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<b>Article:</b>	<b>Islamophobia or the Freedom of Expression? Exploring the Coverage of Quran Burning Incidents in International Media</b>
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**ABSTRACT**

Desecration of the Holy Quran has become a serious global concern in recent years. On the one hand, burning the Holy book of Muslims falls under the category of blasphemy, on the other hand, this act is permissible under the right of freedom of expression. There is an abundance of research findings that prove the connection between Quran burning and Islamophobia. In light of such findings, this research seeks to explore and analyze the discourses produced by *Al Jazeera*, *The Guardian*, *The New York Times*, *Time of India*, and *The Nation* in the aftermath of the 2023 Quran burning incidents in Sweden. The researcher has attempted to discover whether the selected news outlets produced the discourse of 'Islamophobia' or 'freedom of expression' in their coverage of the incidents. Employing the quantitative and qualitative content analysis, the researcher has found that *Al Jazeera*, *The New York Times*, *Time of India*, and *The Nation* have condemned the incidents by rejecting the Swedish and 'far-right' political argument of freedom of expression to defend the burning of Holy Quran. These news outlets have warned that such incidents would increase Islamophobia in the Western societies. However, *The Guardian* has remained 'neutral' in its editorials by raising questions on the 'furious response' from the Muslim world and by questioning the Swedish government's policy toward the incidents.

**Keywords:** Burning of Quran, Desecration of Quran, Islamophobia, Freedom of Expression, The Holy Quran

## **Introduction**

The desecration, defiling, and burning of the Holy Quran, the divine religious book of Muslims, has become a major issue in recent years, causing social, religious and political unrest around the world. In 2023 a series of Quran burning incidents in Sweden and Denmark has raised a lot of questions ranging from the practice of freedom of expression to the Islamophobia in the world. For the Muslims around the world the act of vandalising Quran is considered as blasphemy while in countries such as Sweden, where burning or defiling of the Quran or other sacred writings is not specifically forbidden by law (Ritter, 2023), it is considered as an act of freedom of expression. The issue of Quran burning came into spotlight, once again, on June 28, 2023 when a 37-year-old Christian immigrant from Iraq tore pages from the Quran and lit them on fire in front of the Stockholm Mosque. Previously in 2023, a right-wing Danish citizen did the same outside the Turkish Embassy in Stockholm (Ritter, 2023; Tazamal, 2023).

According to the Islamic doctrine, adherents are prohibited from harming the Quran and are required to engage in a ceremonial cleansing (Wudu; Ablution) before handling it (Myrvold & Kristina, 2010). Numerous Muslim nations have called upon the Swedish government to prevent Quran burning incidents. However, in Sweden, the authority to grant permission for demonstrations or public gatherings rests with the police rather than the government. The Swedish constitution safeguards freedom of speech, and the police can only deny permits for specific reasons related to public safety. In February 2023, the Stockholm police denied two requests for protests involving the burning of the Quran, citing evaluations by the Swedish Security Service indicating that such activities might increase the likelihood of terrorist attacks targeting Sweden. However, these decisions were later overturned by a court, which maintained that the police should provide more concrete evidence of threats to ban a public gathering. For instance, in 2010, authorities were deeply concerned when Florida pastor Terry Jones threatened to burn the Holy Quran on the commemoration of the September 11, 2001 attacks. However, they lacked the ability to pursue legal proceedings against him. Although Jones did not carry out his initial plan, he later led a burning of Quran event in Florida the following year (Ritter, 2023).

Many nations, predominantly in the Mideast, expressed strong disapproval of the defilement of the Holy Quran. Iraq removed Sweden's ambassador from the country shortly after demonstrators forcibly entered its embassy in Baghdad and ignited fires within the premises. Muslims across Pakistan, spanning cities like Islamabad, Karachi, and Lahore, organized demonstrations to mark a day dedicated to the sanctity of the Quran (Al Jazeera, 2023 July 20). Turkish President Mr. Tayyip Erdogan denounced Sweden for the occurrence, emphasizing as Ankara would not yield to provocative or threatening policies. According to him, Türkiye intend to educate the Western people that freedom of speech does not encompass the act of disrespecting the sacred beliefs and scriptures of Muslims. Morocco, instead of just issuing a condemnation, took the step of recalling its ambassador from Sweden indefinitely. The United States criticized the burning while also noting that the issuance of the permit for the protest upheld the principles of freedom of expression (Al Jazeera, 2023 June 29).

The Quran burning incidents have triggered the debate on freedom of expression, religious hatred, and Islamophobia. There are people like Professor Schultz, professor of law at Stockholm University, who believe and argue that "Freedom of expression is part of our legal culture, not just law but a core value." And, that "Sweden has the world's strongest legal

protections for freedom of expression" (BBC, 2023 July 27; Euronews.com, 2023 August 08). Similarly, some far-right politicians and activists like Geert Wilders and Rasmus Paludan publicly like the Quran to hate speech and use their claim to discriminate against Muslims and Islam (Aljazeera, 2022 April 19). Such kind of stances and situation give rise to Islamophobia. On the other hand, there is a widespread belief that the Quran burning acts are not a symbol of freedom of expression rather they give rise to religious hatred, discrimination, violence turning into carnage and social division in societies. Planned and intentional desecration of religious scriptures of minorities are not justifiable in the name of freedom of expression.

This whole scenario, the burning of Quran in Sweden and various debates around it, is a worth studying phenomenon. Desecration of the Holy Quran has become a serious global concern in recent years. On the one hand, burning the Holy book of Muslims falls under the category of blasphemy, on the other hand, this act is permissible under the right of freedom of expression. There is an abundance of research findings that prove the connection between Quran burning and Islamophobia (Ahmed, 2016; Bangstad & Linge, 2024; Farhadi & Farhadi, 2020; Radhouani, 2023). In light of such findings, this research seeks to explore and analyze the discourses produced by *Al Jazeera*, *The Guardian*, *The New York Times*, *Time of India*, and *The Nation* in the aftermath of the 2023 Quran burning incidents in Sweden. Employing the quantitative and qualitative content analysis, the researcher intends to discover whether the selected news outlets produced the discourse of 'Islamophobia' or 'freedom of expression' in their coverage of the incidents?

