

## Covert Islamophobia: An Analysis of *The New York Times* and *The Wall Street Journal* Headlines Before and After *Charlie Hebdo*

*Islamofobia velada: un análisis de los  
titulares de The New York Times y The Wall  
Street Journal antes y después de  
Charlie Hebdo*

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.32870/cys.v2020.7601>

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This article examines representations of Islam and Muslims by analyzing *The New York Times* and *The Wall Street Journal* headlines two months before and after the *Charlie Hebdo* attack to better understand manifestations of Islamophobia in the American national media after a major terrorist event. Results found a majority of headlines related Islam and Muslims to violent conflict, war and terrorism (73% in *The Wall Street Journal* and 63% in *The New York Times*). This correlation spiked directly after the attack. Headlines prior also mostly referenced Islam and Muslims when reporting on violent conflict, indicating covert Islamophobia.

**KEYWORDS:** Charlie Hebdo, Islamophobia, journalism, terror attacks.

*Este artículo examina las representaciones del Islam a través de un análisis de los titulares en The New York Times y The Wall Street Journal dos meses antes y después del ataque contra la revista Charlie Hebdo para comprender las manifestaciones de la islamofobia en los medios después de un ataque terrorista de alto perfil. Los resultados encontraron que la mayoría de los titulares analizados relacionaban el Islam y los musulmanes con los conflictos violentos. Aunque esta correlación se disparó en los días posteriores al ataque, los titulares anteriores también a menudo hacían referencia al Islam al informar sobre conflictos violentos, lo que indica una forma de islamofobia encubierta.*

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** Charlie Hebdo, Islamofobia, periodismo, ataque terrorista.

<sup>1</sup> Politzer, M. N. & Olmos Alcaraz, A. (2020). Covert Islamophobia: An Analysis of *The New York Times* and *The Wall Street Journal* Headlines Before and After Charlie Hebdo. *Comunicación y Sociedad*, e7601. <https://doi.org/10.32870/cys.v2020.7601> University of Granada, Spain. [maliapolitzer@correo.ugr.es](mailto:maliapolitzer@correo.ugr.es)

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Submitted: 13/09/19. Accepted: 21/05/20. Published: 23/09/20.

## INTRODUCTION

Midmorning on January 7<sup>th</sup>, 2015, two jihadists armed with Kalashnikovs forced their way into the editorial meeting of the Paris-based French satirical magazine *Charlie Hebdo* and opened fire, killing 11 people, and injuring 11 more. The attack, which quickly became known by the moniker “Charlie Hebdo” received widespread press coverage, incited protests and riots around the world, and prompted a heated public debate about freedom of speech, hate speech, and the role of Islam in a secular society (Boone, 2015).

This article examines the representation of Islam and Muslims in two American daily newspapers, *The New York Times* and *The Wall Street Journal*, two months before and after the Charlie Hebdo attack to better understand the manifestations of Islamophobia in the national media after high-profile terrorist event. We created our data set by collecting all articles captured with the search terms “Islam” and “Muslims” in print and online versions of the newspapers *The New York Times* and *The Wall Street Journal* for four months, from November 7<sup>th</sup>, 2014 to March 7<sup>th</sup>, 2015 (two months before, and two months after the Charlie Hebdo attack). We then coded each individual headline according to its predominant theme, which resulted in classifying articles into eight distinct category codes: “War, violent conflict and terrorism”; “Direct critique of Islam”; “Cultural issues”; “Freedom of speech”; “Religious practice”; “Migration, refugee & integration”; “Politics” and “Other”. We created four charts based on these results: two pie graphs that illustrated the percentage of each code for the total articles collected for each newspaper, and two line graphs that plotted the number of headlines published on each day (according to code categories).

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The media play a fundamental role in framing how racism and ethnic minorities are discussed, forming public opinions and the diffusion of ideology (Baker et al., 2002; Jamieson & Waldman, 2003; van Dijk, 1991). Media representations of ethnic minorities often contribute to the reproduction of racist narratives and stereotypes (Bleich et al., 2015;

Hall, 1990; van Dijk, 1991) and can have real-world implications on a number of important dimension –directly impacting political agenda setting, individual attitudes and voting intentions (Andrew, 2007; Azrout et al., 2012; Baker et al., 2002; Bleich et al., 2015; Boomgaarden & Vliegenthart, 2007; Cottle, 2006; Green-Pedersen & Stubager, 2010; Kellner, 2004).

