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Analysis of News Coverage of Extremist Terror Attacks Between 2016 and 2017

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Declaration

I, Ahmad Mansoor, declare that this thesis is a result of my research investigations and findings. Sources of information other than my own have been acknowledged and a reference list has been provided. This work has not been previously submitted to any other university for award of any type of academic degree.

Signature: *Ahmad Mansoor*

Date: 17th August 2020

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Abstract

Since September 11, Islamist terrorism has been widely represented by news broadcasters around the world. News coverage has consistently conflated Islam and Muslims with terrorism, focusing intrinsically on 'War on Terror' news frames. However, research has shown that transnational white nationalist terrorism is a recent and emerging threat to society. The point of departure is that news framings have typically victimised white supremacist terrorists in their news representations. Previously, scholars have examined news framings of terrorism, but research on this topic, the representation of white nationalist terrorism, remains scarce. This gap is addressed by assessing MailOnline, a bona fide right-wing British newspaper, and its representation of Islamist and white supremacist terror attacks in UK. Using discourse analysis, this thesis investigates news framings of the Jo Cox murder in 2016 and the Westminster Bridge attack in 2017, perpetrated by a white supremacist and Islamist respectively. Analysis was guided by four distinct categories; Self and Other, representations of ideology, representations of motivations of terrorists and identity of perpetrators. The findings show that MailOnline framed white supremacist terrorists in humanising terms, which was anticipated, but it was unexpected to see MailOnline portraying an Islamist terrorist in a similar, humanising and personalising way. It represents both terrorists as in need of help; MailOnline adopts a hybrid position to frame terrorists empathetically while maintaining labels of *terrorist* only for the Westminster Bridge attacker, even though both cases were legally defined as terrorism. These unexpected findings suggest that right-wing papers are moving away from the traditional 'War on Terror' frames established since September 11. Right-wing newspapers such as MailOnline are subtly shifting styles of reporting to be mindful of conflating Islam with terrorism. That being said, scholars need to place further emphasis on prominent threats within topics dealing with media representations of terrorism. A good place to start would be temporal comparisons of news framings of white nationalist terrorism.

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1.

Introduction

“Take an angry person, tell them you feel their pain, give them a target for their anger and help them to switch off their brain... Treat people as stupid, hate-filled, gullible and mean while simultaneously helping them to blame all their problems on ‘others’ and they will love you for it. So much so, that you could shoot someone on Fifth Avenue and not lose a single vote”

- James O’Brien, *How to be Right*, 2018

Since September 11, white nationalist extremists have killed more people in USA than other types of domestic extremists (Waters, 2019). White nationalist extremists consist of individuals and groups that follow a broad set of values such as anti-immigration, anti-black, anti-Muslim and anti-feminism (Ehmsen & Scharenberg, 2016). Also, far-right movements have grown more powerful in towns and capital cities across European countries (p. 1). This surge in pro-White ideologies across the world has resulted in extreme racist and criminal behaviour. This is evident in the Charlottesville alt-right rally against the removal of a confederate statue (Hartzell, 2018, p. 6) held in USA in 2017. Other events include the attacks against minorities such as the 2015 Charleston church shooting (BBC News, 2015) and the 2019 El Paso shooting in Texas (BBC, 2019). Both are clear examples of violence against minorities based on white supremacist ideologies. One possible reason for the surge in white supremacist attitudes is political polarisation that has provided an opportunity for violent bigots, both on-and offline (Levin, 2019).

Similar to the USA, after September 11, UK has also seen the re-emergence of racist sentiment (Flemmen & Savage, 2017, p. 234). UK “reported the highest number of far-right terror attacks and plots in Europe in 2019 (Dearden, 2020). The 2017 Finsbury Park mosque attack (BBC News, 2018) is one of the more recent examples of white supremacist violence. Aside from this, four far-right terrorist plots were foiled since the 2017 terror attack in UK (Dearden, 2018). There are also other international examples of white supremacist terrorism with the most prominent being 22nd July shooting in Norway, mosque shooting in Christchurch, New Zealand (Blackbourn et al., 2019),

shooting in Hanau, Germany (Jasser et al., 2020) and mosque shooting in Bærum, Norway (BBC News, 2019).

On the other hand, the September 11 attacks were significant in advancing Islamist terrorism. Almost every country modified their response to improve security measures towards external violent threats (Danzell & Maisonet Montañez, 2015), catering specifically to Islamist extremism and terrorism. Major examples include the *War on Terror*, racial profiling of Muslims while travelling or at-venue security check points, and the restrictions on immigration “casting Muslims, whether settled or immigrant, as the enemy within” (Fekete, 2004). For instance, there is the PREVENT strategy in the UK, that initially only focused on violent Islamist extremism but was adjusted to include all forms of terrorism (Lowe, 2016). This also put an obligation on staff in public entities to prevent people from getting involved in extremism (p. 917). Ultimately, all of these security measures were succeeded by the Muslim Ban executed by the Trump administration in 2017 (ACLU, 2020). Nonetheless, there have still been a range of Islamist terrorist attacks in Western countries like the Lower Manhattan attack in 2017 (BBC News, 2017) and the London Bridge stabbing in 2019 (BBC News, 2019).

Ever since these increase in ideological terror attacks, it becomes exceptionally important to recognise and investigate the reasons that may be causing them. Quite reasonably, perceptions of people’s identity have also changed drastically over the past two decades, which has led to polarisation of beliefs. Along with this, the looming threat of white supremacy has become stronger, particularly in the USA (Woodward, 2020). With this, Islamophobia has become a problem for much of the mainstream Western world (Gallup, 2020). This is often presented as a ‘clash of civilisations’ where these two sides with quasi-religious conflicts dominating rational decision making in the world. It is one thing to say that these problems will dissolve on their own, however, the role of the media is that of a giant in representation of terrorism or extremism in particular. In the USA, media portrayal of Islam has been consistently negative in that there is a natural focus on *fear* of Islamist terrorism from abroad (Powell, 2011).

True role and functionality of the media is an academically debated subject. Some scholars have speculated, and some have claimed that the role of media is to structure audience perspective about issues, shaping opinion and presenting particular versions of reality (Yusof et al., 2013). In studying terrorism, scholars have claimed that

“terrorism has not meaning without media coverage in this age of mass communication” (Martin, 2008). This is important because scholars assert that the public perceive terror attacks from the point of view of the media outlets that represent them. This becomes particularly problematic when media portrays Islam to be the same as an extremist ideology adopted by terrorists. Academic studies into representations of Islamist terrorism have shown the pattern to which Islamists are represented differently to white nationalists. For example, studies show that “Islam is dominantly portrayed as a violent religion” (Ahmed & Matthes, 2016, p. 219). In comparison to this, terror attacks by white people and members of white supremacist groups are less likely to be represented as terrorist and instead as mass shooters (D’Orazio & Salehyan, 2018). Though this type of representation of white supremacists is typical, scholars are increasingly investigating media framings of white nationalists. This thesis builds upon this prior research agenda, that has been focusing on Islamist terrorism.

This thesis aims to conduct analysis on media representations of terrorism in a British context. In particular, it investigates the news coverage produced by MailOnline, the online entity of the UK-based Daily Mail newspaper. Research in this thesis focuses on MailOnline coverage of extremist terrorist attacks between 2016 and 2017. More specifically, it looks at the 2016 murder of British Member of Parliament, Jo Cox by a neo-Nazi, white supremacist Thomas Mair. This event is compared to the 2017 Westminster Bridge terror attack perpetrated by militant Islamist Khalid Masood. By looking at these two cases, representations of both attacks are highlighted and compared; white nationalist extremism in comparison to Islamist extremism.

The reason for comparing these two cases is that they represent two ideologically motivated terror attacks; both perpetrators committed violence against innocent victims in the name of their extremist ideologies. Also, though tied to an ideology with transnational roots, whether white supremacy or Islamist extremism, they both acted on their own, as lone actors. These two examples are also compared because there have been media tendencies to portray one ideology different to the other; prior research claims that Islamists are usually framed differently to white nationalist terrorists (Corbin, 2017). Western media has also had a bias especially after the events of September 11 which saw Islamists commit multiple terrorist attacks in USA. It is also important to remember that while there are differences in framing of both

ideologies, they are not permanent and the media has the potential to change and develop new frames (Butler, 2009), nuance old ones or ditch them altogether. This is why it is valuable to investigate this new empirical case examining MailOnline. Additionally, by comparing Islamist terrorism to white nationalist terrorism, an insight into the double standards, news bias and media perception of two similar issues with different perpetrators is documented and examined.

To study the news coverage, the following questions are posed:

What frames has MailOnline used to represent Islamist versus white supremacist terrorism? How do they contribute or contradict to the stereotypes highlighted by prior research?

For the analysis, a qualitative approach was adopted with discourse analysis of news articles that represented both murder of Jo Cox and Westminster Bridge attack. Articles were selected based on their sensationalist attributes such as in writing, style, word choice and rhetoric devices. Followed by this, articles were placed in a document under key categories established in the theoretical framework. This was to guide the analysis to document support or opposition of prior research but also to accommodate new findings from this study. British media tends to be implicated in the reproduction of biased framings of Islamist versus white nationalist terrorists and the theoretical and analytical framework is based on this prior research. This is a good way of studying Islamist compared to white nationalist terrorism because it documents the patterns in both case studies, by highlighting similarities and differences in the two terror attacks. The object of analysis then becomes MailOnline and its framing of both events.

MailOnline was selected to analyse for a few reasons. Firstly, it is an extremely wide-read newspaper not just in UK but also countries such as USA, Canada and Australia (Durrani, 2013). Secondly, MailOnline's parent company Daily Mail has been claimed to be an "unreliable" source by Wikipedia editors (Jackson, 2017). Thirdly, Daily Mail is the "most widely read news title in the UK" (Ofcom, 2019) which has previously had almost 200 million unique monthly visitors to their site (Edge, 2015). Daily Mail is also unsurprisingly Britain's most right-wing newspaper (Smith, 2017) and in doing the analysis in this thesis, MailOnline can be used as a reasonable proxy for the right-wing press. Daily Mail is often used as the archetype of a right-wing newspaper that reproduces offensive framings and portrayals of social and political stories (O'Hagan,

2012). Empirical investigations that focus on Mail Online are limited, and those that do, often compare it amongst other British newspapers. This is why this thesis is useful as it is evaluating a presumption that the Mail deals in stereotypes rooted in double standards, bias and misrepresentations of ideological groups. This thesis presents a new empirical case as, to some degree, it investigates attributes that prior research has shown to be a pattern in global and British media. However, there are also compelling, nuanced findings that produce new understanding about the MailOnline, found in this thesis.

The findings of this thesis indicate that, seemingly there have been increasing attempt made by MailOnline to rectify and change the narrative regarding Islamist versus white nationalist terrorism. In analysis of self and other in a 'good' versus 'evil' format, MailOnline framed Jo Cox's murderer as disconnected from the white supremacist ideology. This was opposed to Westminster Bridge attacker, who was framed and categorically distanced from 'us' as the 'other', a violent terrorist. MailOnline's ideological representations of both cases are similar to one another; both Mair and Masood were framed to be a lone wolf, not part of a wider terrorist network or ideology. Though this was the case, there was still hesitance in calling Mair a terrorist. In examining motivations of both terrorists, MailOnline framed them similarly, as part of two opposing extremist ideologies. However, it also reinforces a fear-frame that has been attributed in prior research to Islamist terrorists. MailOnline ascribes this frame to both cases which was unpredicted. Lastly, perhaps the most important finding of the analysis was the unanticipated humanisation of both terrorists. This was expected in the case of Mair as a white nationalist but not for Masood as an Islamist. Therefore, MailOnline has somewhat made attempts at becoming inclusive and considerate of the distinct biases noted in prior research, that are typically present when representing Islamist terrorists.

Before going into the later chapters, some key terms should be clarified. In this thesis, white nationalists are neo-Nazis with goals that show and are equivalent to white supremacists, white power fanatics and white power terrorists, which also includes the alt-right movement. Far-right refers to the extreme right-wing ideological groups but not necessarily to do with terrorism. For any type of terrorism that is perpetrated by people using the religion of Islam and its principles, will be referred to as Islamist

terrorism or acts, not as *Islamic* as this can otherwise lead to assume the acts were de facto Islamic in nature.

This thesis is divided into five main chapters. The following chapter reviews prior academic research and literature, discussing and reviewing concepts that contextualise topics of Islamist and white nationalist terrorism. This includes previous media representation of Islamist and white supremacist terrorism both internationally as well as in the UK. It is also indicative of the gap in current research, which this thesis aims to fulfil and provides a theoretical and analytical framework of how it will attempt to answer the research questions. In the third chapter, the methodological choices are explained and justified, how certain aspects of MailOnline news articles were used along with the strategies for data gathering and analysis of collected data. It also justifies the suitable methods that seemed reasonable as well as limitations of certain strategies. The fourth chapter is the main analysis section as it debates and argues the central findings of the research. It seeks to answer the two research questions as well as fulfil the purposes of doing this research. Analysis is guided by the four categories of Self and Other, representations of ideology, representations of motivations of terrorists and identity of terrorists. Finally, the last chapter of this thesis concludes the discussion. In this, a summary of the findings is available as well as potential for further research into the same or similar topics. It was concluded that MailOnline has made attempts at bringing changes and has adapted to new frames that represent terrorists in a similar manner, pushing towards impartiality. That being said, there is still a lot more to do before MailOnline can become truly impartial in its representation of ideological extremists.

2. Literature Review

This chapter reviews and discusses previous studies and literature on media and terrorism in the global context. This includes studies that have investigated white nationalism, Islamist terrorism and radicalisation among other relevant topics. Then, this is followed by research pertaining more specifically to media and terrorism in reference to the theoretical framework that will guide the analysis, based on prior research. Lastly, it provides a justification for the choices made in creating the theoretical framework and selecting empirical cases for analysis. The purpose of this review is to understand the wide variety of topics within the scope of white nationalist and Islamist terrorism. By clearly highlighting past studies into these subtopics, a greater emphasis is placed on the scholarly debates on Islamist and white nationalist terrorism. It is also helpful in establishing categories that can serve as the theoretical framework to guide analysis in Chapter 4. It is important to not bind this thesis into binary understanding of white nationalism and Islamist terrorism, but to keep a logical structure for discussion of MailOnline articles. The categories also allow flexibility in being sensitive to new information from analysis including other patterns of representation and narrative devices that are used to depict terrorists.

