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Representation of Islam and Muslims in the Australian Newspapers: Exploring the Predominant Discourses

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Abstract

This paper is an endeavor to explore the predominant discourses in the editorial representation of Islam and Muslims by selected Australian newspapers from November 01, 2016 to March 31, 2017. Making use of the lexicalization and ideological square strategies proposed by Teun A. van Dijk, the researcher examined the editorial coverage of two Australian newspapers namely *The Age* and *The Australian*. According to the results, the editorial discourse regarding Islam and Muslims in both dailies was entirely opposite to each other. *The Australian* portrayed Islam and Muslims negatively by producing a ‘securitized’ and ‘Othered’ image of ‘Them’, within and outside Australia’s boundaries. On the contrary, *The Age* created a significant ‘counter discourse’ on Islam and Muslims by portraying them positively and as victims. The explicit impact of right-left ideological lines of the selected newspapers was found evident in their editorial discourses regarding Islam and Muslims.

Keywords: Critical Discourse Analysis, Foreign Islam, national Islam, Othering, political parallelism, representation, securitization, *The Age*, *The Australian*

Introduction

Media, generally, play a pivotal role in generating, disseminating, and the maintaining certain ideologies, discourses, and cultural knowledge that influence our perceptions and understanding regarding ourselves and the world we live in.¹ So, the media is involved in reflecting, distributing, and upholding particular societal and political discourses which affect the overall process of meaning construction and the evolution of society around us.² According to Stuart Hall (1992) a discourse is combination of succeeding statements which

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¹Stuart Hall, “The Whites of their Eyes: Racist Ideologies and the Media,” in *The Media Reader*, edited by M. Alvarado and J. O. Thompson (London: BFI, 1990), 7-23; Elisabeth Poole, *Reporting Islam: Media Representations of British Muslims* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2002).

²Karin Creutz-Kämpfi, “The Othering of Islam in a European Context: Polarizing Discourses in Swedish-Language Dailies in Finland,” *Nordicom Review* 29, no. 2 (2008): 295-308.

generates ‘webs of meaning’ for a specific knowledge on a topic. A discourse corroborating other discourses constructs a particular theme in way that restricts other likely ways to develop the theme.³ Therefore, it is pertinent to explore what kind of discourses the Australian newspapers are producing, upholding and propagating in their editorials regarding Islam and Muslims in the ‘migrant-friendly country’ where Muslim community is growing and Islam is the second largest religion.⁴

The Muslim population in Australia has increased manifold quite recently because of a rapid migration from the Arab countries, Lebanon, Turkey, and also from America and Europe.⁵ A substantial number of population has migrated from Asian countries including; Pakistan, Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, and Malaysia.⁶

This diversified Muslim community has been enjoying their religious freedom in terms of their religious practices, running their own schools and by holding their communal associations for long. However, many research findings are evident that since September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks in America; October 12, 2002 Bali bombings; March 2004 Madrid train bombings; July 07, 2005 bombings in London, and March 22, 2016 explosions in Brussels, Islam and the Muslim communities are receiving a notable negative representation in international media. And, such representations have made the Muslim communities more vulnerable to discriminations, racial attacks, prejudice, and harassment.⁷

³Stuart Hall, “The West and the Rest: Discourse and Power,” in *Formations of Modernity*, edited by Stuart Hall and Bram Gieben (Oxford: Polity in association with Open University, 1992), 275-331.

⁴A. Alharbi, “Corpus Linguistic Analysis of the Representation of ‘IAM’ in the Australian Press before and after 9/11,” *Language Discourse and Society* (2017): 107; *Australian Bureau of Statistics*. 2016.

<http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/mediareleasesbyReleaseDate/7E65A144540551D7CA258148000E2B85?OpenDocument> (accessed November 14, 2017); B. Tolj, “Number of Muslims in Australia soars Census 2016,” 2017. <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-4641728/Number-Muslims-Australia-soars-Census-2016.html> (accessed november 14, 2017).

⁵“Issues Deliberation Australia/America,” www.ida.org.au 2007, <http://www.ida.org.au/UserFiles/File/AUSTRALIA%20DELIBERATES%20-%20FINAL%20REPORT%20-%20CHAPTER%202%20> (accessed october 21, 2011).

⁶B. Tolj, “Number of Muslims in Australia soars Census 2016,” 2017. <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-4641728/Number-Muslims-Australia-soars-Census-2016.html> (accessed november 14, 2017).

⁷Shahram Akbarzadeh, and Bianca Smith, “The Representation of Islam and Muslims in the Media (The Age and Herald Newspapers),” *School of Political and Social Inquiry* (Monash University.) 4 (2005); A. Alharbi, “Corpus Linguistic Analysis of the Representation of ‘IAM’ in the Australian Press before and after 9/11,” *Language Discourse and Society*. 2017. 107; I. Munro,

Hence, this would be an interesting and useful addition to the body of existing knowledge that how Islam and the Muslims have been represented by the Australian newspapers; *The Age* and *The Australian*.