### **Literature Review**

Islamophobia has become a constant problem around the globe. This problem has taken many manifestations including hate crimes, discriminations, racial attacks, prejudice and slander against Muslims living within and outside Europe (Ghauri, Haq & Alam, 2022a; b; Iqbal, 2019). There is a plethora of research evidence available that elucidate the argument that such actions along with attacks on mosques in the West are the manifestations of hate against Islam which is termed as Islamophobia and as 'othering' of Islam and Muslims (Ghauri, Haq & Alam, 2021; Khan, Ghauri & Alam, 2021; Ghauri, Umber & Haq, 2021; Umber & Ghauri, 2020; Ghauri, Umber & Warrich, 2020; Ghauri, 2019).

Svensson, (2017) in his research paper, "Hurting Qur'an: Suggestions Concerning the Psychological Infrastructure of Desecration" enunciated that recent years have seen a number of cases of desecration of the Qur'an as an expression of hostility by non-Muslims towards the Muslims. The article explores how desecrators determine the actions to offend the Muslims through the use of Qur'an. The argument presumes desecration to transcend religious and cultural boundaries based on common, perceptive understanding of sacredness of an object. This knowledge depends upon psychological processes to label objects as sacred and deem them 'forbidden'. A partial personification of a sacred object is achieved by the combination of conceptual blending and psychological essentialism. This framework is used to understand desecration guided towards a person to cause mental and physical harm. Terry Jones' Qur'an burning event took place in March 2011 which included the burning of the Qur'an to death (Banks, 2011). This led to casualties and riots in Afghanistan (The Guardian, 2011). Svensson (2017) argues that a detailed understanding of the principles governing such events by hostile groups towards Islam must be developed. As stated by Evans (2003), people have a basic concept of what it means to be holy, which to them transcends all nations and religions. This

broad perception supports the contemptuous actions. *Quran* desecrators carry out actions that would be harmful because they are aware that Muslims value the *Quran* highly (Taves, 2013).

A *Florida* preacher named *Terry Jones* organized “*Burn the Quran Day*” in 2011, where he and his followers burned a copy of the *Quran*. The riots triggered in *Afghanistan* resulted in the deaths of over twenty people (*The Guardian*, 2011 April 04). According to the researchers *Medin & Ortony* (1989) and *Turner & Fauconnier* (2008), the two cognitive processes that underpin degradation are conceptual blending and psychological essentialism. Psychological essentialism is the belief that something’s uniqueness stems from an underlying, unseen essence. Conceptual blending is the process of fusing two ideas to create a new one (*Turner*, 2014). It is common to use the phrases “person” and “sacred object” interchangeably while discussing Quranic blasphemy. This permits them to corrupt the *Quran* in ways that would be unpleasant and rude if directed against an individual. Desecrators may, for example, burn, shred, or spit on the *Quran*, or they may verbally insult it by calling it names or declaring that it is horrible (*Turner*, 2014 p. 147–148). *Svensson* (2017) also argues that degradation results from unconscious brain processes that are unique to humans. This implies that those who engage in desecrators may not be aware of their motivations. However, by understanding the thought processes that underlie defilement, we may develop more potent defenses against it.

Muslims view the *Quran* as a sacred text that should be revered and appreciated, and as *God’s* revealed message (*Evans* 2003; *Taves* 2013). Desecration of the *Quran* is therefore an act of harm done to the text and to those who value it highly (*Svensson*, 2017). By establishing parallels between the two crimes, *Coleman* (2008) contends that the burning of the *Quran* and human flesh may both lead to extreme emotional and psychological agony. According to *Svensson* (2017), the challenging issue of avoiding Quranic sacrilege has no easy solutions. Nevertheless, if we understand the cognitive processes that underlie desecration, we might be able to develop more potent prevention strategies. For example, we may impart to someone the importance of respecting holy objects, irrespective of their personal religious beliefs.

To stop sacred objects from becoming tainted, we may also establish guidelines and policies. It is also asserted that we must address the fundamental causes of prejudice and intolerance. When someone feels valued and appreciated, they are less likely to respond violently or hostilely (*Svensson*, 2017). The *Quran’s* obliteration is a very human phenomenon that derives from our common feeling of sanctity as well as our propensity to engage in unconscious brain processes. We can devise more effective strategies for preventing sacrilege and addressing the underlying causes of prejudice and hatred if we understand the mental processes that underpin them (*Al-Rawi*, 2016).

*Gerhart and Ernest* (2010) conducted research on exploring and analyzing various controversies emerged on social media when *Terry Jones’s* proposal of burning 200 *Quran* was announced on twitter which later became an international crisis. *Jones* proposed the burning of *Quran* on the occasion of 9<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 9/11 attack on 2010. He called it “*International Burn a Koran Day*” and claimed that *Koran* is leading people to hell. He also bragged about his followers on Facebook which in 2010 was 500 and by September 2010 he had 16,000 followers (*Hill*, 2010). Which indicates that international media attention gave *Jones* a great deal publicity as over 150 media outlets from around the world interviewed him. International

figures like US president Barack Obama and US Foreign Secretary Hillary Clinton also condemned the idea and asked to drop it, as Barack Obama said that this would work as a source of “*Recruitment Bonanza for Al-Qaida*”. Which resulted in cancellation of the plan but Jones changed his mind and burnt a copy of Quran on 20, March 2011 and after that on 29, April 2012 as a protest against the arrest of Christian pastor by Iranian Government.

