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**Framing Discourses on Islam and Terrorism
The 2015 Brussels Attacks as Reported by Spanish
National Newspapers**

Submitted by:

Inés Bolaños Somoano

Matrikelnummer: 21566594

+34696889350

inesbs92@gmail.com

Supervised by:

Professor Matthias König (Göttingen)

Magister Martin Elbel (Olomouc)

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Declaration

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I declare that the written (printed and bound) and the electronic copy of the submitted MA thesis are identical.

I hereby also acknowledge that I was informed about the regulations pertaining to the assessment of the MA thesis Euroculture and about the general completion rules for the Master of Arts Programme Euroculture.

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1. Introduction

1.1. Rationale of the Research:

At this point in European history, it is a sad fact that Muslims have become the *Other* in which we reflect ourselves. Numerous reports alert us of the discrimination that European Muslims are facing nowadays, in almost all areas of life: education, employment, and access to the public sphere. According to the Eurobarometer of 2015, public attitudes towards this minority have also hardened. In the work place, for example, a majority of respondents would be at ease working with colleagues who were Christian, atheist, Jewish or Buddhist. However, the situation is different for Muslims, with which respondents in every Member State have “the lowest levels of comfort and indifference”¹. In a similar fashion, respondents would be considerably more comfortable (89%) if their son or daughter married a Christian person, than if he or she married a Muslim individual (50%)² his shows that negative feelings towards this religious group have only continued to grow in the aftermath of recent terrorist attacks (Madrid, London, Paris, Niza and so on), and are perhaps exacerbated by the current influx of Syrian refugees.

Such negative attitudes towards Islam and Muslims are commonly referred to in academic circles as “Islamophobia”³. Islamophobia as a term coined has gained relevance as public attitudes towards Islam harden. It was presented to the general public (via media coverage in TVs and newspapers) in 1997, when a British independent research group, the Runnymede Trust Fund released a report called *Islamophobia – A Challenge for Us All*⁴. This report empirically demonstrated that British Muslims were suffering from racism and exclusion in several areas of life: social inclusion, access to labour markets and suffering from verbally or physically violent attacks. A 2016 update on their webpage acknowledged that “anti-Muslim racism continues to block the opportunities and aspirations of British Muslim men, women, boys and girls”⁵.

Indeed, the situation of European Muslims has not necessarily improved in the last two decades, despite Governments’ efforts and state initiatives to protect Muslim

¹ TNS Opinion & Social, “Special Eurobarometer 437: Discrimination in the EU in 2015,” 2015. 33

² Ibid, 35

³ Islamophobia can be broadly defined as unfounded hostility towards Muslims or Islam, based on a negative and monolithic construction of ‘Muslim’ identity, which is then generalised for all Muslims. However, Islamophobic images are fluid and vary depending on the context. Gordon Conway, “Islamophobia a Challenge for Us All,” 1997, 9.

⁴ Lester Holloway, “Islamophobia - 20 Years On, Still a Challenge for Us All,” accessed June 25, 2017, <http://www.runnymedetrust.org/blog/islamophobia-20-years-on-still-a-challenge-for-us-all>.

⁵ Ibid.

rights in various domains (economic arena, cultural and social integration)⁶. Such policies have taken important steps towards developing a comprehensive and realistic integration programme, such as making religion and language courses available in schools, or providing State funding and recognition to Muslim associations in the same way that other religious groups already enjoy. And yet, anti-Muslim sentiments do not seem to be diminishing, rather the contrary. The 2016 European Islamophobia report warns that “the level of Islamophobia in fields such as education, employment, media, politics, the justice system and the Internet is on the rise”. Such a state of affairs also poses a threat to “the state of democracy and human rights in Europe”⁷.

However, many do not see it that way, and believe Islamic religion to be at the root of most contemporary evils: globalization and cultural change, immigration and security threats. As immigrants, terrorists or destroyers of European culture, Muslims have been forcefully moved to the centre of European political discourse, with little attention being paid to the empirical evidence for these assumptions.

This trend is the most visible in relation to the recent terrorist attacks perpetrated in the name of Islam in European countries. Since the 2004 attacks in Madrid (Spain), members of Islamist radical violent groups have committed atrocious attacks in the UK, France, Germany, Denmark and Sweden, targeting civilians and causing hundreds of deaths in total. This list is a long and bloody one, and it keeps on increasing every month. Such attackers cannot be easily identified as belonging to a single operative unit or terrorist network, sharing a single “version” violent radical Islamism, or even ties to the same violent organisations, such as ISIS, Al Qaeda or ISIL. In fact, while attackers in Paris in November 2015 and Brussels in March 2016 were found to be connected, having travelled together to Syria and being very possibly organized in the same unit, the ties of the culprit of the April 2017 attack in Stockholm to any concrete violent radical Islamist cell or group have not been determined yet. This goes to show the complexity of this topic. It does not mean, though, that the importance of terrorism in Europe should be understated. After all, on top of the last decade’s attacks, “the September 11th plots were partially planned in Hamburg, and there were at least 20 Europeans among the individuals imprisoned by the United States in Guantanamo Bay”⁸. The self-proclaimed Islamist

⁶ Jocelyne Cesari, “The Securitisation of Islam in Europe,” *The Changing Landscape of European Liberty and Security*, vol. 27, 2009, 12

⁷ Enes Bayrakli and Farid Hafez, “European Islamophobia Report 2016” (Ankara, 2017) 5.

⁸ Cesari, *Securitasation*, 11.

nature of the culprits, who claim to their actions are condoned by the Quran, the sacred book of Islam, has done little to dispel negative stereotypes about Muslims in Europe.

Terrorist attacks are, among other things, unique in their ability to shock and scare the public. This is due to their highly stressful and dramatic nature, and their perceived randomness, the fact that at least for the type discussed above, attacks don't seem to target anyone in particular, and thus anyone can potentially become a victim⁹. Although research in the relationship between fear and terrorism is still limited, some preliminary results point to the "rareness" of terrorism as another added reason for increased public anxiety, and thus increased media coverage of terrorist attacks¹⁰. Another aspect to be considered is the effects that the reporting of terrorist attacks have on individuals, especially those who have not been directly exposed to such violence. In general, research has demonstrated that "media documentation of violence and brutality engenders feelings of fear even among those for whom it poses no immediate personal threat"¹¹. It is also worth considering that during the first moments of a terrorist act, the media are often the first source of information for citizens, well before the public authorities are able to take up the communication¹².

In conclusion, we can highlight three main issues in the context of this research. First, the big role that anti-Muslim prejudice still plays in European politics, society and economy. Second, the importance that terrorist attacks have in term of human-life losses, threat assessment and security policy making. And third, that terrorism is not only a shocking event in and of itself, but media reporting can have a great impact in individual perceptions of fear and understanding of the situation.

1.2. Research Area: narrowing down the scope

However, European, and more concretely EU, states are immensely diverse and different from one another. This means that the research must be narrowed down to one country, in order to study how the above elements interact with one another in a determined set of political, economic and social circumstances. In this case, the choice for a country-case study is Spain. This choice, which will be further elaborated is

⁹ Jean-Paul Marthoz, *Terrorism and the Media A Handbook for Journalists* (Paris: UNESCO Publishing, 2017) 39.

¹⁰ Ashley Marie Nellis and Joanne Savage, "Does Watching the News Affect Fear of Terrorism? The Importance of Media Exposure on Terrorism Fear," ed. James Forest, *Crime & Delinquency* 58, no. 5 (September 10, 2012): 748–68, 750

¹¹ Michelle Slone, "Responses to Media Coverage of Terrorism," *The Journal of Conflict Resolution* 44, no. 4 (2000): 508–22, 509.

¹² Jean-Paul Marthoz, *Terrorism and the Media*, 27.

conditioned by four factors. Firstly, Spanish hasn't suffered any major terrorist attacks¹³ since the 2004 bombing of *Atocha Metro* station, in contrast to countries like the UK and France, who have suffered of several terrorist attacks in the last decade, while being subject to similar security, economic and migratory trends. Secondly, Spanish configuration of Church-State relations is somehow different from other EU liberal democracies. Despite recent moves towards religious pluralism, it remains largely a homogeneous, mono-confessional, National-Catholic environment¹⁴. Thirdly, there is an estimated of 1.919.141 Muslims in Spain, which constitutes little more than 4% of the total population of Spain (46.507.760 as of 2014), a relatively small number when compared to the 4.6% of the UK, or the 7.5% of France. And fourthly and finally, the situation of Muslims in Spain presents “a unique context for studying Muslim incorporation not only due to Islam's historical legacy in the Iberian Peninsula, but also because policies governing the accommodation of Islam have been developed amid a profound process of national redefinition spawned by Spain's democratic transition”¹⁵.

The choice of Spain as the country case-study for media, terrorism and Islamophobia relations is nevertheless still too broad. After all, in the last decade there have been dozens of terrorist attacks by violent radical Islamists in European countries¹⁶. The very attack that Spain suffered in 2004, which caused 191 deaths and wounded more than 1800¹⁷, is too far away into the past. It does not reflect current attitudes about Islam and security concerns in Europe. The purpose of this research is to offer an up-to-date picture; yet, academic research also demands a certain distance in terms of time, so as to allow for the creation of appropriate research tools, statistical knowledge and so forth. Thus, an attack on the year 2016 was deemed ideal for this research. On 2016 several attacks took place in Europe: the March attacks in Brussels, the July ones in Niza and the December ones in Berlin, among other. From these, the attacks in Brussels were considered the best option mainly due to four reasons. Firstly, they were large scale

¹³ At least related to Islam or Muslims, since the armed independentism terrorist group ETA has just recently this year surrounded their guns, thus cementing the peace making process.

¹⁴ Cathelijne De Busser, “Church-State Relations in Spain: Variations on a National-Catholic Theme?,” *GeoJournal* 67, no. 4 (2006): 283–94.

¹⁵ Avi Astor, “Governing Religious Diversity Amid National Redefinition: Muslim Incorporation in Spain”, in *After Integration*, ed. Marian Burchardt and Ines Michalowski (Wiesbaden: Springer Fachmedien Wiesbaden, 2015), 248.

¹⁶ For an outline of every terrorist attack carried out in Europe, the “Global Terrorism Database” is an excellent tool, which allows to select criteria such as region of the attacks, target group, perpetrator group and much more.

¹⁷ Global Terrorism Database “Global Terrorism Database ID: 200403110003,” accessed June 13, 2017, <https://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/search/IncidentSummary.aspx?gtdid=200403110003>.

attacks that targeted transport means (airport and metro lines) and produced over three dozens of casualties; this mirrors the 2004 attacks in Spain, which provides an interesting angle to the study¹⁸. Secondly, Brussels has a central role in the European Union's political and cultural life, as some of the major EU political institutions (such as the Commission and the Parliament). Thus, an attack on Brussels by a violent radical Islamist group is likely to elicit a response which makes strong arguments about social/moral values and the role of Islam in Europe. And thirdly, Belgium's Muslim population, at 6%, constitutes a significant percentage of the total; this is especially true in Brussels, where Muslims concentrates around 23.6% of the population¹⁹.

One final consideration remains. What news sources should be considered for this research? Given the general lack of research on Spanish media discourses of violent radical Islamist terrorism, both television news and newspapers seem fitting. In this case, this piece of research will focus on Spanish press, more specifically on three newspapers, of different ideological stances: conservative, centre, and progressive, *La Razón*, *El País* and *El Diario.es* respectively. These three newspapers have daily versions and reach to the whole national audience. The fact that they have national scope is preferred to regional/local newspapers, whose influence could be more limited. Additionally, all the three sources have a rich digital version, which allows for easier retrieval and manipulation of information²⁰.

1.3. Research Questions:

If we consider the issues discussed so far- Islamophobia in European societies, the current panorama of terrorist attacks, and the especially shocking nature of the latter- together with the selection of Spain and the Brussels attacks more specifically, we can see the research area of this thesis emerging. The relationship between State policies, terrorist attacks, and media coverage provides a fertile ground for analysing European anti-Islamic imaginaries. In order to explore these issues, the main research questions will be three, formulated as follows:

RQ1. What discourse(s) about Islam are mobilised in the Spanish press when reporting about terrorist attacks in the EU?

¹⁸ The similarities are interesting in so far as they are likely to elicit a greater response from the Spanish press. No comparison between the press treatment of the Madrid and the Brussels attacks will be included in this research.

¹⁹ "Moslims in België per Gewest, Provincie En Gemeente," accessed July 14, 2017, <http://www.npdata.be/>.

²⁰ Since the researcher was not in Spain during the elaboration of this paper, digital newspaper versions greatly eased her access to the relevant material.

RQ2. How are these discourses embedded in larger interpretative frameworks, and how do such frameworks affect the production of meaning around terrorist attacks and Islam?

RQ3. Once the mobilised discourses and their broader discursive contexts are clearly outlined, can we establish a connection between them and the specific situation of Islam and security in 21st C Spain and Europe?

1.4.Theoretical framework:

The theoretical framework of this research will be composed of three main elements, although many more theories will be brought in at a later stage so as to discuss the results of the analysis.

The first element is the concept of Islamophobia, as outlined by the *Runnymede Trust Fund Report* of 1997 and subsequent updates. This report is particularly useful in its categorization of attitudes towards Islam as either “open” or “closed”, with each end of the spectrum carefully defined²¹. The fact that the report examines the discursive aspects of positive as well as negative attitudes towards Islam is particularly important, for it allows this research to consider both options during and after the analysis and it opens up the options for interpreting the results of different sources.

One of their most useful tools is their compilation of “closed and open” views of Islam; it is a table which presents examples of how closed, and thus potentially Islamophobic, views of Islam are articulated, as opposed to open, and thus tolerant, views of Islam.

Closed and open views of Islam		
Distinctions	Closed views of Islam	Open views of Islam
<i>1. Monolithic / diverse</i>	Islam seen as a single monolithic bloc, static and unresponsive to new realities.	Islam seen as diverse and progressive, with internal differences, debates and development.
<i>2. Separate / interacting</i>	Islam seen as separate and other – (a) not having any aims or values in common with other cultures (b) not affected by them (c) not influencing them.	Islam seen as interdependent with other faiths and cultures – (a) having certain shared values and aims (b) affected by them (c) enriching them.
<i>3. Inferior / different</i>	Islam seen as inferior to the West – barbaric, irrational, primitive, sexist.	Islam seen as distinctively different, but not deficient, and as equally worthy of respect.

²¹ Conway, *Islamophobia a Challenge for Us All* 5.

4. <i>Enemy / partner</i>	Islam seen as violent, aggressive, threatening, supportive of terrorism, engaged in ‘a clash of civilisations’.	Islam seen as an actual or potential partner in joint cooperative enterprises and in the solution of shared problems.
7. <i>Discrimination defended / criticised</i>	Hostility towards Islam used to justify discriminatory practices towards Muslims and exclusion of Muslims from mainstream society.	Debates and disagreements with Islam do not diminish efforts to combat discrimination and exclusion.
8. <i>Islamophobia seen as natural / problematic</i>	Anti-Muslim hostility accepted as natural and ‘normal’.	Critical views of Islam are themselves subjected to critique, lest they be inaccurate and unfair.

Table 1. Open and Closed Views of Islam, from Runnymede Trust Report²².

The second element is the theoretical assumption of an on-going securitization²³ of Islam, in particular as outlined by Jocelyn Cesari in *Why the West Fears Islam* and Richard Jackson’s “Constructing Enemies: ‘Islamic Terrorism’ in Political and Academic Discourse”. The first provides a strong theoretical framework for understanding how discourses of terrorism intertwine with common-place stereotypes about Islam, and how from such discourses it naturally follows the proposition “that Islam is an existential threat to European political and secular norms and thereby justifies extraordinary measures against it”²⁴. Similarly, Jackson’s article engages with the notion of “Islamic terrorism” as presented in academic and political circles in the USA, and exposes it as “highly politicised, intellectually contestable (...) and largely counter-productive in the struggle to control subaltern violence in the long run”²⁵. Both these articles provide an articulated, realistic and critical view of terrorism discourses; more importantly, they outline some of the consequences of counter-terrorism measures being based on “intellectually contestable” knowledge. Such consequences are of particular gravity for Muslim populations, but they should be of concern for the non-Muslim population as well, since they have been found to pose a severe threat to civil liberties and human rights’ protection.

The third element of this theoretical framework is the notion of “framing”, as it is used in media analysis. Framing research argues that news frames function to suggest

²² Table taken from Conway, *Islamophobia a Challenge for Us All* 6.

²³ Securitisation theory is in itself “ the discursive construction of security threats”, or “how issues and events get constructed and framed as security threats”; Andrew W Neal, “‘Events Dear Boy, Events’: Terrorism and Security from the Perspective of Politics,” *Critical Studies on Terrorism* 5, no. 1 (2012).

²⁴ Jocelyne Cesari, *Why the West Fears Islam* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan US, 2013), 83.

²⁵ Richard Jackson, “Constructing Enemies : ‘ Islamic Terrorism ,’” *Government and Opposition* 42, no. 3 (2007): 394–426, 395.

how audiences can interpret an issue or event. “A framing effect occurs when a phrase, image, or statement suggests a particular meaning or interpretation of an issue”. Frames function by linking events to particular concepts, which serve to interpret the causes, implications and reactions to the event²⁶. Frames have been found to have substantial weight in how audiences interpret certain events, and some research points to the how news frames can induce particular heightened levels of fear on audiences, often to their detriment²⁷.

The existence of well-established frames is also important. It is generally agreed by scholars that frames draw on “popular culture or a series of events, fits with media routines or practices, and/or is heavily sponsored by elites”²⁸. This is arguably the case for terrorism; journalists reporting on terrorist acts might present over-simplified portrayals of violence, with easily discernable “good guys and bad guys” and little discussion of the deeper causes of terrorist activity²⁹.

In sum, these elements produce a framework in which representations of Islam must be understood in the specific context of terrorist activity, counter-terrorist measures, potentially discriminatory attitudes towards Muslims, and the particular conventions of media when reporting on terrorist activity.

²⁶David Tewksbury and Dietram A. Scheufele, “News Framing Theory and Research,” in *Media Effects Advances in Theory and Research*, ed. Jennings Bryant and Mary Beth Oliver (Oxon: Routledge, 2009), 17–33, 29.

²⁷ Nellis and Savage, “Does Watching the News Affect Fear of Terrorism?”, 751.

²⁸ Tewksbury and Scheufele, “News Framing Theory and Research” 21.

²⁹ *Ibid*, 23.

2. Methodology

2.1. Presentation of Data Sources:

The research will focus on three Spanish newspapers, of different ideological stances: conservative, centre, and progressive, *La Razón*, *El País* and *El Diario.es*, respectively. These three newspapers have daily versions and reach to the whole national audience. The fact that they have national scope is preferred to regional/local newspapers, whose influence could be more limited. The three newspapers all have digital archives, from which the news will be retrieved. This format will make the data more uniform, being all in the same medium, and not some from physical newspapers and some from digital versions. It will also make the analysis process easier, since no transcription from physical to digital form will be necessary. Furthermore, the format of the three archives includes a search engine which can be adjusted to a given time frame and to specific keywords. Furthermore, these archives all have their own system of “tags” which categorise articles according to topics, such as “Terrorism”, “Terrorist Attacks in Brussels”, “Islamic State”, etc. These tags will be included in the analysis of the material as indicators of particular trends regarding the framing of this event deployed by each newspaper.

This is a brief summary of the main ideological traits and economic ties of each newspaper used for the analysis.

La Razón is a newspaper connected to the conservative core of the Popular Party (PP-*Partido Popular*) and to the high ecclesiastic hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Church in Spain, and it is known for its strong support of the Spanish Royal Family. It self-proclaims an uncompromising defence of Spain, the (Royal) Crown, the Constitution, the Christian humanism, the free market, and so on. It is part of the *Grupo Planeta*, a multimedia company with dominant shareholder rights on several printed, television and radio media in Spain.

El País is one of the most successful newspapers in Spain, “both offline and online, where (it) attracts audiences three times the size of even the most successful digital-born companies”³⁰. Traditionally amicable towards the PSOE *Partido Socialista Obrero Espanol* (Spanish Workers’ and Socialist Party), has since grown very critical of the Socialist Party. It also has a hard editorial line towards the new Spanish left wing party, *Podemos* while remaining in the ideological centre in terms of social and gender equality

³⁰ Nic Newman, “Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2015,” 2016, www.digitalnewsreport.org, 30.

issues. *El País* is part of the *Grupo Prisa*, a stakeholder conglomerate whose main shareholder (57%) is in turn an American investment fund.

Finally, *El Diario.es* is a fairly recent start-up which keeps growing with an extensive network of collaborators and partnerships. Unlike the other newspapers, more than 70% of *El Diario.es* is directly owned by the workers of the company, with most of the revenue coming from subscription memberships and non-native advertisement on their web page. Ideologically, this newspaper defines itself as progressive, left-wing, concerned with socio-economic justice and un-biased news coverage, independent from economic and political pressures.

2.2.Data Collection Criteria

For the collection of data, this essay will review Spanish broadsheet's news reports and editorials/opinion articles concerning a particular episode of Islamic terrorism, the 22nd March 2016 triple bombing attack on the airport and public transport system of Brussels, in Belgium. The first two bombs went out at 7:58 am at the check-in lanes of Brussels Airport in Zaventem; a third device was found inside a suitcase and detonated later on without causing any casualties. Around an hour later, at 9:11 am, another explosion went off in the second car of a train wagon as it was pulling out of the Maelbeek station, which is located near some European Union offices, in the centre of Brussels city³¹. In total, there were 32 victims, and over 300 were injured; the three suicide bombers who carried out the attacks also died³².

Regarding a time frame, the attack selected for the analysis took place on the 22nd March 2016, and the data collection will stick to a three day period starting on the date of the attack, and covering the 23rd, 24th, and 25th March 2016. The selected time frame will allow putting together immediate and later reports, as well as early and later reflections on the attacks and their consequences. This will ideally provide enough material to understand the representation of terrorism and Islam in each newspaper. This criterion for data collection will hopefully allow avoiding a bias in the data collection process, and to include both apparently aseptic descriptions of the attacks, political statements and more elaborate opinion pieces reflecting on the attacks.

