

Trabajo Fin de Grado

After the 2015 Paris Attacks: British Muslims seen
by the British written media

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Resumen

Desde los atentados terroristas del 11 de Septiembre de 2001, el terrorismo parece estar más presente que nunca en el mundo Occidental. Así, los atentados de París que tuvieron lugar el 13 de Noviembre de 2015 sólo contribuyeron a empeorar esta situación, convirtiéndose en uno de los puntos de inflexión del siglo XXI y sembrando el pánico en los países Occidentales.

En este trabajo de fin de grado, propongo un análisis exhaustivo de artículos publicados en distintos periódicos del Reino Unido. Se pretende mostrar cómo los diferentes periódicos, independientemente de su ideología o calidad, han reflejado la imagen de los Musulmanes Británicos, relacionándolos con diferentes estereotipos negativos.

Palabras Clave: Multiculturalismo, Terrorismo, Islamofobia, Anti-Muslinismo, Prensa escrita, Orientalismo, Estereotipos.

Abstract

Since the terrorist attacks of 9/11, terrorism seems to be more present than ever in the Western world. Thus, the Paris attacks that took place on November 13, 2015 only contributed to worsen the situation, becoming one of the turning points of the 21th century and sowing panic in the Western countries.

In this final project, I propose a thorough analysis of articles published in different British newspapers and its coverage of the terrorist attacks in Paris in its immediate aftermath. The analysis has as main purpose to show how the different newspapers, regardless of their ideology or quality have reflected the image of British Muslims, relating them with different negative stereotypes.

Key Words: Multiculturalism, Terrorism, Islamophobia, Anti-Muslimism, Written Media, Orientalism, Stereotypes.

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1. Introduction:

Terrorism has always been present throughout history but the sequential terrorist attacks that happened on 9/11 (New York, 2001), 3/11 (Madrid, 2004), 5/7 (London, 2005) and 11/13 (Paris, 2015) put Muslims, especially those living in the West, between a rock and a hard place. Moreover, ever since the beginning of what is known as the “War on Terror”¹, Islam has been considered “different” as well as “a foreign faith that sits uncomfortably in Western countries” (Masood 56-57). In relation to this, it is relevant to bear in mind that a billion Muslims inhabit the earth nowadays and each of them has been and will be affected by these terrorist attacks and also by the continuous attempts to defeat this new threat within their own religion. Consequently, they have become the target of “radical political Islam” and this issue has become a problem for Muslims because they see it as an attack on everyday Islam, which tends to be marginalized or politicized both in the East and the West. Thus, the aim of this essay is to prove by means of the analysis of written British media articles, how in the immediate aftermath of the Paris attacks that took place on 13 November 2015, both tabloids and broadsheets reduced their differences regarding ideology or quality, manipulating and distorting the image of Muslims in the United Kingdom.

2. Multiculturalism, Islamophobia and Anti-Muslimism

First of all, Britain is not a single, homogenous country but a relatively recent and potentially unstable union which claims to be a multicultural society. However, the meaning of this term has been changing from the 1970s onwards. The term multiculturalism is a noun that describes the country’s multi-ethnic or multicultural

¹ It began as a consequence of 9/11 and it was a war one against terrorist organizations, and “ever since the Iranian Revolution of 1979, and the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 nearly all these new terrorists have been Islamic by name (although certainly not by deed)” (Abbas 3).

population. Moreover, it implies the existence, acceptance, or promotion of multiple cultural traditions within a single jurisdiction, usually considered in terms of the culture associated with an ethnic group. However, as Oakland points out, “a multicultural society does not inevitably lead to greater tolerance and the term has recently been a strongly debated issue in Britain” (78). Multicultural policies were adopted from the 1970s and 1980s onwards. At this time, politicians favoured the preservation of ethnical identities within Britain. Nevertheless, in 1997 the New Labour government committed to a multiculturalist approach at a national level changed radically its policies when Blair’s government embraced a policy of community cohesion instead. In fact, in 2011, Prime Minister and Conservative Party leader David Cameron said in a speech that “state multiculturalism has failed” and he added that “the UK needed a stronger national identity” (*BBC News Online*. 5 February 2011). Moreover, the former Chancellor of the Exchequer, Norman Lamont stated in *The Daily Telegraph* that “multiculturalism is dying – is possibly dead”. In fact, the article concluded by saying:

In today’s public and political spaces, the “threat” that Muslims are most commonly seen to present is typically framed... [and] becomes evident along the lines of new racist discourse where “Islam” and “Muslims” are seen to be incompatible with the dominant or perceived overriding culture and its heritage: that is, being “British” and being “us”. (*The Daily Telegraph*)

According to the 2001 census, the Muslim population numbered 1.6 million in the UK, a number that has been increasing since the 19th century, when the Moghul Empire² was defeated. As a result, most of the Islamic world became controlled by colonial powers but this situation radically changed at the end of World War II because Britain was no longer able to hold onto its colonies. Besides, manpower was needed to

² Muslim Empire that was founded in 1526 and ruled for over two centuries, controlling much of India and at times extending into parts of what are now Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Bangladesh. <<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/Mughal%20Empire>>.

work in Britain and, in response to the decline of industrial sectors, people from the New Commonwealth nations started coming to Britain. However, the economic recession of the late 1950s eliminated the demand for labour and by that time hostility towards ethnic minorities had already been developed. Consequently, “Muslims were placed at bottom of the labour market, disdained by the host society, and systematically ethnicised and racialised in the sphere of capitalist accumulation” (Abbas 9). At the beginning of the 1960s, the number of immigrants entering Britain was at its peak but towards the end of the 1960s, immigration had all but ended due to the Commonwealth Immigrants Act (1962)³ and the Commonwealth Immigration Act (1968)⁴. These acts were the ones that led to the politicisation of ethnic minorities in Britain, especially the Muslim community. As a consequence, despite multiculturalism’s advantages, Britain has failed as a modern society because multiculturalism is based on full integration and it seems that Britain has rejected cultures that do not correspond to its nation state. The culture and religion of British Muslims have turned into the key features, often into the only features, used to shape their public image in the media. Therefore, Oakland states that “many find it hard to embrace the term ‘Britishness’, a term which encompasses opportunity, respect, tolerance, supportiveness and decency” (78).