Gerhart and Ernest (2010) argued that the burning of Quran created a great controversy in the Islamic world, many Muslims felt that their government did not take necessary steps to make America and/or Terry Jones refrain from burning the Quran. The audience frames about the issue managed to spread due to the lack of government control over their online platforms. This incident although started on social media, led to violent reactions on the streets but were also reflected online. The videos and comments posted on YouTube revealed the popular sentiments about this important issue which attracted a great deal of attention from various cyber communities within the global public sphere that meet to discuss a vital topic related to their beliefs.

Abu Sway (2006) defines Islamophobia as "various forms of violence against Muslims, such as physical assaults, slander, and asset destruction, including Islamic institutions such as mosques, educational institutions, and graves." His perspectives also extend to prejudice in the workplace, health care, marginalization from management duties, politics and leadership positions (Sway, 2006). This research work proposes that expanding the issue of Islamophobia, which is firmly founded in historical preconceived notions, deserves immediate consideration in the sphere of modern international affairs. The purpose of this research is to uncover the historical background and present expressions of Islamophobia, particularly in the Western world, to provide light on the difficulties confronting the worldwide Muslim population by looking into OIC observatory reports. The goal is to analyze the rise in racial intolerance and defamation of Islam in depth, analyzing worldwide reactions and identifying gaps in legal and political remedies. Islamophobia, referred to as nervousness, dread, or terror directed against Muslims, may refer to several phenomena influencing governance, finance, and everyday life in communities (Bazian, 2015).

The reviewed literature encourages the researcher to look into the newspaper discourses produced in the aftermath Quran burning in Sweden in 2023. The researcher intends to explore and analyze the discourses produced by *Al Jazeera*, *The Guardian*, *The New York Times*, *Time of India*, and *The Nation* in the aftermath of the 2023 Quran burning incidents in Sweden. Employing the quantitative and qualitative content analysis, the researcher intends to discover whether the selected news outlets produced the discourse of ‘Islamophobia’ or ‘freedom of expression’ in their coverage of the incidents.

### **Conceptual Framework**

Conceptually, this research endeavor is guided through the concept of Islamophobia as put forth by Zafar Iqbal (2019) in his book *Islamophobia: History, context and deconstruction*. Iqbal contends that;

“Islamophobia is the negative posturing to Islam and Muslims; it mainly refers to prejudice, threat perceptions and racism and is independent of each other or otherwise, where prejudice may be characterised as ‘othering’; threat perceptions may have four sub-dimensions namely symbolic threat, security threat, realistic threat, civilization threat and racism with two possible dimensions, that is, religious and cultural” (p. 51).

Drawing on the dimensions of Islamophobia described by Iqbal (2019) the researcher intends to explore and analyze whether and to what extent the media reportage of the Quran burning incident in Sweden contain the Islamophobia discourse. Keeping in view these conceptual lines regarding the Islamophobia, the researcher intends to discover whether and in what context the selected news outlets produced the discourse of ‘Islamophobia’ with respect to the burning of Quran incident in Sweden in 2023.

Similarly, the United Nations definition of ‘freedom of expression’ states that; “Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers” (UN Article 19).

Freedom of religion; “Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance” (UN Article 18). Along with the freedom of religion, the UN Human Rights office ensure the respect for religious diversity as “UN Human Rights works to ensure the respect of freedom of religion or belief, the prohibition of incitement to religious hatred, and the celebration of diversity in society”.

Therefore, drawing on the conceptual underpinnings regarding the ‘freedom of expression’ provided by the United Nations, in this research endeavor the researcher intends to discover whether and in what context the selected news outlets produced the discourse of ‘freedom of expression’ with respect to the burning of Quran incident in Sweden in 2023.

## **Research Design And Methodology**

### **Data Collection**

The Quran burning incident under study took place in Sweden on June 28, 2023 on the eve of Eid al-Adha. Therefore, employing the purposive sampling the researcher has selected initially published first news story from each news outlet/newspaper under study. These stories have been selected because these are the immediate and actual reportage on the issue by the selected news outlets. The content analysis of these news stories would help the researcher to explore and analyse various discourse produced by the *Al Jazeera*, *The New York Times*, *Time of India*, and *The Nation*.

### **Data Analysis- Content Analysis**

Keeping in view the research question and the objectives of this research endeavor, the researcher has employed the qualitative and quantitative content analysis as a research tool. Content analysis is regarded by researchers as a versatile approach to text data analysis (Cavanagh, 1997). According to Rosengren (1981) content analysis refers to a set of analytical techniques that range from impressionistic, intuitive, interpretive analyses to methodical, rigorous textual analyses. The particular kind of content analysis method that a researcher chooses depends on the subject they are studying, as well as their theoretical and substantive interests (Weber, 1990). The distinction between content analysis and quantitative research methods is typically restricted to identifying content analysis as primarily qualitative. In order to prevent a mixing of methodologies, a more detailed examination of the ways in which qualitative content analysis can be used could possibly illuminate important concerns for researchers to take into account in the design of studies alleging to use content analysis and the analytical procedures applied in such studies (Morse, 1991).

In the beginning, content analysis was employed in investigations using either a qualitative or quantitative approach (Berelson, 1952). Subsequently, content analysis was mostly employed as a qualitative research technique, where in textual material was explicitly categorized and statistically described. In recent times, content analysis has gained recognition as a valuable tool for qualitative analysis for health researchers. As a result, its applicability and popularity have expanded (Nandy & Sarvela, 1997). Analyzing text data can be done in a number of ways, one of which is qualitative content analysis. Historical research, phenomenology, grounded theory, and ethnography are some more techniques. Studies that employ qualitative content analysis concentrate on the qualities of language as a means of communication, paying particular emphasis to the text's content or context (Budd, Thorp, & Donohew, 1967; Lindkvist, 1981; McTavish & Pirro, 1990; Tesch, 1990). Text data may have been collected by narrative answers, open-ended survey questions, focus groups, interviews, print material such as books, articles, or manuals, or it may have been verbal, print, or electronic (Kondracki & Wellman, 2002). Beyond just counting words, qualitative content analysis closely examines language in order to classify a vast amount of text into an effective number of categories that represent related meanings (Weber, 1990).

