



Media and the Muslims

A thesis on media framing & priming in Argentina

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Abstract

All over the western world, media are giving Muslims the role as scapegoats for everything that is wrong with society. Through grave generalizations as well as alleged connections between Islam and terrorism, social categorizations are established in which Muslims become the 'others'. Research has been made on a various amount of western nations, with the exception of a few, and this thesis explores how Argentinean media portray Islam and Muslims. With the use of quantitative and qualitative text analyses, the result will show the levels of priming and framing in relation to earlier research. By assuming social constructivism, a high frequency of these two 'faces of power' would affect societal relations, possibly creating a gap between an 'us' and 'them'. Our findings suggest, however, this is not the case in Argentina; on the contrary, Argentinean media lack the frames which make Muslims 'others'. This important discovery implies that the relationship between Islam and the West of today does not necessarily have to be one of two combatants, incapable of coexisting.

Keywords: Muslims| Islam| Media| Framing| Priming

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background

The media coverage on Islam and Muslims has reached a peak during recent decades¹, in the wake of tragic events such as the Al-Qaeda attack of the World Trade Center and Pentagon in 2001², and the London and Madrid bombings in 2004 and 2005 respectively³. There is a common denominator for all these actions: the ones allegedly responsible were all Muslim⁴. This has been widely acknowledged and emphasized by western media, and the consequences have been devastating for the Muslim identity. Laws have been stipulated in parts of Europe against, for instance, Muslim clothing as the *niqab*, and the construction of minarets⁵. As Said, somewhat controversially, states: “[T]here is a consensus on ‘Islam’ as a kind of scapegoat for everything we do not happen to like about the world’s new political, social, and economic patterns”⁶.

This image is further fuelled by the media, which both by using value-laden language and by giving it disproportional weight and coverage results in sustained stereotypes⁷. Media is a powerful actor in conveying messages, so called ‘priming’ and ‘framing’⁸, to the public and thereby influencing its opinions. This has implications for societal relationships, since an ‘us’ and a ‘them’ are created. Studies on the media have been conducted in a wide selection of nations – including Australia, France, Germany, Great Britain and USA – in which a significant amount of Muslims, both as a percentage of the population and in nominal terms, live. These media give us, according to Kai Hafez, “an image of oriental life that consists of 50 percent wars, catastrophes, revolutions, terrorism, crises and tensions”⁹.

There are, however, nations with a reputation of lacking these tensions within society. Much indicates that Argentina, a western nation¹⁰ with a significant minority population of immigrated Muslims (784 000 out of 40.6 million¹¹), belongs to this group¹². Apart from the rumours, Argentina has once

¹ Shadid & van Koningveld (2002), p. 174.

² *The New York Times*, ‘A NATION CHALLENGED: EVIDENCE; British Detail Bin Laden’s Link to U.S. Attacks’, October 5th 2001.

³ For the London attacks, see: *BBC News UK*, ‘Bomber video ‘points to al-Qaeda’’, September 2nd 2005. For the Madrid bombings, see: *BBC News Europe*, ‘Madrid blasts: The Islamic connection’, March 30th 2004.

⁴ See section: *Conceptual explanations*.

⁵ *BBC News Europe*, ‘The Islamic veil across Europe’, April 11th 2011; *BBC News*, ‘Swiss voters back ban on minarets’, November 29th 2009.

⁶ Said (1997), p. lv.

⁷ Shadid & Koningveld (2002); Gardner et al. (2008); Brown (2006).

⁸ McCombs (2006), p. 118.

⁹ Hafez (2000), p. 191.

¹⁰ For further discussion on the term ‘western nation’, see section: *Conceptual explanations*.

¹¹ *Pew Research Center*, ‘Mapping the global Muslim population: A report on the size and distribution of the world’s Muslim population’, (2009); *BBC*, ‘Argentina country profile’.

elected a president of Muslim origin, Carlos Menem, which makes it an exceptional case in relation to other nations in the western world¹³. Additionally, while nations such as France have passed laws prohibiting the niqab, Argentina has taken the opposite path by legislating for the Muslim right to wear such clothing¹⁴. Media undoubtedly play a major role in shaping societies through distributing values and opinions. Does this mean, then, that Argentinean media has another way of portraying Muslims?

The aim of this thesis is to investigate how the Argentinean media frame Muslims and Islam by exploring whether there is an Argentinean media framing of Muslims in 'us and them' terms. In other words, are Muslims generalized according to homogenous standards, and separated in relation to the dominant group in society, hence considered 'others'? Additionally, do results differ from what has been presented in studies on other western media? The result will be interpreted through analyzing the Argentinean written media and the images provided by it, in accordance with the theories presented further on. The images will be visualized and emphasized by arranging the media coverage into three categories: *Culture*, *Religion* and *Political structure*.

1.2 Literature review

In earlier research, much is claimed to be true about Muslims and the media. Literature has covered numerous subjects involving these two concepts individually, and in relation to each other. In Argentina, the studies have solely focused on them separately.

The literature on Islam in Argentina covers the history of Muslim immigrants from the middle of the 19th century, stretching beyond the 20th century¹⁵. It tells us of a nation founded by immigrants, most of those originating from Europe. The larger part of these immigrants were thus of Christian heritage, and Argentina became a nation dominated by European and Christian values.¹⁶ Given this fact, authors have debated whether these different groups of people can live peacefully side by side. Some assert that Muslims are uniquely well-integrated in the Argentinean society, while others maintain the complete opposite.¹⁷

¹² *El Clarín*, 'Un coloquio aborda dos siglos de interculturalidad cristiano-judeo-islámica', October 13th 2010; *Spero News*, 'Jews and Muslims worship together in Argentina', September 15th 2007.

¹³ Brieger & Herszkowich (2002), pp. 161-163.

¹⁴ *Página 12*, 'Con velo musulmán o la kipá', January 26th 2011; *PressTV*, 'Muslims welcome hijab law in Argentina', January 26th 2011.

¹⁵ Brieger & Herszkowich (2002).

¹⁶ Lewis (2001), p. 6; Bianchi (2004).

¹⁷ Brieger & Herszkowich (2002); Klich & Lesser (1996); Klich (1995); Akmir (1991); Velcamp (1997); Alsina & Peralta (1997).

Whereas the literature on Islam in Argentina is vast, less has been written on the nation's media. The focus of this literature lies on the history of the media and the changes in journalistic paradigms within the nation.¹⁸ In present time, however, no studies have been performed discussing the portrayal of Muslims in the media, and its potential impact on society; the images of Muslims are more commonly discussed through the perspectives of the people or the authorities¹⁹.

To find studies covering how media portray Muslims, one needs to turn to other western nations. The research on these nations discusses the provided images from the media, both through quantitative and qualitative analyses, of Muslims and Islam, in domestic as well as international contexts.

The most extensive part of this literature regards qualitative analyses on how Muslims and Islam are negatively portrayed. Generally, the picture presented is that of a media generalizing values ascribed to Islam and Muslims.²⁰ These images feed stereotypes which, according to the literature, distance the Islamic world from the West, provoking fear among westerners and contributing to polarized societies, hence making Muslims the 'others'. In many cases, this stereotype is argued to add to the belief that every Muslim is a potential terrorist. Three themes have dominated the literature, on how Muslims and Islam are generalized in the media: through religion, culture and political structure. Even though a great number of nations have been studied – including France, Germany, Great Britain and USA – there are still several which constitute a gap in the literature, including Argentina.

Within this literature, many scholars have additionally performed quantitative analyses over the changes in media coverage of Muslims and Islam. There is a clear pattern demonstrated: the overall coverage of Muslims has increased over the last decades as well as within the last decade. Secondly, this literature has explored the change in how Muslims and Islam are captured within a context of terrorism and fundamentalism, and likewise found a significant increase of its existence in western media. Recent studies have been performed in nations such as Great Britain and Germany, and these confirm this development.²¹ However, is this increase representative for all western nations? Until now, a study of this quantitative nature has not been made on Argentinean media, regarding the use of terms such as 'Muslims' and 'Islam'.

In sum, with their western-like civilization, and relatively large population of Muslims, Argentina is comparable to the nations used in previous research in Europe, Oceania and North America. Earlier

¹⁸ Margolis (2010); Bonner (2009); Waisbord (2010); Waisbord (1998).

¹⁹ Klich & Lesser (1996); Velcamp (1997).

²⁰ Shadid & Koningsveld (2002); Said (1997); Hafez (2000), Byng (2010); Gardner et al. (2008); Bowen (2007); Brown (2006); Abrahamian (2003); Hossain (2000); Brun & Hersh (2008); Poole (2000); Poole (2002); Larsson (2006); Mishra (2008).

²¹ Jaspal & Cinnirella (2010); Poole & Richardson (2006); Mishra (2008); Hafez (2000); Poole (2002).

studies on Argentina have dealt with the history and integration of Muslims, and media's historic changes. No scholars have, however, combined these two disciplines: investigating how media portray Muslims and Islam. This type of research has been performed, both quantitatively and qualitatively, on many western nations. One might wonder, then, if written media in Argentina provide the same image of Muslims as newspapers in, for example, Germany? And if not, what are the differences?

We intend to use the theories of priming and framing in order to compare Argentina to the research made in earlier studies on western nations, and to see whether Muslims are portrayed as 'others'. Through this aim, the thesis seeks to contribute to the already existing literature on media portrayal of Muslims and Islam.

1.3 Conceptual explanations

The concept Muslim is difficult to define since different people use the notion in different ways. This is although what we intend to show in this thesis, that newspapers are defining 'Muslims' and incorporating all people that could be considered Muslims to that definition. This derives them their rights as everyday citizens of society and defines them according to a set of attributes, including anyone who fulfils at least of one of these criteria. In other words, one might be considered Muslim even though he/she is not practicing Islam in any way, but in one sense, geographically or culturally, might seem to be a part of this religion. The consequence is, in some cases, that these individuals are ascribed the same attributes – e.g. values, political and religious beliefs, as well as traditions – as the created stereotype. Elisabeth Poole concludes that: "Islam is portrayed as monolithic and Muslims as homogenized; diversity and differences are ignored; the most potent image of Muslims is that of the Muslim fundamentalist; the same characteristics are attributed to all Muslims; Islam is a threat and its people extremists"²². There is a relatively high use of the concepts 'mass media' and 'media', which in this context signifies written media in form of daily or weekly newspapers and magazines. The term 'western society', or 'the West', is used throughout this thesis, and it will not be defined by us, but merely assumed that there is a common, general culture shared among various nations in the Americas, parts of Europe and Oceania.

