THE IMAGE OF ISLAM AND MUSLIMS IN THE FRENCH MEDIA: BETWEEN THE HAMMER OF THE MEDIA AND THE ANVIL OF PUBLIC OPINION

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ABSTRACT

The history of European countries has been associated with migration. These states have developed and flourished, economically and culturally, thanks to the successive waves of migration: Spaniards, Italians, Portuguese, Turks, Arabs, and Muslims. Kings, rulers, and peoples of European "origin" treated immigrants in different ways: Welcome, racism, kindness and hatred. The estimated number of Muslims in Europe is 44 million, giving a rate of 6 percent of European inhabitants. Most of them are from the Arab Maghreb (Tunisia - Algeria - Morocco), or Turks, who mainly settle in Germany, while those coming from Asia choose to stay in Britain.

However, the largest proportion of Muslims (about 4 million) lives in France. There are historical and political ties between these Muslims and European countries. Unfortunately, over the years, a distorted image of Muslims has been established through several steps to make it prevail firmly in the minds. Fed by world bloody terrorist events, the media, traditional or modern, played a prominent role in disseminating and making that image prevalent among European, especially French, public opinion.

Research Question: What is the image of Islam and Muslims in the French media and how has the latter, with the help of elite, shaped French and European public opinion?

In a first stage, the study describes and identifies the features of the image prevalent in the French media. It shows, with evidence, how the "problem" of Islam and Muslims is established and shaped mentally through media uneven dealing with religions, absence of media coverage of the common practice of Islam and media emphasis on the issue of Islam of "Crises". In a second stage, the study introduces and explains both the nature and characteristics of information work and activity, the political affiliation of the medium, their impact on handling the issue of Islam, and the monopoly of the so-called "media experts" of media outlets. This could be a confirmation of Maxwell MC Combs and Donald Shaw's argument that: "The media don't tell people (audience) how to think, but what to think about." Finally, the study deals with the audience (accused/victim) and how it reacted, through modern media, to defend Islam and Muslims, address the prevalent image and misperceptions, and alert the public opinion to the transgressions, exaggerations and misconceptions.

Research Method: a descriptive, analytical method was employed in the study with an ongoing follow-up and observation of the French media landscape.

KEYWORDS: *Islam and Muslims, Mental Image, Traditional and Modern Media, Shaping Public Opinion, Audience in Media, Information Work & Media Coverage*

Received: Feb 04, 2018; Accepted: Feb 24, 2018; Published: Apr 17, 2018; Paper Id.: IJCMSAPR201804

INTRODUCTION

The history of European countries has been associated with migration. These countries were structured, and economically and culturally flourished thanks to the successive waves of immigrants like the Spanish, Italians, Portuguese, Turks, Arabs and Muslims, whose number is about 44 million Muslims (6% of the European population). Due to the geographical proximity on the one hand and the language (French) on the other hand, as well as historical links dating back to the French colonial history, these Arab migrants came principally from the Maghreb (Tunisia, Morocco, and Algeria), and settled mainly in France and Belgium. Today, these Maghrebians issuing from an exodus that began in the fifties and the sixties of the last century are in their fifth generation.

These waves have contributed to modify the demographic composition of the European countries whose population is mainly old.

Figure 1:
Source: Pew Research, Ipsos, Mori

Over the years and eras, the different aboriginal kings, rulers and European peoples treated the Muslim immigrants in different ways from a warm ,welcoming, racism, fair treatment, hatred, marginalization, to exclusion.

The greatest percentage of Arabs and Muslims living in France (about 4 million) were given a lot of interest by the public opinion because the media shed more light on them than on others. In fact, Islam attracted the attention of the public opinion due to the mediatized interest of thinkers, academics, security officials and some ignorant politicians in this true religion. Due to the great number of debates and “Fatwa” that were assigned to Islam than to other religions, Islam has been addressed as an issue in France. Unfortunately, bloody global and regional events have helped fuel this "issue".

This research describes and identifies popular and prevailing image features about Islam and Muslims in the French media. It also identifies how the media and the French elite played a major role in inventing the "issue" of Islam, how such an image has been promoted in the public opinion through poor media, and how those who have sought to correct this wrong image have been excluded. Our interpretations and analysis are supported by examples and evidence from the French media, some valuable studies, some people who have considered Islam and Muslims as a golden opportunity for Europe in general and France in particular, as well as my doctoral research (Doctoral thesis entitled Arab television in France and its impact on immigrants in 2000), and finally through living this reality and continuously observing the French media.

This research approach is descriptive and analytical in nature. It defines the characteristics of the phenomenon, describes the nature and quality of the relationship between the variables and their causes, and identifies the aspects

revolving around the problem or phenomenon from the reality on the ground. One of the characteristics of this approach is that it goes beyond the description and data collection to analysis, connectivity and the explanation of the phenomenon, which helps draw conclusions.

