Riggs, Ashley. "Comparing British, Spanish, and Swiss Societies: Politics, Social Attitudes, Language, and the News." *Stylistic Deceptions in Online News: Journalistic Style and the Translation of Culture*. London,: Bloomsbury Academic, 2020. 49–86. *Bloomsbury Collections*. Web. 26 Apr. 2023. <<http://dx.doi.org/10.5040/9781350114203.ch-003>>.

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Comparing British, Spanish, and Swiss Societies: Politics, Social Attitudes, Language, and the News

In Chapter 2, we saw that when terrorism and other violent attacks are reported upon by the media and the perpetrators appear to have a connection to Muslims and/or Islam, this potential connection often becomes a major focus of the news. At the same time, the voices of those most affected—or maligned—often go unheard. This can, in turn, affect the way that academics working on the language of the press analyze news texts. Indeed, Ahmed and Matthes (2017: 236) issue an important warning for (Western) scholars who critically examine media discourse: because Muslims are not sufficiently involved in the production of media discourse, “academic discourses,” in turn, “run the risk of using pre-constructed media categories when studying Muslims and Islam.” In order to counter this tendency, it is important to include, in research, “the range of rapidly shifting social, political and religious contexts” (Ahmed and Matthes 2017: 236) involved. For this reason and because the news articles I analyze come from British, Swiss, and Spanish news sources, I discuss in this chapter the place that terrorism occupies in these countries and explore how related issues such as migration, integration, or religion may shape attitudes in divergent ways in the national and regional contexts in question, due to their particular historical, political, social, and linguistic characteristics. For instance, this chapter will briefly examine Spain’s evolution from a “país de emigrantes” [country of emigrants] to a “país receptor de inmigrantes” [country that takes in immigrants] (Piquer Martí 2015: 139) and the resulting shift in societal attitudes toward migrants, including Muslims; the devalorization of a previous policy of multiculturalism by the Conservative government in the UK in favor of “British values,” a “hostile environment policy” vis-à-vis migrants, and stringent laws in the name of counterterrorism; the rise of anti-Islam opinions and policies

in Switzerland despite the fact that the country has never experienced the types of attacks that have occurred in the past two decades in France, the UK, Spain, or the United States. Degrees of devolution and of linguistic diversity are also explored. Finally, some characteristics of the news landscapes are discussed, although my primary focus is the textual product.

In their introduction to *After Integration: Islam, Conviviality and Contentious Politics in Europe*, Burchardt and Michalowski write: “Islam is mainly an immigrant religion in Europe” (2015: 11). Given how long Muslim communities have been present in some European countries, and the fact that demographics are changing rapidly, it is high time this idea was challenged. In the meantime, though, this widespread attitude has all kinds of ramifications, across Europe but also by country, in terms of where Muslims stand with other members of society; how they are viewed, how they view themselves; what space they can occupy, what rights they have; how they are treated, how they treat others; what roles they play. Among other issues, in examining European societies, Burchardt and Michalowski (2015) point out, one must recognize and try to take into account the complex interplay between secularity (and its varying definitions and roles) and social, political, and economic history. The role of secularity in the functioning of the societies in question will therefore also be addressed here.

Linguistic Issues, including Linguistic Diversity

English is the official language of the UK. However, following the UK’s ratification of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages in 2001, it now has an impressive number of recognized minority languages, although the way they are treated in practice varies enormously. These languages are Welsh, Scottish Gaelic, Scots, Ulster Scots, Cornish, and Manx (language of the Isle of Man) (Vacca 2013). When the last official census was conducted in England and Wales in 2011, more than 90 percent of respondents said English, the official language of the UK, was their first language (Office for National Statistics 2018). More recently, it has been estimated that more than 95 percent of people in the UK are monolingual English speakers.¹ In 2011, after Welsh, with 562,000 speakers, Polish was the third most spoken language, with 549,000; then Punjabi, with 273,000; Urdu, with 269,000; Bengali, with Sylheti and Chatgaya, 221,000; Gujarati, 213,000; Arabic, 159,000 (Office for National Statistics 2018). These languages do not receive any special recognition. And yet, demographics are changing significantly—at the time of the last census in 2011, 13.4 percent of the

residents of England and Wales were non-UK-born, compared to just 4.3 percent in 1951 (Office for National Statistics 2013). In 2018, the figure had risen to 14 percent.² In terms of speakers of *recognized* minority languages, Scotland had 1.54 million Scots speakers and 57,602 Gaelic speakers, while 184,898 people in Northern Ireland indicated some knowledge of Irish and just 16,373 spoke Ulster Scots. Only 557 people declared Cornish to be their main language (Office for National Statistics 2018). As of 2015, some 1,800 people claimed to have knowledge of Manx.³ As of 2013, Wales had “the strongest legislation on minority languages in the UK” (Vacca 2013: 89).

In Switzerland, German, French, Italian, and Romansh are the official languages; Romansh is an official language mainly at the cantonal (see below) level, but also at the federal level when the government communicates with Romansh-speaking citizens (*Encyclopaedia Britannica* Online 2019). According to statistics compiled by the Swiss government,⁴ as of 2017, 62.6 percent of the Swiss population was German or Swiss German native speakers; 22.9 percent, French native speakers; 8.2 percent, (Swiss) Italian speakers; and 0.5 percent, Romansh speakers. The geographical zone where each language is spoken is generally close to the neighboring countries that speak the same language, Germany, France, and Italy; Romansh is a Rhaetian romance language spoken in parts of southern and eastern Switzerland, and parts of northern Italy. That said, the Swiss, in their tendency to “emphasize difference,” reinforced by the country’s “rugged topography” (*Encyclopaedia Britannica* Online, 2019), as well as the fact that they value regional and even local identity above the national, very often insist on the distinctions between themselves and the populations of these neighboring countries, as well as between themselves and residents of Switzerland’s other linguistic regions. At the same time, given the linguistic and cultural characteristics Swiss regions share with the neighboring countries as well as their interest in these countries’ national media, Germany, France and Italy naturally also influence the Swiss regions closest to them.

The fourth- and fifth-most-spoken languages in Switzerland are English (5.1 percent) and Portuguese (3.7 percent). Albanian (3.1 percent) and Serbo-Croatian (2.4 percent) follow; their presence is due to the arrival of many migrants and refugees from Bosnia and Herzegovina and from Kosovo during the violence of the 1990s. With Turkish residents, these groups make up a significant portion of Switzerland’s Muslim population.

The official language of Spain is Castilian,⁵ and 99 percent of Spanish citizens speak it as a first or second language. The Spanish constitution also allows its seventeen *comunidades autónomas* (autonomous communities; see below) to

recognize regional languages as “co-official” (*Encyclopedia Britannica* Online 2019), and six of the seventeen have done so: Catalonia and the Balearic Islands for Catalan, Valencia for *valenciano*, Galicia for *galego*, and the Basque Country and some parts of Navarra for *euskera* (Basque). In addition, “[a]lthough not named a co-official language of Asturias, Bable (Asturian) is protected and promoted under the community’s statutes, as are local Aragonese dialects in Aragon. ... Aranese, spoken in the Aran Valley, is safeguarded in a provision by the region’s government, the autonomy of Catalonia” (*Encyclopaedia Britannica* Online 2019). It is in such areas, and particularly in Catalonia, Galicia, and the autonomous cities of Ceuta and Melilla (see below), that Castilian is more often residents’ second language. In Catalonia and Galicia, regional and local government bodies and administrations conduct their affairs in the respective regional language.⁶ In the Basque Country, the Balearic Islands, and the *Comunitat Valenciana*, the regional language and Castilian are co-official (*Encyclopaedia Britannica* Online 2019).

Where a regional language is official or co-official, teaching in that language is enshrined in law, regardless of the fact that the percentages of people across Spain who speak, for instance, Catalan/*valenciano*, *galego*, or Basque are small (as of 2018, 17 percent, 7 percent, and 2 percent, respectively⁷). In stark contrast, in the autonomous cities of Ceuta and Melilla, Castilian is the one official language and also the language of prestige, whereas 50 percent of Ceuta’s inhabitants are of Moroccan origin and 40 percent of Melilla’s, of Berber origin. While it was difficult to find current data on the language specificities of these cities, a study of high school students in Ceuta (Antón 2011) found that 18 percent were Castilian-mother-tongue and 67 percent considered Arabic their first language; 27 percent of the latter group said they were more competent in Arabic than in Spanish. Cembrero (2016) maintains that language issues (294) are responsible for the 25.2 percent school dropout rate in Ceuta and Melilla (258).

Political and Legal Issues

In this section, I discuss political and legal aspects of the UK, Switzerland, and Spain which may shape attitudes toward those considered “Others” in the three countries. Just as we saw in the section on linguistic characteristics above, this necessitates some discussion of levels of regional diversity, and attention to the complexities of the Swiss cantons and of the *comunidades autónomas* in particular. That said, it is beyond the scope of this text to go into detail about levels of devolution in the UK and the countries that comprise it.

Politics, Law, and Religion

As indicated above, and given one of the issues inherent in this study—Muslims as “Others” in the media and in society—it is important to look at the interplay between politics, laws and regulations, and religion. One key component, then, is the relationship between church and state. Bassets (2017) distinguishes between *laicidad*, a position that “defends the separation between religion and the state,” and *laicismo*, a position that “actively aims to exclude religion from public spaces.”

The policies of European democracies generally tend toward *laicidad* (secularity); in some cases, this has been true for over a century. More recently, in conjunction with a hardening of opinion against Muslims, they are also tending toward *laicismo* (secularism), which has manifested itself in controversies, bans, or proposed bans of headscarves in schools or state institutions and administrations, or efforts to ban the burka in all public spaces, for instance. However, according to Cembrero (2016: 385–6), “secularism [*laicismo*] is starting to be questioned in some European countries that practice it ... In her academic articles, Zoila Combalía, Professor of Ecclesiastical Law at the University of Zaragoza, warns of the ‘dangers of a repressive secularity [*laicidad represiva*] that could hinder the integration of Islam in European societies.’” In addition, for this reason, “she is ‘surprised’ that some propose for Spain a form of secularity [*laicidad*] inspired by the French model, when France itself is abandoning it because it doesn’t work” (Cembrero 2016: 385–6).

