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A Socio-Cognitive Study of Positive English Testimonials Praising Islam

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دراسة اجتماعية معرفية للشهادات الإنجليزية الإيجابية التي تُشيد بالإسلام

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Abstract

Despite vast amounts of research on Islam, the practice of negatively caricatured and bigoted coverage in the media, especially in the West, often shapes this most contested religion's international debate. But instead of collegial debate being followed by academic respect, we get left with competing liberal and conservative narratives that somehow manage to paint Islam as either bent on conquest or inevitably regressive in culture. To fill this void, we have the book by Dr Imad al-Din, *What They Say About Islam*, which is a collection of positive opinions expressed by non-Muslims who acknowledge the intellectual, spiritual, and civilisational glories of Islam, the Qur'an, and prophet Muhammad (PBUH). According to Teun A. van Dijk's socio-cognitive model of speech, cognition, and society (1998), coherent linkages, metaphorical phrases, and evaluative adjectives may be used to promote Islam. The study analyzes the discourses and cognitive models underpinning these testimonials, examining their potential as counter-narratives against Islamophobia. The testimonials use purposive linguistic strategies to establish respect, mirror cognitive models based on intellectual inquisitiveness and fairness, and challenge prejudiced presuppositions by articulating Islam's moral, spiritual, and civilizational rewards. Seven English-language testimonials were chosen for the analysis. Those Positive testimony counters the negative narrative about Islam, and reclaims that Islam is a religion of knowledge, equality, and human freedom. They promote interfaith understanding and give information for scholars and intercultural communicators who seek scientifically validated prejudice-fighting methods.Keywords: Testimonials, Socio-cognitive, Islamophobia, Critical Discourse Analysis

على الرغم من الكم الهائل من الأبحاث حول الإسلام، فإن التغطية الإعلامية السلبية والمتحيزة، وخاصةً في الغرب، غالبًا ما تُشكل النقاش الدولي حول هذا الدين الأكثر إثارة للجدل. ولكن بدلًا من أن يُتبع النقاش الجماعي بالاحترام الأكاديمي، نجد أنفسنا أمام سرديات ليبرالية ومحافظة متنافسة، تُصوّر الإسلام إما على أنه عازم على الغزو أو رجعي حضاريًا. ولملء هذا الفراغ البحثي، نجد كتاب الدكتور عماد الدين "ماذا يقولون عن الإسلام"، وهو مجموعة آراء إيجابية عبّر عنها غير المسلمين الذين يُقرّون بالأمجاد الفكرية والروحية والحضارية للإسلام والقرآن الكريم والنبي محمد (صلى الله عليه وسلم).و وفقًا للنموذج الاجتماعي المعرفي للكلام والإدراك والمجتمع الذي وضعه تيون أ. فان ديك (١٩٩٨)،والذي يؤكد على امكانية استخدام الروابط المتماسكة والعبارات المجازية والصفات التقييمية للترويج عن الخطابة بشكل عام وعن الإسلام بشكل خاص. تُحلل هذه الدراسة الخطابات والنماذج المعرفية التي تُشكل أساس هذه الشهادات، وتدرس إمكاناتها كأطروحات مضادة لظاهرة الإسلاموفوبيا. تستخدم الشهادات استراتيجيات لغوية هادفة لترسيخ الاحترام، ومحاكاة النماذج المعرفية القائمة على الاستقصاء الفكري والإنصاف، وتحدي الافتراضات المسبقة المتحيزة من خلال التعبير عن صفات الإسلام الأخلاقية والروحية والحضارية. وقد تم اختيار سبع شهادات إيجابية عن الإسلام باللغة الإنجليزية لغرض التحليل والتي تُعارض

السرد السلبي ضد الإسلام ، وتُعيد تأكيد الإسلام كدين قائم على المعرفة والمساواة والحرية الإنسانية. كما تُعزز التفاهم بين الأديان، وتُقدم معلومات صادقة وواقعية للباحثين في مجال التواصل بين الثقافات الذين يسعون إلى أساليب علمية مُثبتة لمكافحة التحيز.الكلمات المفتاحية: شهادات، معرفي اجتماعي، معاداة الإسلام، تحليل الخطاب النقدي

