

The Mediatized Islamophobia: A Study of US and UK Press Discourses

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ABSTRACT

Aim of the Study: The term “Islamophobia” refers to a hostile attitude towards Muslims and Islam. Although its manifestations may be similar in different social contexts, their reasons might differ from society to society. Since Islamophobia manifests itself through language, the current study seeks to explore these reasons through press discourses.

Methodology: The researchers employed a critical discourse analytical method to study press discourses. Using DHA’s analytical framework, they analysed leading articles published in *The Washington Post* and *The Independent* between November 2016 and December 2017.

Findings: This analysis reveals that the Islamophobia in the US stems from the perception of Islam as an enemy, whereas in the UK it arises from a dislike for this religion. Further, the term “Islam” was employed in the US discourse context to denote the political ideology described as “Shariah,” but it was used in the UK discourse context to represent the religious ideology described as “Wahhabism.” Also, the two Islams in their respective contexts were blamed for the same problem—terrorism.

Conclusion: This study concludes that contemporary Islamophobia is a mediatized phenomenon that is constructed through a discourse that portrays Islam as a source of terror and Muslims as fearsome creatures. It identified the basic strategies of constructing Islamophobia in the press (media) discourses. It further demonstrated that media discourses are not the only factors influencing this phenomenon; historically persistent anti-Muslim prejudice and politically motivated anti-Islam rhetoric have also influenced these discourses to incite enmity or hatred towards Muslims and Islam.

Keywords: Islamophobia, Phobias, Prejudice, Racism, Threat Perceptions, Shariah, Wahhabism.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Practically, the term “Islamophobia” has very narrow dimensions, such as racism, prejudice, hatred, fear, ideological, cultural, and physical threats, bloodshed, suicide attacks, violence, and nothing else. It just revolves around certain nasty labels attributed to Islam and its adherents. The term “Islamophobia” is thus made up of phobias like terror, hatred, ideological, cultural, and physical threats, bloodshed, suicide attacks, and violence within these narrowed definitional complexities. In academic and popular discourse, these phobias are discussed as a “transcendental force” that can drive people to attack the hated ones physically and verbally (Furedi, 2007). Phobias are considered narrative and abstract, and as Michel Foucault suggested, a narrative expresses the modes of power of exclusion and inclusion (Ramadan & Shantz, 2016). One of the most recently created such conditions is “Islamophobia,” which is spreading in Western societies “like a virus” through media (Buehler, 2011). While existing literature points to the fact that Islam lived in European imaginations as a threat from the first Moorish landing in Spain until the second Turkish siege of Vienna in 1683 (Lewis, 1994), the story of mediatized Islamophobia began with the Islamic revolution in Iran (Iqbal & Tariq, 2025).

In addition, the literature indicates three developments following the Iranian revolution in 1979, which shaped this virulent Islamophobia. *First*, the US media increasingly framed that revolution as a return of an extreme orthodoxy in Islam, claiming that Islam is anti-Western in nature (Shuja, 1982; Tariq & Iqbal, 2023a). Edward Said’s landmark study of covering Islam around that period demonstrated how Islam became “news” of an unpleasant sort for the general public in the US and Europe. It revealed that governments, geopolitical strategists, academic experts on Islam, and the media all agreed that Islam poses threats to Western civilization (Said, 1981). The Western media, since then, have increasingly fueled the fear of a clash of civilizations, framing Islam as a threat to the political, cultural, and demographic health of Western societies (Esposito, 2016). *Second*, the 9/11 terror attacks in the US and other incidents in Europe led the West to a global war against Islamic terrorism, which added fuel to media discourses to reorient Islam as an enemy race and Muslims as enemy aliens (Beydoun, 2023). *Third*, some politicians capitalized on the fear of Islam as a political strategy to gain power. Consider Donald Trump, who won the 2016 presidential election by deploying Islamophobia as a primary campaign strategy. He framed Islam as a religion of terror and Muslims as terrorists (Beydoun, 2018), while the media widely publicized his anti-Islam narratives and thus mobilized national hatred for Islam. As a result, hate crimes against Muslims in US society increased manifold (Tariq, 2022). Trump’s anti-Islam rhetoric also facilitated the structural discrimination against Muslims, such as President Trump banning the entry of nationals from seven Muslim-majority countries (Beydoun, 2018).

1.1 Problem Statement

While the current scholarship explains Islamophobia as a mediatized construct, it rarely discusses its construction process. This necessitates an investigation into how Islamophobia manifests in media representations of Muslims and Islam. Its manifestations may be similar in different social contexts, but the reasons behind them might differ from society to society. Investigating representations of Muslims and Islam in the US and the UK media helps explore these reasons.

1.2 Objective of the Study

- To analyse the representations of Muslims and Islam in the US and the UK press discourses.
- To examine the construction of Islamophobia in these discourses and to identify the strategies involved in this process.
- To determine the nature of Islamophobia in the US and UK societies.