Multiculturalism has strong limitations in the UK and ever since the terrorist attacks of New York, Madrid, London and Paris, Britain has seen its policies towards Muslims affected both externally and internally. Externally, Britain became

³ Act of Parliament of the United Kingdom carried by the Conservative Party in response to a perceived heavy influx of immigrants. The Act removed this right from certain groups of British nationals and as a result, citizens of Commonwealth countries became subject to immigration control.
<<http://www.parliament.uk/search/results/?q=Commonwealth+Immigrants+Act+1962>>.

⁴ Act of Parliament of the United Kingdom which restricted the right of entry previously enjoyed by Citizens of the United Kingdom and Colonies, to those born in the colonies or who had at least one parent or grandparent born there.
<<http://www.parliament.uk/search/results/?q=Commonwealth+Immigration+Act+1968&page=4>>.

bulletproofed by means of anti-terrorist policies and a more strict control over immigrants whereas internally, Muslims, especially the younger ones, had to choose between an Islamic or a British identity. The basis of this problem relies on the fact that, on the one hand, nobody argues that Britain is a multicultural country but, on the other, this multiculturalism has not always been seen in the media as something positive, especially in the last few years because it demands unity, diversity and the willingness to respect and value cultural differences. As a result, when multiculturalism fails, it turns down what does not belong to the mainstream and it also underlines what makes Muslims different. As a matter of fact, this lies in the idea that Britain's discourse on minorities has changed since the 1960s from "colour" as defining feature to the present day "religion".

It seems clear that multiculturalism is not seen as the positive concept it used to be but now the question is whether Britain is an Islamophobic country or not. First of all, although its coinage is very recently, Islamophobia is defined in the Runnymede Trust (1997)⁵ as "dread or hatred of Islam – and, therefore, fear or dislike of all or most Muslims" (Conway 1). However, in more specific terms, Islamophobia could be defined as:

Any ideology or pattern of thought and/or behavior in which [Muslims] are excluded from positions, rights, possibilities in (parts of) society because of their believed or actual Islamic background. [Muslims] are positioned and treated as (imagined/real) representatives of Islam in general or (imagined/real) Islamic groups instead of their capacities as individuals. (Allen 133)

Moreover, Abbas explains seven main features when defining Islamophobia:

⁵ The Runnymede Trust was founded in 1968, with the aim of acting as an independent race equality think tank by generating intelligence for a multi-ethnic Britain through research, network building, leading debate and policy engagement.
<<http://www.runnymedetrust.org/>>.

Muslim cultures are seen as monolithic; Islamic cultures are substantially different from other cultures; Islam is perceived as implacably threatening; Islam's adherents use their faith to political or military advantage; Muslim criticism of Western cultures and societies is rejected out of hand; the fear of Islam is mixed with racist hostility to immigration; and Islamophobia is assumed to be natural and unproblematic. (12)

In fact, the Commission on British Muslims and Islamophobia (1997) noted that Islamophobia was becoming 'more explicit, more extreme and more dangerous' (Conway 1). In this sense, it is interesting to consider the results of a poll conducted in Britain by the YouGov⁶ shortly after the terrorist attacks in New York which showed that:

- 84% of British people tended to be more suspicious about Muslims after 9/11
- 35% stated that their opinion of British Muslims had gone down since
- 82% believed that Muslims were too isolationist
- 56% felt that generally had nothing in common with Muslims
- 63% suggested that Muslims did little to promote tolerance between themselves and others
- And finally, one in six said that they would be "disappointed" if Muslims became their neighbours. (YouGov)

Having considered these results it is not difficult to understand the rise of Islamophobia in Britain. In addition to this, the 2010 *British Social Attitudes Survey* conducted by the National Centre of Social Research, suggested that 52% of respondents believed that Britain was deeply divided along religious lines while 45% of people believed that religious diversity was having a negative impact on society. These

⁶ Poll conducted by YouGov in October 2002 on behalf of the Islamic Society of Britain as part of their Islam Awareness Week 2002. <<http://www.isb.org.uk>>.

numbers are relevant and should be taken into account not only because Muslims represent the second largest faith community in the UK but also because “they are the most visually recognizable, with traditional Islamic attire or even just mere aspects of the tradition being easily identifiable across many of Britain’s towns and cities” (Allen 85). Because of this fact, not only British people tend to link Muslims with the concept of being different but with being counter to, or even against, the norms of British society. Thus, Joanne Britton states that “from this recognition of difference, it has emerged a wider demarcation that embodies Muslims with notions of Otherness and inferiority” (3). It could be said that Muslims have become “chimerical others” (Sardar 51-56). In fact, Sardar also suggests that “Muslims are contemporarily identified as either terrorists warring against the West, or apologists defending Islam as a peaceful religion” (51-6). However, the truth is that either apologists or terrorists, all Muslims have become equally the same in part of the British media because they are being judged by the same negative and stereotypical characteristics, portraying all of them as potential terrorists. As a result, in much of the British media, the mere fact of being different implies being problematic and even challenging.

Thus, the previously mentioned ideas lead us to the fact that when something becomes rational it also becomes correct. In this case, this is mainly caused because Islamophobia is often misunderstood in current European societies, the ones that still consider Islam an enemy, whereas for Halliday:

Islam as a religion *was* the enemy in the past – in the Crusades of the *reconquista*. It is not the enemy now . . . the attack now is against not Islam as a faith but against Muslim as people . . . the term “Islamophobia” is . . . misleading. The rhetoric is “anti-Muslim” rather than “anti-Islamic”. The rhetoric is against people, not religion. (160-65)

In conclusion, Islamophobia exists as a phenomenon but its connection with Islam as a faith, rather than Muslims as people, may difficult its understanding so I think that it

could be more useful to talk about anti-Muslimism rather than Islamophobia because: “Islamophobia is both not a post- 9/11 phenomenon and also a distinctly post-9/11 phenomenon. It emerges from the overlap, blurring, exaggeration and confusion of the bizarre triangle that is held together by the nodes of 9/11, Muslims and South Asian Muslims” (Abbas 65). As a result, anti-Muslimism appears to be the adequate name for the anti-Islamism or Islamophobia phenomenon.

