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**Cognitive Linguistic Analysis of Muslim Representations in The Times: Birmingham Protests, 2019 & Paty's Murder, 2020****A B S T R A C T**

This paper studies the ways linguistics choices are utilized in the press to achieve particular conceptualizations in the mind of the reader. It aims to explore how The Times represents Muslims in its news reports. The data is analysed qualitatively by adopting Hart's model of proximization (2014) as conceptual parameter through which ideology and legitimacy are enacted in the reports. The findings show that as a strategy of interventionist discourse, proximization is exploited to present Muslims as a threat to the self by emphasizing Us vs Them Polarization. A major finding is that as a rightwing organization, The Times represents Muslims in a way that reflects extreme-nationalist debate that is interdiscursively associated with discourses of "the war on terror" by relying on proximization strategy.

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## تحليل لغوي ادراكي لتمثيلات المسلمين في جريدة: The Times احتجاجات برمنكهام، ٢٠١٩

ومقتل باتي ، ٢٠٢٠

الباحثة: صبرا حسن غانم أ.د. احمد قدوري عبد

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## المستخلص

تعنى هذه الدراسة بطرق استخدام الخيارات اللغوية في الصحافة لتحقيق تصورات معينة في ذهن القارئ. وتسعى لاستكشاف كيفية تمثيل المسلمين في التقارير الإخبارية في جريدة The Times . يتم تحليل البيانات نوعيًا باعتماد Hart's model of proximization (2014) كاستراتيجية ادراكية تخدم تفعيل الأيديولوجية والشرعية في تلك التقارير. تظهر النتائج بان proximization ، كاستراتيجية للخطاب التدخل، تسهم في تقديم المسلمين كتهديد للذات وذلك عبر التأكيد على "نحن ضدهم" كمنهجية للاستقطاب. وافادت الدراسة بان جريدة The Times و بصفتها منظمة يمينية ، تمثل المسلمين بطريقة تعكس الجدل القومي المتطرف المرتبط بشكل متبادل بخطابات "الحرب على الإرهاب" من خلال الاعتماد على استراتيجية proximization.

الكلمات المفتاحية: التحليل الادراكي ، الأيديولوجيا ، تمثيل المسلمين ، جريدة The Times

## Introduction

Much of the literature on Muslim representations emerged from the lingering shadow of Islamophobia as a phenomenon that generalizes a negative image of Islam and Muslims. Fadil (2011, p.20) has described Islamophobia as “one of the big questions of our day, presenting a problem that is most often answered with ignorance or with common hysteria, and almost never with fresh thinking.” Islamophobia is initiated by forms of racism, which is defended rather than challenged by media that gives legitimacy to such racist sentiments and expressions. “Islamophobia prevents Muslims from being invited or encouraged to take a full part in society’s moral deliberations and debates”. For instance, *The Sun* newspaper fails to highlight the difference between religion and race, at times when the distinction between Asian and Muslim became blurred (Allen, 2010, p.73). Building on that, it is necessary to examine how Muslim representations are gradually changed over time and how that changes are manifested in the current media (see Abed, 2016).

Richardson (2004) has followed an interdisciplinary foundation by combining both quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection and analysis to detect manifest and latent meaning in the sampled reports. This research was motivated by the scant empirical work that has been done on Muslims representations in newspapers. Based on CDA, Richardson operationalized a thorough coding instrument to record over 80 factors. He then applied that coding instrument to four months' worth of British broadsheet newspapers (from October 1997 to January 1998), yielding 2,540 pieces of newspaper reporting. In order to avoid passing references to Islam, Muslims, etc. and instead concentrate on more thorough, full media coverage, he has developed a set of criteria to identify methodically which units of analysis or texts would fall inside the remit of the study. One of his significant findings is that the ‘Muslimness’ is backgrounded or even absent from reporting, whereas, the ‘Muslimness’

of certain other countries is foregrounded. The book contributes to a better understanding of the nature, prevalence and effects of anti-Muslim racism in élite discourse. Such tendency leads Richardson (2004, p.227) to define journalism as an “argumentative discourse genre.”