The Age is a national daily newspaper based in Melbourne and is being published in a compact format since 1854. This Fairfax Media owned newspaper is the 6th most published newspapers in Australia with an explicitly left-wing or centre-left editorial policy and ideological political line. On weekends maximum 115,256 copies of this newspaper are circulated and 83229 copies during weekdays.⁸ *The Australian*, on the other hand, is a broadsheet daily newspaper owned by News Corporation. It is based in Sydney and is being circulated since 1964. *The Australian* is recognized as a rightist newspaper with an explicitly right-wing editorial policy and ideological political line. On weekends maximum 219,242 copies of this newspaper are circulated and 94,448 copies during weekdays.⁹

A large number of internationally accepted and valid research findings regarding mis/representations of different race and ethnicity in the Western media have induced many scholars to look into the depiction and construction of an inferior ‘Other’ by a ‘superior’

“Portrayal of Muslims ‘Tainted by Racism,” 2006. http://www.theage.com.au/news/national/portrayal-of-muslims-taintedbyracism/2006/03/17/_/1142582526996.html# (accessed march 17, 2015); I. Munro, “Portrayal of Muslims ‘Tainted by Racism,” 2006. <http://www.theage.com.au/news/national/portrayal-of-muslims-tainted-by-racism/2006/03/17/1142582526996.html#> (accessed march 17, 2015); Halim Rane, “Australian Press Coverage of Islam,” Master’s thesis, Bond University., 2000; Halim Rane, *Knowing One Another: An Antidote for Mass Media Islam* (Brisbane, QLD, Australia: Griffith University, 2008); M. Safi and N. Evershed, “Three-Quarters of Muslim Australians Feel They are Unfairly Targeted by Terror Laws, Study Reveals,” 2015. http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/mar/16/three-quarters-of-muslim-australians-feel-they-are-unfairly-targeted-by-terror-laws-study-reveals?CMP=share_btn_fb (accessed march 17, 2015); R. Susskind, “Representation of Muslims in the Australian Print Media,” 2002. http://www.sydneyr.det.nsw.edu.au/Equity/documents/_/TSandR/representationinmediareport.pdf (accessed august 14, 2011); S. Yasmeen, “Muslim Women as Citizens in Australia: Diverse Notions and Practices,” *Australian Journal of Social Issues* 42, no. 1 (2007): 41-54.

⁸Audit Bureau of Circulations, *ABC Circulation Results-Feb 2017*. February 25, 2017. <https://mumbrella.com.au/abcs-weekend-nationals-grow-circulation-metro-weekly-newspapers-continue-decline-427101> (accessed February 25, 2017); B. Reimers, “Which are right-wing media and left-wing media in Australia?” 2016. <https://www.quora.com/Which-are-right-wing-media-and-left-wing-media-in-Australia> (accessed October 30, 2017); C. Ramirez, “Which are Right-wing Media and Left-wing Media in Australia?” 2016. <https://www.quora.com/Which-are-right-wing-media-and-left-wing-media-in-Australia> (accessed October 30, 2017); The Age, “Source Information,” *www.nexis.com* 2017. https://www.nexis.com/results/shared/sourceInfo.do?sourceId=F_GB00NBGenSrch.T25501762415 (accessed December 4, 2017).

⁹Ibid; The Australian, “Source Information,” 2017. https://www.nexis.com/results/shared/sourceInfo.do?sourceId=F_GB00NBGenSrch.T26708005099 (accessed December 4, 2017).

Western media 'Us'.¹⁰ In Edward Said's *Orientalism* (2003) the 'Other' has been elaborated as people who live in the East and who are 'exotic', 'primitive,' 'uncivilized,' and 'opposite' to the 'progressive,' 'modern,' and 'civilized' West i.e., the 'Occident.' Such an understanding and construction of 'Them' (Islam and The Muslims) provides 'Us' (The West) with the reasons to 'control,' 'master,' and/or fear from the rest.¹¹ However, many other academics around the globe have used the notion of 'Other' in a variety of academic fields like cultural studies, philosophy, gender studies etc.¹²

For instance, Richardson (2004) used Critical Discourse Analysis to expose the ideological meanings in the press discourse regarding Islam. He found out that Islam was associated with four major themes; as a security threat, extremist or terrorist threat, threat to democratic steadiness in their native countries, and as a threat to women.¹³ He argues that the UK press, while representing Islam, engaged in three-part process i.e. separation, differentiation, and negativization.¹⁴

Similarly, Elisabeth Poole (2002) asserts that the European Muslims along with their life style in comparison with the 'European modernity' have been portrayed as 'belated', 'inferior', 'incomplete', and 'partial.' The European Muslims have been depicted as 'so different,' 'politically intolerant,' 'threatening' and as an 'external religious minority.' Poole maintains that conflating Islam and the Muslims as a cultural threat and as a security threat by the British press has widened the gap between 'Us' and 'Them.'¹⁵

Going further than that, Roza Tsagarousianou (2016) explored latest trends and discourses in the depiction of Islam and Muslims by the European press. In her study *Muslims in Public and Media Discourse in Western Europe* she scrutinizes the dominant media and public discourses regarding Islam and Muslims in the UK, Denmark, France, Germany, Netherlands, and Spain. She explains that there is a gradual change in the discourse regarding Islam from the 'exotic Islam' to a 'threatening Islam' which threatens the European way of life and the safety. She refers to this transformation as 'Securitization

¹⁰Elisabeth Poole, and J. Richardson, *Muslims and the News Media* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2006); Elisabeth Poole, *Reporting Islam: Media representations of British Muslims* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2002); Stuart Hall, "Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices," *Sage* 2 (1997).

¹¹Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Penguin Books, 2003); Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978).

¹²Wadumestri, "Being Other: The Experience of Young Australian-Lebanese-Muslims," (PhD Dissertation RMIT University, 2010).

¹³J. E. Richardson, *(Mis)Representing Islam: The Racism and Rhetoric of British Broadsheet Newspapers* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2004), 232.