Representation of Islam and terrorism in a global context

Media representation of terrorism across Western countries is often different to one another. Previous research shows a consensus in labelling of individuals as terrorists that commit violence under a distorted Islamic theology as opposed to those under far-right ideologies and are instead treated as mentally ill lone-wolves (Rondon, 2018). Such mislabelling of far-right terrorists has the capacity to unconsciously bias audience perception of terrorism or terrorists. This is also as evidenced in narratives used to promote Islamophobic and xenophobic propaganda (p. 742) such as the

notion of ‘terrorists are always (brown) Muslim’ and ‘white people are never terrorists’ (Corbin, 2017) portrayed in the media.

As xenophobia and Islamophobia is prominent, the role of media is extremely important, especially inaccurate depictions of terrorism. Research has claimed that there is an “almost symbiotic relationship” (Spencer, 2012, p. 6) between terrorism and the media. This is by the representation of extremist ideologies, inciting fear and ultimately generating higher selling stories in which “the media do not passively describe or record news events but actively reconstruct them” (Erjavec & Volcic, 2006, p. 304). In this, information and news are used as a tool to further goals specific to media but also specific to extremist or terrorist ideologies. Essentially, the media is able to work multiple angles on stories related to terrorism, as well as giving a platform to extremist ideologies of the terrorists.

Academic research has also looked into journalistic platforms and their representations of terrorism. Research focusing on *The Telegraph*, *The Times*, *The Independent* and *The Guardian* among other regional papers, found that after the 2013 Woolwich attack, “Islam and Muslims were used alongside terrorism in an overtly negative manner” (Awan & Rahman, 2016). Similarly, research that looked at Serbian and Croatian newspapers and their use of the ‘terrorism’ frame found that the mischaracterisation of terrorism equating to violence by Islamists is adopted by both newspapers (Erjavec & Volcic, 2006, p. 307). In another instance, research into *Al Jazeera* and *Al Arabiya TV* networks found that the ‘terrorist is Muslim’ narrative prevailed in the news coverage. This also included both networks acknowledging that the majority of terrorism victims were Muslim (Abdullah & Elareshi, 2015), placing an emphasis on an often-blurred boundary that can mix Islam with terrorism. Other research that studied *CNN* argues that perpetrator religion is the “largest predictor of news coverage” (Kearns et al., 2018) which guides how the news outlet will represent cases of terrorism. As this thesis makes use of categories of analysis based on prior research, these scholars and studies have provided relationships between news coverage of terrorism and factors that influence the coverage.

Representations of Muslims in the media incorporate one aspect; Islamist violence. Prior research suggests that patterns of news coverage frame all Muslims as a homogenous group of potential extremists (Hallowell, 2016). By employing such

framing, there is no distinction between the *enemy* and average Muslim citizens. Extremist actors and the associated violent acts were portrayed as crazy, barbaric or otherwise irrational (p. 16). Research after the 7/7 attack's second anniversary show that the press made it clear that Muslim militants posed a *real* threat. Broadsheets and tabloids combined, some of which included *The Times*, *Daily Telegraph*, *The Sun* and *Daily Express*, maintained a stance of "nurturing moral panic about the enemy within" (Kabir & Green, 2008, p. 18). In particular, the *Daily Mail* attempted to instil the greatest fear among its readers (p. 16). These patterns in categorising level of threat and violence is in line with representation of terrorism among other Western outlets. With heightened fears against radical Islamist ideology, it is no doubt that the religious Islamic theology has become questionable in news media.

Public concern about the implementation of Sharia law in the UK has shown mixed views. But UK tabloids have devoted significant attention to Islamist terrorists such as Anjem Choudhary and his group's extremist agenda. This "is rejected by the vast majority of Muslims" and "give the impression that his group is representative of most British Muslims" (Standing, 2010). Media and news focus on Choudhary as representative of Islam implies that British Muslims are in fact calling for the introduction or imposition of Sharia law in the UK (p. 22). Findings also show that such narratives are furthered by the media when it unnecessarily associates Islam with ISIS or equivalent groups while using relatively positive images such as a hijab-wearing lady who bakes cakes, are used to show a takeover (Hedges, 2015).

In this proclaimed takeover, radicalisation of youth is a clear concern. Research into ISIS's terror threat and influence for lone wolf attacks tells us that the group has managed to attract members to "wage virtual jihad through skilfully spreading its propaganda via the medium of cyberspace" (Ade, 2015, p. 4). Many of these so-called lone wolf attackers are radicalised online and terror groups serve as inspirational to them (p. 5). In promoting extremist propaganda inadvertently, media can often fail to realise the extent of influence it has on the public particularly in reference to comparisons of representations between Islamist and white nationalist terrorists. This is because "the global response to political violence perpetrated by non-Muslims is not handled through the legal framework of the War on Terror" (Cherkaoui & Dewan, 2019) since "terrorism was not seen as a white problem" (p. 5). Ironically, white nationalists have increasingly been using methods employed by Islamist terrorists, such as

publicising their own acts of terror. For example, the Christchurch shooter produced propaganda similar to ISIS before he went on to executing victims, with a camera attached to himself and his weapons (Crothers & O'Brien, 2020).

There are now shared attributes in Islamist and white nationalist terrorism in the form of spectacularisation. Research claims that “performing violence in the form of a show, for instance through live-streaming, with a renewed emphasis on captivating symbols” (Brzuszkiewicz, 2020, p. 72) shows the similarity of recent white nationalist terrorism with Islamist terror tactics. Scholars claim that with such spectacularisation of events, “mass media coverage of terrorism can lead to a contagion effect, in which witnessing ‘successful’ attacks on television will allow terrorists to copy the tactics of other groups and motivate them to employ similar campaigns of violence” (Matthews, 2015, p. 268). Seeing more media investigations into this particular area would be highly insightful in understanding perpetrators’ urge to publicise their acts using first-person methods. Along with this input, it is clear that there is a lot of research on representation of Islamist terrorism as opposed to white supremacist terrorism in the media.

The key points from this review that will inform research include the media portrayal of white nationalist terrorists as mentally ill lone wolves. This is problematic because such framings discard the extremist ideology and the violent attacks and instead place terrorists into a separate category. Moreover, the implied mutually beneficial relationship between media and terrorism gives prominence to inaccurate depictions of Islam, as terrorists have the aims of promoting their extremist ideology meanwhile the media finds content to output. Furthermore, the conflation of Islam with terrorism incites fear against the religion of Islam, separate from the militant ideology that extremists and terrorists follow. All of these are some reasons why it is worth doing this study. This is because academic research has made it clear that there is an intrinsic focus on Islamist terrorism, that is not necessarily accurate. There are also limited comparisons of Islamist and white nationalists which is something that this thesis focuses on. The gap that this will fill is that scholars have not focused on the two attacks used in this thesis. Past studies are also not comparative between two case studies and two ideologies, in understanding representations of both by one specific news outlet.

Representation of white nationalists and terrorism in a global context

Though academic research on white nationalist terrorism is relatively scarce, reports says that between 2011 and 2017, white nationalism has been the “motivating force behind nearly 350 terrorist attacks” (Facing History, 2020). A recent study on white nationalist terrorists found that *Los Angeles Times* and *New York Times* both essentially framed the Las Vegas attack perpetrator in a way that humanised him, referring to his personal attributes and lifestyle (Elmasry & el-Nawawy, 2019). This was in comparison to the Orlando shooting in which the perpetrator was a Muslim where both newspapers employed the ‘terrorism’ frame in their coverage to describe the event (p. 1). Further research into press coverage of lone-actor terrorism found that British and Danish newspapers framed Islamist lone-actors as distinct from far-right lone-actors (Parker et al., 2018). This makes a distinction between the two sides effectively placing far-right violent actors, following a violent ideology, in a separate category to Islamists.

In terms of development of the white nationalist ideology, studies show that “algorithms speed up the spread of White supremacist ideology” (Daniels, 2018, p. 62). This is clear in a similar manner to news outlets, alt-right and white supremacist groups are able to advance their ideology through the power of social media (p. 61). Essentially, social media can be seen as another vessel of news media, that informs the public. In another instance, it is documented that entertainment platform YouTube can nudge people towards more radical ideas (Harwood, 2019), especially those that use it as a source of information. Although algorithms’ role in providing *relevant* information, they become more important in context to online white nationalist factions. There is evidence that they provide a digital community for users to confirm and grow (Daniels, 2018) their hatred and beliefs by being part of a network with like-minded individuals, which eventually seep into conventional norms.

When algorithms are used in the media, white supremacist ideologies are strategically brought into the mainstream (p. 62). For example, researchers found that popular entertainment and video streaming site YouTube’s “algorithms often directed users who searched for specific keywords towards increasingly violent, extreme content” (Basu, 2020). This is also the case with search engine algorithms that can reflect racial bias because “hate groups can take advantage of search engine algorithms to target

individuals and elevate their websites in search results” (Uprety & Solomon, 2018). The Charleston church shooter, Dylann Roof searched for ‘black on white’ crime and Google lead him to racist websites and communities (Daniels, 2018, p. 62), which illustrates the role of algorithms in the spread of white supremacist ideologies.

This has shown to be a problem as scholars claim, instead of using traditional media, terrorists can “gain public attention by simply posting the controversial content themselves” (Bates & Mooney, 2014, p. 5). Recently, the Christchurch shooter employed this technique of live streaming himself on Facebook, shooting and killing worshippers in New Zealand (Brzuszkiewicz, 2020, p. 73). Combined with algorithms and an agenda-setting requirement by news media, his execution video was widely circulated online and in news broadcasts. Ultimately, white nationalist ideologies are assisted by this technological advantage especially in gaining members through radicalisation. This relates to media representations, specifically this research, because it speaks to the role of the media, which is diminished as the attackers can simply use their own mediums to promote extremist ideologies.

Radicalisation is not strictly associated with forming extreme views on white supremacist matters. Researchers have claimed radicalisation is not specific to white supremacists as a similar process is present in Islamist extremists (Buckingham & Alali, 2019). This indicates a resemblance in the initial stages of *becoming* a terrorist whether white nationalist or Islamist. However, media attention has overlooked white supremacist terrorism because they are not perceived as authentic terrorists (Jenkins, 2003 cited in Simi, 2010). As a result, though growing recently, scholarly study of radicalisation is *relatively* limited on white supremacists when compared to the abundance of studies on Islamist radicalisation, along with focus on role of extremism varied by gender.

Gender plays a prominent role in study of white nationalism. Research argues that this is because in terrorism, it is about the apparent “restoration of a damaged masculinity” (Ferber & Kimmel, 2008, p. 874). A recent study that focused on news coverage in New Zealand, Australia, UK, France and Sweden found four dominant representations which were “lone wolfs and maniacs, insufficient legislative system, separating ideology and violence, and racism in Western societies” (Guinez, 2020). These representations “reproduce whiteness and masculinity as the norm and normalise

violence by silencing the relationship between masculinity and violence (p. 2). In essence, performing masculine acts in the form of political violence is an apparently courageous choice for white supremacist terrorists, that furthers their political goals in news networks. This is seen in the Christchurch example as the footage of the perpetrator's assault was publicised in different ways by some news Australian networks before being removed (Ellis & Mueller, 2020).

Promotion of the Christchurch shooter's extremist ideology varied depending on country. Research into media coverage of the attack, news outlets in New Zealand provided an empathetic coverage of the victims meanwhile Australian outlets ran extended coverage over the shooter among other sensitive features (Ellis & Mueller, 2020). Although the Australian media utilised a slightly insensitive approach to report the attack, it shows thorough news reporting of a white supremacist terrorist. For example, *The Australian* included "brief excerpts from the alleged attacker's soundtrack, including statements of regret that he didn't kill more people" (p. 339). More generally, referring to the 22nd July attacker, "the widespread assumption voiced by the media and broadcast worldwide over the internet, radio and television, was that the perpetrator of these attack was a Muslim terrorist" (Strømme, 2017, p. 147). This is a clear reference to the media tendency to associate terrorism with Islam "given the current hype concerning Islamic radicalisation and the war on terrorism, it would be difficult for the general public to not draw such implications" (Dingley & Herman, 2017).

Research has also highlighted how white nationalism is legitimised in mainstream discourses. Prior research into the *New York Times* and *Breitbart News*' reporting shows that the latter news outlet creates "ethnically exclusive collective memory" (Wasilewski, 2019, p. 77) as opposed to *New York Times* that provided similar content in an inclusive manner. In this, far-right media allows for a stronger identity and an ability to contest the mainstream views (p. 88). Despite *Breitbart News*' specific audience, a potential for growth in followers is there, particularly when studies show that "Islamist terror and extremism have been amply highlighted in politics and the media, while far-right extremism has largely been downplayed or ignored" (Strømme, 2017, p. 167). Additionally, new media has played a crucial role in enabling white nationalist ideologies. This is the case with *Breitbart News* but also *VICE News*' reporting of white nationalist ideologies (Mansoor, 2018).

From a broader perspective, white nationalist ideologies have essentially been enforced by populist public figures. Previous research has advocated for the analysis of “how populist leaders succeed in aggregating a number of unfulfilled requests, by reshaping the political and social space” (Leconte, 2015, p. 257) rather than investigating what those leaders are saying. In this way, research shows the connection between Farage and mythological narratives in journalism; where he is “constructed as a man on a mission, fighting against the odds, overcoming trials and tribulations in his efforts to win the United Kingdom’s democratic power back from the European Union” (Kelsey, 2015, p. 971). Similarly, in Sweden, scholars assert that populist radical-right parties have used the trope of a Swedish dystopia, in a “call for action against Muslim migrants and minorities who, they claim, pose an ethnoreligious threat to the national identity” (Thorleifsson, 2019, p. 515). In the end, these beliefs are represented in the media using certain framings, which is also clear in the most superior frames currently present in global news media.

