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# COMPARATIVE MEDIA COVERAGE OF NEW YORK'S FIRST MUSLIM MAYOR: WESTERN AND ARAB NARRATIVES ON ZOHRAN MAMDANI'S HISTORIC VICTORY

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## ABSTRACT

The election of Zohran Kwame Mamdani as mayor of New York City in November 2025 marks a significant moment in contemporary urban politics. At 34, Mamdani became the city's youngest mayor in over a century, as well as its first Muslim and first South Asian mayor. Winning 50.78% of the certified vote in a high-turnout contest with 2,218,647 ballots cast (43.47% of 5,103,941 registered voters), his victory unfolded within a socio-economic context characterized by persistent urban poverty, widespread rent burden, and a sizeable Muslim population (Board of Elections in the City of New York, 2025; Furman Center, 2024; Institute for Social Policy and Understanding [ISPU], 2018; Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs [MOIA], 2023; Poverty Tracker Research Group at Columbia University, 2025). This article provides a qualitative, comparative analysis of how Mamdani's campaign and electoral success were framed in major Western and Arab media, alongside a rhetorical analysis of his most circulated campaign speeches and social-media content. The study is grounded in agenda-setting and framing theory (Entman, 1993; McCombs, 2004; McCombs & Shaw, 1972), as well as classical and contemporary approaches to rhetoric and persuasive communication (Abbas, 2020; Aristotle, 2007; Cialdini, 2004; Ishaq, 2025; Madkour, 2006). Empirically, it draws on a purposive sample of news reports, opinion pieces, and features from leading Western (Associated Press, The Guardian, Le Monde, The New Yorker, New York Post, Time) and Arab media outlets (Al Jazeera Arabic/English, Al-Bayan, France 24 Arabic), in addition to campaign speeches and viral materials disseminated through platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, and X. The findings reveal a clear divergence in media framing. Liberal Western outlets largely portrayed

*Mamdani as the product of a revitalized progressive coalition rooted in racially diverse and renter-dominated neighbourhoods, whereas conservative U.S. media framed his democratic-socialist platform as an economic and security risk. Arab media, by contrast, emphasized the symbolic and political significance of his election for Muslim representation, frequently linking his positions on Palestine and anti-Muslim hatred to wider critiques of U.S. foreign policy and the post-9/11 security imaginary (Faytre, 2018; Ikramullah & Alsoofy, 2025; Khemilat, 2022; Reuters, 2024). Rhetorically, Mamdani's discourse consistently redefined "freedom" in material terms—housing, transport, wages, and care—using a language of dignity, solidarity, and anti-war ethics that facilitated wide cross-media circulation and reinterpretation (Betts, 2025; Chapuis, 2025; The New Yorker, 2025; Transition 2025, 2025).*

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**KEYWORDS:** Zohran Mamdani; Media Framing; Arab Media; Political Communication; Democratic Socialism; Muslim Representation; New York City; Agenda-Setting; Persuasive Communication.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

New York City is frequently described as “the world’s city”: a metropolis of approximately 8.8 million inhabitants, more than 3.1 million of whom are foreign-born, representing about 38% of the population (MOIA, 2023). It is also home to an estimated 770,000 Muslims—about 9% of residents—making it the largest and one of the most diverse Muslim communities in the United States (ISPU, 2018). Yet this diversity coexists with deep socio-economic inequalities. Poverty Tracker data indicate that about one in four New Yorkers (25%)—roughly two million people—live in poverty, while child poverty remains above one quarter (Poverty Tracker Research Group at Columbia University, 2025). Housing costs are central to this crisis: more than half of renter households are rent-burdened (spending over 30% of their income on rent), and nearly 29% are severely rent-burdened (Furman Center, 2024; New York City Comptroller, 2024). In the 2024–2025 academic year, more than 154,000 public-school students—nearly one in seven—experienced homelessness (Advocates for Children of New York, 2025; Spauster & Evely, 2025).