1.3 Significance of the Study

This study helps understand the dominant perceptions about Muslims and Islam in the US and UK societies, as well as the ways that the media create them.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Contemporary scholarly discussions on Islamophobia have thoroughly examined the neologism to develop a generally accepted definition that has remained ambiguous for years. It has been debated, defined, critically analysed, and conceptualized by scholars from different backgrounds (Allen, 2010, 2017; Iqbal, 2020; López, 2011). However, a comprehensive and widely accepted definition has yet to be developed by incorporating all of the negative adjectives attached to the term. It is crucial to explicitly spell out the cognitive frameworks that form the discourse in any such discussion, but Nathan Lean contends that it is easy to become bogged down in needless etymological roundabouts (Lean, 2012). In the literature, there is still confusion over the origins of the term “Islamophobia,” as its meaning has never extended beyond fear, dislike, prejudice, racism, violence, and so on.

Fernando López traces the origins of Islamophobia back to the late 19th century, demonstrating that Alain Quellien used the term for the first time in 1910 to describe French administrators' biased attitude against the Muslim population. Quellien's pioneering perspective defined it as prejudice stemming from the perception of Islam as an “implacable enemy” (López, 2011). However, the term gained popularity following the release of the first Islamophobia report by the UK's Runnymede Trust, which also defined it as anti-Muslim prejudice with real-world effects in the form of discrimination against Muslims, eventually leading to their exclusion from sociopolitical affairs. Prejudice, in its most basic sense, is a negative attitude that emerges from feelings of dislike or “antipathy based on a faulty and inflexible generalization” that results from one's strong attachment to a particular group, which eventually leads one to prejudice against others. Its expressions are generally directed from the dominant ones to the dominated ones (Allport, 1954). But an enemy image cannot be simply based on feelings of hatred because it always includes threats of violence and destruction. It refers to a group's belief that its security and fundamental values are directly and gravely challenged by another group, and so survival and existence are at stake (Luostarinen, 1989). These facts point out two types of Islamophobias: one that stems from dislike or antipathy towards Muslims, and the other that stems from the perception of Muslims as enemies. This signifies that while both Islamophobias can manifest similarly in different social contexts, the causes of Islamophobic attitudes can differ from society to society. This raises the question of what causes contemporary Islamophobia in Europe and the USA, where discrimination against Muslims has risen significantly, particularly after the 9/11 attacks in the USA and the 7/7 bombing in London (Cesari, 2012; Croft, 2012).

Contemporary Islamophobia manifests itself in “discourses” and “practices,” originating in media and political domains with the integration of Muslim immigrant populations in Western societies and subsequently intensified after 9/11. The Islamophobic discourses serve to legitimize the Islamophobic practices, such as discrimination against Muslims (Cesari, 2006). It calls into question how Islamophobia operates discursively. The following section attempts to offer a framework for this.

2.1 Theoretical Framework

There is no single theory of Islamophobia, but rather a collection of theoretical perspectives that scholars use to explain how discrimination against Muslims emerged and persisted. One of the recent perspectives defines it as a corpus of three phobias—threat perceptions, prejudice, and racism. These phobias are the result of three representational (discursive) processes: “problematization,” “otherization,” and “racialization.” These are, in fact, the three stages of Islamophobia construction, with each manifestation leading to the next (Tariq & Iqbal, 2023b).

First, “problematization” refers to how and why certain things—behaviours, phenomena, or processes—become viewed and treated as problems that need consideration, regulation, or intervention. Though it has practical dimensions, it is fundamentally a discursive process that creates knowledge, ideologies, categories, and vocabularies through which a problem is made thinkable (Foucault, 1983). For instance, Islam has been increasingly portrayed as a triple threat—political, civilizational, and security—in Western media and political discourses since the Iranian Revolution and subsequent events like the American

hostage crisis, the Rushdie affair, the 9/11 attacks, and other violent incidents involving Muslims (Esposito, 2016). These discourses contributed to the perception that Muslims were a problem for the West while facilitating xenophobic attitudes towards Muslims within Western societies.

Second, "otherization" implies a more institutionalized or systemic process of producing "others" through discourses, policies, practices, or cultural norms. Otherness is fundamentally the result of a discursive process through which a dominant (in)group creates one or many (out)groups or "others" by stigmatizing actual or imaginary differences, presented as a rejection of identity and thus as a reason for possible discrimination (Staszak, 2008). This is a historical process; for example, Edward Said's landmark study, *Orientalism*, explains how colonial powers constructed Muslims as "Orient" (Other) through discourses and representations during the post-Enlightenment period (Said, 1978). For him, the Islamic revolution in Iran in 1979 was the first instance in modern history of Islam giving Westerners reasons for making Muslims a collective "Other" (Said, 1981). Since then, Islam has been the focus of terrifying news in the Western media, which has fostered the idea that Muslims are an ideologically and culturally different entity.

