What Does the "Terrorist" Label Really Do? Measuring and Explaining the Effects of the "Terrorist" and "Islamist" Categories

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Abstract:

Many scholars and practitioners claim that labelling groups or individuals as "terrorists" does not simply describe them but also shapes public attitudes, due to the label's important normative and political charge. Yet is there such a "terrorist label effect"? In view of surprisingly scant evidence, the present paper evaluates whether or not the terrorist label – as well as the "Islamist" one – really impacts both the audience's perception of the security environment and its security policy preferences, and if yes, how and why. To do so, the article implements a randomized-controlled vignette experiment where participants (n=481) first read one out of three press articles, each depicting a street shooting in the exact same way but labelling the author of the violence with a different category ("terrorist"/"shooter"/"Islamist"). Participants were then asked to report on both their perceptions and their policy preferences. This design reveals very strong effects of both the "terrorist" and "Islamist" categories on each dimension. These effects are analysed through the lenses of social and cognitive psychology, in a way that interrogates the use of the terrorist category in society, the conflation of Islamism with terrorism, and the press and policymakers' lexical choices when reporting on political violence.

Keywords: *terrorism*; *terrorist*; *Islamist*; *category*; *labelling*; *experiment*; *effects*; *attitudes*.

Introduction

The present paper seeks to evaluate whether or not the public labelling of an individual or group as "terrorist" – and, jointly or separately, as "Islamist" – influences the audience's perceptions of that individual or group and policy preferences on how to deal with that him(her)/them. We conduct this evaluation among widespread recognition that language in general and categorisation in particular play several important roles in facilitating, triggering, or sustaining political violence, conflict, and the dynamics of insecurity.[i] In this context, scholars from various backgrounds have more precisely documented how terrorism narratives count amongst today's most "violent labels",[ii] up to the point where the very concept of "terrorist" (and that of "terrorism") itself has been the object of a sharp critique in the academic literature, in spite (or because) of its colossal use in everyday life. This critique has mainly come from two standpoints, which need to be distinguished to situate the present enquiry.

First, in line with Austin's famous argument that 'words are our tools, and as a minimum we should use clean tools',[iii] many scholars have rightly warned that "terrorism" might be too 'loose'[iv] a concept to be analytically useful. It is claimed that the notorious impossibility to coin a unanimous definition of the concept, discussed in details in some of the most classic works in terrorism studies,[v] has led research to compare apples and pears, thereby producing fragile or incompatible findings. This dissatisfaction has led academics to subdivide the terrorism category into a series of supposedly more coherent subcategories (e.g. "national" and "transnational" terrorisms) but each of these efforts has similarly been challenged,[vi] prompting some authors to discuss or openly question the pertinence of keeping the concept of terrorism in scientific inquiry.[vii] We do not want here to enter this longstanding and useful, yet indeterminable discussion on the definition of terrorism and its analytical consequences.

Rather, we engage with the second, related but deeper source of critique that says that the concept of terrorism is inherently flawed for political – and not so much analytical – reasons. Scholars from various schools of thought (terrorism studies, critical security studies, framing studies, rhetoric analysis, political communication) have highlighted the moral and political charge associated with the concept, which is said to have 'always been a pejorative rather than analytical term'.[viii] In line with authors stressing the political use of categories,[ix] studies have documented the more or less instrumental uses of the terrorist label by policymakers eager to legitimize ethically contestable security policies,[x] to shape public opinion in order to win public support or elections,[xi] or to rhetorically coerce adversaries in parliamentary debates leading to war.[xii] In brief, it is claimed that the category of terrorism is no longer credible as a value- or interest-neutral descriptor of any given reality, but should rather be seen as a powerful instrument that shapes opinion in particular

ways, especially in the aftermath of the deceptions associated with the Bush administration's "war on terror".[xiii]

This trend of distrust vis-à-vis the terrorist category as a rhetoric label serving political goals, has now permeated into the public debate, leading some to employ the concept more carefully or even in some cases to abandon it. Prominent political leaders now avoid using this label or more frequently some of its specific variants, or have dropped it altogether. For example, outgoing US President Barak Obama preferred to speak about "violent extremism" and outgoing French Prime Minister Manuel Valls explicitly refused to talk about "Islamist terrorism". Martin McGuinness, formerly one of the Irish Republican Army's (IRA) leading figures and outgoing Deputy First Minister of Northern Ireland, recently explained that he rejects the label because it always serves political delegitimization purposes.[xiv] The press is also more and more aware of the power of labels in influencing the opinion and its own independence from political agendas (see the Associated Press and the New York Times on the "illegal immigrant" category for example),[xv] and is increasingly uncomfortable with the most contentious of them – "terrorism". As Bhatia observes, "segments of the media are decidedly reluctant to use the term 'terrorist', referring only to terrorist attacks and instead labelling these perpetrators as 'militants' or 'rebels'".[xvi] For example, the BBC now has an official editorial guidance on "Language when Reporting on Terrorism" (which does not ban the word but nonetheless encourages to "try to avoid it") and the Belgian French-Speaking Radio and Television (RTBF) has internal memos providing guidance on the terms to privilege when reporting on terrorism-related events.[xvii] Overall, as already discussed by Wardlaw in the early 1980s[xviii] and more recently by Hoffman,[xix] the press plays a key role in public perceptions of terrorism by (not) choosing to label particular events as such.

Yet this academic and practitioner's viewpoint on the political and instrumental dimension of the terrorism category presents a major fragility: its axiom – the very idea that the sole use of the label indeed "does something" – has never really been directly empirically evaluated. Most scholars, policymakers and journalists take the political dimension and therefore impact of the terrorist category for granted, instead of relying on precise information on what and how strong this effect actually is. The aim of this paper is to address this problem.

Explorations in Securitization Theory on the one hand, and studies of media influences on public opinion on the other hand, do indeed provide together a very general indication that framing a group or individual as a terrorist with a semantic/lexical field broadly associated with terrorism may indeed under the right circumstances produce an effect on the audience. In addition, Dunn and colleagues,[xx] followed by Haider-Markel, Joslyn and Al-Baghal,[xxi] Montiel and colleagues,[xxii] and Woods,[xxiii] have already provided more specific preliminary evidence of the impact of the word

"terrorism", but their studies have several shortcomings evoked below, and provide very little theoretical explanation of the effect. It still remains to be known both the exact nature and the strength of this effect; furthermore the social-psychological dynamics behind this type of effect and its intensity need to be exposed. Without this evidence, numerous contradictory claims can be made: it could for example be argued that individuals at influence positions have the power to use the label to alter the public's perceptions of the reality to which it is applied ("rally round the flag" scenario), whilst it could also contrarily be claimed that with the public being increasingly suspicious of narratives structured by the terrorism label, the risk is high to lose credibility by applying it to a non-obvious case ("sceptical" scenario). The present article has the ambition to provide a multidimensional measurement and explanation of what we could call the "performative" character of the terrorist category – that is, the ability of this category to *do* something rather than merely *describe* something – by evaluating both its exact characteristics and strength.[xxiv]

Acknowledging the media's role as "both a name-giver and a primary mechanism through which names and narratives are transmitted to the public",[xxv] we measure this effect with a randomized-controlled vignette experiment (see "Experimental Design" below for more details). Participants (n=481) were first asked to read one out of three press articles, all depicting a street shooting *in the exact same way* but each labelling the author of the shooting with a different label – "terrorist" in vignette 1, the more neutral "shooter" in vignette 2, and "Islamist" in vignette 3. This latter variation was included due to the rise of so-called "Islamist terrorism" since 2001 and the many questions this social and linguistic construct raises. Participants were then asked to express both their *perceptions* of the event and their *policy preferences*.

Overall, this experimental design provides robust evidence of significant differences between the three treatments, thereby confirming the capacity of the terrorist category to alter attitudes, and detailing the characteristics and strength of this effect. Results highlight not only the impact of the "terrorist" label, but also the performative power of the "Islamist" category (because, we suggest, of the frequent association of the two categories in the present context). We also find a tendency of Muslims to be tough on violence committed by people presented as Islamists. These effects are explained through the lenses of the social and cognitive psychology of social categorisation.

The article is therefore divided into four main sections. In the first one, we first highlight the lack of direct evidence on the terrorist category effect. In the second one, we present our experimental method.[xxvi] A third section presents the results, and a fourth and final section offers an interdisciplinary theoretical framework that explains these results.

Existing evidence on the "terrorist" label effect

In spite of a growing consensus on the performative character of the terrorism category, this effect has been taken for granted rather than seriously tested. Even within securitization theory, which emphasises the importance of "security speech acts", there is no strong and direct evidence on the kinds of effects produced by the label, let alone the strength of these effects. To be sure, several studies have already provided evidence first for the *variability* and second for the *effect* of terrorism-related language, and have therefore been used as a starting point for designing our method. We aim to significantly consolidate this literature.

