



MA in Culture, Communication and Globalization
MASTER THESIS

**An analysis on the construction of hegemonic discourses in
breaking news coverage on international terrorism**

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ABSTRACT

In the aftermath of the September 11th 2001 terrorist attacks, supported with the declaration of war on terrorism from the West, the media coverage on global terrorism has dramatically changed, leading to a post-race era and a new kind of racism towards Muslims (Alsultany, 2012). A strong focus in the role and influence of Islam in the development of terrorism has considerably raised and placed the phenomena into a “West vs Islam” frame, even though Islamic extremism has not been proved to be directly involved in some cases (Hervik & Boisen, 2013). Since then, emerging models on the study of terrorism have made unfounded assumptions that Islam and Islamic radicalization are its main root causes. Guido Steinberg, former advisor to the German Federal Chancellery, has strongly argued that Islamic terrorism began to suffer a process of internationalization sometime after the 9/11 attacks when its ideology, strategy, and social base reacted to the global war on terror (Steinberg, 2013). He also has argued that this war has attracted Muslims, both living in Arab countries, as well as the ones living in the West to take active part of this fight, converting Islamic radicalization into a local and cross-national phenomenon (ibid.).

Alex P. Schmid (2014), Director of the Terrorism Research Initiative, has exposed his own perspectives on terrorism by finding difficult to define the phenomenon due to a shift in social and cultural processes. According to him, the initial arguments of relating terrorism primarily to political violence has gradually shifted to be understood more in terms of violent coercion through persuasive communication: “Terrorism is a combination of the two, using demonstrative public violence as an instrument of psychological warfare, “advertising”, as it were, an armed non-state group’s capabilities to do harm and to destroy.” (Schmid, 2014) In addition, communications are believed to play an important role in terrorist phenomena, since they are based on threat-violence based communicative processes between the perpetrators and victims. This is done in order to manipulate the message and turn it into one that spreads terror, attention, coercion or even propaganda, depending on the source’s intention (Schmid & Jongman, 1988). Therefore, terrorism and communications are interpreted to be strongly embedded.

Before 9/11 a diversity of terrorism root causes were supported by Western governments, including social inequality, poverty, and political oppression (Schmid, 2013). Nevertheless, after 9-11 all these were mostly avoided by the same states, which emphasized instead the criminal and inexcusable character of the 9/11 attacks (ibid.). Afterwards, radicalization gained strength and became central to terrorism studies and counterterrorism policy making especially since 2004, when Western governments started focusing on homegrown Islamist political violence (Kundnani in Schmid, 2013). This shift on terrorism perception has raised then questions on how violent attacks are now being framed as 'terrorist' due to its motivations and the background of its perpetrators. Schmid's argument on this change supports the idea that radicalization is the engine of extremist groups such as ISIS to use violence and persuasive communication to influence and radicalize people in order to achieve their objectives. Therefore, additional relevant questions haven't risen regarding why Islam is seemed to be always in the discussion involving every act of global violence and terrorism, especially those targeting the West. How is it that the global agenda on terror is always pointing out a single ethnic group such as Muslims as the ones to face risk to be radicalized due to their background or the religion they practice? Moreover, why is Islamic radicalization out from other kinds of radicalized ideologies been addressed by media and the public agenda as the only potential causality for terrorism? And finally, why terrorism has been strongly linked to Islamic radicalization in West by mass media lately?

According to Anu Kundnani (2012), radicalization has become "the master signifier of the late war on terror", and has provided a new lens through which the Muslim community is perceived by the general public. The concept of radicalization has led to the construction of specific stereotypes involving the Muslim group, which has been treated as a "suspect community". They have been labeled as well due to the highlights on important differences of their culture such as civil rights and politics when compared to the Western one. This framing can also be explained as a consequence to the declaration of war on terror which has openly pointed out the Muslim community as the antagonist of the West. Muslims therefore represent what Samuel Huntington (2004) has described as an ideal enemy: A racial group that is

notoriously culturally different to Western society, and who is hostile. This idea of having an enemy and an ideology such as Islamic radicalization which are constantly threatening the Western society has developed into the urgency on controlling the threat and imposing certain power over them.

The latter arguments build up the core of this master thesis by bringing these issues into the public agenda context; in specific by questioning how mass media has taken a crucial role in the construction and the strengthening of stereotypes regarding the Muslim community and Islam. Such representations have impacted the public's perception on generalizing Muslims to be always connected to terrorism and the radicalization phenomena. This field of study has already being approached by cultural scholars who study media consumption; nevertheless this thesis will rely in how media coverage, especially Western one automatically constructs a hegemonic discourse that relates terrorist attacks with Islam and Muslims just within minutes after events start to unfold. This may be explained as a result of the possible natural reproduction of hegemonic understandings which journalists already have about the Muslim–Terrorism relationship; serving then to an ongoing and natural discourse in media which ignores crucial or other facts involving the actual nature and motives of terrorist attacks. The latter is what Oliver Roy (2004) has called as effects without causes, fully linked to the argument about terrorism causalities being very broad to define it, and the existence of other facts which media ignores when elaborating on narrations. Therefore the following research questions will be addressed and elaborated by this thesis:

How have hegemonic discourses against Muslims been naturally framed in media narratives during the first stages of coverage on recent terrorist events?

Which linguistic and language features build up hegemonic discourses in mass media in order to link international terrorism with the Muslim community and Islam?

In order to answer these questions, the present thesis will focus on doing an in-depth analysis of the news' discourse in relevant mass media channels when covering

different terror and violence related events during the first stages of their coverage, a.k.a. “breaking news”. It is fully intended to find out how these narrations contribute to the construction and reproduction of a hegemonic thinking about terrorism and radicalization being connected to Muslims and Islam. This analysis will also aim to point out specific exclusion and racism models which depict Muslims as a threat to the West in mass media creating an “us vs them” discourse.

To be able to approach this study’s research questions it is important to ground some crucial concepts and theories. Departing from the most relevant issue which interests to this study, it is important then to define ‘terrorism’ itself, and explore how its definition has evolved and shaped overtime due to important events and circumstances. Grounding terrorism into the media context will be also crucial to get closer to this study’s main objectives. Before going further, it is important to point out that this thesis will be addressing a dichotomy between the West and Islam; therefore it is relevant to define which definition of the West will serve this study. Geographically the ‘West’ will be referring to those countries which culturally and politically have a considerable European descendant influence, which besides the European Union, includes The United States of America, Canada and Australia.

TERRORISM

Terrorism as argued before is a phenomenon that can be explored through different perspectives, and can be approached through different interpretations, even beyond the political ones. It involves sociological, cultural and even technological dimensions of human relations, and it can be studied in different international and local scenarios (Caruso & Locatelli, 2014). The FBI in the United States has defined international terrorism as an action that involves any activity of violent or dangerous acts to human life that violet any federal or state law, and that intend to intimidate or coerce civilian population that occur outside the U.S. national borders and jurisdiction. (<https://www.fbi.gov/about-us/investigate/terrorism/terrorism-definition>, Last retrieved: Feb 20, 2016). On the other hand, domestic terrorism according to the same source

involves the same kind of actions but happening inside the U.S. territory (ibid.). In both cases they may involve mass destruction, assassination or kidnapping. This definition is important to highlight since its source, the U.S. government, is the ultimate precursor on the so called 'War on Terror'. However, is important to stress out the fact this definition does not make any reference on terrorism to be linked to Islamic extremism per se. Actually, acts with the same brutality level and motives as such as mass shootings could fit into these definitions according to their intentions and 'modus operandi'.

Schmid and Jongman (1988) have suggested, that "Terrorism is an anxiety-inspiring method of repeated violent action, employed by (semi-) clandestine individual, group or state actors, for idiosyncratic, criminal or political reasons"; in which also the main targets of terrorism are not direct or selected ones, in fact they are chosen randomly and serve as message generators (ibid.). However, other scholars have encountered with some disagreements regarding the fact that in present time terrorism is fully linked with political motives. It has been actually argued that nowadays the individual nature of terror-related attacks, as well as the perpetrator's motivations are more important in order to label violent or political related attacks as terrorist ones (Ekici et al. 2009).

As for the purposes of this research, terrorism acts will be referred as the deliberate use of unconventional violence upon civilians who are easy and vulnerable targets, and its main purpose is to spread panic and fear in order to publicize a specific cause regardless their origin (ibid.). In addition, in such acts, victims are considered to have a great disadvantage on a traditional military battlefield. This definition may be seen as a very broad one to approach the phenomenon; however as stated before, terrorism could be studied from different perspectives. Tactic terrorism for instance has been studied by the United Nations and NATO, or suicidal terrorism approached by scholars like Spriznak and Pape (2002). Nevertheless, by using this definition it is intended to approach several recent mediated events that fit into it due to their nature and operation. In addition, what also matters to this study is an approach on how labels are used by mass media in order to construct hegemonic understandings

towards Muslims or Islam, as well as identifying the factors surrounding this 'labelling' or framing process.

In order to ground the terrorism phenomena into the media context, it is then relevant to explore when in time terrorism started to be highly mediated and linked to a specific ethnic group: Muslims, turning it and their 'possible' roots such as radicalization as racialized social issues.

After the United States and some other European countries declared the war on terrorism in the aftermath of events such as 9/11, the London or the Madrid bombings, the racialization of terrorism became stronger and evident with the emergence of different anti-Muslim agenda models that were quickly adopted by both of the most important ideology blocks in Western society: On one hand, the conservatives linked terrorism to what is understood as an Islamic culture failure to adapt to modernity, whereas liberals believed that religion as such produced a totalitarian ideology (Kundnani, 2013). This way of thinking from both political views fully connected Islamic extremism with the radicalization of Muslims in the West. According to Arun Kundnani, both of these approaches " [...] eschew the role of social and political circumstances in shaping how people make sense of the world and then act upon it." Moreover, these models are not free floating; they have been institutionalized in the war on terror's practices, which are actively promoted by well-resourced groups, and ultimately reflect an imperialist political culture (ibid.).

As pointed out, terrorism has been constantly evolving overtime, as well as how it has been inserted into mass media along with other embedded circumstances leading to the racialization of terror events and their perpetrators. For instance, in the European Union it can be seen with the link that terrorism has nowadays with the current migrant crisis of Syrian refugees, and the spread of Islamophobia. (<http://www.newsweek.com/how-isis-smuggles-terrorists-among-syrian-refugees-453039>, Last retrieved: July 25th, 2016) In the United States on the other hand, it has been highlighted with the recent declaration of war on ISIS, and the active discourse in public agenda about the threat of Islamic radicalization among young American Muslims (Brooks, 2011). In fact, radicalization as already addressed before has been

discussed among those Islamic studies academics to be a crucial source of terrorism. Therefore, it is relevant to go in-depth on how radicalization has been defined and treated by media in relation to terrorism, especially in the Western context.

RADICALIZATION

Western scholars such as the ones coming from the Denmark School for instance, assure that terrorism is the namely one aspect to be approached about Islamism in order to consider it a transnational actor. This involves the anti-terror measures that governments have increasingly developed to fight Islamic radicalization due to their “[...] high interest in Muslim inhabitants and the risk that they may pose to the cohesion of society and the foundational position of democracy.” (Kühle & Lindekilde, 2010) According to them, there is a basic social belief in regards of Islamic terrorists that they gradually evolve from ordinary and peaceful Muslim citizens into individuals who are capable of perpetrating assassinations in the name of Islam. Therefore, politicians, the government and media agencies have increasingly focused on an additional threat to the basic norms of Western democracy posed by radical Islam (ibid.). This has developed into a cross-Western trend in which there is the generalized assumption that many Muslims born in the West, especially young ones are looking to re-Islamize or fall into an Islamic revival, and may risk radicalization. The idea of Islam posing an extremist and anti-democratic position makes the fight against radicalization even higher, and centers its focus in the clash between civilizations rather than in the nature of their totalitarian views. Example of this is the fact that anti-radicalization models ignore that presence of other sort of radicalized groups such as right wing or left wing ones. This illegitimate asymmetry pattern has also been perceived in media which treats radicalization in a different way, strongly focusing in religious and ideological radicalization, leading to cultural stereotyping (Awan et al., 2011).

