

## Islamic State in the Spanish Daily Press: Framing Analysis of 'El Periódico' and 'El País'

### L'Estat Islàmic a la premsa espanyola: anàlisi del 'frame' a 'El Periódico' i 'El País'

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*This study examines the journalistic production related to Islamic State (ISIS) by two daily Spanish newspapers, El Periódico and El País. Through a quantitative content analysis, this study analyzes the type of stories, sources of information, story contexts and frames used to portray the ISIS threat in three different time periods: the expansion into Syria (April 8, 2013), the declaration of the Caliphate (June 29, 2014) and the Paris attacks (November 13, 2015). Results show that Government officials are the most used source of information, followed by other news media and international organizations. Regarding the frames used to report on ISIS, findings show that in general both newspapers have favored a geopolitical perspective over an existential threat perspective. The only exception to this general trend can be found in El Pe-*

*En aquest treball s'estudia la producció periodística relacionada amb l'Estat Islàmic (ISIS) en dos diaris espanyols, El Periódico i El País. Mitjançant una anàlisi quantitativa de continguts, aquest estudi analitza el tipus d'articles, les fonts d'informació, els contextos dels articles i els frames que s'empren per descriure l'amenaça d'ISIS en tres períodes de temps diferents: l'expansió a Síria (8 d'abril de 2013), la declaració del Califat (29 de juny de 2014) i els atacs de París (13 de novembre de 2015). Els resultats mostren que la font d'informació a la qual es recorre més són els Governos, seguits d'altres mitjans de premsa i organitzacions internacionals. Pel que fa als frames que s'utilitzen per informar sobre ISIS, en general s'ha comprovat que tots dos diaris prefereixen una perspectiva geopolítica per damunt d'una d'amenaça existencial. L'única excepció d'aquesta tendència general és el diari*

riódico, which has published far more stories related to the human rights crisis than El País.

**Key words:** framing, terrorism, ISIS, press, Spain, El Periódico, El País, content analysis, Paris attacks.

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The media and terrorism has always been a major topic in media research. The reason for this is that this connection raises key questions concerning journalistic production, news dissemination and mass media effects. Back in 1977, the Columbia Journalism Review published in its May/June issue (vol. 16) a “Statement on terrorism and the media” by the American National News Council, rejecting as “unthinkable” any notion that terrorist activities should not be reported on the grounds that publicizing terrorist activities could be perceived as contagious. Besides warning that information of public interest should not be withheld, the Council also recommended that news media adopt guidelines on the appropriate limits of news coverage of terrorism and on the relationship with and the use of news sources. A brief search of the Communication & Mass Media Complete Index shows that the number of scientific publications on the topic increased significantly from the 1980s on. Of major interest are the questions related to audiences’ perceptions of terrorism, the social effects of press coverage, media as a weapon, the structure of news on terrorism, terrorism and censorship and the media’s influence on public policies.

In Spain, academics’ attention has for a long time been centered on the Basque terrorist organization *Euskadi Ta Askatasuna* (ETA), which announced a definitive cessation of its armed activities on October 20, 2011. The attacks on the twin towers on September 11, 2001, and the subsequent “war on terror”, gave rise to a new international and eventually global perspective on the studies on media and terrorism, a pattern that has been reinforced following the emergence of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), also known as the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) or simply Islamic State (IS).

Recent studies on the representation of terrorism have centered their attention on very disparate news outlets: The New York Times and The Monitor of Uganda (Kalyango, 2006), Al Jazeera English and BBC websites (Sati, 2015), CNN and Al Jazeera English (Zhang and Hellmueller, 2016). By contrasting international news outlets, these studies have helped highlighting the existence of different cultural backgrounds in newsrooms, diverse media production habits and diverse media agendas. But what happens when two newspapers from the same country are com-