²² Poole (2000), p. 157.

2. Theory

2.1 Theoretical approach

2.1.1 Social constructivism

The foundation of this thesis lies with the theory of social constructivism, which claims that our 'reality' is constructed through the language of social actors. The implication of such a theoretical framework is that people tend to interpret phenomena and meanings, and that these different concepts of the 'reality' change constantly through language. It is an ontological position asserting that definitions and meanings are not definite; instead they alter in appearance as a result of social interaction.²³ This makes those in control of words extremely powerful. It would consequently mean that media's unique position in interpreting events and therefore in constructing 'reality' results in a massive amount of influence. If mass media subsequently affect individuals' perception of events, as well as of themselves and others, it indirectly has a meaning for their interaction with each other. Portraying all Muslims as fundamentalists in the media – to take one provocative example – might then lead to an image that is generally recognized and accepted.

There is, however, not merely one kind of social constructivism, and its different sub-categories and divisions are not shared among all scientists²⁴. Colin Hay, for one, identifies at least two standpoints within this discipline: 1) thick constructivism, and 2) thin constructivism²⁵. Conventionally, constructivism is seen as the first type, today having more resemblance with post-modernism than anything else. It asserts that there is no external 'reality' independent of our knowledge and perceptions of it; instead 'reality' needs to be contextualized in order to understand human behaviour. For instance, when media picture some phenomena in one way or another, they are framing the world according to their context, which indisputably has several implications. Conversely, thin constructivism, as advocated by Alexander Wendt, relies more specifically on ideas and norms than its thicker sibling, drawing influence from both realist and neo-realist discourses. Political behaviour, thin constructivists claim, can be fully understood by this set of ideas, norms and sometimes also values²⁶. In relation to priming and framing, thin constructivism implies that 'reality' is constructed by language, in this case words formulated in normative, value-laden and ideational terms by the media.

Social constructivist theories, evidently, give media an important role in constructing reality. Hence they are essential for the understanding of texts and the potential effects they might have on society. This thesis, then, is an analysis of both, directly, the written media and, indirectly, the 'reality'. In

²³ Bryman (2008), pp. 19-20.

²⁴ Different types of social constructivism are found in among other: Kukla (2000).

²⁵ Hay (2002), p. 199.

²⁶ Hay (2002), pp. 199-200; Mercel (21 February 2001).

terms of how we are positioned on the constructivist scale, a thicker perspective will form our interpretations. When analyzing a text, it is important to take into account the context within which it is displayed, but also the normative statements that are formulated.

2.1.2 Framing: Creating an image

Everyone is arguably, to some extent, exposed by the content of the mass media. Maxwell McCombs asserts that the agenda-setting theory – how media set the public agenda – deals with how “these worldviews of journalism substantially influence the pictures of the world held by the public”²⁷. This reflects how what is considered important in the agenda-setting of the media, often becomes highly prioritized by the public.²⁸ He calls this phenomenon ‘framing’. Framing, applied to agenda-setting, means that the fundamental structural idea of news is to give a context or inform what an issue is in fact about, through the use of selection, emphasis, exclusion and elaboration²⁹. “Framing organizes thoughts and creates an integrated pattern that is significantly more than the sum of all parts”, and thus it “shapes how we think about political issues, political candidates, or other objects in the news”. Frames are described as ‘schemata for interpretation’.³⁰ They do not merely tell us what is relevant or not, they moreover “*promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation and/or treatment recommendation* for the item described”³¹. Hence, media set the agenda and decide its priorities, and even though they do not decide what people should think of/about or what to do, they still have importance for our understanding of events. In other words, as argued by several authors³², media constitute an important source of what is desirable or not, normal and abnormal, possible and unrealistic, and so on. This means, then, that the image provided of Islam and Muslims by the Argentinean media is the image that is seen by the public eye.

2.1.3 Priming: Repeating an image

Related to the concept of framing is ‘priming’; described as “the establishment of associations”³³. Priming asserts that “news media exposure presumably causes the activation of related knowledge, which is more likely to be retrieved and used in later judgments because it is more accessible in memory and comes to mind spontaneously and effortlessly”³⁴. Logically, it would signify that the

²⁷ McCombs (2006), p. 97.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 118.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 120.

³¹ McCombs is here quoting Entman (1993), p. 52 (emphasis in original).

³² Camañer & Nohrstedt (2006); Asp (2002); Livingstone (1996).

³³ McCombs (2006), p. 157.

³⁴ McCombs & Shaw (1972), p. 65.

more something is mentioned in the written media, e.g. a certain term, the more it is used in this sense by those who have been exposed to it. Priming is an important theory in the quantitative part of this thesis, since it will provide the foundation for some of the data collected, which is further discussed in *Methodology*. More specifically, we will investigate the priming level (i.e. frequency) of certain words ('Islam', 'Muslims' etc.) in the Argentinean media, as well as how some terms are related ('Muslims' and 'terrorism' etc.). The importance of it is evident: if Muslims are commonly associated with terrorism, this might lead to a general, societal image of all Muslims as terrorists.

To widen this power debate, we turn to the perceptions of how it is described, exercised and distributed in reality. In the 'faces of power' discussion, the definition of power is the main focus³⁵. Three different faces are being presented: 1) decision-making, 2) agenda-setting, and 3) preference-shaping. The first face is primarily connected to the behaviour in decision-making (power is exercised in relation to other individuals), in which power is a zero-sum game; some gain while others have to lose some³⁶. Agenda-setting, conversely, deals with the power that is given to those who select what is included and simultaneously excluded "in the formal process of political deliberation"³⁷. Among those who set the agenda, not at least politically, newspapers are represented. The third face of power is also heavily linked to the mass media and McCombs' theories of framing. Instead of ascribing power merely to situations of conflict, it is also exercised when one has the ability to actually influence someone else's preferences. As Lukes rhetorically asks: "[I]s it not the most insidious exercise of power to prevent people, to whatever degree, from having grievances by shaping their perceptions, cognitions, and preferences in such a way that they accept it (...) as natural or unchangeable"³⁸. The third face of power, and therefore also framing, can be described as specific branches of social constructivism; they shape 'reality' through language, in newspapers, television and other media instruments. In sum, framing tells us of the image that is given in the media, while priming establishes the frequency of which it is shown.

2.1.4 Generalizing: 'Us and Them'

Images and stereotypes are often created by the different actors in society, and this is as well reflected in the 'faces of power' discussion. We argue this to be a proof of social constructivism – reality constructed through language – and that the recognition of differences between groups of people creates a hierarchical structure in which discrimination occurs. The notion of systematic discrimination is discussed by Leonor Camañer and Stig Arne Nohrstedt, and is defined as "the majority's systematic

³⁵ Hay (2002), p. 70; Lukes (1974).

³⁶ Hay (2002), pp. 172-173.

³⁷ Ibid., pp. 174-175.

³⁸ Lukes (1974), p. 24.

actions of subordination and stigmatized definitions of certain ethnic, religious or immigrant groups”³⁹. This does not always happen intentionally, but the simple recognition is enough to create a gap between ‘us’ and ‘them’, and can easily be visible through opinions, generalizations and monolithic thoughts of certain groups of people. Ann Runfors adds to this, illustrating a distinction between ‘Swedish children’ and ‘immigrant children’. This division forms a group of people who do not belong to the ‘norm’ but are instead considered as something ‘out of the ordinary’. A categorization is accidentally constructed when ‘immigrant children’ are compared to ‘Swedish children’. She writes that “[t]he processes (...) are one example of how judgment structures unintentionally are constructed and reconstructed in social practice”⁴⁰. This in turn leads to perceptions of particular subordinate groups, since they are constantly compared to the dominant group. Another aspect can be witnessed when, in this case, students can either choose to be part of the premises of the dominant group and be subordinate to their conditions, or be different and accept to be defined as members of a foreign culture⁴¹. Applying this to the situation of the West and Islam, several authors claim that a strong ‘us and them’ relationship has been developed through the constant use of such terms by politicians, academics and particularly the media⁴².

Our argument is that these generalizations are created by all social actors and infiltrates every part of society, given that media are continuously providing further support for an already established view of people. Intentionally or not, socially constructed perceptions are reflected in the media, thus forming a certain way of framing ‘them’. For this particular study, the notion is important to understand in order to analyze the different written media as they, in this case, ‘[s]ustain our stereotypes through selective perception’⁴³. A homogenous framing (generalizations) of Muslims in the media, combined with high levels of priming, thus easily contributes to the already created stereotypes, continuously keeping ‘them’ (as ‘others’) separated from ‘us’.

2.1.4.1 ‘Them’ as ‘others’

In articles, there are arguably a number of possible frames. These frames have different messages and characteristics. Given the massive amount of possible frames – and since we are only interested in investigating whether these frames create ‘others’ – we have chosen to split the framing of Islam and Muslims into three categories. These categories are meant to represent earlier research made on this subject in numerous western nations, and what the research illustrates as the base for the construction of a stereotype. This literature has for most part focused on cultural aspects and the religion Islam as

³⁹ Camatier & Nohrstedt (2006), p.11.

⁴⁰ Runfors (2003), p. 226.

⁴¹ Runfors (2003) quotes (p.228): Lindqvist (2002).

⁴² Said (2006); Zolberg & Woon (1999); Huntington (2006); Shadid & van Koningsveld (2002).