3. Encoding/Decoding the Paris Attacks

Having analyzed the importance of the term “anti-Muslimism”, it is worth studying the impact that the Paris attacks left on both the global scene and more precisely on Britain. On the evening of Friday 13 November 2015, several coordinated terrorist attacks took place in Paris. The attackers killed 130 people, becoming the deadliest attacks on France since World War II and the deadliest in the European Union since the Madrid Bombings in 2004. As a result, Muslims became the epitome of unwanted difference due to the confrontation between Islam and Christianity. In fact, as political scientist Samuel P. Huntington stated in *Clash of Civilizations*, “East and the West, Islam and Christianity are diametrically opposed and irreconcilable” (quoted in Abbas 4). Besides, the attacks also produced different aftermaths in global affairs: “First of all, the creation of a new terrorist discourse in Western countries; secondly, the fear that they produced on ethnic minorities and thirdly, the reinforcement of anti-terrorist policies” (Toohey 212). Although the effects on the global scene are worth considering at length, I am going to limit the scope of this essay to the rise of anti-Muslimism in the British media in the aftermath of the Paris attacks. The British media has fed on the public panic to the terrorist threat and, as a result, the War on Terror has become a war of images, the most effective images being those of the victims of the terrorists. For this reason, the analysis

of the different reactions that British newspapers had on the two following days after the terrorist attacks in Paris provides the possibility of exploring how Muslims have been portrayed in the immediate aftermath of the attacks.

The British media construction of the Paris attacks cannot be understood without considering the important role of the news nowadays. The way in which we understand the news can be better understood through the encoding/decoding model, a model of communication first developed by Stuart Hall in 1973. Titled “Encoding and Decoding in the Television Discourse,” Hall explains how media messages are produced, disseminated, and interpreted. Hall also adds that “if no meaning is taken, there can be no consumption” (117). Thus, the event must become a story before it can become a *communicative event*. As a result, this story is a set of both decoded and articulated meanings which have, on the one hand, effect and influence and, on the other, they persuade with very complex perceptual, cognitive, emotional, ideological or behavioural consequences. It is also true that all societies and cultures tend to impose their own classifications of the social, political and cultural world and, as a result, “the different areas of social life appear to be mapped out into discursive domains, hierarchically organized into *dominant or preferred meanings*” (123). Readers have no choice and operate within the “dominant” or “preferred” code. Besides, they have to fight against distorted communication and this is precisely what British Muslims have to confront and especially have been confronting during the fourteen years of “War on Terror” and, more precisely, since the Paris attacks of November 2015, mainly because their representation is not transparent but rather limited, conservative and mediated.

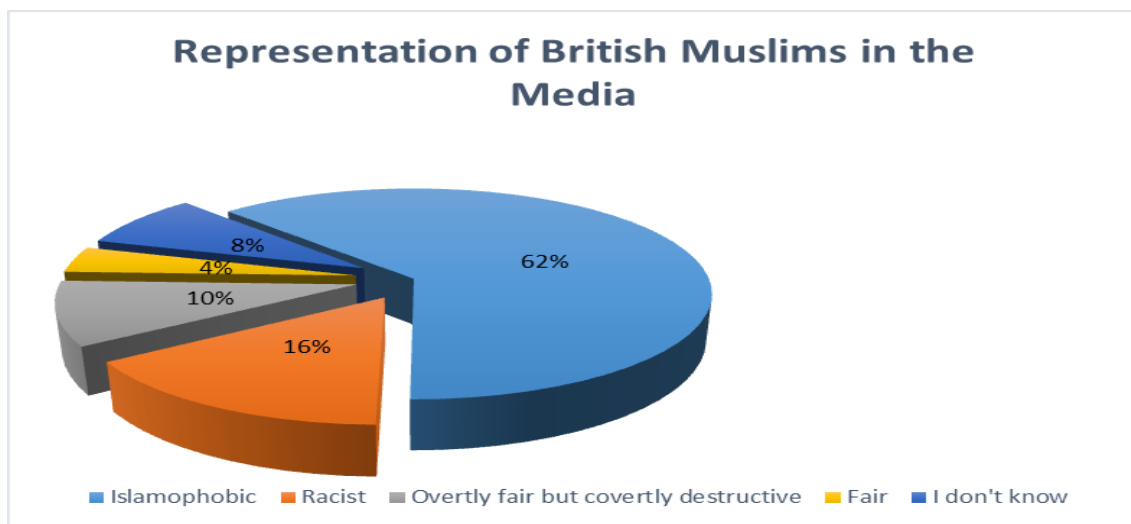
It is undeniable that in the era of communication, the media shapes public opinion and can also silence certain aspects of reality. As a result, language, terminology and ideas widely circulate in the public British domain, encouraging the

acceptance of anti-Muslimism as something natural and logical. Taking the 9/11 terrorist attacks as an example of the previously mentioned idea, it is relevant to take into account that immediately after the attacks, anti-Muslim views appeared in a number of British publications. David Selbourne wrote an article in *The Telegraph* entitled “This War is not about Terror, It’s about Islam”. Even in the more liberal newspapers, similar standpoints could be detected. In *The Guardian*, British journalist Polly Tonybee stated her distaste for Islam and Muslims in “Last Chance to Speak Out”. In fact, most Western media used the 9/11 attack to reinforce their depiction of Islam as a form of fundamentalism. Michael Bromley and Stephen Cushion affirmed that in the following days after 9/11, more than 13 million British people bought a national newspaper every day (160-77).

