

Irina Volf

Hizb ut-Tahrir in the press II: Exploring differences between academic discourses and editorial choices in Europe and Central Asia

Kurzfassung: Der Aufsatz analysiert den Diskurs über Hizb u-Tahrir al-Islami (HT) in verschiedenen akademischen Disziplinen, gibt einen Überblick über die Medienframes, die in der Berichterstattung über HT in der deutschen, britischen und kirgisischen Qualitätspresse angewendet werden, und untersucht die Unterschiede zwischen der wissenschaftlichen Einschätzung und der Darstellung von HT in den Massenmedien. Der einleitende Abschnitt des Aufsatzes stellt einige ausgewählte Autoren und Texte vor, erläutert die Wichtigkeit des Vergleiches zwischen akademischen und journalistischen Diskursen über HT und begründet die Auswahl der Länder, die in der vorliegenden Studie vertreten sind. Der methodologische Abschnitt beschreibt die Fragestellungen, die verwendeten Quellen und die Methoden der Untersuchung. Schließlich folgt eine detaillierte Darstellung und Diskussion der Untersuchungsergebnisse und eine Zusammenfassung der daraus gezogenen Schlussfolgerungen.

Abstract: This article analyzes academic discourses on Hizb u-Tahrir al-Islami (after this HT) in various disciplines, provides an overview of media frames applied to HT in German, British and Kyrgyz quality newspapers, and examines the differences between the conclusions of scholars and mass media representations of HT. The introductory section of the paper briefly presents a group of selected authors and texts, illustrates the importance of drawing parallels between academic and journalistic discourses on HT, and explains the choice of the countries used in the study. The methodological section specifies the questions, sources and methods of research. Finally, there is a detailed presentation and discussion of the findings, followed by a summary of the conclusions.

1. Introduction

This paper is based on the findings of a large-scale empirical study of media coverage of Hizb u-Tahrir al-Islami – a name derived from the Arabic and meaning “Party of Islamic Liberation” – in German, British and Kyrgyz quality newspapers in the period 2002-07. Like every study that employs media content analysis as a research method, it presents a snapshot of a topic, limited by time and space.

What specifically is HT? Taquiddin, the ideological founder of HT, describes it as “a political party whose ideology is Islam” (Taquiddin, 1999: 23). However, it has never been registered as a party and is not a political party in the Western sense of an organized group of people aiming to gain or share power through political activities and elections. The British branch of HT was once registered as a non-governmental organization (Bakker, 2007). At one point, HT’s leaders claimed to be “nothing more, or less, than a proselytizing organization, spreading the word of Islam, much as evangelical Christians do” (Johnston, 2007: 11). One British sociologist refers to HT in Britain as an Islamic “new religious movement” (Barker 2008, 166), while a Greek political scientist calls HT “a revolutionary social movement” in Central Asia (Karagiannis, 2005: 140). A British scholar of Islam suggests that HT is not a social movement anywhere in the world: “*Haraka* [literally movement] in Central Asia and *firqa* [literally sect or division] in Europe” (Sedgwick, 2009). Two religious studies scholars who do research on Islam, Jenkins (2007) and Mandaville (2007: 236), call HT a terrorist, militant or radical Islamist movement, and Roy (2004: 309) calls it a radical fundamentalist organization. Evidently, “clashes of knowledge” (Berger and Luckmann, 1966) in academia arise not only from disputes over the right *scientific* methods of revealing “infallible knowledge” (Wunder, 2008: 5), but also from differences in definitions. It can be argued that the above-noted inconsistencies in definitions of HT are mainly attributable to the fact that the cited scholars considered this organization in different social, political and geographical contexts. Still, it can also be objected that by viewing it from their own disciplinary perspectives, they missed an opportunity to develop a more complete picture of HT.

Most people learn about organizations like HT not from academic books and scholarly monographs but rather from local and/or national media. If one quickly scans German, British and Kyrgyz quality newspapers in the period 2002-07, one reads about HT in German newspapers as a prohibited anti-Semitic, Islamist, radical and/or extremist organization; in British newspapers as a legal Muslim, Islamic, Islamist radical and/or political organization; and in Kyrgyz newspapers as a banned religious, extremist, radical and/or clandestine organization. Unlike the academic world, the world of journalism is characterized not only by a specific thematic specialization, but also by a number of professional, structural and social constraints. Although journalists often deny their agenda-setting influence on the public, claiming that they only report what is happening or has happened (McCombs, 2004: 21), many would agree that even the most honest and diligent journalists, who are ideally supposed to uncover the “truth,” have been at a loss because they rely “on existing forms of public discourse” (Lakoff, 2002: 32).

If there is no consensus among scholars about how to define HT, how can journalists, who are often far from being experts on political Islam, be blamed for using such terms as 'Muslim' and 'Islamist', 'extremist' and 'terrorist', 'radical' and 'fundamentalist' inaccurately or inconsistently? Such criticism overlooks something. Even if journalists were to do comprehensive research on how the academic community defines and uses these terms, they would probably feel more confused than enlightened by what they read. Relying mainly on official sources of information and reproducing biased conclusions in public discourses, journalists inevitably become trapped in a vicious circle. Therefore, it is important to systematically analyze academic and media discourses on HT, to draw parallels and to find connections between two, at times independently developing, public spheres. Before dealing with this topic in greater depth, the next section explains what makes cross-national research on HT in Germany, Great Britain and Kyrgyzstan unique.

1.1 Hizb ut-Tahrir in Germany, Great Britain and Kyrgyzstan

	Great Britain	Germany	Kyrgyzstan
Geographical location	Western Europe		Central Asia
Political system	Constitutional monarchy / democracy	Representative democracy	Post-Soviet democracy / authoritarian state
Media settings in the 21 st century	Privately owned media independent of direct governmental control		Privately owned media subject to direct and indirect governmental control
Religion	Mainly Christianity (Muslims make up 4% of population)		Mainly Sunni Islam (Christians make up 10% of population)
First activities of HT in the countries	Founding of the British branch of HT by asylum-seekers Omar Bakri Mohammed from Saudi Arabia and Farid Kassim from Syria in 1986.	The first national branch in a non-Muslim majority country was established in West Germany in the 1960s (Taji-Farouki 1996, 170).	In the 1990s, shortly before the collapse of the Soviet Union.
HT's legal status	Legal since 1986	Banned since 2003	
HT's membership	More than 10,000 members, predominantly of Pakistani and Indian origin. The British HT branch is well-organized and holds elections among male and female members in the UK every two years to select its Executive Committee.	The last official number of 300 HT members in Germany was registered in 2012. HT was active among Muslim academics and students in university towns.	The official numbers for 2011 vary between 7,000 and 10,000 members. In the 1990s, HT members were predominantly Uzbek males from the southern regions. Currently the movement is active in all parts of Kyrgyzstan, accommodating different ethnicities and both sexes.
HT's main activities	Engaging in political campaigns, demonstrations and public discussions supportive of Islam and Muslims in Europe and against political leaders in Muslim countries such as Pakistan and Uzbekistan.	After the ban, the group was publicly inactive. In 2006, a court appeal by HT against the prohibition of its activities was rejected. A person charged with plotting bombings on German regional trains in 2006 was suspected of belonging to HT.	Distributing leaflets containing HT propaganda, organizing study circles, providing financial and other assistance to people in difficult situations, urging people to boycott elections and national holidays, advocating the adoption of Muslim laws and traditions.
Major historical developments in the 20 th century relevant to the politics of HT	Colonialism: The 1960s UK immigration policy encouraged people from former British colonies to come to the UK, which has a tradition of tolerating immigrant (self) organizations.	The Holocaust: HT was banned in Germany due to its anti-Semitic slogans and was not recognized as a religious organization.	After seventy years of official Soviet atheism, there followed a massive religious revival in the Kyrgyz population. In a short time, the number of mosques increased dramatically.

