

Analyzing Media Representations of Terrorist Attacks Against Muslims: A Comparative Content Analysis of the Christchurch Mosque Attacks on BBC, Al Jazeera, and Al Arabiya Websites

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This study investigates how mainstream Arab and Western media outlets differed in their coverage of the Christchurch Mosque terrorist attacks in 2019. It examines the Arab media websites of the two most popular Arab news channels (Al Jazeera and Al Arabiya), which vary in their agendas and funding, and the BBC website, one of the biggest and most popular Western media outlets. It examines how the Arab and Western media websites differ in their framing of the attacks concerning the association of “terrorism” to the perpetrator and the attack, sympathy for the victims, the importance given to the perpetrator’s religion, and the sources quoted, covering a period from March 15, 2019, to June 14, 2019. Contrary to previous literature, this study finds that the BBC’s coverage was close to Al Jazeera and Al Arabiya regarding sympathy for the victims, the importance given to the attack, and the official sources quoted. However, BBC still applied double standards in describing the perpetrator according to his religion although the official New Zealand position explicitly indicated that the perpetrator was a “terrorist.” The BBC did not label the perpetrator as a “terrorist,” except in a few instances. This finding aligned with previous literature.

Keywords: White terrorism, Arab media, Western media, Muslims, framing

The attacks in two mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand, in March 2019, in which Brenton Tarrant, then 28, killed 51 Muslims and injured 46, including children, during Friday prayers, brought back to light the double standards of Western media outlets’ coverage of “radical Islamic” terrorism and “White” terrorism (Canavar, 2019). Western media have always found different ways to cover terrorist attacks according to the identity of the perpetrator. The coverage by the U.S. print and online newspapers of all terrorist attacks that took place in the United States between 2006 and 2015 was “significantly more likely to reference terrorism when the perpetrator [was] Muslim” (Betus, Kearns, & Lemieux, 2021, p. 11).

On various occasions, Western media have deliberately avoided labeling a White attacker as a “terrorist.” Conversely, acts of ideological violence committed by Muslims are more likely to be discussed

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Date submitted: 2022-07-29

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using the terms "terrorist/terrorism" and "extremism" as well as to specify the perpetrator's religious identity (Rao et al., 2018). Additionally, Western media avoid covering some terrorist attacks while focusing on others, depending on the religion of the victims. For instance, the *Washington Post*, in its coverage of attacks in France and Belgium, humanized the victims and drew links between European societies and the Western world more broadly. On the other hand, attacks in Turkey and Nigeria received less attention and were framed primarily as internal conflicts (el-Nawawy & Elmasry, 2017).

The literature concerning Arab media coverage of this type of terrorism is insufficient. This study is significant as it explores whether BBC's coverage of terrorism altered in response to the criticism Western media received for their double standards and whether Al Jazeera and Al Arabiya, which have different agendas, provided a different narrative from that of Western media.

Literature Review

Western Media and Terrorism

Many studies have investigated the way Western media frame terrorist attacks by examining the news frames used to represent the perpetrators, the focus on the ethnic and religious backgrounds of both perpetrators and victims, and the cited news sources (Dimitrova & Strömbäck, 2005; Fahmy & Al-Emad, 2011; Kabir & Hamid, 2015; Ryan, 2004).

Many previous studies show that there is a clear trend in Western media of linking terrorism to Islam and framing Islam as an imminent threat to the West and the world (Lueg, 1995; Manning, 2006; Nacos, 2002; Powell, 2011). The coverage of the aircraft terror plot at Heathrow Airport in 2006 in three media outlets in New Zealand constructed a negative image of Muslims and depicted Islam as inspiring terrorism (Kabir & Hamid, 2015).

Even before the September 11 attacks, linking terrorism to Islam was present in the media, although on a smaller scale. Only 11% of articles on terrorism and Islam together connected terrorism to Islam before September 11, whereas, after the attacks, this rate increased to 89% (Manning, 2006). The results of a content analysis (Powell, 2011) of U.S. media coverage of 11 terrorist events on U.S. soil after September 11, more specifically between 2001 and 2010, revealed that even before confirming the authenticity of the information and the identity of the perpetrator of each attack, the classification of perpetrators as Muslim was common in the coverage. Those assumptions were based on the names of the attacks' perpetrators. Furthermore, when a suspected terrorist was identified as a Muslim during news coverage of an attack, the perpetrator of the attack was then linked to Al-Qaeda before proof was provided or the investigation was completed (Powell, 2011). This tendency underscores that U.S. media presuppose that terrorism stems from outside the United States, especially from Muslims, who have been depicted as executing the agenda of "Islam against Europe" (Said, 1978, p. 272).

Western media promote an Orientalist discourse where the "West" represents superiority, and the "non-West" represents the inferior "other" (Said, 1978). They dedicate negative stereotypes to that "other non-Western" person or group (Kabir & Hamid, 2015). Labels such as "awkward" and "barbaric," which the

Western mainstream uses frequently in describing Muslims, maintain the discourse that Islam is harmful to the West (Maira, 2008).

