Construction of Muslim Identity: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Obama's Speech at Cairo

by

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Abstract

President Obama's speech delivered at Cairo in 2009 is considered to be a historical event in the history of relationship between Muslims and the West. The speech was applauded for its eloquence and rhetoric. It was appreciated among the Muslims and the Americans alike since it promised for treating Muslims as partners and not as patrons anymore and depicted Muslims as the precursors of the human civilization. However, the centuries old tinge of *us* and *them* was observed in the contents of the speech. Therefore, the speech was dissected with the tool of CDA, as proposed by Van Dijk[i], to reach the underlying socio-cognitive makeup of the speaker. The analysis revealed that Muslims to Obama / West are still the violent extremists, intolerant, hostage keepers, educationally and technologically backward and in fact the out-groups despite their collaboration in war against terrorism.

Key Words: Obama's The New Beginning, collective Muslim identity, Van Dijk's[ii] socio-cognitive model

Introduction:

Language—a system of "combining smaller units into larger units" by employing "'rules' of the language"[iii] — is used for the essential purpose of communication through "dialogue, negotiation, argument and discussion, learning and remembering"[iv] in any socio-cultural setting. Since, each individual language is created around a distinct "system of representation that mirrors, and indeed so reinforces the world of its speakers"[v]; it makes the language users behave differently and "cut up reality in different ways."[vi] Apart from serving the apparent communicative purpose, our choice of language demonstrates "who we are;"[vii] "who people are to each other"[viii] and exhibits the ways we present "ourselves to others" in order to differentiate ourselves from others and construct our individual or collective identity.

This way of seeing ourselves and others in different perspectives is not as simple and naïve as it seems; rather it is based on a complex and intricate framework of ideology and power relations. These ideologies are gradually acquired by the members of society through long-term process of socialization and "other forms of social information processing."[ix] Once internalized, these ideologies mentally or cognitively represent the basic social characteristics of an individual group, such as its "identity, tasks, goals, norms, values, position and resources"[x] and gathers all the individuals sharing the same social characteristics under one umbrella.

In current political scenario the exercise of power and dominance is no more achieved through physical means; rather it is "achieved through ideological working of language"[xi] and the

show of power becomes evident through manufacturing of consent.[xii] According to Van Dijk[xiii] "... ideologies require production and reproduction through public text and talk"[xiv] and political speeches by the "specialized elites or ideologues"[xv] such as political leaders is one such way of propagating the group ideologies and defining yardstick for inclusion and exclusion of members in their group. It can be assumed that a text producer translates his socio-cognitive representations about a social group "into the textual construction of a collective identity" and these concepts of collective identities are "constructed, negotiated and changed through discursive interaction within and between groups."[xvi]

This creation of us and them is globally being produced and propagated through the text and talk of powerful elites and is segregating the Muslim world and the Non-Muslim world into two opposing poles "that pitch **Us** in the modern and democratic West, against **Them**, who, after the demise of Communism, are mostly associated with the well-known orientalist schema of a primitive, dictatorial, violent, and terrorist Islam, Arabs, or fundamentalism."[xvii] In such a politico-social backdrop, President Obama's visit to Cairo on June 4, 2009 and his speech *A New Beginning* was expected to nullify such negative connotations attached to Muslims, Islam, and Arab and to start afresh the relationships between the United States and the Muslims.

An Overview of the Speech

The speech can be divided into three parts: the opening, the main issue, and the closing. The opening of the speech revives the golden period of Muslim contribution for the humanity and relates it to the contributions of Muslims living in the US at the present. He further traces the role of "violent extremists" who tried to create misperceptions and tensions between the Islam and the western world and criticized the old policies of violence against Muslims. He, therefore, underlined the need for a new beginning. After the preamble, the president brings forth the "sources of tension" that exist between Islam and the Western world and enlists them in six main points covering issues relevant to Muslim countries and the status of human rights, democracy and women rights prevalent in these countries. The closing sums up his discussion and provides a way forward for the mutual relationship based on the "courage to make a new beginning" and stresses to establish peace among Mankind.