⁴³ Downing & Husband (2005), p. 9.

reasons to an image-building media, consequently *The Cultural Others* and *The Religious Others* are chosen as two categories. The difference we claim is important between religion and culture is the fact that someone could belong to a culture, but not to the religion – for instance Christians in the Middle East – and in the same line of argument practice a religion but not the culture; exemplified by the cultural variations in North Africa and Indonesia. We have created a third category and named it *The Political Others*. The focus here is media's elevation of democracy in the West, over authoritarian rule in, for example, the Middle East and North Africa. There are arguably other ways to categorize the earlier research, for instance according to identity or ethnic origin, but our argument is that the three categories chosen are optimal in order to perform further research. These categories will be presented in depth below, beginning with culture.

2.1.4.2 *The Cultural Others*

Much literature on the topic of media coverage on Muslims has highlighted cultural differences as the reason to why Islam and the West cannot co-exist⁴⁴. The most obvious examples relate to the veiling debate in France, Belgium and parts of Germany, in which Muslim women have been denied the right to wear clothing such as the niqab, the burqa and the hijab, among others⁴⁵. The media in these nations often write about a specific 'Islamic culture' with certain mandatory traditions – forced marriages, honour crimes and alternate clothing – as a significant part. This monolithic focus is discussed by Gardner et al. where they label it as "islamophobic"⁴⁶. The fear here is not aimed at the clothing in itself, but rather at the implications from immigrants bringing their customs, thus influencing society's (western) values. As Byng puts it, in an attempt to compare the American picture with that in Great Britain and France: "Newspaper stories used images of national identity, the assimilation/integration of minorities, and the fear and threat of terrorism to position France, Britain, and the USA as ideologically alike with regard to veiling by Muslim."⁴⁷ To conclude, cultural generalizations framed by the media are common in these nations and are expressed in the form of an explicit Islamic culture and unchangeable, oppressive gender roles.

The data related to *The Cultural Others* can include statements such as 'all Muslims' or 'in the Muslim culture', which denote that a specific culture exists and that every Muslim practices all parts of this 'culture'. Expressions comprehending an obligation to wear burqa, or mandatory actions of any kind possibly ascribed to a Muslim culture, will be interpreted as a framing of Muslims as 'others' in

⁴⁴ Byng (2010); Bowen (2007); Gardner et al. (2008).

⁴⁵ *BBC News Europe*, 'The Islamic veil across Europe', April 11th 2011.

⁴⁶ They use Islamophobia "to refer to an irrational distrust, fear or rejection of the Muslim religion and those who are (perceived as) Muslim", Gardner et al. (2008), p. 120.

⁴⁷ Byng (2010), p. 123.

relation to Argentines. Signs of gender roles and man-to-female relationships being depicted as inflexible – and gravely generalized – will also contribute to a distinct ‘others’.

2.1.4.3 The Religious Others

The work that seems to have had the largest influence on the media in the religious debate between Islam and the West was written by Samuel P. Huntington. His argument is based on the belief that the conflicts of tomorrow will be fought between religions, not nations. In this struggle, Islam is considered the anti-thesis of Christianity, to which most western societies belong.⁴⁸ Some have claimed that Huntington’s arguments have fed the conflict by worsening the chances of religious stability. Brown writes that “[f]undamentalist violence abroad – terrorism in the Middle East, Algeria and the marching Black Muslims of the Nation of Islam in Washington – has only made things worse. As have theories among some intellectuals, such as the American political theorist Samuel Huntington”⁴⁹. The discussion of Huntington’s theory had its peak in the aftermath of September 11th when many critics turned to instead agree and praise his work⁵⁰.

What, then, is the problem with this religion, according to media, and the problematic difference to Christianity and western ideals? If we break it down to pieces, the general media picture of Islam is that of a religion unable to adapt. Fear is created regarding the absorption of stereotypical ‘Islamic values’ into western societies, which would compromise the freedom and equality of individuals. The literature on this subject is vast.⁵¹ Poole has analyzed the theme and concluded that “[t]he West is seen as more progressive in terms of strength, systems, modernity and human rights. Women are one group that is seen as being oppressed ‘by the hands of an ancient religion’”⁵².

In order to evaluate if media illustrate a distinction between Argentines and ‘others’, we will interpret articles covering Islam. These articles, if framing the religion, can describe Islam as making people dangerous to themselves, in terms of civil riots and regional conflicts, and to the West, through terrorism. Similarly, news related to, for instance, the Qur’an or religious activities (such as holidays etc.), portrayed negatively, might be part of a media separation of ‘us’ and ‘them’.

⁴⁸ First published in an article in *Foreign Affairs* (1993), then as a book: Huntington (2006).

⁴⁹ Brown (2006), p. 305.

⁵⁰ Abrahamian (2003).

⁵¹ Abrahamian, (2003); Brun & Hersh (2008); Hussain (2000).

⁵² Cited in: Poole (2000), p. 158; but also discussed in: Poole (2002).

2.1.4.4 *The Political Others*

Many of the Islamic states, especially in the Middle East and North Africa, have been or are still ruled by dictators, with their religion strictly tied to the constitution. Hence, they are not considered democracies.⁵³ This belongs to the group of political factors in which several media have argued that the world consists of anti-poles, and that there are struggles between these; democracies versus dictatorships, and the West versus Islam. A generalized view of earlier research is that there is a common belief in which democracy is superior and that the western ideals – whatever they might consist of – are universally desirable⁵⁴. In this ethnocentric world view, the Islamic principles only feed fundamentalism and create the basis for Muslim suicide bombers, reportedly motivated by one single purpose: harming the West⁵⁵. Hafez notes how media ignore positive developments in Islamic nations, especially the ones considered totally or largely undemocratic. He concludes that these nations are “hardly ever associated with extraordinary success stories, either in politics or in any other sphere of life”.⁵⁶ The political literature moreover deals with the disproportional focus media aim at certain political figures, giving them the role of representing the whole religion of Islam, no matter the degree of their devotion to it. In sum, media tend to positively promote the political values of the West, and contrast them to insecure, dangerous authoritarian states in the Middle East and North Africa.

Articles covering political structure and leaders, as well as security matters will be interpreted and analyzed. Examples of the two former are articles describing the western model of democracy – free elections and free media, etc. – as superior to the Islamic dictatorships, which allegedly consist of authoritarian dictators who reign during long periods of time, with total control over media and the people. This category also includes high-profile figures becoming media’s faces of Islam, although they are in reality not entitled to that role. One obvious example of this is Osama bin Laden in the aftermath of 9/11. Consequently, articles regarding oppression, authoritarian leaders, limited media freedom and non-free (undemocratic) elections, expressed in value-laden terms will be considered as a description of political ‘others’. In terms of security, this results in articles labelling Muslim-dominated nations as insecure and as threats to the rest of the world. Note here the separation between *states* and *religion* as threats, where the latter is included in *The Religious Others*.

⁵³ The Economist, Economist Intelligence Unit, *Democracy Index 2010: Democracy in retreat*.

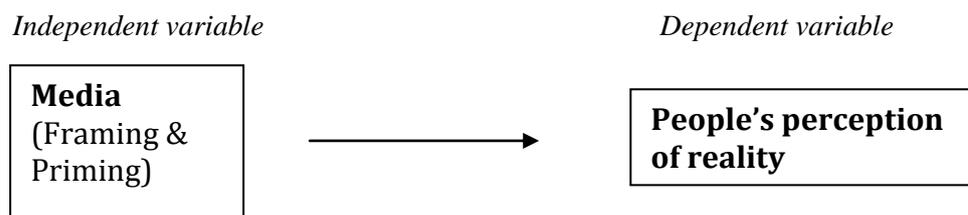
⁵⁴ Said (1997).

⁵⁵ Larsson (2006). It is also the theme in Said (1997).

⁵⁶ Hafez (2000), p. 191.

2.1.5 How theories are used

The ‘us and them’ theory functions as a sociological explanation of how groups in society are positioned in relation to each other, and how their ascribed characteristics are cemented. The theory of framing, conversely, establishes that media have the power to emphasize certain images, and thereby sustain stereotypes. Priming, then, asserts that the extent to which something is framed has importance for the perception of it. These three theories are, as already shown, closely linked. ‘Us and them’ will be the principal theory of this thesis, and hence it will guide the interpretation of the data gathered from the case study. Framing and priming will be the independent variables, since these provide us with the understanding that media are powerful in conveying messages and images consumed by society. However, the ‘us and them’ theory more specifically tells us in what way groups are projected within this framing. The opinion of the people is therefore the dependent variable (displayed below) of this thesis, since it is affected by what is written in the media. We do not intend to investigate the causality of this model, but merely assume that framing and priming affect people’s perception of reality. The only variable studied will be the given independent; how the chosen terms are framed and primed in Argentinean media.



2.2 Aim and Research question

The aim of this thesis is to apply the theories of ‘us and them’, and priming as well as framing aspects, to Argentina. More specifically, it will investigate whether the Argentinean written media portray Muslims in accordance with earlier research. If Muslims are seen as a homogenous group, generalized as ‘others’ in relation to the dominant group in society, the result will be in line with earlier studies on western nations. If not, Argentina will be seen as an exception to the rule.

Principal research question:

- Are Muslims and Islam portrayed as ‘others’ in Argentinean media?

Sub-questions:

- Are Muslims and Islam framed as cultural, religious and/or political ‘others’ in Argentinean media, in similarity to other western nations?

- How are ‘Muslims’ and ‘Islam’ primed in Argentinean media? Are there connections between those terms and the term ‘terrorism’, and, if so, to what extent?

2.3 Analytical Framework

In our qualitative analysis, we intend to identify the characteristics, if any, which the written media commonly ascribe to Muslims and the religion, culture and politics of Islam. These characteristics have, according to earlier research, become part of homogenous framing; the creation of stereotypes and the continuing cementation of them. The three categories – *The Cultural Others*, *The Religious Others* and *The Political Others* – originally developed in the theory section will be used in order to interpret and analyze the data. We will use earlier research on four western nations – Germany, USA, Great Britain and France (*the West*) – and their respective media framing to develop an analytical scheme, from which we intend to identify if the same framing of ‘others’ exists in Argentina. Since the framing in Argentina does not necessarily resemble that in other nations, an open-ended question will be posed in the scheme (seen below).