Theories of framing posit that stories are framed to impart social and cultural meaning (Goffman, 1974). How journalists frame stories has a direct impact on how readers understand those stories, thus playing an important role in imparting social values and exerting influence over the parameters through which people think, view, and discuss issues related to race, culture and ethnicity (Hassan et al., 2017; Igartua et al., 2007; Valkenburg et al., 1999). Headlines –which serve as indexes or cognitive shortcuts– can have an outsized influence on readers, as while most consumers of news do not necessarily read most articles, “even casual readers will often be drawn to headlines” (Bleich et al., 2015). Discourse analysis is another useful tool for the study of Islamophobia in the media, and more specifically for understanding the role that media can have in communicating not only meaning, but power, domination and control –effectively reproducing “power abuse and social inequality” (van Dijk, 2008, p. 1)–. While discourse analysis is most often used for qualitative research, it can also have useful quantitative applications, particularly when combined with other analytical methods (Sayago, 2014).

In this research, our aim is to study Islamophobia in the American media by analyzing two American newspapers’ representations of Islam and Muslims within the larger context of a specific international terrorist attack. We understand that studying Islamophobia in the media means examining the role that media plays in generating collective beliefs and transmitting social values (Foucault, 2002; van Dijk, 2009). We draw on discourse analysis and theories of framing that examine how the way that media sources write about and cover specific events places them within a field of meaning –of which headlines play an important role (Bleich et al., 2015; Sayago, 2014)–. While our research draws on mixed methods, due to the large quantity of articles analyzed, we only present the quantitative results in this article, saving the qualitative interpretations for subsequent publications.

## THE MEDIA, ISLAM, AND ISLAMOPHOBIA

To better understand how Muslim minorities are represented by the North American press today, it's useful to have some historical perspective: Islam first entered the contemporary American news cycle in the late 1970's "because of connections to oil, resource wars, terrorism, and Iraq which sets up minimal knowledge of Islam, except for in terms of need, control, and fear, leading to Western reactions to Islam, as Edward Said argues, being largely Orientalist" (Powell, 2011). Said was an early critic of media representations of Islam, Arabs and Muslims, finding them to be superficial, and often dominated by two tropes –Muslims and Arabs as suppliers of oil, or potential terrorists– "thus contributing to the creation of widely-held negative stereotypes that depicted Islam as "medieval and dangerous, as well as hostile and threatening to 'us'" (Said, 1977). According to Said, such media representations contribute to a Western response that is largely Orientalist, which he defined as "a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between "the Orient" and (most of the time) "the Occident" (1977, p. 2). Orientalism, in short, "is a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient" (p. 3). In an Orientalist discourse, "the Occident" or "the West" is automatically assumed to have a position of authority and superiority over "the Orient", which is positioned in opposition to Western values and believes, presumed to be inherently inferior and resistant to modernity and change. In his influential *Foreign Affairs* article, published in 1993, Huntington (1993) argued that this perceived divide was creating a "clash of civilizations", an idea that has seems to have been uncritically adopted by many media outlets, as evidenced by scholarly analysis of various press representations of Arabs, Islam and Muslims, and which has subsequently been heavily criticized by numerous academics (Inglehart & Norris, 2002; Said, 2001).

In 1997, the British NGO Runnymede Trust published a highly influential report on Islamophobia that was widely seen to be "a landmark in the establishment and development of Islamophobia both as a phenomenon and a concept", not just in the United Kingdom,

TABLE 1  
THE RUNNYMEDE TRUST'S "CLOSED" AND "OPEN" VIEWS OF ISLAM

Features	Closed (Islamophobic) Views	Open Views
Monolithic/Diverse	Islam seen as a single monolithic bloc, static and unresponsive.	Islam seen as diverse and progressive, with internal differences.
Separate/Interacting	Islam seen as separate and other.	Islam seen as interdependent with other faiths and cultures.
Inferior/Equal	Islam seen as inferior to the West; barbaric, irrational, primitive and sexist.	Islam seen as... equal and worthy of respect.
Enemy/Partner	Islam seen as violent, aggressive, threatening, or supportive of terrorism.	Islam seen as an actual or potential partner in joint cooperative enterprises.
Manipulative/ Sincere	Islam seen as a political ideology, used for political or military advantage.	Islam seen as a genuine religious faith, practiced sincerely by its adherents.
Criticism of the West rejected/considered Discrimination defended/criticized	Criticism of "the West" rejected out of hand, and hostility towards Islam used to justify discriminatory practices towards Muslims.	Criticism of "the West"... are considered and debated. Disagreements "with" Islam do not diminish efforts to combat discrimination and exclusion.
Islamophobia seen as natural/problematic	Anti-Islam hostility and accepted as "natural" and "normal".	Critical views of Islam are themselves subjected to critique, lest they're inaccurate.