Third, "racialization" is another discursive process that legitimizes and normalizes the differences among people or races. It entails the creation and circulation of meanings about race through language, symbols, and representations (Murji & Solomos, 2005). Some groups are described as exhibiting tendencies toward certain ascribed attributes and behaviours (Carr & Haynes, 2015). Consider, for example, how Muslims have since 9/11 been racialized through discourse and policy, and how the "Muslim terrorist" stereotype (or trope) was imposed upon Muslims apart from their wishes. This racial trope has altered American understanding of Islam, displacing it as a faith (Gotanda, 2011). Consider Huntington's *Clash of Civilizations* thesis, which portrayed Islam as a cultural entity and proposed that, rather than ideological or other considerations, future battles would be founded on cultural (civilizational) differences (Huntington, 1996). Such interpretations of Islam facilitated a division between Islam and the rest.

The preceding discussions point to the discursive nature of Islamophobia. Its expressions can be found in everyday conversation and media discourse (Conway, 1997). However, media discourse is readily available in modern society and provides data that can also be utilized to study Islamophobic attitudes. It not only represents how speech communities employ their attitudes towards others but also has an impact on them. Because of what it represents, media discourses can reveal a lot about the nature of Islamophobia in US and UK society (Bell & Garrett, 1998).

2.2 Research Questions

1. How do the US and UK press discourses represent Muslims and Islam?
 - 1.1 What is the process of constructing Islamophobia in these discourses, and what strategies are involved?
 - 1.2 What is the nature of Islamophobia in the US and UK societies?

3. METHODOLOGY

The researchers used the discourse analysis methodology to study this phenomenon. They applied the analytical framework of the Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA), which is three-dimensional: (a) establishing the specific contents of a given discourse; (b) investigating the discursive strategies; and (c) studying the linguistic means (as types) and the specific, context-dependent linguistic realizations (as tokens) of the discriminatory stereotypes (Baker et al., 2013; Wodak & Reisigl, 2001).

The first step, however, in any discourse analysis is the systematic selection of data. The data analysed in this study consisted of news stories and leading articles (including features and editorials) from *The Independent* (ID) and *The Washington Post* (WP). Since national dailies and magazines are the most obvious sources for studying dominant voices (or discourses) in any society, only leading newspapers were selected for this study (Mautner, 2008). The selection was made because both newspapers have a

global readership, are known for balanced reporting, and have been classified as left-leaning in their respective societies (Perez & Matusitz, 2025; Phillips, 2018). The data was obtained through *LexisNexis* by searching for the terms “Islam” and “Muslim.” This search yielded 446 articles (218 from WP and 228 from ID) published from November 2016 to December 2017. This timeframe was chosen because it corresponds with Trump’s pronouncement of halting Muslim immigration to combat terrorism, which is considered a “critical discourse moment” in the news coverage (Carvalho, 2008).

To begin, all 446 articles (from then on “texts”) were reviewed for Islamophobic content. This review involved several critical readings of each text to determine its relevance to the study. It reduced the texts to a sample of 38 with Islamophobic content for in-depth analysis, including 17 from ID and 21 from WP, which discussed the themes of Islamic “extremism,” “radicalization,” “terrorism,” Muslim “immigration,” and “integration” into Western society.

The sample texts were then studied for the basic discursive strategies for creating prejudice as a collective attitude, which included “nomination” and “predication” strategies that help understand how people, objects, or phenomena are represented and constructed. The former are used to linguistically represent and construct individuals, and they involve the use of membership categorization devices like metaphors, metonymies, and synecdoches (Wodak, 2011). The latter includes the use of predicative nouns, adjectives, and collocations to construct people positively or negatively (Wodak, 2011). Some nomination strategies may also resemble predication since they include labels for people that are either positive or negative (Wodak & Reisigl, 2001). The table 1 below lists the strategies investigated in this analysis, together with the linguistic means of realization for each, from the list compiled by Wodak and Reisigl (2001).

Table 1: *Nomination and predication strategies*

SN	Strategy	Linguistic means of realization	Examples of realization (types)
(1)	Collectivization	Collective nouns Deictics Collective proper nouns	people, world, nation, group us, them, they ISIS, al-Qaeda, Taliban
(2)	Spatialisation	Toponyms Anthroponyms	Iran, Egypt, Libya residents, citizens
(3)	De-Spatialisation	De-toponymic anthroponyms De-adverbial anthroponyms	Syrian, Iraqi, American Outsider
(4)	Explicit Dissimilation	Xenonyms	Alien
(5)	Somatisation	Racionyms Genderonyms Gerontonyms	white, black man, female children, young, younger
(6)	Culturalisation	Ethnonyms Linguonyms Religionyms Primitivisation	Uighur, Uzbek German-speaking Sunni, Salafist, Barbaric
(7)	Actionalisation	Actionyms	Refugees, migrants
(8)	Professionalization	Praxonyms	journalists, Imam
(9)	Militarisation	Militarionyms	Militant, fighter, enemy
(10)	Social Problematisation	Negationyms Criminonyms Negative ideologonyms Victimonyms	Illegals terrorist, bomber, Jihadist, Islamist Victim

Finally, the descriptive findings of the textual analysis were contextualized following DHA's "triangulation procedure," which helps reduce the possibility of critical bias and ensure the validity of the results (Wodak & Reisigl, 2001).