Analytical Scheme: Media Framing of Islam and Muslims			
Are Muslims and Islam framed as 'others'?	<i>Culture</i>	<i>Religion</i>	<i>Political structure</i>
Nations:			
<i>The West</i>	Yes, as cultural 'others': How? As a homogenous culture, distant from that of the West, with mandatory participation.	Yes, as religious 'others': How? As a religion with values in opposition to Christianity encouraging terrorism and constituting a threat to the West.	Yes, as political 'others': How? As unfree states, not sharing the democratic ideals of the West. They are, then, a threat to the world, in terms of war and conflicts.
<i>Argentina</i>	Yes/ No? How?	Yes/ No? How?	Yes/ No? How?

2.3.1 Criteria for conclusion

The focal point in the criteria for conclusion, which regards the analytical scheme, is to find generalizations and distinct framing of Muslims, Islam etc. In order to conclude an ‘us and them’ type of framing, we need to be able to generalize the articles, meaning that a large amount of them need to match this type. A more exact number of articles, in order to reach a conclusion, cannot be specified. After separately examining and analyzing every category, an overall view can be demonstrated. This part will further be analyzed and discussed in correlation to the previously made priming analysis. In the end, a result will either show a general picture of the media in Argentina, or how the Argentinean

media framing and priming are separated, between newspapers and between categories. The ability to conclude if Argentinean media can be seen as having an ‘us and them’ framing, or not, remains to be seen.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This thesis will explore written media’s portrayal of Muslims/Islam in Argentina. As the intention is to describe a case (Argentina), in relation to the established theories, the most obvious selection of design would be a case-study. As already discussed, the selection of case is based upon Argentina seen as a western nation in which a relevantly large population of Muslims live. By consuming the theories of framing and priming, with our conviction of language as the constructor of reality (in line with social constructivism), we assume that media have a significant influence on the public agenda.

In order to carry out this deductive research, we will firstly perform a quantitative content analysis over three time periods, after which we will more deeply examine the angles of framing, in a qualitative content analysis. The quantitative part will consist of a longitudinal comparison, aiming to explore a possible rise or decline in media coverage of Muslims and Islam, from 2000 until 2010. Making such a comparison will enable us to distinguish a pattern in priming, which will further be analyzed together with the results of the qualitative analysis. The latter is more specifically aiming to generalize a pattern, in reference to the theories. Our intention is to either verify or falsify that Argentinean media frame Muslims and Islam as ‘others’, and to explore further the ways in which ‘us and them’ categorization appears. The collection of data for the qualitative analysis will be based on stratified random sampling, where specified dates will be chosen from which all articles will be analyzed.

By performing both a quantitative and qualitative content analysis, we will be able to demonstrate a result in comparison to earlier research. The reason for merging these two tools is based on the assumption that framing and priming are interconnected; although it is useful to see how the ‘others’, if any, are described, it is also necessary to establish the frequency, which indicates the effect of the framing. Labelling all Muslims as terrorists might not have an impact if mentioned once, but if it is frequently repeated it can result in the birth of a stereotype.

3.2 Method

Data will be collected from three Argentinean newspapers – El Clarín, La Nación and Página 12 – and more specifically their respective online databases. These newspapers are chosen based on the size of their editions, as they are the three of the dominating written media in Argentina. They are moreover evenly spread over the ideological scale; El Clarín is considered centrist, La Nación conservative and Página 12 left-wing.⁵⁷ To use the dominating newspapers in Argentina simplifies the generalization of Argentinean media. A politically even distribution might, moreover, present differences, if existing, due to respective ideological positions. Since articles are collected from the online databases, one cannot be certain that all articles published in these newspapers are also published on their respective websites. However, nothing leads us to believe that newspaper articles are not published online⁵⁸, nor that the framing and priming of Muslims would be different for these two sources of data.

We have chosen to take data from three different time periods during the last 10 years: 2000, 2005 and 2010. Given the events in the beginning and the middle of this decade – 9/11, the Madrid and London bombings – we selected year 2000 as it preceded this turbulent phase. Consequently year 2005 would be expected to generate a deviation (at least quantitatively) in the data consisting of articles covering Muslims and Islam, as observed in previous studies⁵⁹. The choice of 2010 as the final year of data collection is based on its distance from the above mentioned world events. It is in our interest to explore the possible fluctuations during this decade, in order to locate a pattern and reach a conclusion.

We will use a quantitative content analysis in order to handle the data. In other words, using key words such as ‘Islam’, ‘Muslim’ or ‘Muslims’, among other, will result in articles concerning these concepts.⁶⁰ Searches will also be conducted using these words combined with ‘terrorism’ and ‘terrorist’ etc., in order to see whether a high proportion of the articles mentioning Muslims also concern terrorism. In short, it will examine “the change in attitude towards something”⁶¹; more specifically, Muslims. The amount of articles will be counted and put in percentages, illustrating whether some terms have increased nominally or not in recent years, and discussed in relation to the theory of priming. The width of the quantitative search will cover all the articles during selected years (from the 1st of January to the 31st of December). Necessary to explain is that the quantitative part (i.e. priming) will show the number of articles containing a frame of Muslims/Islam, but not the amount of those including the specific framing of culture, religion and politics. This is the main reason for

⁵⁷ BBC, ‘Argentina country profile’.

⁵⁸ None of the three newspapers have, for instance, a payment option on their websites.

⁵⁹ Poole (2002), p. 5.

⁶⁰ Esaiasson et al. (2007), p. 223; Bergström & Boréus (2005), p. 43.

⁶¹ Bergström & Boréus (2005), p. 47.

making both a quantitative and a qualitative research. All articles contain frames; our intention is to find frames concerning the three mentioned categories.

In the qualitative part, articles and descriptions of the terms used will be analyzed, seeing exactly how the Argentinean media frame Muslims; homogeneously or heterogeneously, in terms of ‘others’ or not, and so on. The purpose is to visualize the “ideological messages that are not conveyed as clearly as they are expressed with literally formulated arguments or articulated ideas”⁶². The selection of articles will be based on a semi-random method, resulting in specified time periods, but without control over the exact contents. Due to the large amount of articles, we have chosen two days per year from which data will be collected. This will, ideally, result in between 60 and 80 articles (8 each year per newspaper), spread equally over the three newspapers and differing in content. In case of not obtaining a sufficient amount of articles, the period of collecting data will be extended one day at a time. The randomly chosen dates are: the 15th of April and the 6th of October. We advocate variation, in order to obtain a legitimate result, and have therefore selected one day during spring and one during autumn. To be able to compare the results, across newspapers – irrespective of their ideology – only news material will be analyzed. This means that debate articles, editorial articles and columns will be disregarded, since these arguably provide conscious and thereby subjective frames. Given that we assume the theory of framing, the only articles of interest are those characteristically describing Muslims, Islam and the geographical areas of North Africa and the Middle East. Articles simply mentioning, for instance, Muslims incidentally, without further description, will hence not be analyzed in the analytical framework. We are looking for meaningful material; in this case, these have a certain frame which can be interpreted⁶³. If very few articles, or none, have a distinct framing of Islam/Muslims, within the selected categories, it would lead to the conclusion that Argentinean media does not display a separation of ‘us’ and ‘them’.

Moreover, merely articles written by the newspaper in question will be read, since we intend to explore what *Argentinean*, not *foreign*, media writes. It would exclude articles from, for instance, news agencies (Reuters, AP etc.) and from other newspapers. If searches on *musulmanes* and *Islam* generate the same articles, these will only be considered and collected once. Consequently the search will continue until another article has been retrieved. The selection process of articles for the analysis will consist of three stages: 1) gathering articles mentioning ‘Muslims’ and ‘Islam’; 2) separating articles simply *mentioning* Muslims from articles *about* Muslims, Islam and nations related to those concepts; and 3) analyzing articles which contain distinct frames of Muslims/Islam. The third stage will ideally result in at minimum ten articles. Even though this means only a handful of the articles will be analyzed in detail, *all* data collected will be part of the final analytical discussion.

⁶² Ibid., p. 263.

⁶³ Ibid., p. 252.

3.2.1 *Interpreting the data*

Content analysis can be performed both quantitatively and qualitatively; the former most commonly through quantifying words or measuring the proportion of certain terms, and the latter through systematically describing the content of a text⁶⁴. For the quantitative analysis, the interpretation will be based in relation to earlier research, in order to conclude whether Argentinean media have a high level of priming of these specific terms. The actual frequency of the terms, as well as the shown percentage of those combining the terms ‘Muslims’/’Islam’ with ‘terrorism’, will be analyzed both separately and combined.

The use of both priming and framing analyses is based on the understanding that they are both important in correlation to each other and individually. The quantitative analysis will show a level of priming in Argentinean media, and since all articles contain frames, the conclusion of a priming analysis will answer: in how many articles are Muslims and Islam framed? The qualitative, on the other hand, will show if the specific frames are occurring. If the level of priming is high, and the frames within the selected categories are distinct and many, a discussion of the relation between these concepts are possible. Although, if a lack of these frames is discovered, such a connection cannot be made, but the priming analysis can still be discussed, by itself, as in line with earlier research.

Within the qualitative content analysis, several approaches are possible. The variables that are measured can vary significantly; expressions, metaphors, arguments of certain types, headline sizes or the frequency of specific phenomena. The analysis can moreover include two different focuses: 1) what the text says, and 2) how the text speaks to its recipients; interrogatory, appellant or persuasively.⁶⁵ In terms of this thesis, the intention is to categorize the data collected, in order to interpret *what* the text says. The categorization is argued by Esaiasson et al. to be part of a systematization of the data, by “placing the content under a suitable title”⁶⁶. Applying it to our case, the data collected is then placed under i) culture, religion or politics, and ii) under the title ‘others’ or not. For example, an article about Muslim clothing will initially be categorized under culture, and secondly – if mentioned as something *they* wear – interpreted as a framing of ‘others’.

In practice, there are three steps that could be used when interpreting a text: 1) Understanding the meaning of the words in the text, for example, ‘Muslim’; 2) how the reader (us, the public) interprets

⁶⁴ Ibid., pp. 43-44.

⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 44.