1.0Theoretical background

1.1 Meaning of Testimony

The term "testimony" comes from a lengthy history of intellectual culture, law-making, and everyday communication. It comes from the Latin word testimonium, meaning 'proof', 'evidence', or 'witness' (Online Etymology Dictionary, n.d.). The term testis comes from the Latin for "witness" which seems relevant to human participation in truth telling. Both the Latin and Greek suffixes refer to testifying, not an entity. Dictionary of Etymology Online. Witness came into Middle English from Old French and Latin (14th – 15th century) (Online Etymology Dictionary, n.d.). This particular shift emphasizes testimony's function in communication as evidence which proves credibility and authority. The semantic roots of witness' Old Testament beauty and social function lie in the classical origins of the word.Testimony enables evidence and supp ort ing statements in legal, social and educational contexts. Testimony goes far beyond mere facts and has both credibility and authority, even including personal or group experiences: ruthless witness for fact reliability and understanding of particular events. Testimony is a declaration made to establish a fact. It is defined by Black's Law Dictionary (Garner, 2019) as "A solemn assertion or affirmation made for the purpose of establishing or proving some fact, given by a competent witness under oath in a judicial proceeding" (p. 1652). This raises a formal issue of testimony. It stresses upon the responsibility of the witness to tell truth and stand by it. All forms of legal testimony: direct, cross-examined and re-examined authentication of evidence within can all serve to facilitate, the justice system process and promote confidence in that process. Van Dijk is of the opinion that : Testimony is communicative action in which a speaker conveys some version of reality, and the listener attends these ascriptions to discursive representations of reality by interpreting them [the versions] also within his or her cognitive social context". (2008: 22).This perspective places testimony in a sociocognitive context, focusing on both utterances and their process of interpretation. The speaker's testimony helps the audience comprehend, remember, and learn about an event. Historical and sociological study uses testimony to understand previous events and social systems. Cohen (1998) states that "Historical testimony allows researchers to access the lived experiences of individuals and communities, providing insights into social norms, personal motivations, and collective memory that are otherwise inaccessible through mere documentation" (p. 45). This first argues for the epistemological value of testimony, which is an architecture that stores and analyzes experiences, replays views, and conserves contexts. Testimony in this sense is about creating knowledge and assisting scholars, historians and social scientists in comprehending such complex social realities. Witness makes ethical and interpretive demands as well. And all accounts are not created equal, with social bias often determining whose testimony is believed and whose is not. Fricker (2007) emphasises "Testimonial injustice occurs when a speaker's credibility is unfairly deflated due to prejudice, thereby silencing or undermining their contribution to the epistemic community" (p. 15)This realisation emphasises the ethical duty to testify as well as to hear testimony. Testimony is seen as a habit of affirming testimony, and the recognition of testimony helps ensure justice in speech, scholarship, law, and history. And testimony itself is a means of social cohesion and understanding. By exchanging experiences, societies confirm what they know together, strengthen social cohesion, and generate collective stories. As a result, testimony operates at different levels, from the personal to the social and institutional. It influences people's sense of what is true, their sense of responsibility, and their memory of culture.Ultimately, testimony is a complex notion that refers to bearing witness, presenting proof, and/or confirming facts in legal, social, and academic settings. Its value goes beyond factual reporting, covering ethical duty, trustworthiness, and knowledge communication. Testimony itself is a core medium through which understanding, social reality, and historical truth are constructed and justice is maintained. In the courtroom, in the academy, and in the community, testimony is an essential and foundational way to tell the truth, affirm experience, and permit voices to be heard above silence.

1.2 Methodology of Research

1.2.1 Data Sampling and Description

The data sampled for the study used purposive sampling, which added a focus and direction to the results (Palinkas et al., 2015, p. 544). This method is most applicable to the analysis of discourse, ideology, and power; therefore, it is assumed that ample text is required for critical discourse analysis.What follows are more of their

net views, recorded in *What They Say About Islam*, which contains 165 affirmative statements about Islam from remarkable non-Muslims. Utilising quotes from scholars, philosophers, scientists, writers, historians, and political leaders – each quote is an exposition or commentary on Islam, the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), and the Qur'an. The book seeks to stress Islam's positive image among honourable outsiders and dispel misunderstandings, while presenting the universal values of Islamic teachings.This analysis discusses positive talk about Islam and how non-muslims find a place to confess and appreciate Islam, the Qur'an, and the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). The book is thematically arranged with quotes collected in neat sections:

1. The Holy Qur'an
2. Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him)
3. Islam
4. The Spread of Islam and the Treatment of Non-Muslims
5. Islamic Civilisation
6. Women and the Family
7. The Present and the Future

For this paper, the author will take three testimonies from each chapter (from texts written by native English-speaking scholars) . This architecture enables the investigation of recognition in specific regions. Positive recognition predominates in the book, which focuses on the integrity of Islam, the greatness of the Prophet (PBUH), the letter and spirit of the Qur'an, and progress for Islamic civilisation. It challenges hostile stereotypes of Islam and has an extensive source reference for almost every quote:

- The original work (book, article, or speech)
- The name of the non-Muslim author and the publication title
- Publisher and year of publication
- Page numbers for verification

