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Article:	Construction of Islamophobia in the USA: Evidence from the US Press
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ABSTRACT

The term "Islamophobia" refers to two distinct emotions: anti-Muslim prejudice and anti-Islam sentiments. As relevant literature suggests, these negative feelings are the product of a discourse that portrays Islam and Muslims as a source of fear and insecurity. This study investigated the discursive manifestations of Islamophobia within the theoretical framework of securitization. To investigate these manifestations in the US media discourses, the discourse analysis method was adapted from the DHA. The researcher analyzed a total of 3153 news and opinion articles from US newspapers and wire services between November 2016 and January 2017. This analysis found that both types of negative posturing are present in the US press discourse, which presents the picture of an Islamophobia society. The study concluded that Islamophobia in the US context is primarily a political construct, used to mobilize societal hatred against Islam and Muslims, with hate crimes against Muslims being the most apparent manifestation. The researcher recommends similar inquiry into other contexts as well.

Keywords: Islamophobia, Securitization, Anti-Islam Sentiments, Anti-Muslim Prejudice

1. Introduction

The Western media is rife with anti-Islam sentiments, with a slew of negative expressions like: Islam is a violent religion (A. H. Ali, 2015); it is incompatible with democracy and inimical to US fundamental values and principles; and it is a threat to the Western way of life (Hill, 2019; Perraudin, 2019). When dealing with the Muslim world, such expressions as ‘a type of media(ted) crusade’ serve to defend Western powers and prove their cultural superiority. These erroneous threats and misconceptions stem from the growing phenomenon of Islamophobia, which has been spreading since the 9/11 attacks. These attacks brought a surge in incidents of people being targeted in the US due to their race, ethnicity, and religious identities. Muslims have been victimized by thousands of hate crimes, verbal abuses, and violent attacks on individuals and religious institutions.¹ Many years have passed, yet Muslim women in hijab (nikab) are facing discrimination. Protests erupt when Muslims attempt to build places of worship, and a few politicians have been reported to call for a ban on Muslim migrants as well (Beydoun, 2018). The rise of anti-Muslim feelings in the West and the growing concerns about Islamic ideology and the activities of Islamists constitute important inquiries about the current state of fear of Islam in the US. A number of scholars, like Beydoun (2018); Duderija and Rane (2018); Green (2015); Ogan, Willnat, Pennington, and Bashir (2014), relate this climate of fear of and hatred towards Islam and Muslims in the West to the phenomenon of “Islamophobia.”

Since 9/11, many polls suggest that the wider population in the US has become hostile towards Muslims. Parallel developments can also be seen in the polemical discourse being engineered in political and media circles (Considine, 2017). They perceive Islam as incompatible with Western values, democracy, and Muslims as threatening “Other,” violent extremists, and even anti-Western. These negative perceptions are generally identified in the context of “Islamophobia” and are predominantly shaped by the media (Rane, Ewart, & Martinkus, 2014). The work of scholars, like Cherkaoui (2016a, 2016b) and Iqbal (2010), explains contemporary Islamophobia as a mediated construct. This study is designed to examine the manifestations of this phenomenon in the US media.

The extant literature suggests that contemporary Islamophobia is the product of a mediated discourse that represents Muslims and/or Islam in order to produce specific kinds of perceptions of them on the basis of various parameters of theoretical nature. As suggested by Poole (2002), the media are increasingly engaged in producing and re-producing the dominant ideologies of Western society, in contrast to the ideology of Islam and Muslims. One such ideology is “Islamophobia,” which according to Allen (2010) represents multiple threat perceptions related to Muslims and/or Islam, as Iqbal (2010) also endorsed this viewpoint. It also refers to the modes of operation by which distinct identities of Muslims or Islam are sustained and perpetuated with ideological significance, as per the viewpoint of Considine (2017). Poole (2002) observed that media representation of Islam is not a transparent process because there are always mediating effects in which news about Muslims is filtered through an interpretive framework such as the “clash of civilizations” (1993) or what Amin-Khan (2012)

¹ FBI had recorded 1,600% increase hate-crimes against Muslims from 2000 to 2001 (Oswald, 2005, p. 1776).

refers to as "new Orientalism," which has dominated media discourse since the 1979 Iranian Revolution (Ogan et al., 2014).