³¹ Meghan Keneally, "How the Brussels Attacks Unfolded," accessed July 23, 2017, <http://abcnews.go.com/International/brussels-attacks-unfolded/story?id=37877145>.

³² Michelle Fitzpatrick and Philippe Siuberski, "Brussels Airport Delays Reopening, as Attacks Toll Lowered to 32," accessed July 23, 2017, <https://www.yahoo.com/news/belgium-resumes-hunt-airport-suspect-criticism-mounts-004723635.html>.

Finally, these newspapers are solely published in Spanish, and even in their web version, most of the news are not available in English. Thus, I will do the translations myself; in case that a certain translation would demand for further explanation or could lead to misunderstanding, it will specify its meaning in a footnote. This could particularly important when certain words have an ideological or emotional weight in Spanish that does not translate well to the English equivalent.

2.3.Data Selection Criteria

The initial data collection returned an uneven number of news for each source, with the smallest and the biggest sample having over thirty articles of difference. In order to have a comparable sample for each source, the smallest sample (forty-eight articles) was chosen as the target quantity, and the other two samples were narrowed down to fit that number. This implied a certain degree of data manipulation, which could constitute a bias for the information presented.

In order to avoid that bias as much as possible, three criteria were used to select the articles to be eliminated from the samples: length, originality and relevance. Length implied all articles shorter than three hundred words were taken out. Originality meant that if an article's content was reproduced in a subsequent article, the one which greater amount of details and information was preserved and the other one discarded. Finally, if the use of these two criteria did not suffice to match the target quantity, the concept of relevance was used: articles referring to only loosed related aspects of the Brussels' attacks were discarded. This category included mostly articles providing contact lines to the Spanish Embassy in Brussels, so as to allow citizens to enquire for potential victims, and articles related to a friendly match that was to take place between Belgium and Spain shortly after the attacks, and that was subsequently moved to another time and location. After applying these filters, the target quantity of forty-eight was achieved for every source, providing a homogenous data sample for each source.

2.4.Data Analysis Sections and Respective Techniques

This analysis will be composed of two sections, the first one being mostly quantitative and the second one using a mixed methods approach, although a bigger weight will be given to the qualitative aspect of the study. This is due to several reasons: firstly, the personal preference of the researcher for qualitative studies and her particular abilities at this point, specifically her lack of familiarity with quantitative research techniques. Secondly, the lack of a bigger research team makes certain quantitative techniques

impossible, such as running the codes by several researchers independently, in order to check for coding reliability. This means that whatever code book established will be flawed and its biases cannot be limited by means of comparative coding. Thus, this study will be mainly qualitative in its approach to textual analysis, although this does not preclude the use of some statistical tools, such as occurrence of certain words or clauses and overall prevalence of certain topics.

This mixed methods approach will be achieved by using both traditional discourse analysis and the text content analysis software “MaxQDA”. The selected software, “MaxQDA”, works by creating code books (set expressions, words or complete sentences) against which the data is run, in order to find matches for such codes in the texts analysed. It also helps the researcher select specific fragments from large data collections for a detailed discussion. From a quantitative point of view, the use of “MaxQDA” will allow to extract simple statistical elements, such as word repetition, and to compare these elements across the three data sources. A selection of specific fragments will be used to discuss, from a qualitative point of view, the discourse formation and its main linguistic and stylistic resources in each newspaper.

The first step of this analysis will be to descriptively account for the news included in each newspaper regarding the Brussels terrorist attack. This account will include the topics which are discussed in the news and their frequency of occurrence. In so far as possible, this section will offer an objective account of the data, without addressing the language or tone of the content, but merely describing it.

The second section of the analysis will focus on a set of topics extracted by means of carefully coding all the material through the “MaxQDA” software. These topics are fundamentally different from the thematic division presented in the first section, because they are not based on the overt issues discussed by the newspapers, which can be easily deduced from their titles (“Belgian Police Finds New Evidence”, or “Spanish Politician Expresses his Solidarity to Brussels’ Victims”) or after a quick reading of the articles. Rather, to find the main topics discussed in the articles requires a lengthy reading of the material, and extensive coding. The coding activity starts by attaching descriptive categories to every possible unit (whether individual words or larger clauses of several words), such as “Explanation for Terrorist Activity”, “Identity of Victims” or “Reactions to Terrorist Activity”. After all material from each source has been thus coded, this general labels are further refined into analytical categories which allow to approach the

material in an orderly fashion. Although the creation of these categories has been mostly based on the results of coding the material (data-deduced), it also has an inductive element. This research has considered what are the main questions that the material “should be asked”, in order to provide a clear insight into the way discourse around terrorism is constructed in the Spanish press. They are as follows:

1. What is terrorism? This includes a differentiation between terrorism as a crime or as an act of war.

2. Who are the terrorists? This category has three levels: first, terrorists as political actors, religious fanatics or other identities; second, terrorists as European, foreign, or European with a particular ethnic/religious background; and third, terrorists as belonging to specific armed groups, like the Islamic State or Al Qaeda, or as being branded with an unspecific term (jihadists, Islamists, etc.).

3. Who are the victims of terrorism? This category includes two further subcategories: human casualties (witnesses, people killed or injured by the attacks, or somehow affected by the attacks’ consequences), and intangible casualties (values, morals or other abstract ideas).

4. How do we³³ react to terrorism, and how should we prevent it in the future? This category is the most complex of all, since it encompasses many different issues and it covers both Belgian, Spanish and EU spheres of reaction. Such complexity is reflected in the need for two main subcategories which are in turn further divided by region. The first one is immediate reactions to terrorist attacks, including expressions of solidarity and the need for social and political union. The second one is what measures are proposed to prevent terrorist attacks in the future, such as: increased/improved security measures (military deployment, increased information gathering and sharing, and strengthening of border controls), changes in foreign policies, and increased/improved social cohesion and integration policies.

It must be noted that these categories are present in each data source, but their representation relative to the total varies, as does the presence of the subcategories. Differences in terms of their distribution will be addressed and interpreted in the final section of the analysis.

³³ This “we” reflects the identities reflected in the articles by the authors, and does not include a positioning of the researcher.

To finish, two methodological aspects should be discussed at some length: the decision to divide the data in thematic groups for the quantitative analysis, and the approach to the distinction between “news” and “opinion” articles for analysis. Firstly, it should be mentioned that the thematic groups were fundamentally based on the data itself; after carefully reading through the three data sources, it became apparent that a vast majority of the articles could be grouped together based on their shared themes, and from here the decision was made to categorise the data in such a way that it reflected the main subjects broached by each newspaper. This decision is indeed a personal research choice, which has its advantages but also its shortcomings. In the opinion of the researcher, the division of the data in thematic group presents two major advantages: firstly, it brings forward the main topics in a straight-forward manner, which in and of itself provides the researcher with valuable information about the discourses and discursive frames to be found. Secondly, the similarities and differences across the data sources in terms of thematic groups and their sizes allows for a comparison of the data sources which make have not been possible under a different categorisation. As its main shortcoming, however, stands the fact that despite the researcher’s efforts to create the thematic focus based closely on the data, the possibility remains that a certain bias influenced the creation of the thematic groups.

Secondly, regarding the “news articles” vs. “opinion articles” distinction, it should be explained how this research will address the issue. News articles are easily described as informative pieces which inform the reader about the what, when, where and how of an event; they might be written by a particular author or be the summary of news agencies information, such as EFE or EuropaPress. Opinion or editorial articles, on the other hand, are journalistic pieces written by a determined author, whom offers his insights and knowledge, and approaches the topic from his personal point of view, sometimes offering an explanation for an event or a solution to the perceived problem. The different distribution of opinion and news articles in each source will be briefly mentioned at the beginning of the analysis, in terms of quantitative distribution, and it will be taken up again at the discussion of the findings. For the purpose of the qualitative analysis, both types of articles will be considered, as they provide different types of information and might contain different framing techniques.

3. Literature Review

3.1. Literature Review: Islam

3.1.1. Islam in Europe: Demographics and Public Debates³⁴

In the last decades, more and more researchers are interested in the different ways in which Europe looks, understands and interacts with Muslim faith. Since the early 2000s, several factors have propped an increase in academic, political and media attention to Islam: warfare and political instability of some countries with a majority of Muslim population, such as Syria, Lebanon or Palestine; the influx of war or famine refugees from African and Middle Eastern countries; the declaration of high levels of risk of terrorist attack in many European countries; and the increase in terror attacks themselves. Interestingly, the presence of these topics in political and social debate often turns the discussion back to the situation of European Muslims, their “adaptability” or lack of thereof and the impact that that Islam is supposed to have on “traditional European values and culture”³⁵. Whether in political, social or academic circles, the discussion of Islam is systematically tied to debates of immigration, integration, cultural change and security³⁶.

But how big is Islam in Europe? As of 2011, Muslims constituted a 6% of Europe’s total population³⁷, remaining a minority in most European countries, with average of populations oscillating between 4% and 13%³⁸. Muslim populations in Europe do have a bigger estimated growth than other population segments such as Christian, Jew or religiously unaffiliated; nevertheless, their overall numbers will remain small, and Europe is not likely to “become” Muslim. Indeed, research from the Pew Forum Institute points out that, “although Europe’s Muslim population is growing, Europe’s share of the global Muslim population will remain quite small. Less than 3% of the world’s Muslims are expected to be living in Europe in 2030, about the same portion as in 2010 (2.7%)”.

³⁴ Considering the broad nature of the topic “Islam in Europe”, this sections aims at presenting a general discussion of two topics: the presence of Islam in Europe, and the reception and discussions issuing around such a presence. This and subsequent sections addressing the situation of Europe mean to frame the information about Spain in a larger context, and by no means are intended to be a comprehensive description of European affairs. Finally, Europe should be understood as synonymous with EU for the purpose of this research.

³⁵ F. Yilmaz, “Right-Wing Hegemony and Immigration: How the Populist Far-Right Achieved Hegemony through the Immigration Debate in Europe,” *Current Sociology* 60, no. 3 (2012): 368–81, 370.

³⁶ *Ibid*, 381.

³⁷ Conrad Hackett, Alan Cooperman, and Katherine Ritchey, “The Future of World Religions: Population Growth Projections, 2010-2050,” *Pew-Templeton Global Religious Futures Project*, 2015, <http://www.globalreligiousfutures.org/>, 10.

³⁸ Examples of 4% Muslim populations would be Italy, Denmark or Spain, while the higher concentration of Muslim populations occurs in Russia and Bulgaria, with a 10% and 13.7% respectively as of 2010. All this figures are assumed to have increased exponentially by 2017, *Ibid*.

Despite this data, concerns about growing Muslim populations have instigated calls for restrictions on immigration in the UK, the Netherlands, Germany or Denmark.

There is a widespread tendency to treat all Muslims as immigrants, especially considering the great influx of Muslim immigrants entering Europe after the 1950s and 1970s as part of labour, post-colonial and post-Yugoslavian immigration trends, to which we may add the current influx of Syrian refugees. However, nowadays, second and third generation individuals constitute a significant percentage of the total population of Muslims in Europe. Moreover, there are a number of Muslim communities native to Europe, especially in the Balkan area, such as Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina or Bulgaria, whose presence in Europe dates back to the 14th Century³⁹.

With regard to integration, most European countries have seen an increase in State-led initiatives, although different countries have advanced at different speeds depending on several factors. At the EU, Muslim citizens are ensured equal treatment in all areas (employment, access to the political sphere, etc.) thanks to the European Charter of Human Rights⁴⁰, a legally binding document signed by all EU member states. However, in recent years, scholarly research has criticized the adequacy of the European Court of Human Rights and the European Charter of Human Rights for defending Muslim rights, especially when it comes to religious freedom⁴¹. As advanced by some scholars, “divergences in public policy responses to Muslim claims for recognition can be explained by varying institutional arrangements of political organization, collective identity, and religion that result from distinctive historical paths of state-formation and nation-building”⁴². Cross-country comparisons show that different countries in Europe have adopted various models for integration, which are in turn closely linked to the respective “legacies of nation building or colonial strategy. For example, French *republicanisme* stresses total assimilation of immigrants, while British multicultural race relations follows a pluralist model loosely based upon a similar colonial policy”⁴³.

³⁹ Benjamin Elisha Sawe, “European Countries With Significant Muslim Populations,” accessed July 16, 2017, <http://www.worldatlas.com/articles/european-countries-with-large-muslim-populations.html>.

⁴⁰ Council of Europe, “European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, as Amended by Protocols Nos. 11 and 14” (n.d.), <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/NOT/?uri=CELEX:12012P/TXT>.

⁴¹ T Kayaoglu, “Trying Islam: Muslims Before the European Court of Human Rights,” *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 34, no. 4 (2014): 345–64.

⁴² Matthias König, “Incorporating Muslim Migrants in Western Nation States. A Comparison of the United Kingdom, France, and Germany,” in *After Integration: Islam, Conviviality and Contentious Politics in Europe*, ed. Marian Burchardt and Ines Michalowski (Wiesbaden: Springer Fachmedien Wiesbaden, 2015), 43–58, 45.

⁴³ Christopher A. Bail, “The Configuration of Symbolic Boundaries against Immigrants in Europe,” *American Sociological Review* 73, no. 1 (2008): 37–59, 42.

On the issue of economy, there is considerable research on the disadvantages that Muslims face in the labour market. A 2006 report by the European Monitoring Centre for Xenophobia and Racism found that “differences in wages, type of employment and unemployment rates of migrants, of which a significant proportion belong to Muslim faith groups, indicate persistent exclusion, disadvantage and discrimination” Other problems faced by European Muslims concern a higher likelihood to be poor and live in segregated, crime-prone neighbourhoods, as well as difficulty accessing religious education in schools⁴⁴.

As briefly pointed out at the beginning of this section, most of the public debates around Islam in Europe seem to be concerned with the potential security threat that Muslims communities posit (mainly because of the danger of radicalization from “poorly integrated” young Muslims) and the general (in)compatibility of Islamic religious values and European values of tolerance, respect and democratic participation⁴⁵. One of the best examples of “fundamental incompatibility” is Samuel Huntington’s 1996 book *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, which has crystalized or perhaps given voice to a substantial sector of Europeans critical with the presence of Islam. This publication argues that conflicts of modern societies will be driven by cultural and religious differences, rather than by countries’ or populations’ specific economic and political interests. Huntington pays special attention to the role of Islam in this paradigm of clash; according to him, conflicts are particularly strong and bloody between Muslims and non-Muslims. In an essentialist reading of Islam, Huntington declares Islamic faith to be basically incompatible with “Western” (aka European or American) liberalism and democracy⁴⁶.

In many senses, Huntington’s depiction of Islam coincides with the definition of Islamophobia brought forward by the Runnymede Report, as presented in the theoretical framework: a monolithic block unresponsive to change, which does not have values in common with other cultures and is seen as aggressive, threatening, supportive of terrorism and engaged in a “clash of civilizations⁴⁷. But neither of these depictions of anti-Muslim

⁴⁴“Muslims in the European Union: Discrimination and Islamophobia,” *Policy*, 2006, 11.

⁴⁵ Upon claims of individuals possessing certain traits on based of their practice of the Islamic faith, it will be important to remember that “Empirical studies have shown time and again that most of the traits that Muslims have in common are the ones they share with the rest of humanity”, Yahya Sadowski, “POLITICAL ISLAM: Asking the Wrong Questions?,” *Annual Review of Political Science* 9, no. 1 (2006): 215–40, 217.

⁴⁶ Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996).

⁴⁷ Conway, *Islamophobia a Challenge for Us All*” 5.

sentiment should be considered as new. Historical events such as “the rivalry between Islam and Christianity, *Al-Andalus* and the Christian kingdoms, and the European and Ottoman Empires caused conflicts of interests and ideologies that stigmatized the Other”⁴⁸. Indeed, current Islamophobic attitudes in Europe draw from a rich tradition of depicting the Muslim individual as foreign, barbaric, fanatical, and inimical to any innovation, especially when coming from the Christian West. In recent years, “far right anti-immigrant political parties and political commentators in Europe have demonized Islam and Muslims and the net result has been a virulent form of cultural racism”⁴⁹. One consequence of this kind of anti-Muslim rhetoric is the proliferation of hate-crimes, as registered by the aforementioned 2006 EUMC report.

3.1.2. Islam in Spain: Demographics, State Provisions and Public Imaginaries

As Zapata says: “Islam in Spain is a new reality that people are encountering, but a historical fact that people tend to suppress”⁵⁰. Indeed, Spain’s relation with Islam is in many senses different from that of other European countries. The historical roots of this relationship date back to the conquest of Hispania (the Roman name given to the Iberian Peninsula) by the Umayyad Caliphate during the VIII C, and the posterior establishment of the Caliphate of Cordoba, which would last until the late XV C, with the fall of the Kingdom of Granada before the Catholic Kings. Islamic faith was forbidden and Muslims were expelled from Spain following the successful completion of the *Reconquista* of all territories formerly controlled by Muslim rulers. Ties to Muslim-majority countries continued during the late XIV and early XX C presence of Spanish colonies in North Africa, especially in Morocco, a kingdom with whom nowadays Spain still maintains strong economic ties.

Nowadays, there is an estimated of 1.919.141 Muslims in Spain⁵¹, which constitutes little more than 4% of the total population of Spain (46.507.760 as of 2014)⁵². Compared to other Western European countries, the percentage of immigrants is still quite low (about 7% in the country as a whole, but reaching some 10% in cities such as

⁴⁸ Ibid, 24.

⁴⁹ John L. Esposito and Ibrahim Kalin, eds., *Islamophobia. The Challenge of Pluralism in the 21st Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), Introduction xxiii.

⁵⁰ Ricard Zapata-Barrero, “The Muslim Community and Spanish Tradition: Mauophobia as a Fact, and Impartiality as a Desideratum,” in *Multiculturalism, Muslims and Citizenship A European Approach*, ed. Tariq MODOOD, Anna TRIANDAFYLLIDOU, and Ricard ZAPATA-BARRERO (Oxon: Routledge, 2006), 144.

⁵¹ Observatorio Andalusi, “Estudio Demográfico de La Población Musulmana” (Madrid, 2017), 7.

⁵² Ibid, 7.

Madrid and Barcelona)⁵³. Without differentiating between converts and immigrants, the overall number of Muslims in Spain has increased an 8.4% from 2015, and Islam will continue to be the fastest growing religion in Spain, mostly due to the higher fertility rate of Spanish Muslim women as compared to Catholic or religiously unaffiliated Spanish women⁵⁴.

Islam's presence in Spain more or less evenly distributed among Spanish converts and immigrants and foreign-descent communities. The latter represent a 59% of the total, of which 39% come from Morocco and 19% from other countries such as Algeria, Senegal and Pakistan. In turn, Spaniards converted to Islam represent a 41%⁵⁵ of the total, and "have a strong and vocal presence in the country"⁵⁶. The convert community has an especially strong representation among Muslim official associations, such as the *Comisión Islámica de España* (Islamic Commission of Spain), commonly known as CIE and the *Asociación de Musulmanes de España* (Muslim Association of Spain, known as AME)⁵⁷. However, as in many other European countries (Germany and the Netherlands, among others) the leadership of such associations is not without contestation. Research shows that opinions among Spanish Muslims are highly fragmented, and that "Muslims [of foreign descent, be it first or second generation immigrants] (...) consider them undemocratic and utterly divorced from the lives of Spain's Muslim residents"⁵⁸.

The legal basis for Spain's accommodation of Islam can be traced to the 1992 Islam-State Agreement, recognised in Law 26/1992⁵⁹, which was negotiated by the Spanish Government and CIE. The 1992 agreement includes a series of rights and privileges for Muslims, which aimed at levelling their rights to those already enjoyed by the Roman Catholic Church in Spain, and was passed "by unanimous vote in both houses of parliament". It covered

⁵³Teun A. van Dijk, *Racism and Discourse in Spain and Latin America* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2005), 15..

⁵⁴ Hackett, Cooperman, and Ritchey, "The Future of World Religions: Population Growth Projections, 2010-2050."

⁵⁵Andalusí, "Estudio Demográfico de La Población Musulmana," 7.

⁵⁶ Astor, "Governing Religious Diversity Amid National Redefinition: Muslim Incorporation in Spain," 247.

⁵⁷ Mikaela Rogozen-Soltar, "Managing Muslim Visibility: Conversion, Immigration, and Spanish Imaginaries of Islam," *American Anthropologist* 114, no. 4 (December 2012): 613, doi:10.1111/j.1548-1433.2012.01518.x..

⁵⁸ Elena Arigita, "Representing Islam in Spain: Muslim Identities and the Contestation of Leadership," *Muslim World* 96, no. 4 (2006): 563–84, 564. For a more detailed discussion of the existing Islamic associations in Spain, refer to Arigita (2006), Rogozen-Soltar (2012) and Astor (2015).

⁵⁹Andalusí, "Estudio Demográfico de La Población Musulmana," 9.

the protection and recognition of mosques as inviolable spaces, the right to religious accommodation in public institutions (i.e., the military and state prisons), the right to Islamic religious education in public and semi-public schools(...) the right to take time off from work to celebrate Muslim holidays, and the right of Muslim associations to participate in the conservation of Islamic historical sites and artefacts⁶⁰.

Toward the end of the 1990s, Spain experimented a major economic boom which generated an unprecedented number of employment opportunities in the agriculture, construction and services sector, and the “Muslim population began to increase precipitously”⁶¹, as a consequence of an increase in immigration from African countries, especially from the Maghreb area. Such labour market niches were composed of low-skilled, poorly paid jobs not readily accepted by Spanish nationals⁶².