Source: Runnymede Trust (1997).

where it was initially published, but also across Europe and the United States (Allen, 2010). In addition to widely popularizing the term “Islamophobia”, the report also established a “shorthand” definition for the term, which was “the dread or hatred... of all or most Muslims... [an] unfounded hostility towards Islam” resulting in “unfair discrimination against Muslim individuals and communities” (Runnymede Trust, 1997). The report further outlined seven distinctive features that characterize “closed” (Islamophobic) viewpoints of Islam, which it contrasted to treatments of Islam the authors considered to be more “open” (non-Islamophobic):

Following the publication of the report, there was a considerable rise in the numbers of studies looking at representations of Islam in the media which drew heavily on the Runnymede definition (Ahmed & Matthes, 2016). Pool’s 2002 study, for example, was one of the seminal works that looked in-depth of Islamophobic representations in the media, drawing heavily on the Runnymede approach (Pool, 2002). Since then, a number of other scholars have also analyzed Islamophobia in the media in different geographical contexts and time spans, and also in terms of individual media, and at the meta-level (Amiri et al., 2015; An et al., 2016; Bleich et al., 2015; Bowe et al., 2015; Ishak & Solihin, 2012; Powell, 2011). Other studies have critically examined Islamophobia’s relationship to Orientalism, to Huntington’s “Clash of Civilizations” hypothesis, and as a form of cultural racism against Muslims (Alshammari, 2013; Grosfoguel, 2010; Grosfoguel & Mielants, 2006; Meer, 2014; Powell, 2011). The Runnymede concept of Islamophobia is not without its critics: some have critiqued the binary nature of the definition, finding it overly narrow, while others have found it problematic in its failure to position its approach to Islamophobia within the larger context of epistemic racism, post-colonialism, and Orientalism (Grosfoguel, 2010; Grosfoguel & Mielants, 2006; Meer, 2014). These critiques are valid, however, for the purposes of this study we have elected to use the Runnymede definition and method for identifying Islamophobia, which, while imperfect, remains highly influential and widely cited by researchers studying the phenomenon (Allen, 2010).

The terrorist attacks of September 11 also thrust Islam and Muslims into the media spotlight, after which American news media increasingly

focused on Muslims, Islam, and Arabs both within the United States and globally (Al-Arian et al., 2007; Joseph & D’Harlingue, 2012; Powell, 2011). For example, according to one study, *The New York Times* published ten times more articles mentioning Muslims in the six-month period following the attacks as compared to the same period the previous year (Al-Arian et al., 2007). Scholarly opinions diverge considerably, however, on whether overall press representation of Islam and Muslims since the 9/11 attacks has been primarily positive, negative, or more nuanced. Many scholars have found representation of Islam to be primarily negative, associated with violence and terrorism (Ahmed & Matthes, 2016; Powell, 2011). Some scholars found that immediate coverage following 9/11 adopted a “Clash of Civilizations” narrative, pitting “The West” against “Islam”. Powell (2011), for example, analyzed the coverage of 11 terrorist attacks in the United States between October, 2001 and January, 2010, and found that the most frequent labels of a terrorist suspect (Muslim, Al Qaeda, and terrorist) effectively connected terrorism to Islam, which she believed contributed to an Orientalist fear of the “other”.

Another set of scholars have found media framing of Muslims directly following a terrorist attack to be largely positive, initially eliciting sympathy, and subsequently becomes more and more negative with the passage of time (Al-Arian et al., 2007; Trevino et al., 2010). Finally, we have studies that have found coverage to be more nuanced, including a mix of positive, negative, and neutral framing (Bowe et al., 2015).

Despite this rich body of work, there remains a lack of consensus on how Muslims and Islam is represented in the American press—particularly in the direct aftermath of a terrorist attack—. With this study, we hope to contribute to the scholarly research and discussion of this important topic.

## THE ATTACK, AND PUBLIC RESPONSE

The Charlie Hebdo attack took place midmorning on January 7<sup>th</sup>, 2015, when two brothers, Saïd and Chérif Kouachi, armed with Kalashnikovs, forced their way into the editorial meeting of the Paris-based French satirical magazine, *Charlie Hebdo*, and opened fire, killing 11 people,

and injuring 11 more. The gunmen identified themselves as “Yemeni Al-Qaeda” before fleeing the scene. Two days later, Yemeni Al Qaeda also posted a video taking responsibility for the attack, and claiming that the attack had been planned for years. The attack was seemingly triggered by the publication’s repeated depictions of the prophet Mohammed on the front cover and inside the magazine.