4. RESULTS

The focus of this analysis is to look at how Islamophobia is constructed discursively and what strategies are used in this process. A strategy is a more or less accurate and more or less deliberate set of practices (including discursive practices) used to accomplish a certain social, political, psychological, or linguistic goal. While the discursive strategy is the systematic use of language (Wodak & Reisigl, 2001). The manifestations of discursive strategies used for Muslims in the analysed texts from ID and WP were realized using linguistic means specific to each strategy explained in Table 1. All the instances of linguistic realizations were manually extracted, transcribed, and categorized. The table below summarizes the results of these realizations:

Table 2: *Discursive strategies used for Muslims*

No.	Strategies	Number of Instances (tokens)		
		WP	ID	Total
(1)	Collectivisation	277	271	548
(2)	Spatialisation	126	67	193
(3)	De-Spatialisation	56	63	119
(4)	Dissimilation	01	02	3
(5)	Somatisation	24	63	87
(6)	Culturalisation	116	87	203
(7)	Actionalisation	56	10	66
(8)	Professionalization	62	48	110
(9)	Militarisation	45	56	101
(10)	Social Problematisation	64	106	170
	Total	827	773	1600

Table 2 shows that "collectivization" was the most frequently used strategy for representing Muslims in both newspapers, and that other strategies followed it, but less frequently in terms of the number of instances. These findings are in line with those of KhosraviNik et al. (2012), who found that between 1996 and 2006, collectivization was one of the most commonly used strategies by the British press in its representation of "Racism." It is a linguistic process in which individuals or groups are systematically presented as a single homogeneous group, with all members sharing common qualities, cultures, motives, intentions, and social positions, or they are reduced to the category of "Other" (KhosraviNik et al., 2012). The linguistic devices involved in this process include collectives and deictics. This analysis found six types of collective nouns that were frequently used to collectivize Muslims, including "community," "nation," "world," "group," "organization," and "people." The use of such nouns tends to portray Muslims as a single religious category (Baker et al., 2013). The researchers then identified the collocates of these nouns.

A "collocate" is a word that appears regularly adjacent to another word, generally more often than we would expect the two words to come together by coincidence. Baker et al. (2013) contend that the identification of collocates is a useful tool for textual analysis because it helps unveil ideological uses of language. The most commonly used collocate for the identified nouns was "Muslim." Consider the terms "Muslim community," "Muslim nation," and "Muslim world" found in the texts examined, which tend to present a picture of a "monolithic Islam" (Baker et al., 2013). This analysis revealed some functional categories, represented through collective proper nouns, that defined Islam in each newspaper. The table below lists these nouns:

Table 3: *Collective proper nouns used for Muslims*

Collective Proper Nouns (types)	Number of Instances (tokens)	
	WP	ID
Council on American-Islamic Relations	06	00
Muslim Brotherhood/Brotherhood	23	00
Taliban	05	05
al-Qaeda	14	19
Islamic State	39	03
ISIS/Isis	09	58
Others	02	15
Total	98	100

Table 3 shows that the ID writers frequently used three proper nouns in their discourse on Islam but primarily focused on two: “Isis” and “al-Qaeda,” whereas the WP writers represented all with an emphasis on two, namely “Islamic State” and “Muslim Brotherhood.” Those are the names of Islamic-oriented groups, and they were all deemed to represent an ideological movement, namely the “Muslim Brotherhood,” which was described as “the mother of political Islamist movements” (A. Hauslohner, 2017a). These results revealed that writers in both newspapers portrayed Islam as a monolithic bloc, but in two distinct ways: first, “genericization” (or generalization), which means the representation of people or groups as a monolithic bloc; and second, “specification,” which means the representation of a specimen of that bloc (Wodak & Reisigl, 2001). It can, therefore, be deduced that the WP writers tend to portray a generalized picture of Islam, whereas the ID writers present a specialized image of this religion.

The results so far indicate that the nature of Islam, its functions, and its psychological and social impact are all situated within the discourse context and change as the context changes. To investigate this, the researchers looked for the commonly used adjectives for the proper noun “Islam,” since they could help in understanding the nature of Islam portrayed in each newspaper (Richardson, 2007). This investigation revealed two main adjectives: one is “Sunni,” which describes Islam in the ID, and the other is “political,” which defines Islam in the WP. In ID, the term “Sunni Islam” was used to refer to a religious ideology, namely Wahhabism, which was described as a “puritanical,” “fanatical,” and “regressive” type of Islam (Cockburn, 2017). In WP, the term “Islam” was used to refer to a political system directed by Shariah, which was described as a “political ideology,” rather than a religion (Schulson, 2017). Wahhabism and Shariah, two distinct ideologies of Islam, have a lot in common. Every follower of Wahhabism practices Shariah, but not all Shariah practitioners follow Wahhabism. Yet, both types of practitioners are called “Muslims.” This suggests that the term “Muslim” has two separate connotations in the UK and US contexts.