Analysis

According to Van Dijk[xviii] when there exist "a conflict of interest, that is, when events may be seen, interpreted or evaluated in different, possibly opposed ways[xix]" we need to focus on those discursive aspects that indicate the self-interested "opinions, perspective, position, interests or other properties of groups"[xx] and are "articulated along an *us* versus *them* dimension."[xxi] These opinions and perspectives become "a candidate for special attention" in broader socio-political context and serve the purpose of "legitimating dominance or justifying concrete actions of power abuse by the elites."[xxii] He later devised the strategies for picking out such elements in the discourse and ways they depict the group construction on the axis of us and them. These categories and their corresponding analysis are given below:
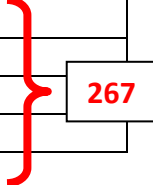
Lexicon

It is one of the major domains which signify the use of language according to discourse genre, "personal context (mood, opinion, perspective), social context (formality, familiarity, group membership, dominance relations) and sociocultural context (language variants, sociolect, norms

and values)."[xxiii] In fact, the group dynamics and social relations determine the use of lexicon for the in-group and out groups. It is experienced that it is lexicon that highlights the covert use of positive implications of in-group opinions and perspectives and the negative ones for the others in order to establish the legitimacy of their power relations. In the current study, the analysis will be started with determining the use of lexicon for the Muslims and Islam as this very feature will determine the track of later research.

The speech comprises 6,100 words. The word frequency for certain relevant words is as follows:

S.No	Words	Frequency
1	Muslim(s)	46
2	Islam, Islamic	23
3	Christian	02
4	Arab(s)	06
5	extremist(s)	09
6	their, they, them	08, 28, 23=59
7	you	18
8	Jew(s)	06
9	West	05
10	American(s)	14
11	we	101
12	our, us	68,23= 91
13	I	61

(brace spanning rows 10–13: **267**)

The word frequency reveals that the words Muslims, Islam and Arabs are frequently repeated in the text as compared to West, Christian, and Jews. This deficiency of representation is overcome by the use of pronouns we, ours, us, and I.

Obama started his speech with all out appreciation and dignified sentiments for the Muslims, Islam and the Arabs and considers colonialism, Cold war and globalization as the precursors of tension between Islam and West as these factors "denied rights and opportunities to many Muslims", treated them as proxies and led many Muslims to view the West as hostile. The positivity and empathy with Muslims continued as he goes on to trace historical contributions of Muslim to the human civilization and considers it to be i.e. civilization's debt to Islam. Later in the speech he appreciates Islamic tradition of tolerance and expresses that " I saw it firsthand as a child in Indonesia, where devout Christians worshiped freely in an overwhelmingly Muslim country. That is the spirit we need today".

He enlists the Muslim's contributions to the modern world by providing the spade work at ab initio level for various sciences and arts and reminded them that "Islam has demonstrated through words and deeds the possibilities of religious tolerance and racial equality". He later traces the Muslim's assistance in recognizing America -my country- and elaborates their contributions as:

"They have fought in our wars, they have served in our government, they have stood for civil rights, they have started businesses, they have taught at our universities, they've excelled in our sports arenas, they've won Nobel Prizes, built our tallest building, and lit the Olympic Torch. And when the first Muslim American was recently elected to Congress, he took the oath to defend our Constitution".

Doing so, apparently, he is appreciating the contribution of American Muslims in the making of America; however, covertly he has underlined the concept of acceptable Muslims for the West and tried to bring forth the formula for an in-group membership for the Muslims around the world.

The benefits of being **American Muslims** or in-group *us* are further elaborated in the form of promise of success that "exists for all who come to our shores -- and that includes nearly 7 million American Muslims in our country today who, by the way, enjoy incomes and educational levels that are higher than the American average".

This license of becoming one of *us* guarantees a positive portrayal for all the Muslims who either go to the shores of America or become an ally to America even in their own country. It is for such Muslims that " I consider it part of my responsibility as President of the United States to fight against negative stereotypes of Islam wherever they appear".

The concept of Muslims as Others on the axis of us and them becomes evident when Obama uses a Euphemistic expression of "violent extremists" instead of terrorists or fundamentalist which quite justifies its usage when seen in the context.

- *"Violent extremists* have exploited these tensions in a small but potent minority of Muslims. The attacks of September 11, 2001 and the continued efforts of these extremists to engage in violence against civilians has led some in my country to view Islam as inevitably hostile not only to America and Western countries, but also to human rights".

- "When *violent extremists* operate in one stretch of mountains, people are endangered across an ocean".