pared? Are they offering a plural perspective on the ISIS threat? Or, are they also being affected by the increasing influence of the major international news outlets and government officials to determine the contents of news reporting on international affairs? This is not a minor question. As Moore's study found out for the case of the British press (2010), the reporting on international affairs is becoming progressively less diverse, echoing the voices of a few major international players and of official sources of information. As a consequence, Moore argues, the world is "shrinking" for British readers. And it could also be shrinking for the Spaniards. In order to find out the situation of international reporting in the Spanish press, this study examines the journalistic production related to Islamic State (ISIS) by two Spanish daily newspapers, *El Periódico* and *El País*. *El País* is the world's leading daily newspaper in Spanish and a trademark in Hispano-American journalism. It is based in Madrid and belongs to the Spanish media conglomerate PRISA. *El Periódico* is a Catalan newspaper based in Barcelona belonging to Group Zeta. It is printed both in Spanish and Catalan and in 2015 it was Spain's fifth-highest circulating general-interest daily. Both *El País* and *El Periódico* are considered progressive newspapers connected to the socialist political party. Through quantitative content analysis, this study analyzes the types of stories, sources of information, story contexts and frames used to portray the ISIS threat in three different time periods: the first military incursions into Syria (April 8, 2013), the declaration of the Caliphate (June 29, 2014) and the Paris attacks (November 13, 2015).

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Like many other recent studies focused on media and terrorism (Powell, 2011; Woods, 2011; Rodero, 2011; Brinson and Stohl, 2012; Sati, 2015; Nevalsky, 2015; Hatton and Nielsen, 2016; Zhang and Hellmueller, 2016), this study was conceived within framing theories, which have become popular in mass communication research over the last few decades.

Regardless of their characteristic lack of epistemological unity (Entman, 1993; Reese, 2001; Sádaba, 2001; Borah, 2011), framing theories share the basic premise according to which our understanding of reality is influenced by a set of shared social principles (frames) that function as sense makers. Among the first authors to apply the concept of frame to social theory, special mention is due to Erving Goffman, who, building on the works of William James, Alfred Schütz and Gregory Bateson, defined frames as those principles that help us to structure and organize our everyday life experience (Goffman, 1997). In his seminal work *Frame Analysis: An essay on the organization of experience* [1974], Goffman defined frame analysis in the following terms: "My aim is to try to isolate some of the basic frameworks of understanding available in our society for making sense out of events and to analyze the special vulnerabilities to which these frames of reference are subject" (Goffman, 1997: 155). Stemming from this sociological orientation of framing analysis, a profusion of studies have examined how news organizations construct, structure and disseminate their stories (Reese, 2001). In order to understand the means through which news media convey meaning, the majority of these stu-

dies undertake content analysis operations, which may apply either quantitative methodologies that measure frequency and use of keywords and concepts, or qualitative research methods that interpret meaning through more comprehensive semiotic and hermeneutic procedures. Alternatively, framing studies may also focus on audiences' responses and media effects (Scheufele, 1999). Following a more social-psychological approach, these studies aim to identify the links existing between media framing and people's responses to subjects.

Assuming that specific news frames influence people's perceptions and attitudes regarding the subjects covered by the media, both of these approaches face the major difficulty of having to isolate the relative responsibility of a specific media content from the complex flow of other media contents and from the set of other social, historical and cultural factors that also influence people's perceptions and reasoning (Reese, 2001; Borah, 2011). Nonetheless, this major difficulty has not prevented scholars from trying to show that news media framing plays its part in shaping people's minds.

Regarding the main methodological issues involved in framing theories, Borah (2011) highlights the little attention that scholars have dedicated to analyzing the origin of the frames used in news stories: "The ability of a frame to dominate the news discourse depends on a multitude of complex factors—economic and cultural resources and the journalistic routines and practices or the frame's resonance with political and cultural values—" (Borah, 2011: 256). In order to identify some of the factors that may lie at the root of the news frames used to report on ISIS, cross-tabulation tests were undertaken to assess the use of the following variables: news authors (home-based journalists, foreign correspondents, news agencies); news sources (government official, news media outlets, international organizations, ISIS insurgent groups, etc.); news stories' frames and geographic context. A more in-depth analysis on the influence of ideological and organizational factors (McQuail, 2010) in news production would be beyond the scope of this present study.

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In order to examine the presence of Islamic State in the two Spanish daily newspapers, the following research questions were posed:

RQ1. Are there significant differences regarding how *El País* and *El Periódico* reported on ISIS in terms of news authors, sources of information, news frames and geographic context?

RQ2. Are there significant differences regarding how the two newspapers reported on ISIS throughout the three time periods analyzed?