In 2010, *Exploring Islam Foundation* carried out a poll of 2,152 British adults. It concluded that 40% of the British adults believe Muslims have no beneficial influence on the British population. Half of the respondents associate Islam with terrorism, whereas 13 per cent associate Islam with peace (Baker et al., 2013, p.2). This raises questions about the British Media and how it affects and affected public opinion in Britain.

Regarding the role of media, certain coverages of pressing social and political controversies, such as the war on drugs, the Gulf and Iraq wars, terrorism, globalization sexism, racism, and Islamophobia motivates Critical Media Studies to adapt CDA approaches in exploring news and other press or broadcast genres. The systematic analysis may include lexicon, syntax, rhetorical figures, topics, coherence, social actors, modality, genres, interaction, news schemas, and multimodal analysis (van Dijk, 2015, p.477).

As far as journalism is concerned, van Dijk (1996, p.12) asserts that there are aspects hint to affect social cognition via newspaper discourse, i.e., who is the news source, “whose voices are heard and who gets quoted.” This view is stressed then by Fairclough (2009, p.12) who argues that global communications industry has two vital roles; first, they provide the basic hardware and software means that change the pattern of production; second, they are the producer views and ideas, the major financiers of news, information, entertainment and knowledge in general, a reference for what is right and what is possible, and the main providers of powers legitimacy. On the same vain, Sparks (1999, p.45–6) notes, newspapers “do not exist to report the news...They exist to make money.” Thus, to survive, a newspaper attracts readers to maintain some form of ‘brand loyalty.’ For instance, Gibson (2003) points out that it was a first in seventy years when *The Daily Mirror’s* circulation dropped to less than 2 million due to its “anti-war stance” on Iraq in 2003.

Reah (2002, p. 70) argues that delivered news is not always the honest pure truth of reality, because the last printed version of what happened on the ground got filtered by journalists, editors, printers, camera operators, sound technicians, etc. The hot piece of reality actually reflects the interests of the owners and the political party they support. Therefore, newspapers serve as a prism through which diverse primary texts (political speeches, legislative debates, governmental, or nongovernmental reports) are reified or even recontextualized, according to Koller (2004, p. 44-45).

Santa Ana (2002, p.51) states “media power is constituted in the ability to characterize the events of the day and the social structure of society in a particular way.” In this sense, media passes different ideologies via manipulating ideational and interpersonal information, that is “the major media...will generally reflect the perspectives and interests of established power” (Chomsky 1989, p.10). This view is supported by Hart (2010, p.16) who argues that “[k]nowledge of certain social and political realities is not formed from first-hand experience but rather on the basis of the texts to which we are exposed”

The British press has the ability to extend beyond its borders. for certain reasons such as the online access, the importance of the English language, as well as the fact that the United

Kingdom is a culturally rich and significant country. It consists of different types of newspapers with regard to frequency (daily, Sunday, or weekly), coverage (national or regional), style (broadsheet, tabloid or 'middle-market'), and political stance (left-leaning, right-leaning, centrist, or independent). The national newspapers have a wider audience and are therefore more influential. They are involved in a system of capitalist democracy. National newspapers began their free online versions by the beginning of the twenty-first century (with some exceptions) (Baker et al., 2013, p.4-5).

Brescoll and Lafrance (2004) investigate stories that centered on sex differences in newspapers, and conclude that readers dismiss the newspaper's political standpoint and accept interpretations about sex differences as being scientifically valid. By way of illustration, according to Lido (2006), readers' perceptions of asylum seekers are impacted by the negative portrayal of them in the media. Another example of the well-established power of influence possessed by media discourse is the findings of Dietrich et al. (2006). The paper concludes that when a newspaper presents mentally-ill people in an article as being linked to violent crime, the readers categorize a mentally-ill people as violent and dangerous.