Despite the comprehensive nature of the 1992 law, several Muslim organisations (CIE), international NGOs (Amnesty International) and independent research bodies (SETA- Foundation for Political, Economic And Social Research) have pointed out that the provisions contemplated in the law are not being met. Some bodies, like SETA, point to “institutional Islamophobia” as a major factor blocking Muslims’ access to the agreed services⁶³. Among others, they highlight “problems with the provision of imams in prisons and the number of available Muslim cemeteries” are important issues that remain unresolved by the public administration.⁶⁴

Other bodies, such as the CIE denounce the practical impossibility for Muslim students to access courses on Islam, which are provided only in a few *Comunidades Autónomas* (Autonomous Communities, the Spanish system of regional division) and only at the primary school level⁶⁵. As of 2015, only 46 teachers have been hired in all of Spain to teach courses on Islam in public schools, despite the demand for an estimated 400 teachers. Moreover, such courses are offered in only 6 of Spain’s 19 regions

⁶⁰ Astor, “Governing Religious Diversity Amid National Redefinition: Muslim Incorporation in Spain,” 253..

⁶¹ Astor, “Governing Religious Diversity Amid National Redefinition: Muslim Incorporation in Spain,” 255.

⁶²Francisco Javier Moreno Fuentes, “Dissonance between Discourse and Practice in EU Border Control Enforcement: The Spanish Case,” in *Immigration, Integration, and Security: America and Europe in Comparative Perspective* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2008), 257–59.

⁶³Bayrakli and Hafez, “European Islamophobia Report 2016,” 248.

⁶⁴ Ibid, 568.

⁶⁵ Andalusí, “Estudio Demográfico de La Población Musulmana,” 10.

(including Ceuta and Melilla). Courses on Islam are notably absent from public schools in Catalonia, despite the fact that it is home to Spain's largest Muslim population⁶⁶.

At the general citizen's level, purely Islamophobic attitudes are largely absent. "While a minority sector of the population is inherently Islamophobic, there is a majority of citizens whose rejection of Islam is due to mere ignorance of the principles of the religion and fear derived directly from lack of knowledge"⁶⁷. One exception to this overall tolerant trend is the increasing presence of online-hate⁶⁸, especially in social platforms such as Twitter or Facebook, where there is an increased in overtly Islamophobic hashtags, such as *#StopIslamización* (*#StopIslamization*), *#nosdestruyen* (*#Theyaredestroyingus*) and *#vuelveimperioespañol* (*#TheSpanishEmpirecomesback*).

3.2. Islam in the media

3.2.1. Islam in the European Media

Considering the wide-spread environment of prejudice, the representation of Muslims in the media has attracted significant attention from scholars. Overall, academics have been very critical of the view of Islam transmitted by mass media, especially TV news stations, tabloids and broadsheet newspapers.

One of the first examples of such scholarly work is Edward Said's 1997 book *Covering Islam: how the media and the experts determine how we see the rest of the world*. In it, Said argues that those who control or influence Western media (mainly politicians and large corporations) have the power to determine which images of Islam are brought forward and thus permeate Western imaginaries of Islam. In this context, misguided reporting and excessive coverage of, for example, women in *hijab*, portrays Islam as oppressive of women and restrictive. Similarly, focusing on the struggles of Algeria, Lebanon and Palestine solely in terms of religion transmit an idea of Muslims as violent extremists, dangerous and responsible for world-wide conflict⁶⁹, while ignoring the complex post-colonial and economic circumstances surrounding such conflicts.

Particularly interesting for us, given the similarities in research focus, are the works of Elizabeth Poole, John E. Richardson and Elzaim Elgamri. These authors focus specifically on British broadsheet press, and deconstruct their modes of representation of

⁶⁶ Ibid, 10-11.

⁶⁷ Bayrakli and Hafez, "European Islamophobia Report 2016," 560

⁶⁸ Ibid, 563

⁶⁹ Edward W. Said, "Covering Islam. How the Media Amd the Experts Determine How We See the Rest of the World" (Vintage Books, New York: 1997) 37.

Islam by using discourse analysis to highlight both the schematic form and textual content of news texts⁷⁰. First of all, their choice of broadsheet newspapers (as opposed to tabloid publications, for example) is worth discussing. It has been argued that “broadsheet newspapers’ argumentative structures tend to be based on such standards of reasonableness, and as such are adept at providing support for the expression of delicate or controversial social opinions whilst simultaneously protecting the speaker against unwanted [negative] inferences about his or her ethnic attitudes”⁷¹. This is due to the stylistic features of broadsheet newspapers, “where news items are written in a moderate, emotionally controlled language, close to the standard register and using more sophisticated and less explicit mechanisms [...] to control and bias the information given”⁷².

The findings of these publications are rather consistent: neo-orientalist and racist presumptions are mobilised in the press when it portrays Islam or Muslims, and a stronger emphasis (in terms of recurrence and length of articles) is given to news involving Muslims, violent events⁷³ and/or “religiously specific” actions that mark them as different (use of religious symbols, practice of fasting, etc.). Such actions reinforce the view of Islamic religion, in association to particular ethnicities, as a symbolic boundary in Britain, one that distributes populations between insiders and outsiders. Symbolic boundaries are “conceptual distinctions made by social actors ... [that] separate people into groups and generate feelings of similarity and group membership”⁷⁴. In this particular case, the use of such symbolic boundaries creates a vivid sense of difference between Muslim and non-Muslim British citizens.

However, not all authors agree on whether the particular reporting of Muslims in the media or the overarching anti-Muslim discourse in European society is the ultimate responsible for the perpetuation and reinforcement of “closed views” of Islam. The Runnymede Trust Fund argues that

Any one news story is interpreted by the reader or viewer within the context of a larger narrative, acting as a kind of filter or template. If the larger narrative is racist

⁷⁰ Elizabeth Poole, *Reporting Islam: Media Representations of British Muslims* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2002). See also Elzain Elgamri, *Islam in the British Broadsheets: The Impact of Orientalism on Representations of Islam in the British Press* (Reading: Ithaca Press, 2008) and John E. Richardson, *(Mis)Representing Islam The Racism and Rethorics of British Broadsheet Newspapers* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2004).

⁷¹ van Dijk, *Racism and Discourse in Spain and Latin America*, 15.

⁷² *Ibid*, 16.

⁷³ Richardson, *(Mis)Representing Islam*, 20.

⁷⁴ Bail, “The Configuration of Symbolic Boundaries against Immigrants in Europe,” 38.

(...) then the story is likely to be interpreted in a racist way, regardless of the conscious intentions of reporters, journalists and headline writers⁷⁵.

According to this view, the portrayal of Muslims in the media is not so much the problem as the dominant view of Muslims which readers will deploy when encountering such articles. This idea can also be turned around, though; several authors have argued that media puts forward distinct and clearly outlined frameworks of meaning within which particular events are made sense of, thus constricting the availability of meanings that such events can be attributed. "To frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described"⁷⁶. There is significant scholarly debate about what makes certain frameworks more salient than others; strong economic and political elite support or the fact that they resonate with already well-established popular narratives⁷⁷.

Despite these considerable discrepancies in how to interpret media discriminatory attitudes, the fact remains that in general, media in Europe is significantly biased against Muslims and Islam. And it is important to remember that such anti-Muslim attitudes are especially insidious and hard to detect in broadsheet publications, given their use of standard language, the semblance of reasonableness attached to these publications and the use of sophisticated mechanisms of meaning making that avoid an open articulation of Islamophobic ideas.

3.2.2. Islam in the Spanish Media

As we will see in subsequent sections, the contemporary presence of Islam in Spain has not yet received sufficient scholarly interest⁷⁸. This circumstance can be explained by several factors. First of all, the regime of General Franco, which was officially Catholic, outlawed any other manifestation of faith, thus rendering Islam either inexistent or invisible in Spain until the Democratic Transition of 1978⁷⁹. Secondly, Spain had traditionally been a country of emigration rather than immigration, and thus the tardiness of immigrant-Muslim settlement in Spain (1990s) must be understood as a factor

⁷⁵ Holloway, "Islamophobia - 20 Years On, Still a Challenge for Us All."

⁷⁶ Tewksbury and Scheufele, "News Framing Theory and Research," 33.

⁷⁷ Tewksbury and Scheufele, "News Framing Theory and Research," 34.

⁷⁸ The historical presence of Islam in Spain has however received abundant coverage by historians, many of them non Spaniards.

⁷⁹ De Busser, "Church-State Relations in Spain: Variations on a National-Catholic Theme?"

determining the relative lack of empirical research on the field. Thirdly, the Muslim population of Spain still remains significantly lower than that of other European countries, which might have also determined the lack of scholar interest in the field. This is not to say that there is no research on the field of Muslim representation in Spain; but it emerged from the late 1990s onwards and continues to experience a slower growth than other countries such as the UK or Germany.

In fact, existing research on Islam in the Spanish press is mostly linked to public and official attitudes towards immigration and racism, as well as citizenship policy making processes and their relation to anti-African stereotypes. Issues of Spanish identity, citizenship and belonging are closely linked to mainstream perceptions of the “otherness” of immigrants, especially when they come from African countries. Spain’s relationship to Africa (specifically regarding northern Morocco, Western Sahara, and Equatorial Guinea) has itself been subject of recent research, which points out Spain's relationship to Africa have been rather faltering and contradictory:

“Spain's national discourse of Africa has oscillated from exalting a natural and linguistic kinship between Northwest Africa and Spain—to the point of imagining a common space from the Pyrenees to the Atlas Mountains, though the centre seemed to remain in Madrid—to disparaging racist and sexualised representations of Africans that are reminiscent of the colonial literatures and imageries discussed in Said's *Orientalism*”⁸⁰.

When it comes to the specific relationship of Spanish “national identity” to Islam, the relationship is one of binary opposition, where:

“the construction of *Hispanidad* or Spanish identity as an essentially Christian identity goes back to the epic narratives of the *Reconquista* of St James or *Santiago Matamoros* (the Muslim killer), in which moors or *moros*, as the Muslims in Spain are called, were presented as fanatical, wild, cruel and lazy, and this has continued over the centuries”⁸¹.

In his work on racism and discourse, Van Dijk nuances Spanish anti-immigrant rhetoric, distinguishing current anti-African racism from anti-Arab/anti-Muslim racism, given Spain’s “historical consciousness of being the Southern rampart protecting Fortress Europe against Arab or Muslim ‘invasions’”⁸². He then connects the historical identity of Spain as an “occupied territory” by the Arab kingdom and its posterior role as the

⁸⁰Susan Martin-Marquez, *Disorientations: Spanish Colonialism in Africa and the Performance of Identity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008).

⁸¹Iker Barbero, “Citizenship, Identity and Otherness: The Orientalisation of Immigrants in the Contemporary Spanish Legal Regime,” *International Journal of Law in Context* 12, no. 361-376 (2016):363.

⁸²van Dijk, *Racism and Discourse in Spain and Latin America*, 15.

“Southern Guardian” of Christian Europe to current Islamophobic slurs which deploy the idea of Muslims “invading” or “taking over” Spain (as we saw in the hashtags of the previous section).

This image of (presumably Muslim) immigrants taking over Spain is an everyday reality in Spanish press, and, some scholars argue, the biggest reality of Islam in Spain, as far as press coverage is concerned. According to *Xenomedia- Observatorio de la Diversidad*, an SOS Racism initiative to tracking how ethnic and religious diversity are represented in several strata of society, “every day in Spain there are dozens of news items reporting irregular border crossings, stories linking immigration to crime and public safety or to the erosion of the welfare state”. Other sources have denounced that Spanish media reliance on such portrayal of immigrants has contributed to an “over magnification of the extent of illegal crossings on the Moroccan border in order to justify police taking illegal action by returning people to their country of origin”⁸³. Fundamental to Spanish media portrayals of Muslims is the notion that they are a disturbance or threat; this is Van Dijk’s assessment of the presence of immigrants in general, and Muslims in particular. A superficial analysis of the Spanish mass media (and official politics) provides a very different from other European countries, as “ there are no major, national or regional, newspapers in Spain that are blatantly racist, as is the case for instance for the major British tabloids”⁸⁴. However, a more content based analysis reveals that the “overall evaluative tendency of the articles is largely negative”, with “about two-thirds of all articles have topics with negative implications, and only one-sixth of the articles can be classified as rather positive”⁸⁵. Finally, the topic cluster covering everyday realities of immigrants in Spain (racism, discrimination, prejudice, violence against immigrants) “is not very dominant, and accounts for about 7% of the items”⁸⁶.

This goes to show that, while there is no overtly Islamophobic trend in the Spanish media, there is reason to consider that it could be the case. For a start, the strong relationship between Spanish identity and anti-Muslim discourses could mean a “thicker skin” (and thus greater difficulty in identifying it) towards Islamophobic rhetoric. On top of this, we must point out how the themes deployed in the discussion of Islam in the media are primarily negative, linked to ideas of forced entry (invasion) into the country,

⁸³ “Citizenship identity and otherness”, 365.

⁸⁴ van Dijk, *Racism and Discourse in Spain and Latin America* 36.

⁸⁵ *Ibid*, 40.

⁸⁶ *Ibid*, 41. All the above statistics are as of data from 1995 to 2000. Large scale research on newspaper topical treatment of immigrants and Muslims was not available.

criminality and “otherness”. Overall, further and more updated research is necessary to confirm or discard specifically negative or Islamophobic representations of Islam and Muslims in the Spanish media.

3.3.Terrorism and Islam

3.3.1. Terrorism and Islam in Europe

Since the 1990s, and especially since the 9/11 attacks, scholars of security and security professionals have noted an ever-rising tendency: the merging of internal and external security. Traditionally, the army has taken care of external security (border defense and control), while the police forces have overlooked the internal situation (crime). Nowadays, both branches have merged and increased in cooperation under the pressure of international organized crime and the need for surveillance of potential threats and the like⁸⁷. This change is in part justified and mobilised by the emergence of a discourse of “global raising insecurity”, which “describes the world as a more dangerous place than ever, characterized by a concomitant expansion of transnational organized crime and terrorism, which requires new measures heightening the level of security”⁸⁸.

The European Union⁸⁹ has fully responded to this discourse of global insecurity and global terrorism. This reaction, although it has generated substantial critique which will be discussed later on, must be understood in the context of a perceived increase in terrorist violence which was no longer limited to national boundaries and clearly defined political goals, as it was the case with ETA in Spain, RAF in Germany and the IRA in the UK. Additionally, the incorporation of self-proclaimed religious identification of the terrorists with the Islamic faith has prompted the tendency to distinguish between “older”, more political forms of terrorist and the “new” (religious, international, Islamic) terrorism.

Indeed, over the last two decades European institutions (both at the international and national level) have had to enhance their attention, understanding and response to “global Islamist terrorism” as a result of a succession of alarming events: “the Hamburg Al Qaeda cell that led the attacks of 9/11, (...) the murderous gunning of over 200 persons

⁸⁷ Didier Bigo, “The Emergence of a Consensus: Global Terrorism, Global Insecurity, and Global Security,” in *Immigration, Integration, and Security: America and Europe in Comparative Perspective*, ed. Ariane Chebel D’Appollonia and Simon Reich (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2008), 67.

⁸⁸ *Ibid*, 68.

⁸⁹ This chapter will specifically refer to the European Union, as it deals with policies and State approaches to terrorism, which cannot be understood in the broader and more ambiguous term of “Europe”. Unless stated otherwise, this research will refer indistinctively to Europe and the European Union.

in Paris during the year 2015 (...), not to mention abundant reports of young militants recruited from Europe to fight for jihadists in Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, and elsewhere”⁹⁰. In such a context, the European Union has been pressured by both key international partners (primarily the UN and USA⁹¹) and its own member states to strengthen its existent regulation on security and terrorism prevention. It has done so by focusing on two areas: limiting immigration (especially from third party nationals and asylum seekers⁹²) and increasing surveillance within the member states and across borders. One example of the increased surveillance is the PNR, the “Passenger Name Record”, which the EU Parliament approved in May 2004, amidst strong critics of violation of privacy rights; other examples include the creation of new national and international level bodies charged with gathering, storing, contrasting and exchanging data on potential “security threat” individuals, such as the EU Regulation 810/2009 establishing a Community Code for Visas, the Return Directive 2008/115/EC, the European Neighbourhood Policy, or the automated biometric border crossing systems implemented by the European Border Agency FRONTEX⁹³. These policies have increased State powers for recording private information, as well as extended police authority and the length of time for detentions related to terrorism charges⁹⁴. It would be misleading, however, to consider that these policies have occurred solely as a response to the terrorism threat. Their foundations can already be found in the 1985 *Schengen Agreement*, which included “common visa policies, coordination of police forces, and exchange of computerized personal data. Another restrictive outcome was the conceptualization of illegal immigration and international crime as illicit activities to be prevented through the intervention of police forces”⁹⁵.

⁹⁰ Javier Jordan and Nicola Horsburgh, “Mapping Jihadist Terrorism in Spain,” *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 28, no. November 2004 (2005): 169–91, 182.

⁹¹ Immediately after the 9/11 attacks, the UN Security Council unanimously passed Resolution 1398, which called on every countries to co-operate in bringing anyone related to the attacks to justice (perpetrators, organisers and sponsors). Moreover, it established accountability for support or harbouring of culprits and collaborators. Western powers (USA, EU, Russia and others) were told to increase efforts “to suppress and prevent terrorist activities through co-operation and implementation of anti-terrorist conventions”, Jolyon Howorth, “European Security and Counter-Terrorism,” in *Immigration, Integration, and Security: America and Europe in Comparative Perspective* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2008), 95.

⁹² While the EU did not strictly eliminate asylum protocols, it created a great number of restrictions on asylum-seekers which in the practice meant blocking it as an immigration route.

⁹³ Barbero, “Citizenship, Identity and Otherness: The Orientalisation of Immigrants in the Contemporary Spanish Legal Regime,” 362.

⁹⁴ Jolyon Howorth, “European Security and Counter-Terrorism,” 108.

⁹⁵ Moreno Fuentes, “Dissonance between Discourse and Practice in EU Border Control Enforcement: The Spanish Case,” 259.

Overall, these changes in the “security philosophy” of the EU have been met with considerable opposition on the part of scholars and NGOs, who argue that in the face of new security challenges, the EU is “more inclined to strengthen security measures than to admit that they are unable to address the dilemmas posed by the so-called second and third generation of immigrants”⁹⁶. Indeed, the threat posed by “home-grown” terrorism and the increasing numbers of young European traveling to Syria and other foreign territories to fight alongside recognized terrorist groups, seems to be largely overlooked in EU policies⁹⁷. Another thorny issue on the side of politicians and scholars alike is the difficulty at defining terrorism. In its broadest sense, terrorism is defined as “the use of intentionally indiscriminate violence as a means to create terror or fear, in order to achieve a political, religious or ideological aim”⁹⁸. Historically, the term “terrorism” originated during the French Revolution, and has since been assigned to the ideological left and right, to state and guerrilla warfare, to anti-colonial and nationalist waves, to religious and secular movements alike. As some scholars point out, terrorism as a concept suffers of “border and membership problems”: “the same acts, such as air piracy or assassinations, may be considered terrorist acts on some occasions but not on others, usually based upon the assumed motivations of the perpetrators or the social standing of their victims”⁹⁹

One of the most problematic outcomes of current counter-terrorism measures is the profiling techniques addressed mainly at Muslim Europeans¹⁰⁰, which do little to alleviate the problems faced by second and third generation immigrants, while creating a situation where potential abuse of anti-terrorism legislation leads to “indiscriminate arrests and imprisonments that compromise the civil liberties of Muslims. The net result is a growing climate of suspicion, deterioration of relations between Muslims and non-Muslims, and the growth of Islamophobia”¹⁰¹.

Finally, scholars have consistently argued that to follow the logic of wide-spread suspicion of Muslims and to issue policies targeting mainly Muslims, despite a systematic

⁹⁶ Ariane Chebel d’Appollonia, “Immigration, Security, and Integration in the European Union,” in *Immigration, Integration, and Security: America and Europe in Comparative Perspective* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2008), 204.

⁹⁷ For example, by addressing problems of spatial segregation/ghettoization, economic disadvantages, etc.

⁹⁸ Leonard Weinberg, Ami Pedahzur, and Sivan Hirsch-Hoefler, “The Challenges of Conceptualizing Terrorism,” *Terrorism and Political Violence* 16, no. 4 (2004): 778.

⁹⁹ *Ibid*, 2004: 779. For a lengthier discussion on the conceptualisation problems of terrorism please refer to Boaz Ganor, “Defining Terrorism: Is One Man’s Terrorist another Man’s Freedom Fighter?” *Annual Editions: Violence and Terrorism* 03-04 (2003) pp.11–19.

¹⁰⁰ European Muslims being understood both in terms of religious practice and those with an immigration background from a Muslim-majority country

¹⁰¹

lack of evidence, is illegal and contradicts the concept of human rights as recognised and ratified by all EU countries in the *European Charter of Fundamental Human Rights*. “(...) it is to suggest that those rights can and should be made secondary to counterterrorism imperatives. It is to suggest that human security is of lesser significance than homeland security”¹⁰².

3.3.2. Terrorism and Islam in Spain

Contrary to popular belief, the Spanish experience with terrorism was not limited to ETA prior to 11M¹⁰³. From the early 1980s onwards, Spanish police arrested a number of Islamist violent terrorist, which had targeted American, Israeli, Saudi or Kuwaiti citizens temporarily residing on Spanish soil¹⁰⁴. The common denominator of the terrorist activity in Spain up until the early 2000s is that it was carried out by non-residents, being therefore “an external form of terrorism. Spain was merely the scene for action. This is in sharp contrast to the 1990s, when resident and permanent Jihadist networks emerged in Spain”¹⁰⁵.