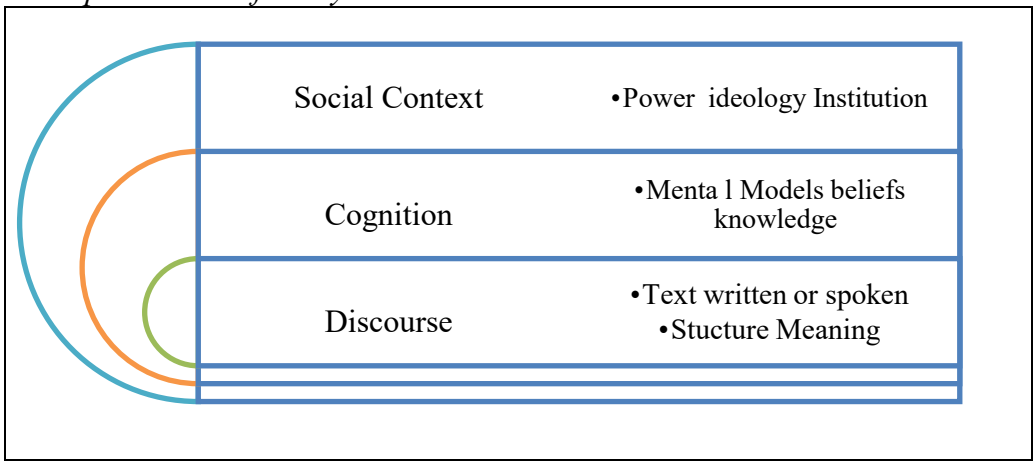
Documentation is the one factor that gives credence and enables readers to follow quotes to their sources. Quotations in the book are included and presented with very little commentary, allowing the subject's voices to speak for themselves. It is an instrument for da'wah [inviting to Islam] and facilitates communication between Muslims and non-muslims. Providing a positive image of Islam from reliable sources.

3.3 The Model of Analysis

Teun A. van Dijk's (1998) model of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) focuses on the relationship between discourse, cognition, and society. His approach is known for its three-dimensional framework:

- Discourse Dimension (Textual/Structural): Examines text structure (syntax, semantics, style, rhetoric). And examines how word choice, phrase structure, coherence, etc. create meaning. As an example: Metaphors, pronouns, and passive voice influence meaning.
- Cognitive Dimension (Mental Models): Studies how people comprehend and portray conversation. And examines how mental models, ideologies, and beliefs affect text interpretation. It connects speech and society.
- Social Dimension (Power & Context): Examines how rhetoric reinforces or undermines social power. And considers social, historical, and political context. It examines how language reproduces or resists prevailing ideas.Van Dijk's (1998) methodology demonstrates how language manifests power, dominance and inequality in political, media and institutional discourses. The three interrelated dimensions of his Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) are as follows: As you can see from the following diagram:

Figure1*The Adopted Model of Analysis*



Van Dijk model has three dimensions: macro, meso and micro. The macro level corresponds to power relations, ideologies and institutions; the meso level covers discourse processing; and the micro one concerns language. Such factors demonstrate the link between language, cognition and culture.

3.4 Research Design

This qualitative study examines how individuals and communities understand social issues. According to Creswell (2014, p. 4), qualitative research is concerned with interpreting phenomena through non-numeric methods of gathering and analysing information, such as interviews or observations. Instead, the study seeks to offer insights into people's experiences and social context, drawing on nuance from lived experience rather than testing hypotheses or measuring variables.

Procedures of Analysis

The researcher will take the following steps in the analysis:

1.One testimony is selected from each chapter of the book; since there are seven chapters, the total number of testimonies analysed will be seven.

2.Each testimony is labelled with the full name of its author.

3.The testimonies are presented in cursive font to distinguish them from the rest of the text.

4.Each testimony is traced back to its source, that is, the place where it first appeared in English, and it is documented accordingly.

5.Every account is examined in three respects, according to those proposed by Teun A. van Dijk: discourse, cognition , and social context. This can involve examining the linguistic nature of the text (discourse), delving into what a writer and an audience believe or imagine (cognition), and taking a broader look at what is happening socially and culturally. This interpretation contributes to revealing the process of meaning-making, in which both individual and social aspects are involved.

The author and his book

Dr Imad al-Din Khalil (1941-) Was Born in Mosul, Iraq, and is a major Islamic thinker and historian known for his recontextualisation of Islamic history on the basis of the Qur'an. He received a B.A. in History and an M.A. in Islamic History from the faculty of languages at Baghdad University in 1962 and 1965, respectively.

The scholarship of Khalil specialises in the reconciliation of faith and reason, as well as in a Qur'anic-centred approach to the intellectual forebears and historical events. He has worked as an Islamic studies specialist in Iraq, the UAE, and Jordan. His works have dealt with civilisational topics, highlighting the role of Islam in contemporary intellectual and cultural life (Khalil, 1981, pp. 12-15). What They Say About Islam offers a set of truthful Testimonials about Islam, its Holy Quran, its notable Prophet, its history, its civilisation, and its people. These Testimonials are issued through distinguished figures, most of whom are non-Muslims, together with politicians, writers, poets, scholars, navy figures and men and women. The book consists of an introduction and seven chapters.The first chapter discusses what is stated in the Holy Quran; the second, the Messenger of God (PBUH); and the third, the largest, addresses Islam in all its doctrinal, legislative, devotional, moral, and behavioural aspects. The fourth chapter, which, like the preceding chapters, is prominent for its breadth, goes on to discuss the historical facts of Islam regarding the most critical issues: the growth and treatment of non-Muslims. These are carefully interrelated issues, woven into a single fabric, and consequently addressed in a single chapter. The fifth chapter, additionally prominent for its breadth, specialises in civilisational statistics, seeking to convey as much information and detail as possible, focusing on tales of a deductive and evaluative nature, especially on how people cope with the scale of the worldwide role played by Islamic civilisation . Chapter Six deals with several aspects of what has been stated regarding a vital social material of Islam: the woman and the family in Islamic society. As for the seventh and final chapter examines examples of testimonies about the current state of Islam and its near and distant future (Khalil, 1992, pp. 5-6).

