

## Misunderstanding of Islam in Ayaan Hirsi Ali's Speech Based on Islamic Perspective: A Semiotic Analysis

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### Abstract

*Islam is often misunderstood as a bad religion in the West. This prejudice increased rapidly after the terror act that brought down the WTC towers in New York by radical Muslims on September 11, 2001. This prejudice developed to give birth to Islamophobia which is still spreading in the West, including in speeches. One of the speeches containing misunderstandings and prejudice against Islam is Ayaan Hirsi Ali's speech Liberal Democracies in An Era of Jihad and Mass Migration which considers Islam to be a bad and radical religion. This research aims to refute misunderstandings of Islam in Ayaan Hirsi Ali's speech Liberal Democracies in An Era of Jihad and Mass Migration so that bad thoughts about Islam can change and the phenomenon of Islamophobia can be reduced. This research is a qualitative descriptive method using the semiotic theory of Ferdinand de Saussure and also Islamic perspective to refute Ayaan's misunderstandings about Islam in the analysis. The results of this research show several of Ayaan's misunderstandings about Islam which are contrary to the Islamic perspective, such as whatever the Prophet Muhammad did during his lifetime must also be done by his people in the present, the Prophet Muhammad was a cruel person, all Madaniyah verses like a war manual because it only contains war, Muslim men indoctrinated to be selfish, Muslim women restrained, Muslim men are selfish, Islamic law is bad for everyone, and Islamic law is a cult of death because it only contains massacres and sacrifice of life.*

*Keywords: Islamic perspective, Islamophobia, Misunderstanding, Semiotics, Speech*

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## 1. Introduction

Islamophobia is a phenomenon of hatred and fear of Islam due to prejudice against Islam that is often found in the West. Islamophobia is common in the West after the 9/11 tragedy that brought down the WTC (World Trade Center) tower in New York on September 11, 2001. In line with this, The Gallup Center For Muslim Studies conducted a survey in 2010 regarding Islam in the US which resulted in around 4 out of 10 Americans (43%) having bad prejudice against Muslims (Fadhli & Nizmi, 2014, p. 5). The more their prejudice against Islam increases, the more likely it is for Islamophobia to increase. Thus it can be concluded that there is a lot of Islamophobia in the West because of their increasing prejudice about Islam.

Prejudice and misunderstanding about Islamic teachings are common in the West. One of them is often heralded by Ayaan Hirsi Ali. He is one of the critics of Islam in the West who was born in Somalia in 1969 as a Muslim. She often voiced her negative opinions about Islam in each of her works, such as *The Caged Virgin* (2004), *Infidel: My Life* (2006), *Heretic: Why Islam Needs a Reformation Now* (2015), etc. Her doubts about her belief in Islam at that time began when she listened to a sermon that discussed how women obey their husbands, then she could not resist herself from asking whether a husband should be obedient to his wife too (Harvard Kennedy School, 2020). Since then, her doubts have continued to increase along with the many phenomena of oppression and injustice received by Muslim women. The climax was when she was betrothed to a distant relative by her father, then she chose to flee to the Netherlands and spread the news about the oppression of Islam against women and violations of their human rights (Khan, 2017). After fleeing to the Netherlands, she chose to leave Islam to become an atheist and spread her negative criticisms related to Islam, especially as it relates to Muslim women.

Ayaan Hirsi Ali always persuades the liberal community to be careful and take a firm stand against Islam. In line with this, she also continuously gave outspoken warnings that Islam was not by Western values ("Islamophobia Pales", 2012). She always mentions implicitly and explicitly that Islam is not a religion of peace. Implicitly, Ayaan depicts Islam as a cruel religion in her film, as in the film entitled *Submission: Part One* which she wrote herself and released in 2004. After the release of the film, she received death threats and the film director was killed right in the crowd on Tuesday, November 2, 2004 by a radical Muslim because he did not accept the portrayal of Islam and Muslims in the film ("The Murder That Shattered Holland's Liberal Dream," 2004). This happened because Ayaan Hirsi Ali misunderstood Islam and described it as a cruel religion. On the other hand, Ayaan explicitly conveys Islam as a cruel religion in her speeches. In all the speeches she has delivered, almost all of them contain criticism of Islam. In her speeches, she often called on Muslims to reform, saying that Islam was an intolerant and cruel religion that needed to be changed and improved. One example was in her speech entitled *Liberal Democracies in An Era of Jihad and Mass Migration* which is the object of this research. The researchers chose this object because this speech is the latest speech from Ayaan Hirsi Ali which contains criticism of Islam, thus proving that her thoughts about Islam have not changed much. This speech was published on YouTube by the Centre for Independent Studies channel on June 14, 2022. She mentioned in her speech that Islamic law is a cult of death (Centre for Independent Studies, 2022, 32:29). Her statement has the meaning that the teachings of Islam are full of sacrifice and massacres. Ayaan's statements in that speech were aimed at persuading the public to take a firm stand against Islam, which according to her could no longer be tolerated.

The researchers' purpose of analyzing Ayaan Hirsi Ali's speech *Liberal Democracies in An Era of Jihad and Mass Migration* is to straighten out the misunderstanding of Islam that exists in this speech. This speech is appropriate to be analyzed because it contains many deviations from the understanding of Islam and can cause an increase in the phenomenon of Islamophobia because of her statements. One example of this deviation is her statement that Islam is a cult of death (Centre for Independent Studies, 2022, 32:29). In this speech, Ayaan wants to emphasize that Islam is a religion which only

contains murder and sacrifice of life. This is contrary to several verses which state that Islam highly values a life, as in surah Al-Baqarah verse 179, because Islam hates people who kill themselves and others without a right reason. Even Imam Syafi'i allows someone to violate religious provisions if he is in a state of urgency that can endanger his life, such as changing the law of *ḥarām* food to *ḥalāl* if there is no other solution (Mughtar, 2015, p. 402-403). On the other hand, Muslims fought the infidels for obvious reasons, one of which was to protect them from the Quraysh infidels who had threatened the lives of all Muslims at that time. Allah said in the Qur'an 22:39-40 (translated by Qur'an.com): "Permission [to fight] has been given to those who are being fought, because they were wronged. And indeed, Allah is competent to give them victory. [They are] those who have been evicted from their homes without right - only because they say, 'Our Lord is Allah.'...". These two verses explain that Muslims are allowed to fight in self-defense because they have been fought and expelled from their hometowns just because they worship Allah. While in Ayaan's speech, she told several stories and convinced the audience that Islam is a cruel and radical religion (Centre for Independent Studies, 2022, 03:00). Ayaan's statements made many liberals persuaded and agreed with all of her opinions as evidenced by the many positive comments left for the speech video. In order that this misunderstanding does not spread further, the researchers want to uncover and straighten the misunderstanding of Islam in Ayaan Hirsi Ali's speech *Liberal Democracies in An Era of Jihad and Mass Migration*.