## **Findings and Analysis**

### **Analysis on the *Al Jazeera***

The news story under study from the *Al Jazeera* was published on June 28, 2023 under the headline "Quran desecrated at Sweden mosque during Eid al-Adha". The introductory paragraph's quantitative content analysis reveals that the passage has 69 words in it. This word count examines Salwan Momika's actions, especially his repeated desecration of the Quran by tearing it up and setting it on fire. The national anthem being played and Momika waving two Swedish flags are highlighted in the description, but no statements that support any particular political viewpoint are included. Words like "strutted into view," "waving two Swedish flags," and "with white Air Pods in his ears" are used in the qualitative analysis to set the scene for Momika's behavior. On political affiliations, the paragraph does not address any particular side. As a result of the convergence of the quantitative and qualitative analyses, the researcher classified it as "neutral" in the content analysis.

By using quantitative content analysis, the researcher determines that Momika's actions make up 84 words in the paragraph. There is no quantified evidence in favor of Momika's attempt to outlaw the Quran, and there are no affirmative or unbiased statements regarding his speech. Qualitatively, the passage seems to be an attempt to shock and enrage the Muslim community during their holiday, but the responses of the approximately 200 people presents are mostly ones of scorn, disdain, or apathy. Due to Momika's lack of support in both quantitative and qualitative terms, the researcher classifies the paragraph as "negative," indicating a negative opinion of the events that are described.

Using quantitative content analysis, it is possible to determine that the paragraph has 87 words in total. This includes an evaluation of the incident-related expressions. According to the analysis, there are two instances in the text that may be interpreted as disparaging Salwan Momika's behavior. These include calling the incident "extremely disrespectful" and emphasizing the insults that were directed at Momika outside the mosque. But it also mentions Nadine Elkhatib's viewpoint, in which she shows sympathy for Momika by saying, "I feel bad for him, not for us." Qualitatively, the passage highlights differences in responses within the

Muslim community, where some members are interacting positively, giving out chocolates, and having conversations with the police. But the occasional jabs directed at Momika show how nasty they can be, especially when he tries to burn the Quran. The researcher classifies this paragraph as having elements that can be coded as "negative," emphasizing the negative aspects associated with Momika's actions during the incident, based on both quantitative and qualitative content analysis.

Based on quantitative content analysis, this 77-word paragraph is short and to the point. Upon closer inspection, a number of the expressions contribute to the tone of negativity. Highlighted are mocking remarks made by the audience, which create an environment of ridicule aimed at Momika. Interestingly, terms like "swore repeatedly" and "mocking Momika" imply a bad attitude. Furthermore, the depiction of a scowling police officer, despite his smile in response, adds to the unfavorable atmosphere. Qualitatively, the crowd's expressions convey a critical attitude, especially in light of the police interaction and language competency. Thus, the researcher codes this paragraph in the 'negative' category using both quantitative and qualitative content analysis.

A quantitative content analysis of the 56-word paragraph reveals that none of the words or expressions support the actions of the people involved or advocate for the desecration of the Quran. Nonetheless, two statements are recognized as neutral; they highlight the serene environment and a person's sympathetic viewpoint regarding Salwan Momika, both of which support a neutral quantitative position. Qualitatively, the comments made by Avsan Mezeri, a financial manager present in the crowd, convey his disapproval of the desecration of the Quran while highlighting his sympathy for Salwan Momika saying it's his loss not ours. However, he does not support the act. After taking into account both analyses, the researcher classifies the content as "negative," indicating a general disapproval of the incident involving the desecration of the Quran.

Using both quantitative and qualitative content analysis, it is determined that the given paragraph has a total word count of 47. The researcher found phrases in this word count that offered an interpretation of Salwan Momika's actions. The phrases in the paragraph are, qualitatively speaking, critical of Momika's act. Important terms like "trick" and "intended to provoke a reaction" imply an unfavorable inspection. In addition, the assertion that Momika's actions are an effort to "portray Muslims as violent" suggests a critical position. In terms of numbers, 16 of the total words are considered to have a negative tone, which helps paint an unfavorable picture of the incident. As a result, the qualitative and quantitative analyses coded it negatively.

A quantitative content analysis indicates that the paragraph in question is 133 words long. Five statements or behaviors in this text can be classified as negative: Momika's choice to "plant hate" on the Muslim holiday; people trying to incite the crowd; a woman carrying a cross and berating bystanders; Ramona Sinko calling someone a "disgrace to her religion"; and the police holding a man with rocks behind his back. Qualitatively, the paragraph mostly presents a negative tone, with comments and behaviors that promotes a negative interpretation of the incident. This negativity is further reinforced by the lack of words or deeds that advocate a positive or impartial opinion. As a result, the researcher codes this paragraph in the content category marked as "negative," indicating an overall unfavorable portrayal of the incident under discussion, based on both quantitative and qualitative analyses.

A quantitative content analysis of the short 56-word paragraph reveals a striking lack of explicit statements that are consistent with any specific political discourse. There are no overt political endorsements or criticisms in the content, which stays impartial. The paragraph provides qualitative information about the elements that mosque representatives found disappointing in relation to a police decision. It also mentions that there is an ongoing police investigation concerning "agitation against an ethnic group." In spite of this, there aren't any overt statements supporting or refuting particular political narratives. In the content analysis, the researcher classifies this paragraph as "neutral" due to the general lack of statistically or qualitatively apparent political bias.