Table 1: Hizb ut-Tahrir in Great Britain, Germany and Kyrgyzstan

HT was founded in 1952 in the suburbs of East Jerusalem by a Palestinian Islamic legal scholar and political activist with the aim to liberate Palestine and to re-establish the Islamic caliphate destroyed in 1924. To reach this goal, the organization suggests three stages of action that are to be pursued using non-violent means. "Unlike Hamas, Hezbollah or the Taliban – Islamist organizations tightly linked to geographical units like the Palestinian territories, Lebanon and Afghanistan – HT is a transnational movement that, like Al-Qaida and the Muslim Brotherhood, recruits members and supporters around the world, including in Western Europe" (Volf, 2012: 1). Due to its controversial nature, HT has been banned as an extremist or terrorist organization in Turkey,

Russia and the Central Asia, as well as in many countries of Europe, the Middle East and North Africa. The group was legalized in 2006 in Lebanon (Maliach, 2006) and remains free to operate in Britain, Denmark, the United States, Canada, Australia, the United Arab Emirates, Sudan, and Yemen. The international headquarters of the organization are located in London.

An examination of HT's presence and its media coverage in Germany, Great Britain and Kyrgyzstan reveals a number of dimensions for comparison and contrast. On the one hand, the three countries differ from each other in their geographical locations, political structures, and media settings, as well as in terms of their social, religious and cultural traditions. On the other hand, the HT branches in these countries have different legal statuses, target groups and recruitment tactics, as well as different spheres of influence and media images. Finally, different 20th century historical developments in these countries provide additional insights into the reasons why HT became active there and why the countries responded to this challenge in different ways. Due to HT's transnational character, comparisons can be used here "as a strategy for seeing better" and as "a means of determining what is distinctive about a country" (Livingstone, 2003: 484). Since the differences among the HT branches in Great Britain, Germany and Kyrgyzstan have been previously covered in detail (Volf, 2011), the most important points are summarized in Table 1.

1.2 Research questions

To answer the overarching research question of this article – *what parallels and connections can be found between academic discourses and editorial choices regarding HT?* – the following research questions will be carefully considered:

RQ 1: How do social scientists classify HT in Europe and Central Asia? Is it a sect, a new religious movement, a social movement or something else?

RQ 2: How do scholars of political Islam and the Middle East describe HT? Is it a Muslim, Islamist, fundamentalist, extremist or even terrorist organization?

RQ 3: How do German, British and Kyrgyz journalists frame HT in their stories? What descriptive words do they use to characterize HT? What sources of information do they use when reporting on HT, and in what contexts do their stories on HT appear? Does a discourse in the media have anything in common with academic discourses on HT?

1.3 Methodology

In order to answer the first and second sets of research questions, the author conducted a secondary literature review analysis of a large number of the English, German and Russian speaking scholars of political science, sociology and Islamic studies. Whereas at the time of the active research phase the sources of information on HT in Russian language discourses were limited to a few comprehensive studies that were historical rather than contemporary in nature, German language academic discourses were and continue to be virtually non-existent. Therefore, in order to embed the HT's European and Central Asian branches in the frameworks of the social sciences, the works of Sedgwick (2004, 2007, 2009), Richardson and van Driel (1988), Barker (2008), Ustinova (2007), Mihalka (2006), Karagiannis (2005, 2006, 2009), McGlinchey (2009), as well as a report by the International Crisis Group (2009) were finally selected for analysis. A secondary literature review of works by Roy (2004), Esposito (1992), Said (1981), Halliday (2000), Lewis (1967, 1988, 1993, 2001, 2003), Huntington (1993), Krammer (2003) and Pipes (2001) was conducted in order to understand how well-known scholars of political Islam and/or the Middle East refer to HT and define such terms as Islamist, fundamentalist, extremist and terrorist that are often attached to this group.

The empirical part of the study is based on a quantitative and qualitative media content analysis of 226 articles from the following German quality newspapers: *Die Tageszeitung (TaZ)*, *Frankfurter Rundschau (FR)*, *Süddeutsche Zeitung (SZ)*, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung (FAZ)* and *Die Welt (DW)*, 396 articles from the following British newspapers: *The Independent*, *The Guardian*, *Financial Times (FT)*, *The Times*, and *The Daily Telegraph (DT)*, and 325 articles from the following Kyrgyz quality-newspaper: *Vecherniy Bishkek (VB)*. This resulted in an overall sample of 947 articles published between 2002 and 2007 that mention HT at least once. The unit of analysis was the individual article. Although the original code books included more than 100 variables, this article focuses mainly on characterizing terms that German, British and Kyrgyz journalists used in writing on HT, the main topics of stories and the sources of information cited or referred to by journalists in regard to HT.

The German and British articles were selected from the Lexis-Nexis database, and the Kyrgyz articles were downloaded from the electronic archives of the VB newspaper. First, all articles were coded by the main coder. After that, inter-coder reliability coefficients were measured for 70 articles of the German sample, 81 of the British and 77 of the Kyrgyz samples (Riffe, Lacy and Fico, 2005: 146), which were selected randomly and coded

by three graduate students, who were respectively native speakers of German, English and Russian. The inter-coder reliability coefficients are presented in Table 2.

	Terms describing HT		Main topics of articles		Authors of references / quotations	
	Cohen's Kappa	Simple percent agreement	Cohen's Kappa	Simple percent agreement	Cohen's Kappa	Simple percent agreement
Germany	0.904	0.988	*)	*)	0.929	0.976
Great Britain	0.948	0.993	*)	*)	0.953	0.992
Kyrgyzstan	0.635	0.939	0.795	0.971	0.545	0.881

Table 2: Inter-coder reliability coefficients

2. Findings

Addressing the main research question of this article – *what parallels and connections can be found between academic discourses and editorial choices regarding HT* – it is important to emphasize that the European and Central Asian branches of HT operate in very different legal, cultural, social and political frameworks. HT's target groups in Germany, Great Britain and Kyrgyzstan constitute different social strata of society; HT branches use different recruitment strategies and fulfill different missions. What unites them is an ideology based on Islam. As any religion becomes especially visible in the news when it is considered a problem (Jenkins, 2007), and a balanced news agenda is hard to achieve "as long as Islamism is involved" (Hafez, 2005: 8), it was rather predictable that reportage on HT would be negative in many respects. However, it is interesting to explore the question of whether journalists could have done a better job if they had consulted academic discourses relevant to the categorization and understanding of HT. Therefore, Section 2.1 considers the nature of HT in social science discourses, Section 2.2 reviews the definitions of various adjectives that are often attached to the group, and Section 2.3 provides empirical information on media coverage of HT in the three countries of the study.

