Islamophobia in Online Arab Media

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Abstract:

What is Islamophobia? A popular term among many newspapers articles, politicians' speeches and scholarly texts, it is rarely clearly defined. Although the concept of 'Islamophobia' is difficult to define it has been a source of heated discussion in academic work, public diplomacy, government policy and news media. Governments, social think tanks and various scholars have attempted to define Islamophobia in order to counter incidents of physical, legal or verbal abuse of Muslims, Islamic artifacts and symbols, etc. Those attempts tend to present Islamophobia as a global phenomenon, similar in all its occurrences and definable as a concrete observable fact. This article supports a move from Islamophobia singular to Islamophobia(s) plural by exploring notions of Islamophobia in Arab and Muslim online media. It is suggested that multiple, localized "Islamophobias" exist and that varying uses and understanding of the term may occur in that media. Furthermore, the article problematizes the emergence of the term and its sometimes over-simplified uses, stepping away from an 'Us' against 'Them' dichotomies. Through careful and thematic analysis of the sources, the political and religious apparatuses of "Islamophobias" are crystalized.

Introduction

In December of 2014, soon after the tragic events in Paris where three Islamic extremists killed seventeen people, various attacks on Muslims and Islamic spaces took place. These attacks included "Three training grenades thrown at a mosque... A bomb blast at a restaurant adjacent to and associated with a mosque... [and] a boar's head and entrails were left outside an Islamic prayer center in Corsica with a note: 'Next time it will be one of your heads.'" (Fisher 2015)

Although these events can easily be seen as a response to the horror of the *Charlie Hebdo* attacks, the Muslim community in Europe is not completely unfamiliar with such abuses. For the last four decades, verbal and physical abuse of Arabs, Muslims and individuals that were considered Muslims have been reported all over Europe (see for example: Runnymede Report, 1997, 2004; EUMC, 2002, 2006). Some leaders and scholars have termed such events 'Islamophobic.' Like many social phenomena, the concept of 'Islamophobia' is difficult to define and has been a source of heated discussion in academic work, public diplomacy, government policy and news media. Governments, think tanks and various scholars have attempted to define Islamophobia in order to counter incidents of physical, legal or verbal abuse of Muslims, Islamic artifacts and symbols, etc. Those attempts tend to present Islamophobia as a global phenomenon, similar in all its occurrences and definable as a concrete observable fact.

This article would like to join a growing trend in scholarship that argues for the locality of Islamophobia (Iqbal 2010; Scalvini 2011) thus problematizing the universal term. In a recent review of the term Islamophobia offered by Brian Klug, the assertion is made that the term has 'come of age' and thus "Once a word has come of acquired a life of its own, the quarrel that we might have with it - as distinct from the concept for which it stands - becomes a quibble." (2012:674). I do not wish to quibble with Islamophobia, but I would like to question what are the concepts for which it stands?

The use of Islamophobia as a universal term has been noted by several key political and scholarly figures, such as Kofi Annan, who lamented the need for the term (United Nations, 2004). It has allowed for a common discussion of incidents of legal, cultural, verbal and psychical violence against Arabs, Muslims, Islamic symbols or spaces, or people/spaces associated with Islam. As such, it is useful for a constructing a political discourse. However, some of the political or academic attempts to define or use Islamophobia as a global, unified term might make the unconscious assumption of the purity of cultures and the unavoidable clashes between them. By assuming a global Islam/Muslim, suffering/oppressed/beaten by a global West/White Man, we risk adhering to Huntington's Clash of Civilization (1996). Thus, in a similar vein to

Queer theory resistance to a global term of 'Woman' or of Patriarchy (Jagose 1996), we might want to think how Islamophobia could use some queering up. Using Islamophobia in a mega-narrative of 'the west' is afraid of 'Islam' could possibly Orientalize (Said 1979) Muslims as victims of a unified White Man.

Therefore, by looking at local occurrences and interpretations of Islamophobia, such as "Islamophobia in Italy" (Scalvini 2011), "Islamophobia in Poland" (Gorak-Sosnowska, 2014), or "Islamophobia in the UK" (Saeed 2007), we allow for a more nuanced, careful use of the term. Furthermore, one can argue that these local observations, this use of the plural term 'Islamophobias' would give us information about the real, and not the imagined, sufferings of people in specific times and spaces.

It should be noted that even those scholars that emphasize the localities of Islamophobia, tend to do so in a Eurocentric or Western-centric way. For example, Nafar Iqbal introduces Islamophobia in the following way: "the phenomenon is subtle, hard to understand, and too complex to measure. Nonetheless, it is conspicuously observed all across Europe, Australia and USA." (2010:82). Here, Iqbar might be referring to the fact that most definitions and material written about Islamophobia has been produced in western countries. This article wishes to contribute to the growing study of Islamophobia by providing an initial (limited) presentation of Islamophobia in Arab media. By exploring this avenue, we might gain a new perspective for understanding acts of violence carried out against Muslims and Arabs as they are understood by Muslim or Arab media, a perspective that might differ from the western discourse in certain ways, agree in others, and will certainly offer another locality.

