

**Media Effect on Public Opinion:
A Monograph on
"Anti-Islamic Brainwashing Discourse"**

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مدرس اللغويات الإنجليزية بجامعة الأزهر

Abstract

This paper attempts to explain the effect of media on public opinion in the light of "brainwashing" theory. After reviewing the history of the term "brainwashing", the researcher provides detailed illustration of its modern applications especially the techniques used in "destructive cults" to convince their members commit suicidal attacks. Then, the research focuses on the "Nation of Islam" as a famous example of destructive cults to show how the media coverage of this perverted movement had dangerous effects on the public opinion in America that helped create an illusive kind of discourse that researcher refers to as "anti-Islamic Brainwashing discourse" .

Introduction

Media has contracted the whole world into a small global village. Through its diverse forms, media can spread news instantaneously and enable people all over the world communicate quite easily. No one can deny the vital role that media plays in cultivating people and enlightening them. However, media is a double-edged sword that can be dangerously exploited to destroy values, break norms, and spoil identities. It is impossible to assume that media is made up of completely unbiased information and that its sponsors do not impose their own views upon the material being supplied to media users. They can manipulate news and juggle facts with opinions and make true stories false to render them more eye-catching to recipients. People fail in many cases to distinguish between true news and fabricated stories. A famous trick that some media masters use to delude public opinion is to provide

people with one-sided accounts of stories by mentioning details and *un*-mentioning others. It goes without saying that the repeated exposure of people to manipulative media has its negative effects on their knowledge, attitudes, and behavior.

This paper attempts to explain the effect of media on public opinion in the light of "brainwashing" theory. After reviewing the history of the term "brainwashing", the researcher provides detailed illustration of its modern applications especially the techniques used in "destructive cults" to convince their members commit suicidal attacks. Then, the research focuses on the "Nation of Islam" as a famous example of destructive cults to show how the media coverage of this perverted movement had dangerous effects on the public opinion in America that helped create an illusive kind of discourse that the researcher refers to as "anti-Islamic Brainwashing discourse".

What's "Brainwashing"?

Brainwashing is a severe form of social influence that causes changes in someone's way of thinking without that person's consent and often against his will. The "brainwasher" - that is, the influencing agent - actively breaks down the target's identity and replaces it with another set of behaviors, attitudes and beliefs that work in the target's current environment. So invasive is the influence that it requires the total isolation and dependency of the subject, which is why the most familiar brainwashing occurs in cults or prison camps (Sharecare).

The concept of brainwashing was originally developed by the anti-communist American journalist Edward Hunter (1902 - 1978) in the 1950s to explain how the Chinese communist government applied mind control techniques to propagate for communism and increase its popularity:

Brain washing became the principal activity on the Chinese mainland when the Communists took over. Unrevealed tens of thousands of men, women, and children had their brains washed. They ranged from students to instructors and professors, from army officers and municipal officials to

reporters and printers, and from criminals to church deacons. There were no exceptions as to profession or creed. Before anyone could be considered trustworthy, he was subjected to brain-washing in order to qualify for a job in the "new democracy." Only then did the authorities consider that he could be depended upon, as the official expression is worded, to "lean to one side" (Soviet Russia's) in all matters, and that he would react with instinctive obedience to every call made upon him by the Communist Party through whatever twists, turns, or leaps policy might take, no matter what the sacrifice. He must fight by all possible means and be ready, too, with the right answer for every contradiction and evasion in Party statements. (Hunter 4,5)

Although Hunter's conclusions about brainwashing in Communist China were refuted by many following scholars, the term "brainwashing" –with its numerous translations –became part of the collective consciousness of peoples around the world and Hunter's ideas got adopted as truth (Melton Brainwashing). Later, the word "brainwashing" was listed in dictionaries and brainwashing techniques had wider applications in social and cultural domains. One of the most dangerous applications of brainwashing techniques is that used in cults and religious groups. The clinical psychologist and researcher Margaret Thaler Singer (1921- 2003) - a prominent figure in the study of brainwashing and coercive persuasion in cults and religious groups - argues that cults exploit brainwashing strategies to control the minds of their members:

Cults use drastic techniques of control . . . techniques that in some respects resemble the political indoctrination methods prescribed by Mao Tse Tung during the communist revolution and its aftermath from 1945 to 1955 in China. These techniques, described by the Chinese as 'thought reform' or ideological remolding were labeled 'brainwashing' by the American journalist Edward Hunter

(1951, 1958). Such methods were studied in depth after the Korean War by a number of Western scientists (qtd.in Melton Brainwashing)

The application of those techniques, she added, led members of religious groups to become incapable of making decisions or thinking creatively and rendered their responses to questions naively stereotyped.

