Commentary

Islam in the Dutch press: with special attention to the *Algemeen Dagblad*

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Shifts in Dutch integration policy

Continuing immigration is only one of many challenges facing Dutch society. Dutch integration policy is characterized by important changes in emphasis which could be attributed to a social shift to the right and a general toughening of the social climate. Hence the *laissez-faire* integration policy of the early 1980s has made way for 'personal responsibility'. Integration is seen as the main way to promote this personal responsibility; government measures are aimed at equipping immigrants with the language and other skills promoting their independence and self-sufficiency (d'Haenens and Koeman, 2006). Moreover, the events of 11 September 2001 have had a detrimental effect on citizens' level of tolerance towards Islam, a religion that is readily associated with the repression of women, lack of separation between church and state, lack of democratic values and persistence of old-fashioned customs. Western society is often regarded as the 'civilized' norm and Muslims need to adapt to 'Western' culture (Rijkschroeff et al., 2003).

Today some 1.5 million non-Western immigrants are living in the Netherlands; Muslims make up 5.8 percent of the entire population. The media often blame multicultural society, and more particularly Islamist groups, for any problems arising (e.g. Shadid, 1995). This is indeed the way many Muslims feel (TNS NIPO, 2005): 63 percent experience Dutch reporting on

2007

Muslims as negative. Ideally the Dutch media should be a reflection of society, including its multicultural aspect. Research makes it clear that the Dutch print and broadcast media have hardly managed to chart the need for and use of the media by ethnic minorities and therefore have failed in their function as a meeting place (Rinnooy Kan Commission, 2004; ter Wal et al., 2005). Consequently, ethnic minorities do not recognize themselves sufficiently in the Dutch media. A complaint often voiced is about the small number of migrant experts and spokespersons on television and in the press. The same people tend to be asked for their opinions; they usually deal exclusively with subjects related to multicultural society (d'Haenens, 2005). It comes as no surprise, then, that the 'average' Dutch population has a distorted (negative) image of the 'average' migrant population.

Media and public agendas

The media shape the issues about which the public can form an opinion. Nevertheless, the media alone are not able to impose their opinion on the public. The agenda-setting concept (Rogers and Dearing, 1988) supposes a strong link (and/or a causal relationship) between the media agenda and the receivers' agenda. Agenda-setting assumes that the more people see or hear about a subject, the more they will talk about it. A subject from the media agenda can therefore end up on the public agenda, and the media have a number of methods for influencing the public agenda. One is the use of news frames. According to Entman (1993: 52), framing primarily implies selection and salience: 'An increase in salience enhances the probability that receivers will perceive the information, discern meaning and thus process it, and store it in memory.'

Although journalists have various ways of 'framing' news, it seems generally agreed that there are at least five common methods (Semetko and Valkenburg, 2000: 95) resulting in five generic news frames: (a) by emphasizing conflicts between parties or individuals (conflict frame); (b) by fixing attention on an individual as an example or by emphasizing emotions (human interest frame); (c) by laying responsibility or blame on political authorities or individuals (responsibility frame); (d) by emphasizing the economic consequences for the public (economic consequences frame); (e) by presenting the news from a religious or moral point of view (morality frame).

Shadid and van Koningsveld (2002) blame the media for their recurrent, simplifying frames and their stand-offish presentation when covering Islam. They argue that Islamic culture is simplified from an outsider's point of view and often stigmatized as a problematic issue. They recommend that the heterogeneity and dynamism of Islam be focused on, from the perspective of the Muslims themselves. Journalists rather prefer emphasizing the differences between Islam and the West, giving news value to these divergences.

Distorted media representations

In response to controversial statements made by imams in the Dutch media and to reactions of the general public, the Second Chamber of Parliament decided to initiate a large-scale study on Muslims in the Netherlands. Part of this study concerned a content analysis of domestic reporting about Islam, minorities and integration from 1998 to 2002 (ter Wal, 2004). This first content analysis was confined to the *Volkskrant*, the most widely read quality paper, and to a period before and after 9/11. Overall, 35 months of reporting were studied. The analysis was confined to domestic news. Half of the sample consisted of factual articles, the other half of comments: 866 articles were analysed, one-third of which explicitly dealt with religion. The results show that the debate about Islam is largely conducted by native Dutch opinion-makers. Interviews, especially, illustrate the predominance of the 'white' point of view, since 'white' experts and politicians are interviewed rather than Turks or Moroccans. Religious issues prove to dominate reporting: no less than one out of four statements is about religion. In 2001 the focus on religious issues increased further. In 2002 the El Moumni affair (concerning a conservative imam who had made tendentious statements about homosexuality) brought about a peak in articles on religion, producing a diverse range of subjects related to religion.