This article suggests that the idea of a global, coherent Islamophobia is not helpful and should be replaced with the concept of "Islamophobias" - a variety of incidents, each uniquely created within its context of time and place, which can only be understood on a local level. However, in order to speak of these different perspectives, localities - or simply, Islamophobias - we need to consider what is the core set of features shared by all the Islamophobias. This is a difficult task, one that perhaps cannot be fully answered by this ar-

ticle alone. What this article does offer is a new, non-western produced (but perhaps western-informed?) review of media, which in turn gives voice to a myriad of perspectives that can clue us in a direction for this core set of features of Islamophobias.

I will begin by shortly reviewing the emergence of the term and its development in western literature. Then an explanation of the unique methodology that allows the author of this article to examine Arab media will be presented, followed by an analysis of the sample of Arab media selected. By highlighting key findings from the analysis of the Arab media, I conclude by proposing a set of feature of Islamophobias.

Origins of the term Islamophobia

Islamophobia as a term started circulating in western literature at the end of the 20th century. According to Sayyid and Vakil (2010), the term Islamophobia sparked interest in the late 1980s. In these first publications (Mescher 1980; Wright 1985; Batunsky 1990), Islamophobia was understood as the fear and hate of Muslims by non-Muslims (Sayyid and Vakil 2010).

The fact that the term was coined before the terror attacks of September 11, 2001 has some importance, a point stressed by Esposito and Kalin (2011), in their introduction to the book *Islamophobia: The Challenges Of Pluralism In the Twenty-First Century*. In fact, one of the most well-known and influential reports about Islamophobia is a British report written in 1997. This report is known as the Runnymede Trust Report and is entitled *Islamophobia: A Challenge for Us All* (Runnymede Trust 1997). It was the first serious and comprehensive attempt to research the phenomenon of Islamophobia, and some argued that "Islamophobia only emerged in contemporary discourse with the 1997 publication of the report." (Bleich 2011:1582). Although the September 11 terror attacks and other terrorist events have increased the hostility towards Muslims as well as awareness of Islamophobia, the term and the concept have already been in circulation for at least a few decades. However, the definition of Islamophobia is still a controversial topic. While the term Islamophobia is used in academic writing, public debates, and in the media, it is not al-

ways formally defined. Many academic scholars, including such prominent researchers as Esposito, use the definition and features of Islamophobia suggested by the Runnymede Report, with little or no critical examination of the report.

The Runnymede Report *Islamophobia: A Challenge For Us All* was written in 1997 by a British committee as part of the Runnymede Trust, a research center dealing with issues of ethnicity. The Runnymede Trust considers itself: "UK's leading independent race equality think tank. We generate intelligence for a multi-ethnic Britain through research, network building, leading debate, and policy engagement" (Runnymede Trust 2014). The trust produces reports about issues of race and equality, based on data collected by scholars and independently by the trust. In 1996 the rationale for a committee on Islamophobia emerged and the committee members gathered data by taking a few consulting tours in different areas of the UK (Allen, 2010). The committee included 18 members, as well as the Chair, Professor Gordon Conway, all of whom came from different social and religious backgrounds. Despite the diversity among the committee members, one of the criticisms against the report has been that too much attention is given to relations between the different religions, and too little attention to issues of race (Allen 2010).

In the introduction to the report, Islamophobia is referred to as "a new word," a concept that emerged, as has been previously pointed out, throughout the 1980s. According to the report: "The word is not ideal… [but] is a useful shorthand way of referring to dread or hatred of Islam - and, therefore, the fear or dislike of all or most Muslims" (The Runnymede Report 1997:1). This simple definition seems to be a general way to describe Islamophobia, but it lacks nuance and precision. Perhaps out of awareness to this weakness, the report authors choose to define Islamophobia anew already in the second chapter. In the second chapter, which is dedicated to illustrating the "nature of anti-Muslim prejudice," a deeper observation of Islamophobia takes place. Here, Islamophobia is defined as an "unfounded hostility toward Islam. It [Islamophobia] refers also to the practical consequences of such hostility in unfair discrimination against Muslim individuals and communities, and to the

exclusion of Muslims from mainstream political and social affairs." (The Runnymede Report, 1997:4).

This "unfounded hostility toward Islam" is what the Runnymede constantly refers to as "closed views." According to the report, one should distinguish between "open" and "closed" views regarding Islam. As rule of thumb, an open attitude toward Islam sees Islam as a complex and diverse religion and Muslims as a heterogenic group of people, while a closed attitude sees Islam as a monolithic religion and Muslims as a completely uniform group. This results in eight distinctions between closed and open views, which became recognized as features of Islamophobia, and are used by scholars. For example, Göran Larsson, in his examination of the web portal "Wiki-Islam," relies on these characteristics when he concludes that the website is Islamophobic (Larsson 2007).