When embedding radicalization with terrorism, it has been argued that the latter is the ultimate type coming out from a process in which radicalism develops through a

combination of diverse risk and protective factors on several levels. It also has been stated that the process of radicalization could evolve from mild to extreme, and that this phenomena is very diverse in forms where radical notions may also vary: “Despite the ideological discrepancies of movements, these forms of radicalization run parallel (Van San, Sieckelinck & De Winter, 2010). In fact, any type of radicalization could be defined as “The process of [an individual or a group] adopting an extremist belief system [inspired by philosophical, religious, political or ideological notions], including the willingness to use, support, or facilitate violence [or undemocratic means], as a method to effect [drastic] societal change.” (Allen in Euer et al. 2008, completed with the definition in the report of the Vice- Prime Minister, 2013) However, when bringing radicalization into the media context as stated before, it seems to be treated differently. This has been highlighted when approaching right wing ideology radicalization for instance; in where this treatment has been emphasized by falling under one principle: The fact that no other people who share their ethnicity with the terrorist attacks’ perpetrators should be blamed or attacked (Friedersdorf, 2013). There is also the fact that media utilizes tolerance towards Muslims when terrorism is Islam-related for example. According to Conor Friedersdorf, this is not because journalists value it, but because when same race perpetrators commit attacks, there is not usually an “irrational backlash against white men” in response: “A radicalized right winger shouldn’t cause the media to harass every right wing talk-radio host into a defensive crouch.” (ibid.). Reactions from Americans in respond to Islamic terrorism have been quite different than the ones perpetrated by white people. This was clear in the case of Timothy McVeigh in the Oklahoma building bombing. In this event, Islamic extremism was first pointed out to be the source of the attack, and media did a full coverage about it, until the perpetrator’s identity was later revealed. Afterwards, the discourse regarding the motives of the attack took a different direction, pointing out to blame McVeigh’s mental condition rather than considering him a terrorist (Sheptoski, 2012).

On the other hand, even left wing radicalization has been treated differently. In the United States for example, left wing extremism is handled as hate-motivated, anti-political by single issue-groups that do not espouse domestic terrorism or

interpersonal violence to achieve their ends (Brockhoff et al., 2012). Moreover, their violent nature is established by the state in terms of surveillance and investigation, and their rhetoric is not considered as sufficient threat to do so. In fact, many left wing groups are revolutionary and separatist oriented, who are seen as ethnically and racially inclusive, carrying important national sentiments, and they actually rather be self-excluded than included (ibid.). On both cases, it can be argued that right and left wing radicalization have not been monitored in the same way as Islamic one in order to consider them enough sources for terrorism since they do not fit the “us vs them” model. All these arguments have raised questions regarding the actual role of radicalization itself in the motivations of perpetrators to commit such acts and as a possible root cause for terrorism.

As presented, even though radicalization processes seem to have the same base in the fact that they come from broader socioeconomic circumstances, deviant norms, values and negative experiences, or even from social and psychological needs, they are definitely treated differently by mass media (Awan et al., 2011). In terms of mediated coverage of terrorist events, their racialization has been identified as key, converting terrorism into a social process that can be designated as a ‘racial issue’, in this case directed heavily towards the Muslim community (Winter, 2015).

Since this study is fully interested in getting insights of the way terrorism and Muslims are treated by mass media’ discourse; it is crucial now to focus on how mass media works in present times, especially on its role on creating content, and on building a public discourse for its dissemination to fit the public agenda’s needs.

MASS MEDIA COMMUNICATIONS AND PUBLICITY

Nowadays, mass media communications not only serve as an important creator and reproducer of relevant content used to inform, but also to spread values and conduct codes which make people adapt and understand the society they belong to (Chomsky in De Giordi, 2013). However, according to Noam Chomsky, mass media is recently going through a monopolistic control which shows to serve the interests of dominant

groups who use information in a 'propagandistic way'. This means that they aim control and tend to change audiences' attitudes and behaviors by influencing and manipulating information, as well as avoiding the presentation of relevant facts behind news' veracity (Qing, 2002). In order to create a strong influence in views and attitudes, dominant ideological meanings are constructed and transmitted through different types of communication such as language, images, or text in mass media content (ibid.). Western countries however, do not like to use the term 'propaganda' since it makes reference to wartime, and it has been even associated to Nazism or Communism (Schmid, 2014). Instead, 'Strategic Communications' or 'Public Affairs' are terms that are more commonly used to describe these information-based influence operations in mass media (ibid.).

Public Affairs or "propaganda" have a tendency to be controlled by social elites, and when rapid social, politic, economic and even religious changes occur in society, it is used in a most active, dynamic, and operated in a more inconspicuous way. Francis Cody states that public affairs constitute self-produced political subjects that expose themselves and act by means of mass mediated communication effects having a considerably impact in the public sphere (Cody, 2011). The latter is characterized by "the exercise of reason in the production of democratic discourses spaces among those property owners who would supervise the state." Therefore it has been argued that the public sphere has been going into a degeneration process in an industrialized mass-welfare democracy through processes of commodization, monopolization and competition among private interests (ibid.).

Through public affairs, modes of social interaction are created and embedded in ways that the public sphere or audience are influenced by mediated technological, linguistic and conceptual means about specific subjects. The latter are then portrayed as good enough to follow, or bad enough to dislike and be against them (ibid.). This factor also converts 'public affairs' into those assembled of private citizens who act together in order to mediate between the state and society, in which "[...] discourse can only play its function if arguments are made in terms of rational common interest, and if communication remains free from coercion." (ibid.:). Cody reinforces his argument by

presenting the term of “counter-public” as the delineated opposition to dominant forms of publicity which are to be defined only by the content of discourse. This aims to prove that they lack of the sufficient power to make themselves present in the state or to oppose to the dominant public.

Chomsky (1989) has also argued that certain elites such as right wing groups for instance have taken control of the most predominant mass media communication channels in the Western world by using negative publicity against their ‘enemies’ through the use of public affairs. Antonio Gramsci (1992) has suggested calling this tendency as a “hegemonic influence”. This refers to the manipulation and domination of society through specific beliefs, values or explanations which aim to be imposed by a ruling sector as cultural norms to society with the conviction that they are beneficial and natural for everybody. It is then relevant to ground the development of hegemony into the media context.

HEGEMONY AND THE MEDIA

The term hegemony has its roots in Marxism, and according to Antonio Gramsci it can be defined as a social context ideology based on the argument that a dominant social group has the capacity to exercise intellectual and moral influence over society in order to build a new system of social alliances to support its intentions (Gramsci in Dhakal, 2011). This influence is usually generated by cultural and political consensus through important institutions in which hegemony is easily exercised by dominant classes and social groups. Gramsci also makes reference to the importance of certain institutions such as mass media, which play the role on the “production, reproduction and the transformation of hegemony.” (Strinati, 1995) Therefore it is pointed out the importance of looking at mass media in the context of the construction of hegemonies (ibid.). As already argued, media is without a doubt a powerful tool that impacts not only individuals but also society as a whole (McQuail, 1997), and helps to produce consensus and manufactured consent, serving as a crucial channel to establish hegemony (Hall, 1982). Stuart Hall argues that public usually trusts

media since ideologically they project independence and impartiality from the political or economic interests of the state. However, he also highlights that media within a state is obliged to follow some “formal protocols of broadcasting”, and they also depend directly on “the form of state and political system which licenses them”, converting it into an “ideological state apparatus” that is used to mediate social issues (ibid.).

The production of hegemonic ideology coming from the media can be also approached from the perspective of communicators or journalists who serve as amplifiers of “systems of representations that legitimize the social system” (Curran, 1982). According to Dominic Strinati (1995), journalists are seen as intellectuals who are responsible for the “production and dissemination of ideas and knowledge”; Nevertheless, regardless of their assumed autonomy, they are considered to be bounded by the hegemonic system, and therefore they might fall to unconsciously frame the news in order to keep the “institutional arrangement of society” (Gitlin in Dhakal, 2003). This could be reflected on the way journalists make news decisions, the way they are trained, or even the way they were raised in childhood, leading to a particular tendency on promoting certain economic, political or social ideology by simply doing their job (ibid.).

“Today, ‘mediatization of society’ refers to the conceptualization of a process whereby institutions, companies and individuals no longer operate independent of the news media, its logic and its experts.” (Hjarvard, 2008)

Taking the latter arguments a bit further, and talking specifically about news, these are seemed to be tailored by ideology all the time (Gitlin, 2003). According to Todd Gitlin, media acts as a window to the world, and a provider of social knowledge which in reality is controlled by corporate and political elites who aim to control the ideological space in order to shape the public’s state of mind. This is done according to what those dominant classes want the rest of society to believe or do so they can remain in power and achieve their public interests. News and other TV shows help to maintain the dominant ideology by renewing the content with such hegemonic

ideologies in order to keep the agenda updated and functioning. The latter arguments might be molded to fit the logics and structure how news covering terrorism are mediated, as well as to suit the concerns of strategy and security regarding this social issue (Devji in Hevrik & Boise, 2013).

As an impact of mediated public affairs, publicity is seen as the communicative effect that relies on the reflexive recognition of textual circulation through a 'metatotal' space or indefinite addresses (Cody, 2011). In other words, it is the study of language ideologies that travel between different social relationships achieving communicative practices that are intertwined with large scales regimes of value. It is important to emphasize though, that the performance of ideological mediation in language has enabled the understanding of the effect of publicity, and it cannot be determined by the form of texts alone or by simple making reference to the way that they are disseminated. "Instead, circulation interacts with the semiotic form of the circulating objects to create the cultural dimensions of the circulatory process itself." (Lee, 2001) This means that language ideologies must be mediated in order to make publicity's effect function correctly. In mass media, language ideologies refer to the specific content that is disseminated in a narrative way. Narrative can be defined then, as a system of interrelated and sequentially organized stories that share a common rhetorical desire to resolve a conflict by establishing audience expectations according to known 'trajectories' of its literary and rhetorical form" (Halverson et al., 2011). In this definition, trajectories refer to the narrative arc, hence the stories behind these conflicts. According to Steven R. Corman (2016), mediated stories that are manipulated and which refer to specific conflicts or some other kind of deficiency, desire for a resolution coming from the audience side. This desire to solve the stories is connected by an arc of people, actions, and events that make sense of the chain of events that build up the stories to be further developed. In addition, people usually tend to understand and negotiate their position about events coming through the stories of others; and whether these are positive or negative, they still use events to promote their worldviews and ideologies (Hervik and Boisen, 2013).

By focusing in narrations and the use of language, this study will explain then relevant theories which focus in the construction of linguistic features and discourses when approaching social differences and power relations in the mass media context.

LANGUAGE IDEOLOGY AND LINGUISTIC DIFFERENTIATION

Judith Irvine and Susan Gal (2000) formulated the following arguments regarding ideologies concerning boundaries and social differences which are embedded into the politics of a certain region and its observers. According to them, ideologies can be defined as conceptual schemes that are suffused with the political and moral issues surrounding a specific socio-linguistical field, and they are subject of interest to take social stances (Silverstein et al. in Duranti, 2009).

When focusing in linguistic differences from an ideological aspect, they can be understood as “the ideas with which participants and observers frame their understanding of linguistic varieties and map those understandings onto people, events, and activities that are significant to them.” (Duarnti, 2009) This means that usually it is easier for people to place their own position towards a specific issue based in the views of others, and therefore the representation of sociolinguistic phenomena to which they are exposed influence later representations. It also helps on the shaping of the sociolinguistic atmosphere itself, hence the shift in language, its description, as well as the interpretation of the consequences and actions emerging from it (ibid.).

Linguistic forms which include ‘language’ are able to index social groups, and its features can be interpreted as reflections and expression of broader cultural images of people and activities (ibid.). On the other hand, participants’ ideologies about language locate linguistics as essential part and evidence of what they believe to be “systematic behavioral” among social groups that are indexed. Three main stages take part of this process when referring to differences in a social and linguistic context:

Iconization, which refers to those linguistic features that are used to classify social groups or those activities that appear to be iconic representations of them, making such feature a depiction of a social group's inherent nature.

Fractal recursivity, involves the projection of an opposition when engaging into a relationship, which will later lead to a dichotomization. In a social context, it also leads into framing certain activities as contrasting identities, and provides to participants with cultural and discourse resources to claim that these frames impact a social shift in communities. For instance, nationalism could be considered a clear reaction to the identification of this shift (Irvine & Gal, 2000).

Erasure, Is the process in which a specific ideology regarding differences when simplifying the sociolinguistic fields that surrounds it, simply renders persons and activities. This refers that when crucial facts that seem to not fit with the linguistic scheme that has already been imposed, are ignored or simply go unnoticed. Instead they might be transformed and help to form an identity which defines the self as against an imagined "other", as well as homogenizing them.

Such linguistic features grounded to the media context when referring to certain activities that are usually represented to be part of Islam or Muslims' nature are the relevant to be identified by this research when analyzing media coverage of terror attacks. They also help to support the idea of having natural produced ideologies converted in hegemonic discourses in a mediated context.

By using these concepts of hegemony and linguistic differentiations, it is intended to use such theories to analyze and understand how the mass media industry works, as well to identify its role in culture and its influence on the spread of power relations in society. In regards of the specific hegemonic understandings towards the Muslim community and its religion specifically, it is of high interest for this thesis to explore how they have been represented in language and narrations during the first stages of

Western media coverage (breaking news) on terrorist attacks, serving as a symptom of these understandings to be naturally reproduced, and to help the “us vs them” discourse in the War on terror to become stronger.

