

## Chapter 70

# Digital Games and Orientalism: A Look at Arab and Muslim Representation in Popular Digital Games

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### ABSTRACT

*The cultural and ideological tools that enable the West to maintain the imperial and colonial rule over the East have been varied. With the help of Western-based digital technologies and communication tools, it is possible to produce, publish, and distribute all kinds of information easily and quickly. The western and Western perspective is also reflected in the media content, and all kinds of popular media texts such as films, music, newspapers, magazines, toys are the bearers of the political social, cultural, and ideological structure of the West. Media texts produce discourses, especially about the 'East' and position the East as one other. In this context, digital games should not be considered independent of the political, social, cultural, and economic structure in which they exist. The aim of this study is to assess research studies focusing on the orientalist perspective in digital games. While examining the relationship between orientalism and digital games within the framework of the literature, especially the Muslim and Arab representations in the plays were examined.*

### INTRODUCTION

With the development of new communication technologies, human beings have had the opportunity to be more closely connected and to know each other than ever before. Nowadays, a person living on one side of the world can communicate with someone living in another part of the world, get education from him, trade, make friends, play games, gather around an idea and make their voices heard more. In addition to all these positive possibilities, human beings may fear each other and feel enmity to an extent that they have never experienced before, they can marginalize, beyond the conflict of opinion, maybe they can get into a fight with someone they can never come together with in life. Othering and hate speech have become a common occurrence with the dominance of new communication technologies in daily

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life. “Islamophobia”, which includes a discriminatory, marginalizing and even hostile attitude towards Islam and Muslims as a religion, is a phenomenon that this situation is frequently experienced.

The most important intellectual source of Islamophobia is orientalism. In this idea, first expressed by Edward Said, the West examines the East, changes it, and creates images aimed at the East. In this sense, the East is not a geographical place but an idea. It is possible to find the traces of orientalist thought in the Western media’s view of Muslims.

Islamophobic content, which is frequently pumped by various news, TV series and movies in conventional media, appears sometimes as a video, sometimes as an article, and sometimes as a visual in media where new communication technologies are used. One of these new channels in which Islamophobia comes to life is digital games. Arcade-style games were first connected to television, followed by computers, and advanced game consoles and digital games are an entertainment commodity that is used extensively not only by children but also by adults.

Today, digital games have surpassed a format played against artificial intelligence in the game, and with internet technologies, it has become a format where people from all over the world can play games together or mutually. The technical devices on which the games are played have also changed, and it has become possible to play these games at any time, sometimes over a social media network, or as an application, without time and space restrictions with mobile phones and tablets. Even virtual and augmented reality technologies and digital games are still in a transformation. There are simulators in which people play as protagonists in the game today. However, it is not practical to be easily produced and put into service and has not yet been commercialized in terms of demand-cost relationship.

The most important feature that distinguishes the digital game from other channels of new media is that it includes the player in the game. In these games, the person does not just look at a photo or watch a video like on a social network site. He gets excited by playing the game himself, is happy when he succeeds in the game, gets sad when he is defeated, sometimes gets ambitious, sometimes he is angry enough to kick the device he is playing and throws it against the wall. The fact that people live and reflect digital games to their behavior in this way makes the content of these games important. These games, which have a lot of content from violence to racism, and from sexism to pornography, are subject to certain regulations from age restrictions to prohibition in most countries. However, it has not been possible to prevent these games from reaching millions in today’s world where everyone has access to everything. Representations towards Muslims are processed directly in some of the digital games and indirectly in others, and an environment is prepared for the formation of an attitude or behavior in this direction in the masses who play. With this study, the results of research on this issue have been compiled to reveal a general situation of Muslim representation in digital games.

## **ORIENTALISM: A CONCEPTUAL INTRODUCTION**

Orientalism means “science of the Eastern world”, with the old word Orientalism (Derin, 2006). As for the word orientalist, it generally means Eastern languages and Eastern Sciences expert, and is used to mean a scientist who studies the history, religion, language, literature, culture, and some other points of Eastern communities. Orientalism, which emerged as a research method and discipline because of non-professional studies, has paved the way for studies in various fields over time. The term Orientalist originally had a rather different meaning than its present meaning. In 1683, the term orientalist means “a member of the Eastern or Greek Church”(Bulut, 2010).

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