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**Misrepresentations of Muslims
In
Some American Movies
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Abstract

Muslims are often misrepresented in the American movies. This helps to depict degrading stereotypes about them in the American society – or even in the West as a whole. Their images differ according to the concurrent political events. Negative images turned from bad to worse accompanying the changes in politics.

These negative images have a direct effect on the internal and the external American policies. They also play a pivotal role in constituting the public opinion against Muslims not only in America but also in the West as a whole. This research paper tries to trace these misrepresentations and their effect. It also discusses some strategies and solutions to enhance them, the role of the departments of English Language, literature and simultaneous interpretation of Al-Azhar El Sharif and the roles of the members of the Islamic countries.

Keywords:

(1) Misrepresent:

-to describe falsely an idea, opinion, or situation, often in order to get an advantage

(2) Stereotype:

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-A term used to define all people of a certain belief into a mostly negative category that may only reflect a selected few of the racial demographics

(3) The Other:

-A group or a member of a group that is perceived as different, foreign, strange, etc.

(4) Racism:

-Prejudice, discrimination, or antagonism directed against someone of a different race based on the belief that one's own race is superior

(5) Terrorism:

- The unlawful use of violence and intimidation, especially against civilians, in the pursuit of political aims.

A large number of Hollywood's films has represented demeaning images of Muslims. These wronged images have contributed to generating several misconceptions about them in America and in the world as a whole due to Hollywood's massive effect and propagandist role. Since the early years of the American cinema, there has been a standard practice vilifying Muslims. This practice has helped to a great extent in spreading racist attitudes towards them. Muslims or Arabs (as the two words are used as synonyms disregarding the Christians in the Orient) have been a target for stereotyping along ages in the American movies. These stereotypes of Muslims are constant, in contrast to those of other nations or ethnic groups portrayed in Hollywood, which have been changed and improved. The American president Richard Nixon states in chapter five of his book, *Seize the Moment: America's Challenge in a One-Superpower World* (1992), that: "No nations, not even Communist China, have a more negative image in the American consciousness than those of the Muslim world" (199). Sorrowfully, Hollywood has stated and deepened these negative images.

Muslims' negative images portrayed by Hollywood have been changed and worsened according to various political events such as the creation of Israel (1948), the Arab-Israeli conflict, the 1973-Oil Crisis in the Middle East, the Iranian Islamic Revolution (1979), the Iranian Hostage Crisis, the first and the second Intifadas in Palestine in 1987 and 1993 respectively, the demise of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War (1991) which caused the replacement of the image of the Soviet enemy with the Muslim one, 9/11 attacks (2001), some terrorist attacks on Europe and other areas in the world and the foundation of Al-Qaeda (1988) and The Islamic State of Iraq and The Levant 'ISIL' or 'Da'esh' (2014). The "growing numbers of the attacks" by extremist Islamic Groups "gave Hollywood an ample opportunity to show" Muslims "in a strongly negative light" (Fries 320). But this is unfair, as there are many violent and terrorist actions committed by Westerners, Christians (e.g. KKK 'Ku Klux Klan') or other ethnic or religious groups, and there is no collective judgment or punishment against their countries or nationalities.

Hence, the objectives of this research paper are: (1) trying to trace Muslims' misrepresentations in some of Hollywood's movies, since the late years of the 19th century and the early years of the 20th century till now, and (2) showing the changes and the escalations of these misrepresentations. (3) Revealing the effects of these movies on the American foreign policy (and vice versa) is a third goal. (4) It also aims at clarifying the influence of these movies on constituting negative public opinions in the West about Muslims, and on creating angry reactions in the East. Consequently, they generate tension and hatred between them. (5) Additionally, the research paper suggests some strategies for abolishing

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such stereotypes, enhancing them, and demonstrating the true essence of Islam. (6) Finally, it calls inherently for peace tolerance and fraternity between all human beings. It leaves the reader with a lasting message for denouncing all forms of violence and collective judgment or punishment.

In achieving the above objectives, the research paper divides the periods of the changes and the escalations of Muslims' misrepresentations in Hollywood's movies, according to some coexisting pivotal political and military events in the Orient and in the Occident, into five categories: Firstly, before the creation of Israel; secondly, after the creation of Israel; thirdly, after 1973-Oil Crisis; fourthly, in the 1980s and the 1990s, after the first and the second Intifadas in Palestine; and fifthly, after 11 September Attacks on American targets in 2001 till now. Some movies of each period are inspected as a sample. The political events of each period are discussed briefly before inspecting the example movies.

Degrading images of Muslims (men, women and even children) have been aggravated and escalated, affecting the internal and the external American policies and vice versa. Hollywood's misrepresentations of Muslims "ebbed and flowed with the foreign policy realities of the United States across time" (Fries 320). Muslims living there may lose their jobs, be detained without any cause, or suffer from verbal or physical assaults or racial discrimination in public places. What is called as 'America's War on Terrorism' has been waged on many areas of the Islamic world. [Jack Valenti](#), longtime president of the [Motion Picture Association of America](#) states that: "Washington and Hollywood spring from the same [DNA](#)" (Shaheen, *How* 00:14:06 – 00:14:19). These misrepresentations also play a principle role in constituting the negative public opinion against Muslims not

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only in America but also in the West or the world as a whole. Because many Westerners may have not travelled to the Islamic countries nor have personal contacts with many Muslims; these movies have a direct impact on their opinions towards all Muslims. For this purpose, this research paper tries to shed light on these misrepresentations and their impact, analyzing some example movies and casting questions about their aftermaths. It also discusses some strategies and solutions to confront and enhance them, as mentioned in the paragraph of the objectives.

Firstly, before the creation of Israel in 1948, the images of the Muslims were diversified from being "lazy, bearded, heathens" or "Bedouins" having "concubines" from "slave markets", to being "swarthy sheik, chasing Western heroines" (14); as described by the American writer and lecturer, Dr. Jack George Shaheen in his book, *Reel Bad Arabs: How Hollywood Vilifies a People* (2001), which is considered as an indispensable reference for this subject. In this book, Shaheen discussed about one thousand American films misrepresenting Muslims for nearly a century from the beginnings of Hollywood till the time of its publication. This book was adapted to a 2006 documentary film, entitled: *How Hollywood Vilifies Arabs*. In both of them (the book and the film), Shaheen explained how Arabs have been misrepresented as "villains", "stereotypes" and "sub-humans" in the American cinema. After about 3 minutes and 28 seconds of the beginning of the film, Shaheen states that: "we inherited Arabs' images primarily from Europeans ... the writers fabricated them ... these images were transmitted and inherited by us", we have Arabs' lands as "deserts with oases and palm trees". Arabs are represented as "Villains, Sheiks, Egyptians, Palestinians and the members of a Harem - many of which overlap". Arab children "are usually

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projected as grimy children, killer's assistants, and robbers". Shaheen also states that Arab women are paradoxically depicted either as "bosomy belly dancers leering out from diaphanous veils or as shapeless 'Bundles of Black' driven by their males" (Shaheen, *Reel 22*).

Inherited demeaning images have played a great role in depicting Muslims negatively hundred years ago. No wonder that America's motherland, Britain, saw the East in an inferior way and a colonialist view. For the British, "Ottoman despotism, Islamic obscurantism and Arab racial inferiority had combined to produce a backward culture that was badly in need of Anglo-Saxon tutelage" (Little 10). This perspective was transferred to America, as it was one of the British colonies one day and an important part of the British Empire. After the Second World War (1939-1945), the ascending power of America, in accordance with the descending power of Britain, has helped to shift the scope of the European colonization to America.

Consequently, Hollywood represented and developed the inherited negative images of Muslims increasingly with the political, the economic and the military changes. Some examples of the early movies representing Muslims' demeaning images are: *Sheik Hadj Tahar Hadi Cherif* (1894), *In The Sultan's Power* (also known as *The Power of the Sultan*) (1909), *The Fire and The Sword* (1914) *Garden of Allah* (1917 and 1927), *Flame of the Desert* (1919), *An Arabian Night* (1920), *The Sheik* (1921), *Arabia* (1922), *The Sheik's Wife* (1922), *Tents of Allah* (1923), *Fleetwing* (1928), *The White Sheik* (1928), *The Desert Song* (1929), *Sinbad the Sailor* (1935) and *Ali Baba: the Mad Dog of the Desert* (1940).