Against this backdrop, the 2025 New York City mayoral election unfolded as more than a routine local contest. On 4 November 2025, Zohran Kwame Mamdani, a 34-year-old democratic socialist of Ugandan Indian Muslim background, won the mayoralty with 50.78% of the vote, defeating Andrew Cuomo (41.32%) and Curtis Sliwa (7.01%). The certified tally recorded 2,218,647 ballots cast—43.47% of 5,103,941 registered voters—marking the highest raw turnout in a New York City mayoral race since 1969 (Board of Elections in the City of New York, 2025; Time, 2025). Electoral maps indicate that Mamdani’s strongest support clustered in racially diverse, renter-heavy, and transit-dependent neighbourhoods across Brooklyn, Queens, the Bronx, and parts of Manhattan (Time, 2025).

Mamdani’s campaign foregrounded affordability, social housing, fare-free buses, universal childcare, and a US\$30 local minimum wage by 2030, while openly criticizing police abuses, Islamophobia, and U.S. support for Israeli policies in Gaza (Le Monde, 2025; The Guardian, 2025; Transition 2025, 2025). His identity as a Muslim, a child of immigrants, and an avowed democratic socialist made his rapid ascent an immediate subject of global media interest. Western outlets debated whether his victory signalled a durable progressive realignment or a risky “socialist experiment”; Arab media hailed it as a historic milestone for Muslim representation in the heart of a city associated with 9/11 and the “war on

terror” (Al Jazeera, 2025, 2025b; France 24 Arabic, 2025a, 2025b).

This article examines how Mamdani’s election was framed across these different media ecologies and how his own discourse travelled between them.

**It addresses three questions:**

- 1 How did major Western and Arab media outlets frame Mamdani’s campaign and victory?
- 2 How did these outlets integrate (or ignore) structural indicators such as poverty, rent burden, and demographic change into their narratives?
- 3 What persuasive strategies characterized Mamdani’s speeches, and how did these strategies facilitate the transnational circulation of frames?

By addressing these questions, the study contributes to scholarship on transnational media framing, political communication, Islamophobia, and the evolving representation of Muslim political leadership in Western democracies.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1. MEDIA, Islamophobia, And Muslim Representation

A sizeable body of scholarship has documented how Muslims and Islam have been recurrently framed in Western media as security threats, cultural “others,” or objects of integration, especially since 9/11 (Faytre, 2018; Khemilat, 2022; Latif, 2024; Rodrigues Galvao, 2024). Latif (2024), for example, shows how conflict and security coverage can reproduce a narrowed Muslim identity by anchoring newsworthiness in suspicion, moral panic, and selective attribution of responsibility. Similar patterns have been observed in France, where Khemilat (2022) traces both the persistence and partial reconfiguration of Muslim representation in political discourse and the press from the 1980s to the present. In a detailed analysis of French newspapers, Rodrigues Galvao (2024) finds that “Islam” is frequently treated as a homogeneous category and linked to debates on secularism, radicalization, and national identity.

These patterns resonate with broader evidence that Islamophobia is not only a discursive phenomenon but also an institutional and affective climate that shapes how Muslim publics are interpreted and policed. In the United States, anti-Muslim and anti-Palestinian complaints reported to civil-rights organizations surged to record levels in 2023, with the Israel–Gaza war frequently cited as a catalyst (Reuters, 2024). Such contexts matter for

Muslim politicians, who face not only routine scrutiny applied to elected officials, but also additional suspicion tied to religious and ethnic identity—especially when foreign policy, security, and “loyalty” become framing shortcuts.

Arab-language scholarship has examined how Arab media themselves participate in constructing images of Muslims and the West, oscillating between reproducing Western frames and articulating counter-narratives. Studies by Abousedra (2025), Issa (2023), and Suleiman (2021) show that Arab news and commentary on Europe and North America often foreground themes of colonial history, double standards, and Islamophobia, particularly in relation to Palestine and the “war on terror.” This work is crucial for interpreting how Arab outlets cover a figure like Mamdani, whose candidacy touches directly on these themes (Al Jazeera, 2025, 2025b; France 24 Arabic, 2025).