Despite the European tendency toward secularity (at least ostensibly; we will see that the claim of such a policy often belies a different reality), there is a parallel countercurrent which, in strong contrast, emphasizes and even instrumentalizes religion. According to a professor of sociology at the Universidad Complutense de Madrid quoted in *El País*, “[t]here is a far right in Europe which, even though it is not religious, uses the Christian identity to ... counter the appeal of emigration and globalization” (Abad Liñan 2018). The journalist adds that “these Catholic, Protestant or Orthodox ultras, who stand for a ‘pro-Western and extremely xenophobic’ idea of Europe, present religion as a key aspect of identity to fulfil an aim that is not religious but rather ‘political and cultural’” (Abad Liñan 2018). Given, among other factors, European populations’ distrust of Muslims and fears about rising immigration, parties that rely on this kind of discourse are making gains across the region. One example is the *ultramontano* or radically conservative VOX in Spain. While in 2016, Cembrero characterized the far-right party as marginal, its status is changing rapidly: it recently won seats in Spain—specifically, twelve seats

in the parliament of Andalusia in the December 2, 2018 regional elections—for the first time in forty years. In addition, in the national elections of April 28, 2019, it won twenty-four seats in Spain's Congress of Deputies (*Congreso de los Diputados*, lower house of parliament), where previously it had none. Moreover, a recent survey confirms that VOX is the fastest-growing political party in Spain, and some believe that the ongoing "Catalan conflict" will strengthen it further (Llaneras 2019).

The fact that the UK is made up of four countries and its legal system, of three main sub-systems, means that religion is managed in various ways. That said, the constituent countries have been dominated by various forms of Christianity for some thousand years, and the Church of England remains England's official state church. Weller and Cheruvallil-Contractor (2015) point out that because the legal system of the UK is based on common law and has no constitution, there is significant room for "adaptability" (or inconsistency) "in matters ... concerning the relationships between religion, state and society" (312). Non-negligible examples of this, as Fiddian-Qasmiyeh and Qasmiyeh (2010: 296–7) illustrate, include the misleading and inconsistent labels applied by the Home Office to indicate the origins of asylum-seekers and refugees, suggesting both a major focus on and a major misunderstanding of ethnicity and geopolitical identity—not to mention actual geographical provenance—of certain groups arriving in the UK. In defining the migrant "Other," the Home Office engages in generalization, labeling, and *mislabeling*. In stark contrast, from the inside, in this case the points of view of interviewees who were asylum-seekers or refugees, "multiple re/presentations of religious identification" emerge which "reflect not only the heterogeneity of the category 'Muslim,' but also the multiple ways in which people define themselves and present themselves to others" (302). Ambivalence about one's own identity can also arise as one's understanding of it evolves, a process which is necessarily affected by life in the host context (302–3):

[T]ransformations in religious practice and identification may be instigated by the political and social environment in which individuals are currently located, with their real or imagined visibility leading to their hiding or modifying their approaches to Islam. Indeed, while individual descriptions of religiosity and practice may of course reflect personal feelings and preferences, they may in addition be determined ... to a large extent by the national and international realities framing the topic under consideration. (303)

Another significant contrast, then, is revealed here: self-representations by Muslim asylum-seekers and refugees are often not only personal, but fluid, malleable, aware of, and sensitive to change; other representations are often

not only general but rigid, static, unaware, and misinformed, not just in terms of geography, but also, in the case of the UK, in the separation between (more established) Asian Muslims⁸ (even if this label, too, is a generalization) and newly arrived Middle-Eastern Muslims (304).

The Rushdie affair⁹ was a “watershed” moment (Weller and Cheruvallil-Contractor 2015: 313) in the history of Muslims’ relations with British society, and for their public status within European societies more generally. Legal decisions made in relation to blasphemy in the wake of the controversy surrounding publication of *The Satanic Verses* convinced many Muslims “that legal protection from blasphemous libel extended only to Christian sensibilities,” thereby “underlining the perception among Muslims of a deeply rooted religious disadvantage and discrimination” (313). Subsequently, Muslims provided the major impetus for UK-wide laws against religious discrimination, the first accomplishments being to extend anti-blasphemy laws beyond the Church of England and to revisit hate speech legislation. At the same time, however, the episode cemented for various European governments the idea that Islam is fundamentally incompatible with their societies. In addition, in the UK, despite the establishment of the Racial and Religious Hatred Act in 2006, the constellation of legal changes that occurred around that time, including the abolition of existing blasphemy laws in 2008, actually kept the focus on racial or ethnic, rather than religious, issues: “discriminatory bias was created against religious (as opposed to racial or ethnic) groups, and at the disadvantage of Muslims in particular” (Maussen 2015: 98).

Is the UK a secular nation? On the one hand, if secularity means a population that does not believe in God or engage in any religious practices, the fact that in the last decades more and more people have claimed lack of belief and church attendance has plummeted suggests the country is becoming more and more secular. On the other hand, if secularity means absence of religion from state institutions, the label clearly does not fit. Take just one example—the significant role the Church plays in Parliament:

The UK Parliament automatically awards 26 seats in the House of Lords to bishops of the Church of England. These bishops are able to (and do) vote on legislation, make interventions, and lead prayers at the start of each day’s business.¹⁰

The same source observes that the only other country “to award clerics of the established religion votes in [its] legislature” is the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Another interesting issue is that of religious education in the UK. Offering it is mandatory in all state-funded schools. The Church of England supports

this requirement, including where Islam is concerned, because it deems religious literacy to be important. Just how the content is to be delivered, however, remains woefully undefined. Furthermore, *attending* is not mandatory; and in the past couple of years, parents across the UK have been rebelling against the possibility of their children learning about Islam, pulling them out of school—they have the legal right to do so under a 1998 law—or refusing to let them go on field trips that involve visiting a mosque, for instance.

Finally, it is worth noting that in contrast to Muslim populations in Switzerland and Spain, Muslims in the UK have played an important role in achieving law and policy changes, community building, and educational endeavors. This may be in part attributable to such factors as mastery of the national language and stable, long-term status in the UK, particularly of the large and well-established Muslim population of Indo-Pakistani origin. Muslims became more politically active as of about the 1990s, “especially through the Labour Party,¹¹ leading to the election of a significant number of Muslim elected local councilors (see Purdam 2000, 2001)” (Weller and Cheruvallil-Contractor 2015: 317). Moreover, as of the late 1980s, Muslim media organizations were created (i.e., *Muslim News*, *Q-News*, and the *Islam Channel*, a TV station, in 1989). “Such media have provided an alternative image of Muslims and Islam in comparison with the predominantly negative one found in the mainstream national media” (317).

Switzerland is made up of twenty-six cantons and some 3,000 *communes* (municipalities). The legal, political, and social landscape of Switzerland is complex in part because these cantons have a lot of autonomy. Each has its own constitution, parliament, government, and courts. Any powers that have not been expressly attributed to the Confederation are the remit of the cantons; these include health, education, and policing. Moreover, it is the *commune* that grants citizenship, which in part explains why Swiss identity is much more closely tied to this substructure than to the Confederation.

One area of policy that different cantons may manage in very different ways is that of religion. The Confederation states that it guarantees freedom of religion and equality before the law and that, as long as the cantons respect this principle, they may manage religious matters and the relationship between church and state as they see fit, including deciding which religious entities receive state support. One example of religious matters that cantons regulate in different ways is that of levying a church tax. For instance, payment of the tax is theoretically obligatory for all church members, but it is actually voluntary in the cantons of Geneva and Neuchâtel, the two cantons that have most clearly separated state from church; and businesses must pay it in twenty-one of the twenty-six cantons

(Geneva is not one of them). That said, it is important to be aware that the only boxes the taxpayer can check that will lead to payment of the tax are Christian Catholic, Roman Catholic, and Protestant/Reformed. Thus, cantonal taxation policies in the area of religion show a clear bias that disadvantages people and entities associated with minority religions, including Islam. There has also been extensive debate, just like in other European countries, around the questions of religious education for Muslims or the viability of allowing headscarves in schools, whether to allow halal meat (the mode of killing required is considered cruel to animals), and the establishment of Muslim cemeteries (which the cantons of Neuchâtel, Zurich, Geneva, Basel, and Berne have made possible by changing their laws) (D'Amato 2015: 291–3). In terms of wearing visible signs of the Muslim religion, Gianni, Giugni, and Michel (2015) and Cembrero (2016: 96) all highlight the fact that the Swiss canton of Ticino was the first European region to ban the full Islamic veil in all public places.

The anti-minaret ban of 2009 (also see section “Social Issues, including Religion and Attitudes to Religious Minorities”), which received 57.5 percent of the vote, is a particularly well-known example of the Swiss public’s reaction to the presence of Muslims and Islam in the country:

In 2009 the passage of a referendum to outlaw the construction of minarets (towers that feature in the design of many mosques) highlighted widespread misgivings about the presence of Muslims in Switzerland. The minaret ban had been promoted by the conservative Swiss People’s Party. (*Britannica Academic Online*, 2019)

The Swiss People’s Party’s campaign included posters featuring a Swiss flag from which many minarets—really resembling swords or knives, and therefore very menacing—protrude, with a figure in the foreground wearing a black burka, the word “Stop!,” also in black, and the exhortation to vote “yes” on the minaret ban. Moreover, “the local Catholic and the local Protestant Church” both “publicly supported local protests against the building of minarets” (Michalowski and Burchardt 2015: 120). The contrast between the acceptance of Muslim cemeteries (required for religious reasons) in some cantons and the ban is a single but telling example of the lack of “a unitary approach to Muslims in Switzerland” (D’Amato 2015: 299). Indeed, “[r]elations—between cantons and religions, between Muslim and non-Muslim communities—are fragmented according to the opportunity structures provided by the institutional and political settings of the different cantons” (299). On the issue of minarets, given the region and press in question in this study, it is important to note that of the four sole cantons that

voted against the ban, three were in the *Suisse romande*: Geneva (by almost 60 percent), Vaud, and Neuchâtel.

As we have already seen, Spain is made up of seventeen autonomous communities. It is important to realize that these regional autonomies took different paths to becoming so. The constitution of 1978 which accompanied Spain's transition from dictatorship under Franco to constitutional monarchy allowed for autonomous communities of two different types, "each of which has a different route to recognition and a different level of power and responsibility" (*Encyclopaedia Britannica Online* 2019):

The three regions that had voted for a statute of autonomy in the past—Catalonia, the Basque provinces, and Galicia—were designated "historic nationalities" and permitted to attain autonomy through a rapid and simplified process. Catalonia and the Basque Country had their statutes approved in December 1979 and Galicia in April 1981. The other regions were required to take a slower route, although Andalusia was designated as an exception to this general rule. It was not a "historic nationality," but there was much evidence, including mass demonstrations, of significant popular support for autonomy. As a result, a special, quicker process was created for it.