## METHODOLOGY

This study centers its analysis on a sample of news pieces dedicated to Islamic State published in two Spanish daily newspapers (*El Periódico* and *El País*) in three different time periods: 1) the expansion into Syria on April 8, 2013; 2) the decla-

ration of the Caliphate, on June 29, 2014; and 3) the Paris attacks of November 15, 2015. For each of these three different moments, the first 30 journalistic pieces published (news briefs, news articles, features and opinion pieces) were analyzed (90 pieces per newspaper, 180 pieces in total). The sample was selected using MyNews Hemeroteca (the most important press-clipping digital software available in Spain). By centering the analysis on three different moments of the history of the terrorist organization, this study aims to shed some light on how the journalistic coverage of ISIS has evolved and to assess how newspapers respond to events of global scale like the Paris attacks of 2015. Following the same coding scheme used by Zhang and Hellmueller (2016) to the study of the coverage of the ISIS threat by Al Jazeera and CNN allowed the performance of the two Spanish newspapers to be compared with the two major international news outlets.

## CODING SCHEME

Building on Zhang and Hellmueller (2016), the following variables were coded: date of publication, author of the story, author of the photograph, story type, sources of information, frames used and geographic story context.

The author of the story variable included: foreign correspondent, journalist, news agency and not identified. Regarding the author of images, the following categories were established: AFP, Reuters, AP, Getty, EFE, photojournalist and not identified.

The story type variable included four categories: news brief (news items of up to three paragraphs), news articles, features or reports, and opinions. The source types found in the news items included government, business, military, news media outlets, international organizations, ordinary people, civil institutions, ISIS/insurgent groups, experts from various fields (not affiliated with other categories), political opposition and anonymous sources.

Regarding the frame analysis, two primary general frames were identified: geopolitics and existential threat. Within the geopolitical frame, the following secondary frames were included: 1) failing state, which focuses on Middle Eastern nations affected by ISIS's action that were incapable of maintaining political and social order; 2) political opportunism, which centers on the political debate between different political parties about how to respond to ISIS actions; 3) strategic games, which focuses on nations' strategies in dealing with ISIS; and 4) geopolitical alignment, which centers on nations' cooperation with ISIS and on international relations between nations. Within the existential threat frame, the study includes the following four secondary frames: 1) ISIS prowess, which centers on ISIS's military and police forces; 2) the human rights crisis, which focuses on the humanitarian disaster caused by ISIS; 3) the economic consequences, which focuses on the ISIS threat from an economic perspective; and 4) ISIS propaganda, which concerns the efficacy of ISIS's recruiting message. If after having gone through the news article it was not clear which frame was the dominant one, the final decision was made by considering the story headline as the basic coding unit.

Finally, and in order to examine the story context, four categories were established: 1) individual, which refers to stories based on individual or family experiences and testimonies; 2) national, when news stories are set at a national level; 3) international, when stories involve between two and five nations; and 4) global, when stories involve more than five nations or an international organization such as the United Nations.

The information obtained was analyzed using a T-Test of proportions that allowed a comparison to be made, cell by cell, of the data in a table in categorical variables of independent samples (Wimmer and Dominick, 2011). Using this test, the values in two cells of the same row can be compared with respect to the columns of the table. For each column, the test is carried out under the hypothesis that the population size of case A and that of case B are equal, versus the hypothesis that they are significantly different (whether by being much higher or much lower) at a confidence level of 95%. The statistically significant differences are marked in capital letters.

## FINDINGS

Regarding the authorship of news pieces, the overall results reveal that both newspapers show similar behavior. Both *El Periódico* and *El País* relied mainly on the work of foreign correspondents (46.7% and 56.7% respectively), followed by journalists (37.8% and 36.7%). News agencies account for a minor percentage of the journalistic production on the ISIS threat (4.4% and 3.3%).

When it comes to considering the authorship of the photographs published, the two newspapers rely almost completely on large international news agencies: Reuters (26.4%, *El Periódico*; 34.5%, *El País*), AFP (11.3%, *El Periódico*; 30.9%, *El País*), AP (15.1%, *El Periódico*; 16.4%, *El País*). No significant variations were observed throughout the three periods analyzed.

