MEDIA COVERAGE OF THE ISLAMIC STATE AND TERRORISM AROUND THE GLOBE

Does media coverage on this topic differ nationally, regionally & internationally?

Antonia Spiring-Sundberg
Abstract

The purpose of this thesis is to examine how different news agencies around the world portray the Islamic State, using the beheading of journalist James Foley as a case study. Whether or not media outlets coverage and portrayal of the Islamic State and terrorism differs depending on region and state. This to investigate or uncover how cultural heritage and political currents might be influencing news agencies portrayal of the Islamic State and its advances. How do different news agencies depict or picture the same events and the terror organizations advances. By using Norman Faircloug’s model for critical discourse analysis three prominent discourses are found. The conclusion is that political currents and cultural heritage does have an influence in media coverage and portrayal; news agencies belonging to different regions portray this terror organization differently but when condemning the event there is a global standardization.
Table of contents

1. Introduction .................................................................................................................. 4
  1.1 Purpose & Research Question .............................................................................. 5
      1.1.1 Purpose ........................................................................................................ 5
      1.1.2 Research Question and hypothesis ............................................................ 5
  1.2 Delimitations ............................................................................................................ 6
  1.3 Outline ..................................................................................................................... 6

2. Background .................................................................................................................. 7
  2.1 The Islamic State .................................................................................................... 7
  2.2 What is terrorism? .................................................................................................. 8
  2.3 Media’s power and influence ................................................................................ 9
  2.4 Previous Research ................................................................................................. 11
      2.4.1 “Us and them” ............................................................................................ 12
      2.4.3 ”The Changing Face of Modern Jihadism” .................................................. 13
  3. Theoretical framework .............................................................................................. 14
      3.1 Country-specific reporting ............................................................................... 14
      3.2 Regional patterns in reporting ......................................................................... 15
      3.3 Global standardization of coverage ................................................................. 16
  4. Method ....................................................................................................................... 17
      4.1 Discourse analysis ............................................................................................ 17
      4.2 Critical Discourse analysis .............................................................................. 18
      4.2.1 Fairclough’s three-dimensional method ...................................................... 20
      4.3 Semiotic Resources ......................................................................................... 21
      4.4 Ethical considerations ....................................................................................... 22
  4.5 Reliability and validity ......................................................................................... 23
  4.6 Selection of material ............................................................................................. 24

5. Analysis ....................................................................................................................... 24
  5.1 Introduction ............................................................................................................ 24
  5.2 Othering ................................................................................................................ 25
  5.3 Threat toward “us” ............................................................................................... 27
  5.4 The Islamic States material ................................................................................ 29
  5.2 Similarities across the media outlets ..................................................................... 31
  5.3 Differences in coverage ....................................................................................... 32
Antonia Spiring-Sundberg
Supervisor: Håkan Bengtsson
13414 words excluding references
VT 2016
Faculty of theology
Uppsala University

6. Results and Discussion .................................................................................................. 34
7. Conclusion ...................................................................................................................... 37
8. Suggestions for future research ..................................................................................... 38
9. References ...................................................................................................................... 39
1. Introduction

The discourse or worldview that an individual has effects on our interpretation of the world. Discourses are alterable and are shaped by constant dialogues between actors in societies. One such actor is the media; media has been titled the “fourth estate” due to its enormous influence and power when forming people’s views and beliefs (Swärd 2008 s.192).

Culture, traditions, religion and ethnicity are factors known to affect the ideas and opinions of human beings. Thereby media is affected by the above as well and it also has a tremendous influence on people’s comprehensions due to it being a communicative event. Media has the ability to produce and reproduce meanings linked to political, cultural, religious and social discourses.

There is an ongoing media debate that most people take part of in our everyday life. We live our lives in the midst of a never-ending flow of information without really reflecting on the information we take in. The power of media cannot be ignored. This giant forum claims knowledge both by taking the decisions on what to publish and more importantly how it should be produced and portrayed. Thereby, the focus of this paper shall lie on the social construction of knowledge and with a critical approach to present and highlight prevailing discourses.

In the last few years highly rated news agencies and social media all around the world have frequently been reporting on the Islamist terror organization the Islamic State. This terror organization is a pending and controversial topic which has affected many all around the world. It is an extremist jihadist group which is behind several terror attacks, assassinations and an ongoing conflict. Thereby it would be interesting to critically examine the image which media creates on the topic of the Islamic state and there as understand the relationship between media and the power in society.

The aim of this thesis will be to through a critical discourse analysis study or uncover how cultural heritage and political currents might be influencing news agencies portrayal of the Islamic State and its advances. As well as how the media outlets coverage and portrayal of the Islamic State and terrorism differs depending on region and state. Cultural Heritage is an
expression of the ways of living developed by a community and passed on from generation to
generation, including customs, practices, places, objects, artistic expressions and values.
Cultural Heritage is often expressed as either Intangible or Tangible Cultural Heritage
(ICOMOS, 2002). Where this study focuses more on intangible heritage which includes
voices, values, customs, traditions and oral history (ICOMOS, 2002).

How do different news agencies depict or picture the same events and the terrorist group the
Islamic States advances. In the book The media at war Susan L. Carruthers states that during
the last thirty years no subject related to medias monitoring of violence has created as much
attention and controversy as the reporting of terrorism. Articles in newspapers with different
religious, cultural and geographical origins provide a good understanding of how different
discourses shape the view of happenings in the world at a given point of time. Furthermore,
focus will lie in the field of interdiscursivity; namely the relation between discourses
portraying the same event or group will be examined, how the interpretation of the same event
differs. Focus will lie on uncovering how cultural heritage and political currents might be
influencing the news agencies. The critical discourse analysis will give a possibility to go in-
depth into what the texts in the empirical material are conveying.

1.1 Purpose & Research Question

1.1.1 Purpose

The purpose is to inquire into internet based newspapers reports on the Islamic State, with
focus on the beheading of American Journalist James Foley. The study will be conducted with
articles published between the nineteenth and twenty-first of August 2014 on the following
new agencies webpages; Reuters (US edition), The Mirror, BBC, CNN, Al Jazeera, Canadian
Broadcasting Network and Sydney Morning Herald. This in order to study and create an
understanding of how the Islamic State is portrayed in Media during 2014 and how it may
differ in different regions.

1.1.2 Research Question and hypothesis
How has the execution of James Foley been portrayed in Media?

- What do the reports focus on?
- Which semiotic structures are visible in the articles?
- Are the reports biased; if so how?

Which similarities and disparities have the articles got?

The hypothesis then is as follows; that the coverage of the Islamic State differs to an extent depending on the region. That the regions closest to one another are the most similar due to their similarities in culture and the ones furthest apart will differ the most.

1.2 Delimitations

The Islamic State is a relevant and up to date topic all over the world which can concern many different areas. This thesis will solely focus on how the Islamic State was portrayed in media in reference to the execution of James Foley. This will be limited to a few articles in newspapers web based production. It shall shed light upon which information was focused on when reporting on the topic. Delimitating to articles focusing on James Foley’s execution was a conscious choice, as this is known as the first major report of events involving the Islamic State (UR, 2015). The thesis will not elucidate how individuals perceive the Islamic State, but solely how newspapers have chosen to portray the Islamic State and the execution. Neither will it illuminate how the Islamic State is portrayed in other mediums, nor will it raise the issue of social media or other types of sources of information. This as in these areas exists a wide supply which causes ambiguity in what is facts and what is fiction.

1.3 Outline

First, the background of the Islamic State will be presented, followed by an outline of the power of media. Thereafter former research will be presented, focusing on othering, terrorism in media and the Islamic States usage of media. This in turn is followed by the theoretical framework which encompasses possibilities as well as the dangers of media’s power in form
of propaganda and the link between media and terrorism. The next section is an explanation
and presentation of the method utilized when exercising this study. Followed by a
presentation of the results found in the chosen articles intertwined with the theory presented
earlier. Thereafter, these results will analyzed and discussed. Finally a conclusion
interconnected to the research question will be illuminated.