- "We will, however, relentlessly confront *violent extremists* who pose a grave threat to our security".

- "We would gladly bring every single one of our troops home if we could be confident that there were not *violent extremists* in Afghanistan".

- Indeed, none of us should tolerate *these extremists*. They have killed in many countries. They have killed people of different faiths -- but more than any other, they have killed Muslims. Their actions are irreconcilable with the rights of human beings, the progress of nations, and with Islam.

- America can never tolerate *violence by extremists.*

- The sooner the extremists are isolated and unwelcome in Muslim communities, the sooner we will all be safer.

This fully justifies the persistent negative connotation still attached to the word Muslim and Islam in any part of the world. The portrayal of Other Muslims finds expressions in speech when Obama talks of sources of tension between West and Muslims.

He talked of "***tyranny of Saddam Hussein***" and expressed his belief that Iraqi people will be better off without the tyrant. Though, apparently his choice of words for Palestinians and Jews depicted the rule of equality for both the factions but certain lexical choices establish the connection of violence initiation with the Palestinians. He says:

"Palestinians must abandon violence. Resistance through violence and killing is wrong and it does not succeed. ... Hamas must put an end to violence, recognize past agreements, recognize Israel's right to exist".

However, Jewish violence on Muslims has never been discussed; only Jewish settlements became the target of criticism.

"The United States *does not accept the legitimacy of continued Israeli settlements*. ... It is time for these settlements to stop".

Likewise, Iran that "has defined itself in part by its opposition to my country" and "has played a role in acts of hostage-taking and violence against U.S. troops and civilians" is considered to " lead this region and the world down a hugely dangerous path" of nuclear proliferation. The stern stance of Iran in this regard is tackled by asserting that "And any nation *-- including Iran --* should have the right to access peaceful nuclear power *if it complies* with its responsibilities under the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty".

Talking of system of government, he apparently promoted the individual choice of the country; but preferred "elected, peaceful governments" round the world. However, making use of a pronoun 'You' and a modal auxiliary 'must' he foregrounded what Muslims are not doing at present and advised them to follow these ideals in order to become party to us.

"So no matter where it takes hold, government of the people and by the people sets a single standard for all who would hold power: You must maintain your power through consent, not coercion; you must respect the rights of minorities, and participate with a spirit of tolerance and compromise; you must place the interests of your people and the legitimate workings of the political process above your party".

He expressed his dissatisfaction over present concept of Muslim tolerance and declared intolerance among Muslims as "a disturbing tendency" and advised the Muslims to uphold their much-needed tolerance, the absence of which has led to tragic violence among different factions in Islam. He talked of the need of economic stability and progress in the field of technology and education. Again, through his words, he signifies that "education and innovation will be the currency of the 21st century ... and in too many Muslim communities, there remains underinvestment in these areas".

Except for depicting the rich Muslim ancestry and American Muslims in appreciative tones, the Muslims in the present social context are still portrayed as violent extremists, intolerant, selfish, backward, hostage-takers, and tyrants. However, Islam and Islamic traditions are always kept in high esteem. The word frequency of Islam/Islamic shows 23 instances of its use in the speech and almost all the expressions bear positive sense, for instance:

- "The relationship between Islam and the West includes centuries of coexistence and cooperation, but also conflict and religious wars".
- "It was Islam -- at places like Al-Azhar -- that carried the light of learning through so many centuries, paving the way for Europe's Renaissance and Enlightenment".
- "Islam has demonstrated through words and deeds the possibilities of religious tolerance and racial equality".
- "So let there be no doubt: Islam is a part of America".
- "America is not -- and never will be -- at war with Islam".
- "Islam ... is an important part of promoting peace".
- "Islam has a proud tradition of tolerance".
- "Issues of women's equality are by no means simply an issue for Islam".

The positive in-group representation is extensively found in the whole text under discussion. This representation is supported by the use of adjective 'American'; pronouns 'I, we, us, our'; nouns as America and United States and the corresponding constructive actions and thoughts. The case of American Muslims has already been discussed above; while, certain other instances are given below:

- America is not the crude stereotype of a self-interested empire.