The Heavy Heritage

The Muslims' image in Europe has unfortunately been distorted through a number of stages, each of which contributed to the creation of this image and making it firmly prevalent in people's mind:

- The Muslims' image was invoked in the religious and cultural heritage in the West from the inheritance of the Crusades as well as the Western travelers and Eastern research and studies. This helped insert Muslims and Arabs from any era in static molds which led the public opinion to think that the Arab communities have never changed or evolved.
- These distorted qualities were amplified, disseminated and replicated in different ways and methods:
- In stories, novels, and poems Arabs and Muslims were associated with negative characteristics
- In cinema and TV movies, Arab and Muslim actors have been assigned "ugly" and negative roles, and stereotypes.
- Cartoon series have made fun of Arabs and have confined them to a negative degrading image.
- Games played a role in shaping the child's mind and rooting negative and positive concepts and values in his mind
- School curricula
- Advertising and Media

How is the "Issue" of Islam and the Muslims Mentally Constructed and Shaped?

Before talking about Islam, as "an issue" we must first identify the concept of the public issue" from the perspective of sociology which considers that every social phenomenon is not necessarily an issue except if three elements are gathered leading to a collective belief of its existence.

The first element is to identify the phenomenon. To this end, we need to point to the identification and knowledge of Islam (history, principles, practices...) which is a "selective" and incomplete identification", and sometimes there is no minimum knowledge of this religion. This imperfect knowledge is promoted through the mass media by politicians, academic and researcher elite who explain events by identifying Islam as a public issue which makes people suffer.

The second element is mobilizing and recruiting actors –as individuals and groups- who contribute and without prior agreement to nurturing an idea; the idea that Islam is an issue.

The third element is linked to the French model, which is the national cohesion that is "threatened by" the advent of Islam in the public space through the practices of the Muslim immigrants, their children and their grandchildren. In fact, the practice of Islam remained inside the house in private spaces for a long time, and Muslim immigrants did not dare to practice their religion outside this space, i.e. in the public space.

Of course, the three elements mentioned above use mass media, and more particularly television to shape the

public belief about the existence of an issue named Islam and Muslims in France and unite the public opinion around this idea. This makes everyone agree that Islam is not compatible with the French Republic and its principles, which raises anxiety and fear.

The "issue" of Islam and Muslims that was built and shaped mentally in the French public opinion went through different stages which started with the author Salman Rushdie case and the headscarf issue in the Parisian suburb of Creil in the eighties, as well as violence emanating from religious speeches (Paris attacks 1995-1996 / New York and Washington in 2001/2004 Madrid / London 2005) up to the bloody terrorist acts adopted by a group which claims its belonging to the Islamic religion.

Note that many examples of violence caused by non-Muslim religious speeches were not considered as an issue by the media like the Catholics "conservatives" movement against abortion and Gay marriage. According to the reports issued from statistics carried out by "Europol" Institute, although acts of violence carried out by separatist movements come at the top of all acts of terrorism, they are not considered as a public issue.

During the first period (eighties) Islam was gradually transformed from a secondary subject which did not have any media coverage and public attention to a national issue and main talk show in the newscasts, television programs, and columns. As a consequence, a new classification of Muslims emerged: the "good Muslim" and the "radical Muslim". The French society started to have a new idea about the Muslims and considered them as a source of nuisance, anxiety and fear that threatens France ((Edward Mills Afif: Islam, and television: media promotion phases).

This transformation was accompanied by the emergence of new media terms like the Muslim community and the Muslims of France. Contrarily, in the past, the journalists used to speak about the migrant workforce, immigrants and children of immigrants without reference to the religious affiliation. The "Islam issue" has also been associated with migration and the difficulty of the integration of Muslim immigrants in the country of residence because of their cultural origins.

The Culture of the Mother Country

The French television – more particularly the public channels- broadcasts cultural programs which present the cultures, customs and traditions of the different immigrant communities that flowed to France and settled there for a long time like the Italians, the Spanish, and the Chinese.

Research studies have shown that this presentation varies depending on the nationality first and the Press treatment of these communities second. In fact, the Press addresses the culture of European nationalities like the Spanish, the Italians and the Portuguese including language-dress-food- celebrations and events...) as something secondary. However, with Africans, it becomes important and significant when it comes to the Maghreb immigrant Muslims. In addition to presenting the culture of the European and Chinese nationalities as attractive that help enrich the French culture, and as a means of integration in the French society, the Maghreb, culture is presented as a burden and a heavy heritage that hinders the integration, which must be disposed of in favor of the French culture. As a result TV audience perceives the Muslim culture, including the religious component, as something that prevents the integration of Arab Muslims in the French society.

During the second phase (the nineties), the relationship between the media and the immigrants evolved. And a new image was presented to the public opinion consisting of success stories of friendship and love between the sons and

daughters of Muslim immigrants (second generation) and other nationalities including French because such an image serves the tolerant and multicultural France thanks to which the melting and integration model was successful. This was shown in different TV programs, including a weekly program broadcast by the third French channel France 3 entitled "Life in France" which tells the success stories of a peaceful coexistence and the blending of cultures.

