

TRANSLATION BY PROPAGANDIST MEDIA  
MEMRI AS A CASE STUDY

by

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## **Abstract**

The Middle East Media Research Institute (MEMRI) TV is a media agency which portrays, to an English-speaking audience, a stereotypical representation of Islam through subjective and selective translation. Despite its accurate translations on a linguistic level, MEMRI practices paralinguistic manipulation through its selective choices for translation to further its ideological agenda. This thesis aims to explore MEMRI's skopos-driven selective translation by discussing two narratives it constructs: the Allahu-Akbar narrative and the terrorisation of childhood narrative. The consequences of this Islamophobic frame by such narratives are then investigated. In conclusion, the impact of MEMRI's selective approach to translation is proven to be a biased strategy for the achievement of its political purposes and the reinforcement of Islamophobic discourse.

**Search terms:** politics, ideology, skopos, selective translation, MEMRI, narratives, frames, Islamophobia.

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## Chapter One: Introduction

The clash between the Arab and Muslim world and its western counterpart has become a widespread phenomenon. What exacerbates the problem is the communication gap between the two parties, which further alienates them. Agencies, such as MEMRI (The Middle East Media Research Institute), feed on this deficiency in order to promote personal interests, victimising both sides while keeping them in the dark through communicating false, or inaccurate information masked as facts.

The power of translation, it can be suggested, is partially derived from its ability to eliminate the linguistic gap between the target reader and the source language. The original text disappears and the target text takes up the role and position of the source. In such cases, when the target readers are unfamiliar with the source language, their critical reading ability is paralysed. They are incapable of detecting the subjectivity committed in producing the translation as they cannot consult the original to track manipulation and misrepresentations. Translation is an operant tool and a deliberated process in which action takes place to shape perception and achieve goals. In many cases, translation is a functional purpose-oriented practice, with manipulation as the vehicle. The purpose implied with this process is chiefly concerned with bringing the target reader “into line with a certain notion of correctness which is found within a system of norms” (Hermans, 1991, p. 166).

It is within this context that the relationship between translation and politics is nurtured. Translation, being an active tool, can be used to attain political purposes and elicit specific desired responses. The political game is generated by propaganda and the dissemination of ideology. Dominant political parties gain power by degrading the status of opposing parties. This never-ending quest for power is not only exercised in the form of military power; it is in many cases through the power of words through which political propaganda is realised. MEMRI TV is a news agency which, in essence, seeks to portray to the west a negative customised image of the Arab and Muslim world through the translation of selected material.

The selection of text to be translated plays a major role in manipulating the content of the original text in order to produce an inaccurate representation of the source culture. The more serious problem springs from an accurate translation on the linguistic level of the particular selection in order to conceal the initial manipulation. This biased approach earns the translating agency unwarranted legitimacy and credibility. MEMRI’s selective translation strategy sheds subjective light on the terrorist behaviours in the Arab-Muslim

world, by using specific negative footage as a prototype for the entire region. The stories that MEMRI selects for translation, “follow a familiar pattern: either they reflect badly on the character of Arabs or they in some way further the political agenda of Israel” (Whitaker, cited in Baker, 2006, p. 74).

MEMRI’s political and ideological doctrine dictates its cautious screening process of any requests for subscription. In fact, several failed attempts were made by the researcher to subscribe to the institution’s website in order to facilitate access to the posted material. MEMRI discloses only selected footage to the public audience, while it reserves a considerable number of clips which are only available to subscribers. Several weeks after requesting subscription, MEMRI replies to the researcher with an investigatory inquiry about the reason for the subscription. They request in-depth, information from the researcher including: the department the researcher works for, his/her position/role, and the intended use of the material. Further investigation into this policy would help gain a better understanding of MEMRI’s not only selective translation, but also selective approval of subscription requests.

By analysing MEMRI’s translated clips, this thesis aims to explore the agency’s skopos-driven selective approach to translation through which the organisation seeks to realize its political and ideological objectives. This is achieved by investigating MEMRI’s construction of two narratives: the Allahu-Akbar narrative and the terrorisation of childhood narrative. An Islamophobic frame is then discussed as a result of the narrative construction. These results prove MEMRI’s subjective and biased translation in reinforcing Islamophobic discourse.

In order to attain its objectives, this thesis is divided into five chapters. Chapter one introduces the subject matter, briefly discusses the political implications of translation, and touches upon the power of selective translation as practiced by biased media agencies, such as MEMRI. Chapter two explores this matter by shedding light on the multidisciplinary nature of translation, as a cultural, ideological, and political enterprise. The chapter presents definitions of culture and ideology, and the aspects encompassed within these two complex concepts. Furthermore, this chapter attempts to explain cultural implications in translation. The chapter also discusses foreignisation and exoticism and refers to the impact of their use in handling cultural components. In tackling ideology, the use of translation by political institutions is discussed as a deliberate exercise of power, and a purpose-driven practice of ideological subjugation and manipulation of information.

Chapter three places a stronger emphasis on the exploitation of translation as a purpose-driven practice. By discussing the construction of frames and narratives, the discussion explores the ways in which realities are tweaked and misrepresented in order to achieve objectives, including ideological and political ones. Islamophobia is introduced as a frame which portrays Arabs and Muslims as inherently evil and threatening. MEMRI's translation approach is then explained in light of frames and narratives, stressing its role in reinforcing the Islamophobic discourse.

Chapter four demonstrates MEMRI's biased translation by investigating its discursive selective approach. It explores the agency's use of narrative features and framing devices in propagating its political agenda. The discussion sheds light on two narratives: the terrorisation of Allahu-Akbar and the terrorisation of childhood, embedded within the meta-narrative of Islam as a terrorist religion. For that purpose, clips translated by MEMRI are analysed to reveal the institution's Islamophobic rhetoric in light of two narrative devices namely: selective appropriation and relationality. The successful establishment of the narratives is then discussed in terms of the resultant transculturation of notions presented by the narratives. A frame of Islamophobia is consequently described as a product, becoming the yardstick against which the Arab and Muslim culture is assessed.

Concluding the study, chapter five confirms the study's initial premise that MEMRI's selective translation does indeed reinforce the demonisation and discrimination of Arabs and Muslims. Furthermore, it stresses that MEMRI, despite what it claims, is indeed biased, even if it strives to present accurate translations on the linguistic level.

## **Chapter Two: Culture, Politics and Translation**

This chapter discusses translation in light of its cultural, ideological, and political components, and similarly defines translation in an attempt to correlate these concepts and their application. This interdependency is used as the basis for the explanation of how cultural implications are handled in translations. The impact of foreignisation and exoticism in cultural translation is also discussed. Finally, the political utilisation of translation is presented as an exercise of power and information manipulation.

### **2.1 Translation and Culture**

#### **2.1.1 Defining translation**

Nida and Taber (1969) describe translation as the closest possible rendition of meaning and style borne by the source text. To ensure retention of meaning, this definition requires the transposition of the source text's cultural dimension in order to achieve the equivalent effect it is intended to generate, and essentially a successful translation (p. 49). Nida (1964) perceives translation as an art, describing its success through its natural reception by the target readers to whom the translation should be tailored (p. 3). Such conditions require the translators to consider and conform to the preferences and expectations of their target readers in formulating the text to be delivered. Such stances relevant to the reformulation of text in translation are echoed by Lefevere (1992) who presents translation as rewriting wherein cultural aspects such as ideology and poetics are pivotal (p. xi). Translation is further described by Lefevere and Bassnett (cited in Salama-Carr, 2007, p. 136) as an exploration of a cultural interface in which a translator acts as a mediator. Similarly, Bassnett (1980) considers translation to be an intercultural communication activity rather than a purely linguistic transfer, confirming the importance of handling cultural considerations in translational choices (p. 6). This requires the translator to manipulate textual and cultural differences, while handling intercultural tensions and antagonisms. In this quest for cultural interaction, the creation of new meanings is an expected outcome (Salama-Carr, 2007, p.136). Translation is a "value creating process (which) takes the form of an inscribed interpretation of a foreign-language source text whose own values inevitably undergo diminution and revision" (Venuti, 2004, p. 25). A link is established between translation and culture by describing translation as a suggestion for cultural creations, including religious and political contexts.

Setting out the various definitions and perceptions of successful translations sheds light on essential aspects that resonate across the different definitions. While translation is a

transfer of meaning from one language to another, it cannot be overlooked that such definitions allocate significant weight to the cultural factor of translation, alongside the linguistic one, and the possible impact of that cultural portion on the receiving audience. For the purpose of this research, the focus will be on the cultural dimensions of translation, explored as means for achieving purposes and shaping realities.

### **2.1.2 Defining culture**

Language has been constantly linked to culture. Andre Lefevere (2003) poses several questions wherein he aims to correlate translation and culture. In order to provoke further thought, the following questions are asked:

- What makes the text in one's own culture "represent" the text in the foreign culture? Who translates, why, and with what aim in mind?
- Who selects texts as candidates to be represented? Do translators? And are those translators alone? Are there other factors involved?
- Thirdly, how do members of the receiving culture know that the imported text is well-represented? Can they trust the translators? If not, who can they trust, and what can they do about the whole situation, short of not translating at all? If translation is, indeed, a text that represents another, the translation will, to all intents and purposes, function as that text in the receptor culture, certainly for those members of that culture who do not know the language in which the text was originally written Lefevere (2003, p. 1).

Lefevere's (2003) questions serve as the basis on which the dogma of translation is focused, and set the tone for the objective this study aims to explore.

Culture, explains Newmark (1988) is a particular course of life led by a group of people who use a language unique to their needs and nature as a means of communication and expression (p. 94). This definition suggests a cultural peculiarity implied within languages which differ across cultures. In a more explicit manner, Vermeer (1989) ascertains that "language is part of culture" (p. 228). Echoing this correlation are Lotman, Uspensky, & Mihaychuk, (1978), who state that "no language can exist unless it is steeped in the context of culture; and no culture can exist which does not have at its centre, the structure of natural language" (p. 211). Similarly, Bassnett (2002) describes language as "the heart within the body of culture," (p. 23) clearly confirming the interdependency of the two entities. These established relations between culture and language infer that cultural complexities will arise from the transfer of information from one language to another, as language is impregnated

with cultural manifestations and components. Nida (1964) explores this issue with reference to the translator's role in decision making regarding the approach adopted in translating the language of one culture to the language of another. The degree of retention of cultural peculiarities, as meaning travels across languages, varies from one translation approach/method to another.

Kroeber and Kluckhohn (1952) argue that “culture...consists of patterns, explicit and implicit of and for behaviour acquired and transmitted by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievement of human groups...[T]he essential core of culture consists of traditional...ideas and...their attached values” (p. 181). Edward Tylor (1871) in his book *Primitive Culture* refers to culture as a complex whole which comprises characteristic elements including beliefs, knowledge, customs, and morals (p. 1). Parallel to this position is Matsumoto's (1996) view in which a set of similar components, such as attitudes, values, behaviours, and conventions are passed across generations (p. 16). Spencer-Oatey and Franklin (2012) share the previous designation of culture; expressing the crucial impact such components bear on the “interpretations of meanings” of individuals within each culture (p. 3).

In light of the aspects defining culture, and recalling Lefevere's (1992) association of translation with politics and ideology, and Nida's (1969) requirement of conformity with the receptor's cultural expectations, culture is posited as an integral determining factor in translation. Because language and culture are theoretically and practically intertwined, it can be deduced that translation is indeed a cultural enterprise.

### **2.1.3 Cultural implications in translation**

A sound approach to translation requires an informed rendering of cultural associations invoked by linguistic expressions, in order to produce meaningful texts for the target readership. Due to the interdependency of language and culture, and taking into consideration the vast diversity of cultures, such associations and cultural implications may become void via translation. Hence, it is necessary that culture-specific items that are “key to social organisation and cultural practices...and are central to the question of personal and social identities” (Tymoczko, 2007, p. 242), be properly and intuitively achieved. Commenting on the efficiency of translation, Bassnett (1980) obliges the translator to maintain the impact borne by the source text on the source reader when translating text into the target language in such a way that it replicates the impact on the target reader originally intended by the source text on the source audience (p. 23). However, given the vast

differences that occur when travelling across different cultures accessibility to this required cultural retention in translation is challenging.

### ***2.1.3.1 Manipulative translation of culture***

Newmark (1988) sets forth two translation methods which should be considered when culturally impregnated expressions are encountered: to retain the expression as is, or interpret it. The former, transference, infuses a “local colour” into the text, which is consequently received as foreign by the target reader. While the latter, componential analysis, retains the message, rather than the lexical component (p. 96). The criticism of preserving the local colour entailed by transference is the generation of alien expressions, which may be difficult to comprehend by the receiving culture. Lefevere (2003) perceives translation as an access route through which the foreign influences are imposed on to the original text’s culture, consequently contributing to its subversion (p. 2).