Regarding the use of different journalistic types of stories, both newspapers favored the use of news articles over news briefs, features and opinion articles. Of the 90 articles analyzed from each newspaper, 73.3% in the case of *El País* and 60% in the case of *El Periódico* were news articles. No significant statistical variation was observed in the use of news articles during the different time periods analyzed. However, variations were seen in the case of the use of opinion articles. In general terms, the use of opinion pieces has increased since the declaration of the Caliphate. *El País* published 6.7% of opinion pieces during the first period analyzed, a figure that increased to 23.3% following the declaration of the Caliphate and reached 20% in the aftermath of the Paris attacks. *El Periódico*, published 16.7% of opinion pieces following the first invasions into Syrian territory, a feature that increases after the declaration of the Caliphate (26.7%), and after the Paris attacks (40%). People's growing interest in ISIS activities, perceived as an increasing global threat may help explaining the increase number of journalistic pieces on the subject.

When it comes to features, the results show that *El País* published more reports during the first period analyzed than in the other two. In the case of *El*

*País*, reports were replaced by opinion pieces. Nevertheless, in general terms, *El Periódico* has published far more opinion pieces than *El País* (27.8% and 16.7% respectively).

**Table 1. Story type**

	IS/SYRIA		CALIPHATE		PARIS		TOTAL	
	<i>El País</i> (B)	<i>El Periódico</i> (C)	<i>El País</i> (E)	<i>El Periódico</i> (F)	<i>El País</i> (H)	<i>El Periódico</i> (I)	<i>El País</i> (X)	<i>El Periódico</i> (Y)
Sample	30	30	30	30	30	30	90	90
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
News article	80.0	63.3	66.7	56.7	73.3	60.0	73.3	60.0
News brief	0.0	10.0	3.3	6.7	3.3	0.0	2.2	5.6
Feature	13.3 J	6.7	3.3	6.7	3.3	0.0	6.7	4.4
Opinion	6.7	16.7	23.3	26.7 B	20.0	40.0 B	16.7	27.8
Other	0.0	3.3	3.3	3.3	0.0	0.0	1.1	2.2

Source: authors.

Regarding news sources, the results show that government officials were the most quoted sources of information used in reporting on the ISIS threat (48.9% in *El Periódico* and 54.4% in *El País*). In the aftermath of the Paris attacks, the use of government officials was especially high, reaching 66.7% in *El Periódico* and 63.3% in *El País* (see table 2). During the other two periods, the use of government officials remained below 40%, except in the case of *El País* during the first period analyzed, when it reached 60%. Experts were another very important source of information for the two newspapers. *El País* relied on their views and opinions in 24.4% of the time and *El Periódico* in 28.9%. In this regard, the T-Test of proportions found no significant variations between the two newspapers or between the three periods analyzed.

Results also show that both *El Periódico* and *El País* relied significantly on other news outlets as privileged sources of information (26.7% *El Periódico* and 25.6% *El País*). Although no significant statistical differences were found in the use of these sources of information over time, it is worth mentioning that their use decreased in the aftermath of the Paris attacks (20% *El Periódico* and 20% *El País*). The situation involving the use of international organizations as news sources is similar: having reached a peak in the first period analyzed (33.7% *El Periódico* and 53.3% *El País*), the use of this source of information decreased significantly in the aftermath of the Paris attacks (6.7% *El Periódico* and 0% *El País*). A special mention should be made of the role played by ISIS insurgent groups as a news source, which was more frequent in *El Periódico* (17.8%) than in *El País* (7.8%).