- And America will not turn our backs on the legitimate Palestinian aspiration for dignity, opportunity, and a state of their own.
- Today, America has a dual responsibility: to help Iraq forge a better future -- and to leave Iraq to Iraqis.
- The United States has been one of the greatest sources of progress that the world has ever known.
- And that is why the United States will partner with any Muslim-majority country to support expanded literacy for girls, and to help young women pursue employment through micro-financing
- That's why the United States government has gone to court to protect the right of women and girls to wear the hijab
- That's why we plan to invest $1.5 billion .. to partner with Pakistanis to build schools and hospitals, roads and businesses, ... we are providing more than $2.8 billion to help Afghans develop their economy ....
- And we will match promising Muslim students with internships in America; invest in online learning for teachers and children around the world; and create a new online network...
- We will help Iraq train its security forces and develop its economy.
- We're forging service projects in America to bring together Christians, Muslims, and Jews.
- I have unequivocally prohibited the use of torture by the United States, and I have ordered the prison at Guantanamo Bay closed by early next year
- I recognize it will be hard to overcome decades of mistrust, but we will proceed with courage, rectitude, and resolve.
- I'm committed to working with American Muslims to ensure that they can fulfill zakat.
- I will host a Summit on Entrepreneurship this year to identify how we can deepen ties between business leaders, foundations and social entrepreneurs in the United States and Muslim communities around the world.
- We will launch a new fund to support technological development in Muslim-majority countries, and to help transfer ideas to the marketplace so they can create more jobs. We'll open centers of scientific excellence in Africa, the Middle East and Southeast Asia, and appoint new science envoys to collaborate on programs that develop new sources of energy, create green jobs, digitize records, clean water, grow new crops. Today I'm announcing a new global effort with the Organization of the Islamic Conference to eradicate polio. And we will also expand partnerships with Muslim communities to promote child and maternal health.

Van Dijk [xxiv] opines that the distinction of us & them can also be highlighted by emphasizing that "the Others violate the very norms and values we hold dear."[xxv] Therefore, Obama explicitly describes the American norms of religious tolerance, equality, welfare system, democratic system of government etc. and then implicitly creates the difference by portraying others as violators of the norms and values that 'we hold dear'. This difference is quite obvious in the following sentences quoted from the speech.

- Moreover, freedom in America is indivisible from the freedom to practice one's religion. That is why there is a mosque in every state in our union, and over 1,200

> mosques within our borders. That's why the United States government has gone to court to protect the right of women and girls to wear the hijab and to punish those who would deny it.

- <u>Among some Muslims</u>, there's a disturbing tendency to measure one's own faith by the rejection of somebody else's faith.

Again, the same polarization is created on the issue of democracy.

- America respects the right of all peaceful and law-abiding voices to be heard around the world, even if we disagree with them. And we will welcome all elected, peaceful governments -- provided they govern with respect for all their people.
- ... there are some <u>who advocate for democracy only when they're out of power; once in power, they are ruthless in suppressing the rights of others</u>.

Almost all the instances mentioned above represents in-groups as tolerant, peace loving, courageous, helpful, upholders of equality and equal rights and the like. It is I/ we/United States that is helping and supporting all the third world Muslim countries in terms of health facilities, economy, infrastructure, and technological advancements despite the violent activities of extremists found in these countries.

Local Semantics

"Local coherence depends on models, that is, on ideologically controlled representations of the situation. Biased reasons and causes that define relations in the model may, therefore, appear in partisan local semantics.[xxvi]" The shared social cognition, unintentionally finds its way to surface itself in the talk of the power elite. Such biased expressions or one-sided opinions are expressed through presupposition, "variation in levels of generality and the degrees of specificity in describing events,[xxvii]" apparent denials and concessions, and blame transfer. All these semantic strategies "legitimize, rationalize, authorize, universalize,[xxviii]" positive self- representation and create negative other-representation.

In the text under review, there are certain instances which show biasness or one-sided opinion shared by us for them. Obama **presupposes** that the system of government prevalent in the Muslim countries is not letting the masses to speak for themselves and if at all democracy is the system of government; it is not being followed in true letter and spirit. Therefore, he advises all the Muslim political leaders:

> "So no matter where it takes hold, government of the people and by the people sets a single standard for all who would hold power: <u>You must</u> maintain your power through consent, not coercion; <u>you must </u>respect the rights of minorities, and participate with a spirit of tolerance and compromise; <u>you must</u> place the interests of your people and the legitimate workings of the political process above your party".