In her book Brainwashing and the Science of Thought Control (2004), psychologist Kathleen Taylor (1953--) specifies four aspects of the process of controlling human mind through brainwashing techniques: (1) purposeful nature, (2) 'cognitive difference' between the beliefs held by a victim before and after brainwashing, (3) timescale over which belief change occurs, and (4) the use of brainwashing as a 'concept of last resort':

(1) Purpose

According to Taylor, "brainwashing" cannot happen by accident; it must be purposefully applied to control a person's mind: "Brainwashing is a deliberate act; that is, intentional behavior on the part of the brainwasher is part of the essence of brainwashing . . . the action is intended and carried out in order to change the victim." (14)

(2) Cognitive difference

The beliefs of a brainwashed victim, explains Taylor, must differ diametrically from the beliefs he used to adopt before brainwashing:

For prisoners in Chinese thought-reform camps, adopting the prevalent (Communist) belief system was the only way out of extreme deprivation and torture. Yet some continued publicly to maintain these 'enemy' beliefs even once they were back in the United States. Given the strength of feeling about anything Communist-related at the time, this was not a prudent way to behave. Beliefs acquired through brainwashing, like beliefs acquired by more routine methods, may not actually benefit the holder. In some cases they may be positively harmful.' (15)

(3) Timescale

Brainwashing, according to Taylor, takes place abruptly in a short time not throughout long gradual phases:

'consider my friend Keith's extremely strong belief in Christianity. If Keith were to vanish for a month and then reappear a fervent atheist I would suspect that someone had been exerting undue influence, whereas if I hadn't seen Keith for ten years I would be much more likely to attribute the lapse to natural causes. In other words, the shorter the time of transition – between old and new beliefs – the more likely that some form of brainwashing has occurred.' (16)

(4) Last resort

Finally, Taylor argues that brainwashing (when it is not being used as a casual insult) is often a 'concept of last resort', typically invoked only when no other explanation is apparent (16)

Besides, Taylor mentions two other aspects of brainwashing:

The **first** is the strength of the beliefs involved, and their association with emotion, both during the brainwashing itself and later, in the victim's response to attacks on their new beliefs. People who work with victims of cults, for example, often observe that the new beliefs are associated with extremely emotional states. Challenging such a belief rationally is difficult if not impossible. The victim not only perceives any such challenge as hostile but refuses to engage in rational debate; the new beliefs are considered 'sacred' and beyond the reach of reason'. (16)

The **second** aspect is the use of force and terror: the coercion in coercive persuasion. In brainwashing of the type allegedly carried out on the US prisoners in Korea, force was very much of the essence. The guards were trying to break their captives down; both mental and physical tortures were employed to achieve this. However, although force is often used, it is not essential. Many cults woo their victims with

love, rather than brutality... The most disconcerting thing about some victims of alleged brainwashing is the vehemence with which they claim to have free will, to have chosen their destiny rather than to have been coerced into it. (17)

This means that cults apply brainwashing techniques to guarantee full control of their members and reduce them into blindly-obedient robots. Before explaining how cults use brainwashing techniques, it is important to know what is meant by "a cult".

What Is a Cult?

The word cult can be broadly defined as a "formal religious veneration," "a system of religious beliefs and its body of adherents," "a religion regarded as 'unorthodox or spurious,'" "great devotion to a person or idea" as well as "persons united by devotion or allegiance to an artistic or intellectual movement or figure." (Ross). "A cult", according to Taylor, is a hierarchical group:

there is usually one leader and a number of followers (who may themselves have varying status, e.g. novice, adept, leader's favourite, and so on). Leader and followers bring very different needs to, and derive different satisfactions from, the group. In psychological terms, leaders raise the issue of charisma, followers that of dependence. Both are bound together in the group by a shared 'cognitive landscape': a commonwealth of ideas, beliefs, attitudes, and feelings. (57)

Cult followers typically consider their leaders divine or, at least, mandated by some supreme authority (God, fate, the forces of history, or whatever ethereal ideas fits their particular world view) to change the universe. (50)

A "destructive cult" is a subcategory of cults that refers to "a cult or other religious movement which has caused harm to its members or other people, or which will likely do so" (Robinson) Psychiatrist Robert Jay Lifton (1926--) delineated three primary characteristics of destructive cults:

1. A charismatic leader, who increasingly becomes an object of worship as the general principles that may have originally sustained the group lose power. That is a living leader, who has no meaningful accountability and becomes the single most defining element of the group and its source of power and authority.

2. A process [of indoctrination or education is in use that can be seen as] coercive persuasion or thought reform [commonly called "brainwashing"]. The culmination of this process can be seen by members of the group often doing things that are not in their own best interest, but consistently in the best interest of the group and its leader.

