"Political Parallelism" and the representation of Islam and Muslims in the Australian Press

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ABSTRACT

Recent studies conducted in the UK, US, and in few other European countries have revealed a prominent political parallelism phenomenon in the news coverage of Islam and Muslims. The studies have evidenced that the coverage of Islam and Muslims is widely influenced by the ideological leanings of the newspapers. This paper sets out to explore whether the ideological differences of the Australian newspapers are reflected in the coverage of Islam and Muslims from January 1, 2016 to March 31, 2017. Employing Van Dijk's ideological square and lexicalisation approaches within the CDA paradigm, this study examined editorials from two leading Australian newspapers. The findings validate the existence of the political parallelism phenomenon in the editorial contents of the selected newspapers representing Islam and Muslims. The findings show that *The Australian*, which is a rightist or conservative newspaper, toed the line of right-wing political parties and politicians such as Pauline Hanson and Malcolm Turnbull, portrayed Islam and Muslims in an overwhelmingly negative way, appreciated anti-immigration policies, criticised those who support accepting refugees, highlighted violence in Muslims countries, and collectivised Muslims while commenting on terrorist attacks in the West. On the other hand, *The Age*, which is a leftist or centre-left newspaper, criticised the far-rights for appreciating and supporting the rightist or conservative policies against Muslims, advocated the leftist or progressive or liberal stance, portrayed Islam and Muslims in a positive, supportive and balanced way, and advocated understanding, harmony and cohesion in Australia.

Keywords: **political parallelism, Islam, Muslims, ideological square, lexicalisation**

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INTRODUCTION

The rapid expansion of Islam across the world, as asserted by Zafar Iqbal (2010), led it to become a target of racial and religious discrimination. The era of crusades further cemented hostilities and widened the racial prejudice view of "us" and "them" (Iqbal, 2010). The swift growth of Islam in Australia and around the world (Lipka, 2015; Lipka & Kackett, 2017) has posed a challenge to the Western political, cultural and religious ideologies. In Australia, the growth of Islam and Muslim population is on the rise (Issues Deliberation Australia/America, 2007; ABS Census, 2016) and many research studies have revealed that over the years, the Australian media have been biased, racial, prejudiced, pejorative, overwhelmingly negative, and stereotypical in representing Islam and Muslims (Elund, 2007; Issues Deliberation Australia/America, 2007; Quayle & Sonn, 2009; Rane, 2008; Safi & Evershed, 2015; Susskind, 2002).

Islam and Muslims gained prominent visibility in media and public discourse and in academic research since the 1990s, although with a predominantly negative connotation (Mertens & Smaele, 2016, p. ix). This visibility surged to an unprecedented level after the 9/11 terrorist attacks in America. Subsequently, events such as the 7/7 London bombings, Bali attacks, Madrid bombings, Mumbai attacks, Brussels shootings and Charlie Hebdo shootings propelled debates about Islam and Muslims into the limelight and gave rise to a negative and unwelcoming visibility of Islam and Muslims in Europe (Tsagarousianou, 2016). Muslims have been frequently represented as the most controversial group since 9/11 which has made them the topic of political and academic attention (Alharbi, 2017). The representation of Muslims has been studied in various news discourses employing different theoretical and methodological frameworks within a variety of disciplines.

The Muslim community in Australia has long enjoyed religious freedom practicing their religion and running their own schools and associations. However, many studies have proven that as a result of events such as 9/11, 7/7, Bali attacks, Madrid bombings and Brussels shootings, Muslim communities are now negatively portrayed by the media and these communities have become vulnerable to racial attacks, discrimination, harassment, and prejudice (Alharbi, 2017; Safi & Evershed, 2015; Quayle & Sonn, 2009; Rane, 2000, 2008; Yasmeen, 2007; Munro, 2006; Akberzadeh & Smith, 2005; Susskind, 2002). Hence, this study attempts to map out recent trends in the representation of Muslims in two Australian newspapers, *The Age* and *The Australian,* from January 1, 2016 to March 31, 2017. The researcher assumes that the identification and exploration of the impact of political ideologies of the Australian newspapers on the editorial representation of Islam and Muslims will be a useful addition to the existing body of knowledge.