By May 1983 the entire country had been divided into 17 *comunidades autónomas*.

In 1995 the two autonomous cities of Ceuta and Melilla, both geographically part of Morocco on the North African coast, were added. Catalonia was given the status of nation in 2006 under Zapatero's socialist government, but Spain's Constitutional Court has since ruled that this term has only historical and cultural import and carries no legal weight.

What of the relationship between church and state in Spain? Comparing and contrasting France and Spain, Bugnot (2012: 982) observes that the notion of *laïcité* in Spain is "relatively recent and constantly developing." In addition, the country's "non-confessional" nature, enshrined in the Constitution of 1978, "has to cohabitate with a powerful Catholic hierarchy" that "controls a prestigious primary and secondary school network that extends across the country." As we will see below, this "cohabitation," coupled with the country's long history of strict Catholicism, actually goes some way to undermining Spain's supposed "non-confessional nature."

That said, Spain's shift away from the despotic and rigid aspects of Franco's totalitarian regime and its later adoption of the multicultural model of integration, in particular in the last two decades of the twentieth century, fostered a certain openness, including to other religions. An important step took place in July

1989, when “the Advisory Commission for Religious Freedom unanimously approved the recognition of Islam as a firmly established religion [*religión de notorio arraigo*] in Spain” (Cembrero 2016: 206). There followed the creation of the Islamic Commission of Spain (CIE) and the signing of the Cooperation Agreement between this body and the Spanish state in 1992.

Spain’s *official* recognition of Islam “is probably unique in Europe” (Astor 2015: 259). Nevertheless, the benefits have largely remained on paper only, as Cembrero (2016) amply demonstrates. He presents a long list of issues and inconsistencies, including, to give just three examples, the availability of public funding for Christian, but not Muslim, peregrination; the fact that the shirts of soldiers’ (including the significant number of Muslim soldiers) uniforms have a cross on them (355–6); as is the case in Switzerland, the possibility for citizens to attribute a portion of their tax to the Church, but not to other religious organizations (381). The numerous examples Cembrero cites highlight “the inconsistency of the State, given that Article 16 of its Constitution states that ‘there shall be no national religion’” (356). (While Cembrero (2016) holds up France as the model for genuine secularity, as—he believes—its 1905 law established a clear separation of church and state, France’s recent politics, too, nevertheless demonstrate that such laws remain insufficient when the Judeo-Christian tradition remains the exclusive—and exclusionary—religious yardstick used by members of society, including politicians.) Furthermore, Astor recognizes “a general disinterest among public officials in taking concrete steps to accommodate the ordinary needs of Muslim communities, especially when doing so comes with political risk” (2015: 262). The author points out that Muslims “have had great difficulty establishing mosques, obtaining land for Muslim burial grounds, arranging for Islamic religious instruction in schools, and attaining other measures of accommodation” (262), despite allowances set out in the Agreement.

According to Cembrero (2016: 376), if the measures of the Agreement have only been partially rolled out, this is also in part “due to the divisions and apathy among Muslims themselves.” Apparently (203) the infighting of the two leaders of the previous rival associations that make up the CIE has actually impeded the enforcement or securing of recognition of the rights that are guaranteed under the Agreement. The author also maintains that Muslims—presented, unfortunately, as a monolith—remain in a mindset where they relate to Spain as Muslim foreigners, not as Muslims of Spain. This is a generalization; to the extent to which it applies, it may have a lot more to do with how society defines and treats them than with how they see themselves (see, for example, Barbero 2016).

It may also have to do with the fact that the governance¹² of Islam in Spain is decentralized. Catalonia is the major exception and is working to institutionalize it “and religious diversity more generally” (Astor 2015: 258). This is all the more significant as the autonomous region is home to the largest Muslim population in Spain. For its initiatives, Barcelona’s Office of Religious Affairs (OAR) “has drawn heavily on examples from British, American, and French cities,” not only because they have “longer traditions of regulating religious diversity,” but also for linguistic reasons: OAR employees “have greater fluency in English and French than in other European languages” (259). The *Generalitat*’s Directorate General of Religious Affairs (DGAR) operates at the regional level (259). Moreover, Cembrero (2016: 117) attributes to Catalonia a vested interest in attracting immigrants—as well as encouraging them to learn Catalan directly, rather than Castilian—the idea being that they would then support the separatist movement. But one has to question the influence of Cembrero’s own ideology in making this assertion, as the separatist movement is an incredibly polarized, divisive, and emotional issue for Spaniards. I do wonder whether the volatile question of Catalan independence gets bound up with generalizations about the greater concentration of Muslims there and (extremist) violence. The question warrants further research.

Despite the efforts of local and regional organizations such as the OAR, “social tensions surrounding Islam’s presence in the region have persisted” (Astor 2015: 259). Barbero (2016) also provides useful insights about how the legal framework in Spain addresses immigration and Muslim immigrants in particular, and how regulation of citizenship contributes to “othering” the Muslim community. For him, Spain’s approach is part of a larger strategy of “orientalization” of this group by government, politicians, and the media, which in turn legitimizes the “securitization of immigration,” and relies on the construction of an image of the “immigrant as criminal” and of the “Muslim immigrant as terrorist.” According to Barbero, such attitudes are longstanding, as Muslim otherness is a historical matter for Spaniards¹³ (363) and closely tied to the construction of the “Spanish identity.”

Politics, Law, and Terrorism

Given the focus on terrorism of the news articles in my corpus, it is important to look at how the issue is addressed in the countries in question. In the UK, Section I of the Terrorism Act of 2000 defines terrorism as “the use or threat of action” “to influence the government or an international government organisation or

to intimidate the public or a section of the public”, or to advance “a political, religious or ideological cause.” The action is terrorist in nature if it “involves serious violence against a person” or “serious damage to property,” “endangers a person’s life, other than that of the person committing the action,” “creates a serious risk to the health or safety of the public or a section of the public,” or “is designed seriously to interfere with or seriously to disrupt an electronic system”.¹⁴

Over the last two decades and in particular since 9/11, a complex web of anti-terrorism laws and measures, too extensive to be presented in detail here, has been progressively introduced in the UK and progressively fine-tuned as new violent events have occurred. What can be said is that these policies are widely considered to be increasingly restrictive of civil liberties, increasingly invasive in terms of citizens’ privacy, and increasingly likely to result in racial profiling—which means they disproportionately affect people of color, Muslims, and people believed to be Muslim. One of the prime targets of criticism currently is the Prevent strategy, so I will discuss it briefly here.

Prevent is one of four so-called strands of the UK’s official counterterrorism strategy *CONTEST* (along with *Pursue*, *Protect*, and *Prepare*), and the most vehemently criticized. A minor aspect of the larger strategy introduced under New Labour (Blair) in 2003, Prevent has since been reinforced, including after the London terror attacks of July 2005 and after the killing of Lee Rigby in 2013. The official aim of this strand is “to stop people becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism.” A worthy goal, as was the “first pillar” of Prevent: “to tackle disadvantage, inequalities and discrimination” (Warsi [2017] 2018: 87). Other pillars aimed to foster “civic challenge and debate” (88) and to challenge extremist ideologies. Again, worthy goals. However, two main problems developed. The first is related to the vocabulary of extremism: “radicalization” became the new buzzword for the discussion of all things that led up to the actual violent act of terrorism”; it was defined as “the process someone goes through in becoming a terrorist,” not as “a reason or a root cause” (89), and as a result, reasons and root causes could be more easily ignored (89). Moreover, the government defined extremism as “[v]ocal or active opposition to fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs” (95). The argument that developed was that all Islamists—itsself a misused term, as it simply refers to “Muslims with political goals” (93)—are extremists, and that their values are diametrically opposed to “British values.”

The second problem is that in 2015, it became compulsory for schools, universities, National Health Service (NHS) employees, and local authorities to essentially police their respective environments, as they were made responsible for identifying signs of extremism and reporting them. This has eroded trust within various institutions, including by challenging fundamental relationships such as those between teachers and students or doctors and patients; made easier and more legitimate the profiling and stigmatization of certain groups; and threatened the “robust debate” (105) and free speech that are part of the *raison d'être* of institutions of higher education. As we can see, the climate this creates actually works roundly against the original principles of the Prevent strategy.

Switzerland does not have a specific law pertaining to terrorism; it qualifies as a criminal act. For Jean-Paul Rouiller, head of the Terrorism Joint Analysis Group at the Geneva Centre for Security Policy and a former analyst for the Swiss intelligence services, Switzerland “has not integrated [into its law] the close relationship between intention and action. Legally speaking, both should be punished” (Misson 2014). However, according to another expert quoted in the same article,

1. a crime is punished once it is committed, and
2. incorporating the notion of intent would make the law more difficult to apply and also potentially lead to abuses.

As of 2014,

[t]he penal code punishes preparatory acts in certain cases; they must be at a relatively advanced stage. They do not constitute a crime unless they correspond to one of the infractions listed in the Penal Code. “In a case where a [would-be] perpetrator of a terrorist act changed his mind, it would be important to determine the extent to which his acts were premeditated.” [Nesa Zimmerman, Phd student in law at the University of Geneva.] Otherwise, according to the law, he would be exonerated if he decided not to go through with the act (art. 260a of the Penal Code). (Misson 2014)

Article 573 of the most recent version of Spain’s penal code defines terrorism as “any serious crime against life or physical integrity, freedom, moral integrity, sexual freedom and indemnity, property, natural resources, the environment, public health” or “the Crown,” “involving catastrophic risk, fire, falsifying documents,” amassing or trafficking arms, with the aim of “subverting the constitutional order, ending or gravely destabilizing the functioning of the political, economic or social institutions of the State,” forcing state institutions to engage in certain actions or to “abstain from doing so,” “gravely altering

the public peace, gravely destabilizing the functioning of an international organization,” or “provoking a state of terror within the population or a part of the population.”¹⁵ Both the variety of types of acts labeled terrorism and the level of detail may well be tied to Spain’s history of organized violence. While Catalonia and the Basque Country were the first autonomous communities to receive the status, their histories have been marked by strong militant activity, including violence widely considered to be terrorism, on the part of the Basque separatist group ETA and, on the part of Catalonia, the volatile and hugely controversial movement for independence, which turned particularly violent in autumn 2019. “[T]he militant Basque nationalist movement ... has sought total independence and used terrorism as its principal method. As a result, domestic terrorism is a major concern of the Spanish police” (*Encyclopaedia Britannica* Online 2019).

