

Salomi Boukala. “European identity and the representation of Islam in the mainstream press: Argumentation and media discourse”. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019, pp. 347. ISBN 978-3-319-93313-9

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In her book *European identity and the representation of Islam in the mainstream press: Argumentation and media discourse*, Salomi Boukala offers us a thoroughly interdisciplinary and extremely timely scrutiny of print media communication in times of profound crises in Europe. Boukala interweaves Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Argumentation theory, employing also notions and principles coming from the fields of Political Sciences, Anthropology, (Cultural) Political Economy. In particular, the author examines how “specific [European] newspapers with opposite ideological background [...] construct the European supranational identity via references to the EU and the representation of Islam as a common, European ‘Other’” (p. 7).

After an introductory chapter, where the author presents the main aims and the research questions of her study, nine chapters elaborate on the theoretical concepts (chapters 2–3), the methodological considerations (chapter 4) and the extensive and rigorous data analysis (chapters 5–9), paving the way to a fruitful discussion of the main findings (chapter 10).

In chapter 2, Boukala firstly discusses the notions of *nation* and *national identity*. The author views the nation (and the nation state within this) in a broad sense as an “imagined community” (Anderson, 2006) which secures the cultural background of its members and embraces social, cultural etc. cohesion through its political institutions excluding the perceived ‘Others’ (non-members). Nation-states do so, based on a discursively constructed national identity, which cultivates ‘us’ and ‘them’ dichotomies regarding the posi-

tively represented members of the nation state vis-à-vis the negatively portrayed ‘Others’ (see Wodak et al., 2009). Based on these premises, the author moves towards a discussion related to the transformation of the nation state into the EU employing selectively notions coming from a (cultural) political economy perspective (Jessop, 2002). This methodological loan enables Boukala to conceive and discuss the development of national and European identity/ies in constant interrelation to the fundamental (political, economic etc.) transformations of national and supranational formations in Europe since the 1970s. In the last section of this chapter, the author introduces a classification of different approaches that focus on the examination of the European identity (as national, transnational, post-national, and supranational identity), before underlying her main research focus: how national media, as dominant, ideological (and political) apparatuses, based in contemporary nation states, construe European identity in their discourses.

In chapter 3, Boukala proceeds to an in-depth discussion of the general concepts and principles of Gramsci’s (1971) thought employed in this study such as, for instance, the notions of *hegemony* and *intellectuals*. In this sense, the author is strengthening a theoretical perspective that bridges CDA perspectives with the Gramscian tradition (see also Fairclough, 1992). She comprehends the mass media’s role in contemporary, European social formations as *traditional intellectuals*, i. e. as well-established institutions, highly connected to the dominant social classes, which exercise *hegemony* upon EU supra-



national project. Accordingly, following Gramsci, hegemony is viewed here as the achievement of *consent* in civil societies through the production of widely accepted/naturalized (and thus hegemonic) *knowledge*. More specifically, highlighting the discursive construction and dissemination of stereotypes related to the demonized ‘Other’, the author seeks to find whether media institutions as powerful (traditional) intellectuals attempt to establish hegemonic (stereotypical) knowledge about the excluded ‘Islam-Other’ in the EU context.

Chapter 4 includes the methodological orientations that determine this study. Firstly, Boukala provides an overview of her methodological framework, namely the CDA and especially the Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA) to CDA. Within this (DHA / CDA) framework, she examines the discursive strategies that permeate the selected corpus of European newspapers, underpinning the discursive construction of juxtapositions between the ‘Us the Europeans’ vs. the ‘Islam-Other’. She pays special attention to the *argumentation strategies* and therefore she moves towards a presentation of tools and concepts she mainly exploits from Argumentation theory. She discusses comparatively the key-notion of *topos* in DHA / CDA, in Aristotle’s work, and in pioneer approaches belonging to argumentation studies, namely the New Rhetoric (see Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1969 [1958]) and the Pragma-Dialectics (see van Eemeren and Grootendorst, 2004). Moreover, she underlines, in a remarkably innovative manner, the interconnection of the Aristotelian *endoxon*, i.e. the shared (hegemonic) knowledge and *topos*, and she proposes that hegemonic knowledge (i.e. endoxical knowledge) has to be challenged by *topos / topoi* during the development of the *dialectic syllogism*. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the concept of *fallacy/ies* and the function of fallacious argumentation.