## 2.2. *Urban Inequality and Progressive Politics*

Research in urban politics has emphasized how structural inequalities especially in housing, wages, and social services shape electoral realignments (Furman Center, 2024; Poverty Tracker Research Group at Columbia University, 2025). In New York City, a 25% overall poverty rate and a 26% child poverty rate have coincided with record rental burdens, particularly among low- and middle-income renters (Furman Center, 2024; New York City Comptroller, 2024). Spauster and Evely (2025) highlight how more than 154,000 students experienced homelessness in 2024–2025, underlining the human cost of these macro-structural trends.

Within this context, proposals such as rent freezes, expanded social housing, fare-free buses, public grocery initiatives, and higher minimum wages become more than ideological markers; they are positioned as pragmatic responses to a widely felt crisis (Furman Center, 2024; New York City Comptroller, 2024; Poverty Tracker Research Group at Columbia University, 2025; Transition 2025, 2025). Mamdani’s campaign explicitly linked “freedom” to material security, arguing that a city where working families cannot afford rent or childcare cannot meaningfully call itself free (The New Yorker, 2025; Transition 2025, 2025).

## 2.3. *Arab Media, U.S. Politics, And Transnational Narratives*

Arab media have long treated U.S. elections especially presidential contests as key events, often framed through lenses of imperialism, Palestine, and double standards in human rights (Khamis &

Vaughn, 2011). With the war in Gaza and rising concerns about Islamophobia, the election of a Muslim mayor in New York City was quickly interpreted as symbolically significant. Al Jazeera and France 24 Arabic framed Mamdani’s victory as a challenge to Islamophobic narratives and as potential evidence that U.S. voters can support candidates who speak openly about Palestine (Al Jazeera, 2025, 2025b; France 24 Arabic, 2025). This transnational dimension suggests that an adequate analysis must connect local urban issues to broader geopolitical imaginaries.

## 3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is anchored in a composite theoretical framework that brings together agenda-setting, framing, and persuasion/rhetorical theories, while drawing on Western, Arab, and Francophone scholarship on media and the representation of Muslims. The aim is not only to describe how Zohran Mamdani was reported, but to understand why specific narratives gained prominence in Western and Arab media and how his own discourse travelled across these media systems.

### 3.1. *Agenda-Setting in a Transnational Media Environment*

Agenda-setting theory posits that the media may not tell audiences what to think, but they are highly effective in telling them what to think about (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). In the context of the 2025 New York City mayoral election, Western and Arab outlets did not simply report vote tallies; they constructed different hierarchies of salience around poverty, rent burden, Islamophobia, and the Gaza war.

Second-level agenda-setting, which emphasizes attribute salience (McCombs, 2004), is particularly useful here. It directs attention to how specific attributes Mamdani’s status as a Muslim, his democratic socialist platform, or his stance on Palestine were foregrounded or backgrounded in different media systems.

Liberal Anglo-American outlets frequently linked Mamdani to affordability and renters’ struggles, whereas conservative U.S. coverage tended to associate him with economic risk and public safety (Betts, 2025; New York Post, 2025a, 2025b). Arab media, by contrast, repeatedly linked his name to Islamophobia, Gaza, and Palestine, building an agenda around geopolitical and religious concerns (Al Jazeera, 2025; Ikramullah & Alsoofy, 2025; Reuters, 2024). Extending agenda-setting beyond national borders, this study draws on work that

examines how satellite channels and digital platforms shape what publics in the Arab world "see" of U.S. politics (Khamis & Vaughn, 2011).

### 3.2. FRAMING And the Construction of Muslim Political Leadership

While agenda-setting addresses what is covered, framing theory examines how it is covered. Frames select and highlight certain aspects of reality and make them "more salient in a communicating text" (Entman, 1993, p. 52), thereby structuring problem definitions, causal interpretations, moral evaluations, and recommended remedies.

**This study identifies several recurrent frames in the coverage of Mamdani:**

- a "historic progressive breakthrough" frame, dominant in liberal Western outlets.