Many studies have shown that European media outlets depict Muslims as the main "suspect for terrorism" (Kabir & Hamid, 2015, p. 470). After the terror attacks in Norway in 2011, Western media accused Islam and Islamic organizations of planning and perpetrating the attacks, without providing sufficient evidence (Powell, 2011). Later, it was known that the perpetrator was the Norwegian Far-Right extremist Anders Behring Breivik, who was described as a "mass murderer" harboring "extremist right-wing views" on the BBC Arabic website ("Anders Breivik Accepted," 2015, para. 13).

Double Standards in Media Coverage of Terrorism

It is commonplace to find terror attacks committed by a Muslim being labeled as "Islamic" by Western journalists, while a religious label is absent when the perpetrator of the terror attack is a Christian or a Jew (Karim, 2003). Karim (2006) notes that Muslims are front-page news for U.S. media, and rarely does one find a positive portrayal of them. Moreover, "in cases of domestic terrorism, the media actively searched for a motive for the act" (Powell, 2011, p. 100).

The double standards of linking the perpetrator's religion to the terror attack have recently faced strident criticism, especially in the past decade. A study conducted by the Center for Investigative Reporting reveals that the number of terrorist incidents committed by far-right extremists was almost twice that of those committed by Muslims between 2008 and 2016 (Neiwert, 2017). However, not all terrorist attacks receive the same media coverage (Chermak & Gruenewald, 2006). The religion of the perpetrator played the most integral role in determining the amount of media coverage in all terror attacks that occurred on U.S. soil between 2006 and 2015: "Attacks receive 357% more coverage on average when the perpetrator is Muslim" (Kearns, Betus, & Lemieux, 2019, p. 998). The word "terrorist" is largely avoided when describing non-Muslim perpetrators; furthermore, the coverage is limited when the victims are from Muslim and non-Muslim minorities (Kearns et al., 2019).

Western media generally tend to frame White perpetrators in a positive light, portraying them as part of families and placing great emphasis on the human side of their life before the terror attack (Powell, 2011). Another study (Elmasry & el-Nawawy, 2020) compared the 2017 Las Vegas attack carried out by a non-Muslim and the 2016 Orlando attack carried out by a Muslim in the *Los Angeles Times* and *New York Times*. It found that the Las Vegas shooter's personal relationships with family and friends were mentioned more often than the Orlando mass shooter's personal relationships with family and friends (Elmasry & el-Nawawy, 2020).

Western media's double standards extend to their framing of the victims. The results of a study (el-Nawawy & Elmasry, 2017) comparing the media frames of the victims of five terrorist attacks targeting Muslims and non-Muslims showed that the *Washington Post's* coverage was different in both cases as it used the terror frame and the humanization frame in its coverage of attacks that targeted non-Muslim victims while using the internal conflict frame with limited focus on the humanization frame when the victims

were Muslims (el-Nawawy & Elmasry, 2017). The traditional definition, a conflict frame, reflects disagreement between individuals, institutions, or countries (Cappella & Jamieson, 1997).

The Coverage of Terrorism in Al Jazeera and Al Arabiya

Al Jazeera Media Network was founded in 1996 at the request of Qatar's then emir, Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifa Al-Thani, with funding from him. The network was intended to function as a soft power tool for Qatar (Miles, 2011; Samuel-Azran, 2013).

Al Arabiya was founded in Dubai in 2003 by the Middle East Broadcasting Group, which is owned by businessman Sheikh Walid Al-Ibrahim, a Saudi who has close relationships with the Saudi royal family. There are direct restrictions on Al Arabiya's editorial policy, which are imposed by the Saudi government (el-Nawawy & Strong, 2012). The editorial policy of Al Arabiya is closer to pro-Western governments, while Al Jazeera tends to be critical of Western policy on the Middle East (Zeng & Tahat, 2012).

The results of a study (Abdullah, 2016) that analyzed 171 news stories on terrorism in the Al Jazeera and Al Arabiya outlets over a period of more than three months show that the two channels closely follow the "official frame," which supports their respective governments although the former less so than the latter. Al Jazeera uses the humanitarian frame more frequently as it focuses on the stories of victims and civilians (el-Nawawy, 2004). Al Arabiya focuses on echoing the government's views more than Al Jazeera does (Abdullah, 2016), which has drawn criticism that Al Arabiya's coverage is not impartial and panders to the Saudi and U.S. governments (Zayani & Sahraoui, 2007).

Al Jazeera uses multiple sources to cover the news unlike Al Arabiya, which instead focuses on official sources only (Zeng & Tahat, 2012). Al Arabiya uses words such as "Islamic," "extremist," "jihadist," and "Salafi" to define perpetrators, while Al Jazeera tends to describe perpetrators as "unidentified" (Abdullah, 2016). Al Jazeera strives to cover events from several sides, even if this entails presenting viewpoints that contradict its political agenda (el-Nawawy & Iskandar, 2002); it arose as a media outlet that challenged major Western media in its controversial coverage of the era of the American so-called war on terror (el-Nawawy & Iskandar, 2002).