Seven years after the Runnymede Trust report, in 2004, a report titled *Islamophobia: Issues, Challenges and Action* was created by the Commission on British Muslims and Islamophobia, led by researches Hugh Muir and Laura Smith. This report was intended to follow up on the Runnymede Report, and answer the question "In what ways have things improved since 1997, and in what ways have they got worse?" (Muir and Smith 2004:3). One of the notable changes is perhaps not in the phenomenon examines by the report, but in the way Islamophobia is discussed in the report itself. First, this report is much more attuned to the influence of global (and specifically USA) media on UK conceptions of Islam, Muslims, and Islamophobia. Second, it takes a broader attitude to Islamophobia, one that is not only centered on the religious aspects. Most notably for the purposes of this article, this report, unlike the 1997's one, begins to recognize the multiplicity of Islamophobia:

> Hostility towards Islam and Muslims has been a feature of
> European societies since the eighth century of the common
> era. It has taken different forms at different times and has
> fulfilled a variety of functions. For example, the hostility in
> Spain in the fifteenth century was not the same as the hos-

tility that was expressed and mobilised in the Crusades. Nor was the hostility during the time of the Ottoman Empire or that which prevailed throughout the age of empires and colonialism. It may be more apt to speak of 'Islamophobias' rather than of a single phenomenon. Each version of Islamophobia has its own features as well as similarities with, and borrowings from, other versions. (Muir and Smith 2004:7)

Unfortunately, the report does not specifically point to the features shared by all Islamophobias. Instead, it does the important work of contextualizing Islamophobia in Britain. Similarly, recent reports and studies of Islamophobia in various spaces in the west tend to highlight the specific context of Islam and Islamophobia in that country, a point made explicitly clear by Hutchings, Flood, Miazhevich, and Nickels: "national contexts impact differently upon Islamophobia." (2011:8). However, both national and media contexts explored in current scholarship tend to be western, that is, in Europe, the US or Australia. Less attention has been given to understandings of Islamophobia from the (more) emic perspective of Muslim and Arab media. The next section explores such a perspective, although it does so through a web-based retrieval and translation system, which has serious limitations, namely, that the computer generated translation is not always coherent. The sample, its limitation and possible key findings, which support the notion of a multiplicity of Islamophobia, are discussed below.

'Islamophobia' in Arab Media

Method

Using the Texas A&M Media Translation System, the author of this article has accessed web articles with content concerning Islamophobia, out of which thirty-six articles were selected for this sample. The Texas A&M Media Translation System, MTS, was built by Raytheon (MTS, 2014). The system archives and translates international media in two outlets: the BMS system, targeting television broadcasters in three languages: Arabic, Chinese and Russian. The second outlet is the WMS system, collecting web content

in five languages: Arabic, Chinese, Russian, Hindi, Farsi and Urdu. For the purposes of this article, only web content was examined, using the existing WMS system, which currently covers 65 websites of news broadcasters, military websites and other news-related content websites. The Arab web media included in this sample contains the following news sources and websites: Al Jazeera, Ad-Dustour, Asharq Al-Awsat, Asre Nou, MehrNews, Aldiyar Online, Al-Hayat, Akhbar-Rooz, Radiofarda, Al-Quds Al-Arabi, and Tabnak.

The sampling strategy was complex due to the nature of the system. During the months of March and April 2014, data was collected through the employment of several different search words. The first search word used was "Islamophobia." However, it yielded problematic results. It seems that the system's subject article results in Arabic or Persian for the English phrase "Islamophobia" was far from accurate. For example, the system returned results such as a story about a new TV show, about water waste and so on. One possible reason for these inaccurate results might be the translation. When conducting some translation work, it seems that the system translated "جابه," meaning opposition (according to Almaany online dictionary, 2014) into Islamophobia. Therefore, any article concerning hostility, disagreement or opposition was retrieved, out of which only few were relevant to the topic of Islamophobia.

The next step was to search for the Arabic phrase for Islamophobia (الخوف من الإسلام), which retrieved a variety of related results (see Appendix, Items 1-5). However, many of them were distorted due to the nature of the search phrase, since the phrase contain three words "fear" (الخوف) "of" (من) "Islam" (الإسلام), any article was retrieved by the system if all three words were present, which led to many articles concerning Islam and fear, but not necessarily fear of Islam. This search also led to the consideration of using the phrase "Stigma of Islam" (الإسلام قد وصم) which yielded a few articles (see Items 6-8). The next logical step was to search only the term "stigma" "وصم," which yielded an article about the demonization of jihad (Item 9). Then, a search of the term "الخوف من الإسلام" (fear of Islam) was conducted while using quotation marks, which retrieves only articles in which the entire phrase is found

(Items 10-12). The term "إسلاموفوبيا" - which is the word Islamophobia in Arabic script - yielded only two results (Items 11 and 13), one of which was already found under the other search terms (Item 11, titled *alaslamwfwbya*).

While reading the article titled *alaslamwfwbya*, it was discovered that "Alaslamwfwbya" is the transliteration of Islamophobia. This transliteration was probably produced by the MTS system for Islamophobia (al-aslam-wf-wbya), and searching for this term arrived at a several articles (Item 14-21). Other phrases, like "hate of Mosques," "hate of Muslims," etc., yielded no results when searched for as a distinct phrase, but without the quotation marks, one interesting result was returned (Item 22). Similarly, the phrase "Muslims suffering" (المسلمون يعانون) brought up two articles (Items 23-25).