As an attack that targeted journalists at a magazine headquarters, it received immediate and enormous international media coverage. A number of news sites in the United States and across Europe live-blogged the manhunt following the attack. Online response was similarly immediate and widespread: within hours of the attack, the hashtag #JeSuisCharlie trended on Twitter, and pictures with the same slogan written in white on a black background filled tens of thousands of Facebook profiles. Over the next several days, there were mass demonstrations and candlelight vigils in cities throughout Europe, the United States and Australia. There were also demonstrations in Niger, Pakistan, Jordan and Nigeria against the magazine –some of which turned violent–. In Algeria, protestors changed to “I am not Charlie, I am Muhammad” (Boone, 2015).

In addition to the protests and riots, in the immediate aftermath of Charlie Hebdo, there were a number of Islamophobic hate crimes on mosques, and other places where Muslims congregate. The attack also provoked a heated public debate that touched on various themes including freedom of speech, hate speech, the right to offend, and the place of religion –and in particular Islam– in a secular society.

In the years since, scholars have begun to analyze press coverage of the Charlie Hebdo attack: some studies have contrasted how the narrative of front-page news coverage differed between countries (Gómez-Domínguez et al., 2017) while others have looked at how the narrative construction of the event differed in the European and American press (Wolska-Zogata, 2015). Neither of these, however, has looked specifically at the dimension of Islamophobia, or specifically how Islamophobic representations in press coverage of Islam or Muslims may have been affected by the attack. This is where we hope our research can add value.



## METHODOLOGY

In this study, our objective was to analyze coverage of Islam and Muslims in United States print and online media, and to investigate whether such coverage becomes more Islamophobic following a major terrorist attack. For the purposes of this study, we draw Runnymede's definition of Islamophobia, which continues to be one of the most practical and commonly used by scholars to date.

We began this study by collecting the headlines of all articles (published both in print and online) with a search containing the words "Islam" and "Muslim" in both the headline and the article text in two American newspapers—*The Wall Street Journal* and *The New York Times*—, over a four-month period of time, from November 7<sup>th</sup>, 2014 (two months before the attacks) to March 7<sup>th</sup>, 2015 (two months after the attacks). A two-month span of time allowed to capture both the immediate reaction and "breaking news" coverage on the day of the event, day-after stories, as well as longer, more in-depth analysis that often takes place in the weeks after. We also collected articles with the same search terms for the two months prior the attacks in order to establish a baseline.

Since the amount of articles captured was so numerous (a total of 793 for both papers), we elected to initially conduct a quantitative analysis—the results of which are presented in this article—leaving the interpretative results and qualitative analysis for subsequent papers.

Our primary units of information were the headlines, sub-headlines, and sub-sub-headlines rather than the text of the articles due to the large quantity of articles collected, and the important role that headlines—which serve as indexes or cognitive shortcuts for readers, signaling what sort of content to expect in the body of the article—play in news consumption (Althaus et al., 2001).

We chose to analyze the headlines of the two national daily newspapers with the largest online subscriptions and print circulations in the United States: *The Wall Street Journal* and *The New York Times*. As of September, 2017, *The New York Times* had a weekly print circulation of 597 955, and *The Wall Street Journal*, 1 million 180 460 (Statistica, 2018). *The New York Times* combined digital and print

subscription surpassed 3 million in 2017, and *The Wall Street Journal* boasts more than 2.2 million print and digital subscribers.

We also intentionally selected articles with contrasting ideological views. This typology helps to ensure a sample that represents diverse readership in terms of age, geography, and political alignment. *The Wall Street Journal* is the United States' leading conservative newspaper, and describes its editorial position as one that supports "free markets and free people".<sup>3</sup> In contrast, *The New York Times* is generally considered to be the leading liberal newspaper in the United States.<sup>4</sup>

After removing duplicate headlines and accidental inclusions (articles about Islamabad, or with the first name Islam) our search parameters yielded a total of 462 articles from *The Wall Street Journal*, and 331 from *The New York Times*.

We inputted all articles into two Excel spreadsheet (one for each newspaper) organized by publication date, article headline, sub-headline, sub-sub-headline (a frequent occurrence in *The Wall Street Journal* articles), author, and newspaper section. We then proceeded to code each of the headlines. Codes were established according to the dominant theme of the headline, and included the following eight categories:

- 
- <sup>3</sup> Former editor William H. Grimes wrote on the editorial page in 1951: "On our editorial page we make no pretense of walking down the middle of the road. Our comments and interpretations are made from a definite point of view... People will say we are conservative or even reactionary. We are not much interested in labels but if we were to choose one, we would say we are radical. Just as radical as the Christian doctrine" (Grimes, 1951).
- <sup>4</sup> Former opinion editor Daniel Okrent wrote on the editorial page in 2004: "The Op-Ed page editors do an evenhanded job of representing a range of views in the essays from outsiders they publish –but you need an awfully heavy counterweight to balance a page that also bears the work of seven opinionated columnists, only two of whom could be classified as conservative (and, even then, the conservative subspecies that supports legalization of gay union and, in the case of William Safire, opposes some central provisions of the Patriot Act)" (Okrent, 2004).