- a "socialist and security threat" frame, prevalent in conservative U.S. media.

- a "Muslim milestone" frame, particularly strong in Arab media; and

- an "anti-imperial / pro-Palestinian symbol" frame, which links his election to the Gaza war and long-standing grievances about Western double standards.

These frames resonate with research documenting how Muslim and Arab actors have been depicted as "suspect communities" in European and North American media (Faytre, 2018; Khemilat, 2022; Rodrigues Galvao, 2024). Arab and Muslim scholars have likewise shown that Western news often essentializes Islam, while Arab media sometimes re-narrate Western politics through the prism of colonial history and Palestine (Abousedra, 2025; Issa, 2023; Suleiman, 2021). Situating Mamdani's coverage within this literature, the present study treats his election as a critical case in the evolving representation of Muslim political leadership: a case where securitizing frames are partially displaced by frames of empowerment and normative critique, but where suspicion and alarm persist (Faytre, 2018; Reuters, 2024).

### 3.3. Persuasion, Ethos-Pathos-Logos, And Hybrid Political Communication

To understand why Mamdani's rhetoric resonated with many voters and attracted intense media attention, the study mobilizes persuasion and rhetorical theories. Classical rhetoric emphasizes ethos (credibility), pathos (emotion), and logos (reasoned argument) as pillars of effective persuasion (Aristotle, 2007). Contemporary work such as Cialdini's (2004) *Influence et manipulation* empirically refines these categories in terms of

principles like social proof, commitment, authority, reciprocity, and scarcity.

Arabic-language scholarship on *al-ittiṣāl al-iqnā'ī* (persuasive communication) offers parallel conceptualizations. Ishaq (2025) defines persuasive communication as a strategic process integrating content, delivery, and non-verbal cues to shape attitudes and behaviours; Gad (n.d.) emphasizes the centrality of mass media in amplifying persuasive messages; Madkour (2006) and Abbas (2020) treat persuasion as a dynamic introduction of "new ideas" into social systems, drawing on diffusion-of-innovations logic.

These perspectives are highly pertinent to Mamdani's campaign. His ethos is built through a biography of migrant precarity and community organizing; his pathos emerges in stories about homeless children and families on the edge of eviction; his logos takes shape in specific, numerically grounded proposals on housing, wages, and transport (Advocates for Children of New York, 2025; Spauster & Evely, 2025; The New Yorker, 2025; Transition 2025, 2025). His use of simple, memorable slogans ("New York is not for sale"; "a city we can afford to live and dream in") reflects a strategic exploitation of consistency and social proof (Cialdini, 2004).

French-language work on persuasion and the psychology of influence stresses that political messages are rarely processed as pure rational arguments; they are filtered through affect, identity and media routines ("*Mécanismes psychologiques de la persuasion*," 2024). This is evident in how Mamdani's speeches were clipped, captioned, and remixed on social media, where short segments of emotionally charged content often travelled further than detailed policy explanations.

### 3.4. Hybrid Media Systems and Muslim Self-Representation

Finally, the framework adopts a hybrid media systems perspective, recognizing that Mamdani's campaign operated simultaneously within legacy news structures and decentralized digital networks (Chadwick, 2017). Digital tools allowed Mamdani and his supporters to circulate counter-narratives that challenged dominant media frames of Muslims, echoing broader efforts by Muslims in Europe and North America to use digital platforms to contest Islamophobic representations (International Union of Muslim Scholars, 2023; Ramadan, 2020; Rodrigues Galvao, 2024; "*Les usages des ressources numériques musulmanes*," 2021).

Mamdani's online visibility viral clips subtitled into Arabic and disseminated on Arab Twitter/X and TikTok intersects with this wider field of Muslim self-representation and media activism. Bringing these strands together, the theoretical framework views the coverage of Mamdani as the outcome of interacting processes: transnational agenda-setting, competing frames around Muslims and socialism, and strategic persuasive communication within a hybrid media environment.