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In *Sheik Hadj Tahar Hadi Cherif, Power of The Sultan, The Fire and The Sword, The Sheik, The Sheik's Wife and The White Sheik*: Arab Sheiks are misrepresented as immoral villains. They move swiftly and violently to deflower Western women. Edward Said explained that the perverted sheik can often be seen "snarling at the captured Western hero and blond girl...and saying 'My men are going to kill you, but they like to amuse themselves before they do'" (Said, *Orientalism* 287). In *The Sheik*, for example, a Paris-educated Muslim Sheik, 'Ahmed Ben Hassan', provides brides for wealthy Arabs. He kidnaps 'Lady Diana Mayo' to make her fall in love with him.

In *Sinbad the Sailor*, the events take place in a '[casbah](#)' of a Middle Eastern country. We can see magical lantern with a genii bought by Sinbad and turbaned chimers with dancing snakes in a basket. The events are full of superstitions, backwardness and unbelievable actions. Sinbad's beloved is a 'harem' girl as the Arab women have often been meanly represented. This movie was a beginning to a series of movies about Sinbad's adventures. They were produced from the 1930s till 2014, with the same implications.

The images of the Muslims were not only related to immorality, superstitions and backwardness as in the above examples, but also to mockery. They were represented as a comic caricature in *Ali Baba: the Mad Dog of the Desert*. It is an animated cartoon. In a series of comic actions, the hero, Ali Baba is depicted as an image of irony and comedy. He is a fat man with an evil big grin, long nose, pointy beard and dirty sleeves. He appears barking like a dog while the caption is written at the very beginning of the film. This stereotype of a Muslim man is not suitable for children. It will be engraved in their memories. It will be easy for them to accept Muslims as the uncivilized 'Other' after that.

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Additionally, the Arabs' lands appear as deserts with oases which are full of camels with no signs of civilization.

Thus, the demeaning stereotypes of Muslims in the early stages of Hollywood are the villain, the immoral, the backward and the comic. The heritage and the imagination of the writers constituted them wrongly. They have continued in the following ages, in addition to representing new ones in accordance with the coming political events in an escalating way.

Secondly, one of the important political events, that caused a change in the American-Arabic and Islamic relations, is the creation of Israel. After its creation on 14 May 1948, Muslims began to be depicted as a "surmountable obstacle to Israel's creation" (Said, *Orientalism* 286). The images of the Muslims became clearly involved in the political events. The American support to Israel doubled the misrepresentations of Muslims and vice versa. Hollywood escalated racially the inherited images adding to them new violent ones. Additionally, Israel was shown as a weak victim that needs support in order to establish itself and to restore its historical rights on the Palestinian lands. Hollywood released epic films such as: *The Prodigal* (1955), *The Ten Commandments* (1956), *Invitation to the Dance* (1956), *Solomon and Sheba* (1959), *Ben-Hur* (1959), *Exodus* (1960), *El-Cid* (1962), *Lawrence of Arabia* (1962), *Harum Scarum* (1965), *Cast a Giant Shadow* (1966) and *The Ambushers* (1967).

The 'epic religious drama' film, *The Ten Commandments*, tackles the Bible story of Moses' journey with the Israelites from Egypt to Palestine or the Promised Land. The adopted prince Moses frees them from the Egyptian yoke where they were enslaved. On Mount Sinai, Moses receives from God

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the Ten Commandments. The film is based on the novels: *Prince of Egypt* by [Dorothy Clarke Wilson](#), *Pillar of Fire* by [J. H. Ingraham](#), the book of *Exodus* and *On Eagle's Wings* by [A.E. Southon](#). Its budget "was \$13 million, it was the most expensive film ever made till the time of its release on 8 November 1956" ("[The Ten Commandments](#)" 1). Hollywood spends this large amount of money at that time to support Israel and to prove its right in Palestine. Hollywood's role as the American "propaganda machine is undeniable" (Robb 15). Consequently, this Biblical story can be seen from a political perspective.

Muslims in the movie *Exodus* commit violent actions towards the Jews as that of the Nazis. They kidnap, torture and kill a young Jewish woman called 'Dafna'. The [Grand Mufti of Jerusalem](#), [Mohammad Amin al-Husayni](#), commands Arab nationals to attack Gan Dafna kibbutz and massacre the Jews, including the children. When Taha, the '[mukhtar](#)' of an Arab village near Gan Dafna Kibbutz warns the Jewish secretly, his corpse is found hanging in his village. He has been killed by ex-Nazis, working for the Grand Mufti. A '[Star of David](#)' is carved on his body. A [swastika](#) and a sign saying "Jude" is written on the walls of the village, indicating the Arabs' violence and their hatred of the Jews or their Anti-Semitism. The Palestinians attack the Kibbutz. Karen, a young Danish-Jewish beautiful girl is killed. Her body is found by her fiancé, Dov, the next day. Why has this atrocity been related to the Palestinians only? The Zionists have committed many massacres against the Palestinians since 1948, as: Dair Yassin, Sabra and Shatela, Quana, Genein...etc. The film equates Muslims with Nazis. Why are the images of the Muslims misrepresented as those of the Nazis? Doesn't this cause hatred to Muslims? Islam is not Nazism. There is a great difference between resistance of

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occupation and bloodiness. Moreover, the film is considered by some critics as "influential in stimulating [Zionism](#) and support for [Israel](#) in the United States" (Boer 152).

Identically, in the movie *Cast a Giant Shadow* (from a book by Ted Berkman entitled: *Cast a Giant Shadow: The Story of Mickey Marcus, Who Died to Save Jerusalem*), the Israeli Haganah members want to train troops and have an army to defend the newly declared State of Israel against an invasion by its Arab neighbors. They ask the help of a former American Jewish [Army Reserve Colonel](#) called David Marcus (acted by Kirk Douglas). As he is proud to be Jewish, he accepts the mission as a duty leaving his wife and his home to go to Israel. There, he is given command of the Jerusalem front with the rank of '[Aluf](#)' (General), a rank not used since biblical days. Before reaching Jerusalem, he is killed by a sentry. His coffin is carried by an [honor guard](#) of the soldiers whom he has trained. The movie was shot in Israel and America. No wonder that America has supported its ally, Israel. Both of them co-operate in producing many films that serve their aims and tackle important themes for them (other movies will be discussed in the following periods). The hero of the film is a clever American-Jewish Colonel trains the Israeli soldiers and killed by a savage Palestinian. The Zionists of Israel appear as victims to the violent Palestinian Muslims. Here, the images of violent bloody Muslims are added to the previous ones of immorality, backwardness and villainy.

Thirdly, with the 1974-Oil Crisis, which resulted from the continuity of the Arab-Israeli conflict, new negative images of the Muslims appeared in the American movies in an escalating way. While Hollywood was escalating using new stereotypes, it also kept producing the old ones. At the time of this crisis, Arab leaders declared their solidarity with

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Egypt and Syria in their confrontation with Israel and its allies. OPEC, an organization of mostly Arab 'Oil Petroleum Exporting Countries', announced an embargo on oil shipments to Israel's allies, in October 1973. Hollywood came to see the Middle East as a growing threat (Brands 19). Accordingly, images of an "oily, militant sheikh that hoards women and natural resources at the expense of the Americans" have appeared (Shaheen, *Reel* 14-25).

The demeaning image of the Arab Sheik as living by oil without morals has been drawn by Hollywood and affected the American policy and vice versa. To set an example, the [Federal Bureau of Investigation](#) (FBI) project known as 'Abscam Operation' in the late 1970s and early 1980s led to the convictions of seven members of the [United States Congress](#) and others with corruption. They were videotaped having bribes from a fake Arabian company in return for various political favors. This fake company was, of course, created by FBI. It was called 'Abdul Enterprises' in which FBI employees posed as fictional Arab [sheiks](#) led by owners 'Kambir Abdul Rahman' and 'Yassir Habib', who had millions of dollars to invest in the United States (Noonan 604–11). Why did FBI use intentionally Arab Muslim characters for this fake company (not other members of any other nationality or religion)? As a result of this choice, FBI helped to portray a stereotype of a rich deceitful Arab, the same as Hollywood (as will be shown in the following discussed movies as examples). This negative image has been implanted in the American public consciousness.

The Iranian Revolution was also one of the motivations for negative images of Muslims in the American movies at that period. The Iranian Islamic Revolution ended the role of one of the long-time allies of America, Shah Muhammad

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Reza. Shah protected "the American interests, including Oil reserves, in the Gulf" (Donovan and Scherer 143). The leader and the spiritual guide of the Revolution, Ayatollah Khomeini, called the Islamic States to make similar revolutions. Additionally, he declared that Israel should be destroyed and America is "a satanic enemy of Islam". The 'Iranian Hostage Crisis' during his role overthrew the American president, Jimmy Carter, and slogans of "hatred to America" were lift outside the American embassy (Donovan and Scherer 142 - 146). As a result, Muslims were perceived as terrorists in the American media and the political reports. Consequently, Hollywood and Washington served each other again.