3. Economic, sexual, and other exploitation of group members by the leader and the ruling coterie. (qtd in Ross)

Brainwashing Techniques in Destructive Cults

Cults resort to a process of thought reform to wash the brains of their members and convince them that violence is the only way to reform society. Explaining how cult leaders convince their followers to commit suicidal attacks, the psychologist Dr. Marc Galanter specified four steps: "group isolation", "leader grandiosity and paranoia", "absolute dominion", "government mismanagement. Isolation can lead to extreme actions because groups reduce the possibility of external feedback to their actions and operate solely on the basis of internally constructed definitions of events. Movements can isolate themselves from conventional society either through geographic separation or constant mobility. The leaders' need to maintain absolute control produces paranoid fears that others inside or outside the movement will usurp their power. In order to protect their positions, leaders create a siege mentality within the group in order to maintain solidarity and loyalty. Movements may also exercise centripetal control mechanisms that closely regulate members' lives, leading to absolute domination of

individual's thoughts and behavior. Governmental mismanagement refers to agencies' failure to immediately control illicit activity and to prevent young adults from being enticed into these movements. (Galanter 179-184)

The above shows that destructive cults systematically apply brainwashing techniques to exploit their members and urge them to shed blood. What facilitates their mission is the fact that religious ideas – as well as political ones – call for noble principles that are SOMETIMES manipulated to delude naïve followers. According to Taylor, both political and religious ideas are "ethereal" ideas that tend to arouse fervent "emotions" and lead to bloody "consequences" in the end:

Ideas

Both politics and religion call on certain core ideas (freedom, a State, God) which are so highly abstract that I will refer to them as 'ethereal'. Ethereal ideas are so ambiguous that they are often interpreted very differently by different individuals (political theorists describe political ethereal ideas, such as liberty and equality, as 'essentially contested'). This ambiguity makes them hard to challenge with rational debate; participants in such a debate may, in effect, be talking at cross-purposes. Speakers often use such 'glittering generalities' to mask impracticalities, hidden catches or other devils in the detail of their aims and objectives, or in the hope of evoking an emotional response from their audience which will increase the level of commitment to their agenda. As well as being abstract and ambiguous, ethereal ideas are value-laden . . . Viewed as supremely important in themselves, they come with a huge accumulated emotional baggage, and encourage a sense of superiority in believers. (40)

The Emotions

While the abstract nature of ethereal ideas allows their adherents to avoid focusing on difficult practicalities (like how to be sure what God wants, or when exactly freedom will have been achieved), these concepts are not detached from reality.

Far from it: they gain their power by being linked to specific, highly emotive examples. Human brains tend to associate two stimuli perceived at the same time, a skilled speaker will make use of this, trying for instance to associate a perceived or real injustice with an ethereal idea. (40)

The consequences

Ethereal ideas are generally bloodstained. Valued more highly than human life, they also facilitate the processes whereby, firstly, ends can come to justify means, and secondly, people who don't accept the ideas' supremacy can be seen as less than human. In other words, ethereal ideas encourage totalist thinking . . . They therefore can be, and all too often are, used to justify acts of terrorism. To the victim, or to us who look on, it may seem unimaginable that human beings could do such things to others, could knowingly and calmly fly a planeload of people into a skyscraper, or bomb a hotel, or look a child in the eyes and then blow out its brains. Groping for explanations, we use terms like evil, mad, or – if we perceive a controlling agent – brainwashed. We also react with hostility and sometimes repression, providing a clear external threat which serves to strengthen the emotional commitment for terrorists. (41)

Question of Research

The paper at hand analyzes the negative effect of media on public opinion in the light of brainwashing theory. It shows how media can brainwash peoples' mentalities by diffusing the mistaken ideas of destructive cults on a large scale. As mentioned before, Taylor argues that brainwashing takes place abruptly in a short time not throughout long gradual phases (16). Besides, she indicates that the leader and members of a group "are bound together in the group by a shared 'cognitive landscape': a commonwealth of ideas, beliefs, attitudes, and feelings" (57). This research attempts to test the validity of these ideas in media discourse by posing two questions:

1- Does brainwashing occur just abruptly or could it be applied on a long-term basis?

2- Is the "cognitive landscape" of a cultish group shared only by its leaders and members or could it be shared by other common people? In other words; does the brainwasher of a cult victimize only a limited number of followers inside the group or does he, by disseminating his corrupt ideas through the media, brainwash a broad spectrum of common people in society?

In order to find answers for these questions, the researcher will analyze an extremely notorious cultish phenomenon in the United States known as the Nation of Islam (NOI). The analysis will shed light on the history of the movement and show its effects on the public opinion of the American society.

The Nation Of Islam (NOI)

The Nation of Islam (NOI) is an African American movement and organization founded in 1930 and known for its teachings combining elements of traditional Islam with Black Nationalist ideas. The Nation also promotes racial unity and self-help and maintains a strict code of discipline among members. Muslim teachings were tied to Black Nationalism by Noble Drew Ali, originally Timothy Drew (1886–1929), who founded the Moorish Science Temple of America in Newark, New Jersey, in 1913. He produced a new sacred text, *The Holy Koran* that bears little resemblance to its namesake and was based on his limited knowledge of Islam and on spiritualist teachings.