Al Arabiya is more biased in its coverage owing to its reliance on official sources, and its coverage of terrorism is closer to that of Western media coverage than Al Jazeera's (Zeng & Tahat, 2012). A study (Zeng & Tahat, 2012) analyzing 200 news stories on Al Jazeera and Al Arabiya about terror attacks found that the coverage by these two major Arab media outlets differs. Al Jazeera focuses more than Al Arabiya on investigative reporting and attempting to uncover the details of terrorist attacks. Nonetheless, both Al Jazeera and Al Arabiya focus on the fact that the victims of the terror attacks are mostly Muslims (Zeng & Tahat, 2012).

Theoretical Framework

Frames are "principles of selection, emphasis, and presentation composed of little tacit theories about what exists, what happens, and what matters" (Gitlin, 2003, p. 6). Journalists select aspects of the news and make them more salient "to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral

evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described" (Entman, 1993, p. 52). It is an inevitable part of writing the news, and it is important as it aims to produce stories that both the author and audience will find interesting (Ryan, 1991). Framing news stories is by far one of the most notable strategies used by the media to create and distribute ideology (Powell, 2011).

Scheufele (1999) notes that news frames are dependent variables that result from "extrinsic and intrinsic factors influencing the production and selection of news" (p. 109). Every news story has several angles that can be examined. The viewing angle most focused on in media depends on the scope through which the events are examined and interpreted. For example, sometimes the media might probe the events through the lens of dominance, White supremacy, and the Christian perspective in the United States (i.e., a Western perspective in general). Consequently, the "other" may be depicted in a biased form (Powell, 2011). Although the information might be correct, the elements a journalist chooses to include, accentuate, and prioritize can largely influence and shape the audience's perceptions (Campbell, 1995). Entman (1993) argues that if all the elements in a text asserting that the glass is half full are included and emphasized, fewer audience members will notice the other half of the truth, which is that the other half of the glass is empty. On the other hand, frames might be independent variables. Thus, when words and images that reinforce a negative stereotype of Muslims are used predominantly in much Western media coverage, the public is likely to conclude that Muslims are terrorists (Powell, 2011).

When the media use a specific frame frequently to cover an event, this frame will likely have the greatest impact on the audience (Chong & Druckman, 2007). According to Kahneman and Tversky's (1981) classification, frames are divided into positive and negative: The media conceptualize the individual's perception of one aspect of the issue while shunning another aspect by "highlighting certain risks, attributes, or goals associated with the event that is being framed" (el-Nawawy & Elmasry, 2017, p. 861).

According to Entman (1993), the process of accentuating a specific aspect of a message in media coverage is achieved by selecting words, phrases, stereotypes, symbols, and specific sources of information. Pan and Kosicki (1993) suggest that the order in which words and sentences appear plays an important role in setting the frame.

Research Hypotheses and Questions

Several studies have found that there are double standards in the Western media coverage of terrorist attacks (Karim, 2003; Neiwert, 2017). That is, the Western media tend to frame White perpetrators less negatively than non-White perpetrators, such as Muslims and African Americans, by not using the label "terrorist" for the former and by searching for justifications for their acts (Powell, 2011). Based on the aforementioned studies and the literature on framing theory, which suggest that framing a news event in a certain manner can lead to its interpretation in a positive or negative light by the recipient (Entman, 1993), the following hypothesis is suggested:

H1: Since the perpetrator in the Christchurch attacks is White and non-Muslim, Al Jazeera and Al Arabiya will use the word "terrorist" to describe both the perpetrator and the attack more than the BBC website.

According to Karim's (2003) study, terrorist attacks committed by a Muslim are often labeled as "Islamic," while a religious label for terror attacks committed by non-Muslims is not used by Western media. However, no previous study shows whether Arab media coverage connects the terror attack to the religion of the perpetrator or not. Therefore, the following research question is posed:

RQ1: To what extent do the studied media outlets connect the terror attack to the religion of the perpetrator in the Christchurch attacks, and are there any differences between the coverage by the BBC and the Arab Al Jazeera and Al Arabiya?

According to Powell's (2011) study, Western media tend to portray White perpetrators as being part of a family and place great emphasis on the human side of their life, especially before an attack. The following hypothesis is thus suggested:

H2: The BBC website will be more likely to focus on the human side of the perpetrator in the Christchurch attacks, in which it will mention the perpetrator's family, life, studies, work, childhood, relationships with friends, and the conditions of his imprisonment) more than Al Jazeera and Al Arabiya.