Chapters 5 to 7 concern with the first part of the empirical analysis. In these chapters, the author scrutinizes the (negative) conceptualization of the ‘Islam-Other’

in Greek (*I Kathimerini* and *Ta Nea*), British (*The Times* and *The Guardian*) and French (*Le Monde* and *Liberation*) broadsheet newspapers. She places her examination within the following contexts: (a) the 9/11 case in the US, (b) the attacks in Madrid on March 11, 2004 and London on July 7, 2005, and (c) the recent Paris and Brussels attacks on November 13, 2015 and March 22, 2016, respectively. Among the major findings of this part is that the “Us vs. Other” juxtaposition is primarily based on a constructed (metaphoric) scenario of *horror*, which favors the supranational cohesion of ‘Us-Europeans (or Westerns)’ against the ‘Other-Muslims’. This scenario shapes a European identity according to which Europeans-victims of Islamist / jihadist terrorism should be unified against the perceived ‘(Islamist / Jihadist) threat’ (chapter 5). This conceptualization is further strengthened in chapter 6, where ‘Islamist / Jihadist terrorism’ is negatively construed in editorials of the British newspapers mostly on the basis of the (DHA / CDA) ‘*topos of threat*’. However, this argumentative strategy portray EU as an institution restricted to deal only with defense and security issues, and thus as risking to tear apart an inclusive European identity. Finally, in chapter 7, editorials of the aforementioned French newspapers are examined. The analysis shows that the image of the EU as a merely ‘counter-terrorism’ institution is significantly reformulated via the (DHA / CDA) ‘*topos of European integration*’, echoing European values such as ‘democracy, freedom and solidarity’. This chapter includes also a discussion section where the main findings regarding the examined European press are synthesized.

Chapters 8 and 9 include the second, shorter part of the data analysis. The analysis in these chapters deals with media representations of an Islamic country such as Turkey, referred in editorials of mainstream European (Greek, British and French) press, and regarding the issue of Turkey’s accession to the EU as case study. In chapter 8, the author shows that Turkey is negatively portrayed as not sharing common European values in an exclu-

sionary rhetoric according to which the country (Turkey) embodies Europe's 'Other' through a repetitive metaphorical scenario of horror of the 'Muslim-Other' (see also chapter 5). Then, in chapter 9, British and French mainstream media discourses on Turkey are examined. According to the analysis, Europe appears to be extremely divided on Turkey's entrance to the EU, in both French and British press. Reporting highly polarized political debates between leading figures of the European leadership the respective newspapers reproduce EU's internal dichotomies and national antagonisms, thus failing to construct a dense European 'Us'.

Summing up, the major strength of this book is adumbrated in the following lines. On the one hand, it synthesizes various theoretical and methodological traditions under the scholarly agenda of CDA, and especially the DHA to CDA, sketching a totally original and interdisciplinary approach to media communication in times of crises in Europe. Boukala's writing style is precise, facilitating the development of her theoretical and methodological apparatus. On the other hand, it presents an extensive and rigorous data analysis. Data are coming from mainstream media institutions (newspapers) of different backgrounds in different European societies. Thus, the author establishes adequately her research hypothesis and her claims on an extremely rich corpus.

It is worth mentioning that Boukala responds to criticisms addressed against DHA/CDA by scholars belonging mainly to argumentation theory. The challenge of *endoxon* (the *hegemonic knowledge*, as Boukala perceives it) by *topos/topoi* in a dialectical syllogism brings to the fore the inseparability and the interplay of the two components (endoxical/topical) in the defense of a standpoint. However, what this book seems to lack is a clear-cut description of how the intersection of the above-mentioned components of a dialectical syllogism (endoxon and topos/topoi)

lead to the final standpoint/claim that lies in media discursive representations. In other words, a more detailed analysis would better unveil the main claims that mainstream media support through the provided discursive constructions. This effort, although would require a more systematic endorsement of argumentation analysis, could create new interdisciplinary integrations while sketching research avenues in the broader field of media communication.

Overall, the book at hand offers us a very clear and critical view on an open debate in the EU while concurrently permitting scholars to follow such a demanding topic as the construction of the European identity. It is unreservedly recommended to all scholars with research interests related to politics of identity, (critical) discourse analysis and argumentation studies, with a particular focus on (media) communication in periods of crisis.

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