From this discussion, the notable points that will inform the research are the humanisation of white nationalist perpetrators. Assigning personalising attributes to attackers who have performed highly violent acts detracts from their ideological motivations. Also, the legitimisation of white nationalist extremism in mainstream discourses means that it is no longer of an extremist nature, rather verified to be part of the public’s perception. Furthermore, the representations of past white supremacist attackers as being perpetrated by Islamist attackers, such as 22nd July shows clear media bias. These are some reasons that show why it is worth doing research into this comparison of Islamist versus white nationalist terrorism. It is also worth doing because it will illuminate white supremacism further in context with the framing of terrorism. Subsequently, this will fill in the gap of scarcity in scholarly research on white nationalism compared to other ideologies.

Dominant frames in the media surrounding reporting of terrorists

This section now turns to the dominant frames that are common across academic work, in the representation of Islamist and far-right terrorism. Discussing dominant frames in this review provides previously established trends in the way news media has reported terrorists. The first two frames, sensationalism and War on Terror are indicative of the style in which Islamist terrorism is represented across Western media

and the last two framings, mental health and lone wolf attributes, are typical of white nationalist terrorists. The purpose of these frames is to lead the discussion and analysis in Chapter 4 as they add to the analytical framework. In this, it is important to examine whether and how MailOnline complies with these frames.

Sensationalising terrorism

Media representations of political topics that are written with sensational objectives can lead to violence-based problems. Studies indicate that “sensationalist media coverage of acts of terrorism results in more such acts being committed” (Doward, 2015). Additionally, news reports that “extensively personalised perpetrators of violence strengthened radicalised individuals’ motivations to imitate the use of violence” (Baugut & Neumann, 2019, p. 1437). Research also claims that mass media excessively covers terrorism in sensationalist styles (Iyengar, 1991 cited in Gadarian, 2010) and news is “most influential when it is presented in a sensationalistic way” (Gadarian, 2014). This indicates sensationalism to be the ultimate stance of news platforms attempting to attract the most attention.

There are some claims in public and academic discourse that Islamist terrorists in particular are represented in a sensationalist way. A report into perception of news coverage shows that media inclination to use sensational news angles in reporting of Britain’s Muslim communities was present before September 11 attacks (Ahmad, 2006). It asserted that the sensationalist ‘ways’ include usage of terminology such as “Islamic terrorists” or “fundamentalists” (p. 977). This becomes a bias when compared to representations of white criminals or white supremacist terrorists as sensationalism took priority. Though not explicitly about terrorism, the same report stressed that “clashes between white youths, the police and South Asian Muslim young men were often crudely reported through racialised and anti-Muslim discourses” (Ahmad, 2006, p. 962). Clearly, media framed their reports in a negative manner that opposed Muslim communities, especially when the issue was related to terrorism.

Some research argues against sensationalist styles in reporting news because in doing so, the stories diverge from the main objectives. It was reported that “terror is becoming too sensationalist and simplistic in the digitally driven rush and that the role

of professional journalism has been constrained and diminished” (Beckett, 2016, p. 4). In essence, news platforms and their competition to gain the largest numbers of audience members is resulting in improper journalism quality and standards. More significantly “there is a clear synergy between the media’s desire for a sensational story and terrorists’ desire for publicity” (White, 2020). It is also in the terrorists’ interests to be provided with a sensationalist platform to represent their propaganda and extreme ideologies, not just a benefit for media platforms to have dramatic stories, that do not represent average Muslims.

On the representation of Muslims, a number of institutions have researched racism and discrimination in their media representations. The Council of Europe’s Commission on Racism and Intolerance’s (2010) report on UK media suggested that Muslims, migrants and other groups are portrayed in a negative light and as being associated with terrorism (Stevenson, 2015). Crucially, this has also been picked up by the Leveson Inquiry into British press reporting standards which emphasised that British press had a great deal of instances in which they were “discriminatory, sensational and unbalanced” (Sweney & Plunkett, 2012) in reporting of minorities, migrants or immigrants. This highlights the empirical patterns of representations of specific groups in society, of which include refugees and Muslims. The importance of this lies in the blending of ‘immigrant’ and ‘Muslim’ by the media (Allievi, 2006) that further stresses the findings of the Leveson Inquiry.

War on Terror

The September 11 attacks in America were possibly a starting point for a consistent media narrative of threat and terrorism in Western countries. Scholars claim that African wars before the ‘War on Terror’ “have largely been ignored by the media” (Franks & Shaw, 2012, p. 6), that this frame was “internalised by the US press” (Reese & Lewis, 2009, p. 777), continues to be present (p. 792) and War on Terror has been a ‘media war’ receiving ongoing coverage in all its manifestations (Franks & Shaw, 2012). Over time, it has become clear that this is a presiding frame that serves as a guide for news or creative media when it comes to reporting Islamist terrorism or radical ideological violence in general.

Western entertainment industry has played a substantial part in creating various representations of war on terror. Research into the film industry's adaptation of war on terror argues that Hollywood has shown "racist, essentialist and Orientalist representations of Arabs and Islam for decades" (Shaheen, 2001 cited in Castonguay, 2004, p. 103). This becomes a contributing factor to the concealed news media representations of Islam and Islamist terrorists. Entertainment media thereby paves the way for "dehumanising and demonizing" (p. 103) the enemy, a common trait found in news media. For instance, a study into Canadian media's role in framing of war on terror found that it was involved in utilising metaphors that dehumanised and de-individualised the "enemy-Other" (Steuter & Wills, 2009, p. 7), evoking fear in public perceptions.

Distinction in media framings of Islamist versus white nationalist terrorism are clear. A study investigated articles in the *New York Times* to assess media framing of ideological and non-ideological mass shootings. It found that though both are similar to some degree but how they are framed is separate when terrorism is present (Schildkraut & Gruenewald, 2019). To clarify, news is framed "qualitatively different than far-right and ideological shootings" (p. 84) when they are Islamic and imply terrorism. A second study underlined the notion that media coverage of terrorist events intensifies fear of Islam and Muslims while justifying those committed by non-Muslims as mentally ill (Powell, 2018). This empirically validates the belief that Islam and Islamist terrorism is in fact represented differently by the media as opposed to white nationalist terrorism, especially that involves the mental health of a perpetrator.

State of mind: mental health considerations of a terrorist

Firstly, the causal relationship between mental health and violence in the form of terrorism is up for debate. Prior research declares that "there is little to suggest that terrorists are mentally ill, or behaviourally maladjusted; however, there is evidence that certain socio-economic difficulties and problems of personal identity and belonging come together to produce them" (Dingley & Herman, 2017, p. 1003). Therefore, other research argues that "we should refrain from making any causal claims about a direct relation between mental health disorders and violence" (van Zuijdewijn & Bakker, 2016, p. 45). This makes it clear that although news media is inclined towards

establishing a causal relationship based on limited factors, it is misleading and possibly inaccurate to do so.

Attributing causes to be potentially incorrect factors is problematic. This is why, studies show that mainstream media are often criticised for “readily attributing terrorism committed by White perpetrators to mental illness” (Kunst et al., 2018) while attributing ideological motivation to same behaviour committed by non-Whites (p. 1888). Further studies say that “violence in the context of mental illness can be especially sensationalised” (Rueve & Welton, 2008). Consequently, this becomes an incorrect frame, particularly if a causal relationship is attributed by the media. While research does not support the link, the fact that it is a common frame means the extent of this representation should be investigated, along with the extent to which it differs in usage between Islamist terror and white supremacist terror.

A potential pitfall of using this type of representation for white nationalist terrorism is that it occludes from view the far-right networks, which is a good reason to pay attention to this frame. This is because past research into domestic terrorism in the USA show that violence under a distorted Islamic theology is treated as part of a collective terrorist network as opposed to violence under far-right ideologies, which is treated as mentally ill lone-wolfs (Rondon, 2018). Double standards in the news reporting ultimately pave the way for various consequences, some of which are discussed in this chapter.

Lone wolf versus collective extremist groups

The above research makes a claim that Islamist terrorism is treated as part of a collective network as opposed to white nationalist terrorism. This was observable in the Norwegian media representation of 22nd July attacks. Studies show that the coverage “provided an image of the perpetrator as a lone and disturbed individual rather than a politically motivated individual” (Falkheimer & Karin-Olsson, 2014). Norwegian media also gave the terrorist considerable attention and significant space to voice his opinions, almost equal to the prime minister (p. 82). Had the terrorist been a follower of an Islamist ideology, media response most likely would be opposite. Authors of this study posited a few arguments as to why Norwegian media

representation was deeply rooted in bias; mainly, that since he was ethnically Norwegian, perhaps this did not conform to the terrorist presumptions of our time. Or that he was unaccompanied, and as a result, not conforming to the presumptions of planned terrorism (Falkheimer & Karin-Olsson, 2014, p. 82).

Studies into terrorism perpetrated by lone wolf actors was limited, but now it has been “dramatically increased in the past decade” (Bates, 2016, p. 2). Research focusing on Danish and British media found that “lone-actor terrorism is framed, with national variations, as a significant and increasing problem in both countries” (Parker et al., 2018). Another study claims that terrorism perpetrated by White men or non-Muslims goes by unchecked, as they are labelled lone wolf and not part of a bigger problem (King, 2017). Analysis of daily newspapers in Croatia and Serbia shows their submission to the “terrorism is all violent acts carried out by Islamic extremists” proposition (Erjavec & Volcic, 2006). Also, reports claim that it is difficult to find ‘lone wolf’ actors that have not been influenced to some degree by terror groups (Beckett, 2016, p. 31). All of these examinations show a lack of awareness in news media despite the rise in scholarly study of the lone wolf issue. Perhaps, avoiding the lone wolf framing would have some beneficial consequences for news coverage. Instead of covering far-right ideological extremists as lone wolves, portraying them as a collective network similar to Islamists (Rondon, 2018), would highlight the collective nature of the ideology.

Why these framings of terror attacks matter?

Representations of terrorist groups and terror attacks are significant because, depending on the context, they can either fuel or diminish prevailing stereotypes in the media. This is possible by weaponizing information to suit an agenda. For example, scholars claim that widespread news coverage of beheadings, bombs and genital mutilation dominate Western media reports in coverage of Muslims, eventually “selling the message that they are perpetrators of savagery, deprivation and torture” (Fahd, 2017). Prior research also shows that “the most common nouns used by the media to identify British Muslims were terrorist, extremist, Islamist, suicide bomber and militant” (Moore et al., 2008). Such representations of terrorism are not necessarily related to

Islam or Muslims. However, coverage of terrorism overall involves heavy focus on both as together, thereby giving the impression that terrorism and Islam are one.

Moreover, one of the aforementioned dominant frames, 'War on Terror' plays a considerable role in media representations of not just terrorism in general but also Islam. A study claims that some of these news frames are "driven by war on terror baselines that profile Muslim identity as presumptive of terror threat" (Beydoun, 2018, p. 1213). This type of framing matters particularly when it is utilised by other extremist ideologies. Though a clear causal relationship between framing and perpetrating terrorist attacks is difficult to establish, some research has claimed that a mutually beneficial relationship between both is evident (Rohner & Frey, 2007 cited in Bilgen, 2012). Therefore, the likelihood of extremists being inspired by biased content in the media is higher, especially when focus is on one particular ideology.

Aside from news agenda setting and preferences, public perception bias on the threat level of terrorism makes it increasingly tougher to provide objective information. This can typically be in line or against government policies and initiatives to enforce securitization. For example, research shows that "citizens concerned about terrorism are more likely to adopt the hawkish foreign policy views communicated in threatening news stories when that policy is matched with fear-inducing cues than when it is not" (Gadarian, 2010, p. 469). Essentially, public is influence easily by government discourse when it is associated with fear.

Why does it matter how Islamists and white nationalists are framed?

A lack of attention on far-right terrorism and extremism effectively undermines terrorism perpetrated by white nationalists. For example, research into framing of 22nd July attacks by two major Norwegian newspapers found news coverage focusing on the "perpetrator as an individual, giving him questionable political exposure" (Falkheimer & Karin-Olsson, 2015, p. 70). The study also asserts that this depoliticised the attack by framing the attacker's lone wolf nature and ill mental health as motivating factors as opposed to his politically motivated extremist ideologies. In this example,

justifications aside from political violence become apparent that disregards possibilities of perpetrating violence in the name of a cause.

Additionally, news stigmatising white nationalists' motivations for terrorism as a mental problem or solitary acts of violence leads to polarisation in framing of the two sides. For example, earlier research suggest that white nationalist terrorism is discredited as a psychological defect and not a conscious choice (Corbin, 2017). Also, personal trauma is held as a contributing factor to triggering the violence in the case of white terrorists (p. 468). When reports have expressed that far right terrorist attacks have been "accompanied by published manifestos, which outline ideology, motivation and tactical choices" (Ware, 2020, p. 1), it is strange to see individualised justifications for the behaviour of white supremacist terrorists.

Lastly, although discussed in detail later on in this review, framing of Islamist terrorists enforces the othering of Muslims. As research indicates that Islam is seen as a violent religion connected with the reason that "terrorists are always Muslim" (Corbin, 2017, p. 455), another study highlights a thematic pattern of terrorism coverage that places significance on international terrorism, with Muslims and Islam against Christian America (Powell, 2011). As previous research has shown, framing dichotomies have large scale consequences such as the establishment of a consistent, biased narrative against one side of the same matter.

Why Mail Online?

It is useful to look into MailOnline on two particular attacks because there is an assumption that MailOnline is implicated in reproducing stereotypes about Islam or terrorism. For example, a former *Daily Mail* employee claimed that "none of the front-line reporters I worked with were racist, but there's institutional racism" (Collins, 2012). However, this is an assumption that cannot be consistent temporally. Considering the timeframe, it is likely that there is change in MailOnline behaviour. It is also likely that right wing newspapers have become more subtle in their efforts to speak about particular subjects. Or, similar to the far-right uprising in Western society, they start catering to their audience and are similarly vocal. These possibilities are explored

empirically, by conducting new analysis and comparing it with studies of representations in right-wing press of older attacks.