Among those associated with the Moorish Science Temple was a peddler named Wallace D. Fard (or WaliFard Muhammad). In 1930, claiming that he was Noble Drew Ali reincarnated, Fard founded the Nation of Islam in Detroit, Michigan, and designated his able assistant, Elijah Muhammad, originally Elijah Poole, to establish the Nation's second centre in Chicago. When problems erupted in the Detroit headquarters in 1934, Elijah Muhammad stepped in and took

control. While Fard retired into obscurity, Elijah taught that Fard was a Prophet (in the Muslim sense) and a Saviour (in the Christian sense) and that he represented the very presence of Allah. Muhammad provided what Fard lacked—strong leadership and a coherent theology. His teachings included many of the basic tenets of Islam, including monotheism, submission to Allah, and a strong family life, and these tenets were promoted in the Nation's parochial schools. Elijah also borrowed from traditional Islamic behavioral practices, including the refusal to eat pork or to use tobacco, alcohol, or illicit drugs. He tied these beliefs and practices to a myth designed especially to appeal to African Americans. (Melton, Nation)

Brainwashing means at NOI (Strategic distortion of Islam)

Since the first day it was founded, the NOI applies brainwashing tactics that are intended to pollute the teachings of Islam with violent, racist, cultish, separatist, and Zionist ideologies in the minds of both the members of the group and the American society as a whole. Here follows an illustration of those tactics:

1- Temples of the NOI

Individual temples, or mosques, of the NOI are located in various cities throughout the United States, but all are under the complete discipline of the national headquarters at Chicago. Elijah has designated altogether 38 numbered temples, one of which has been inactive for several years. The 37 active numbered temples are attended by about 4,300 of the total of slightly over 5,000 members of the cult. Only six of these temples have a membership of over 300 members each. These six temples are located in Chicago; Detroit; New York City; Washington, D. C.; Philadelphia; and Los Angeles. Almost half of the NOI's total membership belong to these six temples. Six other temples have memberships of between 100 and 300, and all the rest (25 numbered temples) have less than 100 members each-- several having less than 20 members each. (D. Friedman)

2- University of NOI

For the Muslim children, there was the "University of Islam" which provided all the education from elementary to high school. School was in session 50 weeks per year and had few vacations. By 1974, the University of Islam had schools in 46 cities. Now, the institution is known as Clara Muhammad School. (D. Friedman)

3- Muslim Girls Training (MGT)

The NOI's female organization is called the Muslim Girls Training (MGT), sometimes referred to by the female members as the General Civilization Class. Led by its captain and as many lieutenants as are necessary, this group engages in the many activities Elijah believes necessary for his female followers. They have classes in homemaking, hygienics, calisthenics, and other subjects, such as Muslim history and the English language. They are constantly urged to be "properly dressed"; that means, they must wear long, loose-fitting dresses or white robes, flat shoes, and no lipstick and cover their heads with a white shawl-type headdress. ([Nation of Islam: Cult](#))

4- The Fruit of Islam (FOI)

The Fruit of Islam (FOI) is a secret militaristic unit within the NOI, composed of the male members. Each temple's FOI is organized and governed by a system with general orders similar to the system in a regular military organization. ([Nation of Islam](#))The overall purposes of the FOI are: 1) to protect organizational officials and property, 2) to reinforce the doctrine and objective of the organization, and 3) to prepare for the race war known as Armageddon. (D. Friedman)

Regularly, the FOI participates in close-order military drills, engages in group physical exercises, and receives judo and karate training. The avowed purpose of this training program is to create healthy minds and bodies among the faithful followers of Elijah. Acting as bodyguards and escorts for temple officials, these vigorous young men impart a crisply efficient tone to the meetings of the organization. They impress nonmembers of the

Negro communities with the massed and ready power of the Muslim organization and the accomplishments they have achieved through faith in Elijah's teachings. But the FOI has other functions.

Besides the protection of officers and property of the cult, the FOI enforces compliance with the many cult rules imposed on all members. Probably most important of these many rules is that every Muslim must sell the NOI newspaper, "Muhammad Speaks." The FOI sees to it that the members fulfill their obligation to sell the paper. To discipline those members breaking the rules, as well as nonmembers who cause trouble for the cult, goon squads have been organized in some of the temples. These small groups of selected men, frequently led by former professional boxers, well-trained in karate and judo, have been employed to threaten or, on occasions, to brutally assault other Negroes. Charts have been used to show vulnerable spots on the human body, and instructors demonstrate the lethal blows that can be used. One instructor advised members of his group to "obtain salt brine" and soak their hands in it to toughen them enough to break planks.[\(Nation of Islam: Cult\)](#)

5- NOI Newspaper

On May 1962, Nation of Islam leader [Elijah Muhammad](#) began the publication of a weekly newspaper under the title *Muhammad Speaks*. While serving as their main propaganda organ, the cult's paper is a money-making enterprise. FOI captains regularly emphasize to members that "the number-one program is selling the newspaper." Though the number to be sold varies in individual temples, each FOI member is required to purchase and resell from 50 to 300 copies of each issue of the paper. Contests are held by the various temples. Teams are made up to cover certain areas of each city and prizes are awarded to top salesmen. A winning team of two young salesmen of one temple sold 1,800 copies of a particular edition. Currently, the paper is running a nationwide contest in which the winner, who

"circulates" the most cult papers before June 30, 1965, is promised a new 1965 automobile. Sales by the NOI's unpaid "newsboys" plus income from advertising net the cult approximately \$30,000 from each weekly edition of "Muhammad Speaks." (D. Friedman) The newspaper is known nowadays as The Final Call.