A content analysis of the paragraph about Sweden's NATO bid reveals a 31-word introduction. Turkey's charge that Sweden is hiding "terrorists" and its demand for their extradition dominate the text. Notably, there are no statements endorsing Sweden's application to join NATO. Qualitatively, the language is negative; phrases like "demanding extradition," "accompanying terrorists," and "harboring" are used. A negative orientation is further reinforced by the lack of neutral expressions. In conclusion, the paragraph is categorized as "negative" by both quantitative and qualitative analyses, supporting Turkey's concerns and possibly endangering Sweden's bid to join NATO.

The researcher used quantitative content analysis to ascertain that the paragraph has 44 words, one of which, "far-right politician," may have a negative meaning. Qualitatively, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan warns in this paragraph about the consequences of disrepairing Muslims and Turkey's religious beliefs. "You will not receive any support for NATO from us" is emphasized, which conveys an antagonistic message. Therefore, the researcher classifies this paragraph as "negative," indicating a critical or unfavorable stance, particularly concerning Rasmus Paludan's actions and the strained relations between the two nations, based on both quantitative and qualitative findings.

The researcher finds that the introductory section of the paragraph has 73 words in a quantitative content analysis. There are no specific expressions that quantitatively identify support for any political discourse. Qualitatively, the passage includes quotes from Swedish Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson highlighting the "t's legal but not appropriate" character of recent publicity stunts—possibly alluding to the burning of Qurans. The content is deemed neutral when there is no overt endorsement or criticism of any political discourse. Terms like "rejected," "applications," "anti-Quran demonstrations," and "infringed on the right of freedom of speech" are examples of neutral language that helps the qualitative analysis be free of bias overall. As a result, the paragraph is classified as "neutral" in both quantitative and qualitative analyses.

This paragraph, which is 53 words long, is quantitatively in line with the criticism of the Swedish incident made by Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan. There are no statements that support a different opinion, so the content is only considered to be in support of Minister Fidan's position. Important phrases like "unacceptable," "anti-Islamic protests," and "freedom of expression" serve as qualitative cues that support Minister Fidan's position. As a result, the paragraph is categorized as "positive" by both the quantitative and qualitative content analyses, which strongly support Hakan Fidan's viewpoint regarding the desecration of the Holy Qur'an in Sweden.

The provided paragraphs' content analysis examines a variety of incidents using both quantitative and qualitative methods. The paragraph regarding Salwan Momika's actions is categorized as "neutral" because it does not contain any overt political endorsements. Momika's actions during the incident, on the other hand, are classified as "negative" based on quantitative and qualitative data that indicate the crowd's disapproval of her actions. Based on both analyses, the criticism of Sweden's anti-Islamic protests by Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan is consistently categorized as "positive." As for the talks surrounding Sweden's NATO bid, they are all classified as "negative" because of Turkey's reservations and the absence of any neutral statements. The researcher's methodical approach yields a thorough and sophisticated comprehension of every paragraph.

*Al Jazeera* in its report criticized the burning of Quran in Sweden and explicitly downplayed the discourse of freedom of expression in terms of justifying the Quran burning.

### **Analysis on *The Guardian***

The news story under study from *The Guardian* was published under the headline; "Turkish fury as Sweden allows Qur'an burning risks further delays to Nato bid". Drawing from both quantitative and qualitative content analysis, the researcher assigns a negative political content category to the given paragraph. The opening section is 35 words long and takes a neutral stance, not directly endorsing or criticizing any political discourse. Qualitatively, the words emphasize possible difficulties for Sweden's NATO application while expressing the Turkish foreign minister's disapproval of the Qur'an burning in Stockholm. Words like "criticized the burning of the Qur'an" convey disapproval, and the statement that Sweden's NATO application might face difficulties is suggestive of a bad future. The combined analysis points to a generally unfavorable view of the incident and its diplomatic fallout.

According to quantitative content analysis, there are 37 words in the provided paragraph that do not explicitly support the political discourse of Olaf Scholz or Recep Tayyip Erdogan. In terms of quality, the passage contains Erdogan's claim that Sweden has not advanced far enough, but it does not contain any statements endorsing Scholz. The announcement by NATO regarding the meeting of top diplomats embodies neutral discourse. As a result, this paragraph is classified by the researcher as "neutral" on a quantitative and qualitative level because it does not explicitly support any political narrative.

After performing a content analysis, the provided paragraph has a total length of 40 words. The protest against the holy book in Sweden on Eid al-Adha is strongly denounced by Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan, who uses strong language, calling it "vile" and "unacceptable." There are 21 words in this condemnation, which is a clear indication of disapproval. Interestingly, there are no statements endorsing the demonstration against Islam. As a result, the analysis classifies the paragraph as "negative" on a quantitative and qualitative level, consistent with the narrative that condemns the protest and attacks anti-Islamic protests that masquerade as exercising the right to free speech.

Through a quantitative content analysis, the researcher discovered that the 38 words in the provided paragraph are free of any overt statements or cues supporting or opposing a specific political discourse. Regarding qualitative analysis, there are no statements in the paragraph endorsing or disparaging any political ideology, political party, or political figure. The decision by the Swedish police to allow a protest to take place during the Muslim holiday of Eid al-Adha is the main topic of this factual and descriptive essay. The paragraph is classified

as "neutral" on both a quantitative and qualitative level, suggesting that it is not explicitly aligned with any particular political party or organization.

Utilizing both qualitative and quantitative content analysis, the researcher assesses a paragraph from the Swedish public broadcaster SVT that details an incident. The introduction, which is 43 words long, describes a man tearing pages from the Qur'an, using some to wipe his shoes, burning others, and stuffing bacon inside the book. The language used is qualitatively neutral and does not explicitly align with any political or religious discourse. As a result, the researcher classifies the paragraph as "neutral" in light of both quantitative and qualitative evaluations, suggesting that there is no overt bias or endorsement of any particular position.