MailOnline has tendencies to pick sides on specific social and political issues, which is historically the case with newspapers. For example, a report asserts that “newspapers have become more proactive, picking up or even instigating campaigns on single issues” (Duffy & Rowden, 2005, p. 1). Eventually, research also concluded that in matter of economy and immigration “the *Daily Mail* failed to serve the public in an objective manner” (Sogelola, 2018, p. 139). It is for this reason, that dominant frames in the international news were investigated and also how these were reinforced by MailOnline coverage. A report shows “the four popular papers (*The Sun*, *Daily Mail*, *Daily Express* and *Daily Star*) which have run the most critical copy about asylum seekers are read by more than 22 million people, more than a third of the British population” (Greenslade, 2005). The relevance of asylum seekers or immigrants is pivotal because representations within MailOnline of these groups “in many variable scenes, has progressively become *Muslim*, both in his/her perception by the host societies and in his/her self-perception” (Allievi, 2006). Add to this, MailOnline’s lack of credibility in that it has a “reputation for poor fact checking and sensationalism” (Jackson, 2017) and misleading stories (Goldacre, 2010), and it is easy to presume that it represents terrorism in an opinionated manner. In investigating MailOnline, if this research does not discover anticipated findings, then it serves as a powerful argument against conventional wisdom. However, if expected discoveries are made, it will result in a nuanced picture of the framings, to get a fuller understanding of the issue at hand.

There is a common assumption in scholarly study of news organisations that the role of media includes impacting public opinion on issues that are unknown (Happer & Philo, 2013). Another instance in the reviewed research claims that UK national newspapers have played a role in shaping opinion and to some degree, distorting the truth (Deacon et al., 2016 cited in Sogelola, 2018). It also investigated the accuracy of this claim in reference to *Daily Mail*’s representation of economy and immigration (p. 128). Additional research maintains that *Daily Mail* adopts “an anti-immigrant stance that sometimes becomes expressed in images that stigmatise migrants and refugees” (Wal, 2002), pointing to MailOnline’s tendency to reinforce sensationalist coverage.

These qualities are indicative of conduct that has the potential to take place, if not already occurring, in reference to Islamist terrorism and white supremacy.

Gap in current research

This thesis is exploring a specific outlet in the UK media and its representation of terrorism. The first section of this literature review shows how scholars have researched UK, US and other European news media broadcasters to investigate specific issues. However, this thesis focuses on two major terrorist attacks, each specific to extremist Islamist and white nationalist ideology respectively. Both attackers in the 2016 murder of Jo Cox and 2017 Westminster Bridge killings, were individuals or *lone actors* as opposed to a group attack. Previous academic research has not looked at these two cases, especially in reference to MailOnline's news coverage, but academics have investigated radicalisation in media coverage of attacks in France and Germany in 2016 compared to the 2017 Westminster Bridge attack (Dingley & Herman, 2017).

Comparing two terrorists attacks in the same country but of different ideologies is valuable and useful because there two reasons. Firstly, empirically this is a new case with a different newspaper to the ones that have been analysed in prior research. Secondly, past research lacks focus on comparing Islamist terror attacks to other similar attacks. As such, it is not possible to assess whether the frames specified are specific to Islamist attacks or terrorism in general. By comparing two cases, this assessment becomes possible. It is also empirically valuable to assess MailOnline coverage because it is often treated by scholars as example of right-wing and Islamophobic newspaper. It should be an easy case for finding framings that differentiate by the ideological nature of the terrorist attack. Conversely, if MailOnline does not conform to expectations outlined in this chapter, it casts doubt on the broader assumption in research that MailOnline deals in crude racial stereotypes.

Similarly, current academic research draws insufficient comparisons of Islamist terrorism compared to white supremacist terrorism, excluding media representations. For example, a report argues that there is a "deficit in research on the topic of violence and extremism from the extreme right" (Bjørge & Ravndal, 2019, p. 1). Evidently, the

possibility of academic research on news coverage is undermined when research into the core issues of Islamist versus white nationalist terrorism is limited. This thesis aims to fill this gap by analysing news coverage on Islamist *and* white nationalist terrorism. This will contribute to a fuller understanding of how white supremacist terrorists are represented and perceived through the media.

This review has indicated the extent to which scholars have focused on Islamist terrorism, whether in the UK, US or Europe. The thesis intends to begin to fulfil this unfortunate gap because the threat from white nationalist terrorism is documented to have increased transnationally (United Nations Security Council, 2020). As mentioned above, scholars (Dingley & Herman, 2017) have compared the 2017 Westminster attack to other attacks in Europe in 2016. Nevertheless, Dingley and Herman's research does provide insightful analysis of media reporting in reference to categories such as mental health, political motive and so on. This proves to be useful in this thesis as these scholarly considerations act as a foundation to the analysis of MailOnline coverage. Aside from this, these scholars investigate representations across a range of British newspapers of a few cases. It also does not provide specific analysis of one news organisation's reporting. In this thesis, the advantage of focusing just on MailOnline is that it might provide finer or nuanced insight into the way right-wing press frames terror attacks, especially those that are of different extremist ideology.

Additional research that somewhat compares media coverage of terrorists attacks committed by Islamist versus white nationalists, is useful to understand the scope of this thesis. Inquiry into terror attacks after September 11 found that news coverage is different for terrorist acts committed by Muslims than those committed by non-Muslims (Powell, 2018). The author states that this is important because "the climate of fear of Islam has persisted and even increased, resulting in efforts to halt immigration for those from Islamic countries" (p. 1), which is also a motivation for this thesis. This research is built upon by analysing whether such tendencies are common in one news organisation, a part of the right-wing media. It also attempts to explore dominant frames in British media and representation of terrorism by MailOnline. By comparing the findings of this thesis with prior research, the extent of certain framings can be evaluated.

Theoretical Framework

In this chapter, previous research on media representations of Islam, Islamist terrorism and white nationalist terrorism has been reviewed. Particularly, dominant frames currently present in the media were discussed. From this, a theoretical framework is devised which will assist with the analysis in Chapter 4. The framework consists of four categories which have been theorised in past literature on media framing of terrorism. This includes self and other, representations of ideology, representations of motivations of terrorist and identity of perpetrators. These categories are important to use for analysis of media representations as it is a similar approach to other scholars in this field. For example, Dingley & Herman (2017), make use of categories to analyse a range of British and American news broadcasters. A final point to note, rather than 'testing' whether MailOnline articles conform to these categories, this framework will remain open and draw from them as well as guiding the analysis. This flexibility allows the analysis to be open to other patterns of representation as well as those that prior work has investigated.

Self and Other

Global media tends to have a fine line of distinction perpetrators of terrorism and themselves. Research claims that in USA, terrorism is linked to rogue states that have a hatred for it and everything it stands for (Reese & Lewis, 2009, p. 779). Similarly, a study on Croatian and Serbian media highlighted their use of binary terms of 'us' versus 'them' to refer to victims of terrorism and perpetrators, with 'them' being portrayed as Muslims in general (Erjavec & Volcic, 2006). It is understandable to have a distinction, but it becomes obvious that news media companies are utilising the Islamophobic narrative of associating terrorism with Muslims.

Research into representation of Islam in New Zealand media found that othering people is a "defensive form of ethnocentrism" (Rahman & Emadi, 2018) in which these separated out-groups are framed as "alien, barbaric and thus require control for society to attain a civilised existence" (p. 184). This 'control' is evident in research that investigated media complicity in framing 'War on Terror' news. It says that "dehumanising language takes the form of animal imagery that equates and reduces

human actions with sub-human behaviours” (Steuter & Wills, 2009). Media representation of the other, in this way, makes it clear that news coverage holds influence in shaping understanding and also how different ideologies are represented. It is useful to compare representations of self and other of Islamists and white nationalists as it would support or refute prior research claims about othering of Islamist terrorists.

Representations of ideology

As established in the literature review, Islam is associated with and blamed for a variety of terrorism related problems. It is also clear that the both Islamist and white nationalist ideologies are dangerous considering the terrorist attacks committed influenced by them. Representation of ideology in the media is influential because it frames stories in a specific way. Prior research that inquired into how media consumption and social identity influence public opinions on terrorist attacks (Dolliver & Kearns, 2019) asserts that political ideology of the perpetrator is one of the contributing factors to the public’s assessments (p. 1). As this is the case, it becomes relevant to analyse how MailOnline represents ideology of perpetrators in the two terror attacks.

Ideology plays a central role in understanding motivations or goals of terrorists. To no surprise, past research on Canadian media shows that news coverage of ideology, gave disproportionate negative attention to Islamist violence (Kanji, 2018) as opposed to white supremacist violence. In another study on ideology represented in *TIME* magazine, it was found that it “mirrors conservative ideologies about the nature of terrorists” (Steuter, 1990) and that “media present a partial and limited view of terrorism that denies any historical or social context to terrorist actions” (p. 275). Conservative representations of ideology highlight the unlikelihood of change in media perception of terrorism. However, frames have the possibility of changing (Kanji, 2018, p. 16) and therefore it is imperative to examine MailOnline’s representations of ideology. This is because it will show framings of how Islam is portrayed by MailOnline, whether there is any conflation between Islam and terrorism and to what extent white nationalism is framed as an extremist ideology.

Representations of motivations of terrorists

News framing of motivating factors in terror attacks can have a profound effect on the audience, whether this includes average citizens or individuals trailing towards the path of extremist. Previous research on influence of news media and propaganda on radicalised Islamists found that “exposure to propaganda and news reports depicting Muslim war victims contributed to the radicalised individuals’ willingness to use violence” (Baugut & Neumann, 2019). Also, news that “extensively personalised perpetrators of violence strengthened radicalised individuals’ motivations to imitate the use of violence (p. 1437).

Valued issues vary between different ideologies and perpetrators. For example, reports show that after the Hanau terrorist attack, much of the international and German media focused on the “perpetrators blatant far-right and xenophobic motivations” (Jasser et al., 2020). However, media also focused on the misogyny in the shooter’s manifesto. The same report also claims that news articles also wrote about the shooter’s motivations including being an *incel* (involuntary celibate. It is therefore apparent, that media does in fact represent motivations of terrorists within reporting of their ideology. This gives the general public an indication of the identity of the perpetrator, who they were and possible reasons why they committed the attacks. Representations of motivations are useful to compare to see whether MailOnline frames motivations as part of the extremist ideology of the perpetrators, their state of mind or whether in the case of Westminster attack, motivations are associated with Islam.

Identity of perpetrators

Previous research about the Germany shooting has shown that terrorists in the media are represented according to various agenda setting factors. The portrayal of the general threat of terrorism plays a role in understanding attacker’s motivations. Research that examined representation of Muslims in *The Weekly Standard*, a neoconservative magazine, found that “by basing the ‘War on Terror’ entirely around ideology, neoconservatives advanced a Eurocentric narrative that made identity the primary focus” (Kassimeris & Jackson, 2011, p. 32). Binary framings of good and bad

Muslims (identity) meant that the magazine challenged the general Muslim identity and represented it as either being pro or anti America (Said, 1997, p. 106 cited in Kassimeris & Jackson, 2011). Eventually, this representation can be essentialised. Terrorists may be anti-America but the blurring of identities and direct association of Islam with terrorism means both identity of perpetrators and average Muslims is seen negatively.

Newspapers have shown to continue this trend of picking identity-related facts out of a story. For example, research into *The Wall Street Journal*, *New York Times* and *USA Today* found that newspapers adopted a ‘terror frame’ focusing on the terrorist’s “religious and socio-cultural background as the son of an immigrant, Muslim family (Morin, 2016). Meanwhile, the non-Muslim terrorist was framed as a “mentally ill person” (p. 998). The thematic versus episodic coverage of terrorism meant that it “placed the incident on the larger canvas of terrorism” (Morin, 2016) by using the perpetrator’s Muslim background.

Average Muslims’ identity has basically been seized by perpetrators of violence. For example, studies show that “Arabs and Muslims are seen as one and unique entity with the aim to be arbitrarily regarded collectively as anti-rational, barbaric, anti-democratic, etc” (Ridouani, 2011, p. 2). Similarly, news corporations in New Zealand have a “tendency to use negative framing” with the “absence or manipulation of the Muslim voice” (Rahman & Emadi, 2018, p. 166). Without the inclusion of widely held Islamic beliefs in the media, negative framing has the potential to “ultimately cause an unnecessary and irreparable rift in civil society” (p. 185). Applying the word *terrorist* or *terrorism* to describe ideologies, groups or individuals has also become controversial in scholarly discourses. Maybe due to increased visibility of terrorism in global landscapes (Kampf, 2014), which places terrorism as the centre frame of news reporting. This category is useful in analysis because news reports historically focus on covering the perpetrator’s personal life, beliefs and past experiences as a timeline to understand the attacks.

Framing

In mass media and communication, framing can be associated with agenda setting and priming theories. However, this thesis uses framing, in which a series of representations make up a frame. Varied media framing has an impact on the

audiences that consume content. Public tends to form their opinions and perceptions of issues based on the media's scope and quantity of representation of certain issues over others. For example, during general election cycles, in the USA or UK, media focuses heavily on politicians and political parties with a diverse range of issues that they promise to combat, if they win. To clarify framing, it is important to understand that the types of representations that have been discussed, taken together make up a frame. However, analysis is not limited to this as representations can be studied individually and also holistically as a frame.

Scholars (Pan & Kosicki, 1993) have conceptualised framing in the form of four distinct dimensions which are “syntactic structures or word choice; script structures or an evaluation of the newsworthiness of an event; thematic structures or, including causal themes for news events; and rhetorical structures, which include ‘stylistic’ choices made by journalists” (Powell, 2011). Other scholars have elaborated on Entman's (1993) definition of framing as “the unique packaging, ordering, and highlighting of information in communicated messages in general, and news reports in particular” (Elmasry & el-Nawawy, 2019, p. 5). To an extent, this thesis builds upon some aspects of previous research into media representations of terrorism. For example, Mohamad Elmasry and Mohammed el-Nawawy (2019) studied double standards in news reporting of 2017 Las Vegas shooting compared to the 2016 Orlando shooting. They used framing theory to examine two large-scale newspapers in USA. Using framing in a similar way, Kimberley Powell (2018) looked into media coverage of 11 terrorist attacks in USA. For Powell, increasing Islamophobia and government's changing immigration rules for those in Islamic countries.