The events that portray others as negative entities are highlighted with extensive details, employing horrific vocabulary and signifying "concretization"-- to describe others' negative "acts in detail, and in concrete, visualizable terms."[xxix]

During his speech Obama highlights the atrocities of Muslims/ Al-Qaeda in the wake of 9/11 and labeled it as "an enormous trauma" for the Americans. He became specific in describing the event by quoting the figure of "nearly 3,000" deaths and went on to describe the dreads of the events as:

> "<u>The victims were innocent men, women and children</u> from America and many other nations who had done nothing to harm anybody. And yet al Qaeda <u>chose to ruthlessly</u>

murder these people, claimed credit for the attack.... These are not opinions to be debated; these are facts to be dealt with".

On the contrary, the violence in Bosnia and elsewhere is generally dealt with without apportioning blame or nominating the culprits.

"When innocents in Bosnia and Darfur are slaughtered, that is a stain on our collective conscience".

Apart from self-glorification, *us* makes use of self-critique which "often presupposes good characteristics: ... we are too good, too democratic, too lenient..."[xxx] The self-critique related to torture at Guantanamo is handled so skillfully that it turned out to be a "good" and "lenient" stance on the part of U.S.

"I have unequivocally prohibited the use of torture by the United States, and I have ordered the prison at Guantanamo Bay closed by early next year".

Likewise, invasion in Iraq is made justified as it has freed the Iraqi people of a tyrant. Treating this as a failure on diplomatic grounds to win international consensus, Obama very skillfully saved his skin by saying:

"I hope that our wisdom will grow with our power, and teach us that the less we use our power the greater it will be."

The analysis of local semantics in relation to shared values also testifies that Muslims are collectively portrayed as a group possessing damaging values and norms.

Syntax

Like semantics, the syntax of the sentences in discourse also indicates ideological implications shared by the members of dominant group. "Syntactic prominence expresses or suggests semantic prominence, which, in turn, may be related to prominence of actors and their properties in mental models.[xxxi]" The negative properties attached to the members of out-group affect "syntactic word order and clause structure in such a way that agency and responsibility of out-group actors is syntactically highlighted". However, negative actions of in-group members are "syntactically played down by the use of passive sentences, ...and agentless passives or nominalizations.[xxxii]"

The out-group members are syntactically highlighted by making them the responsible agents for doing something embarrassing and humiliating against the in-groups. "There is constant generalization from specific persons and events to whole categories of people."[xxxiii] Obama, in his speech clearly pinpoints such agents among the Muslim out-groups, some are mentioned below:

- Violent extremists have exploited these tensions in a small but potent minority of Muslims
- Pakistan determined to kill as many Americans as they possibly can.
- When violent extremists operate in one stretch of mountains, people are endangered across an ocean.
- Al Qaeda killed nearly 3,000 people on that day.
- Palestinians must abandon violence....
- Hamas must put an end to violence...

However, the negative actions of in-group members are 'played down' by the use of agentless passive constructions or by introducing a vague of agent actually pointing towards no one in particular. The incidents of atrocities on Bosnian, Jews, and Muslims were syntactically toned down by these syntactic strategies. Some of such sentences are given below.

- colonialism <u>that denied rights and opportunities to many Muslims</u>
- and Cold War in which <u>Muslim-majority countries were too often treated</u> as proxies...
- When innocents in <u>Bosnia and Darfur are slaughtered,</u>
- camps <u>where Jews were enslaved, tortured, shot and gassed to death</u> by the Third Reich.
- Six million <u>Jews were killed</u>

The syntactic strategies employed in the construction of sentences clearly illustrate the positive in-group dynamics for *us* i.e. West/ America and negative out-group dynamics for *them* i.e. Muslims/Arabs.

Global semantics: Topics

The choice related to topic or "semantic macropropositions" of discussion "may also be subject to ideological management."[xxxiv] The social cognition and shared ideologies may influence social actors to 'detopicalize' information that is not along the lines of their interests or positive self-image and conversely to 'topicalize' information that accentuates negative out-group properties.[xxxv] In the similar vein the topics of injustice and dehumanizing atrocities that innocent Muslims are facing in Guantanamo Bay, the blame game of nuclear weapons in Iraq, imposition of democracy in Muslim countries, the undue control over oil and gas reserves, the extremists elements in other faiths/religions, American invasion in Afghanistan and involving Pakistan in war against terror etc. have been de-topicalized and the information related to 9/11, Muslims' intolerance and violence; and their educational and technological backwardness has been topicalized.