⁶⁶ Esaiasson et al. (2007), pp. 238-239.

the text; and 3) what the author(s) means⁶⁷. Our focus will be concerned with the interpretation (step 2) and not the intentional meaning of the author(s) nor the meaning of specific words (step 3 and 1); what is written will be interpreted. Hence language, not thought, will be the foundation of our interpretation. Expressions will be interpreted as having a frame matching our criteria or not, and we are only interested in how Muslims are portrayed, either directly or from a context, within our selected categories. In articles structured as interviews, the respondents' answers will not be analyzed since they are not representatives of the newspaper in question. However, questions posed will be under our scrutiny. Note that we are not looking for one sentence *criticizing* a Muslim person, but rather *generalizations* regarding the culture, religion, or political structure to observe if these consist of any 'us and them' terminology. Obviously, some interpretations will have to be further motivated in order to make these and our conclusions righteous. This brings us to the hermeneutic circle, which emphasizes the importance of going back and forth between the understanding of various parts in the texts and the context.

The theoretical criteria for analyzing results might vary, in line with the so called 'hermeneutic circle'. Hermeneutics is the study of interpretation, and the circle indicates that as more data is generated, interpretations and meanings of text change in the eyes of those reviewing it⁶⁸. Reading five articles can create a hypothesis about how Muslims are framed, but when reading five other articles, the hypothesis might change due to a new understanding of the context. This new context can obviously affect the criteria of interpretation, through changing our 'fusion of horizons'; the latter referring to how people, both consciously and unconsciously, have a set of understandings that influence their interpretation.⁶⁹ If this fusion of horizons changes during the course of the analysis, it will be documented. It might be seen as problematic that our context and fusion of horizons are arguably of different nature compared to those in Argentina. Nevertheless, given the amount of articles we intend to read and critically analyze, our contextual understanding will develop (in accordance with the hermeneutical circle), hence reducing or even eliminating the problem. For instance, the ability to detect and recognize irony or sarcasm in Argentinean articles will be enhanced by further developing an understanding of the context from within it is displayed. Furthermore, having an analytical framework with specified categories and criteria – irrespective of cultural or national contexts – will contribute to a reduction of the contextual importance.

We are aware of that interpretations are inherently subjective – which is one of the major critiques of qualitative analyses⁷⁰ – and we acknowledge the fact that different interpretations are possible, which is why transparency is essential. For instance, an article defending the burning of Qu'rans might be

⁶⁷ Gilje & Grimen (1992), p. 195.

⁶⁸ Føllesdal et al. (1990), p. 135.

⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 139.

⁷⁰ Marsh & Stoker (2010), p. 204.

interpreted as valid since the action is a protest against Islam for events such as the hanging of a woman in Iran. For others, however, the same article would be seen as illegitimate, given their argument that human beings and religion should be separated; it was a *person* who committed the hanging, not necessarily a *Muslim*. Considering this fact, when confronted with a text that could be interpreted in this way by a reader – in line with the theoretical framework – this will also be our standpoint. It will, however, always be discussed, especially when findings obviously have a number of different interpretations, since one can never be sure that an interpretation is correct⁷¹. When faced with this scenario, the interpretation process needs to be transparent. In some cases, certain interpretations will be motivated by presenting the entire paragraph or article in both English and Spanish⁷². We have the advantage of being two persons that will individually review the data, in order to carry through a more reliable process of interpreting. If stumbling upon an article that can be difficult to interpret, one firstly has to understand the context in which it is written and thereby the context in which it can be understood.

⁷¹ Gilje & Grimen (1992), p. 203; Føllesdal et al. (1990), p. 141.

⁷² Gilje & Grimen (1992), p. 191.

4. Findings & Analysis

4.1 Priming

How something – in this case ‘Muslims’ and ‘Islam’ – is primed has importance for how it is seen upon. Language, both *how* it is used (framing) and how *often* it is used (priming), constructs reality. This means that the level of priming in a society (in this case through newspapers) is an indicator of how these concepts are perceived in reality. A priming-analysis is thus of great importance for understanding the impact of the framing, of which the results will be presented further on.

The mode of procedure has already been theoretically explained above. In reality as in theory, this process was carried through by using key words, in Spanish: *musulmanes* (‘Muslims’), *musulmán* (‘a Muslim person’ or as a masculine possessive pronoun), *musulmana* (‘Muslim’ as a feminine possessive pronoun), *Islam* (‘Islam’), and *terrorismo* (‘terrorism’). The search engines in the newspapers’ databases, however, differed in complexity. The database of El Clarín showed the same amount of articles for different key words, whereas those of La Nación and Página 12 reflected the specifically typed word, resulting in articles containing the explicit phrase. For instance, the words *musulmanes* and *musulmana* generated the exact same articles in El Clarín, while the searches in both La Nación and Página 12 ended up with different amounts of articles, as well as different articles. However, in order to demonstrate a reliable and comparable result, only *musulmanes* and *Islam* have been chosen as part of the analysis. *Terrorismo* was additionally used in order to provide a percentage of how many articles generated from the first four key words that also considered the latter, as conducted in earlier studies. In plain text: In how many articles concerning Muslims or Islam was also terrorism mentioned?

4.1.1 Muslims in the Media

Firstly, we observed the quantity of articles regarding Muslims and Islam, in the three newspapers. This was conducted in the three years previously selected (2000, 2005, 2010). One obstacle affecting the quantitative analysis is the lack of articles published before 2001 in the electronic database of Página 12. We acknowledge this but do not regard it as a factor affecting final results. What is essential, instead, is the notable difference between the five-year intervals, which can still be interpreted by observing the overall results. In El Clarín and La Nación, a significant nominal change is noticed when comparing articles regarding Muslims between the years 2000 and 2005 (see *figure 1*). Furthermore, in all three newspapers, this number descends from 2005 to 2010.

Figure 1 visualizes the change in the amount of articles published online mentioning ‘Muslims’ (*musulmanes*) over the three years. In El Clarín, the number of articles was: 177 (year 2000), 326 (2005) and 152 (2010). Additionally, in La Nación: 256 (2000), 459 (2005) and 173 (2010). Given the missing values from Página 12, it is represented by a zero (0) in 2000. The other years were as follows: 196 (2005) and 114 (2010).

Figure 1: Frequency of articles on Muslims

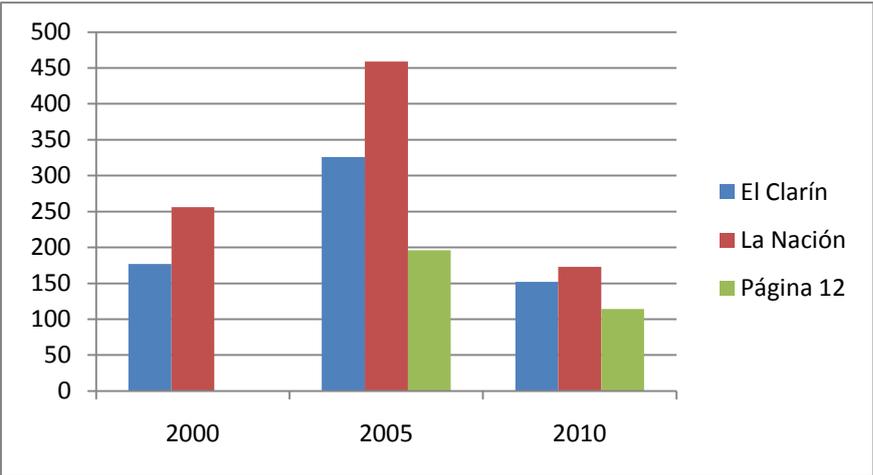
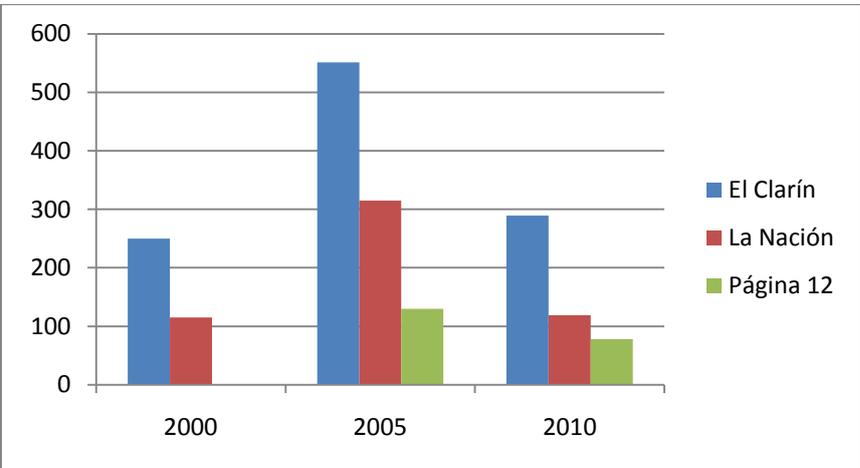


Figure 2 shows the use of the word ‘Islam’ (*Islam*) for all three time periods and in all selected newspapers. Página 12 demonstrates the lowest amount of articles, in each year, among the three newspapers. The numbers from Página 12 are: 0 (2000), 130 (2005), 78 (2010). El Clarín has the following distribution: 250 (2000), 551 (2005), 289 (2010). Articles from La Nación are: 115 (2000), 315 (2005), 119 (2010).

Figure 2: Frequency of articles on Islam



Between the years of 2000 and 2005, we can notice a dramatic increase in the coverage of Muslims and Islam. For instance, the use of *Islam* increased with 120 percent (from 250 to 551 articles) in El Clarín, and with 174 percent (from 115 to 315 articles) in La Nación. The word *musulmanes* follows the same path. In El Clarín, the increase was 84 percent (177 to 326), while in La Nación the difference was 79 percent (256 to 459). Irrespective of the missing data from 2000 in Página 12, by reason of the decrease from 2005 to 2010, we can still suspect a similar fluctuation. This variation is applicable to all three newspapers. For example, El Clarín demonstrated a 67 percent decrease (459 to 152) for articles mentioning *musulmanes*, and a 47.5 percent decrease (551 to 289) for *Islam*. The same goes for La Nación, which showed a decrease with 61 percent (459 to 178) for *musulmanes*, and 54 percent (315 to 144) for *Islam*. In Página 12, this decrease corresponded to 42 percent (196 to 114) for *musulmanes* and 44 percent (139 to 78) for *Islam*.