This analysis further revealed that the groups listed in Table 2 and those deemed to represent them, Muslims, were frequently represented by negative *ideologonyms* like “jihadists.” This indicates that Muslim groups in both newspapers were presented in the context of Islamic jihad, but the ideological dynamics of jihad were found to be different. Consider the left-hand collocates of the word “jihadist,” identified in the ID, that include the words “Salafist,” “Salafi,” and “Sunni.” These words seem to be the attributes of Salafism, or “Wahhabism.” Table 2 has already revealed two groups, “Isis” and “al-Qaeda,” which were frequently named in the ID and deemed to represent Wahhabism in the UK context, and the identified collocates used for these groups suggest that they were viewed as collective actors of Salafi Jihadism, as also evidenced by the example below:

“What has been termed Salafi jihadism, the core beliefs of Isis and al-Qaeda, developed out of Wahhabism” (Cockburn, 2017).

In WP, the word “cultural,” the terms “wearing suits” (A. Hauslohner, 2017b) and “tribal cult” were commonly used as collocates of the word “jihadist” (Lozada, 2016). These terms could be said to be the attributes fitting Muslim groups in the context of civilizational jihad. This implies that all the groups listed in Table 2 were viewed as advocates of Shariah, and those deemed to represent them, Muslims, were presented as civilizational Jihadists in the US context. The following examples suggest the same:

“The Islamic State and al-Qaeda, which all along have promoted the idea of civilizational war [jihad] with the West” (A. Hauslohner, 2016).

The ideological motivations for Salafi jihadism and civilizational jihad were different in both discourse contexts, yet they were both presented as drivers of the same phenomenon, viz., “terrorism.” Bassam Tibi considers jihadism, which uses terrorism as a military strategy, to be a subset of Islamism (Tibi, 2007). Further investigation revealed that the negative *ideologonyms*, used as collocates of the noun “group” in both newspapers, also include the terms “Islamist,” “extremist,” “radical,” and “terrorist.” It is unlikely that these words were used unintentionally since they all refer to the phenomenon of Islamism. If Islam is likely to be associated with terror, the writers’ use of such negative words to characterize Muslim groups tended to achieve the same purpose.

However, the psychological and social impact of Islam’s terror differs depending on the discourse context. In the US discourse context, the groups listed in Table 2 were all considered to be attempting to subjugate US society to a totalizing Shariah-directed state apparatus. For example, a statement in WP reads, “Muslim religious law, or sharia, was a “dangerous political ideology” that a cabal of Muslims hoped to impose on the United States” (Schulson, 2017). Here, the word “dangerous,” to collocate with the term “political ideology,” tends to problematize not only Shariah but Islam as a whole as a threat, since one cannot find any Muslim who is practicing Islam without adhering to Shariah. The in-depth analysis revealed a general perception of US society that they consider “Shariah is the cause of terror.” Consider a US pilot’s comments published in WP, which read, “Sharia—the guiding laws and principles of Islam—is the embodiment of that (spiritual battle) evil” (A. Hauslohner, 2017b).

The facts revealed so far point to the construction of all Muslims as terrorists in the US discourse context. Consider the metaphor “evil” used in WP to figuratively define “Shariah” as a dangerous ideology, and when it is collocated with the noun “people,” like in the term “evil people,” it tends to portray all Muslims as evil (terrorists) (J. H. Warrick, 2016). Also, some alleged claims found in WP tended to normalize Muslim-terrorist perception, such as Islamic State’s 2015 statement from its magazine, Dabiq, “warned that the terrorists would soon begin targeting the West” (J. Warrick, 2016), and the former Middle East analyst at the CIA, Dan Byman, appeared to be endorsing this warning, saying that “I think it’s likely there will be terrorist attacks in the coming years” (Jaffe, 2016). These findings revealed that in the US discourse context, sweeping generalizations about Islamic terror were made in ways that did not occur in the case of the UK discourse context. Consider the headline from ID, for example, which reads, “It is pious and inaccurate to say (Salman) Abedi’s actions had ‘nothing to do with Islam’” (Cockburn, 2017). Though it tended to link terror to Islam, he did so not to the entire religion but to a specific Muslim (Sunni) community. The text that followed the headline echoed this, which states, Wahhabism is “responsible for preparing the soil for the beliefs and actions likely to have inspired the suicide bomber Salman Abedi” (Cockburn, 2017). This implies that only Wahhabism was problematized as a source of terror in the UK context and that this threat did not apply to all Muslims but to a portion of them who profess support for Sunni Islam.

