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The Effects of Media on the American Perceptions of Islam from 2001-2012

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Abstract

This study seeks to understand the correlation between the average American's understanding of a Muslim and the portrayal of Muslims in relevant news events. After defining terms and reviewing previous literature, two news sources will be used to compare various historically-significant events. The major events to be studied are the September 11 attacks of 2001, the American involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan, and the "Arab Spring". Precedent literature shall be used to determine a baseline understanding of common American perceptions of Muslims. From the baseline understandings of American perceptions and the established definitions regarding Muslims, a connection will be drawn between the claims of media sources and the American perceptions.

The Effects of Media on the American Perceptions of Islam from 2001-2012

This study shall seek to establish a connection between the ways in which mainstream media represents Muslims in pertinent social issues and the average American's perception thereof through comparing the results of public opinion polls and the development of news trends and stories regarding American interactions with Muslims. In analyzing these different concepts, the author will set preliminary definitions, creating a baseline of understanding regarding various terms, such as "Muslim" and "media bias." After these basic definitions are laid out, other sources are going to be compared to outline media's role and influence over public opinion, media bias, and select critiques of media's portrayals of Muslim and Islam. This research will lead to the development of a brief historical backdrop, followed by an analysis of public opinions of the American people regarding Islam and Muslims. After this brief analysis of public opinion, news comparisons between Fox and CNN will follow. The major eras to be analyzed are during the attacks of September 11, 2001, the early war on terror from 2003-2004, and the rise of the so-called "Arab Spring."

Once the basic definitions have been set, other critiques have been analyzed, and the poll findings have been summarized, then the news comparison will begin. This work will be comparing Fox and CNN's coverings of these issues, in order to get a perceived left and right winged perspective. In order to do this, various news quotes shall used. Some of the primary terms that shall be looked for in these quotes are "Muslims," "Islam," "Islamic," "extremist," "Mosque," and "Arab." While not all of the quotes containing one or more of these words may be pertinent, these are the sorts of words that are often associated with Islam. Additionally, as many of these words have strong

emotional connotations to them, they may influence the light in which Muslims are generally painted, as per that media source. Once this has been done for both CNN and Fox, then comparisons shall be made, tracking the overall light shed on Muslims and any development in these portrayals across the time spanned throughout these events.

In order to draw a conclusion, the results of the research will be compared with survey results of American public opinion regarding Islam and Muslims. If the comparison matches the results of the polls, the conclusion will be reached news media has influence over these everyday perceptions of the unknown. Before a final conclusion will be reached, various potential gaps and shortfalls will be analyzed within the research conducted here. In light of these various shortcomings, various considerations for future work in the field shall be suggested.

Definition of Terms

There are a few terms, which will have special importance and meanings designated throughout the paper. These terms include “Islam,” “Muslim,” “Arab,” “terrorist,” “media,” and “media bias.” “Muslim” and “Arab” are going to be defined separately, as they are often illegitimately intertwined in several different ways. Islam is a major world religion, and Muslims are followers of Islam. There are “approximately 1.6 billion [Muslims] in the world, living in different countries, speaking different languages, and with different ways of viewing the world.”¹ Because of the variety of cultural values and geographic locations filled with Muslims, “There are different sources of Islamic law, including local customs and traditions; therefore, there is not one legal system that

¹ Fatih Harpci. “Islam,” *Religious Studies Review*, 43 (2017 1): 19.

applies to all Muslims.”² Additionally, at this period of time, Indonesia is generally held to be the largest Islamic nation by population. Considering these facts, it would be incorrect to represent all Muslims as Arabs.

Conversely, those who inhabit the Middle East are not necessarily Muslims. As such, the term “Arabs” will refer to those who live on or near the Arabian Peninsula and share in much of Arabian culture, including northern Africa (the Maghreb region) and all throughout the Middle East (the Mashriq region). Some of these nations, such as Israel and Lebanon, are not predominantly Muslim. As such, the term “Arab” will refer to people of the general regions of North Africa and the Middle East.

Throughout this essay, the word “terrorist” may be used. Because of the nature of this study, this term will refer to the extremist actions of various isolated Islamic groups, or the individual perpetrators of these acts of violence. However, the term terrorism is more directly a type of violent crime meant to incite fear or the perpetrator of such an action. While “for many people in the world, Islam has become synonymous with violence and religious extremism, especially after the 9/11 terrorist attacks and now with ISIS,” it shall here be recognized that “terrorism” is not exclusively an act perpetrated by militant Islamic groups.³ However, to reiterate, due to the scope of this work, the term “terrorism” will refer to the actions of such specific extremist Islamic groups.

The term media is an all-encompassing term which can describe nearly any means of conveying information to a large public. However, in this study, media will mostly refer to television and online news as those are the two most popular forms of readily-

² Fatih Harpci. “Islam,” 20.

³ Ibid., 19.

available media. Even more specifically, due to the focus on Fox and CNN to provide respectively a right and leftist perspective, the term media will refer to various news segments and online articles published by Fox and CNN.

Lastly, media bias shall be defined uniquely as well. I shall use D. P. Baron's explanation of media bias, based on the principle that "Cumulatively over a series of stories, bias is consistent with unbalanced coverage of an issue and overemphasis."⁴ All media is, in some sense, limited in its ability to purvey the direct truth, as "it is not possible to suggest that the media operates completely outside of any particular perspective..."⁵ and is therefore inherently biased in some sense. CNN and Fox are both well-known news sources, and Fox has a more conservative bias while CNN has a more liberal bias. This idea is supported by Groseclose, who counted references to various think tanks amongst various media outlets, comparing them to the frequency of citations of those same think tanks, but used within the political realm. He deduced that "...the average New York Times article is ideologically very similar to the average speech by Joe Lieberman (D-CT). Next, since vote scores show Lieberman to be more liberal than Specter or Nunn [the established centrist markers], our method concludes that the New York Times has a liberal bias."⁶ Groseclose researched several other various media outlets and confirmed that CNN is liberal and that Fox is conservative from a relatively

⁴ D. P. Baron, 2016, "Persistent media bias," *Journal of Public Economics*, 90 (1), 11.

⁵ M. Samaie, & B. Malmir, 2017, "US News Media Portrayal of Islam and Muslims: A Corpus-Assisted Critical Discourse Analysis," *Educational Philosophy and Theory*: 1364.

⁶ T. Groseclose, & J. Milyo, 2015, "A Measure of Media Bias," *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 120 (4), 1204.

objective viewpoint. In researching both the left and right perspectives, it will be easier to understand what precisely it is within their news broadcasts that is being slanted.

Delimitations

Before analyzing the data and forming conclusions, it seems important to address various areas for concern and gaps in research, acknowledging that these conclusions may be imperfect or incomplete. As an independent researcher delving into the world of mass media, there are many limitations which hindered the researching process. One potential weakness was that for many of Fox's transcripts, the shows analyzed were not necessarily "news" programs, but were more of an opinion or talk show, such as "The O'Reilly Factor." These shows are on Fox's channel and are focused on current events and polls but are not strictly "news" shows. Next, this study was aimed only at comparing Fox and CNN within the United States. As such, there are thousands of alternative news sources which could alter American opinion, ranging from the twitter updates of a local news company to BBC. Furthermore, most people watch the news with some element of skepticism. As such, it is difficult to say how much the average individual is influenced by media's projections. Another point of contention is polling. Polling cannot be verified as a perfect sample, as it is done often at random and only the responses of those who are willing to answer the questions are recorded. Additionally, people often like to portray themselves in a positive light, and due to the sensitive nature of some of the survey questions, certain individuals may feel a need or desire to lie in answering a question. Lastly, there are countless outside influences which can affect the things a person believes, ranging from their religious views to the more subliminal influences that their

work environment may have over them. As such, it is impossible to definitively say what precisely influences the beliefs of a large group of people.