2 Background

2.1 The Islamic State

The Islamic State is a Sunni Islamist militant group which today controls large territories in
Iraq and Syria (globalis, Cfr). The group is characterized as a “salafi jihadist” movement
which has its roots in Salafism (Crowley, 2014:32, Holmer, 2014:2). Meaning that their
ideology is striving toward a traditionally bounded and conservative Islamic teaching which is
claimed to emulate the original Islam with lineages from Islam’s ancestors (Halldén, NE).

The Islamic State (ISIL) is also known under the names ISIS, IS and under its Arabic
acronym DAESH (globalis, Lund, NE). The group’s goal is to establish an Islamic State in the
Middle East (Napoleoni, 2015). It was in June 2014 that the group declared that they from
then on are known under the name Islamic State which symbolizes their caliphate (Ahlberg,
2014:2).

The Islamic state has received a lot of attention, all over the world. The group is very active
on social media, they use the constant access of internet to spread their message. The group
has filmed a lot of their movements, such as murders, sexual violence, looting of villages and
ethnical abasement (Napoleoni, 2015:28). Social media is also a tactic which they use to reach
out to new followers all over the world (Napoleoni, 2015:34).

The Islamic State claim that the western world are anti-Islam (Crowley, 2014:30). On
November 13, 2015 the Islamic State executed a terrorist attack in Paris, claiming 129 lives
(Globalis). This in turn led to increased security measures all around Europe and fear. This
was a response to the bombings against the group in the Middle East. Also it is thought to be
part of a tactic to increase tensions between Muslims and non-Muslims in Europe, in order to improve the statistics of recruiting Muslims from Europe (Globalis).

2.2 What is terrorism?

As this thesis to a large extent concerns terrorism a definition of just that concept will follow below. However, there is no one clear-cut definition of this concept, as neither scholars not the United Nations have come to an agreement on a joint definition, even though terrorism as a phenomenon is not new (Säkerhetspolitik, 2015). In the book Mass-Mediated Terrorism it is described that defining terrorism is easier said than done, there is no lack of definitions, whole articles and books are written on the topic, but to this day there is no one joint definition (Nacos, 2002:15–16). Therefore, here below are a few examples of definitions of terrorism:

James. D Kiras, associate professor and lecturer on terrorism and warfare (Infinity Journal, 2015) in the book “The globalization of world politics” defines terrorism as:

"The use of violence by sub-state groups to inspire fear, by attacking civilians and/or symbolic targets, for purposes such as drawing widespread attention to a grievance, provoking a severe response, or wearing down their opponent’s moral resolve, to effect political change” (Kiras, 2011, s. 367).

In the book ”Framing Terrorism: The News Media, the Government, and the public”, Pippa Norris, professor in political science, Montague Kern, associate professor in media studies and Marion Just, professor in political science chose to define terrorism as “the systematic use of coercive intimidation, against civilians for political goals” (Norris et al., 2003, s. 6). By “coercive intimidation” they mean executions, kidnappings and torture, all which are utilized as control mechanisms. The main target are civilians and the goal is to acquire multiple political goals such as spreading fear among civilians and society as a whole, through destroying society and eliminating opponents (Norris et al., 2003:67).

Merari when conducting a study found that, in the USA., Great Britain and Germany, there are three common elements that exist in the legal definitions of terrorism of those countries:
(1) the use of violence, (2) political objectives, and (3) the aim of propagating fear in a target population (1993:250-251).

Walter Laqueur, American-British historian and scholar defines terrorism in the book The Age of Terrorism. “Terrorism is the use or the threat of the use of violence, a method of combat, or a strategy to achieve certain targets... [I]t aims to induce a state of fear in the victim, that is ruthless and does not conform with humanitarian rules... [P]ublicity is an essential factor in the terrorist strategy” (1987:143).

The Arab Convention for the Suppression of Terrorism has also got its own definition of terrorism which may be linked to the Global script (see 3.3) : “any act or threat of violence, whatever its motives or purposes, that occurs in the advancement of an individual or collective criminal agenda and seeking to sow panic among people, causing fear by harming them, or placing their lives, liberty or security in danger, or seeking to cause damage to the environment or to public or private installations or property or to occupying or seizing them, or seeking to jeopardize a national resources.”

From the above definitions, these are the following similarities: Terrorism is in act of violence motivated by amongst others politics, targeting civilians, with the goal of spreading fear. Therefore, this thesis will proceed from this.

### 2.3 Media’s power and influence

The following chapter discusses the relation between media and society, initially a few examples of approaches to the relation between media and reality will be presented. Thereafter, discourses and powers role in society will be acknowledged. Media and the ambient society have a strong bond, where one party influences the other in a constantly ongoing process. Even though media is not the sole contact for a countries citizens with the surrounding world, the information which comes through media significant and persuasive role.
However, the views within the scientific sphere concerning the relation between media and reality are spread wide; opinions which have shifted throughout time as the communicative development in society is constantly changing (McQuail, 1994:64).

McQuail (1994:65-66) discusses six different ways, called metaphors in which the relation between media and reality are looked upon. The first of those metaphors, gatekeeper, highlights the selection of news to be covered, as it is impossible to include everything which is happening. News passages gatekeepers and is filtered on the way, from the happening to the public. The reality which is conveyed does not represent a true full-coverage picture, as some aspects are given more attention meanwhile others are consciously or unconsciously left out (McQuail, 1994:65). Media can also be seen as a window, through which happenings are conveyed to us in order to broaden our view on the surrounding world. According to metaphor, the audience has the possibility to themselves take part in what is happening in their surrounding without the involvement from others. The third approach views media as a mirror, which reflects happenings to us. The transmission of media gives a trustworthy image of the reality, even though the recipient cannot take part of happenings in the world to the same extent as in the window metaphor. Since the mirror image’s direction is decided by someone, McQuail means that the information transmitted cannot give a true picture of the happening. Media can be viewed upon as a type of interpreter that interprets the reality and the ongoing to the audience. This metaphor is similar to the gatekeeper to some extent, in the way in which media selects the news content for the audience. However, this metaphor takes it one step further as media is viewed upon as a type of interpreter and decoder of the news content. Another metaphor deals with media as a forum for flowing information to the audience is often given a chance to response. Thereby, this approach views the relation between media and society as a meeting where both parties are accessorial in a type of communication. Finally, media can be viewed upon as an obstacle which contributes to humans being passive media consumers and are screened off from reality as they are being fed with a screwed picture of the world; through propaganda for example. Since media is linked to the various major institutions of society, such as the political structures, economics and culture, thereby media is also subject to various power relations (McQuail, 1994).
When discussing media’s power in a society or community, two models are often highlighted: the dominant media and pluralistic media. McQuail argues that these two models are more or less opposites. According to the former approach different media organizations are controlled by a small group of people, an elite, from the community. The information which is provided is limited and imprinted by the power relations the elite wants to preserve. The public is given no direct opportunity for critical feedback, but are rather passive recipients of the media outflow. To link this to the media metaphors mentioned above, the window, mirror, gatekeeper and interpreter are included in this model (McQuail, 1994). Moreover, the second approach claims media is not controlled by elites, but is rather a tool of political, social and cultural interests. The range is more unpredictable and flexible, and is not intended to benefit any specific power relation or actors. The audience is freer and more active, there is a relationship between them and the media and its content. The forum metaphor is the one model which fits under this approach. The two models above are described as opposites, but in reality it is more likely a combination of the two (McQuail, 1994).

The concept of discourse (see 4.1) is also that an important part of a society which is strongly linked to various power relationships. Lövgren (1999:20) discusses power and means that discourse is a type of “speech with power” this in Foucault’s spirit. The discourse has the power and ability to change society and social relations and can thus be seen as an institutionalized practice, such as media. Thus the news discourse has a very important and influential role in a society. The media has such a massive societal power, as by promoting credible and convincing news, they function as one of the major pillars of society. The language or discourse that permeates a new article for example is therefore extremely important for the transmission of information which the article contains. When researching powers role in media texts it is mainly Fairclough (see 4.2.1) that can provide one with the most useful ideas and aspects (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2000).