In other European countries, research into the image of Islam has also been carried out. In the UK, Elisabeth Poole (2002) looked into the representation of Islam in two British newspapers: *The Times* and *The Guardian*. She analysed 6507 articles on Islam between 1994 and 1996: only 837 (12%) dealt with British Muslims specifically. The major focus is on international rather than on British Islam. One of Poole's conclusions is that Islam is often portrayed as an 'alien' culture when compared with Western culture. It is regarded as an intruder into the life of 'normal' British people. This concurs with John Richardson's findings (2004) in seven British newspapers: Muslims tend not to be attributed features of 'Britishness', but rather their own 'Islamicness' is depicted. Poole (2002) contends that Islam is reported on in a simplified fashion. The three subjects most often discussed in connection with Islam are religion, education and fundamentalism. This illustrates the restrictive framework weighing on reporting of Islam. Poole's overall conclusion is that it is mainly non-Muslims who report on Muslims from a Western viewpoint.

Goals, research questions and method

The present article assesses the extent to which the above-mentioned criticisms (simplification, lack of diversity) apply to coverage of Islam in the *Algemeen Dagblad* (AD). This study, which adds to ter Wal's (2004) analysis of the quality paper *De Volkskrant*, an analysis of Islam reporting in a popular newspaper, addresses a number of questions:

1. How frequent are Islam-related articles?
2. In which country do the events reported take place?
3. Who speaks on behalf of Islam?
4. What is the slant of Islam-related articles?

Commentators have seen the assassination of editorialist/film-maker Theo van Gogh in 2004 as a turning point in Dutch society. Hence, the question:

Are any changes noticeable, and if so what changes, in reporting on Islamic affairs after the brutal killing of van Gogh?

Seven years (from 1998 to 2004) are examined. All Islam-related articles are analysed. The approach is longitudinal, aiming at a reconstruction of reporting on Islam and Muslims. A search with *Lexis Nexis* was made for the word 'Islam' in the title (producing 81 articles) or in the opening (462 articles). We also included articles with 'Muslim(s)' in the title (256) and with 'fundamentalism' in the title as well as in the opening section (37 articles). It was expected that this procedure would yield the bulk of the articles with Islam as key topic. The final sample consisted of 677 articles.

The coding instrument, partly modelled on that by ter Wal, has five sections. The first deals with the characteristics of the message, asking questions about its place in the paper, the length of the article, its author and the place where the event took place. Second, we try to discover the occasion for publishing the article: was it written following particular statements by politicians, was it prompted by the publication of a report or a book, did it report on elections or a crime of some sort, or did it follow from the journalist's own investigation, etc. Third, the article content is scrutinized: what kind of Islam does the article address? What are the topics linked to it? Under the fourth section we look at how people or groups of people are presented: are they mentioned by name, are they quoted or are their statements paraphrased? Does a person speak for him/herself or on behalf of an organization? Is he or she well-known? How is ethnicity referred to and is this person a man or a woman? What do they speak about? What are the relations between the interviewees? And what attitude does the author of the article take towards (non-) Muslim interviewees and people he or she writes about?

Results

How frequent are Islam-related articles?

The *Algemeen Dagblad* (AD) published a steadily growing number of Islam-related articles from 1998 to 2004 (Table 1). We find a peak in September (33 articles) and October 2001 (39), an obvious effect of the terrorist attack against the Twin Towers. The 72 articles published in these two months account for a little more than half (51%) of all Islam-related articles in 2001.

TABLE 1
Number of Islam-related articles in the *Algemeen Dagblad* in each month
in the period 1998–2004

	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	Total
January	6	4	10	1	9	18	9	57
February	5	7	6	7	12	18	8	63
March	5	6	8	5	7	5	8	44
April	3	8	7	4	6	13	13	54
May	1	0	7	10	4	5	6	33
June	1	2	2	5	15	3	18	46
July	2	5	2	0	1	5	5	20
August	6	2	2	6	0	3	8	27
September	3	2	2	33	18	4	9	71
October	7	2	8	39	8	13	14	91
November	2	9	1	15	14	14	37	92
December	6	2	6	17	15	9	24	79
Total	47	49	61	142	109	110	159	677
Total %	7	7	9	21	16	16	23	100

A similar rise in interest in Islam is noticed in November and December 2004, in the aftermath of the assassination of Theo van Gogh on 2 November 2004: 61 articles, i.e. 38 percent of all articles published in 2004.