This textual analysis revealed that the two newspapers from different social contexts used a similar process to promote fear of Islam, or more precisely, to construct Islamophobia. This process begins with the cognitive categorization of Muslims into a single religious category, Islam, then splitting this category

into sub-categories, attributing terror characteristics to these categories, and so problematizing Islam and making Muslims a problematic identity. The ideological dynamics underlying Muslim identity were found to differ in the US and UK discourse contexts. In the US context, Islam was problematized by its ideology of “Shariah,” presented as a cause of terrorism, and this threat was applied to the entire Muslim community, thus cultivating fear of all Muslims. In the UK context, Islam was problematized by its brand “Wahhabism,” presented as a source of terror, and this threat was applied to a specific segment of Muslims, not the entire Muslim community, thus cultivating fear of most Muslims, especially those who practice Sunni Islam. Whether fear of all Muslims or most Muslims, both lead to feelings of hatred for Islam, and this serves as the foundation for otherizing Muslims (Conway, 1997).

The process of otherizing begins by referring to individuals or groups via deictic expressions or deixis like “they,” “them,” or “their” and ends by reducing them to the category of “Other” (Brons, 2015). The linguistic means, which accounted for the collectivization strategy in the analysed texts, also included deictic expressions. The table below presents details of those expressions:

Table 4: *Deictics used for Muslims*

Deictics	Number of Instances	
	WP	ID
We	00	07
Us	02	00
Them	20	24
They	16	52
Their	15	17
Total	53	100

Table 4 shows that the writers in both newspapers used deictics such as “they,” “them,” and “their” to represent Muslims more frequently than “us” and “we.” Deictic (or indexical) expressions are the linguistic means used “to perform deixis—that is, to prompt the interpreter to relate the uttered indexical expression to various situational features” (Chilton, 2004). Take, for example, the words “we,” “us,” or “our,” which may be used to lead interpreters to think of group identity as “insider” (in-group), whereas “they,” “them,” or “their” can lead interpreters to think of group identity as “outsiders” (out-group). This shows that the writers’ frequent use of words like “they” and “them” for Muslims in both newspapers was intended to enforce or reinforce the perception of Muslims as a collective “other.” This is the basic perception related to Islamophobia, which the first Islamophobia Report identified as prejudice (Conway, 1997). In this sense, the otherization of Muslims may be characterized as a manifestation of anti-Muslim prejudice (Iqbal, 2020). Overall results from this analysis suggest that discursive manifestations of Islamophobia in both discourse contexts were the same, but that the reasons for this prejudiced attitude towards Muslims were different in each context. The next section discusses the key findings in both discourse contexts.

5. DISCUSSION AND FINDINGS

The textual analysis identified the basic process of Islamophobia construction, which begins with collectivizing Muslims into a monolithic category, Islam, and then attributing threatening characteristics to this category to instill prejudice against Muslims. It also identified discursive manifestations of this prejudice in the form of otherization, which creates the perception of Muslims as different, the “other.” The ideological dynamics underlying this perception in the UK and US discourse contexts were found to be different. In the UK context, “Muslim Other” referred to those who adhere to “Wahhabism,” defined as a “religious ideology,” whereas in the US context, it referred to those who practice “Shariah,” described as a “political ideology.” This suggests that a different Islam-phobia predominates in each context: “religio-phobia” in the UK and “politico-phobia” in the US. These phobias appeared to be the continuation of past prejudices against Muslims.

Consider that contemporary anti-Muslim prejudice is driven by two sentiments: “dread or hatred of Islam” and, thus, “fear or dislike of all or most Muslims” (Conway, 1997). But these sentiments emerged in the 7th century when Islam started to spread in medieval Europe. Islam spread rapidly and dramatically in its early decades, posing challenges to the religious, cultural, and political domains of medieval Europe (Lewis, 1994). Consider the Eastern Empire, centered on Byzantium, which had previously seen greatness but was now up against the Muslim caliphate, a terrible enemy. This sent a wave of terror and insecurity among the existing European empires because changes in power changed the landscape of 7th and 8th century Byzantium, resulting in changes in the political, cultural, and even religious contexts as indigenous peoples began to succumb to Muslim conquerors. The Orthodox Christian hierarchy, the spiritual arm of Byzantine political power, saw rising Islam as a unique threat to its legacy (Lewis, 1994; Wheatcroft, 2005).

John of Damascus (675 AD–749/750) was the first Orthodox Christian to respond to Islamic challenges within Orthodoxy. He had intimate knowledge of Islam, which led him to issue the first polemical response, demonizing Islam (Meyendorff, 1964). There could be many reasons for his hostility toward Islam, but Iqbal (2020) cites a few. For example, John was a high-ranking priest whose sayings had a considerable following, but the spread of Islam called into question his prophetic character, and the massive conversion of Christians to Islam posed an immediate threat to his realm of supremacy. John's family had close ties with the Umayyad Caliph Yazid because his father had previously worked for the Caliph's administration, but his Christian opponents alleged that when Khalid Bin Waleed (RA) stormed his region, his predecessors ceded Damascus to the Muslims. Perhaps all of this made him an irreversible enemy of Islam, and he never stopped insulting this religion and its adherents.