Table 2. Sources type

	IS/SYRIA		CALIPHATE		PARIS		TOTAL	
	<i>El País</i> (B)	<i>El Periódico</i> (C)	<i>El País</i> (E)	<i>El Periódico</i> (F)	<i>El País</i> (H)	<i>El Periódico</i> (I)	<i>El País</i> (X)	<i>El Periódico</i> (Y)
Sample	30	30	30	30	30	30	90	90
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Government	60.0	40.0	40.0	40.0	63.3	66.7 CEF	54.4	48.9
Business	0.0	0.0	3.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.1	0.0
Police/Military	10.0	6.7	33.3 BCJ	13.3	13.3	10.0	18.9	10.0
News Media	30.0	23.3	26.7	36.7	20.0	20.0	25.6	26.7
International Organizations	53.3 EFHJ	36.7 EHJ	13.3 H	23.3 H	0.0	6.7	22.2	22.2
Common People	10.0	3.3	26.7 CFJ	0.0	13.3 FJ	0.0	16.7 Y	1.1
Civil Institutions	0.0	10.0	3.3	3.3	3.3	3.3	2.2	5.6
ISIS/Insurgent Groups	10.0	13.3	3.3	26.7 E	10.0	13.3	7.8	17.8 X
Experts	33.3	23.3	16.7	40.0	23.3	23.3	24.4	28.9
Confidential Sources	13.3 HJ	13.3 HJ	3.3	10.0	0.0	0.0	5.6	7.8
Political Opposition	30.0 H	13.3	10.0	20.0	6.7	13.3	15.6	15.6
None	3.3	13.3	20.0	6.7	13.3	20.0	12.2	13.3

Source: authors.

Regarding the frames used in reporting the ISIS threat, the results show that in general terms both newspapers favored a geopolitical approach to stories over an existential threat perspective. The only exception to this pattern can be found in *El Periódico*, which focused 20% of its stories on the human rights crisis frame, while in *El País* these stories did not reach 10% (see table 3).

In the case of *El País*, strategic games, at 26.7%, was the most used frame, followed by failing state (23.3%), ISIS propaganda (12.2%) and geopolitical alignment (10%). In the case of *El Periódico*, the most used frame was human rights crisis (20%), followed by failing state (25.6%), strategic games (15.6%) and geopolitical alignment (14.4%).

Regarding the frames included in the existential threat category, stories centered on ISIS Propaganda counted for 12.2% of *El País* and 8.9% of *El Periódico* news



production, while those centered on ISIS prowess counted for 7.8% in *El País* and 5.6% in *El Periódico* reporting. Still regarding the existential threat category, it is worth mentioning the scarce attention paid to the economic consequences of ISIS actions. *El Periódico* dedicated only 1.1% of its articles and *El País* 4.4% to this subject.

When considering the main differences during the three periods analyzed, results show that stories centered on failing states were far more common during the first period analyzed, that is, between April 2013 and January 2014 (*El Periódico* 33.3% and *El País* 46.7%), than in the aftermath of the Paris attacks (*El Periódico* 3.3% and *El País* 0%). With strategic games and political alignment the situation is inverse. Following the Paris attacks, *El País* dedicated 46.7% of its stories to strategic games and *El Periódico* 36.7% to political alignment, both features significantly higher than in all periods.

Cross-tabulation tests show that when it comes to geopolitics, government officials were the most quoted sources of information (56.1% *El País* and 60.4% *El Periódico*) followed by other media outlet in the case of *El País* (26.3%) and by experts in the case of *El Periódico* (27.1%). When stories were focused on existential threat frames, the mix of sources of information used by the two newspapers diverged: whereas *El País* still relied mainly on government officials (56.7%), *El Periódico* only quoted them on 37.5% of its news pieces. Experts (33.3% *El País* and 34.4% *El Periódico*) were the second most used source of information to report on existential threat stories, followed by common people in the case of *El País* (30%) and other media outlets in the case of *El Periódico* (34.4%).

**Table 3. Frame type**

	IS/SYRIA		CALIPHATE		PARIS		TOTAL	
	<i>El País</i> (B)	<i>El Periódico</i> (C)	<i>El País</i> (E)	<i>El Periódico</i> (F)	<i>El País</i> (H)	<i>El Periódico</i> (J)	<i>El País</i> (X)	<i>El Periódico</i> (Y)
Sample	30	30	30	30	30	30	90	90
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Failing state	46.7 FHJ	33.3 HJ	23.3 HJ	20.0 H	0.0	3.3	23.3	18.9
Political opportunism	0.0	10.0	3.3	3.3	6.7	0.0	3.3	4.4
Strategic games	16.7	13.3	16.7	10.0	46.7 BCEF	23.3	26.7	15.6
Political alignment	3.3	3.3	10.0	3.3	16.7	36.7 BCEF	10.0	14.4
ISIS prowess	10.0	6.7	6.7	3.3	6.7	6.7	7.8	5.6
Human rights crisis	6.7	16.7	13.3	40.0 BEHJ	6.7	3.3	8.9	20.0 X