As far as their place in the paper is concerned, slightly more Islam-related articles are published on the domestic news pages than in the section with international news (36% and 33%, respectively). Nearly half of the articles about Islam are more than 400 words. Looking at the journalistic genre of these articles: 289 (43%) are longer news items and 218 (32%) are short articles. At first sight, this strikes one as a positive feature: the reader is not only given mere facts about Islam, but also provided with background information.

In which country do the events reported take place?

However, we do find a different slant in reporting on Islam in the Netherlands and abroad. Islam in foreign countries tends to be stigmatized as a religion governed by strange laws and customs. One example is an article about Muslim women in Kashmir who had acid thrown in their faces because they were not covering their heads and faces (*AD*, 30 August 2001). Another article reports on the closure of a nightclub in Dubai because 'immoral activities', notably homosexual practices, are forbidden (*AD*, 3 April 2001). When Dutch Islam is spoken of, the reader is more often given different opinions and interpretations, both by Muslims and non-Muslims. On 1 February 2001, for instance, an article was about the musical *Aisja*, the performance of which was cancelled in Rotterdam because of heavy criticism from strictly orthodox Islamist quarters. Several opinions are presented; by giving the floor to both

supporters and opponents of the cancellation, both Muslim and non-Muslim, the article gives the fullest possible coverage of the event.

When comparing the journalistic genre of an article with its place in the newspaper, the pages with domestic news and especially those with foreign news chiefly carry long Islam-related news items. Interviews usually find a place on the domestic news pages. Consequently, especially people living in the Netherlands are interviewed about Islam, much more so than foreigners. After all, a Dutch journalist will find it much more convenient to contact somebody in the Netherlands and, moreover, Dutch informants can also express their opinions on foreign news.

Most of the events talked about in the articles under review take place in the Netherlands in general (16%) and in Rotterdam in particular (12%), Rotterdam being one of the most multicultural Dutch cities. The Middle East ranks third (11%), being the point of reference for Islam abroad. Strikingly, Amsterdam is the location of a small number of articles (6%), although it is the Dutch capital as well as the city with the largest number of migrants (49% of Amsterdam's inhabitants are of non-Dutch descent).

When distinguishing between a 'Dutch' and a 'global' Islam, the results show that 253 articles deal with foreign Islam (37%) and 226 articles of Dutch Islam (33%). This difference reflects Poole's results in the United Kingdom: international Islam is more often highlighted than British Islam. In our own study 12 percent of the articles deal with both Dutch and foreign Islam. In 10 percent of the articles the emphasis is on Dutch Islam, and in a mere 2 percent on foreign Islam. Islam in general is the subject of 114 articles (17%), no distinction being made between Dutch or foreign Islam.

Who speaks on behalf of Islam?

The next point is which people are given the floor by the *Algemeen Dagblad* about or on behalf of Islam. After all, the choice of people who can express their opinion often determines the slant that an article is given. It makes a difference whether a Western Islam expert or a Muslim is given the opportunity of airing their view on a given event.

Mentioned, quoted or paraphrased The individuals spoken of in the articles under review will be called *actors*. We only examine Muslim actors, i.e. individuals or organizations that are followers of Islam. The analysis distinguishes actors who are mentioned, quoted or paraphrased. If more than four actors occur in the article, it is only the first four who have been examined.