Moreover, the American foreign policy could be blamed at that period of the 1970s, because of its interference in the East, for example: in Iran during the Iranian Revolution in order to guarantee the Oil supply, its intervention in the Lebanese Civil War to support the Christian groups against an increasingly turbulent and radicalized Muslim majority, and most importantly its great and increasing support to Israel. Yet, Hollywood presented the American role in the east as the 'protector' and the 'supporter' rather than the 'invader' and the 'exploiter' by releasing films as: *The Jerusalem File* (1973), *Embassy* (1973), *Prisoner in the Middle* (1974), *Rosebud* (1975), *The Next Man* (1976), *Network* (1976), *Ilsa, Harem Keeper of the Oil Sheikhs* (1976), *Black Sunday* (1977), *Operation Thunderbolt* (1977), *The Happy Hooker Goes to Washington* (1977), *Slavers* (1977) and *Chapter Two* (1979). These movies showed how America protects the Middle East region from the growing threat of the Islamic terrorism and radicalism. Consequently, they were serving the government's political targets and giving the justification for the American presence and activity in the Middle East and in the Islamic countries.

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"Hence, the Arabs should be depicted as a filthy and backward nation that needs, and will continue to need, Western aid" (Hasian 210-215). The old misrepresentations were also deepened and adapted to the new political changes.

In reproducing the old images, some movies allude to the old inherited ones. For instance, in the movie *Chapter Two*, when the protagonist's brother asks him "How is London?" He answers contemptuously: "full of Arabs" (Shaheen, *How* 00:09:05 – 00:09:10). It is a [Metro color romantic comedy](#) film based on [Neil Simon's 1977 Broadway play of the same name](#). Arabs are imposed in the conversation with no need, only to show how London becomes terrible. They are used to set examples of evilness and wickedness. In the same way, in the movie, *Network*, the main character, the American 'Howard Beale' says: "The Arabs are simply buying us" (*How Muslims* 1). However, other adapted images such as those of terrorism have been escalated.

Accordingly, the movie, *Prisoner in the Middle*, tackles the idea that America decides to save the world from Muslims' terrorism when an American CIA hero, 'Colonel Tony Stevens', is sent to find and disarm a missing nuclear weapon in a warzone between the Palestinian Liberation Army and the Israeli Army, 'before it falls into the wrong hands'. The film explicitly shows "Hollywood's partiality against the Arab and Muslim world" (Shaheen, *Reel* 380). The film was originally shot in Israel in 1973 under the title: *Sabra Command*. It is also known as *Prisoner in the Middle*, *Warhead* and *Mission Overkill*, in West Germany. In Mexico, it was released as *Amenaza Nuclear* ("Nuclear Threat"). All of these titles are related mainly to its subject and help mainly to spread its ideas.

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. The film, *Prisoner in the Middle*, begins with the blowing up of an Israeli children school bus by terrorists (00:05:59). Everyone is killed except the military guard, Lt 'Liora' who identifies the Palestinian Major 'Malouf' as leading the operation. The latter appears wearing the Palestinian 'Kuffya' and smiling at seeing the corpses of the Israeli children. The audience can't do anything except hating these Muslim terrorists. An Israeli military operation with 'Liora' along to identify 'Malouf' sets out to find the terrorists. Meanwhile, a US Air Force Colonel named 'Stevens', who is a nuclear arms expert, is parachuted into the desert to disarm a nuclear bomb that has accidentally fallen out of an airplane flying over the area. He and the military operation eventually meet.

Throughout the film, *Prisoner*, the operation pursues the Palestinian terrorists. The nuke expert 'Stevens' learns more about humanity through his relationship with the Israeli Lt 'Liora'. In the end, all the Palestinian terrorists and the operation members die from various fights. 'Stevens' alone survives and recalls his newfound discovery of the love of humanity. The nuke is left in the desert, presumably defused by another nuke expert ("[Warhead](#)"1).

Racially, the Palestinian Muslims are represented in the film, *Prisoner*, as violent terrorists and enemies of humanity. At the same time, the Israeli people are represented as victims. They have morals and know the real meaning of love of humanity. The Americans are the supporters of Israel as their traditional role and also the protectors of the world, especially the Middle East, from the Islamic radicalism and terrorism.

Islamic radicalism and terrorism are represented again in the movie *Rosebud*. It is based on a novel by [Joan Hemingway](#) and [Paul Bonnacarrère](#), and tackles nearly the same theme as *Prisoner in the Middle*. PLO terrorists kidnap

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five wealthy Greek girls from the [yacht, Rosebud](#). The American Larry Martin (O'Toole) is a [Newsweek reporter](#), secretly working for the [CIA](#) tasked, along with [Israeli Intelligence](#) (Mossad), to work for their release. The Palestinians are shown as terrorists and the Americans as protectors.

Islamic terrorism is no longer related in Hollywood's movies to Muslim men only, but to women also in a new escalation. A Palestinian Muslim woman 'Dahlia' (acted by Marthe Keller) attempts in *Black Sunday* to blow up a blimp hovering over the Super Bowl football stadium to kill thousands of Americans and the American president who is attending. But, the intelligence and the cleverness of the members of the Israeli Mossad and the American Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI) prevent the terrorist operation and kill 'Dahlia' and her partners. She is a member of 'Black September Group'. The film is based on a novel written by the American writer, Thomas Harris. Yet, both of them deal with an escalation in the misrepresentations of the Muslim woman. Now, she is not a member of 'harem' or a seducing 'belly dancer', she becomes a violent terrorist carrying weapons and killing innocent persons ruthlessly.

Hollywood may also tackle Islamic terrorism as not only directed to the non-Muslim world, but also to Muslims themselves who seek peace with Israel. This Islamic threat should be confronted. So, they need America's help. The movie, *The Next Man* (also known as *The Arab Conspiracy* or *Double Hit*) is a 1976 American political action thriller film. It is set during the Arab oil embargo of 1973-1974. The main Muslim character, Khalil Abdul-Muhsen (acted by Sean Connery) is the [Saudi](#)

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[Arabian](#) minister of a state who proposes to recognize [Israel](#), support Israeli membership in [OPEC](#) and sell Saudi oil to any needy nation. His plan is to protect third-world nations from the threat of [Cold War](#) ideology. Khalil's agenda and idealism finds few friends and he is soon the target of multiple assassination attempts by Muslim terrorist groups. The actions are related to the Arab-Israeli conflict and the Oil embargo. Muslims appear as terrorists who would kill the Israelis, the Americans and even the Muslims who support peace with Israel and America. Hence, the film leaves the audience with a lasting message that Muslims are a source of danger threatening the world. In addition to this, America should be here in the Middle East region to protect its allies and even to protect the Muslims from themselves, while it benefits also from the natural resources. The American President David Dwight Eisenhower (1890-1969) wrote: "no region in the world received as much of my close attention and that of my colleagues as did the Middle East" (Brands 19).

The Islamic threat has been tackled over and over again in other American movies. It has been continued to be likened to Nazism. This repetition and insistence would deepen the world hatred to Muslims. For example, *Operation Thunderbolt* is a Hollywood movie with an Israeli production. It is known in Israel as *Mivtsa Yonatan* (literally "Operation Jonathan"). It is also known as *Entebbe: Operation Thunderbolt* in the USA. It is based on an actual event; that is the hijacking of a flight by Muslims and the freeing of Israeli hostages on July 4, 1976.

In *Operation Thunderbolt* two members of the [Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine – External Operations](#) (PFLP-EO), and two members of the German [Revolutionary Cells](#) hijacked an [Air France](#) plane

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with 248 passengers, on 27 June 1976. The hijackers had the stated objective to free 40 Palestinian and affiliated militants imprisoned in Israel and 13 prisoners in four other countries in exchange for the hostages. The flight, which had originated in [Tel Aviv](#) with the destination of [Paris](#), was diverted after a stopover in [Athens](#) via [Benghazi](#) to [Entebbe](#), the main airport of Uganda. The Ugandan president [Idi Amin](#) (1925-2003) supported the hijackers. After moving all hostages from the aircraft to a disused airport building, the hijackers separated all Israelis and several non-Israeli Jews from the larger group and forced them into a separate room.