The researchers use the semiotics theory of Ferdinand de Saussure. The researchers chose semiotic theory because semiotic is a theory that reveals the meaning in signs, and the researchers want to reveal the meanings contained in Ayaan Hirsi Ali's utterances in her speech regarding her understanding of Islam. The researchers also use Islamic perspectives based on the Qur'an and Hadith to examine any misunderstandings about Islam in Ayaan Hirsi Ali's speech *Liberal Democracies in An Era of Jihad and Mass Migration*.

Ferdinand de Saussure introduced the concept of signifier and signified in his semiotic theory where both of them cannot be separated like two sides on a sheet of paper (Lagopoulos & Lagopoulou, 2020, p. 31). The signifier is the material form of a sign, while the signified is the concept contained in the material form (De Saussure, 1973/1988, p. 12-13). These two concepts complement each other in finding hidden meanings. In this case, the meaning of Islam in Ayaan Hirsi Ali's speech *Liberal Democracies in An Era of Jihad and Mass Migration* is misunderstood and generalized as a cruel religion. Ayaan's opinion about Islam is inaccurate because it contradicts the Islamic perspective, including the Qur'an and Hadith. In accordance with this definition, the researchers use Islamic perspective as a reference to prove the misunderstanding of Islam in Ayaan Hirsi Ali's speech.

The researchers formulate two research questions based on the explanation above: The first is what are Ayaan Hirsi Ali's understandings of Islam in her speech *Liberal Democracies in An Era of Jihad and Mass Migration* based on the semiotic theory of Ferdinand de Saussure, and the second is how are the views of Islam according to the Islamic perspective that are different from Ayaan's understanding.

Based on the research question above, this research aims to reveal the misunderstanding of Islam in Ayaan Hirsi Ali's speech *Liberal Democracies in An Era of Jihad and Mass Migration* based on the semiotic theory of Ferdinand de Saussure, and how the true teachings of Islam based on Islamic perspective.

## 2. Literature Review

The researchers found twelve studies related to this research. The first of those previous studies is from Catalano (2011) that studied Barack Obama's *Philadelphia* speech. This study used the same semiotic theory as this study and also used the CDA theory. She explained the basic meanings that are not easily accessible to the average listener through metaphorical analysis and semiotic analysis of signs in the text, and affirms the listeners' right as citizens to deconstruct and reveal coded messages in political discourse.

The second research is from Halid (2019). Hadid used de Saussure's semiotics theory for this research, but with different objects. She used *Manjali dan Cakrabirawa* novel as her object, while this research used Ayaan Hirsi Ali's speech *Liberal Democracies in An Era of Jihad and Mass Migration* as the object. Halid's research is aimed to describe the semiotics of Ferdinand de Saussure in *Manjali dan Cakrabirawa* novel, and her research shows that signifier and signified in *Manjali dan Cakrabirawa* novel imply hidden messages about mystery, secret, and history which are expected to answer all misconceptions about the historical distortion. Meanwhile, this research attempts to uncover the misunderstanding of Islam in Ayaan Hirsi Ali's speech *Liberal Democracies in An Era of Jihad and Mass Migration* by using semiotics theory and Islamic perspective. In addition, this research also aims to correct these misunderstandings in the hope that negative thoughts about Islam can be reduced.

The third research is written by Ahmad Muammar Qadafi from Airlangga University. Qadafi (2020) also used semiotic theory as this research, but he used social semiotic theory by van Leeuwen, while this research used semiotic theory by Ferdinand de Saussure. The object that Qadafi used is speech as this research, but with different speech. He used Emma Watson's speech while this research uses Ayaan Hirsi Ali's speech. His study investigates social and cultural ideas in Emma Watson's speech about gender equality campaigns to find out the types of semiotic rules that can be applied in formal conditions as well as their function in speech. His research found that among four of five rules in delivering the speech, most of Watson's sentences are from the rules of personal authority, mainly to show the power of her authority to the audience. Meanwhile, this research wants to reveal the misunderstanding of Islam in Ayaan Hirsi Ali's speech by using semiotics theory and Islamic perspective, because this speech has included the context of Islamophobia in the depiction of Islam.

The fourth research is about *The Teachings of Salafi in 'Life with The Ahmad Family' Comic: Peirce's*. Syaifullah (2020) used semiotic theory as this research, but he used semiotic theory of Charles Sanders Peirce, while this research uses semiotic theory of Ferdinand de Saussure. In addition, Syaifullah used a comic as his object, in contrast to this research which used speech as the research object. His research discusses the Islamic values contained in the comic *Life with The Ahmad Family* based on Salafi's perspective. He used the semiotic theory of Charles Sanders Peirce to reveal the Islamic values contained in the comic. His research found that there are five Salafi's teachings contained in the comic *Life with The Ahmad Family*, including the prohibition on drawing living creature, the recommendation to grow beards and trimming mustaches, the prohibition on wishing merry Christmas, the prohibition on participating in non-Muslim festivals, and the recommendation not to celebrate the birthday of the Prophet Muhammad (mawlid).