Recent events in late 2015 and early 2016 such as the Paris and Brussels attacks were fully covered by Western media with content paying special attention to the involvement of Islamic extremism due to the nature of the attacks; as well as information regarding the background of the perpetrators as the events were unfolding. At the same time, these exact media channels had also covered past events such as the Boston Marathon bombings which was not categorized as ‘terrorism’ due to the uncertainty of their nature. It was until few facts about the perpetrators’ origin and ethnic background were revealed, that the information’s tone and content started shifting into describing the event as a terrorist attack perpetrated by a ‘racially different outsider’:

Boston Marathon Shooting (2013): *“The brothers were Muslims, born in the former Soviet republic of Kyrgyzstan in 1986 and 1993. Dzhokhar Tsarnaev arrived in the United States with his parents in 2002, and the family soon applied for political asylum and settled in Cambridge”* [<http://www.history.com/topics/boston-marathon-bombings>, Last retrieved on 26/7/2016].

This pattern in labelling terrorism has been already observed since a few decades ago in different events such as the Oklahoma bombings or the Oslo attacks in which mass media naturally referred to the attacks as to have a Middle Eastern style, leading to the assumption that they are Islamic terrorism.

To be able to identify these patterns in late terror events and to relate them to the construction of hegemonic discourses in mass media is crucial to this research. Therefore, it is relevant first to understand the context on the development of the ‘War on terror’ and how it has impacted the image of Muslims around the world. Additional concepts and theories regarding ethnic exclusion and racism models will be approached in order to understand how they support to the construction of hegemonies in the terrorism, radicalization and Islam phenomena.

THE WAR ON TERROR

It was in the 1980's when a first template for the war on terror was hammered out in the West. It was announced as a fight against terrorism due to its violent ideology, and was directed at those states resisting the United States or Israel power (Kundnani, 2014). Afterwards the "war on terror" concept started to become viral in media, just during the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks in the United States, and it attributed direct connections to Islamic extremism (ibid.). Right after the attacks, a full analysis of the events and its perpetrators was performed, arguing that the responsables were only part of a small group of individuals who hijacked Islam, and not the religion itself. However, former President George W. Bush's office and other policy makers tended to reject these ideas, and developed several justifications and models about the need of a war on terror. The latter suggested that Islamic extremism was fully connected to the failure of the Muslim community in adapting to modernity, converting the issue into a "Muslim problem" for the West. Even President Bush's characterization of the war on terror led to the representation of a prevalent "crusade" against Islam (ibid.). Such way on referring to the war on terror was also strengthen by some statements made by key actors during the implementation of this operation. William Boykin, Bush's deputy undersecretary of defense, stated back in 2003 that the war against terrorism was a battle against 'Satan' fought by "the army of God", falling into a discourse in which Islam, hence the Muslim community were part of an anti-modern and totalitarian society, and they must be seen as the West's enemy.

Arun Kundnani (2014) has argued that the war on terror is not a clash between civilizations only, but it goes further by claiming that traditional Islam which may be seeing as compatible with Western values has been appropriated by extremism, and transformed into a violent political ideology, becoming a big problem for the West. Arguments like these have shaped the way foreign policy such as the one in the United States has addressed the 'Muslim issue' in the past years, and they have failed to shift its rhetoric substance in policy development. The Obama Administration, for example attempted to draw a line through the imagery on the clash

between civilizations in the aftermath of 9/11 period by offering a respectful picture of dialogue between cultures (ibid.). Nevertheless, specific actions related to the war on terrorism and the military operations in Afghanistan and Iraq offered a different perspective about this rhetoric. During the operation in Pakistan in which Osama Bin Laden was executed, the celebrations in the United States denoted a sense of victory in a continuing war rather than an outbreak for peace; A war that according to Kundnani had no limits or clear objectives since the beginning, and which cannot be concluded with the death of one man. A number of other scholars have contributed to these arguments with others which directly link Islam with the war on terror. Richard Winfield (2016) argues that the war on terrorism does not address challenges that some official terrorist groups' goals represent to society. Despite their indiscriminate reference to terrorism, this war does not fight all these groups which conspire to attack states, officials and civilians, or which have used terror to "advance local struggles for national emancipation" (ibid). Instead, he presents the actual enemies of this war as Islamic Jihadists who aim to impose religious rule over political, social, cultural and family affairs, as well as their opposition to secular freedoms which is more far reaching than any other modern fundamentalist movement (ibid.:)

These arguments strengthen the idea of having a war on terror directed to an ethnic group and its ideology rather to carry a military operation against a state or government that threatens society with specific violence actions. Kundnani has stressed out this idea by referring to the intensification of the war on terror discourse and propaganda during the past year. President Obama's administration for instance has focused in the spread of fear of Muslim-American citizens who have been pointed out as a threat due to the risk they face into radicalization and Islamic extremism. In addition, this war on terror has also focused on showing the racialized dehumanization of its Muslim victims. Several polls carried out during this period of time showed that Americans were "more anxious about Muslim Americans being terrorists" than they had been before (ibid.). Therefore, the United States domestic national security apparatus has increased the revision of anti-radicalization policies during the last years, by carrying out extensive intelligence operations and the

surveillance of Muslim-Americans' activities inside U.S. soil. The latter actions have denoted that these programs are the ideal solutions for the 'Muslim problem' (ibid.:)

Having approached the war on terror as this declaration of war against Islam and Muslim culture, it is crucial now to go in depth on how this war has been represented in specific actions and models against the Muslim community.

THE ANTI-MUSLIM AGENDA

The declaration of the war on terror opened the door for seeding an Anti-Muslim ideology in the West which is directly rooted in alien culture, hence labeling an outsider who threatens social stability (Kundnani, 2014). This has been enough reason to create a conflict beyond cultural differences which developed into specific strategies such as agendas (ibid.). Anti-Muslim agendas are specific public campaigns directed to promote mostly political and mediated propaganda against Muslims and Islam, and usually carry negative sentiments such as hatred and bigotry towards them (Dressel, 2011).

When anti-Muslim agendas took strength, they started impacting social and identity patterns in the Western Muslim community, who stopped revealing their 'Muslimness' due to racist attacks and stereo-typation against them. This shift and other factors have contributed to the globalization of Islam: "This notion of a globalized Islamic identity is not the product of any specific Islamist organization, but a broad sociological trend that has developed across Europe also as a result of racism, migration and globalization" (Roy, 2004). Young Muslims for instance, started to feel alienated from the racism they began suffering from a wider society, and yet from the clash of identity they faced at home. This has developed into a new identity mixture of folklore a new global Islam. But in addition, it has also let the door open to analyze the Anti-Muslim agendas as social issues, since they deal with a matter of identity clash and the centralization of a single Muslim identity. The latter is what scholars like Oliver Roy have been trying to argue against: 'A single Islam' which has been suffering from a crisis in the social authority of Islam everywhere. This de-

territorialisation is seemed to be affecting Muslims' identity not only in the West, but also in Arab countries as well.

It has been this re-thinking of social and cultural Islamic identity the one which has been pointed out as one of the most relevant causes for homegrown terrorism and radicalization in the West (Kundnani, 2014). Therefore, counter-radicalization models encouraged by anti-Muslim political agendas nowadays assume that homegrown terrorists tend to break the parental Islamism, and turn it into a trend just called 'Islamism' through the use of violence and radical behavior (Shiv Malik in O'Connor, 2015).

In terms of media coverage, Anti-Muslim agendas strengthened by the presence of anti-radicalization programs and by a homegrown terrorism ideology have led to the public's expectation on revealing terror attack's perpetrators racial identity before building a complete judgment towards them; this by pointing out if the responsible is one of 'them' or one of 'us' (Kundnani, 2014). During the media coverage of the Boston Marathon attacks in 2013 for instance, this speculation in American media was noted and eager to reveal whether the events were a result of domestic or international terrorism. Specific codes in media language were used to refer to the perpetrators identity depending on whether they were white or not; this was later confirmed after knowing that those responsible were not American born. At this point, the events were quickly inserted in the pre-existing script agenda of the war on terror and the fact of having a threat from the Muslim community (ibid.). In England on the other hand, after the London bombings, polls carried by the Financial Times (2007) showed that 38% of the British were feeling uneasy about the presence of Muslims in the United Kingdom, and that they represented a threat to National security, revealing that British hold one of the higher levels of Islamic-phobia in the Western world (Milne, 2007). Back in the time, media coverage tended to anyway disguise these figures by addressing an anti-Muslim opinion agenda through hostile coverage in press and TV, especially after the attacks in 2005. According to Seumas Milne (2007), "[...] in a climate of anti-Muslim prejudice, their disproportionate and sensationalist treatment can only feed ethnic tensions", led by anti-defamation

campaigns which have the power to sway people's opinions and define Islam not as an ethnic figure, but an ideology and yet a 'toxic racial proxy'. He also argues that the relentless public invective against Muslims and Islam is also clearly fueled by a political agenda, which seeks to demonstrate that radical Islam violence is driven, and therefore there is a justification for the declaration of the war on terror and the occupation in Muslim territories: "The relentless media onslaught in Britain on Muslims, their culture and institutions risks turning into a racist witch-hunt." (ibid.).

In both cases, the Boston Marathon attack and the London bombings, mass media depicted the events with the same graphic and visual language as they did back in September 11th. TV anchors kept account of the events in such a traumatic tone which then developed into fear and anxiety among the audience, using as an engine the justification of the perpetration of the war on terror with a renewed focus on domestic threat. This was then used to legitimize the further surveillance, criminalization and demonization of the Muslim community (Kundnani, 2014).

All of the addressed arguments are able to explain the way the conception of a terrorist threat is shaped by ideology rather than objectivity (John Mueller, 2005); most likely embraced by defamation agendas aiming to move public opinion towards Muslims and Islam. Having studied the sources, it is now important to go deep into how Anti-Muslim agendas are represented when they are mediated, as well as the impact and reaction they cause in people.

MORAL PANIC

According to Erich Goode (2009), a Moral Panic is regularly impulsive by mass media, and it can be defined as a sociological phenomenon rather than a theory, since it carries a process of social construction of behaviors and change. The latter can be represented as reactions to a designed threat, which creates a state of panic where emotion usually rules over reason (Cricher, 2005).

In addition, a moral panic could be defined as the reaction from influential members of the society towards activities from individuals or social groups which seriously subvert the mores and interests of a dominant culture (Watson and Hill, 2003). An important attribute to emphasize about the moral panics is that they could also be manipulated by elites and groups who hold a power over society, and who have the capacity to define a social problem which needs to be taken care of (Cricher, 2005). This leads to the cultivation of prejudice and anxiety towards an issue that needs to be swept aside through urged action by the most powerful sectors of society. Chas Cricher refers to some influential groups such as politicians, press and media, public opinion leaders and law enforcement as key actors to boost a moral panic.

When a moral panic is inserted into society, it develops a relationship between its cause and its focus, which is the threat that represents to society. It also must be boosted by any of the influential and distressed groups already mentioned in order to have the sufficient strength to cause anxiety. By spreading the latter, its main goal is to restore social order and security, and it uses all the necessary resources to back up any proof of threat, such as actual events and facts shaped by social change, even cultural myths (de Young, 2004). When successful, the anxiety around the social issue then develops into defining, labeling, and punishing the threat in order to defend what society believes in or stands for. Evidence of the success of a moral panic campaign could even result in social movements, law revision and enforcement, just to mention some. It is important to highlight though that the impact of a moral panic would rely in the strength of the moral boundaries of the affected social circle. Therefore, when moral boundaries are strong enough, it is unlikely that something will easily attempt to cause disorder in the mainstream society (Goode and

Ben Yehuda, 1994). As when moral boundaries are “fuzzy” and constantly shifting due to social changes, it is probable that a moral panic will create uncertainty and anxiety (ibid.). However, even when a social moral atmosphere is strong enough, distressed and influential groups could mobilize enough to disrupt the order with all their resources such as media.

Media is a crucial channel to spread a moral panic through propaganda that depicts the threat and presents the necessary remedies to solve it. The depiction of a moral panic enemy must be, according to scholars such as Burns and Crawford (1999), those which will represent the threat as a real enemy evil in the most effective category.

Mathew Durrington (2007) refers to the process of a moral panic as follows:

- 1.- Something or someone is defined as a threat to values and stability.
- 2.-The threat is depicted in a recognizable form by media.
- 3.-Public concern is rapidly built.
- 4.-There is a response to the threat by authorities and opinion makers.
- 5.- Social change is generated.

When referring to the previous literature review about the war on terror and Anti-Muslim agendas, there is a similarity between the moral panic process and the way these phenomena develops in order to create defamation against Islam and Muslims. Arguments from cultural scholars on the war provide statements such as the ones affirming that the Muslim way of thinking do not fit into Western values, and therefore they represent a significant problem to the West. On the other hand, Anti-Muslim agendas aim to use media to create a moral panic into society by broadcasting negative opinions and stories about Muslims, strengthening the ‘sickness’ they provide to Western society. Policy changes such as anti-radicalization models and law enforcement operations such as the ones addressed before represent the final step of the moral panic process.

