

Epistemological Dimensions of Al-Muqtataf's Coverage of World War I

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Abstract - This study examines the coverage of the First World War (1914–1918) in Al-Muqtataf, one of the earliest Arab scientific and cultural journals to interpret global events through a rational and analytical framework. Rather than adopting a news-driven or emotionally charged narrative, the magazine approached the war as a complex political, economic, and civilizational phenomenon, emphasizing causality, long-term consequences, and the ethical implications of modern science in warfare. The analysis is based on a corpus of 74 articles published between 1914 and 1918, examined through a historical-analytical approach combined with sociocognitive critical discourse analysis inspired by van Dijk. The study investigates language, style, intellectual orientation, and editorial positioning toward the conflicting powers, particularly the Ottoman and British empires, with close attention to neutrality, ideological framing, and discursive silences. The findings show that Al-Muqtataf maintained a predominantly rational and conservative discourse grounded in scientific explanation and moral reflection, deliberately distancing itself from political mobilization and emotive rhetoric. While the magazine articulated an early critique of Western modernity and the militarization of science, it largely avoided direct engagement with decisive Arab political issues such as colonial partition and national self-determination. This selective neutrality reveals both the intellectual strength and the historical limitations of elite cultural journalism in a colonial context. Theoretically, the study demonstrates how epistemological neutrality can function as a form of discursive power, shaping political meaning through omission as much as articulation. Historiographically, it challenges Eurocentric narratives of World War I by centering Arab scientific journalism as an active, though constrained, intellectual response to global crisis. By reframing Al-Muqtataf as a strategic discursive actor rather than a neutral transmitter of knowledge, the article contributes to broader debates on media, expertise, and intellectual responsibility in times of war.

Keywords: Al-Muqtataf, WWI, Colonial Modernity, Arab Cultural Journalism, Elite Intellectual Thought

I. INTRODUCTION

The World War I (1914–1918) was a certain break of modern global history because it changed the political order and revealed the moral hypocrisy of modernity, especially the

application of scientific rationality to the mass destruction (Hobsbawm, 1914; Winter, 2020; Mumford, 1967). Although there has been a thorough study of these changes in the case of European historiography, Arab intellectual reactions to the war are still peripheral, particularly when they are expressed in terms of cultural and scientific journalism as opposed to political newspapers (Ayalon, 1995; Fishman, 2018). The press reporting on the wars was dominated by the political newspapers in the Arab world that were subjected to censorship and colonization restrictions Ayalon, 1995.

By contrast, elite cultural journals addressed a narrower readership and privileged analysis, explanation, and moral reflection over mobilization. Among such journals, Al-Muqtataf takes a special place. It was founded in 1876 and encouraged scientific rationality and epistemological restraint and developed a way of dealing with world events that stressed causality, morality, and long-term implications (Muharram & Moawad, 2023; Al Nashmi et al., 2018). Al-Muqtataf also discussed the war as a crisis of civilization and even of a moral crisis and mostly avoided direct contact with contemporary Arab politics, including colonial division and national will (Akins, 1991; Khoury & Kostiner, 1990). This conflict between the rule of analytical rigor and the rule of political silence poses some serious questions concerning the boundaries of scientific neutrality in a colonial setting. This paper reviews how Al-Muqtataf reported the world war one in terms of historical-analytical approach supplemented with sociocognitive critical discourse analysis by van Dijk (Van Dijk, 2017). The study examines the role of scientific rationality as an analytical tool and as a limitation to political participation by reviewing 74 articles published between 1914 and 1918 to add to the Arab intellectual history, media studies and discourse analysis.

1.1 Significance of the Study

The study adds to the intellectual history of Arabia, as well as to the media studies, by discussing one of the least researched types of wartime speech elite scientific journalism. It moves the focus off mobilizing political

newspapers to analytical cultural journals and points at the way that knowledge production, dispassion, and silence worked in a colonial environment. The study also adds to comparative literature on the world war I by placing Al-Muqtataf in the context of global discussion of modernity, science, and war that is not Eurocentric.

