



US Media Framing of Diversity: The Case of the 2025 New York City Mayoral Election

ABD Medyasında Çeşitliliğin Çerçeveselenmesi: 2025 New York Belediye Başkanlığı Seçimi Örneği

ABSTRACT

Persuasive political communication aims to appeal to the thoughts and perceptions of the target audience, thereby creating a positive impression of the relevant ideology, political party or candidate. The inclusion of newly evolving communication tools in this process has raised the issue of governments and political parties using these tools as propaganda instruments. The ideas that are dominant in society tend to be more prevalent in the mainstream media, whereas diversity may be represented in a biased manner or ignored. Given these concerns regarding political communication, the present study investigated how the press framed Zohran Mamdani, a Muslim and Ugandan-born mayoral candidate for New York City. News articles about Zohran Mamdani, published between June 25, 2025 and July 31, 2025 in the online editions of The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal and New York Post, which are among the most read newspapers in New York, were analyzed from the perspective of framing theory. The aim of this analysis was to determine whether news about the candidate used ethnically, religiously and politically othering and polarizing news language and framing. According to the findings obtained as a result of the study, all three newspapers emphasized Mamdani's ethnic and religious identity in their coverage. Whereas The New York Times employed a more balanced approach to diversity in its journalistic language, The Wall Street Journal adopted an othering tone and The New York Post utilized a news language designed to foster both othering and the generation of fear and sensationalism.

Keywords: US Media, Political Communication, Framing, News Language.

ÖZET

İkna edici siyasal iletişim, hedef kitlenin düşünce ve algılarına seslenerek ilgili ideoloji, siyasi parti ya da aday hakkında olumlu bir izlenim yaratmayı amaçlamaktadır. Bu süreçte yeni ortaya çıkan iletişim araçlarının da dahil edilmesi, hükümetlerin ve siyasi partilerin bu araçları propaganda unsuru olarak kullanması tartışmasını gündeme getirmiştir. Toplumda hâkim olan fikirler ana akım medyada daha fazla yer bulma eğilimindeyken, çeşitlilik önyargılı bir biçimde temsil edilebilmekte ya da tamamen görmezden gelinebilmektedir. Siyasal iletişim bağlamındaki bu kaygılar ışığında, çalışma New York Belediye Başkanlığı için Uganda doğumlu Müslüman bir aday olan Zohran Mamdani'nin basın tarafından nasıl çerçevelendiğini incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Araştırma kapsamında, New York'ta en çok okunan gazeteler arasında yer alan The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal ve New York Post'un çevrimiçi edisyonlarında 25 Haziran 2025 – 31 Temmuz 2025 tarihleri arasında Zohran Mamdani hakkında yayımlanan haber metinleri, çerçeveleme kuramı perspektifinden analiz edilmiştir. Bu analizin temel amacı, adayla ilgili haberlerde etnik, dini ve siyasi açıdan ötekileştirici ve kutuplaştırıcı haber dili ile çerçevelemenin kullanılıp kullanılmadığını ortaya koymaktır. Çalışmadan elde edilen bulgulara göre, üç gazete de haberlerinde Mamdani'nin etnik ve dini kimliğini ön plana çıkarmıştır. The New York Times gazetecilik dilinde çeşitliliğe daha dengeli bir yaklaşım benimserken, The Wall Street Journal ötekileştirici bir üslup kullanmış; New York Post ise hem ötekileştirme hem de korku ve sansasyon yaratma amacı güden bir haber dilini tercih etmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: ABD Medyası, Siyasal İletişim, Çerçeveleme, Haber Dili.

INTRODUCTION

Political communication has been thought about, discussed, and strategized since the time of Ancient Greece. One of the most fundamental reasons for its importance is that it is one of the most effective ways to manipulate society and societal perceptions. Therefore, those who come to power or aspire to do so must carefully manage political communication. When communicating with a target audience, many details should be considered, from word choice to oratory, from appearance to tone of voice.

Since the 20th century, the development of new communication technologies has given political communication a different dimension. In particular, the mass media has had significant effects on the thoughts and perceptions of readers and viewers. As Walter Lippmann (2020) tried to explain through his concept of pseudo-environment, learning through the media about events that we cannot personally experience can also bring the danger of manipulation and perception management. That is, our perceptions of the external world due to media reflections. This situation undoubtedly depends on important economic-political factors, such as media ownership structure and the mainstream media's relationship with power.