Translation of literature wants to influence, if not the masses, at least the literature of its own time of its own culture...to make a foreign work of literature acceptable to the receiving culture; translators will often adapt it to the poetics of that receiving culture. (Lefevere, 2003, p. 6)

Features acceptable to the original culture do not necessarily comply with what the source culture deems appropriate. Maintaining and ensuring this acceptability requires a consideration of what text is translated, by whom, and to whom (Lefevere, 2003, p. 6). It is in this context, for example, that children’s literature originally written in English undergoes mandatory and excessive screening when translated into Arabic. This process primarily arises from cultural concerns, ensuring that any original content which is incompatible with the receiving culture’s constitution of norms and values is appropriated or eliminated altogether. Kawthar Mahmoud’s Arabic translation of *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* exemplifies the culturally filtered renditions of text from one culture to another. For instance, to avoid the translation of “drunk” and “hog,” in the following: “lay drunk with the hogs in the tanyard” (p. 2), the translation is rendered as إثارة الكثير من المشكلات في كافة أرجاء البلدة , corresponding in English to “causing trouble all over town.” As such, the unwanted words are euphemised into an expression which does not raise cultural flags, thereby refraining from introducing concepts which defy the codes of acceptability. The involvement of such factors in translation contributes to ideological behaviour and formations in both the process and product of translation (Lefevere, 2003, p.2). To modify the text into a convenient form for the target readership, a “cultural filter” is utilised in the adaptation of the source text to the expected target culture’s conventions and norms (House, 2008, p. 151). Thus, such

contextualisation of translations renders the practice guilty of manipulation and alterations (Alvarez & Vidal, 1996, p. 7), allowing ideological preferences to govern translation choices and result in misrepresentations of reality.

### ***2.1.3.2 Inadequacies in translating culture***

Attaining envisioned translation goals might require the translator to highlight certain cultural prejudices, serving the interests of the target audience. Cultural gaps in translation occur when the two languages, across which translation is carried out, belong to two divergent cultures. Because culture is a complex entity incorporating a multitude of smaller components such as thoughts, worldviews, language, religious beliefs, and other culturally manifested notions, when two different cultures are brought in contact through translation, cultural discrepancies become increasingly common. Franco Aixela (1996) notes that "cultural asymmetry between two linguistic communities is necessarily reflected in the discourses of their members, with the potential opacity and inaccessibility this may involve in the target culture system" (p. 54). Of particular interest to this discussion is the inaccessibility factor resulting from such cultural gaps in translations. Translators bear, within their reach, the key to either complicate or facilitate accessibility of the target readers to the unfamiliar culture. The discrepancies between the original and the receiving cultures pose difficulties not only for the translator in rendering text and meaning, but also on the receiving audience. Target readers are placed in an alien environment where they lack knowledge, and therefore are subject to the power of the translation/translator, which selectively frames particular meaning and information for the target reader to receive. Potentially, political, religious, historical, and cultural implications triggered by culturally bound items can be either lost or misinterpreted. Norman (1989) states that "awareness is the first step to emancipation" (p. 1). Exploring this statement in the context of this discussion, it is evident that the lack of accessibility is borne by unawareness, resulting in the subjugation of the target culture by the translation.

This contingency confers upon the translators the power to formulate and fabricate translation products, possibly creating a tweaked version of the original culture from which the translated text originated. Capturing the exertion of handling cultural items in translation and coping with the possibility of gain or loss, Aixela (1996) clarifies:

Those textually actualized items whose function and source text involve a translation problem in their transference to a connotation in a target text, whenever this problem is a product of the non-existence of the referred item or of its different inter-textual status in the cultural system of the readers of the target text. (p. 58)



The common perception of the purpose of translation is to deliver and communicate meaning across different languages, and consequently, different cultures. For the applicability of this stance, the endeavour for equivalence implies the existence of cultural universality. The accuracy of delivered information and equivalence is a variable that is highly dependent on the actual purpose of the translational activity. In this context, translation can very much be a key tool in accentuating cultural differences rather than mitigating cultural gaps. It must be understood and clarified that for the purpose of the following discussion and position of this paper, criticism of translation does not relate to the correctness of linguistic equivalence and delivery. With the assumption of linguistic equivalence, doubt is cast on the intended cultural implications of translation. To take this further, the current discussion attempts to present how the linguistic accuracy of translation can facilitate manipulation. Linguistic accuracy serves as a scape goat for the manipulation of cultural components in translation to influence how the source culture is portrayed to the receiving culture.

## **2.2 Domestication and Foreignisation**

Venuti (1995) discusses cultural implications in translation by exploring domestication and foreignization. Venuti (1995) defines domestication as an “ethnocentric reduction of the foreign text to target-language cultural values, while foreignisation is ethno-deviant on cultural values to register the linguistic and cultural difference of the foreign text” (p. 20). Foreignisation consolidates the linguistic and cultural unfamiliarity between the source and target cultures. When employing foreignisation as a strategy, the translator demonstrates complete awareness of the intention to introduce an element of unconventionality and eccentricity for the receiving end (Shuttleworth & Cowie, 1997, p. 59). This is evident in Barbara Romaine’s translation of Bahaa’ Al-Taher’s *Aunt Safiyya and the Monastery* into English. On several occasions, the English narration may present the English reader with non-English sounding expressions. This is despite the fact that the English language contains expressions which closely correspond in meaning to the Arabic ones. The translation renders *الله يلعنهم* as “God’s curse upon them,” which sounds foreign to the English ear. On the other hand, “God damn them” would more or less reproduce the same effect of the source expression *الله يلعنهم*, and is more acceptable to the English ear. But foreignising is done for a purpose. By presenting western readers with structures and words alien to them, the gap between the two cultures is widened. Presented with alien forms and components, the target reader is further distanced from the original environment from which the received text originated. This vacancy separating the two, not only deprives the reader of

the power to judge the text based on knowledge, but it also allows for ignorance-borne intimidation from the foreign culture; thereby, widening the cultural gap. The effect of foreignisation exposes translation as an enterprise which is not exclusive to linguistic implications, but rather operates, both implicitly and explicitly, on cultural and ideological grounds (Dongfeng, 2002, p. 24). Practically, translational action serves more than mere linguistic purposes; it functions as a linguistic tool which achieves political objectives, which will be further discussed in section 2.4.

As an advocate for foreignisation, Venuti (1995) portrays domesticatio as violence against the source culture, as it ethnocentrically subjects the translated culture to the notions, beliefs, and values of the target culture (p. 20). Following this stance, the preservation through foreignisation of the source text's profile reinforces the unfamiliarity between the target reader and the source culture. Allowing the source culture-bound items to preserve their original makeup in translation consequently results in the formulation and representation of an alien identity (Munday, 2001, pp. 146-147). The danger of what Munday (2001) describes as the preservation of cultural aspects in translation arises when the choice to retain the cultural dimensions is made deliberately to achieve a particular effect on the target reader. A translation which emphasises the alien identity of the source culture further increases the distance separating the two cultures. Utilising foreignisation, a translator may suggest to the target audience that the source culture is not only different, but also inferior, as it defies what the target reader knows, understands, and values.

### **2.2.1 Skopos**

Contrary to Venuti's (1995) stance, it can be argued that foreignisation has the potential of being the very catalyst of violence against the source culture, particularly in a context in which antagonistic ties connect the source and target cultures. The wider the cultural void between the two cultures is, the more prone they are to be estranged, and the more the fear of the other is aggravated. Such alienation and hostility, may be intended to serve political and religious purposes. Means for achieving such purposes range from political media, to entertainment and educational systems. A common bridge for a cross-over from one culture to the other is translation, often with a governing aim, or as Vermeer (1987) calls it: skopos, which means "to produce a text in a target setting for a target purpose and target addresses in target circumstances" (p. 29). Translation does not occur in a vacuum; it is governed by a system of goals and targets. As a strategy, foreignisation has the ability of indirectly, but deliberately, exploiting target readers by its seemingly faithful rendition masked by devotion to the lexical makeup of the cultural item. Ignorance in translation of

the cultural and pragmatic components of culture-bound expressions can be an effective mechanism for achieving goals.

Skopos dictates translation and guides strategies towards the attainment of translation objectives. When certain translational behaviour is committed with the aim of fabricating meaning, doubt is cast on the objectivity of translation and the agenda guiding the process.

### **2.2.2 Utilising domestication and foreignisation**

Introducing unfamiliar cultural components, foreignised translations in the 19<sup>th</sup> century were primarily aimed at the elitist reader with high literacy and educational levels. This elite audience selection suggests a need for pre-requisite knowledge of the source culture by the target reader, which would facilitate the comprehension of cultural implications produced in the translation. Nida (cited in Venuti, 2000, p. 135) recognises the existence of knowledge gaps which might cause a mystification of the source text/culture.

Foreignisation allows the source a distinctive identity, one which does not readily assimilate to the norms of the receiving culture. Munday (2001) states that “domestication and foreignisation deal with the question of how much a translation assimilates a foreign text to the translating language and culture, and how much it rather signals the differences of that text” (p. 148). Advocates of foreignisation, such as Venuti (1995), strongly believe that this strategy hinders the dominance of one culture over the other, preventing therefore the subjugation of the translated culture to the limitations of the receiving discourse (p. 8). Indeed, foreignisation does set apart the transitioned cultural component, highlighting it as clearly foreign. This calls for further consideration of what could be a by-product of establishing and emphasising the foreign. The indication of difference by introducing cultural items alien to the receiving audience may alarm readers to the entrance of a foreign entity, disrupting the natural flow of reading and comprehension. The invasion of foreignness in the text is thus established, classifying the discrepancy borne by the foreign culture as a breach to the norm, a reality constructed in opposition to the reality experienced and accepted by the target culture (Bassnett, 2002, p. 8).

#### **2.2.2.1 Exoticism**

Fear of the other, the different, and the unexpected, may be the resultant impact some translation processes are built on and seek, executed in such a way that the production of a distinct dichotomy between the two texts becomes the ultimate skopos. This area can be further explored by exploring exoticism in translation. Faiq (2004) discusses exoticism practices in translations from Arabic into English and Spanish. He points out that translators painstakingly diverge text in translation from the norms of the target language, which is a

feature characteristic of exoticism, that constructs a ready-made recipe for awe for the receptor. A direct variation arises; the more unusual the foreign is represented, the higher the receptor's self-satisfaction leaps (Faiq, 2004, p. 28).

In translating English into Spanish, for example, any unaccounted for divergence is considered an error. But when dealing with translation from Arabic into Spanish or English, or even from Spanish into English, exoticism appears. In fact, what should be considered an error becomes favourable for those who benefit from the portrayal of Arabs and the Spanish being portrayed as divergent from the norm. Arising here is the usual foreignisation that is taken for granted in translations of the *Arabian Nights*, where for example al-malik as-sa'id becomes in Spanish ¡Oh rey feliz! (O happy King); although no one would expect a queen to address her husband in such a way, unless that queen is Shahrazad (Faiq, 2004, p. 28).

Through purpose-driven translations, cultural differences are highlighted, providing stereotypical patterns, categories and expectations, which, in turn, govern future encounters with foreign cultures.

## **2.3 Ideology and Translation**

### **2.3.1 Defining ideology**

Ideology, according to Hatim and Mason (1997), "is a set of suppositions which indicates the ideas and benefits of a person, group, social institution, etc. which is finally presented in the form of language" (p. 218). The political facets on the term have resonated across different definitions, such as the definition by the *New Oxford Dictionary* which defines ideology as "a system of ideas and ideals, especially one which forms the basis of economic or political theory and policy." In a more encompassing sense, Van Dijk's (1998) definition describes ideology as "the basis of the social representation" (p. 8). Briefly, the notion of social representation is captured by several components, including discourse, which is the use of language expressing societal ideologies and cognition. Furthermore, it is comprised of thoughts, personal and socially shared values, group interests, power, and domination. Van Dijk (1998) departs in his definition from the mere political sense of the word and considers a wider semantic scope. Hence, it ceases being a strict reference to political and economic struggles, enabling it access to the realm of translation as a two-way system.

### 2.3.2 Translation as an ideological practice

The concepts of ideology and translation are intertwined by means of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), an approach which suggests that ideological considerations and forces are constantly at work in linguistic practises and communicative exchanges (Calzada-Pérez, 2003, p. 2). This statement likely applies to translation given the intercultural, communicative, and linguistic nature of its practice. Translation as a discursive tool is culpable of forging ideologically impregnated texts. The ideological aspects are explored of translation from a view of ethnocentrism practiced by coercing source language cultures to take up the ideological constructs the target culture bears (Brisset, 2000). In a similar manner, Lefevere (1992) implicate ideology in translation, by describing the latter as an act of rewriting of the source text, “manipulat(ing) [text] ... to function in a given way” (p. xii). This process of rewriting is driven by certain motives, or *skopos*, which in turn represent an implied ideology. Ideological considerations in translation are apparent in the English translation of Bahaa Al-Taher’s abovementioned novel. Of the main characters of the narrative is the bey, a political figure characterised by high status and esteem, highly regarded by the other villagers. Describing the bey’s physique, the translation expresses the bey’s desire to “**make** his dark-brown skin **appear lighter**.” Instead of “to conceal his brunet,” the English text paraphrases the Arabic expression ‘*يخفي سمرته الغامقة*’, in a manner which does not convey the latter accurately. The translator injects a sense of comparison by using the comparative adjectival “lighter” which does not appear in the ST. The adjective reflects the ethnocentric frame through which the translator portrays the image of the bey, and in turn, compares the dark-skinned foreigner with the target culture’s fair complexion. With this translation, it is suggested that the source culture itself reveres lighter skin colour, a prevalent aspect of the target culture, attributing more positive aspects to it than to a dark complexion. This transformation carries hidden, yet clearly racist undertones and evokes traces of white supremacy.