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵Elisabeth Poole, "The United Kingdom's Reporting of Islam and Muslims; Reviewing the Field," In *Representations of Islam in the News: a Cross-Cultural Analysis*, edited by S. Mertens and H. D. Smaele (Maryland-USA: Lexington Books, 2016), 21-36.

of Islam' discourse.¹⁶ She illustrates that the murder of the Charlie Hebdo editorial team in 2015 is the last incident among a list of such incident where the representation of Islam and the Muslims appeared to be a problematic in Europe. Subsequent reporting of the incident portrayed Charlie Hebdo as a symbol of freedom and Islam as religion and the Muslims, who follow it, as an increasing threat to the value.¹⁷

Apart from the 'securitization' discourse, many recent studies have also revealed various other trends in the representation of Islam and Muslims. For instance, recent researches conducted in the USA, UK, and a few other European countries have discovered a clear difference between the coverage of Islam and Muslims within the national boundaries i.e., 'National (Internal) Islam' and 'Foreign (External) Islam' wherein the 'Foreign Islam' has been portrayed as more violent and as a 'greater threat' as compared to the 'National Islam.'¹⁸ Coverage of 'Foreign Islam' has also increased more than the 'National Islam' in international reporting.¹⁹

Similarly, Stephen Mertens (2016) analyzed the impact of 'ideological biases' of the newspapers on the portrayal of Islam and the Muslims in Europe. He argues that left versus right political ideological lines of the press do have an impact on the coverage. He claims that the right-wing or conservative European press focuses and highlights more violence and presents a 'collectivized' image of Islam and the Muslims as compared to the left-wing or liberal or progressive newspapers.²⁰ So, the 'political parallelism' phenomenon i.e., the impact of ideological lines of the newspapers does have an impact on the representation of Islam and the Muslims.

So, considering findings from all the literature reviewed, it is pertinent to explore the predominant discourses regarding Islam and the Muslims in the editorial coverage of *The Age* and *The Australian* from November 01, 2016 to March 31, 2017. The researcher

¹⁶R. Tsagarousianou, "Muslims in Public and Media Discourse in Western Europe: The Reproduction of Aporia and Exclusion," In *Representations of Islam in the News: a Cross-Cultural Analysis*, edited by S. Mertens and H. D. Smaele (Maryland-USA: Lexington Books, 2016), 3-20.

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸Stephen Mertens, "European Media Coverage of Islam in a Globalizing World," in *Representation of Islam in the News: a Cross Cultural Analysis*, edited by S. Mertens and H. D. Smaele, 59-73; E. Alsultany, "Arabs and Muslims in the Media: Race and Representation after 9/11," In *Representations of Islam in the News: a Cross-Cultural Analysis*, edited by S. Mertens and H. D. Smaele, 64; L. d'Haenens and S. Bink, "Islam in the Dutch Press: With Special Attention to the Algemeen Dagblad," *Media, Culture and Society* 29, no. 1 (2007): 135-149; D. Ibrahim, "The Framing of Islam on Network News following the September 11th Attacks," *International Communication Gazette* 72, no. 1 (2010): 111-125.

¹⁹Elisabeth Poole, "Reporting Islam: Media Representations of British Muslims," in *Representations of Islam in the News: a cross-Cultural Analysis*, edited by S. Mertens and H. D. Smaele, 21-36.

²⁰Stephen Mertens, "European Media Coverage of Islam in a Globalizing World," In *Representation of Islam in the News: a Cross Cultural Analysis*, 59-73.

assumes that along with the stereotypical ‘Othering’ discourse regarding Islam and the Muslims some latest trends and discourses in ‘their’ representation may also be found in the editorial coverage of the selected Australian newspapers. However, making an allowance for the varied nature of the editorial policies and ideological lines of the two newspapers, the researcher expects that a counter discourse can also be discovered wherein ‘They’ have been portrayed positively.

2. Methodology

2.1. Data Collection and Sampling

For this study and keeping in view the basic objective of this study, editorials from two highly published and candid policies bearing Australian newspapers have been analyzed using Ideological Square and Lexicalization within the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) paradigm. The researcher collected data using key terms ‘Islam’ and ‘Muslims’ through ‘LexisNexis’ from the selected newspapers for the time period November 01, 2016 to March 31, 2017. The researcher has employed ‘Census Sampling,’ ‘Data Cleansing,’ and the ‘Purposive Sampling’ to select the most relevant editorials from the overall data. During this time span *The Age* published five and *The Australian* published three editorials regarding Islam and Muslims. The researcher has selected two editorials as sample from each newspaper using the purposive sampling for the desired objective. One editorial each from both the newspapers is published on March 31, 2017 on the same topic. This publication has provided the researcher with an opportunity for an authentic and more accurate comparison of the editorial discourses of both the dailies. The chosen editorials are component of the broader sample used in his PhD thesis by the researcher.

3. Data Analyses

The data have been analyzed and interpreted using the ideological square and lexicalization proposed by Teun A. van Dijk within the paradigm of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA).²¹ The process includes identifying and exploring prominent verbs, phrases, adjectives, adverbs, and sentences within the headlines and the overall text of the editorials. The researcher has employed ideological square and lexicalization as lenses to carry out the process of data analyses and interpretation.

There is a variety of approaches and techniques of critical discourse analysis developed by its proponents and advocates based on various theoretical features and aspects.²² However, in this study the researcher has employed a ‘social cognitive perspective’

²¹T. A. Van Dijk, “Opinions and Ideologies in the Press,” In *Approaches to Media Discourse*, edited by Allan Bell and Peter Garrett (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998b), 21-63.