After the 9/11 attacks on USA soil, the Spanish legal and enforcement concept of terrorism changed dramatically. As we have seen before, the EU at large followed the counter-terrorist strategy devised by U.N. Security Council’s answer to 9/11, and so did Spain. This entailed the (mandatory) adoption of “Resolution 1373 on September 28, 2001, mandating all U.N. member states to adopt specific measures to combat terrorism and creating the Counter Terrorism Committee (CTC) to monitor states’ compliance”¹⁰⁶. This resolution explicitly linked immigration and asylum seeking individuals to potential terrorists, strongly recommending states to “up” their security screening and selectiveness of newcomers. This Resolution came to reinforce already existing EU led initiatives, which since their implementation in the late 1990s had meant an important shift in Spain’s immigration and border control enforcement policy. In compliance with Resolution 1373, and parallel to immigration restriction policies implemented by recommendation of the EU, Spain answered with a “tightening of the requirements for gaining asylum”, which

¹⁰² Stuart Croft, “Introduction,” *Government and Opposition* 47, no. 3 (2007): 270.

¹⁰³ 11M is how Spaniards usually refer to the attacks of the 11th March 2004 on the train system of Madrid, Spain, which killed 192 people and injured around 2,000.

¹⁰⁴ A detailed outline of Islamist terrorist actions on Spanish soil since the early 1980s can be found on Jordan and Horsburgh, “Mapping Jihadist Terrorism in Spain.”

¹⁰⁵ Ibid. 171.

¹⁰⁶ Fernando Reinares, “After the Madrid Bombings: Internal Security Reforms and Prevention of Global Terrorism in Spain,” *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 32, no. 9 (2009): 367–88.

resulted in a “drastic decline in the rate of acceptance for asylum status”¹⁰⁷. Simultaneously, Spanish authorities invested significant resources to build an effective system of border control around Ceuta and Melilla, the only two points of direct contact between Morocco and Spain, as well as along the Southern coastline of the Iberian Peninsula¹⁰⁸. This string of measures came to give official recognition to Spain as “guardian of the EU’s Southern Border”¹⁰⁹.

With regards to the specific measures by the Spanish Government to counter terrorist activity, these must be understood within the context of the three-decade long struggle against ETA¹¹⁰, with the result of an improved capacity by police and judicial forces “to prevent and combat terrorism under the rule of law”¹¹¹. Indeed, the Spanish legal system defines terrorism as a criminal offense, within Article 571 as “[terrorists are] those who belonging, acting in the service of or collaborating with armed groups, organizations or groups whose objective is to subvert the constitutional order or seriously alter public peace”¹¹². However, in the face of the 11M tragedy, it was argued that “the Spanish police was badly prepared to face the risks and threats of current global terrorism”, because of shortage in the number of civil servants working in this area and the shortage of resources allocated to them¹¹³. The result was the creation, in May 2004, of the *Centro Nacional de Coordinacion Antiterrorista* (National Antiterrorism Coordination Centre), CNCA, which coordinated different police bodies, military resources and intelligence gathering resources; this move was mirrored by other EU countries, in the aforementioned global tendency towards a merging of internal and external security threats and response bodies.

¹⁰⁷ Moreno Fuentes, “Dissonance between Discourse and Practice in EU Border Control Enforcement: The Spanish Case,” 263.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid, 265.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid, 262.

¹¹⁰ ETA (*Euskadi Ta Askatasuna*), is a formerly leftist Basque nationalist and separatist armed group, operative since the 1960s in northern Spain (Basque Country) and southwestern France; it has killed over 820 people (including 340 civilians). As of 2011 a permanent ceasefire was declared and a rendition of all weapons and secret hideouts is underway.

¹¹¹ Reinares, “After the Madrid Bombings: Internal Security Reforms and Prevention of Global Terrorism in Spain”, 367.

¹¹² Judith Sunderland, “Setting an Example? Counter-Terrorism Measures in Spain” (Madrid, 2005).

¹¹³ Reinares, “After the Madrid Bombings: Internal Security Reforms and Prevention of Global Terrorism in Spain”, 370.

Substantial revision to the counter-terrorist model was introduced in 2015, after the attacks in Paris, when the government and most of the political parties¹¹⁴ with representation in the Spanish Congress signed a new counter-terrorism agreement, known as *Pacto Antiyihadista*. Special emphasis was placed on countering the spread of terrorist discourse online, the praise of any terrorist activity and the toughening of the sentences for terrorism. The criminal law was substantially changed to adapt to the new terrorism of groups like DAESH and there was a strengthening of the functions of security forces, prison officers, judges and prosecutors.

The previous counter-terrorist legislation, but especially the 2015 development, has attracted considerable criticism from civil rights' organisations and journalists, who see it has having the potential for increased authority abuse. For example, with regards to the possibility of detainees charged with terrorism charges being up to five days under police custody, without access to the correspondent judicial authority, as it is recognised in the European Charter of Fundamental Human Rights¹¹⁵. Another cause of concern for Spain is the use of poorly legally defined terms such as “apology of terrorism” to suppress political opposition or ideological dissent, as it was the case with the 2015 law being used to harshly punish jokes about the assassination of a Francoist PM by ETA terrorist¹¹⁶. These restrictions have been said to affect even comedians who made jokes about Catholic symbols¹¹⁷.

Finally, criticism of Spanish approach to security is also concentrated on its lack of a clearly defined integration policy to curb radicalization processes at their roots. It is argued that there should be “an integrated, multifaceted plan to interweave them [security measures] with other actions taken in relation to the social integration of immigrants, the regulation of religious groups, socialization in schools, and foreign policy”¹¹⁸. Other security warn Spain to take head of the problems that France is currently facing due to

¹¹⁴ With the exception of some nationalist parties and *Podemos*, a recently emerged left-wing party, who voiced considerable opposition to the new *pacto anti-tyihadista*, attracting accusations of support of terrorism from certain parties and conservative sectors of the press and society.

¹¹⁵ Sunderland, “Setting an Example? Counter-Terrorism Measures in Spain”.

¹¹⁶ Cathal Sheerin, “The Threat Of ‘glorifying Terrorism’ laws,” *IFEX*, 2017. Accessed 12 June 2017, https://www.ifex.org/europe_central_asia/2017/02/02/glorifying_terrorism_charges/; Human Rights Watch, “Spain: Draft Public Security Law Would Limit Protests,” *IFEX*, 2015, Accessed 12 June 2017 https://www.ifex.org/spain/2015/03/10/public_security/.

¹¹⁷ Silvia Nortes, “No Laughing Matter: Making Jokes about Franco and ETA Is off the Table in Spain If You Want to Avoid Trouble with the Law,” *Index on Censorship* 46, no. 2 (July 19, 2017): 85–86, doi:10.1177/0306422017716058.

¹¹⁸ Reinares, “After the Madrid Bombings: Internal Security Reforms and Prevention of Global Terrorism in Spain”, 385.

insufficient efforts on the integration arena. “Rejection both socially and in the labor market generates resentment among the victims of xenophobia, where resentment is a factor for integration into a Jihadist network”¹¹⁹.

Moreover, in relation to the increasing number of Moroccans in Spain and their economic and social stagnation,

The success or failure of their integration constitutes two elements of great transcendence”. In the end, this [economic and social stagnation] could lead to pockets of marginalization, giving way to unfavorable positions for second generations and generating frustration within wide sections of the immigrant community. The experience of other countries demonstrates that this kind of situation can be exploited by the promoters of the global Jihad when attempting to extend their network¹²⁰.

3.4. Terrorism and Islam Press in the Media

3.4.1. Terrorism and Islam in the European Media

As we have seen, the presence of Islam in the media has received detailed coverage from scholars. Likewise, there is a growing body of literature addressing changes in security trends in Europe¹²¹. But what about media representations of terrorism, specifically Islamist terrorist attacks?

The wave of terrorist attacks in Europe, the USA and pretty much all over the world (East Asia, the Middle East, sub-Saharan African countries, and so on) during the last decades has, among other factors, entailed a growing ubiquity of Islamist terrorism in the media. This has, in turn, started to catch academic interest from different academic fields, mainly Media and Discourse Studies. Two publications, from many, must be mentioned: *Framing Terrorism. The News Media, the Government and the Public*, and *Writing the War on Terror*. These works focus on the American post-9/11 context, and attempt to define the “elusive concept of war on terrorism, and the way that rhetoric has been used to justify the global counter-terrorism offensive as a response to 9/11”¹²²; they also address how language has been used to manipulate public anxiety about terrorism to gain support for military action. While mentions to the role of Islam in the “war on terror”

¹¹⁹ Jordan and Horsburgh, “Mapping Jihadist Terrorism in Spain,” 185–86.

¹²⁰ *Ibid*, 186..

¹²¹ It is necessary to highlight the creation of the journal *Critical Studies in Terrorism* in 2007, which was preceded by some seminal works in the field such as Richard Jackson’s 2005 book, *Writing the War on Terrorism*. One of CST’s main advantages is their independence; while the field of Terrorism Studies has seen a substantial growth since 9/11, much of it is sponsored and conducted by state-actors, which greatly hinders its capacity for criticism of current policies and dominant actors.

¹²² Tewksbury and Scheufele, “News Framing Theory and Research,” 6.

discourse are unavoidable, these publications do not target directly the role of anti-Muslim sentiments in such a construction. More importantly, the American context differs in significant ways from the European, even if official counter-terrorism policies have ran parallel in the last years.

At any rate, these publications (especially *Framing Terrorism*) provide us with a working example of the application of framing theory to media coverage of terrorism. In particular it articulates the question of whether media reporting terrorism “err on the side of governments, due to an overreliance upon the *framework of interpretation* offered by public officials, security experts, and military commentators, with news functioning ultimately to *reinforce support* for political leaders and the security policies they implement?”¹²³ Subsequent research¹²⁴ has combined “framing theory” with other disciplines, such as narrative theory, in order to incorporate new layers to the analysis of media’s construction of Islam and the “war on terror” narrative. Its results argue that current violent conflicts over territory and material are “being widely emplotted as a religious war waged by irrational fanatics against innocent and peace-loving nations”¹²⁵, by means of “a range of carefully selected translations”¹²⁶ which frame conflict around (Islamic) religion.

Finally, another article of particular interest for this research covers the representation of Muslims in non-mainstream American mass media platforms, “The Fringe Effect: Civil Society Organizations and the Evolution of Media Discourse about Islam since the September 11th Attacks.”¹²⁷ It identifies five different media frames, “five ways of organizing information related to Islam”¹²⁸, as methodological tools which permit the identification of different ontological categories of Islam: positive (Muslims as victims), negative (as enemies), or “blurred” (Muslims should be judged on other components of their identity, aside from their religion) among others. It also introduces the use of “discursive fields”, as “places where Islam and its definition is contested”, identifying that the relationship between Islam and violence is particularly salient in the

¹²³ Ibid, 4, *my emphasis*.

¹²⁴ Mona Baker, “Narratives of Terrorism and Security: ‘accurate’ Translations, Suspicious Frames,” *Critical Studies on Terrorism* 3, no. 3 (2010): 347–64.

¹²⁵ Ibid, 351

¹²⁶ Ibid, 361

¹²⁷ Christopher A. Bail, “The Fringe Effect: Civil Society Organizations and the Evolution of Media Discourse about Islam since the September 11th Attacks,” *American Sociological Review* 77, no. 6 (2012): 855–7.

¹²⁸ Ibid, 857.

post 9/11 scenario, and that discursive framework of “Muslims as enemies” have drifted “from the fringe of the discursive field to the very centre of mainstream over time”¹²⁹ .

With regard to the relationships between Islam, terrorism and European media there is significantly less available research. Perhaps due to the great concentration of attacks on the UK and France, and their size in terms of casualties and national shock, a number of studies exist on the press of these countries. In the case of the UK, it deals with the portrayal of Muslims in the context of the aftermath of a terrorist attack¹³⁰. In the case of France, the existing research¹³¹ focuses more directly with the mode of reporting of Islamic terrorist, in this case the attack on the headquarters of the magazine *Charlie Hebdo*, in French broadsheet publications. This latter line of research found that on reporting radical violent Islamist terrorism “Islam is largely misrepresented, due to a number of simplifications, misconceptions and the fusing of Islam piety and terrorist inclinations”¹³².

Overall, existing research seems to confirm that the Islamophobic and reductionist portrayal of Muslims in mainstream media is mirrored in its treatment of violent radical Islamist terrorism and its associated territorial conflicts. Moreover, the problematic nature of “terrorism” as an ontological category does little to avoid partisan appropriations of the term. Finally, the deployment of particular frameworks of interpretations of terrorism has been said to work, directly or indirectly, to support specific policies, budget expenditures and lines of foreign policy¹³³.

3.4.2. Terrorism and Islam in the Spanish Media

The coverage by the media of all news related to terrorist attacks where Muslims are involved has been seriously criticized by NGOs, anti-racist groups and Muslim organisations. One example is the clear distinction in coverage that self-proclaimed Islamist terrorist attacks and Islamophobic attacks get from mainstream media in Spain. On the 20 December, a terrorist attack shook the city of Berlin when a lorry driven by a terrorist killed 12 and injured 48 in a Christmas market. The DAESH claimed

¹²⁹ Ibid, 869.

¹³⁰Is Shaw, “Stereotypical Representations of Muslims and Islam Following the 7/7 London Terror Attacks Implications for Intercultural Communication and Terrorism Prevention,” *International Communication Gazette* 74, no. 6 (2012): 509–24.

¹³¹ Mariela Cuadro, “Racismo Religioso: El Islam En La Economía Discursiva Del Terrorismo,” *Relaciones Internacionales UAM*, no. 36 (2016): 59–79.

¹³² Ibid, 72, my translation.

¹³³Richard Jackson, *Writing the War on Terrorism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005)..

responsibility for the event the following day. On the very same day, an Islamic centre in Zurich was attacked by a Swiss man who killed one and injured three more before committing suicide. Though both news stories appeared in the written press, the amount of detail, time and attention devoted to both clearly differ. On the [Spanish] national television, many channels did not even mention the Zurich attack while all channels devoted time to explain thoroughly the Berlin terrorist attack with the fear-inducing idea that Europe was threatened again by “Islamic terrorism”¹³⁴.

A report on Islamophobia in 2015 denounced the indiscriminate use by some media platforms of the terms “Islamist” and “Islamic”, without real understanding of the connotations of those concepts. They also denounce the “journalist’s expression of supposition, by labelling political parties, religious movements and armed bands alike” with the said Islamic label. They further problematize the depiction of Muslim politicians as “Islamic, but not Islamic-democrat, social-democrat, etc. If the terrorist considers himself Muslim then he must be Islamic or Islamist, never just a terrorist or (a terrorist) belonging to an armed band with a specific name”¹³⁵.

This final section aims at pointing out the lack of exiting research on the representation of Islamist Terrorism in the Spanish Press. As we have seen, there exists, if not sufficient, solid research on the situation of Islam and terrorism in Spain. However, some of the more substantial critiques of current views of Islam in Spain come from NGOs and Muslim Organisations, rather than from academic research. This situation opens up the niche of the following research, which aims at filling a perceived research gap at the Spanish and European level. Three main reasons can be given: first, that Muslim presence will continue to be an important aspect of Spanish social life, and that conviviality, if not the worse than in Europe, can still be improved. Second, that the representation of Islam in the context of terrorism constitutes an excellent locus of interrogation of the associated views of Islam by Spanish media, and to a certain extent, the political elites that influence it and the public that consumes it. And third, that interrogation about the modes of representation of terrorism itself is necessary, in so much as we know that inaccurate representations of Muslims harm rather benefit counter-terrorist struggles, and also in the sense that terrorism is a relatively un-clear phenomenon

¹³⁴ Bayrakli and Hafez, “European Islamophobia Report 2016,” 557.

¹³⁵ Observatorio Andalusi, “Informe Especial J/2015 Institución Para La Observación Y Seguimiento de La Situación Del Ciudadano Musulmán Y La Islamofobia En España” (Madrid, 2016), 6.

that requires of further critical approaches from both academics, journalists and policy makers.

4. Analysis

4.1. Quantitative Analysis: Topic Distribution

4.1.1. Quantitative Analysis. Topic Distribution in *La Razón*

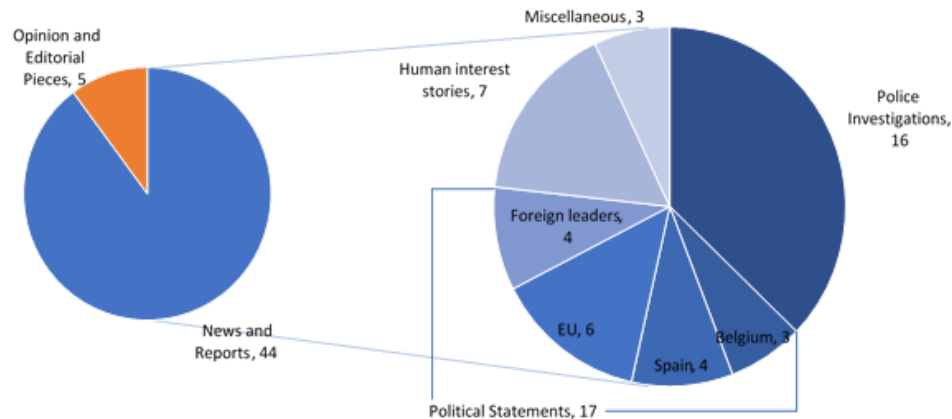


Table 2. Topic Distribution in *La Razón*

The un-refined selection of articles from *La Razón* returned eighty-three articles, the biggest amount of articles from the three sources. The articles discarded followed the selection criteria outlined in the methodology section, mostly on account of length and originality, and some fewer ones on account of relevance.

Focusing on the selected articles, the first division is between news and opinion pieces. There is a great difference in numbers, with news articles representing the overwhelming majority (over 91%). The opinion pieces reflect on the state of Brussels city after the attacks and the terrorists' connections to the 2015 Paris attacks.

Within the news articles, we can distinguish three main thematic groups and a final miscellaneous category. The first group contains reports on the investigation of the attacks, including updates on the culprits' identity and their collaboration with police investigations, as well as potential relations of the culprits to Spanish and French terrorist networks. The second group reflects Spanish, Belgium, EU and foreign (USA) politician's reactions to the attacks, together with announcements of emergency meetings at the Belgium and EU level, and announcements of tighter security measures at several levels. In consonance with the Catholic outlook of the newspaper, it includes two pieces concerned with the Pope's reactions to the attacks. The third group is made up human interest stories, which includes survivors' and Brussels citizens' testimonies, and

identification of some victims¹³⁶. The fourth group includes a miscellaneous of news¹³⁷, concerned with transport cancellations, a survey the Spanish media coverage of the attacks and a summary the main terrorist attacks in Europe since 2000.

4.1.2. Quantitative Analysis Topic Distribution in *El País*

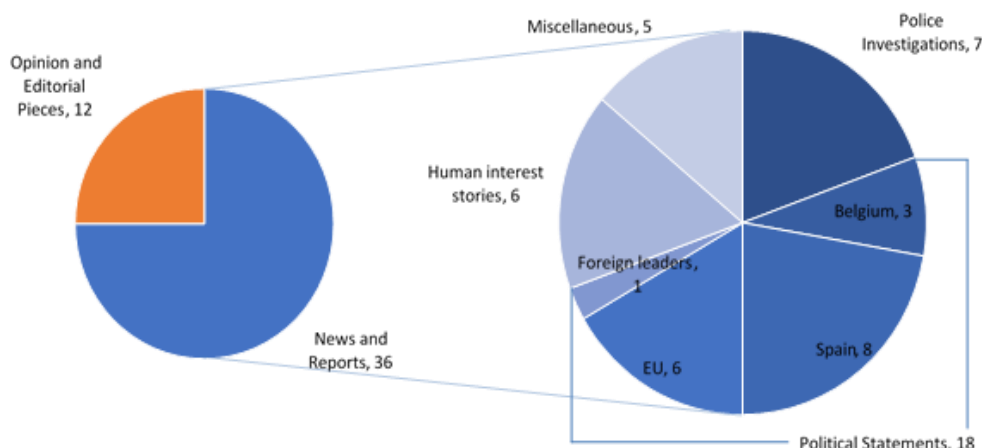


Table 3. Topic Distribution in *El País*

The un-refined selection of articles from *El País* returned sixty articles, the second biggest amount of articles from the three sources. The articles discarded followed the selection criteria outlined in the methodology section, mostly on account of originality, and some fewer ones on account of length and relevance.

Focusing on the selected articles, the first division is between news and opinion pieces. News articles represent the majority of the total (75%), but there is a sizeable amount of opinion pieces as well. Such opinion pieces cover a wide variety of themes, such as Brussels as a terrorist target and a source of radicalized individuals, current counter-terrorist strategies and the state of Brussels' city after the attacks.

Within the news articles, we can distinguish three main thematic groups and a final miscellaneous category. The first group is rather small, and it contains a few reports on the investigation of the attacks, many descriptions of the terrorists' past criminal history, and several pieces on the culprits' identity and their links to other European

¹³⁶ The grouping of the articles in the outlined categories was done according to their thematic focus (political statements, investigations on the attacks, etc.). In the case of the second group, "human interest stories", witnesses' testimonies and victims' accounts were grouped together based on the fact that they both bring an emotional angle -the death of the victims and the point of view of witnesses- to the report. This emphasis on individual experiences makes them a distinct category from police reports or political statements.

¹³⁷ The miscellaneous category was created based on the singularity (only being one of them) of articles not fitting any of the other categories.

terrorist networks. The second group is by far the largest, and it reflects Spanish, Belgium, EU and foreign politician’s reactions to the attacks; it has a strong emphasis on Spanish politicians, framing their reactions on the context of their existing rivalries. The third group is made up of human interest stories, with an even division between interviews with survivors of the airport and train bombs, and identification of Spanish and Latin American victims. The miscellaneous group comprises a small selection of news regarding airport traffic, an attack on a Spanish mosque in Spain, the use of Google after the attack, and a final piece describing the main terrorist attacks in Europe since 2004.