TABLE 2  
CODE THEMES AND DEFINITIONS

Theme of code	Headline content
Freedom of speech	Headline that deals with issues relating to freedom of speech, or that debate the role of Islam/religion in limiting the freedom of expression.
War, violent conflict and terrorism	Headlines with content relating to war, terrorist attacks, or violent conflicts.
Migration, refugee and integration issues	Headlines with content relating to human mobility and coexistence.
Political issues	Headlines with content about issues related to systems of government, the actions of States and political systems.
Cultural issues	Headlines with content that related to architectural, artistic, culinary, music, or other folk aspects of Islam.
Religious issues	Headlines related to religious ceremonies, mosques, prayer, or the practice of the religion.
Direct attack against Islam	Headlines that openly or directly attack of Islam or the people practicing it.
Other	Headlines that do not fit into any of the above categories.

Source: The authors.

Each headline was coded only once;<sup>5</sup> in the case that a headline might fit into two categories, we used the code that was the most contextually dominant. For example, the category “War, violent conflict and terrorism” applied to any headline that explicitly referred to violent conflict, terrorism or counter-terrorism measures, and violent conflict.

<sup>5</sup> The categorization process, carried out inductively, was done entirely by the authors. For this, various preliminary tests were carried out to verify that the categorizations coincided consistently, constantly discussing and comparing throughout the process in the instances where there was disagreement as to how to categorize.

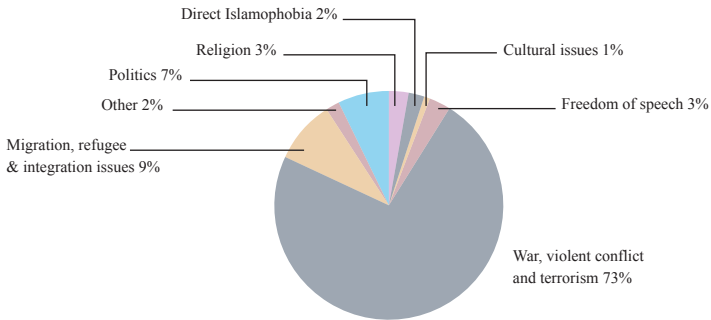
For example, consider two *Wall Street Journal* articles. The first, published on December 17<sup>th</sup>, 2014: Title: “A Costly Lesson Paid for by Pakistan’s Children”; Subtitle: “The army will likely go after the attackers. But what about the ideology that drove them”; Sub-sub-title: “Sins of the Father: The group that claimed credit for the Peshawar attack called it a retaliation for losses it suffered under Pakistani army assaults”. And the second published on January 21<sup>st</sup>, 2015 *Wall Street Journal* article: “Japan Seeks to Contact Islamic State Over Hostages”; Subtitle: “Japan Will Use All Available Diplomatic Channels, Abe Says”.

As both headlines relate directly to wars/conflict, they were coded under the category “War, violent conflict and terrorism”. In both papers, headlines and sub-headlines that were directly Islamophobic or criticized Islam were classified under the category “Direct critique of Islam”; for example, an article published in *The Wall Street Journal* on January 9<sup>th</sup>, 2015 titled “Ways of Looking at The Prophet: Devout Muslims see him as the model for human behavior. Non-Muslims have seen him as lustful, barbarous, or worse”. This headline clearly fits the Runnymede criteria for Islamophobia and a “closed” viewpoint of Islam on multiple levels: It conflates “devout Muslims” (Islam as monolithic), and describes the Prophet in terms that are simultaneously threatening (Islam as enemy) and inferior (Islam as barbaric, irrational, primitive and sexist). The wording of the title that pits “devout Muslims” against “non-Muslims” both creates a dichotomy between Muslims and non-Muslims (Islam as enemy) while simultaneously implicitly defends the headline’s viewpoint as “natural and normal” for non-Muslims. By categorizing articles by the primary theme expressed in the content of their headlines, we hoped to better understand how the newspapers sampled prioritize coverage of issues related to Islam and Muslims.

## RESULTS

We used the data to create four data visualizations: two pie charts, which demonstrated the percentage each code-type accounted represented for the total headlines collected from each of the two publication, and two line graphs that plotted the daily occurrence of each of the coded headlines; one for each paper.

