Summary

Report about the State of the Dialogue of Cultures in the World

First Part
The Image of the West In the Arab Press
Manifestations of the Interaction Between the Self and the Other
Translated From Arabic by Amal Mehio

Résumé

Rapport sur le Dialogue des Cultures dans le monde

Première Partie
L'image de l'Occident dans la presse arabe
Les manifestations de l’interaction entre le Moi et l’Autre
Traduction de l'arabe: Hoda Moukannas
Summary


& Yearly Bibliography of the Dialogue of Cultures

First Part
The Image of the West In the Arab Press
Manifestations of the Interaction Between the Self and the Other
The analyses of the image of the Self and the Other constitute for researchers an important means that allows for understanding the manner in which ideas, facts, personalities, communities and States - which comprise the main events reported by daily newspapers—are perceived. Particularly since the press uses, to a great extent, its power to form mental images of the subject at hand; these in turn inhabit the public’s thoughts and sentiments.

The role of the press has been a growing one when it comes to the image of the West, since the press, in addition to other media, become an important means on which depend the dynamics of the dialogue between different cultures. Furthermore, it is possible that the press exceeds this role in an attempt to create a space for confrontation, where causes, theses and values of a certain culture confront another. In any event, through its portrayal of the Other, the media exercises an influence regarding the representations that form in the mind of the public receiving these media messages. This is regardless whether the Other is a group of people - who have individual characteristics, doctrines, values or a sense of national self - or a State, region or even a simple institution, or finally a public figure.

It should be noted that a large portion of the media’s activity entails the construction of the image of the Self and the Other. The latter is formed using information, analyses, explications, comments, and published viewpoints by newspapers. The cumulative of these form a stereotype image of the Other; which in turn compels any who tries to change or modify it a great
deal of effort to do so. The image of Arabs has clearly suffered from this problem, ever since the Western media persisted in constructing a negative image of Arabs in the 70s, following the use of oil as a weapon in the October 1973 war against Israel. This image has evidently worsened after the events of September 11, 2001.

To better understand the manner in which the Arab press has processed the image of the West, the following hypothesis is used as a starting point for the analysis to follow. There exists between newspapers of different Arab countries a level of agreement regarding certain roles and characteristics of the West; nonetheless, there also exist differences between these same newspapers in the manner in which they process the image of the West, and this in function of the following factors: the theme or issue that constitutes the frame in which this image appears; the type of ideology which underlies how newspapers view the West; the nature of the relationship between the State where the newspaper is published with other States, institutes, or Western entities.

The Problems Addressed by the Study

This study falls within the frame of first degree analysis of the image of the Other. It aims to understand the manner in which the image of the West is presented by the Arab press. We know that the press, in performing its role as a media image builder, takes its starting point in its own ideology which directs its view towards an idea, event on the one hand or a person, community or State, on the other. This ideology is formed, by common practice, from the vision held by the dominating party in any given newspaper since «the presence of a specific social group at the center of control, decision, or at the source of information allows it to present the image of another social group in a manner that reflects its own ideas, and the image of the other that it desires to promote»(1).

Therefore, we consider that the image is formed in a precise frame that reflects the ideology directing the newspaper’s view regarding the West. We use the term frame “to signify the method of selecting, anchoring and using certain elements of the text in order to construct an argument or proof concerning the problems and their causes, as well as their evaluation and their solution. In order to outline a theme, a few facets of the truth must be chosen so as to emphasize them by means of the selection and operation mechanism of emphasis or of dissimulation of certain words/phrases, stereotype images, or even sources of information; all in order to present a number of truths or judgments regarding the theme in question”(1).

In light of the above, it is possible for us to specify the outline of problems addressed in this analytical work by the answers provided to the following questions: what are the attributes, roles and actions which serve as a context for the Arab press in order to present the image of the West? What are the frames through which newspapers try to reflect the image of the West in order to exercise an influence on the readers’ representations and orientations? What are the professional and cultural factors at play when it comes to the construction of the image? To what extend is the image of the West, as presented by the Arab press, participating in the dialogue or the conflict between cultures?

Objectives of the Study

This study aims to achieve the following objectives:

1- To specify the characteristics of the image of the West in the daily Arab newspapers through the roles, attributes or significations ascribed to it and which are presented to the reader in a precise manner.

2- To analyze the manner in which the contexts of presentation of the image of the West in the Arab daily newspapers

(1) حسن عماد، ليلى حسنز (1998)، الاتصال ونظريته المعاصرة، القاهرة، الـدار المصرية اللبنانية، ط 2، ص 348.
influence the characteristics and specifications of this image.

