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<b>Article:</b>	<b>Islam, the Western Leaders and the Media</b>
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### **ABSTRACT**

This study adopted both quantitative content analysis and qualitative approach to investigate the narrative of Western Politicians relating to Islam and Muslims in the Western press. Specifically the study content analyzes the Western leaders' sentiments in coverage as positive, negative, or neutral. The study used Python's sentiment analysis technique, which discovered negative connotations such as terror, inflammatory, gullible, notorious, nasty, extreme, fearful, guilty, unsuccessful, ferocious, conservative, controversial, and radical. The coverage of the *Guardian* about the negative sentiment of the western leaders was more negative than the other selected newspapers.

**Keywords:** content analysis, qualitative approach, narrative of Western Politicians, sentiment analysis

## Introduction:

The Western press is consistently framing Islam as a violence religion and portraying Muslims in a negative role. This agenda on the western media raises the tendency of Islamophobia in the western world. The Western global political pundits are using Islamophobia as a device to devalue Islam, as it is the fastest-growing religion in the West. The Western religious orthodox are also stimulating prejudice against Islam and Muslims. This organized movement creates fear and resentment against Muslims (Sunar, 2017; Kundnani, 2014).

Similarly, Muslim issues are also instrumental in gaining more voters by politicians. In the presidential election of 2016, Donald Trump used Islamophobic views as a winning strategy. He knew that deploying Islamophobia as a primary approach could mobilize a significant portion of emotional electorates already influenced by the Islamophobic networks. Moreover, anti-Muslim discourse is also profitable for the ammunition business and many war supporters like the Afghan, Iraq, and Yemeni wars. It happens in almost all Western countries where the same opinions, organizations, roles, and messages are disseminated, primarily through media in public backed by an unidentified industry with nefarious aims.

Newspaper stories also contain a tone of political speeches that indicates how the paper narrates the content (Zheng, 2006). Many scholarly findings have discovered that tone in news coverage has several significant effects. For example, it affects readers to think in a specific way about a matter (Brunken, 2006). It also aids in cultivating public opinions accordingly (Gunther, 1998; Kim, Carvalho, and Cooksey, 2007). Critics mark 9/11 as a critical moment in the political scenario of Western liberal democracies. A large body of media content is based on political discourse in the news stories related to terrorism, immigration, and the assimilation of Muslims (Rane et al., 2014).

During the Bush regime, a racialized political rhetoric incorporating Islamophobia became dominant by the American politicians, mainly by the right-wing political leaders (Kellner, 2004). Press adopts a radicalization narrative usually when it sees an ideological threat perceived as extremism (Kundnani, 2014). Mols & Jetten's (2014) study concluded that right-wing politicians of Western Europe had instilled temporal narratives about past and identity since the 1980s to make an outstanding comeback and provide collective anguish and dread of losing collective roots.

## Literature Review

Analyzing the 111 political speeches made by British political leaders, mentioned that despite the efforts not to conflate Muslims with terrorism, there were several occasions when Blair and other ministers used disparaging terms. Celermajer (2007) also attempted to uncover the Australian political party motives of advocating 'radical Othering of Islam' through media. The author took the example of an editorial from *Sydney Morning Herald* in which politicians used extremely derogatory rhetoric and portrayed Muslims as a threat living with 'Us' who, as an electrician, a painter, and a butcher, has an aversion towards 'Us' and is all set to attack 'Us.'

In his article, Richardson (2009) pointed out that issues relating to Muslim migration, refuge, and cultural, religious, and ethnic differences have become more frequent in British domestic politics to a point never seen before since last two decades. Throughout the speeches by influential political leaders, Muslims are constantly selected in discussions about multiculturalism, assimilation, and other social issues in which Muslims are specifically

demonized (Kundnani, 2007, p. 6). Like former British Prime Minister Tony Blair, the Western minister's rhetoric on Muslims persistently vacillates between the perception of 'improvement' and a latent belief of inborn reverting characteristics (Morey & Yaqin, 2010) by arguing that this is a battle for the survival of modernity and civilizational progress (Tempest 2006, cited in Morey and Yaqin, 2010, p.154).