Methodology

In forming this work, the author researched the presence of media bias, specifically regarding Islam and Muslims. Through this literature, the author developed some ideas regarding the way mass media portrays Muslims and the effect that this has on the average American. The author's suggestion is that because all media has some bias and news is used to discover information regarding current events that the bias inherent within news resources would influence the perception of its audience. More specifically, the bias within Fox and CNN within news coverage involving Muslims would influence their audiences' perceptions concerning Muslims and Islam. A comparison of news transcripts was used by the author to discover what Fox and CNN were directly saying about Muslims and Islam. The findings will then be compared to the precedent literature and poll results to either assert or deny a connection between mass media and the average American's perception of Muslims. From the author's research, no other direct attempts of this exist, though separate studies exist regarding media bias, media's portrayal of Muslims and Islam, and the effects of news.

Discussion

Precedent Literature

Through analyzing various research and historical findings on media and its interactions with Islam, Muslims, and Arab nations affiliated with Islamic ties, an overall portrait of Media and Islam can be pieced together. The United States has had a strained relationship with many middle eastern countries, as the US played an instrumental role in

forming the modern-day nation of Israel. In the times following, “American orientalism [made] it virtually impossible for ordinary American citizens to get knowledge about the Near and Middle East which is not shaped by the Arab-Israeli conflict and which is full of images of Arabs and Palestinians as irrational and violent.”⁷ This situation was worsened during the Cold War, as much of the Middle East was possessed by the USSR. During this time, “the different aspects of Islam as a political and cultural dogma ... increased and exacerbated after the end of the Cold war.”⁸ This increase in the unknown, along with various skirmishes, led to the Persian Gulf War.

The Persian Gulf War happened in this context near the end of the Cold War. Because of the expansion of the USSR into the Middle East and the historical misunderstandings of these regions, tensions were already high. Once the war started, these tensions came to a new height. The American public, “[b]ombarded by both the conscious disinformation campaigns by the president and Pentagon and the structural disinformation tendencies of television and reinforced by a process of ideological constraint and group think, critical thought about what was happening in the Middle East and the Gulf War was suppressed.”⁹ This idea of limited available information has been closely agreed upon by various critics of the media. It has been found that “...a narrowly limited inventory of pictures was used by the newsmagazines to represent the Gulf War, images shaped by more established conventions of military illustration than by specific

⁷ Salim Kerboua, 2016, “From Orientalism to Neo-Orientalism: Early and Contemporary Constructions of Islam and the Muslim World,” *Intellectual Discourse* 24 (1): 19.

⁸ Salim Kerboua, 2016, “From Orientalism to Neo-Orientalism...” 26.

⁹ F. Shor, 1993, “The Adult Learner, the News Media, and the Third World: Suppressing and Facilitating Critical Thinking,” *The Journal of General Education*, 42 (4), 230-231.

events in the Gulf.”¹⁰ It has been argued that this deprivation of imagery and information was not necessarily the fault of the media outlets. Shor writes that “...the Bush administration and the Pentagon administrated a media campaign that made it difficult to seek out and articulate alternative views.”¹¹ Additionally, during the Persian Gulf War, Shor concluded that those in his research sample “demonstrated a near unanimous reliance on television as their primary news source and an abysmal ignorance of the culture and politics of the Middle East.”¹² While this may be a relatively-isolated sample, Shor found a dearth of understanding regarding the geography, the culture, and the background of the Middle East, yet a relatively regular reliance on television news for information regarding the political occurrences of the Middle East.

The next political event which brought Islam into the eye of the American public was the incidents of September 11, 2001. This date brings a lot of feelings, controversies, and grief to many Americans and drastically influenced the perceptions of Americans regarding Muslims. Generally speaking, “Islamophobia gained momentum after the events of September 11, 2001, as many westerners started to think that the ideology of the terrorists – assumed to be Muslims – must be derived from their religion. The Qur’an has been regarded as the root of the problem.”¹³ While this trend was increasing, it also seems that fewer people actually understood the basis of Islam.

¹⁰ M. Griffin & J. Lee, 1995, “Picturing the Gulf War: Constructing an Image of War in Time, Newsweek, and U.S. News & World Report,” *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 72 (4): 822.

¹¹ F. Shor, “The adult learner...” 228.

¹² F. Shor, “The adult learner...” 228.

¹³ Ibrahim Saleh, 2009, “Thinking Loudly about Media Approaches to Islam: Understanding the Qur'anic Text, or Spinning a Mass-Mediated Meaning,” *Journal of Arab & Muslim Media Research* 2 (3): 208.

It has been proposed that the root cause of this issue could be the mainstream media outlets. Ogan, Willnat, and Bashir write that "... media exposure to Muslim-related issues might have an impact on attitudes toward Muslims and Islam in general... U.S. respondents who paid more attention to media coverage of the Park51 issue were ... more likely to think that Islam is a religion of violence, and that Muslims should not have the same rights as other religious groups."¹⁴ Park51 was a project that wanted to build a thirteen-story mosque approximately two blocks from the World Trade Center Ground Zero in New York. As such, much controversy was spurred through this proposed building which was never built, likely due to the concerns raised by the controversy. Overall, it seems that "...many western circles believe that the September 11 perpetrators justified their attack with Islamist critique of 'Western culture'. And the same polarization applies to the collective mind of Arabs and Muslims, where their perception is determined by what the media offers for consumption."¹⁵ Here, it can be seen that parties on both sides may be plagued by similar misinformation in media, leading to mutual misunderstandings in these sensitive areas.

The last main group of events which shall be analyzed here is the so-called "Arab Spring". It seems that a building civil unrest peaked throughout various Arab nations, leading to strikes, protests, rebellions, and civil wars. This then led to millions of refugees spreading throughout the European Union and fleeing to the US. In the coverage of these occurrences, "the guest columnists, American experts and ex-officials appeared as

¹⁴ C. Ogan, L. Willnat, R. Pennington, & M. Bashir, 2013, "The Rise of Anti-Muslim Prejudice: Media and Islamophobia in Europe and the United States," *International Communication Gazette*, 76 (1): 4.

¹⁵ Ibrahim Saleh, "Thinking loudly..." 204.

prominent writers of columns, while Arab scholars and social activists were rarely heard from. It is also notable that U.S. government officials, including those from the White House and the State Department, were not visible as writers.”¹⁶ Due to the narrow scope of opinion which was thereby voiced, much of the content was heavily biased to promote various American interests. In the words of J.S. Ha, “... the elite U.S. newspapers accentuated the prevailing values of American society in the media narratives about the Arab Spring and filtered the unfolding events in the Middle East through a lens of ‘national interest’.”¹⁷ This idea of national interest can take on different roles, ranging from the safety of US citizens to the feminist agenda around the world and promoting women’s rights. It is an application of unseen ethnocentrism that tinges the media in subtle ways.

Similar findings were discovered by others. The general conclusion was that throughout the “Arab Spring”, “...Western media tend to project human rights and personal stories of the protest victims significantly more than the Eastern media.”¹⁸ This projection may have to do with the general desire for the spread of democracy, which has often prevailed through American history and international endeavors. While this may seem to be a bit of a stretch, due to the rise in media focusing on extremist activities, “Many people in the West now perceive Islam as a threat to free thought, civil liberties,

¹⁶ J.S. Ha, 2017, “Tailoring the Arab Spring to American Values and Interests: A Framing Analysis of U.S. Elite Newspapers’ Opinion Pieces,” *International Communication Gazette*, 79 (3): 283.

