

# **With Us or Against Us**

Tabloid reporting on British Muslims in the weeks following  
the London bomb attacks of July 7 2005

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## Introduction

Following the murder of Dutch filmmaker Theo van Gogh in November 2004, I was struck by what I perceived to be very biased and discriminatory reporting on Islam and Muslims in the Netherlands in certain sections of the Dutch media. I would have found the tone taken irresponsible at the best of times, but especially so then given the tension that already existed between various communities in the country following the murder, illustrated by acts of arson in various churches, mosques and schools.

Though media cannot by any means held solely responsible for the social climate in a country, there is a huge body of research that shows its influence to be far from insignificant. The best-known and most extreme examples are those of former Yugoslavia, where Slobodan Milosevic used television to initiate the Serbian nationalist campaign that began the Yugoslavian civil war and *Radio Mille Collines* which was used to instigate the 1994 Rwandan genocide.

The societal tension that has followed terrorist attacks in the US and European countries should of course not be compared to civil wars or acts of genocide. Neither am I suggesting that there is any kind of politically orchestrated 'campaign' to instigate violence against Muslims in the media. Nevertheless, these terrorist attacks were followed by a spate of attacks against Muslims (and those mistaken for Muslims), Islamic centres and mosques, and some against churches. Though the freedom of speech and press must of course under all circumstances be protected and upheld, it is my opinion that it is of great importance, especially during times of tension, that the press is fair, balanced and responsible as well as free.

Furthermore, various studies have shown that while grievances of a large section of a populace are not a sufficient cause for terrorism, they are a necessary factor. If media reporting contributes to or incites racist or anti-Islamic sentiment, it can be argued that fairer reporting also reduces the threat of terrorism.

## **Problem**

This thesis studies the case of tabloid press coverage in Britain pertaining to British Muslims, following the public transport bombings in London on July 7 2005. There are a number of reports predating the bombings which showed the UK press to be biased against, among others, Muslims. Some of these investigations concluded that these biased press reports contributed to a hostile climate for many immigrants and children of immigrants, asylum seekers and Muslims in particular.

The reports of rights-based organisations such as the Council of Europe and the Runnymede Trust focus on general misconceptions of Islam and British Muslims, and 'Islamophobia' in the press and in society in general. The research undertaken by two social scientists, Elizabeth Poole and John E. Richardson focus on the press coverage of events that were linked to Islam or Muslims in some way, such as the fatwa against Salman Rushdie, the marriage of Jemima Goldsmith to Imran Khan, and the debate surrounding the public funding of Islamic schools. They found the images of Islam presented to be negative or biased across the board, though more so in the more right-leaning newspapers than in more leftwing ones.

The scope of these studies covers a large section of the 1990's. Based on these earlier findings, it could be expected that the reporting would have become more biased and inflammatory following the September 11 attacks in the United States in 2001, and after a possible dwindling of attention in the inter-lying years, to have become more so again following the bombings in London in July 2005. This would be problematic on various levels. Not only does it make Britain an unpleasant and even dangerous place to live for many Muslims, it can also contribute to the disaffection that is thought to be one of the causes of extremism in the first place.

## **Questions**

**Central question: *How did discourse regarding British Muslims develop in the two largest British tabloids during the two weeks following the London bomb attacks of July 7 2005?***

The tabloids selected for study, The Sun and The Daily Mirror, along with their Sunday sister publications News of the World and the Sunday Mirror, were chosen because they had the largest circulations and are at opposite ends of the political spectrum. Given their opposing political orientation, it is unlikely that it will be possible to answer such a sweeping question for both of them simultaneously. In stead, they will be treated individually, and compared to one another.

The number of articles referring to Islam or Muslims in Britain during this period is enormous, and

it is impossible to make sweeping statements regarding the position of this or that newspaper for the entire period. Therefore, the focus is specifically on a number of recurring issues that were debated in the news during the month following the 7 July attacks.

The issues were chosen firstly because a very large proportion of the reporting that wasn't 'human interest' revolved around them, thus representing a large part of the discourse on British Muslims in these publications during the period under investigation. Secondly, these issues are all potentially divisive, making fair and balanced treatment of them all the more important. The sub-questions derived from the issues are:

**1) How did each of the newspapers cover the various suggested reasons for the attacks?**

Video statements by the attackers themselves which emerged respectively three months and a year after the bombings blamed UK policy in Iraq and Afghanistan as well as the continuing Israeli occupation of the Gaza Strip and the West Bank for the attacks. However, these videos were not released until respectively two months and a year after the attacks, so speculation on the reasons was rife directly following the bombings.

In the immediate aftermath of the attacks, various MPs, George Galloway most prominently, had already expressed similar views to the reasons eventually given in the video messages ("London is paying the price for Iraq"). The more left-wing media paid considerable attention to this viewpoint. The more right-wing media outlets almost universally dismissed the 'apologist' reasoning out of hand, saying no 'excuses' should be made for such atrocities, sometimes citing the simplistic 'they were evil' as a reason for the perpetrators' actions.

Though they did not support the actual attacks, various politicians, columnists and some Muslims expressed understanding for the reasons behind the bombings, namely anger over Britain's involvement in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan as well as discrimination and poor prospects for young Muslims in the UK. This viewpoint was often vilified in the right-wing press and treated as treasonous.

This question delves into how the Sun and the Daily Mirror cover the opposing viewpoints and the entire spectrum of possibilities in between, and whether they allowed for the possibility that the grievances might have been genuine even if the bombings themselves were abhorrent.

**2) How did each of the newspapers cover the debate around the threat posed by Muslims in Britain?**

There was a great deal of consternation about the fact that the bombers were 'home-grown', and the question of how much of a threat Islam posed to Britain rose in various ways. Previous research into newspaper reporting on Muslims in Britain showed that British Islam was frequently constructed as posing a cultural threat. Now, the security threat which had previously been

attributed to Muslims abroad had to be examined in a local context also. This section will look at the degree to which Islam itself is seen as the source of the threat, rather than a broader socio-political situation and the degree to which customs and opinions associated with Islam are seen as a threat in and of themselves. It also covers whether certain political views, held by Muslims or others, are perceived as threatening.

### **3) How did each of the newspapers cover the backlash against the Islamic community?**

Following the London bombings, the metropolitan police reported a 600 per cent increase in religious hate crimes<sup>1</sup>, many of them against Muslims or those perceived to be Muslims (Sikhs were often targets) and Islamic buildings such as Mosques and Islamic schools. These attacks even resulted in a death<sup>2</sup>. The newspapers studied paid varying amounts of attention to these attacks, and some were more vocal than others in their condemnation. In spite of the large increase in attacks, the number of incidents that were considered newsworthy was fairly limited. However, a lot of attention was paid to fear of reprisals and calls for calm from various politicians and community leaders.

### **4) How did each of the newspapers cover the debate on the response required from various stakeholders?**

The bomb attacks resulted in a call from Prime Minister Tony Blair, some MPs, various sections of the public, and a number of the newspapers for tougher legislation on a set of issues ranging from counter-terrorism to immigration and extradition to advocating violence in sermons or speeches. Exemplary of this was consternation in *The Sun* in particular, about the invitation for Swiss Islamic scholar Tariq Ramadan – seen by the *Sun* as extremist - to speak at a conference in part funded by the Association of Police Chiefs shortly after the bombings. There were also repeated calls upon Islamic communities and leaders to do more to combat extremism, and to approach the security services with any information they might have regarding militants in their midst. Some columnists and letter-writers called for an ‘end to political correctness’ and to ‘pandering to Muslim sensitivities’, which they viewed as one of the direct reasons the attacks could happen.

Though the focus in this question lies particularly on consequences for or demands of Muslims, some broader issues of civil liberties and human rights are also addressed, as further curtailment of these could further contribute to a hostile environment that encourages rather than prevents terrorism.

Cross-cutting the four questions raised above, is a fifth:

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<sup>1</sup> EUMC, The impact of 7 July 2005 bomb attacks on Muslim communities in the EU <http://fra.europa.eu/fra/material/pub/London/London-Bomb-attacks.pdf> p. 31

<sup>2</sup> Dodd, V., *Islamophobia blamed for attack*, *The Guardian*, July 13 2005 [http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk\\_news/story/0,3604,1527288,00.html](http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk_news/story/0,3604,1527288,00.html) and Independent race and refugee news network, *The anti-Muslim backlash begins*, 14 July 2005 <http://www.irr.org.uk/2005/july/ak000008.html>

### **5) To what degree were Muslims given a voice in these debates in both newspapers?**

The events of 7/7 strongly affected the (mostly Asian) Muslim community in England, and led to an increased interest in British Muslim opinion. Across all the issues investigated, attention will be paid to how much space is given to Muslim viewpoints, *which* Muslim voices are heard (community leaders and representatives, experts and scholars, and members of the public, and moderate versus extremist opinions), *where* these views are presented, (news articles, editorials, columns or letters to the editor), and what commentary the journalist/newspaper had on Muslim opinions.

## **Rationale**

This particular research topic was chosen for five reasons:

*1) British press reporting, tabloid or otherwise, on British Muslims for this specific period has not yet been researched in depth*

There is a growing body of research on Islam and Muslims in the (western) media. There have been a number of previous studies into particularly Muslims and the UK media, and two in depth studies of Islam and Muslims in the British press.<sup>3</sup> However, these pre-date the period researched here, and neither focuses on tabloids specifically. Press reporting in the period in question, 7 July 2005 until 21 July 2005, is touched upon in the report of the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC, re-named European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) in 2007) on the impact of the attacks on Muslim communities in the EU<sup>4</sup>, but not studied in depth. Finally, there is the book *One Day in July: Experiencing 7/7*, by John Tulloch, professor of media and sociology and expert on risk at Brunel University, who was badly injured in the Edgware road bomb blast. Though Tulloch does study media reporting and other aspects of the aftermath of the bombings with an academic eye in part, *One Day in July* is still very much a personal account of terror and recovery and a social critique rather than a systematic study of a (section of) media reporting following the attacks.

*2) The Sun and The Daily Mirror are the two most-read newspapers in the UK.*

In July 2005, the Sun and the Daily Mirror had circulations of 3,343,386 and 1,752,948 respectively<sup>5</sup>, with the Sun claiming a readership of ten million, making them the two largest

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<sup>3</sup> Poole, Elizabeth, *Reporting Islam*, 2002 and Richardson, John E., *(Mis)representing Islam; The racism and rhetoric of British broadsheet newspapers*, 2004

<sup>4</sup> EUMC, "The impact of 7 July 2005 bomb attacks on Muslim communities in the EU", 2005  
<http://fra.europa.eu/fra/material/pub/London/London-Bomb-attacks.pdf>, p.31

<sup>5</sup> Audit Bureau of Circulations statistics, reproduced on the Guardian website, *National daily newspaper circulation July 2005* <http://media.guardian.co.uk/circulationfigures/tables/0,,1549552,00.html>

newspapers in the UK, a position they hold to this day. Their sister Sunday papers, News of the World and the Sunday Mirror, hold the same positions for the Sunday Papers.<sup>6</sup> News and opinions put forth in these two newspapers both reach and are presumably at least in part representative of the largest population of newspaper readers in the country. (See also Method)

*3) Discrimination against Muslims in Britain is widespread, and a negative media discourse on Islam is a contributing factor to this situation*

The position of Muslims in Britain and the role media reporting has played in that situation are discussed extensively in Chapter Two, but in short it can be said that there is a great deal of anti-Muslim discrimination at both the societal and institutional level, and that anti-Islamic discourses have been dominant in British news reporting in at least the past ten years, if not longer.

*4) Social exclusion and disaffection as a result of discrimination are necessary – though not sufficient - causes of terrorism.<sup>7</sup>*

The reasons for terrorist action in general are not the main focus of this study. However, links between discrimination and injustice and terrorist action have been found in previous studies. They also feature in the debate surrounding the reasons for this particular terrorist attack in Chapter Three. Given the previous point on the relationship between media and discrimination, it can be said there is a link between biased media reporting and radicalisation leading to terrorist activity.

*5) Experience in various other countries has shown the inflammatory news reporting can lead to violence:*

Links between media reporting and violence are covered in brief in Chapter One. Though there is absolutely no indication that there was an orchestrated campaign in the media to turn public opinion against Muslims, experiences in other countries do indicate the role media can play in steering opinion. Particularly in a socially tense period such as the one that followed the London bombings, responsible and non-incendiary reporting is crucial. However, while this study assumes a link between news reporting and public opinion based on previous studies, the objective is merely to study what was reported rather than making a causal link between reporting and public reaction.

## **Method**

### **Selection of data**

Period: 07/07/2005 - 21/07/2005: This period was chosen because it was during this time that the most attacks against Muslims and Islamic buildings took place in the wake of the bombings of July

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<sup>6</sup> Audit Bureau of Circulations , <http://media.guardian.co.uk/presspublishing/tables/0,,1549559,00.html>

<sup>7</sup> Gupta, K. *Exploring Roots of Terrorism*, in Bjorgo, T, *Root causes of terrorism*, Routledge, 2005

7<sup>th</sup>. Also, two major events occurred, on 21 and 22 July respectively, namely a failed second attempt at public transport bombings on the 21<sup>st</sup>, and the wrongful fatal shooting of Brazilian Jean Charles de Menezes in the Stockwell Tube station, after a case of mistaken identity led police to believe he was a suicide bomber. Though these are significant events, the new storm of debate that followed, in particular on immigration, asylum seekers and police powers, makes the volume of articles too great to be covered within the scope of this study. Nevertheless, the two-week boundary remains artificial, and most of the stories that were covered during this period continued to develop in the following months. A larger study would be required to research their development over time.

Newspapers: The two newspapers were selected for two reasons, namely their political orientation and their circulation. The only left-leaning tabloid is the Daily Mirror and its counterpart the Sunday Mirror, and additionally The Daily Mirror is the second-most read newspaper in the country. The Sun and its sister Sunday paper, News of the World, have the largest readership among the remaining, all right-wing tabloids, and are the most-read newspapers overall in the UK. Political orientation is determined on the basis of viewpoints on issues relevant to this study such as immigration, multiculturalism and terrorism, rather than political party affiliation. The Sun is traditionally anti-immigration and pro-assimilation of minorities, whereas the Daily Mirror leans towards the multiculturalist side of the debate.

In terms of political affiliation, The Sun, traditionally a Conservative supporter, threw its support behind Tony Blair and the Labour Party in the 1997 elections, and claimed credit for the party's landslide victory.<sup>8</sup> It continued to support Tony Blair until his resignation in 2007, after which it has continued to support Labour. The Daily Mirror was a long-time Labour supporter, but became heavily critical of the party and Prime Minister Blair with the onset of the Iraq War in 2003.<sup>9</sup>

On the issues mainly under investigation in this study, such as terrorism, integration, human rights and civil liberties, 'New Labour, as it was re-named in 1997, has taken an approach that could be considered increasingly right-wing, especially in the years following the terrorist attacks of September 11 2001. This is further examined in Chapter Two.