²²R. Wodak, and M. Meyer, *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis* (2001), 95-120.

proposed by Teun A. van Dijk.²³ According to this paradigm the power is exercised and maintained through manipulation of minds. There is a direct and deep social cognitive connection between discourse and dominance which makes it crucial to examine the production and reproduction of the texts ‘critically.’²⁴ The researcher has employed two CDA strategies to analyze the newspaper texts i.e., Ideological Square and Lexicalization.

The ‘Ideological Square’ approach incorporates binary positions emphasizing ‘Our’ good, ‘Their’ bad and de-emphasizing ‘Their’ good and ‘Our’ bad. This strategy, as proposed and advocated by Teun A. van Dijk of positive in-group and negative out-group is manifested through various lexical choices and many other linguistic facets within a discourse.²⁵ So, in terms of the ‘ideological square’ the in-group and out-group are presented in a polarized way wherein in-group (Us) is portrayed in a positive and favorable way while out-group (Them) is portrayed in an unfavorable and negative way.²⁶

The ‘ideological square’ is a theoretical and methodological model that lays emphasis on media texts’ examination to determine and unpack journalistic ideological positions that establish distinguishable projection and construction of various social groups.²⁷ Lexicalization and polarization (Us vs. Them categorization) are two out of numerous analytical techniques within the domain of the ‘ideological square’ wherein the former is associated with the ‘style’ and the latter is related to the ‘meaning’ aspect of the critical discourse analysis.²⁸

The strategy of ‘lexicalization’ is incorporated through ‘lexical choices’ i.e. employing positive and negative evaluations within a text to portray ‘Us’ (in-group) favorably and

²³T. A. Van Dijk, “Principals of Critical Discourse Analysis,” *Discourse and Society* 4, no. 2 (1993): 249-283; T. A. van Dijk, “Discourse Analysis as Ideological Analysis,” In *Language and Peace*, by C. Schaffine and A. L. Wenden (London: Routledge, 1995), 17-33; T. A. Van Dijk, *Ideology and Discourse A Multidisciplinary Introduction* (Barcelona: Pompeu Fabra University, 2000).

²⁴T. A. Van Dijk, “Principals of Critical Discourse Analysis,” *Discourse and Society* 4, no. 2 (1993): 249-283.

²⁵T. A. Van Dijk, *Ideology A Multidisciplinary Approach* (New York: Sage Publications, 1998a); T. A. Van Dijk, “Opinions and Ideologies in the Press,” In *Approaches to Media Discourse*, edited by Allan Bell and Peter Garrett (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998b), 21-63.

²⁶S. H. Kuo and M. Nakamura, “Translation or Transformation? A Case Study of Language and Ideology in the Taiwanese Press,” *Discourse and Society* 16, no. 3 (2005): 393-417.

²⁷G. Philo, “Can Discourse Analysis Successfully Explain the Content of Media and Journalistic Practice?” *Journalism Studies* 8, no. 2 (2007): 175-196.

²⁸T. A. Van Dijk, “Politics, Ideology and Discourse,” In *Encyclopedia of Language and Linguistics*, edited by K. Brown (Ed.) (Oxford, UK: Elsevier, 2004), 728-740.

‘Them (out-group) unfavorably. The lexicalization is the manifestation of the ‘ideological polarization’ within a discourse.²⁹

So, the researcher has employed the ‘ideological square’ and the ‘lexicalization’ from the CDA paradigm because of their relevance and suitability with the nature of this study.

4. Data Interpretation and Analysis

Following pages contain the interpretation and analysis of the editorial contents of *The Age*.

Date	January 31, 2017
Headline	PM's cowardly stance on Trump shames us all

Interpretation and Analysis;

Lexical items used in the headline by the newspaper such as; *cowardly*, *shames*, *us all*, represent newspaper’s polarized opinion regarding Australian Prime Minister Mr. Malcolm Turnbull’s stance on Mr. Donald Trump’s policy towards Muslims and refugees. In this headline and in the whole text below, the main target of criticism is Mr. Turnbull for his *cowardly* stance on Mr. Trump’s anti-Muslim and anti-refugees policies. Lexically, the use of *cowardly* and *shame* explicitly expresses the negative opinion of *The Age* towards Australian P.M. for his *cravenly* endorsement of the U.S. President’s policies. The newspaper places Mr. Trump, his supporters and those who remain silent against Mr. Trump’s policies in negative space. In terms of polarization strategy, the newspaper excludes Mr. Turnbull from ‘us’ (Australians) because he supported Mr. Trump’s anti-Muslim/refugees policies.

The lead paragraph contains an explicit counter discourse regarding the Muslims in terms of criticism on those who ban and support ban on the Muslims’ entry in the U.S. The newspaper draws a negative picture of Mr. Donald Trump for his policies that propose ban on the Muslim entry into the U.S. The lexical choices; *deluded belief*, *alternative facts*, *chilling description*, *blatant and pathetic anti-Muslim move*, *lies*, associated with Mr. Trump and his policies express negative opinion of *The Age* towards them. Emphasizing on *the star-spangled land of the free* and *home of the brave* and comparing it with *blatant and pathetic anti-Muslim move*, the newspaper presents ‘us’ (The Americans) negatively. In a polarization strategy, the ‘our bad’ has been emphasized as compared to the Muslims (them) who are portrayed as ‘victims.’ The newspaper evaluates the belief on such leadership as *deluded belief* and pointing towards the Australian PM, the newspaper opines that those who have such deluded belief should *consider a few facts* instead of *alternative*

²⁹A. Shojaei, K. Youssefi, and H. S. Hosseini, “A CDA Approach to the Biased Interpretation and Representation of Ideologically Conflicting Ideas in Western Printed Media,” *Journal of Language Teaching and Research* 4, no. 4 (2013): 858-868.

facts. The newspaper labels such *facts* as *lies*. This lead paragraph is the gist of the whole text expanded below.