### **Herman and Chomsky Propaganda Model**

This study used Herman and Chomsky's theatrical propaganda approach of manufacturing consent to explain how propaganda, systematic biases, pressures, and constraints work and influence mass media. Introduced in 1988, the model aims to elucidate how people are manipulated, and consent is "manufactured" to manipulate the people's minds using socioeconomic benefits. The propaganda model suggested five filters as: 1) size, ownership, and profit orientation of mass media, 2) funding (generated through advertising), 3) source, 4) flaks (refer to lawsuits, pressure groups) and 5) anti-communism and fear ideology. Several research studies have substantiated the model due to its viewing of Western mainstream media as an instrument in the hands of dominant elite in covering international issues. The application of this model will be helpful to explore the representation of Islam and Muslims with respect to tone of Western political leaders and framing perspective.

### **Huntington's Clash of Civilizations**

The *Clash of Civilizations* hypothesis is used in this research because Huntington (1993, p.45) contends that in a post-Cold War setting, people's ideological, political, or economic would not be the basis of their distinctions anymore, but their cultural counts and religious identities will be more meaningful and become the prime source of a geo-political conflict. Later in 1996, he also indicated that international politics began to be restructured along cultural lines and civilizational-based world order is going to emerge (p. 19). It will form different policy responses to different major issues such as human rights, immigration, trade and the environment, leading to the further deepening of civilizational divisions.

Furthermore, he proposed that the utmost threat for the West would be from Islamic, Sinic (Chinese) and Hindu civilizations. Huntington proposes that Western interests and principles and foreign and security policy should be fixated on self-preservation and civilizational goals (Huntington, 1993, p. 38). Later, the assumption gained much credence through the 9/11 incident and its aftermath and provided the necessary evidence to substantiate the thesis. The idea was re-rendered by U.S. neoconservatives like the Bush administration by introducing a range of policies limiting the expansion of Islamic influence.

### **Research Questions**

R Q 1: To what extent the selected Western newspapers covered Western political narratives towards Islam and Muslims?

R Q 2: How far the coverage of the Western political mawkishness against Islam and Muslims was different in the selected press?

### **Methodology**

The Western Newspapers selected for the study were *Guardian* (UK), *The Washington Post* (USA), *The Australian* (Australia), and the *National Post* (Canada). The period of coverage taken for this study was January 2015 to December 2016. For the qualitative approach, the study did a sentiment analysis of the tone used by Western politicians to provide to identify similes, and metaphors, demonizing language and the western negative stereotypes

of Islam and Muslims. The tone of Western Political Leaders refers to the attitude in the story toward Islam and Muslims. The study adopted Herman and Chomsky's Propaganda Model and Samuel Huntington's Clash of Civilizations Hypothesis.

### Coding Scheme

This study coded the tone as positive and negative based on careful qualitative judgment to identify the keywords and terms used. The unit of analysis identifies the tone in every single paragraph of the story. We coded the news stories for statements of Western political leaders containing a positive and negative tone about Muslims and Islam.

### Research Findings

The total stories in the selected press were 1230, with 324 from *The Guardian*, 368 from *The Washington Post*, 293 from *The Australian*, and 245 from the *National Post*. Making comparison in the types of stories, all the newspapers dominantly published news stories containing negative sentiment about Islam and the Muslim (Chi-square=743.951;  $P < .000$ ). (See Table 1).

**Table 1 Sample's characteristics**

<b>Published stories</b>	<b>1230 (100.0)</b>
<b>Selected Press</b>	
<i>The Washington Post</i>	368 (29.9)
<i>The Australian</i>	293 (23.8)
<i>The National (Financial) Post</i>	245 (19.9)
<i>Guardian</i>	324 (26.3)
<b>Stories Type</b>	
News	714 (58.0)
Editorials	97 (7.9)
Opinionated essays	208 (16.9)
Columns	211 (17.2)
<b>Source of Stories</b>	
Official	144 (11.7)
Private	1085 (88.2)

However, to analyze the tone, 421 news stories were selected from the four newspapers containing statements or quotes of Western political leaders. Of that, 133 news stories from the *Guardian*, 109 from the *Washington Post*, 97 from *The Australian*, and 82 from *The National Post*. All of the selected press coverage was more negative than positive about the statement used by Western politicians. However, the negative tone coverage of the Western politician was significantly different from other selected newspapers (See Table 2).