More importantly, Elmasry and el-Nawawy say that “future research should study coverage of Muslim and non-Muslim perpetrators of violence in different contexts” (2019, p. 14). This thesis investigates MailOnline's representation of an Islamist terrorist attack in 2017 (Westminster Bridge) and a white nationalist attack in 2016 (murder of Jo Cox) using discourse analysis of framing. Finally, a limitation of frames is that they are not unchangeable (Butler, 2009) and require constant reiteration for audiences to grasp an ultimate representation. So, as much as this literature review has shown that there is potential to find evidence of MailOnline covering news while

conforming to prior frames, a likely possibility arises that there is change. It diverges from frames found in prior research and allows the analytical framework to evaluate substantive differences, which can give a more nuanced picture of the representations of Islamist and white nationalist terrorism. As a result of this, the specified framework was developed that can identify and analyse overall frames but also the key types of representations within them. This chapter has reviewed and discussed previous literature on media representation of both Islamist and white nationalist terrorism. It has also discussed dominant frames in news coverage as well as an in-depth theoretical framework for analysis. The following section justifies the methodological considerations in this research.

3.

Methodology

For this thesis, a qualitative data gathering approach appeared to be the most suitable. This is because research in this thesis is less to do with the statistical or numerical significance but rather the normative expressions and changes in discourse. Therefore, a tailored strategy to assist with data collection was adopted along with discourse analysis to understand the text. Discourse analysis has played an important role in relation to the social construction of events and meanings in newspaper reports (Bryman, 2012, p. 618). A qualitative methodology was adopted because it “embodies a view of social reality as a constantly shifting emergent property of individuals’ creation” (p. 36). A quantitative approach was not suitable for this thesis because it would not provide a nuanced and in-depth understanding on representation of Islamist versus white supremacist terrorism. The research involved analysis of online news articles that represent these topics. An analytical framework was developed which uses the categories mentioned in the previous chapter for analysis. This chapter covers the methodological justifications in making particular choices for the research in this thesis. It covers how the sample was selected, why these two specific case studies were picked, the process of data gathering, strategy for analysis and limitations of this research.

Selection of articles for discussion and analysis

To begin with, MailOnline and HuffPost were chosen as the two politically opposing news outlets to analyse. However, due to time constraints and large amounts of data both of these news companies produce, MailOnline was ultimately chosen to be discussed in its portrayal of white nationalist terrorism as opposed to Islamist terrorism.

This is because MailOnline has an apparent reputation of “poor fact checking, sensationalism and flat-out fabrication” (Jackson, 2017). This makes MailOnline a

suitable choice for analysis because it highlights the possibility that MailOnline framing of Islamist and white nationalism has the potential to mislead or be entirely inaccurate. There is also potential in MailOnline dealing in Islamophobic stereotypes that will downplay the terrorist nature of white supremacist terrorism. With this, since it is a right-wing newspaper, it exhibits hostile tendencies in representing terrorism in general, not to mention Islamist or white supremacist attacks. Daily Mail is also the UK's "best-selling newspaper" (Sweeney, 2020) and with print and online combined is also the "most widely-read news title in the UK" (Ofcom, 2018, p. 41). This is important because it means MailOnline has the capacity to output its representations to a large audience, especially with an apparent questionable reputation.

The initial strategy involved looking over a decade of news articles from 2010 up until this year, 2020. This was changed to fit a narrowed timeframe of 2014-2019 but looking at the quantity of articles published on a daily basis by MailOnline, even this was far too broad to focus on that timeframe. The population size was narrowed; for two reasons. Firstly, to compare Islamist versus white nationalist terrorism, two cases were picked for analysis; one was the murder of Jo Cox in 2016 and the other was the Westminster Bridge terror attack in 2017. Both of these attacks, murder of Jo Cox (Hill, 2018) and attack on Westminster Bridge (Hill, 2018) fall under the definition of terrorism in UK legislation. Secondly, population size was narrowed because this thesis investigated representations of these two specific examples, instead of representations of *all* cases of Islamist and white nationalist terrorism over a timespan. These two cases were specifically chosen because they are relatively similar. Both attacks were in a timeframe close to one another, both attacks had perpetrators that follow an extremist ideology, both perpetrators were supposedly lone individuals, and both were allegedly in mental distress for various reasons. Therefore, it was justifiable to select these two cases as they are the most robust to analyse. This is because by picking two similar cases, both can be juxtaposed and investigated with limited variables that would interfere with types of framings.

Before categorising articles, the MailOnline archive was examined to see news reports related to the topics of Islam, terrorism and white nationalism. This was to ensure MailOnline actually produces articles on these topics. Following this, the generic purposive sampling method was used to pick a sample for analysis. In this method, the "goal is not to generalise to a population but to obtain insights into a phenomenon"

(Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007, p. 242). To do this, news articles “sampled are relevant to the research questions that are being posed” (Bryman, 2012, p. 418) in this research, found in Chapter 1. Sample selection was based on the criteria outlined in Chapter 2; the four categories of analysis. These are Self and Other, representations of ideology, representations of motivations of terrorists and identity of perpetrators. The methodological reasoning behind using these categories is that “the researcher establishes criteria concerning the kinds of cases needed to address the research questions, identifies appropriate cases, and then samples from those cases that have been identified” (Bryman, 2012, p. 422). This sample is suggestive of variant framings of news stories about Islamist and white nationalist terrorism. Specifically, categories were established, appropriate cases were identified as murder of Jo Cox and Westminster Bridge attack. There are some differences between these two terror attacks that could arguably make them unsuitable to compare. For example, the victim numbers, method of attack and peaceful/non-peaceful arrest are a few differences that indicate the seemingly incompatible nature of these two case studies. To mitigate this, perhaps more attacks could have been analysed from both Islamist and white nationalist terrorism.

In purposive sampling, “particular settings, persons or activities are selected deliberately in order to provide information that can’t be gotten as well from other choices” (Maxwell, 2013, p. 88). For example, to understand how Islamist terrorists are represented in comparison to white nationalist terrorists, looking at a representative sample of MailOnline news stories that cover both topics will not be useful. This is because there are variable factors that will result in inconsistent comparisons between chosen cases, which can include country of attack, perpetrator ethnicity, political ideology, religion, motive and so on. As a result, these sampling choices that will provide the information in order to answer the research questions “is the most important consideration in qualitative selection decisions (p. 88). The purpose of using this sampling method was to find out how different types of terrorism, specifically terror attacks in UK, are framed in MailOnline. This news outlet is theoretically significant because as examined in Chapter 2, they would be the *most* likely to reproduce problematic stereotypes and framings about Islamist terrorists in comparison to white supremacist terrorists. As a result, if some nuance is found in this

research regarding MailOnline, it would call into question, the conventional wisdom that right-wing press deals in simplistic stereotypes.

As part of this purposive strategy, news articles were selected based on a criteria that considered sensationalist styles of stories. The justification behind this is that the most sensationalist stories would be more likely to deal in stereotypes. This would provide an especially good window into the use of stereotypes. Similarly, if these selected articles also have more nuanced representations, it would allow this research to cast more doubt on prior research that suggests the right-wing UK press' narratives of terrorism simply reproduce stereotypes and crude framings. If news articles did not fit in the sensationalist criteria, though they were under MailOnline banner and their site, were broadly discredited because they were not explicitly part of the criteria, but used in analysis to illustrate particular points about framing. These included stories from a few other news outlets including Reuters, AFP, AP and PA. For findings, the choice of news articles suggests a narrow sample that focuses on a specific style of news reporting as possibly exhibiting the nuanced framings of Islamist and white nationalist terrorism cases.

MailOnline had a total of 125 articles related to Islam and Islamist terrorism compared to a total of 31 that mentioned white nationalist terrorism. This was observed to get an understanding of frequency of articles on both ideologies. The aim was to have a sample size that was not so small that it made achieving data difficult nor so big that it prevented deep analysis of collected sample (Bryman, 2012, p. 425). Out of the articles selected, some were removed after attempts to access them at later dates proved unsuccessful, possibly as they were relocated or deleted from the archive. The selection criteria were news articles from the MailOnline, on Islamist and on white nationalist terrorism, in the UK. Subsequently, 15 news stories that corresponded to murder of Jo Cox and 15 news stories that referred to the Westminster Bridge attack were selected as part of the sample. The broad criteria included selecting articles with sensationalist headlines and to exclude articles that were broadly speaking about Islamist or white nationalist terrorism. Along with this, articles were chosen if they mentioned the two terror attack cases. If these cases were represented by other news outlets within MailOnline, they were also excluded. An advanced Google search was conducted because it would solve the problem of human error through triangulation because it involves "using more than one method or source of data in the study of

social phenomenon” (Bryman, 2012, p. 392). Any articles that were missed while going through the search would be flagged up with the relevant key words.

To ensure the Google search was robust, another advanced search was conducted. In this, specific key words were used to search within the timeframe. For articles to do with Islamist terrorism, the key words were: Islam, Muslim, mosque, Islamist terrorist, Islamist terrorism, Islamic terrorism, migrants, immigrants, refugees, jihad, ISIS, Islamic State, Daesh and Sharia law. Note that migrants, immigrant and refugees were also words considered though not clearly related. This was because, as mentioned in Chapter 2, “the immigrant, in many variable scenes, has progressively become *Muslim*, both in his/her perception by the host societies and in his/her self-perception” (Allievi, 2006). Additionally, according to the Leveson Inquiry into British press standards, Muslims, migrants, asylum seekers were among “targets of press hostility and/or xenophobia in the press” (Media Diversity Institute, 2012). For the white supremacy attacks, the key words were: white genocide, white resistance, white power, white supremacy, white nationalism, white nationalist, white nationalist terrorist, defend white, alt-right, neo-nazi, EDL, white extremism, attack, lone wolf and mental illness.

To some degree, the research methodology is influenced by scholars Elmasry and el-Nawawy, who in their (2019) article compare two major US newspaper’s representation of two ideologically opposing terror attacks in America. They investigate how framing results in alleged double standards in reporting of Muslim terrorists versus non-Muslim terrorists. Moreover, Powell (2018) compares Canadian media’s representation of Muslim versus non-Muslim perpetrators in ideological violence, examining framings to find patterns of portrayals. Lastly, Dingley and Herman (2017) inquire into radicalisation and reporting of terror attacks in Europe in 2016 and 2017. Most importantly, the first authors make use of hypotheses based on prior literature and second and third authors have used categories of analysis. For example, Powell used ‘amount of coverage’ and Dingley and Herman used ‘mental health’ as categories that they used to assess news framings. This thesis makes use of categories for analysis and framing and has therefore adopted a similar methodological approach to these academics.

Strategy for analysis

By examining a news company and both terror attacks from the UK, it solves the methodological problem of inconsistencies between two terror attacks. Two specific attacks were picked so the comparative analysis is clear and provides an opportunity for analysis and discussion. Consequently, the strategy was to establish a foundation of the current situation regarding representation of Islamist versus white nationalist terrorism in Western media and UK media, in Chapter 2. Though analysis is guided by the four categories which are based on previous academic literature, it is not limited to findings in prior research. It remains open to new data emerging from analysing the sample of MailOnline news articles. Additionally, the dominant frames investigated in Chapter 2 are also valuable to compare and contrast with prior research.

For analysis, news article headlines were read multiple times to find patterns in how perpetrators of both attacks are represented. This was followed by creating a document, one for articles on Jo Cox's murder and one for Westminster Bridge attack. The document consisted of the four categories from the theoretical framework. Each news article was read multiple times to see to map the representations and to explore any patterns emerging. Followed by this, the articles were placed under the representation category that consisted of that frame. In Chapter 4, this document is used to place the articles side-by-side for comparison in discursive differences. As mentioned in Chapter 2, the purpose of these categories and literature was not to bind the analysis to previous research, but to remain open to new data that emerges from analysis. That being said, some findings were supported by prior research and the dominant frames mentioned in Chapter 2.

Discourse analysis was used to study the news articles and conduct the analysis. Using discourse analysis is a useful approach for this thesis because it can be applied to forms of communication other than talk such as texts and newspaper articles (Bryman, 2012, p. 528). Also, "discourse analytical approaches systematically describe the various structures and strategies of text or talk, and they relate these to the social, political or political context" (Dijk, 2000). In doing discourse analysis of news articles, the focus would be on overall topics or local meanings, sentence structures, variations in style, organisation of the news report itself, metaphors and rhetorical devices used (p. 35).

Limitations of the research

The most noteworthy limitation in this thesis is the author religion, background and upbringing. As a practicing British Muslim of an ethnic minority, an inherent confirmation bias against representation of terrorists is present. Especially because this study examines how Islamists versus white nationalists are framed by a British newspaper. It was important to be aware of and reflect upon the personal identity bias within this thesis. This point is raised to aid transparency so that the reader is able to judge the extent to which this thesis answers the research questions. Nevertheless, in an attempt to mitigate the bias, data analysis was reviewed amongst colleagues to check and ensure some degree of objectivity. In addition to this, data was verified through triangulation to show a pattern in events. For example, Chapter 2 shows the patterns in academic study on representations of terrorists; that Muslims or Islamist terrorists across the West are treated with more hostility than white nationalist terrorists. Similarly, the news articles used in Chapter 4 show patterns in framing of terrorists in particular ways. On a personal level, an attempt at discarding biases was made as best as possible in order to provide a comprehensive, impartial discussion on Islamist and white supremacist terrorism.