The last method attempted for collecting this sample was using current events that were considered Islamophobic by Western media. Information about such events was gathered from two leading anti-Islamophobia websites: *Islamophobia Today – Americans against Islamophobia* (Islamophobia Today 2014) and the British website *Islamophobia Watch* (Islamophobia Watch 2014). Islamophobia Watch, for example, covered a story concerning threat letters sent to a mosque in France (Islamophobia Watch 2014a). A search was conducted for phrases such as "Muslims in France" and "A mosque in Paris" (both in English and Arabic), which resulted in a few articles (Items 26-30). Similarly, the author of this article searched for current events that might spark interest in the discussion of Islamophobia. First, a search for the EU parliament election in English and in Arabic was run, which brought five articles related to Arab or Muslim issues (Items 31-35). The second search was for "Brandeis University" after the university cancelled its plan to give an honorary degree to Ayaan Hirsi Ali, a feminist critic of Islam (Perez-Pena and Vega 2014), an act which was considered possibly Islamophobic. This resulted in only one article, published by Al-Hayat (see Item 36).

Lastly, it is interesting to note that other search words of events mentioned by the above sites, yielded no results. For example, Islamophobia Today reports an Islamophobic radio talk given by Bryan Fischer, the spokesman for American Family Association, in which Fischer claims that "Allah is

a demon" (Islamophobia Today 2014a). However, the Arab Media accessible via the Texas A&M Media Translation System, show no interest in Fischer, as both searching his name in English or Arabic retrieved no results.

This section has covered the various methodologies used to arrive at a collection of articles dealing with Islamophobia from Texas A&M Media Translation System's Arab Media. It is detailed not only for methodological interests, but also to show the complexity of this topic and the advantages and limitations of working with a closed and experimental translation system. With these limitations considered, thirty-six articles were collected from a variety of Arab and Persian sources. An analysis of these sources follows.

Analysis

In this section a short descriptive statistical analysis of the material is offered, followed by a much more detailed thematic analysis. The descriptive statistical analysis includes two tables: one including the thirty-six articles' publication dates, and the second table examining the distribution of the articles' publication sources (see Figure 1 and Figure 2). As can be seen from the figures, most of the sources were from 2014, which is not surprising given the fact that the WMS system can only retrieved web content from the last 90 days (pre-2014 articles were retrieved due to a new comments or edits added in the last three months).
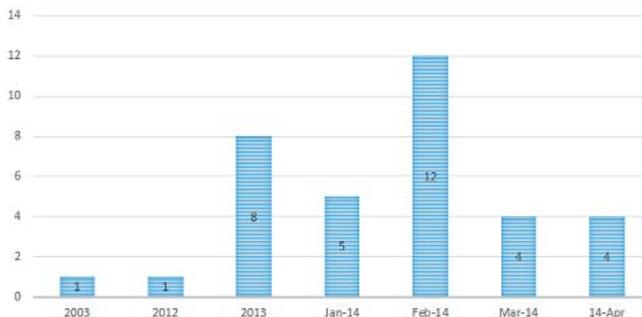

Figure 1. Article publication date.

Figure 2 clearly shows that the leading news source in Arab media dealing with this topic is Al-Jazeera. This can be explained in various ways. One possible explanation lays in the fact that Al-Jazeera is the biggest producer of content on the Arab world (Lahlali, 2011), and as a result has the largest amount of articles. Another possible explanation is that Al-Jazeera, being a point of contact between the west and the Arab world, is influenced by western notions of Islamophobia, and covers more stories of Islamophobic attacks in western countries (Gilboa and Powers, 2007).
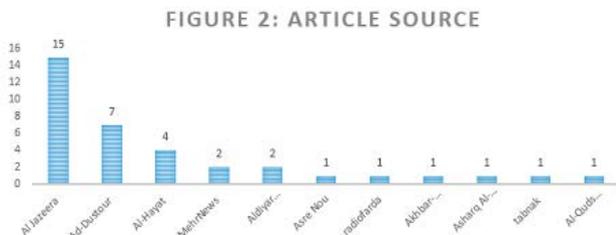

Figure 2. Article source.

The second step of the analysis was to conduct a detailed thematic analysis of the sources. Each article was closely read for repetitive or related words (such as Islam, hate, fear, violence, politics, etc.). While conducting this analysis the author took notice of the limitations of a computer-translated text. Therefore, a closed, descriptive analysis was not conducted, rather a general inspection of themes and concepts. The analysis arrived at twenty-four sub-themes, which can be clustered to six themes: media, globalization, religion, violence, politics and Islamophobia. A short examination of each theme will reveal something about the complexity of the phenomenon.

Media

Under the cluster of media, the following three themes are found: Arab media, new media and international media. Arab media can be traced in the multiple mentions of Al-Jazeera. In many of the articles published by Al-Jazeera, the authors cite previous news stories from Al-Jazeera. Therefore, although Al-Jazeera is mentioned several times it is mostly used as a

self-referential source. The second theme, new media, is mentioned only a few times, and in one article (Item 15) "racist attacks" against Muslims on the World Wide Web are mentioned. The last theme, international media, seems to be the most dominant within the cluster of media. International media includes words such as western media, world media, Israeli media, international radio and television, western propaganda, global awareness, and mentioning of specific western media such as BBC and the "British Guardian newspaper." The context of international media was not unified. In some cases, it was merely mentioned as a source, for example, the phrase "According to some international sources" can be found in one of the articles (Item 5). In other sources, however, it is clear that international media is framed as the cause for Islamophobia. For example, in one article international media is explicitly framed as distorting Islam and promoting Islamophobia: "Father Dr. Antoine Dhaw... warns of the seriousness of movements... that distort Islam and promote [Islamophobia], and the role of inciting [international] media..." (Item 16).