FIGURE 1  
*THE WALL STREET JOURNAL* HEADLINES BY CODE THEME  
 (NOVEMBER 7<sup>TH</sup>, 2014 - MARCH 7<sup>TH</sup> 2015)



Source: The authors.

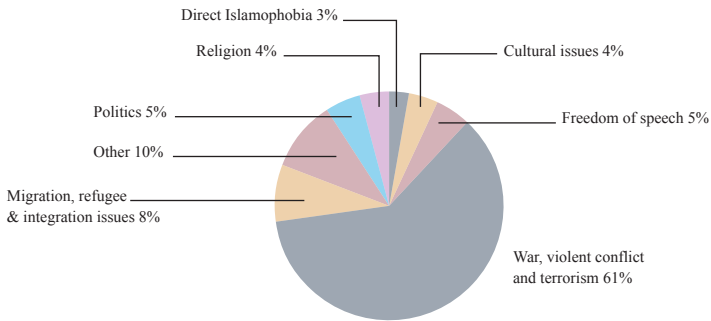
For *The Wall Street Journal*, a total of 339 headlines (representing 73% of the total) were explicitly about war, terrorist acts, national security concerns and violent conflict. This was by far the most common code type. There were 42 articles coded according to “Migration, refugee & integration issues” (9% of all headlines); 32 headlines relating to politics (7% of all headlines); 15 articles coded “Freedom of speech” (3% of the total); 13 articles coded “Religion” (about 3%); 10 articles that directly criticized Islam (2%); seven articles coded as “Other” (about 2%) and four articles coded to “Cultural issues” (1%).

For *The New York Times*, our search terms (adjusted for duplicates) yielded a total 320 distinct articles: 196 related to the code “War, violent conflict and terrorism” (61%); 31 coded “Other” (10%); 25 coded “Migration, refugee & integration issues” (8%); 16 each coded to “Politics” and “Freedom of speech” (5%); 14 to “Cultural issues” (4%); 13 coded to “Religion” (4%); and 9 that were direct critiques of Islam (3%).

The line graphs for each of the publications reveal that the frequency of articles with headlines coded to “War, violent conflict and terrorism” is higher overall than the other coding types, this is true both before and after the attacks. The largest frequency of articles coded to this category

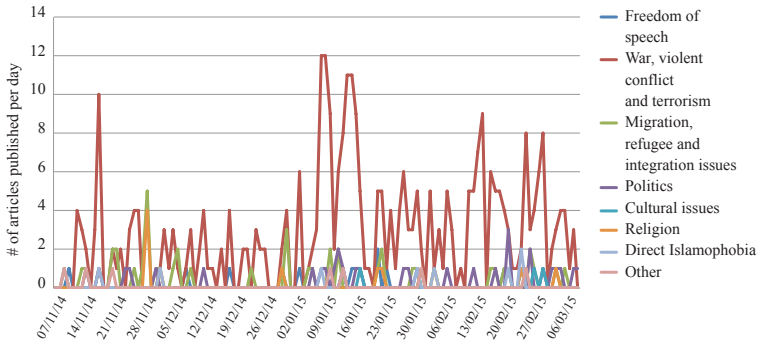
takes place over a week period immediately following the Charlie Hebdo attack (60 articles total, from January 7<sup>th</sup> to January 15<sup>th</sup>), with the highest point on the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup>. For *The Wall Street Journal*, on the day of the attack there are 12 titles coded to “War, violent conflict and

FIGURE 2  
 THE NEW YORK TIMES HEADLINES BY CODE THEME  
 (NOVEMBER 7<sup>TH</sup>, 2014 - MARCH, 7<sup>TH</sup> 2015)



Source: The authors.

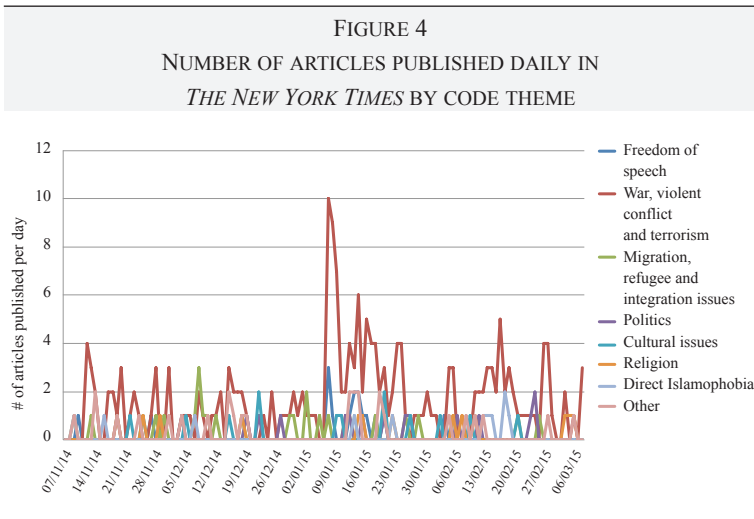
FIGURE 3  
 NUMBER OF ARTICLES PUBLISHED DAILY IN  
 THE WALL STREET JOURNAL BY CODE THEME