The above discussion indicates the impact of ideology “as a part of a socio-cultural context” on the practice of translation, as well as the different applications of translation depending on the ideological portrayal required for different audiences (Hatim & Mason, 1997, p. 145). The application of ideology in translation can be subtly materialised in metalinguistic features of text production. Ideology, for instance, can be reflected in the particular selection of text to be translated, which, according to Toury (1980) is geared by “interests and objectives of social agents” (p. 53). Selection is driven by *skopos*, demonstrating political, economic, and social power and authority for promoting ideologies,

beliefs and values, with discursive translation as the transporting vessel. Selection in translation is also brought to the forefront by Alvarez and Vidal (1996) who believe that all translational action, including text selection, exclusion, and formation, is ideologically governed, stating that “there is a voluntary act that reveals his history and the socio-political milieu that surrounds [a translator]; in other words, his own culture” (p. 5). Likewise, Schäffner (2003) appoints ideology as a chief determining factor in translation choices, whereby “interests, aims, and objectives of social agents” ideologically influence source text selection and the relevant desired function of the translation (p. 23). This stance is also voiced by Fawcett (cited in Baker, 1998), who argues that beliefs driven by ideologies of individuals and institutions strongly influence the translation process.

Translation of literature in Turkey is an example of the employment of translation in changing and shaping ideology. The Turkish culture was transformed by the Kemalist ideology, of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, from a conservative to a westernised society. Lewis (1969) comments on the transfusion of western ideologies into the then-Ottoman culture, referring to Atatürk’s strong belief in the capacity of western thought towards progressing Turkish culture (Lewis, 1969, p. 292). To establish his desired civilisation, selective translation of western literature was heavily employed with the aim of importing progressive and modernised ideologies, resulting in a striking shift in the sociocultural make-up of the republic.

## **2.4 Translation and Politics**

The *Merriam-Webster* dictionary defines conflict as “a competitive or opposing action of incompatibles: antagonistic state or action (as of divergent ideas, interests, or persons).” Deriving from that, and considering the role of culture as a “sense-making, viewpoint-forming and behaviour determining” system (Salama-Carr, 2007, p. 135), cross-cultural conflict arises from cultural differences, primarily those pertaining to ideology and identity. Undoubtedly, as perpetuators of communication across different language speaking communities and cultures, translators serve as mediators and key players amid such cross-cultural disagreements. In her work *Translation and Conflict*, Baker (2006) secures a central place for translation in the framework of contemporary political conflicts.

### **2.4.1 Political exploitation of translation**

Political discourse is an ideologically governed practice which has the capacity to influence, alter, and encourage the promotion of desired ideologies and agendas. In a global village where nations come in contact on different levels, chiefly political, cross-cultural communication becomes an inevitable outcome. The linguistic barriers obstructing

communication and comprehension between conflicting cultures of different tongues confer upon translators a significant authority embedded in the textual choices they employ in bridging cultural gaps. Being the sole supplier of information to the target culture regarding a sometimes incomprehensible source culture, translators have the power to either curb or fuel conflict. Recipients of such manipulated translations will accordingly acquire certain cultural and political ideologies promoted by the mediating translator, but not necessarily in the original form presented in the source text.

Manipulation in translation materialises differently across texts. Whereas some translators exploit linguistic and ideational features and components of texts, others resort to selection of the actual text to be translated as a means of manipulation. Salama-Carr (2007) further explores this stance by pointing out the possible intentionality of translators to increase conflict by selective translation actions and choices. Selective translation is a skopos-driven exercise of subjectivity aimed at achieving particular aims and serving certain interests, exhibiting biased embeddedness (Dragovic-Drouet cited in Salama-Carr, 2007). As a result, and based on misrepresentation of information, translation may breed violence and hostility, fuelling animosity between conflicting counterparts (Salama-Carr, 2007, p. 137). John Williams (2007) explores Feiglgrath's German translation of purposely selected and politically driven English poetry of Wordsworth. Feeding on the political enmity prevalent between the two nations of his time (i.e., Germany and England), Feiglgrath's selection strategy significantly influenced the German readers of his translation (Williams, 2007, in Salama-Carr, 2007).

Translators are faced with a double-edged translation sword: a choice to either conform to political drives, or to challenge the manipulation of texts to achieve political ends. Translation is a powerful tool with a potentially destructive momentum to create, alter, or exploit meaning.

In light of the above, one can cast doubt on the legitimacy of translation as an accurate recounting of the originally produced text, suggesting that translations are products of the translators' interpretations of the original text, which in itself is an offspring of the translators' political views and cultural orientations.

Political media and relevant genres serve as fertile grounds for the exercise of political discourse and ideologies. Political media may serve as powerful perpetrators of political opinions, orientations, and agendas amongst particular communities for the attainment of specific interests. Potential long-term outcomes of such political behaviour

may occur in the manipulative formation of particular ideological representations and generalisations (Van Dijk, 2000).

As asserted by Vermeer (1989), translation serves a *skopos*; therefore, translation is not innocent. When translation departs the cocoon of the one-dimensional process of denotative linguistic transfer from one language into another, it becomes a pursuit of purposeful meaning formations. Soring (1986) differentiates between persuasion and seduction. Persuasion is performed by presenting arguments trusted for credibility, logic, and reasoning, allowing the receiver the liberty of assessment. Accordingly, sound decisions are made to either adopt or disclaim an initially presented premise. Contrastively, seduction, unlike persuasion, is not based on summoning conscious decision making, but on the exploitation of external factors to sway the reader into certain desired behaviours and actions, all-the-while believing their decision is not influenced. Both forms of meaning delivery and the swaying of readers to adopt certain knowledge can be found in translation, particularly in political translations. Translators of political texts may claim credibility and trustworthiness; meanwhile, they can be impregnating the target text with their ideologically biased political beliefs presented as facts, seducing target readers into indirectly adopting misrepresentations of the source text.

#### **2.4.2 Translation: An exercise of power**

In consideration of the critical role ideology serves in shaping political and cultural ideas and behaviours, and bearing in mind the functional use of language in translation, it can be concluded that translation is largely an exercise of power. Fawcett (1995) elaborates on this notion by widening the scope of the power interplay underlying translation. Power play does not only occur between the translator and the target readership. Translation choices can also exercise power backwards; the original text and culture may also fall victim to the translation acts committed by translators. In a cultural interaction where translation is the chief medium of communication, the selective portrayal of the source text/culture filtered through the biases, ideologies, and discourses of translators subject both source and target readerships to the power of translation. The power of translation is embodied in its ability to establish and maintain alliances, ideologically, politically and economically (Gramsci, 1971).

Translation acquires a more extreme facet with scholars such as Alvarez and Vidal, who approach the act of translation from a post-structuralist/ post-colonial standpoint. Translation subjectifies native cultures and languages and abuses power. Alvarez and Vidal (1996) deconstruct this notion and define translation as:



... an unstable balance between the power one culture can exert over another. Translation is not the production of text equivalent to another text, but rather a complex process of rewriting that runs parallel both to the overall view of language and of the “Other” people have throughout history; and to the influences and the balance of power that exist between one culture and another. (p. 4)

By establishing strict interdependence between translation and culture, this chapter has emphasised the impossibility of neutral translations. It has also explained why translation is a purpose-oriented practice which can be an influential tool in achieving ideological and political objectives. In light of this, chapter 3 will present how MEMRI exploits translation through the construction of ideological and political narratives and frames in fabricating a terrorist image of Arabs and Muslims.

## **Chapter Three: Frames and Narratives**

Chapter three investigates the culpability of translation in the manipulation and construction of realities with the use of narratives and frames as tools for shaping, manipulating, and simplifying the representation of foreign concepts. This is further consolidated by the phenomenon of Islamophobia, in which Arabs and Muslims are readily filtered through the lens of evil and terror. As a perpetuator of the Islamophobic discourse, MEMRI is then introduced as a key player in the exploitation of translation, with strong emphasis on its selective approach, for achieving its political and ideological objectives.

### **3.1 Framing**

#### **3.1.1 The concept of framing**

The concept of framing, as investigated by Maria Tymoczko (2007), sheds significant light on the influential factors regulating and controlling common perceptions of ideas and realities. A frame, according to Potter (2012), is “the point of view from which the story is told” (p. 77). A frame acts as a filter through which perceptions are controlled by a complex set of cultural and ideological values and beliefs. Frames provide certain characteristics which define the ideas and stories they present. Thus, frames govern the understanding of the notions they portray, defining them in terms of the certain properties and characteristics. Therefore, a frame established relevant to any given knowledge becomes the sole governor and the pivotal source for the understanding of any ideas associated with that given knowledge.

With the help of the defining properties and characteristics provided by frames, the representation and understanding of complex concepts are simplified when presented within the boundaries of a frame. Furthermore, the established conceptual frame serves as a model source of information consulted when encountering any similar concepts to which the frame possibly applies. By virtue of such characteristics, frames become a comparative tool against which other concepts are identified, judged to as either similar or dissimilar (Tymoczko, 2007).

The power of frames is embodied in their ability to govern perception and understanding. Tymoczko (2007) elaborates on this notion by comparing translation to a frame. The frame of translation provides representations of realities, in other words, “a statement or account, especially one intended to convey a particular view or impression of a matter in order to influence opinion or action...for a particular purpose” (p. 112).

### **3.1.2 Framing translation**

Translation is considered a representation of meaning and realities. Therefore, Tymoczko (2007) explains, translation offers a frame with a “particular view or impression of a matter;” a platform in which ideology and discourse actively participate in the discursive swaying of perceptions (p. 113). The representation of information via translation is often manufactured in line with perspectives and hidden agendas. In a wider sense, the pre-existing discourse is a key factor in guiding the translation process, leading to particular meaning formations. Tymoczko (2007) questions the objectivity of representations as they are, in essence, interpretations of ideologies and realities of those who create and promote them. Representation is the re-creation of a particular reality as seen by the creator by means of selective language and discourse, implicitly or explicitly.

Tymoczko (2007) discusses transculturation as a result of translation. Through translation, transference of meaning and information takes place across different languages, speakers, and cultures, with the risk of significant changes in the source information amid the transfer. This process ultimately leads to transculturation, which comprises the “uptake of beliefs and practices related to religion, social organisation, and government from one people to another” (pp. 120-121). The transculturation of cultural elements travelling from the source to the target chiefly constitutes an operative function by which the receiving end is swayed to appropriate and integrate the borrowed items into its own set of cultural norms, belief systems, and ideologies. Transculturation entails the adaptation of the inserted foreign cultural components into a form which respects the requirements of the locally established beliefs, norms, and narrative expectations.

The incorporation of transferred items into the cultural discourse of receptors is secured by the adoption of such culture specific components by the members on the receiving end (Tymoczko, 2007). Born out of this process is transculturation, a product of translation which reflects the choices made by the translators influenced by several factors including “interpretations, values, goals, and intentions” (p. 129). Such translational encounters are commonly witnessed in religious and political texts and will be discussed in section 3.2.

Frames provide properties and features which help define the realities presented by the frame. Such properties may include characters, circumstances, contexts, and human features, among other. In turn, these properties are correlated and accordingly interconnected, becoming characteristic of the overall frame of representation. This interconnectedness facilitates the understanding of any information relevant to the frame in light of the network of properties the frame comprises (Tymoczko, 2007).

### **3.1.3 Use of frames in media**

Media sources and agencies benefit from the heavy utilisation of frames. This efficient device enables the selective formation and fabrication of reality, creating news items which filter out unfavourable components, and restrict information delivery to certain intended representations of reality. This selective approach, like framing, is a representation of information from a particular point of view. Through framing, selective individual aspects become representative and characteristic of an overall experience. For example, particular religious statements and sayings are significantly highlighted in a certain context or frame as benchmarks for understanding accounts regarding militant Muslim groups. Conclusions are then drawn solely from the presented reality, ignoring the other facets of the recount, and paralysing the critical analysis of information. Hence, an act driven by political motives may be falsely framed as a religiously influenced behaviour. This is achieved by restricting focus on certain religious properties within the story and presenting them as key motives, obscuring the properties referring to the political agenda governing the incident.

## **3.2 Islamophobia**

### **3.2.1 Origins and evolution**

The successful propagation of Islamophobic discourse and ideology is blatantly enabled by the promotion of a dualism in which Muslims are represented as alien to, and different from the norm, i.e., typical westerners. The *us-them* dualism highlights the otherness of Muslims, attributing traits to them which make accepting them problematic. Media neutralises the representation of Islam in all its aspects as synonymous to terrorism.

Exhaustive efforts in the media and politics have been dedicated to establishing the *us-versus-the-other* paradox in mapping the relations between the west and Muslim east. Muslims are presented as an alien irrational entity which defies the norms and values of the western culture. Feeding on the human fear of the unknown, this ardent assertion of difference and foreignness facilitates the west's perception of Muslims with distress and anxiety, giving rise to the thriving notion of Islamophobia. A BBC report written by Beydoun (2015) traces the trending Islamophobic rhetoric and culture in America back to 1913, when "the dark walnut skin" (Beydoun, 2015) Lebanese Christian was denied citizenship based on the assumption that he was a Muslim. Such discriminatory legal actions against Muslims endured until 1944, operating under the notion of Islam being "an inherent menace and threat to American life...branding Islam as un-American...From 1790 until 1952 whiteness was a legal prerequisite for naturalised American citizenship. And Islam was viewed as irreconcilable with whiteness" (Beydoun, 2015).

The rising abhorrence and fear of Islam led officials in 1995 to correlate the bombing of the Federal Building in Oklahoma City with “Islamic extremist or Arab radicals” based on mere prejudiced speculation, a stance later defied by the proven implication of a white Christian citizen. Despite the initial faulty accusations regarding that incident, and many other such terrorist attacks committed by non-Muslims, the Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act of 1996 (AEDPA) was utilised as an official derogatory device against Muslim-Americans, resulting in the deportation “of Muslims with links - real or fictive - to terrorist activity.” This movement started gaining momentum and increasing popularity with the World Trade Centre incident (Beydoun, 2015).