When other social and cultural issues are embedded and represent a threat to a moral panic campaign success, mass media strategies are then developed and manipulated to divert the final effect. Scholars such as Tariq Ramadan (2001) have suggested that Islam values are compatible with liberalism in case of a political struggle for instance. Therefore, conservatives groups of the Western societies seek exhaustively to use direct and effective communication channels to spread anxiety towards a specific cultural group due to the threat they represent to their central values. In the case of the Anti-Muslim agendas, a simple formulated slogan for such campaigns has been: "Muslim culture doesn't fit the Western one."

As for the purposes of this study, it is also relevant to find out how Western media specifically plays an important role and supports the diffusion of a moral panic against Islam and Muslims. The latter achieved by presenting them as a threat to Western society, and by linking them directly with global terrorism and radicalization. As already addressed, anxiety must be stimulated through emotions ruling over reason. Therefore, fear is a key factor in order to stimulate anxiety through moral panic.

THE SPREAD OF FEAR IN THE WEST

"Whether real or imagined, in box-office sensations or evening news stories, monsters are sustained by narratives of fear." (Lean, 2012)

As referred in the previous section, a moral panic's enemy should be the one who is depicted with the worst image ever in order to impose fear and rejection, even if referring to them as evil entities such as monsters or demons is needed.

During the media coverage of the terrorist attacks of September 11th 2001, the descriptions and narrations of TV writers referred to the unfolding event as a horror movie scene (Lean, 2012). In the following days, press writers and politicians stood up front the public scene affirming that the "The world must stand together to defeat these monsters [...] We must kill the monster of terrorism" (The Express Newspaper in Lean, 2012); suggesting that the terrorists had 'abdicated' their human status and became monsters, leading to a public state of phobia for Muslims; in where 'Arab

terrorists' were represented just as monsters: the most revolting and dangerous creatures (Lean, 2012). Their destructive actions against humankind somehow demanded from the public opinion an explanation on such inhuman behaviors which took place in a setting that jeopardized human goodness, and separated the human kind from the savage beasts who signified an omnipresent sense of disaster (ibid.).

In a Hollywood movie context for example, monsters have long haunted the peripheries of human civilized space. According to Nathan Lean (2012) the most relevant characteristic of monsters is their foreignness: "They are from another domain—one where chaos and danger triumph over order and security...". This statement connects directly with the justification for having a moral panic situation where a threat is represented to alter social and cultural order as addressed in the previous chapter. Richard Kearney (2002) also describes monsters as the ones who defy borders: "Monsters are liminal creatures who can go where we can't go", transgressing conventional frontiers that separate the good from evil, making reference to unknown outsiders and infiltrators who remind people that they are vulnerable and that they will attempt to harm them at any unexpected moment. "Societal order will succumb to the chaos of the dark beyond." (ibid.). This same argument has also strengthened by Evelyn Alsultany's "Arabs and Muslims in the Media" (2012), and Dr. Jack Shaheen's short film "The Reel Bad Arabs" (2006) in which they examine this increase of antipathetic images against Muslims, and the deprivation of "the enemy" during the War of Terror. These new standards of racial and cultural representations in media and entertainment have resulted according to Shaheen, into the production of over three hundred films where Muslims/Arabs have been vilified as the "bad guys", or as "the enemy".

In Nathan Lean's "Islamophobia Industry: How the Right Manufactures Fear of Muslims" (2012), he clearly exemplifies on how the West, in this case, American society has suffered overtime a sense of public anxiety due to foreign ideology (e.g. the threat to Christianity religion from the Illuminati group during the late 1700's, or Communism during the Cold War). This distress has developed into a nervous feeling towards political, religious or ideological systems whose followers had so suddenly

gained traction across the world. When grounding the sense of fear towards Muslim and Islam, one of the first mediated events that caught important public attention was the U.S. embassy in Iran crisis in 1979. As long as the crisis lasted, evening news reports showed in American television sets frightening images of the tension developed during the event (ibid.). Newspaper headlines kept American citizens concerned of the latest updates of the crisis, just as the nightmare was unfolding. At this point it became clear that a new, violent, and foreign threat to the United States security model and way of living had emerged:

“The radical Muslim monster had awakened and like the ideological friends that had roamed the American landscape before, this new enemy was eager to expunge the values of liberty and justice...and impose its dangerous credo on the helpless and unwilling” (ibid.:).

This crisis and the media coverage of the Iranian revolution, as well as of other conflicts in the Middle East gave rise to new stereotypes of Arabs in general as dangerous fanatics who threatened the American way of living (Kundnani, 2014). These events as already addressed in the ‘War on terror’ and ‘Anti- Muslim agendas’ sections have had a serious impact in the way the Muslim community has been perceived, including Muslim Westerns who started facing a reconceptualization of their own identity even though they were born, raised and adapted Western values (ibid.). The functionality of multiculturalism models which had functioned to Muslims living in the West in assimilating into a new political and cultural life, started to considerably decelerate by the end of the 20th Century having its peak in 2001 after the 9/11 attacks, especially in the United States.

In addition, new trends in immigration flows also started impacting the shift of the perception of Muslim Western communities. People coming from Arab countries stopped moving from their home places due to mostly employment reasons as it used to happen before the Cold War, now they seek asylum, fled authoritarian and violent conflicts. This change on the immigration patterns has resulted in the intensification of the surveillance of foreign nationals and the efforts to revise anti-radicalization models to mostly Muslim-Americans as already addressed (Solomos, 1995).

It seems that the chain of events and different historical processes beginning with the declaration of the war on terror have developed into the active depiction of Muslim ethnicity, which uses fear as an engine to spread this negative sentiment towards them. It also seems that September, 11th 2001 is considered as a departure point in this cultural and sociological process in which American-Muslims went to bed the day before the attacks like any other American citizen. The following day, they were just labelled as 'Arabs' regardless of their ideological beliefs or affiliation to any religious group. Moreover, they started suffering the effects of the fear that was being spread in media which pointed them out as rivals. Deepa Kumars (2012) has shared her experience of being victim of this discrimination when one day after the attack at the World Trade Center, a colleague from school yelled at her "Are you happy?", assuming that her South Asian appearance would have made her a supporter of the attacks. Examples like this can be used to explain how the United States for example has manufactured the 'War on Terror' as an ideological device to promote a global hegemony against Muslims.

As for the specific reactions from this fear which has been spread through moral panic campaigns, the dislike that has been generated against Arabs or Muslims brings the term Islamophobia into place. Its definition has suffered several shifts within time according to different social and cultural processes that have been already addressed such as the development of homegrown radicalization or migration flows. However the setting in which Islamophobia has taken place is crucial. As for this study, it is important to ground the term in the context of the Islamophobic wave occurring in the West (United States and Europe mostly) and how it has been influenced by mass media.

ISLAMOPHOBIA

Islamophobia is a term which has been approached through several scholars coming from different cultural schools. It has been simply defined as a form of structural racism directed exclusively at Muslims by non-Muslims, and it is sustained through a

symbolic relationship with an hegemonic thinking and practices related to the war on terror.

Some scholars such as Chris Allen (2016) have argued that the root of Islamophobia is in new racism, which explores the presence of hatred and intolerance due to culture rather than racial or biological aspects of a minority (Bernassconi, 2005). Etienne Balibar (1991) on the other hand, makes reference to this term to be time framed in postcolonial time having an increasing popularity today since it makes reference to the perceived incompatibility between cultures. It is important to point out that this new current of racism does not present cultures as unequal, nor argues inferiority assumptions, just incompatibility (Hervik, 2011). This last approach has been studied mostly by the 'Culturalists' such as Bernard Lewis (1990) and Samuel Huntington, who have argued that this conflict between Muslims and the West is a result of culture itself and its 'structural problem with modernity" has led to a clash of civilizations (Kundhani, 2014). Culturalists have also claimed that Islamic fundamentalism and their violence is a natural product of their inner culture and not from political interests (ibid.). Balibar has then presented the contemporary 'Arabophobia', or Islamophobia as the most prominent example of new racism in the modern era in which Islam has been classified as not compatible to Western values (Balibar, 1991).

However, Allen has brought the term into a new discussion, and he has argued that Islamophobia is developed from bipolar extremes. On one hand from those who define themselves as 'Islamophobic' through criticism and denounce directed towards Islam and Muslims in a general way. On the other hand, there are those openly express their hatred towards the referred ethnic and religious group (Allen, 2016). Both approaches have based their opinions on a diversity of causes and justifications to do so, resulting in the recognition of a distinct anti-Muslim/Islam phenomenon which is growing, and impacting Muslim identity which has also worked as a catalyst of this social process (ibid.). The latter has positioned Islamophobia into a transition process in some countries such as in the United Kingdom where it has moved from being a socio-economic phenomenon, into one with global, historical and racial

dimensions. The Arab community in England for example, has evolved within time since they were defined as Asians when former migrant workers from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds started arriving into the country mixed with other groups such as Indians, or Bengalis (Kundnani, 2014). However, their identity has changed nowadays due to Islamophobia which has influenced the reinterpretation and redefinition of what is it to be a Muslim. This has also been approached by academics, activists and policymakers to the point that those who were considered Asian migrant workers in the past, are now considered Muslims (Allen, 2016).

Through Islamophobia, Muslim identity has been highly politicized and overtly represented in negative frames through Western mass media mostly (Allen, 2016). This has resulted into unsuccessful integration efforts and the increase of negative attitudes, stereotypes, as well as in discrimination towards Muslims through the expansion of 'Islamophobic' propaganda in media and political discourses (Kiss et al. 2015). In the United Kingdom for example, Muslim identity started acquiring negative attributions from the moment public and political discourses have been spread with the aim of depicting Islam as an ideology that goes against Western values and its founded institutions. The latter has resulted into a confrontation of 'them' (Muslims) being against 'us' (The West).

It has also been argued that when covering Islam in mass media, the issue is approached through orientalist views, in which Islam is presented as something monolithic and predominantly hostile, and it is object of suitable vulgarity and trivialization (Said, 1981). This has led to the generalization of statements about Muslims and Islam where they are ridiculed, provoking instant outrage (ibid.).

By having approached all the literature review and relevant theories regarding hegemonies, mass media and the history of the war on terror, among others; it is intended to have a better understanding of all the issues that this research will analyze in order to connect them and make sense of the social phenomena that is being studied. In terms on how to conduct this analysis, the methodological profile of this thesis which will help to answer the formulated questions will be now defined as follows.

METHODOLOGY

As addressed already, the present thesis is interested in operationalizing the discussed theories regarding hegemonic understandings in mass media coverage, therefore the main focus on this research will be the analysis of mass media content which is reproduced and provided to the audience, aiming to disseminate a specific message.

Content is the valuable piece of information or set of experiences that is directed to an audience (Odden, 2013). In media, content can be delivered through different channels such as internet, television or written press which are considered the mediums that create, carry and deliver it. The medium controls and actually has much influence in the way content is perceived by the final audience, since it may be responsible of adding the entire value to the information that is been provided (McLuhan, 1994). One of the most important values of content is that it can be a source of inspiration for other people to develop, follow up or re-create it in order to enrich it resulting in the creation of new content (ibid.).

In Western media mostly, content is provided in much extent visually through television networks and recently it has taken strength to be presented online through social media, blogs and official websites. Therefore, in order to identify the production or reproduction of hegemonic understandings in visually produced news content, this thesis has directed its methodologic base on a data analysis research using a qualitative approach.

A qualitative study

Since this thesis is interested in exploring the way hegemonic understandings are constructed, doing an in-depth analysis of mediated content which relies on what people and institutions such as mass media say and reproduce about global issues is crucial. Information entitles a language, a tone, and a style that expresses social perspectives about events achieving social engagement, as well as the transfer of knowledge to its audience. In the case of mass media, its most relevant audience is society who will be the ones interpreting and making sense of their messages

(Wright, 1975); therefore this study's ontological approach will focus on a social constructivist one.

Social constructivism

Its origins are attributed to Lev Vygotsky's (1985) arguments about knowledge, in which he explains that all cognitive functions in humans originate in, and must be explained as products of social interactions. According to him, learning cannot mandatorily be explained as the assimilation and accommodation of new knowledge by learners. Instead it can be understood as the process by which learners are integrated into a knowledge community. Therefore, social constructivism relates to the construction of 'fields of knowledge' which emerge from the social reflections of the surrounding world. The latter is socially constructed mostly out of human interactions and engagements which result into the meanings of culture through the exchange of knowledge (Bevir, 2007). It is important to emphasize that culture plays a crucial role in the cognitive development of a person. Instead of seeing culture as an external reality that acts on and constrains people, it can be taken to be an emergent reality in a continuous state of construction and reconstruction (Bryman, 2012). Even though content is a source of data, it is built, reproduced and manipulated by human actors in order to share knowledge. In the case of news' content, as already discussed, knowledge is something that mass media is willing to share in order to educate its audience: "What people generally know today about other "cultures" derive almost exclusively from the news media and popular media" (Hervik & Boise, 2013). Lately it has also been argued that knowledge derives more from images and visualizations than from texts (Ursyn, 2014), making news' visual content very strong and influential nowadays.