Of course in the modern world where the role of the media is central, the image of reality can be manipulated to misrepresent the actual facts. Part of the media has tried to represent Muslims as terrorists posing a threat to Western security. By doing so, they have tried to justify the war of Afghanistan and Iraq. In fact, after the 9/11 terrorist attacks in his “Address to Joint Session of Congress and the American People” President George W. Bush speech claimed that “Over time it's going to be important for nations to know they will be held accountable for inactivity,” . . . “You’re either with us or against us in the fight against terror”. This well-known slogan was basically used as a kind of ultimatum, forcing people to become either allies or enemies of the US. As a result, the aftermath of 9/11 only contributed to worsen the situation between Muslims and mainstream western societies because the controversial depiction of Muslims had trespassed geographical borders, tying Muslims throughout the world to the same stereotypes of Islam. Since the challenges are seen much greater today due to the Paris terrorist attacks in 2015, a sense of justification has arisen in contemporary societies. In

fact, Allen states that “with rationalism comes the belief that such ideas [negative stereotypes] appear to be correct” (88). In sum, when negative stereotypes become normalized, acceptance follows in societies because those ideas become the truthful and reliable ones.

Despite being a diverse and heterogeneous group, Muslim communities in the UK have often been on the spotlight by the media in order to reinforce their negative images. In fact, the Islamic Human Rights Commission⁷ conducted a poll in the year 2007 which showed the percentage of British Muslims in the media (Ameli *et al.* 2007)



It is also a fact that tensions between British Muslims and the mainstream media are much greater than the ones that exist between the media and other groups in society. Islam is considered by the media to be “the other” because a foreign faith is still uncomfortable for the West. In addition, many Muslims argue that the media coverage of them is based on terrorism, violence or simply bad news. This fact has been quite often associated to the belief that the West is always trying to maintain both its hegemony and its supreme identity. But did the Paris attack trigger a broader backlash against Muslims in Britain, and a shift towards more authoritarian policies towards

⁷ The Islamic Human Rights Commission is an independent organization that was set up in 1997 to campaign for justice for all people regardless their racial backgrounds. <<http://www.ihrc.org.uk/about-ihrc/about-us>>.

them? The answer, according to Ford and Sobolewska is no, because the study showed that no negative shift in public sentiment was found after Paris and that in most cases, attitudes did not change at all:

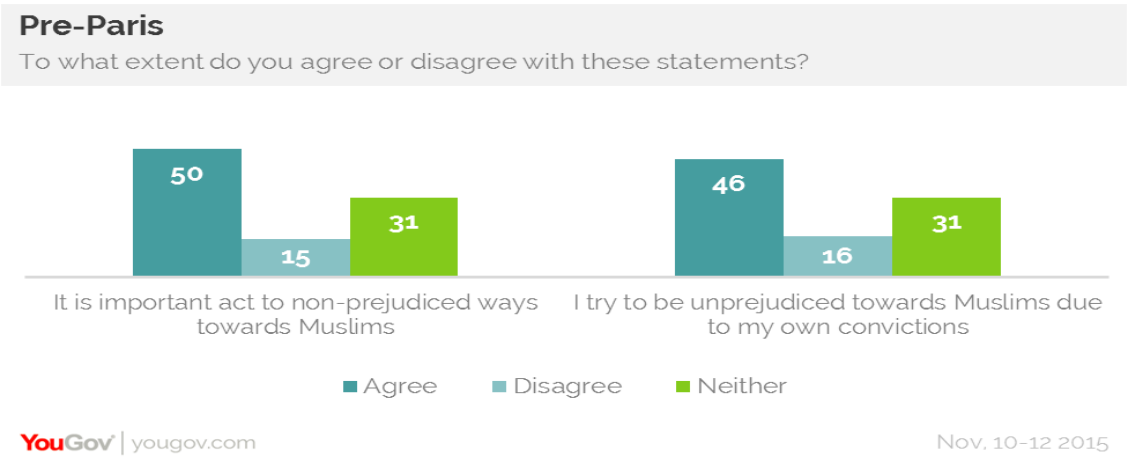


Figure 1 : Acceptance degree of Muslims in Britain

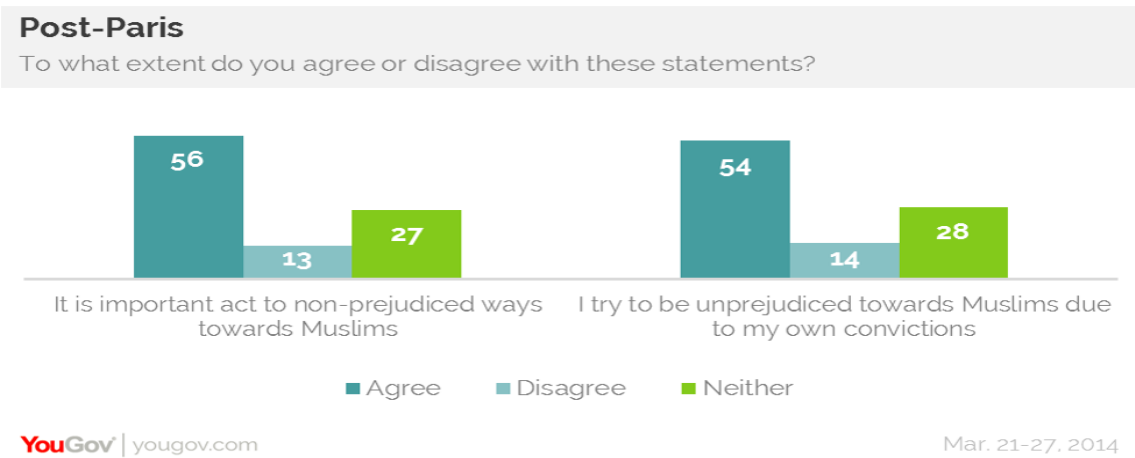


Figure 2 : Acceptance degree of Muslims in Britain

The study also dealt with security: respondents were asked whether or not they would support or oppose government powers to combat radicalization by extremists.