4.1.2 Analytical discussion of Priming: Muslims in the Media

Firstly, the missing data from year 2000 in Página 12 obviously has some effect on the calculations, since we cannot observe a change, if any, from 2000 to 2005. We do not, however, see this as a major flaw given that the exact numeric increase is not the chief purpose to reveal in this thesis. Moreover, a pattern between those years should be distinguishable merely by using El Clarín and La Nación. Leaving this discussion, we observe that in 2000, as well in 2005 and 2010, El Clarín was the newspaper that had the highest amount of articles mentioning *Islam*. Conversely, La Nación had more articles mentioning *musulmanes* than any other newspaper during these three selected years. This means, then, that El Clarín tends to focus on the religion of Islam instead of Muslims, while the reversed relation is true for La Nación.

It is impossible to observe a percentage increase of articles covering Muslims in the overall number of articles published. Due to the lack of information on how many articles per year are published, we can only state the nominal change in these particular articles. Furthermore, one cannot be sure of the numbers in 2005 being part of an increase, peak or decrease over the 10 years covered; the only conclusion that can be drawn is that there was a deviation in the data from 2005, which resulted in a peak, if compared to the other years.

The three newspapers generally published the same amount of articles in 2000 and 2010. It leads us to believe that these represent a condition that can be conceived as 'normal'. Therefore, over the last years, there has not been a visible permanent increase in priming of these key words related to Muslims and Islam. This indicates that Argentinean media are very sensitive to major events, but lack the overall increase in coverage of Muslims and Islam that is seen in studies on many other western

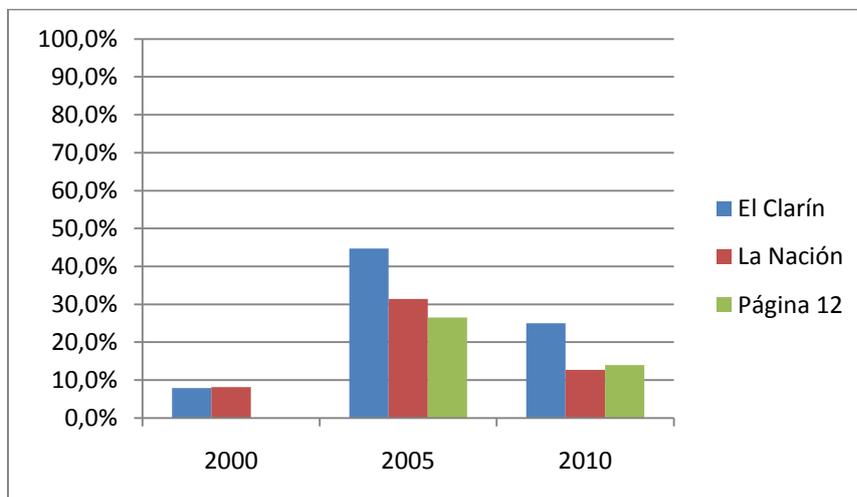
nations⁷³. However, the contexts in which Muslims are mentioned have changed, and will be discussed in the following section.

4.1.3 Muslim terrorism in the Media

In this section, as previously declared, articles in which both *musulmanes* and *terrorismo*, and *Islam* and *terrorismo*, occur have been quantified as well as compared in percentages. The fact that key words such as *musulmán* and *musulmana* were not used is based on articles overlapping, and given that they are numerically fewer. In order to grasp a generalizing picture, therefore, the key word generating the highest amount of articles became the comparing variable.

Figure 3 demonstrates articles published in all three newspapers over the selected time periods. Here, articles containing the terms *musulmanes* and *terrorismo* are related, in percentages, to the whole number of articles including *musulmanes*. In El Clarín, the following percentage distribution was found: 7.9 percent (2000), 44.7 percent (2005) and 25 percent (2010). In La Nación, the percentages were: for year 2000, 8.2 percent, 31.4 percent in year 2005 and 12.7 percent 2010. In 2005 for Página 12, the percentage was 26.5. In year 2010 it was 14 percent.

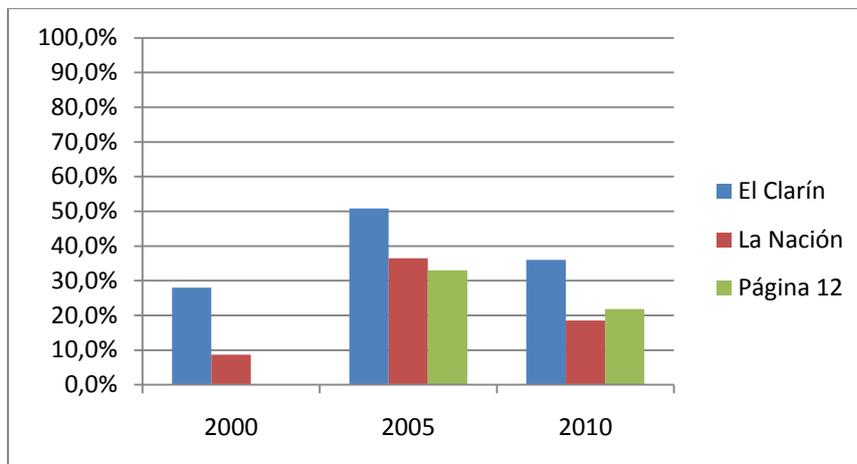
Figure 3: Terrorism related to articles on Muslims



In figure 4, a similar comparison is made. In this case, articles containing the key words *Islam* and *terrorismo* are given a percentage of the whole amount of articles mentioning *Islam*. For El Clarín, this gives us 28 percent in year 2000, 50.8 percent in year 2005 and 36 percent in 2010. In La Nación, the distribution was: 8.7 percent (2000), 36.5 percent (2005) and 18.5 percent (2010). The last newspaper, Página 12, has 33 percent in 2005, whereas in 2010 it was 21.8 percent.

⁷³ Poole (2002); Poole & Richardson (2006); Mishra (2008); Jaspal & Cinnirella (2010).

Figure 4: Terrorism related to articles on Islam



What can be concluded from observing these statistics? As already noted, El Clarín is the newspaper with by far the highest amount of articles covering Islam. With a surprisingly high number, 50 percent (2005), of these articles mentioning terrorism, a conclusion can be that the priming level of Islam related to terrorism is high. Also in articles on Muslims in 2005, about half of them mention terrorism. A decrease can further be seen in 2010, but it does not reach the relatively low level of 2000. Another mentionable aspect is that, in El Clarín, the religion of Islam seems to be closer connected with terrorism than the Muslim identity itself. La Nación provides similar results, although the percentages are not as high as in El Clarín. The change, however, is significant. In 2000, barely a tenth related terrorism to Muslims and Islam, while in 2005 this percentage rose to 31.4 percent (Muslims) and 36.5 percent (Islam). Although these numbers do not reach the levels of El Clarín, a third of all the articles on Muslims and Islam in 2005 brought up terrorism, which can be seen as remarkable. Moreover, albeit slight, there *is* a difference in articles on Islam and Muslims, where a higher amount relates the religion to terrorism. Página 12 displays a pattern which is fairly similar, but the lower total number of articles containing words as Muslims or Islam in this newspaper contributes to a lower level of priming than in, for instance, El Clarín.

4.1.4 Analytical discussion of Priming: Muslim terrorism in the Media

Why is it relevant to investigate if Muslims are associated with acts of terrorism? From a social constructivist perspective, we understand our ‘reality’ through the use of language. Consequently, a repeated image – such as that of Muslim fundamentalists – has a high probability of becoming an accepted stereotype. The media, in this case, can thus help in shaping the ‘reality’ of the readers if often associating a person or a religion with an act, further establishing an ‘us and them’ perspective in

society. This should be kept in mind when observing these data; the percentage of articles covering Muslims and/or Islam, also mentioning terrorism.

In sum, among these three newspapers, El Clarín stands out as having the highest amount of articles relating terrorism to Muslims and Islam, thus displaying the highest level of priming. Overall, terrorism seems to be more often mentioned in context with the religion than with Muslims. The fluctuations of terrorism-related articles can, precisely as the amount of articles, have a strong relation to the events that occurred between 2001 and 2005. There is one notable difference though: The content of the articles has changed when comparing 2000 to 2010. The average amount of articles relating terrorism to Islam or Muslims has increased from about a tenth to a fourth during these years. This could indicate that the notion of terrorism is far more present in the written media today, than 10 years ago. Earlier research in other western nations has demonstrated a similar pattern. As an example, a study performed on the press in Great Britain showed that a third (36 percent) of all articles between 2000 and 2008 on British Muslims dealt with terrorism, in which a significant rise was seen after 9/11 and the London bombings in 2005. Although similarities can be observed, the Argentinean media noted a decline from 2005 to 2010, while in Great Britain it kept rising. In 2008 alone, two thirds of all articles on Muslims mentioned terrorism, which could be compared to the 2005 high-point of similar coverage in Argentina, 50 percent.^{74 75} In sum, even though rises are seen in Argentinean media – both in overall coverage and articles related to terrorism – they are not as significant as in some other western nations. Nevertheless, Argentinean media do have a high frequency of relating Islam/Muslims to terrorism, but only with a qualitative analysis it will be proven if these tendencies are part of framing them as cultural, religious or political ‘others’.

4.2 Framing

All articles provide frames, and the quantitative research, i.e. the investigated levels of priming, has demonstrated the number of articles which contain frames of Muslims and Islam. Priming does not, however, tell us how these frames are characterized. For instance, what does it mean that 50 percent of the articles mentioning ‘Islam’ in El Clarín during 2005 also featured the term ‘terrorism’? Without a qualitative analysis, one cannot state that the framing of Islam in these articles are to be considered as creating ‘religious others’, ‘cultural others’ or ‘political others’.