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More specifically, the media controls various functions, including presenting electoral candidates and their political parties to the public, explaining their promises and projects, accurately representing them to readers, and conducting interviews with candidates. Along with digital media, this situation has highlighted the issue of interaction, providing candidates and their target audiences with the opportunity to communicate directly through social media. Currently, the online publications of newspapers with a significant and wide readership are also followed by the readers. Thus, the media continues to be an effective means of political communication.

Given the media's agenda-setting and framing functions, it is necessary to analyze in detail which candidates and parties the media highlights, especially during election campaigns, and which candidates the media talks about more positively and more frequently. In addition, given that the media are also interested in candidates' ethnic, religious, or sexual differences, the argument of this study mainly focus on certain questions, particularly how differences are represented in political communication, whether these differences are presented as a disadvantage or advantage, and whether there is perception management about these differences between the lines or openly.

Drawing on framing theory, the present study analyzes online news articles published by the New York Times, Wall Street Journal, and New York Post, which are the three most read newspapers in the American press, about Zohran Mamdani, the candidate who received the highest number of votes in the New York City mayoral primary elections. The aim of this study is to understand how the media highlights and frames diversity. To do so, the article first examines the historical development of political communication and then explains framing theory. Within the context of media representation of diversity, the framing of New York City mayoral candidate Zohran Mamdani, a Muslim and Ugandan-born candidate, in the United States press is analyzed through online news reports published between June 25, 2025, and July 31, 2025, in The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal and New York Post.

POLITICAL COMMUNICATION and MEDIA INTERACTION

Political communication is the process of creating, sending, and modifying messages that have a high potential to influence politics. The effects can be indirect or direct and can emerge immediately or later (Uztuğ, 2004). The effect is directly proportional to the impact created by the communication tools used. In defining political communication, the focus is on what the message is, how it is designed, and through which communication tool it is sent, rather than who sends the message. Although political communication has gradually shifted towards a personalized strategy drawing on micro-targeting studies, the basic goal remains to change the thoughts, beliefs, and behaviors of the recipients. The political communication process encompasses political systems and cultures, media organizations, journalists, public relations workers, advertisers, and citizens. Political communication is constantly developing and can change depending on the development of technologies that support this process. Hence, political communication, which encompasses the entire society, is shaped on a variable politics-media axis (Blumler, 2015).

Political communication was first discussed during Ancient Greek period in terms of concepts like political persuasion, rhetoric, and oratory. The philosophers of this period, such as Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, particularly discussed rhetoric and investigated oral persuasion techniques through oral communication in public spaces called the agora. These techniques, concretized in Aristotle's book *Rhetoric* (Aristoteles, 2018), were based on basic concepts like ethos, pathos, and logos, which are still used today to explain rhetoric and persuasion. Since political communication in Ancient Greece was entirely based on oratory, the speaker's credibility, the use of emotion, and the inclusion of logical expressions were adopted as a strategic approach. In the city democracies of this period, one of the requirements of political communication was to make beautiful and provocative, that is, agitative speeches. Orators with highly effective skills of persuasion could obtain or maintain power through speeches that provoked and mobilized their listeners (Özkan, 2007).

Written political communication fully emerged with the invention of the printing press. In particular, books, brochures, and declarations became quite effective in sharing political ideas with the masses. In its current meaning, the first newspaper appeared in Europe in the 17th century, followed by daily newspapers in the United States. Subsequently, the increase in literacy levels, the Industrial Revolution, and the development and spread of mass media led to the emergence of political propaganda alongside political communication. Mass media began to be used as a propaganda tool by political powers, with newspapers particularly becoming the spokespersons of political parties and leaders (Gurevitch, Coleman and Blumler, 2009).

Following these developments, communication theories of political communication and media interaction emerged. Important research based on media effects theories was conducted into various issues, such as the effect of the media on voting behavior and voters' perceptions, and the role and impact of mass media in political communication. Harold Laswell, Paul Lazarsfeld, Elihu Katz, Kurt Lewin, and Carl Hovland are important theorists who contributed to 20th-century political communication studies from different disciplines. Since then, the political communication power of the media has been analyzed through various methods depending on the communication technologies used. Of these,

framing theory explains that the frames used in the news by the media affect readers' perspectives and approaches to events.