A previous study (el-Nawawy & Elmasry, 2017) has shown that Western media focus less on the emotional frame when most of the victims are Muslims. On the contrary, another study shows that Al Jazeera and Al Arabiya's coverage focuses on the fact that most victims of terrorism are Muslims (Zeng & Tahat, 2012). The following main hypothesis and the ensuing sub-hypotheses are therefore suggested:

H3: Since the victims are Muslims, the Al Jazeera and Al Arabiya websites will be more sympathetic to the victims of the Christchurch attacks than the BBC website.

H3a: Al Jazeera and Al Arabiya will use sympathetic language to describe the victims in the Christchurch attacks, with terms such as "victims" and "innocent" more than the BBC.

H3b: Al Jazeera and Al Arabiya will humanize the victims of the Christchurch attacks by focusing on their life, work, studies, childhoods, and relationships with their families more than the BBC.

H4: The number of quotes from families, friends, eyewitnesses, and survivors will be more than the number of quotes from official sources in the coverage by Al Jazeera and Al Arabiya, and this will be vice versa for the BBC.

Method

This study analyzed the difference between a Western media outlet, the BBC, and two Arab media outlets, Al Jazeera, and Al Arabiya, in framing White terrorism in the two mosque attacks in Christchurch, New Zealand. The comparative content analysis method was chosen to enable us to analyze the overt meaning of the content of the communications objectively, systematically, and quantitatively (Berelson, 1952). The results are proved herein through numbers to give the results greater accuracy, credibility, and generalizability.

Sample

The number of BBC website visitors, according to SimilarWeb (2019), reached 554.44 million people in the second half of 2019. Al Jazeera is one of the first news websites launched in Arabic on the Internet and is visited by millions in the Middle East, with 19.11 million visitors in the last six months of 2019, according to SimilarWeb (2019). It was ranked by 4 International Media & Newspapers institution as the sixth most important news source in 2016 worldwide (Al Jazeera, 2017). Al Arabiya is considered among the most popular news websites in the Arab world, with total reach of 16.79 million visitors in the second half of 2019, according to SimilarWeb (2019). All three news websites are owned by TV news channels that are considered among the most prominent in the Middle East and the world. We selected Al Jazeera, Al Arabiya, and BBC to compare the alignment in the coverage of White terrorism between two of the most prominent Arab media outlets, funded by different countries with different political views (Al Jazeera funded by Qatar and Al Arabiya funded by Saudi Arabia), and the alignment of their coverage with one of the most prominent Western media outlets. Douglas Bicket and Melissa A. Wall (2009), commenting on the BBC's presence in the United States, noted that the credibility and respect that the BBC has set it apart from the mainstream U.S. media and carry huge influence, making it a "super alternative news medium" (p. 374). While there are fundamental differences between the Qatari-funded Al Jazeera and the Saudi-funded Al Arabiya in covering "jihadist" or "Islamic" terrorism and the "war on terror," there also is common ground between them in covering terrorist attacks in which the victims are Muslims.

This study includes an analysis of news articles from the day of the attacks (March 15, 2019) up until the perpetrator's appearance in court (June 14, 2019).

The online archive for each news site was used to search for the articles. The archive of the BBC website was searched using the following keywords, without specific dates: "Christchurch attack," "New Zealand attack," and "Christchurch Mosque shooting." The Al Arabiya and Al Jazeera websites were searched using the Arabic keywords "هجوم نيوزيلاندا" and "مذبحة المسجدين," that is "Hojom New Zealand" and "Mathbahat Al-Masjedain," which translate to "New Zealand attack" and "massacre of the two mosques," respectively. The results returned all the articles that discussed the attack directly and indirectly (indirectly meaning in which the attack was mentioned as background information for relevant and following news stories). All articles connected directly to the attack were selected for the sample whether their focus was on further developments of the incident, the perpetrator, the victims, the victims' families, eyewitnesses, or official statements about the attack.

Some results on the BBC website included short silent videos that contained only text. Coders were instructed that silent videos containing textual information were part of the written article and that they should watch these videos and take them into account when answering all the questions in the coding sheet.

Articles that did not directly deal with the attack were ignored altogether. For example, the sample did not include any news about the measures taken by Facebook, YouTube, and other social media sites to deal with the video that the perpetrator live streamed while committing the terrorist attacks, nor did it include news about the arrests of persons who shared the video.

The unit of analysis used in this study was a full news article. All editorial articles were excluded. The final sample included 174 articles: Forty-nine from the BBC website, 42 from the Al Jazeera website, and 83 from the Al Arabiya website.

Coding

Some of the items measured in the coding sheet were inspired by a previous study by Egyptian researchers Elmasry and el-Nawawy (2017), who examined the number of quotes and the length of articles, and by a study by researchers Zeng and Tahat (2012), who examined references to the perpetrator's religion in media coverage.