This paper has always been a dangerously effective means of diffusing tampered ideas about Islam on a very large scale. The homepage of the newspaper's website, for example, is introduced with a distorted formula of the Two Testimonies of Islam reading "There is No God But Allah, Who came in the Person of Master Fard Muhammad. Elijah Muhammad is His Last and Greatest Messenger" followed by another sentence reading "Dedicated To Freedom, Justice and Equality for Black People in America. The Earth Belongs To The Blackman":



(Muhammad Speaks)

Celebrating the birthday of the Saviour "Wallace Fard" (i.e. representing *Allah*), Elijah Muhammad issued a message that *He* revealed to him as "the last *Messenger of Allah*" to deliver to the black American people (i.e. the *Muslims*):

Allah (Master Fard Muhammad) said Messenger would die trying

Our Saviour Has Arrived

Chapter 11

The Knowledge of God Himself

Saviour's Day, February 26, 1969

"Tell them, Elijah, I love them!" "They have been here 400 years, and there is none that has befriended them. I am their God," He said, "and I love them. I will destroy the Nations of the Earth, to save them and then die Myself." And I said, "I'll do the same." I said, "I can't destroy the Nations, but I will die trying to teach them." He (Allah) looked at me and smiled. He said, "Yes," He said, "You will do that." He looked at me some more. He said, "Yes, He will give his life." He said, "Jesus didn't do anything; no more than any believer." Well, that's right. If I say I believe in God and His true Religion, certainly I will give my life for it. (Muhammad Speaks [docs.wixstatic](#))

In an article titled "The importance of having the proper attitude toward Allah", an NOI journalist praises the wisdom of *God* as represented in Farrakhan's anti-American racist stance:

Look again, at the wisdom of God's ways through Minister Farrakhan, who, in a most intelligent manner, teaches and warns America, especially against her wrong way of dealing with her most critical and explosive problem. That problem, at its core, involves the state of condition of her ex-slaves and God's own plans with them, which He will not relinquish. (Muhammad)

Presently, the NOI continues spreading their insane claims about Islam through the *Final Call Digital Edition*, a library of MP3s; books; CDs; DVDs, websites, mobile applications, and webcast streaming services. (The Final Call)

Malcolm X (1925-1965)

An exceptionally renowned public face of the Nation of Islam was Malcolm Little, better known as Malcolm X. Originally a follower and protégé of Elijah Muhammad, Malcolm became a loyal and effective minister of the NOI who advocated self-defense and the liberation of African Americans "by any means necessary." As a fiery orator, Malcolm was vehemently admired by the African American community in New York and around the country.

By March 1964, Malcolm X had grown disillusioned with the Nation of Islam and its leader Elijah Muhammad. Expressing many regrets about his time with them, which he had come to regard as largely wasted, he embraced Sunni Islam (Berry). While performing a Muslim pilgrimage to Mecca, Malcolm was profoundly affected by the lack of racial discord among orthodox Muslims. He returned to America as El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz and in June 1964 founded the Organization of Afro-American Unity, which advocated black identity and held that racism, not the white race, was the greatest foe of the African American (Malcolm X assassinated).

Malcolm was severely criticized by the loyal NOI members and received a number of death threats that failed to discourage him to continue his adoption of orthodox Islam (D. Friedman). Louis Farrakhan spoke out after Malcolm was suspended and encouraged the killing of his mentor, "Malcolm's head should be cut off . . . his tongue should be pulled out of his mouth and mailed to Mr. Muhammad" (D. Friedman). On February 21, 1965, one week after his home was firebombed, Malcolm X was shot to death by Nation of Islam members while speaking at a rally of his organization in New York City (Malcolm X assassinated). The assassination of Malcolm X was an evidence of the movement's intentional stigmatization of Islam and their

bloody refusal of any person who tries to voice his adoption of the real teachings of Orthodox Islam.

Louise Farrakhan (1933--)

The current leader of the NOI Louise Farrakhan is famous for his controversial, anti-white and anti-Semitic comments. He is always keen on expressing his enmity to the Jews, hatred of American government, scorn of white Americans and willingness for violence all in the name of *Islam*:

This week, Farrakhan is facing backlash for another string of anti-Semitic comments on Twitter comparing Jews to termites.