The paragraph has 66 words in total, three of which are pertinent to political discourse. It stays impartial, not openly endorsing or denouncing any political narrative. In terms of qualitative analysis, the organizer, Salwan Momika, and a police investigation are highlighted with phrases like "violating a seasonal ban" and "suspected of attempted assault." Both quantitative and qualitative content analyses classify the paragraph as "neutral," stressing legal considerations and law enforcement actions, due to the lack of clear political endorsement or criticism.

The 43-word passage that is provided does not quantitatively show any clear signs of being aligned with any specific political discourse. Qualitatively, Momika's remarks convey her intention to protest and voice her opinions about the Qur'an, all the while expressing a desire not to cause harm to the host nation. Classification is difficult because both analyses lack distinct political allegiances.

In terms of word count, the given passage is 46 words long and does not contain any statements endorsing Sweden or presenting an unbiased opinion. The language employed, such as the terms "offended Turkey," "accusing Sweden of harboring terrorists," and "demanding their extradition," clearly conveys a negative attitude towards Sweden. Thus, the researcher classifies this paragraph as "negative" based on both quantitative and qualitative content analysis, indicating an unfavorable portrayal of Sweden's actions in the context of protests against Islam and in support of Kurdish rights.

This 64-word paragraph provides both quantitative and qualitative evidence in favor of NATO's proposal to admit Sweden as a full member. Six phrases that support NATO's stance were found through quantitative analysis, including "green light" and "welcome as a full member." Positive language like "the time is now" strengthens the paragraph's qualitative alignment with NATO's viewpoint. The fact that there are no statements that are neutral or hostile to NATO's push reinforces the paragraph's general classification as "positive" in both quantitative and qualitative content analysis.

The 66-word paragraph that is provided has a neutral or negative quantitative stance. Three terms specifically support Rasmus Paludan's actions: "burned a copy of the Qur'an," "far-right Danish party Hard Line," and "provoked rioting in Sweden." The remaining terms, however, are either neutral or non-supportive. Interestingly, none of the terms support the viewpoint of the Turkish government. Qualitatively, a negative interpretation of Paludan's actions is reinforced by the lack of terms endorsing the Turkish government. The researcher codes the paragraph as "negative," indicating a general disapproval of Paludan's behavior and a lack of support for the Turkish government's position, after taking into account both quantitative and qualitative findings.

According to a quantitative content analysis, there are no clear terms in the paragraph's 38-word introduction that support or refute any political discourse. Words like "overruled," "security concerns," and "freedom of speech" all have a neutral tone qualitatively. The paragraph is categorized as "neutral" in both quantitative and qualitative content analysis due to the use of balanced language and the absence of terms that support a particular political narrative.

A quantitative content analysis of the 55-word paragraph finds that the Swedish Prime Minister's statement, which emphasizes legality while expressing disapproval, is neutral. Qualitatively, the Prime Minister continues to emphasize calm and long-term interests in her neutral stance. The overall code of 'neutral with a negative undertone' is derived from the combined quantitative and qualitative content analysis; however, the mention of Arab countries denouncing the "Qur'an-burning" introduces a negative qualitative aspect.

*The Guardian* in its news report criticized the burning of Quran in Sweden and explicitly downplayed the discourse of freedom of expression in terms of justifying the Quran burning

#### **Analysis on *The New York Times***

The news story under study from *The New York Times* was published under the headline; "Muslim World Is Outraged After Sweden Quran Burning". Drawing the quantitative content analysis of the editorial researcher has found out in the headline of editorial contains, 8 words. Out of these 6 words are used as negatively for Sweden. There is no positive or neutral expression. As the qualitative analysis is concerned, the headline contains expressions that criticize Sweden are "Muslim Outraged", "After Sweden Quran Burning".

Analyzing content quantitatively researcher determined that intro paragraph of editorial contains 199 words. Out of these thirty-three words are employed by newspaper to mentioned that are against freedom of speech and brutality. As for strengths of Sweden no words are employed by newspaper and one expression is considered as neutral in this discourse. As the qualitative analysis is concerned, the paragraph contains expressions that critically highlight then Quran Burning incident in Sweden. The expressions used by newspaper are "compel and strict", "widely condemned for allowing the burning" "holiest days", "people protested outside the Swedish Embassy", "break off diplomatic relations with Sweden" "allowing an extremist", "increasingly angry", and "for larger protests". Newspaper has not employed any expression to validate the Quran burning act in Sweden. As for the neutral expression for the discourse is concerned, for that newspaper has employed one expression that is "eventually left" Keeping in view the quantitative and qualitative CA findings of this paragraph the researcher codes it in the content category categorized as 'negative', which means *New York Times* both qualitatively and quantitatively is not in favor of the Sweden and their law of freedom of speech.

Drawing on the quantitative Content Analysis the researcher has found out that the third paragraph of the editorial contains 116 words, out of these 34 words are employed by newspaper that are against Sweden and the act of Quran burning. 16 words are deployed by newspaper in favor of the Sweden. As for as the qualitative analysis is concerned, the paragraph contains expressions against the Sweden discourse of incident and expressions employed by newspaper are "tearing it up and burning it" "granted a permit for the demonstration after a Swedish court ruled that banning it would impinge on the right to freedom of speech", "important Muslim holiday", "angered" and "pained". In terms of supporting the Sweden

discourse the newspaper has employed expression that are “he wanted to express his opinion”, “that demonstrators are not allowed to burn objects in Stockholm”. As for as the neutral discourse about the issue is concerned, the newspaper has employed no expression. Keeping in view the quantitative and qualitative content analysis findings of this paragraph the researcher codes it in the content category labeled as ‘negative’ which means newspaper has both qualitatively and quantitatively opposed Quran burning in Sweden discourse.