The Image of the Arab Woman

During the seventies and eighties, the Arab immigrant woman was limited to a folkloric appearance. In fact the Arab woman was presented on TV as a woman who is good at house organization and cleaning as in the home country, who cooks dishes unfamiliar to the French, does not master the French language, and barely able to look at the camera when she has to answer the journalist's questions; a woman who does not leave the house unless it is necessary, and does not mix with neighbors and other communities, except with some Muslim women; a woman who lives within the confines of the head of the family who does not speak much.

That was the image of the first-generation woman.

With the second generation which was born, went to the school and mingled with the different nationalities in the country of residence, the image began to change especially after the distinction of the Muslim Arab girl at school and her entering the job market, as well as her embodiment as a successful integration model in France, a model spotlighted by the media.

Mother Country TV Channels

During the nineties, Arab TV channels appeared for the first time in Europe's skies as a response to the Arab public request. Arab immigrants were, therefore, able to communicate with their homeland and maintain a connection with it through various programs, news, and content. This helped ease migratory pressures and the sense of alienation in a non-Arab and non-Muslim country. However, the presence of Arab TV channels had different reactions in the media and from the French public opinion, most of which were negative. Many politicians, organizations, scholars, and thinkers' voices denounced the danger of these channels and their negative impact on the integration of Arab Muslim immigrants in the community mentioning the fact that these Arab TV channels would spread extremist religious ideas in France and Europe.

The European media shared such debates and contributed to the promotion of voices and attitudes hostile to the spread of Arab TV channels.

People started to fear the «Islamic spread», the «extremist religious speeches», and the obstacles to the integration of Muslim immigrants and their assimilation in the French society.

Having coexisted with that period characterized by the media and political storm, we decided to look for and investigate the truthfulness of the media, some popular speeches and the influence of television of the home country on immigrants.

After a three-year scientific research using a questionnaire which distribution, collection and analysis lasted two years, the results revealed that:

- Entertainment programs and soap operas represent the largest percentage of programs broadcast by Arab television

- The religious programs are not in a privileged position in terms of programming and in terms of size compared to other programs
- The religious speech for most of the channels is a moderate speech and its content is moderately far from extremism
- The satellite channels play the role of mediator between the Arab immigrants and their homeland
- There is a balance between watching the national TV channels in the country of residence (France) and Arabic speaking channels of the home country
- These channels play a major role, especially during the month of Ramadan and other religious events (Eid al-Adha, Eid al-Fitr, Hajj) and represent a psychological link that eases the pain of alienation
- The scientific research supported by field work refuted the wrong ideas promoted by the French media (Samia Boubaker Ghazouani: Arab TV in France and its impact on immigrants. Ph.D. 2000)

The Uneven Media Approach to and Treatment of the Different Religions

France has been known throughout the years for the freedom of expression, information, and news. Several national events showed the validity of this principle by uncovering some politicians' financial corruption cases and exposing the public transactions in which some people used their influence.

Based on this principle, the French media boasts the practice of freedom of expression in all the fields, including religion, by treating all religions equally and in the same way.

At first glance, the validity of this practice is seen through what has been published by newspapers and magazines, including the most famous newspaper "Charlie Hebdo" which published caricatures and comments insulting the Prophet, peace be upon him, imams and clergymen.

However, when we look more closely and examine these media contents, we find that the treatment is not equal. In fact, there is plenty of evidence for this:

In July 2003 a Jewish extremist threatened 13 persons to death when he thought that they tended to defend the Palestinians. He claimed that he behaved on behalf of all the Jews. The media addressed the issue without reference to the last point. The young man was considered an isolated individual not responsible for his actions.

A young Muslim man threatened a professor of philosophy in Toulouse who published an article in the right-wing Le Figaro newspaper entitled: "What should the free world do in the face of Islamists." He was considered as someone acting on behalf of Islam and Muslims because he issued a fatwa against the professor (Laura Jekyll: media coverage of Islam. 2014-2015).

Similar voices rose: How is the Pope made fun of while Islam is spared such a practice?

We do find some of the caricatures of the Pope, but the final image presented and promoted by the media gives a positive image characterized by praise and admiration.

The famous journalist in Le Monde Diplomatique "Alain Gresh" who wrote extensively about Islam (Alain Gresh: the Islam Republic and the world. 2014) gave an example, in one of his writings showing the unfair treatment of Islam.

In Albania, in the late nineties, an Arab state set up a refugee camp, built a mosque, and gave a headscarf for every woman in the camp without forcing any woman to wear it. The Western media dealt with the event and condemned it as a kind of extremism and even a sign of a religious war.

Not far from the same camp Italian soldiers supervised another camp where Christian prayers were held every week and where the clergymen roamed around the tents and preached. Such an event was not of any interest to the media.

The first impression is that equal media coverage is a wrong fact and that the French media do not deal the same way with all religions.

Media Activity and the Circumstances of its Practice: "Business", Excitement and Time

Media has been playing a crucial role in building and maintaining the "Islam issue" in the public opinion by producing, broadcasting and publicly publishing rough information and knowledge about Islam and Muslims.