**Table 2: Tone in the Coverage**

<b>Tones</b>	<b><i>Guardian</i></b>	<b><i>Washington</i></b>	<b><i>The Australian</i></b>	<b><i>The National</i></b>
<b>Total</b>		<b><i>Post</i></b>		<b><i>Post</i></b>

Positive 108	32	29	24	23
Negative 260	95	66	54	45

### Qualitative Analysis

The quantitative findings of the data indicated that the majority of the stories (61.8%) had a negative tone used by Western political leaders. The contextual polarity used in the political discourse against Muslims and Islam was checked using sentiment analysis through Python yielded the 250 words used by political leaders for Islam and Muslims. The first list generated after conducting Python Sentiment Analysis contained many words with a neutral tone. However, after data wrangling, the software developed a list of the most frequently occurring words along with their frequencies. Also, the outcome contained three more lists differentiated by many verbs, adjectives, and nouns together with the description of the degree of tone as positive, negative, or neutral of the verbs, adjectives, and nouns.

### Sentiment Analysis

Sentiment analysis or opinion mining is the automatic method that identifies the underlying sentiment of the content. This technique involves analyzing the text data and classifying the polarity or tonality as positive, negative, or neutral. According to Turney (2002), its application can analyze different levels of scope such as at the document level (to obtain the sentiment of a whole document or paragraph), at the sentence level (to convey the feeling of a single sentence), and at sub-sentence level or the phrase level (to obtain sentiment of sub-expressions within a sentence). Here the tone of the Western political leaders has been analyzed at the sentence level, and the use of Python software finds out the words.

**Table 3: Tone used in the press**

Text Type	Tone
Verb	lightly positive (0.01)
Adjective	lightly positive (0.06)
Noun	lightly Negative (-0.02)

Table 3 shows the tone of the verbs, adjectives, and nouns. The digits in the parenthesis indicate the sentiments with the help of a scale ranging from -1 to +1 value. Overall, the tone was inclined toward negative in all the verbs (0.01), adjectives (0.06), and nouns (-0.02). However, the tone of the nouns was more negative than the verbs and adjectives.

**Table 4: Frequencies of Words in the Selected Newspapers**

Words	Frequency	Words	Frequency
Trump	1923	Australia	498
Muslim	1641	Political	487
Muslims	1489	English	481
Islamic	1027	States	479
Islam	826	Republican	467
State	764	Minister	465
National	671	Attacks	458
Australian	663	Terrorism	453

Government	585	United	450
Obama	577	American	443
President	560	World	441
Community	523	Religious	423

Moreover, the most frequently occurring words were Trump (N=1923), Muslim/Muslims (N=1641/1489), Islamic (N=1027), Islam (826), Obama (N=577), Attacks (N=458), Terrorism (N=453), and Religious (N=423). (See Table 4)

**Table 5: Use of Nouns in the Selected Newspapers by the Western Political Leaders**

Attributing Noun	Tone			Attributing Noun	Tone		
	Pos.	Neg.	Neu.		Pos.	Neg	Neu.
Australia	Neutral			String Attacks	Negative		
Fleeing	Negative			Police	Neutral		
Turkey	Neutral			Border	Neutral		
Neil Prakash	Neutral			Intelligence Agencies	Neutral		
Islamic State	Neutral			Conflict	Negative		
Prime Minister	Neutral			Security Agencies	Neutral		
Operations	Neutral			Target	Positive		
Muslims	Neutral			ISIS	Neutral		
Authorities	Neutral			Ability	Positive		
Apprentice	Neutral			Extremists	Negative		
Syria	Neutral			New York	Neutral		
US	Neutral			Fighter	Negative		
Bombing	Negative			Movements	Neutral		
Raid	Negative			Experience	Neutral		
Iraqi	Neutral			Gathering	Neutral		
Stronghold	Negative			Intensity	Positive		
Mosul	Neutral			Coalition	Positive		
War	Negative			Comrades	Positive		
Demise	Negative			Briton	Neutral		
Development	Positive			Strike	Negative		
Malcolm Turnbull	Neutral			Propaganda Video	Negative		
Terror	Negative			Drone	Negative		
Recruiters	Neutral			Arrest	Negative		
Michael Keenan	Neutral			Counter-Terrorism	Negative		
Iraq	Neutral			Daesh	Neutral		