Globalization

Under the cluster of globalization several themes can be found: geopolitics, "The West," colonialism, international organizations, economics, and immigration. It is interesting to note the variety of places mentioned: USA, Britain, France, Lebanon, Somalia, Libya, Algeria, Morocco, Myanmar, Palestine, Central Africa, Turkey, Syria, Netherlands, Sudan, Kenya, Malaysia. A diverse spread of places of interest can be noted from this list, suggesting that Arab media covers attacks on Muslims or Islamophobia in a variety of places. This is interesting especially when compared to western understanding of Islamophobia, which is mostly focused on happenings in western countries.

That being said, it seems that Islamophobia is highly connected to western media, history and politics. Variation of the word 'west' appeared fifty-four times across the thirty-six articles. In several incidents, the west was closely associated with colonialism. For example, in Item 25 we find the question: "If France-led left-wing does it change its policies Western imperialist

Powers [?]" [*sic*]. Terms such as imperialism, colonialism, orientalism, and post-colonialism are presented in some of the articles, perhaps as political powers that maintain, if not produce, hate and fear of Islam. Lastly, we see mentions of other globalization factors, such as migration, economic powers and global organizations, such as NATO, UN, the Association of Muslim scholars, and Islamic Cooperation.

Religion

The cluster of religion contains themes such as: Islam, attacks on Islam, Christians and Muslims, religious freedom, and the mixture of identity or community (race/ethnicity/culture and religion). This is perhaps the largest collection of themes, and suggests that for the Arab media in this sample, the topic of religion is pivotal for the issue of Islamophobia. Religion seems to be brought up in the context of identity, of politics and conflict, and in a general discussion of Islam. The last context appears as religious teachings. For example, talk of God, Imams, morals, the Qur'an, and love for Islam is present in several articles (Items 14 and 22, for example). Furthermore, one article calls out to stop supporting extreme Muslims and Islamic terrorists, as they are damaging and distorting Islam: "Extremism is a violation of the rights of all Muslims because it harms the image of Islam" (Item 4). Other articles, however, focus on the harm being done to Islamic symbols and traditions, such as attacks on mosques (mentioned three times), preventing the building of new mosques (mentioned once), burning the Quran (mentioned once), not allowing Halal food (mentioned once), or attacking women who are wearing the hijab or other 'Muslim wear' (mentioned eight times). Some of these harmful phenomena are specifically framed as conflicts between Christians and Muslims. This framing is found both when referring to violence in Africa, as in the article titled *Africa's Muslims trapped between terrorism and anvil of genocide* (Item 5), and in the west, in the article titled *10 years later; interaction between Islam and the West in the shadow of the consequences of September 11 attacks* (Item 24).

However, a much more common context for religious terms within the data analyzed, is in the construction of identity or community. For example, one

of the reasons to combat Islamophobia, according to one article (Item 18), is "in order to [help people] maintain their dignity and identity, culture, religious [*sic*]." It seems that religion plays part in defining one's identity and community. The term 'Muslim community,' for example, is used several times in different forms and contexts. Furthermore, the different identity makers: religion, ethnicity, and race are often mixed. 'Arab and Islamic thought,' 'Arab and Muslim,' 'religious and cultural identity,' ‚black Islam,' and 'religious and cultural identity' are examples of such mixtures. This can be understood as part of the complexity and fluidity of these identities.

Violence

The cluster of 'violence' includes themes like: terrorism, attacks, attacks against women, war and security, and racism. Most of the mentions of attacks refer to internal safety of Muslim or Arab people intra-national-ly, while terrorism, war and security refer to more international, global happenings, such as September 11 or 'the war on terror.' The attacks on Muslims are sometimes framed as 'racist attacks.' One example from the article titled *Muslims in Myanmar* (Item 23) assembles together race and religion, and describes the attacks as "the ugliest kinds of racial and religious discrimination." The attacks include, as mentioned above, attacks on religious symbols, but also 'physical and verbal assaults,' 'racist graffiti such as *Islam outside France*,' 'aggression,' 'sabotage,' 'harassment,' 'breaking a number of windows and throwing pieces of pigs inside,' and 'incidents of verbal or physical harassment against women because of Muslim dress.'

As can be noted from this list, the violence is understood to take place in three different forms: the first is verbal, as in aggression and harassment; the second is physical, as in sabotage, vandalizing buildings, and phys-ical assault; and the last is religious violence, such as setting fire to the Qur'an, and, perhaps, "insulting the Prophet" and describing the religion of Islam as "a religion of violence" (the last two examples are from Items 11 and 36).