The Western public relies on television, radio, the press and new types of media to have an idea about Islam and Muslims. There is no coincidence that the study of Islamophobia has become the subject of media debates and media caricature approach to Islam and Muslims.

Such studies focus on the influence of the media on public perceptions and behavior without paying enough attention to the study of media organizations and the characteristics of their activities, which are governed by another type of reasoning.

The form has become more important than the content, and people have become more interested in the effect than in the event. This approach creates information selection based on what the media want to show, which is the main media practice in religion coverage (Fabrice Dhume: *The way we want to see Islam, a look back at a political and media manipulation* 2012).

The image and press forms have dominated and controlled media work which is witnessing changes and development. This has led to a hasty production of news and information and hence a hasty research and investigation. The speed affected the quality as testified by some journalists. New media practices appeared giving more priority to the form than to the content, letting emotions dominate instead of the reason and cognition, and focusing on image, voice and video effects.

Journalism has become a profession under pressure in recent years: Lack of resources, advertisers' pressure, and lack of time to research and investigate properly. With the need to address the huge amount of news and information within time constraints, and with limited resources the journalists have the only option that of working hastily without thorough research or investigation allowing the media to keep its audience amid stiff competition. The drawbacks of such journalistic work are felt in all domains, and more particularly, in the Islam question. In fact, journalists suffer from lack of knowledge about Islam. In this context, a journalist interested in the religion section in a popular daily newspaper said: "the journalists who make serious research, documentation and investigation of Islam are counted on the fingers of one hand". In fact, most of them identify Islam through, what one researcher suggested, 'knowledge compilation' that is shared among the media

Time constraints + Speed breed press releases that provide an approximate knowledge of the second religion in France.

Mass Media and the Commercial Reasoning

Mass media are exposed to material and financial pressures. This is why they have always sought to keep the audience, which represents their capital, and have closely followed audience figures. In fact, the higher the audience rates, the higher the revenues derived from advertising. In order to keep the same audience rate despite the disastrous material effects and to grab the attention of the largest possible audience number, the media rely on the logic of excitement and emotion at the expense of the ordinary representation and daily treatment of many issues, including Islam.

This is why the media discourse on Islam is characterized as being exciting and devoted to information show. Hence a competition for higher audience rate has been created among the media.

Such a competition generated Press or media based on what a French visual media researcher Dominique Wolton called «ideological journalistic scoops». Media content has focused on hasty and superficial news that captures the public's attention at the expense of reflection and depth, from announcement and news of the show. The approaches are diverse but the goal is the same: luring and seducing the audience to catch and maintain its attention. This commercial reasoning allows us to understand why the media publish articles and topics which present Islam as a dangerous and an imminent threat to the public opinion. In fact, it is because Islam - like other social issues (the issue of the suburbs in France, immigrants and their children) is a media substance full of surprises, debates, conflict and excitement. These properties contribute directly or indirectly to the "stigmatization of Muslims." (Sabrina Sonkand Chocar: media as a tool to promote negative stereotypes about Muslims' image. Reality and fantasy. 2011).

Besides the logic of excitement that has guaranteed revenues, and victimized Islam and Muslims, the French national and local media work on the marginalization and exclusion of Muslims from the media scene and forums because Muslims belong to the social class that is completely absent from the popular media forums and do not represent the public who has a weight and a target for advertisers due to their weak purchasing power. Muslims who try to provide a different Muslims' image from the popular and current one are also excluded.

Journalists and those who represent the mainstream media have more priority. Muslims, on the other hand, become a tool or an "object" rather than a media subject. With the exception of the media targeting the Maghreb immigrants, Muslims and Africans, whose content is dominated by Islamic ads (Halal meat-low cost travel tickets- calls Offers....) it seems that advertisers ignore the Muslims because they do not represent the target group to date.

The variety and diversity of media content, presenting the "Islamic threat" goes back to one of the characteristics of journalism (since the eighteenth century and has continued to be so on television in the twentieth century), which focuses on incidents and crimes.

Islam is one of the issues, thanks to which incident pages and social issues take credit. In fact, these pages represent a financial survival for the mass media because they contribute significantly to increasing the sales, and thus attracting ads that generate a lot of money for the media. To this end, the themes should be of interest to the general public and attract a new audience. In this context, the "Islamic threat", one of the most attractive topics, is sold in a great number of copies, and attracts a high audience rate. This helped increase editorial and audiovisual "auction, which advances the idea of "Islamic threat

Figure 2

Le Point Magazine and its Press File about Islam and Muslims

For example, "Charlie Hebdo" sales rate, which was 4500 copies per week rose to 650,000 copies due to caricatures of the Prophet, peace be upon him, in the 6 February 2006 issue. Also, the September 9, 2012 issue containing a caricature of the Prophet (PBUH) + The Innocence of Muslims movie raised the sales to 150,000 copies.

The competition among the media and the quest for scoops led to creating the need for incidents and crimes in the police stations, the courts, and the government institutions. An interdependent relationship between journalists and official sources of information was created leading to the co-production of information. This interdependence and information sharing has made journalists less objective. In fact, they went beyond the line that separates them from government sources by using the same terminology and the language used by the police in their writings, articles and in all press forms.