Law enforcement	Neutral	Arrest Warrant	Negative
Deaths	Negative	Officials	Neutral
Canada	Neutral	Israel	Neutral
Terrorist Attacks	Negative	Non-believers	Neutral
Junaid Hussain	Neutral	ShadiJabar	Neutral
Migrant	Neutral	Plots	Negative

Table 5 explains the attributes used by the Western politicians against Islam and the Muslims in the selected press. Most of the attributing noun in the list had a negative tone, the remaining had a neutral tone, and very few nouns had a positive tone. The most frequently occurring negative attributing nouns used in the quotes and speeches by Western politicians were fleeing, bombing, raid, stronghold, war, terror, terrorist attacks, string attacks, conflict, extremists, fighter, propaganda video, arrest, and plots, etc. The 'fleeing' was used in the context of any Muslim who fled conflict, persecution, civil war, ISIS and arrives in Western countries for refuge or future security from his home Muslim war-torn country. Similarly, the press used a noun like 'bombing' as Islamic State bombing, suicide bombing, Bali bombing, Madrid bombing, Brussels bombing, London bombing, carpet bombings, etc.

**Table 6 Use of Verbs in the Selected Newspapers by the Western Political Leaders**

Use of Verbs	Scale			Use of Verbs	Scale		
	Po s.	Neg .	Neu.		Pos.	Neg.	Neu.
Captured	Negative			Joined	Neutral		
Plotted	Negative			Reported	Neutral		
Arrested	Negative			Killed	Negative		
Learned	Positive			Speaking	Neutral		
Planning	Positive			Heralded	Neutral		
Flee	Negative			Encouraging	Positive		
Radicalise	Negative			Fight	Negative		
Caught	Negative			Promoted	Positive		
Travelled	Neutral			Wounded	Negative		
Survived	Positive			Rattled	Negative		
Monitoring	Negative			Including	Negative		
Believed	Neutral			Declined	Negative		
Appeared	Neutral			Confirmed	Positive		
Tipped	Neutral			Longstanding	Positive		
Crossed	Neutral			Comment	Neutral		
Ruled	Positive			Attack	Negative		
Prosecuting	Negative			Cracked	Negative		
Jihad	Negative			Operating	Positive		
Fighting	Negative			Encrypted	Neutral		

Starred	Positive	Involved	Negative
Urged	Neutral	Foiled	Negative
Broadening	Positive	Moulded	Neutral
Recruited	Neutral	Prevent	Negative
Acknowledged	Positive	Debated	Negative
Prefer	Positive	Responding	Positive
Work	Neutral	Warning	Negative
Educated	Positive	Praised	Positive
Harmed	Negative	Reminded	Neutral
Spread	Neutral	Allowing	Positive
Restore	Neutral	Migrated	Neutral
Ignoring	Negative	Released	Neutral
Honest	Positive	Realized	Positive

Table 6 explains the verbs and their tone used in Western political narratives in the press contained in the list had a negative tone, followed by a few positive and a few neutral tones. The news stories' most frequently occurring negative verbs were captured, arrested, radicalized, fighting, harmed, killed, foiled, plotted, warning, etc. The verb 'captured' was used in the context of any Muslim captured in Turkey/Brussels, captured towns in Iraq, captured Yazidi girls as if they were cattle, and arrested terrorist suspects. In the same way, a verb like 'foiled' was used by leaders while referring to terrorist attacks and plots planned by Muslims or Islamic organizations that their government has successfully foiled.

**Table 7 Use of Adjectives in the Selected Newspapers by the Western Political Leaders**

Use of Adjectives	Scale			Use of Adjectives	Scale		
	P os .	Neg .	Ne u.		Pos .	Neg .	Neu .
Terrorist	Negative			Post truth	Neutral		
Turkish	Neutral			Interesting	Positive		
Australian	Neutral			Wrong	Negative		
Former	Neutral			Concentrated	Positive		
Young	Positive			Actual	Positive		
Leading	Positive			Specific	Positive		
Near-death	Negative			Significant	Positive		
Several	Neutral			Temporary	Negative		
Close fellow	Positive			Frankly	Positive		
Unsuccessful	Negative			Vast	Positive		
Sudanese	Neutral			War-torn	Negative		
British	Neutral			Second-generation	Neutral		
Understood	Neutral			Third-generation	Neutral		
Consular	Neutral			Dead	Negative		