### **3.2.2 The frame of Islamophobia**

Stephen Sheehi (2011) argues for an understanding of the concept of Islamophobia as one which surpasses cultural and religious differences, one which is an “ideological formation” (p. 141) well-grounded in western politics and imperialism. Allen (2010) likens Islamophobia to racism, and its premise based on the portrayal of a particular group of people through a negative lens. The very foundation of Islamophobia is questioned by Fuller (2008), who critiques the faulty ideological formations pertaining to Islam and the fear it inspires.

What if Islam had never existed? To some it’s a comforting thought, no clash, no holy wars, no terrorist. Would Christianity have taken over the world? Would the Middle East be a beacon of democracy? Would 9/11 have happened? Remove Islam from the path of history, and the world ends up exactly where it is today. (p. 46)

Fuller (2008) explains the spread of the Islamophobic doctrine by a sense which closely resembles the notions put forth by Tymoscko (2007) relevant to framing complex concepts to facilitate their comprehension. Framing the unfamiliar Muslim religion within the boundaries of Islamophobic properties restricts the perception of Islam and binds it to the understanding of the frame’s properties.

### **3.2.3 The Islamophobic political agenda**

The political agenda with which Islamophobic rhetoric is impregnated is devised and elaborated by benefiting political institutions and Islamophobes, who employ their anti-Islam ideologies in breeding and disseminating hatred and hostility against Islam. Deepa Kumar (2012) identifies common denominators between the promotion of Islamophobia and American foreign policy. He points to members of the Zionist movement, among others, as being crucial players in demonising Muslims in America and promoting pro-Israel policies, heavily utilising the media as a key facilitator of anti-Islam ideologies.

Smith (2014) investigates Islamophobia from Edward Said's viewpoint of orientalism. Echoing Said's premises on orientalism, Smith views Islamophobic discourse as an "othering discourse...creat(ing) a harsh dichotomy between 'us' and them'... (which) creates an image of the other that does not correspond to reality, but is socially constructed by a particular group of elites with an adequate level of power and resources necessary to diffuse their propaganda to a broad audience" (p. 11). The delivery of such orchestrated realities to targeted groups is supposedly objective, and tends to be received by the target audience as truth. The formation of such negative images uses a variety of undesirable components and episodes, such as jihad and conspiracy theories, which collectively create a sense of dread, horror, and mystification in defining the Muslim other. The media acts as the main promoter of such negative perceptions.

### **3.2.4 Selection and reinforcement**

It is significant that the media, in all its different forms, is a dominant source of knowledge dissemination. Media agencies are aware of their prominent role in convincing their audiences. Potter (2012) contextualises this notion within the scope of Islamophobia, whose spread and influence benefit from the cultural and linguistic boundaries which obstruct direct contact between the east and the west. The media exploits this estrangement in order to accentuate the stereotypes and preconceived notions that the west has of Arabs and Muslims. Accordingly, Islamophobic discourse is expounded upon and further established by emphasising stereotypes through discursive selection of information. Such selections parallel the images and definitions of Muslims in line with "symbolically fix(ed) boundaries, exclud(ing) everything that does not belong" (Hall, 1997, p. 247). Furthermore, this strategy of reinforcement adopted by the media, although subtly executed, still has tangible negative outcomes (Potter, 2012).

Through repeated exposure, the media, gradually and continuously, adds greater weight to something that may already exist in a person, thereby consolidating that feature and rendering it less prone to change. When the media systematically presents particular groups and events in a particular manner, actual knowledge regarding that information becomes more rigid and less likely to be open to change (Potter, 2012).

One of the key tools employed by the Islamophobic discourse is selection. The persistent and selective contextualisation of Muslims through terroristic acts and violent thematic scenes in the western media grants a foundation to this association (Gottschalk & Greenberg, 2008), and further, exasperates the stereotypes which have been embedded by the ideology- constructing media agencies. This images perpetuated by the media inhibit any

other possible perceptions of Muslims, which lie beyond the scope of the suggested context. Consequently, a western ideology is constructed, driven by fear and a rejection of the Muslim other.

### **3.3 Narratives**

Baker (2010) establishes a link between translation and narratives. Narratives are defined as “the stories we tell ourselves and others about the world(s) in which we live. These stories provide our main interface with the world” (p. 350). Each narrative comprises a narrative plot, characters and settings. Translation is similarly a recount of realities and information filtered through the choices of the translation. The ideologies of translators, and probably their patrons, are constantly at play in the in the process of translation, manifested either implicitly or explicitly in the target text. Bearing that in mind, and that translation serves as means of communication, translation can be considered as a perpetrator of narratives which may carry ideological overtones.

According to Baker (2010) narratives manifest themselves in four different forms. Public narratives are those stories which relate to a group larger than a singular individual and promoted among political or religious institutions, the media, or other collective entities. Personal narratives, on the other hand, primarily pertain to a single person’s experience. The distinction between the two forms remains blurry due to their interdependency. The involvement of an audience widens the scope of a personal narrative to encompass the public. Once delivered, a narrative might acquire new elements introduced by its recipients, who will, in turn, become part of the narrative. Furthermore, a personal narrative cannot escape the public narrative realm because it requires legitimacy by public acknowledgment and coverage. A personal narrative employs a public narrative as an agent of promotion, benefiting from its audience who will be “willing to subscribe to [the narratives] and narrate themselves in line with the values and beliefs ([the narratives] embody” (Baker, 2010, p. 351). In addition to the two forms of narratives mentioned above, there are also meta-narratives, which essentially are public narratives of strong social influence. Baker (2010) exemplifies this type of narrative by utilising the term ‘War on Terror,’ primarily signified by Islam, which is an internationally influential recurrent theme, both socially and politically.

#### **3.3.1 Narrative features**

##### ***3.3.1.1 Selective appropriation***

Baker (2010) explores selective translation as a prominent tool for the establishment and sustainability of political narratives, discussing the strategies adopted in the construction and framing of narratives. According to narrative theory, a coherent narrative is established

and further sustained by the recurrent exclusion and selection of particular components of the recount being presented, based on evaluative criteria. This is a process known as selective appropriation. A central characteristic of selective appropriation is the selection of not only events and themes, but also the characterisation of protagonists and their profiles throughout the narrative. For instance, in the British media, “Muslims are often identified simply as Muslims . . . [they] are much less likely than non-Muslims to be identified in terms of their job or profession, and much more likely to be unnamed or unidentified” (Moore et al., cited in Baker, 2010, p. 352). The consistent selection of certain characters and figures within events is fundamental for the coherence of the narrative. Relentlessly and systematically associating certain attributes to narrative characters contributes to the creation of a consistent image throughout the narrative against which the characters will henceforth be viewed, assessed, and experienced. Manipulation in the construction of narratives is not restricted to the actual translation of texts, in fact, selective appropriation materialises most prominently in the selection of “whose voice, which texts and which extracts from these texts are translated and made to ‘represent’ the values and ethos of the communities in question” (Baker, 2010, p. 352). With its plot, characters and settings, each narrative becomes in its whole a unit of analysis. This single unit may then be introduced within other texts along with other narratives, creating a conglomerate of narratives which may ultimately result in a larger narrative. Contrary to the traditional approach of analysing translation in terms of language choices, narratives become units of analysis. This is because the selection of narratives for translation significantly implies the translator’s ideologies and motives. Accordingly, ideological manipulation is exercised on a level larger than the word or that of the expression. It is manifested in the specific selection of stories the translator seeks to perpetuate, deliberately excluding other stories which may not serve the translator’s interests.

Manipulative behaviour in translation can be inaugurated as early as the mere selection of text for translation. This introductory phase is void of any actual lingual transfer; however, one can argue, it is the nucleus in which prospects for manipulation are generated. The selection phase, in which the choice of the text to be translated is made, is suggestive of the translator’s ideologies, culture and motives. After all, it is the vehicle which will allow them to exercise their power over the text and decide how they plan to transmit their agenda to their audience. The standard scenario of translation usually occurs across two different cultures, whereby the translation for the receiving culture strives to emphasise the superiority of the receiving culture over the source culture. In this particular venture, the receiving culture is presented with information on the source culture which agrees with its pre-



established conception of the other. The translation then emphasises the stereotypes through which the target culture views the source culture. Therefore, the selection of texts for translation is chosen based on its similarity to the target culture's perception of the source. Ultimately, these carefully selected pieces can be falsified to become representative of the entire culture; a tool for image-making and promotion of ideology; thereby, widening, not bridging, the gap between the two cultures, and further alienating them.

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#### ***3.3.1.2 Relationality***

Narratives are also characterised by the feature of relationality, by which elements and events are correlated in and made to become interdependent in such a way that understanding one requires the understanding of the whole context. Hence, elements of a single narrative are defined within the exclusive scope of the narrative in which they lie. Baker (2010) exemplifies this notion by examining the differing meanings assigned to the concept of martyrdom across different narratives. What he finds is that the meaning that martyrdom represents in the Islamic narrative of Jihad would greatly differ from the conceptualisation of the notion within the first century Christian narrative of persecution (Baker, 2010, p. 353).

#### **3.3.2 MEMRI TV**

The Middle East Media Research Institute (MEMRI) TV is a strongly pro-Israel advocacy group established in February 1998 by Colonel Yigal Carmon, a former member of the Israeli intelligence service (Baker, 2010, p. 353). Baker (2010) describes MEMRI TV as an "industry" of creating and propagating certain realities of communities projected as a source of threat to world security has become, chiefly recently, a phenomenon catching increasing momentum (p. 353). The circulation of such realities is largely facilitated by means of translation delivered by translation agencies entirely designed for this particular

purpose. These agencies embark on the translation of carefully selected texts in the forms of articles, videos, sermons, interviews, and various other sources of information. One culture which is targeted exhaustively is the Arab Muslim community, which has become the core of a meticulously constructed narrative that essentially aims to dehumanise members of that community. Translations by such agencies are usually executed with the utmost linguistic accuracy, in an attempt to secure legitimacy and integrity for the translation agency. Concealed behind the mask of linguistic loyalty to the source text, manipulation of the message is manifested in the very selection of the text to be translated.

Political contexts would be ideal realms for exploring selective translation, as political translations can only pass as objective when the translator's subjectivity and manipulation are discretely practiced (i.e. not on a linguistic level). Members of the politically-driven media agencies utilise any means possible to locate loopholes in opponents' political actions. Therefore, manipulation is played safe when it is restricted to the selection of texts which portray to the audience information which serve the interests of the translating agency. Manipulation by selection, as opposed to the manipulation of the word, mitigate the risk of a translation being disqualified for its bias and subjectivity. This approach is primarily employed by MEMRI, through which the agency strives to present itself as objective and non-partisan.

An expository documentary prepared by Al Jazeera English illustrates MEMRI's political dogma, and discusses the danger of MEMRI's selective translation in its pursuit of portraying the Arab and Muslim culture to the western media. Priding itself on its accuracy and objectivity, MEMRI confidently claims that it "bridges the gap that exists between the West and the Middle East" (MEMRI). It is statements such as this which earns the agency limitless trust and a strong following from its readers in its capacity as the sole distributor of the alien eastern culture (Zabi G, 2011). This is a culture which is distant both geographically and in terms of comprehension; and which has been extensively and continuously linked to terrorism and threats to western security.

MEMRI's political front and approach are expected given the political backgrounds and affiliations of its members. MEMRI is a "propaganda machine, which includes a group of Islamophobes and Israeli extremists who fabricate how the Middle East is seen in the western media," revealing it to be inherently violent and irrational, and a threat to the western world (Zabi G, 2011).

MEMRI positions itself as the vanguard in the war on terror narrative (Baker, 2010), a protagonist combatting the transgressions of the antagonists – Arab and Muslim

communities, consistently portrayed as the producers, operators, and perpetrators of terrorism. MEMRI chooses a variety of texts for its selective translation, ranging from interviews and TV shows, to religious sermons and speeches, to any other content with political or religious dimensions, even if it is only remotely indicative of MEMRI's narrative through which the Arab and Muslim communities are portrayed. MEMRI's materials target language communities who "MEMRI chooses to depict as the guardians of the free world at any point in time" (Baker, 2010, p. 357). MEMRI disseminates its translations largely free of charge: they are accessible upon subscription to the agency's website. Perhaps even more interesting is the fact that MEMRI sends "unsolicited translations of selected material to members of the US Congress and journalists in various parts of the world completely free of charge" (Baker, 2010, p. 356). In this regard, Brian Whitaker (2010) reports in *The Guardian*:

For some time now, I have been receiving small gifts from a generous institute in the United States. The gifts are high-quality translations of articles from Arabic newspapers which the institute sends to me by email every few days, entirely free-of-charge. . . . The emails also go to politicians and academics, as well as to lots of other journalists. The stories they contain are usually interesting. Whenever I get an email from the institute, several of my *Guardian* colleagues receive one too and regularly forward their copies to me – sometimes with a note suggesting that I might like to check out the story and write about it. (p. 356)

Whitaker (2002) sheds light on MEMRI's selection strategy, revealing the pattern it utilizes in order to share its interpretation of Arab news. The agency constructs a narrative which negatively portrays Arabs and Muslims, cultivating Israel's political agenda. Echoing Whitaker's comments, Harris (2006) further explains MEMRI's selective appropriation as demonstrated in the decontextualisation of selected text, which ensures that any representation of Muslims and Arabs who are "opponents of [Israel's] occupation [are viewed] as religious extremists or anti-Semites" (cited in Baker, 2006, p. 74).