I'm not an anti-Semite. I'm anti-

Termite. pic.twitter.com/L5dPQcnVg4

— MINISTER FARRAKHAN

(@LouisFarrakhan) [October 16, 2018](#) (Pirani)

According to the Anti-Defamation League, Farrakhan has “repeatedly alleged that the Jewish people were responsible for the slave trade and that they conspire to control the government, the media, Hollywood, and various Black individuals and organizations to this day.” (Carter)

Commenting on the September 11th crisis, Farrakhan implicitly gloated at the USA in a statement that described the attacks as a tragedy that "Allah" permitted to destroy a powerful unjust country to establish a new country for His chosen race. He quoted the Quran to support his stance:

I, like millions of people around this earth, watched in amazement, shock, and horror, the events of September 11, and the unfolding of the ripple effect of this terrible tragedy. . . .How then shall we look at such a tragedy? The question was asked, "Where was God in this tragedy? How could God permit such an evil thing?" There is a verse in the Qur'an that reads, "*Whenever misfortune befalls the Believer, the Believer says, God is my patron and to Him is my eventual return.*" All of our lives are from God, and all of our lives

are for His Purposes. He says in the Qur'an, "I Give life, and I Am the ultimate cause of death." He also says in the Qur'an that no soul dies but by His permission. Why did He permit such a tragedy?

Whenever a nation becomes great and powerful by God's Permission, as America has; whenever a nation becomes the undisputed ruler of the world, as America has, by Allah's Permission; when a nation becomes the only remaining superpower, having the power to destroy other nations and people by the tens of thousands and millions, as Allah has permitted America the power to do, and that nation then has a spiritual lapse and begins to sink into moral decline, the Qur'an teaches that Allah (God) raises a messenger, but he raises that messenger from among the poor and the abject to guide and to warn the great and the powerful.

Allah (God) knows that the powerful will not heed a warning coming from their ex-slave or from the weak or from the abject, so the Qur'an teaches that Allah (God) then seizes that nation with distress and affliction, that it might humble itself. For only in humility can the proud and the powerful heed the Guidance of God, which is mercy and grace from Himself. Allah (God) used this tragedy, hopefully, to bring a great nation to Himself. (Nation of IslamNOI Responds)

Media and NOI Anti-Islamic Discourse

The NOI's stigmatization of Islam as a bloody racial religion helped diffuse an anti-Islamic language in the American media and society. As shown above, their newspaper uses words like "Allah", "Muhammad", "Islam", "Messenger", "Nation" ... etc in a way that murders their original sacred meanings in true Islam and attributes to them earthly, racial, and violent shades of meaning instead (Read NOI newspaper). Even worse, NOI leaders quote the Qur'an in their speeches to introduce their racial ideas in an Islamic guise. This is clear when Farrakhan, commenting on the September 11th events, decontextualized verses of the Qur'an to imply that the attacks were a deserved

punishment for America that *Allah* permitted to destroy her unjust power and please *His* poor black victims (Read Farrakhan).

Expectedly, the American press carries to the common people numerous stories about the violence and racism of a destructive cult named the "Nation of Islam". Here follows some examples:

1- *Chicago Tribune*
**"NATION OF ISLAM" By Abdul Wali
Muhammad**
Nov. 30th, 1987

Allah (God) never plucks a rose without leaving behind a bud. We must now tap the vast pool of qualified black leadership in order to move forward; we must not lie down. We have lost many black giants who have contributed tremendously to our forward movement, and we have mustered the strength to keep up the fight after their departure. Again, we are faced with the challenge of moving forward after the passing of a great leader, and we must rise to the challenge. Our struggle will not end with the birth or death of any one man or woman. The struggle for freedom, justice and equality depends on the total involvement of each of us. (Muhammad, Abdul Wali)

2- *Washington Post*
**"THE NATION OF ISLAM A CLOSE-KNIT
SOCIETY" By Patrice Gaines-Carter**
September 18, 1988

"Our mission is to our people," Muhammad said. "It is often misinterpreted as racism. But we are a people who have been deprived of all prophets. We've been taught that all prophets have been sent to white people Now we are being called upon to learn something that will turn our own lives into paradise." (Gaines-Carter)

**3- *New York Times*
"Dispute in Michael Jackson Camp Over
Role of the Nation of Islam" By SHARON
WAXMAN
December 30th, 2003.**

Officials from the Nation of Islam, a separatist African-American Muslim group, have moved in with Michael Jackson and are asserting control over the singer's business affairs, friends, employees and business associates of Mr. Jackson said.

