in Hollywood movies about Muslims indicates that the frequently used pronouns are “we”, “they”, and “you”. The use of “us” versus “them” shows social distance, disapproval or resentment. It is a form of contrast, opposition, and social conflict. Two worlds and spheres are portrayed; one for Muslims and another for Americans which is emphasized by the use of pronouns (us versus them, we versus they...and so on). This division of the world into two main groups is one of the ongoing attitudes that the American decision makers depend on. The current division of the world into “an anti-terrorism” camp and “a pro-terrorism” camp is an extension of the old vision of the world as two camps, one of which being “anti-communist” and the other “pro-communist”.

Fairclough (1989) differentiates between two varieties of the pronoun “we”; the so-called “inclusive we” and the “exclusive we”. The “inclusive we” refers to the reader/listener as well as the writer/speaker. The “exclusive we”,

on the other hand, refers to the text producer plus one or more others, but does not include the addressee. The following examples from Hollywood movies help to illustrate this point.

The first example appears in a scene in *True Lies* (1994), in which the leader of the terrorist group, Salim Abu Aziz, sends a message to the Americans saying:

You have killed our women and
children, bombed our cities from
afar like cowards, and dare to
call us terrorists—

(Cameron, 1994, 01:33:14)

The pronouns used in this quote are the first person plural, and the second person pronoun. The second person pronoun “you” refers to the Americans, and it is used in the nominative case in order to function as the subject asserting the Americans’ responsibility, while the first person pronoun is used in the accusative case functioning as the object. The use of ‘our’ is significant; it is exclusive ‘our’ that refers to Abu Aziz and Muslims and does not include the addressees who are the Americans. Using the “exclusive we” here mocks globalization and the claims that the end of the Cold War has put an end to competition and announced America the unquestionable mistress of the world.

Investigating the salient linguistic features in the movies’ discourse is ideologically significant because it helps to reveal the hidden ideologies beyond the text. However, what is absent from the movies is also ideologically significant. One of these absent elements is that the audiences do not have an opportunity to hear the Muslim characters speak for themselves. One of the most representative examples that illustrate this point occurs in *The Siege* (1998). Agent Antony Hubbard receives a call informing him that a group of Muslim terrorists have hijacked a bus fully loaded with passengers. He and Agent Frank Haddad head to the scene and Agent Hubbard offers to negotiate with the terrorist. Throughout the negotiation scene, Agent Hubbard appears to the audience as the only speaker while the other side of the conversation,

the Muslim character, is not introduced to the audience. The conversation goes this way; Agent Hubbard speaks and Agent Haddad translates into Arabic to the hijackers:

Agent Hub: Hello, sir.

My name is Anthony.

I want you to know right from the start I'm not the boss.

I don't have the authority to negotiate any deals
or to respond to any demands.

You need anything in there? Any medical supplies?

Anybody need any help?

I don't even know if they understand.

Look, I know you may not want to talk to me,
but are you willing to listen to me?

Whatever grievances you have, whatever quarrels,
surely it doesn't involve these children.

I'm asking you, please,
would you please let the children go?

I appreciate your gesture.

(Zwick, 1998, 00:21:43)

In the above excerpt, the Muslim character is not introduced to the audience as a human being who can talk and negotiate. Depriving Muslims of one of the essential gifts of mankind, which is language and the ability to speak, denigrates Muslims representing them to the American audience as inferior creatures and reflects America's self-centeredness and its belief that it is the leader of people and the great power in the world.

Conclusion:

In the light of the aforementioned textual analysis it can be concluded that several Hollywood movies have presented a negative image of Muslims which can be referred to as the 'Republican' representation of Muslims. Through investigating the linguistic features used in the selected movies to determine the image provided of Muslims, it is obvious that the movie makers and script writers draw on certain linguistic devices to deliver certain preferred

meanings that can be summed up as follows:

- Muslims are represented as barbaric, savage and brutal creatures that hate Americans and want to eliminate them through the choice of certain negative attributive words, metaphors and overwording.
- Muslims are put in charge for Americans' misery and plight by attributing all the material processes and actions that include bombing, killing, and destruction to them.
- To convey the widespread notion in the American society that the real problem is with Islam itself not with Muslims, and that the instructions of Islam is the ultimate motive for Muslims' aggressive behaviors, several ideologically contested words, which are mainly Islamic concepts, terms, and phrases, are utilized. Besides, several Quranic verses are cited in the movies out of their real context.
- The idea of the "self" against the "other" is manifested in Hollywood movies selected for the analysis through the use of the personal pronouns. The frequently used pronouns are "we", "they", and "you". The use of "us" versus "them" reinforces the idea of the "in-group" and the "out-group" that represents the base for the exclusionary policy that is remarkably salient in right wing discourse regarding the other ethnic groups.
- Part of the negative image of Muslims in Right-Wing media is achieved through the absence of Muslims' language in Hollywood Movies. Muslims are deprived of the essential human gift, which is language, and are not given enough space to speak. This suggests the dehumanization and degradation of Muslims.