Pre-Paris

Support for government powers to prevent radicalisation (Muslim youth, Islamic extremists vs British youth, far right extremists - aggregating across protect vs prevent)

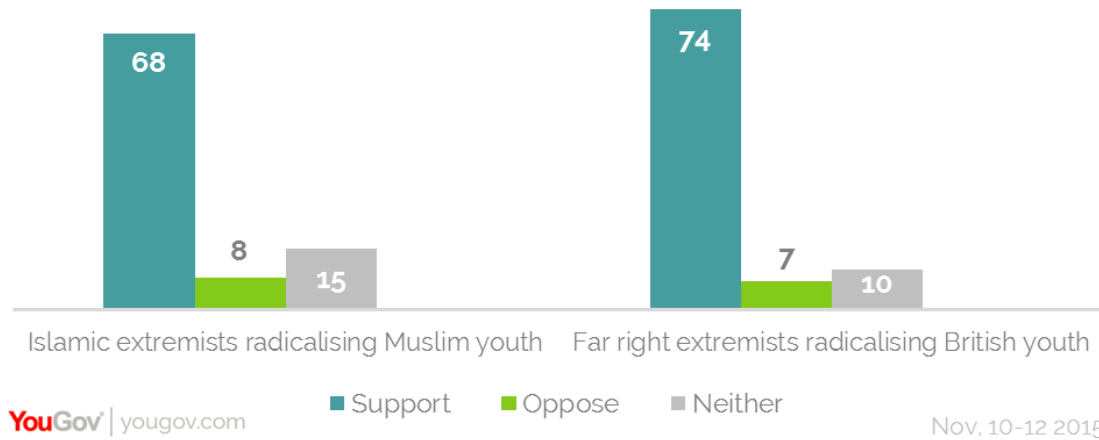


Figure 3: Support for government powers to prevent radicalization

Post-Paris

Support for government powers to prevent radicalisation (Muslim youth, Islamic extremists vs British youth, far right extremists - aggregating across protect vs prevent)

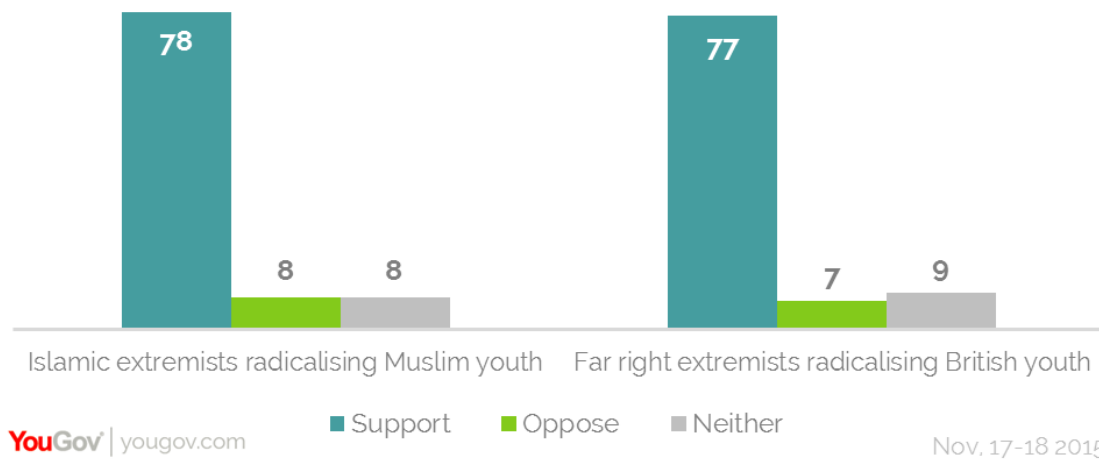


Figure 4: Support for government powers to prevent radicalization

In sum, the study showed that resilient tolerance was found in British society but widespread hostility towards Muslims was also found because the Paris attacks may have intensified the hostility felt by those who already viewed Muslims negatively. In this sense, Gani made public in *The Guardian*, an article entitled “Targeting of London

Muslims triples after the Paris attacks”. This article also stated that reports of Islamophobic incidents increased from 24 in the week ending 10 November to 76 in the week ending 24 November. As a result, a certain degree of anti-Muslimism can be perceived inside British society, which is portrayed by the media.

4. Tabloids/Broadsheets and Right-wing/Left-wing newspapers

It is extremely important to make a distinction between both tabloid/broadsheet and right/left British newspapers in order to carry out a proper analysis about the British media coverage of the Paris attacks. The British national newspapers are divided into two distinct categories: the quality and the popular papers. Nevertheless, as O’Driscoll states, “this method of classification has a hint of snobbery because it implies that a newspaper cannot be both high quality and popular at the same time” (153). Thus, this is why the two types are commonly known by other names: the broadsheets and the tabloids. On the one hand, broadsheet papers like *The Times* or *The Guardian* are more focused on international news as well as politics. Moreover, they do not make use of so many images or pictures. On the other, the tabloid papers, such as *The Sun* or *The Star*, are addressed to a larger readership. Moreover, they “deal with relatively few ‘hard news’ stories and tend to be superficial in their treatment of events” (Oakland 263). A third category should be also taken into account, the one involving the ‘Mid-market’ papers such as *The Daily Mail* or *The Daily Express*, which attempt to appeal readers who want both, some entertainment and important news coverage. Apart from this previously mentioned category, it is also necessary to make a distinction between left wing and right wing newspapers too. Left wing ones such as *The Guardian* or *The Mirror*, are categorized as progressive because they show modern concerns. On the

contrary, right wing ones such as *The Daily Mail* or *The Daily Express* are characterized by upholding traditional British values.

5. Analysis

Having explained the existing differences in British newspapers, I am going to analyse the different types of Islamophobic attitudes I have found and that can be classified in six distinct categories: politics of fear, symbolic violence, orientalism, stereotypes, and permanent dichotomy.