Understanding political communication means understanding power ambition, perception management, and persuasion techniques in the historical process of human-politics relations. People desire to be governed as much as to govern, while the basic strategies and methods used to influence them do not change much. Thus, Goebbels' political propaganda techniques are still applied in 21st-century politics, even if the communication tools have. The political communication goals of power holders and the mainstream media have consistently been to shape society around dominant ideas, circulating only similar thoughts, and ignoring differences or portraying them as dangerous. Therefore, political communication is both directly and indirectly connected to many factors, including the political economy of the media, cultural relations, and sociology. Society's stereotypes, beliefs, and political system are also important bases in conducting political communication.

It can be argued that the manipulative aspect of political communication was initially reinforced by newspapers, then radio and television; with the use of internet technologies, this manipulation created a gap between reality and perception. The most prominent effects include biased statements in newspapers, exaggerated news headlines, rhetorically controversial photographs, perception-managing columns, the effects created by radio through both news and other programs, and television bringing political communication into living rooms and thereby reducing the social aspect of politics. Indeed, technological developments have enabled public political communication activities to expand since Ancient Greece into private spaces, thereby enlarging the audience while directing viewers more towards entertainment than political content, distancing them from the public space, and causing discussions on public issues to disappear among the added content (Gurevitch, Coleman and Blumler, 2009).

Given these changes, the interaction between political communication and the media has become highly important, leading to processes like public opinion formation, agenda setting, and highlighting. Moreover, the role and impact of the media in political communication remains important and effective even as communication technologies develop. Therefore, it is essential to examine, from a social science perspective, how the media reports on political parties or candidates, the language it employs, the lexical choices it makes, and the frames through which it presents the news.

Framing Theory

According to sociologist Erving Goffman (1974: 11), a frame "provides the opportunity to understand what is happening around." It not only allows us to perceive the current situation but also serves as a determining factor in terms of how we participate in action. Frames sometimes facilitate and accelerate the process of understanding events; sometimes they can lead to unrealistic or biased perceptions of events. That is, incorrect framing can lead to misperceptions. Goffman (1974: 12) argues that frames are used for interpreting relationships and everyday social life; that is, he claims that frames are a kind of schema for making sense of life. Goffman categorized frames as either natural or social. Natural frames are those that occur without human influence, whereas social frames encompass human actions and offer a perspective (Goffman, 1974: 22). For example, natural frames are used when describing a natural event; social frames come into play when describing a social event or a greeting. According to Goffman, social life requires frames due to its flow; he defined social life like a stage based on frames (Craib, 1978: 83).

Robert Entman developed Goffman's analysis and associated framing theory by applying it to journalism, specifically by analyzing the frames used in news texts. According to Entman (1993: 51), regardless of the purpose of their use, frames offer a way to reveal the power of the text in communicating with the reader. Rather than an individual approach to framing theory, Entman focused on how news texts shape meaning and create perceptions, given that media texts emphasize certain aspects of reality and shape readers' perceptions. Framing involves selecting only certain aspects of perceived reality and making this reality more prominent in a media text, thereby offering solutions (Entman, 1993). Frames fulfill four basic functions: defining the problem, analyzing it, morally judging it, and offering solutions. However, framing also reveals social power relations by both conveying information and structuring the text (Druckman & Parkin, 2005). Walter Lippmann introduced the concept of pseudo-environment to explain that, because we cannot experience every development and event in the external world, we have to rely on the media's representation of them: "The real environment is too big, too complex, and too fleeting for full acquaintance. We are not equipped to deal with so much variety and combination" (Lippmann, 2020).

Media frames reveal why the event in the news is important; they also manage perceptions. The context within which the relevant event is addressed also affects how the parties to the event are evaluated by readers. This is particularly evident for issues like immigration and war, which are frequently prioritized in the media nowadays. Another role of frames in media texts is to ensure that the framed part is remembered while the other parts are forgotten. That is, emphasis in the news directly affects both perception and memory.

Regarding the focus of the present study, the way that ethnic and religious differences are framed in the news is of great importance because the media influences readers' perceptions and creates public opinion by framing the news in certain ways. Hate speech and discrimination are reinforced by the effect of media texts; discriminatory statements, othering expressions, and derogatory words in news headlines and texts can direct readers' thoughts. For example, framing a socialist candidate's political campaign as a "communist threat" rather than a "promise of equality" creates different perceptions. As Entman (1993) stated, framing power also establishes dominance in both the traditional media and the new media environment. The present study analyzes both printed and online versions of newspaper reports that reach a wide readership, and thereby shape readers perceptions by using framing power.