Media treatment of Islam is influenced by the particular contemplations of events by the security. For example, the police consider that Islamic religious practices are including veils, niqab, Ramadan fasting and prayer in the mosque as signs of sectarianism and extremism among Muslims.

Such security contemplations of Islamic practices are shared among the different types of mass media thanks to the principle of the circular flow of information and news since the journalists rely on the news published by other media and so on. Such terminology and the particular police contemplations of Islamic practices are spread to such a point that the line between Islam and radical Islam has been blurred. In this sense, ordinary religious practices from a media concept become dangerous political practices threatening public security.

Another media-political mechanism that contributes to the exclusion of Muslims is the use of opinion polls. Despite the criticism made by some sociologists, opinion polls have managed to impose their own concept and identification of Islam on the public opinion. Away from the scientific concept and close to the political one, Opinion polls are not always in line with the social reality. For example, the French press sample surveys and opinion polls about Islam expose the idea of Islamophobia from a superficial and not a deep point of view.

When asking: "Do you believe that the presence of a Muslim community in France presents a:

- a threat to the identity of our country
- a cultural enrichment factor to our country

- Neutral

Tacitly there is an acknowledgment of the existence of a Muslim community, the national identity, and threat, as well as some unspecified features among the three elements. In this case, the public opinion connects the three elements together; and from the majority of the answers, it is concluded that Islam is a threatening danger due to its vision and its presence on a continuous and intensive basis in both the public and media scenes.

The characteristics of press work that "stigmatize" Muslims reveal the absence of true journalistic work, which relies on deep research and investigation, as well as on substance and intellectual independence for the benefit of, economic (audience rate), and political (the owners of media organizations) motivations.

Hence we understand how the media scene led to the emergence of some media "thinkers" who are willing to think and act according to media expectations and provide ready, concise and hasty analyses consistent with the nature of the program.

Researchers and "Experts" (in Islam) and Media Forums

Media forums present experts who adopt social issues and researchers who, though they do not always apply scientific standards on issues and mix the subjective with the objective, still monopolize the media scene. In addition to this, security experts rival academics in the media forums and accuse them of being "gentle" with Muslims, since they justify acts of violence by searching for social excuses. These experts also present themselves as neutral and knowledgeable about Islam and Muslims, especially after their frequent appearance in the media. In fact, on the occasion of the release of a book of theirs related to the issue of Islam, they are often invited to express their opinion.

However, unfortunately, many of these experts diverge from the requirements of the scientific work and press work ethics. They start fabricating and promoting the myth and the illusion of the Islamization of Europe. We, therefore, see, hear, and read an Islamophobia scenario signed by the French elite based on the idea of the invasion of Muslims of Europe.

Similarly, the cultural and literary scene is not devoid of some French books that are popular among the public written by scholars gasping for an appearance in the media. Such books tell and present stories of Muslim women as being oppressed by Muslim men by displaying a veiled woman or a woman wearing the niqab on the cover page; like "Jamais sans ma fille" by Betty Mahmoud 1987 which sold more than 3 million copies in the world, Mariée de force 2005 / Bas les voiles 2006/ Convertie 2009/ Burqua. la révolte d'Aïcha/ Le voile de la peur 2010.

These books probably reflect realistic cases, but the question is: "how are they situated in the media scene?" Other books, on the other hand, are not promoted in the same way, nor do they find the same popularity.

How and what are the standards based on which books are selected for publication or assigned literary prizes?

In an attempt to analyze two studies investigating media coverage of Islam and the suburbs' issues in France, Fabrice Dhume, one of the founders of the association against discrimination in the Alsace region, highlighted the fact that mass media treated the two studies, which revealed the difficulties and racism in all fields as well as the marginalization of the two regions, differently, despite the fact that they shared the same subject and revealed about the same results.

The first study entitled "Muslims in Marseille" was carried out by Françoise Lorcerie and Vincent Geisser from the Research Institute of Islamic and Arabic Studies (IREMAM) in Aix-en-Provence in Marseille

The second study, entitled “ the suburbs of the republic: a fieldwork” was carried out by a Professor at the Institute of Political Sciences in Paris for the benefit of the Montanio Institute which is owned by a French businessman (C.Bébéar). It examined the suburb of Clichy-sous-Bois and Montferrmeil known for the violence that shook France and the world in 2005.

The title of the first study reveals that the Muslims belong to Marseille. Like the remaining citizens, they suffer from the same hardships and discrimination in all fields including housing, health, work, police, and education. The second study, on the other hand, focuses on the local organization of Islam and the disruption of the French model of integration. It also assesses the balance of power between Islam and the French Republic and emphasizes the fact that Islamic principles drive migrants into introversion and lack of integration.

The position of Islam in both studies is quite different. The national and local media highlighted the second study more than the first in terms of the number of readers. In fact, as shown from the results of a survey on Google on 24/10/2011, the number of readers of the second study was higher than those who read the first study on search engines.