5.1 Politics of fear

To begin with politics of fear, Lucy Crossley acknowledged in *The Daily Mail* that Prime Minister David Cameron stated that “Britons must be prepared for a number of casualties from last night’s terror attacks in Paris” and that “last night’s attacks suggest a new degree of planning and coordination and a greater ambition for mass casualty attacks”. In *The Guardian*, Syal Rajeev reported that conservative MP Theresa May said that “we don’t have time to wait. It is important that the police and security services have the power they need to keep us safe”. *The Times* even entitled one article using the following headline: “Decapitating the Snake: Britain should join its allies in bombing the Jihadist capital of Raqqa. It is time for parliament to give David Cameron the power to act” pleading that “Britain has been on the sidelines for too long”. Thus, as it happened in the US with the Bush Doctrine⁸, both a feeling of insecurity and the fear of what is non-mainstream were created in order to make security an excuse for restricting most freedoms and civil rights. It can also be appreciated that while dealing with politics of fear, the vast majority of articles come from broadsheets, because cultural

⁸Doctrine created in 2002 which was based on unilateralism and which introduced the idea that the United States should not allow other rival superpower to emerge. <<http://www.peace.ca/bushdoctrine.htm>>

wars are considered priority issues inside British society and people look for those reliable informative sources. However, 'Mid-market' papers also began to analyse these more political-like issues.

5.2 Symbolic violence which threatens Western Values

The second category to be mentioned is symbolic violence which threatens Western values. One consequence of the attacks was that the dominant narratives of Muslims as disloyal and dangerous citizens, challenging national laws and values and threatening peace and security, gathered strength once again in Western societies. This is to be expected given that "Muslims are said to face a 'hegemonic bloc of hostility' that is derived from a wide range of sources, including the state and the media" (Abbas 5-9). Consequently, these narratives and sources operate to sustain a symbolic order that places Muslims, as a group, in direct, inevitable opposition to the liberal freedoms and values of secular European societies (Britton 3). Some evidence could be seen in a Voice of The Mirror editorial, which depicted Muslims "as those who despise the values that generations have struggled to achieve – democracy, tolerance, freedom and respect for others, especially for those who do not agree with them". Former soldier and Labour MP Dan Jarvis also commented in *The Mirror* that "terror will never triumph if we stand with our neighbours and those who believe in peace all over the world in defense of our shared humanity and hard-won freedoms". Nick Lowles, former editor of the anti-fascist *Searchlight* magazine also made some statements about how Muslims were threatening the western way of life in *The Mirror*: "The attacks on Paris were an attack on all of us. It was an attack on our values and the way we live. They want us to curtail our freedoms, increase our bombings and turn on our neighbours". British journalist Patrick Kidd stated in *The Times* that "the poisonous narrative of Islamist

extremism is a battle for our generation". Even Colonel Bretton-Gordon, a former British Army officer and counter-terror expert insinuated in *The Mirror* that "the time for talking is nearly over, it is action that is now required, it is time to defend our democracy with all means even if that means not always practising it". Having read all these statements coming from both broadsheets and tabloids, one may wonder if it is therefore correct to generalize that the cause justifies the means. Could we say that all Muslims are fighting against the western ways of life and that all of them are guilty?

Ironically enough, it seems so. On the one hand, ComRes conducted a poll for *BBC Radio 4 Today* of British Muslims and their perspectives on the *Charlie Hebdo* shootings⁹, and on the life in the West in general. While 95% of British Muslims felt loyalty to Britain, there were some disturbing numbers:

- 24 % feel violence can be justified against those who depict Prophet Muhammad.
- 11% feel sympathy for the people who want to fight against Western interests.
- 8% know Muslims who are sympathetic to ISIS or Al Qaeda.
- 45% feel there is some justification for clerics to preach violence against the West. (ComRes)

There was also a much more comprehensive, five-year survey conducted by the WZB Berlin Social Center, which surveyed Muslim communities in six different European countries. Some of the findings suggest a disconnection between "Muslim" and "Western values":

- 65% of Muslims interviewed say Islamic /sharia law is more important to them than the laws of the country they live in.

⁹ On 7 January 2015 at about 11:30 local time, Saïd and Chérif Kouachi, forced their way into the offices of the French satirical weekly newspaper *Charlie Hebdo* in Paris. They killed 11 people and injured 11 others in the building. After leaving, they also killed a French National Police officer outside the building.

- 54% believe that the West is out to destroy Islam.
- 60% reject homosexuals as friends, 45 per cent says Jews cannot be trusted.
- 20% of non-Muslim Europeans expressed Islamophobia, whereas 54 per cent of Muslims expressed Occidentophobia or anti-Western sentiment. (SCIICS)

Maybe, due to the publication of these results and even more after the Paris attacks of November 2015, people, not only British citizens, started to systematically connect Muslims with ISIS. However, some articles seemed to take advantage of the aftermath by means of distorting information. One relevant case was revealed by Adam Taylor in *The Washington Post*. Taylor made reference to the following front page published on Monday 23 November 2015 by the British newspaper *The Sun*:



The paper's story reported the results of a survey of UK Muslims, generating more than 3,000 complaints. The article was illustrated on the front page with a photograph of Mohammed Emwazi —the British militant known as “Jihadi John”, who was killed in a drone strike— and was captioned “Support ... Brit Jihadi John who went to Syria”. According to an article published in *The Independent* by Will Worley, *The Sun* was finally ordered to admit a controversial story that said one in five British Muslims had sympathy for Isis was "significantly misleading". In fact, Adam Taylor stated in *The Washington Post* that the resident polling expert, Scott Clement, had declared that “the results of the poll were misleading because taking this approach typically requires

multiple months of interviewing to obtain a sufficient sample of the population”. Moreover, Worley also stated that the Independent Press Standards Organisation (IPSO)¹⁰ deemed that “the newspaper had failed to take appropriate care in its presentation of the poll results, and as a result the coverage was significantly misleading in breach of Clause 1 (Accuracy)”.

Thus, regarding this second category, it has been made clear that tabloid newspapers, due to their sensationalist nature, are more interested in covering symbolic violence which threatens Western Values. One of the reasons for this is basically that they generate a culture of fear by developing one of the primary instincts of human beings: survival. Conversely, broadsheets are more reluctant to deal with these issues, because they do not consider this argument to be reflexive at all.