4.1.3. Quantitative Analysis: Topic Distribution in *El Diario.es*

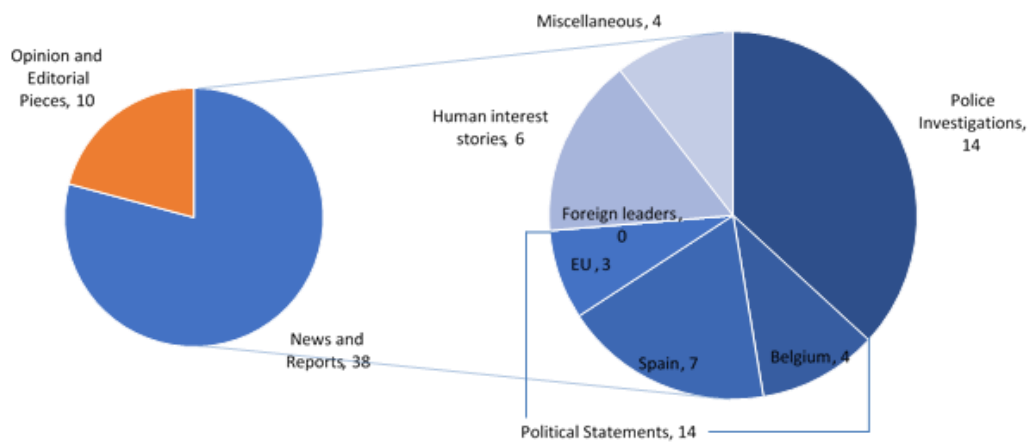


Table 3. Topic Distribution in *El Diario.es*

The un-refined selection of articles from *El Diario.es* returned forty-eight articles, the smallest amount from the three sources. Two pieces had to be discarded for analysis, according to the length criteria.

Focusing on the selected articles, the first division is between news and opinion pieces. News articles represent a majority of the total (79%), although opinion pieces also had a significant representation. Such opinion pieces include mainly critiques of current counter-terrorist strategies and their potential violations of civil liberties, and different reflections on the reasons for the current wave of terrorist attacks in Europe.

From the selected articles, four main thematic groups emerged. The first group is rather large, and it includes a systematic coverage of the police investigations, the terrorists’ movements and links to the Paris terror network; it also includes final police raids in search of other culprits. The second group reflects Spanish, Belgium and EU

politician's reactions to the attacks, together with statements from other Spanish public figures such as Bishops. It also constitutes a big part of the total, and it includes the only interview of the whole sample with a Belgian Muslim association. The third group is made up of human interest stories, which includes several interviews with Spanish residents in Brussels and with a former hostage of one of the terrorists. The fourth miscellaneous group comprises a rather small selection of news, including a couple of articles on the attack to a Spanish mosque, flights cancellations and Muslim-majority countries as the main target of terrorists.

4.2. Mixed Methods Analysis

4.2.1. Mixed Methods Analysis: *La Razón*

First of all, there was no discussion on the “nature of terrorism” per se. Rather, this topic was approached indirectly by means of the use of certain words to refer to the terrorists, and the perceived situation in which the terrorist attacks are situated.

Overall, news articles inclined towards considering terrorism as a criminal activity. This transpires from the use of the legal term *presunto*, “alleged”¹³⁸. We find thus expressions like “the identity of the alleged terrorist (...)”¹³⁹. In fact it has the stronger presence of all the data samples, with twenty-seven mentions in total, versus eleven in *El Diario.es* and four in *El País*. It is often accompanied by statements from the Brussels Police, the Belgian federal police and the Belgian Public Prosecutors Office, which reinforces the image of terrorism as a regular crime, dealt by with the corresponding authorities, instead of, for example, the military or the intelligence services. In contrast, in some opinion articles the terrorist acts and terrorism at large is identified as an act of war, specifically a religious war waged against Christianity by the Islamic State: “That the terrorism waged by Daesh, the Islamic State, in order to create a «Great Caliphate» is a religious war, is something that no one can deny”. Furthermore, the date of the attacks (Holy Tuesday) is seen as intentional to hurt Christians, although as the author himself

¹³⁸. *Presunto* is equivalent to “alleged”. The term is reserved in Spanish legal system to the “suspected but unconfirmed author of an offense”. Such term is common in journalistic jargon to avoid attributing a crime or felony to someone in the absence of a judicial ruling.

¹³⁹ Mirentxu Arroqui, “Las Células Que Atentaron En París Atacan El Corazón de Europa,” *La Razón* (Brussels, March 23, 2016), accessed 30th April 2017. <http://www.larazon.es/internacional/una-doble-explosion-en-el-aeropuerto-de-bruselas-obliga-a-evacuarlo-JE12255480?sky=Sky-Junio-2017#Tt1MluLNAJOQxmw>.

acknowledges, no such link could be established by either the police or the Belgian intelligence services. So far, the slaughter of Christians is unstoppable, with “more than 7.000 Christians murdered on account of their faith” in 2015¹⁴⁰. Other opinion articles don’t regard it as a religious war, but a war between “inhuman”, “cruel”, “heartless” individuals, the terrorists, and the “democratic societies” of Europe, and call for a “joint defence of our civilization”¹⁴¹. Other expressions reinforcing the idea of terrorism as an act of war include the use of military terms to refer to the terrorists, such as “soldiers”, “combatant”, or the “invasion” of Europe, with “the goal of [us the Europeans] having the enemy within our doors”¹⁴².

Whether terrorism is presented as crime or war, there is a consistent sense of a growing, impending danger on European societies, which could affect anyone, anywhere, anytime. For example, the second piece of the sample, mere hours after the attacks, is an article in the miscellaneous category which presents a summary of the “most serious attacks since 1972”¹⁴³, and it refers only to attacks taking place on Western European countries: Germany, France, Denmark, United Kingdom and Spain. Interestingly, of the fifteen attacks covered, five refer to Palestinian terror groups and four signal Israeli citizens as the victims. Also on the topic of terrorism as a growing threat, one news article piece discusses Brussels’ nuclear power plants being the original target of terrorists, who had to change their plans after the police arrested several members of the network.

Another way in which the sense of threat grows is by discussing the tight network of terrorism existing in Europe. Indeed, culprits of the Brussels attacks were found to be connected to the Paris 2015 terrorist attacks, and even those were found to have been harboured in Brussels in their flee from the French police. Moreover, two whole article news pieces are devoted to the possible links of the Brussels “terrorist cell” to Spain. Although the first article already establishes that Spanish public prosecutors don’t suspect of any connections, a second piece was run the following day to discuss the implications that a hypothetical (and non-existent, in the end) link to Spain could mean for national

¹⁴⁰ J.M. Zuloaga, “Miércoles Santo Blindado,” *La Razón*, March 23, 2016, accessed 30th April 2017. <http://www.larazon.es/internacional/miercoles-santo-blindado-BH12260735?sky=Sky-Junio-2017#Tt18PfCAK6RUBuK>.

¹⁴¹ N.A., “Una Defensa Común Europea Frente Al Terrorismo Yihadista,” *La Razón*, March 23, 2016, accessed 30th April 2017. <http://www.larazon.es/opinion/editorial/una-defensa-comun-europea-frente-al-terrorismo-yihadista-GH12260503?sky=Sky-Junio-2017?sky=Sky-Julio-2017#Tt1H854cOC9PwXf>.

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ N.A., “Acciones Terroristas Más Graves En Europa Desde 1972,” *La Razón*, March 22, 2016, accessed 30th April 2017. <http://www.larazon.es/internacional/acciones-terroristas-mas-graves-en-europa-desde-1972-HE12256537?sky=Sky-Junio-2017?sky=Sky-Julio-2017#Tt1oDaOjITFcHCR>.

security. These articles highlight that “Our country, *Al Andalus* as they call it, has become a priority target for our demonstrated effectiveness in fighting jihadism”¹⁴⁴.

In total, only three articles dealt in some detail with the identity of the terrorists. Most of the information on these pieces is concerned with the terrorists’ criminal past (“Brahim was sentenced (...) for shooting several policemen (...). On the other hand Jalid El Bakraoui was sentenced for car theft”)¹⁴⁵, their travels to Syria (“Most of the francophone jihadists met in Syria and have returned to their home countries with the intention of perpetrating attacks. They have in common having survived to the “jihadist Erasmus” in the Middle East”)¹⁴⁶ and more importantly with their links to the culprits¹⁴⁷ of the 2015 Paris attacks as integral part of the functioning of the European networks of terrorists (“Salah Abdeslam didn’t explode himself in France, but since he escaped from Paris he has received unstopped support in Belgium from his childhood friends from the Molenbeek neighbourhood or directly from members of the Islamic State”¹⁴⁸).

In general terms, news articles referred to the terrorists as “criminals”, “murderers” or “suspects of terrorist activities”. Opinion articles, in contrast, identified Islamic religion and a certain degree of fanaticism as a key motivator/triggering element of their violent acts, using expressions as “religious fanatics”, “radical Islamists”, “Islamic extremists”, or being “hell-bent on the application of sharia law”. In particular, one article very vocally articulated that “the religion of the Quran” encourages violent acts against Christians and all non-Muslims, even if this is “a politically incorrect and uncomfortable truth”. The same article establishes a link between “Spanish left wing claims that Catholic Church shares the *Mezquita-Catedral of Córdoba* [Cordoba’s Moss-Cathedral] with other religious confessions” and an exaltation of the “most radical” Muslim positions¹⁴⁹.

¹⁴⁴ J.M. Zuloaga, “Siguen a Dos Células Del Eje París-Bruselas En España,” *La Razón* (Madrid, March 24, 2016), accessed 30th April 2017. <http://www.larazon.es/internacional/las-fuerzas-de-seguridad-siguen-a-dos-celulas-del-eje-paris-bruselas-en-espana-FH12264320?sky=Sky-Junio-2017?sky=Sky-Julio-2017#Ttt1wrFpMN98cxs8>.

¹⁴⁵ S.I., “Los Hermanos Que Ocultaron a Abdeslam,” *La Razón*, March 23, 2016, accessed 30th April 2017. <http://www.larazon.es/internacional/los-hermanos-que-escondieron-abdeslam-CH12261300?sky=Sky-Junio-2017#Ttt18BIQnpY3x2uJ>.

¹⁴⁶ Esther Sieteiglesias, “EE UU También Tenía a Los Hermanos El Bakraoui Como Potenciales Terroristas,” *La Razón* (Brussels, March 24, 2016), accessed 30th April 2017. <http://www.larazon.es/internacional/la-alianza-sangrienta-que-comenzo-en-saint-denis-AH12264260?sky=Sky-Junio-2017?sky=Sky-Julio-2017#Ttt1dbHqympQ2dfA>.

¹⁴⁷ One of these culprits, Salah Abdeslam, was apprehended in Brussels days before the attacks, and police investigations showed that he had hid the El Brakraoui brothers, both of whom died during after exploding themselves in the airport and subway station.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ Zuloaga, “Miércoles Santo Blindado.”

No personal details of their lives were disclosed. Only on one occasion one news article echoes Belgian press to wonder about one of the attackers' personality, whether he is "a religious fanatic or a «bon vivant»". With regards to their nationalities, there are only three mentions of their nationalities, even though all the main culprits were born and/or raised in Brussels. They are neither referred to as Belgian or Brusselèers¹⁵⁰, although both terms were amply used to refer to citizens, victims, authorities and districts of Brussels. Instead, it was mentioned that they are "of Belgian nationality". There was no mention whatsoever of terrorists as being European. However, their ties to the neighbourhoods of Molenbeek and Schaerbeek were occasionally mentioned, as it was the immigrant and Muslim majority of said sectors of the city. Such places were described as "meant to harbour alleged jihadist"¹⁵¹; a "lair for terrorists" and "a sanctuary of jihadist fighters"¹⁵².

Several terms are used to refer to the terrorists. The Islamic State (Estado Islamico or EI in Spanish), was used as a tag four times, all in news articles related to police investigations, for example: "Two kamikazes immolate themselves in the name of the Islamic State", or "Police finds an Islamic State flag and a bomb in a house search in Brussels". The name Islamic State was further used occasionally within news and opinion articles, also mostly in news articles related to the police findings. Only once was the name accompanied by the explanation "the terrorist organization Islamic State", the rest of the times it appeared alone. The name "Daesh" was used ten times, always to refer to the activities of the terrorist group in Spain. AQMI (Al Qaeda en el Maghreb Islamico, Al Qaeda in Islamic Maghreb) was also mentioned in relation to the existing terrorist networks in Spain.

The tag "Islamic State" was always accompanied by "Islamic terrorism", "Radical terrorism" or "Jihadist terrorism". The expressions "Muslim extremists" was found only two times. The term "Islamists" was much wider used, over a dozen times, paired with "radical" (radical Islamists) or standing on its own. The use of either "Islamic", "Islamists", "radical" and "jihadist" seemed to be random, with no discernible patterns for each term. They were indiscriminately used in news and opinion articles alike

¹⁵⁰ In Spanish, *bruselense*, someone natural or a long time resident in Brussels.

¹⁵¹ Arroqui, "Las Células Que Atentaron En París Atacan El Corazón de Europa."

¹⁵² N.A., "Turquía Deportó a Uno de Los Yihadistas Y Bélgica Lo Liberó," *La Razón* (Brussels, March 24, 2016), accessed 30th April 2017. <http://www.larazon.es/internacional/los-hermanos-el-bakraoui-identificados-como-los-kamikazes-del-aeropuerto-EH12261072?sky=Sky-Junio-2017?sky=Sky-Julio-2017#Tt18cJhylTaTviY>.

whenever they referred to the culprits of the Brussels and other terrorist attacks, whether authored by Islamic State members, Al Qaeda or unidentified violent groups. Finally, the tag “Jihadist Terrorism” also appeared frequently together with “the jihadist threat”. In total, “Jihad” and related terms (jihadist terrorist, jihadists, jihadist cell, jihadist suicide [bomber or attacker] etc.) was used thirty-six times.

The reports on human casualties accounted for four of the six “human interest” stories. From that, two were concerned with details of the victims’ identities (one of the articles was concerned solely with Spanish victims), one of the articles interviewed a witness of the attack and another one talked about, but didn’t interview, a young Mormon boy who survived. However, the general number of victims (“various dozens of dead and hundreds of injured”¹⁵³ in the first reports, changing to 34 dead and over 300 injured, later “31 and over 300 injured”)¹⁵⁴ was frequently repeated as a formulaic sentence in headlines and sub-headlines, and also in the body of the text, without further elaboration of the victims’ identities.

The articles dealing in detail with victims of the attacks refer to Belgian or other EU nationality, Caucasian ethnicity¹⁵⁵ male and female individuals, of whom their youth (20 the youngest and 45 the oldest), and their roles as social workers or educators, family member and friend are highlighted. It is mentioned that victims span over eleven nationalities (including India and the Democratic Republic of Congo), but aside from the ones mentioned, only an Israeli victim of the airport attacks is mentioned. No interviews are given with the members of the families, and the information present comes primarily from condolences posted in the victims’ social media accounts.

The article containing an interview with several survivors of the airport and metro attacks depicts a chaotic scene: “There were around 30 or 40 injured people around me. (...) I also saw some corpses, six or seven, on the floor, near the entrance of the [airport] terminal”. Other recount gruesome scenes: “I have blood on my hands and trousers. But it isn’t mine, it belongs to people I helped to get out”; “To manage to get out I had to push

¹⁵³ S.I., “Veinte Muertos En La Estación de Metro Del Barrio Europeo,” *La Razón* (Brussels, March 22, 2016), accessed 30th April 2017. <http://www.larazon.es/internacional/otra-explasion-deja-heridos-en-el-barrio-europeo-de-bruselas-ME12255559?sky=Sky-Junio-2017?sky=Sky-Julio-2017#Ttt1pMAGYvps1150>.

¹⁵⁴ In the first hours of the attacks the Belgian police counted some victims double, causing the misunderstanding of three more victims.

¹⁵⁵ Pictures of most of the victims were included in the article, and all of the names are “European” sounding: Albrecht, Owen, Adelma, etc.

aside two policemen with shattered legs. I was in shock. There were many people with amputated extremities”. The article is substantially long, especially compared to other news reports, and it is only rivalled in length by opinion articles. It closes the final paragraph with an account of somebody stating that “I heard someone saying something in Arabic just before the first bomb. I don’t know what [he said] because I don’t speak Arabic”¹⁵⁶.

With regards to a young American boy who survived the attacks, it is remarked the “miraculous” nature of his escape, since he was also present in Boston and Paris during the terrorist attacks. His religious identity as Mormon is mentioned several times, and the article quotes his father’s interview with American news station, stating that he has been blessed by God. Two articles specifically point to Brussels city as somehow a direct victim of the attacks, describing how the Belgian capital strives to regain normality, although the lack of public transport and people offered “the image of a ghost town”. The second article describes a situation of “odd calm surrounding a city traditionally chaotic and noisy”, and pointing out again the empty streets and “ghostly” aspect of the city. Yet the city refuses to “let the terrorists win”. Both articles interview a couple of by-standers who confirm the “shock” of the attacks and of “seeing Brussels deserted”.

The description of “intangible casualties” is, aside from those articles, scattered throughout other news articles, mainly those concerned with political statements, but it is also present in one opinion article, where it is argued that Brussels has been attacked because it is the “heart of Europe” and the “best example of its (European) values of liberty, respect and democracy”. In this context, the author argues that “the defence of our civilization must be a coordinated effort which puts our common interests before national goals”¹⁵⁷.

In news articles referring to political statements, it is present across Belgian, Spanish and EU politicians, and their message is fairly consistent: the Belgium, and largely European, values of democracy and tolerance have been targeted by the terrorists, who do not share such ideas. The most articulated example is found in the declarations made by Belgian Prime Minister after announcing that F-16 flying fighters will be sent to bomb the Islamic State, in cooperation with the USA. The Belgian PM declared that “We [Belgium and the United States] are great democracies. We share convictions,

¹⁵⁶ Arroqui, “Las Células Que Atentaron En París Atacan El Corazón de Europa.”

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

freedom of expression, tolerance, diversity and openness of our societies, values that we must defend”¹⁵⁸. Another piece collecting EU politicians’ statements declares that “[the EU politicians] warn that what happened in Brussels is not only an attack against Belgium, but an attack against Europe and our shared fundamental values”¹⁵⁹. Other news articles focus on the French Prime Minister at the time, Francois Hollande, who declares that the real target of the terrorists was Europe, not Brussels.

But such statements are also present in some opinion articles, which further elaborate on the “war” paradigm, stating that “[the war posed by the Islamic State] means to sabotage the principles of freedom and tolerance of democratic societies”. The same article goes on to insist that “(...) yesterday’s attack has a special significance: it took place in the political capital of Europe and thus it is an attack against all the members of the EU”; it also warns against “giving up against a terrorism that only wants to liquidate our democracies”¹⁶⁰. As it has been discussed at the beginning, there are also several mentions to religious freedom, Christianity, specifically Catholicism and the Easter celebrations, being a target of terrorism.

In relation to the first immediate reactions to the terrorist attacks, the expressions of solidarity are reduced, making up only four of the total of eighteen political statements. They come from the main Spanish political parties, the Spanish Royal Family, EU leaders (UK, France, and Germany) and Pope Francis. From these, the one concerning the Pope is by far the lengthier article, depicting him washing the feet of refugees in imitation of Jesus Christ, and explaining his rejection of violence and his condemn of those selling weapons and making a profit.

The statements coming from the Spanish Royal Family, and Spanish and EU politicians express a similar message: rejection of the attacks as “brutal”, “barbaric”, “beyond explanation” and “inhuman”; solidarity to the victims and the Belgian people; and a strong commitment to unity and social and political cohesion to fight against terrorism. The UE Commission President, Jean Claude Juncker, declared that “We are

¹⁵⁸ EFE, “Bélgica Anuncia El Envío de Cazas F-16 Para Bombardear El Estado Islámico,” *La Razón*, March 25, 2016, accessed 30th April 2017. <http://www.larazon.es/internacional/belgica-anuncia-el-envio-de-cazas-f-16-para-bombardear-el-estado-islamico-KH12268929?sky=Sky-Junio-2017#Ttt1exLA37rf5hEU>.

¹⁵⁹ S.C. Macías, “Los Principales Partidos Políticos Europeos Llamam a «luchar Juntos Frente Al Terrorismo»,” *La Razón* (Madrid, March 23, 2016), accessed 30th April 2017. <http://www.larazon.es/internacional/los-principales-partidos-politicos-europeos-llaman-a-luchar-juntos-frente-al-terrorismo-HH12263150?sky=Sky-Junio-2017?sky=Sky-Julio-2017#Ttt1CDMwF1GtSK6A>.

¹⁶⁰ N.A., “Una Defensa Común Europea Frente Al Terrorismo Yihadista.”

united against terrorism and have full solidarity for the people of Brussels”¹⁶¹. Political unity, solidarity and rejection of violence are common expressions used by all the authority figures quoted in the articles, whether news or opinion.

Regarding which measures are proposed to deal with this concrete terrorist attack, and terrorist attacks in the future, increased security measures are the earliest proposals. There are nine articles dealing in detail with security measures as a desirable, necessary or unavoidable step to take in the aftermath of an attack. The first, third and fifth articles of the sample mention how all the international organizations associated to Spain and Belgium are implementing such measures: OTAN, UE member states and the USA. These articles appear even before any substantial coverage of the attacks, which only appears in sixth place. For example, the USA announced that “although there is no specific or credible threat, as a precaution measure, additional patrols have been deployed [in airports and important institutional settings] and there has been an increase in troops accompanied by dogs trained to sniff drugs and explosives”. The UE Commission President, justified similar measures through Twitter saying that “We live free, we keep ourselves safe”¹⁶².

The next level of recommended counter-terrorist measures included assessing the failures that made the Brussels attacks possible. There appears to be a consistent message that the Brussels’ authorities failed to use the information that they had on the terrorists, thus allowing the culprits of the attacks to avoid capture for months before they immolated themselves. In this sense, two articles point out that both Spain and the USA had also information on the potential danger of some of the terrorists, information that they failed to communicate to the Belgian authorities¹⁶³. In the case of Turkey, it is said that Belgian authorities “failed to asses correctly” the danger posed by returned terrorists, and that they “ignored the warnings from the Turkish Government when [Turkey] expelled Ibrahim El Bakraoui [one of the suicide terrorists] back to Belgium”¹⁶⁴. Although many of the news articles are critical of Belgium’s handling of the situation,

¹⁶¹ N.A., “La UE Y La OTAN Elevan El Nivel de Alerta Tras Los Atentados de Bruselas,” *La Razón* (Brussels, March 22, 2016), accessed 30th April 2017 . <http://www.larazon.es/internacional/la-ue-y-la-otan-elevan-el-nivel-de-alerta-tras-los-atentados-de-bruselas-AE12257236?sky=Sky-Junio-2017?sky=Sky-Julio-2017#Tt1gPBfU7S0bXb1%0A>.