The choice to study tabloids was made on the basis of their large circulation (for comparison, The Daily Telegraph is the largest broadsheet in the country with a circulation of 864,377, smaller than that of any of the tabloids<sup>10</sup>). When looking at the impact of reporting on British Muslims, especially in the context of backlash and response to the attack, the Sun and the Daily Mirror combined have the widest reach. Furthermore, tabloid reporting tends to be more

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<sup>8</sup> Nicho, J, Pric, J, *Advanced studies in the Media: Communication and Production*, Cheltenham 1998, p. 64

<sup>9</sup> Frankel, G., , *As Election Looms, Tony Blair Basks In Warmth of the Sun* , Washington Post <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A35472-2005May4.html>, 4 May 2005;

<sup>10</sup> Audit Bureau of Circulations statistics, reproduced on the Guardian website <http://media.guardian.co.uk/circulationfigures/tables/0,,1549552,00.html>

incendiary and less nuanced than the broadsheet press.

While it can not be automatically assumed that newspaper readers unquestioningly follow the views of the papers, a degree of agreement between the newspaper's views and that of its readers can be assumed for the following reason: Despite the worthy codes and principles of journalism, journalists do more than merely 'tell the truth'. News is a product, and it must be sold. A great deal of newspapers' income comes from advertising, and therefore the most attractive markets are those that have the greatest spending power. This can mean targeting a relatively richer readership (mainly that of the broadsheet newspapers such as the Financial Times, Daily Telegraph or Guardian) or a broad readership in terms of circulation numbers. This is illustrated by the near-identical cost of a full-page advertisement in the Sun and the Financial Times.<sup>11</sup> Given that the Sun has – with some fluctuations over the years - roughly ten times the circulation of the Financial Times<sup>12</sup>, it means that advertisers reach ten Sun readers at the 'price' of every one Financial Times reader.

It is therefore in the newspapers' interest to select news that will be of value to its 'market', and to present it in a way that echoes or reinforces their concerns, ideas and preconceptions, meaning that while media may influence opinion, it also reflects it.

Articles: All articles were selected using the LexisNexis database searching for the terms 'Islam', 'Muslim', 'bomb', 'attack', 'terror' and the names of the four bombers, 'Khan', 'Tanweer', 'Hussain' and 'Lindsay'. Articles about Muslims and Islam outside of Britain were discarded, as the research focuses on the discourse about Muslims 'within'. This led to the inclusion of articles detailing the trips of two of the bombers, Mohammed Siddique Khan and Shezad Tanweer to Pakistan and their visits to Madrassas there, as well as speculation about similar trips made by other British Muslims, as they deal with the radicalisation of British Muslims in a foreign setting. A very small number of articles were further excluded from the analysis because they did not touch upon Islam or Muslims any of the five issues studied here. These were almost exclusively human interest stories about the victims of the bombings and their families, and the rescue workers who helped them. Articles of this nature on victim Shahara Islam are included however, because they fall under sub-question two, on the perception of the threat of Islam.

### **Analysis**

A qualitative comparative analysis will be made of the reporting in the two tabloids concerned. The material will be organised thematically, following the first four sub-questions on reasons, threat, backlash and response. The fifth sub-question on the degree to which Muslim opinions were represented is cross-cutting and will be answered for each of the themes.

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<sup>11</sup> Franklin, B. *Newzak and the News Media*, London, 1997

<sup>12</sup> Audit Bureau of Circulations statistics 2001 – 2008, reproduced on the Guardian website, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/media/abcs>

In order to provide a framework for comparison, the Runnymede Trust's open and closed views of Islam will be used. In the Runnymede Trust's "Islamophobia: A challenge for us all" (1997), which is further discussed in Chapter Two, a number of open and closed representations of Islam were identified.<sup>13</sup> In the analysis of the data selected the focus is on whether newspapers have a more open or closed discourse on Islam and Muslims following the Runnymede Trust's framework:

<b>Distinctions</b>	<b>Closed views</b>	<b>Open views</b>
Monolithic/ Diverse	Islam seen as a single monolithic bloc, static and unresponsive	Islam seen as diverse and progressive, with internal differences
Separate/ Interacting	Islam seen as separate and other	Islam seen as interdependent with other faiths and cultures
Inferior/ Different	Islam seen as inferior to the West	Islam seen as not deficient, and equally worthy of respect
Enemy/ Partner	Islam seen as violent, aggressive, threatening, supportive of terrorism	Islam seen as an actual or potential partner in joint cooperative enterprises
Manipulative/ Sincere	Islam seen as a political ideology, used for political and military advantage	Islam seen as a genuine religious faith, practiced sincerely by its adherents
Criticism of West rejected/ Criticism of West considered	Criticisms made by Islam of 'the West' rejected out of hand	Criticisms of 'the West' are considered and debated
Discrimination defended/ Discrimination criticised	Hostility towards Islam used to justify discriminatory practises towards Muslims	Disagreements 'with' Islam do not diminish efforts to combat discrimination and exclusion
Islamophobia seen as natural/ Islamophobia seen as problematic	Anti-Muslim hostility accepted as natural	Critical views of Islam are themselves subjected to critique, lest they're inaccurate

Closed views in this context are representative of a phobic dread of Islam, whereas appreciation and respect, as well as legitimate disagreement and criticism are aspects of open views. In reality these distinctions are obviously blurred, and often mutually reinforce one another.<sup>14</sup> The more a protagonist expresses closed views of Islam, the more Islamophobic their attitude can be said to be. A critique of the use of term 'Islamophobia', discussed in more depth in chapter two, is that it might curtail genuine dialogue and discussion about Islam and Islamic affairs and issues. In his in-depth study into anti-Islamic sentiment in the British broadsheet press, John Richardson, proposes a mechanism to separate warranted from prejudicial criticism, which lies in the relationship between text and context. A text, Richardson says, can be estimated to be more or less Islamophobic depending on the extent to which it reproduces the 'closed' views of Islam as listed by the Runnymede trust. All of the closed views assume that the actions of Muslims are thought to be defined by their 'Muslim-ness', as opposed to any other number of explanatory categories. Secondly, they are based on a ranking of groups in which Islam is presented as

<sup>13</sup> Runnymede Trust, *Islamophobia, a challenge for us all*, 1997, p.5

<sup>14</sup> Islamophobia 1997, p. 4-5

inferior. When these two – essentialisation and stratification - are combined, Richardson argues, the result will *necessarily* be prejudiced.

However, an analysis of this kind is by nature based on interpretation of the language used and the connotations and emotional charge it carries, which is not always equally objective. The study will remain as close as possible to the actual texts, and it will be indicated in instances where interpretation relies on speculation.

The Runnymede Trust's framework of open and closed views can not be used to signify every form of discourse on Muslims in the article. Therefore, other forms of signifiers and framing will also be noted.

Though some newspaper articles used in this study have a clear dominant theme, others address more than one of the four sub-questions raised, and various sections of these articles are therefore covered in more than one of the chapters dedicated to the sub-questions.

A distinction will be made between articles that are presented as news or as opinion, as news articles are more likely to be accepted as truth by readers, whereas opinion articles tend to be viewed with more scepticism. However, whereas articles from The Sun are marked in LexisNexis as either news or opinion, the distinction is not made with Daily Mirror. The division in the case of the Daily Mirror will be made on the basis of whether clear opinion is expressed in the articles.

In addition, the fifth, cross-cutting question on the degree to which Muslim voices were given a space in the debate will be examined for each of the questions. The comparison here will not be made using the Runnymede framework, but rather reviewed on a case-by-case basis, determining which Muslim voices are heard, whether they are presented as being representative of 'the Muslim community' as a whole, and whether their opinions are put forward in the news or opinion sections.

### **Definition of terms**

Though most terms used in this study do not require clarification, there are a few which have either varying definitions or varying spellings. They are listed here:

9/11: Though the term 9/11 is based on the US date notation system, '9/11' has become common in world-wide usage to refer to the events of September 11, 2001, in which four passenger jets were flown into three landmark buildings and one crashed in a field, in a terrorist attack claimed by Al-Qaeda. These events are also occasionally referred to as '9/11' in this study.

7/7: Similar to '9/11', the July 2005 London bomb attacks that are the focus of this study very soon became known in Britain and beyond as '7/7' almost immediately after they occurred, and are sometimes referred to as such here.

Al Qaeda: Al-Qaeda is has a number of variant spellings including al-Qaida, al-Qa`ida and al-Qa`idah. Al-Qaeda is the form used here (though quotations from the newspapers and other sources may use one of the other forms), and the word signifies a Sunni Islamic movement that has carried out attacks on a number of civilian and military targets around the world, most notably those of September 11 2001 in the US. As yet, no direct link has been established between the perpetrators of the London bombings and members of Al-Qaeda.

Islamophobia: The reality of prejudice and unfounded hostility towards Islam, and its practical consequences of antagonism and discrimination against Muslims. The term is disputed, as discussed in chapter two, but it is still the most commonly used phrase for the definition given here, and it is therefore used in this study to indicate said prejudice

Muslims: Those who self-identify as being of the Islamic faith

The Muslim community: the collective Muslim population in Britain or, when indicated, in smaller geographical areas (e.g. 'the Muslim community in Leeds). While the Muslim community is sometimes discussed as a whole, this should not be taken to mean that it is a homogenous group, see also chapter two, paragraph two.

Terrorism: The systematic use of coercive intimidation against civilians for political goals<sup>15</sup>

UK/Britain: The UK and Britain are used interchangeably to indicate the geographical area of United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

## **Overview of chapters**

Chapter one sets out to explore the theoretical framework within which this study should be seen. It comes in two main sections, the first of which describes the dominant theories on Western perception of Islam, focusing particularly on the theories on Orientalism, set out most famously by Edward Said in his 1978 work *Orientalism*. Said's view on Orientalism is reviewed, as are later works on the topic by other authors, as well as its critics and detractors. Particular attention is paid to Samuel Huntington's *Clash of Civilisations*, which argues that whereas the world divide of the second half of the twentieth century during the Cold War was ideological, the conflicts that followed and are to come are between civilisations, particularly between Islam and the 'West'. The second part of the chapter focuses on media, discourse and violence.

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<sup>15</sup> Norris, P. Kern, N and Just, M. (eds) *Framing terrorism: The news media, the government and the public*, London, 2003, p.7

Chapter two provides the context for this research, covering multiculturalism, racism and government policy in Britain in recent years, the history and position of Muslims in Britain, a discussion of Islamophobia and an overview of the findings of previous studies on Islam and British press reporting. The chapter concludes with an overview of events on the day of the London bombings, and short profiles of the four men presumed to be the perpetrators.

The shorter chapters three, four, five and six each deal respectively with one of the first four sub-questions respectively, namely:

- How did each of the newspapers cover the various suggested reasons for the attacks?
- How did each of the newspapers cover the debate around the threat posed by Muslims in Britain?
- How did each of the newspapers cover the backlash against the Islamic community?
- How did each of the newspapers cover the debate on the response required from various stakeholders?

The fifth question, 'to what degree were Muslims given a voice in these debates in both newspapers?' is cross-cutting, and will be examined in each of the chapters and in relation to each of the four issues. Attention will also be paid to *who* is allowed to speak and in which sections of the paper they are placed, news or opinion.

The conclusion will sum up the findings from chapters three through six, and make recommendations for further research.

# Chapter One: Theoretical Framework

## Introduction

It is virtually impossible to make any kind of study of representations of Muslims by 'the West' without knowledge of the theories of Orientalism, some of its critics, and its development over time. This is especially important because the earlier proponents of Orientalism mainly focused on 'the Orient' and its peoples and cultures as geographically external to 'the West', whereas today's reality – and especially this study - is concerned with the peoples of the Orient now living *in the West*. Edward Said's *Orientalism* is the main focus of this section, followed by criticisms and later works. Samuel Huntington's *Clash of civilisations* will be studied here as an example of Orientalism. Islamophobia, which could be argued to be an extension of Orientalism as described here, is examined in the following chapter regarding the British context for this study.

Secondly, since this study concerns press reporting, news as discourse must be examined. News is not simply the reporting of 'the truth': In most cases it is a commercial product which must be sold. The selling of a product requires the identification of target audiences, preferably audiences with the greatest spending power. To attract this audience, the news selected for reporting must be of interest to this group, and it must be presented in a way that that reinforces and echoes its concerns, ideas and preconceptions. To be able to produce such news, it is likely that the reporters, editors and other staff of any media outlet will also have similar concerns. Following from this, any group that is not financially attractive as a target audience, will be marginalized both in the way it is covered, and in its representation in news teams.

If the economically unattractive groups are ethnic or religious minorities, they are at a double disadvantage in news production: Firstly, due to their relatively small numbers and often lower income they are not a target audience and therefore their concerns are of little interest to the producers of news, and secondly, their very presence in a country might *be* the concern of the target audience. This combination of factors can (and according to the majority of researchers does) lead to a racist news discourse. The work of Teun van Dijk, Myra Macdonald, John Richardson and others on this issue will be examined. Finally, theories on (media) discourses on violence and terrorism will briefly be considered.

The chapter following this one will deal with the specific British context of this study: the 2005 London bombings, the history and position of Muslims in Britain, prior empirical research on British press reporting on Muslims will, among other topics, be reviewed. However, in social research such as this, it is not entirely possible to make an absolute separation between theory and context. Some of the theory covered in this chapter will already pertain to the British situation, whereas some of the theories governing the social reality in Britain will be addressed in the following chapter. Together, they form the complete framework of ideas within which this study

will be undertaken, and the social reality within which the object of study – newspaper reporting on a certain topic during a certain period – was created.

## 1.1 Orientalism

*Orientalism* by the half-Palestinian half-American literary scientist Edward Said is often hailed as the seminal work on the topic. His 1978 book is certainly one of the most comprehensive studies of Western writing on the Orient to date, but in spite of its reputation as the origin of all studies of Orientalism, it was not born into a vacuum, as many scholars (often hailing from the Orient themselves) had already covered various aspects of Said's monumental work.<sup>16</sup> Before embarking on a review of the writings on the theories of Orientalism however, the term itself demands some clarification, as it has three different meanings even within Said's work itself.