Based on the abovementioned studies and other studies in the extant literature, the coding mechanism for this study was designed to measure, through the use of two questions, the extent to which the perpetrator was linked to terrorism. Coders were asked in the first question to write the number of times the perpetrator was described using the following labels in the article: (1) terrorist and (2) gunman. In the second question, coders were asked to write the number of times the attack was labeled as (1) a terrorist attack or (2) a shooting. It was made clear to coders that all descriptions must be from the author of the article and not in a direct or indirect quote, whether from a president, an official, or an eyewitness.

The second variable was the perpetrator's religion and the extent to which it was linked to the attack in the media coverage. To measure this variable, coders had to answer three questions. The first was about the number of times the perpetrator's religion as a Christian was mentioned in each article. The second was about the number of times his manifesto entitled "The Great Replacement," which he had posted on his Facebook page, was mentioned in the article. The third was about the number of times the racist slogans the perpetrator had written on his rifle were mentioned because these slogans and the online manifesto reveal that his motive for the terrorist attacks was pure racism against Muslims.

The third variable measured through the coding mechanism was the focus on the human side. This variable was measured by writing the number of times the news presented information about the perpetrator's family, life, studies, work, childhood, relationships with friends, and the conditions of his imprisonment.

The coding mechanism was also designed to measure the level of sympathy for the victims of the attack. Coders were instructed to write the number of times the victims were described using sympathetic terms such as "victims," "innocent," "worshippers," and "civilians." Another question asked the coders to write the number of times the victims were humanized by information presented about their lives, work, and families.

The coding mechanism also measured the sources used in the articles by posing three questions. The first was about the number of quotes by the victims' family members and friends. The second was about the number of quotes by survivors and eyewitnesses. The third was about the number of quotes from official sources such as presidents, police officers, emergency responders, official bodies, associations, and institutions. This aspect is of vital importance because if the number of quotes by family members and

friends of the victims, eyewitnesses, and survivors is more than the number of official quotes, this reflects a greater sympathy from the media outlet for the victims of the attack. Coders were asked to count both direct and indirect quotes.

Intercoder Reliability

Two Arab coders carried out the coding process. After being trained, they coded 15% of the sample independently. The intercoder reliability was measured using Krippendorff's alpha for ordinal variables, ratio variables, and interval variables. The degree of reliability was excellent, ranging from 0.872 to 1. See Table 1.

Table 1. The Degree of Reliability.

Variables	Degree of Reliability
Describing the perpetrator as a "terrorist"	1
Describing the perpetrator as a "gunman"	0.898
Describing the attack as a "terrorist attack"	0.990
Describing the attack as a "shooting"	0.991
Number of times the perpetrator's religion was referenced	1
Number of times the perpetrator's manifesto was referenced	0.992
Number of times the racist slogans on the gun were referenced	1
Humanizing the perpetrator (number of times the perpetrator's family, life, studies, work, childhood, relationships with friends, and the conditions of his imprisonment were mentioned)	1
Number of words sympathetic to the victims	0.914
Humanizing the victims (number of times the victims' lives, work, studies, childhoods, relationships with their families were mentioned)	0.990
Quotes from victims' family members and friends	1
Quotes from eyewitnesses and survivors	1
Quotes from official sources	0.994

Results

Linking the Perpetrator to Terrorism

Based on previous studies that illustrate the double standards of Western media's coverage of terrorism, H1 predicted that Al Jazeera and Al Arabiya would be more likely than the BBC to use the word "terrorist" to describe the perpetrator and the attack. Western media generally use the word "terrorist" to label the perpetrator only if he is a Muslim; when the perpetrator is a Far-Right extremist, Western media use the label "gunman" or "shooter." As shown in Table 2, H1 is supported. Al Jazeera and Al Arabiya used the word "terrorist" more than the BBC to describe the perpetrator and the attack. Al Jazeera described the perpetrator as a "terrorist" 1.05 times per article, while Al Arabiya used the term "terrorist" 0.46 times per article. The BBC used the "terrorist" label to refer to the perpetrator only 0.02 times per article. Test results reveal that these

differences are statistically significant ($p = .005$). Even though H1 is supported, it should be noted that Al Jazeera described the perpetrator as a "terrorist" more than Al Arabiya. Both media outlets were not far apart in describing the attack as "terrorist," with Al Jazeera describing the attack this way 1.12 times per article and Al Arabiya 1.95 times per article. The BBC used the word "terrorist" to describe the attack only 0.06 times per article. Test results reveal that these differences are statistically significant ($p < .001$). The BBC used the word "gunman" to describe the perpetrator 0.94 times, and the word "shooting" to describe the attack 1.92 times, indicating a much greater difference than Al Jazeera and Al Arabiya ($p < .001$ in each case).

Table 2. Labels for the Shooter and the Attacks.