¹⁷ J.S. Ha, “Tailoring the Arab Spring...” 283.

¹⁸ Rasul, A., & Asim, M. M. 2014, “How US Newspapers Framed the Arab Spring” *Media Asia*, 41 (1), 97.

world peace, and stability.”¹⁹ This vilification of Islam, whether intentional or not, has created much tension and misunderstanding of not only Islam, but the Middle East, Muslims, and non-Muslim Arabs. Many claim that this vilification exists unintentionally because there is often a false dichotomy made of Muslims, creating a certain “us - them” dialogue. Faimau writes:

[f]irst, there is a strong tendency that when argumentation opposes ‘Islam’ to ‘democracy’ or ‘modernity’, the antithesis simultaneously excludes and debases Islam and Muslims. Second, fear of Islam is often formulated through negative references such as violence, threat and conflict, as opposed to positive references for the West. Third, the application of the binary approach affects media representations of Muslims in two related ways, namely hegemonisation and homogenisation. The hegemonisation representation reinforces Western power over Muslims by representing them as ‘foreigners’ having ‘non-Western’ values. The homogenisation of Muslims is seen in the tendency to regard Muslims as a single, monolithic community.²⁰

This simplification of the idea of Muslims is incredibly problematic and often perpetuates further misunderstanding. The idea of Islam is often reduced to a violent Middle-Eastern religion. When these stereotypes are perpetuated in such a large scale, it creates “this reconstructed vision of a threatening, backward and violent *homo islamicus* turns Muslims into people requiring therapeutic or punitive interventions.”²¹ While violent trends have been seen, reducing one of the largest world religions to a violent and depraved cult is a dangerous allegation.

¹⁹ Ibrahim Saleh, “Thinking loudly...” 206.

²⁰ Gabriel Faimau, 2015, “The Conflictual Model of Analysis in Studies on the Media Representation of Islam and Muslims: A Critical Review: The Conflictual Model of Analysis,” *Sociology Compass*, 9 (5): 326.

²¹ Gema Martín-Muñoz, (2010) "Unconscious Islamophobia," *Human Architecture* 8, no. 2 (Fall): 26.

Based on various surveys, it is apparent that the American public is ill-informed regarding Islam and its adherents. Following the attacks of September 11, various opinion polls were used to gauge the understanding of Americans regarding Islam. The data showed that "... the percentage of Americans who claim to know "nothing at all" about Islamic practices grew from 24 percent in 2001 to 29 percent in 2003. Likewise, with regard to the Koran, the Islamic "Bible," most Americans express a lack of familiarity the text."²² While there was a general ignorance of Islam displayed throughout the survey data, there were some additional trends which were equally interesting. It was found that "While older respondents were more likely to hold more unfavorable opinions of Muslims... the same was true for conservative respondents in the United States... Respondents with more education, on the other hand, were more likely to hold more positive attitudes toward Muslims."²³ These feelings have been on the rise since 2001, and "[w]hile in 2004 almost half (48%) of all Americans had unfavorable opinions of Muslims, this group increased to 56% in 2008."²⁴ This contrast points to a potential separation and may be seen as evidence of a polarization of left versus right thoughts within the US.

Public Opinion

The author has compiled the results of a number of survey questions through the Pew research center regarding American's perceptions of Muslims and Islam. These

²² C. Panagopoulos, 2006, "The polls-trends: Arab and muslim americans and islam in the aftermath of 9/11," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 70 (4): 611.

²³ C. Ogan, L. Willnat, R. Pennington, & M. Bashir, 2013 "The rise of anti-Muslim prejudice..." 39.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 37.

survey questions were selected due to their pertinence and repetition over time. The author then combined the results of polls with the same question and compiled them below to create a picture of the average American’s perception based on these survey results and showing how they have or have not changed over time. The idea here is to create an understanding of American’s perceptions with which to compare the news slants.

Table 1: *General Opinions Regarding Islam*

Question asked: *Would you say you have a generally favorable or unfavorable opinion of Islam?*

Table 1	Mar. 20, 2002²⁵	July 26, 2005 (Group 1)²⁶	July 26, 2005 (Group 2)²⁷	Aug. 24, 2010²⁸	Average % (rounded to .1)
Favorable	38 %	41%	37%	30%	36.5%
Unfavorable	33%	36%	36%	38%	35.8%
No Opinion (vol.)	29%	23%	26%	32%	27.5%

Table 2: *USA VS. Islam or USA VS. Radicals?*

Question asked: *Do you think that the terrorist attacks over the past few years are a part of a major conflict between the people of America and Europe versus the people of Islam,*

²⁵ Pew Research Center, “Would you say you have a generally favorable or unfavorable opinion of Islam?” Mar. 20, 2002, Accessed Nov. 1, 2018, Accessible at http://poll.orpub.com/document.php?id=quest02.out_22192&type=hitlist&num=14

²⁶ Pew Research Center, “Would you say you have a generally favorable or unfavorable opinion of Islam?”, July 26, 2005, Accessed Nov. 1, 2018, Accessible at http://poll.orpub.com/document.php?id=quest05.out_18895&type=hitlist&num=10.

²⁷ Pew Research Center, “Would you say you have a generally favorable or unfavorable opinion of Islam?”, July 26, 2005, Accessed Nov. 1, 2018, Accessible at http://poll.orpub.com/document.php?id=quest05.out_18896&type=hitlist&num=11.

²⁸ Pew Research Center, “Would you say you have a generally favorable or unfavorable opinion of Islam?”, Aug. 24, 2010, Accessed Nov. 1, 2018, Accessible at http://poll.orpub.com/document.php?id=quest10.out_9147&type=hitlist&num=3.

or is it only a conflict with a small, radical group? (July 26, 2005) / Do you think that the September 11th terrorist attacks were the start of a major conflict between the people of America and Europe versus the people of Islam, or is it only a conflict with a small, radical group? (Sep. 6, 2006 / Sep. 1, 2011)

Table 2	Jul. 26, 2005 ²⁹	Sep. 6, 2006 ³⁰	Sep. 1, 2011 ³¹	Average % (rounded to .1)
Major Conflict	29%	40%	35%	34.7%
Conflict with a Small Radical Group	60%	49%	57%	55.4%
Don't Know / Refused	11%	11%	8%	10%

Table 3: *Perceived Support of Extremism*

Question Asked: *In your opinion, how much support for extremism, if any, is there among Muslims living in the US - a great deal, a fair amount, not too much, or none at all?*

²⁹ Pew Research Center, “Do you think that the terrorist attacks over the past few years are a part of a major conflict between the people of America and Europe versus the people of Islam, or is it only a conflict with a small, radical group?” July, 26, 2005, Accessed Nov. 1, 2018, Accessible at http://poll.orpub.com/document.php?id=quest04.out_31080&type=hitlist&num=0.

³⁰ Pew Research Center, “Do you think that the September 11th terrorist attacks were the start of a major conflict between the people of America and Europe versus the people of Islam, or is it only a conflict with a small, radical group?” Sep. 6, 2006, Accessed Nov. 1, 2018, Accessible at http://poll.orpub.com/document.php?id=quest06.out_31473&type=hitlist&num=1.