## 4. METHODOLOGY

### 4.1. Research Design

The study employs a qualitative, comparative content and discourse analysis. Rather than aiming at exhaustive coverage, it uses purposive sampling to capture influential texts that shape public conversation in their respective media ecosystems. The focus is on dominant frames, narrative patterns, and rhetorical strategies, situated within structural indicators (poverty, rent burden, demographics, turnout).

### 4.2. Corpus

**Time frame.** The corpus covers June–November 2025, from the intensification of Mamdani's mayoral campaign and the Democratic primary through the general election and the immediate post-election aftermath. To strengthen timeframe transparency, the sampling window includes election-day coverage (4 November 2025) and follow-up reporting published in the first 7–10 days after the vote, capturing early reactions, framing consolidation, and agenda shifts (Betts, 2025; Chapuis, 2025). Sampling details and operational definitions. Purposive sampling was used to capture high-impact items that shaped public interpretation of Mamdani's candidacy, platform, identity, and electoral outcome across ideologically diverse Western and Arab media ecosystems. The final analytic corpus comprised 33 media texts (Western outlets:  $n = 21$ ; Arab outlets:  $n = 12$ ), in addition to the core set of campaign speeches and highly circulated platform videos used for the rhetorical analysis.

Across outlets, the analysis typically included 2–3 items per outlet (range: 1–4), selected for prominence (front-page placement or high circulation/engagement), direct relevance to the election story, and representativeness of recurrent frames (e.g., progressive breakthrough, socialist threat, Muslim milestone, Gaza/Islamophobia). Inclusion criteria were: (a) election-focused news reports, features, and clearly identifiable opinion/analysis pieces that substantially addressed

Mamdani's campaign or victory; and (b) publication within the study window, including the immediate post-election period noted above. Exclusion criteria were: brief passing mentions, duplicated syndicated rewrites, and items focused on unrelated municipal issues without meaningful engagement with the campaign or its framing.

The term "major" outlets was operationally defined as organizations with established agenda-setting capacity in their media system, evidenced by at least two of the following: large audience reach/circulation, long-standing national or international reputation, routine citation by other media, or transnational distribution (e.g., wire services and pan-Arab satellite networks).

Western outlets.

News agencies and mainstream outlets: Associated Press, The Guardian, Le Monde, Reuters, Time, and The New Yorker (Betts, 2025; Chapuis, 2025; The New Yorker, 2025; Time, 2025).

- Opinion and ideological media: New York Post and other conservative commentary, plus progressive magazines such as Jacobin (New York Post, 2025a, 2025b; Religion News / Al Jazeera, 2025).

### Arab Outlets.

- Al Jazeera English liveblog and election-related features (Al Jazeera, 2025).
- Al Jazeera Arabic analytical and opinion pieces foregrounding Islamophobia and Gaza-related positioning (Ikramullah & Alsoofy, 2025).
- France 24 Arabic reports on Mamdani's biography, agenda, and Arab/Muslim reactions (France 24 Arabic, 2025a, 2025b).

### Contextual Data.

- Electoral figures: derived from the NYC Board of Elections certification report and triangulated with neighbourhood-level reporting (Board of Elections in the City of New York, 2025; Time, 2025).
- Poverty and rent data: Poverty Tracker (Columbia University/Robin Hood), NYU Furman Center, and the NYC Comptroller (Furman Center, 2024; New York City Comptroller, 2024; Poverty Tracker Research Group at Columbia University, 2025).
- Demographic data: MOIA and ISPU (ISPU, 2018; MOIA, 2023).
- Student homelessness: Advocates for Children of New York and City Limits coverage (Advocates for Children of New York, 2025; Spauster & Evely, 2025).

4.3. Analytical Procedure

The analysis followed four steps:

Open coding of articles to identify recurrent themes ("shock victory," "socialist threat," "Muslim pride," "Israel/Gaza," "rent crisis").

Frame construction by clustering codes into the four frames outlined in Section 3.2.

Rhetorical analysis of selected speeches, focusing on ethos, pathos, logos, and the deployment of statistics and narrative.