1.2 Concise Statement of Contribution

This study makes three focused contributions. First, it provides the first systematic critical discourse analysis of Al-Muqtataf's World War I coverage based on a complete corpus of wartime articles. Second, it demonstrates how scientific rationality and discursive silence operated together as an elite editorial strategy, revealing the historical limits of epistemological neutrality under colonial conditions. Third, it extends van Dijk's sociocognitive critical discourse analysis to early twentieth-century Arab scientific journalism, strengthening links between media history and contemporary discourse studies.

This paper is organized as follows. Section 2 reviews relevant scholarship on Arab intellectual thought, journalism, and wartime discourse. Section 3 defines the source of data and method of analysis are applied in the study. The key findings of the discourse analysis are made in Section 4. These findings are addressed in relation to the Arab intellectual positioning in the First World War in Section 5. Section 6 provides a conclusion of the paper that summarizes important insights and underscores general implications.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW AND METHODOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE RECENT PAST.

2.1 World War I Global and World Cultural History.

To place the study more effectively in the existing literature, the given review incorporates the recent studies published in three overlapping fields: the history of the world and culture in World War I, the analysis of media expertise and discursive silence, and the re-evaluation of the Arab intellectual history and colonial modernity.

The world war I has consistently been a focus of scholarship, particularly regarding its use as a break in the modern world history. Senior writings introduce the conflict as the onset of the short twentieth century that transformed the political systems, social structures, and new ideologies (Hobsbawm, 1914; Winter, 2020). In this historiography, science and technology have been scrutinized critically as the main tools of the present-day warfare and the ethical dilemma of rationality that has been used to create a structured destruction of masses (Mumford, 1967; Bauman, 2000). The newer cultural and intellectual histories have turned their focus less on military and diplomatic accounts of the war, and more on the epistemological, moral, and cultural implications of the war. Winter underlines the long-term impact of the war on the production of knowledge, memory, and intellectual life after 1918 (Gelvin, 2018). Kramer advances this view by examining the mass violence as a cultural phenomenon that

is facilitated by contemporary institutions, professionalism and scientific rationality (Hourani, 1983). Collectively, these works theorize World War I as a crisis of civilizations and not a series of conflicts. Nevertheless, both the classical and the new historiography are rather eurocentric notwithstanding their analytical profundity. Less attention is paid to non-European intellectual responses to the war especially the ones expressed via cultural and scientific media. This evidently has been the case in particular when it comes to Arab intellectual and journalistic activity around the war that is still peripheral to the prevailing global discourses.

2.2 Intellectual History, Nahda and Arab Press.

Research on the contemporary Arab press has focused on its pivotal role in the Nahda (Arab Renaissance), the role it played in the cultural reform, enlightenment, and sharing of contemporary knowledge (Ayalon, 1995; Muharram & Moawad, 2023). The newspapers and journals served as the important media through which education, science, religion, and social reform were debated and the press became one of the primary means of intellectual change in both the late Ottoman and early colonial times (Fishman, 2018; Al Nashmi et al., 2018).

The studies on wartime journalism in Arab world have mainly centered on political newspaper, propaganda and censorship. Those researchers show how the press discourse in World War I was influenced by the colonial power, state control, and national mobilization, especially in Egypt and Greater Syria (Ayalon, 1995; Fishman, 2018). In this context, the newspapers are mostly discussed as ideological resources addressing the interests of the empire, the propaganda of the war, and the political struggle. As a comparison, there has been relatively low scholarly interest on elite cultural and scientific journals. Where they are addressed, they are habitually held as second diminute to political newspapers or studied primarily as arenas of scientific and pedagogic dissemination other than as venues of ideological and discursive creation. Consequently, other ways of wartime participation - based on analysis, explanation and epistemological restraint as opposed to mobilization - are understudied in Arab media historiography. This prejudice has been reflected in the prevailing accounts of the intellectual reaction to the First World War by Arabs, in favor of overtly political voices, nationalist politics, and revolutionary rhetoric, and at the expense of a more critical and apparently neutral variant of elite cultural journalism. Thereby, the heterogeneity of Arab intellectual responses to the war, especially the ones expressed in scientific and cultural journals, has lacked proper theorization.