³¹ Pew Research Center, “Do you think that the September 11th terrorist attacks were the start of a major conflict between the people of America and Europe versus the people of Islam, or is it only a conflict with a small, radical group?”, Sep. 1, 2011, Accessed Nov. 1, 2018, Accessible at http://poll.orpub.com/document.php?id=quest11.out_15842&type=hitlist&num=0.

Table 3	Aug. 29, 2011 ³²	Sep. 1, 2011 ³³	2011 Average (rounded to .1)	Feb. 17, 2017 ³⁴	Jul. 26, 2017 ³⁵	2017 Average (rounded to .1)	Average % (rounded to .1)
A Great Deal	6%	15%	10.5%	11%	6%	8.5%	9.5%
A Fair Amount	15%	25%	20%	24%	11%	17.5%	18.8%
Not Much / Not Too Much (Aug. 29, 2011)	30%	33%	31.5%	40%	30%	35%	33.3%
None at All	34%	12%	23%	15%	43%	29%	26%
Don't Know / Refused	15%	14%	14.5%	10%	10%	10%	12.3%

Due to the basic nature of polling, the anonymity of those questioned, the time spanned, and the nature of the questions, it is difficult to definitively state trends.

However, through looking at these slight trends both over time and averaged together across time, some interesting patterns come to light.

³² Pew Center Research, “In your opinion, how much support for extremism, if any, is there among Muslims living in the US: a great deal, a fair amount, not too much, or none at all?” Aug. 29, 2011, Accessed Nov. 1, 2018, Accessible at http://poll.orpub.com/document.php?id=quest11.out_9358&type=hitlist&num=3.

³³ Pew Research Center, “In your opinion, how much support for extremism, if any, is there among Muslims living in the US - a great deal, a fair amount, not too much, or none at all?”, Sep. 1, 2011, Accessed Nov. 1, 2018, Accessible at http://poll.orpub.com/document.php?id=quest11.out_9336&type=hitlist&num=2.

³⁴ Pew Research Center, “In your opinion, how much support for extremism, if any, is there among Muslims living in the US: a great deal, a fair amount, not too much, or none at all?”, Feb. 17, 2017, Accessed Nov. 1, 2018, Accessible at http://poll.orpub.com/document.php?id=quest17.out_3798&type=hitlist&num=1.

³⁵ Pew Research Center, “In your opinion, how much support for extremism, if any, is there among Muslims living in the US - a great deal, a fair amount, not much, or none at all?”, Jul. 26, 2017, Accessed Nov. 1, 2018, Accessible at http://poll.orpub.com/document.php?id=quest17.out_3797&type=hitlist&num=0.

First, while it may seem that the overall negativity towards Islam has been on the rise since the terrorist attacks of 9/11, there also seems to be more people who still maintain a positive view than those who hold a negative view regarding Islam and Muslims. The increase in the negative view, assuming these percentages are consistent across all of the US, negative sentiments regarding Islam went up approximately 5% from 2002 to 2010, shortly before the “Arab Spring”.

Additionally, as per Table two, it seems that over half of Americans believe that Islam at large is not responsible for terrorism, while approximately one third of Americans are of the opinion that the US is actively against the whole of Islam. Across time, there was neither enough data nor enough change to place a definitive statement regarding beliefs. However, by averaging these percentages together, it can be seen that about one out of three Americans view Islam as a threat to the US, while over half view the threat to be minimal.

Lastly, Table three had some interesting results. Any distinct trend was relatively indiscernible, as the variation in responses was wide. However, in averaging together the data across time, it seemed that one third of Americans found there to be not much of a threat of Islamic extremism in the United States, while nearly one in four Americans found no threat at all. This statistic nearly matched those who found there to be a moderate to advanced threat of extremism in the United States.

Media Review

The media review will focus on analyzing different trends of focus throughout larger events. Various quotes and ideas from Fox and CNN shall be analyzed and compared with one another, followed by the data found in the public opinion polls. The

events will be analyzed in order of the overarching events. CNN's perspective of these events will be outlined first, followed by Fox Network's perspective. A comparison of the coverage, the development and shifts in perspective and the implications of these shifts will be to follow. The news cross-references will then be compared to the findings of the Pew research surveys to establish a connection or lack thereof.

9/11

CNN. The attacks of September 11, 2001 were a sensitive subject and it is arguably the most infamous and widely reported news issue of the 21st century. Due to the attackers' connections to the religion of Islam, there was also a lot of reference to Islam and Muslims during this time. One of the first reports found containing the word Arabs was an interview with Guy Tozzoli, the president of the World Trade Centers Association. He said that "When this terrible thing happened I had messages, e-mails from every single part of the world, including much of the Arab world where trade centers are saying this is a bad thing. And the next message was, we must reconstruct the World Trade Center in New York because it's a symbol not just of New York, it's a symbol of stability and peace around the world."³⁶ Here, while this was an interview and not a CNN official, it shows remorse from the area of the world often associated with Islam, shortly after these events. This remorse points to the idea of a more complicated situation than simply a battle of Islam versus the United States of America.

³⁶ Bill Hemmer, Maria Hinojosa, Richard Roth. "New York Residents Discuss Terrorist Attack on World Trade Center." *CNN*, September 23, 2001 accessed September 9, 2018. <https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:4944-BS40-009B-G0WJ-00000-00&context=1516831>.

Next, almost a month after the attacks, CNN Chief International Correspondent Christiane Amanpour made this comment, stating “The magnitude of this hatred and fanaticism now has most of the world, especially the West, asking what kind of Islam is this? How can a religion of peace have been so distorted?”³⁷ Here, Amanpour assumes a previous understanding of Islam as a religion of peace, again indicating the complexity of this political climate.

Wanting to establish a sort of timeline, CNN later produced a program entitled “History Repeats: Islam and The West Have Met Many Times Before”. In This program, Garrick Utley introduced Islam, going back to its historic roots, saying “Act one our story begins in the sands of Arabia, where a new faith arises. Mohammed is its messenger, and in the oasis town of Medina, Islam is born, the first mosque is built, the year is 622.”³⁸ As this timeline progresses, Utley outlines some of the historical clashes between various Western powers and influences and Islam, such as the crusades. Later, Utley says “Was history repeating itself, or simply continuing the most enduring of conflicts between Western influence and power and the might of Islamic belief? If the faces have changed, the fundamental and fundamentalist forces behind the conflict, over more than 1,300 years, have not, only the weapons have.”³⁹ This quote points out the longstanding

³⁷ Christiane Amanpour, Mike Boettcher, Brent Sadler, Frank Sesno. "An In-Depth Look at Islam: The Realities and the Rhetoric". *CNN*. October 13, 2001, accessed September 7, 2018. <https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:4944-BVH0-009B-G2VY-00000-00&context=1516831>

³⁸ Daryn Kagan, Garrick Utley. "History Repeats: Islam and The West Have Met Many Times Before". *CNN*. October 31, 2001, accessed September 7, 2018. <https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:4944-BYS0-009B-G4K4-00000-00&context=1516831>

³⁹ *Ibid.*

presence of conflict between these two powers and the presence of extremism as well. CNN later broadened the focus of this Islamic tension, discussing how the Taliban destroyed some Buddhist statues. In a back and forth between Johnathan Karl and Annie Griffiths Belt. Karl points out that “the Taliban destroyed the Buddhist statues. That's certainly not a Western figure there. I mean, this is -- they are more than merely anti-Western,”⁴⁰ to which Belt replies “Right. I think the Taliban will lash out at all sorts of influences... It's a radical fringe, obviously, that has been rejected, I think, by most of the Muslim world.”⁴¹ Showcasing the Taliban in this light, describing them as apostates, rejected by mainstream Islam seems to muddy the topic. This description of the Taliban makes the tension suddenly less clear, as to what causes it.