	IS/SYRIA		CALIPHATE		PARIS		TOTAL	
	<i>El País</i> (B)	<i>El Periódico</i> (C)	<i>El País</i> (E)	<i>El Periódico</i> (F)	<i>El País</i> (H)	<i>El Periódico</i> (J)	<i>El País</i> (X)	<i>El Periódico</i> (Y)
Economic consequences	0.0	0.0	6.7	3.3	6.7	0.0	4.4	1.1
ISIS propaganda	10.0	6.7	16.7	13.3	10.0	6.7	12.2	8.9
Other	6.7	10.0	3.3	3.3	0.0	20.0	3.3	11.1 X

Source: authors.

The analysis of the story context allows assessing the extent to which the news coverage of the ISIS threat reflects its global and not just international nature (Zhang and Hellmueller, 2016). Generally speaking, results show that the majority of the stories published by each newspaper were set within an international context, which means, involving two to five countries. Results also show that the number of stories set in a global context has slightly increased following the Paris attacks (table 4). Little attention has been dedicated to ISIS activities in Spain. The few exceptions were stories related to jihadists arrested in Melilla and Malaga and to the security weaknesses of Catalonia in the face of a possible terrorist attack.

**Table 4. Story context**

	IS/SYRIA		CALIPHATE		PARIS		TOTAL	
	<i>El País</i> (B)	<i>El Periódico</i> (C)	<i>El País</i> (E)	<i>El Periódico</i> (F)	<i>El País</i> (H)	<i>El Periódico</i> (J)	<i>El País</i> (X)	<i>El Periódico</i> (Y)
Sample	30	30	30	30	30	30	90	90
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Individual	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
National	3.3	3.3	0.0	3.3	0.0	6.7	1.1	4.4
International	63.3 J	56.7 J	73.3 J	76.7 J	60 J	30.0	65.5	54.4
Global	33.3	40.0	26.7	20.0	40	63.3 BEF	33.3	41.1

Source: authors.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The findings of this study show that both *El País* and *El Periódico* relied mainly on foreign correspondents to report on ISIS activities throughout the three time periods analyzed. Most of the international reporting was produced in Jerusalem and Bagdad, but also in Istanbul, Beirut and Dubai and, to a lesser extent, in Ra-

bat, Cairo, Tunis, Damascus, Aleppo and Erbil. In very few cases did news agencies feature as news authors. This does not mean though that their role was irrelevant in the news production process. In fact, together with other major news media outlets, news agencies were the second most cited source of information on ISIS, having been quoted in 25% of the articles published. Regarding news images, it is remarkable that more than 70% of news photographs published by the two newspapers were taken by one of the three biggest international news agencies: Reuters, AFP and AP. In line with previous studies focused on international reporting (Moore, 2010), these results show that regarding visual information, newspapers rely increasingly on a small number of sources of information and produce less original content. As a consequence, the visual depiction of the world becomes less diverse and plural and newspapers lose independence and autonomy. This division of labor (of text and image production) may also generate double standards when it comes to establishing the moral distance within which the other is represented (Franquet Santos Silva *et al.*, 2016; Silverstone, 2007). Furthermore, the pictures disseminated by international news's agencies are the result of a set of complex editorial decisions that do not match necessarily with the ones put forward by national newspapers.

When it comes to the use of sources of information, the results show that journalists from both newspapers relied extensively on government officials to report on ISIS. This pattern remained relatively constant throughout the three periods analyzed, although it was slightly higher in the aftermath of the Paris attacks. These results are also in line with recent studies published on the representation of ISIS on CNN online and Al Jazeera online (Zhang and Hellmueller, 2016). In this sense, although recognizing the importance of maintaining independence from official sources of information (Rodríguez-Martínez *et al.* 2013), Spanish journalists relied more on government officials than on any other type of news source.