Website	"Terrorist"	"Gunman"	"Terrorist attack"	"Shooting"	<i>n</i>
BBC	0.02	0.94	0.06	1.92	49
Al Arabiya	0.46	0.13	1.95	0.33	83
Al Jazeera	1.05	0.29	1.12	0.21	42
Total	0.48	0.40	1.22	0.75	174

Linking the Perpetrator's Religion to the Attack

The research question RQ1 was concerned with the extent to which the perpetrator's religion was connected to the attack when the perpetrator was non-Muslim on the BBC, Al Jazeera, and Al Arabiya, and the differences between the ways in which these three outlets connect the perpetrator's religion to the attack, if any. According to previous studies, the word "Muslim" is frequently collocated with the word "terrorism" in Western coverage of terrorist attacks. This variable was measured by (1) the explicit mention of the word "Christian" in an article, (2) mention of the racist manifesto published by the perpetrator, and (3) mention of the racist slogans on the perpetrator's gun. The results show, as indicated in Table 3, that the BBC and Al Arabiya were similar in their coverage of the perpetrator's religion and its relation to the attack as both websites never mentioned the word "Christian" in their articles. Conversely, Al Jazeera mentioned the word "Christian" 0.17 times per article. The BBC and Al Arabiya mentioned the racist manifesto less frequently than Al Jazeera, which referred to it 1.38 times per article, while the BBC and Al Arabiya alluded to the manifesto only 0.14 and 0.18 times per article, respectively. Furthermore, references to the neo-Nazi slogans written on the gunman's weapon on the BBC website were made 0.18 times, whereas Al Arabiya never mentioned them. On the Al Jazeera website, the writings on the gun were mentioned 0.62 times per article. Test results reveal that these differences are statistically significant ($p = .005$, $p = .007$, $p = .046$, respectively). Based on these results, the answer to RQ1 is that the BBC and Al Arabiya did not link the Christian perpetrator's religion to the attack. That is, they did not mention Christianity as a motive for the attack and overlooked the perpetrator's manifesto and the slogans on his gun.

Table 3. Linking the Perpetrator's Religion to the Attacks.

Website	Christian	Reference to the Manifesto	Reference to the Racist Writing on the Gun	<i>n</i>
BBC	0.00	0.14	0.08	49
Al Arabiya	0.00	0.18	0.00	83
Al Jazeera	0.17	1.38	0.62	42

Total	0.04	0.46	0.17	174
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Humanization of the Perpetrator

Hypothesis 2 predicted that the BBC would humanize the perpetrator by mentioning information about his relationships with his family and friends, his work, and imprisonment conditions more than Al Arabiya and Al Jazeera. This hypothesis is not supported. As shown in Table 4, the BBC humanized the perpetrator 0.29 times per article, Al Arabiya 0.11 times, and Al Jazeera 0.05. Test results show that there are no statistically significant differences ($p = .989$), which means that the three media outlets did not humanize the perpetrator.

Table 4. Number of Times the Perpetrator was Humanized.

Website	No. of Times the Perpetrator was Humanized	<i>n</i>
BBC	0.29	49
Al Arabiya	0.11	83
Al Jazeera	0.05	42
Total	0.14	174

Sympathy for the Victims of the Terror Attacks

Hypothesis 3 predicted that Al Jazeera and Al Arabiya would express greater sympathy for the Muslim victims than the BBC. Two sub-hypotheses were formed to support the main one: Hypothesis 3a assumed that Al Jazeera and Al Arabiya would use sympathetic words more than the BBC; H3b assumed that Al Jazeera and Al Arabiya would humanize the victims by presenting stories about their lives, families, and work more than the BBC. Hypotheses H3a and H3b are not supported. Consequently, H3 is not supported. As evident from Table 5, Al Jazeera used sympathetic words toward the victims more than Al Arabiya and the BBC although the three outlets all expressed great sympathy for the victims. Test results indicate that the differences are statistically significant ($p < .001$). As for the humanization of the victims by focusing on their life, work, studies, childhoods, and relationships with their families, Al Jazeera humanized them 4.24 times per article, Al Arabiya 2.93 times, and the BBC 2.27. However, the differences between these results are not statistically significant ($p = .731$). According to the results of the two sub-hypotheses, the three media outlets expressed a great deal of sympathy toward the victims of the attack.

Table 5. Number of Times the Victims Were Humanized.

Website	Use of Sympathetic Words Toward the Victims	Humanization of the Victims	<i>n</i>
BBC	1.49	2.27	49
Al Arabiya	1.36	2.93	83
Al Jazeera	2.76	4.24	42
Total	1.74	3.05	174