METHODOLOGY

This study used frame analysis to examine news reports concerning New York Mayoral candidate Zohran Mamdani following the announcement of the primary election results. The study draws on Goffman's and Entman's framing theories, which are both prominent in the literature. Zohran Mamdani is a Uganda-born, Muslim, and self-defined socialist candidate, who grew up in New York. Mamdani has served as a member of the New York State Assembly since 2021. On his personal website, he declares that "the government can lower costs and make the expensive and difficult life in New York easier; he will use all tools at his disposal to lower rents, create a world-class public transportation system, and facilitate family life" (Meet Zohran, 2025). Such opinions make his profile quite different from those politicians who have previously run for New York City mayor.

The study sampled news reports from The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal, and New York Post newspapers. These newspapers were purposefully selected from among the top five most read newspapers in New York because they have archive scanning capabilities (Statista, 2025). The aim in frame analysis is to detect and interpret media frames in news headlines and texts. These frames offer certain schemas to readers, presenting a "reality" about what the event or problem is (Entman, 1993). Therefore, the frames used in news language also form the frames of political messages, which enable the media to direct perceptions and limit actions. The main elements analyzed are stereotypes, word choices, and bias in frame usage.

The main purpose of this study is to understand how New York's news media framed a local political candidate from a minority ethnic and religious background in relation to the political communication process. The study also investigated the publishing history and ideological stance of the three newspapers to identify any similarity in their news frames and ideological approaches. Regarding political communication and democracy, it is important to research how the media represent diversity. Given that New York is a large cosmopolitan city; it is also important to understand how Zohran Mamdani, who won many more votes than the other candidates in the primary election, was framed in news headlines and reports.

The study analyzed news reports about Zohran Mamdani published by the three newspapers between June 24, 2025, and July 31, 2025. This time period began on the day of the New York Mayoral primary elections and was limited to one month. In accordance with framing theory, the analysis identified the relevant frames, which contexts were highlighted in the reports, which words were repeated, and what perceptions were created. The news reports were obtained by scanning the news archives of the relevant newspapers using the keyword "Zohran Mamdani." A total of 143 news items were analyzed, of which 45, 50, and 48 came from the New York Times, Wall Street Journal and New York Post, respectively.

Coding Framework

To systematically analyze the news reports, a qualitative coding framework was developed based on Entman's (1993) framing functions (problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and treatment recommendation) and Goffman's (1974) concept of social frames as interpretive schemas. The framework categorizes frames into three primary codes, derived inductively from a pilot review of 10% of the sample articles and deductively from prior literature on media framing of diversity (e.g., stereotypes in political coverage). Each code was applied to headlines, lead paragraphs, and body text to identify patterns of emphasis, omission, and language use. The coding framework consists of the following categories:

Political Frames: This category captures references to the candidate's political ideology, policies, or affiliations. Examples include mentions of "socialism," "communism," "radical left," or policy critiques (e.g., tax plans, free services). These frames are coded when they define the candidate's positions as threats, opportunities, or anomalies, often linking them to historical contexts like the Cold War. **Religious/Ethnic Words:** This category identifies language emphasizing the candidate's religious (e.g., "Muslim," "devout," "jihad") or ethnic identity (e.g., "Ugandan-born," "African American," "Third World"). Codes are applied when such terms are used to highlight difference, othering or as a basis for moral judgment, rather than neutrally. **Negative Implications and Adjectives:** This category codes

derogatory, fear-inducing or biased language, including adjectives like "dangerous," "extreme," "scary," "anti-semitic," or implications of threat (e.g., "economic collapse," "radical danger"). These are noted when they evaluate the candidate morally or recommend opposition, often through sensationalism or stereotypes. Frequencies were tallied per newspaper to quantify frame prominence, as shown in Table 1. Overlapping codes (e.g., a "radical Muslim" phrase coded under both Religious/Ethnic and Negative) were allowed to reflect multifaceted framing.