Schematic structures

Any news event, story, or a political discourse is organized around a "conventional schemata"[xxxvi] or organizational structure e.g. a heading, main story and conclusion in news report. The arrangement of the contents and their organization is essentially dictated by the ideological insight which may drive a social actor to maneuver the information by downgrading main topic to a "lower level of the schema"[xxxvii] and realizing it as a subordinating topic in a background category of main argument. Political discourse also follows a schematic category of highlighting problem and devising solution[xxxviii] and additionally providing self-serving arguments in more explicit and prominent ways and "other arguments may be left implicit."[xxxix]

The whole speech revolves around developing self-serving arguments while developing the problems and describing the hitches on way to the New Beginning. He then elaborates the solution to all this again by utilizing self-serving arguments and justifying his stance. In the speech, there are 14 clear-cut such instances which exemplify his self-serving arguments in one way or another.

- That is why there is a mosque in every state in our union, and over 1,200 mosques within our borders.
- That's why the United States government has gone to court to protect the right of women
- And that's why we're partnering with a coalition of 46 countries.
- That's why we plan to invest $1.5 billion each year over the next five
- That's why we are providing more than $2.8 billion to help

- And that's why I ordered the removal of our combat brigades by next August.
- That is why we will honor our agreement with Iraq's democratically elected government
- And that's why I strongly reaffirmed America's commitment to seek a world in which no nations hold nuclear weapons
- And that is why we will support them everywhere
- And that is why the United States will partner with any Muslim-majority country to support
- We did not go by choice; we <u>went because of necessity.</u>

This all leaves no space for argumentation by the Muslims as all this was so skillfully arranged causally that he seems justified in warning and threatening the out-groups provided they do not serve their purpose.

Rhetoric

The use of certain rhetoric-based discourse structures such as "surface structure repetition (rhyme, alliterations), or semantic figures such as metaphors" are indicative of ideological control when they are utilized to deemphasize the negative information related to *us*; and emphasize the negative information related to *them*[xl] The rhetoric devices of parallelism, alliteration, simile, metaphor, irony, over-and understatements, hyperbole, mitigation etc. are effectively utilized in the speech to demean *others* and glorify *us*.

The parallelism in sentence construction is utilized to stress the positive actions related to the in-groups and to bring negative actions of out-groups in the spot light. The speech is replete with such syntactic constructions, for example:

- <u>That is why there is a mosque</u> in every state in our union, and over 1,200 mosques within our borders. <u>That's why the United States</u> government has gone to court to protect the right of women and girls to wear the hijab and to punish those who would deny it.
- Fear that because of modernity we lose control over <u>our economic choices</u>, <u>our politics,</u> and most importantly <u>our identities</u> -- those things we most cherish about <u>our communities, our families, our traditions, and our faith.</u>
- <u>We will help</u> Iraq train its security forces and develop its economy. But <u>we will support</u> a secure and united Iraq as a partner, and never as a patron.
- ... <u>we will expand</u> exchange programs, ... <u>we will encourage more</u> Americans to study ... <u>we will match</u> promising Muslim students with..
- <u>Too many</u> tears have been shed. <u>Too much</u> blood has been shed.
- <u>It's easier to start wars</u> than to end them. <u>It's easier to blame others</u> than to look inward

The similar trend of parallel constructions is used to stress negativity related to out-groups and whatever Obama wants the world to know about Muslims.

- <u>You must</u> maintain your power through consent, not coercion; <u>you must </u>respect the rights of minorities, and participate with a spirit of tolerance and compromise; <u>you must</u> place the interests of your people...
- <u>They have killed</u> in many countries. <u>They have killed </u>people of different faiths -- but more than any other, <u>they have killed Muslims.</u>

Obama made use of ironical remarks first by creating a hype of events and then denouncing the same due to undesirable actions of the out-groups.