However, while acknowledging extremism, CNN also wanted to express some clarifications regarding this presence of extremism. On September 23 of 2001, they aired “What do We Know About Islam?” In this, Bill Delaney interviewed an Imam, seeking to help clarify these questions. Delaney opened the conversation, saying:

There's of an air of a medieval way of thinking to say that now again the Christian West and the Islamic East confront each other...the West is not all Christian nor the East monolithically Islam. And yet an age-old misunderstanding. Roots of violence flourish. To not know how close Christians and Muslims are to allow alleged distance to further drive us apart.⁴²

⁴⁰ Jonathan Karl, Peter Bergen, Don Shepperd. "America's New War: McCain Praises Bush; Shays, Weiner Debate Economic Stimulus; Dealing With Conflicting Emotions After September 11". *CNN*. December 22, 2001, accessed September 7, 2018. <https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:4944-C580-009B-G3WV-00000-00&context=1516831>

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² Bill Hemmer, Bill Delaney, "What Do We Know About Islam?", *CNN*, September 23, 2001, accessed September 7, 2018, <https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:4944-BS40-009B-G0X0-00000-00&context=1516831>.

The Imam generally agrees with Delaney's comment, and added in a comment about the idea of Jihad, stating "I don't know how many references there are to actual war to Jihad - - maybe less than five or six... It's referring to groups of people to work on their spiritual enlightenment -- their inner connection to God's self-disclosure."⁴³ Here, the Imam establishes that not only are the violent forms of Islam a radical bent, but are generally to be regarded as a cult that has denied Islam. This comment confirms the idea previously promoted by Jonathan Karl, regarding specifically the Taliban.

Fox. Bill O'Reilly said in his talk show on the twelfth of September that "There was no difference between Hitler and Osama bin Laden. They're the same person."⁴⁴ However, the very next day, Bill O'Reilly stated that "all fair-minded Americans will not take out any of our anger and frustration on fellow citizens, I'm sure of that. And restraint is what is needed in that area" in reference to a caller requesting that Americans not blame all Muslims for the attacks.⁴⁵ In fact, O'Reilly does not blame the religion at all. He later states "the Muslim religion doesn't say any of that. It looks to me to be rogue people who are hiding behind that religion, not the theology itself."⁴⁶ In November,

⁴³ Bill Hemmer, Bill Delaney, "What Do We Know About Islam?"

⁴⁴ Bill O'Reilly, "Call For Declaration of War Against Islam Jihad", *Fox News Network*, September 12, 2001, accessed September 7, 2018. <https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:492C-XG90-00MM-P1FS-00000-00&context=1516831>.

⁴⁵ Bill O'Reilly, "America Unites How Is America Feeling?" *Fox News Network*, September 13, 2001, accessed September 7, 2018. <https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:492C-XGB0-00MM-P1GC-00000-00&context=1516831>.

⁴⁶ Bill O'Reilly, "Back of the Book Is Religion to Blame for September 11th's Attacks?" *Fox News Network*, September 24, 2001, accessed September 7, 2018. <https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:492C-XGD0-00MM-P1R6-00000-00&context=1516831>.

O'Reilly added that "...we're at war with Muslim extremists..." which in one sentence acknowledges and further emphasizes the connection of the attacks with Islam, but also brings to light the idea that those who set themselves against the United States are the violent fringe extremists.⁴⁷ Here, thus far, Fox and CNN appear to potentially be in agreement, regarding the rash and independent behavior of terrorist groups.

In a live interview with Fox, Ibrahim Cooper said "...it's ridiculous to say that acts of violence of this nature are somehow part of a faith... But because people don't have a context, into which to place Islam, if you come to them and say -- well, Islam is violent, because some Muslim is violent -- they go, well, maybe that's true".⁴⁸ An episode of Sean Hannity also acknowledged the idea that these attacks were not endorsed by the Islamic religion at large. Siraj Wahhaj said "...there are Muslims all over saying the same thing I am saying, that what happened on the tragic event on September 11th had nothing to do with Islam at all, and -- and our book -- Islam teaches against it. Prophet Muhammad taught against it, and Muslims are against this."⁴⁹ Overall, Fox News connected the attacks to Islam, but kept the relation limited to the extremist sects of Islam.

⁴⁷ Bill O'Reilly, "Personal Story Interview With Sarah El-Tantawi". Fox News Network. November 14, 2001, accessed September 7, 2018. <https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:492C-XJJ0-00MM-P4BY-00000-00&context=1516831>.

⁴⁸ John Gibson, George Mitchell, Wendell Goler. "Special Edition America United", *Fox News Network*, September 15, 2001, accessed September 7, 2018. <https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:492C-XGB0-00MM-P1HV-00000-00&context=1516831>.

⁴⁹ Alan Colmes, Sean Hannity, "Interview With Siraj Wahhaj", *Fox News Network*, October 16, 2001, accessed September 7, 2018. <https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:492C-XGH0-00MM-P277-00000-00&context=1516831>.

Comparison. So far, regarding the content and differences between Fox and CNN, there has been a minimal difference of ideas promoted by the networks themselves. Due to the ‘talk show’ nature of some of these programs, such as “the O’Rielly Factor”, some of the guests expressed opinions with which the host did not agree. These sorts of disagreements were not included in the scope of this study, as it did not focus on the viewpoint directly expressed through the network. Regardless, both Fox and CNN expressed a similar hesitation to label any nation or religion at large as the cause of the attacks. There was often a crasser sort of language used in Fox, such as directly equating Bin Laden and Hitler. This crass boldness, however, seemed to be pointed at the isolated terrorist groups. CNN used a more cautious explanation, seeking historical precedents to approach this sensitive issue. Overall, the two outlets seemed to agree more than anything else regarding 9/11, exerting caution in reporting such a sensitive tragedy. This more centrist reporting makes sense in light of the opinion polls as well, as in March of 2002, the views of Islam were nearly divided into thirds, with 33% viewing Islam negatively, 38% viewing it positively, and 29% either unsure or not expressing an opinion regarding their feelings toward Islam.⁵⁰

2003-2004

CNN. Following the 9/11 attacks and the announcement of the so-called “war on terror”, the US began to invade Iraq and Afghanistan to depose Saddam Hussein and eliminate terrorist groups and strongholds. With the increase of attention put on various militant groups and their heightened focus on attacking American targets, the eyes of

⁵⁰ See Table 1, p.15.

American media zoomed in on the Middle East. Meanwhile, on the home front, paranoia regarding Muslim neighbors increased. While the goal was to help increase peace and democracy, Anderson Cooper had to ask “Has it helped our status, though, in the Muslim world? And again, I point to this Pentagon report. They said, and I quote, ‘American direct intervention in the Muslim world has paradoxically elevated the stature of and support for radical Islamists, while diminishing support for the United States to single digits in some Arab societies.’”⁵¹ Nic Robertson, a CNN International Correspondent confronted this tension, noting how many things seemed unchanging. He reports having seen “Posters very much echoing and the rhetoric inside the mosque today at prayers, echoing exactly the sort of statements that we were hearing from the imams in the mosques when Saddam Hussein was in power... Perhaps they really haven't moved their political thinking forward.”⁵² Robertson’s observations again point to this idea of Eastern ideology versus Western ideology, expecting a change in values and ideals following Hussein’s deposition. In this same report, Akbar Ahmed, a professor of American University points out this tension while cautioning from over-simplifying the situation. In his words, “Just as history divides, history can be used to bring people together... there's obviously a debate. It's a much more nuanced, sophisticated debate than very often we

⁵¹ Eliot Spitzer, Will Cain, E.D. Hill, Nic Robertson, Ben Wedeman, David Gergen. "Gadhafi's Bizarre Appearance; Gadhafi Forces Attack Rebel Positions; U.S. Response to Libya; Brigitte Gabriel on Radical Islam; Brigitte Gabriel's Anti-Islam Message on Radical Muslims; Imam Speaks Out on Muslim Terror; Radicalization of Islam in America; Women in Post Revolution Egypt: Women's March Turns Ugly," *CNN*, March 8, 2011, accessed October 8, 2018. <https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:52BK-RWJ1-JBKP-N12V-00000-00&context=1516831>.