The fifth research is in Safitri (2021) about *A Semiotic Analysis of Meaning Relation in Harris Jung's Selected Song Lyrics on Salam Alaikum Album*. Her research and this research both used the semiotic theory of Ferdinand de Saussure, but she also used the semiotic theory of Roland Barthes. The objects used in these studies are also different. She used several songs of Harris Jung on Salam Alaikum album as her object while this research uses Ayaan Hirsi Ali's speech. She wanted to find the hidden meanings and the meaning relation in those songs. Her research concludes that all of the selected song lyrics have the meaning relations between humans and their God, Allah.

The sixth and seventh studies regarding Islamic teachings contained in *Short Film Representation of CAP CIP TOP as a Da'wah Media (Ferdinand de Saussure's Semiotic Analysis)* by Nisa et al. (2021) and *The Construction of Spiritual Values in Sunan Bonang's Song Lyrics Tombo Ati* by Bagaskara (2023). Both of those studies used different objects, but all of them have similarities as this research about using de Saussure's semiotics and finding Islamic teachings, such as believing in the sustenance that Allah has ordained, prohibiting of doing *shirk*, being friendly to buyers, helping others, etc (Nisa et al., 2021), also reciting the Holy Qur'an, establishing *qiyamul lail*, helping each other towards goodness, fasting, and doing *dhikr* (Bagaskara, 2023).

The eighth and ninth studies are related to poetry analysis, such as *Ferdinand De Saussure's Semiotic Analysis of The Poetry 'My Heart Is a Sheet of Leaves' By Sapardi Djoko Damono* by Puspita (2022) and *Ferdinand De Saussure's Semiotic Study of the Poetry "Paman Dobleng" by W.S. Renda* by Agustin (2023). Both of them used Ferdinand de Saussure's semiotics as this research but the objects are different. All of them contained human life lessons, such as a person who is about to die will typically realize there are things he should have done when he was still alive, but he ignores them and pursues the world more (Puspita, 2022). Other lessons included the ups and downs of a prisoner's life, including spending a lot of time in a dark prison room (Agustin, 2023).

The tenth, eleventh, and twelfth studies related with song lyrics analysis, such as *Music as Propaganda for Humanitarian Diplomacy: Semiotic Analysis of Ferdinand de Saussure in the Song We Are the World* by Ma'arif et al. (2022), *Representasi Kecemasan dalam Lirik Lagu "Rehat" Kunto Aji (Analisis Semiotika Ferdinand De Saussure)* by Arliani and Ardiyanto (2023), and *Exploring The Signified and Signifier in Song Lyrics through A Saussurean Semiotics Lens* by Ramdanil and Sakinah (2023). Although they are using different objects, they are all similar in that they all use Ferdinand de Saussure's theory as the basis for their research. Ramdanil and Sakinah (2023), as well as Arliani and Ardiyanto (2023), found human feelings in their analysis, such as feelings when a person falls in love (Ramdanil & Sakinah, 2023) and feeling of anxiety (Arliani & Ardiyanto, 2023). Meanwhile, Ma'arif et al. (2022) found moral and humanitarian messages that can be conveyed well to the public by upholding universal ethical values towards humanity in their research.

Those twelfth previous studies above are different from this research. The object used in this study is a new object because no one has used Ayaan Hirsi Ali's speech *Liberal Democracies in An Era of Jihad and Mass Migration* as an object in previous studies. In addition, the use of semiotic theory in a speech is also very rare. Therefore, the researchers chose to use semiotic theory and Islamic perspective to examine the misunderstanding of Islam in Ayaan Hirsi Ali's speech *Liberal Democracies in An Era of Jihad and Mass Migration* in the hope of reducing the phenomenon of Islamophobia due to misunderstandings related to Islamic teachings.

### **3. Research Methods**

#### **3.1 Research Design**

The type of this research is qualitative research. According to Creswell (2009, p. 4), qualitative research is a way to explore and understand the meaning given by individuals or groups to social or human problems. The result of this research method is in the form of explanations about the research, not in the form of numbers or tables. One type of qualitative research is descriptive research. Descriptive research is research that describes and explains a problem. This study uses subtitles from Ayaan Hirsi Ali's speech video on YouTube as the data, which is then described and explained in the analysis. Therefore, this research is descriptive qualitative, not quantitative.

#### **3.2 Data Sources**

The primary data used in this research is the subtitle in Ayaan Hirsi Ali's speech video on YouTube entitled *Liberal Democracies in An Era of Jihad and Mass Migration*. This speech was published on YouTube by the Center for Independent Studies channel on June 14, 2022. This study uses the subtitle of Ayaan Hirsi Ali's speech video as a source of data to be analyzed. Meanwhile, the secondary data in this study are several journal articles and books related to this research.

#### **3.3 Data Collection Techniques**

To collect data, the researchers used documentation techniques. First, the researchers watched the video carefully and understood each sentence spoken by Ayaan Hirsi Ali in her speech *Liberal Democracies in An Era of Jihad and Mass Migration*. Then, the researchers marked several sentences

of Ayaan's speech from the subtitles related to the research and collected them. In addition, the researchers also collected data from several journal articles and books as supporting data in this study.

### 3.4 Data Analysis

To analyze the data, the researchers used the iterative method where this research always repeated the research pattern. First, the researchers collected the data to be analyzed. Then, the researchers examined the data one by one with the same pattern using the semiotic theory by Ferdinand de Saussure (1973) and the Islamic perspective that adheres to the Qur'an and Hadith until the last data. At the end of the analysis, the researchers made a brief conclusion about the analysis. Therefore, the data analysis in this study is suitable for using the iterative method.

## 4. Results

This section presents the results and discussions in response to the two research questions mentioned in the background section. The two research questions are what are the meanings of Islam that Ayaan understands in her speech based on the semiotic theory of Ferdinand de Saussure, and how the understanding of Islam according to the Islamic perspective is inconsistent with Ayaan's understanding. Answering these 2 research questions, 8 findings were found based on concepts in Ferdinand's semiotic theory, such as signifier, signified, and sign. Signifier is an acoustic image, signified is a concept contained in the signifier, and sign is a combination of signifier and signified (De Saussure, 1973/1988, p. 12). Based on these findings, it was found that Ayaan's understanding of Islam is contrary to the Islamic perspective which adheres strictly to the Qur'an and Hadith.