First, and drawing on the vast literature on framing effects by the media[xxvii] and on the impact of framing on choice and attitudes,[xxviii] and in direct line with Galtung and Holmboe Ruge's seminal analysis of news coverage of conflict,[xxix] Ruigrok and Van Atteveldt have for example highlighted how differently terrorism-related events have been depicted in US, UK and Dutch newspapers. By doing so, they documented the scope of possible descriptions of a single event, chiefly the strength of the association between terrorism and Islam.[xxx] Focusing on the categories that structure frames, Weimann demonstrated with a quantitative analysis of press articles on violence that the use of the terrorist label is dependent on the proximity on the political spectrum between the reporting media and the terrorist, with left-leaning media less inclined to label far-left violent groups as terrorists, and right-wing media conversely less likely to label far-right terrorists as such.[xxxi] Simons and Lowry compared the use of the label "terrorist" in US news magazines articles from 1980 to 1988 and complementarily noticed that the category is consistently preferred to the more neutral categories of "gunman" or "attacker" when the action depicted involves people opposed to US foreign policy.[xxxii] Taken together, these studies make clear that the "terrorist" label has a variable geometry, i.e. that its use or nonappearance is less determined by the supposedly objective situation that it depicts, than by a series of social factors related to the context and source of the depiction.

Second, four experimental studies measuring the impact of terrorism language have complemented these inquiries on the variability of terrorism framing. First, Dunn and colleagues have tested whether "exposure to just a few relevant words may trigger the activation of the terrorism or patriotism schema".[xxxiii] They exposed participants to a fake press article depicting an act of violence but without using the word "terrorism", and observed significant differences in opinion between those who had this article ridden with terrorism-related words and those who had the same article but without any terrorism-related words. This led them to conclude that "acts of violence may be viewed as terrorism even when this label is not explicitly applied".[xxxiv] We

complement this study by completely reversing its experimental design, that is, by keeping the text intact but by explicitly mentioning the "terrorist" label in one version of an article and substituting it by other labels in (two) other versions. Montiel and Shah should be credited with the first attempt at doing this. They ran a survey experiment in which they measured people's evaluations of the moral character of a fictional violent individual whose actions are depicted in a very short paragraph, with this individual mentioned as a "terrorist" once in one vignette and as a "freedom fighter" in the other.[xxxv] Insisting on the "framing effects of political labelling",[xxxvi] they asked: "can the language used by the media and those who commit political violence produce any persuasive effect on the public at large, by labelling an act as "terrorism" or "freedom fighting"?".[xxxvii] This study offered the first direct evidence that the terrorism label can *in itself* trigger some effects. They showed that participants from disadvantaged groups rated freedom fighters higher than terrorists on moral traits, whereas respondents from dominant groups evaluated terrorists more highly than freedom fighters. However, their study has four weaknesses that we aim to overcome in order to produce robust conclusions. First, they only measured the audience's evaluation of the moral character of the terrorist/freedom fighter – his "goodness", "kindness", "mental state", "correctness", or "criminal" character. By doing so they left aside a wide range of other possible effects, crucially policy preferences. Second, their vignette is very small and does not look like a press article or any sort of statement that could credibly exist, leaving aside the question of the source's legitimacy (that is, its (non-) authorized status). Third, they focus on the terrorism/freedom fighter distinction, which is not only certainly the most widely publicized and contentious distinction (which could potentially influence participants' answers), but also one that does not allow them to single out the effect of the terrorist label as compared to a neutral (or as neutral as possible) signifier. Fourth, the article largely leaves its results unexplained. Woods had the original idea of designing a "minimalist" experiment on terrorism framing, where the particular effects of very specific labels are isolated and compared.[xxxviii] Unfortunately, this led him to subdivide a pool of 172 participants into no less than 8 conditions of 22 individuals, thereby seriously undermining his conclusions through lack of statistical power – chiefly that the "terrorist" label alone does not have any impact on the audience's threat perception. Moreover, like Montiel and Shah, he only measured participants' threat perceptions (which is useful as a point of departure but calls for a more multifaceted assessment or attitudes including policy preferences) and failed to go beyond framing theory to explain his results. Finally, Haider-Markel, Joslyn and Al-Baghal offered a rich survey experiment on terrorism framing, yet only varied the type of terrorism (e.g. "using hijacked airplanes", "creating a smallpox epidemics"), leaving the "terrorist" effect itself unquestioned.[xxxix]

We complement Dunn and colleagues as well as Haider-Markel, Joslyn and Al-Baghal, and we correct the flaws of Montiel and Shah's and Woods' pioneering experiments by offering a direct and wide-ranging measurement of what we hypothesise are the two main effects of the terrorist and Islamist categories on the audience's attitudes: to *elicit particular perceptions* and to *shape policy preferences*. In line with the widely-shared scepticism vis-à-vis the terrorist label, and with the reviewed literature (at the exception of Woods), our central hypothesis is that the "terrorist" vignette will *elicit perceptions of the event that are more severe* (in terms of threat, severity, importance, etc.) than the other two labels and prompt participants to *endorse more hard-line policies* to address the kind of event depicted in the press article. Two complementing hypotheses are also advanced. First, given the high frequency of the conflation "Islamist terrorism" in the press and political discourse, we expect the "Islamist" label to produce mid-way effects between the "terrorist" one and the neutral one. Second, in line with Montiel and Shah we also hypothesise that these effects to be mediated by participants' self-categorisation, that is, the group they themselves consider belonging to.

Experimental design

We opted for a vignette-based randomized-controlled experiment.[xl] It is worth noting that the experiment took place in Belgium in the spring term 2015, so before the Brussels attacks of March 2016.

Vignette experiments "use short descriptions of situations or persons (vignettes) that are usually shown to respondents in order to elicit their judgments about these scenarios".[xli] The choice of running a vignette survey experiment stands in line with Dafoe, Zhang and Caughey's recent critique of this type of experiment.[xlii] Warning against the misuses of vignette experiments, they recalled that their prime function is to help answer questions "about the effects of the presentation of a particular feature of the world. […] Examples of this kind include asking about the effect of describing a country as a democracy, of describing a person as African-American, of describing a firm as having generous child-leave policy. These sorts of questions are of interest for understanding the effects of the framing and presentation of information".[xliii] To use their words, our experiment precisely asked about the effects of describing the author of a violent action as a terrorist or an Islamist, as compared to a shooter. Moreover, vignette experiments have already disclosed important results on the public's perceptions and policy preferences on security issues.[xliv]

The experiment was conducted in group sessions with a large and diverse pool of 481 university-level social science students, none of whom had previously entered a course on terrorism, security, or related topics. Although our pool of participant is diverse in many aspects

(gender, self-positioning on the political spectrum, foreign roots, etc.), it is still a student population. Since Sears' famous 1986 paper, the biasing effects of disproportionate student participation in psychological experiments have been identified, especially in research on intergroup prejudice, to which the present study participates. Yet more recent studies have shown that "student subjects are not an inherent problem to experimental research",[xlv] and that if students' results on experimental security simulations are indeed far from those of security elites, they can nonetheless be generalized – with warning – to the general population.[xlvi] In line with these recent analyses, we recognize the limitation of our sample but believe that the strength and direction of our results – precisely with a left wing-leaning student sample widely endorsing traditionally right-wing perceptions and solutions – significantly consolidate previous research up to the point where for the "terrorist label effect" "the burden of proof – of student subjects being a problem – should lie with critics rather than experimenters".[xlvii] More fundamentally, our primary interest here is not in the external validity, but instead the internal validity of our empirical findings, making the generalisability of the results to other population groups a secondary issue.

Participants were first presented with a seemingly (and presented as) real depiction of an act of violence in the press, and subsequently asked to answer to a questionnaire that allowed us to evaluate both perceptions and beliefs on the one hand, and policy preferences, on the other hand (see questionnaires in annex).[xlviii] The 1-page fictional press article described the shooting of a police car in Germany; it was inspired by a *Reuters* release on an event taking place in Marseille in February 2015. We mimicked the layout of *Le Monde*, arguably the most prestigious, well-established and less politically biased newspaper in the French-speaking world, in line with previous evidence that labelling can only have effects when conducted by specific "authorised actors".[xlix]

Following the principle of Woods' minimalist design, the aim was to isolate the power of the "terrorist" label *only*, so this article served as a common basis for preparing three different vignettes in which the *only* difference is the terminology used to name the shooters (see vignettes in annex). Whilst in the first vignette they are referred to as "terrorists", the second version of the article provides a neutral baseline for comparison by implementing the more neutral language of "shooter". The third vignette aims at comparing the effects of these two vignettes with another prominent delegitimizing label, that of "Islamist". Apart from this difference in categorisation, the article remained unchanged in the three versions. The plausibility of the vignette has been secured in a series of pilot tests, including with a professional journalist, in which feedback was received.