Most Muslim actors are merely mentioned and not quoted or even paraphrased. In 76 percent of the articles one or more Muslim actors are mentioned. In nearly half of the articles one or more Muslim actors are quoted (43%). This finding concurs with ter Wal's study, in which Muslim actors are quoted in 44

TABLE 2
Who does Muslim actor 1 (mentioned, quoted or paraphrased)
represent? (in absolute numbers)

Who does actor 1 represent?	Mentioned	Quoted	Paraphrased	Total
Him/Herself	220	79	33	332
Islamist organization, e.g. mosque	70	52	26	148
Underground org., e.g. terrorist org.	68	8	10	86
Government	20	16	8	44
Migrant citizen	18	2	3	23
Political party	13	5	2	20
Other organizations of/for migrants	3	8	1	12
Youngsters, pupils, students	5	1	4	10
Experts and intellectuals	5	2	3	10
Schools and parents' committees	9	1	0	10
Other	35	28	15	78
Total	466	202	105	773

percent of the texts. Finally, one or more Muslim actors are paraphrased in 27 percent of the sample. Admittedly, the range of people and subjects these actors talk about is rather limited. They are chiefly asked for their opinion on Muslims in general and about terrorism. The *Algemeen Dagblad* of 23 December 2004, for example, has an article with the following headline and opening:

Dutch Muslims susceptible to extremism

The Hague – Muslims in the Netherlands find it hard to resist radical Islam. The reason is that radicalization creeps in so stealthily. There are few legal or administrative means available to prevent Muslims from turning their backs on society and resorting to violence. That is the gist of a report which AIVD, the Dutch intelligence service, submits to the Second Chamber today. (AD, 23 December 2004)

Nevertheless, nearly half the Muslim actors speak in their own name. Only in the second instance do Muslim actors act as spokesmen for Islamist organizations or institutions, e.g. for a mosque or for an underground (terrorist) organization. Examining as a separate group the 86 texts in which a terrorist organization occurs as the first actor (see Table 2), we find that the organization is merely mentioned in 68 cases, quoted in 8 cases and paraphrased 10 times. 'Ordinary' Islamist organizations are quoted or paraphrased more often.

As far as their topics are concerned, actors mainly talk about terrorist actions and other subjects. The voice of the Muslims themselves has a prominent place in the op-ed section. Many of the op-ed articles are written from the Muslim viewpoint or by experts on Islam and frequently criticize or qualify and refine the content of factual articles. These pages regularly break down prejudices against Muslims and fight stigmatization. For example, the distinction between 'normal' Muslims and Muslim terrorists is often underlined.

The degree of qualification is proportionate with time: in other words, the later after 9/11 an article is published, the more room it leaves for nuance.

Which well-known Muslims turn out to be the most frequent actors in the sample? The founder of Al Qaeda, Osama bin Laden, is the unrivalled number one: he appears 48 times. The other actors are usually imams speaking for their respective mosques. The Dutch Muslim expert who is most often found in the sample is MP Ayaan Hirsi Ali. Her criticism of fundamentalist Islam makes her a sought-after personality in reporting on Islam. It is a striking feature of the sample that most Muslim actors are merely mentioned, with the exception of the imams and Hirsi Ali, whose statements are regularly quoted or paraphrased. Osama bin Laden and Saddam Hussein are only mentioned; they are paraphrased just once. By contrast, Ahmed Aboutaleb, alderman of Amsterdam, is never merely mentioned by name, but always quoted or paraphrased.

The ethnicity of Muslims is more often not mentioned than it is. If the origin *is* given, then, in the great majority of cases, it is simply indicated as 'Muslim'. In other words, the reference is usually to religion rather than to ethnicity. This is especially true of the first actor. A striking result is that the actors who rank third or fourth in the article are more often referred to as 'Arab' or 'from the Middle East' than the first or second actors. Since Islam has believers in many countries all over the world and is interpreted in many different ways, it is regrettable that the word 'Muslim' lumps all believers together. It is the diversity within Islam that should be underlined.

The label 'migrant' is rarely used. Likewise, the terms 'ethnic minority' or 'foreigner' have almost gone out of use. Few Muslim participants are labelled 'Dutch', in spite of the fact that the majority of the second- and third-generation migrants are Dutch citizens: a Dutch Muslim will be labelled 'Muslim' rather than 'Dutch'.

With regard to the gender of Muslims, the prominent finding is that reporting on Islam is mainly about men. About half of all the Muslims in the *Algemeen Dagblad* are men, and slightly less than 7 percent are women; the gender issue does not apply to almost half of the actors since they are groups or organizations.

What is the slant of Islam-related articles?