Over the following two days, ninety-four, mainly Israeli, passengers along with the 12-member Air France crew remained as hostages and were threatened with death. [Israel Defense Forces](#) (IDF) rescued the hostages. Four hostages only were killed. Only one of the [Israeli commandos](#), unit commander [Lt. Col. Yonatan Netanyahu](#), was killed. All the hijackers and forty-five Ugandan soldiers were killed. Kenya supported Israel. All the survivors joined in flying back to Israel via Nairobi and [Sharm El Sheikh](#). 'Operation Entebbe', which had the military codename 'Operation Thunderbolt', is sometimes [referred to retroactively](#) as 'Operation Jonathan' in memory of the unit's leader, [Yonatan Netanyahu](#). He was the elder brother of [Benjamin Netanyahu](#), the Israeli Prime Minister ("[Operation Entebbe](#)" 1).

The movie, *Operation Thunderbolt* deals with the events following the flight's takeoff until the hostages' return to Israel. It was produced with the co-operation of the [Israeli Air Force](#) and the [Israeli government](#). The film was well received in Israel and was somewhat successful overseas. It was nominated for an [Academy Award](#) for Best Foreign Language Film in 1978 ("[Operation Thunderbolt](#)" 2).

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Hollywood used this real event that was committed by few persons to depict all Muslims as criminals. They are misrepresented as an extension of the Nazi threat, and all Westerners stand side-by-side with Israel against the Muslim hijackers. In the film, an Israeli tells a German: "I don't trust Arabs they are really dangerous they will kill us like the Nazis" (Shaheen, *Reel* 358). Again the Muslims are likened to the Nazis.

Fourthly, the sudden outbreak of the first and the second Intifadas in Palestine in the 1980s and the 1990s caused a new change in the negative images of Muslims in Hollywood. Images as "anti-Christian and anti-Semitic radicals" have been escalated clearly. They also have been portrayed increasingly as "suicide bombers" and "terrorists" threatening and bombing Israeli victims or "Western women and children" (Shaheen, *Reel* 26-28).

Moreover, the increase in the Palestinian Liberation Organization's (PLO) military operations against Israel and the Arab support for these activities along with the appearance of Islamic fundamentalist organizations such as Hezbollah, Amal and Hamas with their anti-Israeli operations, including bombing and hijacking of airplanes have been taken as an excuse for portraying Muslims in general and Palestinians in particular as terrorists in the American movies. While

we never see, never see Palestinians who suffer under occupation, Palestinians in refugee camps, Palestinians who are victimized or killed, innocent Palestinians. These images are denied. Why are they denied? ... Why can't we humanize Palestinians in the same manner we humanize Israelis?

(Shaheen, *How* 00:25:07 – 00:26:03)

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The unbalanced Arab-Israeli conflict shown in many of the American movies disregards plainly the Palestinian suffering and the Israeli massacres. In her study *Images of the Middle East in Contemporary Fiction* (1983), Janice J. Terry, the Professor of History at Eastern Michigan University in Ypsilanti noted that the portrayals of the Arab-Israeli conflict are obviously unbalanced, and added that: "Zionist supporters quickly recognized the effectiveness of popular fiction as a vehicle to establish and reinforce sympathy for Israel" (315). At the same time, the Israeli crimes are never portrayed. Additionally, the end of the Cold War was another cause of spreading Muslims' negative misleading images. It has simply led to portraying Muslims as the "new foe" who

quickly took the place of Soviet Communism in the imagination of many Americans, much of the same energy that animated American fear of the 'red' menace (allegedly the Soviets) shifted during the 1990s to panic in response to the 'green' terror (which is the use of terrorism by militant Islamic fundamentalism).

(Edward 13)

Not only the end of the Cold War has increased Hollywood's defamation of Muslims, but also the 1990 Gulf War has done. Its events have "served as the perfect backdrop for the film industry with a new cycle of violent high-tech spectacles" (Mandel 22). There are some American movies that have appeared at that period tackling the escalation of the misrepresentations of Muslims such as: *Raiders of the Lost Ark* (1981), *Rollover* (1981), the *Hostage* series (1982- 1986-1990), *Never Say Never Again* (1983), *Sahara* (1984), *Protocol* (1984), *Cannonball Run II* (1984),

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Back to the Future (1985), *The Jewel of the Nile* (1985), *Harem* (1985), the *Delta Force* series (from 1986 to 1991), *Iron Eagle* (1986), *Death before Dishonour* (1987), *Frantic* (1988), *Navy Seals* (1989), *Not Without My Daughter* (1990), *The Bonfire of the Vanities* (1990), *Aladdin* (1992), *Son of the Pink Panther* (1993), *True Lies* (1994), *Father of the Bride II* (1995), *Executive Decision* (1996), *The Siege* (1998), *East is East* (1999), *Three Kings* (1999), *Gladiator* (2000), *The Mummy* (2000), and *Rules of Engagement*(2000).

In *Rollover*, for example, an Arab organization plans to wreck the world economy in order to cause anarchy and chaos. It takes the stock of banks across America. Bit by bit Arabs are discovered to be behind many crimes in America. At the end, they pull their money out of all the banks causing a global financial crisis. They appear as villains, as they were before but now with the addition of a financial perspective.

The movie, *Harem* represents again the old inherited image of the Arab Sheik that appeared in the beginnings of the 1900th (after about 60 years) in films like: *Sheik Hadj Tahar Hadi Cherif*, *Power of The Sultan*, *The Fire and The Sword*, *The Sheik*, *The Sheik's Wife* and *The White Sheik*. Yet, it is shown now with some change. Sheik Selim, the ruler of an oil-rich [Gulf country](#) kidnaps Diane Andrews, a [haughty Wall Street floor trader](#). Although she tries to resist him, she falls in love with him after a period of time. Then, Selim realizes that he can't rule his country as before and as his ancestors. He takes a decision to evacuate his castle. The Arab Sheik appears now as having an oil company, and is very rich. But he, as before, follows madly the American blond.

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The same idea is tackled with in *Cannonball Run II*. It describes Arabs as thirsty for the blonds. The main character, 'Sheik Abdul Ben Falafel' (acted by [Jamie Farr](#)) says: "I have a weakness for the blonds". He is immoral and "too rich and stupid to know the value of the money" (Shaheen, *How* 00:08:08).

Again the same stereotype of an immoral rich Arab Sheik is represented again in *The Jewel of the Nile*. Sheik Omar, a charming Arab ruler (acted by [Spiros Focás](#)), tricks Joan Wilder, an American writer (acted by [Kathleen Turner](#)) and convinces her to come back with him to his country. Then, he imprisons her and orders her "to write" only what he wants.

The same seduction and infatuation with the blonds and the blue eyes by a rich Muslim character is represented also in *Sahara*, *Protocol*, and *Never Say Never Again*. In *Sahara*, the American heroine, Dale (acted by [Brooke Shields](#)), is a prey for the Arabs. She is kidnapped and presented to a Sheikh to rape her. In *Never Say Never Again*, the American heroine is abused by the primitive disgusting immoral Arabs, who want to buy her. Thus, the image of the immoral Arab is repeated frequently.

Correspondingly, the old stereotype of Muslims as slave traders appears over and over again, for example, in a movie like: *Gladiator*, although it tackles an occident subject. 'Omid Djalili' played the role of a Muslim slave trader. Why has this demeaning image of Muslims been imposed in a movie related to [Hispano-Roman](#) events, not oriental ones at all?

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Additionally, the lands of the Arabs are still depicted the same as before. In the [satirical black comedy film](#), *The Bonfire of the Vanities*, which was adapted from the best-selling [novel of the same name](#) by [Tom Wolfe](#), the Arabs' lands are represented as full of camels, goats, sheep, chicken ...etc. Veiled Muslim women appear hurrying through bazaars to the sound of snake-charming music in *Raiders of the Lost Ark*. Obviously; Hollywood reproduces again the old inherited stereotypes with a new degrading tinge to refer to Muslims' backwardness in spite of the modern technological developments. "Renew and repeated over and over again, these images, are hard-wired into our psyches, as the Arab proper reminds us by repetition, even the donkey learns" (Shaheen, "Hollywood" 00:02:38 - 00:02:52).

Identically, *Aladdin* is one of the successful films made by Disney and seen by millions of children worldwide. But it "recycled every old degrading stereotype from Hollywood's silent, black and white past" about Muslims (Shaheen, *How* 00:05:40). It is criticized for depicting Arabs as "ruthless caricatures" with "exaggerated and ridiculous accents". Its introductory song states that the Arab hero comes from "a land, from a faraway place, with caravan camels rode, where they cut your ear, if they don't like your face. It's barbaric, but hey, it's home" (Shaheen, *How* 00:05:16 – 00:06:03). Thus the film relates Islam with barbarism, harsh punishment and oppression. Why does Hollywood represent again the old demeaning stereotypes of Muslims in a film for children? Won't the result be a future anti-Islamic trend and hatred feelings towards Muslims? Why does Hollywood every now and then reproduce such films for children, in spite of the existence of many creative and genius Muslims in every field of life worldwide?