Moreover, the timeframe for research is restrictive, which means that a lot of notable events did occur both before and after. Though this is the case, contemporary and retrospective examples are used to analyse the data in Chapter 4. It could also be argued, that since this research also looks at article headlines and text, perhaps there is some bias in those, as they are written to be as provocative as possible and obtain viewers' attention. The selections made for this thesis are, to some degree, limiting as they focus on specific cases and choices for analysis. This could have been improved by discussing more than two case studies as well as a larger sample of news articles to analyse. This can also be a factor to consider in future research. In reference to the two terror attacks used as case studies, 2016 murder of Jo Cox and 2017 Westminster Bridge attack, other examples could have also been picked that may have more distinct difference, showing two clear ideologies, Islamist extremism and white supremacism. This research could also have been supplemented by interviews with MailOnline readers. If this was the case, a selective audience with loyalties to MailOnline could be useful in finding out their perception on these topics.

A weakness of the sampling method is that it “does not allow the researcher to generalise it to a population” (Bryman, 2012, p. 418) because it is a non-probability sample. Also, it is based on the judgement of the researcher which can be a problem for biases. However, this is alleviated by establishing a clear criteria and theoretical framework which the analysis is based on. Despite these limitations, the research is still valuable because it shows a nuanced understanding of how Islamists and white nationalist terrorists are represented by a popular British newspaper. The following chapter discusses the sample of news articles and shows in-depth analysis of MailOnline articles.

4.

Analysis and Discussion

This research analysed the MailOnline's (MO) representation of two terror attacks in the UK in 2016 and 2017. In the first year, the murder of Jo Cox by a white nationalist and in the second year, the Westminster Bridge attack by an Islamist extremist. The study analysed 15 articles that represented Jo Cox's murder and 15 that represented the Westminster attack. The analysis is arranged under the categories shown in Chapter 2 which were Self and Other, representations of ideology, representations of motivations of terrorists and identity of perpetrators. An examination of MailOnline articles on Jo Cox's murderer is conducted followed by analysis of articles on the Westminster Bridge attacker.

Brief explanation of the Jo Cox attack.

According to a report on terrorism acts in 2016 presented to UK Parliament (Hill, 2018), Member of Parliament Jo Cox was murdered on 16th June. The attacker was Thomas Mair who kept chanting "Keep Britain independent", "Britain will always come first" and "Britain First" (p. 22), also a homonym for an extreme right-wing UK political organisation, Britain First. The report stated that the murder was within the legal definition of terrorism. It also explained the events; that Jo Cox was shot three times and suffered multiple stab wounds (Hill, 2018, p. 59). Another witness who intervened to help was stabbed also stabbed. Aside from being a member of Parliament, Jo Cox was also an aid worker who campaigned for Britain to stay in the EU (Holden, 2016). She was targeted for her strong views on human rights, development and refugees (BBC News, 2016).

At Mair's, the police found various publications about white supremacists, Nazi Germany, shootings and assassination that signify highly to his nature as a white nationalist. At his court hearing, he claimed his name was "death to traitors, freedom for Britain" (Holden, 2016). The court made it clear that this murder was for the purpose

of advancing a political, racial and ideological cause which was white supremacy and modern forms of Nazism. Mair also researched the first MP to have been murdered by the IRA in 1990 and had access to internet sites about Nazis, the Ku Klux Klan, Waffen-SS, Israel, matricide and serial killers. (Cobain, 2016).

Brief explanation of the Westminster Bridge attack.

As stated by another report presented to UK Parliament specifically on the Westminster Bridge attack (Hill, 2018), on the 22nd March, British-born Khalid Masood drove a car across the Westminster Bridge, colliding with pedestrians and crashing into the gates of Palace of Westminster. Masood then went into the gateway of the palace and killed a police officer, along with 29 injuries and 6 fatalities, until he was shot and killed by armed police officers (p. 2). Before the attack, Masood had a document to numerous contacts that cited extracts from the Quran and other Islamic sources that supported Jihad (Hill 2018, p. 18). Masood was already known to the authorities for various crimes such as assault, association with extremists such as Anjem Choudhary and was a Muslim convert (Carroll & Batt, 2017).

The attack was treated as Islamist and before he perpetrated the violence, he declared that he was “waging jihad in revenge against Western military action in Muslim countries in the Middle East” (Sengupta, 2017). He had also in the past, been “investigated in relation to concerns about violent extremism” (BBC News, 2017). ISIS claimed responsibility which suggested that he was ‘inspired’ rather than directed by ISIS (Carroll & Batt, 2017, p. 1). But he is believed to have acted alone as police found “no evidence of association with the so-called Islamic State group or al-Qaeda” (BBC News, 2017). This event led into multiple counter-terrorism measures being adopted in public places around the country.

Self and Other

Throughout MO articles, the categorisation of *us* and *them* is relatively clear. At the basic level, it highlights a division between those that are on one side, against the other. It is law abiding citizens that are living normal lives against criminals and terrorists that are causing issues in society especially with extremist ideologies. For

example, in one story (Beckford, 2016), Mair's outburst in court was represented in a way that distanced and isolated him from the general, law abiding public:

'Death to traitors, freedom for Britain': For a nation utterly sickened by the death of Jo Cox, a revolting new low as suspect utters chilling words in court.

It seemed impossible anything could cause more shock and outrage than the brutal killing of Labour MP Jo Cox... until the nine chilling words uttered in open court yesterday by the man accused of murdering her.

In this story, the headline begins with Mair's outburst which is followed by a joint condemnation in the phrase "for a nation" that implies clearly, the trauma Mair caused to the public. Though he was called a "suspect" instead of perhaps murderer or terrorist, it shows that Mair is portrayed to be part of a separate category, one that is different and malicious. The article also has adopted a relatively emotional tone that indicates a collective suffering after the murder.

The collective suffering aspect is contextualised by MO in a global context. It represented the reactions of global media, once again dividing Mair and his act and uniting the public, press and politicians to pay tribute to Jo Cox. It is evident in this story (Summers, 2016):

The murder that shocked the world: Messages of horror and sympathy appear on the front pages across the globe over the death of Jo Cox

The 'assassination' of the Labour MP was on the front page of newspapers in France, Belgium, Germany, Australia, New Zealand and Japan and also featured heavily on online news websites.

Similarly, the patterns of labelling Mair as a lone wolf shows that he was individualised to an extent, as disassociated from an extremist ideology. In this story (Spillett & Tonkin, 2016), the use of "loner" is distinct as he represented as an isolated case, almost separating into a victimising category of us and them:

Loner who murdered Jo Cox MP had researched killing his mother on the internet and may have been on his way to do so when police pounced on him

The Nazi-obsessed killer had not been on his way home following the brutal attack, police revealed

'Jekyll and Hyde' assassin was a loner who scoured himself with Brillo pads because of cleanliness obsession and spent his life on mental health drugs

To Thomas Mair's neighbours, he was a quiet middle-aged man who shuffled along their street and occasionally did their gardens.

But, unknown to those around him, the 52-year-old was filling his head with far-right beliefs and plotting the first assassination of a female MP in British history.

A few points of interest are clear in this story. Mair remains unconnected to neo-Nazi extremist ideology as he is shown to be “Nazi-obsessed” and not a Nazi or white supremacist. He is then depicted as having two sides to his life, one that involves his cleaning obsession, mental state and reserved nature. This is countered by Mair “filling his head with far-right beliefs” instead of becoming part of an extremist ideology, as part of which he committed the attack. In another story (Tozer et al., 2016):

Thomas Mair has been described as a loner who was 'socially isolated and disconnected from society' as a result of long-term mental illness.

Also (Wilson, 2016):

Was he a lone wolf seeking moment of fame? Criminologist DAVID WILSON on the possible motive behind Jo Cox's killing

Mair is repeatedly individualised and isolated from the collective group of white nationalist extremists or even terrorists. The possible theorisations on his motives and choices centralise on his solitary life indicating, to some degree, MO representation of victimisation that puts his personal situation as justification for his acts. Ideally, instead of individualising the problem of white nationalism, a connection to the wider network needed to be established. Since 22nd July attacks, there have been frequent lone wolf white supremacist terror attacks, which shows that white supremacist extremism has allowed for ideologically collective groups, from which lone wolves are inspired to commit terror attacks. Therefore, it would be relevant to associate them as part of a group that advocates for like-minded extremist views.

On the other hand, in an *us* and *them* representation of the Westminster attack, MO adopts a similar style of portraying Masood. There was consistency in highlighting the emotional impact of the violence on the bridge just as there were clear patterns in representing Mair. In this, MO focused on frames that target the association of violence with terrorism:

Terrorist on the rampage: Chilling footage shows London terror attacker's car speeding along the pavement of Westminster Bridge as one terrified woman PLUNGES into the River Thames

Horrifying footage shows the moment a woman plunged into the River Thames as a car ploughs onto the pavement in a terror attack in the heart of London.

Police have said around 40 people were injured before the car came to a halt.

In this article (Burke et al., 2017), the news angle is centralising on the victims of the attack. Describing the "chilling footage" similar to the "chilling words" that Mair spoke in court, MO intensifies the personal nature of the attack, one that targets public perception in a collective way. This is to say that it is perceived in a way that places emphasis on victims versus the terrorist without leading with attribution to ideology. Masood is called a terrorist three times in the headline and introductory sentence, which is a significant difference between his and Mair's treatment as in the latter's case, he was a "murderer" or "suspect" that committed the attack. In either case, MO consistently framed both as being different from the rest of society.

Moreover, the individual versus collective grouping of the perpetrator is also present in depiction of Masood's attack:

The British-born jihadi who killed four and injured 29 in Westminster was last night revealed to be a middle-aged criminal career who MI5 had investigated in the past and had a previous conviction for stabbing a man in the nose.

English teacher Khalid Masood, 52, a 'lone wolf' attacker, who was living in the Birmingham area, had a series of convictions for assault and other crimes.

Masood was a married father-of-three, and a religious convert who was into bodybuilding, according to Sky News. He had falsely given his profession as a teacher.

In this article (Spillett et al., 2017), though there is evidence of individualising Masood and representing him as part of a separate category, similar to Mair, there is a degree of personalisation that portrays Masood in a *normal* light. His life history is described, a “married father of three” who was “into bodybuilding” but importantly, referring to Masood as “lone wolf” followed by other criminal history. This is an exception as he was not as frequently referred to as lone wolf in other articles. As opposed to Mair, this categorisation is not suggestive of victimising him but rather categorising him as an ‘odd’ one of the already *bad* or malicious group of people. This is an interesting point because the point of departure from Chapter 2 was that there would be a negative portrayal of Masood due to the Islamist nature of the attack. However, it is clearly the opposite and runs against large literature in Chapter 2 that suggests Muslim terrorists are represented qualitatively different from white nationalist terrorists. This also suggests that framing of white nationalist terrorists vis a vis Islamists is closer than prior research suggests. Comparatively, both attacks share several commonalities in terms of personalisation of perpetrators’ character as similar to average citizens.

As explained in Chapter 2, press from various countries is quick to distance average citizens from violent criminals, killers and terrorists. European media tends to use an Islamophobic narrative to refer to terrorists and victims as us and them but associating *them* with Muslims in general (Erjavec & Volcic, 2006). This is not the case in these two case studies of Mair and Masood, as they are portrayed by MO as out-groups who are alien and barbaric thus are required to be controlled so the rest of society can be in civilised existence (Rahman & Emadi, 2018, p. 184). Primarily because the extremist ideologies they conform to are radical and malicious to others. Similarity in this representation means that MO has defied its previously set dominant frames that typically associated Islam with terrorism. In this, MO did not conflate Islam with terrorism.

Representation of Ideology

The pattern of lone wolf characteristics, though not explicit, are present in MO articles, both in representation of Mair and Masood. MO representation to some level puts lone

wolf features together with Mair's mental health issues and other beliefs. This framing emphasises the individual nature of both attacks. In this story (Associated Press, 2016):

UK probes neo-Nazi ties, mental health in Jo Cox slaying

Evidence emerged Friday that the reclusive gardener suspected of slaying a popular Labour Party lawmaker had decades-old ties to a neo-Nazi movement and an interest in anarchist weapons literature

As detectives questioned the 52-year-old suspect for a second day, authorities confirmed they were focused on his alleged links to white supremacists and history of mental illness as they sought a motive for an act of violence that has shocked Britain and brought normal political life to a halt.

Mair's history of mental illness was "a clear line of inquiry" as were his alleged links to right-wing extremism and interest in neo-Nazi materials. She said the regional counter-terrorism unit was aiding in the investigation, in part to determine any links with other extremists, but the Birstall native was believed to have acted alone.

The headline highlights two important points; the neo-Nazi ideology that Mair is part of, his mental health, which is not ideological but helps to understand the intensity of his actions. This is followed by a link to specific "interest in anarchist weapons literature" that speaks to Mair's choices in weapons for the attack. MO ensures that a distinction between Mair and the ideology is made, in one area he is called a "reclusive gardener" and in another his "alleged links to white supremacists" are being investigated. This suggests that according to the presumptions of MO behaviour, their reporting does not consist of a straightforward reference to an extremist ideology tied to the individual. In other words, he is separated from the ideology he follows. MO has employed a reasonably balanced approach of representing Mair, until confirmation of his ideology by authorities and when further evidence suggested. But lone wolf characteristics, though not explicit, are still present in other stories (Tonkin, 2016) thereby indicative of a pattern, as they inadvertently distance Mair from the ideology:

Jo Cox 'was shot in the head through her hands with exploding bullets as she tried to protect herself from the gunman who murdered her'

Gardener Thomas Mair, 53, is accused of her politically-motivated murder

The court has heard in the weeks before the alleged killing, Mair researched Nazis, the Klux Klan and Tory MP Ian Gow - the last serving MP to be murdered when he was blown up by the IRA.

He also searched the internet for Jo Cox, William Hague – a 'Remain' supporting former Yorkshire MP – assassinations and shootings, jurors were told.

His case will be dealt with as a terrorist trial because the alleged murder was 'made for the purpose of advancing a political, religious, racial or ideological cause' according to the Terrorism Act 2000, a judge ruled earlier this year.

The political motive is framed clearly but his ideology is only referred to as being “research” that Mair conducted. The article depicts a broader picture of his ideology. It shows how a range of occurrences contributed to the ultimate beliefs that Mair held. For example, the KKK, Ian Gow who was murdered by the IRA, a ‘Remain’ supporting MP in the European Union membership referendum along with the practical possibilities such as “assassinations and shootings” before he did it himself.