⁵² Larry King, Wesley Clark, Jamie McIntyre, Christiane Amanpour, Rym Brahimi, Gary Tuchman, Steve Nettleton, Mike Boettcher. "Interview With Bob Simon," *CNN*, April 8, 2003, accessed October 9, 2018. <https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:494C-09F0-009B-G05R-00000-00&context=1516831>.

hear, which is simply the West vs. Islam. It isn't like that. It's much more complicated, much more nuanced."⁵³ This division has led to misunderstandings and divisions on both sides. There is plenty of evidence displaying these misunderstandings. CNN conducted a survey and found that "half of all Americans think that Muslim Americans are not doing enough to condemn acts of terror."⁵⁴ Additionally on the American public side of things, there has been misplaced aggression against parties uninvolved. Mardeep Singh of the Sikh Coalition reports that there have been "over 300 different incidents of bias against Sikhs since 9/11," and they are not even Muslims, they simply wear turbans.⁵⁵ Americans are overwhelmed and unsure how to respond, crying out for justice.

Unbeknownst to many, however, many Muslims are actively countering some of these atrocities, whether speaking out actively against the violence of extremist groups, reporting suspicious activities to the police, or simply lending a helping hand. One of the countless examples of this sort of action was in the treatment of Jessica Lynch, an American in Iraqi captivity. John Vause, a CNN newscaster, explained that "The doctors here insist that Jessica Lynch received the best possible medical attention, even better, they say, than local Iraqis... they told me it was their duty as doctors as well as Muslims.

⁵³ Larry King, Wesley Clark, Jamie McIntyre, Christiane Amanpour, Rym Brahimi, Gary Tuchman, Steve Nettleton, Mike Boettcher. "Interview With Bob Simon."

⁵⁴ Kelli Arena, Paula Zahn, Maria Hinojosa, Tom Foreman, Jeanne Moos, "Tom Ridge Steps Down; Building Bridges of Understanding Between Muslims and Non-Muslims," *CNN*. November 30, 2004, Accessed October 10, 2018.
<https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:4DXG-HG00-TWD2-V21K-00000-00&context=1516831>.

⁵⁵ Carol Costello, Rob Marciano, Kareen Wynter, Alessio Vinci, Jason Carroll, Jeanne Meserve, J.J. Ramberg, "Democrats in Boston; Mideast Violence; Turban Bias; Democratic National Convention; Convention Security; Work & Worship," *CNN*, July 26, 2004, accessed September 9, 2018.
<https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:4CYC-H2R0-009B-G38Y-00000-00&context=1516831>.

Under the teachings of Islam, they say, prisoners of war should be cared for and treated well.”⁵⁶ Additionally, some of those who are with the extremists are not necessarily there by choice. Zainib Salbi, founder of Women for Women International, paints this picture for CNN of what she makes out to be a relatively-common scenario in Afghanistan. She described how “a Talib would go to a woman who is a widow and has seven to eight children for example, and he will tell her, here is a food package, give me your son. I will send him to the madressa, I will teach him how to read and write and I will feed your children.”⁵⁷ Regardless of how the mother may feel concerning the political motives of the Talib, she will do what she feels is best for her children. She may hate what the Taliban do, but she has to ask herself “Is it worse than watching my children starve?” So this lack of speaking out against the actions of extremist groups may not be due to supporting their cause, but could have to do with fear or some other motive, which is harder to discern. While she is not a CNN correspondent, Salbi is using this picture as a general example of what is going on in the world, and she used this picture to promote women’s rights, arguing that more choices and opportunities for the woman would improve the situation. Jack Cafferty actually took this point and furthered it, saying “yet violence against women at the hands of men in the Middle East and Arab countries is

⁵⁶Anderson Cooper, David Ensor, Nic Robertson, Tim Rogers, Jane Arraf, Michael Holmes, John King, Mike Brooks, William Schneider, Jeffrey Toobin, "Live From the Headlines," *CNN*, April 18, 2003, Accessed October 9, 2018.
Friday. <https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:494C-09Y0-009B-G119-0000-00&context=1516831>.

⁵⁷ Betty Nguyen, Jack Cafferty, Andy Serwer, Susan Lisovicz, Ben Wedeman, Allen Wastler, "Much of Iraq Optimistic; Investors Await Google's Dutch Auction," *CNN*, May 1, 2004, Accessed October 9, 2018.
<https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:4C91-Y3T0-009B-G0MS-00000-00&context=1516831>

notorious. And it's condoned, and in the case of the Taliban, it was even advocated in some sense.”⁵⁸ Here, Cafferty seemed to be reverting to a colonizing mindset, pushing Western values onto the Middle East and casting the news in a manner so as to promote American ideas and perspectives of equality and justice onto the news.

Fox. In the time that followed 9/11 and the invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan, Fox also continued to seek answers to understand what Islam is and how it all tied into the various events seen around the world as American military involvement and Islamic resistance both increased. Of the many more curious incidents reported regarded an isolated extremist in London. This group was purportedly “planning a 9/11 celebration in London tomorrow, drawing outrage from mainstream Muslims around the world.”⁵⁹ While this event in itself is incredibly inflammatory, the response of Muslims around the world, who were outraged, brought some peace of mind to the American public. Asma Hassan, author of “Why I am a Muslim” was interviewed during this same news segment offering further words of encouragement. Hassan insisted that the Muslim community was more involved than media would have one believe and that “...instead of the media reporting on what's happening every day to American Muslims, you know, people like me will have to come and tell you about it.”⁶⁰ This difficult balance of understanding has

⁵⁸Betty Nguyen, Jack Cafferty, Andy Serwer, Susan Lisovicz, Ben Wedeman, Allen Wastler, "Much of Iraq Optimistic; Investors Await Google's Dutch Auction," *CNN*, May 1, 2004, Accessed October 9, 2018. <https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:4C91-Y3T0-009B-G0MS-00000-00&context=1516831>

⁵⁹ Tony Snow, "Impact Muslim Group Plans 9/11 Celebration," *Fox News Network*, September 10, 2004 Friday, Accessed October 10, 2018. <https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:4D97-79G0-00MM-P01M-00000-00&context=1516831>.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

been an area of recurring questions. Tony Snow brought up this question about a year later, insisting "...quite often you'll have people coming out in the Arab world saying, 'We condemn it,' but they don't really do anything to try and prevent it."⁶¹ This distinguishing of "sides" within Islam was of growing concern to the Fox narrative of Islam. Referenced time and time again was this idea of "Wahabism". John Gibson explained Wahabism as a "militant fundamentalist deadly brand of Islam called Wahabism, which is very different than the rest of Islam."⁶² While various opinions exist regarding the validity of the concerns of Wahabism, Gibson is also aware of the potential for paranoia. Gibson stated in a later Fox show that "we're sort of hyper vigilant, because we thought things weren't possible once upon a time too."⁶³ Americans were not the only ones who were tiring of the acts of extremists. By the end of 2004, "insurgents [had lost] support in the Arab world, so now these guys are going after new target: mainly Iraq's Christian churches..."⁶⁴ and the relationship to US media and Islam changed yet again. In these circumstances, Fox seemed to be forcing people to take a side, so as to say

⁶¹ Tony Snow, "Interview With Osama Siblani, Irshad Manji", *Fox News Network*, May 12, 2004, accessed October 10, 2018, <https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:4CCG-W3R0-00MM-P1K5-0000-00&context=1516831>.