Frame Definition Criteria

Frames were defined and identified using the following criteria, adapted from Entman (1993) and Goffman (1974). First, salience and prominence were assessed, whereby a frame is deemed present if an aspect of the candidate—such as identity or policy—is rendered more noticeable through mechanisms like repetition, strategic placement in headlines or leads or association with vivid imagery and metaphors, as exemplified by references to "Soviet bread lines" in discussions of socialism. Second, selection and omission played a critical role, with frames emerging from what is emphasized, such as the candidate's religious identity over substantive policy details, while omitting elements like positive voter support, thereby constructing a selective version of reality. Third, causal and moral attribution were evaluated through language that attributes problems directly to the candidate, for instance, suggesting that "Mamdani would cause economic difficulties" or through moral judgments, such as labeling critiques of opponents as "Islamophobic" in contrast to portraying the candidate as "anti-semitic." Fourth, drawing on Goffman's concept of interpretive schemas, frames were recognized when they provided a contextual framework that guides reader perception, such as portraying the candidate as a "threat" rather than an "opportunity" often reinforced by stereotypes that link Muslim identity to extremism. Finally, to ensure robustness, a threshold for inclusion was applied, considering only those elements appearing in at least 10% of articles per newspaper as dominant frames; ambiguous language was resolved through contextual analysis, for example, interpreting "Muslim candidate" as neutral when used in a biographical sense but as framed when tied to notions of "radicalism." This framework ensures replicability and aligns with the study's goal of uncovering biased representations of diversity.

ANALYSIS

The selected news reports from the New York Times, The Wall Street Journal, and New York Post were analyzed to determine how news about Zohran Mamdani was framed in terms of ideological positioning, stereotype usage and word choices. Both the news headlines and contents were included in this analysis to determine their framing and expression. The analysis was based on both Goffman's and Entman's approaches to framing theory. For each newspaper, news searches were conducted within the relevant date range and news reports about Zohran Mamdani were filtered. The frames used were identified through the stereotypes expressed in words and sentences and subjected to analysis.

Table 1: News Frames Frequency by Newspapers

Newspapers	Political Frames	Religious/Ethnic Words	Negative Implications and Adjectives	Total
New York Post	48 times	21 times	34 times	103
The New York Times	19 times	27 times	11 times	57
The Wall Street Journal	28 times	14 times	17 times	59

Analysis of The New York Times

The New York Times, New York's most important daily newspaper, began publishing in 1851. The newspaper is defined as the reference newspaper of the American liberal left; it also has a unit that provides specific news about the New York region (Gönenç, 2010). Regarding Zohran Mamdani, the New York Times' news headlines mention his Muslim identity, but without framing it as either a disadvantage or advantage in the news reports themselves. Instead, they state that if Mamdani were elected, he would become New York's first Muslim mayor, representing approximately 1 million Muslim citizens living in the city, who have already embraced his candidacy (King, 2025). The newspaper characterizes right-wing statements about Mamdani as Islamophobic (Karni, 2025), yet frequently uses expressions like "Muslim candidate", "first Muslim mayor" in its news reports. Thus, while the New York Times' news language can be considered as balanced, it also adopted a critical frame through an identity-focused narrative. For example, the newspaper framed Mamdani's rise as "surprising" and "new generation", while sometimes questioning his anti-Israel statements. The New York Times uses neutral language to report about Zohran Mamdani's election team, his promises and plans for the city, and pro-socialist statements. Mamdani's primary election victory was reflected in headlines like "Stunning Victory" (Polgreen, 2025). In another article that included comments and questions from readers, 100 questions about Mamdani were selected, and a team of newspaper editors and reporters answered 21 of them. Their answers had neither a biased nor othering tone. The newspaper also reported that Mamdani himself had placed his Muslim identity at the center of his political identity. On the other hand, the newspaper reported as contradictory Mamdani's thoughts on issues such as LGBTQ rights or legalized marijuana use, which do not align much with the views of the attendees of conservative mosques he was visiting (Mays, 2025).

The newspaper was also interested an issue that U.S. politicians are frequently criticized for, namely image. While the news reports considered Zohran Mamdani's appearance and image to be successful and balanced, the accessories he chose were also analyzed in detail in ethnic terms. The reports also included opponents' evaluative descriptions of Mamdani, such as "100 percent Communist lunatic" and a "radical leftie" as examples of othering (Friedman, T.L., 2025). The newspaper also published a special 10-question interview with him regarding his plans and goals for the city (Fitzsimmons, 2025). Another news report stated, without including any othering expressions, that Mamdani's father, who is an academic, and his mother, who is an Oscar-nominated filmmaker, also helped shape his political perspective (Haag & Goldberg, 2025). Finally, one news report stated that Mamdani represents an inspiring new New York version of the American dream. The article underlined that the candidate is an exciting communicator for many New Yorkers with different ethnic and religious backgrounds (Glueck & Lerer, 2025).