Source: The authors.

terrorism”; 12 on January 8<sup>th</sup>, 2015; 9 on the 9<sup>th</sup>; 2 on the 10<sup>th</sup>; 6 on the 11<sup>th</sup>; 8 on the 12<sup>th</sup>; 11 each on the 13<sup>th</sup> and the 14<sup>th</sup>, and 9 on the 15<sup>th</sup>. Overall, there was a higher number of articles coded to this category in the two months after the attacks as compared to the two months before the attacks. Other peaks in the graph for the “War, violent conflict and terrorism” line plot include ten articles published in *The Wall Street Journal* on November 17<sup>th</sup>, 2014; 6 published on January 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2015; 6 published on January 26<sup>th</sup>, 2015; 9 published on February 13<sup>th</sup>, 2015; 8 published on February 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2015; and another 8 published on February 27<sup>th</sup>, 2015.

When comparing the line charts of all of the other codes to *The Wall Street Journal* line chart of the code “War, violent conflict and terrorism”, it’s clear that, on average, the numbers of articles published on any given day for the other coding types was consistently lesser than those coded to this type. Overall, none of the other categories had any notable peaks with the exception of the dates November 15<sup>th</sup>, 2014, on which there were five articles coded “Migration, refugee and integration”, and four coded “Religion”.



Source: The Authors.

Similarly, in *The New York Times*, the numbers of articles coded to “War, violent conflict and terrorism” peaked the week following the attack, with the highest number of articles (ten articles) published on January 7<sup>th</sup>, 2015, the day of the attack. In *The New York Times*, there was total of 45 articles in this code published the week directly following the attacks. However, when reviewing the daily totals, the numbers of articles in this code was consistently higher than all other categories over the entire two months. Other peak days for articles in this code included four articles on November 12<sup>th</sup>, 2014; four on November 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2015; five on February 15<sup>th</sup>, 2015; and 4 on February 26<sup>th</sup>, 2015.

Similarly to *The Wall Street Journal* data, the numbers of articles coded to “War, violent conflict and terrorism” that were published on any given day consistently tended to be higher than the numbers of articles coded to any of the other categories.

## INTERPRETATION

Some studies analyzing newspaper headlines in the United States have found the media to present a nuanced perspective on Islam (Bowe et al., 2015), while others have found representations to be consistently negative—particularly around terrorist attacks cycle (Abrahamian, 2003; Poole, 2002; Powell, 2011)—. Few of the headlines analyzed in this study revealed blatant Islamophobia, as outlined by the Runnymede definition and method for identifying its manifestations. Instead, the type of Islamophobia found is subtler and contextual: In *The New York Times*, 61% of all articles that reference either Islam or Muslims relate to terrorism, violent conflict, or war. In *The Wall Street Journal*, 73% of all articles that reference Islam or Muslims are about these themes. Many scholars have written about how minorities are represented in the press affects public opinion, policy, and frames the discussion around minority issues (Andrew, 2007; Azrout et al., 2012; Baker et al., 2002; Bleich et al., 2015; Boomgaarden & Vliegenthart, 2007; Cottle, 2006; Green-Pedersen & Stubager, 2010; Kellner, 2004). The fact that most of the articles that people read about Islam in these newspapers are about conflict, contribute to Islamophobic representations of Muslims and Islam as a violent enemy other. Thus, while few headlines were



blatantly Islamophobic, taken as a whole, in the context of article theme, overall coverage was consistently Islamophobic –representing Islam and Muslims as violent and dangerous, although such representations spiked around the time of the terrorist attack, they still accounted for the bulk of articles prior to Charlie Hebdo– indicating a certain level of Islamophobia as standard practice.

As expected, there was a major peak of headlines relating to terrorism and war in the week directly following the attack in both newspapers. However, the attack itself didn't seem to have a major effect on overall coverage: within two weeks of the attack, the frequency of headlines relating to terrorism and war in both papers reached approximately the same levels as before the attacks: It is, however, interesting to note that those levels were consistently and significantly higher than any of the other categories. The second-most represented category in both papers related to migration and integration issues, followed by headlines related to politics (representative articles in this last category dealt with, for example, elections in Egypt or the death of a monarch in Saudi Arabia, etc.).