2.1 How do social scientists classify HT in Europe and Central Asia?

The British branch of HT can well be characterized as an Islamic sect (Sedgwick, 2004, 2007, 2009; Richardson and van Driel, 1988), or a new religious movement (Barker, 2008; Ustinova, 2007). The Central Asian branch of HT, especially in Kyrgyzstan, is usually characterized as a social movement (Karagiannis, 2005, 2006, 2009; Mihalka, 2006; McGlinchey, 2009). Apparently, the definition of HT depends heavily on the academic background of those who define it and what branch of HT they describe. A detailed analysis of HT branches from a trans-national analysis follows.

Recalling Muhammad's prophecy that Islam would split into 73 sects, of which only one would be saved, there is wide agreed that sects in the Islamic tradition persist as they do in Christianity and Judaism (Sedgwick, 2004). Apart from the fact that HT claims to be the true one (Rashid quoted in Karagiannis, 2006: 11), the group displays a number of main characteristics of a sect as defined by Richardson and van Driel (1988). Like sects, HT demands a high level of commitment from its members; it exercises a high degree of social control; it perceives the world as torn between good and evil; it exists in many countries because of widespread economic deprivation; its religious leadership is non-professional; it appeals to the lower classes and is community-oriented; its belief system stresses certain elements of traditional religious culture; and one of the its main goals is to live "through personal perfection in a perfect moral community, in a world in God's image" (Richardson and van Driel, 1988: 174). Focusing on Islamic sects in particular, Sedgwick (2004, 288) defined seven main characteristics of sects – voluntarism, exclusivism, the fellowship principle, primary source of social identity, organization, discipline, and tension – and divided them into three groups: "the firqa (literally, part or division) [outwardly oriented], the tariqa (path), and the ta'ifa (section) [inwardly oriented]." (Sedgwick, 2004: 294) Since firqa is characterized as being outwardly oriented, claiming a monopoly on Islamic truth, having a voluntary membership, being the primary source of social identity, being organized and disciplined, as well as finding itself in a situation of high tension with its environment, one can categorize HT as a firqa sect. Indeed, Sedgwick (2004: 301) described Islamist groups like Jihad, Hamas and al-Qaida as firqas and said that calling Hamas 'a political party' is not wrong, since "a firqa is often a political or military entity as well as a religious body. The one does not exclude the other."

In order to avoid using a pejorative sense of the popular terms "sect" and "cult," the academic community has adopted the term "new religious movement" (Barker, 2008: 155). Eileen Barker, a professor of sociology and a

*) Main topics of German and British articles were coded strictly in accordance with information provided by the Lexis-Nexis database in relation to the main topics of articles. For example, if Lexis-Nexis software rated the relevance of an article to the topic 'Politics' at 80% or more, this topic was coded as the main topic of an article; several main topics were possible. Since Kyrgyz articles were rated by coders who could not fully reproduce the algorithm of the Lexis-Nexis rating software, the inter-coder reliability indices were first measured for each topic and then as an average for all main topics.

founder of the Information Network Focus on Religious Movements (INFORM), refers to HT as “an Islamic new religious movement” (Barker, 2008: 166). INFORM keeps track of HT and categorizes it – although “in a working definition for staff use only” – as a new religious movement “based on the criteria that it emerged in Britain after the Second World War, and the majority of its members are ‘converts’ rather than having been born into the group.” (Newcomber, 2009) According to Barker (2008), the defining characteristics of a new religious movement are a first-generation membership, which is seldom, if ever, attracted from a random sample of a population; charismatic founders/leaders and often an uneducated second-generation leadership; and a dualistic worldview, tending to divide the world into ‘right’ and ‘wrong’, ‘godly’ and ‘satanic’, ‘us’ and ‘them’. Having analyzed the British branch of HT in the light of the characteristics of a new religion movement specified by Wilson (1982) and Barker (1999), Ustinova (2007) concluded that HT was “best characterized as a New Islamic Movement rather than just a political party.”

Having considered the scholarship on new religious movements and the studies on jihad, Sedgwick (2007: 17, 20) pointed out: “[The] description of a typical terrorist group (Islamist or non-religious) sounds remarkably similar to a description of an NRM [new religious movement]. In fact, Bryan Wilson’s five ‘specific sociological indicia of the sect’ might equally well describe a terrorist group or cell... The varieties of jihad that have special relevance for NRM scholarship are the two extremes: the pacifist jihad that emerges within NRMs, and the jihad of Islamist terrorists, who operate on a model similar to that of members of sectarian NRMs.” Although the mass media have been criticized for continually applying the ‘sect’ and ‘cult’ labels to minority religious groups (Richardson and van Driel, 1988; Hill, Hickman, and McLendon, 2001), references to HT as a sect, cult or new religious movement are rare or virtually non-existent in Western media.

To explain the rise of HT in Central Asia, Mihalka (2006) and Karagiannis (2005, 2006) used scholarship on social movements for their main paradigm. Karagiannis asserted that HT was not “...a religious organization, but rather a political party whose ideology is Islam.” (Karagiannis, 2005: 139): HT is rather “...a revolutionary social movement since it evidently has all the necessary characteristics: the party has a pyramidal structure of command; it has existed for about half a century; and it aims at radical change but by peaceful means” (Karagiannis, 2005: 140). However, in explaining HT’s ideology, Karagiannis (2005) relied on the core characteristics of sects, as defined by Sedgwick (2004). To name a few examples, the conclusion: “Hizb ut Tahrir has extensively used religious theory and passages from the Quran to mobilize support... people develop a collective identity rooted in religion...” (Karagiannis, 2005: 144). This reflects the sect feature of being a ‘primary source of social identity’. The descriptions of HT as “well structured” and organized at different levels from local to global with a goal to create “a feeling of solidarity that engenders a sense of obligation on the part of party members” reflects the ‘organization’ and ‘discipline’ characteristics of sects (Karagiannis, 2005: 145). A description of HT related to its work with Ummah reflects not only the ‘fellowship-principle’, but also the outward orientation of the group. Rejection by HT of any existing state as “a true Islamic state” and its strong conviction of being the only true Islamic movement among Islamic sects, as prophesized by the Prophet Muhammad, reflects the ‘exclusivism’ feature (Karagiannis, 2006: 11). Finally, the fact that HT is open to newcomers regardless of their ethnicity reflects the ‘voluntarism’ characteristic of a sect, Karagiannis (2005). This description of HT also does not contradict Barker’s (2008) description of a new religious movement, especially taking into account the fact that HT “presents its political struggle as part of a battle between good and evil” (Karagiannis, 2005: 145). Aware of Barker’s arguments, Karagiannis pointed out that her arguments were not applicable in this case and that he examined: “HT exclusively as a social movement organization within the Central Asian context” (Karagiannis, 2009).

In Central Asia, HT finds few political opportunities and fails to use them effectively when they arise; it also has few chances to mobilize resources for political ends. As Mihalka (2006: 139) put it, “In Kyrgyzstan, the clans have the resources, not Islamist organization like the IMU [Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan] or the HT. So [in 2005] when the political opportunity presented itself with flawed elections, it was the clans out of power that had the resources to act, not radical Islamist forces.” According to McGlinchey (2009: 21), HT’s success in Kyrgyzstan could be explained by the fact that HT provided services through charities to help people meet the basic welfare needs that the state failed to meet. Since charity is often an essential activity of religious entities, and HT was one of the new movements of a religious nature that gained a foothold in Central Asia after the break-up of the Soviet Union, it is evident that in Central Asia HT is better described as a new religious movement, rather than as a social movement. In addition, HT’s preaching of Islam and its ability to explain urgent daily events in simple terms – something that the official Muslim clergy could not do – is one of the main reasons why HT appealed to local populations in the late 1990s. The ICG report suggested that most female members joined the organization “mostly by interest in Islam and possibly to escape a sense of economic and political powerlessness” (ICG, 2009: 13); “HT has responded to women’s desire for religious education as well as to the inadequacy of traditional state-sponsored Islam. Its recruiters are mobile and come to local neighborhoods to teach Islam” (ICG, 2009: 8).