In 2012, still a time of economic upheaval following the 2008 financial crisis, separatists made great strides in elections in both regions; given the significant Muslim population in Catalonia, I will give this region more attention here. In addition to economic factors, Catalan separatists were also spurred on by the reversal in 2010 by Spain’s Constitutional Court of a number of measures agreed in 2006 that had given the region greater autonomy. *Independentistas* began to act on their promise to gain independence by holding a referendum in November 2014, despite the fact that secession is illegal under the constitution of 1978. Support was very high, but voter turnout was not. “[E]xactly one year later the regional parliament narrowly approved a measure to implement a ‘peaceful disconnection from the Spanish state.’ Rajoy responded to the move by making an immediate appeal to the Spanish Constitutional Court” (*Encyclopaedia Britannica* Online 2019).

Following the Brexit referendum in the UK, Catalonia’s independence movement gained ground, with polls showing majority support in Catalonia for the first time in 2016. In the end,

Rajoy’s government was unable to contain the Catalan drive for independence, and a new referendum was held on October 1, 2017. Spanish police confiscated ballot papers and engaged in violent clashes with voters, leaving hundreds injured. Although widespread irregularities marred the polling, the Catalan parliament interpreted the result as a mandate to declare independence from Spain, and it voted to do so on October 27. Within minutes of the declaration, Rajoy invoked Article 155 of the Spanish constitution, stripping the Catalan parliament of power and imposing direct rule from Madrid. (*Encyclopaedia Britannica* Online, 2019)

Madrid dissolved the regional parliament and held snap elections. Rajoy's move was popular with the Spanish electorate,¹⁶ which hints at the deep and bitter divisions that continue to exist in Spain between unionists and separatists.

How does militant or terrorist activity relate to perceptions of Muslims in Spain? Scholars differ on the extent to which the terrorist attacks in Madrid in March 2004 (called 11-M in Spain) hardened public opinion against Muslims. According to Astor, the attacks fueled "public anxieties regarding Spain's growing Muslim population" (2015: 256). Cembrero (2016) does not frame it this way at all, however. He claims the event "hardly provoked any xenophobic reactions against the Muslim population, not even against those who had the same nationality—Moroccan—as the material perpetrators of 11-M" (81). The period even saw more Spanish tourists visiting Morocco (82). "While it may seem paradoxical," he goes on, in Spain, "there was more aversion to Muslims following the two series of attacks that spilled so much blood in Paris, in January and November 2015, than after 11-M" (83). It is perhaps not really paradoxical, though, as a lot had changed in between the two events (see section "Social Issues, including Religion and Attitudes to Religious Minorities"). In addition, the section of Cembrero's own text that directly follows these observations explains that Catholic priests in Spain attributed blame to all Muslims after the France events (84) and evokes a security force memorandum targeting people who looked North African (84). The author also observes (146–7) that around the time of the Paris attacks, both the minister of the interior at the time and the conservative newspaper *La Razón* equated *independentismo* with terrorism and crime. Catalonia is another paradox: while pro-independence people have allegedly worked to attract Moroccans there, the discourse of the right is particularly harsh toward them (122).

Regarding José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero and the post-11-M period, Astor (2015: 257) observes that Zapatero's socialist government, which came to power immediately after the attack, naturally worked on bolstering national security; in addition, the integration of Muslims returned to the administration's agenda after having been ignored by José Maria Aznar's conservative government. For example, a new Foundation for Pluralism and Coexistence provided significant funding to religious minority associations and federations (257), as well as developing "initiatives aimed at promoting public awareness and toleration [*sic*] of religious diversity, improving data on the presence of religious minorities, and facilitating access to resources" for those "involved in religious governance" (257). Today, however, support of this Foundation is far from unanimous, including among Muslim leaders. It is even seen by some as a tool for "controlling and domesticating Islam" (257).

Finally, in the wake of the “Charlie Hebdo” events, the Rajoy government tried to put into place something akin to the UK Prevent¹⁷ program, *id est* “mobilizing all public administrations as well as civil society to detect” and report “suspicious behavior before it results in acts of terrorism” (Cembrero, 2016: 169). After the Bataclan attack, the Interior Ministry launched *Stop Radicalismos*, part of a larger initiative launched at the beginning of 2015 “that goes significantly further than the measures in place in other European countries.” It “consists of encouraging citizens to signal via email, a specific website, a free telephone number or a mobile application (Alertcops), signs of radicalization or the disappearances of individuals who may have gone to conflict zones” (172). The contact information for *Stop Radicalismos* is provided in a number of the Spanish articles in my corpus.

Even though the government’s plan hasn’t been comprehensively put into practice, because it is modelled on the counterterror initiatives of other European countries, certain measures can be quite invasive. It follows that criticism of it is similar to that leveled at, for instance, Prevent (Cembrero 2016: 169). First of all, needless to say, “Muslim officials are angry about the plan,” as Muslims weren’t included in its elaboration and are already more than sufficiently stigmatized (170). In addition, there are certain risks. For instance, Cembrero maintains that among Muslims—but why not others?—“people could be tempted to refer someone to Stop Radicalismos out of vengeance or spite” (173). This is all the more likely as “informers” can remain anonymous (unlike in France, for instance, where citizens have to provide their contact information). Furthermore, the measures “are reminiscent of the anonymous denunciations” made between 1936 and 1945 “of teachers and professors accused of opposing the new regime of Franco” (173). Nevertheless, despite these risks and the concerns of the Muslim community, there was generally little criticism of the plan when it was implemented, perhaps because anxiety had risen, along with the terror alert level (4 out of 5), according to a Pew survey in June 2015 (173).

Social Issues, including Religion and Attitudes to Religious Minorities

This section will be particularly concerned with attitudes to minorities and the extent to which minorities, and in particular Muslims, benefit from cultural and religious rights (Burchardt and Michalowski 2015), an issue which is closely tied to the model of integration that predominates in each country in question. Burchardt and Michalowski (2015: 9) maintain that “in general, rights related to

Islam have actually expanded significantly in most Western European countries over the past two decades.” As we will see from more detailed analysis below, this is definitely a generalization; it also masks the fact that there is a long way to go before various European democracies actually offer the degree of equality they claim to support.

Graphs presented by Michalowski and Burchardt (2015: 108–9) indicate that between 2002 and 2008, the ten European countries studied in the *Indices of Citizenship Rights for Immigrants* (ICRI) project became more restrictive on cultural rights for immigrants,¹⁸ but especially the UK, the Netherlands, and France, with the Swiss shift fairly pronounced as well (despite very different migrant, and Muslim, populations, very different histories of terrorism, and so on). Spain only became slightly more restrictive. In contrast, religious rights¹⁹ appear to have expanded significantly in the UK, France, and Spain, but not at all in Switzerland.

Integration is a central issue in Europe and often comes to the fore in political and media discourse when terrorist attacks occur. Despite the fact that the term is used often and as if everyone knows what it means, integration is also a complex notion that has multiple and conflicting definitions (on the thorniness of the concept of “integration,” also see Riggs 2018; Wagman 2006). As Gianni, Giugni, and Michel (2015) explain, policies of integration vary according to country (see discussion of assimilationist vs. multiculturalist policies below). Moreover, integration happens in different spaces (school, the workplace) and depends upon different factors, which may be institutional/political (for instance, ease of obtaining nationality; the right to vote); sociocultural (ability to speak a national language or access to language courses, for example); economic (levels of discrimination in the workplace, for instance). The aforementioned examples are objective, but integration may also be subjective: an individual may *feel* integrated in one setting or aspect of her life and not in another.

At the level of national policies and institutions, two main approaches to integration exist. The first, assimilationist, corresponds to this description by Piquer Martí (2015: 150; she also cites Wagman (2006: 209)), although she does not use the term: “In many cases, the concept includes the idea that for immigrants to be able to ‘integrate,’ they have to alter their behavior and their values in order to acquire other values that are considered ‘superior,’ that is, those of the host society (‘ours’).” Note that in this scenario, the adjustment required is unilateral: the host society does not need to adapt. Access to citizenship is not facilitated and requires proof that the applicant has adapted to the national lifestyle and values, whatever that might mean and however it might

be evaluated. Gianni, Giugni, and Michel's (2015) findings, discussed below, actually show that the assimilationist model "plays an important role in creating a demarcation between nationals and foreigners as well as between immigrant groups" (2015: 79). Importantly, the authors point out that in countries—their example is Switzerland—where this approach prevails, "the concept of assimilation has been replaced by the term integration in official discourse" (21).

The second approach, multiculturalist, is based on the view that in a society composed of various cultures, races, and ethnicities, differences—in particular of minority groups—should be acknowledged, respected, and even protected, because they enrich society as a whole. This necessarily involves the state intervening proactively in various ways, for instance, by providing special protection or allowances under the law for the practices of a given cultural group or granting it autonomous rights of governance. This model also facilitates access to citizenship (Gianni, Giugni, and Michel 2015: 19). A major criticism of the multiculturalist approach is that it allows and even encourages different groups to exist and evolve in separate bubbles rather than requiring their interaction, and therefore does not lead to effective integration after all. (Emblematic of the criticism and of the recent backlash against multiculturalism in Europe are Angela Merkel's declaration in 2010 that the multicultural approach in Germany had "utterly failed" and David Cameron's speech to the Munich Security Conference in 2011, during which he stated that "Under the doctrine of multiculturalism," the UK had "allowed the weakening of our collective identity" and "even tolerated" what he described as "segregated communities [...] living apart from each other and apart from the mainstream" "behaving in ways that run completely counter to our values."²⁰ What is not mentioned is how multiculturalism was defined, operationalized in law and policy, and measured.)

In line with Modood (2007), Gianni, Giugni, and Michel (2015) instead conceive of integration as a mutual, reciprocal "two-way process of social interaction" whose success depends on *both* immigrants/ethnic minorities *and* citizens/the majority, so that the former "cannot alone be blamed for failing (or not trying) to integrate" (Modood 2007: 48). This is the kind of integration that a cosmopolitan outlook or the approaches inherent in cultural translation would foster.