3.0 Analysis of the Data

3.1 Montgomery Watt's Testimony

"In my opinion, regardless of our religious stance, we must consider the Qur'an's message as a moral response to the prevailing situation. There is no doubt that problems existed that required solutions, and crises that some tried to alleviate. However, transitioning from these problems and crises to the Qur'an's message through logical reasoning was impossible. There is no doubt that the Qur'an's message solves social, moral, and intellectual problems—but not all at once and not in a primitive way. Perhaps a religious historian said that Muhammad's thoughts reflected a genuine response to foundational problems of his time, a response no longer possible today.

Experimental attempts and shallow thinking cannot refute what the Qur'an's message must have been." (Watt, 1953, p.134)

1. The Discourse Analysis of Watt's Testimony The paragraph is a reasoned argument that combines personal and collective truths. The text signals subjectivity with "In my opinion," and projects confident assertion by way of expressions such as "There is no doubt" and "we must consider." Words like "real response" and "shallow thinking" have a judgmental implication. The distance between experimental attempts and the Quran's message reveals the eminence of Revelation over reason. Terms such as "however" or "perhaps" show awareness of other perspectives.

2. The Cognitive Analysis of Watt's Testimony The cognitive aspect depicts the Qur'an as sacred scripture and a moral guide while guiding human beings. The speaker maintains that it answers social moral and intellectual question opposed to its characterization as primitive. This view rebuffs secular reductionism, arguing that cognitive processes cannot limit supernatural revelation. The scripture emphasizes that "shallow thinking" does not reduce the Qur'an but rather focuses on its significance "regardless of our religious stand," and is addressed to both religious and non-religious.

3. The Social Analysis of Watt's Testimony The passage treats religion as social text, and it is arguing against secularist readings that view religious scripture as primitive. It highlights the centrality of the Qur'an in this discourse. Moreover, the few observations in the text carry implications that critique deficiencies in contemporary philosophy, stressing that the Qur'an had answered foundational problems in a manner, at least according to many religious thinkers. This criticism raises the status of the Qur'anic message above modern intellectual currents. It establishes its authority on historical and moral grounds. The crowd's tone is one of believers alongside sceptics. This open-armed inclusivity wants to engage rather than close down public expression in a way that non-religious readers will find obtuse or alienating.

3.2 Michael Hart's Testimony"My choice of Muhammad to lead the list of the world's most influential persons may surprise some readers and may be questioned by others, but he was the only man in history who was supremely successful on both the religious and secular levels." (Hart,1992, p. 3)

1. The Discourse Analysis of Hart's Testimony In terms of discourse analysis, Harth uses an opening discourse about the Prophet Muhammad. My choice of Muhammad to head the list shows Hart's personal agency and evaluative attitude, making it clear that he made a conscious choice. Muhammad's achievements are enhanced by the positive meaning of "supremely successful". To contrast "religious and secular levels" shows the Prophet was well-rounded and balanced. Hart invites doubt, concedes other voices; his doubting strengthens his case. He alleges that Muhammad was "the only man in history" who succeeded both as a prophet and statesman, putting his selection into perspective. Its claim is one that reverberates across the world and confronts Eurocentric accounts. Hart's witness supports that Muhammad is not just one among many religious leaders who have universal pretensions but transcends him, it bears testimony to his singular spiritual and worldly significance.

2. The Cognitive Analysis of Hart's Testimony According to Hart, the teachings of Muhammad were also involved in guiding widespread claims for authority in political and military enterprises beyond the range of religious communication. The method evaluates both religious and secular historical significance by leadership and structure. Hart compares Muhammad to some other greats, saying not all of them had every quality. This is consistent with a model that recognizes differential effects. Hart recognizes Muhammad as a "great man", describing him as one who can be credited with the construction of an entire society.

3. The Social Analysis of Hart's TestimonyHart examines Muhammad's worldwide leadership and challenges Western-centric mythology within "hagiographic depictions." Western discourse on Islamic history and civilization has changed drastically, as the article shows. Hart contends that "true greatness [may be judged] by the way in which it affects the spiritual and temporal worlds" and is contrary to the secular nature of recent Western philosophy, where religion is often ignored when discussing what makes for greatness. Hart's recognition of Muhammad's dual accomplishment is testimony to the significance of religious leadership in world history. Sociologically, Hart's testimony disrupts Western mythology, confirms Muhammad's religious and political authority, alters representations of Muslims as others, and promotes intercultural exchange.