Along with political allegiance, it's important to consider where the publications stand on religion in general. Taira, et al. (2013, p. 35) identify a group of British newspapers based on a review of reports regarding the Pope's 2010 visit to the UK and the Dutch conservative politician Geert Wilders, who was barred from entering the UK in 2009 due to his anti-Islam sentiments. The researchers create a pro-/anti-religious continuum for the British newspapers. *The Daily Telegraph* and *The Daily Express* are at one end of the spectrum as two pro-Christian publications. Next to them are *The Daily Mail* and *The Sun*. The more secularist newspapers that are openly critical of religion occupy the opposite end of the continuum, *The Independent* and *The Guardian* were among them. *The Daily Star*, *Daily Mirror*, and *The Times* take up the middle of the continuum. The study also shows that The two secularist publications are left-leaning, whilst the pro-Christian newspapers are right-leaning (Baker et al ,2013, p.9-10).

In a homogenous term, the far right makes use of the media to justify Islamophobia in the contemporary setting in the public domain. The former Conservative Chancellor of the Exchequer, Norman Lamont, wrote the article "*Down with Multiculturalism*" in *The Daily Telegraph*, May 2002, claiming that European identity is threatened by the ongoing immigration. He then went on to criticize Tony Blair for carrying a Qur'an. For Lamont, the Qur'an did not fit into the British identity. Lamont makes his point clear when he adds that it is not the "West Indians, Africans and Indians" who are intended in his article; rather, those communities that are excluded in his article that he clearly sees as being the real threat and challenge to "our way of life." Incidentally, Lamont's article has no mention for Muslims or Islam (Allen ,2010, p.20).

Considering the aforementioned, many approaches to discourse analysis aim at the analysis of the text itself (the linguistic make-up), the historical, social, and interactional contexts of which it is a part. However, cognitive approaches to the text highlights unreached areas of analysis, that is the interpretations in the mind of the reader (Hart,2020, p.97). Hart (2014, p. 6) argues that by appealing to a cognitive approach to CDA, the analysts can scrutinize both descriptive and interpretive stages of the analysis. He (2014, p. 11) believes that a cognitive

linguistic analysis emphasizes the “cognitive reflexes of representation and evaluation in discourse.” Therefore, there is a pressing need to address Muslim representations in the media discourse in relation to cognitive framework. The current paper adapted Hart (2014) framework of construal operations, specifically proximization as a positioning strategy for interventionist discourse to prop Muslims representation in two selected Muslim-related topics covered by *The Times* newspaper. It is hypothesized that as a rightwing organization, *The Times* represents Muslims in a way that reflects extreme-nationalist debate that is interdiscursively associated with discourses of “the war on terror” by relying on proximization strategy.

### **Discourse Space Theory (DST)**

It is best to establish the fundamentals of Discourse Space Theory in order to grasp proximization as a positioning strategy. The theory was first developed by Chilton (2004) as a geometric model to approach the text from a cognitive perspective. Hart (2014, p.163) defines DST as a deictically motivated model of conceptualization. He elaborates:

It accounts for discourse-level meaning construction in terms of an abstract, three-dimensional configuration in a mental ‘discourse’ space which provides a conceptual coherence to whole texts as entities and events are mapped out across axes representing socio-spatial, temporal and evaluative (epistemic and axiological) ‘distance’.