Exploring the content of the articles, we find that the short and factual ones generally portray Islam as an 'extremist' religion. Islam is contrasted with the (civilized) Christian norms and values of the West. This slant is clearly illustrated in the following passage from the *Algemeen Dagblad* of 7 March 2001:

Feast of Sacrifice induces violence

Amsterdam – Cinema giant Pathé will this week deploy extra staff and guards in its theatres City and De Munt in Amsterdam. Pathé blames recent fights in its

theatres on the celebration of the Islamic Feast of Sacrifice, which this year overlaps with spring holidays.

First, there is no explanation about the precise meaning of the Islamic Feast of Sacrifice. Second, the suggestion is that the Feast of Sacrifice is almost inevitably associated with violence. This is an obvious example of a stigmatizing news report.

Most news items were written on the occasion of a crime or an arrest (16%). This confirms what earlier studies have shown: the media link Islam with things negative (Shadid, 1995; ter Wal et al., 2005; Van Dijk, 1991). The second reason for writing an article is an incident or a disaster (11%) and in third place are statements made by politicians (10%). Op-ed articles (taking the form of a reasoned argument) are often written on the occasion of a statement by a politician. Readers send letters to the editor in response to an earlier article or to a politician's statement. Finally, articles with factual information are usually written following a crime or some other criminal event.

The content analysis shows that 'terrorist attacks and related practices' as well as 'religion' are the most frequent main topics (20% for each); in addition to these two, political items are also often the main subject of an article (16%). By way of comparison: Poole (2002) mentions 'education in relation to Islam' as the most common topic (one-quarter of all articles on British Islam). Moreover, Poole's research is based on articles published between 1994 and 1996, i.e. predating the 9/11 attacks.

The articles about Dutch Islam in our sample chiefly deal with religion and politics (Table 3). Terrorism is usually talked about in terms of foreign, not Dutch Islam. Articles dealing with foreign Islam usually have terrorism as their main topic, with politics ranking second. If Islam is discussed in general terms, religion is the most prominent subject, followed by politics and terrorism.

A further scrutiny of the articles reveals that reporting on Islam is less negative than stated by Shadid and van Koningsveld (2002). Generally speaking Dutch journalists make an effort to take a well-balanced view when writing about Islam, but the topics tied in with Islam often have a negative connotation. It follows that the choice of topics encourages stigmatization of Muslims, many articles dealing with terrorism, fundamentalism and acts of violence. Muslims and Islam, without any distinction as to schools of thought within Islam, are thus often presented as the perpetrators of acts of violence, and non-Muslims as the victims.

In reporting on foreign Islam, it is mainly fundamentalist groups of Muslims (e.g. the Taliban) who are painted as evil, particularly after 9/11. However, reporting on Islam turns out to be less stigmatizing than expected, especially when domestic news is concerned, because that is generally accompanied by background information and interpretation. Moreover, we also notice attempts to associate Islam with positive elements, such as an article under the headline

TABLE 3
Main topics in the article per kind of Islam (in absolute numbers)

	Dutch Islam	Foreign Islam	Both, emphasis Dutch Islam	Both, emphasis foreign Islam	Islam in general	Total
Religion	58	27	13	5	34	137
Terrorism	19	78	23	3	14	137
Politics	31	52	7	2	17	109
Criminality/violence	20	37	2	0	5	64
Ethnic relations	19	18	7	1	6	51
Education	24	8	3	1	3	39
Discrimination	14	4	2	0	6	26
Health/well-being	3	2	1	1	3	10
Economic	3	4	1	0	1	9
Ethical	2	2	1	0	3	8
Labour market	3	0	1	0	0	4
Family relations	1	1	0	0	1	3
Sports	0	1	0	0	1	2
Other	29	19	9	1	20	78
Total	226	253	70	14	114	677

'De grote Najib' ('The great Najib'), about the Moroccan cabaret performer Najib Amhali (*AD*, 16 February 2002).

Islamic culture and especially its religious aspects are often highlighted. Domestic reporting provides more background information than the coverage of foreign Islam-related news. This is confirmed by the content analysis carried out by ter Wal et al. (2005) on the coverage of ethnic minorities: their conclusion is that in the last few years journalists have increasingly become investigative reporters. This study shows, too, that journalists have recently done more investigative work of their own on domestic Islam-related news. By contrast, foreign news is generally provided by international press agencies and often published without much editorial processing, without trying to interpret the deeper meaning of the news item in question.

Are any changes noticeable after the killing of Theo van Gogh?