3.3 Edward Gibbon's Testimony

"It is not the propagation, but the permanency, of his religion, that deserves our wonder: the same pure and perfect impression which he engraved at Mecca and Medina, is preserved, after the revolutions of twelve centuries, by the Indian, the African, and the Turkish proselytes of the Koran." (Gibbon,1929, p.77)

1. The Discourse Analysis of Gibbon's Testimony Gibbon (1929, p. 77) praises Islam and the Qur'an with language and eloquence. "It is not the propagation, but the permanency, of his religion" emphasizes persistence above growth. An emphasis in Islam is not place on popularity but rather on stability and longevity. This strategy values bursting over bubbling, portraying the religion as down to earth. Gibbon says of Muhammad's (pbuh) first revelation, "Another lifetime" from His Quotations."Muhammed's(pbuh) first Message was that the Quran is "pure", "perfect" and "certain"."Its verity as being a Revelation he never questioned. The use of "engraved" is metaphoric and implies permanence, turning the Qur'an into an emblem that will have a long-lasting effect on society. This representation casts Islam as a spiritual and literate system that survived tumult over centuries. The proclamation records historical heritage of Islam for 12 centuries. Gibbon includes this distance to give perspective on his admiration. "The Indian, the African, and the Turkish proselytes" are examples of Islam's infiltration into other cultures. The eternal values of the Quran are highlighted. More prominent is the rhetorical gain from the formal pattern. Such is the analogy between "the same clear and single impression..." and "is preserved. by the Indian, the African and Turkish proselytes" emphasize the connection. This approach is consistent with Gibbon's methodological and offers his history in a historical philosophical context.In conclusion, at the level of discourse, Gibbon's testimony deploys contrastive framing, evaluative adjectives, metaphorical language, temporal markers, categorical enumeration, and parallelism to conceptualise Islam as a robust and universal religion that is both morally coherent and whose foundational teachings have been refracted across space and time.

2. The Cognitive Analysis of Gibbon's Testimony In the cognitive component of Van Dijk's discourse analysis, his own testimony reveals models and representations that frame his interpretation of Islam and the Prophet Muhammad's message. Islam, as Gibbon does not structure it in terms of expansion but in terms of transformation, though its long stability and continuity across diverse cultures for twelve centuries or so indeed suggest a primary cognitive focus on endurance and universality, rather than growth alone. This mental structure presents Islam as a religion that secures it "pure and perfect image," indicating a steady schema of authenticity and sustainability in Gibbon's thinking. His story demonstrates how frames of continuity, memory, and permanence can be aligned to understand Islam's lasting influence on Indian, African, and Turkish societies.

3. The Social Analysis of Gibbon's Testimony In his societal critique, Gibbon emphasizes the influence of Islam. Gibbon demonstrates Islam's social strength as a unifying force across ethnic and cultural boundaries. Since a "pure" facsimile of Islam started to be imprinted in Mecca and Medina, it is apparent that Indians, Africans, and Turks had the same pure and faultless impression on their souls. This statement goes beyond religion's capacity to unite people. This reveals Islamic cultures' strong institutional and communal relationships, where rituals, rules, and traditions sustain order. His statement also points to Islam's remarkable ability to resist fragmentation over the centuries, suggesting that its social framework provided not only spiritual guidance but also a foundation for long-term communal solidarity and civilisational continuity.

3.4 Armstrong's Testimony

The Taliban's discrimination against women is completely opposed to the practice of the Prophet and the conduct of the first Ummah. The Taliban are typically fundamentalist, however, in their highly selective vision of religion (which reflects their narrow education in some of the madrasahs of Pakistan), which perverts the faith and turns it in the opposite direction of what was intended. Like all the major faiths, Muslim fundamentalists, in their struggle to survive, make religion a tool of oppression and even of violence". (Armstrong, 2000, p. 164)

1. The Discourse Analysis Armstrong's Testimony In Van Dijk's discourse analysis framework, Karen Armstrong's testimony can be examined on the discourse dimension by focusing on how language structures convey ideological meaning. Armstrong uses contrastive wording, "completely opposed," "perverts the faith," "oppression and even violence", to delegitimise the Taliban's practices while legitimising the Prophet's model and the early Ummah as the authentic representation of Islam. Her lexical choices highlight a clear polarisation between true Islam, associated with justice and respect for women, and the Taliban's selective, distorted interpretation, tied to ignorance and violence. This narrative condemns the misuse of religion by fundamentalists and stereotypes, proving that repression is a result of socio-political wrongs rather than Islam. It is the counter-narrative to fundamentalists.