Cross-checking with structural indicators (Tables 1 and 2) to examine when and how quantitative data appeared in coverage.

5. FIGURES AND TABLES

5.1. Electoral And Socio-Economic Context:

Figure 1 summarizes the basic electoral outcomes of the 2025 NYC mayoral election.

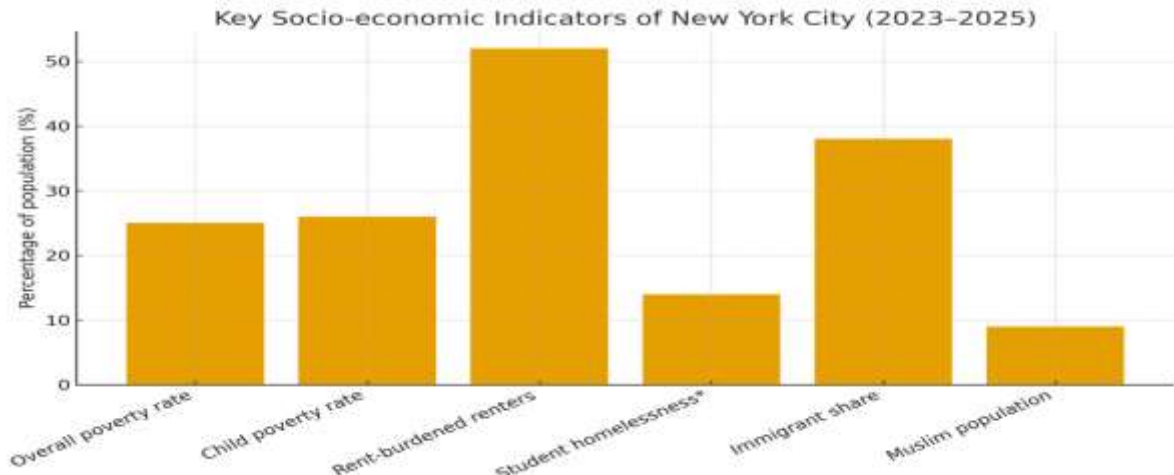


Figure 1: Vote Share in the 2025 New York City Mayoral Election.

(A Bar Chart Showing Mamdani 50.78%, Cuomo 41.32%, Sliwa 7.01%; Total Ballots = 2,218,647; Turnout = 43.47% Of 5,103,941 Registered Voters.)

Source: Board Of Elections in the City Of New York (2025); Time (2025).

Mamdani carried four of the five boroughs Manhattan, Brooklyn, Queens, and the Bronx while Cuomo won only Staten Island (Time, 2025). His strongest margins occurred in neighborhoods characterized by lower median incomes, higher renter shares, and heavy reliance on public transport

(Furman Center, 2024; Time, 2025).

5.2. Western Liberal Media: Progressive Breakthrough and Structural Crisis

Structural Context: Poverty, Rent, and Homelessness:

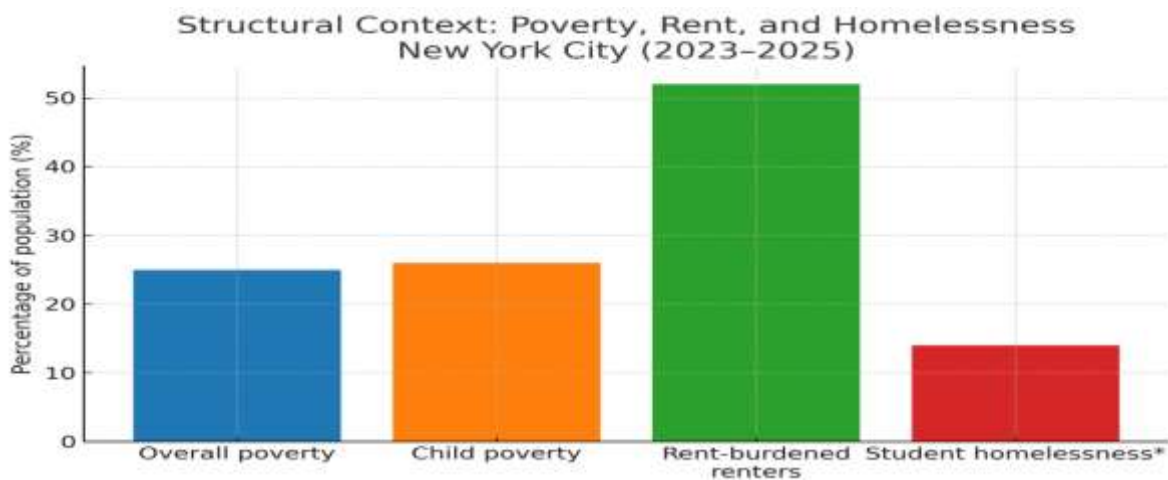


Figure 2

The coloured bars represent overall poverty (25%), child poverty (≈26%), rent-burdened renter

households ( $\approx 52\%$ ), and the proportion of public-school students experiencing homelessness ( $\approx 14\%$ , or 1 in 7). These indicators provide crucial context for understanding how media outlets framed the stakes of the 2025 mayoral election.

### 5.3. Western Liberal Media: Progressive Breakthrough and Structural Crisis

Liberal outlets such as The Guardian, Le Monde, and Time framed the election as a historic progressive breakthrough closely linked to the structural crisis summarized in Table 1.

- The Guardian highlighted that turnout “surpassed two million ballots, the highest in over half a century,” attributing this surge to younger voters and renters who felt ignored by previous administrations.
- Le Monde emphasized Mamdani’s status as the first Muslim and openly socialist mayor, and linked his victory to “skyrocketing housing costs and childcare expenses” that had made life unsustainable for many working families.
- Time focused on the geographic pattern of support, showing that Mamdani outperformed his rivals in neighbourhoods characterized by lower incomes, high renter shares, and heavy reliance on public transport.

In these narratives, quantitative data legitimized the idea that Mamdani’s agenda responded to an objectively measurable crisis. Poverty, rent burden, and homelessness were treated as central drivers of the election rather than marginal context (Furman Center, 2024; Poverty Tracker Research Group at

Columbia University, 2025).

### 5.4. Western Conservative Media: The “Socialist Threat” And Selective Numbers

Conservative coverage, particularly in the New York Post, cast Mamdani as a “socialist experiment” threatening business confidence and public order (New York Post, 2025a, 2025b). Articles focused on the projected cost of his proposals and frequently quoted business owners warning of reduced investment and job losses. Numeric emphasis fell on tax increases and regulatory burdens, while indicators of poverty and rent stress were rarely mentioned (Furman Center, 2024; Poverty Tracker Research Group at Columbia University, 2025).

This selective use of numbers illustrates how statistics themselves function as framing tools: business costs are made visible, while structural hardship is rendered invisible.

### 5.5. Arab Media: Muslim Milestone, Gaza, and Islamophobia

Arab media, especially Al Jazeera and France 24 Arabic, constructed Mamdani primarily through frames of Muslim representation, Islamophobia, and Gaza. Reports stressed that he is the first Muslim mayor of a city with approximately 770,000 Muslims and a dense network of mosques (France 24 Arabic, 2025; ISPU, 2018). Commentaries presented his victory as a symbolic challenge to two decades of securitization and surveillance of Muslims in New York, and as a sign that U.S. voters can support candidates who speak openly about Palestine (Al Jazeera, 2025, 2025b).