2.4 Previous Research

Research on media and the Islamic State is relatively diluted. The scholarly research on the Islamic State and media rather focuses how the organization itself utilizes media for its own gain. How they use media to communicate, which is the main focus of "The Changing Face
of Modern Jihadism” (Quilliam Foundation). Where they draw two conclusion regarding the groups communication; firstly, for recruitment and secondly as means to inflict terror, fear, provoke and to threaten all those opposed to them and their methods. Also they draw the conclusion that the organization’s communication in the form of usage of digital media differs from its predecessors.

Most of the previous research on the Islamic State is more related to terrorist research than to journalism and media. Thereby, there is a deficiency on studies focusing on how the media coverage of the Islamic State looks around the world. However, there is a lot of previous research on the media coverage in conflict situations, how news agencies have reported in conflicts and the link between the conflict and terrorism.

2.4.1 “Us and them”

Media’s reports on conflict often encompasses an image of the perspective “us and them” or an othering as it is often referred to. An othering is created by journalists with the intention to make the reader moved by a part of the article in order to sympathize with it (Nohrstedt, 2006:75). The mutuality created in the reports are aspects which the audience can relate to, for example in the shape of countries in the close proximity of one’s own or one with which they have some type of linkage to, which in this case is states in the west or people known to one. A fashion in which to reach an impression of “us” is the usage of “worthy victims”, which are to symbolize the vulnerable victims to whom which one sympathizes and has a sense of compassion toward. Their situation is utilized and is created as a face outward with its individual vulnerability in conflict (Nohrstedt, 2006:140). Journalist create an othering in conflict situations. Media often depicts conflict with the definition of us and the others, which results in creating sides in conflict which the audience can stand behind. The journalists then have the power to affect the individual’s knowledge of the occurrence as well as the power to influence the audience’s stance in relation to the happening. They are using othering, which the audience is influenced by, they become part of it.

Conflicts between the USA and the Arab world has already got a steady othering in western media (Nohrstedt, 2006). In conflicts between the USA and the Arab world an image of
“Muslim’s as fanatics” and the “USA as the world police” is formed (Nord, Strömbäck: 2002:113). This is the case in other conflicts including the USA as well, the US is often pictured as the world police and the rivals are categorized as Muslims with extremist and fanatic visions (Ibid, 2002:114). The Muslims are described as a collective. Anti-American events often tend to in media become anti-Muslim (Nohrstedt, 2006).

2.4.3”The Changing Face of Modern Jihadism”

The Quilliam Foundation was one of the first to study The Islamic Sates means of communication, mainly social media. They find that the ISIL’s communication methods fulfill mainly two functions. Firstly, recruitment, they can reach out to a massive public globally through social media meaning that their recruitment strategy encompasses a larger network than that of recruiting face to face locally. The second function is intimidation, provocation and spreading threats toward all those opposing them and their “mission”.

Moreover, they also reach the conclusion that the Islamic State’s manner of communication differs from how former terror organizations such as Al-Qaida proceeded, mainly in their usage of modern-day technology through digital media. By utilizing the largest platforms for communication today such as Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, ask.fm, KIK and VK they reach out to millions of people with their agenda. There are no similar cases in history, the ISIL are unique in their usage of digital media when communicating. When publishing in video format the material is of absolute top quality and the quantity is also very well thought through. Furthermore, the Islamic State has displayed examples of advanced encoding, having creating apps of their own for their internal communication which has been successful (Quilliam Foundation, 2014; Farewell, 2014:51).

As they have the means to reach out to such a massive population when utilizing this up to date means of spreading propaganda through digital medias the ISIL have had the possibility to build a large unofficial network for those sympathizing with their views and visions. Which has led to a lot of recruits from other countries not in the proximate region (Stern & Berger, 2015:81).
A second important function, intimidation and spreading threats, the video of James Foley among others fits in. The Quilliam Foundation state that the objective of such a video is to provoke and to terrorize. They further argue that Al-Qaida cannot compare its circulation with that of the ISIL, which has received a lot of help through modern technology and digital media.

### 3. Theoretical framework

There are varying theories in communication and social sciences as to whether and to what extent the media coverage in different states is complementary or how they might alter. With respect to this Gerhards and Schäfer’s model with three theorems which is based on these will be utilized to conduct an analysis (2013:3-4). Below follows a short walkthrough of the model, divided in three sub-categories; country-specific reporting, regional patterns in reporting and global standardization of coverage.

#### 3.1 Country-specific reporting

Here, it is assumed that the media coverage varies considerably between countries as it is mainly influenced by national contexts. Schoemaker and Reese (1995) as well as Weischenberg (1992, 1995) arranged the domestic factors influencing media coverage in a model of hierarchal circles of influence.

The outer circle is based on a country’s historical and cultural characteristics. These may vary depending on the national traditions of journalism (Esser, 1998:25), religious beliefs (Hafez, 2005:148), language, geography and differing political values and institutions (Bennett, 2009).

The circle following that is influenced by country specific structural, institutional and organizational attributes. These may include economic factors, infrastructure and technology (Weischenberg, 1992: 249) or typical working processes in newsrooms (Esser, 1998: 26).

The inner most circle is defined by sociodemographic structures. The attitudes, motivation and self-perception meaning the journalist community defines this category (Esser, 1998:26). The characteristics of these factors vary from state to state, and that the coverage on
international or transnational questions, such as terrorism is influenced by these into a certain domestic view (Swanson, 2003: 57). This model is backed by the significant state differences in media on issues such as European Union enlargement and abortion (Ferree et al., 2002).

3.2 Regional patterns in reporting

Meanwhile, other scholars claim that country-specific patterns are dependent of regional patterns in media coverage. Here, there are two prominent stances.

Some scholars believe that the greatest difference can be expected between Arab and Western media. This in line with the basic patterns of present-day terrorism, which is often carried out toward “western” victims by Arab Islamists. Generally, these theories are entrenched in alleged cultural differences or in cases also similarities.

Samuel Huntington’s “Clash of civilizations” is one of the theories used to accentuate this standing. Huntington claimed that the world in the twenty-first century pervaded by opposing “cultures”, this mainly by Christianity in the “west” with the USA as the “core” and Islam with the Arab states as front figures. He further argues that this conflict finds its expression, among other aspects, in the public rejection of the other side (Huntington, 1998:345).

Thereby, differentiating media coverage and reporting between the “West” and “the Arab world” are expected. Research on the role of cultural proximity in media reporting leads to similar assumptions although having a different entry, cultural proximity functions as a news value. Meaning that culturally proximate subjects and aspects are more likely to be casted and highlighted by journalists and that similar preferences can be found among culturally similar audiences (Gerhards, Schäfer, 2013:3-4). Thereby, Gerhard and Schäfer argue that there likely is a difference in media coverage on terrorism between the west and the Arab world.

However, some scholars argue that these differences are due to cultural differences meanwhile others claim it has to do with differences in the media system in the two areas.

Secondly, Gerhard and Schäfer mention that regional differences can also be due to the identified states being involved in crucial conflicts to different degrees. It is argued that the journalist’s task is to highlight “national outlook”, there as events of national importance tend to be addressed in more detail. News value theory provides with an explanation to the above,
empirical studies show that terrorist events are analyzed by journalists as more or less newsworthy and the coverage follows that. Furthermore, it has been discussed that the interpretation of a terrorist event as “ours” or “theirs” has an impact on the media coverage, which in turn fits well with the above on a “national outlook”. Thereby, it can be argued that it is not solely cultural difference which affects varying media coverage but also whether or not the state in focus is participating in a specific conflict.