Initially invited to the Neverland Ranch several weeks ago to provide security for Mr. Jackson, members of the Nation of Islam are now restricting access to him and have begun making decisions for him related to the news media, his business affairs and even his legal strategy, some of Mr. Jackson's friends and associates said. Mr. Jackson faces charges of child molesting in Santa Barbara and recently moved into a rented house in Los Angeles, where Nation of Islam officials have accompanied him. (Waxman)

**4- *New York Times*
"5th Panelist Quits Over Colleague's
Affiliation With Nation of Islam"
By GRETCHEN RUETHLING
MARCH 10, 2006**

CHICAGO, March 9 - A fifth Jewish member of Gov. Rod R. Blagojevich's commission on discrimination and hate crimes has resigned in protest of the continued presence on the panel of a representative from the Nation of Islam. (RUETHLING)

**5- *Wall Street Journal*
"The Truth About Muhammad Ali and the Draft:
His refusal to serve wasn't motivated by
conscience, but by fear of being killed by the
Nation of Islam." By Paul Beston
April 27, 2017**

Ali refused induction not out of principle but from fear of disobeying Elijah Muhammad, who had stipulated that the champ not serve in a “white man’s war.” . . . Malcolm X, who had been close to Ali, was assassinated in February 1965. After Ali’s former press secretary told the FBI that he had information about Malcolm’s killers, he too was found dead. Other dissidents simply disappeared. Ali got the message. In March 1967, a month before his appearance at the draft board, Ali told his boxing idol, Sugar Ray Robinson, he couldn’t join the army.

“Elijah Muhammad told me that I can’t go,” Ali said. “You’ve got to go,” Robinson replied.

“I’m afraid, Ray,” Ali said. “I’m real afraid.” He had tears in his eyes.

“If you ask me,” Robinson said later, “he wasn’t afraid of jail. He was afraid of being killed by the Muslims.”

Nearly a decade later, Ali told reporter Dave Kindred: “I would have gotten out of [the Nation of Islam] a long time ago, but you saw what they did to Malcolm X. . . . I can’t leave the Muslims. They’d shoot me, too.” (Beston)

As a result of this continuous distortion of Muslims, the FBI blacklisted "*Nation*"-of-"*Islam*" members as fanatical and anti-United States elements:

I. ROLE OF FBI

One of the FBI's many responsibilities is that of investigating members of "basic revolutionary organizations or groups" who are dangerous or potentially dangerous to the internal security of the United States.

Persons included under this responsibility are leading functionaries and active, militant members of the Nation of Islam (NOI), who because of their fanatical anti-white and anti-United States Government teachings and beliefs would be potentially dangerous and likely to seize upon the opportunity

presented by a national emergency to endanger the public safety and welfare.

Therefore, the FBI must determine the identities, whereabouts, and activities of these individuals constituting a threat to the internal security, and must develop sufficient information and evidence to sustain appropriate action against such individuals or to control their movements and activities in the event of a national emergency. (FBI)

All these negative stories about the Nation of Islam in media gave American people a bad impression about this cult. In her book The Nation of Islam and Violence, Martha F. Lee explains the relation between the American society and the Nation of Islam as follows:

American society has often perceived this religious organization as a violent threat to its stability and security, while the Nation of Islam, in its outspoken criticism of white America, has often implied that it would not hesitate to use violence to achieve its goals. (qtd in R. Lewis)

However, the spread of this racial discourse in the media confused many American common people about Islam itself. When they read papers talking about "Allah", "Muhammad", "Islam", "Muslims" . . . they are not always aware that the words have different meanings in the NOI. They, in many cases, misunderstand these stories as referring to true "Islam". Consequently, they harbor inimical feelings against "Islam" rather than the so-called "Nation of Islam" and against "Muslims" rather than "NOI members". The following part of the research will diagnose this problem in the light of schema theory and its relation to brainwashing.

Brainwashing and Schema

Schemata (pl. of schema) refer to "mental structures that an individual uses to organize knowledge and guide cognitive processes and behavior". People use schemata to categorize objects and events based on common elements and

characteristics and thus interpret and predict the world. New information is processed according to how it fits into these mental structures ([Michalak](#)).

Explaining the relation between brainwashing and schemata, Kathleen Taylor points out that the brain, along with all the nerves in the body, is made of cells called neurons that are capable of sending signals to each other. Each of these neurons receives a multitude of signals that help develop one's personality and perceptions of the world. Through these neurons, the brain classifies the information it has about different subjects into schemata. Some schemata are weak (dormant), others are strong (active). In order to be brainwashed, a person only needs to have a dormant schema activated or have a new schema created, rather than have their entire persona modified.

How is the strength of the schemata determined? The more dormant schemata are activated, the stronger they become. This explains why people become used to things that they experience on a regular basis. In order for brainwashing to occur, the relative strength of the schemata must be altered. This is done by manipulating a person's emotions, their brain's aptitude for change and stress, and their prefrontal cortex.