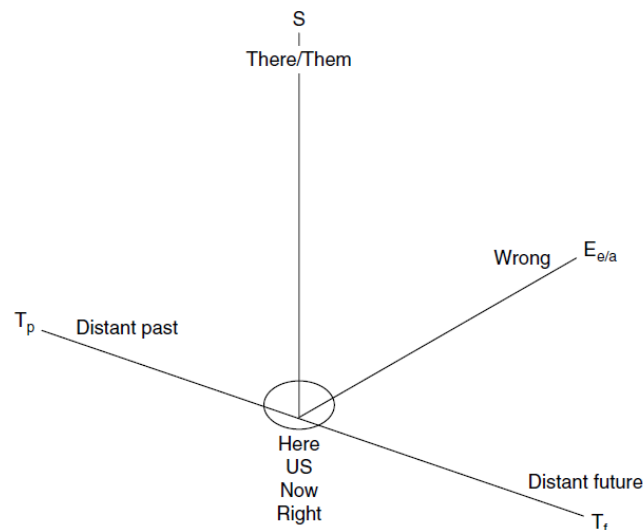
The body constitutes “an abstract conceptual structure to which the semantic values important for meaning-making at the discourse level may be arbitrarily assigned and conceptualized metaphorically in terms of distance.” At a higher level of abstraction, this extra-deictic account corresponds with peripersonal space in situated cognition. Within this mental discourse space, humans, are endowed via language with a specific embodiment of a more “general cognitive capacity for egocentric spatial location” (Hart, 2014, p.165)

The theory based on the conceptualization of the described reality by opening up a mental space of three intersecting axes (The sociospatial (S), temporal (T), and evaluative (Ea) axes) while speaking or listening. The construction of the discourse world involves placing “ideational elements in the text in ontological relations with each other as well as with the speaker inside this space” (ibid., p.164). The Ea axis includes both axiological (Ea) and epistemic (Ee) components. The deictic center, which establishes a scale of relative distance from the indicated axes, is represented by the point of view of the speaker or listener (Hart, 2014, p.165).

From this perspective, DST is “a deictic account of epistemic modality and moral evaluation” (a deictic conceptualization is either *right* or *wrong*), which is linked to the system of engagement in Appraisal Theory That can be modelled in Figure 1. According to Hart (2014, p.165), “by constructing a mental reference frame made up of the three body axes,” people keep track of the objects around them. The process involves stereoscopic vision and motor simulations.

**Figure 1**

*Discourse space: basic model (Hart, 2014, p. 165)*



With regard to Proximization as an elaborated theory developed by Cap (2006, 2008, 2010, 2011, 2013), it is obvious that its effects are invoked by group of functional units, such as noun phrases that conceptualize antagonists, noun phrases that conceptualize protagonists, verb phrases that conceptualize the action (motion) of antagonists, prepositional phrases that conceptualize the direction of action(motion) towards protagonists, and noun phrases that conceptualize the impact of the action(motion) on protagonists. Cap, 2006, p. 60). As a “dynamic simulation,” proximization is based on “an action or motion plus impact image schema” (Hart, 2014, p.170). This is represented by a force vector from the remote end of S where the source of the threat is located to the spatial ground at the deictic center, and the impact of the threat will be felt by the protagonists.

## Methodology

The paper at hand aims to approach the data qualitatively. From this perspective, data sampling can be done by nonprobability, since it allows the researcher “to handpick the sample according to the nature of the research problem and the phenomenon under study.” Such a type tends to be limited as far as representativeness is concerned, since “the probability of each element of the population being included in the sample is unknown,” and the process of “generalizability of results is less important” (Marlow ,2011, p. 140).

Qualitative approach is concerned with detailed descriptions of the social world. However, in critical research, for example, the one under the scope, the concepts of ‘power’ and ‘social organization’ are under investigation to understand how language reflects the sense of oppression operated on people (Ali, 2021, p.48-49). Though it might run the risk of subjectivity, rigorous cognitive analysis that cover both descriptive and interpretive levels supported by accumulative evidences can diminish that risk.