Recent studies conducted in the UK, US, and few European countries have revealed a prominent political parallelism phenomenon in the news coverage of Islam and Muslims (Alharbi, 2017; Alsultany, 2012; Drunen, 2013; Lipka, 2015; Mertens & Smaele, 2016; Mertens S., 2016; Poole, 2016; Tsagarousianou, 2016; d'Haenens & Bink, 2007). These studies have evidenced that the coverage of Islam and Muslims is widely influenced by the ideological leanings of the newspapers. So, a significant aspect of this study is to explore political parallelism in the Australian press, that is, to scrutinize the Muslims' representation within the right-left ideological lines of the newspapers. In the early 1970s, after the abandonment of the "white Australian policy" in 1972, Australia officially became a multicultural country (Colic-

Peisker, Masa, & Karien, 2016). However, popular public support for multicultural policies and ideology has waxed and waned significantly since then, due to the varied stances and roles of the national political leadership. Thus, the role of the current political leadership in this regard and the stance of the national press on this represent significant aspects to be studied.

Additionally, studies conducted in the US, France, Germany, and Spain have demonstrated that perceptions about Muslims are connected to political leanings (Mertens & Smaele, 2016; Mertens, 2016; Tsagarousianou, 2016; d'Haenens & Bink, 2007). Findings show that Muslims are perceived more negatively by the conservatives than the liberals (Ogan, Wilnat, Pennington, & Bashir, 2014). In this context, it is interesting to investigate and explore the negative indicators in the representation of Muslims by Australian newspapers with different ideological lines and whether these ideological differences were reflected in their coverage of Muslims during the study duration.

The study is set to identify the differences in the representation of Muslims by the newspapers on the basis of their right-left ideological lines from January 1, 2016 to March 31, 2017. Therefore, the study mainly focuses on a key research question; whether the ideological differences of the newspapers have any impact on their coverage of Islam and Muslims.

The Age is considered as a left-leaning (Reimers, 2016) or as a centre-left (Ramirez, 2016) newspaper which supports the left-wing politicians and political parties. The newspaper criticizes the far-rights for conservative and anti-immigration policies while supporting The Labor Party and the Greens for their social democratic, leftist, progressive and liberal stance. The left-wing in Australia favours the "multiculturalism" policy and supports migration in Australia and *The Age* highlights their stance.

The Age is a daily national newspaper in compact format published from Melbourne, Australia. The newspaper is owned by Fairfax Media and has been in circulation since 1854. *The Age* is ranked 6th in the list of largest published newspapers in the country with a maximum circulation of 115,256 copies on weekends and an average 83,229 on weekdays (Audit Bureau of Circulations, 2017). Further, *The Age* is one of the leading metropolitan daily newspapers based in Melbourne which provides breaking local, world and business news along with comprehensive reporting and insightful analysis on day-to-day issues from within Australia and around the world (The Age, 2017).

In contrast, *The Australian* is a daily national newspaper in broadsheet format published from Sydney, Australia and available throughout Australia. The newspaper is owned by News Corporation, also known as News Corp or News Limited, and has been in publication since 1964. *The Australian*, ranked the biggest selling national newspaper in the country, has a maximum circulation of 219,242 copies on weekends and an average 94,448 on weekdays (Audit Bureau of Circulations, 2017). According to the numbers available on LexisNexis, *The Australian* has a weekend readership of 952,000 and on weekdays, almost 441,000 people read this newspaper daily. *The Australian* is one of the leading national dailies in the country with journalists, photographers, and one permanent bureau in every state and territory capital. Overseas, *The Australian* has correspondents in ten major cities around the world including Washington, London, Tokyo, Beijing, Jakarta, Bangkok, Wellington, Honiara, New York and Los Angeles (The Australian, 2017).

The Australian is considered a rightist or as a decisively right-wing newspaper which supports the National Coalition or Liberal over the Green and Labor politicians and political parties (Reimers, 2016; Ramirez, 2016; Neagle, 2016). The newspaper is owned by Rupert Murdoch's News Corp, the largest media conglomerate that owns a majority of the media in

Australia and a news organization criticized widely for its conservative agenda and for its alignment with the US's Republican Party (Elund, 2007). The newspaper supports The Liberal Party for their nationalist and anti-immigration policies and criticises the leftists and the Greens for their liberal and pro-immigration stance. The right-wing in Australia favours the anti-immigration position and *The Australian* highlights and advocates their stance.

This study considers *The Age* and *The Australian* as the representative sample of the Australian media for the desired objective. These newspapers were selected because both of them are very candid, outspoken and clear in their ideological lines whereby the former represents the left-wing political ideology and the latter advocates the right-wing explicitly.

Political parallelism

Political parallelism is a concept that scrutinises the representation of Islam and Muslims on the basis of left-right ideological lines. The coverage of Islam and Muslims in European newspapers is influenced by political parallelism. The conservative press (right-wing) focuses more on violence, female under-representation, and collectivism while covering Islam and Muslims as compared to the progressive or liberal (left-wing) press.