On the other hand, another New York Times article, while giving detailed coverage to Zohran Mamdani's designs for the city, questioned whether he can achieve these goals and stated that his campaign strategy is aimed more at social state goals, such as improving the purchasing power of city residents, solving housing problems, and providing free transportation and nursery services. Another frame that the newspaper used for the candidate was "populist" (Haag & Oreskes, 2025). The newspaper also focused significantly on Mamdani's tax regulation plans. However, it reported them neutrally, whereas they were criticized by most American newspapers (Marcius, 2025).

The New York Times also reported on Mamdani's opponents, noting that some Democrats are uncomfortable with his victory and plan to prevent him from winning in November's local elections. The articles also reported U.S. President Donald Trump's anti-Mamdani statements without comment (Mays & Fandos, 2025; Cameron, 2025) while also reporting that young Muslims love Mamdani and encourage their families to vote for him. These news reports mostly referred to Mamdani's ethnic origins and religious beliefs (Maag, 2025). The newspaper's most prominent criticism of Mamdani was shaped around his policies regarding Israel. In particular, while judging his criticisms of Israel more softly than other newspapers, nevertheless defined them as the focus of political concerns (Mays, 2025; Friedman, V., 2025).

In summary, the New York Times included its readers in the discussion as if they were participants. Its news reports addressed Mamdani's policies and plans for the city from different perspectives using a liberal approach and positive framing. The storytelling techniques used provided information about Mamdani's life, past, and communication with voters. The New York Times reported on Mamdani as New York mayoral candidate in line with his aims, promises, and plans. Although the articles mentioned his Muslim and Ugandan origin, there was no hate speech or othering. While Mamdani's resumé and family were presented as part of his political image, only his anti-Israel stance and statements were criticized. The newspaper's reports underlined that if he wins in the local election in November as he did in the primary, he will become New York's first Muslim mayor. However, it avoided framing this in a way that created a threat perception. In short, the newspaper used informative language in its political communication, softened polarization, but mostly centered on identity politics.

Analysis of The Wall Street Journal

The Wall Street Journal, founded in 1889, has one of the highest circulations among U.S. daily newspapers and one of the highest subscription rates among U.S. newspapers publishing online (Walton, 2024). Its conservative stance is close to that of the Republican Party. It is noteworthy that the newspaper's articles framed the Mamdani's socialist statements more than his Muslim identity when defining him. Its headlines and news content frequently referenced Donald Trump's criticisms and claims that Mamdani has radical and communist ideas (Baker, 2025; Wall Street Journal, 2025; Wall Street Journal a, 2025). One news report, explicitly referring to the discourse of the U.S. press during the Cold War, used the headline "Want Soviet Bread Lines? Vote for Zohran Mamdani" to create a clearly negative framing. The reports themselves commented that if Mamdani were elected as New York Mayor, his success would be limited to only a few university towns, and that many people feared the possibility of his winning the election in November (Thomas, 2025; Margolin, 2025; Picciotto, 2025).

Another noteworthy element in the newspaper's articles about Mamdani is that if he becomes mayor, his free service plans for markets, schools, and health systems would cause economic difficulties for the city, while the socialist management style he claims to follow would end in disappointment (McKenna, 2025; Arnold, 2025; Wall Street Journal b, 2025). The newspaper explicitly described Mamdani as a leader as extreme as Trump, stating that Mamdani's primary victory should be a warning for Democrats (Daley, 2025). That is, the articles framed Mamdani as a "dangerous candidate."

It would not be wrong to argue that the Wall Street Journal has openly conducted an anti-Mamdani campaign. In particular, while the newspaper placed less emphasis on Mamdani's Muslim identity, it openly belittled his socialist ideas and his designs and promises for the city (Nuss, 2025; Dhume, 2025; Karmin & Picciotto, 2025). These news

reports claimed that Mamdani has communist plans for the city, dreams of seizing means of production, wants to reduce the effectiveness of the private sector and increase state control, and aims to take high taxes from the rich and implement a failed Soviet system. The newspaper predicted that he had only a remote possibility of being elected in November (Riley, 2025; Schwartz, Dugan & Glickman, 2025). In short, Mamdani was framed as an “inadequate, unsuccessful, communist.”