With reference to the frames used, results show that the two newspapers have focused mainly on geopolitics (63.3% *El País* and 53.3% *El Periódico*), having given less attention to the existential threat caused by ISIS activities (33.3% *El País* and 35.6% *El Periódico*). The major difference between the two has to do with fact that *El Periódico* published far more stories related to the human rights crisis than *El País*. This trend is not easily explainable, especially given the fact that *El País* cited more common people than *El Periódico*. One possible explanation may be related to the less prominent role played by government officials in existential threat stories published by *El Periódico*. According to Moeller (2004), the presence of this type of sources of information affects very strongly the perspective through which news stories are configured. This would have to do both with their importance as news values and with an uncritical use of the inverted pyramid structure for shaping news texts.

It is also worth mentioning that both newspapers dedicated significant attention to the Arabic countries that most suffered in maintaining social and political order. Emphasis on the failing state frame was especially strong following ISIS' first incursions into Syrian territory, but also occurred after the declaration of the Caliphate. Not surprisingly, the focus on this frame almost disappeared

following the Paris attacks, as events in France completely absorbed news media agenda worldwide. In regard to the use of the failing state frame, the two Spanish daily newspapers contrast significantly with CNN online, as the American TV network dedicated to the issue no more than 2.2% of its online news pieces, having centered its attention mainly in strategic games (28.9%), political opportunism (19.4%) and human rights crisis (18.3%) (Zhang and Hellmueller, 2016). Regarding the use of ISIS propaganda frames, the situation is inverse, as CNN (15%) dedicated much more attention to ISIS' recruiting abilities than did Al Jazeera English (3.6%). *El País* and *El Periódico* used this frame in 12.2% and 8.9% of cases respectively. Another remarkable difference between the two Spanish daily newspapers and CNN is that the latter dedicated significant attention (19.4%) to political debates between US political parties regarding how to respond to the ISIS threat, while *El País* and *El Periódico* barely used this political opportunism frame. The economic consequences resulting from ISIS activities were barely mentioned in *El Periódico*, *El País*, CNN and Al Jazeera. Finally, stories focusing on ISIS military advances and territorial gains (ISIS prowess) received more attention from the Qatari broadcaster than by *El Periódico*, *El País* or CNN. Proximity is an important news value.

With respect to the geographic context, the results show that both *El Periódico* and *El País* favored an international approach to reporting on ISIS. The almost complete absence of stories set within a national geographic context reflects the little attention dedicated to political debates in Spain regarding how to deal with the terrorist organization. This pattern will eventually change over time, as the ISIS threat is becoming more global. The Paris attacks are just another sad demonstration of this tendency. Also remarkable is the fact that both *El Periódico* and *El País* contextualize a significant part of its stories on ISIS on a global frame, especially following the Paris attacks.

In conclusion, regarding the first research question, the results of this study show that in general the two newspapers used similar resources to report on ISIS activities, in terms of foreign correspondents, home-based journalists and international news agencies. In order to provide citizens with information on the Islamic organization, the two newspapers favored the use of news articles, followed by opinion articles, news briefs and to a lesser extent features. Regarding news sources, both newspapers relied mainly on government officials, news media, experts and international organizations. The major difference between them here concerned ISIS insurgent groups, which *El Periódico* reported on far more often than *El País*. With regard to the frames adopted, *El Periódico* opted far more frequently for the human rights crisis perspective than *El País*.

Finally, as regards to the second research question, the results presented here show that the role played by international organizations as sources of information diminished over time, being far more quoted in the first period analyzed following the first ISIS incursions into Syrian territory than after the declaration of the Caliphate, to almost vanishing after the Paris attacks. This pattern reflects the analogous loss of prominence of stories centered on failing Arabic states, which were replaced by articles focusing on strategic games and political alignment. Nonetheless, in terms of temporal analysis, the major difference between

the three periods analyzed is the exponential rise of the prominence of ISIS in the two news' media agenda, especially after the Paris attacks. Newsworthiness is pretty much about geography.

Taken together, these results suggest that generally speaking the two Spanish newspapers have offered a quite similar perspective on the ISIS threat, having privileged the use of official sources of information and focusing their stories mainly on geopolitical frames and paying considerable less attention to the existential threat posed by the ISIS activities. Although not being fully representative of the situation in the Spanish media system, the results of this study suggest that the coverage of international affairs in Spain is also becoming less diverse and less plural and that as a consequence the world seems to be shrinking.

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