The editorial contents of two Australian newspapers: *The Age* (centre-left or liberal or progressive) and *The Australian* (right-wing or conservative) will be analysed to determine political parallelism discourse in the representation of Muslims. Using the lenses of "lexicalisation" and "ideological square", the editorial contents will be analysed to identify the violence, female under-representation, and collectivism themes often related to Islam and Muslims.

LITERATURE REVIEW

By exploring and identifying the impact of Australian newspaper political ideologies on their editorial representation of Islam and Muslims, the study hopes to add to the existing body of knowledge because Australia is a migrant-friendly country (Alharbi, 2017) that has been providing its Muslim community facilities and benefits for years without any discrimination. The Muslim community in Australia is diverse like many other countries. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, Islam has taken over Buddhism (2.4% of total population) as the second largest religion in Australia (2.6%) after Christianity (52%) (2016). Recent statistics show that the Muslim population in Australia has increased by 77% from 300,000 in 2006 (2%) to over 604,000 (2.6%) (Tolj, 2017). They have descended from more than 120 countries around the world, mainly from Lebanon and Turkey. A sizable Muslim population is from Asia including Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Pakistan, and the Arab countries, and also from US and Europe. Converts form a small section of this population in Australia. Muslims migrate to Australia for variety of reasons including to join existing family members already here, seek shelter from war and conflict in their home countries, employment and better quality of life (Issues Deliberation Australia/America, 2007).

The news media perform a central function in producing and then upholding a particular discourse that affects our daily life and creates the environment where we make perceptions about ourselves and the world around us. Therefore, the mass media reflect, manifest and corroborate (Creutz-Kämppi, 2008) different contending political and societal discourses, which

all impact on the construction of meaning and the evolution of the society as a whole. A discourse is a set of successive statements that offers a language to stand for a specific form of knowledge about a topic. Within a particular discourse, when statements are made about a specific theme, the discourse helps to construct the theme in a specific way limiting any other possible ways (Hall, 1992a).

In this day and age, contemporary media goes beyond international borders to influence public opinion globally and create meaning for the masses. The meanings produced by the media, the ideological power of media and the development of the notion of "discourse" are contested by intellectuals around the globe (Williams, 2003). Van Dijk (2000b) argued that media discourse is the key source of knowledge, attitude and ideologies for both the elite and common people. Media construct the meaning of the world through conflicting and different ways and what we know is based on how things have been represented to us (Miller, 2002). Today's Western media discourse that represent Islam as a threat to the Western values and civilisation portray a grotesque and distorted image of Islam and Muslims (Sharifi, Ansari & Asadollahzadeh, 2017).

The Western media, particularly the British and the US, can be considered as responsible for cultivating prejudice, irrationality, and the distorted image of Islam and Muslims in the minds of Westerners (Alghamdi, 2015; Nurullah, 2010). The media continues to label Islam as a religion that breeds terrorism and violence and Muslims as terrorists. Any terrorist incident around the world is immediately attributed to the Muslims by the media. For example, consider the media coverage of the Oklahoma City terrorist incident and Norway terrorist attacks in 2011 where the media immediately blamed Muslims for the attacks while both claims turned out to be false. After investigations were completed, two fundamentalist Christians were convicted for the Oklahoma attacks and a 32-year-old Norwegian for the Oslo incident. As a consequence of such hurried and unauthentic media coverage and malicious propaganda against Muslims, violent and racial attacks and offences have increased against Muslims living in Western world (Alghamdi, 2015).

Celermajer (2007) quoted an editorial from *Sydney Morning Herald*, where Muslims are represented as a danger living within "us" in the form of an electrician, a painter, and a butcher, who hate and ready to attack "us". Pointing out such extremely negative political rhetoric against Islam and Muslims, the author quoted some reports and renowned politicians like Angela Merkel, the former German Chancellor, who identified immigrating Muslims as a security and cultural threat to the European life.

According to Celermajer (2007), an intentionally constructed political rhetoric and narrative is where the word Islam is conflated with terrorism and women oppression, and where Muslims are portrayed as "aliens" and "enemy within". Further, there is no doubt that violence in the name of Islam has created fear in most of European countries but, still equating Islam with terrorism obscures a significant part of the picture (Celermajer, 2007).

Historically, newspapers in Europe started off as ideological or political outlets (Mertens, 2016) thus influenced by political parallelism (Hallin & Mancini, 2004). Earlier studies have evidenced that political ideological leanings do influence the media coverage of Islam and Muslims. The conservative ideology or right-wing press portrays Islam and Muslims more negatively than the liberal/progressive or left-wing press (Ogan et al, 2014). Stefan Mertens (2016) confirmed that progressive or left-wing newspapers in Europe focused less on violence than the conservative or right-wing press. The conservative newspapers also gave more coverage

to female under-representation and opted for the institutional angle or collectivisation more than the liberal press.