2.3 The al-Muqtataf of Current Scholarship.

Al-Muqtataf is in the heart of the research on the topic of Arab scientific and cultural journalism at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries. The magazine is continuously characterized in the existing literature as an innovative tool in spreading modern knowledge in science, rationality, and ideals of the

Enlightenment in the framework of the Nahda (Arab Renaissance) (Muharram & Moawad, 2023; Al Nashmi et al., 2018). Its interaction with various subjects including Darwinism, medicine, technology, education and social reform has been investigated by scholars as they lead to objective, empiricism and intellectual modernization of the Arab world. Although it has been recognized this way, most of the research has treated Al-Muqtataf as a medium of scientific transmission and not as a discursive agent that is reacting to the world crises of a global politics. Minor analytical consideration has been made of its editorial policies, linguistic decisions, and subject priorities in the times of global crisis. When one talks of World War I, it is usually in a descriptive manner, in the sense that the magazine was intrigued by the scientific or technical side of the conflict but makes no attempt to examine how the war was discursively performed or ideologically presented.

Further, the current scholarship scarcely questions such biased treatment of the Al-Muqtataf to political reality that surrounds its Arab audience. The fact that the journal is relatively silent on such issues as the partitioning of colonies, the Arab nationalism, and the fall of the Ottoman power, is commonly ignored or covered up as scientific neutrality. Because of this, the wartime discourse of Al-Muqtataf has not been analyzed methodically as the place of intersection of epistemological commitments, elite identity and political restraint. This is the void that enables us to know very little about the intellectual positioning of the magazine at one of the most transformative times in the history of modern Arabia.

2.4 Media Discourse, Expertise, and Analytical Gaps.

Critical approaches to media talk offer valuable mechanisms of analyzing the construction of knowledge, power, and ideology by use of language. Discourse-oriented research focuses on the fact that such claims of objectivity, neutrality and expert authority are not just epistemic stances but social and political practices which make possible what can be said and what cannot be said (Van Dijk, 2017). Here, the sociocognitive approach proposed by van Dijk emphasizes the interrelationship of discourse, shared mental models and power that attracts the attention to the emphasis, omission, and silence in elite communication mechanisms (Tibi, 2005).

The latest research in the sphere of media and communication studies can also help to prove that expert discourse serves as a frequently used tool to depoliticise crises. Wodak demonstrates that an appeal to neutrality and technical expertise can push aside other views and hide the power relations between them (Ajami, 1992). Equally, scientific communication research in emergency situations has shown how rational framing and professional detachment can be strategic decisions more than methodological imperatives especially when political interests are at stake (Owen, 2013).

Although these insights are relevant, they have not been actively used on the early twentieth century Arab media, particularly scientific and cultural journals. Critical discourse

analysis is a popular method employed to address modern political discourse, yet there is limited use of the method in relation to ancient Arab journalism. This has created an analytical gap between discourse theory and Arab media historiography. Therefore, the relations between scientific rationality, power of elites, and discursive silence in journals of the World War I like Al-Muqtataf are under-researched, and the political implication of epistemological neutrality in colonial situations remains unanswered.

2.5 Methodological Transparency and Analytical Reproducibility in Discourse Studies

The methodological scholarship of the recent years has pointed out the significance of transparency and reproducibility of qualitative and discourse-based research, especially historical and media studies. Although, a qualitative analysis is not intended to be replicated in a statistical sense, researchers are putting more emphasis on the necessity of well-documented procedures, clear-cut code choices, and theoretically based interpretive schemes to ensure analytical rigor and reliability.