First of all, through lexical choices; *bastardry, incompetence, bluster, unfortunate elements, bombastic campaign, claims, conservative policy*, the newspaper expresses an explicitly negative opinion about Mr. Trump's (us) regime and policy towards Muslims (them). His personal and political evaluations and characterization is evident from such lexical terms. After pointing out; *unassailable principles, fairness, and decency*, as standard of *leadership*, *The Age* questions Mr. Trump's leadership. Ideologically, the newspaper identifies him with such negative characterization, explains him for his *unfortunate regime* and criticizes him for banning entry to the US for the citizens of seven countries. The newspaper authenticates its critical policy by quoting factual findings from a 'US conservative policy research group' that *zero* citizens have been killed by citizens from the banned countries during 1975 to 2015. With these 'facts' *The Age* rejects the *deluded belief* and the *attractive facts*. In ideological polarization terms, *The Age* emphasizes 'our' bad in this paragraph.

The lexical item *Islamist terrorism* gives a hint of 'Securitization' discourse regarding the Muslims but *monstrous act of terrorism, terrorist act, atrocities, terrorists*, represent a counter discourse wherein terrorism has not been conflated with Islam. Also, the use of *Islamist terrorism* has been referred to Mr. Trump's speech against the Muslims.

The strategy of creating 'them within them' is also evident in the form of criticism on the Muslim-ban for seven countries while four countries; Saudi Arabia, Egypt, United Arab Emirates and Lebanon, have been accused for 'monstrous act of terrorism.'

Using lexical items such as: *ridiculous ban, enraged, rational, compassionate, sparked protests, stupid, unfounded policy, international chorus, condemnation, volatile and thin-skinned, renege*, the newspaper expresses a negative opinion about Mr. Trump's policy and describes his personal characterization. The same is done for Mr. Turnbull through lexical choices such as; *disappointing, cravenly endorsing, sold out their principles*. Use of such lexical items by *The Age* to comment on ban on Muslim entry to the US shows emphasis on 'our' bad which implies the 'counter discourse' regarding the Muslims. In terms of ideological polarization strategy, the newspaper emphasizes 'our' bad and excludes Mr. Trump and Mr. Turnbull from 'us.' The newspaper expresses its ideological policy by criticizing Turnbull government for its anti-refugee policies.

In the last two paragraphs, the political ideological line of the newspaper is evident from lexis used to criticize Mr. Trump's anti-Muslim policy and Mr. Turnbull's support for the policy. The lexical items such as; *logical, widely seen, morally, legally, flawed, massive waste, fall into line, to keep him sweet*, expresses newspaper's leftist policy against the government for anti-refugees policies.

Overall, the editorial contains counter discourse in the contents in terms of criticism on Mr. Trump and Mr. Turnbull (us) for their anti-Muslim/refugees policies. The political

parallelism discourse is available in the form of pro-immigration comments and in the form of the *solution* the newspaper proposes for the Australian government. Although, there is a hint of ‘Othering’ discourse in terms of *Islamist terrorism* but it seems to be a quote from Mr. Trump’s speech. And, in the rest of the comments *The Age* used *terrorism* instead of *Islamist terrorism*, *Islamic militants* etc.

Date

November 22, 2016

Headline

Restraint is right call after bank tragedy

Interpretation and Analysis

The lexical choices opted by *The Age* such as; *restraint*, *right call*, and *tragedy*, to comment on a *terrorist attack* and on Premier Mr. Daniel Michael Andrews’ response, show the newspaper’s political ideology which supports ‘understanding’ and ‘multiculturalism’ in Australia. The headline and text underneath it highlight newspaper’s stance against Australia’s ‘hard line’ immigration policy. The newspaper supports Mr. Andrews’ *restraint* after the attack and criticizes those who jump to conclusions, attack immigrant’s integrity, and blame immigrants for everything. The contents of this editorial explicitly define and elaborate *The Age*’s ideological line which criticizes Mr. Dutton the *rightists* for *casting aspersions on migrants*. The newspaper opines that the use of such tragedies for the political gains by some *far right* and *opportunist* political leaders is nothing new. But, such actions cause damages to social integration.

The lead paragraph shows the expanded picture of the lexical items; *restraint*, *right call*, and *tragedy*, used by the newspaper in headline. The lexical choices such as; *right*, *measured call*, *calm*, opted by the newspaper to comment on Daniel Andrews’ (48th Premier of Victoria) stance on the bank tragedy show political orientation of the newspaper. The leftist or centre-left political orientation is further explained through commenting on *political opportunists* as; *tensions*, *needlessly raised*, *seize on a tragedy*, *political arguments*.

The lexical choices such as; *prompted*, *rabble-rousing far right*, *aspersions*, *migrants*, *opportunism*, *asylum seeker*, *an excuse*, *to rehash arguments*, *Australia's hardline policy*, *limbo*, represent newspaper’s critical stance towards ‘far right’ ideology. Through the use of *claim* and *persecution* to comment on a Muslim, the newspaper presented a ‘victim’ picture of the man who attacked the bank. The counter discourse regarding the Muslims is evident from the comments such as; *Mr. Islam's claim to be from a persecuted Muslim community*.