In his study, Mertens (2016) investigated the influence of the "ideological biases" (left versus right) in the coverage of Islam and Muslims by the Western European press. He claimed that various studies demonstrated that politically conservative newspapers viewed Muslims more negatively compared to the liberals. Further, there is clear thematic distinction between the coverage of external and internal Islam. Foreign Islam is more conflated with female under-representation and violence as compared to the national Islam. Secondly, the findings evidenced that the left-wing press showed less violence as compared to the newspapers of right-wing who remained more institutional.

Mertens and Smaele (2016) contended that the ideological differences are evident in the national contexts. In particular, there is a clear distinction between the coverage of national and foreign Islam with the latter, mostly negative.

Taking into consideration the detailed literature review, it can be concluded that the representation, depiction and construction of Islam and Muslims in the Western and Australian media is problematic. Research on the representation of Islam and Muslims by US and the majority of European print media reveal that Islam and Muslims are being portrayed and constructed stereotypically. The studies also suggest that the political ideology of the newspapers plays a key role in their coverage of Islam and Muslims.

However, the existence of such representational trends in the Australian media has not been established yet. The present study is an attempt to explore whether the impact of ideological lines of newspapers in the representation of Islam and Muslims, as seen in the US and European print media, is also visible in the Australian media.

METHODOLOGY

Data collection and sampling

For this paper, the researcher selected two editorials from each newspaper using purposive sampling for the purpose of exploring the political parallelism discourse in the editorial coverage of *The Age* and *The Australian* regarding Islam and Muslims.

Data analysis

The researcher employed van Dijk's (1998b) ideological square and lexicalisation approaches within the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) paradigm as data analysis tools.

There are various approaches and offshoots of CDA developed by major proponents based on different theoretical aspects, for example, Scollon described CDA from the micro-sociological perspective, while Jager, Fairclough and Wodak developed their standpoint from the theories on society and power closely premised in the Faucauldian school of thought (Wodak & Meyer, 2001). The present study however is based on the paradigm of social cognitive perspective as developed and advocated by van Dijk (1993, 1995b, 2000a). This approach assumes that power is exercised by manipulating and influencing minds. In other words, dominance and discourses have a direct social cognitive connection which deems it imperative to critically analyse the (re)production of texts and also the way they are perceived and interpreted (van Dijk, 1993).

Ideological square

The notion of ideology is fundamentally centred in the debates of critical discourse analysis. Ideology can be understood as ideas or belief systems that members of a society share collectively to create social representation of groups (van Dijk, 2000b). As these ideologies are a function of socio-cognitive structures, they can be acquired and abandoned gradually by members of a society through everyday discursive process. An important aspect that ideology represents is the social identity or self-image of a group or individual which reflects the political phenomenon of in-group and out-group polarisation (van Dijk, 2006). This simply means that ideologies sometimes have polarised nature when they belong to opposing groups, for example, the discourses of racial prejudice related to immigrants (van Dijk, 1998a). This usually creates the "us' versus "them" dichotomy where an individual or group members of the in-group portray the group in good light by mentioning the positive elements or in other words, they deploy positive self-presentation. In contrast, they apply negative "other" presentation when discussing the members of an out-group. With the same concurrence, they de-emphasise or downplay the negative aspects of their own group but exaggerate or overplay the negative aspects of their opponents (van Dijk, 2006). van Dijk calls this the ideological square model. It basically has four moves which are as follows:

- Emphasise our good things
- Emphasise their bad things
- De-emphasise our bad things
- De-emphasise their good things (van Dijk, 1998a, 1998b)

The ideological square is a theoretical and methodological approach that incorporates positive in-group and negative out-group strategies. Both these strategies of taking binary positions are manifested through lexical choices and various other linguistic facets in a discourse (van Dijk, 1998b). van Dijk claimed that many group ideologies seem to be polarised in representing "self" and "other", that is, "us" and "them" in terms of "we are good and they are bad" (Shojaei, Youssefi & Hosseini, 2013). The ideological square operates to present a polarised image of the in-group and out-group by portraying "us" in a favourable way and "them" in an unfavourable way (Kuo & Nakamura, 2005).

Further, the ideological square is a theoretical model that emphasises on examining media texts to determine ideological strategies that ascertain eminent descriptions of different social groups (Philo, 2007). According to van Dijk (2004), there are hundreds of analytical strategies that can be found within the ideological square. Lexicalisation and polarisation (US-THEM categorisation) are two of them. Lexicalisation belongs to the "style" and polarisation belongs to the "meaning" domain of discourse analysis.