There has been a strong tendency for the Western media since 9/11 to present the image of Islam as a threatening "Other" as a part of the Western outlook, which Said (1981) described as "Orientalism." Whether yesterday's Orientalism is judged or today's Islamophobia is looked into, both are discursive formations and thus serve the political agenda, but differ in terms of the nature of the targeted Muslim "Other". Yesterday's Orientalism was used to dominate and manage the external "Other" (geographical regions), while new Orientalism, or what Fekete (2009) calls "European Orientalism," is designed to target the internal "Other"—the growing Muslim population in the US and Europe. In an effort to transform into a virulent Islamophobia, according to Said (1997), the new Orientalism is sustained and rather perpetuated by the media, politicians, and academic experts on Islam. Islamophobia, therefore, tends to demonize Islam in order to ensure the supremacy of the dominant group within the US and European societies, like Ramadan and Shantz (2016) view, thereby justifying reprehensible and contaminating actions or extraordinary measures taken towards the Muslim "Other."

The above facts reveal two dimensions of Islamophobia: 1) a discourse and 2) a practice, with the first providing justification for the second (Cesari, 2006). In this regard, Islamophobia appears to be a form of Islam's securitization, which refers to a discourse aimed at persuading specific audiences to embrace Islam as an ideological threat, portraying Muslims as a sort of existential threat to a society's political or cultural continuity (Iqbal, 2020). Of course, the media are important actors in this process of securitization because they give wider publicity to dominant voices. They frame those voices in such a way that viewers' interpretations of the information they receive from the media are influenced (Goffman, 1974). Thus, the securitization theory determines the theoretical framework of this study.

2. Theoretical Framework

Based on the axiom that "Islamophobia," along with its attributes, has been assembled into the merely blended term called "securitization." When viewed through a theoretical lens, the term "securitization" refers to the process by which state agents transform subjects (Muslims) into matters of security (Messina, 2016). This points to a discursive politics of security that Balzacq (2011) understands to be aimed at raising something to the level of extreme politicisation that makes possible the implementation of extraordinary measures and procedures in the name of security. Islamophobia may also be studied as security politics in that the exclusionary practices identified in the Runnymede Report (1997) represent the process of securitization, which involves those actors who project Islam as an existential threat to secular and political norms, thereby justifying exceptional means to control it. Consequently, extraordinary measures and policies are formulated, leading to the exclusion of Muslims from Western society (Cesari, 2012). In this case, the securitization of Islam, in effect, is the securitization of Muslims, which are both manifestations of Islamophobia (Hansen, 2016; Iqbal, 2020).

Proposed in the 1990s by the security theorists Buzan, De Wilde, and Wæver (1998), securitization theory, redefined the conceptual framework of the classical security studies that had dealt with state and military studies. Instead of pointing out the objective threats, Balzacq (2010) argued that this theory offers a constructionist perspective on how "security problems emerge, evolve, and dissolve." Rychnovská (2014) added that "security threats" are socially constructed in a process known as "securitization." The theorists regard security as a "speech act" and that "language is not only concerned with what is "out there"... but is also constitutive of that very social reality" (Balzacq, 2010, p. 56). There are two theoretical dimensions to securitization. First, the process of securitization, as what criteria have to be met before someone can securitize a subject, and secondly, the successful securitization of a subject, from a non-politicized to a politicized one, and finally as a securitized subject (Buzan et al., 1998). The speaker projects a subject as an existential threat to a designated audience (a referent object); the said process is called a securitizing move. Successful securitization, however, can occur only when the securitizing move is recognized by the audience and the securitized subject is regarded as a threat. More precisely, the securitizing actor makes a securitizing move; next, the subject is framed as a threat; and finally, the referent object (audience) must accept that constructed threat to complete the process of securitization (Balzacq, Léonard, & Ruzicka, 2016; Buzan et al., 1998).

Securitizing actors are generally state agents, but the theory asserts that "functional actors" can also influence decisions in the field of security. These actors include politicians, think tanks, intellectuals, NGOs, corporations, and the mass media. However, the subject of this study, is the media, where security problems are publicized, politicized, and securitized. The media are important actors because they contribute significantly to defining a situation by telling the news in terms of historically inherited "us" and "them" categories. According to theorists, when religious and racial/ethnic categories (e.g., Muslims or Arabs) are defined as the framework for understanding a situation, the media frequently play a role (Buzan et al., 1998). Furthermore, the theory is applicable to five security sectors, namely environmental, economic, military, political, and societal. The characteristics of existential threats vary among these sectors. The subject of this study is a societal sector in which collective identities are made up of potential referent objects, for example, national identities (e.g., Americans, Europeans) and religious identities (e.g., Muslims, Christians, and others). Hansen (2016) argued that identities are always changing, and therefore threats in this sector are hardest to define. Since the securitizing move is defined by the linguistic components and the characteristics of those are set by the speaker, the speaker can deem any presentation of a threat towards identity as existential if the defined criteria for the speech act are fulfilled (Hansen, 2016).