Within the framework of the circular flow of information and news, Le Monde newspaper relied on the first study entitling it as: "the suburbs, Islam: The field study that bothers."

Radical bloggers used the article and its title to warn through their comments and reactions against the "Islamization of France". Given such reactions, the newspaper changed the title on its website as a formality only because it focused on the situation and position of Islam in the French suburbs.

While the media were overestimating the results of the second study and attacking the results of the first one, Sophie Manelli wrote an article in the local newspaper La Provence entitled: “ a strange study of the Muslims in Marseille conducted by a rich man: a simple study made by two idle researchers”

The researchers of the first study were reproached for deviating from the media path. In fact, they highlighted the "unequal treatment and the multifaceted savage racism faced by Muslims due to the lack of local authorities' efforts to address such issues."

The researchers revealed to the public opinion another reality about the horror of dealing with Muslims which the French did not wish to see.

Meanwhile, mass media kept overestimating and bidding over the second study in the public opinion. They also mentioned the emergence of the "Islamic lobby" and the bursting demand for halal products. The religious and political issues were intertwined in the French suburbs. At the same time debates of the local politicians about the building of mosques as part of local election campaigns emerged. These debates were only dictated by political agendas.

The second study led to an inevitable break between the Muslims and the French society. Thus such terminology and words have unfortunately painted an image that relies on imagination and revives stereotypes about, the Muslim conquests"

The terminology used has led to an excessive and over- explanation and interpretation of the concept of the colonial threat (Islam) in France. The study also sought to show the spread of the religious authority within the Muslims in everyday life.

Politicians exploited the opportunity to disseminate the results of the study, which were widely shared among the

media

The minister of interior during that period, Claude Guéant, insisted in a statement to one of the radio stations on the "need for the Muslim immigrants to adopt our customs, respect our laws and assimilate into our society."

Thus the media have played a censorship role. In fact, studies and researchers were selected based on the extent to which they could meet the public opinion imagination about Islam. Studies that did not meet such logic were discarded.

In light of what has been highlighted, one can understand that discrimination against Muslims in France is still a welcomed subject in the media.

Moreover, instead of providing distinct opinions which help understand and know about the issue, the French media always host the same guests whether on TV or write about them in columns because their appearance often fuels more reactions and debates.

Hosting Muslim experts and scholars is rare except for those who follow the mainstream media coverage. Generally, these Muslims have some affiliation with a given political party. The quality of Muslim entitles them to debate the issue of Islam without barriers. However, the reality is that not every Muslim can talk about Islam due to lack of deep knowledge of this true religion.

In this context, the issue of press ethics is questioned again: Is it ethically correct to host a Muslim and to present his speech as that of an expert?

According to the Thinker "Vincent Geisser" guests' selection is a practice similar to a game or a play where the roles are distributed carefully beforehand. He even describes these guests as the "experts and specialists of fear". Such a practice sums up the idea of scholars, thinkers, and experts who see Islam from the perspective of a caution thesis. Among these thinkers we can cite the French Lebanese journalist Antoine Safir, the Geo-political Doctor Alexandre Del Valle who compared Islam to " the twentieth century Nazism " in his book entitled "Islamic tyranny and hostility to democracies", and sociologist, historian and political scientist Pierre-André Taguieff whose claims blurred the dividing line between Islam and radical Islam. This type of reasoning becomes a ground for convictions translated into terrorist recruitment and acts. Such are the features of contemporary Islam. Although these ideas are unfounded and generate fear in the public, these thinkers constantly claim truthfulness in all media circles. However, in reality they express a personal opinion and do not rely on serious studies or fieldwork.

The origin of the problem is not these thinkers' thoughts; rather it is the media's monopoly of ideas and attitudes hostile to Islam. This creates an imbalance in the media debates and contributes to influencing the public opinion by tacitly presenting negative views and stereotypes about Islam.

Political Affiliation of Mass Media

Political affiliation of newspapers, radio and TV channels affect the editorial line which in turn is reflected in the selection and treatment of news and events by journalists as pointed out by Vincent Geisser in his book entitled "the New Islamophobia"

Mass media address Islam based on their historical and political affiliations. For example, the right wing Express and Le Point magazines present Islam from a security lens through different press forms using editorial openings and pictorial compositions more than deep contents, articles and files.

"Marianne" magazine which belongs to the left also advertizes Islam from a security perspective. To this end, it focuses on the defense of the "oppressed" Muslim minorities: the oppressed Maghreb women, Muslim thinker's victims of terrorism, secular Muslims, girls from suburbs suffering from the oppression and abstract concepts of Islam.

Many writers' opinion affects newspapers from different affiliations in addressing Islam. They, therefore, present it to the readers and the public from a particular editorial line, a practice that does not comply with neutrality.

So how can journalists be neutral while exercising their profession when French magazines and newspapers do not respect this ancient principle, when in the public opinion, they claim that they respect the ethics of journalism and continue to maintain the myth of neutrality?