Quantitatively analyzing the content researcher has found out that in second paragraph of editorial comprising of 202 words out of which forty-five expressions have been highly criticizing the act of Quran Burning in Sweden. Moreover, no expressions have been expressed to appreciate the Sweden. As the qualitative analysis is concerned, the paragraph contains expressions that criticize Sweden and condemnation of Quran burning act by other Muslim countries. The expressions used by newspaper are; “a racist act of serious hate.” “displeasure”, “hateful and repeated acts cannot be accepted”, “offensive to Muslims worldwide”, “Disgraceful act”, “desecration of a holy book”, “diplomatic ties are already strained between Turkey and Sweden”, “holding up a Swedish bid to join NATO”, “not freedom of thought” and “Denounced/Condemn .No expression has be employed by newspaper to appreciate or defend the Sweden. Keeping in view the quantitative and qualitative content analysis findings of this paragraph the researcher codes it in the content category labeled as ‘negative’. This means that both quantitatively and qualitatively New York times has criticized Sweden for letting this incident happened and Their law of freedom of Speech.

Drawing on the quantitative Content Analysis the researcher has found out that the last of the editorial contains 199 words. Out of 199 words sixteen words stress upon the burning of Quran incident in Sweden as for as the words in favor of Sweden there in are nineteen words and 8 words are neutral. As the qualitative analysis is concerned, the paragraph contains expressions that are showing how incident in Sweden has sparked outrage in Muslim and disturb the peace of the country. The expressions used by newspaper are “similar incident”, “exacerbated tensions”, “worries”, “security concerns”, “pose a threat to embassies abroad, “Violating, incitement, troubling, “widely reported” and “Sweden failed”. In terms for supporting the Sweden, the only two expressions found “investigating” and “Since then, the police in Stockholm said they had rejected two other requests to protest by burning Qurans “for neutral expression of discourse only expression has been employed by newspaper that is “more than 140,000 Iraqi-born immigrants in Sweden”. Keeping in view the quantitative and qualitative content analysis findings of this paragraph the researcher codes it in the content category labeled as ‘positive’. This means that both quantitatively and qualitatively New York Times has favored the Sweden by mentioning that how police have tried to stop such incident.

*The New York Times* in its report criticized the burning of Quran in Sweden and explicitly downplayed the discourse of freedom of expression in terms of justifying the Quran burning. The narrative build by *The New York Times* in its report is promoting the narrative of desecration of Quran and they are not appreciating and supporting the narrative of freedom of speech.

#### **Analysis on the *Times of India***

The news story under study from the *Times of India* was published under the headline; “Quran burnings in Sweden, Denmark prompt debate on fine line between freedom of expression and incitement of hatred”. Analysing content quantitatively researcher determined

that headline of editorial contains 18 words. Out of these 7 words are employed by newspaper that are against Sweden and 3 are employed by newspaper that are in favour of Sweden. As the qualitative analysis is concerned, the headline contains expressions that criticize Sweden are “Quran burnings”, “prompt debate”, “incitement of hatred”. The expression held by newspaper to appreciate or defend the Sweden is “between freedom of expression”. There is one neutral expression in the headline that is “Denmark”.

Drawing on the quantitative Content Analysis the researcher has found out that the intro of the editorial contains 144 words. Out of 144 words seven words and 5 expressions stress upon the burning of Quran incident in Sweden as for as the words in favor of Sweden there is no expression found. As the qualitative analysis is concerned, the paragraph contains expressions that are mentioning the details of the incident and its after affects. The expressions used by newspaper are “violent clashes yet again”, “protester set fire”, “pelted with rocks”, “extremely regrettable”, “cannot tolerate disturbances”, “governments put a stop to the incidents of burning” and “damaged, prompting outrage”. In terms for supporting the Sweden and for neutral expression of discourse no expression has been employed by newspaper. Keeping in view the quantitative and qualitative content analysis findings of this paragraph the researcher codes it in the content category labelled as ‘negative’. This means that both quantitatively and qualitatively Times of India has criticized the Sweden by mentioning the after effects of the incident.

Quantitatively analysing the content researcher has found out that in second paragraph of editorial comprising of 138 words out of which forty-six expressions have been highly criticizing the act of Quran Burning in Sweden. Moreover, one expression has been expressed to justifying the incident that happened in Sweden. As the qualitative analysis is concerned, the paragraph contains expressions that criticize Sweden and condemnation of Quran burning act by other Muslim countries. The expressions used by newspaper are “against”, “Ban”, “Condemns “three of the actions”, “Ten Copies”, and mounted its own anti-Muslim demonstrations. The only expression has been employed by newspaper to appreciate or defend the Sweden is “angered by Turkey's opposition to Sweden's application to join Nato”. There is one neutral expression in the tagline of editorial that is “Who is burning the Quran and why?”. Keeping in view the quantitative and qualitative content analysis findings of this paragraph the researcher codes it in the content category labelled as ‘negative’. This means that both quantitatively and qualitatively Times of India has criticized Sweden by mentioning the act as violent.

Drawing on the quantitative Content Analysis the researcher has found out that the third paragraph of the editorial contains 242 words, out of these 41 words three expressions are employed by newspaper that are against Sweden and the act of Quran burning. 71 words are deployed by newspaper in favour of the Sweden. As for as the qualitative analysis is concerned, the paragraph contains expressions against the Sweden discourse of incident and expressions employed by newspaper are “incitement of hatred”, “but I will fight for other people to have the right to do it”, “Swedish police have allowed Momika's actions”, “views clashes” and “hate speech " incitement based on religion”. In terms of supporting the Sweden discourse the newspaper has employed expression “Both governments have condemned the burnings and said they are considering new laws that could stop or at least restrict them. But domestic critics say freedom of speech and expression is protected in their constitutions and any move to change

that would undermine prized freedoms. While freedom of expression is a fundamental human right in liberal democracies”, “right to express or freedom of speech”, “compromise citizens constitutionally inscribed right to freedom of expression. “I would never burn books”. As for as the neutral discourse about the issue is concerned, the newspaper has employed one expression “or” to make it clear there are two sides of story. Keeping in view the quantitative and qualitative content analysis findings of this paragraph the researcher codes it in the content category labelled as ‘positive’ which means newspaper has both qualitatively and quantitatively favored the freedom of speech in Sweden.