John portrayed Islam as a “pagan cult” and a “heresy” of Christianity and Judaism, blaming Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) for drafting the Qur'an himself to convert people from other religions to Islam (Al-Olaqi, 2010; Rhodes, 2009). He referred to Muslims as “Saracens,” whose customs and behaviors were considered contradictory to those of Christianity and Judaism. He differentiated Muslims from others by labeling circumcision a “barbaric practice” and denouncing Muslim edicts such as not observing the Sabbath, not being baptized, not eating forbidden (haram) foods, and not drinking wine—all of which are commands from Quranic revelation (Janosik, 2016). Similarly, early Syriac writers referred to Muslims as “pagans,” “son of Ishmael,” “son of Hagar,” “Ishmaelite,” “Hagarene,” or “Arabian,” among other labels indicating contempt for Islam and portraying it as a false religion—heresy—and positioning Muslims as a religious other (Penn, 2015).

Alternatively, take into account the early reactions to Muslim conquests, which included portraying Saracens as the “Antichrist” or the “Scourge of God's Fury” (Levin, 2011). These portrayals, which seemed to be the result of early European religious and political leaders' “fear” and “frustration,” accentuated the psychological divisions that existed between early Muslims and non-Muslims (Levin, 2011). Consider how a 9th-century Spanish priest, Saint Eulogius, otherized Muslims with expressions like “our servants are now ruling us,” “they have turned our inheritance into strangers and our houses to aliens,” and they have “put our religion and culture at risk” (Tolan, 2002). This was the beginning of anti-Muslim othering discourse that remained at the heart of anti-Islam polemics in early Europe. That is why Norman Daniel called the early medieval polemicists “architects” of anti-Muslim prejudice, which continued to abound in the modern West (Daniel, 1960).

John and other early religious and political leaders faced similar challenges that a resurgent Islam presents to the West today, including demographic shifts, cultural and doctrinal conflicts, and political dangers from emerging caliphate movements such as the “Islamic State” (Janosik, 2016). And so the historically inherited prejudicial fear of Islam's expansion persisted in modern Europe, as evidenced by the statement found in ID, which reads, “Islam is meant to triumph over the infidels in a final battle” (Sengupta, 2016).

Prejudice is a negative attitude, but it becomes discrimination when it manifests (Rosado, 1998). Othering discourse has been one of the most visible expressions of discrimination against Muslims throughout

history. Whenever these expressions took the form of presenting Muslims as enemies, hatred for Islam took on a collective character, and discrimination against Muslims became structural, which resulted in wars against them. Consider crusade propaganda, which reflected Europeans' pride in themselves and hatred for others. It included claims such as "Islam reverses Christian moral concepts" (Daniel, 1989a), "Islam is a violent religion, promotes coercive forms of conversion, grew by the sword, is associated with heightened sexuality," or "incapable of democracy" (Bouma, 2016), all of which tended to present Muslims as "implacable enemies" who advocate a faith designed to replace and destroy Christianity. This phenomenon was described as "cultural ethnocentrism" since it enabled structural discrimination against Muslims (Daniel, 1989a).

One of the oldest examples of structural discrimination could be the Vienne Council's (1312) decision to regulate Muslim prayer calls in medieval Europe (Constable, 2010). That decision had behind it the anti-Islam propaganda made by the clerics who criticized Muslims' religious noise on Christian territories and interpreted that the call to prayer "invokes and extols" the Prophet's name, and, bizarrely, Moslems "adore" Mohammed in their mosques (Daniel, 1989a). This was arguably the first time in history that legal conservatism combined with anti-Islam propaganda to the point of self-delusion. The same continues to abound in Europe now, as seen by an ID commentator's suggestions for Trump that:

"America could make itself even safer by passing a law that calls to prayers from a mosque are no longer allowed to witter on about Islam. Trump can announce none of this is anti-Muslim, as Muslims are perfectly welcome to live in America as long as they convert to Christianity. And any that can't be bothered will be deported to the 12th century. Why can't they be calm and peaceful like us?" (Steel, 2016).

The above suggestions demonstrate how Muslims are otherized through deictic expressions—us vs. them. They also reflect the author's bias against Islam, which appeared to have been inherited from the past, given the writer's reference to the 12th century, when Christian administrators used institutional discrimination against Muslims to exclude them from European society. The Christian rulers were so prejudiced that they even restricted Muslims' religious and cultural freedom, and the call to prayer from mosques was subject to legislation and negotiations (Daniel, 1989b). For example, Alfonso X of Castile and Leon (1252-84) ordered that Muslims should be treated as second-class citizens since they are deceitful creatures. He banned the construction of new mosques, declared existing mosques to be royal property, and enforced marriage and sex laws on Muslims (Iqbal, 2020). Muslims across Europe were forced to live in ghettos and were subjected to social restrictions (Soyer, 2007). These state-level actions appear to be motivated by fear of Islam as a religion, which changed when Europeans began to come out of the Middle Ages around the 14th and 15th centuries.