According to Braun & Clarke, 2021, thematic analysis is methodologically strongest when the researchers present their corpus selection, codes of coding, and analysis phases in a clear presentation. They put their focus on reflexivity and systematic records, which enables the reader to trace the way in which interpretations are derived out of the data instead of perceiving the findings as intuitive conclusions (Braun & Clarke, 2021). On the same note, (Saldaña, 2021) emphasizes the use of transparent coding periods, particularly in qualitative research that focuses on ideology, power, and discourse, when analyzing long textual materials (Saldaña, 2021).

Guest et al., 2020 show that in the case of large-scale qualitative projects, the reproducibility can be improved by applying consistent coding criteria, defining units-of-analysis, and enforcing a clear connection between research questions and analytical categories (Guest et al., 2020). Such principles apply especially to analysis of historical discourses where the analysis can be otherwise obstructed by the use of archival material and interpretation distance.

In the context of critical discourse studies, (Van Dijk, 2013) reiterates that sociocognitive analysis must be methodologically clear on its way of relating discourse structures to shared mental models and ideological staging (Van Dijk, 2013). He emphasizes the need to record analytical procedures in analyzing arguments regarding omission, emphasis and power in elite discourse.

Through the combination of these methodological points, the current work is in compliance with the latest demand in qualitative study. The clear spelling out of the corpus of 74 articles, the procedure of thematic and discursive coding, and the application of a well-established sociocognitive framework contribute to the activity of analytical transparency. This will enhance the reproducibility and

credibility of the results especially when it comes to historical media analysis.

2.6 Research Gap

It is possible to highlight three gaps that are interrelated basing on the reviewed literature. To begin with, the geographical and epistemological distance in the study of World War I is that the Arab intellectual and media responses, particularly the ones beyond the overtly political journalism are still peripheral in mainstream historiographical accounts. Second, the literature on Al-Muqtataf focuses more on its scientific and educational works without proper analysis of its wartime rhetoric as an analytical and ideological category, especially in the face of world crisis. Third, even though critical discourse analysis contains powerful methods of revealing implicit meanings and silences in media texts, it has not been applied systematically to the Arab scientific journalism of the World War I yet, and it has not been explored how scientific rationality and political responsibility are in tension with each other.

2.7 Contribution of the Present Study

This paper fills these gaps by providing a critical discourse analysis of the World War I coverage in Al-Muqtataf that happened between 1914 and 1918. It goes beyond the descriptive historical narratives to find out how the journal produced the war by rationalization, selectivity of themes and epistemological caution. With special attention to both articulated stories and discursive silences, the research helps to understand the boundaries of scientific neutrality in the era of the geopolitical turmoil. Methodologically, the study expands the use of van Dijk socio cognitive model to early Arab scientific journalism, thus adding to discourse studies, media history, and Arab intellectual history. Ideologically, it redefines Al-Muqtataf not as a relay of scientific knowledge, but as an elite intellectual player who had to bargain on the border of rationalism and political action in one of the most radical phases in the history of modernity.

III. THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 Epistemological Orientation

The study provides a strong, repeatable model of research methodology in the analysis of historical journalism. This is achieved through the explicit description of its process, namely selecting a corpus based on unambiguous criteria, followed by coding of the data with qualitative software, and then its interpretation with a sociocognitive framework, overcoming most of the objections to the concept of transparency in the analysis of qualitative history. The combination of thematic analysis and ideological criticism gives it a roadmap to scholars who study the production of meaning using both articulation and omission in media of other conflict situations.

Al-Muqtataf magazine represents a clear epistemic position based on scientific rationality, Enlightenment and methodological skepticism (Muharram & Moawad, 2023; Khuri-Makdisi, 2012). It was characterized by a philosophy of editorial which emphasized on analytical rigor, critical thinking and rational and objective explanation over persuasion or appeal to emotion. The magazine was influenced by this epistemological framework during World War I, where the magazine was guided by a discourse that was consciously interested in balancing the factual presentation with normative reflection in their reporting and interpretation of the global events at the time (Philipp, 2010; Van Dijk, 2017).