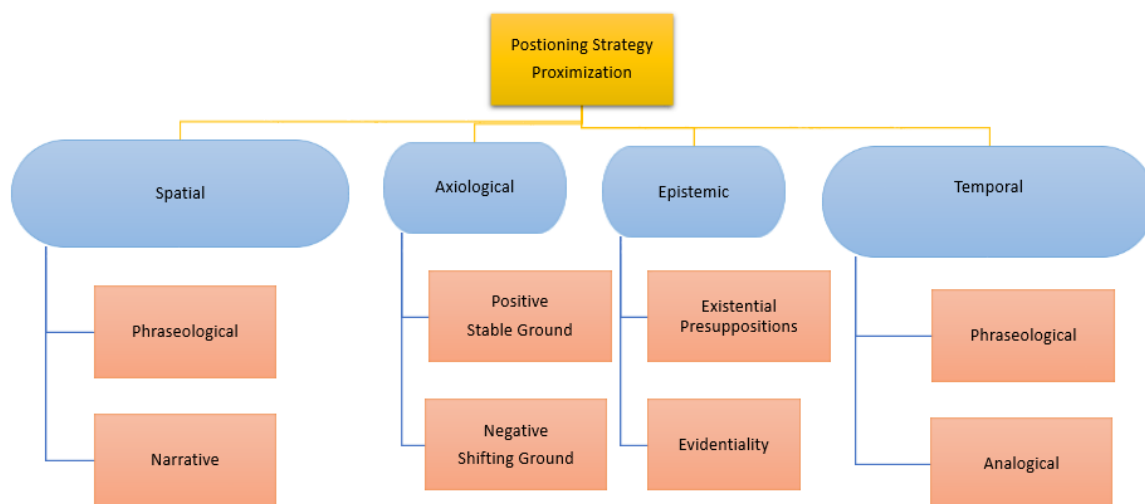
## Data description, Sampling & Procedures of Analysis

*The Times* is one of the first newspapers to be published in Britain (in 1785). It is a summary of the prevailing opinions across the last 200 years of British history. The right-wing News International of Rupert Murdoch, however, bought it in 1981, and since, it has been under criticism for purportedly leaning to the right. Considering that the journal has never, ever been politically neutral. Nowadays, it is published in tabloid format (Oxford Royal Academy, n.d.).

Number of news reports are retrieved from the inbuilt archive of the online version of *The Times* by keying in *Muslim(s)*, *Islamist(s)*, *Islamic*, *Islamophobia*, or *Islam* from 2019 and up. To ensure validity and reliability, two different topics on critical Muslim issues are chosen; the protests against LGBT lessons in Britain, 2019 and the Murder of Samuel Paty in France, 2020. For the purpose of analysis, the reports will be coded as T1 and T2. Both reports will be the repository of extracts rather than sentences for that the constructed world in proximization is extended over sentence border and may cover a whole text. The data will be examined via Hart (2014) framework for proximization as a cognitive construal operation (see Figure 2)

**Figure 2**

*Network of Proximization as a Costrual Operation*



## Data Analysis and Discussion

### Proximization in T1

A Phraseological Spatial Proximization can be realized in the following extract, in which a full extent of a vector is explicitly made within an utterance. By locating the above discourse world in an idealized cognitive model (see Figure 3), proximization presents a dynamic simulation to identify the position of the main elements (actors, time, place, action, etc.).

*“Faced with threats by militant Muslims, the authorities often cave in. It’s so much easier to pick on non-threatening Christians and Jews. That’s why the Muslim ‘Trojan Horse’ school infiltration plots still haven’t been properly dealt with, while some ultra-orthodox Jews are now thinking that Ofsted’s intolerance towards them may force them to emigrate. Intolerance*