3- To analyze the intersections or disjunctions regarding the characteristics and the frames of presentation of the image of the West in the Arab daily newspapers issued in different countries.

4- To evaluate the degree of participation of the image of the West in the Arab daily newspapers in consolidating dialogue or affirming conflict between cultures.

**Theoretical Frames of Analysis**

The daily newspapers use a multitude of instruments to paint an image of States, individuals, communities, in order to influence the representations and orientations of readers. In addition, the construction of the image is not limited to the dimensions of the questions at play when processing the image of the West; it also includes the themes, the sources of information, the inclination (positive or negative) vis-à-vis the West and its intensity. The analysis takes these dimensions into consideration, and adds to them the expressive meanings of the language tools in use during the transfer of information and of the ideas concerning the image of the West.

Thus the «content analysis of the journalistic image seeks to study the manner in which the ideas and images are expressed and represented; in other words what is called encoding. Additionally, it is possible to produce the content, construct and present it (linguistically) in different manners starting with a background which reflects ideologies, thoughts and preoccupations»\(^{(1)}\).

Lemcke (1995) identified the basic guidelines to follow when analyzing the content of the image of a person or community presented by the media. They comprise three interfering aspects: presentational aspect, orientational aspect, and organizational aspect\(^{(2)}\).


Inspired by the preceding analysis model and in light of the research carried out by the research team in 2009 on a sample of journalistic material regarding the West in a number of daily Arab newspapers, it has been possible to specify the analysis procedures of processing and presenting the image of the West in daily Arab newspaper in the following manner:

1- Process of generalization or specification of the description of the West (as a subject of the discourse). To this purpose, an analysis was carried out to measure the degree of emphasis by the discourse on the following elements:
   a- A specific Western state
   b- The West in general
   c- States that are not part of the West but are affiliated to it politically

2- Processes of expression of actions related to the West (which we find in the discourse) that will be analyzed in light of the following:
   a- The Arab states
   b- Islamic States
   c- Israel
   d- States that constitute the West

3- Processes of expression of harmonious and conflictual relationships in the actions related to the West in the discourse. The discourse will analyze the harmonious relationships relative to:
   a- The international role
   b- The discourse of interests
   c- The discourse of globalization
   d- The event
   e- Israel

   In contrast, conflictual relationships include the following categories:
   a- Terrorism
b- Domination of the global world system  
c- Arabs  
d- Islam  
e- Other States (rival states, like China or Japan)

4- Process of inclusion of the West (or the Western States) in the discourse of different elements of the journalistic material:  
a- The title of the journalistic material  
b- The introduction of the journalistic material  
c- Details of the journalistic material

5- Dimensions relative to the questions asked by the journalistic material when processing the image of the West:  
a- The context of the ideas  
b- The event-related frames  
c- The sources of information  
d- The arguments accompanying the theses  
e- The orientations of journalistic processing  
f- The journalistic molds that present material concerning the West

The Population and Sample Analyzed

All of the daily newspapers which appear in the different Arab countries constitute the population from which the representative analyzed sample was drawn. Accordingly, we have proceeded to divide the Arab world into four geographic sections:  
1- The Nile Valley  
2- The states of the Levant  
3- The states of the Arab Gulf  
4- The Arab Maghreb states  
One or more cases have been chosen as representative(s)
of each section, depending on the degree of homogeneity or heterogeneity in the position of the states of the sector vis-à-vis the West. The sample of newspapers which are subject to analysis are in two categories:

1- Daily newspapers:
   - Al Ahram – Egypt
   - Al Hayat – published in London
   - Al Riyad – Saudi Arabia
   - Annahar – Lebanon
   - Al Bayan – United Arab Emirates
   - Al Akhbar – Algeria
   - Monthly cultural reviews:
     - Al Arabi – Kuwait
     - Al Ma’rifa – Syria
   - Woujouhat Nazar – Egypt

   The following reasons have led us to concentrate mainly on daily newspapers when selecting the sample:

1- The nature of newspapers - daily publishing - which provides a larger media coverage that depicts the evolution of events and questions regarding the West and Western states.

2- The tendency of several newspapers to dedicate daily pages destined to follow Western affairs, which contributes to presenting a more detailed coverage and one that is more diverse regarding the construction of the image.

3- Since the object of this study is to analyze the image of the West in the Arab press, selection of newspapers should be limited to ones that do not reflect a specific partisan orientation. They are supposed to present a balanced journalistic analysis within the different tendencies present in every Arab country.

   The method of “the artificial week” was applied to the procedure of sampling with regards to daily newspapers. An issue appearing on the first Saturday of the month of January
was selected, then the issue of the second Sunday of the same month, followed by the third Monday and so forth, until we obtained one complete week; followed by another artificial week starting with the fourth Saturday of the following month.