3.3 Global standardization of coverage

Finally, many scholars rather emphasize on the similarities between media coverage all over the world and link these to globalization (Thompson, 2000). Partly, due to the increase in both formal and informal channels of communication that connect the international, regional and national news channels to each other. Thereby it has been debated that a “transnational news culture” (Cohen et al., 1990: 44), a “global newsroom” (Gurevitch and Levy, 1990; Gurevitch et al., 1991) or a “global news system” (Swanson, 2003: 69) has grown forth nowadays. This global standardization is argued to be very strong within visual media, which overcomes temporal and spatial delimitations easier than printed media. In the case of terrorism coverage several authors have identified how such similarities manifest themselves. Gehard and Schäfer mention Norris et al. (2003) that argue a normative worldwide assessment of terrorism has been established. Terrorist attacks are rejected by the political elite practically everywhere, even (former) leaders in Libya, Syria and Iran, which according to other sources are in secret supporting terrorism. The rejection of terrorism has become a part of a “global script” which is to be supported, at least officially, by all nation-states (Norris et al. 2003). They then go on to assume that this script is applied on media coverage as well, where the portrayal of media is standardized between states and thereby is a “one-sided” case (Norris et al. 2003:12). Where condemning the attacks and the perpetrator is central and compassion is shown toward the victims of the crime. The assumed correlation between media and the political elites fall well into Bennett’s Indexing theory, which is also highlighted by Gerhard and Schäfer.

Bennett argues that in times of international conflict, the constellation of actors in a media context, especially the political elite, plays a central role in forming the media coverage.
Therefore, a consensus among the elites about the significance and assessment of a powerful issue would be reflected in media. Furthermore, when political elites are split, this would lead to a pluralization of media positions (Gerhard, Schäfer, 2013:5). The table beneath provides a summary of the different theories presented in this section. It is these that will be utilized when analyzing the articles and results.

4. Method

4.1 Discourse analysis

Discourse analysis can be utilized in both theory and method. A crude definition of discourse “is an established way of speaking of and understanding the world (or a cutout of the world)” (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2000:7).

Table 1. Theoretical assumptions concerning the shape of terrorism coverage in different countries.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Country-specific coverage</th>
<th>Regional/cultural differences</th>
<th>Regional/cultural differences</th>
<th>Global standardization</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Central heuristic</td>
<td>Importance of the Nation-state/‘Onion model’</td>
<td>‘‘Clash of cultures’’ vs. Cultural Proximity</td>
<td>Involvement in international conflicts</td>
<td>Globalization of TV market/world polity (‘‘one-sided issue’’)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is expected?</td>
<td>Coverage is country-specific</td>
<td>Coverage is similar/different according to geographical and cultural regions</td>
<td>Coverage is similar/different according to involvement in a conflict</td>
<td>Coverage is standardized globally</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why?</td>
<td>Media embedded in different national contexts</td>
<td>Fundamental cultural differences or proximities</td>
<td>Different involvement in central conflicts</td>
<td>Global reach of technology, worldwide problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is expected for this comparison?</td>
<td>All channels differ</td>
<td>Arab and Western channels differ</td>
<td>Different levels of involvement lead to coverage differences</td>
<td>All channels are similar</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Another is a system which produces a set of statements and practices that by establishing themselves institutionally can present themselves as more or less normal (Neuman, 2003:157).

By delimiting the world we live in different discourses are shaped, which we in turn see when describing different parts of the world (Jørgensen & Phillips 2000:7). There is no one definition of what a discourse is as these are given different definitions from differing positions. We ourselves create meaning and modify the surrounding world through language, and discourses can also be utilized critically to study power relations in society (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2000:7-8).

Discourse analysis has its foundation in social constructionism which means that the world is not an objective truth; our knowledge and worldview are rather created by categorization. The knowledge and how we understand the world is maintained in social processes; social acts and what we perceive as knowledge and truth therefore gets various social consequences as these can vary within different worldviews (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2000:11-12). Foucault therefore meant it is pointless to search for an underlying hitherto implicit truth of realities constitution, as such a truth does not exist (Jørgensen & Phillips 2000:23-25). There as, focus should rather lie on “how effects of truth are created in discourses” (Jørgensen & Phillips 2000:23-25). Furthermore, when conducting a discourse analysis one is not looking to find out how something is (ontological questions), but how and why we learn about something (epistemological issues) (Neumann, 2003:14).

The goal of a discourse analysis is therefore not to clarify what is the meaning of something, as discourse analysis fundamental of social construction means that this does not exist. Language is all that exists and its representation of the world. Thereby, language is a construction and therefore we should study how different concepts and discourses are constructed (Jørgensen & Phillips 2000). Thereby, discourse analysis is many times depicted as the analysis of language beyond the sentence. Articles in newspapers with different religious, cultural and geographical origins provide a good understanding of how different discourses shape the view of happenings in the world at a given time.

**4.2 Critical Discourse analysis**
In this essay, I have chosen to use the critical discourse analysis because unlike other approaches critical discourse analysis can say something about the power relations on a more structural level (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2000:79). According to the critical discourse analysis discourses help create our social world; it is only one among several aspects of each social practice (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2000:13).

A discourse is both constituted by and constitutive; that is, it constitutes the social world we live in but will also be constituted by other social practices and structures (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2000:67-68). The critical discourse analysis aim is to highlight and expose unequal power relations between groups that are held by the discursive practice. If one manages to discover these, one hopes to change the social conditions so that they in turn become more equal in the communication process as this in turn is expected to lead to a social and societal change (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2000:69).

Norman Fairclough is one of the founding figures within critical discourse analysis and he defines discourse as both language and "as a way of speaking that give meaning to experiences from a certain perspective "(Jørgensen & Phillips, 2000:72). Discourse will thus look different from different perspectives, and the social structure contains both discursive and non-discourse elements (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2000, p. 67-71). When conducting an analysis of a discourse it is the discourse utilized within an institution (the order of discourse) and the communicative event (language) which are examined (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2000:72-73).

The critical discourse analysis aims to shed light on the relationship between language and social practices as well as social structures (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2000:74-76). This as to implement not only a linguistic analysis without also examining how the inclusion of different identities creates discourses (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2000: 79-80). According to Fairclough discourses have got three different dimensions; the first is an identity function where social identities are created, thereafter is the discursive function and the third is a social dimension that holds the system of knowledge (Bergstrom & Boréus, 2012:374-375; Jørgensen & Phillips, 2000:75). Fairclough views discourses as meanings which have been designed and also produces, reproduces and transforms domination and power relations in a society (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2000:79).
4.2.1 Fairclough’s three-dimensional method

In empirical studies on society and communication, Fairclough has established a three-dimensional model based on textual, discursive and social practice;

The analysis of the textual practice examines texts from a linguistic basis (Bergstrom & Boréus, 2012, pp. 374-376). It examines, among other things, the choice of words journalists use and various stereotypes and metaphors used in descriptions of a phenomenon (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2000, p. 87). Various aspects of sentence structure can be examined by a syntax analysis that can be exemplified by three grammatical techniques (Bergstrom & Boréus, 2012, p. 376); Text transitivity means mapped out the ideological implications of different production forms may have. One examines how the subject and object are linked - or may not be linked - with different events and processes (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2000, p. 87). Text nominalization means that the agent denied responsibility, and instead focuses on the processes and actions that have led to them (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2000, p. 87). The third example is the text modality that focuses on how the speaker in different ways is connected to their assertion, and to what extent it stands by what has been expressed (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2000, p 87-88). In this case there is a difference between “the Islamic State is a threat” and “we believe the Islamic state is a threat”; the modality selected by the speaker or author has implications for the discourses structure of social relations, knowledge as well as systems of meaning. According to Fairclough mass media interpretations are apprehended as truths through the usage of both categorical and objective modalities, instead of subjectivity (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2000, pp. 87-88). Examples of this in my case could be the following: "Islam is dangerous" instead of "we believe that Islam is dangerous." The usage of these modalities demonstrates the power that media has today, and which it gets when their claims are interpreted as true (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2000, pp. 87-88). Furthermore, the analysis also means to make visible what actually is said and what is implied upon (Bergström & Boréus, 2012, p. 376). In the case of this study this step is aimed at the articles which have been chosen.