The newspaper also criticized Mamdani’s statement that U.S. billionaires should not appear in the news. Arguing that this contradicted press freedom, the newspaper claimed that New York’s economic difficulties explained why Mamdani had received so many votes, especially from younger citizens (Wall Street Journal c, 2025; Ensing et. al, 2025). These news reports included ethnic and religious emphases and othering achieved through the use of stereotypes (Dhume, 2025).

The Wall Street Journal’s news reports referenced the business world, reinforced the fear of economic collapse through its choice of language and tried to mobilize its readers. The articles positioned the reader as a “victim” who was encouraged to resist through methods like fundraising. Socialism was framed as a disaster through the use of a fear frame. In addressing conservative readers, the news reports presented leftist ideology as the source of the economic problems. The articles positioned Mamdani as an economic threat; his Muslim identity was associated with anti-semitism; his socialism with “Soviet-style” failures (Catsimatidis, 2025). In summary, the Wall Street Journal framed Zohran Mamdani as a candidate aiming to implement the Soviet economic system, who would drag the city into economic difficulties, with a very high probability of failure, Muslim, inexperienced, and dangerous. In short, the newspaper used a biased and othering language and tone, which directly affects its political communication.

Analysis of The New York Post

The New York Post, which is famous for its sports news, began publishing in 1801 under the name New York Evening Post. Its editorial line began to show conservative and populism tendencies after it was purchased by Rupert Murdoch in 1985 (Gönenç, 2010). Similarly to the Wall Street Journal, its news reports framed Zohran Mamdani as a clearly dangerous candidate who should not be elected. Its news reports relied on statements by New York’s current mayor, Eric Adams, to characterize Mamdani’s promises as lies while underlining that his election would harm the city (McCarthy and Troutman, 2025). Framing Mamdani as a devout Muslim who was supposedly against the rule of law, the newspaper’s articles criticized Democrats for being unable to recognize this (Fischetti, 2025a).

By drawing on expert opinions in its news reports, the newspaper presented quite negative and othering criticisms about Mamdani as its own view (Campanile, 2025a; Ketcham, 2025). Preferring a news language that adopted fear communication, the newspaper tried to manage readers’ perceptions to create fear and anxiety from its reports about Mamdani. It supportively reported statements by Mamdani’s opponent, Andrew Cuomo, that he would leave the city if Mamdani became mayor and Eric Adams’ statement that very dark days awaited New York if Mamdani were elected (Campanile & Calder, 2025; Calder, 2025b). This perception management was framed particularly clearly in a news headline “Voters’ Mamdani fear” (New York Post Readers, 2025).

The newspaper frequently brought up Zohran Mamdani’s past statements, which it claimed were unsettling and creating fears for peace and security. Using negative predicates, its news reports framed both his Muslim and socialist identities as being different from those of the majority of the population. It is also noteworthy that adjectives like “socialist, anti-Israel, and radical” were used frequently alongside phrases like “radical Muslim groups and devout Muslim”. Using the analogy that Mamdani would bring a socialist army to the municipality, the newspaper’s reporting referred to the anti-communist discourses of the Cold War era (Campanile, 2025b; McCarthy et al., 2025). The newspaper also reported the jihadist statements of a young woman who interned for Mamdani as if they were Mamdani’s own statements (Schlott, 2025a). Framing was also achieved by referring to a statement of Mamdani’s father in a book he wrote in 2004 that suicide bombers should also be understood from different contexts. The newspaper portrayed Mamdani’s father as a “suicide bomber sympathizer” (Calder, 2025a). The newspaper also investigated Mamdani’s college application, claiming that he had gained privileges for himself by checking the “African American” option (Schlott, 2025b).

The New York Post’s discourse about Zohran Mamdani can be described as othering, fear-creating, critical, and even humiliating. In its articles, the newspaper sensationalized Mamdani as a “radical threat”, framing him as “anti-semitic”, “Islamist” and “a socialist danger.” With words like “extremist”, “disaster”, “scary”, “extremism”, “ripped”, “blasted”, “outrageous”, the newspaper called on Republicans and the business world to join an “anti-Mamdani” alliance (Fischetti, 2025b). Mamdani was framed as “liar” and “dangerous” (Campanile, 2025c), while his past statements were highlighted as being “resurfaced.”