2. The Cognitive Analysis of Armstrong's Testimony Armstrong's demonstration reveals the religious perspectives of Muhammad and Islam through a cultural, historical lens. He calls on readers to rethink Islam in affirmative terminology, metaphors and historical perspective. The author counters the Western interpretation

of Muhammad as nothing more than an inventor and seer, hoping to change history and attitudes by means of moral or intellectual indictments.

3. The Social Analysis of Armstrong's Testimony Armstrong's findings reveals speech's social structures and power dynamics. His recognition of Muhammad as a religious and social leader alters Western perceptions of Islam. His testimony is his way of rethinking how Islam should be portrayed in contemporary scholarship, based on the data. Armstrong's comments highlight the ability of speech to create social change and shape non-Muslim attitudes about Islam by placing Muhammad (PBUH) in context.

3.5 Will Durant's Testimony

"Islamic civilisation elevated scientific methods: observation of nature and experiment; it applied strict rules of logic — and in the Middle Ages it achieved a height not attained by other peoples." (Durant, 1950, p. 162)

1. The Discourse Analysis of Durant's Testimony At the level of discourse, Durant's text employs descriptive and evaluative (positive) discourses that accentuate the civilisational/historical significance of Islam as well as that of its Prophet. At the level of his text, his language marries historical narration to panegyric, co-opting recordings that are invested with continuity or reform and with moral or intellectual command. The lexicon (great, lasting, influence, civilisation) frames Islam not simply as a religion but as a formative cultural impulse. His language is confident and informative, which helps the reader trust his credibility. Durant centers global history on Islam using rhetorical tactics like parallels to other civilizations and Islamic universality. The discourse acknowledges historical events and challenges unfavorable stereotypes.

2. The Cognitive Analysis of Durant's Testimony Durant's mental witness mirrors his interpretation of Islamic history and the Prophet of Islam, based on amazement, playing by ear and of cultural legacy. He depicted Islam as a civilization of man; an intellectual, moral, and social source of thrive which has prompted the world movement. In his speech Islam is a Acute Belief, way of life and advancement against orientalist prejudices. In these mental constructs, Durant grounded Islam as an agent of civilisation rather than destruction - reflected not only in his personal understanding but also in a deeper humanistic commitment to the continuity of culture and the preservation of intellectual heritage.

3. The Social Analysis of Durant's Testimony Durant's views on Islam reflect his intellectual assessment and the environment in which he lived. Discourse, as Van Dijk argues, is shaped by social structures, ideologies, and power. As a Western historian, Durant interprets Islam as part of the story of civilisation, within which events occur and have meaning only in terms of their historical context. He contests Eurocentric discourses by considering Islam to be a force of civilisation-forming in both Europe and the world. This view parallels early 20th-century changes among Western thinkers who were re-examining non-Western contributions to development. Durant's conversation emphasises the contribution of Islam to world civilisation and counters some of the widespread caricatures in Western culture.

3.6 Hamilton Gibb's Testimony

"When we eliminate the distortions of later jurisprudence and set them aside, the original teachings of the Qur'an and the Messenger (peace be upon him) reappear in all their purity, nobility, and equal justice toward both men and women. At that point, we find that these teachings return to general principles and define the idea that the law should be established and applied in clear legal terms. This idea, especially regarding women, must be grounded in a mature human consciousness, characterised by respect for their individuality and a desire to eliminate the societal harm caused by the misrepresentation of women throughout history. Once we extract and internalise this idea and absorb it, we can see that the specific Islamic legislation concerning women is, in fact, sound. Upon reaching that conclusion, we realise that the Islamic stance toward women—and the Islamic method of understanding their identity and system—surpasses, in many ways, what is found in other religious legislations." (Gibb, 1947, pp. 40-41)

1. The Discourse Analysis of Gibb's Testimony On the discourse level, Gibb's quotation, the discourse analysis dimension according to van Dijk highlights how the language constructs a positive ideological stance toward Islam by contrasting "distortions of later jurisprudence" with the "purity, nobility, and equal justice" of the Qur'an and the Prophet's teachings. Gibb stresses the ethical character of women in Islamic law as superior to that of any other religion. This is consistent with van Dijk's (1991a) hypothesis that discourse mediates social cognition and positions Islam as modern, fair, and just, apparently challenging Western preconceptions about gender in Islam. The claim is that justice and dignity are guaranteed in Islamic law when read for what it is truly about, as evidenced by techniques of positive self-presentation of Islam and implicit negative comparisons with other laws.

2. The Cognitive Analysis of Gibb's Testimonyvan Dijk's analysis of Gibb's cognition emphasises the prototype model, which underlies his perception of Islam and the Prophet Muhammad. His reading is conditioned by his own experience and by Western cultural models. This paradigm is selective and strategically attentive to Islam, and tends to translate it into known categories. It demonstrates how, through cognitive processes, discourse and society are connected, or that texts are reconstructions in the light of conceptualisations and ideological stances, with relevance to howIslam is constructed by discourse n Western thought..