The dominance of MEMRI as an all-knowing eye on the Arab and Muslim world is clearly evident in its solid impact on the prominent and influential western press and media such as CNN, FOX, Sky, NBC, and CBS (Zabi G, 2011). Instances of quoting MEMRI sources are enumerable, a fact highly suggestive of the power and contrived legitimacy this institution has attained through its selective appropriation. MEMRI, well aware of its painstakingly achieved influence, indicates on its website quotes indicating its influence on western press, such as: "MEMRI, the indispensable group that translates the ravings of the Saudi and Egyptian press . . ." (Baker, 2006, p. 74). The following are some excerpts from US congressmen and the press; wherein, they extol the virtues of MEMRI and praise its work.

I am full of admiration for the work MEMRI has done . . . in its dedicated exposure of Arab anti-Semitism. Until MEMRI undertook its efforts to review and translate articles from the Arab press, there was only dim public awareness of this problem in the United States. Thanks to MEMRI, this ugly phenomenon has been unmasked, and numerous American writers have called attention to it. (US Rep. Tom Lantos, 2002)

www.memri.org – What they do is very simple, no commentary nothing else. What they do is they just translate what the Saudis say in the mosques, say in their newspapers, say in government pronouncements, and say in their press. (BBC, 2002)

MEMRI, or as Whitaker calls it “selective MEMRI,” perfectly exemplifies the selective approach to translation. It is very clear that “the stories selected by MEMRI for translation follow a familiar pattern: either they reflect badly on the character of Arabs or they in some way further the political agenda of Israel” (Whitaker, 2002).

Baker (2010) elaborates on MEMRI’s selection process in translation and its impact on perception. The legitimacy that MEMRI claims for itself partially springs from its accurate linguistic transfer of meaning to English. In practice, the assessment of the translation from Arabic into English reveals an almost accurate result. It is not the linguistic manipulation of text which the agency utilises for subversion of reality, because any linguistic inconsistencies can be easily identified, at which point their legitimacy would be questioned. Instead, MEMRI’s chief approach relies heavily on selective appropriation and decontextualisation.

This chapter has explained that manipulation in translation is not strictly bound to linguistic choices. It can be efficiently achieved otherwise by the very selection of text for translation. Narratives and frames are implicit translation tools and processes which allow, beyond the mere linguistic actions, for the formation of new realities, those which are not necessarily found in the source text. The translation of materials relevant to Arabs, Muslims, and Islam through particular frames and within certain narratives can deliver portrayals to the recipients which inaccurately become the stereotypes through which the culture and religion are perceived. The following chapter demonstrates, through examples, the inaccuracy and bias of MEMRI’s selective translations. The discussion investigates the agency’s narratives and frames through which it disseminates its political and ideological agenda.

## **Chapter Four: Data Analysis**

This chapter uses specific examples from MEMRI's selective approach to translating Arab Muslim media. The examples are chosen in order to reveal how MEMRI constructs two narratives, embedded within a meta-narrative, to ignite Islamophobic rhetoric. The examples are analysed to show how MEMRI adopts its approach to achieve its political and ideological agenda. The findings of this chapter will help prove that MEMRI's media coverage is biased.

### **4.1 Methodology**

Based on the discussion of ideological, cultural, and political implications of purpose-driven translation, in addition to the role of narratives and framing in subjectifying translation, a number of clips translated by MEMRI are analysed. Firstly, a meta-narrative: Islam and terror, is defined. Within this meta-narrative there exist two central narratives: the Allahu-Akbar narrative, and the terrorisation of childhood narrative. Four examples of each are discussed in light of their selective appropriation and relationality. Furthermore, the transculturation of each of the two narratives is established as an ultimate product of the narrative construction processes. In this context, a resultant frame of Islamophobia is presented as shaped and consolidated by the investigated narratives.

### **4.2 MEMRI's Narratives**

#### **4.2.1 The meta-narrative**

In the course of her investigation into narratives, Baker (2010) divides narratives into four types. The one most relevant to this inquiry are public narratives, which refer to the stories of world realities which are created and promoted by groups. Accordingly, the narratives formulated and circulated by MEMRI can be considered public, feeding into and elaborating upon the wide-ranging influential meta-narrative of the war on Muslim terror. As stipulated at the outset, MEMRI states the cultural groups whose media it primarily explores. At the core of MEMRI's narratives are Arab and Muslim groups. The agency attempts to highlight terroristic trends practised by these groups through exploring source materials including media coverage, religious sermons, and printed publications. MEMRI exploits several narrative devices for the attainment of successful storytelling, most significant to the scope of this study are selective appropriation and relationality.

Essentially, the overarching narrative that MEMRI governs and maintains is one which displays the Arab and Muslim world to its western counterparts, by incriminating the former's terrorist behaviour and validating for the latter the risks and dangers posed by Arabs

and Muslims. This facilitates the widening of cultural and political enmity between the two conflicting fronts; a skopos MEMRI strives to achieve. MEMRI's narratives underpin and sustain a dichotomy between protagonists and antagonists. The west is portrayed as the victimised protagonist, while Arabs and Muslims are depicted as villains, endangering the western world with their terrorist conduct, violence, and hatred. MEMRI affiliates itself with the protagonists by promising to deliver eye-opening and awareness-raising coverage. MEMRI's coverage is primarily disseminated amongst a western audience. By designating itself as the sole knowledge provider, and by demonstrating allegiance to its western audience, MEMRI ultimately acquires and reinforces legitimacy and credibility by subtly soliciting its audience's trust. Speaking to the audience in their own language encourages trust. MEMRI places itself in its audience's culture, claiming awareness and sharing of their concerns and desires. Dissimilarities provoke intimidation, which is a notion that MEMRI thrives on in its operative approach, seeking to alienate the non-Arabic speaking western audiences from the non-English speaking groups and cultures. The contrast the agency desire heighten is not merely linguistic, but one which extends to cultural and ideological conceptions, which MEMRI seeks to portray as significantly different.

In its capacity as a media agency, MEMRI promises the delivery of accurately represented information, while it creates and develops its narratives through selective appropriation. This skopos-driven strategy allows it to subjectively construct its stories in compliance with its desires, goals, and political agenda. MEMRI chooses its source material based on the particular version of reality it wishes to propagate. The material is then discursively put together in a consistent manner that guarantees certain negative notions and views about Arabs and Muslims will be established. The biased selection strategy exercised by MEMRI consistently reveals to its audience a particular representation characterised by certain ideological and political dimensions. Consequently, this representation is received as a characteristic description of the culture in question. The consistently negative representation of Arabs and Muslims as terrorists, by a source which illegitimately acquires its credibility, is unfortunately adequate enough to impose a believable one-dimensional tableau on its audience. The subjectivity of this approach is further aggravated by what Aixela (1996) refers to as the inaccessibility of the target audience to the source text, and its inability to critically respond to and interact with received information due to the linguistic incompetence impeding the process. MEMRI's linguistically accurate translations, as well as its influential impact on prominent western news agencies, MEMRI has acquired a reputation as a legitimate and trustworthy source among western audience. Despite the

relatively unrestricted intercultural access the internet enables for its users, the western world generally relies upon MEMRI for what it believes to be accurate coverage. Therefore, the selected materials for translation remain a predominant position from which the original culture is explored, often disregarding all other legitimate narratives not promoted by MEMRI. This approach to translation renders what Alvarez and Vidal (1996) describe as a “colonial enterprise” (1996, p. 4).

The maintenance of consistent narratives relies heavily on reiterating certain features which become, through selective translation, characteristic of the narrative and its subjects and essential for the overall validity of the plot. Such features may also be selected by the translation agency to ultimately become centres of other narratives encompassed within, and complement the meta-narrative of terrorism. One may also venture to suggest that such features become mini-narratives themselves. For instance, one can observe the recurrence of the Allahu-Akbar expression in a consistent pattern. Across a considerable number of MEMRI translated clips, this expression seems to emerge in specific settings in which some form of terror, killing, or bombing is expressed.

The following discussion sheds light on MEMRI’s structuring of a narrative which aims to stigmatise the iconic Allahu-Akbar expression in order to cast it as a symbol of terror, violence, and extremism. This selective approach helps MEMRI achieve its primary objectives; thereby, proving its biased and partisan approach. Through such ideological and political manipulation, it can be deduced that MEMRI does indeed play a pivotal role in reinforcing Islamophobic rhetoric.

#### **4.2.2 The Allahu-Akbar narrative**

Embedded within the wider meta-narrative lies an excessively utilised narrative which explores the terrorisation of the Allahu-Akbar expression. By using selective appropriation and relationality as narrative devices, a network of misrepresented ideologies and beliefs is presented in the form of a narrative. In doing so, MEMRI strengthens its political stance, and further consolidates its purpose to represent Arabs and Muslims as perpetrators of terrorism and irrationality. This is achieved taking a symbolic religious component of the Islamic belief - the Allahu-Akbar expression, and degrading it into a symbol of terror and extremism.

##### ***4.2.2.1 Selective appropriation of the Allahu-Akbar narrative***

Despite the range of contexts and occasions in which the Allahu-Akbar phrase is applicable, MEMRI discursively selects excerpts which misrepresent it as a phrase that is strictly bound to violence, terror, and radicalism. As a result, the target audience is ignorant

of the many contexts in which Allahu-Akbar is utilised by both Arab Muslims and Christians. With this selective approach, the phrase is exclusively perceived through an Islamophobic filter. Redefining the expression as a symbol of destruction, MEMRI's selective appropriation ensures the western audience's stigmatisation of the expression, tainting a significant Muslim symbol.

#### ***4.2.2.2 Relationality of the Allahu-Akbar narrative***

To compensate for the foreignness of the expression for its western audience, relationality is practiced with the aim of falsely demystifying the expression by establishing a new context of relations which help define it with the terms MEMRI selects. In doing so, Allahu-Akbar is defined in terms to which it does not comply, and is associated with the Islamophobic connotations that MEMRI strives to propagate. As a transliterated expression, Allahu-Akbar bears no meaning to its non-Arabic speaking recipients. Therefore, it is made to acquire meaning from context. By relating it to other components of the narrative within which it is situated, and with the systematic consistency of such relations, the expression gradually becomes more familiar. Such defining components range from settings to characters and events. MEMRI tends to use a particular pattern of settings in which the expression tends to be uttered.

In several of the examples discussed below, it can be noted that religious sermons and contexts are a recurrent theme in which Allahu-Akbar is produced, usually uttered by clerics and Imams leading the congregation. It can also be argued that a selective pattern in the subject of such sermons has been chosen by MEMRI in relation to the expression. In the videos which MEMRI selects for translation, the Allahu-Akbar expression is regularly associated with contexts of speech which target the non-Muslim and western community, expressing hatred and a desire for annihilation. Such prayers frequently employ figurative and heavily descriptive language depicting the use of weapons in killing, all of which are supported by the solicitation of God's blessing of such act.



#### 4.2.2.3 Examples of the Allahu-Akbar narrative

**Example 1:** Dressed in attire typical of representatives or members of the Islamic State (i.e. ISIS), two young men, the extremists who carried out the Normandy church attack on 26 July 2016, record themselves pledging allegiance to the State's Khalifa. The content of the pledge comprises vows to replenish apostates to the ISIS doctrine, as an affirmation of the validity and sanctity of the committed attack, and the firm intention to recreate similar attacks. Upon recital of the pledge, the deal is sealed with a triple reiteration of the Allahu-Akbar expression, allowing the video to strengthen MEMRI's premise concerning the fabricated terrorist contextualisation of this prominent Muslim expression (<https://www.memri.org/tv/normandy-church-attackers-pledge-allegiance-abu-bakr-al-baghdadi>) (see Appendix A).



Figure 1: Normandy Church attackers pledge allegiance to ISIS Khalifa

**Example 2:** “These weapons are our only means to establish our Islamic State. These weapons are the only means to re-establish Muhammad’s caliphate. These weapons are our only means to instate the law of Allah...Allahu-Akbar! All praise to Allah! Allahu-Akbar! All praise to Allah! Allahu-Akbar! All praise to Allah! Allahu-Akbar! All praise to Allah!” Subtitles are provided by MEMRI in its illustration of a sermon by an Imam in Gaza, Palestine, urging congregates to reclaim their stolen land and violated rights through power and violence. This compressed 52 second footage selectively and conveniently presents to the audience another well narrated episode of the Allahu-Akbar narrative, complementing the powerfully woven net in which this expression has been made to invoke violent associations. This clip can be summarised by filtering the utterances in the video down to weapons, violence, and the closure with Allahu-Akbar, further underlining the implications of violence and terror MEMRI strives to affiliate the Allahu-Akbar expression with (<https://www.memri.org/tv/gaza-imam-brandishes-gun-friday-sermon-weapons-are-our-only-means-establish-caliphate>) (see Appendix B).

Clip #4489  
 GAZA IMAM BRANDISHES GUN IN FRIDAY SERMON: WEAPONS ARE OUR ONLY MEANS TO ESTABLISH THE CALIPHATE  
 August 28, 2014



Figure 2: Gaza Imam brandishes gun as only means for victory

**Example 3:** Another video features the association of the expression with images and overtones of hostility and violence, as a member of the Hamas movement in Palestine is depicted holding a sharpened knife as he describes it as “the only choice.” The audience’s follow by a loud and collective bellow of Allahu-Akbar. Allahu-Akbar is highlighted in yet another MEMRI translation selection within this particular narrative as a signal of Muslim-related violence and irrationality. In Muslim sermons MEMRI selects for translation, an Imam verbally threatens the US and Russia, vowing to take over the White House and the Kremlin by victoriously calling for prayer from those two prominent governmental buildings. The reference to prayers is established by the Allahu-Akbar utterance, which is made to embody conquering the western nations in a war in which the imam calls upon God’s blessings for endorsement and empowerment in the quest for “blow[ing] up ... cities, pulverizing ... ships, killing ... soldiers, subjugating...and burning” (<https://www.memri.org/tv/palestinian-cleric-abdallah-ayed-al-aqsa-mosque-address-oh-allah-blow-capitals-and-planes-us-and>) (see appendix C).