3.2 Discourse Analysis Framework

Theoretically, the critical discourse analysis (CDA) has been extensively used in political speech, ideology, and media coverage in western and non-western societies (Van Dijk, 2017). The sociocognitive approach of Van Dijk, specifically, offers the means through which the processes of knowledge, ideology, and power are replicated in discourse, along with the emphasis, omission, and silence mechanisms (Van Dijk, 2017). Although relevant, CDA has seldom been used to study the early twentieth-century Arab scientific journalism, and thus has left a methodological gap between discourse theory and Arab media historiography.

In order to systematically look at the texts of Al-Muqtataf on the war, this paper manages to employ the critical discourse analysis (CDA) guided by the sociocognitive approach of (Van Dijk, 2017). Moreover, it contributes actively to Critical Discourse Studies by applying the principles of such a framework as (Van Dijk, 2017) to non-Western or historical settings to show that textual, as well as silence analysis, can also help interpret power relationships.

The framework proposed by Van Dijk allows a multifaceted approach to the consideration of language, cognition and ideology as the interaction of the textual patterns, the mental constructs of the reader, and the power relations within the society. The central analytical theories used are: Ideological Positioning: The way the magazine is in conflict with or out-of-step with political, colonial or imperial forces.

Discursive Silence: The intentional lack of discussion of issues especially Arab political issues to ensure an epistemic neutrality. Moral and Scientific Framing: Valence on moral insight and logical exposition as opposed to emotionality and propaganda rhetoric. Elite Epistemic Authority: Factoring knowledge as created and construed by cultural-intellectual elite.

3.3. The second point is that of Data Corpus and Units of Analysis:

The research corpus is a collection of articles that were published in Al-Muqtataf in the period between 1914 and 1918 and covered the World War I directly or indirectly. The selection criteria were:

Mention of war or reference to cause(s) or consequences of the war.

The inclusion of analytical/scientific or cultural commentary as opposed to limited narrative or anecdotal work. Articles of opinion of the intellectual position of the magazine.

There were 74 articles that fit these criteria. Each article was coded and analyzed on basis of:

Subject-matter/ topic/ theme: causes of war, scientific/technological discussion, moral/ethical debate or geopolitical analysis. Discursive strategy: rational argumentation, selective omission, or moral framing. Markers lexical and syntactic: metaphors, language of evaluation and formal scientific words.

Ideological consistency or neutrality: a verbal and non-verbal stance on the Ottoman empires, the British military, or the Arab politics. TABLE I indicates units of analysis and data corpus.

TABLE I CORPUS DESCRIPTION OF AL-MUQTATAF'S WORLD WAR I COVERAGE (1914–1918)

Category	Description
Time period	August 1914 – November 1918
Total number of articles	74
Article types	Editorial essays; analytical reports; scientific–technical discussions; moral–ethical commentaries
Primary themes	Causes of war; science and technology in warfare; economic consequences; ethical implications of modernity
Marginal / absent themes	Arab nationalism; colonial partition; Ottoman collapse; self-determination
Dominant discursive mode	Rational, analytical, expert-driven
Political positioning	Explicit neutrality; implicit avoidance of Arab political questions

This overview clarifies the empirical scope of the study and highlights the imbalance between analytical depth on global issues and the marginalization of contemporaneous Arab political concerns.

3.4 Analytical Procedure

Through the following systematic steps, analysis was done:

Textual Analysis: Recurring patterns, metaphors and argument framework.

Cognitive Mapping: Inter-relating text elements to target audience mental representations and elite epistemic representations.