In investigations of the discursive practice however, one examines how the text is produced, distributed and consumed (Bergstrom & Boréus, 2012, p. 376). Intertextuality is the concepts
used in the critical discourse analysis and describes how texts might be connected with each other (Bergstrom & Boréus, 2012, p. 376). The texts referred to in that text are examined with the aim to trace the discursive and social practice (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2000, p. 77-78).

Intertextuality in this study refers to the examination of the types of sources the news reports are based upon. Through different interpretation strategies one can also examine how consumers interpret a text (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2000, p. 85-86), but since I'm not looking to investigate this, I will not dig into this any further in this paper. The discursive practice in this study are the authors of the article, its audience and the usage of them.

When examining the social practice the analysis widens somewhat; the relationship between the discursive text and the discursive practice is what interests and it is also here that the question of change and ideological consequences can be examined (Jørgensen & Phillips 2000:90). The critical discourse analysis ability to criticize the question of ideology and power emerge when placed in a social context. Text as a manifestation of social practitioners are thus part of a wider structure; the discourse is not a single discourse, it is likewise a part of other structures and is designed from and within the context it is in.

Fairclough here speaks of a discourse order where a specific text or discursive practice must be related to other discourses, it is therefore necessary to mention something about schemes of construction of the discourse in a discourse analysis (Bergström & Boréus, 2012, p 377). This could consist of possible policy changes for example. However in such cases discourse analysis is not sufficient enough on its own and thereby an additional relevant theory is required (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2000, p. 90). In my case, the theory is that media is mirrored by the existing cultural heritage and political streams in that area. Hence the news agencies are affected by happenings in that particular society.

4.3 Semiotic Resources

The two analytical methods within critical discourse analyses which will be used are, one for analyzing the text and the other for analyzing the pictures in the articles; representational strategies in language for the texts and semiotic resources for the pictures included in the articles. In the way in which the articles are written one can identify how the media agency is affected by the happening and thereby it can serve as political, social and psychological
determinates for the readers and also the author (Machine, Mayr, 2012:77). Where the representational choices will always bring associations of values, activities and ideas (Machine, Mayr, 2012:78). There is no neutral way of representing a person in any language and representational strategies mean that whichever choice one makes, these will serve to draw attention to a certain aspect of identity linked to a specific discourse (Machine, Mayr, 2012:77-78).

I have chosen to analyze the pictures as well due to the non-linguistic elements and features also communicating (Machine, Mayr, 2012:49). Where it is believed that images can denote and connote; where the first refers to what is actually portrayed in the picture and the second is more of what one can associate the picture to, an additional or underlying meaning which is of course very individual (Machine, Mayr, 2012:49-50).

4.4 Ethical considerations

When coming to ethical dilemmas this study is likely not to face such; as it in principal is there to make sure there will come no harm to those included in the study, it is often their safety which lies in focus (Cole, 1997:32). As this study would not include any participants there will be no need to take into consideration any actual physical beings. As the articles have all been published and thereby been made visible for the public and the president’s speech was public, I see no need for anonymity. For the sake of the reliability of the study the aim for it is to be as transparent as possible and thereby it is important to refer to from where the citations in the results have been found.

By conducting a discourse analysis the aim is to interpret how the Islamic State is depicted in media, and thereby not such a neutral and objective stance as possible (Jörgensen & Phillips, 2000, s. 70). Simultaneously, it is important to regard the understanding and history I have got; I myself have got a discourse and my interpretation can therefore be based on my own norms and values (Jörgensen & Phillips, 2000, s. 28). Describing reality is difficult without influencing it; the chosen subject and analytical benchmark will limit what I see, which will also become a question of power. Therefore, it is of importance for me to reflect on what I see and why, and that I question it (Börjesson, 2003, s. 25).
4.5 Reliability and validity

The reliability of a study involves achieving the same results when carrying out the same measurements at different periods of time (May, 2001, p. 117-118). The weaknesses of this study include the limitation and sample, both in the choices of theory and method. If for example different news agencies or papers had been used in the gathering of material it is possible that the results had been different. When one uses discourse analyses one becomes involved in the construction and thereby the study will become a highly subjective interpretation; resulting in the study having a different outcome depending on my cultural background and knowledge, decreasing the reliability. When one is involved in the construction process of the discourse one can turn to the term *reflexivity*. Which means that one applies one’s own theories on the material one has filtered (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2000), which means that one is aware of the take-off point and the insight and how these can affect the results of the study. When thinking of this it seems important to motivate ones delimitations and samples. Moreover, since my essay focuses on the interpretations of the language used by different news agencies over the world, it is also important to be open with how the results have been reached and that these are not constructed by the own mind. Interpretations are subjective, so therefore it is important that all choices made are justified (Bergstrom & Boréus, 2012, p. 406).

A study’s validity means that one studies what one has intended to investigate (May, 2001:117-118); that is to say that one can answer the questions posed with the method they have chosen. Validity within discourse analysis is mostly linked to the relevance in the data, whether collected material can respond to the posed question of the study. In which I see no problems with in this study, as the material and aim are so interlinked. However, another aspect of validity in a critical discourse analysis is confirmed by observing the context in which the discourse exists. Thereby, the validity can be measured by controlling the fecundity of the analysis; meaning that it is investigated to what extent the analysis succeeds in creating new explanations and there as contributing with new aspects (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2000:122-123). In my case, the use of quotes hopefully increase the validity (Bergstrom & Boréus, 2012:406).
Furthermore, if this study had been conducted with a quantitative method there had been a risk of structural bias and false representation (White, 2002:516). As one would then only look for certain words and conduct a statistical analyses of these, meaning that the context would be overlooked.

### 4.6 Selection of material

The selected articles are from each media outlets internet based newspaper. The news outlets internet version was chosen due to its accessibility and its relevance to the subject, as the Islamic States stronghold is internet based media. The selected countries for the study are, the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada, Australia and the Arab Peninsula in form of Al Jazeera. These are all English speaking news outlets, but they are spread over different continents. Both from the UK and the US two different media agencies will be analyzed, this as both the US and the UK at the time were already involved in the region where the ISIL are active and as the ISIL fighter is believed to be British. A delimitation was done to two articles in these two states and one in the rest to have the possibility of conducting a qualitative and thorough analysis. These particular media outlets have been selected, as they are large media outlets in their country of origin. These are, BBC, The Mirror, CNN, Reuters (US edition), Canadian Broadcasting Network, the Sydney Morning Herald and Al Jazeera.

When selecting articles in each news outlet, the point of origin as mentioned was their websites. The search function was utilized to narrow the articles down, also it was to have some idea of what the news agencies themselves chose to preserve and show in the history. The articles will be limited to one from every newspaper. The word typed into the search engine on each news outlets webpage is “James Foley”. Then they were chosen in accordance to a timeline; those closest to the 19-21 of August 2014 which is when Foley is thought to have been murdered.

### 5. Analysis

#### 5.1 Introduction
Before presenting the identified discourses as well as similarities and differences in media reportage in different regions, important to mention is that all through the analysis there was an apparent division of “us” and “them”. The othering emerged in among others the exposition of terrorism, but also in which experts where expressing themselves.

Discourse makes visible among other things who is given the right to express their views (Börjesson, 2003:21). In the articles analyzed in this study it is clear that Muslims that condemn terrorism are barely included in the debate. The majority of those interviewed and who express themselves are western experts and analysts, which in turn is viewed upon as a tactic which gives media more credibility (Börjesson, 2003:95) as these are considered to have a lot of knowledge in the sphere of terrorism. When Muslims are interviewed it is mainly on whether Islam is a violent religion or not. The sole Muslim interviewed was in Al Jazeera and he was an expert on recruitment in west by the Islamic State.

In the following section follows a presentation of the identified discourses in the articles analyzed on the topic of journalist James Foleys murder between August 20th and 22nd 2014. A total seven articles have been analyzed using the critical discourse analysis. After having analyzed these, three general discourses have been identified, belonging/othering, threat and drawing on the Islamic States material. Also there are country-specific, regional and also global patterns identifiable.