As for the estimation method, treatments have been randomized at the individual level. We estimate the Average Treatment Effect (ATE) by estimating following equation:[l]

$$Y_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 Islamist_i + \beta_2 Terrorist_i + X_i'\gamma + \varepsilon_i \qquad (1)$$

where Y_i is a dependent variable of interest, $Islamist_i$ is a dummy variable equal to 1 if the event described in the article was framed as committed by an Islamist, and $Terrorist_i$ is a dummy variable equal to 1 if the event described in the article was framed as committed by a terrorist. X_i' is a vector of control variables capturing individual characteristics of the respondents, including the sex, the age, the origin of the family (parents or grand-parents born outside EU), dummies for religious beliefs (Agnostic, Atheist, Christian, Jew, Muslim, Other and Do not want to reply), political self-positioning from far left to far right (7-level Likert scale), parents' number of University diploma (0, 1 or 2), a dummy for benefiting from a scholarship and the type of city of residence (rural, small city, large city in an homogenous neighbourhood, large city in a multicultural neighbourhood).

Summary statistics are presented in Table I below, which provides the balance in individual characteristics across treatment and control groups. Overall, individual characteristics are well balanced across treatment arms, except for the left/right variable. Participants who randomly received the text with terrorist label are on average slightly more left wing.

Table I in here

Our analysis shows that the effect of the variable "Left/Right" goes in the same direction than the effect of the label Terrorist. As a result, coefficients of interest associated with the label "Terrorist" are likely to be slightly underestimated when control variables are not included. We therefore include the vector of control variables to minimize the risk of bias due to selection in treatment arms and generate more precise estimates.[li] As shown later, estimated coefficients are not significantly different when the vector of control variables is included in the regression.

The estimation strategy depends on the nature of the dependent variables. The first variable of interest is the number of years of imprisonment seen as the most appropriate for the authors of the violence described in the article (from 0 to 30 years). It is a count variable characterized by strong overdispersion: a chi-square goodness-of-fit test strongly rejects the null hypothesis that the data follow a Poisson distribution (p-value = 0.00). We will therefore use and compare OLS and Negative Binomial regression models.[lii] Results are similar with these two methods.

For a group of six dependent variables, the respondents had to provide an appreciation of a statement on a 7-levels Likert scale[liii]. We asked them whether the event depicted in the article (1) relates to domestic or (2) foreign policy, (3) has a link with the ongoing conflict in Iraq and

Syria, and (4) could be prevented thanks to immigration control. We also asked the respondent if the author of the violence is (5) irrational and (6) immoral. For this group of variables, we follow Long and Freese and estimate equation (1) with OLS and ordered Logit regressions.[liv] These two methods lead to similar results.

Finally, three dependent variables are categorical. First, we asked respondents if "the motives of the author of the violent act depicted in the article are above all: financial/economic, political/ideological, psychological/psychiatric, religious or social". Second, we asked them if "the right level to address this type of event effectively is according to you: local, national, European or international". Third, they had to assess "which institution is the most effective and pertinent one to manage the sort of event depicted in the article: justice, police, army, private security services or intelligence services". For this group of categorical variables, we estimated a multinomial logit model, as recommended by Long and Freese.[lv] It is worth noting that OLS and Logit regressions with dummies regrouping categories gave similar results.

Results: The power of the "terrorist" and "Islamist" categories

Could it therefore be that when it comes to the terrorist label 'categorizing can itself be an exertion of power'?[lvi] Our results, presented below in Tables II (count and Likert-type variables) and III (categorical variables) strongly suggest that this is true,[lvii] which further accredits Galtung and Holmboe's original claim that the image of a violent event conveyed by the press strongly shapes individual and collective perceptions of it[lviii] and Hoffman's contention that reporting on terrorism by the news media plays a key role in the public understanding of it.[lix] However, the claim that 'to be a terrorist in the 21st century is to occupy an *incomparable* deviant status'[lx] is less confirmed, as the effect of the Islamist category is strikingly very often undistinguishable from that of the terrorist label. As explained in our discussion this is probably the result of the frequent juxtaposition of the two categories, leading to the former gaining its deviant status from its recurring association with the latter. Against Woods,[lxi] and in line with our central hypothesis, we show that using the terrorist category has a clear effect, but our results corroborate his finding that the "Islamist" category elicits powerful effects, yet to a high point not predicted by our "mid-level" hypothesis.

Table II in here

Table III in here

Perceptions effects

The first types of effects we consider are perceptions. A first striking difference concerns the *type of event* the audience perceives to be facing. Participants exposed to both the Islamist and the terrorist labels are significantly more prone than others to see a link between the shooting depicted in the article and the conflict in Iraq and Syria (Table II, Columns 1 and 2). These differences are large and significant at the 1% level; the coefficient associated with the "Islamist" label is significantly higher than the coefficient associated with the "terrorist" label. This perception, as we will see below, matches their policy preferences stressing the importance of foreign policy and action at the European/international levels.

Another set of notable differences in perception relate to the personality characteristics attributed to the *author of violence*. Here we reiterated some of Montiel and Shah's questions[lxii] and obtained results that complement theirs. A first significant difference appears on participants' evaluation of the (ir)rational personality of the shooter (Table II, Columns 3 and 4). Those exposed to the non-neutral vignettes tend to consider the author of violence as less rational than those exposed to the neutral one. They also perceive the author of violence as less moral, even if here the difference is not significant. This result is in line with their perception of the shooter's motives, which are more likely to be seen as political, religious or ideological than financial, economic or social (Table III, Panel A). In sum, it looks like calling the author of a violent act a terrorist or an Islamist suffices to evoke associated traits like irrational, ideological/religious, or immoral – and therefore trigger, as we will now show, harsher solutions to deal with them. This directly backs Wardlaw's claim that terrorists are portrayed and therefore perceived as "irrational, driven by a deranged mind, and with aims of self-interest or illogical destructiveness".[lxiii]

Policy preferences effects

Results indeed confirm our hypothesis that such perceptions effects are concomitant of policy preference effects. Perhaps the most obvious dimension of our hypothesis was that participants exposed to the "terrorist" and "Islamist" categories – would be more prone to advocate more hard-line policy preferences than those exposed to the more neutral vignette. Our main indicator assessing this difference comes from the question asked to participants on *the most appropriate condemnation* they would give to the author of the violence described in the vignette – the "terrorist", the "Islamist" or the "shooter" (Columns 7 and 8 of Table II). The answers reveal a

wide gap between the average sentence length given to "shooters" on the one hand and "terrorists" and "Islamists" on the other hand. The mean sentence is 14.1 years in the control group, 16.4 years in the "Islamist" group and 17.9 years in the "Terrorist" one. The effect to the "Islamist label" is significant at the 5% level, and that of the "Terrorist" label is significant at the 1% level. OLS and Negative Binomial regressions give similar results. Interestingly the difference between "Islamist" and "terrorist" categories is not statistically significant, which could mean that the Islamist label has now come to a par with the "incomparable" deviant status of the terrorist.

Second, participants in the three groups also very significantly differed according to the *broader political response* they would advocate. Participants exposed to the terrorist and Islamist vignettes tend to claim both that this type of event pertains to foreign policy (Table II, Columns 11 and 12) and that the best level at which it should be addressed is the European or international level (Table III, Panel B), in opposition to the domestic policy (Table II, Columns 9 and 10) and local or national level advocated by those exposed to the neutral vignette. We also find suggestive evidence that respondents exposed to the terrorist and Islamist labels are more willing than the other group to see immigration control as a pertinent policy recommendation. This result is statistically significant, but only marginally.

A third strong effect related to policy preferences relates to *the institution* seen as the most able to address the type of violent event depicted in the article. Exposure to the terrorist and Islamist categories boosts support for an extra-ordinary response led by the intelligence services, and the army to a lesser extent, instead of the normal functioning of justice and police (Table III, Panel C).

Self-categorisation effects

Our final hypothesis suggested that these effects in terms of perceptions and policy preferences would be mediated by participants' self-categorisation. One self-categorisation variable implemented in the experimental design indeed provides a remarkable result. Where all other self-categorisation variables (e.g. gender, self-positioning on political spectrum) fail to alter effects in a clear way, it appears that participants who categorize themselves as Muslims have been much more responsive to the treatment than others when it comes to assess and punish "Islamists": not only do they give much longer prison condemnations than non-Muslims to "Islamists", the difference between their respective sentencing choices for "Islamists" and others is also much larger, meaning that the effect of this category is stronger on them (Table IV, Columns 1 and 2 – predictive margins are presented in Figure 1(a) below). In the regressions with interaction variables, the coefficients associated the interaction term are equal to 8.9 without control variables and 9.2 with controls and

significant at the 5% level. It implies that Muslims respondents who got the "Islamist" label recommend about 9 more years of imprisonment for the authors of violence. We find a similar difference on respondents' perceptions of whether the author of the violence is immoral (Table IV, Columns 3 and 4 – predictive margins are presented in Figure 1(b) below). Most non-Muslim respondents tend to be neutral about the statement that the author of the violence is immoral, independently of the vignette they read. On the contrary, most Muslims "agree" or "strongly agree" with this statement if they read the "Islamist" vignette. This effect is strongly significant. For this question, a similar but weaker effect is observed when Muslim respondents faced the "terrorist" label.