Politics

The cluster of politics includes themes such as: politics, political Islam, legalities, human rights, minorities, and social/cultural politics. First, names of specific politicians and parties, as well as political positions, were mentioned, such as: Obama, Kerry, Mohamed Morsi, Merkel, Al-Sisi, Mubarak, US Defense Ministry, Muslim Brotherhood, Interior minister, right-wing, etc. These were mentioned either as part of international events or in reference to the lack of government involvement in stopping Islamophobic events. An example for the last use can be found in the quote: "the failure of government policies in the integration of immigrant groups" (Item 17).

The next sub-theme refers to political Islam, both as a positive development and as a cause of Islamophobia, as can be deducted from the article title *Is the West in fear of political Islam?* (Item 10). Lastly, we find talk of politics in the social sphere: some articles call for "social coexistence," "call for tolerance," and "a culture of tolerance and respect among religions" (Items 15, 3 and 18, respectfully). Similarly, 'human rights' and 'human rights activism' are mentioned several times, and are usually framed as part of the efforts to protect minorities and reduce violence against Muslims and Arabs. For example, in an article from Al-Hayat, the title and body of the article clearly state how human rights groups are fighting to stop Islamophobia: *Groups of Human Rights to combat "alaslamwfwbya"* (Item 18). Some of this political effort to stop Islamophobia takes shape through calling for national and international laws, and to consider "the balance between freedom of expression of the one hand, and protection of religions on the other hand." (Item 18). The cluster of politics, then, compresses international politics, social politics and the influence of these political actions and institutions on instances of Islamophobia.

Islamophobia

It was difficult to cluster Islamophobia with any of the other terms - is it related to violence? Politics? Religion? Therefore, in order to conduct a careful thematic analysis, the term received a cluster of its own. The word "Is-

lamophobia" is mentioned fourteen times, usually describing attacks. All of the occurrences of the word are in the transliterate form of *alaslamwfwbya*. Other terms also describe violent events: racist attacks, ethnic and religious hatred, anti-Muslim acts, hostility towards Islam, fear of Islam, hatred and discrimination against Muslims, anti-Muslim, fear or hatred of Islam and stigmatization of Islam. The variety of terms might result from the translation system, or of the wide search terms used to gather this information. It might also go to show that there is a diversity of terms used by Arab media to describe Islamophobia. It is interesting to note that typically, Islamophobia was used to describe incidents in European countries, or as a general phenomenon. The other terms were used when talking about incidents in Asia and Africa, as well as attacks in Europe and the Americas.

Key Findings

The examination of these clusters reveals the complexity of the topic, in which even similar themes are presented differently in the range of articles. For example, if we look solely at the articles that use the term '*alaslamwfabya*' (Islamophobia) we see a very geographically western - specifically European - focus. However, when the other terminologies are considered, we get a much more global depiction of the phenomenon, which includes violence against Muslims in Africa or Asia. The location and meaning of Islamophobia are related to terminology and search words used to retrieve the articles. For example, when searching for "EU parliament election" in English, most results concerned EU foreign policies: their resolution about Iran nuclear power, about Iran election, etc. In contrast, when searching "EU parliament election" in Arabic, the articles retrieved were cornering Muslims and Arabs within the EU. This probably occurred due to the nature of the WMS's translation tools. It might still be worthwhile to reflect whether Islamophobia is considered as happening within a country, as an internal affair; or as an international affair, in the relationship between countries.

Second, the different articles offered a few explanations for the cause of Islamophobia. Some sources frame international media as responsible for the fear of Muslims. For example, in Item 16 we find the clear statement that

"media distort Islam and promote '*alaslamwfwbya*' (Islamophobia)." Another example shows how "attacks against Muslim women constantly by the extreme right, fostered by spiteful media incites continuously" [*sic*] (Item 13). Other sources see Islamophobia as a result of colonialism, meaning that colonialism allows for expressions of hate or fear of Islam. For example, one article frames Islamophobia as being nurtured by "the spirit of old colonial" (Item 11). Yet other articles point a finger at extremist Muslim groups, and call other Muslims to break away from them in order to minimalize Islamophobic attacks. In Item 18, for instance, the writer calls for the "reduction of extremism and fanaticism" and instead to "deliver of the message of Islam" [*sic*]. Another article (Item 30) calls for Muslims in France "to be vigilant and calm about the cowardly acts of provocation and degrading." Thus, we find that the information points to a variety of global spaces in which Islamophobia is happening (and not just in western countries), and it also indicates a variety of explanations as to why is it happening.

Another interesting finding is the distinct volume of articles published by Al-Jazeera in comparison to the other news-sources. Although the sample is not generalizable, out of the thirty-six articles in the sample, fifteen were published by Al-Jazeera. As previously noted, one possible explanation is Al-Jazeera's close connection to western media (Gilboa and Powers, 2007). This can result in the appropriation and frequent use of western terminology, as well as a need to cover more stories that happen in western countries. Gilboa and Powers recognize Al-Jazeera's external attempt to "represent to the world Arab and Muslim perspectives on regional and international events" (Gilboa and Powers, 2007:53). Perhaps as a by-product of this role, western ideas and terms find their way into the language Al-Jazeera uses when producing content for the Arab world. The second leading source of articles was the newspaper Ad-Dustour, which published seven of the articles in the sample. Ad-Dustour is a Jordanian media company, founded in 1967 (Ad-Dustour, 2014). According to El-Sarayrah (1986), Ad-Dustour relies heavily on western sources for their coverage of foreign affairs. Therefore, similar to Al-Jazeera, exposure and promotion of western sources might carry with it western terminology.