¹⁶² Ibid

¹⁶³ Sieteiglesias, “EE UU También Tenía a Los Hermanos El Bakraoui Como Potenciales Terroristas.”

¹⁶⁴N.A., “Turquía Deportó a Uno de Los Yihadistas Y Bélgica Lo Liberó.”

some political statements and all the opinion articles remind of the need to present a “united front against terrorism”¹⁶⁵, thus avoiding to blame Belgium or anyone else.

The next and final step in assessing the reactions to terrorism comes in the form of a unanimous request for “more cooperation across the EU’s 28 [member states]”. In particular, the EU “promises to cross more intelligence information and asks internet providers to cooperate”, since “new (...) unorthodox, modern communications are key to terrorists networks and they should be accessible for us [EU Intelligence services]”. Moreover, the EU Commission President reminded other member states that “the European Centre for Counter Terrorism needs of widespread national cooperation”; other necessary measures, in his opinion, are “an initiative to make weapon acquisition more difficult” and for the European Parliament to “immediately adopt and implement the PNR [Passenger Name Registry]”¹⁶⁶. The call for increased cooperation is reflected in most of the political statements articles, either from EU or Spanish sources. In an interview, the Spanish Interior Minister declares that such measures are “urgent” as it is to establish “greater controls on the exterior borders of the EU”, since “Europe’s security is at stake”.

Finally, with regards to military measures, one article towards the end of the sample announces Belgium’s decision to send flying F-16 fighters to bomb Islamic State’s positions in Syria, in a “military effort coordinated by the USA” to “attack the Islamic State wherever they might be”. Only one of the opinion articles mentions military measures against terrorism, declaring that “(...) European institutions must be able to mobilise all political instruments, even the military ones (...)”.

No measures of increased social cohesion and/or integration were mentioned in this sample.

4.2.2. Mixed Methods Analysis: *El País*

As it was the case with the first sample, no direct discussion on the “nature of terrorism” can be found. Rather, this topic was approached indirectly by means of the use of certain words to refer to the terrorists, remarks about the situation in Brussels, and the perceived trend of events in which the terrorist attacks are placed.

¹⁶⁵ N.A., “Una Defensa Común Europea Frente Al Terrorismo Yihadista.”

¹⁶⁶ EFE, “La UE Promete Cruzar Más Inteligencia Y Pide Cooperación a Los Operadores de Internet,” *La Razón* (Brussels, March 24, 2016), accessed 30th April 2017 <http://www.larazon.es/internacional/los-ministros-de-interior-de-la-ue-dispuestos-a-avanzar-en-el-intercambio-de-informacion-HH12266166?sky=Sky-Junio-2017?sky=Sky-Julio-2017#Ttt1RxJydZUAqSrd>.

Overall, the presence of a “war” definition was more acute than that of a “crime” definition. Belgian police and public prosecutor sources were mentioned fewer times than in the first sample, and the word *presunto* was never used to address the culprits of the attacks, neither were they defined as criminals. Before being identified, the attacks were described without an author, “Two bombs went out on the European district of Brussels”¹⁶⁷. After the culprits were identified, they were immediately referred to as “terrorists”, and other labels that will be discussed at some length later on. On this regard, no distinction was found between news articles and opinion articles; part of the reason could be the comparatively smaller amount of news articles dealing with police investigations in comparison to the other samples. If anything, opinion articles presented even more overt descriptions of war scenes, war intentions and conflict than their news counterparts.

But the “terrorism as war” discourse can be found across news articles (especially those interviewing survivors or describing the state of the city) and opinion articles alike. Examples of the first kind include calling Brussels “a besieged city”, or describing terrorists as a “diffuse enemy. (...) already living within our streets and neighbourhoods, and ready to act at any point”¹⁶⁸, and highlighting the “military strategy”¹⁶⁹ behind the attacks. Additionally, the French Prime Minister declarations that “we are on war” were echoed up to four times in different news articles covering politicians’ reactions to the events.

Opinion articles didn’t used such metaphorical expressions, and overtly placed the terrorist attacks in the context of the “disperse and clandestine war waged by terrorism”¹⁷⁰, an expression accompanied by the author’s several references to tanks, helicopters and other heavy war machineries. While one article refuses to “open a nominalist debate about whether we are on war or not”, it also warns “that if the old continent wants to win the war against jihadist terrorism” we must first acknowledge its “arrival to Europe”¹⁷¹.

¹⁶⁷ Claudi Pérez, “Golpe Al Epicentro de Las Instituciones Europeas,” *El País* (Brussels, March 22, 2016), accessed 30th April 2017 https://elpais.com/internacional/2016/03/22/actualidad/1458648405_166488.html.

¹⁶⁸ Patricia Ortega, “Interior Mantiene La Alerta 4 Pero Incrementa La Seguridad En Los Aeropuertos,” *El País* (Madrid, March 22, 2016), accessed 30th April 2017 https://politica.elpais.com/politica/2016/03/22/actualidad/1458635362_495746.html.

¹⁶⁹ The Spanish expression, *estrategia bélica*, has a solid connotation of war times’ strategy, even more so than the English equivalent “military strategy”. 31 Todos somos Bruselas

¹⁷⁰ Pérez, “Golpe Al Epicentro de Las Instituciones Europeas.”

¹⁷¹ N.A., “Europa, Unida Contra El Desafío Terrorista,” *El País*, March 23, 2016, accessed 30th April 2017 https://elpais.com/elpais/2016/03/22/opinion/1458671585_735549.html.

Indeed, there is the “foreboding that Brussels and the Europe we knew, the one of peace after the wars, might have vanished, perhaps forever”¹⁷².

As it becomes apparent from this excerpts, there is a sense of growing danger which is not focused on any particular country, but looms over the whole of Europe. The attack “(...) constitutes a true challenge to the EU institutions, and consequently to all its [EU] citizens, who can fall victims to violence at any time”¹⁷³. As with the first sample, there is one article which presents a selection of terrorist attacks since 2004, after stating that the EU has been a target of Islamic terrorism for years. This selection also focuses on Western European countries, Spain, UK, France and Belgium, providing dates and numbers of casualties.

The existence of wide-spread terrorist networks also appears as a source of preoccupation for European stability: up to three news articles cover the existence of ties between attackers in Paris 2015 and in Brussels, although only the first one presents new information, and the subsequent ones rather re-elaborate on the known information on the culprits so far. Finally, one article also runs on the (lack of) connections between the Belgian terrorists and Spanish terrorists networks. The article fundamentally repeats the information of previous pieces, while it highlights the excellent work of Spanish policemen, able to stop terrorist attacks such has the one took place in the Bataclan concert hall of Paris.

On the whole, not many articles deal directly with the identity of the attackers, although two pieces are titled after them: “Salah Abdeslam was planning something in Brussels” and “Who is Najim Laachraoui, the brains behind the attacks”. These pieces explain only that the terrorists were known to the security forces because of vandalism and not because of their connections to “radical Islamism”. These two, and other pieces to a lesser extent, place special emphasis on the ways in which the terrorists “slipped through the fingers of Belgian authorities” for months¹⁷⁴, avoiding capture. Although some details of their criminal past records are mentioned, these are not furthered elaborated after the first reports. Rather, larger spaces are dedicated to their ties to other

¹⁷²Arroqui, “Las Células Que Atentaron En París AtaAna Carbajosa, “La Bruselas Que Conocíamos,” *El País* (Brussels, March 23, 2016), accessed 30th April 2017 https://elpais.com/internacional/2016/03/23/actualidad/1458726473_498929.html.

¹⁷³N.A., “Europa, Unida Contra El Desafío Terrorista

¹⁷⁴Claudi Pérez and Lucía Abellán, “La UE Admite Falta de Coordinación En La Lucha Antiterrorista,” *El País* (Brussels, March 25, 2016), **accessed 30th April 2017** https://elpais.com/internacional/2016/03/24/actualidad/1458853345_581209.html.

terrorists in Europe, especially to Salah Abdeslam, attacker of the 2015 Paris attacks, who was arrested just days before the Brussels' attacks.

With regards to the portrayal of the terrorists, the religious element is the most salient facet of their personality. When referring to the attackers, news and opinion articles use indistinctively the expressions “radicalised Islamists” and “Islamic radicals. They are also referred to as “radicalized young Europeans” and “kamikazes”: “Radicalised or returned [from Syria] men and women willing to kill indiscriminately to the cry of "al-lahu ákbar" (Allá is the greatest one)”¹⁷⁵. Only one opinion article, which stands aside in tone and content from the rest, defines terrorists as having a somehow clearly defined political intention, to “generate terror and chaos and thus obtain the biggest public repercussion of the their actions”¹⁷⁶.

With respect to nationality, the attackers are clearly identified as either European or Belgian, on almost every occasion. In some instances, the fact that the attackers were originally from Brussels is acknowledged by calling them *Bruselense*.

However, such identifications are almost always accompanied by two kinds of nuances: one, their “Islamist radicalisation”, or their specific precedence within Brussels. Indeed, both news and opinion articles, but especially the first, refer regularly to their neighbourhood of origin, Molenbeek, and to the place where they took refuge before the attacks, the neighbourhood of Schaerbeek. Such places are described as having a “strong Muslim presence” and “massive amounts of [Muslim population] concentration, sometimes over 20% of the total”¹⁷⁷. They are also identified as “dens of Islamists”¹⁷⁸, beyond police control and where radicalisation processes go unchecked as an everyday reality.

In an interview with neighbours of the Schaerbeek neighbourhood, where the attackers were hiding in the months prior to the attacks, several neighbours testify that “Differences with Molenbeek are obvious. This is a clean neighbourhood, people know each other well. There is harmony between religions”. Despite this declarations, the

¹⁷⁵ Patricia Ortega, “Interior Mantiene La Alerta 4 Pero Incrementa La Seguridad En Los Aeropuertos”

¹⁷⁶ Dolores Delgado and Baltasar Garzón, “El Daesh Y Los Fuegos Fatuos,” *El País*, March 25, 2016, accessed 30th April 2017 https://elpais.com/elpais/2016/03/24/opinion/1458818468_170945.html.

¹⁷⁷ Pérez, “Golpe al epicentro de las instituciones europeas”

¹⁷⁸ Lucía Abellán, “¿Por Qué Bélgica Se Ha Convertido En Un Objetivo Terrorista?,” *El País* (Brussels, March 22, 2016), accessed 30th April 2017 https://elpais.com/internacional/2016/03/22/actualidad/1458645253_307389.html.

author of the piece points out that Molenbeek has been signalled as “(...) the incubator of a virus, radicalization (...)”¹⁷⁹

This sample included the biggest use of unspecific names and tags to categorise terrorist attacks. For a start, this source uses tags extensively to categorise news, something that although all sources do, this one does more profusely. In this sense, every single article in the sample was categorised with at least one of these tags, although frequently it was more than one: “Islamist Terrorism”, “Jihadist Terrorism”, “Conflict Sunnis and Shia” or simply “Islam”. The tag “Islam” also appeared very often, on over half of the sample (26 out of 48 articles), and it was always accompanied by the tag “Religion”, which never appeared on its own. In an interview with EU Commission President Juncker, the interviewer directly asks him if “the religious component is to blame”. A follow up question asks Juncker whether “Islam is only compatible with European society in small doses”¹⁸⁰.

In terms of presence, one tag-combination was over represented in the sample. The combined use of “Jihadism”, “Brussels Attack 22-M”, “Islamic State”, “Islamist Terrorism”, “Conflict Sunni and Shia” and “Western Europe” was present in over 90% of the sample (44 out of 48 articles). There is no apparent distinction between this use of tags in news and opinion articles. The few articles which do not present this tag combination either are concerned solely with Spanish politician reactions, or are penned by experts on the counter-terrorism and radicalisation fields, who seem to use such labels more discretely. One interesting aspect of this use of tags is that several brands are associated with the terrorist attacks: Islamism, Jihadism, Radical Islam, etc., with no (overt or covert) discussion of whether such terms are different or not. In one occasion, when reporting on a statement by Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, he was referred to as “the Islamist mandatary”.

Similarly to this trend was the use of the terms “Islamic”, “Islamist”, and “Jihadist” in the sample. They were present overall with no distinction between news and opinion articles, although news articles tended to use “jihadist” and associated (“jihadist networks, cells, terrorists”) more than any other term. The term Islamic State, however, was also

¹⁷⁹ Álvaro Sánchez, “Schaerbeek, Viaje Al Último Refugio de Los Terroristas Del Aeropuerto,” *El País*, March 24, 2016, accessed 30th April 2017. https://elpais.com/internacional/2016/03/23/actualidad/1458752096_608770.html.

¹⁸⁰ Lena Le Soir, “Juncker: ‘Que No Empiecen a Dar Lecciones a Los Belgas,’” *El País*, March 24, 2016, accessed 30th April 2017. https://elpais.com/internacional/2016/03/24/actualidad/1458849620_742911.html.

used outside the tags, although its presence is significantly lower (23 mentions) than that of “jihadist” (56 uses).

This source presents two articles, both considerably short, detailing the identities of the victims, and although there is one additional reference to the number of victims in the headline of another article, which however just provides an initial assessment of the extent of the damage caused by the bombs. The articles dealing with the identity of the victims talk about the same individuals featured in the first sample, a Peruvian-Belgian woman, and two Belgian citizens. Additionally, especial emphasis is made to the “nine injured” Spanish citizens, and one single piece is dedicated to the only Spanish victim. A later news piece provides an extended overview of the life and character of the Peruvian woman, highlighting her “joviality, kindness and love of dance”, among mentions of her family life and business ambitions.

Two additional articles describe the impressions of several survivors of the attacks, two of them being famous ex-basketball players, and another one being a Spanish socialist politician. These articles provide little new information, and report on the feelings of “confusion” of the victims. In contrast, one of the most morbid descriptions of the scene, “(...) corpses on the floor in the airport, pieces of flesh before the door of our subway system (...)”¹⁸¹, is found in a piece written by an author as an opinion piece, and which does not interview any survivors.

As in the first sample, we find a few examples of Brussels depicted as a victim of the attacks, described as a “stunned city, taken over by security forces, practically sieged in the European district which (...) is today full of fear”¹⁸². The city’s pavement “oozes sadness” and “pain taps on the windows”, set in contrast to the past livelihood of Brussels. In total, one fourth (4 out of 12) of all the opinion articles focus on the state of Brussels after the attacks.

The “intangible” victims of the attacks are once more Europe, the EU, and the “democratic and humanistic values that embody the European project”¹⁸³, as stated by a Basque politician. Other Spanish representatives, like the sitting President Mariano Rajoy,

¹⁸¹ B. Delvaux, “En Bruselas Todo Son Sirenas,” *El País*, March 22, 2016, accessed 30th April 2017 https://elpais.com/internacional/2016/03/22/actualidad/1458676057_909498.html.

¹⁸² Pérez, “Golpe Al Epicentro de Las Instituciones Europeas.”

¹⁸³ Jabier Martín-Arroyo, “Rajoy Agradece La ‘lealtad’ de Los Partidos En La Lucha Antiterrorista,” *El País* (Ayamonte, March 22, 2016), accessed 30th April 2017 https://politica.elpais.com/politica/2016/03/22/actualidad/1458648197_835250.html.

remark that “terrorism is a global threat to civilization, freedom, and human rights”¹⁸⁴, and that “this attack on the centre of Europe, and on the city that represents above any other the EU, is an attack against all the Europeans and against the values of freedom, democracy and equality that the EU represents”¹⁸⁵. The French PM sends a similar message on the need to defend a civilization characterized by tolerance, peace and respect, from the threat of terrorism.

Opinion articles translate a similar message, pointing out that neither the Paris nor the Brussels attacks were meant to target a specific city, rather “ (...) they meant [to attack] a group of States who have created a model of free civilization, prosperous, solidary and tolerant with every culture”¹⁸⁶. Other authors remark that amidst the sadness of the attacks, we must “remember the values that make us European, the essence of what we are as political project (...) to export peace and wellbeing”, while, as mentioned above, others consider that “the Europe of peace” might have fallen victim to the terrorist attacks. Finally, in a rather personal opinion article, a famous Spanish writer points out that for many in his generation “Europe is something as tangible as the breath of air filling our chests. (...) it is an unlimited space of citizenship (...) and the ultimate guarantee of the rule of the Law”¹⁸⁷. In sum, the ideas of democratic rule, citizenship and civilisation are intrinsically connected to Europe, the EU and the “European political project”.

In terms of immediate reactions to the terrorist attacks, there is a similar trend to the first sample, albeit with some differences. The first article of this sample constitutes a joint declaration of Spanish politicians keeping a minute of silence in memory of the victims. Such an image of unity against terrorism and especially solidarity and empathy towards the victims is echoed also in opinion articles; one author argues that “We are all Brussels, because if Brussels and Belgium are divided spaces, we [Europeans] are also divided and weak”. And that both because and despite that weakness we must stand together with Belgium, because to exhibit weakness is to give the enemy and advantage¹⁸⁸.

At the Belgian level, one news article celebrates the national wave of solidarity that swept Belgium after the attack, with citizens using social media to provide food and

¹⁸⁴ Ibid

¹⁸⁵ Ibid

¹⁸⁶ N.A., “Europa, Unida Contra El Desafío Terrorista”

¹⁸⁷ Antonio Muñoz Molina, “Bruselas,” *El País*, March 24, 2016, accessed 30th April 2017 https://elpais.com/cultura/2016/03/24/babelia/1458818544_814564.html.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid

company, organize concentrations and offer accommodation to those stranded after the airport shutdown, using the hashtags #ikwillhelpen (#iwanttohelp) or #Opendoor.

However, some authors express a critical view of the position of the recently formed left wing party *Podemos*, whose leader Pablo Iglesias refused to sign the “anti-jihadist pact” (a new counter-terrorist legislation) months before. “It is not like Iglesias has changed his mind since the days he predicated “dialogue” as protective vest against bombs” writes one, adding that no one dares to say that “Islam is behind both of ISIS and its radical scouts in Europe”¹⁸⁹. One news article also reflects the political struggle among Spanish political parties to make sense of the attacks in Brussels, in the unstable political landscape of Spain after the 2015 elections.

Among the proposals to prevent terrorist attacks in the future, the most frequently mentioned is the need to improve European-level exchange and processing of information. This topic features strongly among the political statements thematic group, where at least ten (10 out of 18) are directly or indirectly related. Most of this news are concerned with the EU Interior Ministers meeting, which took place shortly after the attacks; in such meeting EU Ministers admitted that they had not implemented security measures agreed upon after the Paris attacks. The President of the Commission, in a lengthy interview, criticized the lack of commitment of certain EU states, and vowed to “speed the implementation of PNR” [Passenger Name Registry] and stricter controls in the outer borders of the EU. He also recognised problems in coordinating national intelligence agencies, who are sometimes reluctant to share sources and information¹⁹⁰. Other news simply call for greater security measures at EU airports.

Also at the Spanish level the emphasis was placed on increased security, with four articles detailing increased security measures in Spanish airports in general¹⁹¹, and especially in Catalonia. Some opinion articles also defended the need for a change in “military and police [counter-terrorism] answers” which do not suffice to counter “a new model of terrorism, savage and indiscriminate”¹⁹². Similarly, a news articles features USA pressures to accelerate the military campaign against ISIS in Syria after the Brussels attacks.

¹⁸⁹ Antonio Elorza, “Yihadismo: La Inacción,” *El País*, March 24, 2016, accessed 30th April 2017 https://politica.elpais.com/politica/2016/03/24/actualidad/1458837896_757770.html.

¹⁹⁰ Lena Le Soir, “Juncker: ‘Que No Empiecen a Dar Lecciones a Los Belgas,’

¹⁹¹ Patricia Ortega, “Interior Mantiene La Alerta 4 Pero Incrementa La Seguridad En Los Aeropuertos”

¹⁹² N.A. Europa, unida contra el desaffo terrorista

Only one news article presented the need for a change in EU foreign policy. It covers the statements of a Spanish liberal mayor, who believes that “the violence of the attacks is a product of the aggressions of Western powers against other countries”. This statement is contested within the piece by a Spanish conservative politician, who considered it “a justification of jihadist violence”, reminding the mayor that Western democracies and societies are “the real defenders of freedom and human rights”¹⁹³.

Finally, there are two articles which present alternative measures to prevent terrorist attacks in the future. The first one is signed by a prominent Spanish jurist and a public prosecutor. It acknowledges the temptation to “call to war against terrorism might mitigate the frustration but it won’t tackle the terrorist threat. For that the reaction must be much deeper”. Among those deeper measures are “long-term goals, actions no merely reactive but proactive and transversal. We need (...) a better job at coordinating intelligence; a systematic and coordinated job of policemen, judges and public prosecutors, unions, teachers, social educators, clergymen of the religious communities involved”. They close the article arguing that “It will politics of integration and not of discrimination which will defeat the feeling of revenge towards the West which is sprouting”¹⁹⁴.

The second article which includes references to integration and social cohesion policies is the lengthy interview with Juncker, where he briefly concedes that “It is true that in most of our countries [EU member States] we are not very efficient in terms of integration. It is our fault”¹⁹⁵.

4.2.3. Mixed Methods Analysis: *El Diario.es*

In this data source we find the first and only direct discussion of “what is terrorism”. It is presented in the eighth place, after several articles discussing in detail the terrorist attacks of Brussels, in a news article discussing the global distribution of terrorist attacks. The definition is taken from the “Global Terrorism Database”, a webpage resource established by Maryland University in the United States, and it reads: “(...)