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The Muslims are portrayed offensively in *Father of the Bride II*. Mr. Habib blackmails the American George Banks. The audience sees him as a hateful vexing villain. He also treats his wife oppressively; when she wants to speak, he shouts at her loudly before the others. He is proud of himself to suppress his wife. She stands in a complete submission and humiliation to him, as the Arab woman is sometimes represented.

Although Hollywood has kept reproducing the old inherited stereotypes of Muslims, adapting some of them, new depictions and escalations accompanying the current political events at that period have appeared. The incidents of the two Intifadas in the Occupied Lands of Palestine have been used by American film makers to represent the images of Muslims/Palestinians as terrorists. The two Intifadas have been seen from only one view and with only one attitude, the attitude of the supporter of Israel.

In *Death before Dishonour*, Palestinians murder savagely an entire Israeli family. Also, the *Hostage* series shows Muslims as villains and terrorists lacking morals and honor. This series narrates a kidnapping of a plane by Muslims who brutally rape and kill Western females including mothers and the elderly ones. Then, these criminals are captured by an American hero.

Furthermore, in the "popular racist" film *The Delta Force*; ten Palestinians hijacked a plane terrorizing the passengers especially the Jews. One of the hijackers says: "take out the passports with Jewish names" (Shaheen, *How* 00:24:06). The terrorists are ruthless extremists committing crimes against humanity. Yet, the Americans appear as

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heroes contrasting the Muslim villains. The Americans rescue the hijacked passengers and kill the terrorists. The film relates directly between Islam and terrorism. The hijackers shout: "Allah Akbar" and consider themselves in a religious mission or 'jihad' against Zionism and American imperialism following Khomeini's 'Fatwa'. The film was "made in Israel and either financed or backed by Israelis" (Boggs and Pollard 338). Typically, the same idea is tackled in *Executive Decision*.

In the same way, the movie, *Back to the Future*, begins with some terrorist Muslim men shooting the American [Dr. Emmett "Doc" Brown](#), the genius inventor of a time machine. *The Siege* also depicts a series of terrorist bombings by Muslims. This movie and the above ones associate Islam directly with terrorism. Perhaps, the most awful thing is relating the shouting "Allah Akbar" with atrocious activities.

Again, in *True Lies* a Muslim terrorist group called 'Crimson Jihad' terrorizing American people. 'Harry Tasker' is a computer salesman often away on business trips, while in reality he is a covert operative for a U.S. [counter-terrorism](#) task force called "Omega Sector". Harry and his fellow Agents Albert "Gib" Gibson and Faisal infiltrate a party in Switzerland, where they learn of the existence of a [terrorist](#) group known as the "Crimson Jihad", led by Salim Abu Aziz. Aziz kidnaps Harry and his wife and takes them to an island in the [Florida Keys](#). Aziz reveals that he has smuggled the stolen [MIRV](#) (Multiple Independently Targetable Reentry Vehicle) nuclear warheads into the country. He threatens to detonate them in major U.S. cities unless the [U.S. military](#) leaves the [Persian Gulf](#). He then orders the couple to be tortured. Finally, after a tense struggle with Aziz, Harry eventually has him ensnared on the

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end of one of the plane's missiles, which Harry fires at a passing terrorist helicopter, killing Aziz and the remnants of his terrorist gang ("[True Lies](#)" 2).

Noticeably, In *True Lies*, 'Salem Abu Aziz' as a Muslim figure is misrepresented in a hateful image as a dangerous smuggler and terrorist that deserves killing. He leads a terrorist gang that wants to kill innocent American civilians. The film ends with the American couple, Harry and his wife, dancing tango together happily after abolishing the evil. The considerable profits of the film and its wide-spread acceptance refer sorrowfully to the broad reception of the hateful image of Muslims. The American film critic and lecturer: [Kenneth Turan](#) wrote in the [Los Angeles Times](#) (1994) criticizing negatively "the cruder and childish things about this film" and "its determination to use caricatured unshaven Arabs as terrorists...leave a sour taste" (20). In addition to being a dangerous smuggler, criminal and terrorist, Salem appears as a disgusting comic character. Shaheen explains: "in a movie like *True Lies* not only are the Arabs dangerous, but incompetent". Salem Abu Aziz says: "one turn of that key...two million of European people will die instantly ... that key ... who's taken the key!" (Shaheen *How* 00:07:13 – 00:07:37).

The political and the military roles of America in the Islamic countries have always found a propagandist support of Hollywood. The latter has served their united aims greatly. For example, the *Three Kings* movie tackles the American role as a 'protector' in Iraq. The American forces are represented as saving the Iraqi people from their oppressive government and their dictator president, Saddam Hussein. Consequently, Hollywood and the other means of media have given an excuse to the existence of the American

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forces in Iraq and to the exploitation of the Iraqi oil. The Iraqi people need the American assistance, so America is there in Iraq spending millions of dollars to save the wronged Iraqi people, as the media depicts. No wonder that this policy depends on the 'Truman Doctrine' (1947); according to it America decided to help any country threatened by oppression or outsider forces. This policy aimed to counter Soviet geopolitical expansion in the world especially in the Middle East. As a result, the Cold War began ("[Truman Doctrine](#)" 1). Much of the American foreign policy in the East after that has become based on this Doctrine. America has taken it as an excuse to its intrusion in and exploitation to the East and its oil fields. Edward Said wonders in his book, *Orientalism*, that:

Without the usual euphemisms, the question most often being asked is why such people as the Arabs are entitled to keep the developed (free, democratic, moral) world threatened. From such questions comes the frequent suggestion that the Arab oil fields be invaded by the marines.

(Said 286)

In the movie, *Three Kings*, four American soldiers are sent to Iraq after the end of the Persian Gulf War, to clean up loose ends. They find themselves entrapped in many missions there, as they have humanity and good qualities, and play the role of the heroes and the protectors. They give back stolen gold and other goods from Kuwait. They tried to take an action against the [Iraqi Republican Guard](#) that has committed many crimes against anti-Saddam Shiite protesters. They tried also to free the Iraqi prisoners exposing their lives to a CS gas attack and to imprisonment and shooting. One of them is killed and another is badly

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injured. The three survivors return back to America and complete their lives.

The movie *Navy Seals* also justifies the American involvement in the Lebanese Civil War by making a great deal of the oppression in the country and distorting it so that it could be considered to be the "Swaziland of the Middle East", while Beirut is described as a "shithole" filled with "rag heads" (Shaheen, *Reel* 14-15). The film shows 'Charlie Sheen' coming to disarm Palestinian fanatic groups (Hezbollah, Amal, Druze) of their US-made Stinger Missiles; in his mission he manages to rescue Israelis and Americans who have been brutally hijacked by the Palestinians.

One of the phases of the unification of Hollywood and Washington in misrepresenting Muslims is the co-operation between them in producing many films-. Movies such as: *Iron Eagle*, *Death before Dishonor*, *Navy Seals*, *Executive Decision*, *True Lies* and *Rules of Engagement* were produced by both Hollywood and the Department of Defense. They set an example to the connection between Washington and Hollywood. All of them misrepresent Muslims as villains and terrorists.

For example, the actions of the war film, *Rules of Engagement*, take place in Yemen. It was written by a former Secretary of the American Navy, [James Webb](#). It was produced by the cooperation of Hollywood with the Department of Defense. 'Colonel Terry Childers', the commanding officer of a [Marine Expeditionary Unit](#) (MEU) and his embarked MEU are called to evacuate the [U.S. Ambassador to Yemen](#) from the embassy grounds as a routine demonstration against American influence on

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the [Arabian peninsula](#) and in the [Persian Gulf](#) turns into rock-throwing and sporadic automatic-rifle fire by snipers from nearby rooftops. After escorting Ambassador 'Mourain' ([Ben Kingsley](#)) and his family to a waiting helicopter, Childers returns to the embassy to retrieve the American flag; meanwhile three Marines are killed by snipers on nearby rooftops. Childers then orders his men to shoot the crowd, resulting in the deaths of 83 irregular Yemeni soldiers, most of whom were armed, and injuries to over 100 more, saving the lives of the remaining US Marines and Embassy staff ("Rules of Engagement 1).