Regarding the monthly cultural reviews, all the issues published during a whole year were examined in order to select those that showed the most interest regarding the West. Hence, a sample of 4 to 6 issues where selected from each review depending on the degree of interest of each of these to the ideas and events regarding the West.

The Methodological Frame of Analysis

The Method of Analysis

The analysis employed by this study uses the method of scanning media messages (the journalistic material concerning the West) at the analytical level, as well as the explanatory. The analysis follows a comparative approach applied vertically in order to compare different elements and characteristics of the image of the West in each of the newspapers and reviews studied.

a- The Analytical Tools

The content analysis will be an instrument used to specify the characteristics of the content regarding the image of the West in the daily Arab newspapers. This type of analysis “aims to carry out a quantitative, objective and methodological description of the content seen in communication and media operations”(1).

Other analytical tools include:
- Analysis of the defended theses: we define «a thesis» as «the idea defended». All journalistic material touching on a particular subject is founded on a series of theses (main ideas); the analyst must identify, through these theses, the intellectual frame on which the author is based when

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(1) محمد عبد الحميد (1983) تحليل المحتوى في بحوث الإعلام، جدة، دار الشروق، ص 6
presenting to his/her reader such a subject, question, or event in a justified persuasive manner.

Analysis of active forces at play in order to specify the characteristics, attributes, roles and actions attributed to the West as an actor on the scene of international, Arab and regional events.

b- Units of analysis:

In light of the instruments of analysis used by this study, it seemed appropriate to consider “the idea” as a unit of survey and analysis since it allows the researcher to break down the material to a series of arguments from which it is composed.

c- The reliability and invariability of the analysis:

Reliability was tested by submitting the results of the quantitative analysis questionnaire and the axes of the qualitative analysis to a number of academic experts in order to evaluate the precision of the categories adopted and their aptitude in achieving the objectives of the analysis.

As for invariability, it was tested through the work done by two members of the research team who analyzed a limited sample of the journalistic material relating to the West, which appeared in the daily Arab newspapers as well as the Arab cultural reviews. The average degree of coherence of the analysis of the two researchers attained 0.91 in what concerns the different axes and categories adopted in the analysis of the image of the West.
The image of the West in daily Arab newspapers

1. Ideas and events as contexts for the image of the West in the daily Arab newspaper discourse:

As the subject of journalistic discourse in daily Arab newspapers, the West has manifested in ideational contexts (related to specific ideas) and in event-related contexts.

1.1 The ideational contexts

A main idea, that is clear and precise, is laid out as a frame for presenting and processing the image of the West. This idea has more than often been the issue of the relationship between the West and Islam which assumes a conflicting form at times, and at other times manifests in the form of a dialogue. The daily newspaper Al Bayan has shown the most interest with regards to this issue followed by Al Hayat, the Lebanese newspaper Annahar, the Algerian newspaper Al Akhabar, whereas the Egyptian Al Ahram showed the less interest (see table below).
Different theses have emerged in the journalistic discourse when processing and presenting the image of the West, within the context of the relationship between Islam and the West. An obsessive idea, that of the conflict with the Other, “the West”, has dominated these theses presented by certain daily newspapers, as the Egyptian Al Ahram, the Algerian Al Akhbar, the Saudi Al Riyad and the Emirati Al Bayan. In this context, the discourse has affirmed a number of theses, of which the most important are: “Arabs and Muslims are victims of segregation inflicted by the West,” particularly following the events of September 11, 2001; “danger is greater from the crisis than Al Qaida” which references the analysis of the threats facing the West and more particularly the international financial crisis; “the antagonism between the Orient and the West” which confirms the idea of conflict between the two parties, knowing that the latter is founded on certain ideas produced by a number of occidental thinkers, such as Samuel Huntington, concerning the clash of civilizations.

The thesis that revealed the largest number of occurrences, in reference to the confrontation between the Muslim Self and
the West, was that of “the similarity” between the two parties (the West and the Islam); knowing that these similarities create a sort of jealousy which drive towards conflict albeit that each of the two conflicting parties has expressed a starting point based on a civilization that is clearly defined. The discourse employed by the daily newspapers has affirmed the presence of three fundamental problems which provoke a tension in the relationship between the West and Islam: the reciprocal incomprehension, the conflicts of interest, and the civilization complex that governs the image of the Other of each of the parties. The discourse employed by the Al Ahram was keen to affirm the thesis which states that “religion does not constitute the basis for conflict between Muslims and the West,” but that the conflict is essentially a result of economical and political aspects.