5.2 Othering

When analyzing the selected articles a discourse on belonging was identified among others, where terrorism and the Islamic State belongs to the East. A scenario of “us against them” emerges – the West against the East, an othering process. In the analysis which follows it will be demonstrated how a reality is constructed by media where terrorism, violence and the Islamic State is linked to the East and the West is portrayed as innocent; and how they make this link appear as truthful.

When analyzing discourses in texts, explored among others are the journalist’s choices of words and the stereotypes used when describing a certain phenomenon (Jörgensen & Phillips, 2000:87). The vocabulary in turn constructs a picture of the group or person’s identity for the
audience, where the attributed stereotypes are viewed as normal (Hall, 1997:258). In several of the articles the Islamic State is depicted as a jihadist, extremist or Islamist movement and the man committing James Foley’s murder is depicted as “barbaric”, “fanatic” or “inhuman”.


The above quote is the heading of the article in The Mirror. Directly in the heading the language creates a determined scenario for the reader. James Foley’s name is mentioned in the heading, which becomes personal to the audience meanwhile the executioner is a “British Jihadist”; as to create rage and disgust among the audience and turn the British public against the man while they feel compassion with Foley. Focus seems to lie in picturing the innocence of the journalist and the brutality of the Islamic State and the man portrayed in the video. The “Jihadist” in this scenario creates hostility and anger, mentioning that he is British further fuels the revulsion among the readers, as these are mainly Brits. Rather than leaving it to the audience to create an opinion of their own, estimating the two people and their actions, the audience is led into “taking sides” with Foley. The relation to Foley is more personal meanwhile the executioner is now pictured as violent and someone one would not want in their society. This is line with Nord & Strömbäck, who claim that when involved in a conflict Muslims are depicted as fanatics and the US as “the world police” in western media.

"We implore the kidnappers to spare the lives of the remaining hostages. Like Jim, they are innocent, Diane Foley wrote on Twitter” (Al Jazeera, 2014). And (…) “he was an extraordinary son, brother, journalist and person” (BBC, 2014). “We have never been prouder of our son Jim” (CNN, 2014).

Above are three example from the articles where they have mentioned James Foley’s family, mainly his mother, when the reporting on the event. By including statements from a devastated parent the journalists again achieve in leading the audience into a standpoint. The audience can relate to the family, in this case the mother, the readers will care for her and take sides with her. The audience can relate to her statement, as most do have either a partner, sibling or colleague; which in turn makes it easier to relate to her sorrow and take her stance which indirectly means opposing the Islamic State. What we have identified here is the
journalist’s usage of a “worthy victim” to symbolize the vulnerability in the victims in the intent to create a reaction among the audience (Nohrstedt, 2006:140). To have the audience sympathize with Diane Foley and condemn the ISIL.

In Reuters (2014), the accompanying picture is that of the masked perpetrator all in black with a gun hanging from his left shoulder. With his right hand he is holding the collar of the shirt of the American journalist Steven Joel Sotloff who is on his knees next to him and in his left hand he is holding a knife. The journalist is dressed in orange and his head is shaven, as if to mimic the clothing a prisoner, much like those at the American military detention camp in Guantanamo Bay. One could claim this is what the picture connotes, this is what I associate to when viewing this picture. However, this could vary depending the viewer (Machine & Mayr, 2012:50). The captive seems worried, when referring to his eyes and facial expression. This picture much alike the quotes above further strengthens the discourse of the “us” and “them”. Sotloff seems terrified and innocent; he is held captive and sitting on his knees on the ground. Whilst the masked man is carrying weapons and seems to pray on those with no possibility of protecting themselves or fighting back.

What we can conclude here is in line with Nohrstedt, there is a steady othering in western media when there is an ongoing conflict between the Arab world and the USA (2006:78).

5.3 Threat toward “us”

The second discourse which stood out was a discourse of the Islamic State as a threat toward the West, mainly the USA; the discourse included which consequences the threat can lead to. In the following section the discourse of a threat toward Christianity and the west will be presented.

Several of the analyzed articles discuss the fact that the Islamic State has threatened the US and the western world, such as Reuters. Here a lot of focus lies on that the Islamic State has gained confidence and may therefore in the future take aim at American targets, and that they have several surprises for the west. Related to this other threatening videos released by the Islamic State are mentioned, one in which they threaten to destroy "The American Cross" and "...boast they will emerge victorious over “crusader” America”. The verbs used here are
aggressive and take a stance against the Islamic State. The other video is claimed to picture an American soldier crying over the death of a comrade meanwhile in the background the Christian hymn Amazing Grace is playing. It is apparent that the article is painting a picture of the Islamic State as a threat toward American civilians, and that it is trying to engage people.

Other articles are focused on the underlying reason for the video; why the ISIL have published it. Namely the purpose of the video, what is The Islamic State after? Their mission, why they have chosen to post the video on social media. They conclude that their goal is to include West in the conflict; which may be viewed as a threat. Due to the casualties of war and the possible outcomes.

In these articles they turn to experts on terrorism and these mention that the video is a tactical move from the Islamic State, they are provoking the west to engage in the conflict on the ground which in turn will fuel the popularity of the group and their recruits will increase. This as the angry west will create a “clash” with the Muslims, hostility toward the Muslims will rise. James Foley’s murder is mentioned as a “barbaric and blood-soaked ransom note” (The Sydney Morning Herald). They are trying to make the audience familiar with the underlying reason of the video and that the west shall not “walk into the trap”. This is also a strategy of portraying the group as a threat toward the west. All experts interviewed but one are Westerners, the single expert with Arab descent was interviewed by Al Jazeera and that man was an expert on the ISIL’s recruitment in the West. This then seems to run in accordance with Börjesson’s claims; that in Western media the experts on terrorism are Westerners, this as to calm the audience (2013:146).

They move on to discuss that the group is skilled and up to date when it comes to social media. That they have for a while been utilizing social media, just like its predecessor Al-Qaeda but that the videos are on a “new level of horror”. They conclude by mentioning that the core fighters in the group are foreigners, which also fits with the theory of the belittled Muslim and hostility toward them in the west. Thereby, the Muslims are marginalized and the power structures are strengthen and reproduced (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2010, s. 92).
According to Jan Hjärpe, the largest amount of victims to the Islamic States terror attacks, are the Muslims themselves (2010:145), however this is not highlighted in any of the articles.

The above discussed discourse is mainly in US newspapers and somewhat in the British ones, which is in line with Gerhard and Schäfer, that mean that it is likely that countries involved in a conflict will report on events regarding this in a somewhat hostile style (2015:3-4). They will focus on its states interests which can also be linked to McQuail who states that the information which is provided is limited and imprinted by the power relations the elite in society wants to preserve (1994:76). In this case the political elite.

### 5.4 The Islamic States material

The final discourse identified was that of reporting through the ISIL’s material and thereby doing exactly what the group is aiming for. The journalists are choosing to use the material in the video uploaded by the Islamic State itself. The news outlets are falling for the “trap”, they are “helping” the ISIL by following the group’s tactic. As Stern and Berger mention, the Islamic State is using the western media for its own means (2015:84). Media is provoking and fueling the public which is exactly what the Islamic State are aiming for, as this in turn will create othering in western societies. An increasing hostility toward the Muslims in these societies will in turn increase the ISIL’s recruitments that is what they have counted on at least (Stern & Berger, 2015:87).

“I call on my friends, family and loved ones to rise up against my real killers – the US government, for what will happen to me is only a result of their complacency and criminality” (Reuters, 2014). “(...) we are an Islamic Army and a state that has been accepted by a large number of Muslims worldwide” (BBC, 2014).