Though the term 'Orientalism' was officially abandoned as the name for the academic study of the Orient by the 29<sup>th</sup> International Congress of Orientalists in 1973<sup>17</sup> (be it in the historical, anthropological, sociological, or any other academic field), this is what the term traditionally signifies. The field of research is now more generally referred to as *Oriental studies* or *area studies*, but as Said remarks, "Orientalism lives on academically through its doctrines and theses about the Orient and the Oriental".<sup>18</sup> Secondly, and more generally, "Orientalism" is used to signify and establish the Orient in contrast to – usually – the Occident. This basic distinction between the two is the starting point for a host of theories, novels, poems, paintings and so on of all those who chose the Orient and its peoples, cultures, 'nature' etcetera as their object of examination. Finally, and most importantly to Said and this present study, at the intersection between the academic and the imaginative meaning of Orientalism, lies Orientalism as the "corporate institution for dealing with the Orient [...], a Western style for dominating, restructuring and having authority over the Orient."<sup>19</sup> He notes the close resemblance – particularly ironic to him as an Arab Palestinian – between Orientalism and Western anti-Semitism in this respect.<sup>20</sup>

Similarly, as Peter Marcuse points out, the term 'Orientalist' can have various meanings. It can signify those who adopt and legitimate the viewpoint of Orientalism (in the third meaning of the word, that of a means of dominating the Orient), or those who accept the tenets of Orientalism, but criticise its results, and lastly, those who devote themselves to the critique of Orientalism in the third meaning of the word, such as Said himself, though there are areas of overlap, particularly between Orientalists of the second and the third kind.<sup>21</sup>

One of Said's precursors was the historian A.L. Tibawi, who in 1964 analysed the methods and techniques of Orientalism on the basis of the historical accuracy and objectivity of

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<sup>16</sup> Sardar, Ziauddin, *Orientalism*, Open University Press, Buckingham, 1999, p. 54-65

<sup>17</sup> Gardaz, M. *Introduction; Twenty-fifth anniversary of Edward Said's Orientalism* in "Religion" 34, 2004, p. 93

<sup>18</sup> Said, *Orientalism*, p.2

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 3

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 27-28

<sup>21</sup> Marcuse, P. *Said's Orientalism: A vital contribution today* in *Antipode*, volume 36, issue 5, p.814

the work of a number of then-living Orientalists, finding that therein was an alarming amount of speculation and guesswork. He concluded that modern Orientalism draws mainly on medieval images of Islam, that the religious and political affiliation of the Orientalists outweighs their academic judgement and that Orientalist scholarship tends to produce “speculative discourses on the obvious”.<sup>22</sup>

Said's *Orientalism* covers a smaller geographical area than the term generally incorporates, also adopting a more limited area for the Occident. Rather than examining the entire Occidental discourse on the entire Orient, Said limits his study to the Anglo-French American experience of the Arabs and Islam.<sup>23</sup> In Said's view, three elements are central to Orientalist thinking throughout the ages. Firstly, it assumes a fundamental, binary opposition between East and West. Secondly, it assumes the Orient is inferior to the Occident, and lastly, it has a colonial or neo-colonial vision on the relationship between East and West.<sup>24</sup>

The work comes in three parts: 'The scope of Orientalism', 'Orientalist structures and restructures' and 'Orientalism now'. In 'The scope of Orientalism', Said sets out his argument, focusing on the third of the meanings the word has, namely “Orientalism as a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient.”<sup>25</sup> Using Michel Foucault's notion of discourse, he contends that it is impossible to understand the manner in which European culture managed the Orient in every possible way, ranging from the political and military to the ideological and imaginative, without examining Orientalism as a discourse.

What follows is an extremely detailed study of European politics, history, philosophy, art and literature regarding the (Arabic) Orient, from the middle ages until the Second World War, illustrating how the Arab world is consistently depicted as 'other' and 'inferior'. He connects the attitudes of the past to those of politics at the time of publication (1978), demonstrating the view of the West as superior in Henry Kissinger's essay 'Domestic Structure and Foreign Policy', which states that the United States can deal more easily with the West than with the Third World, for the reason that the peoples of these nations 'have a very different notion of empirical reality', not having had a Newtonian revolution in their cultures.<sup>26</sup>

The second chapter of the book, 'Orientalist structures and restructures' goes on to describe the spread of Orientalist discourse in Europe, between authors, politicians and academics, through conquest, colonialism and travel. Some of those who created seminal works on the Orient only spent very little time there on which they based entire treatises and books on the nature of the Orient. Those who had not visited the orient accepted these studies as truth, basing in turn their own works upon them. In the nineteenth century this led, Said goes on to explain in his final chapter, 'Orientalism now', to the distillation of a set of essential ideas about

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<sup>22</sup> Sardar, Ziauddin, *Orientalism*, Open University Press, Buckingham, 1999 , 56-57

<sup>23</sup> Said, p.17

<sup>24</sup> Ibid, p.1-9

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., p.3

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p.47

the Orient, namely that it was sensual, tended towards despotism, had an aberrant mentality and habit of inaccuracy, and that it was backwards. The word 'Oriental' came to refer to this set of characteristics which was rendered morally neutral and objectively valid by the volume of text on which it rested and which it reproduced.<sup>27</sup>

'Orientalism now' goes on to describe the events of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries: the division of the Near East into mandated territories by Britain and France, increasing contact with the Orient through trade which began to expose differences between the accepted dogma on the Orient and the modern Orient experienced by traders, travellers and statesmen leading to a revision of Orientalism and the rise of what Said calls Islamic Orientalism between the First and Second World Wars. Herein, the Islamic Orientalist *'expressed his ideas about Islam in such a way as to emphasize his, as well as putatively the Muslim's, resistance to change, to mutual comprehension between East and West, to the development of men and women out of the archaic, primitive, classical institutions and into modernity. (...) [T]he apocalypse to be feared was not the destruction of Western civilization, but rather the destruction of the barriers that kept East and West from each other.'*<sup>28</sup>

In the last section of *Orientalism*, Said describes the waning of Anglo-French dominance after the Second World War and the rise of the United States. The 1967 Arab-Israeli war briefly constructed an image of the Arab as incompetent and easy to defeat. This image changed with the 1973 oil crisis, constructing the Arab as something altogether more menacing. "Thus", Said writes, *"if the Arab occupies space enough for attention, it is as a negative value. He is seen as a disruptor of Israel's and the West's existence (...). Insofar as this Arab has any history, it is the history given to him (or taken from him, the difference is slight) by the Orientalist tradition and later the Zionist tradition. (...) Thus the Arab is conceived of now as the shadow that dogs the Jew. (...) In that shadow can be placed whatever traditional, latent mistrust a Westerner feels towards the Oriental."*<sup>29</sup> A further threat is posed by Arab control of oil supplies, with the 1973-1974 oil boycott calling into question in the West why such people as the Arabs are entitled to keep the Western world threatened, leading to frequent suggestions that the Arab oil fields should be invaded by marines. This thinking, Said states, is supported by the menace of *jihad* – a term widely misunderstood in the West - and a fear that Muslims will take over the world.<sup>30</sup>

Throughout the book, Said describes how the West *created* a divide between the Orient and the Occident, rather than examining or describing an existing divide, with a continuous polemical

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<sup>27</sup> Said, p.205

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., p.263

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p.286

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., p.287

discourse towards the Orient running through the ages, with as its central argument the myth of arrested development of the Semites.<sup>31</sup>

Though much acclaimed, Said's *Orientalism* has also drawn its share of criticism, pointing out inaccuracies and accusing Said of ignoring those Europeans who championed Arab and Islamic political causes, and also of presenting a one-sided view, ignoring Arab Occidentalists ideas towards the West. Peter Marcuse, while an admirer of Said, contends that Said ignores those Orientalists – those who study the discourse of Orientalism and the realities that are subsumed under the term – who argue against Orientalism as described by Said.<sup>32</sup> According to Ziauddin Sardar in his 1999 work *Orientalism*, Zionist historiographer Bernard Lewis, whose work is discussed in Said's book, claims that Orientalism is a neutral, rather innocent classical discipline, disinterested and thus above criticism. He denies any link between Orientalism and politics and power, imperialism and the image of Islam as the darker side of Europe.<sup>33</sup>

Sardar disagrees with Lewis, but has his own criticisms of Said's work, though not with the concept of Orientalism as defined by Said itself. Firstly, he finds Said's conception of the Orient both too limited and too general, arguing that rather than being restricted to the Middle East and Islam, it was applied by European scholars and writers to the entirety of the Orient. Furthermore, Sardar agrees with criticism that Said presents Orientalism as unchanging and monolithic throughout the ages, ignoring the broad range of voices for Islam and against hegemonic movements.<sup>34</sup>

Sardar goes on to discuss current-day Orientalism. These days, he states, modernity is the yardstick against which Islam is measured, with a dominant theme of Islam being incompatible with modernity. In order to support this modern secular Orientalists have had to re-write much of Islamic history in order to present current Islamic trends and movements as backwards. Some Christian Orientalists on the other hand criticise Islam by measuring it against Christianity: according to these scholars (Sardar cites Kenneth Cragg and Norman Anderson), Islam has failed to modernise itself where Christianity has done so. Furthermore, Cragg quoted by Sardar, puts forwards a number of aspects of Islam that he feels are inherently inferior to Christianity, including the absence of a notion of redemption and the fact that the Qu'ran is not a 'satisfying revelation' of God – for that, Muslims must turn to Jesus.<sup>35</sup>

Sardar goes on to criticise 'Orientalised Orientals', the two most prominent of which he feels are Salman Rushdie and V.S. Naipaul. "*The Orientalized Oriental*" Sardar writes "*sees the culture of his/her origins, as the mirror of the West*".<sup>36</sup> Sardar then explores Orientalism in

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<sup>31</sup> Said, 307

<sup>32</sup> Marcuse, p.813

<sup>33</sup> Sardar 1999, p. 69

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., p.70-71

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., p.80

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., p.85

Hollywood film and popular fiction, in which he finds Muslims and Arabs are unfailingly portrayed within a very limited framework, ranging between terrorists or dictators out to destroy the United States, violent religious zealots and comic figures that portray the inferiority of Islam. Furthermore, Sardar berates the filmmakers for making no effort to accurately portray Islamic rituals such as prayer, which he feels is portrayed as parody more than anything else.<sup>37</sup>

Modern day Orientalism, Sardar concludes, is so ubiquitous and embedded, that the peoples of the Orient have no chance of making themselves heard as they understand themselves. The only remedy, he writes, is a “*new conscious openness to what the peoples of the Orient, the masses to the East of the West, think, know and feel about themselves, their culture and their history. (...) There needs to be a terminus, an end to a process that keeps some people caught in a nexus of untenable recycled ideas. (...) Unless the limitations of representation masquerading as reality are perceived and understood, a plural future founded on mutual respect and enhanced mutual understanding is possible. We will continue to live out the consequences of conflict, mistrust, denigration and marginalisation that are the all too real legacy of Orientalism.*”<sup>38</sup>

## 1.2 A Clash of Civilisations

In the light of the theories of Orientalism as described above, Samuel Huntington with his 1993 article titled *The Clash of Civilisations?* in *Foreign Affairs*, and 1996 book of the same title, subtitled *and the remaking of the World Order*, can be seen as an exemplary proponent. Huntington’s central thesis is that the Cold War age of ideology is past, and that the world is reverting to an older form of conflict along cultural/religious lines: “*(...) culture and cultural identities, which at the broadest level are civilization identities, are shaping the patterns of cohesion, disintegration, and conflict in the post-Cold War world.*”<sup>39</sup>

Huntington identifies eight separate world civilisations: Sinic (Chinese), Japanese, Hindu, Islamic, Orthodox, Western, Latin American and African, with religion as a central defining characteristic.<sup>40</sup> The Western civilisation, according to Huntington, has long been hegemonic economically and militarily, and has shaped the international political system, with Western consumption patterns and popular culture also spreading, leading to the perception that it is becoming the universal civilisation. Huntington contests this, as Western civilisation is strongly rejected by other civilisations. “*Somewhere in the Middle East, a half-dozen young men could well be dressed in jeans, drinking coke, listening to rap, and, between their bows to Mecca, putting*

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<sup>37</sup> Sardar 1999, p.93-106

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 118

<sup>39</sup> Huntington, S.P. “*The Clash of civilizations and there making of the World Order*” New York, 1996, p.20

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., p.45-47

*together a bomb to blow up an American airliner*".<sup>41</sup> In terms of religion, Huntington writes, Christianity is declining, while Islam is growing exponentially due to high population growth.<sup>42</sup>

Western civilisation as a whole, says Huntington, is on the decline, while Islamist movements are growing and Asians are becoming increasingly assertive as a result of economic growth.<sup>43</sup> With the end of the Cold War and the clear political alignment it brought, he continues, the search for identity is causing a resurgence of cultural identity in order for states to define their place in the world, leading to the wars in former Yugoslavia, Chechnya, and between Armenia and Azerbaijan among others.<sup>44</sup>

In all civilisations, claims Huntington, there is a tendency to distinguish between 'us' and 'them', based on feelings of superiority (or occasionally inferiority) to those perceived as very different; fear and lack of trust in such people; difficulty of communication due to language differences and differing interpretation of civil behaviour; and lack of familiarity with the assumptions, motivations, social relationships and social practises of other people.<sup>45</sup> Significantly, the major clash he predicts will be that between Islam and the West, going back to a centuries-long troubled history between the two, a constant struggle for power which continues today. Current causes, he states, are Muslim population growth, Islamic resurgence giving Muslims new confidence in the value of their civilisation, and the West's attempts to universalise its values and institutions and maintain its military and economic superiority, the fall of communism as a common enemy, and immigration leading to increased contact between the two, stimulating each in their sense of identity.<sup>46</sup>

Huntington predicts a Confucian-Islamic connection, their cooperation aiming to oppose the West on weapons proliferation, human rights and other issues, illustrated by increasingly close ties between Pakistan, Iran and China in the 1990s.<sup>47</sup> He identifies a "Muslim propensity towards violent conflict", citing the relatively high percentage of violent resolution of disputes by Muslim states as compared to the US, the UK and the Soviet Union. "*Muslim bellicosity and violence*" he says, "*are late-twentieth century facts which neither Muslims nor non-Muslims can deny*". After exploring political and geographical reasons for this, Huntington goes on to describe the violence rooted in Islam, stating that it glorifies military virtues and its dictates of war against unbelievers.<sup>48</sup>

In his final chapter, Huntington describes the decay of Western civilisation, illustrated by increases in antisocial behaviour, family decay, and a rising cult of personal indulgence among

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<sup>41</sup> Huntington 1996, p.58

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., p.66

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., p.81-121

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., p.125-127

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., p.129

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., p.211

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., p.239

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., p.258-262

others. A second threat comes from the 'onslaught' against American values, under attack from multiculturalism, which he believes is eating away at American values and principles.<sup>49</sup>

To protect its interests against those of other civilisations, the West must do all it can to maintain its economic and military hegemony. To avoid a major intercivilisational clash, Huntington concludes, the West must among others, step away from its false and immoral belief in the universality of its culture; it must cement ties between Western nations so that divisions can not be exploited; it must encourage westernisation of Latin America to align it with the countries of the West; and most importantly, cease intervening in the affairs of other civilisations.<sup>50</sup>

Huntington thus reproduces a great number of the fixed beliefs about Islam criticised in Said's Orientalism, most foremost the essential and unbridgeable divide between the two cultures, and the violent and threatening nature of Islam.