The next paragraph contains a counter discourse regarding a Muslim and his family explaining ‘them’ as victims’ and the lexical choices such as; *suffers*, *instances of crime*, *mental ill-health*, *mental problems and distress*, *sickness*, portray that the incident was because of the mental illness. He was suffering instead of any *greed or malice*. In terms of the polarization strategy, *The Age* mitigates ‘their’ bad by emphasizing on Mr. Islam’s

mental illness instead of any personal evaluations and characterization. The counter discourse is evident from the polarization strategy.

The next paragraph is full of lexical items such as; to warp facts, particular political agenda, danger for community cohesion, careful reticence, revisionism, regrettably, to flirt with prejudice, political backing, which portray the newspaper's leftist policy against the 'federal liberal party' who *flirt with prejudice to gain political backing*. The newspaper *welcomes the careful reticence* by Mr. Andrew who talks about taking this incident as an *isolated act*. While the immigration Minister Mr. Peter Craig Dutton's interpretations of crime have been termed as *historical revisionism*. The leftist/progressive/liberal political ideological stance of *The Age* is evident from the comments.

Overall, this editorial contains 'political parallelism' as a prominent discourse in which *The Age* portrays the 'far right' ideology as an *opportunist* and *hardline* policy which is used to *cast further aspersions on immigrants*. The newspaper emphasizes that *simplistic blame game* will not help to meet the *complex challenges* of maintaining a *safe and harmonious* society. There is a counter discourse in the editorial contents that portray the Muslims as 'victim' of 'prejudice' and where the individual Muslim character of violence has not been collectivized rather it is explained for the better understanding. Since the editorial discusses an incident that took place inside Australia and that involves a Muslim character, so it falls in 'national Islam' discourse category also. The prominent themes under 'national Islam' discourse are 'victimization' and 'prejudice'.

Following pages contain the interpretation and analysis of the editorial contents of *The Australian*.

Date	March 4, 2017
Headline	Radicalisation must be resisted

Interpretation and Analysis;

According to the Oxford dictionary *radicalization* means to change people completely, to make them extreme ones, and to make them radicals.³⁰ And, 'resist' is to fight back forcefully.³¹ The use of *must* makes the statement and opinion of the newspaper *imperative* and gives an impression about the newspaper's *presupposition* that *radicalization* is underway in Australia which must be *resisted*. The imperative and presupposed nature of the statement by *The Australian* regarding issue under discussion makes it a biased approach.

From the very first sentence of the editorial the division between *us* and *them* is clear. The 'school' is excluded from 'us' because it *shuns basic Australian values*. The 'school' is referred to the *schools with high number of Muslim students in Sydney*. So, 'our' good is

³⁰*Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 1242.

³¹*Ibid.*, 1291.

emphasized in terms of *basic Australian values* which are enlisted in the last sentence of the lead paragraph as; *equality of the sexes, respect for fellow citizens, renunciation of violence*. And, the Muslim schools (they) are associated with the *recent problems* which portrays ‘their’ image as ‘problematic other.’

In a polarization strategy the ‘other’ (Muslim schools) have been depicted as *problematic other* in the form of comment such as; *Autonomy for state school principals in managing teaching and student behavior is an important part of education reform, but recent problems at schools with high numbers of Muslim students in Sydney*. Problematic in the sense ‘they’ do not respect values that *bind Australia together*. This lexical style reporting and opinion by *The Australian* places Muslim schools (them/other) in a negative space. All the Muslim-students-majority schools have been generalized and collectivized to have such *problems* and *our* authority has been explicitly imposed by *highlight the need for clear principles and guidelines to support school authorities in upholding the values that bind Australia together*.

In the next paragraph, the newspaper emphasizes ‘their’ bad using lexical terms such as; *creeping sharia, influenced, and anathema*. The use of *anathema* for *sharia* i.e. Islamic law implies newspaper’s ‘Othering’ approach while representing Islam and Muslims. The newspaper has ‘Othered’ Muslims (them) by portraying them as an economic burden in lexical terms as *taxpayer-funded school*, and *separated* them from *mainstream Australians* (us). In terms of polarization strategy, *The Australian* emphasizes ‘their’ bad by categorizing Islamic ideology as *creeping sharia* which has *influence on young peoples’ views*. The polarization strategy is evident from the comment; *creeping sharia, especially in taxpayer-funded schools where young people’s views and values are shaped and influenced, is anathema to mainstream Australians*.

In this paragraph, *The Australian* using ‘division and rejection’ strategy places ‘ours’ (us) in a *multicultural* social space where *newcomers* and ‘their descendants’ are accommodated. On the other hand, ‘they’ are placed as *ghettos* and *no go areas* where *non-Muslims* are *intimidated* and *excluded*. Using referential terms and lexical choices, the newspaper identifies Islam and the Muslims as ‘exotic other’ who *intimidate* and *exclude* non-Muslims from their *ghettos*.

In terms of polarization strategy the newspaper emphasizes ‘their’ bad and produces an ‘othering’ discourse regarding Islam and Muslims. The comments such as; *But at a time when Islamic militants are unleashing terror around the world... No teacher, at any school, should have to endure verbal assaults and threats of beheading or violence by any students*, portray Islam and the Muslims in a ‘securitized’ way where ‘they’ are portrayed as a ‘security threat.’ In a typical editorial-recommendation style, the newspaper expressing its rightist/conservative ideological line suggests; *and politicians must find their voices and address voters’ concerns about the problem. Hiding such emerging, dangerous trends behind bureaucratic walls or veneers of false cultural harmony will be counter-productive in the long run*.