Table IV in here

Figure 1 (a) and (b) in here

Discussion: Explaining the effects of the "terrorist" and "Islamist" labels

Clearly confirming our hypotheses, our results strongly contribute to document the strength, direction and characteristics of the "terrorist" label effect. However, this effect remains to be explained. As already noted, the existing literature that paved the way for the present study (chiefly Dunn et al.,[lxiv] Haider-Markel, Joslyn and Al-Baghal,[lxv] Montiel and Shah[lxvi] and Woods)[lxvii] dedicates little room for a theoretical effort aimed at understanding the effect. Below we address this gap by putting our results under the two different but complementary theoretical lights of cognitive sciences and social psychology; both frameworks' conceptualization of the crucial process of categorisation are successively summarized and used to explain our results.

Terrorism/Islamism labelling: A cognitive approach

The work done in cognitive science on categorisation is crucial to understand the terrorist label effect. The cognitive approach to categorisation took off with Rosch's experiments in the 1970s,[lxviii] in which she showed that the mind organizes chaotic stimuli received from the external

world into meaningful categories according to fuzzy resemblances between newly faced items and information already known. The "exemplar(s) model", built on this basis, gives a key role to memory and experience, arguing that individuals see object as belonging to a category if the object resembles the "separate descriptions of some of [the] exemplars"[lxix] that have previously been encountered and learned to belong to the category. As Heit puts it, "a decision whether to categorize some object X as a member of a category A depends on the similarity of X to retrieved exemplars for category A".[lxx] It is important to note that these descriptions of exemplars include not only perceptual features but also "deep", non-observable and functional ones,[lxxi] therefore implying the presence of folk theories at the levels of both abstract functional features and links between the perceptual features and the abstract ones.[lxxii] Other scholars have complemented this view by suggesting that the mind also relies on mentally-constructed prototypes in order to categorize.[lxxiii] In both the basic exemplar model and its prototype version, categorisation therefore heavily relies on a theory-based knowledge on how things coexist. Rehder even qualifies this idea that "cognitive processes depend on the world knowledge that a person possesses" as "the factor that has changed the study of human cognition over the last several decades".[lxxiv]

The impact of such knowledge and theories is decisive at the earliest, most unconscious stages of categorisation,[lxxv] and especially under time constraints as they speed up categorisation[lxxvi] by helping categorisers to "expect certain distributions of features in [to-be-categorised] category members".[lxxvii] Therefore only dedicated motivation can lead people to reflect on and alter the categories they use,[lxxviii] especially when labels are heavily primed.[lxxix] Taking stock of this framework, several authors have claimed that these theories are usually morally charged, that is, include normative judgements. Lakoff counts amongst the supporters of the view that "our very notions of what is moral are built into our unconscious conceptual systems".[lxxx] Echoing Bonham and Shapiro's "cognitive map [of concepts] which allows an individual [or an institution] to relate an event or a series of events to policy alternatives and policy objectives",[lxxxi] he claimed that the categories used by an individual to discuss political issues are interconnected within an organized structure of concepts that form together a unified moral view on the social world.

This cognitive approach of categorisation from Rosch to Lakoff provides an important insight for the study of the terrorist and Islamist labels. By emphasising the combined role of morally charged knowledge frames on the one hand and exemplars and prototypes on the other hand, it suggests that no description of a violent political event could be value-neutral. Using a word as recurrently heard as "terrorism" induces a specific perception of the event that elicits particular thoughts and moral judgments because it activates an entire system of other morally charged concepts and particular expectations on the individual's background, motives and

personality. As Wardlaw warned, such a reification process leads "individual terrorists to be condemned as morally repugnant".[lxxxii] In a context where terrorism is a salient issue, the use of the "terrorist" category has become sufficient to induce more negative perceptions than another label, due to the cognitive activation of various characteristics usually associated with the stereotype of the terrorist. This backs up Schmid's seminal claim about the primacy of the social context in public perceptions of terrorism and attempts to define the term.[lxxxiii] Interestingly, the difference between the effect of the "Islamist" and "terrorist" categories is not usually statistically significant. This could mean that the Islamist category has now almost equalled the previously "incomparable" deviant status of the terrorist, due to the frequent conflation or even interchangeability of the two concepts, meaning that the two labels cognitively stimulate the same stereotype or at least the same cognitive map of concepts. This hypothesis is backed by the observation that no statistically significant difference was found between the participants exposed to these two labels, when asked about the adequate type and level of political response. In stark contrast with those exposed to the "shooter" label, they advocated an international response.

Terrorism/Islamism labelling: A social-psychological approach

Findings on categorisation from social psychology adequately complement this analysis. Henri Tajfel's pioneering works on the role of categories in intergroup relations[lxxxiv] have paved the way for one of social psychology's most influential frameworks, Social Identity Theory (SIT). This influence is so important that some argue that categorisation is the "pivotal process without which the modern social psychology of intergroup relations is almost impossible to imagine".[lxxxv] SIT's starting point is, against cognitive approaches, that "categorisation and stereotyping cannot be understood by considering them solely as information-processing devices which facilitate and simplify individual thinking",[lxxxvi] but should rather be seen as central components in intergroup relationships and hence power. SIT has thus extensively documented the effects of basic in- and out-group categorisation on biased beliefs (e.g. stereotyping) and derogatory behaviours (e.g. ingroup favouritism or material discrimination of outgroup). Taking its roots in a will to understand the Holocaust, SIT sees group categories as implementing an "identity-conferring function"[lxxxvii] that paves the road from prejudice to extreme violence. By highlighting the "complete dependence [of categorisation] on variable features of both perceivers and contexts" and by putting a "strong emphasis on categorisation as context-specific process",[lxxxviii] SIT shows that the more a social category is made salient in a specific intergroup context, the bigger its impact will be on individuals' beliefs and behaviours.[lxxxix]

Importantly, the hidden axiom of this approach is that group categorisation *in itself* – that is, even without a competition between groups, without a clear authority, without an obvious material reason to clash – can produce significant effects on individuals' behaviours and beliefs. This claim is exemplified by Wilder, who stated that "categorisation, *per se*, propels the individual down the road to bias",[xc] or more recently by Gaertner et al., who emphasised "how powerfully *mere* social categorisation can influence differential thinking, feeling, and behaving toward in-group and out-group members".[xci] In this context, political leaders are tempted to naturalize and reify social categories in order to consolidate their power by strengthening group categorisation, thereby increasing intergroup tensions.[xcii]

This approach to categorisation, which rightly emphasises contingent dynamics of real-life group categorisation, reinforces the key insights provided by the cognitive approach. First, it further explains the strength of the effect. In todays' security environment, not only is terrorism heavily primed, but terrorists have also become close to be the ultimate outgroup. Within the current context, characterised by the prominence of terrorism issues in the mass media (e.g. Islamic State's beheadings) and by the recurrent use of the terrorist category by political leaders in security speech-acts, a group category of the "terrorist" has been produced and reified. As Wardlaw explained, "institutions and roles [related to terrorism] become reified", establishing moral judgment and expectations.[xciii] Evoking this group category confers to the labelled individual extremely negative attributes, triggers more negative feelings and elicits hard-line policy choices against this terrorist "outgroup" than against any other label. In his seminal paper exploring the problems associated with defining terrorism, Jenkins was right in noting that "if one party can successfully attach the label 'terrorist' to its opponent, then it has indirectly persuaded others to adopt its moral viewpoint".[xciv] Second, this framework also explains our finding that self-categorized Muslims' perceptions and policy recommendations on "Islamists" are more hostile than those of other participants. In line with SIT, aggressive behaviour against an outgroup is likely to be moderated by people's self-categorisation. By being seen by many as the closest group to the hated outgroup (or even categorized within the same group), Muslims seem to react by creating a rigorous in-/out-group difference through more categorical thinking and harsher exclusion. In a way, this is the paradox that the present article was hoping to reveal: an audience can be manipulated only by using a category that artificially creates a sentiment of proximity between this audience and the labelled group or individual, even if they may in fact have nothing to do with the event.

Conclusions

Categorisation and labelling are profoundly political processes, and some authors go as far as to suggest that the politics of naming has never been as prominent as today. For example, Bathia notes that "from Uzbekistan to Colombia, from the Philippines to Algeria, the conflict over 'names' and 'naming' is becoming furious".[xcv] In this context, the "pejorative"[xcvi] category of terrorism/terrorist occupies a particular place. As Harb and Leenders indeed rightly observe, "while those chastised by their opponents may still take some pride in—and indeed adopt—principally derogatory labels like 'rebel', 'bandit', 'insurgent' and even 'enemy', terrorism has few self-professed practitioners".[xcvii]

Grounded in the emerging discussion on the political dimension of the "terrorist" label, the present article aimed at uncovering and explaining the performative character of this label, hence contributing to further explain linguistic dynamics of conflict and counterterrorism. To do so, an experimental design was set up to isolate this effect from other ones, in which 481 participants were exposed to one out of three vignettes depicting a street shooting which were rigorously identical – at the exception of the label describing the author of the violent action: either a "terrorist" or a "shooter". Inspired by the massive press and political coverage of the Islamic State's terrorist attacks in Europe, and the ensuing intergroup polarization, we also decided to test whether the "Islamist" label had come close to the "terrorist" one in terms of the public's perceptions and policy preferences.