By using a social constructivist reflection in this thesis, it is aimed to have a closer and detailed approach to data in order to find and analyze the linguistic features that mass media discourse is made of. If quantitative research was selected to approach this study, it would have resulted into a higher amount of data to analyze on one hand, but it would have limited the possibility of getting an in-depth understanding and interpretation of the language and content which mainly interests this thesis's

research questions. In order then to interpret and understand the findings, this study will take a hermeneutic epistemological stance.

Hermeneutics

It is a branch of sociology that focuses on human understanding and interpretation, and has originally being applied in the examination of social explanations about events from a standpoint of their historical and cultural contexts (Hilton-Morrow & Harrington, 2007). Hermeneutics relies on the social view of phenomena which works with approaches on meanings, symbolization, and representation in social life that includes semiotics, structuralism, the deconstruction of meanings and discourse analysis. This epistemology stance of research is the one that it is considered to suit better this thesis since it will have the goal of explaining reality through the analysis and deconstruction of meaning coming out from the language of mediated content. This will help to interpret and understand the social issue that interests to this research. The key on hermeneutics is that sources of data, in this case news content to be analyzed, will be understood as the intermediary message between content producers and their audiences.

Framing Analysis

As for the purposes for a qualitative research to be applied in this study, a framing analysis method was chosen to approach hegemonic understandings on Muslims in news media. By analyzing news' content as the primary data of study, a framing analysis is the most suitable method to "frame" how media channels build intentionally or not hegemonic discourses.

Basic content analysis methods aim to respond questions such as "Who, What, to Whom, Why, or to what extent, through the identification of specific characteristics in messages pulled out from data (Lasswell, 1952). This study is fully interested in how mass media frames information disseminated to people and how they develop into hegemonic understandings about specific issues. By framing information, it becomes relevant to audiences, since the latter use their value predispositions such as political or religious beliefs as perceptual screens in order to pay attention to what they

believe and accept as valid (Nisbet & Mooney, 2007). According to Mathew Nisbet and Chris Mooney, frames help to organize information into central ideas. Additionally, they help to provide issues with a controversy in order to have greater emphasis and to resonate with core values and assumptions, allowing people to identify the issue, their participants and the solutions. This is achieved by tailoring messages in news stories with dominant narratives that do not necessarily stick to the facts, and where information could be misapplied and twisted (ibid.). In other words, framing is the way news' stories are packaged, organized and narrated by media channels, which emphasize the theories about what exists, what happens and what matters in stories (Gitlin, 1980). Stephen D. Reese (1996) complements these ideas by arguing that events are framed by mass media in a specific way in order for people to make sense of them in a specific way. Therefore, framing analysis seems an appropriate method in understanding the role of mass media in the construction of hegemonic discourses that will be powerful enough to impact audiences' beliefs and attitudes (Entman in Al Nahed , 2015). It is important to emphasize that by framing events through a dominant discourse in the news agenda, such impact can be seen from an individual as well as from a social perspective, resulting into processes such as socialization, collective and political action, as well as the re-shaping of public dialogue (D'Angelo, 2002.). The latter identifies journalists and news anchors as key influencers in this specific process.

Framing analysis was therefore selected in order to identify how media frames terrorist events in their initial stages of their coverage. Since media coverage is extensive and could take days or weeks to develop, this thesis is interested in identifying these frames in the first stage of the news coverage, this is as the information is unfolding. Breaking news coverage is relevant since fresh information is been generated within minutes, and most likely the construction of hegemonic understandings will result in a natural way rather than elaborated or manipulated. This way, by identifying patterns in the construction of natural hegemonic discourses, they will become the object of discussion in order to answer this study research questions.

According to Claes H. De Vreese (1991), when frame analyzing, two different types of frames can be included, 'pre-packed' or generic frames, which are defined as "transcend thematic limitations, and they can be identified in relation to different topics, some of them even over time and in different cultural contexts." (ibid.). On the other hand, there are the 'Issue-specific' frames, which refer to those that can be associated with and that are also significant only to specific events and topics (ibid.:). For the purpose of this thesis issue-specific frames are considered to be the most useful to work with since specific events, in this case terrorist attacks are being studied.

Several questions involving the events were formulated in order to create an accurate and clear understanding about how they are framed. The goal is to identify patterns in the news' narrations and language that will later lead to build up issue-specific frames. The following questions were formulated as follows:

What is the problem?

Who was involved?

How were the people involved presented?

What is the possible solution or explanation for the issue?

What is the language and the tone of the narration?

How is the issue explained?

Are there any explained causes or motives involving the issue?

What are the reactions?

Since this study is dealing with secondary data, meaning sources that already exist, and that can be easily accessed online, there are no relevant ethical implications to consider. This study will rely of the available content and material that can be found and easily accessed since it is public material, and that will be used in an objective way and only for the purposes of this thesis. No personal political, ethnic or socio-

cultural views are expected to impact the theoretical core, findings or the conclusion of this research.

By tailoring this research with a social constructivist approach, and with a hermeneutic stance, it aims to interpret the analyzed data in order for new social knowledge to emerge, but also to reinforce its theoretical background. This gives this study an iterative nature, where inductive reasoning is used through the formulation of research questions and by framing the analyzed data so categories for interpretation can be discussed. On the other hand, such categories should address the theories in which this study relies on in order to support them.

Sample

This study will focus in breaking news media coverage as the main data sample. They were selected due to important reasons; primarily they portrait the first impressions from news anchors and journalists about the events they are narrating. This means that natural and personal emotions, thoughts and language are most likely to emerge along as the information is being unfolded and narrated. The other reason relates to the information itself, since new and fresh data is emerging within minutes, it is most unlikely that it will be easily manipulated; therefore journalists will not have the time to elaborate on stories in order to tailor them since they are usually running against the clock, giving narrations a natural characteristic.

Several content pieces on breaking news coverage mostly from Western Media will be approached. In the beginning, the intention was to fully use Western media coverage content for this study, especially the ones coming from Western countries who have openly declared War on terror, and in which hegemonies could be perhaps easily found. However, during the collection of data, some content was not fully available, leading to use just a few pieces of content from other international media sources in English, such as RT and Al Jazeera in English, which are not corporate speaking Western companies. Nevertheless, most content comes from American and British media, such as CNN, FOX News or BBC.

Most of these channels, like CNN or BBC were selected for two reasons: One, they serve an important Western audience due to their powerful broadcasting reach. CNN for instance reaches up to 40% of the international upscale population in an international level through television and digital platform channels (<http://cnnpressroom.blogs.cnn.com/2014/10/16/new-global-survey-ranks-cnn-as-top-international-news-brand/> , Last retrieved: June 7, 2016). Whereas BBC has hit the 348 million reached people just in the current year around the globe. (<https://www.theguardian.com/media/2016/apr/29/bbc-global-audience-hits-348-million>, Last retrieved: June 7, 2016). The main objective by selecting these media channels is to find relevant patterns out of mostly Western media that will lead to find relevant frames related with hegemonies.

Sources & Annexes

When doing research in order to find the data, almost all content was found in a mainstream channel, YouTube, place where these coverage videos were stored just as they were streamed during the events' dates. Therefore, no manipulation or edition from the original sources was performed, as it would have been object if data was pulled out from other sources. Media coverage on breaking news for most cases was pretty extensive, even hours of data. Therefore, in such cases, the first couple of hours were selected to carry the analysis on. In few other cases, the length of the coverage was less, so the whole footage was analyzed. In some events, two different sources were analyzed to get a better insight.

A list of several events in recent years and months has been selected as the research's sample. All of them have been labeled with the 'terrorist attack/activity' tag due to their nature. At first glance, this list focused in events carried out in the West only, since the relevance of role of The West due to the War on terror discourse is crucial. However, throughout the writing process of this thesis, highly relevant events to this study took place, some in Asian countries. It became interesting to also understand how media frames them in comparison to those happening in the West, and also if there was any relevant pattern with them. Therefore, the final sample list

included the following events (chart 1); being events 1 -6 the ones who were part of the original list and events 7- 10 those which were added in a later stage.

Event	Location	Event Date	Source
1. The Sydney Siege	Sydney, Australia	December 14 th , 2014	Seven News Australia
2. The Paris Attacks	Paris, France	November 13 th , 2015	CNN, BBC News
3. The San Bernardino Shooting	San Bernardino, U.S.A.	December 5 th , 2015	FOX News
4. The Brussels attacks	Brussels, Belgium	March 22 nd , 2016	FOX News
5. The Pulse Club Shooting	Orlando, U.S.A.	June 12 th , 2016	ABC News, RT
6. The Sarona Market Shooting	Tel Aviv, Israel	June 8 th , 2016	CBS News
7. The Atatürk Airport Attack	Istanbul, Turkey	June 28 th , 2016	FOX News, RT
8. The Holey Artisan Bakery Attack	Dhaka, Bangladesh	July 1 st , 2016	CNN
9. The Nice Attack	Nice, France	July 14 th , 2016	Al Jazeera English
10. The Munich Shooting	Munich, Germany	July 22 nd , 2016	France 24

The sample then included seven events developed in geographically considered Western countries as such, and three in Middle Eastern or Asian countries. It is relevant to note that in The Tel Aviv Shooting and the Istanbul Airport Attack events, even though these countries are geographically located in Asia, they were selected to be considered part of a Western block due to their political context.

All data was downloaded and will be stored in a reference media device which is enclosed with the final printed version of the study. In some cases, due to some videos' length and the limitation on the device's data capacity, the URL addresses which contain the videos were stored instead. In the case of the Nice and the Munich attacks, since they took place in the final stage of this study, video was not available right away, so voice was recorded instead as the coverage was unfolding. Such voice files will also be included in the reference device.

FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

During the framing process, five key frame-story elements were created in order to approach each relevant topic that was identified during the analysis process. All frames are issue-specific since they rely in themes pulled out from the analyzed data. Coding was used in order to find thematic patterns and trends on the media coverage that was analyzed that will relate to the theoretical core of this thesis and also new findings. The final frames were as follows:

- 1) Framing terrorism, 2) The ideal enemy: ISIS, 3) A continuous clash between civilizations, 4) A racial matter, 5) A domino effect? No single causalities

Framing terrorism

Few of the definitions that were addressed by the theoretical section in this study in order to define terrorism used the fact of having mass destruction, coercion, and the attack on civilians as their main characteristics. However, none of them made detailed reference on the use of specific artillery or weapons to define attacks as terrorism per se. Neither them addressed the direct involvement of Islamist Extremism in the planning and execution of attacks to be considered international or local terrorism.

A pattern on the way journalists labeled the analyzed attacks as terrorism was identified in terms of the reference they had made to the type of weapons and artillery

that was used in the events; as well as the way that perpetrators had violated security measures in the places they were carried out. Events which had been perpetrated with heavy artillery or explosive devices were labelled right away as terror attacks, no matter the circumstances in which they were developed. Clear examples of the latter were the Brussels and the Istanbul attacks where explosive were used.



“The addition of gunfire, if its confirmed make the situation more complex to be considered as planned attack” (Al Jazeera in English on The Nice Attack 1, 17/7/2016, 01:00)

In addition to the weapons, the fact that news anchors referred to the attacks as coordinated ones can be interpreted as a way to speculate about the involvement of a major organized group, hence the idea of a terrorist cell being behind them. However, in the events where only one or few weapons were suspected to be involved such as rifles, the term terrorism was not was mentioned throughout the coverage until another factor regarding mostly the perpetrators’ identity came up. This was evident in the Orlando and San Bernardino shootings for example, where the events were been treated as “yet another mass shooting in the U.S.” In the case of the Orlando Shooting for instance, when journalists found out that the perpetrator, Omar Mateen was Muslim and from Afghan descendent, automatically questions were raised concerning the attack’s motives and if it was probably planned by a major

extremist group. Therefore, a focus in homegrown Islamic radicalization took over the coverage, and even though the man used only one weapon to execute the attack, media and law enforcement named the as a possible act of terrorism due to its possible links with homegrown radicalization. By this, the anti-Muslim agenda was detonated, and a sense of concern about the growth of radicalization of Muslims living in the West, especially in smaller cities was raised.



In almost all events, security experts, some of them counter-terrorism ones were brought to intervene in the middle of the breaking news coverage. This clearly raised the seriousness of the story's tone to the point that attacks were assumed to be

“terrorism” in fact. Experts were asked about possible links of the perpetrators with radicalization, as well as discussing security and law enforcement concerns, as well as their opinion regarding how these events should be treated due to the kind of weapons used, motives and execution.