Contemporarily, Islamophobia has come to occur in response to the "problematization of Muslim identity" in terms of the ensuing challenges to the West (Sayyid, 2014, p. 14). Following the 9/11, Islam has acquired a level of salience in political and media discourses in the West. In these discourses, Islam is associated with extremism, terrorism, and migration, which is also framed as a security threat (Bonansinga, 2018). The connection between terrorism and immigration has been reinforced through discursive strategies, and

immigration has become prominent in the counter-terrorism agenda of the West. Political debates, for example, were dominated by discourses on the urgent implementation of counter-terrorism laws through immigration laws (Spencer, 2008). The work of Humphrey (2009) demonstrated that perceptions about Muslims as socially and culturally incompatible in a multicultural society also existed even before the 9/11, but the incident amply securitized Muslims as a social problem for the world. Hence, Muslim immigrants and refugees became the objects of securitization through measures and policies directed at their policing and border controls. According to the reviewed literature, the media played a significant role in materializing these sentiments through the securitization of Islam and Muslims, which is a significant outcome of Islamophobia (Cesari, 2012; Iqbal, 2020). The question thus arises: how do the Western media represent and construct Islam and Muslims, either more precisely, or put another way, what sentiments about Islam and Muslims are manifested in the media, which are constructs of Islamophobia viz-a-vis the securitization of Islam and Muslims. This study tries to answer this question by examining manifestations of Islamophobia in the US mainstream press, which is the most obvious source for studying dominant discourses, in this case, of Islamophobic narratives (Mautner, 2008, p. 32).

3. Methodology

Negativity and hostility in academic and media discourses, as well as political rhetoric, are primary manifestations of Islamophobia, according to Petley and Richardson (2013). The subject of this study is the negativity in the media where it manifests itself in the discursive representation² (i.e., representations expressed in discourse or text) of Islam and Muslims. There are a host of approaches to studying media discourses, but the most commonly used methodologies include content and discourse analysis. The first one involves quantitative and qualitative assessment of media content, e.g., studying words and images (Poole, 2002, 2006), while the second one provides a method to study the construction of these images (Richardson, 2004). This study adopted the critical discourse analytical method, as it studies the linguistic features and representational (discursive) strategies involved in the negative construction of Muslims and Islam—the so-called Islamophobia.

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) aims to show how “linguistic-discursive practices” are linked with “socio-political structures of power and domination” and what role discourse plays in the production and re-production and challenge of power and dominance (Kress (1990) and van Dijk (1993) as cited in Youssef, 2014, p. 8). CDA helps uncover the process through which “social power abuse, dominance, and inequality are enacted, reproduced, and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context” (van Dijk, 2001, p. 352). Media are one of the avenues through which language manifests its power (Youssef, 2014). Within CDA, the Discourse-Historical-Approach (DHA) is applied in this study because it offers a general framework for problem-oriented research and mainly focuses on the inquiry of changes in

²Matus (2018) defines discursive representation as “the material or textual expression of the references or meanings elaborated by the speaker’s consciousness about himself, about reality and his world of sense”. The discursive representation re-presents the utterance, as it is a structure that gives material form to what is said (p. 13).

discourse practice over a long period of time and across different genres (Mansouri, Biria, Mohammadi Najafabadi, & Sattar Boroujeni, 2017; Wodak & Krzyzanowski, 2008). According to Tenorio (2011) (as cited in Shafiq, 2020, p. 16), DHA is considered “a series of analytical and descriptive tools which are an important part of history, politics, and sociology, especially in relation to methodology.” It provides methods to study media discourses to analyze;

“... the implicit meaning in news discourse, making the implicit explicit by consideration of the relevant historical and socio-political environment in which the news story dialog takes place. Such considerations guide and illuminate further analytic processing, whether linguistics-based as in the analysis of semantic macrostructures or ideological-based as in the Ideological Square methodology” (G. A. Ali, 2011, p. 307).