This experiment produced very strong and coherent results in line with theories developed in cognitive science and social psychology. Participants' perceptions and policy preferences are now proven to be significantly altered by the use of the terrorist or Islamist category alone by an "authorized" actor reporting in a context of high terrorism saliency. In comparison with the participants exposed to the neutral vignette, those exposed to the "terrorist" and "Islamist" ones consistently condemned the author of the violence to harsher penalty, favoured more global (rather than local or national) responses, and were more prone to consider the army and the intelligence services as the most effective actors in the fight against the type of violence depicted in the article. Strikingly, participants who categorized themselves as Muslims tended to be particularly exposed to this effect, a behaviour that we explain, in line with SIT, as the expression of a will to sharpen the oft-blurred boundary between "moderate Muslims" and "Islamic terrorists". In line with theories developed in cognitive science and social psychology, these varying policy preferences match different perceptions. Using the terrorist or Islamist labels noticeably oriented participants' perception of the event depicted in the press article towards an action both linked to the conflict in Iraq and Syria and committed by an irrational, immoral and

ideology/religion driven individual. In addition, our results clearly support the view that the meaning of the "Islamist" label has become associated with terrorism. Together, these results go against the scenario of a growing critical defiance vis-à-vis the terrorist category, and instead seems to back the idea that in spite of its repeated flagrant misuses the label still works to "rally round the flag".

These significant results should nonetheless be read with two limitations in mind. A first limitation comes from our sample. The first limitation relates to our pool of participants, and has already been discussed. A second one comes from our choice to use the press as the source of the terrorism category. Although our decision has been guided by both the literature and the impossibility to experimentally test everything, a broader picture of the impact of the source on the effect of the terrorism category is needed. Further studies should seek to replicate the experimental design with either another type of source (e.g. a policy maker, an opinion leader) or with variation in the authorized character of the source (e.g. a highly regarded newspaper vs. a tabloid).

In spite of these limitations, we strongly believe that our study fulfils all the potential purposes of experiments identified by Roth:[xcviii] "searching for facts" (revealing causal mechanisms), "speaking to theorists" (putting theoretical propositions at test), and "whispering in the ears of princes" (providing pertinent and useful results for political actors broadly speaking, including the press). In today's context, this last purpose is of particular importance for scholars with critical ambition. In line with Jackson's warning that 'the "terrorist" label is never a fixed or essential identity' but rather implements unequal power relations,[xcix] these results are strong reminders that words are powerful political devices that should be used cautiously. It is therefore hoped that our findings will clarify and stimulate the emerging discussion amongst the press and political leaders on the performative power of political labels.

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Table I: Balance in Individual Characteristics across Treatment and Control Groups

	Control (t1)	**Islamist (t2)**	**Terrorist (t3)**	**Comparison of means: p-values**		
	Mean (Std. Dev.)	*Mean (Std. Dev.)*	*Mean (Std. Dev.)*	t1 vs. t2	t1 vs. t3	t2 vs. t3
Male	0.39 (0.49)	0.36 (0.48)	0.34 (0.47)	0.62	0.32	0.63
Age	19.48 (2.18)	19.32 (1.47)	19.42 (1.58)	0.46	0.78	0.59
Born in Belgium	0.88 (0.32)	0.88 (0.32)	0.85 (0.36)	0.99	0.43	0.43
Born in UE	0.08 (0.28)	0.07 (0.25)	0.09 (0.28)	0.55	0.91	0.48
Born outside UE	0.04 (0.19)	0.05 (0.22)	0.06 (0.24)	0.46	0.27	0.72
Parents or GP born abroad	0.31 (0.46)	0.26 (0.44)	0.27 (0.44)	0.36	0.42	0.91
Agnostic	0.11 (0.31)	0.17 (0.38)	0.15 (0.36)	0.11	0.26	0.61
Atheist	0.19 (0.40)	0.22 (0.41)	0.23 (0.42)	0.59	0.48	0.87
Christian	0.54 (0.50)	0.51 (0.50)	0.49 (0.50)	0.53	0.32	0.74
Jew	0.01 (0.11)	0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)	0.18	0.16	.
Muslim	0.06 (0.24)	0.05 (0.21)	0.06 (0.24)	0.58	0.93	0.52
Religious belief (Do not want to a	0.02 (0.13)	0.02 (0.14)	0.01 (0.08)	0.91	0.33	0.29
Others	0.07 (0.25)	0.04 (0.20)	0.07 (0.25)	0.29	0.93	0.26
Left/right	4.33 (1.47)	4.34 (1.26)	4.00 (1.51)	0.96	0.05 *	0.04 **
Parents no diploma	0.31 (0.46)	0.27 (0.45)	0.28 (0.45)	0.46	0.55	0.88
1 diploma	0.26 (0.44)	0.31 (0.46)	0.30 (0.46)	0.27	0.39	0.80
2 diploma	0.43 (0.50)	0.42 (0.49)	0.42 (0.50)	0.76	0.82	0.93
Scolarship	0.21 (0.41)	0.21 (0.41)	0.25 (0.43)	0.96	0.44	0.49
Rural habitation	0.34 (0.48)	0.36 (0.48)	0.36 (0.48)	0.70	0.78	0.92
Small town	0.23 (0.42)	0.22 (0.41)	0.21 (0.41)	0.73	0.55	0.82
Big city, not multicultural	0.22 (0.42)	0.22 (0.42)	0.26 (0.44)	0.96	0.39	0.43
Big city, multicultural	0.20 (0.40)	0.20 (0.40)	0.18 (0.38)	0.89	0.51	0.61

Significance: 1% (***), 5% (**), 10%(*)

Table II: Count and Likert-type variables

	Perceptions						Policy preferences							
	Related to Syria and Iraq		Irrational		Immoral		Years imprisonment		Domestic policy		Foreign policy		Limit Immigration	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)	(13)	(14)
PANEL A: OLS Regressions														
Islamist (t2)	0.872***	0.920***	0.320*	0.285	0.219	0.225	2.373**	2.417**	-0.841***	-0.745***	1.215***	1.246***	0.342	0.28
	(0.17)	(0.18)	(0.19)	(0.20)	(0.20)	(0.21)	(1.04)	(1.06)	(0.17)	(0.18)	(0.17)	(0.17)	(0.23)	(0.20)
Terrorist (t3)	0.544***	0.596***	0.408**	0.514***	0.094	0.266	3.869***	4.024***	-0.590***	-0.575***	1.008***	1.029***	0.204	0.411*
	(0.17)	(0.18)	(0.17)	(0.18)	(0.19)	(0.21)	(0.99)	(1.03)	(0.16)	(0.17)	(0.17)	(0.18)	(0.23)	(0.21)
p-value t2 vs. t3	0.05**	0.08*	0.63	0.24	0.53	0.84	0.15	0.14	0.18	0.39	0.22	0.24	0.56	0.55
PANEL B: Negative Binomial and Ordered Logit Regressions														
Islamist (t2)	1.064***	1.121***	0.357*	0.32	0.197	0.258	0.156**	0.165**	-0.916***	-0.889***	1.457***	1.540***	0.305	0.298
	(0.22)	(0.24)	(0.21)	(0.22)	(0.20)	(0.22)	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.21)	(0.23)	(0.21)	(0.22)	(0.19)	(0.22)
Terrorist (t3)	0.571***	0.647***	0.384**	0.526***	0.08	0.284	0.243***	0.270***	-0.663***	-0.673***	1.184***	1.291***	0.157	0.339
	(0.20)	(0.22)	(0.18)	(0.20)	(0.19)	(0.22)	(0.06)	(0.07)	(0.19)	(0.21)	(0.21)	(0.24)	(0.20)	(0.23)
p-value t2 vs. t3	0.048**	0.079*	0.63	0.24	0.53	0.84	0.15	0.14	0.18	0.39	0.22	0.24	0.56	0.55
Observations	476	430	479	433	480	433	449	407	474	429	473	428	479	432
Controls	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
R^2 of OLS	0.05	0.15	0.01	0.09	0.003	0.1	0.03	0.14	0.05	0.1	0.12	0.18	0.005	0.3

Robust standard errors in parentheses. Significance: 1% (***), 5% (**), 10%(*)