⁶² John Gibson, Greg Palkot, "Iraqi Donor's Conference Wraps up With \$33 billion for Rebuilding; Interview with University of Boston's Michael Corgan", *Fox News Network*, October 24, 2003, accessed October 10, 2018, <https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:49VJ-MK30-00MM-P0RN-00000-00&context=1516831>.

⁶³ John Gibson, "Interview with Manhattanville College's James Jones", *Fox News Network*, May 5, 2004, accessed October 10, 2018, <https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:4C9X-YTT0-00MM-P1CR-00000-00&context=1516831>.

⁶⁴ "Interview With Lorenzo Vidino", *Fox News Network*, August 2, 2004 Monday., Accessed November 1, 2018, <https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:4D0X-C6F0-00MM-P43R-00000-00&context=1516831>.

“either you are with us or against us!” This can be seen in demanding more action against the extremists by moderate Muslims and focusing on a strand of extremism.

Comparison. In the 2003-2004 era, Fox and CNN diverged greatly. Both in some senses were focused on American interests. Both expressed some sort of concern and discernment regarding Islam. However, CNN focused on many of the positive aspects, such as citizen involvement and a general kindness within the mainstream branches of Islam. CNN also stepped out addressed and promoted women’s rights overseas. Fox, on the other hand, encouraged more action to be taken by mainstream Muslims to suppress and eliminate extremism and isolated one strand of extremists, focusing attention on the dangers of Wahabism. During this time, the responsiveness of the public rose, with less people feeling passive or uncertain regarding Islam. In averaging together the two polls done in 2005, one can see a decrease by about 4-5% in no-responsiveness, which was not distributed evenly, with a 3% rise in negative feelings and a 1% rise in positive feelings toward Islam.⁶⁵ The negative and positive views of Islam both grew during this time, which reflects slightly the increased polarization seen in the news. Overall, there does seem to be a slight trend in an increasing negative sentiment towards Islam during this period in both media portrayal and in public opinion, which could indicate a correspondence between the two.

“Arab Spring”

CNN. From 2010 to 2014, several revolutions sprung up across the Arab world, which would appropriately become known by the world as the “Arab Spring”. During this time, various conflicts arose and escalated. Paul Marshall of the Hudson Institute

⁶⁵ See Table 1, page 15.

shared in the Situation Room on CNN that there was "... an increase in radical sentiment throughout a lot of the Muslim world which is leading to attacks on Christians and... When Christians are attacked, when they're killed, there is no punishment."⁶⁶ Conversely, two weeks later, Anderson Cooper of CNN stated that "...according to the FBI, tips from the Muslim community helped thwart the Lackawanna Six near Buffalo, New York, in 2002, and tips from the families of five young Muslims in the Washington suburbs led to their arrest in a police raid in Pakistan in 2009."⁶⁷ Regarding the idea of Islam within the US, there was an interview with Peter King, the chairman of the Homeland Security Committee on the subject of radicalization of Muslims occurring in US prisons. King stated:

there's real no way of vetting who the chaplains are... a Muslim chaplain in a New York prison who was actually arrested several years ago for bringing a bag of razor blades into prisons on Rikers Island... in his prior history, he had a felony conviction for murder. Yet, he had been certified as a Muslim chaplain in the New York prison.⁶⁸

⁶⁶ Wolf Blitzer, Dana Bash, Jeanne Meserve, Jack Cafferty, Brian Todd, Barbara Starr, Jessica Yellin, Lisa Sylvester, Jack Cafferty, Jill Dougherty. "GOP Responds to Backtracking Charges; Pre-Emptive Strike on Military Budget; Ex-CIA Officer Arrested; Republicans Breaking Promises; Defense Department Trying to Get Spending Under Control; Financial Protection for Troops; Reading the Constitution", *CNN*, January 6, 2011, accessed September 7, 2018. <https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:51WK-HN41-JBKP-N4V8-00000-00&context=1516831>.

⁶⁷ Isha Sesay, Elizabeth Cohen, Sanjay Gupta, Piers Morgan, Anderson Cooper, Casey Wian. "Congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords' Road to Recovery; Muslim Infiltration?; Ricky Gervais in Hot Water", *CNN*, January 20, 2011, accessed September 7, 2018. <https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:520T-3D11-JBKP-N0XB-00000-00&context=1516831>.

⁶⁸ Kyra Phillips, Reza Sayah, Brianna Keilar, Alison Kosik, Zain Verjee, Roland Martin, Alan Duke, Max Foster, Zain Verjee, Tom Foreman, Brianna Keilar. "Prisoners Converting to Radical Islam; Representative Weiner's Wife Returns Home; Schwarzenegger's Mistress Talks; Pakistan Arrests CIA Informants; Boehner Warns Obama on Libya; Huntsman to Seek White House; Texas Governor Perry Considers Run; Christie Rules Out 2012 Bid; Prisoners Converting to Radical Islam; U.S. Prisons "Fertile Ground" for Terrorists; New York Governor's Same-Sex Marriage Bill; Arizona Wildfire Evacuees Can Go Home; 99-Year-Old Gets College Degree; Wisconsin Court Upholds Anti-Union Law; Hefner's Fiancee Calls Off Wedding; Tweed Walks Off Behar Show", *CNN*, June 15, 2011.

While this negative attention was brought towards incarcerated Muslims, that same negativity did not extend to the “Arab spring”. Anderson Copper directly said “al Qaeda wasn't part of the Arab spring.”⁶⁹ This positive association with the “Arab Spring” could be catering toward national interests, as Ha suggested, subtly promoting the revolutions as a means for the spread of democracy while simultaneously shunning the actions of extremist groups.

Not only did CNN address the idea that Islamic Extremism was not a driving force in the “Arab Spring”, they also focused in on the progressive nature within some sects of Islam. Noah Feldman of Harvard stated that “If you look across the Muslim world you could see a lot of difference... As a general matter, the Sharia is what you make of it, and there are plenty of Muslims who interpret the Sharia in a progressive way so that it's equal... and progressive towards women.”⁷⁰ This multi-faceted approach to promoting Islam displays the tension and confusion regarding the issue, and also caters to national interest, focusing on women’s rights.

Fox. Fox, and more specifically, Sean Hannity, spent a lot of time focusing on the Muslim Brotherhood. The Muslim Brotherhood is the political party which took power after the previous Egyptian president was overthrown. Hannity expressed a lot of fear

<https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:533P-PGM1-DYG3-150K-00000-00&context=1516831>.

⁶⁹ Anderson Cooper; Ivan Watson; Nic Robertson; Arwa Damon, Ivan Watson, Arwa Damon, Nic Robertson, "Arab Spring: Revolution Interrupted", *CNN*, May 25, 2012. <https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:55R8-MYC1-DYG3-1273-00000-00&context=1516831>.