In the UK, the concept of integration was for a long time inextricably tied to a policy of multiculturalism, but as reflected in Cameron's speech, this began to change significantly around 2010. In France, the notion of integration is closely connected to a notion of French identity (whatever that means) which itself relies on *laïcité*: the secularity of the State (see, for example, Doyle 2011; Vaarakallio

2010). Nevertheless, the value placed on multiculturalism in the UK was still reflected in the previous coalition government's conception of integration provided by a House of Commons parliamentary report (Women and Equalities Committee 2016). It stipulates that policy should "focus[] on what we have in common rather than our differences," ensure that "[p]eople of all backgrounds have the opportunities to take part, be heard and take decisions in local and national life," and provide "[a] robust response to threats, whether discrimination, extremism or disorder, that deepen division and increase tensions" (Women and Equalities Committee 2016: 9). The same report, however, formulates strong concerns about the UK government's integration policy, which is inextricably bound up with counterterrorism efforts and especially with tackling extremism (recall the Prevent strategy). It encourages racial profiling and discrimination, in particular against Muslims or those perceived as Muslim:

We do not underestimate the challenges the Government faces in tackling extremism, but the conflation of integration with counter-extremism has exacerbated inequalities experienced by Muslims. The Government needs to tackle the disadvantages faced by Muslims in their own right, not through the lens of counter-extremism. (5)

As we have already seen, and as Lee Jarvis, a prominent author on UK counterterrorism and security policy and editor of *Critical Studies on Terrorism*, has also noted, "counter-radicalisation policy ... in the British case relies heavily on claims around fundamental or mainstream 'British values'" (Antichan and Jarvis 2017). This term, like "integration," is used frequently, particularly on the right, but not defined. Like the current tendency to conflate integration and counterterrorism measures, it poses a challenge to multiculturalism. It suggests that there are "others" who fall outside the realm of "Britishness" (also undefined) and who are assumed to not share those "values." Moreover, as the term "values" is morally focused, it claims superiority over those judged un-British while also intimating that they are a potential threat, since they do not share "our" moral code.

Fiddian-Qasmiyeh and Qasmiyeh (2010) highlight the heterogeneity of the "Muslim experience" through their focus on more recently arrived refugees and asylum-seekers of Middle Eastern origin living in the UK. What they say is valid for these groups more generally and the way their (varied and various) identities get equated with violence and danger. Their identities

have been transformed in/by the public imagination, moving from an emphasis on their "refugee-ness" and categorization as either "bogus" or

“genuine” asylum-seekers, to a primal concern with their Muslim identity, which is equated with a threatening identity. (295)

Such tendencies, coupled with the specificity of their experience, contribute to their marginalization:

Muslim asylum-seekers and refugees’ lives, whether practicing or not, are marked by physical and psychological alienation from both their country of origin (due to their request for political asylum) and the country which they hope will offer them protection (because of the impediments they face upon and following their arrival). This alienation is not only embodied in the specificities of their asylum journey, but also in the current political setting that incriminates and forcibly categorizes them as a threat to national security. (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh and Qasmiyeh 2010: 310)

Thus, they “find themselves exposed to three intersecting vulnerabilities: firstly, their uncertain legal status; secondly, their voluntary or imposed religious identification as ‘Muslims’; and lastly, their exclusion from established Muslim communities in the UK” (294).

And yet, these individuals are regular human beings with regular, and noble, goals. In the interviews these authors conducted, asylum-seekers’ and refugees’ self-described identification and experience included a strong desire to be a productive member of society and to ensure the best outcome for their children’s futures; confusion about which cultural norms to follow; sometimes a rejection of Islam, sometimes an intensification of interest in it, either for comfort, for points of reference and a kind of anchoring in the very uncertain circumstances of the asylum-seeker/refugee existence, or to provide children with a sound basis on which to make decisions/lead their lives; or being simultaneously (often marginalized) observers of, and active participants in, the host society (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh and Qasmiyeh 2010). The authors conclude that the overriding sentiment of this sub-group of asylum seekers and refugees is ambivalence, both in relation to the “within” and to the “without.”

While notions of Britishness were becoming much more inclusive leading up to the 2000s, Weller and Cheruvallil-Contractor (2015) maintain that in the wake of, in particular, “the summer 2001 northern mill town disturbances involving young Muslims,”²¹ 9/11, and then the 7/7 London bombings in 2005, “there has been a move away from earlier forms of multiculturalism” (320). They were writing in 2015; in the current climate, this is an understatement. At the same time, their conclusions are quite optimistic, in particular the notion that the younger generation, encompassing a Britishness that is inseparable from

the Muslim part of its identity, as well as being well-educated and confident (according to the authors; this seems a generalization), will succeed in making inclusive multiculturalism the norm. Instead, recent articles indicate that part of the Conservative government's "anti-radicalisation strategy" will include inculcating "British values."²² Weller and Cheruvallil-Contractor's optimism also seems to rely heavily on the fact that Britain is part of Europe, but soon it will not be, at least not politically. The moves to leave Europe are already affecting multiculturalism. Findings reported in 2017 are also cause for alarm:

More than half of Britons see Islam (the mainstream religion, not Islamist fundamentalist groups) as a threat to Western liberal democracy. Over 30 percent of young children [i.e. the next generation] believe Muslims are "taking over England" and hate crime against Muslims continues to rise, up by 70 percent [from 2015 to 2016], according to the Metropolitan police. (Versi 2016a)

Thus, the fact that in 2014 the UK ranked fifteenth out of thirty-eight countries on the Migrant Integration Policy Index²³ suggests that the way policies are measured, who is consulted about integration of migrants and how integration is defined, may mask a more negative reality. It will be interesting to see what happens to the ranking post-Brexit.

The findings of the EURISLAM Project,²⁴ finalized in 2012, are particularly illuminating with regard to attitudes toward Muslims. The project, which examined approaches to the cultural integration of immigrants, and particularly of Muslims, in six European countries, began with the research question: "How have different traditions of national identity, citizenship and church-state relations affected European" "countries' incorporation of Islam, and what are the consequences of these approaches for patterns of cultural distance and interaction between Muslim immigrants" and/or "their descendants, and the receiving society" (Hoksbergen and Tillie 2012)? In all countries studied, "the non-Muslim majority group perceives the most cultural distance between Muslims and non-Muslims". In the UK, the Muslim community that perceived the most cultural distance between these two groups was Pakistanis; this is despite their greater mastery of the official language—as we have seen, a key factor in integration—than other Muslim communities (Hoksbergen and Tillie 2012). Across Europe, despite the popular claim that "Muslim values" are incompatible with democracy, Muslims showed "strong support for democracy," the sole exception being those of ex-Yugoslav origin in the UK (Hoksbergen and Tillie 2012). In the media, "[o]verall, more is said about Muslims by non-Muslims than by Muslims themselves" (Hoksbergen and Tillie 2012). In addition,

in relation to media treatment of Muslims and integration, the report observes that while positive stances do exist, it is the negative content that is most salient. For this reason, a significant “segment of Muslim leaders feels that they need to defend Islam and the position of Muslims, followed closely by those who wish to interact and get into a discussion with non-Muslims” (Hoksbergen and Tillie 2012). Moreover, and importantly for this study, the researchers observe that “the UK case suggests” that positive input to the media increases “when the number of Muslim actors increases” (Hoksbergen and Tillie 2012).

In terms of social interaction and acceptance among Muslims and non-Muslims, it was in the UK and the Netherlands that “the majority population have close Muslim friends” (Hoksbergen and Tillie 2012). In the UK, Muslims, “except ex-Yugoslavs,” “know more people from the majority population through associations than through their neighbourhood” (Hoksbergen and Tillie 2012). Because members of the majority population of the UK do “not have strongly pronounced religious identities,” those of all Muslim groups are much stronger (Hoksbergen and Tillie 2012). That said, in line with Fiddian-Qasmiyeh and Qasmiyeh’s findings, “[b]elonging was often described in contextual ways, and identity was also context-dependent”; that is, “individual respondents described their sense of belonging as being related mainly to their social networks and lifestyle choices they had been socialized into,” rather than to the context of the country of origin (Hoksbergen and Tillie 2012). Muslims’ feelings of acceptance are low (although this is less true of Pakistanis and ex-Yugoslavs in the UK). Put otherwise, “perception of out-group distance is the highest in the United Kingdom” (Hoksbergen and Tillie 2012). While this is subjective, the researchers also found that it was in the UK where “the national majority shows least acceptance of immigrants” (Hoksbergen and Tillie 2012). Interestingly, majority populations in all the countries except the UK had more problems sharing space with Muslims in public spaces than at social events. Disturbingly, in all countries except France, the majority population was very negative about hiring Muslims or working with them.

Finally, the report criticizes the fact that in Europe “the debate is merely characterized by a bi-directional communication between the states and Muslims [*sic*] organizations. Civil society actors as a relevant addressee are quite absent from it” (Hoksbergen and Tillie 2012). In line with Gianni, Giugni, and Michel’s (2015) findings and the conception of integration as a mutual effort, one of the researchers’ key conclusions is that “[p]olicies to stimulate dialogue should not only target Muslims, but also the majority population, since they perceive far more cultural distance than the Muslim groups in our study and have lesser

bridging social capital [social networks that include both Muslims and non-Muslims and therefore ‘bridge’ the cultural gap] than the Muslim population” (Hoksbergen and Tillie 2012). Media and their portrayals of different societal groups have a key role to play in this.

The Muslim religious minority is relatively new in Switzerland. It was in the late 1960s that the first group²⁵ of Muslim immigrants arrived. Like in Spain, they came mainly for economic reasons: in this case, to resolve labor shortages. While some Muslims have always come from the Middle East, people in this early group were mainly Turkish and Yugoslav, aimed to stay only for short periods, and remained “invisible” (D’Amato 2015: 286) in religious and cultural terms. A second group appeared in the 1970s within the framework of a “policy of family reunification” and therefore no longer intended to go back to the country of origin. The third group was predominantly made up of asylum-seekers: those continuing to arrive from the Middle East were joined by Balkan Muslims in the 1990s as well as groups from sub-Saharan Africa and North Africa.