3. The Social Analysis of Gibb's Testimony The Social Analysis of Gibb's Testimony can be used to reveal how discourse is constructed through the exercise of power, in relation to ideology and cultural setting. Gibb's words reflect the societal backdrop, epitomised in historical discourses, religious dispositions, and community perspectives on Islam and the Prophet (PBUH). His testimony can be seen as a product of interaction between personal viewpoint and dominant discourses in society, where knowledge, authority, and legitimacy are negotiated. By situating his statement socially, we understand how it shapes public opinion, reinforces or challenges stereotypes, and participates in wider debates about religion and civilisation.

Arnold J. Toynbee's Testimony II

"Now, after the competitions have been resolved with the advancement of Western technology, and at a time when Western ways of life compete with the Russian lifestyle to win over all of humanity, it now appears that Islamic tradition — in its ideals — aligns more closely with the needs of the modern social era and is superior to the Western model, which led to the establishment of dozens of small sovereign states. In today's reality, the West itself, since World War II, has fragmented into more than forty independent sovereign states, threatened by collapse due to its own internal divisions. It is hoped that this destructive Western political model can be stopped — and that can only happen in the Islamic world if a strong Islamic unity is achieved." (Toynbee, 1948, p. 184)

1. The Discourse Analysis of Toynbee's Testimony Toynbee compares the Western political division to the Islamic world, in which he finds the superiority of the muslim umma as a force of unification. Decrying the post-127 128 World War II era, I say that Call of his is an argument for historical right. This use of the words 'it is hoped' implies that Islamic unity may cause international chaos. The speech is persuasive, ideological, and comparative, using juxtapositions, evaluative terminology, and historical allusions to prove Islam's importance.

2. The Cognitive Analysis of Toynbee's Testimony Toynbee's quote represents his historical worldview and civilization interpretation schemata. At the cognitive level, his discourse is constructed through comparisons and contrasts — West vs. Russia, West vs. Islam — which activate shared social knowledge of political rivalry and civilisational identity. By framing Islam as more aligned with the "needs of the modern social era," Toynbee mobilises evaluative schemata that challenge dominant Western self-perceptions and decontextualise Islam as a future-oriented system rather than a relic of the past. This reveals his use of presuppositions and implicit beliefs: that civilisations are in competition, that legitimacy lies in their ability to address modern human needs, and that Western fragmentation after WWII is evidence of decline. Thus, cognitively, his discourse processes involve constructing Islam as a viable and even superior alternative, positioning it within a mental model of cyclical civilisational rise and fall.

3. The Social Analysis of Toynbee's Testimony Testifying before Toynbee's Commission reveals the 20th century as it were in the act of making itself∂the post–World War II order and its Cold War tensions between Western capitalism and Russian communism. He proffers Islam as a cultural counterweight to the splintered state-system bequeathed by European colonialism. In his words, the speech is a critique of Western civilisation's inability to provide lasting unity and stability as well as an affirmation of Islam's social coherence and moral values. This converges with van Dijk's conceptualisation of discourse as shaping the social dynamics of power: Toynbee frames Islamic tradition as truly global in scope, questioning Eurocentric claims to superiority.

Findings of the Analysis The twenty-one testimonies from the seven chapters show non-Muslim speakers praising Islam, Muhammad, and the Qur'an. The testimonials utilize elevated vocabulary choices ("light," "guidance," "purity," "justice," "permanency"), metaphorical framings of Islam as "completion" or "law," and contrastive language to separate real Islam from subsequent aberrations Histories that demonstrate Islam as the continuation and perfection of previous revelations or contrast its progressive spirit with past traditions and contemporary misrepresentations foster cohesiveness. These methods present Islam as full, intellectual, and moral.Islam is a culture-shaping religion in the spirit, morality and politics of mankind. It fosters science, is

the defender of justice and social order; it extirpates inequality, in addition to sheltering and fostering mercy. This perspective places Islam in the Abrahamic tradition, and presents ethical solutions to modern problems.Islamic portrayal as a positive force also counters Western misunderstandings and misrepresentations about Islam, that it is a unifying and civilizing influence vital for human development. It presents Islam as a modern, caring and women-friendly religion. Testimonies relate Islam to justice, respect and equality while emphasising that if one wants to talk about persecution in a political context, it should not be identified with religious persecution.These speakers defend Islam's generosity, justice, and civilizing role. They present their opponent as a reformer rather than a threat, challenging Orientalist views of Islam as aggressive or barbaric. This shows Islam as a worldwide history-maker and a dynamic tradition that addresses contemporary concerns and will continue to do so.The results indicate that the seven chapters all emphasise Islam's universality and the rationality of its faith, civilisation, treatment toward others, and views on women and family as reflections of Islam. The testimonies rely on strategic discourses and positive positioning to challenge misrepresentations and assert the salience of Islam. Table 1 elucidates the results of the analysis of the testimonies.