¹⁹³ EP, “El Alcalde de Zaragoza Sobre Los Atentados En Bruselas: ‘Vuelve La Violencia Que Sembramos,’” *El País* (Madrid, March 23, 2016), accessed 30th April 2017 https://politica.elpais.com/politica/2016/03/23/actualidad/1458756756_917252.html.

¹⁹⁴ Dolores Delgado and Baltasar Garzón, “El Daesh Y Los Fuegos Fatuos,”

¹⁹⁵ Lena Le Soir, “Juncker: ‘Que No Empiecen a Dar Lecciones a Los Belgas,’

terrorist attacks are those violent acts that 1) have a political, ideological, economic, religious or social goal, 2) seek to intimidate or coerce a big audience, and 3) are outside the precepts of International humanitarian law (IHL)". The article continues to specify that the GTD does not include "acts in which it is not apparent that the perpetrator of the attack has an objective or political message"¹⁹⁶.

From this definition we can see that terrorism is considered a crime, as it occurs outside an established framework of international law, and that there are established parameters to define an act as terrorism or not. This sample presents further examples of the "terrorism as crime" paradigm. For example, as in the case of the first sample, references to "the Belgian police" and "Belgian authorities" are the rule in the thematic group of police investigations, which in this case constitutes a rather big segment of the total (14 out of 48 articles). A majority (10 out of 14 police investigations articles) use police sources as the main content provider for the article. Such references to the police are also accompanied by the use of *presunto* (alleged) to define the terrorists, prior and after their identification: "alleged terrorist", "alleged brains of the terrorist group", etc. There is no apparent distinction between news and opinion articles; both use the *presunto* label with similar frequency.

Although there are mentions to war on terrorism, these are restricted for the most part to the statement of politicians, and they occur with a relative low frequency. For example, French Prime Ministers' declaration that "we are on war" are quoted only once throughout the sample. In a similar fashion, the word war occurs mostly when discussing wars on the Middle East, and when authors criticise current approaches to counter-terrorism based on the "war on terror" model.

The perception of threat posed by terrorism in this sample is considerable but not overwhelming. One article, for example, details "five reasons for pessimism and one for optimism" about the terrorist threat in Europe¹⁹⁷. Among the reasons for pessimism are "Belgium's lack of sufficient resources to monitor all potential terrorists"; "European citizens allowing this threat to condition their legal and conviviality systems"; "the

¹⁹⁶Belén Picazo and Raúl Sánchez, "El 87% de Los Atentados Yihadistas Desde El Año 2000 Han Sido En Países de Mayoría Musulmana," *El Diario.es*, March 22, 2016, accessed 30th April 2017 http://www.eldiario.es/internacional/atentados-organizaciones-islamistas-mayoria-musulmana_0_497301265.html .

¹⁹⁷Iñigo Sáenz de Ugarte, "Bélgica No Es El Único Eslabón Débil de Europa En La Lucha Contra ISIS," *El Diario.es*, March 22, 2016, accessed 30th April 2017 http://www.eldiario.es/internacional/Belgica-unico-eslabon-debil-Europa_0_497301040.html.

exploitation of the news [of the attack] by reactionary politicians”; and the “permanent contradiction of EU foreign policy” which “condemns terrorism and is outraged about attacks on their soil (...) but maintains fluid economic relationships with countries like Saudi Arabia who have bomb markets, weddings, schools and hundreds of houses (...)”¹⁹⁸. Another opinion article quotes Belfast Richard English’s book, *Terrorism: How to Respond*, arguing that the threat to democracy is not the “unlimited danger of death and destruction, but the danger of provoking States to issue reckless and counterproductive”¹⁹⁹.

This sample also includes a “summary” of terrorism since the early 2000s, detailing the impact of terrorist groups and the number of known casualties so far. The threat posed by these organisations “continues to grow, in part due to the creation of new terrorist organisations like Boko Haram and the Islamic State”. In terms of the threat for Europe, “only 22 attacks were committed against Western European countries, representing a 0.1% of the 15.818 terrorist acts committed by jihadist groups worldwide”²⁰⁰. No articles dealing solely with the connections of the Brussels’ attackers to Spain were found, neither was this topic broached in any other article. One article was concerned with the links of the attackers to the 2015 Paris attacks.

As the summary piece above argues, “terrorism has objective or political message”. Overall, this is the most common approach in this sample; although violence and terrorism are condemned in strong terms, they are not presented as irrational at all. One article argues the logic of terrorism “from the enemy’s perspective”. “My job is to turn the carnage into consequences, the corpses into politics. I wear a suit, not explosives, and a lobby splattered with blood is a means for an end. And the end is power”. Moreover, it argues, terrorists “measure my success in newspaper coverage, increases in security budgets, legal reforms and- my end goal- persecuted Muslims whom I can enlist for our cause. (...) I am a politics manipulator”²⁰¹. Other news articles define the surge of terrorism in terms of specific geo-political factors, “confronted interests and hegemonic disputes over resources and territory”²⁰².

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹⁹ Simon Jenkins, “Lo Peor No Es El Terrorismo, Sino Nuestra Reacción a Él,” *El Diario.es*, March 24, 2016, accessed 30th April 2017 http://www.eldiario.es/theguardian/peor-terrorismo-reaccion_0_498000475.html.

²⁰⁰ Belén Picazo and Raúl Sánchez, “El 87% de Los Atentados Yihadistas Desde El Año 2000 Han Sido En Países de Mayoría Musulmana”

²⁰¹ Simon Jenkins, “Lo Peor No Es El Terrorismo, Sino Nuestra Reacción a Él”

²⁰² Iñigo Sáenz de Ugarte, “Bélgica No Es El Único Eslabón Débil de Europa En La Lucha Contra ISIS”

The consideration of religious fanaticism is also present, albeit with in-depth discussions of the context. One opinion article, for example, discusses “religious fundamentalism” as an “identity agglutinant and supplier of symbolic order” for those “immense Arabic-Muslim majorities which have been left out by the world-system of capitalism”²⁰³.

In general terms, there is no apparent discussion of religion or Islamic faith *per se* as motivators for terrorist violence, whether in the case of Brussels or any other. This also becomes apparent in the references to the culprits of the attacks. Although not much information is given about them, their ages are revealed, something not included in the other samples. Thus, we find that “the two airport attackers were brothers, natural from Brussels, 30 y 27 years old respectively, and they were known by the police for acts of vandalism. We are provided similar information about the “alleged brains of the operation” Najib Laachraoui, whose age, criminal past and trips to Syria are explained. All of the information regarding the identities of the culprits is contained in news articles.

In terms of their nationality, there are frequent references to the “Belgian terrorists” or “alleged terrorists [being] natural from Brussels”. There are only two references to the neighbourhood of Molenbeek, and neither address its population’ composition, although they highlight the problem that it poses, as a place that can harbour a fugitive for months.

With regards to the terrorists’ affiliation to a particular organisation, this is presented fairly early in the sample, in the seventh article, echoing a statement from the Islamic State in which they claim the attack. This does not preclude the use of other labels for terrorism. Indeed the use of “jihadism”, “jihadists”, “jihadist terrorism” is common to both news and opinion articles, which use it interchangeably with “terrorists”.

With regards to other labels such as “Islamic” or “Islamists”, widely used in the other samples, this source allegedly refuses to use them. In the opinion article that closes the sample, written by a professor in International Relations, it is argued that “the usage of terms like Islamist, Muslim or Arab to discuss this acts of terrorism serves to legitimise the ever growing Islamophobic discourses in our country [Spain]”. He goes on to argue that this is an extremely important point that “media workers [journalists] and politicians should keep in mind”, for it is “legitimises unsupportive, xenophobic policies and the use

²⁰³ José Antonio Pérez Tapias, “Crímenes Terroristas Desde La Marginalidad Del Odio,” *El Diario.es*, March 24, 2016, accessed 30th April 2017 http://www.eldiario.es/tribunaabierta/Crimenes-terroristas-marginalidad-odio_6_498060201.html.

of violence to face this threat. The extreme right is doubtlessly rejoicing [over it]”²⁰⁴. Nonetheless, usage of terms like “radical Islamist” or “Islamist organizations” can be found, at least in five occasions. The term “Islamic” is only mentioned in reference to the Islamic State. The provide an explanation for this choice, arguing that “the term Islamist must not be confused with Muslim or Islamic, since the latter refer to anything related to the Islamic religion” while Islamist “refers to organized groups defending an adaptation of political life to the most extreme religious readings of Islam”²⁰⁵.

With regards to the victims of the terrorist acts, there are five news articles interviewing survivors of the attacks, and one referring to the Spanish victims of the attack. In the interviews, the protagonists are always Spanish citizens residing in Brussels or working at the EU institutions who had close experiences of the attacks, and provide the first sources of information on the attacks during the first hours after the bombs.

The interviewees discuss how the attacks have affected their daily routines and how they intend to face the consequences. “I had a dilemma whether fear should make you change your habits, if it should condition you (...) but at the end I have given up on taking the metro and I have taken the car”. He goes on to declare that “after the detention of the terrorist I felt safer, although the situation is changed now. Social media have helped, but they also create a bit of psychosis”²⁰⁶. Another news article reflects the opinions of Spanish civil servants working at the EU institutions, who declare to be worried about what’s going to happen next, and how the situation is going to be normalised. Yet another survivor, of the airport attacks this time, declares that “Since some time ago it is impossible to transit in the airport without stumbling upon an army’s unit uniformed and with heavy weapons, and yet this barbaric act has been possible”. Another interviewee of the piece wishes that politicians would concern themselves more with the “radicalisation processes. How does this happen, that citizens that were born European are maddened with hatred because of a feeling of exclusion or marginalization!”

²⁰⁷ A different kind of witness is also included in the coverage; it is the case of a journalist who was held hostage by one of the culprits, Najim Laachraoui, during his stay in Syria.

²⁰⁴ Jordi Calvo Rufanges, “La Espiral Del Terror Contra El Terror,” *El Diario.es*, March 25, 2016, accessed 30th April 2017 http://www.eldiario.es/tribunaabierta/espinal-terror_6_498760127.html.

²⁰⁵ Ibid

²⁰⁶ N.A., “Creo Que Iba Montado En El Metro Del Atentado, Pero Me He Bajado Antes Por Miedo,” *El Diario.es*, March 22, 2016, v accessed 30th April 2017 http://www.eldiario.es/internacional/sirenas-oyen-dentro-Parlamento_0_497300398.html.

²⁰⁷ Ibid

He says that he discussed politics with the terrorist, but that he never doubted for an instant that Najim Laachraoui wouldn't wink twice if he had to kill.

Aside from the articles mentioned above, the sample includes a combination of press releases by Belgian and Spanish Muslim communities, who “condemn the attacks”, and yet warn that European Muslims are vulnerable victims too, for “these acts undermine the efforts of the Muslim community to live together”, and present “a falsified version of the values that Islam and Muslims defend”. In the same news article, a representative of the *Movimiento contra la Intolerancia* (Movement against Intolerance) argues that “In Spain it was always clear that one thing were Basque people and another very different one ETA's terrorism. We are arguing the same, that one thing are Muslims and another very different jihadist terrorism”²⁰⁸.

In tune with these declarations, there are extensive allusions to Muslims and Muslim-majority countries being the main target of terrorist activity: “(...) more than 72000 people died because of terrorist acts between 200 and 2014, the majority in countries where Islam is the majority religion. Half of the attacks of Islamist organisations took place in countries which have suffered serious armed conflicts, like Iraq (27%), Afghanistan (15%) and Pakistan (95)”²⁰⁹. In the concrete case of Spain, the threat to Muslim communities is highlighted in two news articles covering the attack to a mosque in Madrid by a group of neo-Nazis, and the subsequent police investigations for a potential crime of hate speech and breaking and entering private property.

The main “intangible casualties” mentioned in this sample seem to be civic liberties, “the human right to non-discrimination” and “the freedom of movement of a borderless Europe”²¹⁰, as well as the “deterioration of the democratic rule of law” in Europe. “The Europe that we wanted, based on the values and the defence of human rights, is crumbling down”. However, these are presented as consequences of the “vicious circle of terror against terror”, this is, as a consequence of “our reactions to terrorism”²¹¹, rather

²⁰⁸ Europa Press, “Los Líderes de La Comunidad Musulmana En Bélgica Condenan Los Atentados Y Piden Unidad Frente Al Terrorismo,” *El Diario.es*, March 22, 2016, accessed 30th April 2017 <http://diariodeavisos.com/2016/03/los-lideres-la-comunidad-musulmana-belgica-condenan-los-atentados-piden-unidad-frente-al-terrorismo/>.

²⁰⁹ Belén Picazo and Raúl Sánchez, “El 87% de Los Atentados Yihadistas Desde El Año 2000 Han Sido En Países de Mayoría Musulmana”

²¹⁰ Viviana García, “Los Ultraconservadores Usan Los Atentados de Bruselas Contra La Europa Sin Fronteras,” *El Diario.es* (London, March 23, 2016), accessed 30th April 2017 http://www.eldiario.es/politica/populismo-atentados-Bruselas-Europa-fronteras_0_497650761.html.

²¹¹ Jordi Calvo Rufanges, “La Espiral Del Terror Contra El Terror”

than of the terrorist attacks themselves, which in the sample examined are not said to have lasting effects on the European democracies, and whose negative consequences are focused on the human casualties.

This idea is also present in the portrayal of immediate reactions to the terror attacks. Calls for political and social unity occupy rather small section of the sample, with only three news articles covering the Spanish reactions, of which two concentrate on regional level figures (from Tenerife, in the Canary islands, where several of the civil servants affected by the attacks come from). The piece covering the meeting at the Congress of the main national-level political figures simply lists their presence, without reproducing any of their statements. They do, however, reserve one news article to discuss the critics that the left-wing party *Podemos* has received on account of not signing the “anti-jihadist” pact, including the statements of the leaders of two conservative parties.

In contrast, several opinion pieces are very critical of “hypocritical minutes of silence and (...) tearful eyes that choose to ignore the true roots of the problem”. “Every time that there is act of terrorism, we know that (...) stifling paraphernalia will follow. (...) Always the same cynicism, the same sowing of fear and exacerbation of passions. The only ones who are always new are the dead, the broken families”²¹².

There is as well a defence of the party *Podemos*, who “responds to the events in Brussels with quiet and solemn tranquillity. To minimize something is not to ignore it. Terrorists have specific goals: to use their atrocious acts for a political cause. There is no sensible defence in a free society against atrocity. But there is a defence against its goals: avoid hysteria, show some precaution”²¹³. The media framing and audience consumption of the events “as if it was a film” it is also under fire, arguing that “there is a constructed distinction between us and them”, between our reactions to terrorism in Belgium and terrorism in Morocco²¹⁴.

Overall, there is a cautious support for an improvement of intelligence gathering and information exchange reflected both in its presence in news and opinion articles. News articles report on the slow pace at which information exchange between EU members advances”, and the reluctance of EU members to share information and thus

²¹² Simon Jenkins, “Lo Peor No Es El Terrorismo, Sino Nuestra Reacción a Él”

²¹³ Ibid

²¹⁴ Felipe G.Gil, “La Europa de Los Nuestras,” *El Diario.es*, March 23, 2016, accessed 30th April 2017 http://www.eldiario.es/interferencias/Europa-nuestros_6_497710236.html.

improve the interoperability of databases on suspected terrorists, so as to be able to track their movements in Europe. Opinion articles, on the other hand, also present the potential drawbacks that increased access to private property, arguing that the potential for State interference is a too great not be pondered about.

However, by far the most mentioned measure to prevent terrorism is to change the EU's foreign policy, especially in the Middle East, while prevention of radicalisation is only mentioned in an article echoing the statements of EU Commission President Junker. The prevalence of a change of foreign policy as the key to prevention is reflected solely in opinion pieces, of which half (five out of ten articles) are concerned with the damaging effects of current foreign policy approaches, especially the "unquestioned inertia" to follow OTAN and USA leadership, and the limited effectiveness of military interventions and extensive bombing campaigns against terrorist groups. It is argued that "the political aggressiveness of the USA has taken away the Union's political manoeuvrability and has dragged [the Union] to its geo-political interests", which do not necessarily coincide²¹⁵. Another author criticises "the double moral of countries like France or Spain, who sell weapons to Saudi Arabia and other countries keen on *fanatisising* Islam. Hollande's France even goes as far as to award the heir of the dynasty with the highest honours, right after he [the heir of the Saudi Arabia dynasty] executed over 70 opponents"²¹⁶.

The same author poses the hypothetical question of "whether we should bomb Brussels, the city were the terrorists come from"²¹⁷. This scepticism of the effectiveness of military intervention is shared by other authors. One says that "To flood airports and train stations with policemen and soldiers has a dissuasive effect, but cannot reduce to zero the possibilities of an attack"²¹⁸. Finally, another author questions whether the "War on Terror could be cause of the expansion of Al Qaeda, of the creation and growth of ISIS, and of the apparition of small groups and even individuals, American and European citizens, who perpetrate terrorist acts". "The leaders of ISIS will not let the opportunity

²¹⁵ Suso de Toro, "Europa Paga Sus Platos Rotos Y Los de Otros También," *El Diario.es*, March 23, 2016, accessed 30th April 2017 http://www.eldiario.es/zonacritica/Europa-paga-platos-rotos_6_497710241.html.

²¹⁶ Rosa María Artal, "Menos Minutos de Silencio Y Más Atajar Las Causas," *El Diario.es*, March 24, accessed 30th April 2017, http://www.eldiario.es/zonacritica/minutos-silencio-atajar-causas_6_498060203.html.

²¹⁷ Ibid

²¹⁸ Iñigo Sáenz de Ugarte, "Bélgica No Es El Único Eslabón Débil de Europa En La Lucha Contra ISIS,"

slip to attract new members to their abominable cause every time that a family member [of a civilian family] dies as a consequence of the Allies' air raids"²¹⁹.

5. Discussion of the findings

5.1. Discussion of the Findings: Identification of Frames

As seen in the analysis, each sample contains a variety of tendencies towards framing terrorism and Islam, and although some sources presented more internal voices than others, none was completely homogeneous. Nevertheless, the existence of several coexisting frameworks does not imply that one has a greater relevance within the sample. Thus, the results discussed in this chapter will focus on the main trends detected for each sample; unless there is an important presence of alternative discourses within the sample, only the main discourse will be exposed in detail, together with the key arguments which help to construct and maintain such a framework of interpretation.

Additionally, it is worth noting that there are always several techniques involved in framing, of which the actual "voicing" or writing in this case, of opinions needs not to be the most important one. As an UN journalism manual clarifies, "the frame [in news] is expressed through the selection or rejection of subjects, their hierarchy, their placement, the choice of speakers and images. It can also be reflected in the use of some words and epithets"²²⁰.

To mention the most important ones for this analysis, we could refer to the frequency of representation of certain topics and terms, the date of the publications, the selection of some information and the omission of other, and the voice (and lack of) given to particular agents. Such elements and their use by each source were discussed in detail in the analysis, and will not be repeated here.

5.1.1. Identification of Frames: *La Razón*

Media coverage of this sample tends to frame the terrorist attacks of Brussels as acts of an on-going war between Islam and the European civilisation. Western European countries in particular are being targeted by terrorist organisations, and so are Christians both inside and outside Europe's borders. Thus, the war between Islam and Europe

²¹⁹Jordi Calvo Rufanges, "La Espiral Del Terror Contra El Terror"

²²⁰Marthoz, *Terrorism and the Media A Handbook for Journalists*, 35.

extends to a war between Islam and Christianity, in which Christianity is the righteous heritage of Europe and Islam is just an unwanted, violent intruder. Such a focus on Christianity, via the discussion of religious war and the Pope, matches the ideological outset of the newspaper.

Overall, Islamic religion features very prominently as a key to understanding the terrorism phenomenon. For example, Islamic religion, but not religion in general, appears as the key to understanding terrorists' motivations, as it is argued for example that teachings contained in the Quran encourage violence. The prominence of Islam is reinforced by the ample and indiscriminate use of labels like "Islamic", "Islamist", "Yihaidist", "Muslim radical" and "Muslim extremism". The mention of Arabic language also plays on the connection between Islam and Arabs. Other elements of the terrorist identities, such as nationality, age, education, economic status and so on are largely absent from the sample, thus their adherence to Islamic religion becoming the main piece of information presented to the reader. Similarly, other possible explanations to the roots of the terrorism phenomenon, such as political claims or social unrest, are absent.

The terrorist attacks to Brussels are carefully constructed as the "latest episode" of an unfolding aggression against Western European countries, rather than as an individual, isolated episode. Brussels, as the target of terrorist attacks, represents an attack to all the members of the EU and to the shared European values of democracy, freedom and tolerance. The sense of growing danger as a result of the attacks also features strongly in the sample, reinforced by lists of casualties, graphic depictions of violence, and the depiction of an aftermath of chaos, tragedy and confusion.

The ideas of threat and of an attack on European values are fundamental to understanding the framing of the reactions to the attacks. Political unity and solidarity are presented as a natural, necessary and human reaction to the barbaric and inhuman acts of the terrorists, which reinforces the distinction between a compassionate and civilised Europe and the irrational religiously inspired violence of Muslim terrorists. Following on this logic, the need to protect and preserve European values of freedom justifies a series of reactive measures: the need for increased surveillance and EU-level exchange of information; the need for increased police and military presence in the streets; and the need for military intervention in the perceived source of the terrorist threat, Syria.

Finally, this conflict is presented as a matter of grave concern for Spanish readers, because of the existing connections between terrorists across Europe, which could

hypothetically lead back to Spain; because of the potential access of the terrorists to nuclear weapons; and because of the especial significance of Spain (as *Al Andalus*) for Muslims all over the world.