Qualitative data collected and read consisted, for the most part, of articles incidentally mentioning the words ‘Muslim’ and ‘Islam’, thereby lacking distinct frames of these concepts. The difficulties in

⁷⁴ Jaspal & Cinnirella (2010), pp. 297-298.

⁷⁵ We are aware that these data are presented for the first time in this thesis, but we have previously (in the section: *Literature review*) mentioned this study to be part of the increase in priming of Muslims/Islam.

finding articles including certain frames provide an initial hint of the results differing from what has been established in earlier research. After performing a more extensive research, 70 articles were chosen as part of a deeper analysis. Out of these 70 articles, 19 included more explicit frames (either with Muslims and Islam framed as ‘others’ or other relevant types of frames). Additionally, we performed further searches in the databases, with the intention of finding articles consisting of distinct frames. This search merely generated four articles, out of those approximately 100 articles read, for all newspapers over the three selected years (except for *Página 12* in 2000).

Hence, the findings demonstrate that most of the articles mentioning Muslims and Islam lack specific frames with which we could present an ‘othering’. The most notable result from the data collection was the non-existence of articles covering Muslims *in Argentina*. Argentinean Muslims are almost completely left out. Almost all articles regarding these topics were focused on nations in Europe and the Middle East, and even here, not many articles provided frames with an ‘us and them’ theme.

In accordance with the analytical scheme, the articles have been arranged into three categories; *Culture*, *Religion* and *Political structure*. Presented below are the articles containing distinct framing, in which Muslims and Islam are portrayed as ‘others’ together with a few examples lacking this frame. This section will function as an example of how frames of Islam/Muslims can appear, irrespective of the representativeness of the data for Argentinean media in general. Although these articles have been selected for this detailed analysis, the final discussion will incorporate all data read as well as our overall assessment of the Argentinean media.

4.2.1 Culture

In this section, articles comprising distinct framing related to culture will be displayed and discussed. As a first example, an article written prior to the meeting between the leaders of various nations in South America and of the Arab league, *El Clarín* explains the “Muslim customs”, and how employees of the receiving hotels should act:

The women, for example, cannot extend their hand to greet a man. They must neither travel in the same lift. It is definitely quite impolite to offer alcohol, something which is important to keep in mind during the preparation of food. Neither assume that one can marinate the meat in wine. They also recommend

*not to be surprised if one sees men holding hands through linking their pinkie fingers, a custom in the Arabic world.*⁷⁶

The article provides a frame of Muslim culture in which certain customs are universal. A Muslim man *cannot* touch a woman neither share a lift with her. Even though these customs might apply to this certain situation – with these specific political leaders – the article gives an impression of how all Muslim men should relate to women, and how women should properly relate to Muslim men. In other words, it is a stereotypical view of how Muslims interact. The result of such a framing is a creation of a group distinctively different from ‘us’; a cultural ‘others’.

Within the so called “Muslim culture” there moreover seems to be an alleged tendency of violence. If the Muslim world is met by repressive legislations in the West, the response will be brutal, is the underlying message of this article on the prohibition of the burqa, published by La Nación:

As a consequence of the growth of the extreme right and the populist parties, several European countries are preparing to prohibit the use of the burqa and the niqab, a measure which could exacerbate the tensions with the Islamic community and which threatens to trigger violent reactions in the Muslim world.

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Indicating that violence is rooted within the DNA of Muslims has several serious implications. First and foremost, it separates westerners from Muslims by ascribing them different characteristics, of which violence is undeniably one that few find pleasant. In these terms, Muslims become ‘others’. Additionally, establishing that tensions exist between European countries and the Islamic community is to confirm two already separated sides; Europeans and Muslims, ‘us’ and ‘them’.

However, most articles found on culture in these three newspapers have been well-balanced, in the sense that they do not provide a frame which considers Muslims as ‘others’. Discoveries of different types of framing do at times occur, as exemplified above, but these examples are rare. In some articles, the framing is consciously exaggerated in order to demonstrate a stereotype. It is illustrated by an article from El Clarín, which deals with the situation of the Muslims before the general election in Great Britain in 2005. The author creates the picture of a ‘Muslim neighbourhood’:

⁷⁶ *El Clarín*, ‘Brasilia se prepara para convivir con las costumbres musulmanas’, May 8th 2005.

⁷⁷ *La Nación*, ‘Europa se rebela contra la burka y se extienden las prohibiciones’, April 26th 2010.

*Everyone is called Mohammad, Abdul, Ahmed or Khan. Women covered up to their eyes, men with Afghan turbans and white caps crossing the street heading to the eastern mosque to pray – separately – during Muslims sacred day.*⁷⁸

Obviously, the author provides the reader with grave generalizations of Muslims in several ways. It is, however, apparent – through understanding the context, not this mere sentence – that this is a case of satire. Given the comical approach of the author, it will not be considered as contributing to the creation of a ‘cultural others’.

4.2.2 Religion

Among the three categories, Islam is the concept most frequently given a distinct frame in the Argentinean media. A relatively large proportion of articles connect Islam to terrorism, or frame Islam as a threat. This is for instance seen in interviews conducted by La Nación and Página 12. The first quote is from a conversation with Jean-François Revel, a French philosopher:

*Does it seem to you that Islam is a threat to the western world?*⁷⁹

To pose such a question, angled in this way, might very well leave the reader with the impression of Islam as a threat, irrespective of the answer from Mr. Revel. The same line of argument can be used for the question in an interview with the Italian Member of the European Parliament, Pía Locatelli:

*Another theme that has to be confronted as an EMP is the complex relation with the Islamic world and terrorism.*⁸⁰

What is notable with this question is the mentioned link between Islam and terrorism, where the interviewer leaves no hesitation to whether it exists or not. This thus provides a frame in which Islam and terrorism are interconnected, and makes it an assumption from which the question is posed. Similarly, an article published in La Nación comes to the same conclusion: that Islam and terrorism are linked. This article covers the story of a group of Brazilian citizens who have travelled to Iran, suspected by the Brazilian government of having ties to known terrorists. It has been given the headline: “AMIA: Brazil monitors 20 Muslims.”⁸¹ Instead of using the words ‘terrorists’ or ‘potential terrorists’, the author has chosen to make their religious affiliation the focal point.

⁷⁸ *El Clarín*, ‘Los inmigrantes musulmanes están desilusionados por la “traición” de Blair’, April 30th 2005.

⁷⁹ *La Nación*, ‘Jean-François Revel: “El neoliberalismo nunca anduvo mejor”’, April 27th 2005.

⁸⁰ *Página 12*, ‘Efecto Berlusconi’, October 21st 2005.

⁸¹ *La Nación*, ‘AMIA: Brasil vigila a 20 musulmanes’, December 6th 2010.

Newspapers, at times, report differently on the same subject. To show this difference, we have chosen two articles covering riots in Parisian suburbs. In the first article, published by *Página 12*, the people are described as immigrants, while the second, published by *El Clarín*, refers to them as Muslims.

*Those suburbs were constructed during the 60s in the full immigration boom and they constitute a high proportion of immigrants and children of immigrants originating from Africa.*⁸² (*Página 12*)

*But the deeds once again demonstrate the tension that exists between the authorities and the Muslim population in the Parisian suburbs, where the adolescents become radicalized and consider the state their enemy.*⁸³ (*El Clarín*)

Even though both of these articles provide a frame, the latter distinguishes itself by generalizing over a Muslim population in these suburbs; firstly by unnecessarily linking them to a religion, secondly claiming that all adolescents are radical and, thirdly, applying the same opinion – that of a resentment towards the state – to all of them. In terms of creating a religious ‘others’, *El Clarín* most definitely seems to prevail. *Página 12*, on the other hand, provides an article lacking any religious framing, hence neither contributing to achieve nor to sustain such a stereotype.

Finally, an article from *La Nación* describes a situation where Osama bin Laden is depicted as a hero for the Islamic fundamentalists, and that most young Muslims are drawn to this extreme group:

*[T]he Islamic fundamentalists whose totemic figure is Osama bin Laden, the Saudi whose image in the Muslim world is even more captivating than that of “Che” Guevara in the countries of European culture. (...) For many young Muslims, above all to those living in the big western cities, the fundamentalist option is difficult to resist.*⁸⁴

Living in a big western city, then, one might expect to be neighbouring Islamic fundamentalists. With this kind of framing, every Muslim is a potential fundamentalist, which arguably distances ‘us’ from ‘them’. Moreover, illustrating Osama bin Laden, an extremist and terrorist, being as highly influential

⁸² *Página 12*, ‘Noche tranquila en Saint-Denis, pero la violencia sigue latente’, November 4th 2005.

⁸³ *El Clarín*, ‘Graves disturbios en un suburbio de París por la muerte de dos jóvenes’, October 28th 2005.

⁸⁴ *La Nación*, ‘El sueño de Osama ben Laden’, July 10th 2005.

as ‘Che’ Guevara – who is, to many Argentines, considered something of a national icon⁸⁵ – can definitely be argued to provide a description of reality with which many would not agree.

These generalizations occur in all three categories, although sweeping statements concerning religion comprise the largest proportion. Articles on Islam do not only connect it to terrorism or other types of threats, but also show a picture of faithful people sharing the same values and opinions. It is demonstrated by an article on the blockade of the social network ‘Facebook’ in India after an illustration of the prophet Muhammad⁸⁶. According to the author, all Muslims consider it to be blasphemy. Noteworthy is, however, not the stated opinion of the Muslims, but rather the statement that *all* Muslims share this belief. When generalizing in such a manner, it is easy to distance one self from this framed category of people; in other words, they instinctively become ‘others’.