5.3 Orientalism

Although *The Sun* was finally ordered to admit this controversial story, the article only helped to boost what is known as Orientalism. This is the third category of articles I have analysed and it is a term related to the idea that a foreign faith is still felt as something uncomfortable for both Britain and the West. The term Orientalism was developed by Edward Said and it is understood as the constructions that Western civilizations have about Eastern alien cultures. Said explains that it is “a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between the Orient and, most of the time, the Occident in which Western cultures and societies are essentially and inherently superior to Eastern ones” (2). Therefore, “Muslims have been homogenized as backward, irrational, unchanging, fundamentalists, misogynist,

¹⁰ The Independent Press Standards Organisation is the independent regulator of the newspaper and magazine industry in the UK. They promote the standards of journalism since 2014. <<https://www.ipso.co.uk/IPSO/aboutipso/aboutipso.html>>

threatening, manipulative in the use of their faith for political and personal gain and yet with politically unstable governments and movements” (Poole 18).

Some evidence of this homogenization can be appreciated in different newspapers: British journalist, broadcaster and author Tony Parsons stated in *The Sun* that “we live with men of violence who will celebrate the heartbreaking carnage of Paris. We live with those who would dance on the graves of our children”. He also added that “Not all Muslims are terrorists – but rather a lot of terrorists are Muslims. Those who would butcher everything we love are empathically not atheists”. Thus, verbal assaults against Muslims due to western conception of Orientalism began to take place in Britain. Miqdaad Versi stated in *The Independent* that at a bus stop, a man shouted, “They need all to die, these Muslims need to die. Look what they’re doing in Paris”. The Voice of The Mirror stated that “the enemy [ISIS] is ruthless to the point of insanity”. The article described Muslims as “unholy beasts – worse than beasts, in fact, for no animal would kill so mercilessly without reason”. Orientalism has even affected the most innocent part of society: children. In *The Times*, Helen Rumbelow interviewed a small Parisian boy in the aftermath of the attacks saying “There are bad guys, Daddy. They have guns, they can shoot us”. That video has gone viral because of what his father said next to reassure his son. “It’s OK, they might have guns but we have flowers”. Moreover, several British ex-pats living in Paris also noticed their children’s preoccupation about the issue. In fact, in the same article, a British woman living in Paris was asked by her son if “they were safe now”. Thus, both tabloids and broadsheets deal with Orientalism in a similar way. For them, Islam and Western democracies are two parallel worlds which seem to be difficult to converge.

5.4 Stereotypes

This Orientalist phenomenon has been enormously reinforced by the existence of different stereotypes built around the Muslim community. This fifth category I have found is commonly perceived in the media coverage up to the point that Lucy Crossley acknowledged that Prime Minister David Cameron stated in the *Daily Mail* after the Paris attacks that “French people were killed and injured by brutal and callous murderers who want to destroy everything our two countries [Britain and France] stand for: peace, tolerance and liberty. But we will not let them. We will redouble our efforts to wipe out this poisonous extremist ideology”. These stereotypes have existed since the very beginning of terrorism but it was after the *Charlie Hedbo*’s terrorist attacks of 2015 when claiming “Je suis Charlie” became “almost obligatory, requiring people and particularly Muslims to choose between being for the magazine or for the terrorists” (Ali 12). Similarly, The Muslim Council of Britain criticised a letter written by the government’s communities secretary asking Muslim leaders to prove how faith in Islam can be part of British identity (Dearden 2015). The letter in fact reinforced the dominant belief in understanding Muslims as a homogeneous, problematic group who do not share the values of the rest of western civilizations.

Another example about how the social and political context contributes to the stereotyping of Muslims was carried out by Holehouse, who stated in *The Telegraph* that the UKIP leader Nigel Farage, believed that Muslims constituted a significant internal threat. Thus, Islam is blamed and even all Muslims are blamed for the actions of some individuals or groups. In fact, the media in Britain continues to reinforce Islamophobia and it is precisely the media’s negative treatment of Islam that reinforces the monolithic idea about Muslims in the UK. As an example of the presence of different stereotypes, four persistent stereotypes related to Muslims were identified in a

survey of the coverage of Islam and Muslims in the British media before 2001: Muslims are “intolerant”, “misogynistic”, “violent” or “cruel”, and “strange” or “different” (Whitaker 157-59).

5.5 The “Evil Villain”

Nevertheless, among these stereotypes, more attention should be given to the “evil villain” one. Poole explains that “the global image of Islam is based on observations rather than systematic empirical evidence and as a result, it tends to be measured in relation to some kind of ‘truth’ about Islam, be that Islamic belief in Muslims’ lived experience” (41). As a result, Islam is not allowed to be known but rather an stereotypical version of it in both Western and British media because “the application of a Western ideological framework, or alternatively ethnocentric ‘ways of seeing’ (Dahlgren and Chakrapani 45) has resulted in the “domesticated Islamic world or those aspects considered to be newsworthy” (Poole 43). Some evidence according to this category could be perceived in certain newspapers such as in *The Mirror*, in which English journalist Carole Malone stated that “[o]ur enemy is unknown and unseen. ISIS’s evil does not discriminate. We are all targets now”.

For this reason, immediately after the attacks, different world leaders started campaigning in favour of bombing Syria and the Islamic State. Bruno Waterfield explained in *The Times* that “David Cameron announced 2 billion of pounds of new funding for the SAS¹¹, who will be ordered to shoot to kill terrorists on contact, instead of seeking to negotiate with them”. One day later, journalists Callum Jones, Deborah Haynes and Michael Savage published in the same newspaper another article in which

¹¹ The Special Air Service (SAS) is a special force unit of the British Army. Its main roles are: converting reconnaissance, countering-terrorism and human intelligence gathering.