The article and book created a storm of debate when they were first published, and gained new currency after the terrorist attacks of September 11 2001, as journalists and policymakers sought understanding of what had happened. John Richardson delivers a blistering critique of Huntington's work in his 2004 book *(Mis)Representing Islam, The racism and rhetoric of the British broadsheet newspapers*, a study which will be looked at more extensively in chapter two. Richardson refutes the theory of a Confucian-Islamic connection, and Huntington's assertion that "*the flow of weapons and weapons and technology is generally from East Asia to the Middle East*", citing the statistics of actual arms trade in 1993 when the 'clash' thesis was first developed – namely that the USA accounted for 61% of *all* arms sales to third world countries in 1996, with three quarters of them being shipped to the Middle East.<sup>51</sup>

Richardson is equally critical of Huntington's culturalist analysis, which he says "*dovetails unpleasantly with racist stereotyping of Palestinians/Arabs/Muslims widespread in the West*" and which, he says, has no empirical basis. He cites a 2001 study by Thomas Meyer which showed that though there were indeed clear differences between countries, these are not well-demarcated differences in the validity of core fundamental values. Differences between countries *within* the civilisations listed by Huntington, Meyer found, were in fact greater than those between civilisations.<sup>52</sup>

Huntington's 'proof' of Islam's inherent bellicosity based on the number of wars fought in the past 50 years compared to the US, the Soviet Union and the UK also comes across as somewhat absurd. It ignores the nuclear arms race, the wars-by-proxy that were fought during the Cold War, and the fact that no other country could hope to stand militarily against either the US or the Soviet Union, making violence an option that rarely needed to be resorted to.

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<sup>49</sup> Huntington, p. 305

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., p.312

<sup>51</sup> Richardson, p.13

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 13-14

In a 2003 paper entitled *Neo-Orientalism and the new barbarism thesis: aspects of symbolic violence in the Middle East conflict(s)*, Dag Tuagstad also contests Huntington's claims that Islam is inherently violent and unsuitable for democracy. He argues that both culturalists such as Huntington and Orientalists ignore political phenomena and structures in favour of tribalism as the root of conflict. He uses Paul Richard's term 'new barbarism' for criticising presentations of political violence that omit political and economic interests, in stead presenting it as traits inherent to local cultures. He exemplifies this with US President Bush's description of the war on terrorism as a 'crusade', and Italian President Silvio Berlusconi's statement shortly following the September 11 2001 attacks that 'We should be conscious of the superiority of our civilisation'<sup>53</sup> Huntington, he says, and even more so US writer Robert Kaplan, are the experts on whom states – in this case the US - rely for moral authority for their actions<sup>54</sup>. If the violence (in this case that of Muslims) is irrational and cannot be stopped through diplomacy or conciliation, this serves to make it possible to blame the victims of, as Tuagstad terms them, 'colonial economic or political projects'.

Incidentally, in a response to the storm of criticism that followed the first publication of his article 1993, Huntington asserted that no paradigm covers all the facts with which it can be confronted, and that unless someone produced a better paradigm, his held.<sup>55</sup> However, it is simplistic to state that a paradigm holds true until a better one is available, not in the least because of the factual errors in Huntington's thesis, some of which are listed above. Though Huntington's paradigm *could* account for the flows of power and allegiance in the world, he completely ignores other factors that

The issue is not so much with Huntington's assessment of a clash between 'Islam' and 'the West', which does to a degree appear to be playing out, but rather with his assessment of the reasons for it. His strong focus on irreconcilable differences between civilisations ignores both the geopolitical events that drive the conflict, and the strong movements the exist in both Islam and the West against violence. He reproduces Orientalist views Islam as a monolith, rather than a world religion with strong internal differences and opposing movements

The assumption in this study is, that though antagonistic discourses flow both ways, the dominant discourse in the British media on Muslims also tends towards the Orientalist approach of viewing Islam as monolithic and unchanging, with inherent undesirable traits. That this has been the case in the past is borne out by to books discussed in the following chapter, the aforementioned *(Mis)Representing Islam*, and Elizabeth Poole's 2001 *Reporting Islam*.

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<sup>53</sup> Tuagstad, D. *Neo-Orientalism and the new barbarism thesis: aspects of symbolic violence in the Middle East conflict(s)*, in *Third World Quarterly*, vol 24, no. 4, p 591-599, p 596 & 591

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 592-593

<sup>55</sup> Huntington, S. *If Not Civilizations, What? Samuel Huntington Responds to His Critics*, in *Foreign Affairs*, November/December 1993

This brings us to the next section of the theoretical framework: media and discourse.

### 1.3 Media as Discourse and Discrimination

For the purpose of this study, Myra Macdonald's definition of discourse will be used, as set out in her book *Exploring Media Discourse*. MacDonald defines discourse as "a system of communicative practices that are integrally related to wider social and cultural practices, and that help to construct specific frameworks of thinking".<sup>56</sup> Discourse is as such a process of making meaning, rather than a fixed position. The context of wider social and cultural practices in which the texts studied here, the Sun and Daily Mirror reporting on British Muslims in the two weeks following the attacks of July 7 2005, are situated, are discussed in depth in the following chapter.

It is increasingly accepted that rather than reporting objective truth, the news media project ideologies and values. This is partly inherent in the use of language, as Roger Fowler says: "Anything that is said or written about the world is articulated from a particular ideological position: Language is not a clear window, but a refracting, structuring medium."<sup>57</sup> Furthermore, news, especially print news, is a product that must get its revenues mainly from advertising. This profit orientation has two effects, namely that the audience is 'the market', a consumer of news, and that newspapers are in the business of *producing* audiences. More money can be earned by supplying a newspaper that appeals to a preferably large section of the population.<sup>58</sup> It is therefore in the interest of newspapers to reproduce the themes and concerns that are of interest to such a population section. As a result, Tahir Abbas notes in *Media Capital and the Representation of South Asian Muslims in the British Press*, a trend has developed towards increasing sensationalism, concentration of ownership, and the reproduction of political coverage. Newspaper control nowadays lies in increasingly fewer hands, resulting in the views of a limited few receiving constant publicity and dominating the thinking of subordinate groups.<sup>59</sup> With the improvement of sales at the top of the agenda, this means that the content doesn't happen, but rather that it is *made*. This domination, Abbas states, plays a key role in maintaining class inequalities, as the views and opinions of the least powerful social groups are thus systematically excluded. Richardson makes the same point and applies it specifically to British Muslims, who, as will be covered in the following chapter, are disproportionately poor.<sup>60</sup>

Representation in language carries weight, because by labelling and defining phenomena language frames the terms in which we think about them.<sup>61</sup> This may in turn influence policy, or society. Abbas argues that the influence of media in society is primarily responsible for the

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<sup>56</sup> Macdonald, M., *Exploring media discourse*, London, 2003, p.1

<sup>57</sup> Fowler, R. *Language in the News: Discourse and Ideology in the Press*, London, 1991, p.10

<sup>58</sup> Richardson, 35 - 37

<sup>59</sup> Abbas, T. *Media Capital and the Representation of South Asian Muslims in the British Press: An Ideological Analysis*, in *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, Vol 21, No. 2, 2001, p 247

<sup>60</sup> Richardson, 37

<sup>61</sup> Macdonald, p.5

creation of 'moral panics' around groups in marginal positions, who become targets for stereotyping.<sup>62</sup> In the case studied here, this framework of news production – with the power in the hands of an elite few, and their interest in keeping their predominantly white English readership – leads to a consistently Islamophobic or Orientalist news discourse.<sup>63</sup> Abbas' thesis is borne out by other in-depth studies into British press reporting which are discussed in the following chapter.

However, the influence of news reporting should also not be overstated. With the wide variety of media outlets and information sources, as well as advocacy groups, vocal politicians, the corporate sector and others, it is difficult to identify where a particular dominant discourse originates, or even whether there is a dominant discourse on any given issue.<sup>64</sup> That said, given the previous discussion on Orientalism and the social position of Muslims in Britain and the rise of Islamophobia as discussed in the following chapter, there does appear to currently be a dominant anti-Muslim discourse in Britain, and while the media can by no means be held solely responsible for this, previous studies have shown that they help to construct a version of reality. This is in part because the media convey public knowledge, as well as implicit or explicit opinions about social minority groups that majority group members might have little direct knowledge about. They also provide a discursive framework for the interpretation of events concerning minority groups.<sup>65</sup> Therefore, if certain stereotypes or limited representations are frequently repeated in the news media, it is likely they will be reproduced in broader society.

With growing awareness of race issues in western culture, there is little overt discrimination in the press anymore. Rather, tactics that amount to 'denial of racism' are increasingly applied. Writers who want to say something negative about an ethnic minority might follow the statement with the assertion that there is nothing wrong with most members of this group. Reversal may also be applied, indicating that it is not the majority group that is discriminatory, but in stead the minority group that is intolerant or will not adapt. A third stratagem can be creating distance or doubt about discriminatory acts, with the use of words like 'allegedly' or "claiming", e.g. "A man was beaten in what he *claimed* was a racist attack."<sup>66</sup>

Assuming then – as most theorists do – that discourses in the news media do have some influence over public opinion, taken in conjunction with the social position of Muslims in Britain as discussed in the following chapter, and the high levels of tension and anxiety following the 7/7 bombings, researching whether The Sun and The Daily Mirror contributed to the existing anti-Islamic discourse in the weeks following the attacks is worthwhile.

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<sup>62</sup> Abbas, p.248

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 249-251

<sup>64</sup> Macdonald, p.10

<sup>65</sup> Dijk, T.A. van, *Racism and the Press*, London, 1991, p.7

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., p.190-191

### 1.3.2. Contemporary Terrorism, Violence and (media) discourse

In *Discourses on Violence: conflict analysis reconsidered*, Vivienne Jabri sets out to examine the discursive practises of conflict and peace. While the terrorist attacks examined here may not be a war in the traditional sense as those studied by Jabri, it nevertheless took place in the broader context of the 'war on terror' in which many of the discursive practises are the similar to those described by Jabri. The discourse of inclusion and exclusion for example, in which the other becomes the *deserving enemy*<sup>67</sup>, is found throughout both the political and the media discourse on terrorism in recent years. Here, the 'other' sometimes runs the danger of extending to the entire group from which the terrorists are thought to hail, as is discussed in the following chapter. Furthermore, Jabri notes that affiliation and identity 'come to be defined in terms of exclusionist social boundaries' with dissenting voices often branded as treasonous.<sup>68</sup> In the words of George Bush: "*You are either with us or against us in the fight against terror.*"<sup>69</sup> In the case examined here, the dissenting voices were those seeking to understand the motivations of the London suicide bombers, who were indeed vilified in certain news outlets. "*Any representation which blurs the inclusion/exclusion boundary*" Jabri writes, "*breaks down certainties constructed in the name of war and forms a counter-discourse which deconstructs and delegitimizes war and thereby fragments myths of unity, duty and conformity.*"<sup>70</sup> This applies not only to the war on terror, but also to the belief that exists in some sectors that Muslims somehow deserve the discrimination they face: any suggestion that Muslims might have legitimate grievances, rather than be possessing of undesirable traits and thus deserving of inferior treatment, contests this.

On terrorism, Jeff Lewis poses in *Language Wars*, that mediated shocking images of the effects of terrorism and its symbolic amplitude engender a level of community fear that is disproportionate to the actual risk. Audiences can only know terrorist events and share in the agony and grief of the victims through mediated systems of representation.<sup>71</sup> Contemporary terrorism is, according to Lewis, a form of political violence which exists in a contingent relationship with culture and the media.<sup>72</sup> Connected to this, Alex Schmid suggests acts of terrorism are communicational acts, where the victims serve as message generators, in which the messages generated may seek to elicit a number of responses ranging from fear to government or policy change.<sup>73</sup>

Lewis describes the discourse as it developed in the wake of the September 11 attacks in the United States around legitimacy and illegitimacy of violence. George Bush, in his invocation of

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<sup>67</sup> Jabri, V. *Discourses on Violence: conflict analysis reconsidered*, Manchester, 1996

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, p.5

<sup>69</sup> CNN.com, 'You are either with us or against us' November 6, 2001, <http://archives.cnn.com/2001/US/11/06/gen.attack.on.terror/>

<sup>70</sup> Jabri, p.7

<sup>71</sup> Lewis, J. *Language Wars*, London, 2005, p.22

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, p.43

<sup>73</sup> Schmid, A., *Political terrorism: a research guide to concepts, theories, data bases and literature*, New Brunswick, 1983, p.70

legislative authority when he declared a 'war on terror' placed legitimate 'war' opposite the illegitimate 'terrorism'. Critics Robert Fisk, Noam Chomsky and Edward Herman argued that the concept of the 'war on terror' served to legitimate the military and discursive hegemony of the US over its opponents and their political claims.<sup>74</sup> Further simplistic renderings of 'evildoers' who 'hate our freedom' from the Bush administration were also reproduced in the media, allowing outlets to ignore, if they so chose, the political motivations behind the attacks.

In contrast to the graphic images of terror attacks against western targets which were repeated over and over, the results of the US-led wars against Afghanistan and Iraq for especially civilians were almost entirely obscured from the public view. In a war fought initially through aerial bombardment, journalists were largely unable to report from the ground, remaining in stead 'embedded' with the US and coalition troops. What was constructed, was an imagery of a war without bloodshed, pain or trauma. The journalists who had reported from 'behind enemy lines' during the 2003 invasion of Iraq, thus bringing other images to the world than those permitted by the US military, came under fire from US forces in the Palestine Hotel where they were staying as the troops entered Baghdad. Several Reuters journalists were killed, and in a separate attack on its Iraq office, two Al Jazeera journalists were killed. The official response was that the troops were returning fire from these locations, but Robert Fisk – who was in the area of the Palestine Hotel – calls this into question.<sup>75</sup> The combination of the reproduction of US government messages in the media, the depiction of 'clean' war as opposed to horrific terrorism, and the general lack of attention paid to the perpetrators political motives leads Lewis to conclude that '*Individual governments seek to assert their interests through the control of the mediasphere. (...) government participation in the mediasphere and the processes of representation (including the representation of violence) 'influences' the public-viewer in various ways*'.<sup>76</sup>

In her analysis of the discourse surrounding the events of September 11, Myra Macdonald states that the attacks broke new ground in western perception of risk, as neither the scale nor the nature of such an attack on American soil had been foreseen. Tony Blair's response – "*This mass terrorism is the new evil in our world today. It is perpetuated by fanatics who are utterly indifferent to the sanctity of human life. And we, the democracies of this world, are going to have to come together and eradicate this evil completely from our world*" – reaffirmed the comforting discourse of (western) 'good' versus (terrorism) 'evil', in which evil fell firmly outside of the 'democracies of this world'. The pattern was constantly repeated in the news media; civilisation versus barbarism, (natural) grief and despair versus (pathological) celebration and rejoicing.<sup>77</sup> She identifies three intertwined discourses that developed over the following weeks, which made a rethinking of western ideological positions comfortably unnecessary.