PALESTINIAN CLERIC ABDALLAH AYED IN AN AL-AQSA MOSQUE ADDRESS: OH ALLAH, BLOW UP THE CAPITALS AND PLANES OF U.S. AND RUSSIA  
 September 13, 2016



Figure 3: Cleric vows to takeover White House and Kremlin

Clip #5077  
 PALESTINIAN CLERIC ABDALLAH AYED IN AN AL-AQSA MOSQUE ADDRESS: OH ALLAH, BLOW UP THE CAPITALS AND PLANES OF U.S. AND RUSSIA  
 September 13, 2016



Figure 4: Allahu-Akbar to indicate successful attacks

The intention of this discussion is not an attempt at any commentary on or criticism over the validity of the statements made by the speakers with reference to the Palestinian political case. It is only to illuminate MEMRI's deliberate construction and constant reiteration of the Allahu-Akbar narrative by persistently and coherently translating excerpts which strictly present this emblematic Islamic expression in association with terrorist and violent references.

**Example 4:** The Allahu-Akbar narrative is further consolidated by another video correlating the expression with references suggestive of violence and hatred against MEMRI's chiefly western audience. The footage showcases a mass military parade, comprised entirely of women dressed in abayas and niqabs, handling heavy weapons. The video interviews a woman who in a harsh tone condemns men who refrain from joining forces against infidels, describing such behaviour as un-masculine. Spectators, all of whom are women, collectively shout "Allahu-Akbar. Death to America. Death to Israel. A curse upon Jews. Victory to Islam." Once again, Allahu-Akbar is situated in a context which binds it to acts of cursing and threats of killing directed at Americans, Israelis, and Jews, emphasising and reinforcing the terrorist connotation that MEMRI aims to establish. The video tends to exacerbate the view of Islam's violent orientation, as it promotes the idea of a comprehensive terrorist discourse, which is inclusive, of females, who are generally represented as domestic figures by the religion. Consequently, the western audience is urged to fear the Muslim culture in its entirety (<https://www.memri.org/tv/mass-pro-houthi-rally-sanaa-yemen-women-brandish-weapons-chant-death-america>) (see appendix D).



Figure 5: Houthi women shouting Allahu-Akbar and chanting death vows to America and Israel

With the consistency and persistence of such episodes and coverage, the Allahu-Akbar narrative becomes concretely affirmed, illegitimately acquiring legitimate status through the western culture's virtual encounter with the Arab Muslim antagonist.

Underpinning the strength of this narrative is MEMRI's selective appropriation of reality and its authoritative use of biased and manipulated knowledge. The frame within which this narrative sits helps shape western uninformed perceptions, and conditions the western audience to subconsciously react to Allahu-Akbar with fear.

#### ***4.2.2.4 Transculturation of Allahu-Akbar***

Shedding adequate light on the impact of MEMRI's discursive rendering of this utterance requires a thorough understanding of its original use within the context of Islam. Allahu-Akbar translates to Allah is Greater, referring to God's limitless power and His absolute might, which surpass all human and trivial worldly forces. Despite its excessive use in Islam, the expression is not exclusively Islamic, as its meaning does not have an inherently Islamic connotation, but rather a connotation possibly applicable to all religions. Accordingly, the rise of the expression as a strictly Islamic one might conceal its use by Orthodox Christians.

The phrase has acquired a wide semantic field and has several associations within the Muslim belief. First and foremost, the significance of this expression is derived from its continuous use in the daily prayers. Hajj, the Muslim form of pilgrimage, is another venue in which the expression occurs. The hajj ritual constitutes the oral repetition of this expression throughout its entirety. Muslims use this phrase in several different circumstances as expressions of their state of mind, such as joy and amusement, distress, or victory and gratitude.

Indicating their faith in God's power in governing the human life from cradle to grave, Muslims recite the athan or the call to prayer which starts with a quadruple utterance of Allahu-Akbar, both at the birth and after the demise of people, submitting to God's will and supremacy over the life cycle of humans.

The common rationale behind the diversity of these usages is simple; the speaker acknowledges the ultimate power and authority of The Creator, basing and justifying all the above mentioned circumstances on His endless will. Be it a solicitation of assistance and guidance, or an expression of gratitude and victory, Allahu-Akbar implies absolute servitude to God, proclaiming faith in His strength and might.

This analysis of the expression's significance as practised in Islam and the exploration of its diverse semantic field places further emphasis on the adversity of MEMRI's discursive approach to selection and representation. As a conveyor of information to an audience which is primarily English speaking with very minimal awareness of the Arab and Muslim language and culture, MEMRI's monopoly of power and authority is further

consolidated. The linguistic and cultural gap between the western audience and the source culture allows MEMRI the ability to manipulate information without the fear of criticism and blame. Benefiting from this communication gap, MEMRI translates excerpts and sketches in a coherent selective manner, which includes the expression in specific contexts that can be interpreted negatively. The multi-layered associations the expression invokes and the importance it bears for Muslims are drastically reduced to a few notions and impressions. This activity enables MEMRI to further its ideological and political agenda of projecting the source culture as one which promotes and advocates terror.

An attempt at transculturation is clearly witnessed in this context. The removal of the expression from its original context, and the semantic transformation it undergoes amid the selective translation process changes the phrase, giving it uncharacteristic connotative dimensions. The transculturation of Allahu-Akbar is achieved by the expression's uptake of a new notional form within the receiving culture, as it acquires an invented behaviour which is not truthful to the original. By uprooting this symbolic expression from its contextual, linguistic, and cognitive environment, and replanting it in one to which it is alien, MEMRI achieves its skopos scheme to fabricate an image of Arabs and Muslims as a people and culture which values and venerates terror and violence. The adaptation of the expression by translation into a new semantic field allows it a new persona the expression is originally irrelevant to, shifting the realm of the semantic field.

The fundamentalist doctrine adopted and practiced by Islamist extremist groups provides an ideal platform for politically driven translation agencies such as MEMRI to nurture their agenda and political schemes and successfully transmit them to their western audience. Extremist groups, the rotten apples in the box, are selectively falsely exhibited as a typical depiction of Muslims in general. The severity of this deliberate and selective representation is exacerbated by the lack of any other possible channels through which the western culture may be introduced to its eastern counterpart. This particular channel, MEMRI, prepares the perfect recipe for inducing fear, resentment, and intimidation towards a culture which is conveyed as a threat to the safety and security of the west, thereby widening the existing gap separating the two fronts.

#### *4.2.2.4.1 Foreignisation of Allahu-Akbar.*

MEMRI chooses to present the Allahu-Akbar expression by transliterating it as it is, notwithstanding the lack of comprehension this translation choice will inevitably deliver to its receivers. Surely, this thoroughly informed decision is driven by manipulative skopos and motives. By foreignising the expression, MEMRI exoticises the expression and delivers it in

a cloak of mystery and irrationality (Faiq, 2004). Allahu-Akbar remains a cognitively concealed feature of people characterised by mysticism and irrationality.

### **4.2.3 Terrorisation of childhood narrative**

In addition to the narrative pertaining to Allahu-Akbar, MEMRI also focuses on the association of terror with children. Of particular interest is their selection of footage which juxtaposes the younger generation in scenes of terror and murder. From children chanting verses of murder threats, to a little girl beheading her doll, MEMRI sets forth the notion of Islam being a religion which preaches terror from young age. Children symbolise innocence, purity, hope, and future. But MEMRI's intent to reveal Islam as devoid from humanity, leads them to establish a link between children and references to terror. By representing Islam as a religion which instils values of terror and violence from a young age, MEMRI urges the western world to fear Islam and its followers, thereby deligitmising the religion. At the heart of this narrative is the use of visual media presenting children being conditioned to bear emotions of hatred towards the west and trained to execute acts of violence upon non-Muslims. MEMRI urges its audience to view and "believe" that Islam encourages notions of terror and violence. The decision to select such coverage for translation is in itself discursive. Despite the accuracy of information transfer on the lexical level, discursion and manipulation are deliberately exercised on a larger-scale. The narrative achieves image-making and ideological forging through the particular selection of the nature of information delivered. The selective translation is not done in an ad-hoc manner; on the contrary, it complements and further enforces the over-arching purpose MEMRI strives to disseminate to its audience. Highlighting the involvement of young children in the culture of violence and hatred towards the west emphasises the estrangement between the narrative's protagonist and antagonist, creating a more heightened sense of intimidation and alienation. This systematic negative showcase facilitates MEMRI's manipulation of its target audience to ensure it adapts the agency's islamophobic political ideology.

#### ***4.2.3.1 Selective appropriation of the narrative***

To secure a firmly constructed narrative highlighting Islam's inculcation of terrorism and violence in its youth, MEMRI selects particular depictions that suggest the theme the narrative seeks to convey. At the core of the narrative lie the characters around which the story is built. Children represent the key characteristic of this narrative and are employed as a vessel through which MEMRI further enforces its initial premise, feeding in to the wider meta-narrative. The characters of this narrative are chiefly children whose ages range, in approximation, between three and 15. This is an age group in which the process of learning

and character-shaping is at its peak. This is characteristic of the narrative as it claims that Islam follows a systematic pedagogy that nurtures a terrorist society, and therefore creates a serious threat to western societies. It is evident from examples that a specific negative image of Muslim children is drawn through selective appropriation in terms of attire and use of weapons. Throughout the examples used by MEMRI, children are portrayed carrying tools or weapons such as guns and knives.

#### ***4.2.3.2 Relationality of the narrative***

In a similar format to that witnessed in the Allahu-Akbar narrative, the videos selected for translation regarding children, present them through consistent associations with terror and hatred towards westerners and non-Muslims. Such narrations are either conveyed verbally or in actual application of terrorist behaviour. This singular representation of children in such contexts consolidates a concrete relationality between the concept of childhood in Islam and the nurturing of terrorist behaviour. Due to the regularity of this narrative construction, perceiving Muslim children in a manner other than that illuminated by MEMRI becomes almost impossible. This relationality encourages the western audience to have further contempt for Islam due to its perceived terrorist agenda reinforced by the politicisation and employment of children.

#### ***4.2.3.3 Examples***

**Example 1:** A video presents a training workout session between a father and his young daughter with a toddler also visible in the scene. The father appears to be training the daughter to become a fighter. At the onset, the video shows a rifle in the background, a suggestive element retained throughout the video. Across the room wanders a toddler who fiddles with a gun. The video captures the nurturing of terrorist and violent inclinations in children by Muslim extremists, while complementing the narrative dehumanising the Muslim culture for implicating children in its alleged terrorist dogma (<https://www.memri.org/tv/instagram-video-shows-isis-father-daughter-workout-toddler-plays-gun>).



**Figure 6: Father training daughter and son**

**Example 2:** These suggestions are similarly reiterated in yet another video which emphasises the involvement of children in violent behaviour. A fully covered little girl chants the ISIS signature nashid, which commonly plays in the background of videos capturing episodes of beheadings by this extremist group. The girl appears holding a sharpened knife vowing death and doom for non-Muslims, saying: “State of Islam, attack and defeat the religions of heresy and the gang of the military. Instil terror, exterminate the leftover remnants (of the army), and slaughter.” At the utterance of Allahu-Akbar, the girl kneels down and beheads a doll in a disturbing manner. Upon completion, the girl rises up again and victoriously shouts “Allahu-Akbar,” further reinforcing, not only the terrorisation of childhood, but also aggravating the stigmatisation of the expression (<https://www.memri.org/tv/little-girl-sings-isis-song-beheads-doll-warning-disturbing-images>) (see Appendix E).



**Figure 7: Little girl holds knife while singing ISIS nashid**



**Figure 8: Girl beheads doll**



**Figure 9: Girl shouts Allahu-Akbar victoriously**



**Example 3:** These implications are also echoed in a video of a man encouraging his young daughter, who expresses her aspiration to eradicate Jews with the knife she holds. The father commends the daughter for her courageous drive to “stab a Jew” (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hy-S3hcahZ0>) (see Appendix F).



Figure 10: Little girl holds knife and encouraged by father

**Example 4:** In a similar sense, a video juxtaposes depictions of ceremonial Eid celebrations and a little boy singing, amongst a group of other boys, lyrics expressing allegiance to ISIS. The lyrics include vows to kill and slaughter opponents to the ISIS institution: “Oh Peshmarga...we are coming to slaughter you – you and all apostate Shiites.” The singing boy follows these declarations with Allahu-Akbar, as an invocation for God’s support and blessing of their murderous commination (<https://www.memri.org/tv/children-vow-slaughter-kurds-isis-video-depicting-eid-al-adha-celebrations-mosul>) (see Appendix G).



Figure 11: Boys chant vows of murder



Figure 12: Boys shouting Allahu-Akbar

#### 4.2.3.4 Transculturation of childhood

The above examples indicate MEMRI’s skopos-driven selections which are aimed at uncovering Islam as a religion which abuses, distorts, and exploits childhood. This perception, however, is strikingly contradictory to Islam’s deep respect of childhood’s

delicate and specific needs. In fact, Islamic doctrine is very clear about the importance of children and emphasises their rights to a good life. Islam pays special attention to the upbringing of children in observance of its key virtues and teachings, which will secure them a life of prosperity and virtue. Quranic verses and hadiths have numerous references to this subject, reflecting the value Islam appoints to children and the importance of nurturing them. Islam obliges parents to teach their children morality and righteousness, allowing children to reciprocate the values they acquire towards the promotion of their societies.