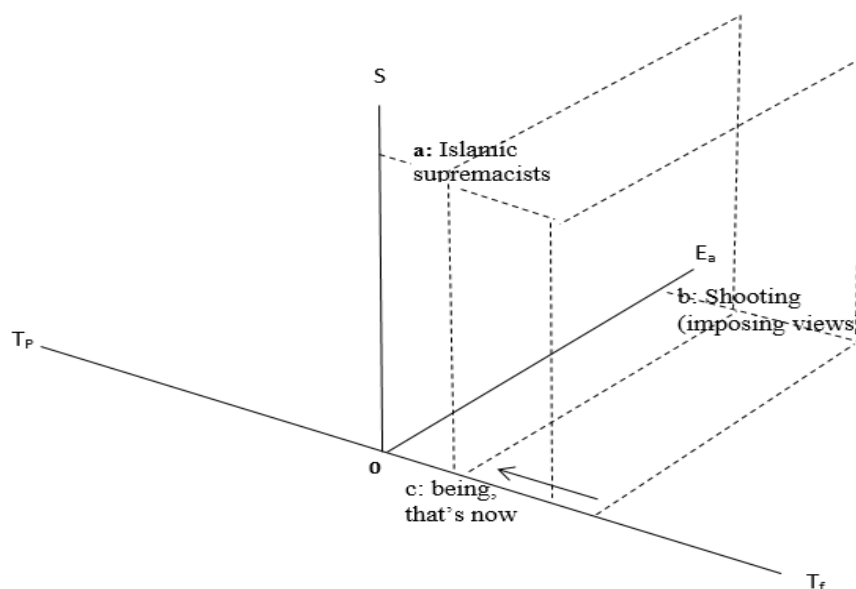
*is about imposing a view on others. Both secular and Muslim zealots are displaying it from opposite viewpoints. There isn't one 'Trojan Horse' in British education but two. What's being destroyed is authentic western culture. That's now in the sights of both illiberal secularists and Islamic supremacists alike, shooting at it from opposite sides of the cultural barricades"*

At the remote end of S, Muslims and Ofsted are located to be the source of the threat. The reader who conceptualizes the scene and feels the impact of that threat is located at the deictic centre to represent *Us* vs. *Them* polarization. "Muslims" are associated to the attributions of "militant," "intolerant," "zealot," and "supremacist" by a connector. Such association inscribes then invokes a negative judgement located in the axiological gear at the remote end of E. Thus, being "geo-politically distant," Muslims are construed as morally distant, since distance values of the socio-spatial and the axiological axis are the same (Hart,2014, p.170).

Moreover, Phraseological Spatial Proximization is indexed in the extract by linguistic units like tense "is being"; aspect "destroyed"; temporal deictics "now"; prepositional phrases "in the sights," "at it," and "from opposite sides" construing the occurrence of an event as close to now. The sense is presented without an endpoint and the event is conceptualized as unbounded seen from inside the situation as it is happening.

### Figure 3

*Phraseological Temporal Proximization as Translation in T1*



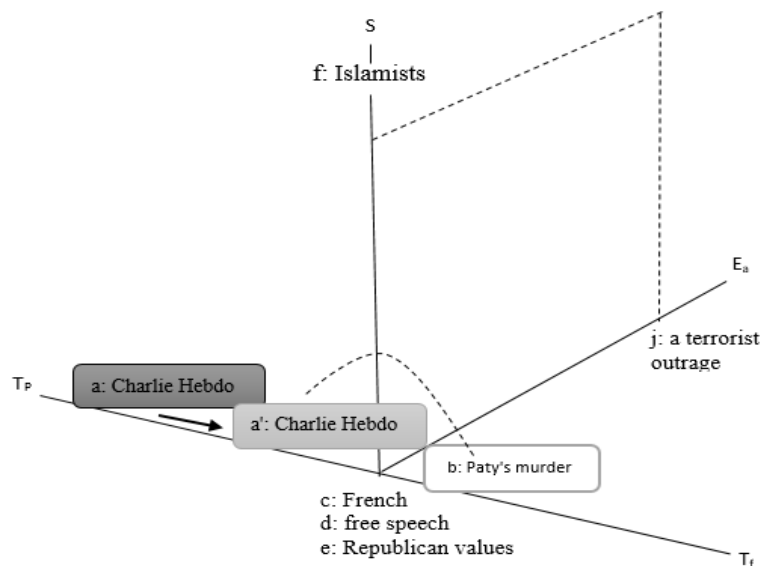
The focus is on the process that makes up the event, which is seen as currently unfolding rather than on the event as a whole to construe a greater immediacy and to encourage the possibility that the situation will continue to endure unless hindered to legitimize immediate counter-action. The undesirable situation is presented as current and pressing (located close to and continuing towards it) which may be translated to a future event. For that, consider again the last two lines in the extract. Proximization is realized by "being," "That's now," and "shooting" that locate the threat at the conceptualizer's temporal ground. A relative compressed time frame on  $T_f$  is created by translating from a previous world to the one presented by the speaker.