Contrary to Al Ahram, the daily newspaper Al Riyad has focused on the religious aspect of the conflict by affirming the thesis: “the West depicts negative stereotypical images of Islam;” their discourse has persistently maintained that the Muslim woman has constituted the essential pretext to all abuse, particularly the image of the observant woman which the West aims to distort. Additionally, other targets include the position held by the Muslim societies with regards to children’s education and lifestyle, along with the emphasis on the idea that these Muslim societies are essentially “masculine.” From this principle, a secondary thesis is developed which describes the Western media as “a machine of falsification.”

The daily newspaper Al Bayan has celebrated the presence of Barak Obama at the head of US leadership and has insisted on his aptitude to present a set of solutions which will be able to solve a large number of problems that are aggravating the conflict between the West and Islam. A number of theories have been illustrated in this context, of which the most important are: “Obama holds a new stream of thought” and “black Obama in the White House.”

When analyzing the conflicting aspects in the relationship between Islam and the West, it is important to note that daily
newspapers in the Gulf region (Al Bayan and Al Riyad) have highlighted a thesis advocating “the non-politicization of oil” in what concerns the Gulf petrol and its exportation to the West.

The daily newspaper Al Akhbar considers the West a colonial entity which makes confrontation inevitable. It has insisted on a number of theses, of which the most important are: “the West tries to crush the identity of the people,” this thesis is illustrated and represented by the Algerian case with its historic struggle against the French colonialism and its attempts to crush the Algerian identity whose resistance was fierce. The woman constituted an essential element on which the discourse was based in an effort to explain the attempts of “the Western Other” to crush the identity of the Algerian people and which we can resume the position advocated in this sense by saying that “the West used the woman as a gateway to crush the Arab and Muslim identity.” The Algerian daily newspaper has set a number of conditions which have to be met before any dialogue with the West can take place. These can be summarized into two main conditions: “the West has to divest itself from its feeling of superiority vis-à-vis others” and “the Western media has to refrain from distorting the image of Islam.”

The two daily newspapers, Al Hayat and Annahar, have more than often tried to shed light on the aspect of dialogue in the relationship between the West and Islam. The discourse held by Al Hayat presents a number of theses to this effect, of which the most important are: “the Muslim thought and the Western thought are based on dialogue;” “the Self benefits from the Western Other;” in addition to a particular focus on “the flagellation of the Self that is weak in front of the Other.” In this last context, the discourse insists in some instances on the “Chauvinism of the Self” and on the “recoil of the Muslim communities in the West.” Furthermore, it has criticized the West for “possessing of an illusionary power” and “contributing to the development of the human being in order to kill him.”

The discourse of the daily newspaper Annahar has adopted the invitation to open up to Western civilization as a frame for processing and presenting the image of the West.
has affirmed a number of theses, of which the most important are: “the human civilization is an indivisible whole;” “accept the culture of tolerance;” “the West constitutes a reference for Arabs.” The discourse has put forth a number of theses that reflect the local Lebanese reality and its specificity when dealing with concepts relating to the Western civilization. Among these theories we note the following: “the Chiite ideology is an open one,” “the Lebanese Christians have more easily accepted the Western values.”

1.2. Event-related contexts:

A number of events have constituted a frame for processing and presenting the image of the West. However, one event stands out among all the others: the Arab-Israeli conflict. It has occupied most of the discourse and as a result reduced the allotted space in proportion to other events such as the Iranian nuclear file, the minaret crisis in Switzerland, the war against terror and the aggression against Muslims in the West (see table below).

Table 2
Events that have constituted the frame for processing and presenting the image of the West in the daily Arab newspaper discourse.
1.2.1. The Arab-Israeli conflict:

The discourse presented by daily newspapers tried hard to present, a propos of the Arab-Israeli conflict, an image of the West which is based on the following thesis: “the West holds the ins and the outs of the conflict.” It constantly asserts that western states, and more particularly the United-States, are capable of inflicting change. It also states that the West, represented by the United States, is subject to influence by Zionist lobbyists who interfere in the decision-making and impose on Americans certain politics and orientations susceptible to serve the expansionist ambitions of Israel in the Arab region; the latter is used to affirm the thesis that “the United States submits to the Israeli influence.” It is interesting to note how the discourse has been keen to point out that “the West is the reason behind the creation of the State of Israel” which was created to compensate the Jews, at the expense of the Arabs, for their suffering during the Holocaust. The discourse sheds light on the role of the American media—as a component of the Western culture—and its partisan position in favor of Israel in the conflict facing Arabs. It demonstrated how newspapers used the content at hand to distort the state of affairs of Arab states that are in conflict with Israel.