Table 1 The Findings of the Testimonies Analysis Across the Seven Chapters

Theme	Linguistic & Rhetorical Strategies	Mental Models, Beliefs, Ideologies	Challenge & Reinforce Stereotypes	Counter-Discourse Function
The Qur'an	Uses terms like "light," "guidance," "completion," and "reform"; cohesion through historical sequencing; metaphorical framing as final law and source of perfection.	Qur'an viewed as culmination of divine revelation and moral renewal.	Challenges stereotype of Islam as alien by linking it to Abrahamic continuity.	Positions Islam as enlightened and reformative, resisting depictions of inferiority
The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)	Evaluative language (transforming ignorance into civilisation); cohesive structuring of mission; metaphors of flow and expansion.	Prophet seen as visionary reformer and civilising leader	Counters stereotype of Islam as chaotic or destructive.	Reimagines Islam as progressive, unifying, and globally relevant.
Islam (as a whole)	Elevated lexical choices ("pure," "perfect," "permanent"); metaphors of engraving and durability.	Islam seen as stable, universal, timeless faith.	Challenges stereotype of Islam as rigid or stagnant.	Affirms Islam's resilience and authenticity across cultures and time.
Treatment of Non-Muslims	Contrastive lexical choices ("justice" vs. "oppression"); evaluative language distinguishing true Islam from distortions.	Islam seen as compassionate, egalitarian, and just toward others.	Counters stereotype of Islam as violent or oppressive	Distinguishes authentic Islam from extremism, resisting Islamophobia.
Islamic Civilisation	Emphatic cohesion ("no single	Islam viewed as catalyst of	Counters Eurocentric	Credits Islam with

	aspect… not traceable"); evaluative terms ("decisive influence"); highlighting intellectual heritage.	modern science and rational inquiry.	narrative of Islamic backwardness	foundational role in global progress, resisting anti-modern portrayals
Woman & Family	Lexical choices like "purity," "nobility," "justice"; contrastive rhetoric separating true teachings from distortions.	Islam seen as rational, egalitarian, and respectful of women and family.	Challenges stereotype of Islam as misogynist.	Reframes Islam as morally superior and progressive in family and gender values.
Present & Future	Evaluative contrasts (Islamic unity vs. Western fragmentation); metaphors of collapse vs. stability.	Islam seen as living tradition with solutions for modern crises.	Counters stereotype of Islam as relic or divisive.	Positions Islam as constructive alternative model for global future

Conclusions

This study critically analyzes positive Islam discourses in al-Din Khalil's work, *What They Said About Islam*. Islam is portrayed as a religion of morality, intellectual depth, and global humanism via socio-cognitive and linguistic activities. The research indicates that these discourses are deliberately produced language occurrences anchored in social cognition and intercultural negotiation, not just individual views..The discourse portrays Islam as a good, organized religion using complementing lexis, metaphors, and rhetoric. Adjectives like noble, rational, universal, humanistic, and magnificent enhance the faith's prestige. Justice, balance, and unity are fundamental to Islam, and twinned utterances provide coherence. These figures of speech indicate that praise is planned.Islam is seen as light and knowledge in intellectual and moral universals via metaphors. Contrast rhetoric: if Islam is tolerant, why were they tolerant to Europeans in the Middle Ages? These strategies support the idea that positive testimony use substance and language to promote respect for Islam, Mohammed (pbuh), and the Koran.According to Van Dijk's sociocognitive approach, these books give knowledge-based mental models. The authors' viewpoints stem from study and exposure to Muslim cultures, not innate biases. Their discourse shows intellectual honesty, curiosity, and academic rigor. The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) is portrayed as a moralist, legislator, and social leader, not a figure of mysticism. These results support the second hypothesis: testimonies are grounded in fairness and rational engagement, not in prejudice or passion.The testimonials contradict prevailing Western portrayals of Islam as inherently violent or backward. They stress Islam's contributions to science, philosophy, and justice, and depict it as a civilisational force marked by compassion and reason. The texts are responding to Orientalist and colonial representations of the Prophet as "a reformer who lifted humanity out of ignorance" and the Qur'an as "a book of reason and ethics," an instance of Van Dijk's ideological counter-discourse. This confirms our third hypothesis , namely that positive testaments superpose negative opinions of Islam with new ones based on mental models of wisdom, justice, and dignity. These narratives are counter-hegemonic, resisting Islamophobia with reason and ethics. What makes them work is that they are written not by Muslims like us (or westerners), which gives them credibility and will go some way to debunking stereotypes. They serve as rebranders of Islam, providing society with one face of the shifting ideology, replacing fear and rejection with empathy and understanding. This confirms the fourth hypothesis, which holds that these discourses mitigate Islamophobia and foster intercultural coexistence.Confirmation of the four hypotheses means that favourable attitudes to Islam originate from a discursive justification and morality that is grounded in empathy. These examples demonstrate that truthful

language can defeat fear, motivate changes in behavior and contribute to a world body of civic activism with multiple Islamic expressions.

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