Hypothesis 4 predicted that on the Al Jazeera and Al Arabiya websites, the number of quotes from family members and friends of the victims, eyewitnesses, and survivors would be more than the number of quotes by officials, and it would be vice versa for the BBC. However, as shown in Table 6, the number of

quotes from official sources is more than that from the families and friends of the victims, eyewitnesses, and survivors across all three websites. For example, Al Jazeera quoted family members and friends of the victims 0.31 times per article and eyewitnesses and survivors 1.86 times compared with 6.24 times for quotes from official sources. The BBC website quoted the families and friends of the terror victims 1.04 times per article and eyewitnesses and survivors 1.57 times, while there were 5.10 instances of quotes by officials in the same article. Lastly, Al Arabiya quoted the families and friends of the victims 0.93 times per article and eyewitnesses and survivors 1.02 times, while official sources were quoted 3.30 times. It is noteworthy that the one-way analysis of variance test showed that there are no statistically significant differences in the quotes by the families and friends of the victims compared with those of eyewitnesses and survivors across all three websites ($p = .479, p = .402$). The test also shows that there exist statistically significant differences in the results of quotes from official sources across the three websites ($F[2, 171] = 5.630, p = .004$). However, the Tukey post hoc test shows that differences exist between Al Arabiya and Al Jazeera ($p = .005$), while no statistically significant differences exist between the BBC and Al Jazeera ($p = .506$) or the BBC and Al Arabiya ($p = .100$). That is, official quotes were presented more on Al Jazeera than on Al Arabiya or the BBC. Thus, H4 is not supported.

Table 6. Number of Direct and Indirect Quotes by Family Members, Friends, Eyewitnesses, Survivors, and Official Sources.

Website	Quotes by Family Members and Friends of Victims	Quotes by Eyewitnesses and Survivors	Quotes From Official Sources	<i>n</i>
BBC	1.04	1.57	5.10	49
Al Arabiya	0.93	1.02	3.30	83
Al Jazeera	0.31	1.86	6.24	42
Total	0.81	1.38	4.52	174

Discussion

Surprisingly, the results of this study contradict those of most previous studies on the Western media coverage of this type of terrorism regarding the importance given to the attack and the sympathy for the victims. One previous study (Kearns et al., 2019) found that attacks committed by a Muslim perpetrator received 357% more coverage than those committed by a non-Muslim in the U.S. media. Conversely, this study found that the BBC coverage of the Christchurch Mosque attacks was close to that of the sympathetic Arab coverage, for the BBC gave as extensive coverage of the attack as Al Arabiya and Al Jazeera despite the perpetrator being from the Far Right and the victims being Muslims. The number of articles that focused mainly on the attack published by the BBC and Al Jazeera between March 15, 2019, and June 14, 2019, is relatively close, with 49 articles by BBC and 42 by Al Jazeera. However, it is worth noting that Al Arabiya published more articles totaling 83 although these articles tended to be shorter in length compared with those published by Al Jazeera and BBC.

This study highlights the global standards of reporting terrorism in terms of the importance given to the terrorist attacks regardless of the type of terrorism. This result is consistent with a study that found that CNN, BBC, Al Jazeera, and ARD news outlets had cross-national similarities in reporting four different attacks in Madrid, Amman, Sharm Al-Shaikh, and London (Gerhards & Schäfer, 2014).

In contrast to previous studies on the difference in the Western media's coverage of attacks targeting Muslim and non-Muslim victims (el-Nawawy & Elmasry, 2017), the BBC expressed sympathy with the Muslim victims to a degree close to that shown by Al Arabiya. Al Jazeera, however, expressed sympathy to an even greater extent.

Several explanations can potentially be used to understand these different findings in the BBC coverage of this attack, and the reason it aligned to a greater degree with the coverage by the two Arab media outlets. First, this attack was the first of its kind in New Zealand, which was previously regarded as a "safe" country not known for this type of racism and terrorism. Second, the attack was beyond brutal, for the perpetrator live streamed the entire crime on Facebook as he was committing it. The graphic video posted by the perpetrator compelled both the Western and Arab worlds to sympathize with the victims. Third, the official New Zealand position and statements were strong and sympathetic to the victims. New Zealand took a strong stance against the perpetrator: New Zealand prime minister Jacinda Ardern described him as a terrorist in all her statements and refused to utter his name so as not to give him any attention. Prime Minister Ardern also took several steps in solidarity with the families of the victims, such as wearing the hijab, attending the funerals of the victims, and holding a ceremony honoring the victims and supporting their families. Finally, the BBC has a historical presence in New Zealand as a member of the Commonwealth. Therefore, it aligns with the official position of New Zealand. All of this was an attempt to expand the circle of sympathy on the official and popular levels in New Zealand and the Western world in general. Thus, it was difficult for the Western media to overlook all this sympathy in its coverage of the attacks.

Although this study is not sufficient to conclude that terrorism coverage is converging in some aspects across different international media outlets, as the results indicate, this could be possible. The factors that might have played a role in such a convergence include the perpetrator's documenting and public live streaming of the brutality of the attacks and the strong official condemnation.

The most substantial difference between the coverage by the BBC, on the one hand, and that by Al Jazeera and Al Arabiya, on the other hand, is in labeling the perpetrator as a "terrorist." BBC still applied double standards in describing the perpetrator according to his religion although the official New Zealand position explicitly indicated that the perpetrator was a "terrorist." The Western BBC did not label the perpetrator as a "terrorist," except in a few instances, and instead focused on describing the perpetrator as a "gunman" and the attacks as a "shooting." It is clear that there was a deliberate effort on the part of the BBC to remove the label of "terrorist" from the coverage of the attacks and its perpetrator. This finding is consistent with the results of previous studies (Kearns et al., 2019).