In the case of the Sydney Siege for example, a terrorism expert came into scene discussing the possibility that the perpetrator, Man Haron Monis could be, whether acting as part of larger plot, or that he was just ideologically inspired and he had been acting as a ‘lonely wolf’. If Haron was conducted by a major organization such as ISIS, the analyst then suggested that fear for the hostages’ lives should be considered, raising the seriousness of the event. Examinations on the Islamic State’s recruiting processes were also addressed, since Monis’s age appeared not to fit into the organization’s online recruitment target, which has focused in young people instead. This can be interpreted as media wanting to take the story even further in assumptions that actually the Islamic State is succeeding to be present in countries like Australia where terrorism and radicalization threats were not daily issues.



This last argument reinforces the idea of having an anti-terrorism agenda active in mass media at all times, and that it is able to localize international issues into potential scenarios and targets. An event happening in Australia for example, country which does not hold a relevant terrorist history is able then to address into the public agenda issues such as homegrown radicalization, the War on ISIS and global

terrorism by how mass media handles the event. This could activate the awareness that such issues are impacting countries which have not suffered from them, reinforcing a hegemonic discourse that Muslims and Islamic ideologies are potential to develop into radicalization in new settings. By using this agenda, mass media seems to bring terrorism into a globalized context, and make the stories related to it as international ones that will generate buzz and reactions elsewhere. Hence, It helps to strengthen Islamophobia and a conducted moral panic towards Muslims because they are reaching 'expanding'.

"They want to find out if the story is Islamic terrorism, because then the story becomes international, it is a story where... Okay, here they come [...]" (FOX news on The San Bernardino Shooting 2/12/2015, 5:34:30)

In addition, narrations were also interpreted to have a dramatic tone when being covered, and the fact that some of the events were described as a Hollywood movie, fully links to Al-Sultany's argument about terrorism in mass media. Such events then are able to mobilize incredible law enforcement and cause such panic just as they are portrayed in movies.

"Police was screaming [...] within seconds, almost like a Hollywood movie, they had the hostages against the window, they were protecting the windows, so the men couldn't been seen [...]" (Seven News on The Sydney Siege, 15/12/2014)



If we connect this argument with the fact that the War on terror needs an enemy to fight against, then an antagonist is needed. In this same example, during the Sydney Siege, the suspect was identified as Muslim and a radical Islamic public figure holding hostages in a Chocolate store. Then he perfectly fit into the profile of Huntington's ideal hostile enemy who is threatening Westerners.

In this last case as in almost all of the studied cases, the antagonists of the stories were represented by the perpetrators of the attacks. However, mass media tried to find an even more powerful antagonist who is most likely to be behind the events, and it clearly pointed it out: The Islamic State.

The ideal enemy: ISIS

As an interpretation of the active political agenda about the war declaration from the West on ISIS, and the increasing levels of Islamophobia in Western countries, the possible involvement of ISIS emerged in every event's narration that was analyzed. Journalists seemed on trying to find any connection of the attacks with the Islamic State. This went from the fact that perpetrators might have been ideologically inspired or homegrown radicalized by the organization's online propaganda, to the fact that they were referring to the attacks as fitting ISIS's operational mode.

"This is certainly a place that ISIS has in the past threatened to target in Australia [...]"
(Seven News 1, 15/12/2014, 14:20)

"Of course this comes (The Paris attacks) on the day that America is saying that they are pretty sure, that they have killed Jihadi John, the man behind the beheading videos for the Islamic State [...]" (BBC News on the Paris Attack 1, 13/11/2015, 2:45)

"[...] whether he (Omar Mateen) had any kind of social media connections to ISIS or any other affiliate group [...]" (ABC News on the Orlando Shooting, 12/6/2016, 12:00)

During the FOX News coverage on the San Bernardino attack, a Counter Terrorism expert, Aaron Cohen came into scene with information that the possible suspect's name was overheard through the police radio system. The name of Farook Syed then was revealed as to be one of the possible responsables for the attack. Immediately the analyst in terrorism addressed the event as a result of Islamic radicalization and to be organized and directed by the Islamic State. This intervention led to a discussion about the magnitude of the threat that ISIS represents to the security of American citizens due to their success on radicalizing Muslims living in the West.



“America is one giant soft target, so if ISIS wants to hit us in places that are not iconic ,this is the best way to do it [...] they don’t have to be tied to ISIS, they can be inspired by ISIS [...]” (FOX News on The San Bernardino Shooting, 2/12/2015, 6:10:31)

“Out of 100 mosques in the USA, out of those randomly chosen mosques, 80 of them were either preaching jihad or had jihadist literature available.” (Fox News on The San Bernardino Shooting, 2/12/2015, 5:41:50)

Even in the events on Tel Aviv’s Sarona Market shooting which was referred to be Palestinian terror related right away, ISIS was mentioned by CBSN journalists due to the fact that the organization has openly declared war on Israel, and that they might be inspiring Palestinians to carry out attacks in Israeli soil.

The Islamic State has been portrayed as the most vicious terrorist group in recent years, and they have openly declared war on the United States and other Western countries. They have the peculiarity to carry out violent acts and spread online propaganda to recruit members abroad (Spark, 2014). In addition they are famous for having recruited members from the West, and to have established strong networks in countries such as France and Belgium (New York Post, 2015); therefore the fact that most of these terror related events were carried in these countries has been established by media as a clear attempt of the organization to attack the West.

In addition, the fact that mass media had related all events with the Islamic State can be inferred as them wanting to strengthen the “War on Terror” discourse, since they emphasize the open declaration of war from both sides. This fully connects to the possible aim on feeding the audience’s perception of the presence of a constant threat from the Islamic State’s ideology to Western culture. Therefore, it seems that there is the need to have an active anti-Islam/Muslim agenda which will stress out the idea of such extremist ideology to be spreading in the West since these attacks have been increasing there recently. It is important to note though, that up to present day when this study is being conducted, out of all the 10 analyzed events, only the events in Paris, Brussels, and Bangladesh have been directly found to have strong connections to a Islamic State’s planning according to media and law enforcement. Yet, it has not fully been confirmed since one of ISIS’s strategies is to claim every attack on Westerners to reinforce their own ‘War on the West’ discourse, even though the perpetrators acted as lonely wolves.



Other important implications regarding the involvement of ISIS in the attacks have been also addressed by journalists. Besides the use of certain weapons, openly declared threats, and online propaganda, the security factor is crucial to point out in this analysis. Questions about how did the attacks were carried out in Western soil despite the evident increase of security have been formulated by journalists.

“This is a major issue, a new era [...] How can individuals have explosives or shot fires? [...] The bottom line is that this a penetration, this is the first time I see pictures of an international airport (Brussels) in the West [...] a violent action most likely by Jihadists, we don’t know yet.” (FOX News on The Brussels Attack, 03/22/2016, 29:18)

Other implications, such the infiltration of people and weapons in Western countries raised the journalists and analysts’ concern when they tried to evaluate the attacks regarding these matters. They made clear reference to people who actually live in the West already, and who are trained to carry out attacks.

“So, they are already here (ISIS followers in the U.S.), the counter-terrorism experts know that, correct?” (FOX News on The San Bernardino Shooting, 2/12/2015, 5:31:42)

“You talk about security [...] Is it fair to say that we have seen in the past in other countries where terrorism or terrorists, they are able to go in and work as airport workers, and to some degree allow that access to take place [...] this could be another homegrown terrorism cell [...]” (FOX News on The Brussels Attack, 03/22/2016, 29:25)

The latter could be interpreted as clear examples of how journalists build up and depicts a threatening outsider who is coordinately prepared to carry out attacks against Western citizens. Moreover, the hegemonic discourse here makes reference to people that have ‘penetrated’ the West for a specific purpose, and by referring to “them” without falling into specific labels, it is identified the generalization of a group of people. This discourse strengthens the “us vs them” narrative, and the argument of having a clash between civilizations: “Islam vs West”. The next identified frame is

exactly the one referring to this dichotomy between cultures; and even though it has been already addressed by academics in this matter, it is an ongoing discourse which is getting stronger due to the recent events.

A continuous clash between civilizations

This frame is relevant because it portraits not only the fact that there is a latent perception about a certain struggle in the relationship between Muslims and the West; but in addition, there are clear representations that were identified in the way journalists lead their narrations on highlighting the presence of cultural differences. Such stories portrayed an outsider who is attempting to vandalize the order and stability of Western lifestyle, hence “they” are constantly threatening “us”, and the order “we” live in. This was clear by identifying the way journalists frame the setting in where the events happening in the West:

“It’s Christmas time, holiday time. Families are in town and want to grab some supplies, stop for lunch, this is a very popular chocolate spot and its Christmas celebrations [...]” (Seven News on The Sydney Siege, 15/12/2014, 12:25).

“And then you think about the target as well, Bastille Day again, French July 4th, heavy crowds, major cities.. also a city where I should mention you have a lot of foreign tourists, and that goes to again, there is no confirmation, but if you look at the precedent such as ISIS like to target places like Istanbul Airport, where you have a number of nationalities which would be affected [...]” (Al Jazeera in English on The Nice Attack 1, 17/7/2016, 01:10)

“You can imagine a city struggling to come to turn with the idea that there are three gunmen on the lose at this stage [...] Public transport has been closed [...] Terrifying times for the people of Munich [...] It is Friday evening, a crowded mall...” (France 24 on The Munich Shooting, 22/7/2016, 04:00)

“This is a very popular area (venues in Paris), a lot of young people[...] lots and lots of people here, this gives you an idea what are we talking about [...]” (CNN on The Paris Attack, 11/13/2015, 20:48)

This can be inferred as how journalists stress out the fact that in these places life goes on in a ‘normal’ and peaceful way, and where Western values such as freedom prevail. Then, suddenly terrorism comes to disrupt them with violence, death and panic. By highlighting how the events attempt to assault modern life, it can be also inferred on how mass media attempts to connect narrations with people’s daily values and codes. Hence the audience would also feel this sense of threat and fear that the actual victims of the attacks are experiencing, leading to a constant sense of panic.

“You could hear this huge explosion as those players are in the football field.” (CNN on The Paris Attack, 11/13/2015, 30:30)

“They go and blow themselves up and kill a bunch of people [...] and they can make your day going from normal to an abnormal day” (FOX News on the Istanbul Airport Attack, 28/6/2016)

In the case of American media specifically, during the events which happened outside of the United States, they seemed to use a peculiar discourse on the way they referred to the venues in which the events took place. They stressed out the fact that such places were potential settings where American citizens/ tourists could be present, such as airports, subways, and touristic spots. This led to an interpretation that even outside home, Americans are constantly threatened by this enemy.

“(Showing two white witnesses being interviewed) We are listening to two Americans there who were at the moment of the attack who are wearing extra clothing, of course it is too cold [...]” (FOX News on The Brussels Attack, 03/22/2016, 25:09)

CNN coverage on the Paris attacks for example, showed an interactive map pointing out where the attacks took place, same in which they also pinned out the usual tourist attractions that any tourist would visit when being in Paris:



By this can be inferred as an attempt to communicate a sense of proximity of Westerner with the threat and with the actual attack. They even pointed out the fact that the attack at the Bataclan theatre, a famous concert hall in Paris which had been one of the targets, was housing an American rock band that night. According to a CNN anchor, this might have raised the interest of the perpetrators on carrying their attack at this venue.

“We are told that an American rock band is performing inside [...] the way these groups operate, they would likely be aware that there was an American band playing there tonight, so you can look at that as a way to attract attention and perhaps it is not just France a target of this attack, but the U.S. as well.” (CNN on The Paris Attack, 11/13/2015, 25:30)

This again, could also makes reference on how media wants to stress out the fact that nowadays terrorism and its threat is everywhere, that and its mission is to target places where Americans or Westerns would be located. In addition, it is clear that they also emphasize the fact that terrorism attempts against Western values, iconic places, celebrations, and that it targets people regardless of their gender, age and even sexual orientation like in the case of the Orlando Shooting for example.

“If you would attack Bangladesh, and get publicity, then this would be the area, since you have diplomats, a lot of expats, restaurants, lots of foreigners, [...] So if you are

going to target Bangladesh, this would be the right area [...] (CNN on The Dhaka Shooting “Not first time ISIS has claimed attacks in Bangladesh”, 2/7/2016).

“There all people gathering young people, families celebrating Bastille Day [...] (Al Jazeera in English on The Nice Attack, 17/7/2016, 15:20)

The ‘Panic’ factor seemed to be also relevant during the media coverages. This is relevant since it tries to connect with peoples’ emotions and sentiments along with their personal values as already addressed; making it clear that such attacks have a relevant negative effect on society. Journalists seemed to have identified how to address fear and panic sentiments when covering news by discussing and asking witnesses or other journalists how does the sense of panic is being perceived in these targeted places, or by asking participants how does it feel to be right in the spot of the event.