4. Data Retrieval and Analysis

The starting point of a DHA study is the systematic selection of relevant data. The data for this study was searched through the "LexisNexis" database by using the terms "Islam" and "Muslim," which yielded a total of 3153 news and opinion articles published in US newspapers and wire services during the period from November 2016 to January 2017. The period selected for this analysis corresponds with Donald Trump's pronouncements on halting Muslim migration to guard against Islamist terrorism. In news coverage, such periods are regarded as critical discourse moments because they can challenge the "established" discursive positions" (Carvalho, 2008, p. 166). The work of Beydoun (2018) points out a rising trend in far-right anti-Islamic narratives and sentiments in media debates surrounding Muslims.

These news and opinion articles (i.e., 3153) were analyzed using DHA's methodology, which operates at two levels of qualitative analysis: the entry-level analysis, which serves as a technique of downsizing data and mainly focuses on content and related "surface" aspects; and the in-depth analysis, which focuses on patterns of discursive representations (KhosraviNik, Krzyzanowski, & Wodak, 2012, p. 286). Within the entry-level analysis, the main category is that of discourse topics—or simply topics or themes—which are defined in DHA as units summarising the meaning of entire texts or their selected passages (KhosraviNik et al., 2012, p. 286). This analysis, in this case, involved several open-ended readings of each article, with a focus on headlines and lead paragraphs, in order to establish the article's relevance to the study first and then choose the discourse topic, or dominant theme, of an article (Carvalho, 2008). On the other hand, the in-depth analysis is guided by the study of discursive strategies³ of positive "self" and negative "other" presentation. This analysis is based on DHA's basic strategies for constructing prejudice as a collective attitude, which are referential strategies and predicational strategies. The former refers to strategies that involve the use of membership categorization devices, such as biological, naturalizing, and depersonalizing metaphors,

³ A "strategy" refers to "a more or less accurate and more or less intentional plan of practices adopted to achieve a particular social, political, psychological, or linguistic aim," and a "discursive strategy" refers to the "systematic way of using language" (Wodak & Reisigl, 2001, p. 44).

metonymies, and synecdoches, to represent social actors or objects, particularly in-groups and out-groups. The latter involves the attribution of positive or negative attributes or stereotypical characteristics to social actors or objects (Wodak & Boukala, 2015, pp. 93-94).

5. Findings

The researcher started this analysis with an initial examination of the news and opinion articles for two major reasons: first, to establish their relevance to the study; and second, to determine the discourse's topic or theme of an article. During this examination, each article was given several critical readings. Bazian (2018) explained that Islamophobia was constituted by a negative portrayal of Islam and/or Muslims. Therefore, the researchers first excluded any articles that simply mentioned the words "Islam" or "Muslim," before selecting those in which Islam or Muslims were represented negatively. As a result, a total of 187 articles were identified as having Islamophobic sentiments. These articles were then studied for the dominant themes. The table below shows the list of themes identified in the analyzed articles, along with the number of articles and the absolute percentage of those categorized under each theme.

Table-1: Dominant themes found in the analyzed articles:
number of stories and percentage

Themes	No. of Stories	Percentage
Hate Crimes	86	45.99
Muslim migration	62	33.16
Hate Groups	02	01.07
Mosques and Religious Noise	08	04.28
Islamic extremism and terrorism	21	11.22
Veil/Burqa/Hijab Ban	06	03.21
Muslims in Burma	02	01.07
Total	187	100

Table 1 shows that the theme of "hate crimes" accounts for the largest percentage (i.e., 46%) of articles examined in this study, followed by the "Muslim migration" theme (i.e., 33%). These hate crimes ranged from sending hate mail to mosques and Islamic centers to spray painting slurs on mosques and vandalism; from verbal abuse to physical attacks on Muslim students, headscarves, and hijab-wearing women and girls in schools and public places, to harassing or even beating on the street. According to the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), a "hate crime" is a "criminal offense against a person or a property motivated in whole or in part by an offender's bias against a race, religion, disability, sexual orientation, ethnicity, gender, or gender identity" (Parker, 2016). Given the widely held notion that the media reflects reality, it is reasonable to deduce that the highest percentage of anti-Muslim hate crimes reported in the US mainstream newspapers, points to the rising Islamophobic tendencies in US society. For in-depth analysis, the researcher chose only those news stories and articles that fall under the theme of "hate crimes" because space constraints do not allow for selecting others.