Lexicalisation

The ideological polarisation is manifested in a discourse through various forms such as in terms of lexical choices wherein positive and negative evaluations are employed (Shojaei et al., 2013). The strategy of employing binary opposition in a discourse is manifested through "lexical items" to portray in-group ("us") positively and out-group ("them or other") negatively. The strategy is one of many categories of ideological square analysis and is referred to as lexicalisation. van Dijk (1998b) contended that in ideological and linguistic studies, the best known method is the

analysis of lexical items. He maintained that words, generally or contextually, are used in terms of "value judgments", "opinion", "factually" or "evaluative".

So, considering the relevance and appropriate nature of the ideological square and lexicalisation, this study employed these two approaches within the premise of the CDA paradigm to analyse the editorial contents of *The Age* and *The Australian* from January 1, 2016 to March 31, 2017 to determine the nature of their Muslim representation.

INTERPRETATION AND ANALYSIS

Analysis on The Age

The following section will look at the interpretation and analysis of the editorial contents of *The Age* which was carried out using the ideological square and lexicalisation within the paradigm of CDA.

Date	**November 22, 2016**
Headline	**Restraint is right call after bank tragedy**

The lexical choices opted by *The Age* such as "restraint", "right call", and "tragedy", to comment on a "terrorist attack" and on Premier Daniel Andrews' response, show the newspaper's political ideology which supports understanding and multiculturalism in Australia. The headline and text underneath it highlights the newspaper's stance against Australia's hard line immigration policy. The newspaper supported Daniel Andrews' call for "restraint" after the attack and criticised those who jump to conclusions, attack the immigrant's integrity, and blame immigrants for everything. The contents of this editorial explicitly defined and elaborated *The Age*'s ideological line which criticises the "rightists" for "casting aspersions on migrants". Further, the newspaper opined that the use of such tragedies for political gains by some "far-right" and "opportunist" political leaders is nothing new. But, such actions cause damage to social integration.

The lead paragraph shows the expanded picture of the lexical items: "restraint", "right call", and "tragedy", used by the newspaper in the headline. The lexical choices such as "right", measured call" and "calm", opted by the newspaper to comment on Daniel Andrews' (48th Premier of Victoria) stance on the bank tragedy shows the political orientation of the newspaper. The leftist or centre-left political orientation is further demonstrated through comments on political opportunists such as "tensions", "needlessly raised", "seize on a tragedy" and "political arguments". Further, lexical items such as "alleged arson attack", "natural enough", "fear to take hold", "horrific and unexpected event", "heightened concern" and "terrorist threats", also show the newspaper's careful, fair, and objective reporting on the issue instead of jumping to conclusions.

Lexical choices such as "prompted", "rabble-rousing far-right", "aspersions", "migrants", "opportunism", "asylum seeker", "an excuse", "to rehash arguments", "Australia's hard line policy" and "limbo", represent the newspaper's critical stance towards the far-right ideology. Through the use of "claim" and "persecuted" to comment on a Muslim, the newspaper painted the man who attacked the bank as a "victim". In terms of ideological polarization strategy, the newspaper placed the far-right ideology in a negative space through comments such as "the

rabble-rousing far-right to cast further aspersions on migrants"… "This is rank opportunism"…"Australia's hard line policy towards refugees". The counter discourse regarding Muslims is evident from comments such as "Mr. Islam's claim to be from a persecuted Muslim community".

The next paragraph contains lexical items: "the right note", "an isolated act", "political weapon", "fault", "tragedy", which portray the political ideological line of the newspaper that appreciates "restraint" and that criticises the use of such incidents as a "political weapon"' by collectivising Muslims. The leftist, liberal or progressive ideological line of the newspaper is evident from the following comments and excerpt taken from Daniel Andrews' statement;

> Mr. Andrews struck the right note with his remarks, urging people to see this as an isolated act… "It is not a commentary, and it ought not to be used as a political weapon by anybody who finds fault with any of the policy settings we have at the moment," (*The Age*, November 22, 2016).

Further, lexical items such as "to warp facts", "particular political agenda", "danger for community cohesion", "careful reticence", "revisionism", "regrettably", "to flirt with prejudice" and "political backing" 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 Daniel Andrews who talks about accepting this incident as an "isolated act". In contrast, the Immigration Minister Peter Dutton's interpretation of crime was termed as "historical revisionism".

In typical editorial-recommendation style, *The Age* recommends that the "complex challenge" to maintain a "safe and harmonious" society, "we" need to avoid "simplistic blame games". In terms of polarization strategy, the newspaper places "us" under responsibility and expresses its "leftist/liberal" ideological approach in the form of comments such as "Australia will not meet the complex challenges of maintaining a safe and harmonious society by resorting to a simplistic blame game"… "Those with agendas to push are better off looking for other examples to fill their barrows".