Today, the Muslim population of Switzerland also includes “descendants of the first waves and an increasing number of Swiss citizens who are converting to Islam (Gianni 2010)” (D’Amato 2015: 286). That said, just 4.5 to 5 percent of the Swiss population identifies as Muslim (286). In addition, *only 10–15 percent of that total number is actually practicing Muslims* (297; citing Gianni 2010: 14; my emphasis), or about 50,000 people and yet, this is the group the media focuses upon. There are more Muslims in the German-speaking areas (4.9 percent vs. 3.9 percent in the French-speaking *Suisse romande*), while those with passports reside mainly in the French-speaking part (287). Given the provenance of the news articles discussed here, it is important to note that the canton of Geneva is the only non-German-speaking canton in which the percentage of Muslims surpasses the national percentage (it was 5.4 percent in 2018).²⁶ In stark contrast to the French, UK, and Spanish Muslim populations, about 90 percent of Muslims in Switzerland have come from other parts of Europe. As the results of the survey by Gianni, Giugni, and Michel (2015) show, Muslims in Switzerland are mainly of Turkish, ex-Yugoslav, and North African (the Maghreb) origin, and the researchers insist on the major differences between them. There are significantly more Muslims from the Maghreb—language is certainly a factor in this—in the *Suisse romande*, the region of particular concern for us here, than in other parts of Switzerland.

In 2000 and then through a federal law in 2005, the Swiss government expressly “recognized the presence of foreigners and affirmed that their integration was a priority” (Gianni, Giugni, and Michel 2015: 22). Article 4 of

the Federal Law on Foreigners stated the following, as summarized by Gianni, Giugni and Michel (2015: 22–3): “the integration of foreigners is intended to foster coexistence of the Swiss and foreign populations in accordance with constitutional values and mutual respect and tolerance; integration should allow foreigners whose residence status is legal and stable to participate in social, cultural, and economic life; integration means that foreigners are willing to integrate and that the Swiss population is open to foreigners; it is essential that foreigners familiarize themselves with the Swiss way of life and in particular that they learn a national language”. Despite these principles, the authors observe that Switzerland ranked twenty-third out of thirty-eight countries on the Migrant Integration Policy Index of 2011 (the most recent data, from 2014, ranks it twenty-first), and that discrimination is rampant in Switzerland (Gianni, Giugni, and Michel 2015: 23).

It is important to look at the specificities of North African Muslims in Switzerland, both because they are the majority Muslim population in the Swiss region of concern here, and because, due to their physical appearance and provenance, they are part of the Muslim population in Europe that is most likely to be stereotyped as extremists/terrorists. It is Muslims from the Maghreb who tend to have the least stable residence status in Switzerland, whereas it is this group that is most likely to have one of the national languages as its mother tongue (Gianni, Giugni, and Michel 2015). The researchers also highlight the fact that many of the Muslims in their sample were multilingual, something which is rarely emphasized in the literature about migrants, but is a particular asset in this country of four official languages (36–8). In addition, while foreigners in Switzerland tend to have a lower level of education than Swiss citizens, that of immigrants from the Maghreb is in fact higher (38). Despite these qualifications, they have difficulties finding employment. This is in part due to lack of recognition of foreign diplomas and in part due to discrimination (44). Swiss residents from the Maghreb also have a higher rate of mixed marriages (25 percent) than the other Muslim groups. (The majority of Swiss citizens are married to Christians (48).) In a similar vein, respondents from the Maghreb had interpersonal networks that were more ethnically and religiously heterogeneous than those of other Muslims. The Swiss citizens’ networks were the most homogeneous (49). If we consider that integration as a mutual process also depends on the efforts of the host society to establish intercultural contact, this tendency is “likely to hinder the process of integration” (51).

Despite the tiny number of practicing Muslims living in Switzerland, a significant portion of the Swiss population has been led to believe that Islam is

threatening to overtake the country. The saga of the Swiss minaret ban (see, for example, Davier 2013; D'Amato 2015: 292–3) aptly demonstrates the significant role that fear-mongering on the part of both certain Swiss politicians and the media has played in swaying public opinion. In stark contrast to the fear in the country “that Islam could be politicized in the near future” is Gianni’s observation that “Muslims in Switzerland do not interpret their presence and citizenship politically” (D’Amato 2015: 297). Indeed, the author considers that “the voting on the banning of minarets has shown how badly Muslims are organized at the national level” (296). This is similar to how Astor (2015) and Cembrero (2016) describe the situation in Spain. (It must be noted, though, that political agency is largely tied to citizenship, which, as Gianni, Guigni, and Michel (2015) discuss, is very difficult for non-Europeans to obtain in Switzerland. Eighty percent of the Muslims they surveyed said they would vote in local elections if they had the right. In addition, respondents from the Maghreb were actually more interested in politics than Swiss citizens (67). Muslims in general were also very active in volunteer associations.) Moreover, in February 2014, Swiss voters approved a referendum—by a tiny margin, 50.34 percent—that established immigration quotas and also “introduced hiring preferences for Swiss nationals” (*Encyclopaedia Britannica* Online 2019). However, it is essential to note that all of the *Suisse romande* cantons except one voted against it: Geneva, by 60.9 percent, and Vaud, by 61.07 percent, for instance. In contrast, of the German-speaking cantons, only Zurich, Basel-City, and Zug refused the text.

On the topic of discrimination, Gianni, Guigni, and Michel (2015) asked respondents if they had felt discriminated against within the preceding twelve months. Nearly a third of Turks and residents from the Maghreb felt they had experienced discrimination based on their skin color or race (53). This kind of discrimination was directed more often at men than at women, whereas religious discrimination was more frequently directed at women (35 percent of females with North African origins) (53–4). A third of Muslims from each group and also a third of non-naturalized non-Muslims had felt discriminated against on the basis of their nationality or origin, demonstrating that one in three foreigners in Switzerland are likely to experience this form of prejudice, regardless of their religion (54). In addition, it affects a significant portion of residents who were born in Switzerland or have spent most of their lives in the country (55; 60 percent of Maghreb-origin “immigrants” were born in Switzerland!). The high proportion of discrimination experienced in the context of employment is probably part of the explanation for the high unemployment

rate the researchers documented among Maghreb immigrants, and shows that discrimination affects Muslims' access to the job market, thereby hindering their economic integration.

Furthermore, "the Swiss respondents distanced themselves more from Muslims in general than from the three nationalities," declaring, for instance, that "they would not want to have Muslims as in-laws, co-citizens, friends, neighbors or colleagues" (Gianni, Guigni, and Michel 2015: 57). That said, they wanted much more distance with Maghreb immigrants than those of the other two nationalities, in line with the fact that "people from North Africa are more frequently associated with the stereotypical image of the Muslim 'Islamist' or 'terrorist' than the two other groups" (57). This is despite the fact that immigrants from the Maghreb proved to be the best integrated of the three main groups of Muslims—even though they are the group with the least stable residence status.

As already discussed, the cantons of Switzerland have a high level of autonomy, which means that different cantons may address a given issue in different ways. Therefore, in relation to religion, religious accommodation, and religious and cultural diversity, as in other aspects of society, "different solutions ... co-exist under a common roof" (D'Amato 2015: 285). For instance, as we have seen, in the *Suisse romande* cantons of Geneva and Neuchatel, there is clear separation of church and state, while other cantons "have chosen one of the Christian religions as their state religion" (285). While this arrangement allowed the accommodation of both the dominant Catholic and Protestant religions in Switzerland's history, it was much less successful in incorporating "new, recently arrived religious minorities" (286), including Muslims. According to the author, this co-existence of "different forms of recognition" often proves inequitable for minority religious groups or may at least be seen as inequitable by the groups themselves, depending on how these forms of recognition resolve "crucial questions affecting those minorities" such as, to give just one example, "the construction of cemeteries" (289). Finally, the EURISLAM project found that "the tendency to generalise and turn Muslims into one category is more visible in the Netherlands and Switzerland" (Hoksbergen and Tillie 2012) than in the other four countries studied.

Cembrero's (2016) text is a very useful resource for understanding the specific nature of Spain's Muslim population. For example, he distinguishes between the UK and France, on the one hand, and Spain, on the other:

In the United Kingdom and in France, Muslim immigration is in part a result of the colonial past of these powers, a past in which [national] history does not directly overlap with the history of Islam. In Spain, on the other hand, these

immigrants are not entirely a foreign body. They are connected to a Muslim past which included a period of absolute splendor. (Cembrero 2016: 337)

That said, immigration to Spain is both more recent and less abundant, proportionally speaking, than that of many other European countries (Cembrero 2016: 17). The vast majority of Spain's Muslim immigrants are from Morocco (19), making for a very different Muslim population than that of, for instance, the UK. In addition, as Astor (2015: 247) notes, "[a]lthough Islam had a deep presence in the Iberian Peninsula between the eighth and fifteenth centuries, Muslims have only recently emerged as a substantial religious minority in contemporary Spain" (247).

The response to this minority at the end of the last century was very different than that seen recently in Switzerland, for instance. Consider the attitude toward mosques:

During the 1980s and 1990s, municipal governments in several Spanish cities actively promoted the establishment of highly visible "cathedral mosques," generally by ceding land to mosque developers. In contrast to France, where the promotion of cathedral mosques was connected to the objective of fostering the development of a distinctively "French Islam" (Maussen 2009), the proliferation of cathedral mosques in Spain was driven by the interest of urban planners and politicians in enhancing the global and cosmopolitan image of their cities. (Astor 2015: 253)

Perhaps in part for this reason, Astor maintains that Spain achieved a "rather seamless incorporation of Islam, institutionally and socially, during the last two decades of the twentieth century" (Astor 2015: 254). This period also saw an economic boom that brought many migrants to the country, including Muslims. At the same time, they tended to settle in poorer neighborhoods, and as time went on, in some towns and cities "mosques came to be perceived as symbolic of the 'colonization' of neighborhood life by Muslim immigrants" (Astor 2015: 255). Such attitudes fed into a new shift: "[d]uring the late 1990s and early 2000s ..., significant socio-demographic and political transformations ... introduced new challenges and contributed to a hardening of the general climate surrounding Islam" (254). Piquer Martí attributes this to a shift in how the country saw itself in relation to immigration and the rise in numbers of immigrants: for a long time a "país de emigrantes" (country of emigrants), it became in the 1990s "un país receptor de inmigrantes" (country that takes in immigrants) (Piquer Martí 2015: 139). Moreover, the way that media reported on the phenomenon of migration had a significant and negative impact on the public's perception of immigrants and in particular those arriving from the Maghreb:

The coverage the media gave to this new phenomenon ... would have a decisive impact on public opinion about non-EU citizens. For example, the press began to develop a pattern of journalistic discourse on dinghies/migrant boats based upon opinion pieces and a constant trickle of short articles about the capture, arrival and deaths of immigrants who were crossing the Strait [of Gibraltar] in these precarious vessels in order to enter Spain illegally (Nash 2005: 37). In general, journalistic discourse focused on the massive presence of these migrant boats and gave little attention to the motivations behind immigration to Spain. In this way, the cultural representation of the African from the Maghreb took form through a conceptual homogenization of immigration which excluded the possibility of considering each case of immigration as a concrete and specific one. (Piquer Martí 2015: 139)

Piquer Martí also chastises the Spanish population for its Islamophobia and “historical amnesia,” which allow it to forget how closely intertwined the country and Muslims are—not only historically, but geographically, politically, socially, and culturally.