In this way, the film, *Rules of Engagement*, represents the Yemeni civilians as violent terrorists, even a little girl with only one leg, for whom the audience can feel pity in the beginning, appears with a pistol shooting the Americans. Hence, the Yemeni are not innocent, and killed the Americans. So, they deserve this massacre, after which Childers tells his men calmly: "mission is complete". As a result, Childers is not guilty and cannot be sentenced to death or imprisonment at the end of the film. The Yemeni victims are represented as terrorists, while the American armed soldiers are 'self-defenders'. CNN reviewer Paul Clinton asks:

Why is the embassy in danger? What has happened? Who are the people rioting? We never know, but we do know this: Those pesky, dark-eyed people in Arab dress, holding protest signs, *have become international shorthand for 'terrorist bad guys'*.
(1)

Clinton clearly summarized what Hollywood has terribly tried to draw and succeeded in. It has spent much time and money to depict stereotypes for Muslims. No wonder then when the words 'Muslim' and 'terrorist' become synonyms in

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the western public opinion, nor when immorality, backwardness and villainy turn to be Muslims syndrome.

Fifthly and finally, the infamous September 11 attacks in 2001 on the Twin Towers of New York City and the Pentagon have paved the way to cast new questions about Islam and Muslims in America and the West as a whole. Muslims have been blamed for Additional accusations and charges. The word 'Muslim' has acquired escalating fearful connotations of 'terrorism' and 'atrocities', in what we can call as 'Islamophobia'. The terrorist action of those who made 9/11 attacks has been taken for granted as the would-be action of all Muslims worldwide. Then, "Islamophobia has joined Arabophobia, Prejudices are escalated, not diminished" (Shaheen, "Hollywood" 00:02:52 – 00:03:00).

Consequently, the internal and the external American policies have changed more and more against Muslims. Various American government agencies, including the Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI), took 9/11 as a "clandestine opportunity" to suspend civil liberties and constitute Arab-Americans as "a new fifth column in the United States" (Salaita 100). Even more importantly, however, are the "domestic legislative, administrative, and judicial measures" implemented by the United States' government "in the name of national security" (Cainkar 1). These measures have included mass arrests, secret and indefinite detentions, prolonged detention of 'material witnesses', closed hearings and use of secret evidence, government eavesdropping on attorney-client, FBI home and work visits, wiretapping, seizures of property, removal of aliens with technical visa violations, and mandatory special registration (Cainkar 1). The extensive legislative measures outlined by Cainkar above are important to be noted and

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discussed because of the wide reaching effect they have had on the Arab-American and Muslim-American communities. Cainkar estimates that "at least 100,000 Arabs and Muslims living in the United States have experienced one of these measures" (1).

Writing also on the status of the Arab-American community after 9/11, Edward Said recorded a similar sentiment in his essay, "Thoughts about America" (2002). He writes: "I don't know a single Arab or Muslim American who does not now feel that he or she belongs to the enemy camp"(1). Said criticizes the American measures against Arab-Americans that endowed them with feelings of "alienation" and "targeted hostility" (1).

Furthermore, after 9/11, 'America's War on Terrorism' began as a part of America's foreign policy against Muslims. Measures of collective revenge or punishment are taken instantly. America's war on Afghanistan, Iraq and others caused the death, the homelessness and the torture of millions of Muslims (e.g. Abu Gareeb Prison and Guantanamo). Today, the American president, Trump, has taken many unfair measures against refugee Muslims even children, as they are supposed to be the future terrorists.

Now, it is taken for granted than before for Hollywood to misrepresent Muslims as terrorists. A long-period heritage of stereotypes and the terrorist current attacks urge Washington to take revenge of Muslims and urge Hollywood to represent more and more degrading images about them escalating its racist attitudes towards them. So,

In spite of the reality, in spite of the material that we know to be true, we still embrace the mythology, the mythology is still a part of our psyches. Stereotypes

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take a long time to weather away. And for many of us, we're comfortable of our prejudice. We don't want to change. We've grown accustomed to this face!

(Shaheen, *How* 00:37:04 – 00:37:31)

Shaheen condemns the illogic American thought that 'every Muslim is suspected to be a terrorist'. He blames also the Americans in general and film makers in particular for accepting the old wronged heritage of Muslims' stereotypes. The escalation in the misrepresentations of Muslims in the American movies (and in all means of media) has turned to include Arab-Americans who were born and live in America; to set some examples, films such as: *The Sum of All Fears* (2002), *Black Hawk Down* (2002), *24* (2001-2014), *House of Sand and Fog* (2003), *Fahrenheit 9/11* (2004), *Sleeper Cell* (2005-2006), *The Kingdom* (2007), *Traitor* (2008), *Body of Lies* (2008), *Homeland* (2011-2018), *The Dictator* (2012), *American Sniper* (2014), *Tyrant* (2014 – 2016), *Madame Secretary* (2014), *9/11* (2017) and *Chicago Justice* (2017).

In *24*, Arab-Americans appear as terrorists, as the stamp of terrorism became not confined to the Muslims of the Middle East and the Orient, but also to those who live in America. It has appeared after ten weeks of 9/11 attack. The same image of American Muslims of Arab origin has been presented in [political drama television series](#), *Tyrant*.

Identically, the idea of a Muslim-American terrorist is tackled in *Chicago Justice* series (Season 1, Episode 3). A Muslim-American student, 'Danny', is killed brutally by his Muslim friend 'Jafar'. The latter claims that he committed this murder to prevent a terrorist attack planned by his

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friend: "I did something. I'm a good American. I'm a hero. I'm not a criminal".

Additionally, the movie, *Sleeper Cell*, presents a [terrorist sleeper cell](#) that is planning an attack in [Los Angeles](#). The cell is run by a Muslim extremist named [Faris al-Farik](#) who disguises himself as a Jewish person, acted by Oded Fehr (an [Israeli actor](#) in the [United States](#)). The members of the cell come from a variety of racial backgrounds and conflicting personalities. The series also portrays the hypocrisy and dichotomy of the cell members who claim to be Muslims but engage in behavior that is sinful in Islam. Yet they profess a desire to be martyred for Islam ("Sleeper Cell" 1). Thus, the film exhibits contrasting characteristics of its Muslim heroes: they live sinful lives and commits terrorist actions, whereas they ask for martyrdom. This creates a state of discrepancy in the Western audience' minds and overshadows the true essence of Islam and its dictates.

Fahrenheit 9/11 is an American [documentary film](#) directed, written by, and starring filmmaker, director and [political commentator](#), [Michael Moore](#). The film takes a [critical look at the presidency](#) of [George W. Bush](#), 9/11 attacks, the [War on Terrorism](#), and its coverage in the media. Muslims are a target of satire and mockery.

9/11 is a drama film based on the true story and the stage play *Elevator* by Patrick Carson. The events take place during the attacks of 11 September. Five persons were entrapped in an elevator in World Trade Centre at the time of 9/11 attack. They do their best to escape but in vain. The Centre collapses. Undoubtedly, it prompts hatred against Muslims who commit hideous acts against humanity and cause the death of innocent people.

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American Sniper is a [biographical war drama film](#). It is based on the memoir [American Sniper: The Autobiography of the Most Lethal Sniper in U.S. Military History](#) (2012) by [Chris Kyle](#). The film follows the life of Kyle, who became the deadliest [marksman](#) in U.S. military history with 255 kills from four tours in the [Iraq War](#), 160 of which were officially confirmed by the [Department of Defense](#). His first kills are a Muslim woman and a boy who attacked [U.S. Marines](#) with a Russian made [RKG-3 anti-tank grenade](#). Thus, the film shows the Muslim men, women and children as terrorists deserving murder.

The movie, *The Kingdom* is entitled after the name of Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. It is based on the 1996 bombing of the [Khobar Housing Complex](#) and the 2003 bombing of the [Riyadh Compound](#) in Saudi Arabia. In these attacks the Muslim terrorists killed both Americans and Saudis. A team hijacks a car and shoots residents. Another attack by a suicide bomber takes place killing everyone around him in the street. An ambulance full of explosives is detonated, killing many Americans. The American team of investigators is also attacked. Muslim children appear as dangerous terrorists. Seeing all these violent and terrorist actions by the hands of Muslims in an Islamic state like Saudi Arabia, with its sacred position in the Islamic world would normalize the stereotypes of Muslims as terrorists in the American society. Wouldn't this film and the same films (whether American or European) plant hatred between the Orient and the Occident? Malcolm X says:

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The media's the most powerful entity on earth. They have the power to make the innocent guilty and to make the guilty innocent, and that's power, because they control the minds of the masses.