Based on Edward Said's (1978) Orientalism concept, we claim that the reason for this insistence on not using the word "terrorist" to describe the perpetrator may be a sign of Orientalist discourse. A White Western perpetrator is not identified as being part of the "other"; instead, he is part of "us." Thus, the frame of terrorism does not apply to him, even if an attack is defined by signs of terrorism.

As for the Arab media coverage, both Al Arabiya and Al Jazeera focused on describing the perpetrator and the attack as "terrorist." It is worth noting that Al Jazeera labeled the perpetrator as a "terrorist" much more frequently than Al Arabiya although both media outlets described the attack as "terrorist" to a similar degree. That is, Al Arabiya attached the "terrorist" label to the attack (action) and

detached it from the perpetrator (subject of the action). In other words, Al Jazeera was more consistent and emphatic that the perpetrator was a "terrorist," but Al Arabiya was reluctant to maintain a consistent link between terrorism and the perpetrator. This is consistent with a previous study that found that Al Arabiya's editorial policy was closer to that of Western media than Al Jazeera's (Zeng & Tahat, 2012). Both might be influenced by their agendas.

Al Jazeera's coverage and Al Arabiya's coverage were not similar across the board. For example, unlike Al Arabiya, Al Jazeera linked the perpetrator's religion to the attack. The coverage by Al Arabiya and that by the BBC were similar in that they both disregarded the religious element and motive in their coverage. Al Jazeera focused more on the racist motives expressed by the perpetrator in his manifesto and the slogans written on his gun.

Limitations of the Study

Hypothesis 4 could have been formulated differently and more precisely to measure the level of sympathy that each media outlet expressed toward the victims through the number of quotes rather than their sources. As most quotes from official sources were very sympathetic to the victims of the Christchurch Mosque attacks, it would have been more effective to compare the number of sympathetic quotes in each article regardless of the source. Many quotes sympathizing with the victims of the attack were not considered because their sources were not family members or friends of the victims, survivors, eyewitnesses, or even official sources. Therefore, it would have been more appropriate to consider the number of sympathetic quotes rather than their sources.

Future Research

We recommend conducting extensive research on Arab media coverage of Far-Right terrorism targeting Muslims in the West. The primary reason for this is to explore the similarities and differences within various Arab media and to study the extent to which Arab media are independent of Western media in covering these attacks. This will also define the participation of Arab media in presenting the concept of terrorism to the world. This study, being the first of its kind, is certainly insufficient to reach generalizable results, especially since the attacks it examined had an idiosyncratic context in relation to official and popular Western responses that influenced the media coverage of it. Therefore, it would be particularly worthwhile to conduct more in-depth studies examining Arab media coverage of several terrorist attacks targeting Muslims by Far-Right extremists and compare Arab media coverage with that of Western media.

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Appendix A: Codebook

1. Where was the article taken from?
 - A. BBC
 - B. Al Arabiya
 - C. Al Jazeera

Note: If the article contains a silent video that presents written information, but it is not an interview or an official statement, it is considered part of the written article and should be considered when answering all of the following questions.

2. How many times was the perpetrator described in the following words in the article?
 - A. Terrorist
 - B. Gunman

Instructions: The previous descriptions must not be quoted or reported on behalf of an official or the victim's family. They must be the words of the author of the article.

3. How many times was the attack described in the following words in the article?
 - A. Terrorist attack
 - B. Shooting

Instructions: The previous descriptions must not be quoted or reported on behalf of an official or the victim's family. They must be the words of the author of the article.

4. How many times did the perpetrator's religion appear in the article?
Answer:
5. How many times has the racist manifesto, which the perpetrator had published on his Facebook page entitled "The Great Replacement," been mentioned in the article?
Answer:

6. How many times have the neo-Nazi slogans written on the gunman's weapon been mentioned in the article?

Answer:

7. How many times has the perpetrator's family, life, studies, work, childhood, relationship with friends, and the conditions of his imprisonment been mentioned?

Answer:

8. How many times have sympathetic words been used to describe the victims in the article?

Answer:

Instructions: Examples of sympathetic words: Victims, innocent, defenseless, worshipers, civilians.

9. How many times have the victims' life, work, studies, childhood, relationships with their families been mentioned?

Answer:

10. How many direct and indirect quotes of the victims' family members and their friends are there in the article?

Answer:

11. How many direct and indirect quotes of survivors and eyewitnesses are there in the article?

Answer:

12. How many direct and indirect quotes of official sources are there in the article?

Answer:

Instructions: Examples of official sources: Presidents, police officers, emergency responders, official bodies, associations, and institutions.