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<sup>74</sup> Lewis, 23

<sup>75</sup> Fisk, R. *Does The US Military Want To Kill Journalists*, 09 April 2003, on Znet.org, <http://www.zmag.org/znet/viewArticle/10611>

<sup>76</sup> Lewis, p. 53-54

<sup>77</sup> Macdonald, p.175

First, there was a great deal of emphasis on western civilisation that nevertheless sought to distance itself from racism. Secondly, the 'other' from which the enemy came was constantly portrayed as callous and irrational, and thirdly, the identification of a powerful and charismatic but elusive enemy in the form of Osama bin Laden.<sup>78</sup> A warmongering rhetoric was combined with denials of Islamophobia, with Tony Blair appearing alongside Muslim leaders and emphasising that the attacks were not the work of Muslim or Islamic terrorists, but of 'terrorists pure and simple'. This attitude was picked up in the press, with the Sun running an editorial under the headline 'Islam is not an evil religion'.<sup>79</sup> Alongside the discourse of the evil enemy, occasional voices were heard, calling for an examination of the causes for the attack, and stating that understanding the injustices that lay at the root of such atrocities was not incompatible with condemning the actions themselves. However, they were few and far between.<sup>80</sup>

After September 11<sup>th</sup> there was a rise in attacks against Muslims and Muslim buildings. These did receive some attention in the media, but the climate of fear in which Muslims in Britain lived in the wake of the attacks was largely ignored. Though there was an overall increase in coverage of Muslims and Islamic affairs in Britain, this scarcely broadened the discursive range of topics covered compared to previous years.<sup>81</sup>

Another issue covered in this study is a battle over *meaning*. Certain media outlets stuck to the simplistic 'good versus evil' paradigm, whereas others sought to find deeper explanations for why four ostensibly successful young men would kill themselves and scores of their fellow citizens. Though some MPs did point at the UK's involvement in the global war on terror, the official government line in the first few weeks after the bombings was that there was no connection between the attacks and the British presence in Iraq and Afghanistan, or its broader foreign policy. Though the perpetrators, having been killed, were not able to speak for themselves, and the first video message of one of the suicide bombers did not appear until after the period under investigation here, it could still be argued that the debate was to a degree what McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly call transgressive contention: "*episodic, public, collective interaction among makers of claims and their objects when (a) at least one government is a claimant, an object of claims, or a party to the claims (b) the claims would, if realised, affect the interests of at least one of the claimants (...) at least some parties employ innovative collective action (action qualifies as innovative if it incorporates claims (...)) includes collective self-representations, and/or adopts means that are unprecedented or forbidden within the regime in question.*"<sup>82</sup>)

This case is partly excluded from the definition, firstly because the bombers did not – at least during the period under investigation – make claims of the government, and secondly because the attack cannot be deemed collective action or movement: while many people, Muslim

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<sup>78</sup> Macdonald, p.176

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., p.178

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., p.182

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., p.186-188

<sup>82</sup> McAdam, Tarrow & Tilly, *Dynamics of Contention*, Cambridge, 2001, p.7-8

and non-Muslim might have agreed with the grievances the bombers held regarding British foreign policy, making the claims collective, very few condoned the action they took, which was therefore not representative of a broader group. However, in the debate that followed the attacks, it may be said that others made claims on the bombers' behalf which were at odds with the government's policies— which in some cases turned out to be accurate upon release of the video messages, and while the terrorist act was not in the least representative of a collective will, the reasons for it were shared by a broader group of 'claimants' in society. This however does not constitute the kind of mass mobilisation that McAdam et. al. describe.

Nonetheless, particularly the 'framing' aspect of their 'Dynamic Mobilisation Model' is useful particularly to the analysis of the debate of claims and counter-claims around the reasons for the attacks, and the framing of Islam/Muslims in Britain as a threat: "*Framing and interpretation go well beyond how a movement's goals are strategically formed to a much broader set of interpretative processes. Among the most important are those that result in attribution of new threats and opportunities by one or more parties to an emerging conflict and the reimagining of legitimate purposes attached to established social sites and/or identities. In short, like all social life, mobilisation is suffused throughout with collective efforts at interpretation and social construction.*"<sup>83</sup> The framing of the threat of Islam in previous years is partly discussed in the following chapter, whereas the framing of the threat following the attacks is covered in chapter four.

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<sup>83</sup> McAdam et al, p.48

### ***We need to be scared***

*“Pressure from the authorities, combined with the sentiments of most congregations, have pushed many young extremists out of the mosques. They have had to find new venues to socialise. These have been out of the scrutiny of the community. Nobody has a clue about what kind of theology these young Muslims are developing. But informed more by rage than the message of peace within traditional Islam, the results are likely to be dangerous. This does not augur well for either community relations or for the development of Islam in Britain. In their dark underground world, these young angry people have, like our government, lost their sense of what is legal, moral or humane. When two million anti-war demonstrators cannot stop the war, the message to these young people is clear. We need to be scared, very scared. The end of the war in Iraq might usher in the beginning of our own intifada”. Fuad Nahdi, 2003<sup>84</sup>*

## **Chapter Two: Context: Multiculturalism, Racism, and Muslims in Britain**

### **Introduction**

Media is formed through the relationship between text, producer and audience. Though the scope of this study does not incorporate audience interpretation, it is important to take into account the cultural and political context in which news is produced.<sup>85</sup>

Therefore, this chapter examines the history of Muslims in Britain, and the social context in which the London bombings took place and were reported on. There is a wealth of evidence to suggest that Muslims in Britain are frequently disadvantaged and discriminated against in the UK; that the September 11 2001 terror attacks in the United States have exacerbated this situation; and that anti-terror legislation since 2001 appears to have institutionalised said discrimination. However, discrimination on religious grounds has only begun to be recorded in recent years, where hate crimes and discrimination were previously all categorised as being racially motivated, making incidences of anti-Islamic discrimination hard to quantify. Therefore, the broader context of racism and discrimination and government legislation in these areas in Britain are studied first.

The chapter concludes with an overview of previous studies on UK press reporting on British Muslims, before and after September 11 2001, an account of the events on July 7 2005, followed by what little research there has been into press reporting in the wake of the bombings on that day. These come from the findings of the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC, re-named European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) in 2007), which formed a small part of a broader study into the impact of the attacks on Muslim communities in Europe.

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<sup>84</sup> Quoted in Islamophobia, Issues, Challenges & Action, p.50

<sup>85</sup> Lewis, p.28

## 2.1 Racism, multiculturalism, New Labour and the War on Terror

### 2.1.1 Racism and anti-racism in Britain, 1960 - 1997

With the nineteenth century theories of racism based on biologically inferior and superior races no longer acceptable in the political and public discourse, a racism based on culture –cultural racism– began to arise in the post-Second World War era in the UK. In the 1980s, sociologists began to identify this as ‘new racism’. Cultural racism had its roots in the theory that people of one race are naturally drawn to one another, and that the coexistence of multiple races in one geographical space, particularly one country, would lead to hatred and violence and the deconstruction of social ties. This form of racism had however been in existence long before it was labelled by social scientists in the late twentieth century. Indeed, historical anti-Semitism can be seen as an exponent of just this type of racism. However, a sharp rise of cultural racism coincided with the era of decolonisation after the Second World War and the wave of immigration that followed. In Britain, this took the form of ‘common-sense’ public belief that non-white immigrants had certain ingrained cultural differences that set them apart from ‘civilised’ Britishness.<sup>86</sup> In what way this set them apart and how it posed a threat to British culture differed across the years.

The 1970s were characterised by a “siege mentality”, where the growing recession led to protests from Trade Unions and black protestors, who were generally members of the social classes most powerfully affected by the economic decline. These – and other groups – were construed in the media and in mainstream political discourse as threatening the state’s legitimacy, and “holding the nation to ransom”.<sup>87</sup> In addition, two types of anti-racism manifested themselves during the 1960s and 1970s, the first being a civil rights oriented anti-racism after the model of the US movement led by Dr. Marten Luther King, the second a Black empowerment movement styled after the campaign of Malcolm X, again in the United states.<sup>88</sup> Particularly the second type of anti-racism was seized upon by first politicians and then the media to place race at the centre of the economic and social crisis that afflicted the country.<sup>89</sup>

In the early 1980s, Conservative Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher’s emphasis on law and order and crackdown on domestic insurgence gave the police increased ‘stop and search’ powers, which targeted Britain’s black communities in particular. The protests in the black community that followed were again generally reported in the press as evidence of mass deviance, the protestors portrayed as criminals set for violence and destruction. This in turn led to further police targeting of

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<sup>86</sup> Modood, Tariq, *Multicultural Politics: racism, ethnicity, and Muslims in Britain*, London, 2005, p.27-39

<sup>87</sup> Hayward, Susan, *Blacks in Britain: racial discourse in UK politics and media*, in *Jump Cut*, no. 41, May 1997

<sup>88</sup> Modood, p.29-30

<sup>89</sup> Hayward

minorities and the slow mainstreaming racism and racist violence into everyday life.<sup>90</sup>

### **2.1.2 Multiculturalism and New Labour, 1997-2001**

In social science, the 1990's saw the rise of multiculturalism, slowly replacing the discourse of racism and anti-racism. In its broadest sense, rather than accepting the self/other dichotomy of racism and antiracism, multiculturalism adopts the politics of cultural difference, in which all cultures are different but equal.<sup>91</sup> However, multicultural theory is diverse, and encompasses multiple forms ranging from the extremely pluralist – where the nation-state coordinates a multitude of different ethnicities and faiths that operate independently of one another – to the exclusivist – in which one signifier, religion or ethnicity, is seen as a person's one determining identity.<sup>92</sup>

In Britain, politics slowly began to follow suit under Conservative Prime Minister John Major. Major began to distance himself and the Conservative Party from the class politics that had dominated the scene under Thatcher, in stead adopting a more American meritocratic ideology in which 'anyone could make it' regardless of class, gender or ethnicity. However, he failed to convince the electorate, paving the way for the triumph of the Labour Party and Tony Blair as prime minister in the 1997 election, heralding the end of eighteen years of Conservative rule. Three previous consecutive election defeats caused the Labour Party to abandon socialism as its central ideology, and reinvent itself as "New Labour", adopting in stead a neo-liberal market ideology. This in turn precipitated reform of Britain's immigration laws when New Labour came to power, making it easier for foreigners to settle in the country by marrying a UK citizen and lessening border controls. These changes made the policy shift from a society divided along the lines of race and class to a multicultural meritocracy believable, along with the end of state racism.

However, a ghost of Conservative years came to haunt New Labour's vision of a New Britain, in the form of the enquiry that was launched into the Metropolitan Police investigation of the 1993 murder of black teenager Stephen Lawrence. The investigation had failed to convict anyone for the crime. The alleged killers were five white youths, who were said to have shouted "nigger" at Lawrence as they stabbed him to death, and years of campaigning by the Lawrence family finally paid off when the enquiry, headed by Sir William MacPherson, was launched under the freshly instated New Labour government in 1997. The enquiry was expected to reveal a racist murder by thugs, who had simply failed to be convicted due to lack of evidence.<sup>93</sup> However, the enquiry backfired on New Labour's multicultural ideal when the report, released in 1999, concluded that institutional racism "*exists both in the Metropolitan Police Service and in other*

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<sup>90</sup> Holohan, N. in Poole, E. and Richardson, J.E., *Muslims in the News Media*, London 2006, p. 13-16

<sup>91</sup> Holohan, p.16

<sup>92</sup> Bauman, G., *The Multicultural Riddle: Rethinking National, Ethnic and Religious Identities*, New York, 1999, p.97-106

<sup>93</sup> Holohan, p. 17-19

*Police Services and other institutions countrywide*".<sup>94</sup>

The release of the MacPherson report on the Stephen Lawrence enquiry was followed a year later by the release of the "Parekh Report" by the Runnymede Trust's Commission on The Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain which was headed by Bikhu Parekh, further embarrassing the New Labour government which had commissioned it, exposing as it did widespread societal and institutional discrimination.<sup>95</sup>

## 2.2 Muslims in Britain

Muslims are currently the second largest faith group in Britain, following Christians. At the time of the 2001 census 1,591,000 people identified as Muslims, constituting 2.7% of the total population of Britain at that time.<sup>96</sup> The census question on religious affiliation was not compulsory, and some estimate the number of Muslims in the UK to be as high as 2 million.<sup>97</sup> By far the largest number of British Muslims is of Pakistani or Bangladeshi origin (close to a million in total, with Muslims accounting for 92% of each of these two groups), followed by Black Africans, Indians and mixed ethnicities.<sup>98</sup> Other nationalities and ethnic groups in Britain with smaller, but not insignificant, numbers of Muslims are Algerians, Bosnians, Iranians, Iraqis Jordanians, Kosovars, Kurds, Lebanese, Mauritians, nationals of the Gulf Emirates, Nigerians, Palestinians, Somalians, Sudanese, Syrians, Tunisians, Turkish and Turkish Cypriots.<sup>99</sup> Due to patterns of migration and higher birth rates, of all the faith groups in Britain, Muslims have the youngest age profile, with more than a third under the age of sixteen in 2001.<sup>100</sup>

As is clear from the many different ethnic backgrounds of Muslims in Britain, there is no such thing as 'the Muslim Community' there. Within ethnic groups there are different denominations of Islam, such as Sunni and Shia, within denominations there are doctrinal divisions, such as the Barlevi and Deobandi within the Sunni denomination, and within doctrines there are various orders.<sup>101</sup> The Runnymede Trust identified treating and examining Islam as a monolith and ignoring the diversity within it as one of eight closed representations of Islam.<sup>102</sup> Nonetheless, the history and discrimination of 'Muslims' in Britain as a group are examined here for the following reasons:

- Though there are obviously differences in approach between different newspapers, radio, and television stations, as well as between individual reporters in Britain, there is still a

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<sup>94</sup> Sir William MacPherson, *The Stephen Lawrence Enquiry*, Chapter 6, §6.39

<sup>95</sup> Parekh, B, *Report of the Commission on the Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain*, Runnymede Trust, London 2000

<sup>96</sup> 2001 UK census,

<sup>97</sup> Ansari, H., *Muslims in Britain*, Minority Rights Group report, London, 2002p. 7

<sup>98</sup> 2001 UK census

<sup>99</sup> Ansari, p.7-9, Poole, p.20, Vertovec p.21

<sup>100</sup> 2001 UK census

<sup>101</sup> John E. Richardson, (Mis)Representing Islam, p. 28

<sup>102</sup> Islamophobia 1997

tendency in *all* media to refer to Islam in Britain or 'the Muslim Community' as a single entity. Therefore what is said and written reflects back on all Muslims in Britain despite their diverse backgrounds. Conversely, every Muslim in Britain is then burdened with the responsibility of representing 'British Muslims'.<sup>103</sup>

- A lot of discrimination against Muslims and their disadvantageous social position is a result of racial and class discrimination or disadvantage. However, Muslims are still at a clear disadvantage compared to other religious minority groups so some of it must stem from problems encountered by all Muslims in Britain *because* they are Muslims. Outside of social disadvantages, explicit and increasing prejudice against Muslims in recent years has led to the relatively new term 'Islamophobia' entering into common usage.
- Other blanket terms such as 'women', 'youth' or 'working class' are freely used in social research, even though there is obviously great diversity within these groups. As Tariq Modood states in his 1994 paper "*Muslim Identity: Social reality or political project?*",

*"If these heterogeneities are within the relevant categories rather than destructive of those categories, then there is no logical difficulty about recognizing that the diversity covered by the term 'Muslim' does not invalidate the coherence of the category 'Muslim'."*<sup>104</sup>