“David? Is the area we talking about sense of panic?” (Al Jazeera in English on the Nice Attack, 17/7/2016 18:44)

“I’m an American citizen [...] We have to live with a greater degree of surveillance” (FOX News on The Istanbul Attack, 28/6/2016)

“But always with the added (inaudible) time, of living in a sense under siege at the moment, you never quite know what atrocity you are going to be next [...] the question here is to know whether the men have any motivations linked to Islamist extremist and jihadists [...] (France 24 on the Munich Shooting, 22/7/2016, 05:40)

Media also uses other resources such as participants, apparently to minimize the exposure of their own views and let the others speak in relation to the addressed issues. This seems to softly activate an anti-terror/Muslim agenda by bringing into the discussion opinions and views coming out from guests and experts who do not belong to the channel but in the end express themselves. During this analysis most of these guests tended to talk about terrorism as an Islamic issue. During the San Bernardino coverage for example, Aaron Cohen, Counter-terror expert, was very straight forward to assure that Muslims represent a threat to Western values and

society by saying that they are not compatible with the free society. This led to a discussion and somehow a tense debate between him and the FOX News anchor, who argued that Cohen might have that point of view due to his personal affiliation with the Israeli government. On the other side during the coverage of the Istanbul's airport, it was brought to discussion how different are security issues treated in the West compared to countries located on the Middle East like Turkey. This by assuring that the West has done its part on investing on security in spots like airports, whereas Turkey hasn't done enough. This seemed to represent an atmosphere of insecurity than can be transmitted to the audience in terms on how insecure is even to travel out of the secured West since some international airports are being targets of terrorism.

All the latter arguments strengthen the idea of media naturally activating an ongoing anti-terror agenda which involves Islam or the Muslim community. This was identified to happen regardless of the political affiliation of the media channel or journalists, who seemed to only speculate and actually stress out the fact that they were speculating, but without leaving behind the public agenda. In the end, this hegemonic discourse was represented by having counter-terrorism or radicalization guests participating in active discussions during the events coverage, who directly addressed Islam. On the other hand, media also addressed fear and the negative effect of terror events, reinforcing the creation of a moral panic in society, and the spread of fear of Islamism. All these factors build up a very powerful hegemony since they reach people's emotions, values and hence their points of view.

By boxing these narrations into a "clash of civilizations" frame, where it is evident the presence of a cultural dichotomy between West and East, it was also inferred that geography is relevant. Depending on the place where the events were taking place, a specific way of media to frame them was identified. The fact that the attacks were happening in countries other than Western ones, led to use a specific language and tone which linked the events to Islamism or to Middle Eastern terrorism right away. This was evident with the attacks that took place in Tel Aviv, Istanbul and Dhaka. As soon as the breaking news coverage was unfolding, terms and words such as terrorism, Palestine and ISIS came into scene rather quickly. By focusing on this

argument, the evident separation between East and West is represented, in which events in the East are easily linked with Islamic terrorism due their proximity to regional conflicts, low levels of securization models, a weak political stability, and to the fact that these countries are either Muslim or hold an important Muslim community. This fact strengthens the hegemonic discourse of Middle Eastern culture to be unstable, conflictive and violent. On the other hand, local conflicts also help on shaping and strengthening this discourse in terms of how their stories are fit into explaining the possible causalities of the attacks. In the Tel Aviv shooting, for instance, Palestinian terrorism was rapidly mentioned even though the perpetrators' identity was not fully revealed or confirmed. In this case, journalists aimed to elaborate on the fact that Israel has been highly secured in its borders with the West Bank lately, and formulated questions about how the "Palestinian" attackers were able to trespass such borders and getting weapons to carry out the attack. This when it was not confirmed that the attack had a Palestinian nature, even though according to what people "know" it was "obvious" . This is identified as the natural hegemony in this case for instance; People are so used to Palestinians perpetrated attacks in Israel so for the audience, as for the journalists it seems natural to think that this was it and to start a discussion upon it. In the end, the current local issues helped fitting the attack into the Israel-Palestinian conflict in order to make the story more credible and stronger.



“Then for the past months or so it has been relatively quiet, and still the tensions have been simmering, and then you have an attack like this which raises tensions and of course can create situations of copycat attacks and Palestinians try to revive [...]” (CBSN on the Tel Aviv Shooting, June 8, 2016, 03:30)

As for the Istanbul attacks, the ongoing story in media about the migrant crisis from Syrian refugees going into the country fit as the possible causality of “terrorists” coming from Syria to Turkey and carry out the attacks. This ongoing social issue was in the same way addressed before knowing who were behind the attack and their nationalities. It was later revealed that indeed the attackers were part of an ISIS plot to carry out the attacks; nevertheless they were Russian, Uzbek, and Kyrgyz nationals and not Syrian, leading to also a misconception about the ethnic background on perpetrators just because the attack happened in a Middle Eastern country (<http://edition.cnn.com/2016/07/01/europe/turkey-istanbul-ataturk-airport-attack/> Last retrieved: July 27, 2016)



“You have Turkey being on the line between East and West, between Asia and Europe. I think that has become a subject of entering into the Middle East and have

all these conflicts [...] and they the urgency is to cut this.” (FOX News on The Istanbul Attack, 28/6/2016)

It can be argued then, that the territorialization of the events helps to the fast construction of hegemonic assumptions, especially if they took place in Muslim countries or in the Middle East. Regarding the events happening in the West on the other hand, mass media took time to fully shape a hegemonic discourse towards possible causalities involving Muslims or Islam. Although, this was evident until crucial factors about the perpetrators were revealed; but in fact in some cases, the speculation about the nature of the attacks gave some hints that the events were linked to Islamic Extremism. The latter was clear with the Paris and Brussels attacks for example, since there were some antecedents which led to conclude that the attacks were a reaction to past events. The same happened with the Nice and the Munich attacks, since they were very close one from each other, and it was an ongoing discussed topic since the terrorism agenda was already detonated by then.

“A suspected terror incident is the right language to be mentioned at this stage [...] So people in Germany is starting to feel the same anxiety we felt in France for many months now since what we have been looking for the last year and half in Europe, and in Brussels a few month ago [...] anything could happen anytime, and we are now waiting for the next terror attack to take place [...]” (France 24 on the Munich Shooting, 07/22/2016)

“These explosions were not confirmed as terrorism, but they come after 4 days after the arrest of those suspects (Paris attacks suspects detained in Paris) [...] it just fits in the threat and the highly fears in Brussels at the moment.” (FOX News on the Brussels Attacks, 03/22/2016, 01:00)

However, in the case of the San Bernardino and the Orlando attacks in the United States, a gap between the start of the media coverage and the construction of hegemony or speculation was identified. In the beginning, these attacks pointed out to have the nature of being ‘mass shootings’ which had happened in the past in the U.S., and which most of them have not involved Islamic extremism at all. Most mass

shootings in the United States have been rather carried by ethnically considered white people, and they have been related to gun control issues by the public agenda rather than terrorism. Nevertheless, according to the FBI definition on terrorism and others found in this thesis's theoretical section, these events shall perfectly fit the profile of terrorism due to their surrounding elements: death toll, used weapons, randomly chosen victims and social impact. One of the first heavily mediated and iconic mass shootings in the history of the United States was the Columbine Shooting in 1999 (Kass, 2009) which was carried out by two ethnically white teenagers and resulted into the death of 13 people, mostly teenagers. Weapons which are considered even heavier equipment than the ones used in San Bernardino or Orlando were used in Columbine; however the shooting was never linked or defined as terrorism.

As discussed in this frame, the speculation and hegemonic discourse against Muslims and Islamic extremism started to be evident until the ethnic background or nationality of the perpetrators became public and object of speculation. This is why arguments like these ones strengthen the idea of thinking about terrorism as an ethnic and cultural issue.

A racial matter

Besides the identification of a clear dichotomy between the West and the Muslim world in terms of territory and culture, there are key ethnic and racial elements that have been identified in the construction of hegemonic discourse. This is the fact of media using certain elements in language to that would identify specific features and activities, in this case terrorist ones to be Muslim related. This relates directly to the Iconization process of the linguistic forms of differentiation that was addressed in the theoretical section of this study. It means then that there are features found in media narrations that would identify a specific social group in order to index them in certain activities. During the analysis process, some of these features were pointed and

stressed out by news anchors in order to create an interpretation that the attacks' perpetrators had or could have had a Muslim or Arabic background.

One of these features which was highly emphasized by journalists was the fact that according to witnesses to the events, the attackers were shouting in Arabic. Specifically, it was pointed out that some of the attackers shouted: "Allahu Akbar" (Allah is great). This phrase in specific has been widely used in media when referring to jihadist attacks, and in the war of Islam against the 'infidels' the West (Tristram, 2014). It can be inferred then that by the fact that this quote has been directly identified as a jihadist threat, it then strengthens the idea that there is a threat coming from people who share this same belief and language. Hence, it can be used as justification for the War on Terror.

Another statement related to language specifically was the fact that journalists like the CNN ones were referring to the way social media was reacting after the Paris attacks. In specific, they referred to the way that the attacks were being celebrated online since Twitter was being filled with support messages in Arabic.

"You can see on Twitter already written in Arabic celebrations and support for these attacks" (CNN on The Paris Attack, 11/13/2015, 25:15)

It can be interpreted then that by referring to messages written in a single language, journalists framed the support that was being given to the attacks by the whole community who speaks this language only. Hence the audience most likely will keep the idea that Arabs or Muslims were the only ones who were supporting it, making them object of a stereotype that would link them to have extremist and violent ideologies.

In addition to this element, when the background of the perpetrators was identified or revealed, the tone and content of the discourse shifted considerably by focusing the narrations on Islamic radicalization and terrorism automatically. This also supports the argument of having ethnic features to be iconic enough in order to embed Muslims with terror activity, such as having an Arabic name.

“The Name Farook Syid came out as the suspect [...] there is a lot being done, it is not that uncommon name, there is a lot being done to see if there is a connection between him and where does he go to the Mosque or any other indicators that this was an Islamist jihadist type attack.” (FOX NEWS on The San Bernardino Shooting, 2/12/2015, 6:09:50)

“An Islamic name has been released, as far as one of the attackers [...]” (FOX NEWS, 2/12/2015, 6:10:31)

It is relevant to mention that in this case at San Bernardino, the only fact that one of the perpetrators had an Arabic-root name was sufficient information to start discussing about Islamic radicalization, or terrorism. Hence, it is understood that for journalists it made sense to start speculating about these issues when they knew that an Arab or Muslim was possibly involved.

In the Orlando attack for example, media channels thought it was relevant to reveal that Omar Mateen, despite being born in the United States was born to Afghan parents.



It's a nature of terrorism, and that is the function of it [...] people feel fear, all of them were innocent [...] He is an American citizen, but not his parents. [...] The Nationality

of family members is indicative, so they will do a whole check background of him as well as social media. (NBC News on the Orlando Shooting, 6/12/2016, 03:00)

The latter quote was pulled out from a press conference where a politician was giving his insights about the Orlando attack; and even though it is not a specific linguistic feature coming from any of the journalists, the fact that it is included in the dissemination of messages make the discourse stronger enough to fit an Anti-Muslim agenda since it is an opinion coming from a political point of view. Such discourse strengthen by a public figure reinforces the argument that the message will eventually develop into a moral panic against Muslims. Hence, the purpose is to influence and impact the way American citizens look at the Muslim community, making Islamophobics sentiments stronger, and the urgency to deal with this security and radicalization issue a demanded top priority for the American state.

Summarizing so far, it can be then identified how media builds a hegemonic discourse around terrorism due to elements such as the ethnic background and nationality of the perpetrators, as well as how events were carried out in terms of coordination and operation. The issue, its participants, and the aim to solve the problem are presented, as well as how it impacts society in a negative way. It is clear that media has framed the problem as one which is affecting Western lifestyle and that is increasing in terms of frequency. However, when trying to explain the possible roots or causes of the events, it was identified that no single explanation is interpreted to be strong enough to understand the origin of each events or of the whole issue.

A domino effect? No single causalities

As already addressed, it was found that most of the events that were analyzed tended to blame the fact that Islamic radicalization, and the Islamic State extremist ideology was involved in them. However, up today it hasn't been revealed a full connection of the terrorist group with most of the attacks, or that they were planned in a really coordinated way like terrorist cells usually do. Just few examples such as the Paris, Brussels and Istanbul attacks for instance were openly declared as ISIS

planned due to their coordination and the statements made by the organization claiming responsibility. On the other hand, the rest of the events have been considered until now as 'lonely wolf' attacks which might have been ISIS inspired, but this has not been fully yet confirmed.

During the media coverage, it was identified that anchors and journalists tried to embed previous events or local issues in order to build a connection between them and the attacks. This seems to be interpreted as the media wanting to strengthen the ongoing story and its discourse by bringing these local or regional events into international issues that would lead to a political or social discussion. Most of the events were portrayed to have a possible link, or pattern with Islamic terrorism, or to being a reaction to law enforcement being targeting Islamic radicalization, making the latter explanations as possible causes for the attack. It was clear that journalists then tried to play somehow with speculation when they tried to link similarities between the events, and evaluating the 'patterns' that according to their insights seemed to fit as a possible root causes. For example, the fact that the targets were airports in Brussels and Istanbul, the weapons used in San Bernardino with the ones used in Paris or the fact that the events were a reaction to a previous event that may fit into the cause.