Table III: Categorical variables

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
PANEL A: Perceptions of the motives of the shooters - base outcome = Political/ideological								
	Economic/ Financial		Psychologic/ Psychiatric		Religious		Social	
Islamist (t2)	-0.361	-2.158	-0.179	-0.312	0.938**	0.989**	-0.836**	-1.107***
	(0.93)	(2.13)	(0.50)	(0.59)	(0.42)	(0.42)	(0.33)	(0.38)
Terrorist (t3)	-0.011	-2.844	0.252	0.38	0.5	0.482	-0.466	-0.804**
	(0.83)	(1.90)	(0.45)	(0.51)	(0.45)	(0.47)	(0.29)	(0.34)
p-value t2 vs. t3	0.71	0.69	0.36	0.21	0.23	0.29	0.29	0.44
Observations	442	400	442	400	442	400	442	400
Controls	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
PANEL B: Policy preferences on the right level to address this type of event - base outcome = National								
	Local		European		International			
Islamist (t2)	0.119	0.08	0.786**	0.893**	1.984***	1.977***		
	(0.36)	(0.40)	(0.33)	(0.35)	(0.32)	(0.35)		
Terrorist (t3)	-0.082	-0.227	0.793**	0.935***	1.682***	1.566***		
	(0.35)	(0.41)	(0.32)	(0.35)	(0.32)	(0.36)		
p-value t2 vs. t3	0.62	0.49	0.98	0.91	0.27	0.18		
Observations	476	431	476	431	476	431		
Controls	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes		
PANEL C: Policy preferences on the best institution to manage this type of event - base outcome = Justice								
	Army		Police		Private security services		Intelligence Services	
Islamist (t2)	0.710*	0.695*	-0.105	0.003	-0.105	-0.513	1.093***	1.365***
	(0.37)	(0.41)	(0.36)	(0.41)	(0.74)	(0.93)	(0.31)	(0.34)
Terrorist (t3)	0.421	0.21	-0.551	-0.626	0.532	0.298	0.989***	1.130***
	(0.36)	(0.43)	(0.37)	(0.43)	(0.60)	(0.62)	(0.29)	(0.34)
p-value t2 vs. t3	0.44	0.28	0.29	0.19	0.38	0.37	0.73	0.48
Observations	453	412	453	412	453	412	453	412
Controls	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes

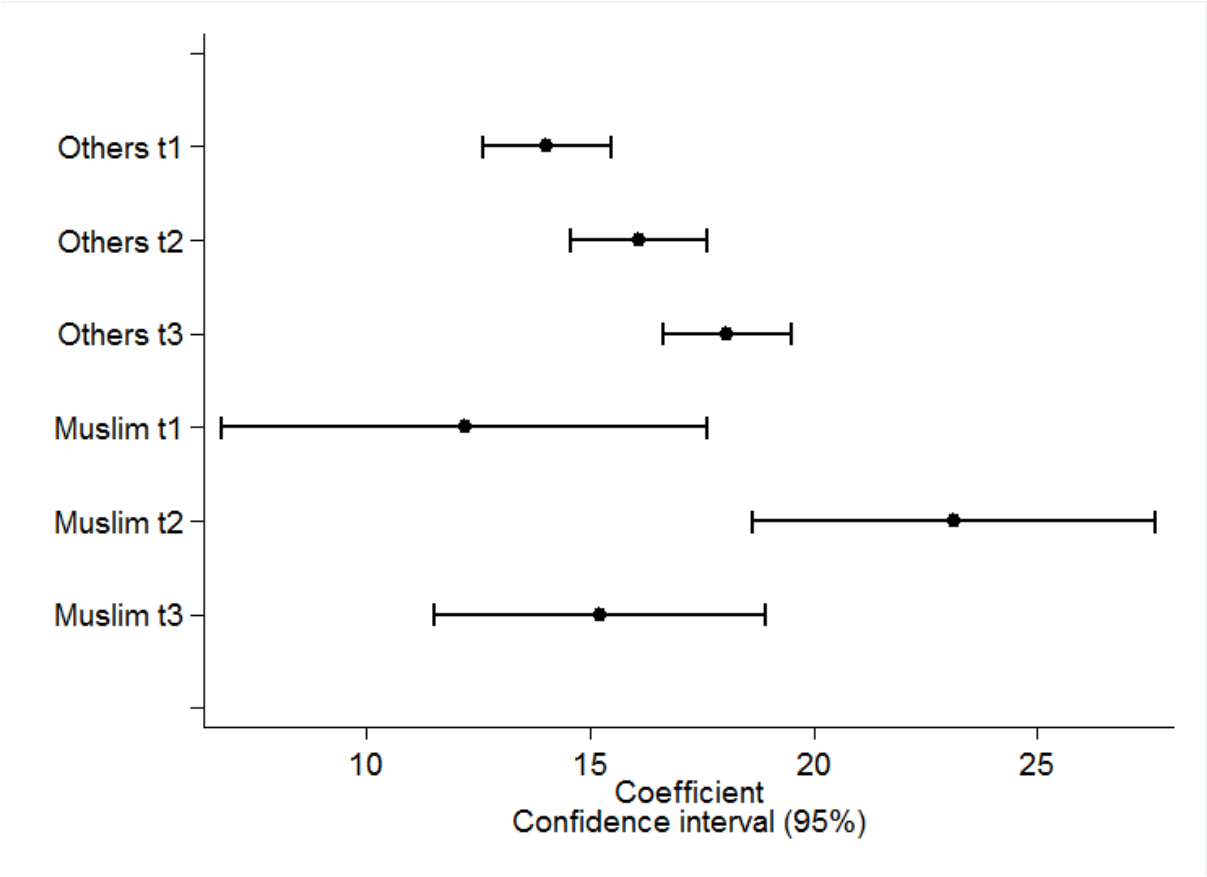
Robust standard errors in parentheses. Significance: 1% (***), 5% (**), 10%(*)

Table IV: Interactions of t2 and t3 with self-categorization as Muslim

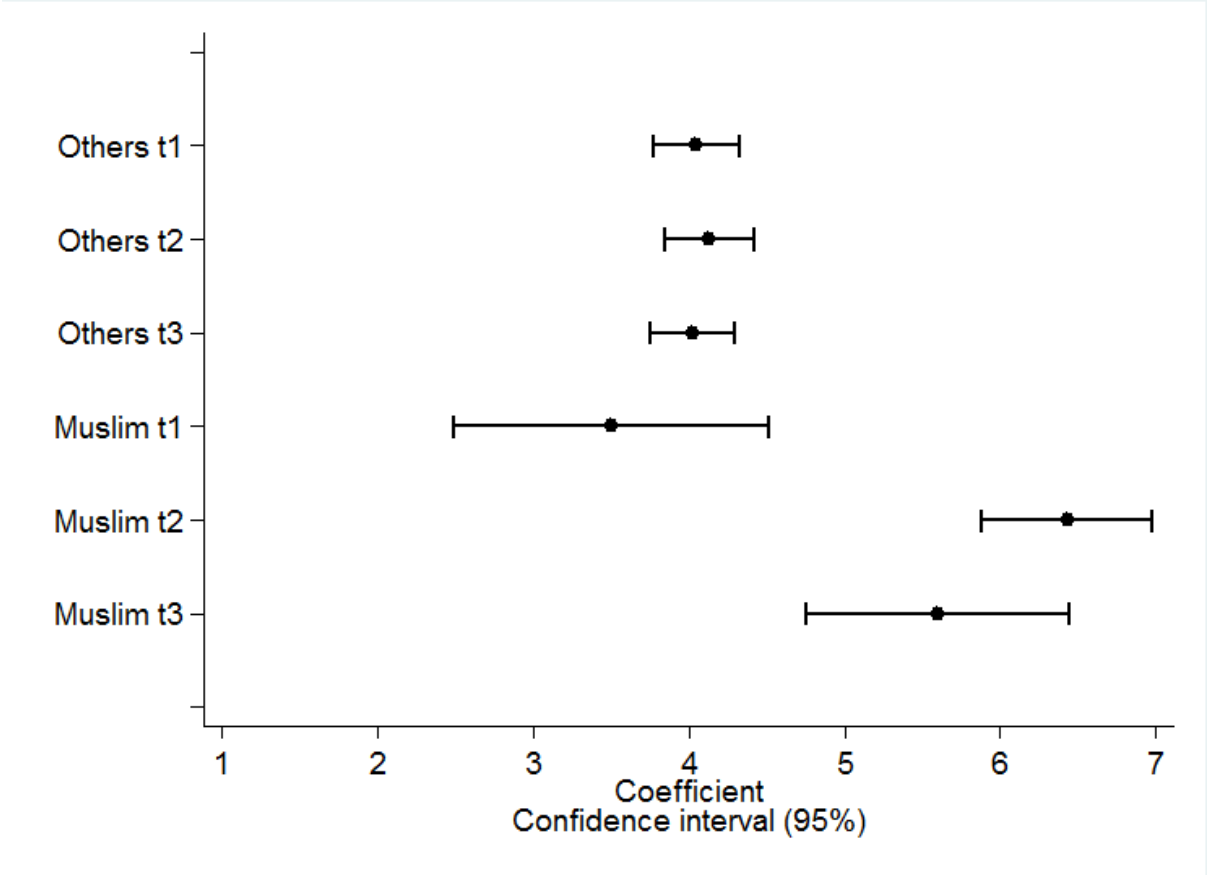
	Years imprisonment		Immoral	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Islamist (t2)	2.052*	1.899*	0.0859	0.0598
	(1.068)	(1.081)	(0.202)	(0.210)
Terrorist (t3)	4.017***	4.102***	-0.0185	0.120
	(1.032)	(1.071)	(0.197)	(0.213)
Mulsim	-1.841	-0.592	-0.545	-0.390
	(2.858)	(3.573)	(0.537)	(0.626)
Interaction Muslim x t2	8.891**	9.234**	2.843***	2.977***
	(3.749)	(4.323)	(0.621)	(0.637)
Interaction Muslim x t3	-0.995	-0.976	2.118***	2.355***
	(3.500)	(3.877)	(0.702)	(0.744)
Observations	446	407	477	433
Controls	No	Yes	No	Yes
R^2 of OLS	0.047	0.154	0.045	0.126