Prime Minister David Cameron “vowed to destroy ‘snake’s head’ as RAF¹² prepares for strikes”. Cameron added that “The Commons should give its support for such action before we are the next target”. Mr Cameron justified his words by warning MPs that “now a direct and growing threat for Britain was latent”. *The Daily Mail* also reported Cameron’s words a few days earlier when he said that “we will redouble our efforts to wipe out this poisonous, extremist ideology” (Crossley, 14 November 2015). On the other hand, Tom Newton Dunn reported in *The Sun* Barack Obama’s intentions immediately after the terrorist attacks. Obama said that “Europe and America need to do everything in their power to stop these people [ISIS]”. Thus, all Muslims—as a homogeneous group—cannot be associated with the same stereotypes, the ones which have been fostered by both broadsheets and tabloids and even “mid-market” newspapers in the UK.

5.6 Dichotomy

All of these stereotypes are rooted in the existing dichotomy between “them” and “us”, which is the final category that I am going to analyse and that has served to perpetuate Muslims as violent or dangerous. The media generally considers Muslims as “others/outsidere” regardless of being British or how much they have contributed to the community. Thus, their homogenization contributes to ignoring them and, as a result, each Muslim bears a burden of responsibility. But how has this dichotomy become so decisive in today’s world? The answer basically lies on the fact that Western societies have provided a way to see Islam as something “anti-modern” whereas they see themselves as the models of progress. This apparently conflictive nature of Islam has been strengthened by images of violence, extremism or fanaticism, relating every

¹² The Royal Air Force (RAF) is the United Kingdom's aerial warfare force. It supports the objectives of the British Ministry of Defence.

conflict to the threatening face of Islam. According to Lueg “this depiction is based on images of ‘oriental irrationality and the fanatical masses’, allowing Muslims to be kept at a distance and impersonalized” (15).

Islam is therefore an alien culture but its images correspond with what the media takes them to be and consequently, people position themselves by news that are, according to Dahlgren and Chakrapani, “evidence of an amplified commitment to a particular form of global order” (62). This fact results in readers who instead of considering real causes of confrontation just imagine a clash between these two cultures. Some articles have also reflected this dichotomy. For example, *The Voice of The Mirror* published an article in which Muslims were depicted as “the few and without human feelings”, whereas the British were “the many, with right and morality on our side”. UK correspondent for France, Benedicte Paviot, also stated in *The Mirror* that “this twisted ideology aimed to destroy what we hold most dear”. In fact, he also stated that “British compatriots may find inspiration in a motto that served Britain well –Keep Calm and Carry on”—. In fact, Jason Beattie reported that the former conservative defence minister Sir Gerald Howarth said in *The Mirror* that “it’s our whole way of life they are objecting to”, even declaring that “we are at WAR”.

These examples show how the images of Muslims and Islam are shaped in the minds of Western people. Thus, a mythical idea of an “‘eternal West’ unique since the moment of its origin” (Amin 89) has been created in Western countries and, as a result, it also gave rise to its counterpart concept namely the “Other”. It is true that from a western perspective, and since Islam is the fastest growing religion in the world, it only plays against itself because it basically threatens the West’s hegemony. Conversely, letting ourselves to be carried out by fear, only will lead us to foster the idea of both ignoring and fearing Islam. It can be concluded that while dealing with this permanent

dichotomy, “mid-market” newspapers are the ones which showed more interest whereas neither broadsheets nor tabloids decided to cover this issue.

6. Conclusion:

To conclude, the examination of the representations of British Muslims in sections of the British written press has made visible a series of similarities and differences within press coverage. My findings have shown that all newspapers’ immediate reaction after the attacks, independently of their political ideology or their quality, highlighted the terrorist attacks’ magnitude, even exaggerating the events and their consequences. From this point onwards, some newspapers highlighted their total opposition towards Islam whereas others were slightly more moderate and therefore, did not blame Islam per se but a specific group of radicalized Islamists who, by means of applying in an inflexible way the Koran, threatened Western values in order to impose their way of life. It is also true that the majority of newspapers expressed great verbal violence in their opinions, openly declaring that we are currently at war and that therefore, Islam is our enemy. Finally, most of the newspapers did not believe in the possibility of having a complete integration between Islam and the West. Only *The Guardian* appeared to be much more optimistic as to the future after the terrorist attacks but without totally accepting an unsettled integration between Islam and the West.

The great majority of British Muslims are members of diaspora communities, being often described as the “other” by means of the previously explained “us” and “them” dichotomy, in a process that as we have seen, Said defines as “Orientalism”. Muslims are therefore portrayed as terrorist, uncivilized and violent because they have been related to the appeal of *jihad*, and, as a result, they have been devaluated, humiliated and stigmatized by mainstream society. In fact, the evident blurring of

ideological differences found in the British tabloids and broadsheets analysed suggests that it is difficult for any Westerner to imagine that Islam is going to accommodate to a more Western-like lifestyle because, as Frankie Boyle wrote in *The Guardian*: “our attitudes are fostered by a society built on the ideas of dominance, where the solution to crises are force and action, rather than reflection and compromise”. This is, of course, caused by discourse because when an idea becomes normalized in the media (like the link between Muslims and radicals), acceptance follows and all disagreements fade away while dealing with terrorism.

Nevertheless, despite the November 2015 Paris attacks having been an inflection point in both British and global affairs, once some temporal distance from the Paris attacks is established, a certain perspective is also adopted, opinions become more moderate, showing much more conciliatory attitudes. In fact, transferred to the day-to-day life, the British population is not as intransigent as it has been perceived in the analysed newspapers and this is reflected in Sadiq Khan’s election as mayor of London on 7 May 2016. His election had great symbolic value, because in spite of being westernized, he remains being a Muslim, a fact that shows real multicultural integration. As he stated in *The Guardian*: “This is to show that it is possible to be someone with western, liberal values and be a mainstream Muslim. My election on 5 May proved that London believes you can be both at the same time”.

This task does not seem to be so simple because ISIS attacks are based on military, cultural and historical reasons. As a result, they intend to radicalize the Muslim population living in Europe to hinder their integration and their interest in the values of secularism and democracy.

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