When comparing the European and Central Asian branches of HT, it becomes evident that in Europe HT tries to mobilize a predominantly young, second-generation Muslim population, offering them a new identity rather than a new religion. The European HT branch is better structured; it mobilizes resources faster and more efficiently

and enjoys more political opportunities than clandestine branches of HT in Central Asia. Thus, in Europe HT appears to be a social rather than a religious movement. In a personal communication, Sedgwick (2009) stated, "I'm 99% sure it [HT] isn't a social movement anywhere. *Haraka* in Central Asia and *firqa* in Europe is my guess." "A *haraka* (literally "movement") is distinguished from *firqa* by its lack of organization. It is generally in a state of far lower tension within its environment than a *firqa*, even though its message may be equally radical. This may well be because only an organized body can threaten and resist a state" (Sedgwick, 2004: 297). Judging by the number of arrests, HT is under far greater pressure in Central Asia than in Europe. Sedgwick's point remains, however, valid if one takes into account the view that the threat posed by HT is exaggerated by Central Asian regimes and is often used to suppress political opposition.

	Barker (2008)	Karagiannis (2005, 2009)	Sedgwick (2004, 2007, 2009)	A view from a trans-national perspective
HT in Great Britain	new religious movement	***	<i>firqa</i> (division, sect)	social movement as defined by Karagiannis, and <i>haraka</i> as defined by Sedgwick
HT in Kyrgyzstan	***	social movement	<i>haraka</i> (movement)	new religious movement as defined by Barker, and <i>firqa</i> as defined by Sedgwick

Table 3: Comparative typology of HT in Europe and Central Asia

Having reviewed the positions of different social scientists on HT, it appears that while HT is a transnational organization with both social and religious spheres of influence, the British branch of HT is better explained as a social movement and the Kyrgyz branch as a religious one. A typology of HT in Europe and Central Asia as seen from different perspectives is summarized in Table 3. Coming back to the main research question, it is yet to be determined whether journalists refer to the British, German and Kyrgyz branches of HT as a religious movement or a social movement, as characterized by scholars. Before that, it should be determined what adjectives – descriptors – scholars and, perhaps, consequently policy makers and journalists attach to the group. Is HT a Muslim, Islamic, Islamist, fundamentalist, extremist and/or terrorist organization? Thus, a more in-depth analysis of these terms and their applicability to HT follows.

2.2 How do scholars of political Islam and the Middle East describe HT?

In the second half of the twentieth century, scholars and journalists faced a challenge in labeling Muslim movements that used Islamic ideology in their political and social programs. In his 1985 book on Muslim extremists in Egypt, the French sociologist of Islam Gilles Kepel did not use the term "fundamentalism," but instead the French *islamiste*, which was subsequently translated into English as *Islamist* (Kramer, 2003). Jenkins' (2007), Wiktorowicz's (2004: 2), Mandeville's (2007: 57) and Roy's (1994: ix) definitions of 'Islamism' are all connected to political activities or ideologies with the goal of promoting an Islamic vision of spirituality, law, order and/or the state. However, Jenkins (2007) describes organizations like Hezbollah, HT and the Muslim Brotherhood as terrorist, militant or radical Islamist movements; Wiktorowicz (2005) refers to the al-Muhajiroun movement as made up of radical Islamic activists; Mandaville (2007: 239) referred to al-Qaida and HT as radical Islamist groups; and Roy (2004, 309) referred to HT as a radical fundamentalist organization.

Speaking of it as an example of 'Islamic fundamentalism' came to be common in the media (Kramer, 2003; Poole, 2002: 140). Scholars were divided into the sympathizers of the new Islamic movements, who rejected use of the term 'Islamic fundamentalism', and those who believed that 'fundamentalism' was an accurate term for such movements. For Esposito (1992: 7-8), 'fundamentalism' was "pejorative or derogatory," often equated to "political activism, extremism, fanaticism, terrorism and anti-Americanism"; he suggested that the term 'Islamic fundamentalism' be replaced with 'Islamic revivalism' or 'Islamic activism.' Lewis (1988: 117-18 n.3), to the contrary, argued that, although unfortunate, the term 'fundamentalist' is applicable to a number of radical and militant Islamic groups; for him, all Muslims are "at least fundamentalists," because the core of the Muslim religion is a belief in the literal truth of the *Koran*. This view was supported by the Syrian philosopher Sadik J. al-Azm and the Egyptian philosopher Hasan Hanafi, who independently of each other analyzed the doctrines of the various Islamic movements and came to the same conclusion: "[Fundamentalism is] the most adequate, accurate, and correct word" to describe the Islamic revival (al-Azm and Hanafi cited in Kramer 2003). Edward Said, one of the first Muslim critics of how Western media portray Islam, did not object to the term 'fundamentalism'. However, he harshly criticized the way journalists used it against Islam by making controversial statements and deliberately persuading the average reader that Islam and fundamentalism are the same; "fundamentalism equals Islam equals everything-we-must-now-fight-against" (Said, 1981: xix).

Further conflicts arise from the terms Islamic 'extremism' and terrorism'. As Wiktorowicz (2004: 20) points out, "Self-proclaimed 'experts' on 'Islamic terrorism' frequently are of little help, since few have actually met their subjects and therefore rely on open public sources such as newspapers and Internet resources, which are often

superficial, uniformed, and biased." Having restricted this study to the works of well-known scholars, it is clear that two distinct positions have crystallized in the academic world.

The first position, largely supported by Roy, Halliday and Esposito, maintains that Islam is not inherently violent. Instead, Islamic extremism is a result of a crisis of modernity, terrorism is a security problem, and the 'war' against it is not a real policy. Urging "great care in using the term 'terrorist' or 'radical' as it is used by the media and/or the authorities" (Roy, 2004: 7), Roy (2004: 197) noted, "We tend to focus on extremists because they make the news, but a sociology of militants is not automatically relevant to the silent majority." Halliday (2000: 80) claimed that the "identification of 'Islam' with 'terrorism' is a misuse of the latter term for polemical political purposes: on the one hand, to delegitimize not just the actions but the very programme of political groups – in Palestine above all – who mobilize Muslim peoples, on the other, to confine discussion of terrorism only to Muslim states." Esposito's (1992: 5) view that, "American policymakers, like the media, have too often proved surprisingly myopic, viewing the Muslim world and Islamic movements as a monolith and seeing them solely in terms of extremism and terrorism," is another example of how scholars in this camp perceive Islam and Islamic movements.