Robust standard errors in parentheses. Significance: 1% (***), 5% (**), 10%(*)

Figure 1: The "Islamist" effect amongst self-categorized Muslims



a) Years of imprisonment: predictive margins of "shooter" (t1), "Islamist" (t2), and "terrorist" categories (t3) as a function of self-categorization as Muslim



b) The author of the violence is immoral: predictive margins of "shooter" (t1), "Islamist" (t2), and "terrorist" categories (t3) as a function of self-categorization as Muslim

Notes

[i] For example on US foreign military interventions: e.g. D. Campbell, *Writing Security: United States Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998); P. Hoyt, "The 'Rogue State' Image in American Foreign Policy," *Global Society* 14, n.2 (2000), 297-310. Or on the Holocaust: e.g. T. Pegelow, "Determining 'People of German Blood', 'Jews' and 'Mischlinge': The Reich Kinship Office and the Competing Discourses and Powers of Nazism, 1941–1943," Contemporary European History 15, n.1 (2006), 43-65. Or on the Rwanda genocide: e.g. M. Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers: Colonialism, Nativism, and the Genocide in Rwanda* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002).

[ii] For example A. Nuzzo, "Reasons for Conflict: Political Implications of a Definition of Terrorism," *Metaphilosophy* 35, n.3 (2004), 330-344. R. Jackson, "The Core Commitments of Critical Terrorism Studies," *European Political Science* 6 (2007), 244-251. R. Krebs and J. Lobasz, "Fixing the Meaning of 9/11: Hegemony, Coercion, and the Road to War in Iraq," *Security Studies* 16, n.3 (2007), 409-451.

[iii] J. Austin, "A Plea for Excuses," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 57 (1964): 7.

[iv] M. Jenkins, *The Study of Terrorism: Definitional Problems* (Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, 1980, 9).

[v] For example Jenkins, *The Study of Terrorism*; G. Wardlaw, *Political Terrorism. Theory, Tactics, and Counter-Measures* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982, pp.3-17); A. Schmid, *Political Terrorism. A Research Guide to Concepts, Theories, Data Bases and Literature* (Amsterdam: North-Holland, 1983, pp.5-23); B.

Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism. Revised and Expanded Edition* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006, pp.1-41).

[vi] For example J. Gunning and R. Jackson, "What's so 'Religious' about 'Religious Terrorism'?," *Critical Studies on Terrorism* 4, n.3 (2011), 369-388; or A. Spencer, "Sic[k] of the 'New Terrorism' Debate? A Response to our Critics," *Critical Studies on Terrorism* 4, n.3 (2011), 459-467.

[vii] For example W. Laqueur, "Interpretations of Terrorism: Fact, Fiction and Political Science", *Journal of Contemporary History* 12 (1977), 1-42; I. Primoratz, "What is Terrorism", Journal of Applied Philosophy 7, n.2 (1990), 129-138; L. Weinberg et al., "The Challenges of Conceptualizing Terrorism," *Terrorism & Political Violence* 16, n.4 (2004), 777-794.; Jackson, "The Core Commitments", 247 (see note 2 above); C. Tilly, "Terror, Terrorism, Terrorists," *Sociological Review* 22, n.1 (2004), 5-13.

[viii] Jackson, "The Core Commitments", 247.

[ix] For example J. White, "Left and Right as Political Resources," *Journal of Political Ideologies* 16, n.2 (2011), 123-144; D. Yanow, *Constructing 'Race' and 'Ethnicity' in America* (Armonk NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2003); G. Lits, "Déconstruire la Politique Européenne de Gestion des Déchets Nucléaires: Une Stratégie Critique? ," *Emulations* 8 (2011), 21-35.

[x] For example D. Bigo D and A. Tsoukala, eds, *Terror, Insecurity and Liberty. Illiberal Practices of Liberal Regimes after 9/11* (New York: Routledge, 2008).

[xi] C. Spielvogel, "'You Know Where I Stand': Moral Framing of the War on Terrorism and the Iraq War in the 2004 Presidential Campaign", *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 8, n.4 (2005), 549-569.

[xii] Krebs and Lobasz, "Fixing the Meaning of 9/11".

[xiii] Analysing "380,000 words of every public pronouncement by top Bush administration officials on the existence of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq and on the links between Iraq and Al Qaeda", the Centre for Public Integrity identified 935 "false statements" (see https://www.publicintegrity.org/2014/06/24/14969/search-935-iraq-war-false-statements). Read also N. Chomsky, "Who are the Global Terrorists?," in *Worlds in Collision: Terror and the Future of Global Order* , edited by K. Booth and T. Dunne (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 128; S. Bonn, *Mass Deception. Moral Panic and the US War on Iraq* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2010); D. Kellner, "Bushspeak and the Politics of Lying: Presidential Rhetoric in the 'War on Terror'", *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 37, n.4 (2007), 622-645.

[xiv] See Al Jazeera, "Head to Head – Terrorists or Freedom Fighters?", 13 February 2014.

[xv] See Christine Haughney: "The Times Shifts on 'Illegal Immigrant,' but Doesn't Ban the Use", *New York Times* 23 April 2013.

[xvi] M. Bhatia M, "Fighting Words: Naming Terrorists, Bandits, Rebels and Other Violent Actors," *Third World Quarterly* 26, n.1 (2008), 11.

[xvii] See BBC (2015): "Terrorism: Language when Reporting Terrorism. Guidance in Full", available on http://www.bbc.co.uk/editorialguidelines/page/guidance-reporting-terrorism-full. The RTBF memos are not public.

[xviii] Wardlaw, *Political Terrorism*, 11.

[xix] Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism*, 28-30.

[xx] E. Dunn, M. Moore and B. Nosek, "The War of Words: How Linguistic Differences in Reporting Shape Perceptions of Terrorism," *Analyses of Social Issues and Public Policy* 5, n.1 (2005), 67-86.

[xxi] D. Haider-Markel, M. Joslyn and M.T. Al-Baghal, "Can we Frame the Terrorist Threat? Issue Frames, the Perception of Threat, and Opinions on Counterterrorism Policies," *Terrorism & Political Violence* 18, n.4 (2006), 545-559.

[xxii] C. Montiel and A. Shah, "Effects of Political Framing and Perceiver's Social Position on Trait Attributions of a Terrorist/Freedom Fighter," *Journal of Language and Social Psychology* 27, n.3 (2008), 266-275.

[xxiii] J. Woods, "Framing Terror: An Experimental Framing Effects Study of the Perceived Threat of Terrorism," *Critical Studies of Terrorism* 4, n.2 (2011), 199-217.

[xxiv] We use the concept of "performative" in its broadest possible sense, in line with Austin's inaugural lecture of his famous series "How to do things with words", where he highlighted the simple fact that some statements – called "performatives", as opposed to "constatives" – do more than describing a state of affairs; they also "do" something, creating a reality through their "perlocutionary" effect, that is, their ability to 'produce certain consequential effects upon the feelings, thoughts or actions of the audience' (J. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962), 101). We do not attempt here to make a

theoretical contribution on further studies of this performative dimension ("speech act theory" as developed by e.g. Searle, Grice, Green), neither do we claim to offer an impossible straightforward test of this complex theoretical framework. Rather, we simply follow Jackson's plea to "question the nature and politics of representation – why, when, how and or what purpose do groups and individuals come to be named as 'terrorists' and *what consequences does this have*?" (Jackson, "The Core Commitments", 248, our emphasis).

[xxv] Bhatia, "Fighting Words", 10.

[xxvi] Our choice of an experimental design responds to Druckman and colleagues' call to shape political science into 'a discipline whose contributions are deepened and strengthened by experimental research' (J. Druckman, D. Green, J. Kuklinski and A. Lupia, "The Growth and Development of Experimental Research in Political Science," *American Political Science Review* 100, n.4 (2006), 634).

[xxvii] For example R. Entman, "Framing: Towards Clarification of a Fractured Paradigm," *Journal of Communication* 43, n.4 (1993), 51-85.

[xxviii] A. Tversky and D. Kahneman, "The Framing of Decisions and the Psychology of Choice," *Science* 211 (1981), 453-458; D. Kahneman and A. Tversky, "Choices, Values, and Frames," *American Psychologist* 39, n.4 (1984), 341-350.

[xxix] J. Galtung and M. Holmboe Ruge, "The Structure of Foreign News," *Journal of Peace Research* 2, n.1 (1965), 64-91.

[xxx] N. Ruigrok and W. van Atteveldt, "Global Angling with a Local Angle: How US, British, and Dutch Newspapers Frame Global and Terrorist Attacks," *International Journal of Press/Politics* 12, n.1 (2007), 68-90.

[xxxi] G. Weimann, "Terrorists or Freedom Fighters? Labelling terrorism in the Israeli Press," *Political Communication* 2, n.4 (1985), 433-445.