**Table 1: Illustrative Frames in Western and Arab Media Coverage of Mamdani.**

Media system	Dominant frames	Typical indicators / facts used
Western liberal	Progressive breakthrough; renters’ and youth coalition	Turnout > 2 million; 50.4% vote share; high support in renter-heavy districts
Western conservative	Socialist threat; anti-business; public safety concerns	Cost of new taxes; minimum wage targets; anecdotes from business owners
Arab media	Muslim milestone; anti-Islamophobia; Gaza and Palestine	Muslim population share; first Muslim mayor; references to Gaza and Islamophobia

Arab outlets did mention socio-economic conditions, but primarily to underscore that Mamdani emerged from working-class, migrant, and Muslim communities facing high living costs and discrimination. In some pieces, interviewees explicitly connected the struggle for affordable housing in New York to wider experiences of marginalization and exclusion in the West (Religion News / Al Jazeera, 2025)

### 5.6. Persuasive Strategies in Mamdani’s Speeches

**Across the corpus, several speech moments recurred in both Western and Arab coverage:**

- Reframing freedom in material terms by tying it to rent, wages, childcare, and transit (The New Yorker, 2025; Transition 2025, 2025).
- Building ethos through a biography of migrant precarity and community organizing (Le Monde, 2025; The New Yorker, 2025).
- Deploying pathos around homeless children and families facing eviction, as well as around Gaza and Islamophobia in Arab media

(Ikramullah & Alsoofy, 2025; Spauster & Evely, 2025).

- Using simple slogans that lent themselves to repetition and translation ("New York is not for sale").
- Engaging in translingual gestures, including Arabic phrases, that strengthened identification with Muslim and Arab audiences (Al Jazeera, 2025; France 24 Arabic, 2025).

These strategies align with classical and contemporary theories of persuasive communication (Aristotle, 2007; Cialdini, 2004; Ishaq, 2025; Madkour, 2006), and they reflect an awareness of the hybrid media environment in which messages must work both on stage and on screen (Chadwick, 2017).

## 6. DISCUSSION

The findings show that Mamdani's election operated as a kind of mirror, reflecting each media system's priorities and normative concerns. Liberal Western outlets grounded their narratives in socio-economic data and framed his victory as a progressive response to structural crisis; conservative outlets foregrounded fiscal and regulatory risks, downplaying or omitting hardship indicators; Arab media linked the same event to Islamophobia, Gaza, and Muslim empowerment.

From a theoretical standpoint, the case illustrates how agenda-setting and framing are mutually reinforcing in a transnational context (Entman, 1993; Khamis & Vaughn, 2011; McCombs, 2004). Different media systems selected different aspects of reality poverty, taxes, Islamophobia, Gaza and structured them into coherent narratives that resonated with their audiences. Statistics were not neutral background; they functioned as evidentiary anchors for these narratives.

The case also demonstrates how persuasion and hybrid media systems matter. Mamdani's speeches were crafted with both physical rallies and digital circulation in mind. His strategic use of ethos, pathos, and logos inflected by quantifiable indicators

produced a discourse that could be easily clipped, shared, and reframed across platforms (Aristotle, 2007; Cialdini, 2004; Ishaq, 2025). Digital networks, in turn, allowed Muslim and Arab users to appropriate his image and words as symbols in their own struggles against Islamophobia and for Palestine (International Union of Muslim Scholars, 2023; "Les usages des ressources numériques musulmanes," 2021; Ramadan, 2020).

## 7. CONCLUSION

This research has offered a qualitatively rich, statistically grounded analysis of how the election of Zohran Mamdani as New York's first Muslim mayor was covered in Western and Arab media and how his own rhetoric travelled across these ecosystems. By integrating agenda-setting, framing, and persuasion theories with structural indicators of urban inequality and demographic diversity, it has shown that:

The same electoral event produced divergent agendas one centred on affordability and progressive politics, another on economic and security risks, and a third on Muslim representation and Gaza.

Frames around Muslims and socialism, long documented in European and American media, were re-articulated in relation to Mamdani, but also confronted by counter-frames of empowerment and moral critique.

Mamdani's persuasive strategies, rooted in personal narrative, moral clarity, and translingual gestures, facilitated the transnational circulation of his image as both a local urban leader and a global Muslim symbol.

Future research could extend this analysis through systematic content coding of larger corpora or through audience studies exploring how different publics interpret Mamdani's victory. Nevertheless, the case already suggests that in an era of hybrid media and overlapping crises, local elections in "global cities" can become key sites for negotiating the meanings of democracy, justice, and who gets to speak for the future.

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