But the most important framing here is to consider his act as a “politically-motivated murder” which is almost equivalent to saying that he committed terrorism. This is also highlighted in the last paragraph in which courts claim that his case is dealt as a “terrorist trial” due to Mair’s political ideology. Despite this, the article fails to designate his acts as those of a terrorist or carrying out terrorism. The collective nature of white nationalist networks is discarded and Mair is represented to be a lone wolf that committed the attack on his own accord. There are more similarities in how the two are represented than prior literature suggests. Nonetheless, there is still a greater reluctance to refer to Mair as a terrorist. Another story (Walters, 2016) contextualises Mair’s ideology in reference to others that have similar beliefs and it shows the pattern of implicitly representing white nationalists:

Swastika-covered Vote Leave activist Eva Van Housen caused further outrage on Saturday by describing the killing of Jo Cox as an ‘unfortunate’ event that should not stop people voting for Britain to leave the EU.

The Mail on Sunday revealed earlier this month that Ms Van Housen, who has several tattoos of Nazi symbols, had distributed Vote Leave campaign materials with her boyfriend, a former BNP official, in Leeds.

Another group, the Notts Casual Infidels, caused outrage by linking to a Guardian article about Mrs Cox's killing with the comment: 'We knew it was only a matter of time before we take it to the next level. We have been mugged off for Far to [sic] long'.

Here, the article calls the neo-Nazi a "Swastika-covered" activist along with "several tattoos of Nazi symbols" but fails to acknowledge that the person in question is in fact a neo-Nazi. This is the same as referring to the extremist group in simple terms as "another group" that evidently supports Mair's actions and beliefs. Mair's ideology is represented by MO but there is a clear pattern of indirect connections to the global white nationalist ideologies whether neo-Nazi or alt-right. As mentioned in Chapter 2, widely adopted news frames have the potential to change (Kanji, 2018). MO is able to change their framing of white nationalism, to frames that move past conservative representations of this ideology, to frames that show the threat of white supremacist terrorism. These conservative representations are those that have been traditionally established by the media, as seen in Chapter 2; the ones that label white supremacist terrorists as lone wolves or part of an ideology separated from extremism.

Articles that frame the Westminster attacker also use the lone wolf narrative to some extent. This is an unanticipated finding as the presumptions in Chapter 2 have been that Islamist terrorists are typically represented to be part of a collective group of extremists or terrorists. For example, in this (Burke et al., 2017) article, Masood is framed as a "terrorist" but also as a "lone wolf attacker" which is highlighting his solitary role in perpetrating violence on Westminster Bridge.

The 52-year-old terrorist, who has a string of previous convictions - including one for stabbing a man in the head - ran a Birmingham-based tutoring business and is thought to have been radicalised in Saudi Arabia.

The 'lone wolf' attacker, who was living in the Birmingham area, had a series of convictions for assault and other crimes.

It is understood he was jailed for the attack and it is thought his indoctrination may have begun through meeting extremists while in prison.

This representation conforms to the patterns identified in the articles featuring Mair, in which the ideology is implicitly framed, not clearly shown that both Mair and Masood are part of a white nationalist and Islamist extremist ideology, respectively. This is also apparent in another article (Matthews, 2017):

ISIS fanatics called for a 'lone wolf' attack on Parliament via secret messaging app Telegram just weeks before Westminster carnage

Six weeks after the disturbing call to arms was posted on Telegram, terrorist Khalid Masood launched his horrific attack on Westminster

It is important to distinguish two factors in both stories. In the first one, Masood is called a lone wolf attacker, but he is also shown to have radicalised in prison, as part of a wider group of extremists that may have resulted in his ideology becoming reified. So, although there is emphasis on lone wolf nature, Masood comes across as he is part of a collective group, as opposed to Mair, who is represented to be following an ideology as opposed to exhibiting white nationalist terrorism. In the second story, the pattern of lone wolf labelling continues as Masood deemed to be the lone wolf that "ISIS fanatics" called on to perpetrated violence. This finding is supported by another research that has looked at formal and informal belonging to a far-right group or organisation, informal being one in which there are loosely banded individuals that do not have an organisational purpose (Gruenewald et al., 2013).

Both are represented to be lone wolves that follow extremist ideologies, with the only salient difference being that Masood's Islamist ideology is explicitly discussed in the articles as being a motivating factor of the terror attack in addition to his lone wolf status. That being said, it is still implicitly related to Masood in a similar manner to Mair and white supremacy. This assessment of these articles supports one of the dominant frames highlighted in Chapter 2, which suggests that Islamist terrorism tends to be portrayed to be in a collective rather than an individual position, contrasting with portrayal of white nationalism.

Representation of motivations of terrorists.

The motivations of a perpetrator behind a terrorist attack can often be a point of contestation. This is evident in representations of both Mair and Masood as they are not explicitly part of a functioning terrorist group but rather an ideology with transnational roots that promote terrorism. Mair's motivations have been speculated in a MO article (Wilson, 2016) by a criminologist:

We know a little about Thomas Mair's online activity, including his apparent interest in far-Right websites set up by SA Patriot, a South African pro-apartheid group, and National Alliance, set up in the US in 1974 by William Pierce.

Pierce's 1978 book *The Turner Diaries* imagines a world in which the government is overthrown, and all black people, Jews and gays exterminated. It is said to have inspired Oklahoma bomber Timothy McVeigh to kill 168 people in 1995.

Norwegian mass murderer Anders Behring Breivik is another point of possible comparison. Like McVeigh, he targeted the institutions of government.

The biggest discovery in this article is that Mair has been distinguished to be outside of mental illness and instead as part of a community. As mentioned in the previous subsection, Mair was framed as ostracised from the rest of *normal* functioning society. Although this story postulates that Mair could be a lone wolf, to some extent, it discredits the mental illness connection and argues that Mair's motivations were that of his wider extremist ideology. The story continues:

Breivik and McVeigh were convicted of a different scale of crime. Mair is accused of killing one person. But it is possible that he, too, is a 'lone wolf' with a personality reflecting isolation?

But, of course, anonymity is not what they are seeking. What McVeigh or Breivik, or possibly Mair, crave most of all is fame – or at least infamy – five minutes when they can be someone. The context for understanding killers like this may not be mental illness but community and belonging.

The wider extremist ideology of white supremacy is also evident when the author of the MO story claims that Mair could be compared to Breivik and McVeigh on a smaller scale. By doing so, it contextualises Mair's act beyond 'lone wolf' and emphasises the possible network of extremists or terrorists within his ideology.

In another headline (Spillett, 2016), the terrorism angle is adopted to explain the legal circumstances surrounding Mair's case. In this, his motivations are presumed to be of a terrorist nature and is represented as such:

Jo Cox murder suspect's case is being treated as 'terror-related', court hears as he is remanded in custody

But the most obvious motivation is present in another article (Greenwood & Sinmaz, 2016), where the headline makes it categorically clear, the murder in association with Mair's identity and ideological beliefs:

Did neo-Nazi murder Jo over fear he'd lose council house he grew up in? Terrorist thought property could end up being occupied by an immigrant family – and the MP wouldn't help him

In this clarification are his ideological choices, "neo-Nazi" and "terrorist" put with his potential reasons; "lose house he grew up in" and "occupied by an immigrant family", two important factors that reify the ultimate act that Mair committed. It is also significant that MO included the label of 'terrorist' in only 2 articles that framed Mair compared to 11 that were representing Masood. Nevertheless, MO represented Mair in a fitting framing that showcases his act of terror, ideology and personal reasoning. It could be said that using these words to describe him maybe conforms to MO's attempts at increasing readership and excitement, as the likelihood of similar words to describe Islamist terrorism is high. Comparatively, the Westminster attacker Masood's ideological motivations are framed more to show the dominant War on Terror frame, in this story (Robinson et al., 2017):

Scotland Yard's top anti-terror officer Mark Rowley said: 'This was a day we've planned for but hoped would never happen.

Asked about the motivation of the attack, Mr Rowley said: 'Islamic-related terrorism is our assumption.'

Interestingly, though “Islamic-related” is a phrase used by a police officer to describe the motivations. In America, “Obama paused before using the term ‘terrorist’ and would not use ‘Islamic’ and ‘extremism’ together, whereas Trump seems to have adopted the us versus them terrorist frame” (Powell, 2018, p.10). As explained in Chapter 2, when politicians and public figures use specific ways of describing terror attacks, it can influence how the public see them. This was evident in how the Bush administration spoke of the ‘War on Terror’ after September 11. Nevertheless, this is also evident here, though words of another person, MO represented a similar frame to that of the war on terror. In this case, it does not mean that this is seemingly a bad choice as it is relevant to Masood’s motivations. As Chapter 2 has emphasised with the dominant frames, mention of Islam as motivation for terrorist acts shows the conflation of Islam and terrorism, which is a problem.

In another story (Burford & Burrows, 2017), sensationalist styles and terminology were used:

‘I want some f***ing blood’: Friends of Westminster terrorist Khalid Masood describe his desire to murder and a string of vicious assaults before he was ‘radicalised in prison’

Terrorist Khalid Masood dreamed of murdering someone and once held a knife to a friend's throat.

Lee Lawrence, 47, knew Masood by his birth name, Adrian Elms, and before he is believed to have converted to Islam in prison

He said: 'He had the knife against my throat and he is going, "I want some blood, I want some f***ing blood, I want to kill someone".

'After he calmed down he was saying, "What have I done? What am I doing? I am going for help. I just want blood or I want to kill someone".'

When the case came to trial, Masood told Hove Crown Court he snapped because of racism in the village and claimed he had been ostracised because villagers had a 'view of black people'.

The headline lead with “I want some f***ing blood” followed by critical language such as “vicious assaults” is present. Comparing this to Mair’s MO treatment, it is rather similar

his white nationalist outburst in court. But in this example, there is a degree to which MO incites fear in its representation of Masood. For example, using his provocative statement to start the headline, which functions as click-bait to increase readership and Masood's "dream of murdering someone", which serves in explaining his psychotic motivation. To some degree, MO represented both cases the same and only in Masood's case, since his extremist behaviour is widely documented, there is more to attribute to his motivations. In both cases, the War on Terror frame is present and represents motivations of both terrorists.

MO's representation of motivation centralises the issues to be at two ideological extremes, one a far-right white nationalist and the other an Islamist extremist. MO also clarifies that though this is the case, both terrorists were supposedly shunned from their communities. MO claimed that Mair was fearful of immigrants and pro-White compared to Masood who thought people were racist towards him and found solace in Islamist extremism. Both framings show patterns that MO follows in representing Mair and Masood; there are angles focusing on their immediate acts, followed by past and ideology which ties in with motivations.

Consequentially, both sides are represented in an unexpectedly similar manner aside from MO inciting some degree fear in framing of Masood. The *problem* in this representation is that, once motivations are explained, it creates a fear of the *other*, both in the white supremacist and in Islamist context. But as Chapter 2 shows, media covers terrorism differently and this pattern creates a climate of fear (Powell, 2018), in which Islamists are framed differently. This difference creates extra problems because it shifts focus of *fear* to only be in the case of Islamist terrorism. Additionally, though MO does show a high level of similarity in framing of both stories, its use of sensationalist tactics reinforces fearful perception of Islamists. This supports prior knowledge because there is an overarching presumption that media frames stories in a way that induces fear, whether this is fear of the other, fear of a terrorist attack or even ideology.

Identity of Perpetrators

MO representation of identity of perpetrators strongly shows patterns of victimisation and humanisations. This is to say that, MO framed both terrorists in ways that would evoke compassion and sympathy. In Chapter 2, it was presumed that this type of treatment

would be applied only to Mair, however, it is evident that Masood is framed similarly. First of all, in the MO depiction of Mair (Greenwood & Brooke, 2016):

Police probe MP killer's mental care: Loner suspected of murdering Jo Cox was 'in crisis' and sought help from health counsellor just 24 hours before attack

The loner suspected of killing Jo Cox appeared deeply disturbed just 24 hours before the attack, a health counsellor said last night.

Thomas Mair said after stumbling into a 'well-being centre' on Wednesday night that he was depressed and had been on medication for a long time.

The counsellor who spoke to him for about 15 minutes on Wednesday said she realised he was in 'some sort of crisis' and there appeared to be a 'real problem'.

Neighbours said the obsessive recluse was often seen wandering around the town and had not received any formal mental health treatment for five years.

The suspected killer was said to be 'lucid' when first questioned after being found fit for interview by two police doctors.

Miss Walker said he seemed a 'quiet and gentle man' and added: 'I couldn't believe what has happened.'

MO frames Mair as being “in crisis” and seeking help from counsellor; he was “deeply disturbed” and there appeared to be a “real problem” which are all phrases used to imply that the problem is part of the perpetrator’s personal life and individual identity rather than their ideology. Moreover, Mair claimed to be “depressed” and “on medication” as well as having “wandered around town” without any treatment. Out of all of these representations, the most significant one is another person’s statement of he seemed a “quiet and gentle man” which explain his isolated life and public perception based on his anti-social behaviour. This supports prior research about media treatment of white terrorists as lone wolves, essentially justifying their behaviour as mentally ill. This representation misleads the public about the identity of the attacker. If the attacker is in fact exhibiting signs of mental issues and the white nationalist ideology is an isolated motivation, it does not explain the long history of involvement in right-wing and neo-Nazi rhetoric.

Another study claimed that media may quickly attribute terrorism by white perpetrators to mental illness and refer to ideological beliefs for non-white perpetrators (Kunst et al., 2018). The patterns of representations in MO regarding Mair conforms to prior research's findings about its treatment of white nationalist terrorists, in that it provides an alternative justification by using identity issues such as mental health, as a cause. Mair was not branded a terrorist despite "counter *terrorist* detectives" investigating far-right links. This might be circumstantial, but it is possible that the labelling of terrorist is subjectively measured by quantifying injuries, death or killings. The victimisation of Mair is evident in another story (Tonkin, 2016):

Inside the lair of a killer: How a quiet and unassuming loner, 53, plotted a murder that shocked the world from a two-bed semi filled with Nazi souvenirs, far-Right books

Thomas Mair, 53, lived a 'quiet existence' tucked away on his own in a two-bed semi in the West Yorkshire village of Birstall.