In summary, the New York Post's reporting presented Mamdani as not just the New York mayoral candidate but as a Muslim, Ugandan-origin, socialist candidate. When such representation becomes the news discourse of one of New York's most read newspapers, it creates a high probability of negatively affecting readers' perceptions and forming negative public opinion of the candidate, thereby disadvantaging him compared to his rivals. One of the basic claims of framing theory is that the framed phenomenon or thought remains in the mind more than others that are not framed. Drawing on this, there appears to be a high probability that the newspaper's negative claims about Mamdani will occupy more space in readers' minds. The New York Post conducted political communication through fear and scandal framing, while the language and tone of its news reporting aimed to anger readers. That is, it adopted a news reporting policy aimed at polarization, othering and creating sensation, while framing its readers as an anti-Mamdani community. In short, its readers were called to stand against the "danger" of Mamdani, who it framed as a radical candidate, especially regarding his ethnic and religious identity and political stance.

CONCLUSION

The effects of the interaction between political communication and the media have been analyzed from many disciplinary perspectives, including history, philosophy, psychology, sociology, and communication. This intersection has created various important issues, such as the media's role in writing history, the effects of news reporting on voting behavior, and news sociology. Thus, political communication and the media cannot be separated from each other. Political parties and candidates meet voters through the media to convey their plans and promises to the target audience, thereby creating an interaction. Therefore, the way that candidates are represented in the media and how they are framed in news reports is of great importance in terms of public opinion formation.

The study's findings align with framing theory's expectations, as articulated by Goffman (1974) and Entman (1993), showing that media frames shape perceptions of Zohran Mamdani's candidacy by emphasizing his ethnic (Ugandan-born) and religious (Muslim) identity, often over substantive policy discussion, to varying degrees across newspapers. The New York Times used balanced, neutral frames, aligning with its liberal stance, while the conservative Wall Street Journal and New York Post employed othering and fear-based frames, linking Mamdani's socialism to Cold War-era threats and his identity to extremism, reinforcing dominant ideologies and polarization. This selective framing, with high frequencies of political (e.g., 48 in New York Post) and negative (e.g., 34 in New York Post) frames, supports theoretical predictions about media bias marginalizing minority candidates, though the persistence of historical anti-communist discourses in 2025 suggests enduring framing patterns, highlighting risks to equitable representation in democratic contexts.

The present study's analysis of newspaper reports about Zohran Mamdani revealed the discursive traces of the Cold War era in the U.S. press. More specifically, the analyzed articles frequently mentioned communism, socialism, seizure of the means of production, anti-capitalism, and extremism. Thus, in terms of political communication, the news language of the three newspapers did not differ much from that of the Cold War period, indicating that anti-communist reflexes are still very alive in the U.S. The newspapers' reporting of Zohran Mamdani highlighted both his Muslim identity and socialist-communist statements. In short, the study's analysis of the representation of differences in political communication in the U.S. press revealed an unchanging reality in that Mamdani's statements as a political candidate were reported in terms of ethnic and religious differences in order to gain news value in the press. Regarding differences between the three newspapers, the New York Times mentioned his Muslim identity in its news reports, but avoided the use of othering or biased news language. On the contrary, its reporting acknowledged that Mamdani receives quite a lot of support from New York's Muslim citizens and the newspaper tried to provide information about the candidate. Its news headlines and articles framed Mamdani neutrally as a "rising socialist candidate".

In contrast, both the Wall Street Journal and New York Post associated Mamdani's political statements with his ethnic and religious origins and created fear communication. Their news reports gave prominence to his birthplace, religious beliefs, mosque visits and family ties. The fact that other Christian candidates' private lives and beliefs were not similarly highlighted clearly reveals the bias of these newspapers. Both newspapers consistently reported his statements in a way that aimed at creating threat perception and manipulating readers. Hence, various articles openly stated that New York's businesspeople and political groups were anti-Mamdani, that if he became mayor then very serious problems would occur in basic services like public transport, housing, health, and education, that radical Islam would be supported and the city's peace would be disrupted. These two newspapers were not, however, identical in their framing of Mamdani. Whereas the Wall Street Journal framed him as a "socialist danger", the New York Post framed him as a "socialist, anti-semitic and radical danger." These frames can be seen as reinforcing polarization through the candidate's ethnic and religious identity and policies. Finally, regarding common themes and frames, all three newspapers highlighted Mamdani's ethnic and religious identity in their reporting. While the New York Times adopted a more balanced diversity emphasis in its news language, the Wall Street Journal adopted

an othering tone and the New York Post adopted a news language aimed at both othering and creating fear and sensation.

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