Analogical Temporal Proximization tends to occur in past-temporal proximization when, for purposes of disanalogy, people deal with the events in the past as happening yesterday. In the following extract, proximization allows to retrieve “The massacres” from the collective memory closer to *now* as phenomenologically experienced on the T axis in construed time. This can be modelled in Figure 4

The vector here is a translation vector that displays an abstract movement through the discourse space. The MASSACRES frame, with its damages and consequences over the French is associated with a frame for the current “war on terror” by an analogical connector. This comparison serves to construct an axiological evaluation between disorder and chaos values possessed by the “Islamists” and peace values possessed by the French. Through backprojection to the MASSACRES frame, an ideology of *Us vs. Them* is constructed for (de)legitimatization.

### Analogical Temporal Proximization in T2



Considering both reports, proximization strategy allows to see actors and events by determining the deictic positioning from a contextually particular point of view. Along with the above analysis, the paper has highlighted a range of proximization strategies in which Muslims are placed onstage conceptually as part of the conceptualization. Phraseological and Analogical Temporal proximization is realized by a translation vector represents the

metaphorical space through which Muslims' movement is actualized. Temporal proximization operates to legitimize authorities' interventionist actions, let alone enhancing the legitimization effect of the spatial proximization that is realized by the vector compresses the distance along the S, T or Ee/a axes to construe Muslims' physical threat as close to or capable of reaching "us." It also has a key role in the axiological proximization, where Muslims' threat is construed against Western values.

*The Times* exhibits a right-leaning ideological and political outlook and frequently support inaccurate narratives about Muslims in their news reporting by cherry-picking. The newspaper stirs up further opposition to conventional Muslim ideas or practices by enforcing *Us vs Them* polarization. It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that contentious topics involving Muslims serve as the fuel for political scuffles in the British press. On one hand, despite sharing their thoughts with people whose opinions are frequently given significant weight in the media, parents in Birmingham were drawn into a divisive gender politics and portrayed by the media as bigots and extremists. The media, on the other hand, makes use of the Muslim community in France to stoke a political battle between Macron and his competitors. In light of the findings, the current study offers some insights into the language techniques used by reputable British media to portray Muslims in a manner that represents their opinions and objectives.

No special treatment for Muslims is suggested by this paper. It argues that media should report Muslim topics objectively and enable access to a variety of opinions, allowing authentic Islamic experts to remark on religious concerns. It recommends avoiding sources with a history of animosity or those working in the industry of Islamophobia. Moreover, it urges media professionals to receive more training and support so they can report in-depth on any potentially divisive theological beliefs or practices. There is a need for specialized viewpoints and representations of the various "Islams" that Muslims around the world adhere to and practice. Because of this, institutionalized human rights and media monitoring in Britain must take the lead in preparing journalists to cover sensitive topics concerning Muslims and/or Islam.

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## Appendix

### 1- Schools are becoming a battle of the zealots (2019)

With Muslim hardliners and Ofsted both seeking to impose their ideologies, no one's a winner. In Birmingham, Parkfield Primary School has been under siege. Hundreds of Muslim parents protested against its No Outsiders programme, which taught pupils about LGBT relationships. Similar protests have erupted at other Birmingham schools and spread to other towns and cities. This is a collision between two forms of intolerance. At Parkfield, children were being taught No Outsiders lessons from five years old. This and similar initiatives in other schools derive from the 2010 Equality Act, enforced by Ofsted, which requires promoting the equality of LGBT and other individuals with "protected" characteristics that make them potential targets of intolerance. From September next year it will be compulsory to teach primary-school children to respect different types of families, relationships and sexual identities including same-sex relationships and transgender people.