Neighbours described him as a shy man who had no visitors. One said he kept his garden very tidy and spent a lot of time in it.

But behind the innocent facade, the unassuming loner– whose cupboards were found stocked with baked beans and biscuits – was masking a sinister secret.

It was here he compiled a dossier on the Labour MP he would later slaughter in cold blood – stabbing the mother of two 15 times and shooting her three times as she frantically tried to defend herself.

Here, Mair is a "quiet and unassuming" loner, "tucked away on his own" and a "shy man". The mental health aspect is not as prominent in this article, instead the other "sinister" side is more evident; Mair's planning of the attack on Jo Cox. MO framed Mair as a loner, very similar to how it did in the other stories presented in this thesis, and then provided a framing of the other side, in which MO portrays his planning and attack in critical light. This is important because as scholars mentioned in Chapter 2 have shown, the media has a habit of establishing causal relationships between mental illness and terrorism but in fact there is not enough evidence to imply that terrorists are mentally ill but instead there is evidence of economic and personal identity difficulties (Dingley & Herman, 2017). This is apparent in stories such as:

Did neo-Nazi murder Jo over fear he'd lose council house he grew up in?
Terrorist thought property could end up being occupied by an immigrant family –
and the MP wouldn't help him

Comparing this news coverage with Masood's, it was found that MO framed articles similar to how they framed Mair's, when they reported on the perpetrator's identity. MO using humanising terms to describe Mair's situation was anticipated. This is the most illuminating finding of this thesis. In Chapter 2, prior research has noted the tendency of mental health issues and humanisation to be used in the framing and explanations of white nationalist terrorism. However, prior research has not identified the same pattern of humanisation in the case of Islamist terrorism. Chapter 2 has shown that Islam and Muslims are dehumanised to a large extent in the media. Other research suggests that Islamist terrorists are not humanised in the same way as Mair as the white perpetrator retains his humanity (Corbin, 2017, p. 467). Though Mair was consistently humanised and victimised across the sample, Masood received a level of similar representation by MO.

In addition to this, research by Elmasry and el-Nawawy discussed in Chapter 2 indicates that white nationalists tend to be framed in a more human way. These claims were made after comparing the framing of the Las Vegas shooter and Orlando shooter, white nationalist and Islamist terror attacks respectively. More importantly, this highlights the importance of comparative approach in this thesis. It cannot be suggested that framing of Islamist or white nationalist is special without comparing that framing to another attack. Nevertheless, this indication that MO framed Mair and Masood in a similar, humanising way suggests that even right-wing newspapers, are moving away from crude War on Terror representations of terrorism. While this thesis has flagged up these potential changes, it will require further research to investigate. Moreover, since this humanisation frame is found in MO, a bona fide right-wing newspaper, it gives reasonable grounds to believe that humanising framings might be found in more liberal newspapers, regardless of whether the perpetrator is Islamist or white supremacist.

The use of humanising terms to describe Masood was not expected, evidenced in this article (Greenwood & Hayward, 2017):

Was Westminster terrorist driven to murder by a hatred of authority? Friends reveal killer said he was 'persecuted' while growing up

Khalid Masood, 52, found it difficult as a young black man in the Home Counties
He became increasingly bitter as his life spiralled into drink, drugs and crime
Khalid Masood may have been driven to murder by a deep-seated hatred of his
treatment at the hands of 'racist' police, it was claimed last night.

And despite the fact Masood converted to Islam in his 40s, a claim by Islamic State that he was acting on their call to followers to strike in the West has been met with scepticism.

Former acquaintances of Masood in Tunbridge Wells and Northiam, Sussex, claim the talented athlete and singer went off the rails after falling in with the 'wrong crowd'.

In this story, Masood is a "persecuted" individual who "found it difficult as a young black man" and "spiralled into drink, drugs and crime". His identity is also shown to be resentful of the "racist" police and to have fallen into the "wrong crowd". All of these attributes are exceptionally similar to articles that represent Mair. The most important part of Masood's framing is that he is actually called a terrorist, a perpetrator of terrorism and having converted to an ideology, Islam. This is where Mair is framed differently, as he was not described as being subscribed to a white nationalist ideology. Instead, he was labelled as having interest in far-right beliefs. Masood's Muslim identity and reference of terrorist was focused on throughout MO articles such as (Gordon, 2017):

Romanian architect Andreea Cristea was pushed over a barrier into the River Thames when Muslim convert Khalid Masood carried out his murderous rampage.

And in (Spillett, 2017):

Kurt Cochran, 54, Leslie Rhodes, 75, and Aysha Frade, 44, died after Muslim convert Masood drove at pedestrians on Westminster Bridge.

The 52-year-old terrorist was shot dead by armed police after fatally knifing Pc Keith Palmer, 48, in the Palace of Westminster's cobbled forecourt.

MO had already called him "terrorist Khalid Masood" in various other articles but this trend continued in conjunction with reference to "Muslim convert". To some degree, this

variance in phrases contributes to supporting the dominant frames mentioned in Chapter 2 that media agenda surrounds mental health. This resulted in that Mair was highlighted so much as having mental problems, whereas Masood portrayed clearly as a terrorist. In either case, it supports scholars in Chapter 2, that claim that violence and mental illness can be easily sensationalised (Rueve & Welton, 2008). In labelling violence or terrorism as being committed by perpetrators with identity issues, it discards the criminal nature of the acts. By this logic, no terrorists, whether Mair or Masood are sane and rational despite their meticulous planning and execution of attacks. Likewise, criminals would be categorised separately from the seemingly normal public; every person who commits a crime would then have mental issues contributing to their motivation, if all lone wolfs are asserted to have mental health issues.

The fact that Masood was framed in a manner that humanises and victimises him, along with labels of terrorist and convert to an ideology is significant. This is because despite these MO framings, he is still called a terrorist and an attacker who has perpetrated terrorism. This is interesting because it is a type of hybrid stance that combines the subtle, considerate framing of victimisation but also clearly separate Masood from the *mental health* justifications used for white nationalist terrorists. Prior research on War on Terror framings in news indicate that typically, dehumanising language is used to equate the perpetrators to animals. However, in this case, research by Elmasry and el-Nawawy seems more pertinent, in which they explain how the Las Vegas shooter, a white supremacist was humanised by newspapers. Thus, it becomes clear that news stories of both Mair and Masood are distinctly framed despite having some similar attributes within their representation by MO.

5. Conclusion

Overall, the purpose of this thesis was to find out how MailOnline represents Islamist terrorism compared to white nationalist terrorism, and therefore how it portrays both extremist ideologies. The research questions posed were; what frames has MailOnline used to represent Islamist versus white supremacist terrorism? How do they contribute or contradict to the stereotypes highlighted by prior research? Chapter 2 reviews prior literature on global news coverage of Islamist and white nationalist terrorism. It also evaluates literature on dominant frames found in media representation of terrorism. Moreover, it indicates the gap in current research and sets out the theoretical and analytical framework used in Chapter 4. Chapter 3 explains the methodological justifications in choosing sample of news articles and analysis strategies followed by Chapter 4, which shows the analysis guided by the categories mentioned in Chapter 2.

Self and Other

Jo Cox's murderer was framed as being disconnected to the wider neo-Nazi, white supremacist ideology. Mair's personal situation was seemingly framed to be a justification of his attacks, and he was not portrayed to be part of a bigger extremist ideology. This is also well established in prior research that white nationalists avoid the labels of terrorism and collective group of extremists. This reflects a broad representation of white nationalist terrorism that sets Mair in the same category as other *normal* citizens instead of being represented as an 'other'. On the other hand, the Westminster Bridge attacker was not framed as disconnected, rather he was portrayed as the 'other' using comparisons of violence and ideology. The important difference in this framing was that in representing the latter, a label of 'terrorist' was issued frequently as opposed to the former, in which the perpetrator was referred to

as a 'murderer' or 'suspect'. In essence, a large body of literature was examined in Chapter 2, and these findings run against this previous literature that suggest Muslim terrorists are treated qualitatively differently to white nationalists.

Representation of ideology

Framing of the perpetrator in the 2016 case, Mair was represented as a lone wolf attacker who committed the attack on his own, without the collective nature of white nationalist ideological groups. He was represented as a perpetrator but detached from being identified as a terrorist, even though he was framed as having committed an attack that is basically terrorism by its definition. In addition to this, Mair's neo-Nazi white supremacist ideology was indirectly mentioned in relation to other neo-Nazis that were supportive of his act of violence. Their personal attributes were framed in the framing instead of being clearly labelled as neo-Nazis. On the other hand, a similar reporting narrative was observed; where the Islamist perpetrator was separated as a lone wolf attacker. Masood was also portrayed to have been part of a group of extremists with a concrete ideology. As prior literature indicated in Chapter 2, Islamist terrorists are typically represented as part of a collective group of individuals that's why this finding was unexpected. Although there are more similarities in how these two cases are presented than prior literature suggests, there is still a greater reluctance to refer to Mair as a terrorist in comparison to Masood.

Representations of motivations of terrorists

In this category, framing of both Mair and Masood has been similar. In both sides of the extremist ideologies, MailOnline representations are suggestive of findings in prior research; reinforcing a fearful perception of terrorists, regardless of their allegiance. A fearful perception ultimately creates a fear of the 'other', being perpetrators of violence. In addition to this, MailOnline makes use of rhetorical strategies that strengthen fearful perception of Islamist terrorists. This is also indicative of past research examined in Chapter 2, that asserts Daily Mail's media framings of Muslim militants as having greatest fear about enemies within. Further, Mair's asserted defence of mental health issues was discredited in MailOnline's framing. He was compared to large-scale

violence white nationalist terrorists, as part of a wider network. That being said, Mair was labelled a terrorist only twice in comparison to Masood who was labelled a terrorist 10 times by MailOnline. This is one important difference as it is repeated across categories and shows the pattern in how often MailOnline characterises an Islamist as a terrorist compared to patterns in how often it considered a white nationalist, a terrorist.

Identity of perpetrators

The most important finding in the analysis was the humanisation of perpetrators by MailOnline. Framing of white nationalist terrorist attacks was anticipated to be portrayed in a civilised manner, focusing on victimisation and using humanising rhetoric and expressions to frame the identity of the terrorist. However, such framing was not expected in treatment of an Islamist terrorist attack. This was for a few reasons which were mentioned in Chapter 2: that Islamist terrorists are typically framed differently to white nationalist terrorists; non-Muslim terrorists as in need of mental health help and essentialisation of the Muslim identity in binary terms of good and bad. Moreover, this humanisation of perpetrators both white nationalist *and* Islamist suggests that right-wing newspapers are moving away from War on Terror frames that have been established since September 11. There is also potential for such framings to be found in other liberal newspapers especially since they have been found in a right-wing paper. Though MailOnline framed Masood in humanising terms, he was also consistently called a terrorist compared to Mair, who was occasionally labelled the same. In this, MailOnline adopts a hybridised stance that frames both perpetrators in a seemingly compassionate light but in Masood's case, as expected, refer to him as a terrorist.

Implications for research: Nuancing the Narrative of The Right-Wing Press

Based on prior research, MailOnline was expected to reinforce stereotypes and dominant frames as mentioned in Chapter 2. To briefly answer the research questions, MailOnline has followed news representation trends uncovered in past research to a degree. However, the unexpected findings show that it has also framed news stories

of representing both ideologies similarly. This has included MailOnline framing of both Mair and Masood as the 'others' in a way to represent us against them, because of their extremist ideological convictions. In terms of differences, MailOnline is unwilling to refer to Mair as a terrorist when compared to Masood, conflating Islam with terrorism to some level. It also perpetuates the fearful perceptions of Islamist terrorism that were covered in Chapter 2. But in these differences, the treatment of both in humanising rhetoric was the most surprising discovery, which was expected in framing of Mair but not expecting in framing of Masood.

The implications of this thesis for wider academic research are that it has investigated a popular British news outlet focusing on two extremist ideologies, one of which has been academically studied for decades, and the other that is relatively new and has potential for other avenues to research. This thesis has contributed to scholarly research because the findings, by comparing to prior research, imply a change across time. A temporal comparison across time of the representations of Islamists and white nationalists would make a productive path for future research. One that would allow the empirical investigation of whether MailOnline or wider press is *learning* or becoming more nuanced.

MailOnline has subtly shifted its style of news reporting to be inclusive of differences in Islam and Islamist terrorism. In Chapter 2, it was explained that there is a gap in current research on terrorism; limited research on the emerging forms of white nationalist terrorism, lone wolf, collective or other. There is also limited research on representation of ideologically driven cases of terrorism such as two terror attacks, one Islamist and another, white nationalist. Previous research has also heavily focused on Islamist terrorism especially after September 11. By comparing newspaper framing of two examples of terrorist attacks that were from both ideologies, this thesis fills this gap. It contributes to a new, necessary and growing research body into white nationalism by studying MailOnline's representations of the Jo Cox murder.

Limitations and Future Research

There were a range of limitations with this thesis such as author's identity bias. An attempt was made to mitigate it to make sure the analysis and discussion is examined

impartially. MailOnline audience could have been interviewed to understand the perceptions of news stories that are framed in certain ways. The timeframe for this thesis was also narrow which meant that there are more Islamist and white nationalist events that occurred after the timeframe. Also, though examining attacks in one country is methodologically justifiable, it resulted in exclusion of recent attacks across Europe which were also represented by MailOnline.

Lastly, the topics discussed in this thesis have the potential to influence research areas such as news reporters' bias in representing Islamist terrorism. Research could also look into digital white nationalism and the ideology's emergence into the mainstream. There is also potential to look into news framings of ideologically different newspapers such as MailOnline compared to HuffPost, in their framing of Islamists or white nationalists. Most importantly, media representations of white nationalism could be investigated over a longer period of time. Comparisons in news framings could also have more examples of white nationalist terror attacks. Additionally, media framings could be compared across countries, such as representations of white nationalist attacks by European news media.

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