Within the framework of “the Western transformation” thesis, the discourse has attempted to celebrate the changes which took place in American politics, relative to the Arab-Israeli conflict, after Obama’s accession to the White House. The discourse has insisted that “the creation of a Palestinian state is the sole guarantee to ensure stability in the region” and the only way to rectify the Arabs’ image of the West.

1.2.2. The Iranian nuclear file:

The discourse of the daily newspaper Al Ahram, when addressing the Iranian nuclear file, did not consider treating the West as a party in the confrontation with Iran. It chose to underscore the thesis that “the International Agency for Atomic Energy represents the United States” and is in charge
of leading the fight to hinder the development of the Iranian nuclear potential. Moreover, it asserted that “America is capable of leading a military action but that it prefers peace” and it explained using the following thesis the reason why Americans backed down when faced with military confrontation by Iran: the United States decided on “putting interests in front of military confrontation” which pushed it to “deal delicately with Iranian ambitions.” Lastly, Al Ahram asserts that “an Israeli attack against Iran is a not an easy undertaking.”

1.2.3. The minaret crisis in Switzerland:

It is possible to state that the predominant thesis relating to this subject keenly pointed out by the daily newspaper Al Riyad is that “Europe has been polluted.” It explained the results of the Swiss referendum, which prohibited the construction of minarets in Switzerland, by asserting that Europe has been polluted especially when considering how the European societies and its protestant kingdoms where once a haven for reformists and liberals during the 17th century. The daily newspaper Al Bayan affirms that this crisis has demonstrated the degree of division and contradiction that characterizes the West when it comes to Arabs and Islam: simultaneously, as the United States and the European Union were criticizing the referendum, the majority of the Swiss people said “yes” to prohibiting the construction of minarets in their country.

Moreover, Al Ahram shed light on the theory which states that “the practices of the Muslim Self has angered the Western Other,” and has offered an explanation to the decision of the Swiss State: “the idleness and failure of Arabs have rendered them powerless in front of the West.”

1.2.4. The war against terrorism:

As regards the war against terrorism, the daily newspapers have set forth the thesis which stated that “cooperation is key when facing terrorism and Al Qaida” by affirming the need for Arab states, confronted to Al Qaeda, to cooperate with the
United States—more particularly, Yemen and Saudi Arabia. They were also keen to cite the importance of the support provided by the US intelligence to Arab States that have to deal with Al Qaeda.

On the other hand, doubts were expressed with regards to the West’s ability to guarantee major results in its war against terrorism because “it has fought terrorism using military action and not through the means of development.”

1.2.5. The aggression against Muslims in the West:

Al Ahram refused to use the death of the Egyptian citizen Marwa Al Charbini in Germany as a pretext to cause any media upheaval against the West with regards to this incident. It affirmed that “there are victims of extremism in the East as well as in the West.”

Conversely, the daily newspaper Al Riyad used « the Western conspiracy against Islam » thesis to describe the above incident which falls within the frame of the series of hostilities towards Islam by Western extremists. The discourse thus drew an analogy between what happened to the young doctor and her husband in Germany and what happened during the Tatar era. Al Bayan, however, insisted on the notion of “Islamophobia,” which made its appearance in Europe during a political and cultural climate that was set against the Arab and Muslim values and rights.

2- The notion of the Western Other and the Self in themes covered by daily newspapers:

The media discourse of the daily newspapers took interest in a variety of themes when handling the image of the West and presented certain characteristics of that image which it aimed to ingrain in its readers. These themes are presented in the order of their importance: politics, civilization, military, religion and culture (see table below).
Table 3
The contextual themes for processing and presenting the image of the West in the discourse of daily newspapers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Politics</td>
<td>178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civilization</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Military</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religion</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above table allows us to conclude that the image of the West was formed thematically—within a triangle. The base of that triangle is politics, whereas civilization forms the first face of the triangle, and religion (and sometimes military conflict) its second face.

The political context has influenced the development of the image of the West within the journalistic discourse of daily newspapers. This proves that “Arab” thought regarding the West rests on a political frame and themes that have a political dimension within which the West constitutes a major player. The civilization theme has also occupied an important status particularly in reference to the “West and Islam duo” and to the dialogue/clash of civilizations. Then follows the military theme which concerns certain aspects of the war on terrorism and the Iranian nuclear crisis; the religion theme relates to the position held by the West vis-à-vis Islam where some events have showed a degree of racism towards Muslims, whether they live in the Muslim world or in the West.

The answer to the question “which West do these themes refer to?” is essential to clarifying the perception of the West