Virtues of love, tolerance, empathy, and patience are believed by Islam to be fundamental building blocks of human character, and therefore Islam stresses their formation from a young age. This can be demonstrated by Islam's requirement for children to perform two of Islam's pillars: praying and fasting, from a very young age. Praying and fasting are not performed as mere ritualistic practices, but are commanded as emblems of Islamic teachings and morals. Praying teaches discipline; thereby encouraging young children to take up responsibility. Fasting is another pillar which entails the application of important Islamic virtues. Children who fast are reminded of those who are less privileged, which nurtures their sense of empathy and discipline. Fasting also teaches tolerance and patience, urging young Muslims to cultivate their ability to tame emotions of anger and fury. The institution of such pious morals from a young age validates Islam's high regard of childhood and its future potential as a fundamental building block of society. The specific profile and characteristics Islam strives to develop from youth reveal the nature and dynamics the religion aspires to attain for a healthily operating society governed by Islamic teachings. (Ali, Belembaogo, Hegazi, & Khaled, 2005)

As a religion which favours moderateness and reproaches extremism, Islam discourages the use of extremism in raising children, believing that children reciprocate behaviors they are exposed to. Because violence breeds violence, parents are strictly requested to refrain from violence and extreme punishment as disciplining techniques, as well as avoid engaging in quarrels in the presence of children. This is to ensure a healthy environment for children to grow up as physically, emotionally, and psychologically flourishing members of their societies. Of principle significance as well is Islam's disfavour of violence. Parents are urged to teach their children to abstain from violence in all its forms. This is because Islam recognises that violence encourages negative conduct, and introduces into society members who exhibit violent inclinations, which may jeopardise children's wellbeing. Islam's emphasis on exercising kindness and avoiding harshness in the upbringing of children is reflected in its acknowledgement of children's fear of death.

Accordingly, parents are exhorted to abstain from constant and unnecessary discussions of the topic. However, an awareness of death is to be reasonably and calmly taught to children without provoking emotions of fear and violence (Ali et al., 2005).

In stark contrast to the sensitivity towards childhood brought forward by Islam, the ideas conveyed by the particular material that MEMRI selects for translation, presents children as violent, hateful, and irrational beings. Their negative and inaccurate portrayal suggests that children in the Islamic world lack human rights and are exploited. The importance of raising children in Islam, underpinned by virtues of love, tolerance, righteousness, equality, and security is transformed through MEMRI's harmful translations into a rigid framework of violence, terror, and fear. While Islam encourages equality on the basis of righteousness, MEMRI suggests, in its selected footage, that hatred and discrimination towards non-Muslims are fostered from a young age. Although Islam deems any sanctioning of violent behaviour in children as condemnable exploitation, MEMRI consistently presents Muslim children engaging in violent acts, both actively and passively. The material that MEMRI presents, revealing an apparent constant reference to death by Muslim children, both verbally and physically, is in direct conflict with Islam's consideration of children's emotional fragility and sensitivity to death. Additionally, MEMRI's incriminates Islam as a religion that urges children to undertake violent actions, which is in absolute contradiction to Islam's keenness to ensure the protection of children from danger and any behaviour which might lead to harm. It is this consistent forging of an atypical image of this religion that the true sense of childhood in Islam is separated from its original truth to one that is alien. Bombarded with such negative ideas, the western audience becomes conditioned to believe MEMRI's version of reality, and entertains the strict notions it presents. Consequently, Islamic teachings relevant to childhood will be viewed from the fabricated conception transculturated by the ideological manipulations of realities, including MEMRI's selective translations.

#### **4.2.4 Consistency in narrative construction**

Consistency plays a chief role in consolidating information (Potter, 2012). The consistency found within MEMRI's narrations contributes to its falsely claimed legitimacy and credibility. A facet of consistency the agency adopts in its selection strategy is the interconnectedness of narratives and/or features within narratives. This constancy strengthens the wider meta-narrative, enabling MEMRI to solidify its premise and facilitate its dissemination across the target culture. The narratives display an overlap in their themes and components. For example, the concurrence between the Allahu-Akbar utterance and the

narrative associating youth with terror consolidates each of the narratives, ultimately benefiting the intentions of the wider narrative, contextualising the Arab and Muslim culture within a terrorist reality. It is apparent that the Allahu-Akbar narrative is frequently exposed in the clips that MEMRI selects for translation. This emphasis is obviously justified by their desire to exploit the symbolic significance of the religious expression and the associations it pertains to within Muslim belief and practice. Hence, the investment in elaborating upon the narrative schemes is to ultimately achieve the stigmatisation of Muslim symbols, uprooting them from their original frames and transculturating them into an alien frame MEMRI constructs to serve its skopos.

### **4.3 A Frame of Islamophobia**

The stories that MEMRI transmits to its western audience in its quest to dissect the Arab and Muslim culture, create a processed picture which highlights features emphasising terrorist characteristics, and obscures others which may negate the premises MEMRI bases its narratives on. The construction and elaboration of such narratives enable the formation of frames of representation in which such narratives are placed, sorted, rearranged, and readily delivered to the target culture for ease of comprehension. The boundaries of such frames are secured around the narratives they encompass, rendering them dangerous sources of information which restrict understanding to the information offered by the frame. Knowledge of Arabs and Muslims is hence restricted to the selective translations executed in observance of these frames. The limited nature of stories presented within frames simplify the demonstration of complex cluster concepts, which in the context of this discussion are embodied by the unfamiliar Arabs and Muslims who are geographically, culturally, and linguistically distant from the receiving culture. Within this frame falls MEMRI's translations, which consolidate the terrorist representation of Arabs and Muslims, a frame which operates as the sole representation of this culture, discursively simplifying the actual reality and selectively shaping its portrayals. The elaboration on the Allahu-Akbar narrative and the childhood terrorisation narrative allows the two to tandemly collaborate in feeding into a wider frame of representation governed by notions of fear, terror, violence, and irrationality in defining the unfamiliar Muslim other. A frame of Islamophobia is thereby consolidated, through which experiences with the Arab Muslim culture are explained.

Fuller (2008) acknowledges the Islamophobic trend of presenting encounters with the doctrinal manifestations of extremist groups, be they in the form of individuals, practices, or beliefs and ideologies in the shape of frames of representation. Similar to Tymoscko's (2007) premise regarding the establishment of frames as points of reference in explaining

and simplifying cluster concepts, Fuller (2008) explains the reference of Islam to radicalism: “Islam seems to offer an instant and uncomplicated analytical touchstone enabling us to make sense of today’s convulsive world” (p. 46). This frame, one which encapsulates Islam in an Islamophobic definition, becomes a benchmark against which information of the cluster concept is explored, experienced, and understood. As a chiefly Islamophobic institution, MEMRI exploits this frame in its representation of Arabs and Muslims. Accordingly, all information received relevant to Arabs and Muslim is processed in light of the characteristics and features of this frame. This in turn, accentuates the power and danger of MEMRI’s selective translations in influencing perceptions and impressions. In line with the above discussion of MEMRI’s narratives, and the correlation between frames and narratives, it can be proposed that the core elements of MEMRI’s narratives discussed above, namely the culture specific expression (Allahu-Akbar), and concept (childhood in Islam), act as complex cultural concepts residing within the predominant frame in which MEMRI’s translations are governed. The narratives are processed with a discourse of Islamophobia facilitated by the frame. With the one-dimensional representation Islamophobia provides of its subjects, these frames serve as fertile grounds for nurturing MEMRI’s narratives, which foster fear of the demonised Arabs and Muslims. The subjects of narratives are simply framed as contrasts to western culture, values, and norms and as threats to western security. In this way, cultural rivalries are accentuated by highlighting differences. Tymoczko (2007) illuminates the advantage of processing cultural cluster concepts through frames of representation, which simplify understanding due to their consistent and coherent selective representation. Due to these frames, it is unlikely that any encounter with the Allahu-Akbar expression by anyone not of the Arab-Muslim culture, would be interpreted as a possible example of terrorism. Accordingly, this conclusion would most likely also be applied on the individual producing the utterance, regardless of age, sex, or profession.

#### **4.4 Adversity of MEMRI’s Narratives and Frames**

MEMRI’s selective translation approach plays a role in perpetuating the longstanding Islamophobic discourse in the west. To demonstrate the solemnity of demonising Allahu-Akbar and what the expression has been tailored by selective translation to do, it is worth investigating common social experiments on social media which aim to explore trends, ideologies, and habits prevalent in western communities. Of particular interest are the social experiments carried out within western societies relevant to terrorism in the context of Islam. It is of even greater interest in terms of how such experiments shed light on the western perception of the Allahu-Akbar expression, and the extreme reactions the expression can

cause when uttered by individuals dressed in Muslim attire and appearance. There are numerous examples of how MEMRI utilises specific texts or videos in order to “prove” their point that Islamic beliefs are somehow associated with terrorist comportment. This is carried out by focusing on attire, behaviour, or more specifically, the utterance of the symbolic Muslim expression: Allahu-Akbar. For example, much of the footage presents individuals disguised in Muslim-looking attire placing bags and brief cases, uttering Allahu-Akbar and then rapidly fleeing. Individuals who are present in the scene of the experiment tend to run in intimidation of a possible terrorist attack. This instant reaction confirms the alarmingly established connotations of the expression. This strong interdependence of such staged events captures the falsely established connection between the expression and the allusions it has been fabricated to evoke at its sheer utterance. This correlation is investigated by Tymoczko (2007) in terms of relationality, a narrative device which allows audience to relate concepts in order to understand complex structures. When people have prior knowledge that springs from a network of related properties categorising a particular entity, they are less capable of perceiving the related properties as separate. Hence, as exemplified above, the target audience will automatically process Allahu-Akbar as part of the network of relations categorising the Islamophobic frame. Unfortunately, any critical processing of information is paralysed by the power of the frame (Tymoczko, 2007).

It must be noted that this discussion does not intend to establish a cause-and-effect relationship between MEMRI’s translation and the western stigmatisation of the phrase in particular, and more generally of Islam. As discussed in section 3.2.2 above, Islamophobic rhetoric is a longstanding phenomenon and goes beyond the operations of MEMRI. Therefore, this discussion instead suggests and attempts to prove MEMRI’s solemn and deliberate role in contributing to the reinforcement of the stigmatisation of the expression.

Attempting to incriminate MEMRI for the initiation of this phenomenon would leave questions unanswered. Contrastively, it is certainly true that MEMRI is guilty of the elaboration, reinforcement, and promotion of the faulty contextualization of the expression by means of narrative and framing devices. The clips MEMRI selects for translation validate the western public’s fear of the utterance: Allahu-Akbar. And of course this is rational, because MEMRI’s audience only encounters this expression as filtered through MEMRI’s representation; a representation tailored by the agency to manipulatively and authoritatively display Muslim beliefs and teachings.

By simplifying unfamiliar cluster concepts through its selective translation approach, MEMRI is able to promote its ideologies and political agendas.

## Chapter Five: Conclusion

Translation is an inherently cultural and ideological practice. The selection of words, composition of syntax, and orchestration of meaning are all governed, either consciously or subconsciously, by the translator's perception of reality. Therefore, readers of translated texts are inevitably subjected to the biased selections of translation agents, notwithstanding probable incongruences with the nature of the source text. This unescapable subjugation is aggravated when the target audience's inability to comprehend the source language obstructs their accessibility to the source text, which in turn allows the translator more power and freedom in fabricating the translation product. Such abuse of power is facilitated by the status of the translator; a trusted renowned translation agency will be likely trusted for its objective and non-manipulated translations. MEMRI spares no effort in implementing its political ideologies through its translations, particularly in its selection of material which complements the image they wish to propagate of Arabs and Muslims.

This thesis has explored MEMRI's selective translation by investigating its narrative and frame constructing approach. It discussed two major narratives that MEMRI's select translation helps develop: the Allahu-Akbar narrative and the terrorisation of childhood narrative. Consequently, an Islamophobic frame is promoted, ensuring that the western perception of the source culture is in line with the institution's political objectives. The analysis has revealed MEMRI's biased approach, which is practiced by carefully and deliberately selecting a pattern of videos that are bound to shed a negative light on Arabs and Muslim. These results prove that what MEMRI claims to be a non-partisan approach in translation is, in fact, a skopos-driven, biased, and selective translation. What increases the threat of such agencies is the audience's belief that the translations are accurate. The audience has little awareness of the calculated political agenda implied by MEMRI's selective approach. Hence, MEMRI becomes a trusted source of mediation between the east and the west, giving it extensive power in fabricating and shaping reality and events.

Although this thesis has revealed MEMRI's exploitation of translation, there is certainly room for further studies to be carried out on this particular topic. One option might be to solicit the reactions of western audiences to the clips this study analyses. This would allow for a more practical assessment of the impact of MEMRI's selective translation. To further validate conclusions, a future study may attempt to present the same subjects with clips that show Arabs and Muslims in a more positive light in order to consider means to counter the damage caused by MEMRI's biased representation.

Are Arabs and Muslims terrorists in the way that MEMRI translates them? It would be unrealistic to deny the instances of deplorable terrorist and extremist behaviours practiced by certain Arab and Muslim groups, especially given the terrorist actions committed by extremist groups from the Arab and Muslim communities. Terrorism is indeed a fact that cannot be camouflaged. This unfortunate reality serves as an ideal platform for agencies such as MEMRI to develop their narratives in a manner which heightens the intensity of the situation and subjectively illuminates the events. To claim, however, that such episodes in which only some groups engage are representative of a culture in its entirety calls for questioning the legitimacy of such translating agencies.