The second position, represented here by Lewis (1967, 1993, 2001, 2003), Huntington (1993), Kramer (2001) and Pipes (2001, 2003), maintains that violence and the use of terror are inevitable parts of Islam's history. Thus, security depends not on defense, but on offence, and that on the battlefield (Pipes, 2001). Lewis (2001) traced the emergence of the first Islamic terrorists back to 656 A.D., when the third caliph was murdered by "pious Muslim rebels who believed they were carrying out the will of God." He stated: "In this sense, the Assassins are the true predecessors of many of the so-called Islamic terrorists of today, some of whom explicitly make this point... For Osama bin Laden, 2001 marks the resumption of the war for the religious dominance of the world that began in the seventh century" (Lewis, 2001). Lewis in fact first coined the term 'clash of civilizations'. Later, Huntington (1993) employed it in offering a simplistic logic of how the 'Muslim' world is different from the 'Western' world, and many Western quality media have used his views to explain the 9/11 attacks on the USA (Abrahamian, 2003). Even an earlier critic of Huntington's paradigm, Salman Rushdie, published an op-ed piece in the *New York Times* entitled 'Yes, this is about Islam' (Abrahamian 2003, 534).

The adherents of these two major camps often criticize each other's positions and mutually accuse each other of exerting a negative influence on the political scenarios of the 21st century. Thus, Esposito (1992: 173-174) criticized Lewis for reinforcing "the stereotypical image of Islam and Muslims as menacing militant fundamentalists... that predisposes the reader to view the relationship of Islam to the West in terms of rage, violence, hatred, and irrationality." Miles (2004) criticized Lewis, along with Dick Cheney, Richard Perle, Ahmad Chalabi and others, who "worked for an invasion of Iraq from the week following 9/11," claiming, "The Lewis doctrine, in effect, had become US policy" – and concluding, "It is tragic that such an admired scholar may be remembered for a policy which history is likely to categorize as ill conceived, illegal and a costly failure." On the other side, Kramer (2001: 56-57), editor of the *Middle East Quarterly* and a former Ph.D. student of Lewis, criticized Esposito and what he called "the camp led by Esposito" for failing "to ask the right questions, at the right times, about Islamism": "They underestimated its impact in the 1980s; they misrepresented its role in the early 1990s; and they glossed over its growing potential for terrorism against America in the late 1990s." Pipes (2003: 45-46), a historian and political commentator on the Middle East, supported Kramer's view regarding Esposito as among "probably the most important academic advisors" (including Roy) who gave bad advice to the US government in representing militant Islam as, "a democratic force that can help stabilize politics in the region," despite the fact that "every one of them [militant Islamic groups] is inherently extremist."

There are certainly scholars like Jenkins (2007) who cannot be immediately related to one camp or the other. They maintain that Islam has its own wars to fight with modernity, but for them it remains unclear how militant Islamists become active terrorists (Jenkins, 2007: 215). On the one hand, Jenkins (2003: ix) defines 'terrorism' as a socially constructed phenomenon, "shaped by social and political processes, by bureaucratic needs and media structures." On the other hand, he implies that radical movements seriously endanger Europe, partly because it is hard to differentiate between radical activism – Islamist movements – and potential armed violence – terrorists. He explained that although in theory terrorists could wear distinguishing uniforms, in reality many militants who sympathize with al-Qaida maintain their membership in organizations that do not have such a negative reputation and cannot be easily distinguished as a threat.

To summarize, while scholars have different understandings of Islamism, fundamentalism, Islamic extremism and terrorism depending on their professional background and political affiliations, they almost unanimously blame the media and journalists, who are often far from being experts on political Islam and the Middle East, for using these terms inaccurately or inconsistently. It appears, however, that even if a diligent journalist consulted their academic works in order to choose an accurate descriptive term for HT, he or she would be at a loss, because there is no consensus on how to describe HT. Moreover, since Western media discourses, at least in regard to such controversial organizations as HT, depend heavily on official discourses nurtured, in turn, by scholarly advisors, the definitions of HT might change over time depending on what political forces are in power and what legal status the organization enjoys in the respective country. If we further examine this research, we see that

there is a need to describe how European and Central Asian journalists framed HT in their news stories during the period 2002-07.

2.3 How did German, British and Kyrgyz journalists frame HT in their stories in terms of the following aspects: terms describing HT, contexts of news stories and sources of information about HT?

2.3.1 Selection of terms to describe HT

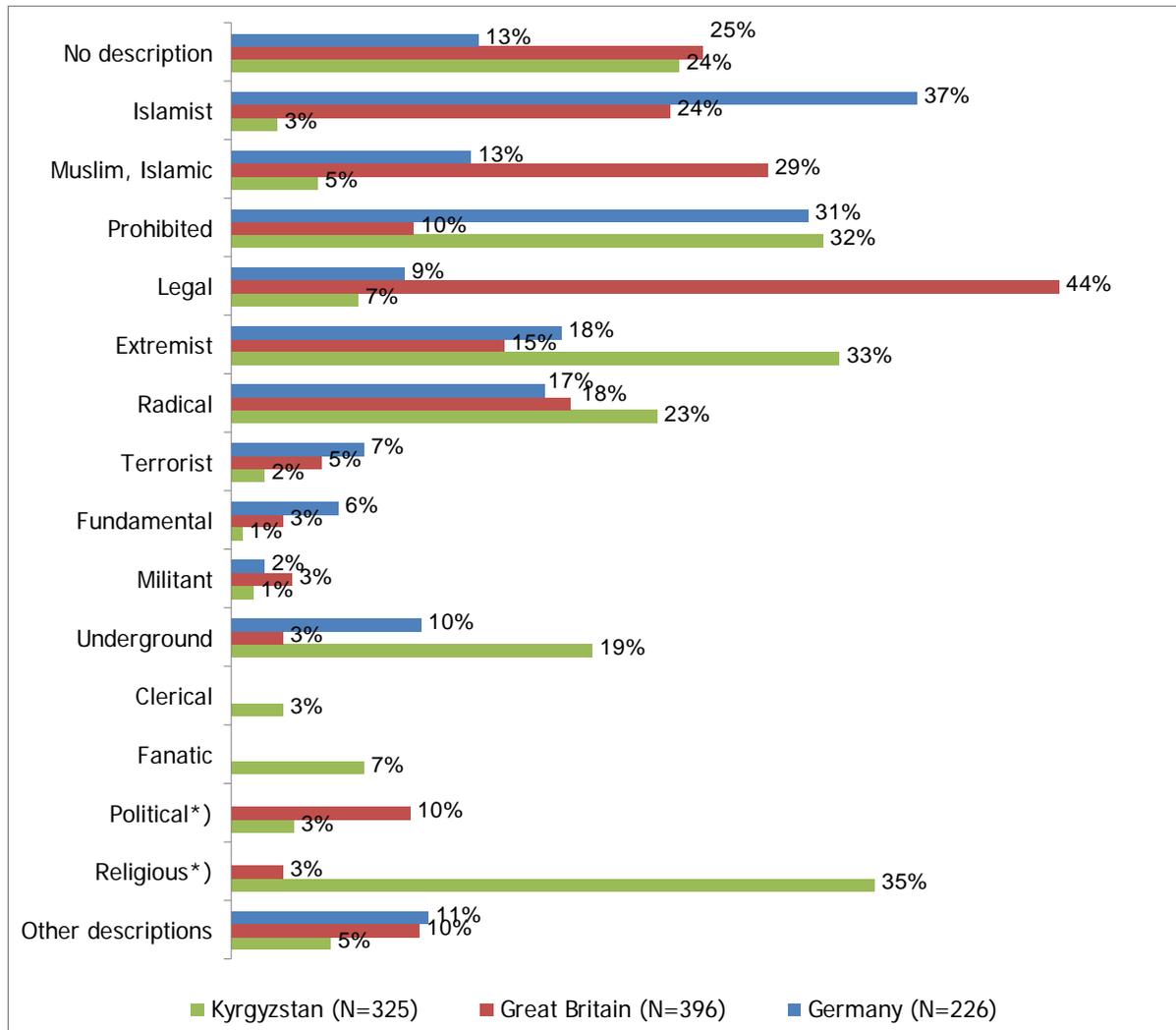


Figure 1: Frequency of terms used to describe HT in German, British and Kyrgyz articles in 2002-07^{*)}

In German articles, HT was mainly an Islamist organization (37%, 83), which was banned (31%, 70), extremist (18%, 40) and/or radical (17%, 38). Based on the definition of the term 'Islamism' provided by the German security services in 2009¹, German journalists' consistent references to HT as an 'Islamist' organization will be

^{*)} Due to low frequencies, the terms 'political' and 'religious' in German articles were coded under the category 'Other descriptions'.