Placing this representation of Muslims in Hollywood movies within its cultural and sociopolitical context is a crucial procedure in Fairclough's approach. Interpreting this representation in the light of El-Misiri's ideas of western modernism, imperialism, and secularism in addition to Edward Said's ideas of orientalism and post colonialism helps in providing a better

understanding of the relationship between the Muslim world and the West, particularly America, in recent contexts.

The relationship between the Muslim world and the West can scarcely be described as genuinely friendly. However, the current conflict between America and the Islamic world, as El-Misiri (2009) states, is an episode in a relentless conflict which started in the 18th century with the emergence of the forces of Western imperialism that tried to divide the world and use its peoples for their own benefit. El-Misiri believes that America's imperialism is one of the manifestations of what he refers to as "Western Modernism". The essence of Western modernity system is based on stripping man of himself and his privacy and turning him into a mere thing. This western modernity asserts that the ultimate reference that governs the whole world is "force/power". Therefore, the powerful has the right to subdue the weak and use them for his benefit. In the case of the relationship between America and the Islamic world, America has declared itself the leading power and the mistress of the world with the end of the Second World War and hardly, if ever, regarded the East and the world as an independent entity that has the right to determine its future but rather as mere territory that can be divided or sold whose people can be subdued and used for its benefit. America's desires to intervene in the Middle-East intensified in the 70s of the twentieth century. This era witnessed the emergence of the so-called "Islamic terrorism". There are several reasons that motivate this conflict between America and the Islamic world. The first reason is the conflict over the natural and oil sources. After the oil embargo crisis of 1973, America and the west feel that the Islamic world controls energy and oil sources. Therefore, the desire to take control of the oil sources in the Middle East increased. The second reason is the emergence of the Islamic resistance movements that rejected the American presence in the Islamic world. Thirdly, the west and America did not succeed in appeasing the Islamic world or defeating it as the majority of the Muslim world rejected the principles of globalization and modernity. Finally, the Arab-Israeli conflict resulted in increasing the tension between America and the Islamic world. America is

Israel's main supporter and ally as Israel's presence in the Middle East serves the American imperial project.

All the above reasons contribute in making Islam America's potential enemy to succeed the Soviet Union to keep the idea around that the end of the cold war does not put an end for America's war against foreign devils in the world and to sustain America's hegemony over the world. As a result of the American pragmatic philosophy and the principles of capitalism and imperialism, there has been talk in America about the Islamic menace and that the Middle East represents a threat to the American national security in order to justify the American intervention and military presence in the Middle East. This extends and intensifies in the period followed 9/11. The US government's handling of the events that followed September 11 reflects the US imperialist mentality dominated by materialistic benefit. Instead of placing these events within their political context, there was a process of decontextualization to suggest that the reason for this attack is an evil rooted in the Islamic religion itself. El-Misiri (2009) asserts that America does not offer a precise definition to terrorism but rather keeps linking terrorism to Islam. As for the media, this pragmatic philosophy is often manifested in different forms. Edward Said (2008) in his book *Covering Islam* asserts that the American media is governed by certain rules and regulations that determine the ideologies and ideas presented to the audience. He argues that the so-called "independent media" is controlled by interests that are commercial and political at the same time. It is just repeating the line of the government. Regarding the representation of Muslims, he asserts that the American media has usually provided an image of Muslims that is very generalized and reductive. This is well illustrated by describing the conflict in the western media as a conflict between the West and Islam not Christianity and Islam. This assumption shows that the West has outgrown the Christianity and that the world of Islam, despite the diversity of its societies, histories, and languages, is still immersed in religion, primitive life and backwardness.

Said (2008) argues that America and the west look at the Middle East or the

Muslim world through a lens that distorts the reality of those places and those people. He calls this lens “orientalism”. Said (2003, P.2) defines orientalism as “a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between the (orient) and the (occident)”. In other words, the term “orientalism” includes a certain practice of creating a binary opposition between the orient and the occident by constructing an image of the orient or the East that is inferior to the occident. The orient, according to the orientalist ideology, is usually associated with barbarism, non-rationalism, violence, poverty, and sexuality. Therefore, this binary opposition between the East, represented as “the other”, and the West or “the self” creates a kind of discourse that is Eurocentric/ West-centric. This discourse focuses on the superiority of Western civilization over Eastern civilization and thus justifies the West exploitation, colonization of the East. Said adopts Simone de Beauvoir’s idea of “the self” vs. “the other” and applies it to the relationship between Islam and the west asserting that the American media tends to represent Islam as the closet other and the most active enemy for the west. This American orientalism emerged and intensified in the twentieth century when America’s imperial desires were directed toward the Middle East. Therefore, the American media has been employed to provide an image of Muslims as “the other” that is completely different from “us” i.e. the Americans. In contrast to the enlightened, liberal, and civilized Americans, Muslims are represented as highly fanatical, barbaric, savage terrorists, and Islam is portrayed in the American media as a despotic, rigid religion which contrasted the “modern” America. Otherizing Islam and providing a generalized image of the Muslim world, despite its various and diverse cultures, is one of the main principles of American orientalism which is considered to be a key factor in the emergence of American imperialism. When a group is represented as “the other” it is easier to suppress them and exclude them from the public sphere. For this reason, the American media has provided a dehumanized and denigrated image of Islam to justify America’s war on terror and its interference in the Middle East whether militarily or politically.

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