4.2.3 Political structure

Of the articles generated by the selected key words in this category, only a handful have dealt with something else than conflicts and wars. The Israel-Palestine conflict has constituted a large proportion of the data, as well as reports about insecure political climate in Lebanon and Iran. Political leaders from nations in this region are often associated with destructive measures and strong relationships with other like-minded figures. This contributes to an image of the region as inhabited by large numbers of fundamentalists, held together by common beliefs. A concrete example can be taken from *El Clarín*, in which they reported on the arrival of Iran president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad to Lebanon:

*The visit of Ahmadinejad, who leads the Islamic fundamentalist revolution in the world and represents it with maximum political and logistic support, is a political catapult for Hezbollah ...*⁸⁷

Connecting Ahmadinejad with Hezbollah creates an alleged reality in which this region’s political spheres are interconnected and where all groups strive for the same cause. Statements of this kind raise several questions: Who are the fundamentalists? On what does one base the claim that Ahmadinejad is this ‘group’s’ leader? What are the consequences for Iran from such a statement? The article uses the term ‘fundamentalist’ in sweeping terms, adding to a generalization of the area and its inhabitants. Firstly, in western eyes, it makes every Muslim a potential recruit for these fundamentalists and, secondly, it illustrates a threatening scenario of a terrorist revolution. It is a frame which might

⁸⁵ *Sydsvenskan*, ‘Che Guevara får nytt liv i Argentina’, October 7th 2007; *The Wall Street Journal*, ‘In Argentina, Che Guevara finally gets more than a lousy t-shirt’, June 14th 2008.

⁸⁶ *El Clarín*, ‘India: bloquean Facebook por contenidos contra el Islam’, May 30th 2010.

⁸⁷ *El Clarín*, ‘Ahmadinejad en el Libano: ”Me siento como en mi casa”’, October 13th 2010.

damage the region's credibility, and which arguably makes it a distant and unattractive location for westerners.

Another issue is the value of democracy, and how newspapers tend to function as proponents for it by making democracy superior to other types of rule. However, the occurrence of articles with such a frame has been very low, with only a few found cases. An example is this article from *La Nación*, an interview with the former Iranian president Mohammed Khatami:

*In next June, when Mohammed Khatami completes his second term, he will have ended an eight year period as president of the Islamic Republic of Iran, always under a theocratic regime which has failed to democratize.*⁸⁸

The article clearly explains that Khatami 'has failed' in establishing democracy in Iran. According to the article, it is regrettable from a western perspective. Democracy is thus seen as universally desirable and every deviation from this normative method of governing is considered a failure.

Argentinean media do rarely contribute with grave generalizations of the political climate or the regions of, for instance, the Middle East and North Africa. Most often, even though a majority of reports cover wars and conflicts, articles lack particular framing of politics and does not contribute to the separation of 'us' and 'them'. Nevertheless, since a vast number of articles deal with these tragic events, the image of related regions in the Argentinean media is still one of a very insecure area, with an instable political atmosphere. This observation arguably makes this closer related to the theory of priming than that of framing.

4.2.4 Analytical discussion of framing

The earlier research on this subject has demonstrated a framing which clearly separates an 'us' from a 'them'; in other words, within the selected categories, Muslims have been made the 'others'. We argue that the reality in Argentinean media is different. Our findings show that even though framing of this kind can be found amongst the newspapers, it is rare. The most obvious examples of framing can be found in articles relating Islam to different types of threats. There seems to be a tendency in some articles, even in Argentina, to equate the religion Islam with terrorism. It tells us of a fictive reality in which every Muslim is a potential terrorist, which from a western perspective makes them different. A consequence of portraying Islam and Muslims in this way is its contribution to sustaining this stereotype, further enlarging the gap between our worlds. This stereotype is additionally strengthened

⁸⁸ *La Nación*, 'Mohammed Khatami: democracia a la iraní', April 17th 2005.

by a discussion on fundamentalism in which sweeping statements dominate. The fundamentalist is seldom defined, resulting in a template that could incorporate every Muslim. Displaying Islam and Muslims in this way can very well lead to people seeing them as dangerous, distancing themselves from the Muslims, and thereby making them the ‘others’.

Muslims are more commonly described as ‘religious others’, in relation to the other categories, but although this is true, it has been difficult to discover articles with this distinctive framing. In a significant number of articles authors consciously separate acts of violence from the religion of Islam, in order to make sure that generalizations are not made. This consciousness is also true for a majority of the articles concerning politics and culture. What, then, is the reason for the lack of articles with distinct frames? It might be a result of an overall lack of articles on this subject. However, given the methodological ambition of this thesis, with a conduction of both a qualitative and a quantitative analysis, we are certain this is not the case. On the contrary, a vast amount of articles has been found, and the reason for the shortage of distinct frames, within our categories, is – from our analysis – due to a dissimilar way of framing. With this we imply that the framing of Argentinean media does not create these social categories, hence not making them the focal point, irrespective of the article’s subject.

The least visible categorization – and thereby the least distinctive framing – is retrieved in the sections of articles generated on *Culture* and *Political structure*. These, however, differ somewhat. In articles concerning culture, a number of examples with generalizing frames were found, most often concerning Muslims in European nations (France, Great Britain etc.). These articles ascribe certain characteristics to all Muslim individuals. One would rarely state there is a ‘Christian community’ in Europe, but still some newspapers find it allowed and even appropriate to speak about a ‘Muslim community’. Despite this controversial way of generalizing for the more than one billion Muslims living in the world, the occurrence of such framing is not common. In fact, most articles concerning Muslim culture are nuanced and provide a picture in which there are cultural differences. Similarly, few cases of an established ‘other’ were found in articles on *Political structure*. Still, the message conveyed is that of a war-struck zone, due to the large proportion of articles covering conflicts. This might arguably be a case of how media inherently tend to focus on so called ‘negative news’, but still transmits a disturbing image of nations dominated by Muslims.

5. Concluding discussion

Repetitive reporting contributes in cementing an image, through the mechanisms of priming and framing, the so called ‘faces of power’. As previously stated, what is written is reflected in society. This signifies that a frame, frequently primed, relating Islam to terrorism – as seen in El Clarín during

2005 – can be the basis of social categorization, creating an ‘us’ and a ‘them’. Nevertheless, this is one of the rare occasions in which framing of Muslims can be considered to generate an ‘others’. Overall, over the three newspapers, a significant difference cannot be noted.

Our aim was to apply the theories of ‘us and them’, and priming as well as framing aspects, to Argentina. From this aim, we posed the question: Are Muslims and Islam portrayed as ‘others’ in Argentinean media? Comparing this thesis to earlier studies made indicates that Argentinean media do, generally, not put as much weight on religious or cultural affiliations as their western colleagues. In the research on articles concerning cultural, religious and political aspects, the only section deviating is that of religion, in which Argentina conveys an image more similar to other western media. The quantitative research shows that an association of Islam and terrorism is relatively common, which is noteworthy. The findings in the quantitative analysis are therefore more or less in line with earlier research. However, the qualitative part displays the lack of a strong relation between the concepts of Islam/Muslims to terrorism. Furthermore, this analysis means that even though frames are frequently primed, these frames do not show a clear distinction between an ‘us’ and a ‘them’, at least not by creating a cultural, religious or political ‘other’. There might, however, exist ‘others’ within other possible categories, but this still means that the framing of Muslims and Islam in Argentina is different from that of the western nations previously studied.

In sum, the quantitative analysis has shown that Argentinean media has a level of priming similar to that of earlier studies on western nations, but since the qualitative analysis does only somewhat fulfil one criterion for conclusion, Argentinean media do not qualify as having a distinct framing of Muslims as ‘others’. This is truly a great discovery, as well as an important contribution to the existing literature. Naturally, Argentina is not an island in today’s globalised media climate, but it still seems to have managed to escape influences from other western media and to some extent chosen not to take part in the media crusade towards Muslims. The reason for this is not for our thesis to explore, but is definitely of profound interest and relevance for this political science literature to answer.

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6.5.2 Página 12

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7. Attachments (appendix)

7.1 Appendix 1 – Quantitative data

El Clarín

Year 2000

Key word:

Musulmanes: 177 articles.

Musulmán: 60 articles.

Musulmana: 177 articles.

Islam: 250 articles.

Musulmanes + terrorismo: 14 articles.

Musulmán + terrorismo: 12 articles.

Musulmana + terrorismo: 14 articles.

Islam + terrorismo: 70 articles.

2005

Musulmanes: 326 articles.

Musulmán: 130 articles.

Musulmana: 326 articles.

Islam: 551 articles.

Musulmanes + terrorismo: 146 articles.

Musulmán + terrorismo: 69 articles.

Musulmana + terrorismo: 146 articles.

Islam + terrorismo: 280 articles.

2010

Musulmanes: 152 articles.

Musulmán: 76 articles.

Musulmana: 152 articles.

Islam: 289 articles.

Musulmanes + terrorismo: 38 articles.

Musulmán + terrorismo: 20 articles.

Musulmana + terrorismo: 38 articles.

Islam + terrorismo: 104 articles.

La Nación

2000

Musulmanes: 256 articles.

Musulmán: 126 articles.

Musulmana: 91 articles.

Islam: 115 articles.

Musulmanes + terrorismo: 21 articles.

Musulmana + terrorismo: 6 articles

Musulmán + terrorismo: 9 articles.

Islam + terrorismo: 10 articles.

2005

Musulmanes: 459 articles.

Musulmán: 213 articles.

Musulmana: 218 articles.

Islam: 315 articles.

Musulmanes + terrorismo: 144 articles.

Musulmana + terrorismo: 73 articles.

Musulmán + terrorismo: 81 articles.

Islam + terrorismo: 115 articles.

2010

Musulmanes: 173 articles.

Musulmán: 144 articles.

Musulmana: 70 articles.

Islam: 119 articles.

Musulmanes + terrorismo: 22 articles.

Musulmana + terrorismo: 10 articles.

Musulmán + terrorismo: 23 articles.

Islam + terrorismo: 22 articles.

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2005

Musulmanes: 196 articles.

Musulmán: 97 articles.

Musulmana: 93 articles.

Islam: 130 articles.

Musulmanes + terrorismo: 52 articles.

Musulmana + terrorismo: 23 articles.

Musulmán + terrorismo: 28 articles.

Islam + terrorismo: 43 articles.

2010

Musulmanes: 114 articles.

Musulmán: 92 articles.

Musulmana: 63 articles.

Islam: 78 articles.

Musulmanes + terrorismo: 16 articles.

Musulmana + terrorismo: 9 articles.

Musulmán + terrorismo: 15 articles.

Islam + terrorismo: 17 articles.

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