Overall, this editorial contains ‘othering’ as a predominant discourse where the newspaper draws a line between ‘us’ and ‘them’; ‘they’ are portrayed as ‘exotic other’ and ‘different,’ and as an ‘economic burden’ on ‘us.’ Secondly, the ‘political parallelism’ discourse is evident in the form of ‘rightist’ approach by the newspaper towards the issue. The ‘securitization’ discourse is also available in the editorial where Islam and Muslims have been portrayed and constructed as *radicals*, *terrorists*, and *security threat*. Since the overall discussion in this editorial is about Islam and Muslims within the Australian boundaries, so the editorial is categorized under content category of ‘national Islam.’ Prominent themes associated with national Islam are; *collectivism*, *women under-representation*, and *violence*.

Date	January 31, 2017
Headline	Bordering on hysteria

Interpretation & Analysis

The newspaper uses two lexical items *bordering on* and *hysteria* to comment and support Mr. Trump’s changes in visa policies for the Muslims and banning entry of the Muslims from seven countries. First one is a phrasal verb, *bordering on*, which means *to come very close to become something, especially a strong or unpleasant emotion or quality*.³² Second one is a noun, *hysteria*, which means *a state of extreme excitement, fear or anger in which a person, or a group of people, loses control of their emotions and starts to cry*.³³ It also means *an extremely excited and exaggerated way of behaving or reacting to an even*. Since, *bordering on hysteria* has been referred to the global reactions and feedback to Mr. Trump’s proposed *Muslim ban*, so this shows newspaper’s explicit support for the ban and its criticism on those who opposed the ban. The newspaper portrays the world reaction against the *Muslim ban* as an extremely excited, exaggerated and out-of-control reaction.

The newspaper criticizes those who oppose *Muslim ban* using lexical items as; *erroneous claims*, *clumsy*, *the hysteria*, *plain untruths*. On the other hand, the newspaper supports and defends the ban by labeling it *temporary immigration ban* which *does not single out Muslims*. The newspaper justifies the ban by placing the responsibility of the *imperative on seven nations* who *are either subject to serious terrorist insurgency, lacking in reliable governance, exporters of terrorism or all of the above*.

The polarization strategy is obvious from the very first sentence of the editorial wherein response to Donald Trump’s visa changes have been labeled as *erroneous claims*; *erroneous claims on Donald Trump’s clumsy visa changes*. The comments in support of the *Muslim ban* and Mr. Trump’s policies highlight the newspaper’s political ideological

³²*Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 168.

³³*Ibid.*, 766.

line which is in favor of the right-wing ideology. The comments determine the rightist ideological line of *The Australian*.

The ‘Securitization’ discourse, wherein the banned Muslim states (them/other) have been securitized, is evident from the comments portraying ‘them’ as *subject to serious terrorist insurgency, exporters of terrorism, and lacking in reliable governance*. Such a representation is obvious from the comments such as; *the imperative, however, clearly stems from the need to combat Islamist terrorism and the seven countries targeted - Iraq, Iran, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria and Yemen - are either subject to serious terrorist insurgency, exporters of terrorism, lacking in reliable governance or all of the above*. In these comments, *The Australian* emphasizes ‘their’ bad by stressing the relationship of the *seven nations* with *Islamist terrorism* and the worst of all is that ‘they’ are *exporters of terrorism*. On the other hand, in an editorial, *PM’s cowardly stance on Trump shames us all*, published by *The Age* on January 31, 2017 (the same day *The Australian* publishes *bordering on hysteria*), the newspaper referring to the findings of ‘*a US conservative policy research group – the Cato institute claims that the combined total of Americans killed by citizens of the banned nations between 1975 and 2015 is ... zero*’.

Overall, this editorial contains ‘political parallelism’ as a predominant discourse wherein the right-wing political line has been appreciated and toed by the newspaper. The newspaper appreciates, exactly on the same day, the same Trump policy (Muslim ban) which is rebutted by *The Age*. The rightist approach by *The Australian* is also obvious from its appreciation for the government minister who endorses ‘anti-immigration policy’ and from its criticism on those who call for understanding and multiculturalism.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

This section contains discussion on the findings from both the newspapers and overall conclusion of the research.

5.1. The Nature of Representation

In the editorial contents of *The Age* the overall nature of the Muslims’ representation including most of the high-flying themes and key terminologies coupled with them are positive and favorable. On the other hand, the representational strategy by *The Australian* contained negative predominant themes regarding Islam and the Muslims.

Comparing both the newspapers it can be concluded that *The Age* produced a ‘counter discourse’ regarding Islam and the Muslims by portraying ‘Them’ favorably. *The Age* portrayed ‘Them’ as ‘victims’, emphasized the need of ‘understanding,’ ‘harmony,’ and supported the ideas of ‘solidarity,’ ‘cohesion’ and ‘multiculturalism.’ On the contrary, *The Australian* portrayed Islam and the Muslims negatively by producing ‘securitization’ and ‘Othering’ discourses. The newspaper highlighted ‘violence’ while covering ‘Them’ and portrayed a ‘categorized’ and ‘stereotypical’ image of the ‘Other.’ So, there was a clear difference and contradiction between the editorial discourses produced by both the dailies about Islam and the Muslims during the time span under study.