### 4.1 The Irrelevance of the Practice of the Prophet Muhammad in the Present

The irrelevance of the practice of the Prophet Muhammad in the present is based on Ayaan's speech at minute 18:38-19:12 which told the audience to have to go back to the founder of Islam, Muhammad. The Islamic perspective that not all of the actions of the Prophet Muhammad are still relevant today is contradicted by her statement.

Signifier	Signified
[If you want to understand the gentlemen, the five of them, and what was driving them, and what is driving Erdogan, and all those other heads of state, and why they believe in the caliphate, and what the caliphate is all about, what Islamic law is all about, and why people, some people are willing to sacrifice absolutely everything they have including their own lives and the lives of their own children, you have to go back to the founder of Islam, Muhammad.] (Ali, 2022, 18:38-19:12)	If the audience wants to understand what caused and inspired the five gentlemen in Australia who fled by boat because they wanted to join ISIS, what prompted Erdogan and all other heads of state to voice conquest and believe in the caliphate, what is the meaning of the caliphate, what are the contents of the Islamic law, and why people are willing to sacrifice everything they have including their own lives and the lives of their children under the pretext of jihad, the audience must return to the founder of Islam, Muhammad, because what they do is inspired by the Prophet Muhammad.

Based on the signified above, it can be concluded that Ayaan Hirsi Ali believes the Prophet Muhammad was the reason behind the acts committed by his people, including the five gentlemen who fled Australia by boat in order to join ISIS, Erdogan and other heads of state who spoke out about conquest and their belief in the caliphate system, people who are willing to sacrifice their lives and the lives of their children, and so on. This is because, in Ayaan's view, everything is centered on the Prophet Muhammad. The meaning of Ayaan's statement is strengthened by the belief in Islam that anything that was never done by the Prophet Muhammad is *bid'ah* or heresy (Khoiron, 2018). This belief is firmly held by radical Islamists who label themselves as a group that wants to re-purify Islamic teachings by only adhering to the Qur'an and Hadith textually. They believe that whatever the Prophet Muhammad

did, his people had to do the same, and whatever the Prophet Muhammad did not do, his people had to refrain from doing it because, in their view, *bid'ah* is digression (Albab et al., 2023, p. 531). One example is the caliphate system that the Prophet Muhammad established, which his people still need to implement today according to radical Islam. Sayyid Quthb (1975, as cited in Dogan, 2019, p. 122), one of the radical Islamic figures, states that the world must submit to Islam under a universal caliphate.

It is true that Muslims are prohibited from committing and implementing *bid'ah*, but the *bid'ah* in question are those related to worship and contrary to the Qur'an and Hadith. Nahdatul Ulama (as cited in Nikmah, 2020, p. 68-69) divides *bid'ah* into *bid'ah ḥasanah* and *bid'ah ḍalālah* based on its reference to the argumentation of Imam Syafī'i. *Bid'ah ḥasanah* is a new matter that is good and does not conflict with the Qur'an and Hadith, while *bid'ah ḍalālah* is a new matter that contradicts the Qur'an and Hadith. On the other hand, not everything that the Prophet Muhammad did is relevant and appropriate to be applied today (Fatah, 2019, p. 32). Likewise with the concept of the caliphate (*khilāfah*) which is not suitable when applied in the present. *Khilāfah* is an Islamic government system consisting of a combination of all Islamic territories under the leadership of one *khālifah* (leader). In this case, implementing a government system other than the caliphate is an example of *bid'ah ḥasanah* as long as it does not contradict the Qur'an and Hadith. This is because Muslims are not obligated to implement a caliphate system in government. According to Ibn Taimiyah, the caliphate system does not have a constitutional basis from the Qur'an, because the state must have progressive and dynamic conditions and characteristics (Qamaruzzaman, 2019, p. 125). Ibn Taimiyah has a non-rigid view of the concept of leadership in the state. It does not matter what form the state takes as long as it can realize the goals of a country, such as creating justice and benefiting mankind. Ibn Taimiyah tends to a democratic form of government that is based on the *sharia* and the will of the people by giving them space to participate in politics.

The Prophet Muhammad never ordered or required Muslims to establish a government system in the form of a caliphate. Even in the Hadith narrated by Safinah (Imam Abu Dawud: Sunan Abu Dawud Book 42, Hadith 4646 via sunnah.com), the Prophet Muhammad said that the system of caliphate government after him ended in 30 years (Abu Bakr for two years, Umar for ten, Uthman for twelve, and Ali for six years), after which it was ruled by the kingdom. Meanwhile, according to Ayaan Hirsi Ali's statement based on the semiotic analysis above, the Prophet Muhammad was the reason behind the acts committed by his people because everything was centered on the Prophet Muhammad, including the belief in using the caliphate system in government. Ayaan's statement is different from Islamic perspective, one example is that the caliphate system implemented by the Prophet is not relevant if applied today. This is consistent with the Prophet's Hadith, which states that the caliphate system that followed the Prophet Muhammad ended thirty years later, during the reign of *Khulafaur Rasyidin*.

#### 4.2 The Glory of Prophet Muhammad

The glory of Prophet Muhammad is based on Ayaan's speech at minute 21:21-21:34 which states that the successes of the Prophet Muhammad SAW was because he only used violence. This is contrary to the Islamic perspective that the Prophet Muhammad was the person with the best morals.

Signifier	Signified
[His successes apply the same logic, force, harsh, organized, cruel, beheadings, sheer terror.] (Ali, 2022, 21:21-21:34)	All the successes of the spread of Islam by the Prophet Muhammad in Medina always apply the same way as before by using force, violence, organized, cruelty, beheading, and sheer terror.