(boerner.net)

Indeed, movies and all means of media may cause hatred, tension, and violence between the Islamic World and the Western one. They may lead to crimes as happened to the French *Charlie Hebdo* magazine or as happened after airing the film *Submission*. It is a 2004 English-language Dutch [short drama film](#) produced, edited and directed by [Theo van Gogh](#), and written by [Ayaan Hirsi Ali](#) in Netherlands. In ten minutes which is the period of the film, Islam is shown as an aggressive violent religion calls for insulting or even killing women especially those who are not submissive to their husbands. The body of the victim woman appears naked with tokens of beating and verses of the Glorious Quran. The film was received with a wave of protest. The result was demonstrations against the director and the writer. Then, the director was killed on 2 November 2004 by a Dutch-Moroccan Muslim with a Dutch passport called [Mohammed Bouyeri](#); his corpse was found with a paper fixed by a dagger in it threatening the writer also and calling for 'Jihad against the kafir' ("Submission" 1). No wonder then that:

Media was *the chief instrument of Islamophobia*, particularly through the frequent linking of "Islam" and "Muslim" with words such as extremism, terrorism and bombing.

(Ward 1)

Noticeably, after this quick overview to the Muslims' stereotypes along the history of Hollywood, the plentiful

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numbers of the American movies demeaning Muslims cast urgent questions: Do Hollywood's misrepresentations of Muslims support implicitly Huntington's 'Clash of Civilizations' motif? Don't Hollywood's representations of the people of America, the West or even of Israel as victims of the Islamic Terrorism increase the tension and the hatred between the East and the West? Or don't they deepen the concept of 'the Other' between them and spread the idea of 'Islamophobia'? Doesn't Hollywood plant a dichotomy between the civilized democratic West and the backward barbaric East, as it depicts both of them? Why does Hollywood focus on some individual incidents in order to depict general stereotypes for all Muslims and to justify a collective judgment against them? Why are Muslims portrayed as aggressive towards non-Muslims by nature, although there are millions of Christians living in peace in the Orient for centuries? Moreover, does Hollywood try to justify the unfair American foreign policy, portraying the offending role of America in the Orient as the role of the 'supporter', the 'protector' and the 'helper' instead of the 'exploiter' and the 'intruder'? Why aren't Muslims portrayed as successful members of the world society such as physicians, scholars, scientists, professors, lawyers, engineers, thinkers, writers...etc.?

The media have run far too many 'experts' and 'commentators' on terrorism, Islam, and the Arabs whose endlessly repetitious and reductive line is so hostile and so misrepresents our history, society and culture that the media itself has become little more than an arm of the war on terrorism in Afghanistan and elsewhere, as now seems to be the case with the projected attack to 'end' Iraq. (Said, "*Thoughts*" 1)

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Finally, Muslims shouldn't be satisfied with the role of the 'victim'. They can take practical steps in order to confront the mutilation trends adopted by Hollywood in particular and Israeli and Western media in general. They can take some internal and external measures and counter-actions. For instance, they may do their best to correct the religious discourse in their societies as an initial step in order to prevent the appearance of extremist groups that misunderstand Islam and mislead the youth. Al-Azhar El Sharief and the Departments of English Language and simultaneous interpretation can take a leading role in showing the true essence of Islam to the world, presenting and translating the related works. International conferences can be held. Some other strategies can be taken as: publishing books and producing documentary films and online websites (e.g. islam-info.net). Means of media, especially the social media, the English-language television stations and newspapers are very important in clarifying the truth and in fighting the misleading and fake pretensions. Al-Azhar Observatory, the religious institutions, the Islamic scholars and thinkers and also all of us as members in an Islamic country should co-operate to enhance the image of Islam and Muslims trying to eliminate 'Islamophobia' worldwide.

Furthermore, the governments of the Islamic world countries can do their best to forbid collective punishment and revenge against Muslims. Means of media also are very important in taking an objective role in this. It is unbelievable to spread 'Islamophobia' and punish millions of Muslims because of some attacks of some extremist persons who misunderstood the core of Islam, the same as it is unfair, for example, to judge all the Christians as terrorists because of the terrorist actions of an extremist group as KKK 'Ku Klux Klan'.

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What matter is that '*not remain silent*'. I think whenever we see anyone being vilifying any races, we have to speak up whether we're image makers or not, we have to take a stand and say this is *morally and ethically* wrong; to dehumanize these people.
(Shaheen, *How* 00:47:58 – 00:48:24)

In conclusion, the plenty of Hollywood's movies misrepresenting Muslims motivated the writing of this research paper. It aimed to throw light briefly on these misrepresentations in some American movies. Its goal also is to show their negative effect on the Western public opinion, foreign policy and the relations between the East and the West. Additionally, it calls for peace and for putting an end to any misleading means of media that cause hatred and prejudice. It also suggested some counter-actions and measures to enhance the Muslims' images and to correct the false ideas about Islam and about them.

The research paper traced these misrepresentations and their escalations along Hollywood's history dividing the periods of their happenings into five categories according to the coexistent political and military events. Some important historical and political milestones are regarded, as Hollywood and politics are inseparable. Samples of Hollywood's movies of each period were inspected briefly, referring to their themes, the Muslims' stereotypes and the escalations in their misrepresentations. The division was as the following:

Firstly, before the creation of Israel: This period was fraught with the inherited stereotypes of Muslims as being a backward race fascinated by the blonde with blue eyes. The Muslim women were also misrepresented as immoral belly

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dancers or as obedient submissive bundles wrapped in black. Images of backwardness, superstitions and villainy were related clearly to Muslims.

The second period was after the creation of Israel. The American support to Israel was tackled in some movies. The issue of the existence of Israel and the American trials of convincing the world with its fake rights in Palestine were the subjects of other films. Muslims/Palestinians became involved in politics as they hinder the stability of Israel. Their images were escalated to portray them as violent and bloody.

The Third period was during and after the 1973-Oil Crisis. The period also witnessed some events that disturbed the Muslim-American relationships such as the Iranian Revolution, the Iranian Hostage Crisis, the end of the Cold War, the Lebanese Civil War and others. The image of a fortune hunter Muslim Sheik, who threatened the American economy, appeared. Islamic radicalism and terrorism were handled with, in a new escalating way. Additionally, the American role as a protector in the Islamic region was shown.

Fourthly, after the First and Second Intifadas in Palestine in the 1980s and the 1990s, the inherited misrepresentations were woven with new ones in an accumulative way. Muslim men, women, and even children were depicted as terrorists, in an escalating rough way. The old inherited degrading images were re-produced. The new ones of terrorism were shown intensely. Hollywood kept the old inherited images reproducing them over and over again in order to be deepened and imprinted in the audience's minds. While it has also created new ones adapting and escalating them according to the political and the military changes.

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The fifth, and the last, period is from the date of the notorious 9/11 attacks till now. All the past stereotypes of Muslims have been ruminated in a racist way. The escalation now includes all Muslims in any country in the world, in addition to Muslim-Americans/Arab-Americans who have been born and lived in America. The word Muslim has been dealt with as equal to the word terrorist. Movies (as well as all means of media) have escalated the Muslims' degrading images extremely. 'Islamophobia' has spread in the world. Consequently, wronged measures against Muslims have been taken. America's foreign policy towards the Islamic world has changed severely causing the death, the injury, and the homelessness of millions of Muslims under the name of 'War on Terrorism' and the collective policy of revenge and punishment.

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The Fire and The Sword. Directed by T. Hayes Hunter, performances by Isabel Rea, and Tom McEvoy. Selig Poly Scope Company, 1914.

The Sheik. Directed by George Melford, written by Edith Maude Hull and Monte M. Katterjohn, performances by Rudolph Valentino, Agnes Ayres and Ruth Miller. Paramount Pictures, 20 Nov. 1921.

The Sheik's Wife. Directed by Henry Roussel, written by Henry Roussel and Franz Toussiant, performances by Emmy Lynn, Marcel Vibert, and Albert Brass. Jupiter Films, 23 April 1922.

Sinbad the Sailor. Directed by Ublwerks, distributed by Celebrity Pictures. The Ublwerks Studio, 30 July 1935.

In The Sultan's Power. Directed by Francis Boggs, performances by Hobart Bosworth, Betty Harte, and Tom Santschi. Selig Poly Scope Company, 17 June 1909.

The White Sheik. Directed by Harley Knoles, written by Violet E. Powell and Mary Murillo, performances by Lillian Hall-Davis, Warwick Ward, and Julie Suedo, distributed by Wardour Films. British International Pictures, 17 Jan. 1928.

Second Period Movies:

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Cast a Giant Shadow. Directed by Melville Shavelson, written by Ted Berkman, edited by Bert Bates, performances by Kirk Douglas, Senta Berger, James Donald, Stathis Giallelis, distributed by United Artists. Batjac Productions and Bryna Productions, 30 Mar. 1966.