As the links between all these neurons strengthen, the schema as a whole becomes more clearly defined and more easily activated. Of particular importance are the strengthening connections between sensory areas, towards the back of the brain and areas in the front of the brain where movements are generated. . . .The stronger those connections, the more automatically the schema will be triggered when some stimulus activates one or more of the schema members, and the faster-evoked will be the thoughts or behaviours associated with that particular schema. As noted earlier, connections between neurons strengthen when they are both active at the same time: more frequent and/or intense activating stimuli lead to stronger connections. . . . The strongest schemas are used frequently and

often without conscious thought (many prejudices built up over years are of this type). Their connections are very strong and extremely difficult to change, (159,185)

Conclusion

According to the above, one can conclude that the wide circulation of NOI's brainwashing distortion of Islam over 90 years through the media made very strong connections in the minds of the majority of American people between "Islam" and all kinds of evil. The recurrent stories that attribute violence and racism to "*Muslims*" helped create a strong anti-Islamic schema in the collective consciousness of the American society. The following figure depicts a hypothetical representation of this schema:

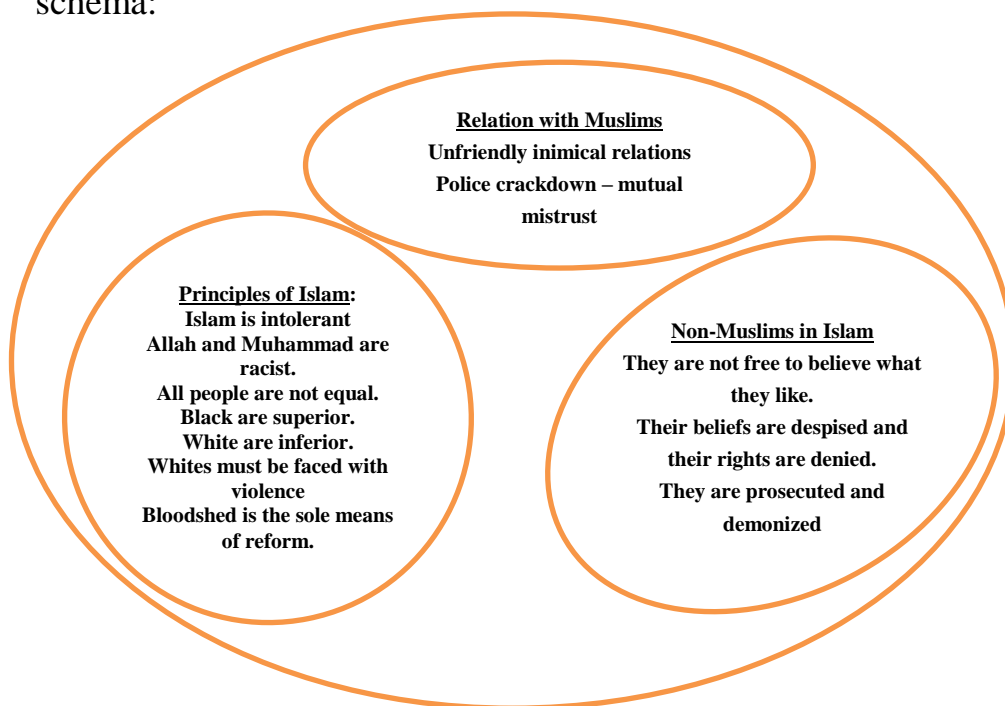


Figure 1: Anti-Islamic schema

This anti-Islamic schema is so strong that it is unconsciously activated by any stimulus in a way that leads American people/media to attribute any terrorist act to any Muslim without any evidence most comfortably. The dominance of this anti-Islamic brainwashing discourse in American media, the world's

superpower, expectedly led to the prevalence of anti-Islamic discourse in the media of all Europe and all English-speaking societies. The researcher will refer to this phenomenon as "anti-Islamic brainwashing discourse".

The above provides answers of the two questions of research. Firstly, brainwashing can thus be gradual not just abrupt; using Taylor's words "many prejudices built up over years are of this type) (185). Gradual brainwashing that the media can apply on recipients is more dangerous than abrupt brainwashing because the schemata the former plants in brainwashed victims are too strong to be changed. They are well-established and accumulated over many years of patient unabated brainwashing. Secondly, the media can diffuse brainwashing discourses that victimize not merely few numbers of members in a cult, but wash the brains of large sectors in a society and perhaps in the whole world.

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ملخص

تعتمد هذه الورقة البحثية إلى بيان تأثير وسائل الإعلام في الرأي العام في ضوء نظرية "غسيل الدماغ". بعد استعراض تاريخ مصطلح "غسيل الدماغ"، يقدم الباحث شرحاً مفصلاً لتطبيقاته المعاصرة وخاصة الممارسات التي تستخدمها "الطوائف المدمرة" لإقناع أعضائها بارتكاب هجمات انتحارية. يركز البحث بعد ذلك على "أمة الإسلام" باعتبارها مثالاً شهيراً لطائفة مدمرة بهدف توضيح التأثير الخطير الذي أحدثته التغطية الإعلامية لهذا التيار المنحرف على الرأي العام بأمريكا؛ مما ساعد في خلق خطاب مضلل يطلق عليه الباحث مسمى "خطاب غسيل الدماغ المعادي للإسلام".