We have so far discussed the results relating to the full period of the sample. Next we will tackle the question if any differences in reporting on Islam emerged after the killing of film-maker Theo van Gogh. We find that the articles published after the murder focus relatively more on Dutch Islam than on foreign Islam: 52 percent after the murder, as against 32 percent before ($\chi^2 = 10.2$; $p = 0.001$). By contrast, after the murder interest in foreign Islam is reduced to a quarter of what it was before: from 40 percent to 11 percent ($\chi^2 = 19.8$; $p = 0.000$). This finding

is closely tied up with the place of murder: after the assassination Amsterdam is considerably more often the key location in the articles than before (11% against 5%; $\chi^2 = 4.5$; $p = 0.030$). After the murder the focus of attention clearly became the Netherlands: 13 percent against 40 percent ($\chi^2 = 31.1$; $p = 0.000$). This shift occurred at the expense of interest in the Middle East: 2 percent after the murder, against 12 percent before ($\chi^2 = 6.4$; $p = 0.011$).

The impact of the Van Gogh killing is also illustrated by the fact that significantly more non-Muslim participants are mentioned in the articles after 2 November 2004: 67 percent against 38 percent before that date ($\chi^2 = 20.6$; $p = 0.000$). Whereas many articles before the murder tend to focus on Islam as such, after the murder it is the relation of Islam with other groups in Dutch society (i.e. non-Muslim participants) that becomes the key issue. The results also reveal that articles written after the murder are more slanted against Muslims: 16 percent have more negative pronouncements after the murder, against 8 percent before ($\chi^2 = 4.0$; $p = 0.044$). By contrast, the journalists take a more positive attitude towards non-Muslims in 11 percent of the texts, as against 6 percent before the killing ($\chi^2 = 15.1$; $p = 0.000$). It must be remembered, though, that the period under review concerns no more than two months after 2 November 2004: it is reasonable to expect these effects of polarization to be of a passing nature and to fade with time.

As to the formal characteristics of the texts concerned, a comparison of the length of pre-murder and after-murder articles reveals that texts tend to be longer after the murder: 21 percent of texts written after 2 November were short as against 36 percent before ($\chi^2 = 4.625$; $p = 0.032$). Examining the incentive for writing an article, we see that before the murder specific events and crimes more often prompt articles: 19 percent before the murder as against 10 percent after, with regard to an event ($\chi^2 = 5.538$; $p = 0.008$) and 15 percent against 27 percent with regard to a crime ($\chi^2 = 7.024$; $p = 0.008$). Also, after the murder more articles were written as a result of the journalist's own investigative work: 8 percent against 3 percent before the murder ($\chi^2 = 5.083$; $p = 0.024$). Finally, more articles deal with terrorist attacks and related matters as their main topic after 2 November: 31 percent against 19 percent before ($\chi^2 = 4.600$; $p = 0.031$).

News frames A principal-component analysis (varimax rotation) of the 20 statements/items intended to measure the news frames in the articles yields a solution that is similar to the results of Semetko and Valkenburg (2000). Table 4 compares the factor scores of the news frames for the periods before and after the Van Gogh murder. They show that after the murder the sample was less concerned with economic consequences, whereas aspects of morality and responsibility acquire greater importance. On 3 November 2004, for instance, we find an article in which a number of Muslims attending a mosque are interviewed and express their reactions to the assassination. The article is published under the headline 'I Was Really Surprised that Van Gogh's Murderer was a Moroccan'.

TABLE 4
News frames before and after the murder of Theo van Gogh

News frames	Averages	T-value	Significance	Before After
Conflict	-0.010	0.097	0.80	0.211
Economic consequences	0.022	-0.222	2.79	0.003
Morality	-0.021	0.206	1.71	0.045
Responsibility	-0.025	0.253	1.80	0.038
Human interest	-0.007	0.067	0.55	0.290

In other words, Moroccan Muslims are tackled about the fact that the murderer of Van Gogh turned out to be a Moroccan. This approach reveals the responsibility frame quite clearly. The Muslims interviewed condemn the murder in no uncertain terms and profess to be afraid of the effects that it may have on the Dutch Muslim population as a whole. The morality frame is prominent in an article of 12 November 2004, the headline reading 'Young People Seek the Pure Form of Islam – Researcher Expresses Fears that Society Breeds more Mohammed Bs' (Mohammed Bouyeri is the murderer). Migrant youngsters find the Islam of their parents hard to accept and the radical form of Islam, which they read about on the internet, holds great appeal for some of them.