In these quotes the newspapers are using the Islamic States words directly. They are utilizing the ISIL’s own material when creating news of the happening, in order to explain the event. They are explaining James Foley’s murder through the Islamic States own video, there as they are doing this on the ISIL’s terms and conditions. Meaning that the news material is more like the Islamic States private propaganda outlet. What is reported on is what the group wants to be reported on. From these results, it can be claimed in accordance with the Quilliam
Foundation that the ISIL are effective when exploiting international media attention. This as they want their message to be spread on international level. Which seems to have become more of their focus since an aggressive countering against the groups presence on social media began in early August 2014 (Stern & Berger, 2015: 114). There are additional examples of the above in other forms in the articles.

“Video: the world’s most ruthless terrorists” (CNN, 2014). “Video: James Foley was an experienced journalist, as Andy Moore reports” (BBC, 2014).

The first is a video created by the Islamic State itself, for propaganda intentions. The second, has got video material/pictures included which originate from the ISIL. It is video material from the group which the news agencies are re-using, they have afterwards included comments of their own but the videos are not revised.

The pictures in all of the articles except for Al-Jazeera are screenshots from the original video the group posted online. With either James Foley or Steven Sotloff kneeling on the ground in the dessert with orange overalls. In some pictures the culprit is included, he is then standing next to them with a knife and holding their collar. Other new agencies have chosen to solely include the culprit, with his black clothes and masked face. Carrying a knife and gun. This fits with the group’s intention of intimidating its enemies (Stern & Berger, 2015:82). The man seems frightening carrying the heavy artillery and as he cannot be identified meanwhile the journalists seem helpless and worthless. They have no possibility of standing up toward the masked man.

In addition to all of the material in the articles taken directly from the ISIL a co-occurring concept is an explanation to why this video was created and thereafter posted online. In the form of;

“The video, titled “A message to America” (Al Jazeera, 2014). “The jihadist militant group said the killing was a revenge for US air strikes against its fighters in Iraq” (BBC, 2014).

This has been visible in all articles, why Foley was murdered is explained clearly and is also explained through ISIL’s words. With a clear explanation of the fault lying in the US hands, they are the real murderers.
A co-occurrence in all articles is the interpreting and sharing of the Islamic States own material in their reports. When media broadcasts propaganda videos, pictures and quotes from the Islamic State itself it gives the group more publicity on its own terms (Stern & Berger, 2015:82).

Interesting is that two of the articles analyzed, the CBC and the SMH have both interviewed experts on the field of terrorism and media tactics. Both of which have warned that by reporting on the video and the event, the media will help the ISIL attract a new wave of recruits. As people will watch the video, many will be turned off, but there are those that will find this thrilling and with the high media coverage these subjects will find out more of the group. Still media tends to report on the subject, not only that but are discussing the images, sceneries and what is said in the video; all according to the Islamic States material.

5.2 Similarities across the media outlets

All of the media outlets included in the study condemn the event or video, all though they might differ in their strength of condemnation. Thereby, that becomes a global standardization in the media coverage. No matter in what region and cultural or historical background they all chose to condemn the beheading.

These negative evaluations are identifiable first in the rhetoric: the event, video and the perpetrator are described as “brutal” (BBC, 2014), “grisly” (SMH, 2014) “horrific” (CNN, 2014, The Mirror, 2014), “gruesome” (CBC, 2014) and “barbaric” (SMH, 2014). A second feature which underlines the strength of the condemnation are condemnations from high-ranking individuals in society, such as British Prime Minister David Cameron, US President Barack Obama and Whitehouse Spokeswoman Caitlin Hayden. Third, the illegitimacy of the event is further stressed by the innocent portrayal of James Foley. That he was a victim of a crime, he had no power in the situation; he is represented as uninvolved politically, militarily and economically. He was a journalist, who was in Syria to expose the world to the suffering of the Syrian people. Thereby, he was just there to do his job and got caught in the middle. Finally, a fourth stylistic device is found in all media outlets: they all include James Foley’s family or mother, and the devastation of losing a son under such circumstances. Which has the effect of the individual picturing James Foley in his everyday life, when with family and
friends. What pain and suffering this deed has caused these people who no longer will have
that. Underlying the negative evaluation of the event or murder.

The American media outlets condemn the event the most, closely followed by the British
ones, the Canadian and Australian thereafter and finally Al Jazeera.

5.3 Differences in coverage

Apart from the similarities presented above, however, there are also differences between the
analyzed media articles. For example, the Canadian and Australian news outlet focus on the
Islamic States reason to post the video and what they hope to achieve. Meanwhile, the British
and American media outlets are rather striving to convey to the public that we are to rise
against the Islamic State; it is personal to them. The US media outlets also highlight that the
ISIL will in a close future attack the USA, that they have threatened to do so and that it should
be taken with gravity. Finally, Al Jazeera is trying hard to be neutral when reporting on the
event, keeping to facts and excluding “hard” and negatively loaded words. However, there is
some critic imbedded in the report against the US and the west.

As stated above, the main focus of the Canadian and Australian articles, namely the purpose
of the video, is what is The Islamic State after? Their mission, why they have chosen to post
the video on social media. In both articles they turn to experts on terrorism and these mention
that the video is a tactical move from the Islamic State. They are provoking the west to
engage in the conflict on the ground. Which in turn will fuel the popularity of the group and
thereby their recruits will increase. This as the angry west will create a “clash” with the
Muslims, hostility toward the Muslims in western societies will rise. James Foley’s murder is
mentioned as a “barbaric and blood-soaked ransom note” (Sydney Morning Herald, 2014).
They are trying to make the audience familiar with the underlying reason of the video and that
the west shall not “walk into the trap”. They move on to discuss that the group is skilled and
up to date when it comes to social media. That they have for a while been utilizing social
media, just like its predecessor Al-Qaeda but that the videos are on a “new level of horror”.
Both conclude by mentioning that the core fighters in the group are foreigners, which also fits
with the theory of the belittled Muslim and hostility toward them in the west. The theme in
these two articles is very alike that of the Quilliam Foundation and Stern and Berger; they
have concluded that western media is in fact a tactical weapon for the Islamic state. An increasing hostility toward the Muslims in these societies will in turn increase the ISIL’s recruitments. So, therefore western media should watch how they report on these types of issues. These two articles both fit in the regional coverage of a news event; Gerhard & Schäfer claim that the event is evaluated whether it is news worthy or no and to what extent (2013:3-4).

This then is followed by the American media outlets. These articles seem more personal, the murdered journalists name is mentioned in the heading; as to create rage among the audience. Both media outlets use the concept ISIS in its article rather than the name the group itself propagates. Focus seems to lie in picturing the innocence of the journalist and the brutality of the Islamic State. They focus a lot on how the family, friends and neighbors describe the man, how he was well-liked and popular and how he will be missed by everyone. They highlight the beheading, but throughout the article focus lies mainly on targeting the USA. A lot of focus lies on that the Islamic State has gained confidence and may therefore in the future take aim at American targets, and that they have several surprises for the west. Related to this other threatening videos released by the Islamic State are mentioned, one in which they threaten to destroy "The American Cross" "...boast they will emerge victorious over "crusader" America" (Reuters, 2014). The other video is claimed to picture an American soldier crying over the death of a comrade meanwhile in the background the Christian hymn Amazing Grace is playing. It is apparent that the article is painting a picture of the Islamic State as a threat toward American civilians, and that it is trying to engage people.

Furthermore, they are painting the picture of a group which is out of hands and a threat towards the USA, "brutal militant rampaging" and "coldblooded mass killings of men, women and children" (CNN, 2014) are just two examples. The perpetrator is described as a "black-clad executioner" and "masked ISIS militant" (Reuters, 2014). Further on, the same man is depicted as a fanatic and the Islamic State is depicted as an extremist and Jihadist group. Moreover, a lot of light is shed on the second American journalist shown in the video, Steven Sotloff. From the almost propaganda-like discourse in the articles toward the Islamic State it is not surprising to find that these are American news anchors and therefore are influenced a lot by American values. It becomes extra personal to these as the murdered
The journalist was an American, and so is the second one. The verbs used here are aggressive and take a stance against the Islamic State. The language has constructed an “us” and “them” feeling, the Islamic State against the USA.