Islamophobia in Spain is real. According to data gathered by SOS Racism (AA. VV., 2012: 33), 37 percent of the Spanish population believes it is acceptable to expel a student for wearing the hijab and opposes the construction of mosques. Arab immigrants are the main targets of racism and xenophobia. (Piquer Martí 2015: 140)

That said, in 2014, Spain ranked eleventh out of thirty-eight countries on the Migrant Integration Policy Index.

With respect to accepting more refugees, Cembrero (2016) reproduces various examples of political discourse linking them to the risk of terrorism, just like in the UK and especially with respect to Syrian refugees, from 2013 to 2015:

“We must urgently take in refugees, but this has to be done in a way that is compatible with security” because among them there could be “terrorists trying to infiltrate the country,” warned Fernández Díaz [former minister of the interior, including at the time of the Nice event] from Paris. “A while ago, Daesh threatened exactly this,” he added. Javier Maroto, Deputy Secretary-General of the *Partido Popular*, added more fuel to the fire: among Syrians, he claimed, “there are a lot of jihadists” who will one day “bomb our cities.” Of the hundreds of thousands of refugees who have entered Europe, only two Syrians ... have raised suspicions, at the end of 2015. The Swiss police arrested them in Geneva. (Cembrero 2016: 50–1)

Barbero (2016: 370; his translation) includes another statement by Fernández Díaz in November 2014: “Jihadist terrorists are trying to sneak among the flood

[note the water metaphor] of illegal immigrants who enter Spain jumping over the fences in Ceuta and Melilla.”

How is the Muslim population distributed across Spain? Interestingly, the nationality most represented within the Muslim population is Spanish (779,080)—Cembrero maintains they are converts and immigrants who have acquired citizenship—followed by Moroccan (749,274) (Cembrero 2016: 45). Islam is more omnipresent in the autonomous cities of Ceuta and Melilla than anywhere else in Europe. In terms of Muslim populations by *comunidad autónoma*, Catalonia comes first, with 510,481 Muslims; Andalusia second, with 300,460. That said, Spain has not had the same level of influx as other countries in the region (48).

One of the major points on which the Muslim and non-Muslim populations differ is the importance of religion in their lives; this applies across Europe more generally but is particularly pronounced in Spain: “Religion has more power to bring Moroccan immigrants together in Spain than in other European countries. Fifty-five percent go to the Mosque assiduously, six percent more than the European average” (Cembrero 2016: 189). In stark contrast, in a 2015 worldwide Gallup poll, “[f]ifty-five percent of Spanish people declare[d] themselves non-religious or atheist” (364), and it was estimated that “half of the Spanish population even consider[ed] that religion plays a negative role” in people’s lives (365). In a similar vein, according to Abad Liñán’s (2018) article, while 92 percent of people in Spain had a Christian upbringing, only 66 percent consider themselves Christian now. Spain is third in numbers of people abandoning the faith. Asked how important religion was for national identity, 38 percent of Spaniards said “very or fairly,” while 59 percent indicated it had no or very little importance. Compare with three other European countries relevant here, France, the UK, and Switzerland:

Switzerland	Very or fairly important: 42%
	Of no or little importance: 58%
UK	Very or fairly important: 34%
	Of no or little importance: 65%
France	Very or fairly important: 32%
	Of no or little importance: 65% (Abad Liñán 2018).

Both the decreasing importance attributed to religion by non-Muslim European populations and the political bias toward Christianity nevertheless present in policies of countries that claim to be secular may explain the following tendency of Islam: “Islam needs to modernize, but it is also a religion that has often felt itself to be under attack by the West and by the governments of Muslim nations,

who try to manipulate it. Therefore, instead of opening up, it turns inward to defend itself, and sometimes, it takes a step backward” (Cembrero 2016: 287–8).

Finally, as we have already seen, lack of economic and educational opportunities is also a barrier to effective integration. According to Eurostat,²⁷ in 2016, 32.7 percent of youth aged fifteen to twenty-nine in Spain were unemployed. Among European countries, only North Macedonia and Greece had higher unemployment. In contrast, the figure for France was 17.7 percent; for the UK, 9.4 percent; and for Switzerland, 6.2 percent. Cembrero (2016: 257–8) highlights the fact that the Spanish figures were in fact significantly higher in Ceuta and Melilla, where the population is also young, many of the youth are irregular immigrants, and the school dropout rate, as we have seen, is 25.2 percent. On the question of religious education in particular (also see section “Politics, Law, and Religion”), the eminent

imam [Riay] Tatary and many other Muslim officials believe that, in addition to being a right, classes about Islam would be useful in the current climate. “A unified curriculum—with appropriate text books—can *prevent terrorism*,” Tatary declared in 2015. “If [young people] learn about it in school they may be less tempted to seek out answers to their questions on certain internet sites, many of which are not appropriate,” said the *ulema* (Muslim sage) Rachid Boutarbouch. (Cembrero 2016: 371; my emphasis)

Moreover, if Islam were taught in schools, children would “see it as something that belongs within the social environment in which they live, whereas if they only hear about Islam in a makeshift garage-mosque from an imam who speaks to them in Arabic, they will see it as something foreign’ ... , maintains Zoila Cambalía Solís, Professor of Ecclesiastical Law at the University of Zaragoza” (Cembrero 2016: 371).

That said, in all of Spain, there are only forty-seven high school teachers of Islam. Ninety-five percent of Muslim students do not take religion classes (again, despite the fact that it is their legal right), and 90 percent of Islamic religion teachers are unemployed (369). It follows that where there are teachers, their numbers are insufficient to meet the high demand (370). “Theoretically, if just ten parents demanded Islamic religion classes for their children, the high school would have to provide them.” And yet, at the time Cembrero was writing (2016), no Muslim group had gone to the courts to obtain them (370).

This section has provided various kinds of information. For example, the national origins of Muslims in the three countries in question diverge, again showing that “Muslims” across Europe are not a monolithic group. That said,

the *Suisse romande* and Spain both have a lot of Muslims from the Maghreb; this subgroup often experiences discrimination and gets equated with terrorism and security risks due to physical appearance and provenance. Muslims may have difficulty obtaining certain cultural and religious rights due not only to various barriers (legal; economic; educational) to their integration and to discrimination, but also due to a bias toward Christianity even in countries that claim to be resolutely secular.

History/Experience of Terrorism

In considering the associations often made between Muslims and terrorism in UK, Swiss, and Spanish online news, it is important to consider the role terrorism has played in these countries. In the UK, terrorism has had two main “faces,” in recent times: “nationalist,” and “religious.” The ideology and the violent acts of the Irish Republican Army (IRA) throughout most of the twentieth century “encompassed both” (Warsi [2017] 2018: 82). Switzerland, in contrast, has experienced just a tiny handful of “terrorist incidents.” Why? The population is small; it is not a member of the EU or NATO and is not involved in any fighting in the Middle East, hence it is not a target for reprisals; and it is one of the most repressive among (geographically) European countries.

Compared to the UK and France, Spain has seen little terrorist activity in the past few years. Different actors propose different reasons for this. Cembrero (2016: 165) states that according to various “experts” “who study the phenomenon,” including academics and the police, “the infrequent nature of terrorist activity” in contemporary Spain is attributable to a number of factors, and in particular, the type of immigration that predominates in Spain: “first-generation immigration.” He juxtaposes this with the identity crisis that later generations will (supposedly) experience. A member of Rajoy’s government attributed it to a higher level of integration of immigrants than in other European countries (165–6) (again, one always wonders how integration is defined, operationalized, and measured), while a migration expert (166) attributes it to the fact that migration was structured purely by the labor market rather than by the imposition of ideologies that would grate on Muslims, unlike in other countries. For Cembrero (167), it is above all down to security and resources (and, importantly, their reattribution after Spain’s long experience combating ETA).

What of the prevalence of extremism in Catalonia? Again according to Cembrero (2016: 179), it is explained by a whole host of factors, including various kinds of barriers to integration and, in turn, identity issues, or systemic problems related to security: “carelessness on the part of the Generalitat (regional government), issues of identity, especially of young people, coupled with obstacles to developing the Muslim religion, marginalization and precarity, ghettos (almost non-existent in other regions of Spain),” or the fact that the economic crisis was particularly hard on Muslim residents of the region (179). Furthermore, the “main forces involved in counterterrorist efforts in Barcelona”—the *Mossos*, the *Cuerpo Nacional de Policía* (CNP), and the *Guardia Civil*—“have a terrible relationship,” which negatively affects security (179). Nevertheless, “the Paris attacks of November 2015” led to a rapprochement between the Ministry of the Interior and the Catalan and Basque Interior advisors (183).

As we have seen, Ceuta and Melilla are, with Catalonia, hubs of extremism that also have significant Muslim populations. That said, while 2015 saw a rise in extremism in Ceuta and Melilla, 66 percent of those detained were Spanish, and their activities basically consisted of “developing propaganda and recruiting with the intention of sending recruits to the Middle East. Only in one case” (Cembrero 2016: 261) was there the intention to commit an attack, but the four men involved only possessed a pistol. Nevertheless, “[t]he Minister of the Interior, Jorge Fernández Díaz, went so far as to compare them to the Kouachi brothers, who had just riddled with bullets the editorial team of the weekly magazine *Charlie Hebdo* in Paris” (261). Cembrero (263) does point out, however, that not only the marginalization and poverty prevalent in Ceuta and Melilla, but also the proximity of Morocco play a role in the radicalization of young Muslims in these cities. “A third of the Moroccan jihadists in the Middle East are from the northeast of Morocco” (264). In addition, radical imams are not allowed to preach in Morocco but can do so in Ceuta and Melilla (263–4).