Sarah Hewitt-Clarkson, head teacher at Birmingham's Anderton Park Primary School, which has also taught relationships equality, says Muslim parents with children at the school have been told they would "burn in hell" if they refused to sign a petition against the teaching. The fact is that this relationships policy is the law of the land. Those who don't like it should campaign to change that law or change the government. They should not use intimidation. That is not how democratic citizens behave. The disturbing thing, though, is that those who do play by the democratic rules tend to lose these battles, while those who use bullying tactics win.

Parkfield has suspended its controversial lessons, as have other Birmingham schools following similar pressure. Faced with threats by militant Muslims, the authorities often cave in. It's so much easier to pick on non-threatening Christians and Jews. That's why the Muslim "Trojan Horse" school infiltration plots still haven't been properly dealt with, while some ultra-orthodox Jews are now thinking that Ofsted's intolerance towards them may force them to emigrate. Intolerance is about imposing a view on others. Both secular and Muslim zealots are displaying it from opposite viewpoints. There isn't one "Trojan Horse" in British education but two. What's being destroyed is authentic western culture. That's now in the sights of both illiberal secularists and Islamic supremacists alike, shooting at it from opposite sides of the cultural barricades.

### 2- France confronts its failure to stop extremism (2020)

A state offensive unleashed against Islamism, galvanised by the murder of a teacher, marks the start of a war on terror, writes Charles Bremner. A terrorist outrage followed by anger, sorrow, candles, marches and a presidential pledge to crush the evil in France's midst. The sequence is as familiar as it is painful. The beheading by a young jihadi of Samuel Paty, a teacher at Conflans-Sainte-Honorine, a leafy town on the outskirts of Paris, triggered the latest cycle. The atrocity committed by an 18-year-old Chechen who grew up in France has added to the 280 murders since 2012 by Islamists in the country, five years after the massacres at the Charlie Hebdo satirical magazine and the Bataclan concert hall.

Critics on the right are again denouncing the "impotence" of a feeble state. Yet the latest killing could mark a turning point because, with all its horror and symbolism it has stirred

extraordinary outrage. It has galvanised a counteroffensive that was opened only this month by President Macron against the underworld of what he calls “Islamist separatism”. On October 2, the president chose Les Mureaux, ten miles along the Seine from Conflans, to lay out strategy for dismantling the “countersociety” of political Islam that has spread for two decades out from the ghetto-like towns that ring French cities. The state would finally act to halt the “indoctrination, the negation of our principles - equality between men and women and human dignity”, he said. Long denied and masked by laws that make it illegal to collect ethnic data, discrimination continues to handicap non-Europeans at work and in public life. Despite progress and billions spent on trying to improve life in the banlieue zones, 16 out of 577 MPs have origins in former Arab North African territories. Few occupy high posts in business or the state. Mr Macron is seeking new social remedies to the ills of the banlieue, but for the moment the focus is on police action and doubling down on those republican values, forged in revolution. Chief among them in the Islamist context is “la laïcité”, the strict exclusion of religious acts or clothing such as head coverings in schools, the police or anywhere else in official public life.

Polls show strong public support. About three quarters of the French believe that la laïcité is under threat from Islam, according to recent surveys. Home schooling for children aged three to five is to be banned to prevent Muslim indoctrination that has led primary school starters to refuse to sit beside members of the opposite sex. All children will go to preschool from three. Mr Macron has ordered the authorities to stop bus drivers refusing women passengers whose dress they deem to be immodest. Councils must stop allowing gender-segregated sessions at swimming pools and providing Halal meals in school canteens. Teachers are to be encouraged to stand up to those who reject lessons on the Holocaust, or the theory of evolution, or the right to publish religious caricature. Forty per cent of teachers at present say they censor themselves to avoid offending Muslim beliefs. The president, who is leading a memorial ceremony for Mr Paty at the Sorbonne University on Wednesday, has told ministers to sow fear in the camp of political Islamists after years of French suffering at the hands of extremists. The success or failure may not be clear until after the next presidential election, in spring 2022.