- To suggest that religion is no more than a by-product of a secular and political conflict for British Muslims would be to undervalue it.<sup>105</sup> However, various reasons, including finding a spiritual bulwark against racism and Islamophobia and passing on cultural traditions to the next generation, have led many Muslims to increasingly self-identify as such, placing religion before nationality (usually British) or ethnic background (e.g. Pakistani or Bangladeshi).<sup>106</sup> Conducting their research in 1994, Tariq Modood et al. found that Islam was the core social identity for many of their respondents, meaning that all other significant identities and identity-shaping practises had to be compatible with Islam.<sup>107</sup>

### 2.2.1. History

The first Muslims came to Britain in the late eighteenth century as seamen recruited by the East India Company from Yemen, Gujarat, Sind, Assam and Bengal. In Britain, they were known as lascars, and some of them set up small settlements around port towns. In time, there were several permanent settlements, as well as Muslim businesses, and prayer rooms or *Zawiyahs* used for the rites of marriage, birth, circumcision, funeral, and the celebration of Eid. By the end of the nineteenth century many Muslim scholars and students were also settling in Britain, and by the

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<sup>103</sup> Poole, E., *Reporting Islam*, London, 2001 p. 44,

<sup>104</sup> Rex, J., Modood, T., *Muslim Identity: real or imagined?*, Birmingham, 1994, p. 9

<sup>105</sup> Rex & Modood , p.5

<sup>106</sup> Islamophobia, p. 15

<sup>107</sup> Rex & Modood, p.11

1930s there were also large numbers of Muslims in the British merchant navy, some of whom stayed on in Britain after the Second World War.<sup>108</sup>

Britain's first Mosque was built in Woking in 1889. Arguably the most prestigious, though, is the Central Mosque, also housing the Islamic Cultural centre, in Regent's Park, London. The land for the Mosque was donated by King George VI in return for a tract of land in Cairo designated for an Anglican Cathedral, and in gratitude for the support of the Islamic world in the War. Fundraising for the new Mosque began in 1944, and by the time it was completed – after much trouble with designs and planning permission – and opened in 1977, the Muslim presence in Britain had changed and grown drastically.<sup>109</sup>

Mass migration of Muslims to Britain began in the 1950s<sup>110</sup>, with numbers rising from around 23,000 in 1951 to 369,000 in 1971. The vast majority of migrants in those years had economic motives, and they were initially welcomed in Britain – often even coming to the country by invitation of employers – due to labour shortages, particularly for night shifts in the textile and steel industries. For this reason, most of the first Muslim immigrants were men, come to England after the first pioneers had settled through patterns of chain migration: new arrivals were often able and willing to come because they already had friends or relatives in Britain, who would sometimes finance their immigration and would usually form their first port-of-call, and near whom they would often settle. The combination of chain migration and the areas that attracted immigrants because of the availability of work have led to the concentration of Muslims in certain areas in Britain. The largest Muslim community, about two thirds of the total Muslim presence in Britain, is located in London, followed in descending order by the West Midlands, the North West, Yorkshire and the Humber.

Often following a four-phase pattern of migration, after the pioneers and the labourers who followed them through chain migration, came a third group comprising their wives and children, and finally, the first generation of British-born Muslims. Changes in legislation to restrict immigration in 1962 and 1971 were precipitated by peaking numbers of mainly Commonwealth citizens entering the country.<sup>111</sup>

Though Muslims in Britain experience racial and religious discrimination and disadvantage, which will be discussed in the following paragraphs, they have also achieved a

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<sup>108</sup> Lewis, P. *Islamic Britain: Religion, Politics and Identity Among British Muslims*, London, 2002, p.7-13, *Islamophobia*, 13

<sup>109</sup> Lewis, 13 and <http://www.iccuk.org/icc/history/5.htm>

<sup>110</sup> Prior to the 2001 census, religious affiliation was not included in the questions, so the size of the Muslim presence in Britain before that must be estimated based on ethnicity: the vast majority of Muslim immigrants initially came from South East Asia, mainly Pakistan and Bangladesh. Later arrivals also hailed from this region originally, but they were expelled or fled from various east African countries where their families had often lived for many generations, following the rise to power of various increasingly oppressive nationalist regimes. In more recent years an increasing number of Muslims from other parts of the world, such as Africa and the Middle East, has settled in Britain.

<sup>111</sup> Lewis 16-18, *Islamophobia* 13-14, Vertovec, S. *Islamophobia and Muslim recognition in Britain*, in Haddad, Y. (ed), *Muslims in the West: From Sojourners to Citizens*, p.19-21,

great deal in the way of organisation and representation. This began to take shape mainly at the time when the first group of immigrant workers decided to make their stay in Britain at least semi-permanent, and their wives and children began to join them. This led to the establishment of Mosques, *Madrasahs* and Koranic schools, as well as organisations for national coordination with regard to funding and liaison with the authorities for various areas of lobby. Initially organisation mostly took place along ethnic or denominational lines, but with the establishment of the Muslim Council of Britain (MCB) in 1997 has achieved its most unified form so far.<sup>112</sup> It is an umbrella organisation which aims, amongst others, to

*“promote cooperation, consensus and unity on Muslim affairs in the UK, (...) to work for a more enlightened appreciation of Islam and Muslims in wider society, (...), to work for the eradication of disadvantages and forms of discrimination faced by Muslims, (...) [and] to foster better community relations and work for the good of society as a whole.”*<sup>113</sup>

The MCB is often described as ‘moderate’ in the media, though the Council itself rejects this label as juxtapositional to ‘Islamist’ or ‘extremist’ Islam, as they feel moderation is inherent to Islam.<sup>114</sup>

Islamic political parties have so far failed to gain seats in parliament, but there is a growing number of Muslim councillors in local government, a little over 200 following the 2001 elections, as well as a number of Muslim mayors. In 1997, following the Labour landslide election win, Muhammad Sarwar became the first Muslim MP in the UK – though he was unfortunately soon suspended on suspicion of electoral fraud, of which he was later acquitted.<sup>115</sup> There are currently two Muslim MPs, one elected Muslim member of the EU Parliament for Britain, and five members of the House of Lords, including three Life Peers.<sup>116</sup>

There has also been increasing recognition of Muslim rights and needs from the government and more recently the corporate sector. This ranges from the availability of *halal* food in schools and other public institutions, to new legislation prohibiting religious discrimination in employment<sup>117</sup>, to the provision of “Muslim-friendly” interest-free mortgages and loans by banks<sup>118</sup>, as making money from money is forbidden under Islamic law.

### **2.2.2. Discrimination and disadvantage**

Muslims in Britain experience both disadvantage and discrimination. Though disadvantage can in some cases be the result of discrimination, it is difficult to prove a connection between the two, as

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<sup>112</sup> Vertovec, p.22, Ansari 18-21

<sup>113</sup> <http://www.mcb.org.uk/aim.php>

<sup>114</sup> Sacranie, I., “Secretary general’s report 2004-2005”, Muslim Council of Britain, London, 2005

<sup>115</sup> Vertovec, 29, Ansari 18-21

<sup>116</sup> British embassy in Saudi Arabia, website,

<http://www.britishembassy.gov.uk/servlet/Front?pagename=OpenMarket/Xcelerate/ShowPage&c=Page&cid=1101390902975>

<sup>117</sup> Commission on British Muslims and Islamophobia, *Islamophobia: issues, Challenges and Action*, London, 2004

<sup>118</sup> See for instance <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/business/3035292.stm>, and <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/business/4725459.stm>

there are plenty of other possible causes for their disadvantaged position, including social class and racial rather than religious discrimination. In many cases though, because Muslims appear to be at an even greater disadvantage than other faith groups which are also mainly found among ethnic minorities, such as Hindus and Sikhs, both racial and religious discrimination are considered to be relevant to the everyday reality of Muslims in Britain, and both are examined in this paragraph.

Clearly anti-Muslim prejudice has grown so rapidly in recent years, that a relatively new term has entered common usage to identify it: Islamophobia.<sup>119</sup> Islamophobia will be discussed separately from discrimination and disadvantage which could also be seen to have its roots in racial or cultural prejudice.

Of all faith groups, the 2001 census shows Muslims to have the highest unemployment rates, to be most likely to be economically inactive (though reasons for this included being a student or taking care of the family and home as well as disability or long term unemployment), to be the least healthy and the most likely to be disabled (doubly concerning given the young age profile of this group), the least likely to have any qualifications, the least likely to have degrees or equivalent qualifications, the most likely to live in Council or Association housing (the quality of which is generally quite poor, and is in some cases even declared unfit for habitation), as well as being the most likely to experience overcrowding and have no central heating. Though the census did not correlate religion with crime victims, Asians – partly accounting for the largest group of Muslims in Britain – were the second most likely group to be the victims of crime, following those of mixed ethnicity.<sup>120</sup>

The census results paint a depressing picture, but they can not be seen directly as proof of the disadvantaged position of or discrimination against *Muslims* per se. It could also be attributed to the fact that most Muslims in Britain are concentrated in inner-city areas, which have the inherent problems of high unemployment, bad housing, poor schooling and below-standard community facilities. Furthermore, almost all British Muslims are members of ethnic minorities, and the problems, prejudice and discrimination they experience are similar to those faced by all ethnic minorities.<sup>121</sup> Colin Brown's *Black and White Britain*, cited in Muhammad Anwar's 1995 *Muslims in Britain* states that

*“all available evidence suggests that widespread racial discrimination is a major contributory factor to the higher unemployment rate of ethnic minorities and their lower paid jobs.”*

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<sup>119</sup> Islamophobia 1997, 4

<sup>120</sup> census <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/focuson/religion/default.asp>, Ansari 8

<sup>121</sup> Anwar, M. *Muslims in Britain* in Abedin, S. and Sardar, Z., eds., *Muslim Minorities in the West*, London, 1995, p.38

Position on the labour market is in turn of fundamental importance to the position of ethnic minorities – and everyone else - in British society. The type of work available to people determines their income, and subsequently the areas in which they live, the schools their children can attend, their chances of participation in civic life, and their overall status in society. Even in well-respected professions, such as medicine, research has shown that overseas doctors have to wait longer for promotion and make more applications than their native British colleagues.<sup>122</sup>

Both the 2001 census and more recent reports by government and rights-based organizations show that little has changed in the nearly twenty years that have elapsed since Brown's research. The 2005 report by the Council of Europe's European Commission on Racial Equality (ECRI) underlines that racial discrimination and harassment still play an important role in keeping ethnic minorities away from the labour market. The report names Muslims specifically as an especially vulnerable group:

*"[Muslims] continue to experience societal prejudice, discrimination across a wide range of crucial areas, such as employment and the criminal justice system, as well as harassment and violence. [ECRI] is particularly concerned that this situation has considerably worsened since the events of 11 September 2001"*<sup>123</sup>

Though employment issues can be linked to (racial or religious) discrimination in many cases, there is no such straightforward connection with discrimination in the differences in educational achievement. One of the most likely reasons is social class and poverty, the connection of which with educational achievement is well-established.<sup>124</sup> Due to migration patterns and the type of work available to first-generation immigrants, an overwhelming majority of Muslim children in Britain come from working class background and are raised in some of the most impoverished areas of Britain, as demonstrated by the 2001 census results on housing, education and employment.

A vast body of research shows that there is a substantial association between parents' social class and that of their children, thus limiting the upward social mobility of the children of all working-class parents, not just members of ethnic minorities.<sup>125</sup> However, there is still differentiation between ethnic groups, with Pakistanis having the lowest chances of upward mobility, followed by Bangladeshis, according to research carried out by Lucinda Platt in 2005. She locates the reason for this in the fact that those of Pakistani and Bangladeshi origins are on the whole Islamic: the statistics for Indian Muslims (and Sikhs) are almost identical to those for Pakistanis and Bangladeshis. Platt does not speculate on the reason for this, beyond stating that it can be partly explained by the fact that Muslim women from these ethnic groups are more likely

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<sup>122</sup> Anwar in Abedin & Sardar, 38

<sup>123</sup> European Commission against Racism and Intolerance, *Third Report on the United Kingdom*, 17 December 2004, p.22

<sup>124</sup> Islamophobia, Issues, Challenges & Action, p. 49

<sup>125</sup> Platt, L., *Migration and social mobility*, Essex, 2005, p.8

to be homemakers regardless of their parents social class and their own educational background, thus lowering the success rate (measured by upward social mobility) of these groups. This does not however account for the full scale of differentiation between groups.<sup>126</sup> The gap may be explained by Islamophobia and specific discrimination against Muslims. This is examined in a broader context than social standing, education and employment, in the following section.

Finally, though some of the housing problems encountered by ethnic minorities (and therefore also by many Muslims as members of ethnic minority groups) are indeed the result of social class and areas of residence, widespread discrimination and illegal segregation in housing policies have been well documented by the government Commission for Racial Equality (CRE) and other organisations and research institutes. Ethnic minorities are both denied access to certain housing, for instance where housing agencies are acting on the instructions of landlords not to accommodate 'blacks', and they are discriminated against in the quality of housing, in many cases being allocated poorer accommodation than whites in similar economic circumstances.<sup>127</sup>

## 2.3 Islamophobia in Britain

*"It is the unexpectedness of Islamophobia and its virulence in the calmest of surroundings that is shocking. The ascribed identity is thrown at you as if it were a reality, as if the marks of years of education, boarding school, elocution classes and a lifetime of living and working in Britain have never diminished the foreignness that I was born with, forever the outsider" – Haleh Afshar, 2004<sup>128</sup>*

The phrase 'Islamophobia' was coined in the late 1970s, became more widely used in the 1980s and first appeared in print in *Insight* magazine in February 1991. In the UK, the publication of the Runnymede Trust's report "Islamophobia, a challenge for us all" in 1997, which received much media attention, saw the introduction of the word in the public arena and discourse. In this report, the word signified new reality of prejudice and *unfounded* hostility towards Islam, and its practical consequences of antagonism and discrimination against Muslims. 'Islamophobia' in both the 1997 report and in this current study is seen to be the interplay between prejudice against Islam and its practical effects. It is not an ideal phrase: Critics feel it prevents legitimate criticism of Islam (thus challenging the possibility of dialogue) and when the report was published some felt it pandered to the increasingly vilified trend of political correctness at the time.<sup>129</sup> Fred Halliday argues that 'anti-Muslimism' would be a more accurate term, as expressions of 'Islamophobia' are more often directed against practitioners rather than against the religion itself. Also, the implication of the

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<sup>126</sup> Platt, p.33

<sup>127</sup> Ansari, p.9; CRE website [http://www.cre.gov.uk/gdpract/housing\\_rented\\_cop.html](http://www.cre.gov.uk/gdpract/housing_rented_cop.html); Harrison, Law & Phillips *Migrants, Minorities and Housing*, p.17

<sup>128</sup> Islamophobia 2004, p.16

<sup>129</sup> Islamophobia 2004, p.9. Of course, this is only criticism if one assumes there is something wrong with political correctness.

term is that there is *one* Islam against which the phobia is directed, rather than the wide spectrum of beliefs and interpretations, as well as cultural and political practices and ideologies which are also frequently attributed to Islam.<sup>130</sup> Moreover, the word ‘phobia’ in general evokes a more passive attitude, or mental illness or aberration, than the prejudice and active discrimination also included in the Trust’s definition of Islamophobia.<sup>131</sup>

It was not the objective of the writers of the report to discourage legitimate disagreement with or disapproval of aspects of Islam, so to discern between Islamophobia and legitimate criticism, it distinguished ‘open’ and ‘closed’ views of Islam as shown in the detailed overview in the Introduction, along with a discussion of the distinctions between the two. Closed views in this context are representative of a phobic dread of Islam, whereas appreciation and respect, as well as legitimate disagreement and criticism are aspects of open views. The report made eight sets of opposing distinctions between open and closed views, though in reality these distinctions are obviously blurred, and often mutually reinforce one another.<sup>132</sup> The more a protagonist expresses closed views of Islam, the more Islamophobic their attitude can be said to be.