Exodus. Directed by Otto Preminger, edited by Louis R. Loeffler, performances by Paul Newman, Eva Marie Saint, Ralph Richardson, distributed by United Artists. Carlyle-Alpina, S.A. Production, 16 Dec. 1960.

The Ten Commandments. Directed by Cecil B. DeMille, edited by Anne Bauchens, performances by Charlton Heston, Yul Brynner, Anne Baxter, narrated by Cecil B. DeMille, distributed by Paramount Pictures. Cecil B. DeMille Production, 8 Nov. 1956.

Third Period Movies:

Black Sunday. Directed by John Frankenheimer, written by Thomas Harris and Ernest Lehman, edited by Tom Rolf, performances by Robert Shaw, Bruce Dern, and Marthe Keller. Paramount Pictures, 1 Apr. 1977.

Chapter Two. Directed by Robert Moore, written by Neil Simon, performances by James Caan, Marsha Mason, and Valerie Harper. Rastar, 14 Dec. 1979.

The Next Man. Directed by Richard C. Sarafian, performances by Sean Connery, Adolfo Celi, Cornelia Sharpe and Charles Cioffi. Allied Artists Pictures Corporation, 10 Nov. 1976.

Prisoner in the Middle. Directed by John O'Connor, written by Buddy Ruskin, performances by David Janssen, Karin Dor, and David Semadar. Puddy Ruskin, 1974.

Rosebud. Directed by Otto Preminger, written by Erik Lee Preminger, performances by Peter O'Toole, Richard Attenborough, and Cliff Gorman. Otto Preminger, 24 Mar. 1975.

Network. Directed by Sidney Lumet, written by Paddy Chayefsky, performances by Faye Dunaway, William Holden, Peter

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[Finch](#), and [Robert Duvall](#), narrated by Lee Richardson. United Artists, 27 Nov.1976.

Operation Thunderbolt. Directed by [Menahem Golan](#), Written by Ken Globus and [Menahem Golan](#), performances by [Klaus Kinski](#), [Yehoram Gaon](#) and [Sybil Danning](#). [Menahem Golan](#), 27 Jan. 1977.

Fourth Period Movies:

Aladdin. Directed by Ron Clements, and John Musker, written by Burny Mattinson, and Roger Allers, performances by Scott Weinger, Robin Williams, and Linda Larkin. Walt Disney Pictures and Walt Disney Feature Animation. 25 Nov. 1992.

Back to the Future. Directed by Robert Zemeckis, written by Robert Zemeckis, and Bob Gale, performances by Michael J. Fox, Christopher Lloyd, Lea Thompson and Crispin Glover. Amblin Entertainment and Universal Pictures, 3 July 1985.

The Bonfire of the Vanities. Directed by Brian De Palma, written by Michael Cristofer, performances by Tom Hanks, Bruce Willis, Melanie Griffith, and Morgan Freeman. Warner Bros, 21 Dec. 1990.

Cannonball Run II. Directed by Hal Needham, written by Harvey Miller, and Hal Needham, performances by Burt Reynolds, Dom DeLuise, Dean Martin, and Sammy Davis. Golden Harvest, 29 June 1984.

Death before Dishonour. Directed by Terry Leonard, written by John Gatliff, performances by Fred Dryer, Brian Keith, Joanna Pacula, and Paul Winfield. New World Pictures, 20 Feb. 1987.

The Delta Force. Directed by Menahem Golan, written by James Bruner, and Menahem Golan, performances by Chuck Norris, Lee Marvin, Martin Balsam, and Joey Bishop. Golan-Globus Productions, 14 Feb. 1986.

Executive Decision. Directed by Stuart Baird, written by Jim Thomas, and John Thomas, performances by Kurt Russell, Halle Berry, John Leguizamo, and Oliver Platt. Silver Pictures, 15 March 1996.

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Father of the Bride II. Directed by Charles Shyer, written by Nancy Meyers, and Charles Shyer, performances by Steve Martin, Diane Keaton, and Eugene Levy. Touchstone Pictures, 8 Dec. 1995.

Gladiator. Directed by Ridley Scott, written by David Franzoni, performances by Russell Crowe, Joaquin Phoenix, and Omid Djalili. Scott Free Productions, 1 May 2000.

Harem. Directed by Arthur Joffe, written by Arthur Joffe, performances by Nastassja Kinski, Ben Kingsley, and Zohra Sehgal. Alain Sarde, 20 Nov. 1985.

Iron Eagle. Directed by Sidney J. Furie, written by Kevin Alyn Elders, performances by Louis Gossett Jr., Jason Gedrick, David Suchet, and Larry B. Scott. TriStar Pictures, 17 Jan. 1986.

The Jewel of the Nile. Directed by Lewis Teague, written by Mark Rosenthal, and Lawrence Konnor, performances by Michael Douglas, Kathleen Turner, Danny DeVito, and Jack Nitzsche. 20th Century Fox, 11 Dec. 1985.

Navy Seals. Directed by Lewis Teague, written by Chuck Pfarrer, and Gary Goldman, performances by Charlie Sheen, Michael Biehn, Joanne Whalley-Kilmer. Orion Pictures, 20 July 1989.

Never Say Never Again. Directed by Irvin Kershner, written by Kevin McClory and Jack Whittingham, performances by Sean Connery, Klaus Maria Brandauer, Max Von Sydow, and Barbara Carrera. Taliafilm and Producers Sales Organization, 7 Oct. 1983.

Protocol. Directed by Herbert Ross, written by Charles Shyer, and Nancy Meyers, performances by Goldie Hawn, Chris Sarandon, and Richard Romanus, distributed by Warner Bros. Anthea Sylbert, 21 Dec. 1984.

Raiders of the Lost Ark. Directed by [Steven Spielberg](#), written by [Lawrence Kasdan](#), performances by Harrison Ford, Karen Allen, and Paul Freeman, distributed by Paramount Pictures. [Lucasfilm](#) Ltd., 12 June 1981.

Rollover. Directed by Alan J. Pakula, written by David Shaber and Howard Kohn, edited by Evan A. Lottman, performances by Jane Fonda, Kris Kristofferson, and Hume Cronyn, distributed by Warner Bros. Orion Pictures, 11 Dec. 1981.

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Rules of Engagement. Directed by William Friedkin, written by James Webb, performances by Tommy Lee Jones, Samuel L. Jackson, Guy Pearce, and Bruce Greenwood. Scott Rudin Productions, 7 April 2000.

Sahara. Directed by Andrew McLaglen, written by James R. Silke, performances by Brooke Shields, Lambert Wilson, and Horst Buchholz. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, Golan-Globus and Cannon, 2 Mar. 1984.

The Siege. Directed by Edward Zwick, written by Lawrence Wright, performances by Denzel Washington, Annette Bening, and Bruce Willis. Twin River Productions, 6 Nov. 1998.

Three Kings. Directed by David O. Russell, written by John Ridley, performances by George Clooney, Mark Wahlberg, and Nora Dunn. Village Roadshow Pictures, 1 Oct. 1999.

True Lies. Directed by James Cameron, written by James Cameron, and Randall Frakes, performances by Arnold Schwarzenegger, Jamie Lee Curtis, and Tom Arnold. Lightstorm Entertainment, 15 July 1994.

Fifth Period Movies:

American Sniper. Directed by Clint Eastwood, written by Jason Hall, performances by Bradley Cooper, and Sienna Miller. Warner Bros Pictures, 11 Nov. 2014.

Chicago Justice. Created by Dick Wolf, performances by Philip Winchester, Jon Seda, and Joelle Carter. Season 1, Episode 3. Wolf Films and Universal Television, 1 Mar. – 14 May 2017.

Fahrenheit 9/11. Directed and written by Michael Moore, performances by Michael Moore, Dog Eat Dog Films and Fellowship Adventure Group, 17 May 2004.

The Kingdom. Directed by Peter Berg, written by Matthew Michael Carnahan, performances by Jamie Foxx, Chris Cooper, and Jennifer Garner. Relativity Media, 11 Oct. 2007.

9/11. Directed by Martin Guigui, performances by Charlie Sheen, Gina Gershon, and Luis Guzman. Sprockefeller Pictures, 8 Sep. 2017.

Sleeper Cell. Created by Ethan Reiff, performances by Michael Ealy, and Oded Fehr. Showtime, 4 Dec. 2005 – 17 Dec. 2006.

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24. Created by Joel Surnow, performance by Kiefer Sutherland. Real Time Productions and 20th Century Fox Television, 6 Nov. 2001-14 July 2014.

Tyrant. Created by Gideon Raff, performances by Adam Rayner, Jennifer Finnigan, and Ashraf Barhom. Teakwood Lane Productions, 24 June 2014- 7 Sep. 2016.