Overall, this editorial contains political parallelism as a prominent discourse in which *The Age* portrays the far right ideology as an opportunist and hard line policy which is used to "cast further aspersions on immigrants". The newspaper emphasises that the simplistic blame game will not help to meet the complex challenges of maintaining a safe and harmonious society.

Date	**November 17, 2016**
Headline	**US refugee deal could quickly come unstuck**

Using lexical items such as "quickly" and "come unstuck", to comment on the US–Australia refugee deal, *The Age* presupposes the "failure" of the deal. This presupposition was expanded and elaborated argumentatively in a coherent opinion form in the whole article. The evaluations implied by "quickly" and "come unstuck" for the "US refugee deal" is a statement pattern or routine of the editorial.

The lexical choices such as "needless misery" and "offshore processing in the Pacific" used by the newspaper in the lead paragraph corroborates its policy regarding support for immigrants and criticism on "the Turnbull government's anti-immigration policies". In a

polarised style, the newspaper criticises Turnbull's government for "offshore processing" of the immigrants as "the Turnbull government has struck a deal with the United States to offer resettlement for refugees whom Australia holds on Manus Island and Nauru". This criticism expresses the newspaper's leftist and progressive ideology against the rightist government.

Additionally, lexical choices such as "capricious attitude" and "base appeal to prejudice" opted by *The Age* for Donald Trump's anti-immigration policy also reflects the newspaper's liberal and progressive policy. In Australia, the immigration policy is the key factor that divides liberals and conservatives. Right-wing politicians, for example Pauline Hanson, and political parties, for example Malcolm Turnbull's party, oppose immigration. On the other hand, *The Age* represents those left wing or centre-left politicians and political stance that encourage "understanding", "multiculturalism" and support for resettlement of refugees. In terms of polarisation strategy, the newspaper emphasises "our" bad as "Mr. Trump has displayed a capricious attitude towards immigrants, making a base appeal to prejudice throughout the US election"… "Whether he will honour a commitment by his predecessor to resettle refugees on behalf of Australia".

Using lexical items such as "faith", "sustained", "confident", "languished too long", "fate of people", "hostage", "the whim of Mr. Trump", "Australia's indifference", "rights of these people" and "enough damage", the newspaper produces a counter discourse regarding Muslim refugees by supporting "them" and by criticising Donald Trump and the Australian government ("us"). On the other hand, lexical choices such as "simplest and speediest", "island detention", "open gates", "bring the refugees to Australia", "stubbornly", "mistakenly", "insisted" and "harsh treatment" endorse *The Age*'s ideological position in favour of immigration. The political parallelism discourse is evident from the polarisation strategy:

> *The Age* has long maintained the simplest and speediest way to end what still remains a policy of island detention—and the practice remains detention, despite the open gates of the camps—is to bring the refugees to Australia… The government has stubbornly and mistakenly insisted that harsh treatment, in refusing people entry to Australia, is needed as a deterrent for smugglers (*The Age*, November 17, 2016).

In the next two paragraphs, the newspaper criticises the Australian government for its decision to accept "additional refugees" from Central America and holding Muslims refugees on islands. The newspaper lexically labels this decision as "people swap" as compared to the "detention policy" for Muslims refugees. Lexical choices such as "absolve", "moral responsibility", "asylum seekers", "obligations", "expensive resettlement deal", "produced little", "beggarly approach", "to offload" and "unwanted refugees", used by *The Age* paint the Australian policy towards "asylum seekers" in negative light. The political ideology of the newspaper is also evident from the polarisation strategy found in the contents.

The personal and political evaluations and characterisation of Donald Trump, Malcolm Turnbull and of the Australian government ("us") along with presupposed failure of the US–Australian refugee deal is the standard fare of *The Age* in these paragraphs through lexical choices such as "concerning", "contempt", "transparency", "needless secrecy", "on-water matters", "raises doubts", "pledge", "cruelly exploit", "difficult challenge" and "political advantage". The political parallelism discourse in terms of *The Age*'s criticism on the US and Australian political strategy towards refugees is evident from comments such as "the contempt the government again displayed for transparency"… "Mr. Trump is not alone in seeking to

cruelly exploit the difficult challenge of migration policy in an attempt to maximize a perceived political advantage".

Overall, the dominant discourse in this editorial reflects political parallelism because the editorial contents demonstrate the critical stance of *The Age* against the Australian government and Donald Trump for their anti-immigration policies.