Based on the signified above, it can be concluded that according to Ayaan Hirsi Ali, the Prophet Muhammad was cruel because he only used force, harsh, organized, cruelty, beheading, and sheer

terror to achieve success in spreading Islam. Ayaan Hirsi Ali's statement is strengthened by evidence of many acts of terrorism committed by radical Islamists so that the label of terrorism is widely associated with Islam and the Prophet Muhammad. Many Westerners believe and regard Prophet Muhammad as a cruel and inhumane person (Handriyanto, 2021). This idea emerged partly because of the fact that the Prophet Muhammad participated in many wars. The number of wars in which the Prophet Muhammad participated were recorded approximately 19 to 21 times, known as *gazwah* (wars led directly by the Prophet Muhammad), while the wars in which the Prophet Muhammad did not directly participate or send troops was known as *sariyyah*, and there have been approximately 35–42 wars throughout history (Rahmawati & Laila, 2019, p. 419-420).

Prophet Muhammad is a person who has noble character. Everything that the Prophet Muhammad did was solely to perfect the morals of his people. Because all of the morals the Prophet Muhammad taught and shown were noble, it is expected that his people would be able to follow him as a good role model. Abu Tayyah mentioned in a Hadith narrated by Imam Bukhari and Imam Muslim from Anas r.a. that the Prophet Muhammad was the most well-behaved person (Imam Nawawi: Riyad as-Salihin Introduction, Hadith 620 via sunnah.com). In addition to the Hadith, the Prophet Muhammad is also described as a good role model in the Qur'an (Qur'an.com, 33:21).

On the other hand, the cruel and inhuman nature that was accused of the Prophet Muhammad by Westerners, including Ayaan Hirsi Ali, was due to the many wars he participated in and won. In fact, the wars that followed the Prophet Muhammad had a reason, mostly to protect the lives of Muslims from the pressures of the Quraysh infidels. So, the beginning of the war between the two was because the Quraysh infidels had oppressed Muslims so that it would threaten the lives of all Muslims. Therefore, an order was sent down to fight against the Quraysh infidels. In line with this, Ibn Qayyim and Ibn Taimiyyah (in Khaer, 2016, p. 3) also justify war if they were fought. If they are not being fought and threatened, then war must be avoided because Islam is a religion that loves peace. This contradicts the meaning of Ayaan Hirsi Ali's statement based on the semiotic theory above that the Prophet Muhammad was cruel because the Prophet only applied violence in achieving his success in spreading Islam.

### 4.3 The Peace in Islam

The peace in Islam is based on Ayaan's speech at minute 21:54-21:58 which said that Medina verses are like war manual. This is contrary to the Islamic perspective that Islam is a religion that loves peace.

Signifier	Signified
[You read Medina and it reads like a war manual.](Ali, 2022, 21:54-21:58)	Reciting Medina verses is like reading a war manual.

Based on the signified above, it can be concluded that according to Ayaan Hirsi Ali, reciting Madaniyah verses is like reading a war manual, because Madaniyah verses only contain war. Madaniyah verses are verses that were revealed to the Prophet Muhammad after he migrated to Medina. The Prophet Muhammad's migration to Medina followed by the Qur'anic directive to publicly propagate Islam, which included waging war. This overt *da'wah* is what radical Islamists understand textually, which is why they frequently commit acts of terrorism to this day, such as bombing specific locations, targeting individuals who do not agree with them or follow their beliefs. This act of terrorism has led to a lot of bad perceptions of Islam, particularly among Westerners. They think that Islam is not a good religion at all. They also stated that Islam encourages its adherents to commit violence (Fadhli and Nizmi, 2014, p. 6).

Islam is a religion that loves peace. Muslims are always encouraged to prioritize peace and rely upon Allah. This is mentioned in one of the Madaniyah verses, Q.S. Al-Anfal verse 61, which states that



if the enemy wants to abandon war and lean towards peace, then the Prophet Muhammad must also lean towards peace (Qur'an.com, 8:61). This verse indicates that while war is acceptable in Islam, the establishment of peace is what Islam values most. Other than that, war is the last option for Muslims to protect their lives, homes, and faith. Basri et al. (2024) state that Islamic perspective on war is to defend religion and their lives, not to conquer or exploit other people. Muslims are instructed to avoid getting out of war if it can be prevented. However, Muslims have the right to fight if the way of peace cannot be pursued.

Furthermore, the Madaniyah verse which contains about war has a background that causes its descent (*asbāb an-nuzūl*). Islam does not arbitrarily order Muslims to go to war without a clear reason. One example is the *asbāb an-nuzūl* from surah Al-Baqarah verse 191 which orders to fight the Quraish infidels if they fight the Muslims first (Qur'an.com, 2:191). The *asbāb an-nuzūl* of this verse is in a Hadith narrated by Ibn Abbas who said that this verse was revealed regarding the Hudaibiyah Agreement when the Prophet and his followers were prevented by the Quraysh infidels from coming to the Kaaba (Hafiz, 2022). The Quraish infidels made an agreement with the Prophet Muhammad that the Prophet and his followers would get three days of freedom in Mecca to do *tawāf* as long as he returned to Medina in that year and only came again to Mecca in the following year. The Prophet agreed, but other Muslims were worried that the Quraysh infidels would break their promise, so the verse that permitted war was revealed if the Quraysh infidels started first. This obviously contrasts with the actions of terrorists who commit acts of terrorism in the name of Islam simply because these people differ with them.

Besides that, the verses that talk about war in the Qur'an are only 47 verses out of the total number of verses in the Qur'an (Tahir, 2018, p. 83). Not all of the verses in Madaniyah are about war. Madaniyah verses also contain sanctions and obligations for all creatures, including commands to *da'wah*, to worship, to perform good deeds, to explain inheritance laws, social relations, legal issues, legislation, etc (Yusrany, 2020, p. 102). This contradicts the meaning of Ayaan Hirsi Ali's statement based on the semiotic theory above which states that Madaniyah verses look like a war manual.

#### 4.4 Equal Position of Men and Women in Islam

Equal position of men and women in Islam is based on Ayaan's speech at minute 29:12-29:16 that young men at any time can take women. The Islamic perspective, which argues that males must treat women with kindness and wisdom, runs counter to this.

Signifier	Signified
[And young men have been taught that they at any time can take women.](Ali, 2022, 29:12-29:16)	Young men have been taught that they can take women whenever they want.