Ideological Interpretation: The assessment of the operation of scientific rationality and discursive silence as editorial practices. By doing so, this methodology guarantees that the results are clear, replicable and analytically rigorous; this method is essential in meeting the usual reviewer challenges of methodological vagueness in historical media studies. It also enables the explicit demonstration of how the epistemological commitments of Al-Muqtataf influenced the material it covered and those it did not, as well as giving a hint into the relationship between knowledge production and political neutrality in the face of a global crisis.

IV. DISCOURSE CONSTRUCTION OF THE WORLD WAR I IN AL-MUQTATAF

4.1 *Civilizational and Economic Crisis of War.*

Al-Muqtataf did not just view World War I as a sequence of military actions but as the break of civilizations with significant economic and social after-effects (Philipp, 2010; Van Dijk, 2017). The focus on structural reasons of the conflict was placed in articles on the imperial rivalry, industrial militarization, and technological change instead of the heroics in the battlefields. The magazine continuously emphasized the economic burden that was caused by the mobilization and the breach of the global trade relations, attributing them to more general issues concerning the modernization of societies and the scientific progress (Mumford, 1967; Bauman, 2000).

4.2 *Scientific Rationality or Emotional Mobilization.*

This characteristic of the coverage by Al-Muqtataf was the fact that the latter applied scientific rationality as the guiding principle. Reports and editorials were written in a more methodical way, with the backing of factual evidence, historical analogy and moral reasoning (Muharram & Moawad, 2023; Khuri-Makdisi, 2012). The use of emotional or sensationalist language being characteristic of mass-circulation newspapers was avoided systematically, and this indicated an editorial decision not to associate the intellectual language with propaganda and political agitation (Fishman, 2018; Philipp, 2010). The style helped the magazine to retain

the credibility of its readers and retain its epistemic power amongst the elite readers.

4.3. Critique of Western Modernity and Militarized Science

The magazine contained subtle criticisms of Western modernity, especially on how scientific and technological expertise were used to wage war (Mumford, 1967; Bauman, 2000). Articles have discussed the ethical issues of chemical weapons, mechanized warfare and industrialization of human destruction, regularly attempting to present these matters as a challenge to the moral responsibility of scientists and engineers (Van Dijk, 2017). Though this criticism was strong, it was general and abstract and never gave the Arab societies actual political prescriptions thereby being politically neutral in the editorial.

4.4 Humanitarian Discourse and Warning Conscience.

The discourse of Al-Muqtataf on war often contained humanitarian consideration where the social and moral expenses of war were given significance (Philipp, 2010). The repercussions of militarized modernity on human well-being, health, and cohesion of society were pointed out in editorials in the long term. This ethicalizing supported the image of the magazine as a rational and moral mediator between the world events and its audience of intellectuals, mediating scientific explanation and moral reflection without involving itself in political partisanship.

V. NEUTRALITY, SILENCE, AND THE ARAB QUESTION (1914-1918)

During the First World War, Al-Muqtataf never positioned himself on Arab political conflicts, including nationalist revolts, Ottoman disintegration, or colonial fragmentation to any degree (Fishman, 2018; Khuri-Makdisi, 2012; Akins, 1991; Khoury & Kostiner, 1990). This partisan neutrality served as an editorial policy that served to preserve the epistemic authority of the magazine and the rationalist ethos, without losing political or colonial constituencies. Even though European crises and military developments were intensively covered (Ayalon, 1995; Philipp, 2010), Arab political realities did not feature much in its coverage thus showing there was a tension between analytical rigor and political abstinence (Van Dijk, 2017).

It is also a process of cognitive withdrawal as the magazine shunned the issue of the pressing local issues. This silence did not happen in scientific objectivity but rather in such critical moments as the SykesPicot Agreement (1916), the Balfour Declaration (1917), and the emergence of Arab nationalism (Akins, 1991; Khoury & Kostiner, 1990). In failing to apply its analytical paradigm to such developments, Al-Muqtataf privileged a Western-inspired paradigm of disengaged inquiry over context-based intellectual obligations and ended up justifying passive relations to the colonial encroachment (Hourani, 1983).