- We would gladly bring every single one of our troops home if we could be confident that there were not violent extremists in Afghanistan ... But that is not yet the case.
- The sooner the extremists are isolated and unwelcome in Muslim communities, the sooner we will all be safer.
- We have the power to make the world we seek, but only if we have the courage to make a new beginning,
- And any nation -- including Iran -- should have the right to access peaceful nuclear power if it complies with its responsibilities under the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

Obama made use of an extended simile[xli] and drew a comparison of Palestinian fighting for their rights with that of Black Americans slaves who fought for their equal rights many centuries back.

- Palestinians must abandon violence. Resistance through violence and killing is wrong and it does not succeed. For centuries, black people in America suffered the lash of the whip as slaves and the humiliation of segregation.
- But it was not violence that won full and equal rights.
- It was a peaceful and determined insistence upon the ideals at the center of America's founding.

The very comparison equates the others' freedom fighting to violence and in-group's struggle for equal rights as 'peaceful and determined insistence upon the ideals' and glorified them as emblem of peace and tolerance.

The utilization of rhetorical devices to serve as a tool for magnifying *us* and miniaturizing *them* is very much evident from the examples quoted above.

Pragmatics

Van Dijk[xlii] holds that socio-cognitive working of ideologies control the production of speech acts and operates "through context models that represent the communicative situation and its participants, goals, and other relevant appropriateness conditions."[xliii] In this context, simple assertions, advice and threats from the representative of one group to another group is treated as a sign of dominance and unequal power distribution and presuppose ignorance of the recipient.[xliv] The same ideological representation made him warn and advise the Muslim countries whom he considered either unequal or ignorant or both. All the *if clauses* mentioned above have undercurrents of warning and the use of modal auxiliaries *must (Palestinians must..., Hamas must...you must... fault lines must be closed among Muslims)* and *should* (Iran should have...) tinges assertiveness on the part of the speaker.

Findings & Conclusion

The speech that was intended " to seek a new beginning between the United States and Muslims around the world, one based on mutual interest and mutual respect, and one based upon the truth that America and Islam are not exclusive and need not be in competition" is found to be created on the axis of us versus them.

"The 55-minute address electrified many Muslims in the Arab Middle East. The president celebrated the cultural, scientific and intellectual achievements of Islam to the delight of the audience inside the domed hall at Cairo University where he spoke -- and beyond."[xlv]

The surface structures give an image of a new beginning and shows an intention of forgetting the past; (So whatever we think of the past, we must not be prisoners to it.) but dissecting the discourse with critical discourse analysis helped the researcher to discover the truth and reality.

The cognitive models that are shared by the westerners for the Muslims are still the same despite multi-tiered efforts of the Muslims to change their image. The formation of collective identity is superimposed with the prominent use of positive judgments for the norms and traditions of the 'in-groups' and presenting any deviant or violator as the 'out-groups'. Obama, one of the in-groups, shows his positive intentions in removing negative stereotypes about Muslims and goes all out to praise the ancestry of Muslims who contributed in the making of human civilization. However, after the preamble the tone changes and the hidden ideological stance surface itself through the use of lexicon, schematic structures, rhetoric, syntactic and semantic structures and drew the great divide of us and them between Muslims and the America/West. This account was different in one respect from that of other such speeches: the words terrorism and terrorist were nowhere to be found in the speech of 55 minutes but these were echoed through 'violent extremist' and 'violence'.

Another finding in the analysis suggests that Obama has included all such Muslims including the 'founding American Muslims' as in-groups who are there to serve the American interests. He overtly extends a promise of success for those "who come to our shores -- and that includes nearly 7 million American Muslims in our country today"; and underlines a criterion of membership to become an in-group, in the following words:

"They have fought in our wars, they have served in our government, they have stood for civil rights, they have started businesses, they have taught at our universities, they've excelled in our sports arenas, they've won Nobel Prizes, built our tallest building, and lit the Olympic Torch. And when the first Muslim American was recently elected to Congress, he took the oath to defend our Constitution..."

In the light of the analysis mentioned above it can be concluded that Obama's speech 'The New Beginning' still represents Muslims as an out-group possessing negative properties and typifies all the American, American Muslims, and westerners as in-groups who all are embodiments of all positive properties.

This analysis clearly illustrates that even plain and straight words are not so simple and contain in them the tinges of socially shared values and norms and depict the in-group membership through the discursive use of language. This covert use can only be unveiled by utilizing the tool of CDA.

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