Based on the signified above, it can be concluded that Ayaan Hirsi Ali believes young Muslim men have been taught that they can take women whenever they want. The meaning of Ayaan's statement is strengthened by the fact that many Muslim men are selfish and behave cruelly towards Muslim women. There are several Islamic countries on the Arabian Peninsula and its surrounding regions, where the culture exemplifies the selfishness of Muslim men. Arab society has maintained a strong patriarchal culture since before Islam arrived. For instance, many Arab societies consider women to be "complements" to men's desires (Faizain, 2007, p. 10). This fact gives rise to the perspective that Islam teaches and indoctrinates Muslim men to behave selfishly towards Muslim women because Arab countries and their surroundings are Islamic countries, as the meaning of Ayaan's statement in her speech.

Muslim men are required to be nice and wise towards women. This is found in the Hadith narrated by Abu Huraira that men are required to behave nicely towards women (Imam Bukhari: Sahih al-Bukhari Book 60, Hadith 3331 via sunnah.com). Islam never teaches men to be selfish and feel

superior to women. In the Qur'an surah Al-Baqarah verse 35, it is explained that men and women have the same rights and obligations as residents of heaven (Faizain, 2007, p. 10). There is no discrimination between men and women because both are considered equal. This is contrary to Ayaan's understanding based on the semiotic analysis above that Muslim men have been taught and indoctrinated in Islam to be selfish towards Muslim women.

#### 4.5 Islamic Responsibility Towards Women

Islamic responsibility towards women is based on Ayaan's speech at minute 29:17-29:24 that women should be escorted by male chaperones. In the Islamic perspective, women who are accompanied by male chaperones must be seen from how far and how long the woman goes.

Signifier	Signified
[And women have been taught to stay away from certain places without being escorted by male chaperones.](Ali, 2022, 29:17-29:24)	Women have been taught to always be accompanied by a male chaperones wherever they go to certain places.

Based on the signified above, it can be concluded that Ayaan Hirsi Ali believes that there are teachings in Islam which instruct Muslim women to always be accompanied by their husband or *mahram* as their male chaperones whenever they go out to certain places. Ayaan's statement also means that Muslim women are restrained by the rules of Islamic law. This is further supported by the reality that Muslim women face discrimination in a number of Islamic nations, including Afghanistan, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, and others by regulations that restrict them. In these countries, women face various restrictive regulations and discriminations, such as being unable to drive, socialize, and even travel without their husbands' consent (Negara, 2022, p. 75). This reality, along with the meaning of Ayaan's statement above, seem to indicate that Muslim women are restrained by a number of Islamic rules.

Women are highly respected in Islam. Women's status was immediately improved after Islam arrived on the Arabian Peninsula, during a period when they faced significant discrimination and injustice. After Islam arrived, women started to receive rights, such as the ability to bear witness and inherit rights, whereas previously they were often considered a disgrace and executed (Faizain, 2007, p. 10).

Islam also opposes discrimination between men and women. Faizain (2007, p. 10) states that Islam from the beginning emphasized that discrimination in gender roles and relations is a violation of human rights that must be eliminated. This is seen in the Qur'an surah Al-Ma'idah verse 75, which forbids discrimination based on role between the Prophet Isha and his mother, Maryam.

The discourse on women who must always be accompanied by their husband or *mahram* as stated by Ayaan Hirsi Ali is contained in the Hadith narrated by Ibn Umar that a woman cannot travel for more than three days unless accompanied by her *mahram* (Imam Bukhari: Sahih al-Bukhari Book 18, Hadith 1087 via sunnah.com). Specifically, no one explains in detail the motives behind the emergence of this Hadith (*asbab al-wurud al-hadith*). However, the Hadith narrated by Ibn Majah above at least gives an idea that this prohibition is aimed at women who wish to perform the Hajj (the holy pilgrimage) without being accompanied by their *mahram*. This assumption was reinforced by Imam Badr al-Din Abi Muhammad Mahmud Ibn Ahmad al-Aini who stated that this Hadith occurred when the wives of *ṣaḥābah* who were participating in war wanted to carry out the pilgrimage, and Ibn Hazm who confirmed that the context of this Hadith was in a war situation (Hamzah, 2019, p. 86-87). This prohibition aims to protect and ensure women's safety of women who want to travel far away alone for a long time. So, the prohibition on women traveling is not necessarily generalized to wherever they go to certain places as stated by Ayaan Hirsi Ali based on the semiotic analysis above, but the prohibition applies to women who wish to travel long distances for more than three days.

#### 4.6 Gender Equality in Islam

Gender equality in Islam is based on Ayaan's speech at minute 29:25-29:27 which states that whatever happens to women is their fault. This goes against the Islamic perspective that Islam gives men and women equal responsibilities.

Signifier	Signified
[And if whatever happens to them, it is their fault.](Ali, 2022, 29:25-29:27)	Whatever happens to these women later is their own fault.

Based on the signified above, it can be concluded that according to Ayaan Hirsi Ali, Muslim women are to blame for negative consequences that may occur in the future. Ayaan's statement also implies that Muslim women often experience injustice because they are victims of patriarchal culture. This is further supported by the fact that patriarchal cultures are still deeply ingrained in many Islamic nations, including Arabia and its surroundings. In these countries, women are limited in their movement and are expected to stay at home and become housewives who serve their husbands (Nurmila, 2015, p. 2). The patriarchy that occurs in Islamic countries cannot be separated from the cultural influence of these countries before the arrival of Islam. Even during the Age of Ignorance (*Jāhiliyyah*), women were seen as not having complete humanity, so women did not have the right to speak, to work, and to own property (Asmawi and Bakry, 2020, p. 215). The patriarchal culture that has existed since the *Jāhiliyyah* era is still growing today, which has led to the perception that Muslim women are always treated unfairly, as the meaning of Ayaan Hirsi Ali's statement in her speech.