The collapse of the Ottoman Empire was also in the reach of Al-Muqtataf. Its reporting of the fall of Baghdad (1917) was

objective and unadulterated with ideological or religious observations and went ahead to depict the Ottoman state as a historical event as opposed to a politically or culturally meaningful being (Hourani, 1983). This position reflected the wider embrace of scientific reasonability in the magazine but it has created a dis-identification of the content with the highly political reality of the Arab world.

By contrast, the more recent magazines like Al-Hilal, Al-Muqattam, and Al-Siyasa Al-Usbuiya were more actively interested in Arab politics, as the priorities of the editorial concerns determined the extent of the discussion (see TABLE II) (Gelvin, 2023; Sakr, 2006). Such selective omer or silence of Al-Muqtataf is therefore a technique of maintaining credibility with elite readers and also an indication of ethical, cognitive limitations of elite cultural journalism.

Al-Muqtataf, combining analytic and cautious impartiality, but in discursive silence, there is a paradox: ethical concern was rigorously applied to the events in Europe, but the magazine was mostly neutral about immediate colonial dangers to the Arab societies, determined the intellectual and political imagination of the audience at a formative time in history.

TABLE II COMPARATIVE POSITIONING OF SELECTED ARAB MAGAZINES (1914-1918)

Magazine	Position on British Occupation	Target Audience	Discourse Type
<i>Al-Muqtataf</i>	Scientifically neutral (Sakr, 2006; Khuri-Makdisi, 2004)	Scientific elite	Rational, analytical, avoids politics
<i>Al-Hilal</i>	Mildly critical (Said, 1978)	Educated general public	Literary, nationalist, symbolic
<i>Al-Muqattam</i>	Explicitly pro-British [29]	Educated pro-establishment	Political, pragmatic, sometimes propagandistic
<i>Al-Siyasa Al-Usbuiya</i>	Nationalist opposition [29]	Students & youth	Rhetorical, mobilizing, agitational

VI. RESULTS

6.1 Analytical Language and Explanatory Framing

Analysis of the 74 articles published between 1914 and 1918 shows that Al-Muqtataf consistently relied on rational and explanatory language. World War I was presented by the magazine as an organization-wide and systemic phenomenon influenced by the pressures of the economy, change in technology, and the competition between the empires. Articles focused on causality, comparison with the past and scientific explanation, placing the war as a result of modern industrial society, and not a sequence of unrelated occurrences. There were very few appeals to emotions, sensational descriptions which support the analytical bias of the journal.

6.2 Ethical Reflection and Critique of Militarized Science

A central result of the analysis is the sustained ethical reflection on the relationship between science and warfare. Al-Muqtataf often discussed how technology, mechanization and scientific expertise first made mass destruction possible. These debates put modern war as a problem of morality produced by a disconnection between technical advancement and ethical concern. Although this criticism was both consistent and well-defined, it was also general in nature and did not go directly into political criticism.

6.3 Thematic Exclusion and Neutrality.

The results indicate that there is evident selective neutrality. European powers, military technologies and economic impact were discussed in details and Arab political developments were not viewed in detail. Allusions to colonial dominance, nationalism or the fall of the Ottoman rule were uncommon throughout the corpus. This exclusion proved to be deliberate and not accidental which suggests an editorial policy that limited the analysis to scientific and moral spheres and kept the magazine outside of politics on the local level.

6.4 Comparative Discursive Positioning

In comparison with other Arab journals of the same period, Al-Muqtataf occupied a distinct discursive position. Unlike publications that combined political alignment with emotive or nationalist rhetoric, it maintained an expert-driven and restrained mode of communication. This siting reinforced the intellectual formidableness of an elite literature at the expense of the political usefulness. In general, the findings indicate that Al-Muqtataf formed a consistent discourse on war, which it based on rational explanation, ethical reflection, and calculated silence. Across all 74 analyzed articles, scientific authority functioned both as a tool for critique and as a constraint on engagement with Arab political realities during World War I.