¹ In 2009 the German security service – the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution – defined 'Islamism' and 'Islamists' as follows: "Islamism is a political, mostly socio-revolutionary movement – heterogeneous in itself – which is supported by a minority of the Muslims. With reference to the original Islam of the 7th century, its adherents – the Islamists – are calling for the 'reinstitution' of an 'Islamic order', in their understanding the only legitimate state and social order which is to replace all other orders... Militant Islamists feel legitimized to impose the 'Islamic order' with violent means." (http://www.verfassungsschutz.de/en/en_fields_of_work/islamism/, accessed on 23.01.2009). Currently the German security forces define it as follows: "Islamism in Germany is no uniform phenomenon. One characteristic feature common to all of its forms is the abuse of the Islamic religion for the Islamists' political objectives and purposes." (http://www.verfassungsschutz.de/en/fields-of-work/islamism-and-islamist-terrorism/what-is-islamism._accessed_on_06/10/2014).

considered appropriate and accurate. However, German journalists' preference for the term 'Islamist' over the term 'Muslim' may also be explained by the fact that German media do not differentiate between moderate and extremist Islamic groups and refer to all of them as 'Islamist' (Hafez, 2005; Glück, 2008). Moreover, the absence of discourses on the nature of HT in German speaking academia reflects the absence of references to HT as a "religious", "political" or "social" movement/organization.

In British articles, HT was called Islamist (24%, 93) or Muslim/Islamic (29%, 144), almost interchangeably, and to a lesser extent an Islamist organization that was radical (18%, 72) and/or extremist (15%, 58). The assumption was partially confirmed that the choice of descriptive terms for HT depended on the contexts of individual stories and individual newspapers. Although there were no distinctive patterns for the use of these descriptive words over time, *The Times* and *The Daily Telegraph* clearly preferred 'Muslim' and *The Guardian* 'Islamist'. In every tenth article, HT was referred to as a political organization, and very seldom as a religious one.

Instead of reporting about HT as a 'Muslim' or 'Islamist' organization, Kyrgyz journalists clearly preferred the term 'religious'. Thus, they described HT mainly as a religious (35%, 112) and/or extremist (33%, 106) organization, which was banned (32%, 103), radical (23%, 74) and/or underground (19%, 63). This tendency can be explained by the fact that Kyrgyzstan is a Muslim-majority state, and the association of Islam with a radical ideology has been consciously avoided. Moreover, in the Kyrgyz articles it was sometimes explicitly pointed out that HT's ideology has nothing in common with Islam (2%, 7), something that was never stated in the German and British articles.

Evidently, the clash of definitions in the German, British, and Kyrgyz newspapers was not accidental. The findings in this study partially confirmed and partially disconfirmed the tendencies identified in previous studies on the coverage of Islam and Muslims in media. Contrary to Kramer's (2003) expectation, 'Islamism' was not replaced with the terms 'militant Islam' or 'militant Muslims'; the term 'militant' was rarely used in British (3%, 14), German (2%, 4), and Kyrgyz (1%, 4) articles when referring to HT. Poole's (2006) finding that the term 'fundamentalism' has been replaced by 'extremism' and 'terrorism' in British newspapers since 2002 may be further supported by the fact that the term 'fundamentalist' was rarely used in connection with HT in German (6%, 13), British (3%, 11), and Kyrgyz (1%, 2) articles, unlike the terms 'extremism' and 'terrorism'. However, HT was more frequently described as a 'terrorist' group in the German (7%, 16) than in the British (5%, 19) or Kyrgyz articles (2%, 6). HT was occasionally represented as a 'political' group in Great Britain (10%, 38), rarely in Kyrgyzstan (3%, 11), and virtually never in Germany. It was sometimes referred to as 'fanatic' or fanatical (7%, 23) in the Kyrgyz newspaper, but almost never in the British and German newspapers.

2.3.2 Main topics of news stories on HT

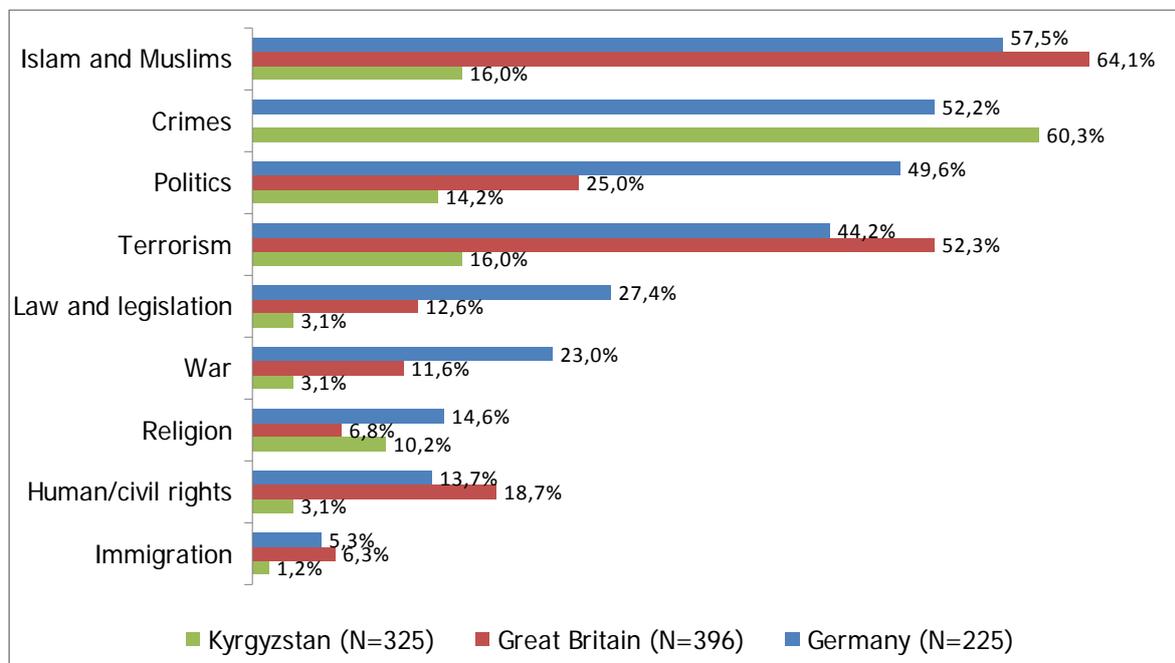


Figure 2: Main topics of articles that mentioned HT in German, British and Kyrgyz articles in 2002-07

Empirical studies of the coverage of Islam and Muslims in German (Hafez, 2002; Hafez and Richter, 2007; Halm 2006) and British (Poole, 2006; Richardson, 2001) newspapers found that Islam and/or its followers were often covered in connection with crimes, war and terrorism. Since HT has often been seen as linked to illegal and/or provocative activities, its coverage in mainly negative contexts was predictable. Yet, there are a number of noteworthy country-specific differences.