[xxxii] B. Simmons and D. Lowry, "Terrorists in the News, as Reflected in Three News Magazines, 1980-1988," *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* 67, n.4 (1990), 692-696.

[xxxiii] Dunn, Moore and Nosek, "The War of Words", 72.

[xxxiv] Dunn, Moore and Nosek, "The War of Words", 69.

[xxxv] Montiel and Shah, "Effects of Political Framing".

[xxxvi] Ibid., 267.

[xxxvii] Ibid., 267.

[xxxviii] Woods, "Framing Terror".

[xxxix] Haider-Markel, Joslyn and Al-Baghal, "Can we Frame the Terrorist Threat?" .

[xl] Ethics approval has been granted by the IACCHOS IRB at Université catholique de Louvain.

[xli] C. Atzmulller and P. Steiner, "Experimental Vignette Studies in Survey Research", *Methodology* 6 (2015), 128-138.

[xlii] A. Dafoe, B. Zhang and D. Caughey, "Confounding in Survey Experiments," Working paper presented at the *Society for Political Methodology Annual Meeting*, Rochester, 2015.

[xliii] Ibid., 6.

[xliv] On racial profiling for example, see D. Johnson, et al., "Attitudes Toward the Use of Racial/Ethnic Profiling to Prevent Crime and Terrorism," *Criminal Justice Review* 22, n.4 (2011), 422-447.

[xlv] J. Druckman and C. Kam C., "Students as Experimental Participants: A Defense of the 'Narrow Data Base'", *Northwestern University Institute for Policy Research Working Paper Series* (2009).

[xlvi] A. Mintz, S. Redd and A. Vedlitz, "Can We Generalize from Student Experiments to the Real World in Political Science, Military Affairs, and International Relations?", *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 50, n.5(2006), 757-776.

[xlvii] Druckman and Kam, "Students as Experimental Participants".

[xlviii] Given the location of the experiment, vignettes and questionnaires have been written in French.

[xlix] P. Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991); Bhatia, "Fighting Words", 9 .

[l] J. Angrist and J-S. Pischke, *Mostly Harmless Econometrics: An Empiricist's Companion* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008).

[li] Ibid.

[lii] J. Hilbe, *Negative Binomial Regression* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

[liii] 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = tend to disagree, 4 = neutral, 5 = tend to agree, 6 = agree, 7 = strongly agree.

[liv] S. Long and J. Freese, *Regression Models for Categorical Dependent Variables Using Stata* (New York: Stata Press, 2006).

[lv] Ibid.
[lvi] S. Goodman and S. Speer, "Category Use in the Construction of Asylum Seekers", *Critical Discourse Studies* 4, n.2 (2007), 180.
[lvii] Data replication: The dataset, codebook, and do-files for the empirical analysis in this article, along with the online appendix, can be found online on the journal website.
[lviii] Galtung and Holmboe Ruge, "The Structure of Foreign News" .
[lix] Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism*, 28-30.
[lx] C. Robinson, "Order in Chaos: Security Culture as Anarchist Resistance to the Terrorist Label," *Deviant Behavior* 29, n.3 (2008), 225, our emphasis.
[lxi] Woods, "Framing Terror" .
[lxii] See Montiel and Shah, "Effects of Political Framing".
[lxiii] Wardlaw, *Political Terrorism*, 7.
[lxiv] Dunn, Moore and Nosek, "The War of Words" .
[lxv] Haider-Markel, Joslyn and Al-Baghal, "Can we Frame the Terrorist Threat?".
[lxvi] Montiel and Shah, "Effects of Political Framing".
[lxvii] Woods, "Framing Terror"..
[lxviii] E. Rosch and C. Mervis, "Family Resemblances: Studies in the Internal Structure of Categories," *Cognitive Psychology* 7, n.4 (1975), 573–605.
[lxix] E. Smith and D. Medin, *Categories and Concepts* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1981), 164.
[lxx] E. Heit, "Knowledge and Concept Learning," in *Knowledge, Concepts and Categories*, edited by K. Lamberts and D. Shanks (Hove: Psychology Press, 1997), 20.
[lxxi] Smith and Medin, *Categories and Concepts*, 19.
[lxxii] D. Medin and A. Ortony, "Psychological Essentialism," in *Similarity and Analogical Reasoning*, edited by S. Vosniadou and A. Ortony (New-York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 186.
[lxxiii] For example, Lakoff considers prototype- and metonymy- based categorisation as a "major aspect of human reason" (G. Lakoff, *Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things. What Categories Reveal about the Mind* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 85).
[lxxiv] B. Rehder, "Categorisation as Causal Reasoning," *Cognitive Science* 27 (2003), 709.
[lxxv] T. Palmeri and C. Blalock, "The Role of Background Knowledge in Speeded Perceptual Categorisation," *Cognition* 77 (2000), 45-57.
[lxxvi] For example C. Luhmann, W-K. Ahn and T. Palmeri, "Theory-based Categorisation under Speeded Conditions," *Memory and Cognition* 34 (2006), 1102-1111; Palmeri and Blalock, "The Role of Background Knowledge" (see note 69 above).
[lxxvii] Rehder, "Categorisation as Causal Reasoning", 712.
[lxxviii] D. Operario and S. Fiske, "Stereotypes: Content, Structures, Processes and Context," in *Blackwell Handbook of Social Psychology: Intergroup Processes*, edited by R. Brown and S. Gaertner (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003), 33.
[lxxix] Z. Kunda, *Social Cognition. Making Sense of People* (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1999).
[lxxx] G. Lakoff, *Moral Politics. How Liberals and Conservatives Think* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 37.
[lxxxi] M. Bonham and M. Shapiro "The Cognitive Process Approach to Planning and Policy Analysis," in *Biopolitics, Political Psychology, and International Politics*, edited by Hopple (New-York: St Martin's Press, 1982), 38.
[lxxxii] Wardlaw, *Political Terrorism*, 8.
[lxxxiii] Schmid, *Political Terrorism*, 5-23.
[lxxxiv] H. Tajfel et al., "Social Categorisation and Intergroup Behaviour," *European Journal of Social Psychology* 5 (1971), 149-178; H. Tajfel and J. Turner, "An Integrative Theory of Intergroup Conflict," in *The Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations*, edited by W. Austin and S. Worschel (Monterey: Brooks, 1979). For a clear review, see M. Hewstone and E. Cairns, "Social Psychology and Intergroup Conflict," in *Ethnopolitical Warfare: Causes, Consequences, and Possible Solutions*, edited by D. Chirot and M. Seligman (Washington DC: American Psychological Association, 2001), 319-342.
[lxxxv] P. Oakes, "The Root of All Evil in Intergroup Relations? Unearthing the Categorisation Process," in *Blackwell Handbook of Social Psychology: Intergroup Processes*, edited by R. Brown and S. Gaertner (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003), 3.

[lxxxvi] R. Brown, "Social Identity Theory: Past Achievements, Current Problems and Future Challenges," *European Journal of Social Psychology* 30 (2000): 750.
[lxxxvii] P. Oakes, "The Root of All Evil", 9.
[lxxxviii] Ibid, 8-9.
[lxxxix] J. Nier et al., "Changing Interracial Evaluations and Behavior: The Effects of a Common Group Identity," *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations* 4, n.4 (2001): 299-316.
[xc] D. Wilder, "Social Categorisation: Implications for Creation and Reduction of Intergroup Bias", *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology* 19 (1986), 293, our emphasis.
[xci] S. Gaertner et al., "Reducing Intergroup Conflict: From Superordinate Goals to Decategorisation, Recategorisation, and Mutual Differentiation," *Group Dynamics: Theory, Research, and Practice* 4, n.1 (2000), 100, our emphasis.
[xcii] S. Reicher and N. Hopkins, "Psychology and the End of History: A Critique and Proposal for the Psychology of Social Categorisation," *Political Psychology* 22, n.2 (2001), 383-407. This contention echoes the general claim made outside social psychology by securitization theory, which posits that political actors using security-related words (e.g. "threat", "insecurity") alongside group categories (e.g. "immigrant") in "security speech acts" can bolster public support for extra-ordinary security policies. See for example B. Buzan, O. Wæver and J. de Wilde, Security: A New Framework for Analysis (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1998); T. Balzacq, ed, *Securitization Theory* (London: Routledge, 2011).
[xciii] Wardlaw, *Political Terrorism*, 5.
[xciv] Jenkins, *The Study of Terrorism*, 1.
[xcv] Bhatia, "Fighting Words", 6.
[xcvi] Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism*, 23.
[xcvii] M. Harb and R. Leenders, "Know thy Enemy: Hizbullah, 'Terrorism' and the Politics of Perception," *Third World Quarterly* 26, n.1 (2005), 174. For an extensive discussion on how terrorist groups from the late 19th Century until now related to the terrorist label, read Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism*, 3-20.
[xcviii] A. Roth, "Introduction to Experimental Economics," in *The Handbook of Experimental Economics*, edited by J. Kagel and A. Roth (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 22.
[xcix] Jackson, "The Core Commitments", 248.