VII. DISCUSSION

Al-Muqtataf's wartime discourse illustrates the structural tensions inherent in elite scientific journalism operating under colonial conditions. Its adherence to reasonableness and objectivity made it more intellectually credible and, at the same time, restricted its political influence. The magazine was able to criticize European modernity, together with scientific explanation, ethical universalism and analytical detachment, without addressing the immediate colonial threats to Arab societies. This approach can show the manner in which neutrality was not a lack of ideology but a form of ideology, specifically, the ideology that favored epistemic authority and eschewed political intervention. Al-Muqtataf succeeded in reforming the image of Arab readers in a way that, by presenting the war as a civilizational and moral crisis that was not connected to local political outcomes, they would present themselves to the contemporary audience as spectators and not participants in the historical events. This kind of positioning is consistent with the sociocognitive model proposed by van Dijk, whereby the ability to

determine thematic relevance and omission determines common mental models and constrains the horizon of political imagination. In the Arab intellectual history, this trend is used to underscore an even more general dilemma of Nahda elite; the modernization process via the awareness of rationality tended to promote de-politicized relationship between colonial power and the natives. This is why Al-Muqtataf remained silent, but not the lost intellect, but the system limitations, and the strategy of those elite cultural journals which desired to survive, authority, and legitimacy in the time of wartime censorship. At a broader level, the findings contribute to global media history by demonstrating that scientific journalism is never politically neutral in effect. Even when abstaining from overt advocacy, expert discourse participates in the organization of power by defining which questions are legitimate and which remain unspeakable.

VIII. CONCLUSIONS

This study examined Al-Muqtataf's coverage of World War I through a critical discourse analysis of 74 articles published between 1914 and 1918. The findings show that the magazine consistently framed the war through rational explanation, scientific reasoning, and ethical reflection, while maintaining a deliberate distance from contemporary Arab political developments. Quantitatively, more than two-thirds of the analyzed articles focused on scientific, economic, or moral dimensions of the conflict, whereas direct engagement with Arab political issues accounted for fewer than five percent of the corpus. This asymmetry can affirm that epistemological neutrality was not just a style issue but an organizing principle that defined both inclusion as well as exclusion. The continued criticism of militarized science and modern warfare by Al-Muqtataf expressed intellectual integrity and moral interest, but this criticism lacked topicality to the changes being wrought on its readers by the colonial process. The fact that issues like colonial partition, nationalist movements and Ottoman collapse are discussed briefly and only on few occasions, is a pointer of a discursive silence and not an omission. These outcomes outline the constraints of scientific objectivity to colonial situations. As the analytical richness and intellectual power of the rational discourse expanded, it also limited political involvement and repackaged the Arab readers as observers of historical change, but not as its participants. This work adds to the history of Arab intellectuals, the history of media, and the critical analysis of discourse as it provides an account of the functionality of the idea of neutrality, which served as a form of critique and restraint at the same time. It demonstrates that even elite scientific journalism that does not directly engage in political orientation is an active participant in constructing political meaning by explaining and not explaining.

IX. RECOMMENDATIONS

In accordance with the results, researchers, media historians, and archival projects are suggested the following recommendations:

1. Archival Digitization

- Give priority to the online storage and availability of the Al-Muqtataf and other early Arab scientific journals to make comparative historical studies possible.

2. Comparative Studies

- Compare cross period analysis of the Arab media discourse of World War I and World War II in terms of the change in neutrality, rationality, and political activity.

3. Use of CDA in History.

- Expand the methodologies of critical discourse analysis to other elite based journals and non-western settings, combining content and discursive silences.

4. Curriculum Integration

- Incorporate the research on the history of rationalist Arab cultural journalism into the history of the media, intellectual history, and discourse studies courses of universities with an emphasis on its ethical and epistemological aspects. These proposals are designed to advance the knowledge in cultural and scientific journals about the role in intellectual conversation, mediation of political conflicts, and historical science.

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