"Back in September during those terrorist raids, the plot that was exposed allegedly detailed a plan to capture a random Australian citizen, and possibly right in the middle of the city [...] that is unfolding upon us now, whether that plot, plan is connected to the events happening right before is unclear. [...]" (Seven News on the Sidney Siege,

"These explosions have not yet been confirmed as terrorism, they do come after 4 days after the arrest of that key suspect [...] in the Paris attack, it just fits on the threat, and highly fear in Brussels at the moment." (FOX News on The Brussels Terror Attack, 03/22/2016, 0:50)

"In my personal opinion is linked to Islamic International terrorism [...] It has the same prints (The San Bernardino attack) to the Bataclan in Paris, where they open fire to a crowd of innocents, all prepared, all equipped, armed with rifles, which are very easy to get [...]" (FOX News, 2/12/2015, 5:37:15)

As shown, journalists elaborated their own arguments based on the patterns that they seem to identify between the events. The attacks in France and Brussels were fully connected to each other, and due to the state of emergency that both nations are currently facing due to the latest attacks, it is interpreted that people would make quick assumptions on the idea that there is a domino effect on the attacks to be increasingly growing during the last months.

However, media's attempt to find a pattern in the attacks' motivations seemed to have faced somehow a difficulty since the motives and sources were not fully connected one with another. It was identified as Peter Hervik and Sophie Boise (2013) has concluded in previous related studies, that terrorist attacks can be seen as an effect without causes due to the unclearness of their nature. Orlando and San Bernardino attacks for instance, were linked to homegrown radicalization due to the ethnic background of the perpetrators; however motives for the attacks remain uncertain and they were rather discussed to be as part of a lonely wolf action.

During the coverage of NBC News on the Orlando attacks, an expert on radicalization exposed his ideas on the existence of different types of radicalization, even the ones coming from the right wing (It is important to point out that out of all the counter-terrorism experts that took part of the analyzed coverages, only this one addressed another types of radicalized ideologies besides Islamic ones). He suggested that the attack shouldn't being linked to Islamic radicalization right away since the facts or motives were not clear yet.



When law enforcement gave a press conference during the first hours after the attack, a member of the Islamic community gave a speech asking the audience not to sensationalize the story. Hence, it was demanded not to blame the Muslim community for this attack. Yet the motives were unclear and the story was also relying into the possibility that this was actually a hate crime towards the LGBT community and not an Islamic related attack. Nevertheless, as addressed already the media tended to frame the suspect due to his name and ethnic background, which inferred that Islamist radicalization, was a possible cause.



In the same way, San Bernardino attack started to be shaped as a gun control issue until the identity of the suspects was revealed, leading to a shift in the issue that then focused on the perpetrators' radicalized ideologies and their possible connection to ISIS.

The appearance of several sources of causalities for terrorism can be interpreted as an effect without causes that media clearly frames during breaking news coverage when trying to explain the events. It is important to emphasize though, that when a story is unfolding it is difficult to come up with real conclusions; however through the analysis it was interpreted that media started shaping their narratives and the language they used to frame events right away. This in addition to the fact that journalists seemed to naturally identify and link patterns that would fit in an ongoing global discussion about terrorism. Despite the load of information that is been

generated at the moment events unfold, it seems that media automatically tries to shape their narrations depending on the direction that new information is taking. In this case it is identified that if a new story fits or makes the sense to the hegemonic discourse, then it is more likely to be used as a resource to lead the discussion towards that direction. Therefore, similarities with past events on the modus operandi of the attacks may have perfectly fit to the narrations on this terrorist events, making their discourse stronger and one with more impact. This suggests then that journalists handle the attacks placed in a timeline as a domino effect.

The argument that there is not a concrete pattern to explain all of the events' causalities infers and confirms that terrorism is a complex social phenomenon. During the final stage of the analysis, new elements on sustaining the hegemonic discourse surrounding terrorism especially the ones related to root causes were identified in events that occurred during this final stage, The Nice and the Munich attacks. These events were found extremely relevant to discuss since they sustained most of the addressed frames in this analysis, making this discussion's arguments stronger.

The Nice & the Munich attacks

During the last stage of this research, two relevant attacks were brought to the attention of this study : The Nice and the Munich attacks, which took place on July 14th 2016 in Nice, France and July 22nd 2016 in Munich, Germany respectively.

The Nice attack happened during the celebrations of the Bastille Day where hundreds of people gathered at the Promenade d'Anglais in Nice to watch the fireworks' show. Suddenly a truck appeared out of nowhere rushing into the crowd and running over them. The attack resulted into 84 casualties and hundreds of injured people. As the story unfolded in the breaking news of several media channels, the rumor that this was the result of a terror plot became stronger in the media's discourse. However, compared to other attacks, the fact that mass media started speculating about terrorism in a quicker way than before, can be interpreted that the fear of terror and the active state of emergency especially in France are 'hot' in the public agenda.

A relevant argument to elaborate on is the fact that in previous attacks, journalists speculated and labeled them as terror attacks due to the weapons that were used to carry them on. In this case, the attacker did not use a single weapon to kill people, but a vehicle instead. Al Jazeera in English broadcasted a guest's intervention, who argued that vehicles in addition to guns can be used as weapons by terrorists, and therefore this way the attack was directly linked to Islamic extremism. He even sustained this argument by saying that the Islamic State called out for fighters to use any kind of vehicle or weapon against Western citizens; but in fact this is the first highly mediated attack which uses vehicles to aim its goals. The argument here is that vehicles used in terrorism are a rather new pattern to follow, and it can be considered as a single event so far. However, since the terror agenda is in high alert in France, the attack despite the way it was operated seemed to fit into it. This happened before knowing the perpetrators' identity. Therefore, having an ongoing public agenda on terrorism has a very strong impact on public opinion, and it was inferred that its discourse came in a natural way when covering terror events due to the high alert that the nation is going through.

The Public agenda about Islamic terrorism happens to be stronger nowadays especially in Europe, where Islamophobia, and the belief that potential terrorists are coming along with the Syrian refugees when crossing the EU border are hot issues that object of public discussion. When the identity of the suspect revealed that he was a Tunisian citizen, the hegemonic discourse towards the Islamic threat became even stronger. The arguments surrounding this event seemed to fit and to be strengthening a powerful hegemonic discourse that serves the anti-Muslim agenda, which uses all these elements to support the story and to empower its "us vs them" discourse.



As for the Munich Attack, this happened to be a shooting carried out by a German citizen (who later was also pointed out to have an Iranian descendant), who opened fire in a mall in Munich, killing 9 people, mostly teenagers. During the first hours of the events' coverage, the label of 'Islamic terrorism' was all over the discourse in news, just as it happened with the Nice attack, when no information about the perpetrator was yet revealed. The fact that these two events happened within a gap of few days made the initial coverage on this shooting in Germany to take a natural produced discourse which would do comparisons with the Nice attack. The fact that the German police would have labelled the event as a terrorist attack gave path for the journalists to speculate about this to be a chain of events that kept happening.

In addition, an event that took place few days before this shooting in Bavaria where an Afghan teenager attacked people with an axe on a passenger train gave journalists the opportunity to elaborate on a hegemonic discourse in which automatically they linked this isolated event carried out by an Arab with the Munich attack, trying to find a pattern. As it happened before, the fact that media presented the attacker by referring to him by his Afghan nationality also gives away the interpretation for people to think that 'all Afghans' have a natural behavior of conducting themselves with violence. During the analysis of the breaking news, since this was been performed as it was happening, no perpetrator's nationality or ethnicity was revealed until later, but the way media connected this event to the isolated one in Bavaria and the Nice attack gave the natural ongoing discourse of all these being embedded within a terrorism frame.

On the next day, it was revealed that the perpetrator indeed had a Middle Eastern background, but German police suggested that he had no links to radicalization, and that his motives were mostly linked with school bullying in earlier years.

The Nice and the Munich attacks had the particularity of having a big hegemonic discourse linked to the wave of Islamophobia and the active anti-Muslim agenda that has been on the spot during the last months due to an increase on attacks, especially in the West. However, none of them have been fully determined to be linked to Islamic Extremism or Radicalization, as well as to be ISIS inspired. The fact that an

Anti-Muslim and Terror agenda is in the spotlight of mass media at the moment, made journalists to enhance the idea that these events were related and that there was the possibility of connections with Islamic terrorism. Hence, it was evident that people expressed what they thought it was obvious to discuss about the events, and they ignored at first glance other possibilities, leading to automatically support the current public discourse about this issue. This totally suggests that there is a natural hegemonic construction that not necessarily depicts Muslims right away, but instead it strengthens the anti-Muslim agenda in mass media which can later be developed on Islamophobia, making this hegemony a process.



CONCLUSION

After doing an in depth analysis of media's breaking news covering terror events it can be said as a first conclusion that there is an active ongoing discussion about different issues that link Islam and the Muslim community with terrorism, leading to the reproduction of hegemonic understandings towards this group. First of all, the fact that there is an ongoing War on Terror and on ISIS, makes the discussion about terrorism itself to be fully linked to an Islamic issue since both wars address Islamic extremist ideology. The latter seems to be usually framed as a single Islamic ideology which depicts all Muslims as people who will easily fall in radicalized ideas due to the

faith they believe in. It can be also inferred through the findings in this research that mass media also falls into this generalization by the way they frame terror related events into issues such as Islamic radicalization, ISIS inspired, or simply yet other events that happen in places where there is an ongoing 'orientalist' conflict.

It is also clear that terrorism falls into a racial issue as well, due to the fact that media seems to inquire on the nature of the attacks by looking at their perpetrators. The findings suggest that by addressing the attackers' cultural features such as names, race, nationality and even language, they lead the stories into a specific racial frame which support the idea that Islam, Arabs or Muslims are culturally violent and hostile in comparison to Western people. However, as addressed in the findings, it seems that every attack has different nature and motivations, and therefore it is difficult to rely in a pattern that would explain a general cause. It is inferred though that media tries to automatically blame responsibility on ISIS and Islamic radicalization for all the terrorism issues that are happening at the moment in the West. Therefore, it can be concluded that indeed there is an active hegemony in media that is naturally produced within minutes after the attacks started to be broadcasted.

The fact that in recent months, there have been attacks with such a short gap of time between them, make the hegemonic discourses even stronger. This could be seen especially in the last two events at Nice and Munich, where the terrorism public agenda was in high alert and ready to be detonated. Therefore it was identified that journalists and mass media producers naturally bring the agenda into the public discourse, even though they do not express their personal or corporate affiliations when covering news like these. This can be interpreted as a way for them to be part of the global discussion, and generate buzz towards what interests and concerns to people at the moment. By doing this, media then leaves behind other facts that may be relevant when covering these news, especially the ones regarding the possible causalities of the attacks, and the real motives behind their perpetrators. In other words, they leave out the idea of another possibility rather than Islamic inspiration. In the end, the single fact that all these acts came from ethnically Muslim people, is apparently sufficient reason to believe that there is an issue to be addressed against

them. Therefore it can be said that terrorism is indeed an evolving phenomena that brings several implications embedded such as race, ethnic and power relations.

It is important to emphasize as well that all this public discourse which is now in the spotlight definitely boost the so desired moral panics, spread of fear and Islamophobic sentiments. The question here is who is really benefited by the spread of these hegemonic understandings. Is it really media who is interested in the dissemination of these anti-Muslim discourses? Or is it the government, right wing groups or people who believe that an ongoing war against Muslims will bring somehow economic or social benefits to the West? These questions are most likely to be taken into consideration by bringing this thesis further in research and encountering with the real people behind the construction of hegemonic discourses against Muslims.

It is also important to mention that actual terrorist groups, especially ISIS, use this hegemony as part of their strategy, since it generates more hatred and fear towards them. This aims to feed their desire to grow and expand their reign of fear; therefore it could be interesting to discover if terrorism itself is indeed behind the hegemony, and if there is a shared benefit between the two sides in war: Terrorism (them) versus the West (us).

Finally, this thesis presents findings that can be brought into further research since most of the events that were analyzed are recent and their narratives and implications are still being unfolding. It would be worth analyzing how these recent events will develop within time and along with ongoing events and discourses like the Syrian refugee crisis, the increase of Islamophobia or even the fact that one of the candidates to the United States' presidency, Donald Trump is claiming for a Muslim ban into the country.

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BBC- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KJi9X6phiwk>

The Brussels Attack

FOX NEWS- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u8z3ynMSWjo>

The Sidney Siege

Seven News 1 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m50sNE7JVRy>

Seven News 2. - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7wn1zJR2270>

Seven News 3 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zf92SjQnntE>

Seven News 4 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l-o-xxGyXoE>

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CBSN - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d7Kb9iR81Kw>

The Orlando Shooting

ABC - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GzkBhGOM6eM>

RT - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2cThjEEFT0w>

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