The main topic of the majority of the German articles was 'Islam and Muslims' (58%, 129), followed by such main topics as 'Crimes' (52%, 117), 'Politics' (50%, 112) and/or 'Terrorism' (44%, 99). Since in Germany HT was mainly inactive and rarely high on the political agenda, such a trend is explained by the fact that the coverage of HT in German newspapers was often internationally-oriented, i.e. mentioning HT mainly in the contexts of events happening outside Germany (Volf, 2012). Unlike the case in Germany, in Britain HT was covered more frequently in connection with 'Islam and Muslims' (64%, 254) and 'Terrorism' (52%, 207) than in the contexts of 'Crimes' (35%, 140) and 'Politics' (25%, 99). This trend is explained by the fact that coverage of HT was most intensive in 2005 – 133 articles (41%) – when terrorist attacks on London gave impetus to discussions on banning HT in Great Britain, and when these debates received a new impulse due to failed terrorist attacks in Great Britain in July 2007. Unlike the cases in Germany and Britain, in Kyrgyzstan HT was relatively seldom framed as an issue of 'Islam and Muslims' (16%, 52), 'Terrorism' (16%, 52) or 'Politics' (14%, 46). Instead, the main topic of the majority of the Kyrgyz articles was 'Crime' (60%, 196), focusing mainly on the arrests of HT members. This finding may appear to contradict the previous findings on HT as the main topic for 'extremism and terrorism' issues in the Kyrgyz media (International Media Support et al., 2008a). Evidently, many articles dealing with 'extremism and terrorism' issues dealt with HT, but not all the articles mentioning HT did so.

2.3.3 Actors behind references and quotations related to HT

Given that the notion of relying on sources that support 'truth claims and assumptions' has been treated as fundamental for objective reporting (Esser, 1998: 297; Tuchman, 1972), it comes as no surprise that the overwhelming majority of articles – 182 (81%) German articles, 325 (81%) British and 272 (84%) Kyrgyz articles – contained at least one quote of and/or references to a specific actor when referring to HT. In this regard, the three country-specific patterns reveal not only *which* sources dominated the coverage, but also *how* the discourses were constructed.

References to law enforcement officials dominated the coverage in the German (50%, 113) and Kyrgyz (58%, 189) articles, and references to political actors dominated the coverage in the British ones (53%, 209). Political and law enforcement agencies were the main sources of information in the analyzed newspapers, and journalists often reproduced the existing official discourses on HT-related issues. HT was banned in Germany in 2003, and thus reporters often cited officials like Otto Schily, then-Federal Minister of the Interior, and/or law enforcement institutions like the police and judiciary, reporting about the ban, apartment searches, etc. Since crime stories dominated the coverage of HT in Kyrgyzstan, journalists inevitably cited military, judicial and national security officials when reporting on arrests of HT's sympathizers. Due to the legal status of HT in Great Britain, this organization has often been at the focus of political rather than law enforcement discourses. Thus, references to HT and political leaders such as Tony Blair, Gordon Brown and David Cameron were often made in the context of public debates on banning HT (Volf, 2012).

The (il)legal status of HT in the countries of this study also explains differences in quoting HT members, websites and/or documents. The views of HT were presented in 33% (132) of the British articles, 17% (38) of the German and 9% (30) of the Kyrgyz articles. In the Kyrgyz newspaper, there were a number of interviews by journalists with local HT members who shared their take on political and economic developments in the region. Such articles were mainly composed in the form of questions and answers, creating an impression of impartiality on the part of the interviewers, but also making it clear that VB was providing a public platform for HT and missing an opportunity to challenge and deconstruct HT's ideology (Volf, 2011). In the German newspapers, interviews with HT members were published as editorials or opinion pieces in which journalists offered their impressions, presented information in analytical form, but rarely quoted HT directly. HT often had a public platform on the pages of national British newspapers. The best known example, which led to heated debates in British society, was when Dilpazier Aslam, a member of HT and a trainee journalist at *The Guardian*, published a provocative article, "We rock the boat," shortly after the July bombings in London. As Dilpazier refused to renounce his membership in HT, he was suspended from the trainee program (*The Guardian*, 2005).

References to religious figures and/or scholars were made twice as often in the Kyrgyz articles (13%, 41) as in the German (6%, 14) and British (7%, 26) articles. This tendency is attributed to the fact that in Kyrgyzstan, HT has been perceived as a religious organization. Often mainstream Muslim religious leaders were blamed for the growth of HT's popularity in the country, since they failed to meet the religious needs of the population and openly disputed HT's ideology. References to human rights organizations were, on the contrary, more often made in German (6% 14) and British (7%, 28) articles than in Kyrgyz (4%, 13) articles. In the European newspapers, such references were often made in connection with events in Uzbekistan. While HT was often blamed by the

Uzbek government for terror attacks and public revolts like one in the Uzbek town of Andijan in 2005, the German and British newspapers quoted human rights organizations reporting about thousands of people being imprisoned and tortured as HT sympathizers by Islam Karimov's regime. In Kyrgyzstan, such references tended to be made to unnamed human rights activists as 'Western' defenders of HT sympathizers in Kyrgyzstan, in a cynical sense.