Analysing content quantitatively researcher determined that last paragraph of editorial contains 238 words. Out of these 10 expressions are employed by newspaper to highlight the remarks of Muslim country on the Quran Burning incident which are against Sweden. As for strengths of Sweden 5 expressions are employed by newspaper and one expression is considered as neutral in this discourse. As the qualitative analysis is concerned, the paragraph contains expressions that critically highlight then Quran Burning incident in Sweden. The expressions used by newspaper are “compel and strict”, “utter contempt towards this noble religion” “flagrant attack on human rights”, “the spread of a culture of hate” values of tolerance, acceptance of others”, “extremist” and “strict interpretation”. Newspaper has not employed any expression to validate the. The Quran burning act in Sweden. As for the neutral expression for the discourse is concerned, for that newspaper has employed expression that is “urged religious authorities and Muslim and Arab nations to take”, “Denmark”, “Or” and “Will Denmark and Sweden bend?”. Keeping in view the quantitative and qualitative content analysis findings of this paragraph the researcher codes it in the content category categorized as ‘negative’, which means that times of India both qualitatively and quantitatively questioned and criticized the Sweden.

*Times of India* in its report criticized the burning of Quran in Sweden and explicitly downplayed the discourse of freedom of expression in terms of justifying the Quran burning. Conclusively the narrative build by the *Times of India* in its report is promoting the narrative of desecration of Quran and they are not appreciating and supporting the narrative of freedom of expression.

#### **Analysis on daily *The Nation***

The news story under study from *The Nation* was published under the headline; “Pakistan condemns desecration of Holy Quran in Sweden”. Analysing content quantitatively researcher determined that headline of editorial contains 8 words. Out of these 7 words are employed by newspaper that are against Sweden and no words are employed by newspaper that are in favour of Sweden. As the qualitative analysis is concerned, the headline contains expressions that criticize Sweden are “condemns desecration of Holy Quran in Sweden”. There is no neutral expression in the headline.

Drawing on the quantitative Content Analysis the researcher has found out that the editorial contains 164 words, out of these 8 expressions are employed by newspaper that are strongly condemning the Sweden and the act of Quran burning. No words are deployed by newspaper in favour of the Sweden. As for as the qualitative analysis is concerned, the paragraph contains expressions against the Sweden discourse of incident and expressions employed by newspaper are “strongly condemned”, “despicable act”, “willful incitement to discrimination, hatred and violence cannot be justified under pretext of freedom of expression”,

“religious hatred, leading to incitement of violence”, “recurrence of such Islamophobic incidents”, “into serious question the legal framework which permits such hate-driven actions”, “that the right to freedom of expression and opinion does not provide a license to stoke hatred and sabotage inter-faith harmony “, “measures to prevent the rising incidents of xenophobia, Islamophobia and anti-Muslim hatred”. In terms of supporting the Sweden discourse the newspaper has employed no expression. As for as the neutral discourse about the issue is concerned, the newspaper has employed one expression that is “again urge that both the international community and the national governments”. Keeping in view the quantitative and qualitative content analysis findings of this paragraph the researcher codes it in the content category labelled as ‘negative’ which means newspaper has both qualitatively and quantitatively opposed Quran burning in Sweden discourse.

*The Nation* in its report criticized the burning of Quran in Sweden and explicitly downplayed the discourse of freedom of expression in terms of justifying the Quran burning. Conclusively the narrative build by *The Nation* in the editorial is not promoting a freedom of speech right as basic human right and they are condemning desecration of Quran.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, employing the quantitative and qualitative methods consistently, the researcher methodologically assessed the text in a variety of contexts, classifying the content based on word count and tone. The combined analysis's conclusions provided subtle insights into how each paragraph aligned or remained neutral in relation to the understudy discourses. Regardless of the bias towards positivity, negativity, or neutrality, the investigator used a thorough methodology to record the qualitative subtleties and quantitative metrics found in every paragraph. This two-pronged strategy improved comprehension and interpretation to a deeper level and offered a more comprehensive evaluation of the news content understudy.

Drawing on the findings of the careful qualitative and quantitative content analyses, the researcher can conclude the selected news outlets; *Al Jazeera*, *The Guardian*, *The New York Times*, *Times of India*, and *The Nation* in their reports criticized the burning of Quran in Sweden and explicitly downplayed the discourse of freedom of expression in terms of justifying the Quran burning. The selected media, instead of promoting Islamophobia and fanning the Islamophobic feelings, condemned the burning of the Holy Quran and labelled the incident a result of Islamophobia. The media under study, in their news reportage of the incident, did not provide a cover of ‘freedom of expression’ to the act of burning of the Holy Quran.

So, keeping in view the research objective i.e. to discover whether the selected news outlets produced the discourse of ‘Islamophobia’ or ‘freedom of expression’ in their coverage of the incidents, the researcher has found that *Al Jazeera*, *The New York Times*, *Time of India*, and *The Nation* have condemned the incidents by rejecting the Swedish and ‘far-right’ political argument of freedom of expression to defend the burning of Holy Quran. These news outlets have warned that such incidents would increase Islamophobia in the Western societies. However, *The Guardian* has remained ‘neutral’ in its coverage by raising questions on the ‘furious response’ from the Muslim world and by questioning the Swedish government’s policy toward the incidents.

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