5.2. Predominant Discourses

5.2.1. ‘Securitization’

Inspired by the work of Roza Tsagarousianou (2016), the researcher has explored the ‘securitization’ discourse in the editorial coverage of Islam and the Muslims by the selected Australian newspapers. Comparing both the newspapers, it can be concluded that *The Australian* portrayed Islam and the Muslims overwhelmingly and explicitly as violent, radical and security threat during the time period under study. On the other hand, *The Age* used terms ‘Islamic terror’ and ‘Islamist terror’ portraying Islam as a security threat only once in its editorial contents during the time period under study.

5.2.2. ‘Othering’

Drawing on the notion of ‘Othering’ coined by Edward Said (1978/2003) the researcher has explored the ‘Us’ versus ‘Them’ discourse in the editorial coverage of Islam and Muslims by the selected Australian newspapers. Both the newspapers produced ‘Othering’ discourses regarding the Muslims in their editorial contents. However, *The Australian* emphasized more on ‘our’ good and ‘their’ bad, portrayed *in-group* positively and *out-group* negatively. As compared to *The Age*, *The Australian* drew a more clear line between ‘us’ and ‘them’ wherein ‘us’ (Australia, Europe and the West) were portrayed positively and ‘them’ (Muslims within and outside Australia) negatively.

5.2.3. ‘Counter Discourse’

The researcher has also confronted a significant amount of the editorial contents wherein the newspaper portrayed Islam and the Muslims positively. Such a discourse has been labeled as ‘counter discourse.’ The findings showed that *The Age*, a ‘leftist’ or a ‘centre-left’ newspaper, produced a ‘counter discourse’ regarding Islam and the Muslims predominantly portraying ‘them’ favorably. The newspaper, during period under study, focused almost evenly on both the ‘National Islam’ and ‘Foreign Islam’ associating ‘victimization,’ ‘prejudice,’ ‘cohesion,’ and ‘understanding’ with ‘National Islam’ while ‘violence,’ ‘conflict’ and ‘collectivism’ with ‘Foreign Islam.’ The ‘counter discourse’ was completely unavailable in the editorial contents of *The Australian* under study.

5.2.4. ‘National Islam’ and ‘Foreign Islam’

Stimulated by the work of Stephen Mertens (2016) and Roza Tsagarousianou (2016), the researcher has explored the differences in discourses produced on ‘National Islam’ and ‘Foreign Islam’ in the editorials of the selected Australian newspapers. Careful analysis of the findings can be concluded as both the Australian newspapers played up ‘conflict’ and ‘violence’ and portrayed a ‘collectivized’ image of Islam and the Muslims in their editorial coverage. *The Australian*, however, accentuated ‘women underrepresentation’ also. While covering ‘National Islam’ *The Age* portrayed Muslims as ‘victims’ and ‘prejudiced’ in Australia. The newspaper illuminated the need of ‘harmony’, ‘understanding’ and

‘cohesion’. Completely opposite to this, *The Australian* produced the same negative discourses regarding ‘National Islam’ it produced about ‘Foreign Islam.’

5.2.5. ‘Political Parallelism’

Drawing on the work of Stephen Mertens (2016) the researcher has explored the impact of political ideological lines (left/progressive/liberal versus right/conservative) on the editorial coverage of Islam and the Muslims by the selected Australian newspapers. Careful examination of the findings validates the existence of the ‘political parallelism’ discourse in the editorial coverage of the selected newspapers regarding Islam and the Muslims during the time period under study. The newspaper with ‘rightist’ ideological line commented opposite to the ‘leftist’ newspaper on Islam and Muslims, immigration policies, refugees, terrorism, and on political, societal and religious upheavals in Muslim countries and in the rest of the world.

Real and conclusive factor to identify the impact of ‘right-left ideological lines’ on the newspapers’ policy and reporting would be the comparison of the editorials published by the two newspapers on the same day (March 31, 2107) on the same issue i.e., Mr. Trump’s proposed *Muslim ban* and his anti-immigration policies. Same day and on the same issue both the newspapers opined entirely in a different way. Commenting on Mr. Trump’s proposed *Muslim ban* both the newspapers explicitly expressed their policies. *The Age*, as left-wing/liberal/progressive newspaper, criticized Mr. Trump while *The Australian*, as a right-wing/conservative, supported Mr. Trump explicitly. Consequently, the impact of ideological lines of the newspapers is explicitly notable in their editorial contents regarding Islam and the Muslims. *The Age* being a left-wing/liberal/progressive newspaper criticized the ‘exclusive’ policies of the government and favored those politicians and their stance who believed in an ‘inclusive’ and ‘multicultural’ Australia. However, *The Australian* a right-wing/conservative supported the ‘Muslim ban’ kinds of far-right political policies.

So, in a nutshell, it can be concluded that the findings of this study are pretty much in line with the findings of earlier research conducted with the same objectives by Edward Said (1978/2003), Elisabeth Poole (2016), Roza Tsagarousianou (2016), and Stephen Mertens (2016). However, in this case of Australia, the researcher has found a significant counter discourse in which ‘Them’ are favored, ‘Us’ are criticized, and the ‘out-group’ has been treated as an ‘in-group’. This trend of ‘counter discourse’ and promotion of ‘understanding’ is encouraging for the world in general and for Australia in particular because if the country has to uphold and maintain its ‘multicultural’ and ‘migrant-friendly’ image then such a discourse of solidarity needs to be promoted.

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