After viewing the variations of "where" and "why" Islamophobia is happening according to Arab media, we should also frame "what" is happening. In other words, what do these sources describe as Islamophobia? The analysis suggests three categories: Attacks against religious symbols (such as mosques and the Qur'an), verbal and physical attacks on Arabs or Muslims, and legal, political or social discrimination. Lastly, and perhaps most important, the analysis reveals a variety of terms for Islamophobia: 'anti-Muslim acts,' 'hostility towards Islam,' 'the stigmatization of Islam,' 'hatred and discrimination against Muslims,' 'anti-Islam,' and 'fear or hatred of Islam.' Furthermore, both in the Arab media and in the western literature, Muslims and Arabs are used interchangeably, and attacks are framed as either based on racist, xenophobic or anti-Islam worldview. Therefore, we can see that the idea of 'Islamophobia' carries a complex set and web of different concepts. One possible explanation for this lack of clear definition might be that this phenomenon takes on different manifestations in different localities. As can be seen from the data, violence against Muslims in Africa is not similar to throwing a pig's head into mosques in France, nor is it similar to cancelling an honorary degree in an American university. Verbal harassment of Muslim individuals are not the same as making cartoons of the Islamic prophet, and the fear of political Islam is not the same as the mistreatment of Arab immigrants to Europe. We might need better tools and terminologies to discuss the similarities and differences between these phenomena. The variety of terms and stories covered in the Arab media of this sample might be a useful first step to consider the common set of features these incidents share.

Conclusion

It is challenging to paint a picture of 'Islamophobia in Arab Media' not only due to methodological difficulties, but also due to the variety of definitions, the diversity of opinions and the locality of these descriptions. Other terms, such as 'hostility against Islam,' 'anti-Muslims,' and 'the stigmatization of Islam' are found to possibly replace the use of Islamophobia in these articles. Therefore, we might benefit from recognizing Islamophobia's multiple appearances by embracing the term "Islamophobias." Much like Eisensta-

dt's (2000) 'multiple modernities' stress how modernity occurs differently in different settings, we can recognize that what might be considered Islamophobic in Myanmar is different than an Islamophobic act in France, the USA or Yemen. The specific histories of Islam in China, in Africa, in Myanmar, in the US, Australia, and Europe, informs the ways in which conflicts and violence related to Islam might take place. The attempt to define Islamophobia as a coherent and globally accepted phenomenon, which mostly takes place in western countries, is problematic. Instead, we might consider a core set of features that can be associated with multiple forms of Islamophobia. I suggest we consider the following features:

> 1. Islamophobias are informed by ideology/religion - As suggest by Chis Allen (2010) a definition of Islamophobia must include an ideological aspect, as Allen defines "Islamophobia is an ideology... that sustains and perpetuates negatively evaluated meaning about Muslims and Islam..." (2010:190). This ideological worldview can also be a religious one, which then views Islam as a threat to the religion, or a secular one. This feature can also be associated with the Runnymede distinction of closed/open views, in which one's ideology informs the closed views about Islam/Muslims.

> 2. Islamophobias consist of a form of violence - As noted by the variety of sources, Islamophobic violence against Muslims can take many shapes: It can be symbolic, verbal, legal, or physical. It can be a micro-aggression or an aggressive assault. The violence can be pointed towards buildings, symbols or people.

> 3. Islamophobias can happen in different localities - the phenomenon is not limited to the west, it can happen in Asia, Africa, Latin America, anywhere. What need to be considered is the history of the locality to understand the specific phenomenon.

4. Islamophobias can be related to global flows, specifically global media -as some of the sources suggest, global flows of media, economic power, immigration and political power all play some role in the increase of Islamophobias.

5. Islamophobias interact with other types of political fears, such as racism and xenophobia: race, religion and nationality still play a part in the identity construction that tends to be the building blocks for ideologies that inform Islamophobias. Therefore, the Othering discourse that takes place in Islamophobias can parallel, substitute or contribute to discourses of racism and xenophobia.

The first feature is very important, in my opinion, because it suggests that not *any* form of violence against *any* person considered to be Muslim or Arab is Islamophobic. The other features are important because they expand our understanding of Islamophobia and allow for multiple, varying types of Islamophobias. This core set of features is only a suggestion, one that scholars should further examine and develop. But it can, I hope, serve as a pilot for a scholarly expansion and consideration of Islamophobia as it is understood, described and experienced from different perspectives.

Further research into this topic might also be useful to overcome some of this current study's limitations. First of all, an examination of western media sources in addition to the government and scholarly sources presented here could shed light on how Islamophobia is presented at the grass-roots level in western countries. That is, we might benefit not only from studies showing how the media creates Islamophobia (Saeed, 2007; Gottschalk and Greenberg, 2008) but also how western media presents violence/discrimination against Muslims/Arabs. In the same spirit, additional exploration of Arab media in the new and developed MTS system at Texas A&M, might pull in more sources, which could make the finding generalizable. Therefore, this article can be considered a first step in the attempt to use the resources at Texas A&M in order to reframe the term Islamophobia. This reframing, I hope, will help crystalized the complexity

of the phenomena and in turn produce new and better ways of decreasing it, and other forms of violence.