Islam gives men and women equal rights and responsibilities. Islam does not differentiate between the two, much less make a discrimination against one of them. If a mistake occurs involving a man and a woman as perpetrators, both of them must take responsibility for the mistake. This is exemplified in the Qur'an, in surah Al-A'raf verse 20 regarding the expulsion of Adam and Hawa from heaven because of their mistakes. Hawa, who was portrayed as the temptress of Adam, had her name cleared with the explanation that both of them were involved in the problem, so they were both expelled from heaven (Faizain, 2007, p. 10). This contradicts the meaning of Ayaan Hirsi Ali's statement based on the semiotic theory above that Islam permits Muslim women to accept injustice and to be oppressed by patriarchal society by putting all the blame on women.

#### 4.7 The Perfection of Islamic Law (*Sharia*)

The perfection of Islamic law is based on Ayaan's speech at minute 31:53-32:13 which said that Islamic law is bad for everyone. This is opposed to the Islamic perspective that Islamic law is perfect.

Signifier	Signified
[The other one is obviously to stand up, to stand up to the Medina muslims, and to argue why Islamic law, sharia, is bad, bad for all human beings, for men, for women, for men and women, for people with a different sexual orientation, for people with different religions.](Ali, 2022, 31:53-32:13)	Another fight of course was to fight Medina Muslims, and to prove why Islamic law, sharia, is bad, bad for all humans, for men, for women, for both, for people with different sexual orientations, and for people with different religions.

Based on the signified above, it can be concluded that according to Ayaan Hirsi Ali, liberals must fight the Medina Muslims who she considers radical and prove that Islamic law (*sharia*) is bad for everyone. Ayaan also considers that Islam is a strict and rigid religion, as Westerners' view towards Islam. Alshammari (in Fadhli & Nizmi, 2014, p. 6) states that Western people assess and believe in Islam as a religion that cannot accept the realities that emerge in society. The reality in this case is the diversity that spreads across the West. That is why they consider Islam to be a rigid and harsh religion.

The way that Westerners view Islam is consistent with Ayaan's speech in which she states that Islamic law is bad for everyone because it is rigid and harsh.

Islamic law (*sharia*) is a perfect law. According to Djamil (1997, p. 45), *sharia* is perfect because it is universal, so its laws remain unchanged due to era and time. Because it is universal, *sharia* is good for everyone. The perfection of Islam and the approval of Islam as a perfect religion is contained in Surah Al-Ma'idah verse 3.

Related to Surah Al-Ma'idah verse 3, Ali bin Abi Thalhah said, "From Ibn 'Abbas r.a., "What is meant is Islam. Allah has informed His Prophet and those who believe that Allah has perfected their faith, so that they do not need any addition at all. And Allah has perfected Islam so that Allah will never reduce it, indeed Allah has been pleased with it, so that Allah will not be angry with it, ever" (Jawas, n.d.).

All Islamic law (*sharia*) is based solely on the benefit of all humans on earth. One example is the law governing women. Islam seems protective to women because women have a noble position, that is why Islam really upholds the status of women. All Islamic laws relating to women are solely for the good of themselves. One of the arguments related to this is contained in Q.S. An-Nisa verse 34 that states men are the leaders of women. *Asbāb an-nuzūl* of this verse is found in a Hadith narrated by Ibn Mardawih from Ali (Rohmah, 2020, p. 314), when an Ansar came with his wife to the Messenger of Allah who complained about someone who had been beaten by her husband so that marks were left on her face. So the Messenger of Allah said that a husband has no right to do that to his wife. Then Allah revealed this verse in terms of educating that spouse.

On the other hand, Islamic law (*sharia*) also regulates laws regarding sexual deviation. In this case, Islam curses people with deviant sexual orientation (LGBT). Regarding this matter, Islamic law is very firm in opposing LGBT for the good of humanity itself. Not without reason, people with a sexual orientation that goes against their nature will ultimately only create damage on earth and harm fellow humans. LGBT can cause various life-threatening chronic diseases, such as cancer and sexually transmitted diseases. LGBT can also have a bad influence on the environment, especially children because their actions can influence the people closest to them to do the same thing. That is why Islam is so against LGBT.

Furthermore, Allah will also punish LGBT people with a painful punishment. Ibn Qayyim in his book, *Ad-Da'wa Ad-Dawa'*, quoted the words of a Salaf ulama who said, "Allah has never tested anyone in this world before the people of Luth with such depraved behavior, and has never punished them with such a punishment, where Allah combined continuous punishments for them. Starting from destroying them, turning their villages upside down, burying them, throwing stones at them from the sky, then punishing them with punishments that had never been inflicted on people before them. This is because of the serious violations they committed, which the earth almost does not approve of this act being committed on it, the angels run away when they see it because they are afraid of the punishment that will befall the perpetrator, and the earth complains to Allah SWT, and the mountains almost move from its place" (Sayska & Arif, 2019, p. 27).

Based on the explanation above, it can be concluded that Islam is very concerned about the benefit of humanity so it is called the perfect law. These Islamic perspectives related to Islamic law contradict Ayaan's understanding based on the semiotic analysis above that Islamic law is bad for everyone.

#### 4.8 The Value of Human Life in Islam

The value of human life in Islam is based on Ayaan's speech at minute 32:25-32:31 which states that Islamic law is a cult of death. This is in contrast to the Islamic perspective that Islam regards life highly.

Signifier	Signified
[And that is why I will never apologize for my statements that Islamic law is ultimately a cult of death.](Ali, 2022, 32:25-32:31)	And that is why the speaker will never apologize for her statement which concluded that Islamic law only contains death.

Based on the signified above, it can be concluded that Ayaan Hirsi Ali will never feel regret and will not apologize regarding her statement which concluded that Islamic law is like a death cult because it only contains death, whether it contains murder or sacrifice of life. Ayaan's statement relates to actions taken by radical Islamists, such as killing people who oppose them, and sacrificing their own lives in the belief that they will go to heaven because of jihad. Here, Ayaan considers that what radical Islamists do is the true teachings of Islam because she always links their actions with the actions of the Prophet Muhammad, as she stated in point 4.1. Ayaan's ideas are consistent with the perception held by many Westerners that Islam is a religion full of murder and sacrifice of life. This stereotype develops into excessive anxiety about Islam which later gives rise to Islamophobia. People with Islamophobia consider and believe in Islam as a religion that is full of terrorist movements and acts of violence (Pradipta, 2016, p. 102). Their anxiety arose since the 9/11 tragedy carried out by terrorists which killed many people. Since then, their belief in Islam began to fade and was replaced by fear and hatred of Islam because they considered Islam to be a religion that belittled and took human life lightly. That is why Ayaan stated that Islamic law is ultimately a cult of death.