Next, the following section contains the interpretation and analysis of the editorial contents of *The Australian*. This interpretation and analysis was also carried out using the ideological square and lexicalisation within the paradigm of CDA.

Analysis on The Australian

Date	**July 16, 2016**
Headline	**Jihadist's deadly hit on liberty, equality, fraternity**

In the lexical style, *The Australian* labels terrorists as "jihadists" or "them" who hit strongly against "liberty", "equality" and "fraternity" or "us". First of all, the "us" versus "them" division is prominent from the outset of the editorial. Secondly, the terrorists are stereotypically labelled as jihadists, which portrays a negative image of Islam and Muslims. Thirdly, "their" bad is emphasised by using "deadly hit", which portrays "them" as violent, barbaric and savages. On the other hand, "our" good is emphasised through the use of positive attributes such as "liberty", "equality" and "fraternity". So, the headline portrays a negative, "othered" and securitised image of Islam and Muslims. This portrayal is present throughout the text in the form of a coherent opinion.

In terms of ideological square, there is a clear difference in the opinion regarding "them" and "us". Stereotypically, "they" are collectivised as "radicals" up against "us" who "cherish" principles of "free societies" such as "liberty", "equality" and "fraternity". The newspaper emphasises "their" bad by portraying "them" as "radicals", "violent" and "barbaric" in terms of comments: "As Islamic State wanes, extremists seek softer targets"… "Images of bloodied bodies, including children and babies lying dead in mangled strollers"… "even the most beautiful places on earth are vulnerable to radical Islamist terrorism". On the other hand, the opinion about "us" is constructed as "victims", "free societies" and "the most beautiful places on the earth" who are "under siege". So, overall, there is a clear distinction between the opinion on "us" and "them" by the newspaper.

The last paragraph contains a clear political parallelism discourse in which *The Australian* expresses its rightist political ideological line by praising Malcolm Turnbull for his condemnation of the act: "Malcolm Turnbull struck the right tone yesterday condemning the 'murderous act of terror' ". This newspaper marks this statement as "the right tone" while *The Age* associated Daniel Andrews' "restraint" appeal as the "right call" (*The Age*, September 22, 2016). Such statements from both these newspapers validate their rightist and leftist political ideological lines.

In the last sentence of this editorial, *The Australian* criticised "the Green's statement" for advocating "respect for diversity and building cohesion". So, the "rightist/conservative" political ideological line of *The Australian* is validated from the comment: "however, the Greens' statement—which did not mention terror, jihad or Islamists and called for 'respect for diversity

and building cohesion in our global community'— showed many in the West remain in denial about the menace threatening freedom and civilization".

Overall, this editorial contains proof of political parallelism discourse wherein the newspaper expresses its rightist/conservative ideological line by supporting a rightist political leader, Malcolm Turnbull, the Australian PM.

Date	**July 15, 2016**
Headline	**Hate preachers not welcome**

According to the Oxford dictionary, a preacher is someone who gives religious talks in a public place (Oxford, 2005, p.1183). And, hate is strong feeling of dislike for someone (p. 713). So, the "hate preacher" refers to someone whose religion is hate, or based on hate, or teaches hate. This headline was expanded in the whole editorial and the "hate preacher" referred to here was Sheik Farrokh Sekalesshfar who was labelled as "radical Islamist". So, the headline is ideologically biased containing lexical items such as "hate preacher" and "not welcome". It emphasises on "their bad" and dehumanizes the "other".

From the very first sentence, the tone of the editorial is very clear. In the lexical style, the newspaper places Australia in authority and emphasises that "Australia cannot tolerate anti-homosexual incitement". The use of lexical items "tolerate" and "incitement" shows the binary position of the newspaper. Tolerate means to accept something annoying or to allow someone to do something you do not agree with (Oxford, 2005, p.1615). Incitement means to encourage someone to do something violent and unpleasant (p.785). In this context, *The Australian* stresses that any anti-homosexual move/statement is encouragement to violence and that "Australia" cannot "tolerate" it. Also, this statement suggests that anyone who speaks against homosexuals is a violence-preacher. In terms of polarization strategy, those who speak against homosexuals are excluded from "us" by the newspaper: "Australia cannot tolerate anti-homosexual incitement".

Further, the next paragraph contains lexical items like "controversial history", "character references", "security grounds", "notorious" and "deported". Controversial is an adjective which refers to something that causes an angry public discussion and disagreement (Oxford, 2005, p.334). And, by combining the word "history", this implies that something is causing angry public discussions and disagreement for so long. So, by labelling the Imam Husain Islamic Centre with "controversial history", the newspaper implies that people have been involved in angry discussions and have been rejecting the existence of this centre for a long time. "Character reference" refers a recommendation or a letter containing good qualities about you written by someone who knows you for your potential employer (p. 246). "On security grounds" means due to security reasons. In this context however, security refers to activities that protect something or someone from some form of danger (p. 1372). And, ground means good reason (p. 685). "Notorious" is another negative adjective associated with a Muslim, Sheik Mansour Leghaei which implies he is renowned for being bad (p. 1039). "Deport" is a verb which means forcing someone to leave a country due to some unlawful activity that was committed (p. 410).