While coverage relating to war, terrorism and violent conflict far surpassed other themes in both newspapers, representation of the other seven categories differed noticeably between the two newspapers. For example, 4% of the articles collected from *The New York Times* –the newspaper which identifies ideologically more with the left– had headlines dealt with issues of religion, 4% related to cultural issues, and 10% were categorized as “Other”. By contrast, in *The Wall Street Journal* –an ideologically conservative paper– only 1% of the analyzed articles dealt with “Religion”, only 2% with “Cultural issues”, and just 3% as “Other”. Respectively, 7% of articles published in *The Wall Street Journal* and 5% of articles published in *The New York Times* related to politics.

That means that, collectively, 23% of the articles collected from *The New York Times* dealt with themes that were potentially more positive or neutral (those categorized into culture, religion, politics or other), versus just 12% of the articles published in *The Wall Street Journal*. Whether or not this is indicative of the contrasting ideologies of the two papers is unclear, but worth further study in the future.

However, even categories that aren't themselves inherently closed—for example “Other”, “Cultural issues”, “Religion” and “Politics” are not necessarily free from Islamophobia—. Article titles sorted into these categories also, at times, engage in racist or Islamophobic tropes. For example, in the “Other” category we have a *Wall Street Journal* article titled “Abercrombie Faces Supreme Court Battle Over Head Scarf: Justices show little tolerance for the retailer’s rejection of a Muslim job applicant”. While the article title highlights a court justice’s decision to uphold a Muslim woman’s right to wear a headscarf, the focus of the article on the headscarf “battle” implies conflict—albeit of a non-violent variety—again emphasizing the “otherness” of Muslims in American society by pitting headscarf wearers against those who do not wear headscarf (the implied norm). Another *Wall Street Journal* article, also categorized under “Other” is titled “Top Cleric Calls for Educational Reform in Muslim World”. While this headline is not blatantly Islamophobic, invoking the terms “Muslim World” conflates all the countries where the majority religion is Islam, and contributes to an uncritical and monolithic perception of Islam (which falls into part of the Runnymede definition of Islamophobia, in which “Islam is monolithic”). By focusing on a cleric’s call for educational reform, the title both manages to both treat Islam as monolithic, and covertly criticize it as inferior (educational reform would not be necessary in the so-called “Islamic world” if the current system of education wasn’t already lacking), without seeming overtly Islamophobic, since the protagonist questioning the educational system is himself a Muslim cleric. In a similar line, we have a *New York Times* article, categorized in “Other” titled “Ayatollah Khamenei Appeals to Western Youth on Islam and Prejudice”. While at first glance, this might seem constitute an “open” view of Islam (after all, it’s directly addressing prejudice against Islam), upon further analysis, it contains elements that more closely align with a “closed” viewpoint of Islam, according to the Runnymede definition: by pitting “Western youth” against “Islam”, the title implies that Western youth cannot include Muslims, or Muslim youth, therefore positioning Muslim youth as “separate”, or other.

Another example of a *New York Times* article that is implicitly Islamophobic, according to the Runnymede definition, with a headline

that was categorized under “Other” is the article titled “The Case Against The Crusades”. By referencing “The Crusades” –a series of religious wars between 1096 and 1291 that has been subsequently and repeatedly portrayed as a conflict pitting Muslims against Christians– it subtly evokes an Orientalist “us” versus “them” narrative.

By contrast, as an example of a title that would not be considered “closed” or Islamophobic by the Runnymede definition, we have the headline published by *The Wall Street Journal* and filed under the category “Cultural” that reads “No Alcohol But Is This Beer Halal? Spinning the bottle to Malaysian Muslims proves a tricky game”. Unlike the other titles analyzed above, the article references a specific subset of Muslims (Malaysian) and eludes to the difficulty of selling non-alcoholic beer to them, which suggests diverse preferences/viewpoints, as opposed to taking Muslims as monolithic whole (which would represent a closed viewpoint).

## CONCLUSION

This study presents a quantitative snapshot of the themes of the articles two ideologically contrasting newspapers present when representing Muslims and Islam. Although analyzed individually, many of the headlines are not explicitly Islamophobic (as outlined by the Runnymede definition), taken as a whole, the predominant theme of coverage relating to Islam or its practitioners is overwhelmingly related to war, conflict or terrorism. This reveals a contextual Islamophobia, and overall news bias towards prioritizing coverage that depicts Islam and Muslims as “enemy”, and was present both before and after the Charlie Hebdo attack (though, as expected, coverage spiked close to the day of the attack). Further researchers should build upon this analysis by analyzing the contents of articles, in order to develop a deeper understanding of the tone and approach American media take towards writing about and representing Islam.

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