"Press wearing neutrality caps helps maintain the trust of readers, hungry for an illusory objectivity, who believe in it because they pretend its existence"

In the same context, members of the French Supreme Council for Audiovisual Media, whose aim is to regulate audiovisual Media, examined some broadcast programs. In fact, programs like "a summer in the city" broadcast by the private channel M6 and "Fear in the city" broadcast by the first private channel TF1, from the number of viewers, were not considered to comply with the profession's ethics.

The Council blamed the two channels for exaggerating the way they presented life in the French cities and suburbs by focusing on violence, the absence of security and safety, and by presenting the indigenous population as strangers and victims in their country, as well as promoting a negative image of Muslims through an investigation of Arab and Muslim immigrants' children.

Lack of Media Coverage of the Common Practices of Islam as A Religion That Has its Own Rules and Founding Components and Coverage of Islam in Times of "Crisis" Instead

Media debates on Islam increase in times of crisis. The journalist Thomas Deltombe showed, in a study of the French TV channels (Thomas Deltombe: The imagined Islam: Media construction of Islamophobia in France. 2008) how some channels such as TF1 use a dramatic style (which carries surprises) when addressing the question of Islam instead of adopting informative methodology and reasoning (People watch the channel to learn and know about the issue or the subject). Excessive and dramatic media coverage of Islam has become one trait of the European and French media scene.

In a study by Laura Gicquel at the Institute of Political Studies in Toulouse (2014) analyzing the content of 98 samples of television programs talking about Islam, it was revealed that:

The word "Islam" appeared in 29 programs which main and primary subject was not Islam. In fact, the subjects of these programs revolved around secondary issues like a meeting between the French President with the representatives of Muslims and Jews in France or the effect of fasting on the performance of the Muslim players in the French national football team.

- Among the 29 programs, only one program highlighted one of the values of our religion; namely the culture of sharing through a family presented as a model, which distributed food to Muslim and non-Muslim families. That was the only program that highlighted charity- a common good practice in Islam and Muslims during the holy month of Ramadan.
- The word "terrorism" appeared in 98 programs, and

- The word “Islamization” appeared in 76 programs.

In summary, most of the French channels contribute to the promotion of events linked to extremist and terrorist groups. On the other hand, they neither provide media coverage nor promote Islamic good practices common among Muslims. The events covered by the media are characterized by violence kidnapping, murder, and fire shooting. This makes the public receive the information and consider the event or the issue as a problem based on a limited glossary (violence).

Enough with media coverage of Islam that present:

- a highly noticeable false negative image of Islam representing less than 5%
- While the majority (90%) of ordinary and common practices are concealed

Incomplete Media Coverage of Specific Events: the Vicious Cycle of Silence

Mass media rely on some agenda which determine the sequence and the order of events and issues.

The vicious cycle of silence: the value of the information is linked to media promotion. The less the media promotes a piece of news or an event, the less they are present in mass media agenda even if the news or event value is genuine. our circle: licence)receive the information and consider the event or the issue as a problem through a limited Del Valle

- Media coverage of a phenomenon does not always match its actual magnitude in the society
- There is some exaggeration in media coverage of a number of phenomena despite their small importance for the society.
- Researcher Pascal Boniface indicates in a study on media coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict how the attacks on Muslims have not received enough media coverage and promotion.
- Fire shooting of a group of Muslims breaking the fast in Ramadan on August 12, 2012, in one of the Paris suburbs.
- A violent assault on Muslims on their way to pray in the mosque (5 May 2012)
- beating a 17- year- old girl under the pretext of wearing the niqab, which necessitated her transfer to the hospital (August, 2012)

The same study showed that media neither cover nor broadcast the daily life of the Palestinians because “this neither attracts the public nor does it achieve a high audience rate”

Based on the public’s sensitivity, there is a focus on feelings of fear, anxiety, and excitement which generate a climate of permanent distrust and fear. This ,in turn, feeds the feeling of insecurity.

Thus, the media discourse provides the public opinion with elements derived from reality, constantly orienting it to think about the negative facts and alluding to them as the main issue through the use of a debating language and tone to make emotions prevail on reasoning.

- A large number of the European public know Islam through the media process of selection and filtering which is a

partial and incomplete vision about Islam

- The European public does not have an idea about Islam as a religion that has its own foundations and practices away from the violent practices of a few individuals which are heavily covered by the media.

Reactions of the Public and Some of the Elite to Defend Islam

Having shared a wrong and incomplete media treatment of Islam, some outstanding writers, researchers, and journalists like Vincent Geisser, sought to express their opinions through newspaper articles and panel discussions. However, these debates did not find the right media promotion. Examples include the editor in chief of the news website Media part, Edwey Plenel who, after the “Nice event” (July 2016) called for dragging all Muslims into the cage of bloody terrorism.

Such media movement was accompanied by the movement of ordinary citizens who, through their interactions on social networking sites, expressed their dissatisfaction, anger or bewilderment of the distorted image of Islam and Muslims.

Entering terms like “Islam and the media” in search engines helps to realize that a lot of people are wondering, debating and committing themselves to correct the image of Islam in the French media.