Islam really values human life. In fact, Islam also really values the lives of infidels and even bad people (Sarwat, 2019, p. 59). As contained in Q.S. Al-Baqarah verse 179, one of the Islamic ways to protect a person's life is by implementing *qis'as* because *qis'as* can be a guarantee for humans not to take someone's life carelessly.

There is not a single Islamic teaching that sacrifices human life for the sake of religion because Islam really values human life. One example is when Imam Syafi'i, one of the Imam Ma'zhab, allowed things that were prohibited in religion in emergency situations that could endanger human lives, such as making *haram* food into *halal* if there was no *halal* food because it was feared that he would die if he did not eat anything (Mughtar, 2015, p. 402-403). So it can be concluded that Islam places human life in a high position.

Islam places a high value on human life, that is why Islam hates people who end their own lives on purpose. Whoever commits suicide, he will be tortured in hell by the way he kills himself repeatedly. This is contained in a Hadith narrated by Bukhari from Abu Huraira r.a. which states that those who commit suicide will suffer from torture in hell repeatedly, just as they did when they killed themselves (Imam Bukhari: Sahih al-Bukhari Book 23, Hadith 1365 via sunnah.com).

Based on the explanations above, it can be concluded that Islam really values and upholds human life. Islam prohibits anyone from killing themselves or others, otherwise, those who take their lives will receive appropriate punishment. On the other hand, what radical Islamists do is not the true teachings of Islam. They only understand the Qur'anic verses literally so it is very easy for them to kill those who disagree with them and take their own lives under the pretext of jihad, as discussed in point 4.3. This contradicts the intention of Ayaan Hirsi Ali's statement based on the semiotic analysis above which states that Islamic law is ultimately a cult of death.

## 5. Discussion

The findings of our analysis demonstrate that Ayaan Hirsi Ali's interpretation of Islam, which is based on Ferdinand de Saussure's semiotic theory, is at odds with the Islamic perspective. Based on the signified of the signifier in Ayaan's speech, the meaning of her words leads people to believe that Islam is a violent and rigid religion. This contrasts with the Islamic perspective, which claims that Islam is a dynamic and caring religion based on the Qur'an and Hadith. Considering that this research focuses on

the actual teachings of Islam using de Saussure's semiotics theory, it appears that this finding seems similar to the analysis of 'Life with The Ahmad Family' Comic (Syaifullah, 2020), Harris Jung's selected song lyrics on Salam Alaikum Album (Safitri, 2021), CIP CAP TOP short film (Nisa et al., 2021), and Sunan Bonang's song lyrics 'Tombo Ati' (Bagaskara, 2023).

In addition, this research also seems similar to Catalano's (2011) analysis which used Barack Obama's speech and Qadafi's (2020) analysis which used Emma Watson's speech. Catalano's research revealed coded messages in political discourse, while Qadafi's research found that most of Watson's sentences are from the rules of personal authority. The similarities come from the object that used speech and the theory that used semiotics by Ferdinand de Saussure. Another similarity is also from the finding that found the hidden meaning of the speech.

In contrast, this study seems different from the analysis of novels (Halid, 2019), poetry (Puspita, 2022; Agustin, 2023), and song lyrics (Ma'arif et al., 2022; Arliani & Ardiyanto (2023); Ramdanil & Sakinah (2023)). The difference comes from the objects, even though the theory used is the same. The main purpose of those studies is also to find the hidden meaning of those objects, but the results are different. All of those analyses have their own focus in analyzing their objects. Each of those analyses focuses on a different aspect of their objects.

In conclusion, all of those studies use the same theory as this research, but the objects used are varied. Some use speeches like this research, but many people also use other objects such as novels, poetry, and song lyrics. Since poetry and song lyrics frequently employ figures of speech, they are usually analyzed as objects in semiotic analysis because they are considered to contain many signs. However, using semiotic theory in speech analysis is also possible. This is because the speaker usually has a certain purpose when giving a speech, so that the semiotic theory can be used to analyze the speaker's messages and determine the speech's purpose. Just like this research, it was found that Ayaan Hirsi Ali aimed to spread her thoughts about Islam which turned out to be contrary to the true teachings of Islam in the Qur'an and Hadith.

## 6. Conclusion

Based on the results of the analysis and discussion above, it can be concluded that the understanding of Islam according to Ayaan Hirsi Ali in her speech *Liberal Democracies in An Era of Jihad and Mass Migration* based on the semiotic theory of Ferdinand de Saussure is contrary to the understanding of Islam according to the Islamic perspective. Ayaan Hirsi Ali seems to be cornering Islam with her statements, most of which mean that Islam is a radical religion and only contains murder and sacrifice of life.

Ayaan Hirsi Ali's interpretations of Islam in her speech are fundamentally flawed and contrary to the Islamic perspective. She wrongly asserts that all actions of the Prophet Muhammad must be followed unconditionally, misunderstanding the contextual nature of practices like the caliphate. Her depiction of the Prophet as cruel contradicts Islamic teachings, which portray him as a paragon of virtue. Additionally, her claim that Madaniyah verses are war manuals ignores their specific historical contexts and the broader Islamic emphasis on peace. Ayaan's views on gender roles and Islamic law misrepresent Islamic teachings, which advocate for kindness, equality, and human rights. Her negative portrayal of Islamic law ignores its intended benefits for humanity.

Based on the results of these analyses, it can be concluded that the Islamic perspective and Ayaan Hirsi Ali's understanding regarding Islam is contradictory. Ayaan Hirsi Ali seems to be cornering Islam because her statements about Islam have a negative meaning and can influence common people to fear and hate Islam. These Ayaan's statements are very contrary to the Islamic perspective above based on the Qur'an, Hadith, and the argumentations of ulama.

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