The British news anchors, are running along similar lines as the American ones; to them too it seems personal. They have included a lot of harsh words and seem to be aiming at engaging the public. However they are not as “propaganda like” as the American news outlets. An explanation of the stance they have taken might be that the executioner in the video is believed to be of British descent. Therefore, it is of importance to Brits to condemn the video and event and distance themselves from such acts, as to make a point out of it. Furthermore, it could also be that the Brits are allied with the US and that the Brits have also been involved in military conflict in the region.

Finally we have reached Al Jazeera. In this article focus lies mainly on James Foley and not on the perpetrator, this as if not to “steer up” any more feelings and anger. The Islamic State is referred to with the neutral words group and organization, also at times as the ISIL; which is the most correct translation of the group’s name and its followers are defined as fighters. Furthermore, they have chosen not to portray the scene of the beheading, rather they focus on the facts. A lot of focus also lies on Foley’s mother, a grieving parent.

The verbs are also they somewhat neutral; ISIL posted a video purportedly showing and James Foley went missing two years ago.

They conclude by focusing a lot on the group’s methods of recruitment and that a lot of the recruits are in fact fighters from other regions and not solely from the Arab peninsula. This as to generate that the west is not to be too judging as they are involved in this problem as well. They have chosen to bring in an expert opinion on recruitments methods and statistics, namely Rami Abdel, the director of UK-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights.

6. Results and Discussion
The intent of this paper has been to investigate whether or not media outlets coverage and portrayal of the Islamic State and terrorism differs depending on region and state. This has been conducted by identifying existing discourses on the topic of The Islamic State and terrorism in the chosen articles from news outlets spread all over the world. As a case study, the video posted on internet portraying the beheading of American journalist James Foley by the Islamic State was chosen. In a total seven newspapers were singled out, two from the US and two from the UK, one Canadian, one Australian and one from the Middle East and the articles in these were analyzed with the aid of Critical discourse analysis and “differing media coverage”. The discourses identified touched upon, belonging/othering, a threat and ISIL’s own material. These discourses are both constructing and constructed; meaning that they explain the reality – knowledge on the group and terrorism – as it simultaneously constructs it. These discourses are powerful as they can affect our views on a certain phenomenon by for example using (negative) words which might appear as obvious; the construction of discourses can thereby both strengthen and reproduce power relations in societies.

Moreover, it shall be highlighted that the results are not generalizable and representative of all Medias reportage and portrayal of the Islamic State. I have neither aimed at investigating whether these portrayals are true or false. The results have among other things been acquired through the choice of case study, theoretical starting-point and prior knowledge; thereby the results could have differed with an alternate case study and starting point.

In the news articles analyzed there is, as stated in analysis section a clear us and them portrayal, where the west is portrayed as innocent and under attack whilst the Islamic State is defined as criminals. This was very clear in the American and British news outlets. Thereby, in Western media there is a tendency of bias toward western values, however there is a hint of bias in Al Jazeera as well due to the underlying criticism toward the West. It must be taken into account though that Al Jazeera might not be criticizing the West by will but due to societal strains on media in its region of origin.

An interesting and urgent matter however linked to the bias in the media creating an “us and them” feeling is that this is what fuels many of the young fighters from the west to travel to the Middle East and join the Islamic State. As these people feel alienated and victimized which in turn makes them the perfect targets.
The largest difference is found between Al Jazeera and the US media outlets (CNN, Reuters). Which runs in line with both the clash of cultures and also the involvement in a conflict. The first theory means that there will a significant difference in media coverage between the Middle East and the US due to cultural differences. Meanwhile the second states that a difference in coverage is identifiable if the countries in which the media outlet are stationed are participating in a conflict and if so the news outlet will report on the event according to its countries stance. This second theory, suits well with the identified discourse of the British media anchors as well. Due to them having been involved in the conflict in Iraq as allies to the Americans. Thereby, they too will report on the event with a similar stance as their allied the USA.

Another main finding of the study is that all media outlets included in the study condemn the event and emphasize on the illegitimacy of the terrorist group, however the articles differ in their strength of condemnation. So to conclude the media coverage related to the murder of James Foley is globally standardized, to a large extent however there are sections which differ between regions.

The conclusion is that political currents and cultural heritage does have an influence in media coverage and portrayal; news agencies belonging to different regions portray this terror organization and this exact event differently. They all condemn it, however some feel more affected than others. It seems personal to the American news outlets, as does it to the British ones, meanwhile the Canadian and Australian newspapers are more neutral and keep to the facts, Al Jazeera is trying to keep a neutral stance however there is some underlying criticism toward the US and the West.

However, the hypothesis is not supported to the fullest. The coverage and the way in which the Islamic State is depicted varies from region to region, although two of the countries with a long distance between them are those that are the most similar, namely Australia and Canada. A likely explanation is that these are the two states that are least affected by the happening and the group itself. Neither of the two have so far been targeted by the Islamic State, they are not militarily active in the area in which the Islamic State is active. Thereby they are not as personally involved or affected and media is likely to not be as emotional; rather they will go to extreme lengths not to upset the Islamic State as to fall below their radar. Simultaneously
they cannot afford to seem unaffected by the tragic event as this will likely not fit right among their audience; therefore they have both got the same strategy. Namely to condemn the event and also educate their surrounding on the Islamic State’s media strategies and use of violence toward civilians.

It should also be pointed out that the disparities and similarities in between newspapers can also depend on the political stance of the newspapers. Meaning that the coverage is not solely driven by the countries cultural heritage but also by the individual magazines stance in the political field.

7. Conclusion

In this thesis, I have explored the research question: “How has the execution of James Foley been portrayed in Media and which similarities as well as disparities have the articles got?” The thesis attempts to identify any differences and similarities in the media coverage of the Islamic State in different regions all over the world using the murder of James Foley as a case study.

Furthermore, media coverage on the Islamic State and terrorism is affected by multiple factors and relationships between these and not solely by the cultural heritage. Factors such as political stances, cost-benefit calculations, the newspapers views, economic incentives and a states military involvements in conflicts seems to correlate with the media coverage on the topic as well. Although, the media coverage seems to be affected a lot by the cultural heritage of a particular state as well.

Furthermore, the findings of the study seem to support the hypothetic path to some extent; the coverage of the Islamic State differs to an extent depending on the region. That the regions closest to one another are the most similar due to their similarities in culture and the ones furthest apart will differ the most. Although the ability to generalize the findings are somewhat restrained due to the limited amount of cases studied.
This was not the case in all of the above studied newspapers and regions, those with the closest proximity were among those that differed the most, this was similar when studying those furthest away from each other. Although it could be argued that those with the most differing cultural heritage were those that differed the most. Also these three namely, Britain, the Middle East and the USA are those that are the most involved with the group and simultaneously they are three world powers from different ages. Thereby, the differences.

8. Suggestions for future research

The first suggestion for future research on this topic would be a large scale study, which includes both qualitative and quantitative methods.

Also it would be interesting to study which factors are underlying when deciding what to report on in media. As some terror events for example, are not given the same amount of attention as others. Even thought they might have claimed more human lives. An example of this might be that the attack against the satire magazine Charlie Hebdo in Paris which claimed 12 people’s lives (National Encyklopedin) received a lot more attention than the terror attack taking place the exact same week in Nigeria by the rebel group Boko Haram which claimed over 2000 lives (Amnesty International).

Another suggestion is whether the presentation in American and also British media anchors of terrorism and the Islamic State, can lead to exclusion of Muslims in the US and also the west, which in turn can lead to extremism. It would be interesting to study whether many of the recruits chose to join terror groups due to alienation which is a result of the existing discourses in media and thereby also in society.
9. References


Nationalencyklopedin (online) *Islamiska staten* Available at: http://www.ne.se/uppslagsverk/encyklopedi/enkel/islamiska-staten (Last accessed: 2016-04-20)


**News articles**