⁷⁰ Soledad O'Brien, "Unwelcome: The Muslims Next Door", *CNN*, August 18, 2012, accessed September 7, 2018. <https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:56CD-5J61-JB20-G12S-00000-00&context=1516831>.

regarding the Muslim Brotherhood's members as "terrorists"⁷¹ and extremists who want to "trash the peace treaty that Egypt struck with Israel in 1979."⁷² The two reports cited were several months apart, and this theme of antagonism toward the Muslim Brotherhood could be seen throughout several months of reports. Then, regarding Libya's freedom and their proposed constitution in August of 2011, Hannity says "...it talks about freedoms. It talks about freedom of the [press, the freedom of assembly, and] all these freedoms. They are all words. Then it goes into the Sharia law aspect of it."⁷³ The surrounding context does not give much insight as to whether or not Hannity was acknowledging the constitution as a legitimate policy or if he was making light of the potential for a compatibility for there to be freedom and Sharia law coexisting in the same political environment, displaying a rather pessimistic view of Islam to its viewers.

As per the more formalized news reports, there was not much to be found in the transcripts. Mainstream Fox news seemed to be more occupied with then US political climate at the time. However, in October of 2011, a broadcast focused on the clash between the military and the Coptic Christians in Egypt. The broadcast reported that "Christians in Egypt have always been under threat but enjoyed protection from former

⁷¹ Sean Hannity, Monica Crowley, "Protesters Gather Outside The U.S. Embassy In Egypt", *Fox News Network*, September 12, 2012, accessed September 7, 2018, <https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:56JS-3J21-DXH2-61N2-00000-00&context=1516831>.

⁷² Sean Hannity, Juan Williams. "Violence in Egypt", *Fox News Network*, February 3, 2011, accessed September 7, 2018, <https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:523J-WJS1-DY2S-C4SP-00000-00&context=1516831>.

⁷³ Sean Hannity, Steve Harrigan. "Libyan Rebels Storm Gadhafi Compound in Western Tripoli", *Fox News Network*, August 23, 2011, accessed September 7, 2018, <https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:53MD-W011-DYG3-108M-00000-00&context=1516831>.

president, Hosni Mubarak. Since Mubarak's resignation, violence has increased, with reports of Muslim gangs raping Coptic women with impunity.”⁷⁴ This broadcast displayed further doubt over the changing political climate of Egypt, saying that the month building up to this outburst displayed “a government scared of hard-line Muslim elements within the country.”⁷⁵ Overall, between the more opinion-oriented shows and the news broadcasts, Fox seemed to cast fear and doubt over the change within the Middle East.

Comparison. Throughout the period of the “Arab Spring”, CNN and Fox had some interesting similarities alongside some strong differences. Both CNN and Fox picked up on the rise in the persecution of Christians during this time of political volatility. The other area in which they were similar was their uncertainty regarding the Sharia law. CNN expressed more openness to Sharia law as a basis for establishing democratic legal systems. Fox, on the other hand, seemed very skeptical of Sharia law. CNN spent more time in this period focusing on stateside Islamic affairs, outlining the troubles of radical Islam and Muslim chaplains and the positive influence lay Muslims have played in stopping crimes and terrorism in the United States. Fox, on the other hand, was heavily focused on the Islamic Brotherhood, claiming that it had infiltrated various legal organizations both overseas, such as in Egypt, and within various federal organizations inside the USA. Here again, there is a broad divergence, though interesting similarities within the two major news network’s reporting regarding Muslims and Islam.

⁷⁴ Shannon Bream, Carl Cameron, Wendell Goler, William La Jeunesse, Brit Hume, Leland Vittert, James Rosen, Doug McKelway. "Political Headlines", *Fox News Network*, October 10, 2011, accessed September 7, 2018.
<https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:540M-TB01-JC11-91WT-00000-00&context=1516831>

⁷⁵ Ibid.

Public opinion during this time seemed to be trending towards a more positive image of Islam within the United States. As can be seen in Tables 2 and 3 on pages 16 and 17, there were decreases in negative opinions and increases in positive opinions regarding both the nature of the conflicts between Islam and the US and in the views regarding the potential of extremist Islam within the United states.

Conclusion & Analysis

Throughout these various political events which display interactions between the US public and Muslims, some noticeable trends have emerged. Ha's findings regarding the news being filtered "through a lens of a 'national interest'"⁷⁶ line up well especially with Fox. Fox represented this in the more nationalistic sense, promoting a strong national pride and identity, seeking to preserve American freedom and independence, pushing for a more "us vs. them" understanding of these events. CNN's focus lines up well with Rasul's frame, explaining western media's interests in "human rights and personal stories of the protest victims."⁷⁷ This framing of Islam could be seen clearly through input such as Cafferty's, promoting the enhancement of women's rights overseas. This perspective often contrasted Fox, in that there was more careful phrasing, uncertainty, and highlighting of the positive elements within the Islamic community.

These two major media outlets correspond well with their general ideas of right and left perspectives, with Fox showing a lot of interest in self-preservation and national identity, while CNN focuses more on unity and the general well-being of all parties involved. While it remains difficult to definitively state the effects of these news

⁷⁶ J.S. Ha, "Tailoring the Arab Spring...", 283.

⁷⁷ Rasul, A., & M. M. Asim, (2014), "How US Newspapers Framed the Arab Spring" *Media Asia*, 41(1), 97.

broadcasting agencies, looking at these trends in light of the findings within precedent literature, such as Shor's findings regarding television news' influence, it stands to reason that CNN and Fox respectively perpetuate leftist and rightist bias and therefore influence how Americans view Muslims and Islam.

It is important to note that these media outlets did not begin in such stark contrast regarding Muslims, recalling the similarities found in both outlets' coverage of 9/11 versus the stark contrast expressed during the Arab Spring. These news outlets seemed to split over time, gradually increasing in their open promotion of left and right-winged values. These trends did not clearly and explicitly extend themselves into the data regarding personal beliefs of Americans, but there were some hints in trends regarding an increased polarization, matching the rough time frame of this split in media perspectives. These hints are not necessarily enough in and of themselves to prove or disprove a connection between media, as the polls did not specifically address where respondents received their information regarding Muslims, how much stock they put into these sources, and how long they had believed these things. In spite of this lack of precision, from the correlations in positive and negative opinions of the general public and the portrayals of Muslims by CNN and Fox during this time, one could not rule out the possibility of a connection.

Considerations for Further Research

For a more complete picture, all forms of media could be analyzed. There is no vacuum which contains all human understanding. As such, numerous other forms of media need to be vetted. These resources could include other news networks, print news, online news, various television shows, movies, and social networking sites. The rise and

dominance of social media all have changed the way that individuals, especially of the younger generations, are influenced, and could prove very useful as a grounds for research.

Digital media as a whole has revolutionized the way people learn and are influenced. As such, much more research is needed to portray a full picture of how media has influenced thought patterns, and, related to the purpose of this study more directly, how it has altered the way people seek factual information regarding current events. Additional research could also be done to seek to further the understanding of the symbiotic relationship between culture and news. The culture of any given region or demographic has and holds certain beliefs and media is a way to push ideas forth, which could potentially alter the culture. Establishing a model which measures the limits of this relationship could prove both beneficial and fascinating.

Overall, for a direct furthering of the research conducted in this study, other mass-media outlets within the United States should be used. Media sources with a recent history and relatively-broad outreach demographic could contribute well to the information found here. Researching these avenues could strengthen the understanding of the connection between American cultural perceptions of Islam and the way major news networks have portrayed Islam.

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