In-depth analysis of news and opinion articles classified under the theme of "hate crimes" indicates that the central target of hostility in these crimes was Islam, regardless of whether the crime was directed against Muslim people, religious objects, or places. Consider the copies of a handwritten, anonymous, hate-filled letter "threatening genocide against Muslims" that were sent to a number of mosques and Islamic centers shortly after Trump's election (Castillo & Bee, 2016). The letter named Muslims as "the children of Satan" and described them as "vile", "evil" and "filthy people" and said they "worship the devil." It warned Muslims that their "day of reckoning has arrived" and threatened that President-elect Donald Trump is "going to cleanse America and make it shine again" and will "do to you Muslims what Hitler did to the Jews" (Abram, 2016; Castillo & Bee, 2016; Ravani, 2016). The letter also mentioned that "You Muslims would be wise to pack your bags and get out of Dodge" (Staggs & Edwards, 2016). Similarly, an "open letter to Muslims in America," as reported by "Springfield News-Leader," reads:

"Do you not realize, or is it impossible for you to accept, that people claiming affiliation with your faith are killing innocent people all over the world and boast about doing it at the behest and approval of your god (Allah), your prophet (Muhammad) and many of your religious leaders (imams and Islamic clerics)? [...] 'Until you can teach us how to unmistakably distinguish a 'good Muslim' from a 'bad Muslim,' you are subject to our suspicion, as well as our right and our duty, to openly question your loyalty and dedication to the safety and well-being of our people and our country" (Pokin, 2017).

So far, reported facts point to the escalated fear and suspicion of Muslims in US society. Further investigation suggests that this anti-Muslim hatred is the result of anti-Islamic sentiments expressed by US political leaders, which were frequently re-presented in the US mainstream press. Consider Trump's anti-Muslim rhetoric during the presidential campaign, which included proposals "banning Muslims from entering the country and heightened surveillance of mosques across the nation" (Zoll & Hajela, 2016). In an interview with CNN, he expressed that "I think Islam hates us," claiming that "it's difficult to separate "radical" Islam from Islam itself" (Castillo & Bee, 2016). In another interview, he said, "call it whatever you want, change territories, but there are territories and terror states and terror nations that we're not gonna allow the people to come into our country. And we're gonna have a thing called 'extreme vetting'" (Staggs & Edwards, 2016). The director of Abubakar Assidiq Islamic Center in an article said that this "rhetoric comes at a time where Islamophobia is already at a peak" (Pyle, 2016). In another article, the executive director of the Islamic Cultural Center of Fresno expressed the views that "Donald Trump didn't create hatred" and argued that "Hatred is something that is there, that people have felt. Trump just made it OK to do it loudly" (Ravani, 2016). It is evidenced from the analyzed data that Trump's racially divisive and disparaging language has released "a flood of anti-Muslim sentiment in communities throughout the United States" (Lin, 2016). "When that kind of rhetoric is allowed to take place on a national level, it creates an atmosphere of hostility, and a fear of Muslims in our country, and our community has felt that," the Executive Director, CAIR-OK, said in an article quoted in Dulaney (2016).

If the president of a state himself is an archetype and orchestrator of Islamophobia, then scapegoating Islam and vilifying Muslims in political speeches and media reports is inevitable (Beydoun, 2018). The Islamophobic expressions by President Trump in the mainstream press not only facilitated his administration's decision to impose a travel ban on people from seven Muslim-majority countries entering the United States, which is a symptom of the securitization of Islam and Muslims, but also gave rise to Islamophobic thoughts and actions in US society as a whole. The analyzed data provides evidence that "Trump's win legitimized and normalized Islamophobic tendencies in many communities, heightening it to new levels and empowering some to commit hate crimes towards Muslims" (Muslimin, 2016). Take, for example, a businessman who "attacked a Muslim employee [...], kicking her, shouting obscenities at her and saying that [...] Trump "will get rid of all of you" (Reports, 2017). In another incident, a person yelled at a Muslim standing outside a mosque that "Trump will kill you all!" (Ravani, 2016). While some academics believe that "Trump's victory is inspiring individuals to openly launch threats against their perceived enemies, or exposing long-standing racism and bigotry in American culture," as the head of Oklahoma State University's political science department considers, "it's both" (Dulaney, 2016). This newly emerged state of affairs with regard to Muslims in US society points to a culture rife with Islamophobic thoughts and actions, which was created by Donald Trump, whom Beydoun (2016) called the first Islamophobic president of the United States. The next section discusses these findings in the light of relevant literature and follows with a conclusion for this study.