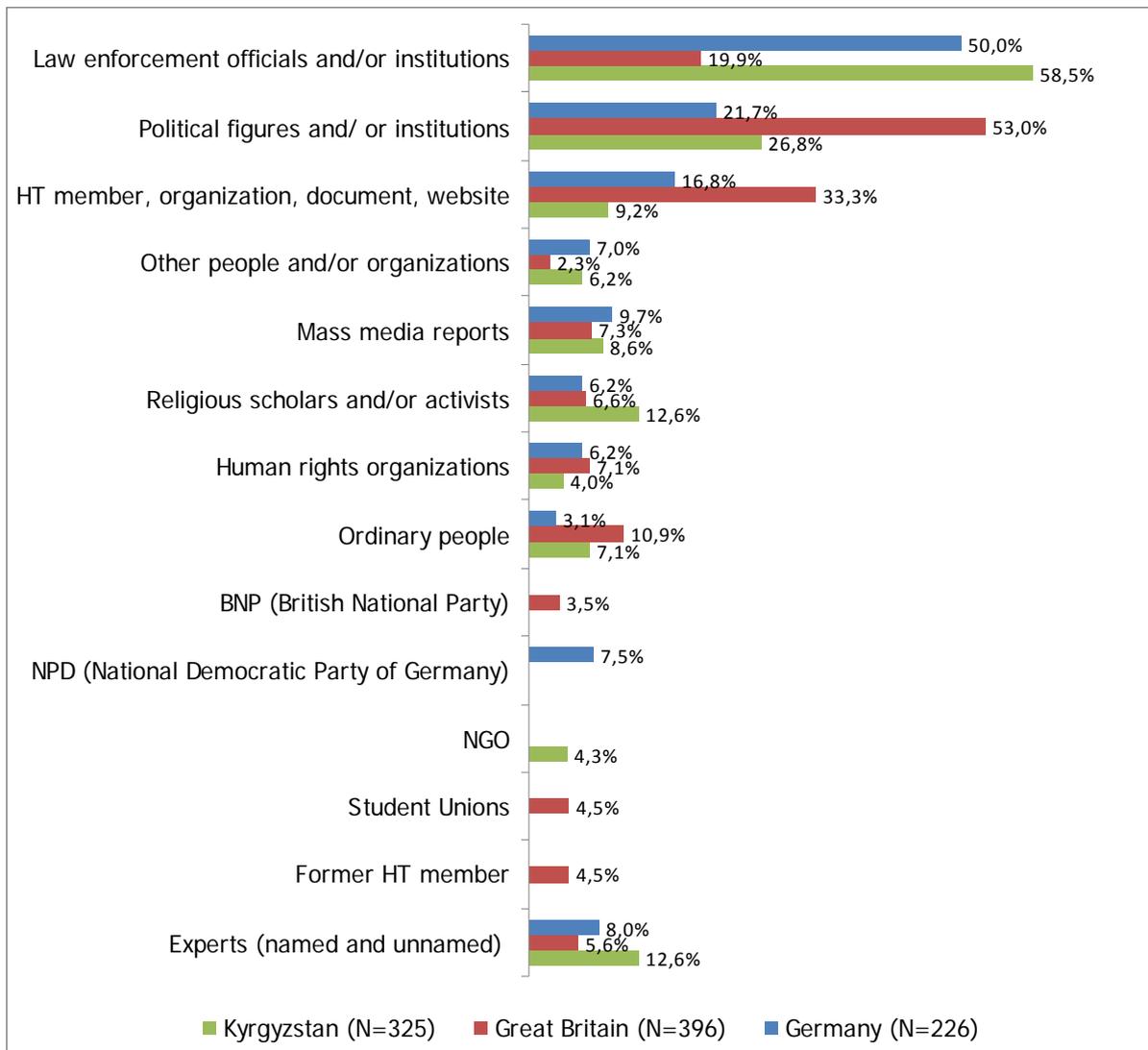


Figure 3: Authors/sources of references/quotes related to HT in German, British and Kyrgyz articles

References to the extreme right-wing German National Democratic Party (NPD) in 17 (8%) German articles are explained by the fact that a public meeting of HT with NPD leaders, who used anti-Semitic hate speech, in Berlin in October 2002 led to the proscription of HT. In Britain, references to the right-wing British National Party (BNP) were made in 14 (4%) articles, mainly when arguing that proscription of HT should be followed by proscription of the BNP, and also when presenting a story about how a BNP member became an HT adherent.

Remarkable is the way German, British and Kyrgyz journalists referred to or quoted 'experts' when reporting about HT. 'Experts' were sources of information in 18 (8%) German, 22 (6%) British and 41 (13%) Kyrgyz articles. A detailed analysis of these articles revealed that in 18 German articles there were 21 references to experts, and 16 references to various persons, indicating their names and positions; four references were made to unnamed 'observers' and 'experts', and one 'reference' was made to an organization. References in German newspapers to 'experts' were used almost exclusively to suggest 'supporting evidence' when reporting about HT in Central Asia. In such cases, journalists referred to or quoted local Central Asian experts. When writing about HT in Germany, expert views were rather refuted than used as 'supporting evidence'.

In 22 British articles, there were 24 references to or quotes of experts and/or organizations: 14 references were made to national and international experts on HT including Zeyno Baran, Anthony Glees, Ariel Cohen, Mike Whine, Ahmed Rashid, etc.; eight references were made to organizations including the Nixon Center, Freedom

House, the Institute for War and Peace Reporting, the UN's committee against torture, etc.; and, two references were made to unnamed 'experts' on terrorism. The references to 'experts' in British articles were almost exclusively used to provide 'supporting evidence' from highly qualified sources. In 41 Kyrgyz articles there were 46 references to or quotes of experts: four of them were attributed to international and local organizations, 17 to persons indicating their official titles, and 25 references were generalized to 'local', 'well-known', 'Western' analysts, specialists, experts, researchers or just to 'my good acquaintance'. The majority of named experts were Kyrgyzstanis who mentioned HT in their interviews with *VB*. The disturbing references to unnamed experts in 8% of all Kyrgyz articles reflect often biased and, thus, not objective reporting on HT.

3. Conclusions

A secondary literature review of scholarly works, along with a media content analysis of HT in British, German and Kyrgyz quality newspapers in 2002-07, suggests that academic discourses and media coverage on HT have developed almost independently of each other.

On the one side, the academic discourses offer a variety of definitions of HT, depending on the backgrounds of those who define it and what branch they choose to examine. Based on a trans-national comparison of how HT originated and operated in European and Central Asian countries, it was established that the existing categorizations can be misleading. It was also established that the positions of renowned scholars on Islam and/or the Middle East regarding HT depend heavily on how they perceive Islam in general and the battles that Islam has to fight in the post-modern world. Scholars agree that HT can be called 'Islamist', since its way of practicing Islam goes beyond the religious sphere into the political. In their studies, they attach, however, terms to HT that range from fundamentalist, extremist and radical to terrorist. Thus, it is likely that even if journalists consult widely accepted academic works in search of a single definition that they can use consistently, they will probably be confused rather than enlightened.

While it is questionable whether journalists, who operate under rigid structural constraints, can afford such research at all, we attempted to analyze the manifest content of media outputs in which HT was mentioned at least once. We established that terms attached to the group discussed in the analyzed newspapers depended heavily on perceptions about and the situation of HT branches in the respective countries. Mainly a 'banned, Islamist' organization for German journalists, HT was above all a 'legal Muslim' organization for British journalists and a 'prohibited, religious and/or extremist' organization/party for Kyrgyz journalists.

Although HT is active in Kyrgyzstan and virtually non-existent in Germany, newspapers in both countries focused on its legal and negative aspects, thus legitimizing state policies toward the group. It was also established that when reporting on or just mentioning HT, journalists in the three countries referred to or quoted mainly official sources – political and law enforcement actors – and rarely academics or experts. German journalists were generally reluctant to use existing sources about HT produced by social scientific researchers and did this mainly when they reported on HT in Central Asia. British journalists readily quoted known researchers and made use of their statements as 'supporting evidence' and 'truth assumptions' about HT. While the British media attempted to play the role of watchdog in a democratic state and articulated "a variety of political viewpoints to educate the public and allow it to make informed choices" (Gunther and Mughan, 2000: 5) about whether HT should have been banned or not, the more consistent references to HT as an *Islamist* organization could help in comparing and contrasting HT with mainstream Muslim organizations. Unlike their European colleagues, Kyrgyz journalists often referred to analysts, specialists and experts without naming them, thus, speculating on HT or simply reproducing the existing political discourses.

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On the author: Irina Volf earned her Dr. rer. soc in Psychology at the University of Konstanz in Germany. She is currently employed at the Institute for Social Work and Social Education in Frankfurt am Main as a research officer. Her current areas of research include evaluation of public policies and programs in the field of a right-wing extremism.

Address: eMail: wolf.irina@gmail.com