By the end of the Middle Ages, Islam was no longer considered a strong doctrinal foe but rather a "religion of primitive nomads devoid of intellectual or cultural sophistication" whose rise to power was only for establishing political hegemony (Lumbard, 2009). This led to a variety of interpretations of Muslims as a threat to the sociopolitical continuity of Europe. This was perhaps because the Ottoman Empire conquered Constantinople in the mid-15th century, which the earlier Umayyad armies had failed to do in the 7th century. In addition, Turkish conquests from Athens (1459) through Vienna and Cyprus (1571) reinforced European inferiority complexes, which began to view Turks as greater external and internal enemies of Europe. After the fall of the Ottoman Empire in the 17th century, the fear of Muslims as enemies receded, but hatred for them as "others" lingered in European imaginations (Lewis, 1994; Vitkus, 1999).

The 1979 Islamic revolution in Iran toppled Reza Pahlevi, a staunch and strategically important US ally, which gave way to the perception of Muslims as enemies in the West (Poole, 1999; Roberson, 2005). The

analysed discourses point out that this perception is prevalent in the United States. The discourses analysed in WP portrayed Islam as “an enemy of the state” (A. M. Hauslohner, 2017), citing statements such as “[...] during World War II and the Cold War, the wars unleashed against us were waged in the names of our enemies’ doctrines, just like jihad today” (Lozada, 2016). Further, the analysis of intertextuality and interdiscursivity found that anti-Muslim discourses in WP were mostly driven by political rhetoric, which presented an official vision of US authorities on Islam. For example, a statement from Kelly, Trump’s nominee for Secretary of Defense, that said, “Our country today is in a life-and-death struggle against an evil enemy,” was not re-presented in WP inadvertently (Jaffe, 2016). The results of the textual analysis lead one to conclude that Kelly’s use of the metaphor “evil” together with the word “enemy” typically problematizes all Muslims as enemies of the US and so lumps them all together under the category of “radical other.” Flynn’s assertion in WP that “this new fight (is) a multi-generational and civilizational conflict against radical Islam” further supports this (Lozada, 2016). In addition, Muslims in WP were usually referred to using terms (*actionyms*) such as “immigrants,” “migrants,” “refugees,” and “asylum seekers,” in an attempt to put them in the socially acceptable category of “outsiders” and position them as undesirable members of US society. When these findings are looked at in light of the facts revealed above, they point out that since the Iranian revolution, US authorities have opposed the existence of “Sharia-compliant Muslims” in US society (A. Hauslohner, 2017b). Trump, of course, is no exception, having openly declared that “anyone who believes Sharia law supplants American law will not be given an immigrant visa” (A. Hauslohner, 2016). These findings lead to the following conclusion.

6. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that contemporary Islamophobia is a mediatized phenomenon that is constructed through a discourse that portrays Islam as a source of terror and Muslims as fearsome creatures. The basic discursive strategies of nomination and predication are involved in this construction. This process begins with the collectivization of Muslims into a single monolithic entity; they all belong to Islam. The nature of Islam on both sides of the Atlantic—the US and the UK—was found to be different. It represents a religious ideology portrayed as “Wahhabism” in the UK discourse context and a political ideology portrayed as “Shariah” in the US discourse context. The two Islams were similar in that they were perceived and problematized in their respective contexts as a source of the same problem, terrorism. Many Europeans and Americans develop prejudices against Muslims as a result of how Islam is portrayed in the media.

This is not to say that the media is solely to blame for this hostile attitude, as many other factors are also at play. One of these is that anti-Muslim prejudice has a long history and may be traced back to the 7th century, when fear of the rising new religion led to hatred towards Muslims. As Islam continued to spread in medieval Europe, Muslims became enemies of Europeans, who waged holy wars against distant Muslims and instituted state-level discrimination against nearby Muslims. Thus, throughout Islamic history, Islam has been a source of biased attitudes towards Muslims, sometimes out of dislike for this religion and sometimes out of enmity toward Muslims. This study concludes that the source of contemporary Islamophobic attitudes in the UK is historically continued hatred for Islam; in the US, it is enmity towards Muslims that has persisted since the Crusades and resurfaced following the Iranian Revolution.

The researchers observed that multiple actors were involved in the negative representation of Islam and Muslims in the analysed discourses. In the UK discourse context, reporters and commentators were the main actors who expressed and enforced their own biases about Islam, bolstering historically continued anti-Muslim prejudice. On the other side, in the US discourse context, leading politicians and state authorities fuelled anti-Islam rhetoric, inciting enmity towards Muslims. Therefore, the researchers recommend more similar research that focuses on the actors involved in negative representations of Muslims and the motivations behind them.

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