In conclusion, this thesis has revealed the strong impact of MEMRI's selective translation in the manipulation and misrepresentation of information, despite accuracy of the translation on the semantic level. This was achieved by investigating MEMRI's particular selections of videos for translation in a manner which serves the agency's ideological and political skopos. MEMRI's selective approach yields narratives and frames which help propagate its Islamophobic discourse, portraying Arabs and Muslim as terrorist and violent extremists to the western audience.



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## Appendices

### Appendix A

#### Example 1:

#### Original video

**الرجل 1:** بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم. إن الحمد لله والصلاة والسلام على نبينا محمد وعلى آله وصحبه وسلم. ثم بعد السلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته. ابن عمر وأنا، أبو الجليل الحنفي، نبايع أمير المؤمنين أبو بكر البغدادي الحسيني القرشي على السمع والطاعة وعلى المنشط والمكروه وفي العسر واليسر وعلى أثره علينا وعلى أن لا أنزع الأمر أهله إلا إن أرى كفراً (غير مفهوم) والله على ما أقول شهيد. الحمد لله رب العالمين.

**الرجل 1:** تكبير

**الرجل 1 + الرجل 2:** الله أكبر

**الرجل 1:** تكبير

**الرجل 1 + الرجل 2:** الله أكبر

**الرجل 1:** تكبير

**الرجل 1 + الرجل 2:** الله أكبر

**الرجل 1:** الحمد لله رب العالمين

#### MEMRI's English Subtitles

**Man 1:** In the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful. Blessings upon the Prophet Muhammad, his family and his companions. Assalaam alaykum. Allah's blessings upon you. Ibn Oman and I, Abu Jaleel Al-Hanafī, pledge allegiance to the Emir of the Believers Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi Al-Husseini Al-Quashi. I pledge to obey him in good times and bad times. I pledge not to dispute the commands of those who have authority, unless I see him committing an obvious act of heresy, of which I have proof from Allah. May Allah be my witness. Thanks be to Allah, the Lord of the Universe.

**Man 1:** Say: "Allahu-Akbar!"

**Man 1 + Man 2:** Allahu-Akbar

**Man 1:** Say: "Allahu-Akbar!"

**Man 1 + Man 2:** Allahu-Akbar

**Man 1:** Say: "Allahu-Akbar!"

**Man 1 + Man 2:** Allahu-Akbar

**Man 1:** Thanks be to Allah, the Lord of the Universe.

## Appendix B

### Example 2:

#### Original video

**الشيخ:** جاؤوا لاحتلال القطاع. هل احتلوه؟ لم يحتلوه. جاؤوا لنزع سلاحنا هذا، هل نزعوه؟ تراه السلاح بأيدينا أمامكم. جاؤوا لنزع السلاح هل (غير مفهوم)

**الجمع:** الله أكبر والله الحمد. الله أكبر والله الحمد. الله أكبر والله الحمد. الله أكبر والله الحمد.

**الشيخ:** جاؤوا لأخذ بنادقنا، ها هي في أيدينا. لم يأخذوا منا بندقية واحدة ولا رصاصة واحدة ولا صاروخاً واحداً. جاؤوا للقضاء على الأنفاق. هل قضوا عليها؟ جاؤوا لوقف إطلاق الصواريخ عليهم. هل توقفت الصواريخ؟ جاؤوا لكي نستسلم. هل استسلمنا؟ جاؤوا لإذلالنا فهل أذلونا؟ جاؤوا لكسرنا فهل كسرونا؟ هذه الحرب أثبتت بأننا لن نعيد البلاد إلا بهذا السلاح. لن نحرر البلاد إلا بهذا السلاح. لن نحرر المسجد الأقصى إلا بهذا السلاح. لن نقيم دولة الإسلام إلا بهذا السلاح. لن نعيد الخلافة التي بناها محمد إلا بهذا السلاح. لن نحكم شرع ربنا في الأرض إلا بهذا السلاح. لذلك ننزع أرواحنا ولا نتنزع.

**الجمع:** الله أكبر والله الحمد. الله أكبر والله الحمد. الله أكبر والله الحمد. الله أكبر والله الحمد.

#### MEMRI's English subtitles

**Sheikh:** The [Israelis] came to conquer the Gaza Strip. Did they succeed in doing so? No, they did not. They came to take these weapons away from us. Do I still hold this weapon, or not? They came to take these weapons from us. Did they succeed?

**Crowd:** Allahu-Akbar! Allah be praised! Allahu-Akbar! Allah be praised! Allahu-Akbar! Allah be praised! Allahu-Akbar! Allah be praised!

**Sheikh:** They came to take our guns, but the guns remain in our hands. They did not manage to take a single gun, a single bullet, or a single rocket from us. They came to destroy the tunnels. Did they destroy them? They came to stop us from launching rockets at them. Did the rockets stop? They came to make us surrender. Did we surrender? They came to humiliate us. Did they humiliate us? They came to break us. Did they break us? This war has proven that these weapons are our only means to liberate our land. These weapons are our only means to liberate the Al-Aqsa Mosque. These weapons are our only means to establish the Islamic State. These weapons are our only means to reestablish Muhammad's caliphate. These weapons are our only means to instate the law of Allah. Therefore, they will take our souls before they can take our weapons!

**Crowd:** Allahu-Akbar! All praise to Allah! Allahu-Akbar! All praise to Allah! Allahu-Akbar! All praise to Allah!

## Appendix C

### Example 3:

#### Original video

يا أمريكا، سنخبرك باليوم الذي يرفع فيه الأذان من على البيت الأبيض ومن على القصر الأحمر لكريميلين في موسكو. سنكبر عليه لأن الله وعدنا بهما لأن الله وعد محمد صلى الله عليه وسلم أن الإسلام سيحكم الأرض كلها. يا الله، إنا في هذه الأيام المباركة، ومن مسجدك الأقصى، مركز البركة يا الله نذراً إليك ونتوسل إليك ونتحصن بك ونلوذ بك ونذرع ونهرب إليك أن تهزم أمريكا وروسيا. اللهم فجر عواصمهم، فجر طائراتهم، واسحق سفنهم واقتل جندهم. اللهم يا الله، إنا ندعوك أن تتسلط عليهم وأن تحرهم كما تسلطوا علينا وكما يحرقون أبناءنا بالنابالم. اللهم احرق بنارك كل ملكهم كما حرقوا أطفالنا وأبناءنا بنارهم. فنارك هي الأقوى وأنت الأشد الأعلى أنت العزيز يا عزيز. ارفع المهانة عنا يا ربنا. عجل بخلافتنا يا ربنا. اقتل أعداءنا يا ربنا. ثبت مجاهديننا. وحد كلمتهم تحت رايتك يا الله وراية محمدك يا الله. اللهم احرقهم وأسط يا ربي راياتهم واجعلهم عبرة في الدنيا والآخرة.

#### MEMRI's English subtitles

**Sheikh:** Oh America, let me tell you about the day when the call to prayer will be heard from on top of the White House and from the red palace of the Kremlin in Moscow. We shall shout "Allahu-Akbar" from there, because Allah has promised both places to us. Allah promised the Prophet Muhammad that Islam would rule the entire land. Oh Allah, in these blessed days, and from your Al-Aqsa Mosque, the center of blessings, we seek Your protection. We seek shelter and refuge with You. We ask You to vanquish America and Russia. Oh Allah, blow up their capital cities and their planes, pulverize their ships, and kill their soldiers. Oh Allah, we ask You to subjugate them and burn them, just like they have subjugated us and burned our children with napalm. Oh Allah, burn all that they have with Your fire, just like they burned our children with their fire. Your fire is stronger. You are the strongest. You are the Powerful. Put an end to our humiliation. Oh Lord, bring about our Caliphate soon. Oh Lord, kill our enemies. Oh Lord, make our *mujahideen* powerful, and unite them under Your banner and the banner of Your Prophet Muhammad. Oh Allah, burn [our enemies] and bring down their banners, and make a lesson out of them in this world and the Hereafter.



## Appendix D

### Example 4:

#### Original video

**الراوي:** نساء اليمن كرجاله. لهم قول في وجه العدوان وفعل، لا يقل شأناً عن المقاتلين في الجبهات، كيف لا وهن السند والمدد، منهن أم الشهيد وأخته وزوجته، خرجن جميعهن اليوم في مهرجان "أشداء على الكفار" في العاصمة، حاملات راية النصر بيد وبالأخرى سلاح. الفعالية التي حضرها جمع نسائي غص به المكان تضمنت عرضاً عسكرياً رمزياً فيه رسالة للعدو مفادها: "نحن هنا وفي حال استدعى الأمر حاضرات للتضحية، مستعدات للقتال ولا تفريط في دماء أطفال ونساء اليمن". المهرجان هنا لم يخل من رسالة هامة بعثتها حرائر اليمن:

**المرأة 1:** إلى كل متخاذل ومتخلف إن لم تحظ بشرف الدفاع عن الأرض وبشرف الدفاع عن دين الله وعن كلمة الله والدفاع عن هذا الوطن الغالي فسلم سلاحك للنساء وهن سيقمن بهذا الشرف العظيم.

**المرأة 2:** رسالتي لأولئك الرجال القاعدين في البيوت أشباه النساء وليسوا نساء لأن النساء أشرف منهم، أنكم خذلتهم هذا الوطن الغالي.

**الجمع:** الله أكبر! الموت لأمريكا! الموت لإسرائيل اللعنة على اليهود النصر للإسلام

#### MEMRI's English subtitles

**Voice over:** The women of Yemen are just like its men. In the face of aggression, they talk and act in a way no less forceful than the fighters on the frontlines. How could it be any different when they are the ones who give support, and they are the mothers, sisters, and wives of the martyrs? They all set out today, as part of the "Forceful against the Infidels" campaign in the capital, carrying the flag of victory in one hand and a weapon in the other. The event was attended by multitudes of women, and included a symbolic military show, which sent the following message to the enemy: "We are here, and if necessary, we are willing to make sacrifices and are ready for combat. The blood of the women and children of Yemen must not be ignored." The event included an important message from the free women of Yemen:

**Woman 1:** We say to all the men who refrain from joining the fight: If you do not seek the honor of defending the land, the honor of defending the religion of Allah and elevating His words, and the honor of defending this precious country, hand your weapon over to the women, and they will have this great honor.

**Woman 2:** I have a message for the men who sit at home. They are not even women. They are half-women, because women are more honorable than them. My message for them is: You have forsaken this precious country.

**Crowd:** Allahu-Akbar! Death to America! Death to Israel! A curse upon the Jews! Victory to Islam!

## **Appendix E**

### **Example 2:**

The researcher could not transcribe the original video due to its incomprehensibility.

#### **MEMRI's English subtitles**

**Little Girl:** "State of Islam, attack and defeat the religions of heresy and the gang of the military. Instill terror, exterminate the leftover remnants (of the army), and slaughter."

**Background Nasheed:** "Soon, soon you shall witness wonders. A fearsome struggle you shall see. The battles will be waged in your own lands. My sword has been sharpened to destroy you. We marched through the night to cut and behead, with the blade of revenge that attacks those who deserve it..."

**Little Girl:** "Allahu-Akbar!"

**Background Nasheed:** "With spirit of night, young men of terror..."

**Little Girl:** "The Islamic State will remain and expand!"

## Appendix F

### Example 3:

#### Original video

الطفلة: بدني أظعن يهودي

الأب: ليش بدك تطعني يهودي

الطفلة: لأنه سرق أرضنا

الأب: لأنه سرق أرضنا بدك تطعنيهم بإيش؟

الطفلة: سكين

الأب: يا قوية! إن شاء الله يا بابا

#### MEMRI's English subtitles

**Little Girl:** I want to stab a Jew

**Father:** Why do you want to stab the Jew?

**Little Girl:** Because he stole our land.

**Father:** They stole our Land. With what do you want to stab them?

**Little Girl:** With a knife.

**Father:** Oh, you're so strong! Allah willing, my dear.

## Appendix G

### Example 4:

#### Original video

الطفل المنشد: يا حور الموعد الجنة نمشي ونرضى بحكم الله ونطبق الشرع والسنة يا دولتنا يا دولتنا يا دولة العز دولتنا وارسل رسالة من مجاهد لكل متخاذل وقاعد اقبل على اخوانك وساند إلى متى انت بتعاند يا دولتنا يا دولتنا يا دولة العز دولتنا. جيناك بالذبح يا بيشمارغي انت وكل شيوعي مرتد

صوت في الخلفية: تكبير

جمع الأطفال: الله أكبر تحيا دولة الإسلام

#### MEMRI's English subtitles

**Child:** Oh black-eyed virgins, we will meet in Paradise. We accept the rule of Allah. We implement the shari'a and the Sunna. Oh our state, our state, the state of honor. I am sending out the message of a mujahid to all the weaklings who do not join the Jihad: 'Join your brothers and support them. Until when are you going to be so obstinate?' Oh our state, our state, the state of honor. Oh Peshmerga, we are coming to slaughter you - you and all the apostate Shiites.

**Background voice:** Say 'Allahu-Akbar!'

**Crowd of Children:** Allahu-Akbar! The Islamic State is here to stay!

## **Vita**

Rana Salah received a bachelor's degree in English Language and Literature from the American University of Sharjah, United Arab Emirates in 2011. Her experience as a translator spans a period of five years, during which she has worked for a UNESCO-affiliated organisation, as well as in an international oil and gas company. She joined the MATI programme in fall 2012.