The conclusion that we did not find any significant increase in the use of the conflict frame after the murder needs to be qualified somewhat, however, when it comes to articles dealing with international Islam on the one hand and with Dutch Islam on the other. In the former, i.e. dealing with foreign Islam or a combination of foreign and Dutch Islam or Islam in general, there was no question of an increase in the use of the conflict frame. By contrast we did find a significant increase in articles dealing with Dutch Islam ($p = 0.007$).

It has been pointed out that results about framing need to be interpreted with caution, since the length of the texts proves to have an impact on the occurrence of frames (see d'Haenens and Bosman, 2003). We have already stated that after the Van Gogh killing the articles in our sample tend to become longer. If the correlation between framing and length should turn up here as well, the differences observed between articles before and after the assassination could simply be attributed to differences in length. As a matter of fact, all the frames do prove to occur more in longer articles, but the difference is significant only with regard to the economic consequences frame ($p = 0.038$), the morality frame ($p = 0.045$) and the responsibility frame ($p = 0.038$). ANOVA tests in which the co-variate is article length showed that the differences in the use of the morality frame between articles before and after 2 November are no longer significant ($p = 0.150$). However, controlling for length did not change the significant differences in the use of the economic consequences and responsibility frames before and after the murder.

We next compare the relative use of the news frames in reporting on Dutch and on international Islam. Except for the economic consequences frame,

there is more framing if the articles deal with both Dutch and international Islam and if the two kinds of Islam are compared or confronted with each other. Articles on Dutch Islam, as well as on international Islam and on Islam in general, reveal no more than the average amount of framing, except for the conflict frame, which is often used when foreign Islam is mentioned, and the morality frame, which often emerges when Islam in general is discussed, notably when Islam is considered as a religious doctrine.

Conclusions and discussion

From 1998 to 2004 the focus on Islam grew more important over the years in the *Algemeen Dagblad*. Islam as such has been a much-discussed item since 9/11 and has often been related to terrorism, fundamentalism, the suppression of women and violence. However, a distinction must be made between foreign and Dutch Islam. Foreign Islam is more often associated with terrorism than Dutch Islam. Reporting on Dutch Islam generally involves religion and politics, although the killing of Theo van Gogh on 2 November 2004 changed the picture in that Dutch Islam too was frequently tied up with terrorism. Analysis of articles written before and after the murder reveals that journalists began to write about Muslims from a more negative viewpoint after 2 November. Yet, after the murder, articles tended to be longer and journalists did more investigative work of their own. The Netherlands clearly became the focus of attention and the Middle East lost some of its importance. With regard to the news frames used, articles after 2 November tended to give more weight to aspects of morality and responsibility, although the conflict frame acquired more importance when Dutch Islam was dealt with.

In spite of the fact that Islam is often associated with negative events, reporting on Islam can be said to be fairly balanced, i.e. events are discussed from different viewpoints. Yet it needs to be stressed that these different opinions are cited less often for international Islam than for Dutch Islam: for the latter, Dutch Muslim participants are interviewed and background information is provided as well. This finding is connected with the newspaper's policy of having an op-ed section, in which various Muslims give their opinion and interpret given events from different perspectives. As far as the ethnic identity of the participants in the news reports is concerned, the term that is most often used is 'Muslim', a term that has acquired an ethnic meaning over the years, in addition to its religious sense.

In conclusion, the changes in reporting on Dutch Islam after the brutal killing of Theo van Gogh must once more be underlined. In the weeks after the killing there was a spate of negative articles about Dutch Islam. Journalists tended to make more negative pronouncements about Muslims and more positive statements about non-Muslims. Before the murder, articles in the Dutch press focused on Islam as such, but after the murder the key issue

became the relation of Islam with other (non-Muslim) groups in Dutch society. Nevertheless, after the murder a larger number of background articles on Islam were published and more of them were based on the journalist's investigative work. It should be pointed out that the results of the present study are based on articles published in the two-month period immediately following the slaying of Van Gogh. It would be interesting to also review reporting on Islam in 2005 and to check if the shifts found in the last weeks of 2004 continue in 2005 or merely fade away. As quantitative content analysis fails to pick up on the ways that media texts communicate hidden messages, a qualitative follow-up study, allowing more reflection and interpretation, is planned.

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