5.1.2. Identification of Frames: *El País*

Media coverage in this sample framed terrorism, almost unanimously, as an act of war against EU States and European values. In many ways its portrayal of terrorism and Islam is very similar to that of the first sample, and most of the argumentative logic follows parallel trails. The nuance of this framing with respect to the first one is the emphasis on the “enemy within”: this is, Islam has insidiously infiltrated European societies and institutions and now proceeds to strike from the inside. Moreover, Europe’s key contribution to the world is peace, and such terrorist attacks threaten to destroy such achievement and plunge peaceful and innocent societies back into the dark ages of war. A strong emphasis on democracy and tolerance, erring of the secularism side, matches the newspaper’s orientation towards an ideological democratic centre, while critiques of *Podemos* draw the line on how left can left be.

Religion is not such an important aspect of the framing of terrorism in this case. If anything, religion is portrayed as a foreign to European values, and religiousness is often identified with violent extremism and Islam. Both elements, religiousness and Islam, are presented as problematic and somehow difficult to square with European values of tolerance, peaceful coexistence, freedom, democracy and the rule of law. To destroy the latter is the real objective of terrorism.

Following the logic of the “enemy within” and of religion as conducting to religious extremism, terrorists are presented in a specific manner. They are identified as European, if not by ideology, at least by birth. Their “Europeanness” is tainted, however, by their Islamic faith. For a start, they have been mysteriously radicalised into hating the aforementioned values of freedom and tolerance. This might have something to do with their origins in a neighbourhood with a Muslim majority; such a place simultaneously produces terrorists and provides refuge to them. The identification of terrorism with Islam is further advanced by the indiscriminate use of labels and tags like “Islamist”, “Islamic” and so on. Indeed, even Islam is used as a categorisation tag, as it is the “Conflict Sunni and Shia”; these allusions to Islamic faith seem to point to Islam as the source of the problem, even if such argument is not overtly deployed in the main bodies of the articles.

Similarly to the first sample, there is a growing sense of danger, due to the terrorist threat which has been looming over Europe for decades. This is not focused on any particular groups but affects all European equally, because the target of the terrorists is to destroy the EU, as a political project and as a source of freedom and civilisation. Therefore, political unity is an absolute necessity to face terrorism, and it must be prioritise to national interests or even political ideology. The importance of solidarity and empathy as responses to the victims of terrorism is also a necessity, although of course no such intentions are extended to terrorists. The need to coordinate at the EU-level also follows the logic of unity against the enemy; otherwise, prevention measures are limited to increasing security measures, among them border control, police and military presence and state surveillance.

5.1.3. Identification of Frames: *El Diario.es*

Media coverage of this sample presents several key differences from the first two, and thus it produces an altogether different framing of terrorism and Islam. Terrorism is presented as an important challenge ahead for Europe, although the size of the conflict is not elevated to that of an open war. In fact, terrorism is presented as a worrisome criminal activity which depends on several factors, of which Islamic faith is not the most important one. Rather, terrorism is framed as a political strategy of claim-making, although it is nevertheless condemned because of its violent means. This framing of terrorism is characterised by a multi-faceted critical approach to both the terrorist actions and the public and official reactions to it. With regard to the latter, this sample identifies European and national civil liberties and human rights as the main victims of this conflict. The approach for an informed coverage of terrorism and denounce of Islamophobic attitudes goes hand in hand with the newspaper's compromise for critical and informed journalism with a social angle.

Religious identity is replaced by political considerations as the main drivers of terrorist activities, as there is no apparent discussion of Islamic faith as the ultimate cause for violence, whether in the case of Brussels or any other. Instead, several explanations for terrorist activity are provided, such as the feeling of marginalisation of certain individuals, the counter-productivity of counter-terrorist legislation, or the aggressive and misguided approach of Europe to foreign policy. With regards to using terms which could evoke connections to Islam, this source makes a much more selective use of vocabulary, which is further justified explicitly in the sample.

Above all, this frame seems to distance as much as possible Islamic faith from terrorist activity. It does so by overt explanations, but also resorts to other devices. One of them is including Muslim authority voices condemning the attacks; another is to present Muslims, both in Spain, in Europe and abroad, as the main victims of terrorism. On the one hand, Muslim-majority countries are targeted more intensely by terrorists; on the other hand, European counter-terrorist strategies further legitimise street and state level discrimination and abuse of Muslims and their civic rights.

All in all, this frame does not seem to identify European values of freedom and tolerance as the main target of terrorists. To the contrary, restrictive counter-terrorist strategies established to prevent terrorism are the ones harming a Europe respectful and protective of basic freedoms and rights, to the point of creating an anti-democratic and intolerant environment. In this sense, the perception of threat posed by terrorism to Europe in this sample is considerable but not overwhelming, and it depends more on State decisions and public attitudes than on the terrorist acts themselves.

Finally, prevention of terrorism in this framing seems to revolve mostly around changing EU foreign policy, which is seen as key factor in engendering home-grown terrorism. Firstly, there is strong critique of the EU's approach to complex situations in the Middle East and Arabic Gulf. Secondly, there is a very sceptic view of the effectiveness of military action as a solution to ending terrorism. While there is no overt reference to improving social cohesion to prevent radicalisation, there are several mentions to terrorism being cause by social exclusion and political and police targeting.

5.2. Discussion of the Findings: Answering the Research Questions

To finish this discussion, let us back at the initial research questions, and see whether the research offers convincing answers. For this purpose, we should bear in mind some of the concepts laid down in the theoretical framework, especially the discussion of Islamophobia offered by the Runnymede Trust Report and the concept of securitisation posed by Cesari. Other authors specialised in terrorism discourses will also be brought up, in order to understand how specific framings of terrorism affect our understanding of Islam.

5.2.1. RQ1. What discourse(s) about Islam are mobilised in the Spanish press when reporting about terrorist attacks in the EU?

Can we say that the framing of terrorism present in the examined samples contains Islamophobic remarks? Considering the topic to be examined, terrorism committed in the name of Islam, it might be difficult to distinguish between legitimate criticism and exclusionary attitudes. In order to avoid merging valid critique and unfounded hostility towards Islam, we shall refer to the Runnymede Trust Report table on closed and open views of Islam²²¹.

In the first two samples, as we have discussed already, there are significant similarities in framing. Applying the Runnymede Islamophobia table, we can see that they indeed share and reproduce closed views of Islam. Both sources, for example, envision Islam as “monolithic”, in so far as the only representation of Muslims or Islam present in the sample is that of terrorists. This provides a much skewed vision of how different Muslim communities in Belgium, Europe and Spain relate to Islamic terrorism: the absence of their voices presents terrorism as the only representative sample of Muslim ideology, and obviously it does not portray Islam in a very good light. The third sample, on the other hand, presents at least some voices of different Muslim associations in Europe, thus allowing for a more accurate, open and diverse view of Islam as having great internal differences.

The second closed view of Islam presents it as “separate”, in so far as it does not seem to share any of the so-called “European values” of democracy, tolerance and respect for the rule of law. This is especially important given how European identity is framed on the samples as being intrinsically tight to these values; arguing that Muslims do not share such values is in fact arguing that they do not or cannot belong to Europe. An example of an open view of Islam can be seen in the third sample, where Islam and Muslims are presented as regular citizens who share a categorical rejection of violence as a means to an end, just as most European citizens do.

Another similarity among the first two samples is that both envision Islam as “inferior” and an “enemy” to Europe, albeit this is sometimes done in a conceited way. For a start, there are abundant references to the irrational and barbaric nature Islamic faith as being the root cause of Islamic terrorism. By extension, all Muslims turn into maddened barbarians, who seek to destroy European values by means of violence, and who are fundamentally incompatible with European societies. A more open view of these

²²¹Conway, “Islamophobia a Challenge for Us All.”, 5.

aspects is present in the third sample, considering that Muslims, however different they might be, are nonetheless worthy of the same rights and liberties, partners and not enemies in the prevention of violent radicalisation, and thus should be respected and protected from current discriminatory attitudes.

Finally, we find that the first two samples share a more or less overt discrimination of Islam, based on the closed views presented above. Hostility towards Muslims, in the form of Islamophobic framings of terrorism, is justified because it is “common sense” that Islam and Muslims at large are responsible for violent terrorist activities. Therefore, anti-Muslim hostility is natural and must be openly articulated, even if it offends some. Following this argument, bigoted criticism of Islam is seen as something positive and to be cherished. In contrast, the third sample engages with the concept of Islamophobia and tries to articulate logical reasons to dismantle negative assumptions about Islam, thus engaging with discrimination from a tolerant point of view.

In sum, the answer to this research question would be that we can find various discourses about Islam in the Spanish press. There seem to be, in so far as these samples are concerned, two very different positions: on the one hand, two samples rely on stereotypical, uncritical and unfounded views of Islam to link the terrible acts of a few on a large, large group of people, who for the most part distance themselves from such violent actions. Moreover, such discourses contribute to legitimise discriminatory attitudes, and thus further deteriorate the explosive situation of Islam in Europe. Conversely, the third sample intends to draw clear distinctions between terrorism and Islam, and struggles to address the first critically and the second knowledgeably. The fact that it gives voice, if rather limited, to actual Muslims, allows to further deconstruct closed and negative views of Islam saturating current European debates.

5.2.2. RQ2. How are these discourses embedded in larger discursive patterns, and how do they affect the production of meaning around terrorist attacks and Islam?

In order to understand the relationship between the stated framings of terrorism and existing discourses about Islam in Europe, we must go back to the tendency of the first two samples to frame terrorism as a fundamentally “Islamic” issue, and as an open war between Islam and Europe.

First of all, media frames do not occur in a vacuum. Rather, “a frame makes reference to something resident in the surrounding culture, and the presence of the frame

essentially invites audiences to apply the information or meanings within which the culture has imbued the frame”. Thus, frames are “context dependent”²²². Moreover, a particular framing might be more popular, “if it resonates with popular culture, fits with media routines or practices, and/or is heavily sponsored by elites”²²³.

In this case, the context to have in mind is twofold: on the one hand, there is an increasing tendency, reflected in the samples, to understand terrorism as an exclusive conflict between European and other so-called Western powers and Islam, in terms of a “clash of civilisations”. This approach avoids giving much thought to the heterogeneity of both sides of the perceived conflict, which can hardly be presented as having an “united front”, in so much as EU countries have as many discrepancies and differences among themselves as Muslims do. Moreover, the idea that terrorism is targeting Europe in particular is ignorant if not outright fallacious. To quote just an example, 2015 is known in Europe for the *Charlie Hebdo* attacks in France, which left seventeen casualties. Yet, in January 2015, an attack by the terrorist group Boko Haram in Nigeria destroyed whole areas of the city of Baga and left more than two thousand dead²²⁴. However, as such an attack does not fit with the framing of terrorism as “clash of civilisations”, many in Europe and abroad have either decided to ignore it, or even more likely, have never known about it in the first place.

The mass media is partially to blame for this misconstruction of terrorism in the public mind, as they tend to give extensive attention and deem relevant only those attacks that take place “close to home”. After all, news frames are “interpretive structures that journalists use to set particular events within their broader context”²²⁵. “Selecting particular aspects and angles of reality and privileging them in the description, the definition, the interpretation and the moral evaluation of the subject”²²⁶ has a crucial weight in how public audiences react to terrorism. Some scholars point out that media outlets are very keen on focusing on the destructive actions and the threat posed by terrorism, “rather than on its grievances or the social conditions that breed it – to present

²²² Tewksbury and Scheufele, “News Framing Theory and Research,” 23.

²²³ Ibid, 19.

²²⁴ Marthoz, *Terrorism and the Media A Handbook for Journalists*, 42.

²²⁵ Pippa Norris, Montague Kern, and Marion Just, “Introduction,” in *Framing Terrorism The News Media, the Government and the Public*, ed. Pippa Norris, Montague Kern, and Marion Just (New York: Routledge, 2003), 10.

²²⁶ Marthoz, *Terrorism and the Media A Handbook for Journalists*, 34.

episodic rather than thematic stories²²⁷. Different framings of terrorism can lead to audiences being overwhelmed by fear and anger (ultimately leading to discriminatory attitudes against all Muslims), or considering such tragedies from a more cautious and moderate point of view.

On top of this, terrorism is far from an easily defined concept, and the lack of a stable definition might have facilitated independent actors to fill the void with whatever explanation they deem fitting. For decades, academics, politicians, security agencies and the mass media have portrayed terrorism as an overwhelming threat that has the power to take down sovereign states and destroy civilisations. Although terrorism is unique in its ability to “shock and scare”, “the actual level of risk for an individual citizen is relatively small, especially compared to countless other factors that may lack the same emotional impact. Yet the average person exposed to the most common frames of terrorism “may become convinced that they are in immediate and pressing danger”²²⁸.

Many scholars, while recognising that it is a difficult problem to face, disagree with such simplistic and apocalyptic views, which also do little to actually tackle the problem. [The discourse of] “Islamic terrorism’ is profoundly unhelpful, not least because it is highly politicized, intellectually contestable, damaging to community relations and largely counter-productive in the struggle to control subaltern violence in the long run”²²⁹.

Luckily, scholars of terrorism have in the last decade began to critically challenge some of the most widespread assumptions related to Islamic terrorism, in a double effort to stop constructs of Islam as an enemy of the West, and to achieve a better knowledge of the phenomenon so as to be able to prevent it in the future. Such deconstruction, for example, targets specifically the actual role of religion for terrorism in general, and especially Islamic religion; the real effects of “suspecting” entire communities; or the potentially counter-productive nature of current security strategies²³⁰. It remains to see such knowledge put to practice at the decision making level, but maybe even more importantly, at the mass media level. Ultimately, most citizens frame their understanding of important topics of which they have no first-hand experience from news (TV, internet, newspapers, and more). Since they are the ones with the power to change political figures,

²²⁷ Michael Stohl, “Old Myths, New Fantasies and the Enduring Realities of Terrorism,” *Critical Studies on Terrorism* 1, no. 1 (2008): 7.

²²⁸ Marthoz, *Terrorism and the Media A Handbook for Journalists*,.39.

²²⁹ “Constructing Enemies: ‘Islamic Terrorism’ in Political and Academic Discourse” 395.

²³⁰ Jeroen Gunning and Richard Jackson, “What’s so ‘religious’ about ‘religious Terrorism’?,” *Critical Studies on Terrorism* 4, no. 3 (2011).

it is of paramount importance for them to “be fed” higher quality information on terrorism, its roots, and the potential solutions.

The answer to this research question should be: yes, there is definitely a perceptible connection between existing discursive trends on Islam and terrorism, and the framing deployed by two of the samples. The framing of the third sample, however, should remind us that no discourse is absolute and without challenge: discourses are constantly competing for prominence and for advancing particular meanings or understandings of events. In this sense, it is not as if the existing discursive context of terrorism and Islam is without contestation, and such contestation is indeed skillfully articulated to tackle and replace some of the established meanings.

5.2.3. RQ3. Once the mobilised discourses and their broader discursive contexts are clearly outlined, can we establish a connection between them and the specific situation of Islam and security in 21st C Spain and Europe?

This is perhaps the most difficult question to answer, and it can be answered only partially. Although it is tempting to establish links between seemingly connected aspects, this research is not representative enough of Spanish press so as to draw such grand conclusions. Furthermore, the effects of media on audiences, and the influence of elites on media are still subject to debate among scholars. This study is by far too limited to attempt to bridge a gap that other, more prepared scholars have not been able to.

This being said, there are certain parallelism between some of the framing we have observed in the samples and current trends in counter-terrorism and security in Spain and Europe. Cesari’s theory of “securitisation of Islam”, in particular, seems to match the emphasis of two of the samples on the need for increased security measures as the only way to prevent terrorist acts. The third sample also provides some hints that securitisation and military measures might be counter-productive. In Cesari’s words, “the measures intended to prevent radicalisation actually engender discontent and prompt a transformation of religious conservatism to fundamentalism. This is the process of securitisation. It involves actors who propose that Islam is an existential threat to European political and secular norms and thereby justifies extraordinary measures against it”²³¹.

As we have seen throughout the analysis, in all but one case security measures are justified in so much as they are necessary to protect European citizens and values from

²³¹ “Securitisation of Islam”, 2.

an “Islamic terrorism” threat. The increase of state intrusion in private affairs, represented by the PNR legislation, is also embedded in the need to “control” certain individuals, especially Muslims.

These policies effectively restrain the civil liberties of Muslim migrants. Although Spain has not gone nearly as far in its suspension of liberties, the government has detained a number of Muslims for periods of time using a policy many believe is oriented towards improving relations with the United States in the aftermath of the Spanish military evacuation of Iraq. The disproportionate effect of these laws on Muslims may engender resentment and misunderstandings among the Muslim immigrants²³².

Interestingly, in an article dating back to 2009, Cesari warns about how threat concerns have been “deployed in campaigns against mosques in Spain”. And as represented in two of the samples, a Mosque in Madrid was vandalised after the Brussels’ attacks; the connection to security concerns is clear in the message that the vandals sprayed on the walls of the mosque: “Today Brussels, Tomorrow Madrid?”.

But Cesari is not alone in her claim that framings of terrorism and policies may actually engender further radicalisation. Other scholars on the field of terrorism have criticised the securitisation of religious practices, such as profiling individuals on religious grounds, as a first step in legitimising flagrant violation of basic human rights:

The ‘religious terrorism’ framework has functioned to legitimise extraordinary and counterproductive measures, such as some of the prisoner interrogation methods used at Guantanamo and Abu Ghraib, which were designed specifically to break down the ‘religious terrorist’ through the application of sexual and religious humiliation, and the invasion of Iraq itself, which was legitimised in part as an attempt to prevent weapons of mass destruction falling into the hands of fanatical ‘religious terrorists’²³³.

In turn, such actions

Create new sources of resentment and undermine the kinds of community policing on which counterterrorism depends and, instead, can function to construct a ‘suspect community’ in which all religious practices become a reason for suspicion. They also function to obscure ways in which religion, as a set of cultural–linguistic practices, could also be a ‘solution’ to terrorism²³⁴.

In sum, although we cannot yet establish a cause-effect connection between frames of terrorism, anti-Muslim attitudes and the specific situation of Islam and security in 21st C Spain and Europe, there seems to be little doubt that these elements are

²³² Ibid, 12.

²³³ "What's so religious about religious terrorism", 381.

²³⁴ Ibid, 382.

interconnected. Indeed, they seem to feed one another in a spiral of fear, mistrust and resentment, in which we all lose.

6. Conclusion and Further Research

It should have become apparent by now that the situation of Muslims in Spain develops somehow along the fault lines established by the European example. Higher levels of discrimination at all spheres of life; poor future expectative in term of occupation and access to education; increase in the cases of abuse on account of their religion; and now, another layer of misunderstanding and negativity is being added, by means of the active connection between Islam and terrorism.

It would be blindsided to deny the existence of a link between certain practices of Islamic faith and terrorism. After all, many terrorist organisations define themselves as acting in name of Islam, and their political claims are often connected to territories with large Muslim populations. However, Islamic terrorists represent an extremely small minority of Muslims, and this is a point that politicians, the media and citizens in general seem to have trouble assimilating. As a Spanish Muslim association pointed out, “In Spain it was always clear that one thing were Basque people and another very different one ETA’s terrorism. We are arguing the same, that one thing are Muslims and another very different jihadist terrorism”²³⁵

And yet, the current research has proven that Islamophobic views, sweeping generalisations and misinformation continue to inform a large part of Spanish public discussions of terrorism. This attitudinal context has provided the niche and the social support and legitimisation for certain security strategies that actively target Muslim communities, in terms of immigration or State surveillance. As experts warn, such techniques are very likely to generate resentment and rejection on the part of Muslims. Thus, a paradox is created: in order to prevent terrorism, policies and views are promoted that do instead push potential innocent citizens into the role of violent oppressors.

As the situation of Muslim communities in Europe continues to deteriorate every year, all groups of citizenry should be concerned. After all, as it has happened in Spain, draconian laws, even if meant to protect us, always have the potential to be used against civic liberties. It is also important to bear in mind that the creation of an environment of fear and prejudice does little to benefit a political and social project based on the hope of leaving national differences and striving for a common goal. If at the national level,

²³⁵ Los líderes de la comunidad musulmana en Bélgica condenan los atentados y piden unidad frente al terrorismo

citizens accuse one another of violence, and hatred of the different grows, what can we expect at the supranational level? Europe has been quite efficient at producing legislation which is meant to ensure equity and protection of everyone in the Union, regardless of how small, how new, how different they might be. And yet, when one digs a bit deeper into the discourses and ideas laying behind the surface, it seems like disregard for dissimilitude is the unwritten norm that we all abide by. Sadder indeed is to see how the principles of democracy and tolerance, for which we have been fighting for generations, are mobilised in order to discriminate those we don't feel comfortable with, whose presence makes us question who is it that we are. The answers to that question cannot come from a place of fear, from wanting to distinguish ourselves from that we consider dangerous or wrong without even knowing it. If we, as Europeans, want this experiment to work, we must leave the comfort of pre-conceived ideas behind and through acceptance of ignorance, embrace the knowledge that those we perceive as different will bring us.

One small reason for hope would be that Islamophobic and ignorant views are not the only views we can find. Both at the academic and journalistic level, more and more individuals have started to critique such approaches, and to propose alternative readings that can compete for public opinion and legitimisation. Their voices are not yet as loud as the ones on the other side, but hopefully they will grow stronger as increased public and scholarly research turns to these questions.

However, more research is necessary in order to have the methodological and informational tools to face the rise of Islamophobic and misguided judgements, especially in countries like Spain, which have not traditionally being receptors of immigration, and thus have problems adjusting a mostly homogenous national identity to allow for the inclusion of alternative versions of itself. Indeed, countries in the South of Europe, like Spain, Italy, Portugal or Greece continue to be underrepresented in the academic debate. This constitutes a great disadvantage for those aiming to develop specific policies or action plans, but it also impoverishes scholarly circles, by over-representing certain Western European countries to the detriment of others.

For all these reasons, it would be the suggestion of this research that more young and experienced researchers turn their attention to relatively unexplored countries, which have much to offer in terms of different historical, socio-political, economic contexts, and

who would benefit much from a more comprehensive and standardised production of knowledge.

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