Acknowledgment

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Appendix 1:
Index of articles retrieved from WMS, during March-April 2014

#	Source	Title	Date Created	Date Archived
1	Ad-Dustour	The most important stories kept the media in 2013	4-Jan-14	15-Apr-14
2	Al Jazeera	Two advisers lmrsa [المرسى]: supporters of the coup will him	29-Nov-13	2-Feb-14
3	Al Jazeera	Fatih February on a global veil	1-Feb-14	1-Feb-14
4	Asharq Al-Awsat	Iyad Madani: extremist voices must be deprived of the deployment of their views and carrying the banner of Islam	3-Feb-14	3-Feb-14
5	Al Jazeera	Africa's Muslims trapped between terrorism and anvil of genocide	14-Mar-14	27-Mar-14
6	Asre Nou	Jannati: the introduction has been prepared and should have waited for	3-Mar-14	21-Mar-14
7	MehrNews	The head of the Kalím culture of Cultural Heritage and Tourism.	10-Nov-13	30-Jan-14
8	Ad-Dustour	A miserable year 2013	2-Jan-14	12-Apr-14
9	Ad-Dustour	Demonize "jihad" the height of Sanam Islam!	14-Aug-13	16-Apr-14

10	Al Jazeera	Is the West in fear of political Islam?	26-Mar-14	29-Mar-14
11	Al Jazeera	Alaslamwfwbya	20-Jan-14	26-Mar-14
12	Ad-Dustour	Reflections in the event of Islam alywm	5-Jan-14	14-Mar-14
13	Al Jazeera	Party that wants to oblige Muslims in Britain by the deletion of verses from the Koran	15-Feb-14	16-Feb-14
14	Al Jazeera	The road to the enemy embodies "alaslamwfwbya"	11-Feb-14	11-Feb-14
15	Al Jazeera	A campaign to resist alaslamwfwbya [الاسلاموفوبيا] in the Netherlands	21-Feb-14	27-Feb-14
16	Aldiyar Online	The mind Heresy: reading in the curriculum excluding	18-Feb-14	18-Feb-14
17	Al Jazeera	Swedish ymhwn [يمحون] the effects of the aggression on a mosque with flowers	13-Feb-14	13-Feb-14
18	Al-Hayat	"Alkhthlan [الخثلان]" of "life": Group of Human Rights to combat "alaslamwfwbya [الاسلاموفوبيا]"	11-Feb-14	11-Feb-14
19	Akhbar-Rooz	Iranian newspapers write what?	27-Mar-14	30-Mar-14
20	MehrNews	Holding the ninth international conference on the doctrine Mahdaviyat/ st international fair on the Qur'an	N/A	24-Mar-14
21	Ad-Dustour	The Muslim Brotherhood in the heart of the storm	5-Jan-14	13-Apr-14
22	Ad-Dustour	US need to be corrected!	3-Jan-13	15-Apr-14

23	Al Jazeera	Muslims in Myanmar	14-Jun-12	29-Mar-14
24	Radiofarda	10 years later; interaction between Islam and the West in the shadow of the consequences of September 11 attacks	5-Apr-14	04-Apr-14
25	Ad-Dustour	France therefore escalates against Pan-Islamists	2-Dec-13	27-Apr-14
26	Al-Hayat	Le Pen's party would prevent the provision of halal food for students in France	4-Jun-14	7-Apr-14
27	Al Jazeera	European interior ministers discuss dialogue of religions	30-Oct-03	3/25/2014
28	Aldiyar Online	Bernard Levy: veil is a call to rape! Shows in Ukraine also!	25-Feb-14	25-Feb-14
29	Al Jazeera	Study: the growing proportion of hostility to Islam in France	5-Feb-14	5-Feb-14
30	Al-Hayat	Crucifixes "square brackets" jdarn [جدارن] on a mosque in France	2-Jan-13	11-Feb-14
31	Al-Quds Al-Arabi	Amsterdam - Reuters: A senior aide resigned fyldrz [فيلدرز] Khairat right-wing Dutch politician of the Freedom Party becoming the latest of a prominent anti-leader's comments resigns for Moroccans	23-Apr-14	27-Apr-14
32	Tabnak	Behind the European Parliament resolution	27-Apr-14	27-Apr-14

33	Al Jazeera	The rights of women between the International Covenants and the Shariah Islamic	N/A	8-Mar-14
34	Al Jazeera	Europe ignore calls to move to solve the crisis of migration	10-Feb-14	10-Feb-14
35	Asharq Al-Awsat	Vice-Chairman of the European Parliament: we need a new framework for cooperation with Arab world	21-Feb-14	21-Feb-14
36	Al-Hayat	US University cancels in honor of lnashtah [لناشطة] described Islam as "a religion of violence"	9-Apr-14	9-Apr-14