<b>Closed views of Islam</b>	<b>Open views of Islam</b>
1. Monolithic	Diverse
2. Separate	Interacting
3. Inferior	Different
4. Enemy	Partner
5. Manipulative	Sincere
6. Criticism of West rejected	Criticism of West considered
7. Discrimination defended	Discrimination criticised
8. Islamophobia seen as natural	Islamophobia seen as problematic

(For the detailed overview of open and closed views, see Introduction)

### **2.3.1 History of Islamophobia in Britain**

Until the early 1980s, Islam in Britain received little public attention. Then, events such as the Honeyford affair, the Rushdie affair, and the first Gulf War pushed it into the public arena: Ray Honeyford, headmaster of a school with a largely Asian/Muslim student body in Bradford (a town host to one of the UK’s largest Muslim communities), made racist remarks about the accommodation of minorities in British schools in 1982 in letters to the *Times Educational Supplement*, the local *Telegraph and Argus*, and to the conservative *Salisbury Review* in 1984. It sparked a public debate, and demonstrations by Bradford Muslims calling for Honeyford’s removal as head teacher. The issue raised the will to protest their rights among Muslims, and awareness in the rest of society about stereotyping and the treatment of Muslim needs in the public sphere. Unfortunately, the affair was soon followed by the publication of *The Satanic*

<sup>130</sup> Halliday, F. ‘Islamophobia’ reconsidered’ in *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, Volume 22 number 5, September 1999, p.898

<sup>131</sup> Richardson, p. 22-23, *Islamophobia* 2004, p. 9

<sup>132</sup> *Islamophobia* 1997, p. 4-5

Verses and the controversy surrounding it. The book burning organized in Bradford on January 14, 1989, and fatwa against Salman Rushdie issued by Ayatollah Khomeini a month later firmly established British Muslims in the media (and in public opinion) as 'uncivilized' and 'intolerant'.<sup>133</sup> Prior to the Rushdie affair, *all* Asian men were stereotyped in Britain as docile, deferential and unassertive. Following the affair, the stereotype changed, practically overnight, with Muslims – the majority of whom are Asians - now portrayed as inflexible, demanding, fanatical and aggressive.<sup>134</sup>

While the book burning – with its unintended evocation of Nazi practices – and certain inflammatory remarks to the news media by 'Muslim leaders' were without a doubt unwise, the way in which they were portrayed to be representative and the way Muslims have since been demonized is unwarranted. 'Muslimness' was established in the media as being at odds with 'Britishness' and liberal values of freedom of speech and human rights.<sup>135</sup> Overt attempts by Muslims in Britain to retain their culture have been interpreted since as separatism and a rejection of 'British values'.<sup>136</sup> The Rushdie affair, its coverage in the media and the vast array of publications and debates it inspired have marked a watershed and have shaped the way Muslims and non-Muslims see each other, both in Britain and world-wide.<sup>137</sup> The affair, in combination with the first Gulf War, have led to the 'racialisation' of Islam, with religion and culture superseding colour and origin as foremost signifier of identity of Muslims in the eyes of others.<sup>138</sup>

In recent years, attention has increasingly turned to an undefined global movement called 'Islamic fundamentalism'. In contrast to 'Christian fundamentalism' (which refers to a literal reading of and adherence to biblical 'fundamentals') the meaning of 'Islamic fundamentalism' is political rather than theological, and the term is never used by Muslims to self-identify.<sup>139</sup> It tends to be characterised by anti-western rhetoric, illiberalism, anti-modernism and terrorist means to political ends. Due to political and media rhetoric and essentialist reasoning, Muslims everywhere are increasingly seen to be exponents of this amorphous and threatening 'fundamentalism' – all the more so when Muslims 'at home' (in the UK) make political demands, regardless of what those demands are, or even just show or wear outward symbols of their religion. This kind of "common sense" logic (Fundamentalists are Muslims, therefore Muslims are fundamentalists) has gained influence with various incidents in the UK and abroad, including the Rushdie affair and the

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<sup>133</sup> Vertovec, p.23

<sup>134</sup> Modood 2005, p.14

<sup>135</sup> Vertovec, p.23

<sup>136</sup> Poole, p.22

<sup>137</sup> Islamophobia (1997), p. 27

<sup>138</sup> Silverman, M and Yuval-Davis, N. *Jews, Arabs and the Theorisation of Racism in Britain and France* in Brah, Hickman & Mac An Ghail (eds.) *Thinking Identities, Ethnicity, racism and culture*, 1999, London p.35

<sup>139</sup> Islamophobia 1997, p. 6

bombings by political Islamists of U.S. Embassies in Nairobi and Dar Es Salaam, and more recently, the attacks of 9/11, 11/3 and 7/7<sup>140</sup>.

Another contextual factor that contributes to Islamophobic attitudes in Britain is the relatively high proportion of Islamic asylum seekers. Particularly the tabloid press vilifies asylum seekers, and uses the terms 'Muslim', 'refugee', 'immigrant' and 'asylum seeker' interchangeably.<sup>141</sup> Writing in his column in the *Express on Sunday* on January 4<sup>th</sup> 2004 (an article for which the BBC sacked him from his position as a talk-show host) Robert Kilroy-Silk asserted that "*We have thousands of asylum seekers from Iran, Iraq, Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Yemen, Saudi Arabia and other Arab countries living happily in this country on social security.*" In the same article he states that "Arabs" are "*currently threatening our civilian populations with chemical and biological weapons. They are promising to let suicide bombers loose in Western and American cities. They are trying to terrorise us, disrupt our lives.*"<sup>142</sup> By including non-Arab Iran in his list of 'Arab countries', it seems Kilroy is actually referring to Islamic countries, rather than Arab ones. Furthermore, the "they" who are living on in this country are implied to somehow be the same "they" who are currently threatening "our" civilian populations.

### 2.3.2 Manifestations of Islamophobia

"*Islamophobia: Issues, Challenges and Action*", the 2004 follow-up report to "*Islamophobia: a challenge for us all*" lists the main examples of anti-Muslim hostility as follows:

- *“verbal and physical attacks on Muslims in public places*
- *attacks on Mosques and desecration of Muslim cemeteries*
- *widespread and routine negative stereotypes in the media, including the broadsheets, and in the conversations and ‘common sense’ of non-Muslims – people talk and write about Muslims in a way that would not be acceptable if the reference were to Jewish people, for example, or black people*
- *negative stereotypes and remarks in speeches by political leaders implying that Muslims in Britain are less committed than others to democracy and the rule of law – for example, the claim that Muslims more than others must choose between ‘the British way’ and ‘the terrorist way’*
- *discrimination in recruitment and employment practises, and in workplace cultures and customs*
- *bureaucratic delay and inertia in responding to Muslim requests for cultural sensitivity in education and healthcare and in planning applications for Mosques*
- *Lack of attention to the fact that Muslims in Britain are disproportionately affected by poverty and social exclusion*
- *Non-recognition of Muslims in particular, and of religion in general, by the law of the land, since discrimination in employment on grounds of religion has until recently been lawful and discrimination in the provision of services is still lawful.*
- *Anomalies in public legislation, such that Muslims are less protected against incitement to hatred than members of certain other religions*

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<sup>140</sup> FAIR, EUMC 2001, Islamophobia 2 etc.

<sup>141</sup> Commission on British Muslims and Islamophobia, *Islamophobia: issues, Challenges and Action*, 2004,

p.8

<sup>142</sup> Kilroy-Silk, R., *We owe Arabs nothing*, *Express on Sunday*, 04-01-2004

- *Laws curtailing civil liberties that disproportionately affect Muslims*<sup>143</sup>

Others have narrower descriptions of the manifestations of Islamophobia. The UK based Forum Against Racism and Islamophobia (FAIR) defines Islamophobia more broadly, leaving out the *unfounded* nature of the fear or hate of Islam that is included in most definitions, but lists only four types of manifestations:

- *“attacks, abuse and violence against Muslims*
- *attacks on mosques, Islamic centres and Muslim cemeteries*
- *discrimination in education, employment, housing, and delivery of goods and services*
- *lack of provisions and respect for Muslims in public institutions.*<sup>144</sup>

Though journalist and Muslim convert Stephen Schwarz warns against labelling anyone who criticises Islam in any way an Islamophobe, he asserts that Islamophobia does exist and manifests in the following ways:

- *“attacking the entire religion of Islam as a problem for the world;*
- *condemning all of Islam and its history as extremist;*
- *denying the active existence, in the contemporary world, of a moderate Muslim majority;*
- *insisting that Muslims accede to the demands of non-Muslims (based on ignorance and arrogance) for various theological changes, in their religion;*
- *treating all conflicts involving Muslims (including, for example, that in Bosnia-Herzegovina a decade ago), as the fault of Muslims themselves;*
- *inciting war against Islam as a whole.*<sup>145</sup>

Writing in 2001, prior to the September 11 attacks in the United States, Steven Vertovec stated that there had been a noticeable increase in derogatory images of Islam, intolerance of Muslim values, and occasional acts of harassment and physical violence against Muslims in the UK.<sup>146</sup> Following the terrorist attacks, expressions of Islamophobia and attacks, discrimination and harassment motivated by it have only become more frequent.

The evidence of real manifestations of Islamophobia is often merely anecdotal for a variety of reasons: as stated earlier it is frequently difficult to distinguish between Islamophobia and racism, or disadvantage linked to social class rather than discrimination. Furthermore, the concept of religiously aggravated crime was only introduced in British law in 2001<sup>147</sup>, and the insulting of the basic tenets of a religion and the insulting or intimidating of its followers was only considered a religiously aggravated offence following a 2003 High Court ruling.<sup>148</sup> As a result, incidents prior to these dates were not recorded by the authorities, or filed as incidents of racist offence. Finally, many mild incidents of harassment go unreported and are therefore not included in official figures, or attacks or harassment are reported and are perceived to be motivated by anti-Islamic

<sup>143</sup> Islamophobia 2003, p. 8

<sup>144</sup> <http://www.fairuk.org/docs/defining%20islamophobia.pdf>

<sup>145</sup> <http://www.frontpagemag.com/Articles/ReadArticle.asp?ID=17874>

<sup>146</sup> Vertovec, 24

<sup>147</sup> [http://www.cps.gov.uk/legal/section6/chapter\\_a.html#\\_Toc44745562](http://www.cps.gov.uk/legal/section6/chapter_a.html#_Toc44745562)

<sup>148</sup> Islamophobia 2, p.32

sentiments by the victim, but this is considered unproven by the authorities, in which case the incident is again not recorded as such.

In a BBC survey, résumés and letters of application were sent to 50 firms offering jobs. The fictitious job applicants all had the same (but differently phrased) qualifications and experience, but some of them had typically white-sounding names, some typically black African, and some typically Islamic. A quarter of the fictitious 'white' applicants were invited for an interview, as opposed to 13% of the black, and only 9% of the Islamic-sounding applicants.<sup>149</sup> Many other cases of discrimination both in hiring and treatment at work go unreported to the authorities, but anecdotal and some empirical evidence suggests that it is widespread.<sup>150</sup>

Discrimination on religious grounds in employment wasn't made unlawful until December 2003. Following a 1983 House of Lords ruling regarding the right of a Sikh boy to wear his turban, Sikhs and Jews were classed as racial groups, and therefore protected under the Race Relations Act. Muslims in Britain however are far more ethnically diverse, and so there was no specific protection for them in cases of religious discrimination. In 1991 the Commission for Racial Equality successfully filed a lawsuit against an employer who refused to hire Muslims because he considered them to be extremists. However, the employer in question was charged with indirect discrimination against Asians (since they constitute the majority of the British Muslim population) as discrimination against Muslims was not, in fact, illegal at the time.<sup>151</sup> This official non-recognition of anti-Muslim prejudice, discrimination and attacks in itself made many Muslims feel marginalised and alienated. Khalida Khan of the An-Nisa Society writes:

*"[...] it is a fact that Muslims are being vilified, abused and attacked every day in this country and in Europe because of their identity as Muslims. There may be no records or statistics to prove this, simply because they have not been kept – but that is not to say that it does not exist. Muslims know and experience it, as victims, each and every day. The onset of certain worrying new problems in the community, particularly with regards to the sudden increase in criminality and extremism amongst sections of Muslim youth, are directly linked to the rise of Islamophobia, and it's various manifestations, and the lack of government will to recognise and address it."<sup>152</sup>*

Perhaps surprisingly, Khan was writing in 1998: many people have only become more aware of both Islam and Islamophobia following the September 11 terrorist attacks in the US in 2001. As Khan's article and various other publications show, Islamophobia and its manifestations clearly existed prior to those attacks, but there was a marked increase following them. In the immediate aftermath, there was a high amount of incidents of violent assault, verbal abuse and vandalism against Muslims and Islamic buildings. 'Visible' Muslims, e.g. women wearing *hijab* and Sikh men

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<sup>149</sup> <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/business/3885213.stm> "Shocking racism in jobs market"

<sup>150</sup> For more information: Vertovec 26, Islamophobia 2004 41-46, Weller, Feldman & Purdam "Religious discrimination in England & Wales" 37-49,

<sup>151</sup> Vertovec, 25

<sup>152</sup> Khan, Religious Discrimination: the reality of everyday experience", in *The Muslim Lawyer*, vol 3, issue 2, 1998

mistaken for Muslims because of their turbans were especially frequent targets, suffering verbal abuse, being spat on, or having their coverings torn from their heads. Arson attacks and other acts of vandalism were perpetrated on Mosques and Islamic schools, as well as on houses of ordinary Muslims. The far-right British National Party launched an explicit anti-Islamic campaign, asserting Christianity as being under threat from Muslims in the UK and comparing the presence of Muslims in the UK to an invasion. The number of attacks decreased in the months following the September 11<sup>153</sup>, but there was resurgence following the bomb attacks of 7 and 21 July 2005 according to various government and non-governmental monitoring systems, especially in the first month afterwards, with piques close to the dates of the two bombings.<sup>154</sup> Furthermore, a poll held for the Greater London Authority in September found that of the respondents who had experienced racial or religious attacks since the bombings, only 11 per cent had reported it to the police.<sup>155</sup>