6. Discussion

The analysis of the texts from US mainstream newspapers and wires provided in the preceding section detected two types of Islamophobic feelings: anti-Muslim prejudice and anti-Islamic sentiments. These are the feelings that Uenal (2016) views as two separate dimensions of Islamophobia, which are the product of a discourse that presents Islam and Muslims as a threat. This suggests that fear of Islam is the main ingredient of Islamophobia. This fear, more than any other factor, generates feelings of hatred (prejudice) toward Muslims. In this case, fear of Islam is as old as the religion of Islam itself. A recent study by Iqbal (2020) demonstrated, how the fear of Islam, or what today is called Islamophobia, had taken birth with the re-birth of Islam in the seventh century. At that point in history, the early medieval political and spiritual leaders perceived rising Islam as an existential threat to Christianity and the Christian world (Iqbal, 2020). John of Damascus was the earliest priest and monk who declared that a problem had taken birth in the Christian world in the shape of Islam (Meyendorff, 1964). To quote Iqbal (2020, p. 88), John declared Islam "a punishment to the unscrupulous sins of other religions and their followers."

The early fear of rising Islam gave way to anti-Muslim prejudices in medieval Europe. For example, Muslims were considered barbaric people and enemies of Christians, proponents of a form of religion devised to supplant and destroy Christianity (Lewis, 1994; Vitkus, 1999). It was the enemy image that facilitated legal steps to cut Christians off from Muslims in territory under Christian control (Allen, 2010; Daniel, 1989). This points out the emergence of systemic discrimination against Muslims in Europe, which is now recognized as

"securitization," with the Vienne Council's (1311 and 1312) decisions to regulate Muslim calls to prayer on Christian lands being among the earliest manifestations (Constable, 2010). This was a part of the developing *modus operandi* for dealing with the emerging challenges of Islam to the existence of the Christian world on the map of the globe. It might be noted that the decisions of the Vienne Council were not purely made on religious grounds because the extant literature indicates that the Council was subject to enormous political pressure from many European states, such as Philip IV of France, which greatly influenced the whole state of ecclesiastical affairs at his will (Constable, 2010). The Council's decisions included establishing chairs in Oriental languages in various universities in Europe as a political strategy to deal with Muslim enemies. Said (1978) regards this as the formal start of Orientalism—a discourse.

Orientalism began as a political strategy to deal with the Ottoman threat, portraying them as enemies of Europe, and later to dominate Muslims outside Europe, referring to them as the Orient, before morphing into Islamophobia to dominate Muslims inside Europe, or the West (Said, 1978, 1981). The findings from the preceding section also point to what Tyrer (2013) calls the politics of Islamophobia, which began with the re-emergence of Islam in the late twentieth century. Said (1981) described the revolution in Iran as the initial signifier of the revival of Islam, posing threats to the political, cultural, and social domains of the Western world, as Zarnett (2007) also confirmed this viewpoint. In his analysis of coverage of Muslims during and after the Iranian hostage crisis (1979–1981), Said (1981) reported that the US media had been found to be increasingly representing Islam as a threatening "Other" and as a part of the Western outlook, which he termed "Orientalism," now considered Islamophobia (Bleich, 2011, p. 1582). Since the 9/11 attacks and the subsequent so-called war on terror, many analyses of media discourses have pointed out that Western politicians have been increasingly framing Islam and/or Muslims as "others," a gross threat to the cultural and demographic continuity of Western societies (Kumar, 2010; Morey & Yaqin, 2011; Powell, 2011). This study revealed that the same discourses have been continuing in the US media even today as a part of a political campaign to designate Islam and Muslims as nothing but a source of terror and insecurity, thus creating widespread fear of and hatred for Muslims living in US society. These findings suggest the following conclusion for this study.

7. Conclusion

The findings and reviewed literature imply that contemporary Islamophobia is being used as a political tool by people who fear and detest Islam and Muslims. Although fear or hatred is not new in US society, when they are voiced in the media by those in positions of power (political leaders), they develop Islamophobic tendencies in society as a whole. Of course, the media's role in making a society Islamophobic is equally important in that they have the power to include desired voices and exclude non-desired ones, and if the media (in this case, the US press) massively presents Islamophobic voices, the possibility of a given society being Islamophobic cannot be ignored. This is what the study's findings on the high frequency of anti-Muslim hate crimes in US society suggest. The analyzed data offered shreds of proof that these crimes were the result of anti-Islamic rhetoric fed to the press by political leaders.

Therefore, it cannot be assumed that the number of hate crimes grew by chance. Finally, the study concludes that, in comparison to other forms of Islamophobia, political Islamophobia has more severe consequences for Muslims in Western societies. More research into politically structured Islamophobia in other contexts, however, is recommended by future researchers.

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