Looking through the lens of ideological square, it can be determined that the whole paragraph is ideologically biased. Muslims and their associations have been dehumanised, degraded, securitised, decontextualized, and termed as controversial, security risk, and notorious. Virtually, every sentence in this paragraph emphasises "our good" and "their bad".

The last paragraph of this editorial contains the following lexical choices which entail ideological traces regarding Muslims: "inciting violence", "the denial", "persona non grata", "zero tolerance", "to preach hate", "Australian radical Islamist", "urged Muslims to unite against homosexuality", "violates human rights", "basic moral decency" and "hate preachers". Incite means to encourage someone to do something violent and illegal (Oxford, 2005, p.785). Violence refers to hurting or killing someone through physical force (p.1704). So, "inciting violence" here implies to encourage someone to cause harm to or kill someone by force. The editorial piece associates "inciting violence" to a Muslim, Sheik Farrokh Sekalesshfar, who has been labelled as radical Islamist. "Denial" means a refusal to accept something unpleasant and painful as true (p. 407). This noun represents a psychological state of patient who denies his poor health condition. Here, this noun is associated with Sheik Farrokh Sekalesshfar who denies inciting violence. In the same way, "persona non grata" is a foreign person who is prohibited by the government to enter or live in a country. Sheik Farrokh Sekalesshfar was labelled with this term.

In sum, the authorities and positive attributes are associated with "us" while "they" are represented as "violent", "in denial of inciting violence", "persona non grata", "radical Islamists", "morally indecent", "violators of basic human rights" and "hate preachers". This paragraph, also, emphasises on "their bad" and "our good," degrading and dehumanising of the "other", and discourses of securitisation, "us versus them".

CONCLUSION

The present study set out to explore the political parallelism discourse in the editorial contents of *The Age* and *The Australian* in covering Islam and Muslims. Inspired by the work of Stefan Mertens (2016), the study examined the impact of right-left ideological lines of Australian newspapers on the representation of Islam and Muslims. The findings of this study demonstrate the explicit evidence of the political parallelism concept in the Australian press. The newspapers with a rightist ideological line commented in contrast to leftist newspapers on Islam and Muslims, immigration policies, refugees, terrorism, and on political, societal and religious upheavals in Muslim countries and in rest of the world. For instance, findings show that *The Australian*, which is a rightist or conservative newspaper, toed the line of right-wing political parties and politicians such as Pauline Hanson and Malcolm Turnbull, portrayed Islam and Muslims in an overwhelmingly negative way, appreciated anti-immigration policies, criticised those who support accepting refugees, focused on violence in Muslims countries, and collectivised Muslims while commenting on terrorist attacks in the West. On the other hand, *The Age*, which is a leftist or a centre-left newspaper, disparaged the far-rights for the same reasons the rightist newspaper appreciated them, promoted the leftist or progressive or liberal stance, portrayed Islam and Muslims in a positive, supportive and balanced way, and advocated "understanding", "harmony" and "cohesion" in Australia.

Thus, the findings demonstrate that the impact of right–left ideological lines is visible in the Australian press wherein the rightist newspaper reflects the right-wing and conservative political ideology as well as portrays Islam and Muslims negatively. On the other hand, the leftist newspaper champions the left-wing and progressive political ideology and portrays Islam and Muslims in a positive way.

In summary, the findings of the study confirm the existence of the political parallelism phenomenon in the Australian newspapers' coverage of Islam and Muslims. Drawing on the work of Mertens (2016), the main focus of this study was to determine the different ways political ideological lines of media affect or influence their representation of Islam and Muslims. In this context, the differences were explored in the discourses of the religion, Islam and its followers, Muslims. The conclusions are somewhat as expected but at the time of this study, there was very little evidence available regarding the existence of a political parallelism discourse and its impact on the coverage of Islam and Muslims by the Australian press.

RECOMMENDATIONS

As the present study had certain limitations, the researcher suggests some recommendations for future research to further expand these initial findings. The abstract nature of the key concepts can be further explored by expanding their operationalisation. CDA offers a variety of approaches to analyse media texts and the key concepts should be analysed using other relevant approaches. Secondly, future research can investigate this topic further by replicating the same procedure for other newspapers in Australia.

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