Given recent terrorist events and national responses to them, particularly in terms of counterterrorism laws and policies, as well as prevailing public opinion about Muslims and Islam that is only reinforced after such events, it is reasonable to believe that measures will become more, not less, restrictive of Islam and Muslims. At the same time, the real or believed threat will continue to be taken as a justification to use “extraordinary measures in the name of security” (Gianni, Giugni, and Michel 2015: 107) which have been proven to disproportionately affect Muslims or those perceived to be Muslim. All of these

trends are likely to have “a profound social and cultural impact” and to “affect policies related to the integration of Muslims” (107). The danger of this series of processes is that it goes well beyond the more restricted question of countering terror and keeping citizens safe, to encompass what is believed to be possible or impossible in the areas of integration; national, political, or social identity; freedom of expression; equality; and coexistence (107).

Characteristics of the News Landscapes

According to Rodríguez-Martínez, Mauri-De los Ríos, and Fedele (2017), the media system of each country studied here corresponds to a different media systems model, as defined by Hallin and Mancini (2004). According to the authors, the UK news fits the liberal model, characterized by a low degree of “state intervention in the media sector,” “a high degree of deregulation [and] a well-developed journalistic professional culture” (Rodríguez-Martínez, Mauri-De los Ríos, and Fedele 2017: 60). Switzerland corresponds to the democratic corporatist model, defined by “a high level of professionalization among journalists” (60), a key role for public media, and a clear separation between media and political power. Finally, Spain comes under the polarized pluralist²⁸ model, “characterized by a relatively weak professional culture”; “while public media systems are present, there is a high degree of political influence in both public and private media” (60).

Regarding the UK, Hallin and Mancini (2004: 246–7) highlight “the persistence of party-press parallelism”²⁹ in the press and the fact that this disproves “the common assumption that commercialization automatically leads to the development of politically neutral media.” Importantly, they also point out that “[t]here is a tension between the fact of private ownership and the expectation that the media will serve the public good” (247). They go further in highlighting disadvantages of the nevertheless-popular liberal model: this type of press sees lower circulation than that of the Democratic Corporatist countries and is “characterized by partisan imbalance and a fairly high degree of instrumentalization” (247). Furthermore, while the authors highlight the “lack of diversity in US newsrooms,” this is patently true of the UK as well. While “[i]nformation-oriented journalism predominates in news systems that fit under this model, there is “a bit stronger commentary tradition in Britain” (75).

According to Hallin and Mancini (2004), the Democratic Corporatist countries among which they classify Switzerland show a high degree of political

parallelism. (This is also true of the other two countries studied here even though the authors classified them under two other models.) Democratic Corporatist countries exhibit a “high level of journalistic professionalization,” “including a high degree of consensus on professional standards of conduct, a notion of commitment to the public interest, and a high level of autonomy from other social powers” (145). “Traditions of self-government” but also of a “welfare state” mean there is emphasis on press freedom but also on various forms of “public sector involvement in the media sphere” (145), as “the media are seen as a social institution and not as purely private enterprises” (196). Nevertheless, it would be flawed to uncritically accept that the *Suisse romande* fits their model, as they associate Switzerland with Northern Europe and in particular Germany and Austria, and not with France. Indeed, in the French-speaking part of Switzerland, the two largest Swiss media companies, private enterprises Tamedia and Ringier, control 88 percent of the market (compared to 71 percent in the German-speaking region). This translates into significant homogeneity of information (ATS/B. O. I. 2017). With respect to my corpus, Tamedia owns *La Tribune de Genève* and Ringier owns *Le Temps*. *Le Courrier*, in contrast, is owned by the non-profit organization *Nouvelle Association du Courrier* (NAC), itself composed of twenty-six different associations (also see section “Le Courrier” of Chapter 2).

Feddersen’s (2013) study of the Swiss press, cited by Gianni, Giugni, and Michel (2015), shows that between 2001 and 2009, the religious designation “Muslim” gradually replaced identity markers based on the nationalities of groups whose members are often also Muslim. This shows that if identity descriptors for minority groups change, this may go in the direction of the kind of essentialism which is more and more common “in the public debates about Islam in Europe, and this has significant implications for public perception of Muslims” (Gianni, Giugni, and Michel 2015: 81). Indeed, because Islam is presented as, and, in turn, comes to be considered as, “incompatible with the values of democracy, Muslims are represented as undemocratic ‘by nature’ (Cesari 2004).” Gianni, Giugni, and Michel’s own study proves that in Switzerland, at least, this is a blatant misrepresentation of Muslims.

The starting date of Feddersen’s (2013) corpus, of course, is linked to 9/11. Yet Gianni, Giugni, and Michel point out that representations of Islam and Muslims in the Swiss media have a certain continuity and should not be simplistically linked to that “watershed moment,” as they are emblematic of the “problematic relationship that Swiss society has always maintained with immigrants and, more generally, with the figure of the Foreigner” (2015: 108). The fact that the

spike in news articles about Islam and Muslims was in 2004, “when the Swiss population voted on a federal popular initiative on facilitating naturalizations” (108), and not in 2001, supports this claim.

We saw above that although only a minute percentage of Muslims in Switzerland actually practice Islam, many non-Muslims have come to fear a Muslim takeover of the country. D’Amato (2015) attributes responsibility for this to politicians and the media. News outlets in Switzerland have tended to disregard non-practicing Muslims—the vast majority—and focused instead on a small minority of ultra-orthodox or extremist groups:

In the regular media coverage and in political debates, those secular Muslims who do not practice or who see practice as a private affair are invisible and go unnoticed. Thus, the public image is dominated by orthodox and conservative, even violent and extremist religious groups, which presents problems for many Muslims in Switzerland. (D’Amato 2015: 295)

Swiss media is far from alone in disseminating such essentialist representations, of course. Weller and Cheruvallil-Contractor (2015) observe a similar phenomenon in the UK:

In the 1990s, and especially in and around institutions of further and higher education, groups such as Hizb-ut-Tahrir attracted a certain following among young Muslims radicalized by the *Satanic Verses* controversy, the killing of Muslims in Bosnia, and the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq (Hussain 2007). In many ways this and other similar groups attracted media and other attention that was disproportionate to their overall size and influence. (318–19)

Miqdaad Versi monitors media organizations in the UK for inaccurate reporting on Islam and Muslims. Writing about his research, Ponsford (2017) observes that while “Muslims comprise five percent of the UK population,” news about them appears “to account for the majority of newspaper mistakes which disparage a particular religion.” In addition, this directly affects attitudes toward Muslims: a study by Cambridge University published in 2016³⁰ found that the prevalence of “negative narratives” in media reporting about Muslims in the UK was fueling a rise in anti-Muslim hostility.

Spain’s history of dictatorship has also shaped its press. Hallin and Mancini (2004: 61) observe that in countries like Spain, Italy, and Portugal where there have been “sharp political conflicts often involving changes of regime,” “[t]he media typically have been used as instruments of struggle ..., sometimes by dictatorships and by movements struggling against them, but also by contending parties in periods of democratic politics.” Arnold (2019: 190; also see section

“Regulation of News Outlets” of Chapter 2) highlights the influence of “an authoritarian past” on the development of and preferences in regulation in Spain:

The end of dictatorships and the collapse of the communist systems have shaped the development of media structures and media regulation. For instance, social upheaval was followed by major reservations about any kind of state regulation and intervention. The media were anxious to secure their autonomy from the state. At the same time, the media often were privatised in a frantic and disorderly manner. This development resulted in the emergence of media enterprises that owned a large proportion of the media and were able to exert political pressure themselves.

Spain supposedly falls under the Polarized Pluralist Model (Hallin and Mancini 2004) but is said to show, like Britain, a high level of political parallelism. Suárez-Villegas et al.’s (2017) ongoing study of Spanish media “is based on the hypothesis that journalistic culture in Spain does not respond to a unique media system or model (like the Mediterranean or polarized pluralist models)” as proposed by Hallin and Mancini in *Comparing Media Systems*. While they do not go far enough, Hallin and Mancini not only point out a lot of exceptions within their models (so that one wonders about their utility) but also recognize the heterogeneity that can exist within a country: “the media in Quebec and Catalonia are distinct in a number of ways from the media in the rest of Canada or Spain” (2004: 71); “[r]egional media reflect the often special political alignments of the autonomous regions” (105). The authors also claim that in Spain, “journalists will express allegiance to the Liberal Model of neutrality and objectivity, while the actual practice of journalism is deeply rooted in partisan advocacy traditions” (14).

The *Observatorio de la islamofobia en los medios* studies the presence of Islamophobia in Spanish news online, including the two newspapers in my corpus. The observatory selects articles which address Islam and Muslims by searching for the terms *islam*, *musulmán/a/s*, *yihad*, *yihadismo*, *yihadista/s*, *islamismo*, *islamista/s*, and *islamophobia*. During August and September 2017 (the first time the observatory measured such statistics and, notably, a period during which data were undoubtedly affected by the Barcelona attacks of August 17 and 18, 2017), 25 percent of the news articles in the corpus which addressed Islam were undeniably Islamophobic,³¹ 31 percent encouraged Islamophobic interpretations, and 44 percent did not show Islamophobic tendencies. The vast majority of the articles surveyed were news articles. Moreover, 451 articles had a negative tone while just 37 had a positive tone. Nineteen percent of informational articles were Islamophobic whereas 46 percent of opinion or blog

articles were. A significant shift has occurred since, however. Indeed, in the final trimester of 2018, 25 percent of informational news articles were openly Islamophobic while only about 8 percent of opinion/blog articles showed this tendency. In addition, 23 percent were blatantly Islamophobic, 20 percent favored Islamophobic interpretations, and 57 percent showed no Islamophobic tendencies. During this more recent period, there was more positive coverage, too: 139 articles or about 33 percent addressed a positive theme. Trends were similar in the two preceding trimesters of 2018. The shifts suggest strong influence from the Barcelona attacks during 2017; they also demonstrate the ideological underpinnings of news articles which are supposedly just there to provide information about events.

Now that we have a wealth of background information on the three countries that provided the news articles for our corpus, we can proceed to the stylistic analysis of the texts.