New groups such as « Until the media stop staining Islam”, “the true face of Islam away from media coverage” “Against associating Islam with extremism and terrorism” emerged incriminating the media and describing them as manipulated and false tools in the hands of politicians.

In the virtual chat rooms, the same enthusiasm against the particular mediatization of Islam is found with every age group, including teenagers who debate and question the following:

What do you think of media coverage of Islam?

Why have media become obsessed with Islam and Muslims?

Do you think that media present a bad image of Islam?

Media "demonization" of Islam

In parallel with the incomplete and mainstream French media coverage of the Islam issue, a great number of people started to debate, defend and correct the image of Islam through the new media and virtual blogs run by Muslims who were born and grew up in France seeking to move the subject away from the incidents, issues and crimes columns, and release it from the biased and prevailing media coverage. The general public has also contributed to adjusting the French media infractions and bias linking Islam to extremism and terrorism as shared on sites like Oumma.com, Al Kanz, Saphir News. Com.

"We do not fight for the victory of Islam but we fight against Islamophobia. Our duty requires from us to fight racism in all its forms, including Islamophobia" as was announced by a blogger in one of these sites

Audience: is THE Guilty A Victim?

For the past few years, a remarkable convergence between the news and entertainment has been noticed seeking to attract a big number of audience and readers. Such a change led to the emergence of a new form of media that combines

entertainment and populism known as infotainment (information and entertainment).

To ensure success and continuity, newscasts, particular television programs or columns must attract and maintain the audience. To this end, mass media present facts and reality in a different way. Since the news turned out to be like any consumable item, it must meet the same specifications of popular goods. Consequently, journalists align with the demands of this market by bringing facts and reality in an attractive way while keeping the same editorial line of the media they work in.

To attract the audience media use emotions heavily. Such a practice does not comply with a deep analysis of the events and news. Thus, media become a magnified and distorted mirror of events. On the other hand, deep and accurate knowledge which requires time becomes a rare practice because research is tiring. It is ,therefore, easier for these reporters to provide and display readymade and lucrative facts instead of adopting moderate, uncomfortable and unprofitable positions which may be boring and repelling for the audience. Here is where evil practices lie: the presence of a given media type in the scene is related to the ability to attract and retain the audience. However, when it resists the mainstream and goes against the wishes of the audience such media will not be able to survive. What is the solution? Where and when does the journalist leave his first goal (information and news) for entertaining practices? Are we living in an age in which a hybrid and a multifunctional type of press has emerged? Can we label this category as journalism?

In our contemporary society some serious, deep, and not necessarily attractive journalistic works are doomed to be watched by a small percentage of the audience on channels such as the European cultural channel ARTE. This channel has been using a deep approach in providing and analyzing news, events and files by hosting all parties involved in the issue in its talk shows. Such valued works have been ignored by other media.

In this modern society where the form and entertainment hold people's interest at the expense of other concerns, some journalists who find themselves outside the mainstream media are doomed to attract a small number of audience. Examples include Edwey Plenel, a former journalist at Le Monde newspaper and director of the famous news website Médiapart.

Figure 3:

Fortunately for France, it is the First Muslim Country in Europe

Figure 4

Ramadan Celebration at the Paris City Hall does not bother me because this is Part of Our Cultural Heritage. Anne Hidalgo, Mayor of Paris (June 2015).

Model: French "Marianne" Magazine Dealing With the Question of Islam

Figure 5: Model: French "MARIANNE" Magazine Dealing with the Question of ISLAM

The front page of the Islam file in "Marianne" magazine paints an image of fear of Islam that threatens Europe (Marianne magazine file on Islam or the embodiment of the unconscious journalists' influence 2012)

The title attracted readers who thought that the magazine would provide a comprehensive and documented journalistic work and a thorough analysis of the file that would reflect a deep understanding of the causes of Europe's fear of Islam but unexpectedly the readers just found the opposite.

Instead of defusing the so-called fears, journalists poured oil on the fuse and did not try to explain and interpret these fears, but adopted these fears from the beginning of the file as fixed truths and constantly sought to establish and confirm them, using fear of Islam as a linguistic style and terminology.

Their work mainly consisted of presenting a blame list on the Islamic religion. Thus, the reader was left with the impression that Islam is frightening, reactionary, and barbaric which will not change and does not want to change.

We read from the first page that the multicultural society project, which Germany aspired to, has completely failed. However, the Muslims who live in France consider France as the land of Islam and therefore their homeland, and will apply the laws of the Islamic legislation.

The liberal societies form a fertile ground for extremists' networks and activists and we (indigenous people), we'll

such an image has been promoted in the public opinion through poor media, and how those who have sought to correct this wrong image have been excluded. The analysis revealed that the French public opinion was largely influenced and oriented towards the Islam and Muslims where a stereotypical image was maintained by media content. However certain French media and journalists defended Islam and Muslims but their opinions had very little place and presence on the media scene. Social media and new media represent a new way that will allow to change progressively Islam and Muslim's image and renew the media debate so it can be more balanced.

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