Limited	Negative	Quick	Positive
Immediate	Positive	Migrant	Neutral
Unclear	Negative	Poor	Negative
Active	Positive	Astonishing	Negative
Unconfirmed	Negative	Ignorant	Negative
Keen	Positive	Insulting	Negative
Slick	Negative	Contradict	Negative
Prolific	Positive	Undermine	Negative
Social	Positive	Fearful	Negative
Cambodian	Neutral	Extreme	Negative
Fijian	Neutral	Nasty	Negative
Indian	Neutral	Complex	Negative
Lebanese	Neutral	Immigration	Neutral
Inflammatory	Negative	Essential	Positive
Prime	Positive	Important	Positive
Blunt	Negative	Truthful	Positive
Particular	Positive	Vietnamese	Neutral
Careful	Positive	Notorious	Negative
Obvious	Positive	Palestinian	Neutral
Foreign	Neutral	Somalian	Neutral
Gullible	Negative	Albanian	Neutral
White bread	Positive	Guilty	Negative
Eager	Positive	Syrian	Neutral
Ferocious	Negative	Proscribed	Negative
Instinctive	Positive	Algerian	Neutral
Original	Positive	Jordanian	Neutral
Radical	Negative	Bosnian	Neutral
Controversial	Negative	Conservative	Negative

Table 7 explains the use of adjectives and their tone by the Western political narratives in the press. Like nouns and verbs, most of the adjectives in the list were negative, followed by neutral and joyous tones. However, adjectives were more negative comparatively. The news stories' most frequently appearing negative adjectives were terrorist, unsuccessful, slick, inflammatory, gullible, war-torn, ignorant, insulting, fearful, nasty, complex, notorious, guilty, ferocious, controversial, conservative, proscribed, etc. The press used the adjective 'slick' for Muslim magazines, calling it slick or slick Islamic State propaganda. Similarly, the coverage also showed an adjective like inflammatory rhetoric/remarks/language/comments/speech/actions used by the Western politicians for Muslims.

Likewise, press coverage used the 'gullible' word for natives of Western countries who the terrorists might trap. Politicians always used 'War-torn' for the Muslim nations rather than safe zone countries. Similarly, the adjective 'ignorant' was used by referring Muslims as 'young radicals, poor and ignorant, 'ignorant members of a minority group,' 'ignorant or inferior,'

'ignorant alarming voices,' and 'ignorant bigotry' etc. In the same way, the press repeatedly used the word 'notorious' to mention Imam and or notorious Muslim student, etc. The press used the word 'guilty' mostly whenever 'Muslim found guilty in the court trial.'

### **Discussion of the Results**

The study found that the western press mostly covered the negative Western political narratives against Islam and Muslims. However, *the Guardian* was more negative compared to the others selected newspapers. This negative coverage in the *Guardian* is mostly the quoted statements of Donald Trump and other right-wing politicians compared to the other newspapers. These results are quite in line with the many studies mentioned in the literature review.

The negative attributions and sentiments used by the press about the western political leader were about terrorism, refuge, and Muslims as a threat to Western security and their values. These results were similar to the research studies of Rane et al., 2014, Mols and Jetten, 2014. Kellner (2004) and Kundani (2014) also support this racist political sermon against Islam. The press uses this tactic to achieve a more important place in the perspective of political struggles (Koopmans, 2001).

Moreover, after applying Python's sentiment analysis technique, more words came out with negative connotations such as terror, inflammatory, gullible, notorious, nasty, extreme, fearful, guilty, unsuccessful, ferocious, conservative, controversial, and radical. Moosavi (2013) analyzed 111 political speeches made by British political leaders and mentioned that despite the efforts not to conflate Muslims with terrorism, there were several occasions when Blair and other ministers used disparaging terms. Celermajer (2007) also attempted to uncover the Australian political party motives of advocating 'radical Othering of Islam' through media and found out extremely derogatory rhetoric.

### **Conclusion**

The coverage of the Western press was hostile to the political narrative against Islam and Muslims. Coverage of *The Guardian* was more negative compared to other selected newspapers. Python's sentiment analysis also reveals negative connotations such as terror, inflammatory, gullible, notorious, nasty, extreme, fearful, guilty, unsuccessful, ferocious, conservative, controversial, and radical. However, adjectives were more negative than nouns and verbs. This study confirms that western societies are mono-cultural and are not ready to assimilate and accommodate Islam and Muslims.

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