### **2.3.3. Institutional Islamophobia? Anti-terror legislation in Britain**

Following the 2001 attacks, the British government implemented a series of amendments and additional legislation to the 2000 Terrorism Act, which have drawn criticism from a wide range of organisations including the United Nations, the Council of Europe and Amnesty International, because they blatantly contravene international law and a number of Human Rights treaties to which the UK is party.<sup>156</sup> There was already concern over the very broad and vague definition of terrorism<sup>157</sup> under the Terrorism Act, which is open to interpretation and therefore abuse. The Act also created a differential system of arrest, detention and prosecution for those suspected of terrorist offences, thereby violating the internationally recognised right of equality before the law without discrimination. After the 2001 terrorist attacks in the US, the Act was followed in November 2001 by the Anti-Terrorism, Crime and Security Act 2001 (ATCSA), which among other worrying things added having unspecified “links” with a member of an “international terrorist group” to the definition of “terrorist”.<sup>158</sup> ATCSA has also seen foreign nationals held indefinitely without charge in high security prisons. Though many were imprisoned for over three years, they were never questioned again after their initial arrest, and neither they nor their lawyers know why they were being held or have access to whatever evidence there may be against them. Though

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<sup>153</sup> Allen & Nielsen, EUMC Summary report on Islamophobia in the EU after 11 September 2001, ECRI 2005, p. 22, Islamophobia 2004, p. 16, Ansari p. 4

<sup>154</sup> EUMC, “The impact of 7 July 2005 bomb attacks on Muslim communities in the EU”, p. 13-15

<sup>155</sup> “MORI London Omnibus 2005 Telephone questionnaire” Final Topline 30<sup>th</sup> September 2005, [http://www.london.gov.uk/mayor/consultation/docs/sep05\\_poll.pdf](http://www.london.gov.uk/mayor/consultation/docs/sep05_poll.pdf)

<sup>156</sup> Amnesty International, UK Human rights: a broken promise”, 2006, p.6

<sup>157</sup> Definition of terrorism under the 2000 Terrorism Act: [...] *the use or threat [of terrorism] is designed to influence the government or to intimidate the public or a section of the public, and [...] the use or threat is made for the purpose of advancing a political, religious or ideological cause* (<http://www.opsi.gov.uk/ACTS/acts2000/00011--b.htm#1>)

<sup>158</sup> Anti-Terrorism, Crime and Security Act 2001, 21 (2) (c) <http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2001/10024--e.htm#21>

many of them were released from prison when their detention was deemed unlawful in a 2004 Law Lord Ruling, they have since been kept in their houses under 'control orders', a situation tantamount to house arrest, and still without charge, possibly facing deportation to countries from which many of them fled.<sup>159</sup> In the last round of new legislation, following the July London bomb attacks, the period during which a British national can be held without charge for on suspicion of terrorist offences has been extended from 14 to 28 days (for comparison, a murder suspect can only be held without charge for 4 days), and a number of new and again very vague offences have been added, which according to Amnesty International violate the rights of freedom of expression and association.<sup>160</sup>

The various Bills and Acts are also discriminatory to certain ethnic and religious groups either in law or practise. The parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights found in 2004 that the powers under the Terrorism Act were being used disproportionately against Muslims, indicating that unlawful racial profiling was being used in the exercise of those powers. This concern, as well as worry about the lack of monitoring and therefore reliable data on the religion of those stopped, searched, questioned and detained under terrorism laws was echoed by the Commission for Racial Equality.<sup>161</sup> Not only is religion not registered in police stop and search actions, but Arabs are not classed as a separate group, simply falling under 'other' in the categories used by police.<sup>162</sup> If the police are indeed applying racial profiling, though British Arabs are by no means all Muslims<sup>163</sup>, Arabs and North Africans would seem to be a logical target. Both the CRE and Amnesty International have expressed their concern about the impact on both Muslim communities, who increasingly feel targeted by these measures, and about the impact on race relations in Britain as a whole.<sup>164</sup> Measures to monitor and prevent the funding of terrorist organisations have also led to the suffering of legitimate charities according to Sadiq Khan, chair of the Muslim Council of Britain's legal affairs committee. Muslims are now afraid to donate, lest they be accused of funding terrorists.<sup>165</sup>

#### **2.3.4. Criticism and counter-criticism of the 'reality' of Islamophobia**

As has been demonstrated in paragraph 3.3, there are many entirely valid criticisms to be made of the *term* Islamophobia. There are also those, however, who contest the existence of the *reality* of Islamophobia. Two examples are given here; an author who believes the reality of

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<sup>159</sup> Amnesty 2006, 9-29

<sup>160</sup> Amnesty 2006, 43-45

<sup>161</sup> House of Lords, House of Commons Joint Committee on Human Rights (JCHR), *Review of counter-terrorism powers*, Eighteenth Report of Session 2003-04, July 2004, p.16 & 60

<sup>162</sup> Home Office, "*Statistics on Race and the Criminal Justice system - 2004*", p.111

<sup>163</sup> Ismail al-Jalili, *Arab Population in the UK, An ethnic profile*,

[http://www.naba.org.uk/content/theassociation/Reports/arabPopUK\\_04.htm](http://www.naba.org.uk/content/theassociation/Reports/arabPopUK_04.htm)

<sup>164</sup> Amnesty 2006 p. 47, JCHR p. 60

<sup>165</sup> Islamophobia 2004, p. 3

Islamophobia is exaggerated, and a political party which claims that clashes between cultures and religions are 'natural' or 'biological' and thus unavoidable (*ergo* not something to combat or be ashamed of or indeed feel victimised by), and that these clashes can be avoided by keeping cultures geographically separate. Following this line of reasoning, Islamophobia or indeed any other form of racism or discrimination is therefore no more than 'common sense'.

Broadcaster, author and lecturer Kenan Malik drew a lot of attention with his essay "The Islamophobia Myth" published in *Prospect* magazine in early 2005.<sup>166</sup> His central thesis is that there is a large gap between reality and perception, which is exploited (and created?) by Muslim leaders to gain power in their own communities and influence in mainstream politics, and by mainstream politicians to reclaim the moral high ground. Criticism of the war in Iraq and anti-terror legislation can be countered by being seen to take a tough stance on Islamophobia. Malik bases his criticism on two sets of statistics (the number of Asians stopped and searched by police and the number of recorded Islamophobic attacks over the past few years) and his own experience of racism in the 70s and 80s which he feels was far worse than the current situation. He feels that though "Islamophobia" may be useful in politics, it is detrimental to the rest of society. It creates a siege mentality in the Muslim community, making it more insular and encouraging extremism among its members who believe that they as a group are constantly under attack. Quoting journalist Yasmin Alibhai Brown, he also worries that "Islamophobia" will become a fig leaf for every problem faced by Muslims in Britain such as underachievement in education and high unemployment, thus failing to tackle the real causes of these problems. Finally, Malik states, it stifles any possibility of legitimate discussion or criticism of (cultural) aspects of Islam: to criticise is to be labelled an Islamophobe. He fears that the existence of the concept of Islamophobia and the bill to outlaw incitement to religious hatred which it has espoused will effectively curb free speech.<sup>167</sup>

In a response printed in *Prospect* magazine, Inayat Bunglawala, secretary of the media committee of the Muslim Council of Britain, summarises the main critiques of Malik's article. Firstly, Malik reduces 'Islamophobia' to violent incidents and police discrimination, ignoring all other manifestations of Islamophobia experienced and recorded. Malik, Bunglawala writes, "makes a mockery" of the victims of anti-Muslim prejudice, by claiming they have not been discriminated against. Secondly, Malik ignores the explanatory notes of the (then) draft law to outlaw the incitement to religious hatred: "*what must be stirred up is hatred of a group of persons defined by their religious beliefs and not hatred of the religion itself ... criticism or expressions of*

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<sup>166</sup> A slightly longer version of the article published on Kenan Malik's website was used for the purpose of this study.

<sup>167</sup> Malik, K., "The Islamophobia Myth", 2005  
[http://www.kenanmalik.com/essays/islamophobia\\_prospect.html](http://www.kenanmalik.com/essays/islamophobia_prospect.html)

*antipathy or dislike of particular religions or their adherents will not be caught by the offence.*" Therefore his fear that the Act would curtail free speech is unfounded.<sup>168</sup>

Malik's treatment of statistics is also suspect. He assumes (presumably based on demographics) that of all the Asians stopped and searched by police, only half were Muslims, when there is no indication in the statistics that this was the case. Malik acknowledges that Asians and Blacks were disproportionately targeted by police, so there is at least a reasonable chance that 'visible' Muslims were also thus targeted, possibly making up far more than half the Asians stopped. He also acknowledges that about 15 per cent of those stopped and searched under anti-terror laws were Muslims, whereas Muslims make up only 2 per cent of the population, but he fails to draw any conclusions from these numbers, quite the opposite in fact: "*Yet not a single reputable journalist challenged the claim that Asians were being disproportionately stopped and searched. So pervasive is the acceptance of Islamophobia, that no-one even bothers to check if it is true*"<sup>169</sup> Finally, in his analysis of the data he fails take account of the fact that religiously motivated discrimination and attacks against Muslims have only very recently begun to be officially recorded.

The only part of Malik's article that withstands criticism is the danger of *all* problems faced by Muslims being attributed to Islamophobia, thereby obscuring other causes and possible solutions.

Rather than denying or denouncing the existence of racism (and by extension Islamophobia), the British National Party (BNP) claims it is natural. In its 2005 election manifesto it states that there are essential differences between races, and claims that Western Europeans in general and natives of the British Isles in particular are genetically predisposed to "*create and sustain social and political structures in which individual freedom, equality before the law, private property and popular participation in decision-making*".<sup>170</sup> Other ethnic groups do not have this predisposition according to the BNP, and "*to allow large numbers of people from very different ethnic groups and cultures to settle here*"<sup>171</sup> is therefore a threat to the values listed above. The manifesto goes on to cite the examples of 'wars' fought between primates from different groups and the wars in former Yugoslavia and Rwanda as 'proof' of the inability of different groups of people to peacefully coexist. Racism is not to be deplored, but rather a "*natural and laudable survival system*"<sup>172</sup>

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<sup>168</sup> Bungawala, I. *Kenan Malik's Islamophobia Myth*, a response from Inayat Bunglawala, printed in Prospect Magazine in March 2005 and available on the MCB's website: [http://www.mcb.org.uk/media/30\\_01\\_05.php](http://www.mcb.org.uk/media/30_01_05.php)

<sup>169</sup> Malik

<sup>170</sup> BNP, 2005 manifesto, "Abolishing multiculturalism, preserving identity", <http://www.bnp.org.uk/candidates2005/manifesto/manf4.htm>

<sup>171</sup> BNP, 2005 manifesto, "Abolishing multiculturalism, preserving identity", <http://www.bnp.org.uk/candidates2005/manifesto/manf4.htm>

<sup>172</sup> BNP, 2005 manifesto, "Abolishing multiculturalism, preserving identity", <http://www.bnp.org.uk/candidates2005/manifesto/manf4.htm>

The BNP's views on Muslims are exemplified in, amongst others, its articles "The Lies of the 'apologists of terror'" and "Islam is the enemy". In the first, reasoning along the lines of President Bush's "If you're not with us are against us" is applied: Polls show that many British Muslims do not support the War on Terrorism and the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, so therefore, according to the author, they must support terror. This reasoning is taken a step further: "those fundamentalists that espouse Islamic terrorism" must therefore logically enjoy the support of the majority of British Muslims.<sup>173</sup> A paragraph from the second article deserves to be quoted in full:

*"Islam tried three times, Poitiers, 732, Vienna 1588 & 1683, to conquer Western Europe by force of arms and each time they were turned back—just. But now, there is no need for Islam to march for the third time on Vienna, nor burst once more across the Pyrenees for the enemy (is there a more appropriate term?) is already within the gates. Europe is and continues to be inundated by a tidal wave of asylum-demanders & illegal immigrants none of whom bother even for an instant to hide their venomous hatred of the West and all it stands for; and the governments of Europe are paralyzed by political-correctness, inertia or sheer moral cowardice to stop that invasion."*<sup>174</sup>

The portrayal is that of a hostile and unified Islam and its multiple attempts to conquer Europe, in an unbroken line throughout the ages, rather than two separate attempts at expansion by two geographically and temporally separate political entities, and largely economic migration (since legal economic migrants rather than asylum seekers and illegal immigrants form the majority of Europe's Muslims). Far from ignoring the fact that Britain itself has in the past had extremely expansionist tendencies, at the expense of amongst others Islamic countries, Dale states that "Islam as a whole went on the offensive" the moment Britain "abandoned its imperial responsibilities" (sic!) in India in 1947.

Following the July 7 bombings, the BNP produced a leaflet for the Barking council by-election in east-London, displaying a picture of the bombed no. 30 bus with the slogan, "*Maybe now it's time to start listening to the BNP*".<sup>175</sup>

The campaign materials and articles of a nationalist party with racist ideas do of course not constitute a serious critique of the reality of Islamophobia. The BNP's total political representation is negligible, with 53 county councillors across the UK out of a total of around 20,000. However, more than half of those 53 council seats were won in the 2006 local elections, showing a recent sharp rise in the BNP's support.<sup>176</sup> Furthermore, though virtually all newspapers including The Sun are anti-BNP, some of the tabloids (especially The Sun) do take a BNP-esque stance on a number of issues, immigration in particular.

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<sup>173</sup> Barnes, Lee, *The lies of the "Apologists for Terror"*, [http://www.bnp.org.uk/articles/apologists\\_terror.htm](http://www.bnp.org.uk/articles/apologists_terror.htm) (April 2004)

<sup>174</sup> Dale, Leslie, "Islam is the enemy" [http://www.bnp.org.uk/articles/islam\\_menace.htm](http://www.bnp.org.uk/articles/islam_menace.htm), March 2003

<sup>175</sup> BBC, "BNP campaign uses bus bomb photo", [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk\\_news/politics/4674675.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/politics/4674675.stm)

<sup>176</sup> [http://www.bnp.org.uk/news\\_detail.php?newsId=913](http://www.bnp.org.uk/news_detail.php?newsId=913)

## 2.4 Islam in the British press

### 2.4.1 Press reporting on Islam before 11 September 2001

Two extensive studies regarding Muslims in the British press will be summarised here: Elizabeth Poole's 2002 "*Reporting Islam: Media representations of British Muslims*", and John E. Richardson's "*(Mis)Representing Islam: The racism and rhetoric of British broadsheet newspapers*", as well as a number of smaller studies, or studies in which media representation formed but a small part of the research undertaken. Though Poole and Richardson's books were both published after September 11 2001, the periods they investigated predate that day. Richardson does not refer to it, and Poole addresses it briefly in a preface added shortly before publication. Studies concerning Muslims in the British press after September 11 2001 will be examined in the following paragraph.

Poole uses three separate methods of analysis: she makes a quantitative content analysis of all reporting on Islam and/or Muslims worldwide in two broadsheets (the *Guardian* and the *Times*) over a period of three years (1994-1996), a qualitative examination (discourse analysis) of a number of stories concerning Muslims in two broadsheets and two tabloids over a period of one year (1997), and an analysis of reader interpretations on the basis of a small selection of articles from 1997 and 1998. Overall, she finds that the amount of international coverage of Muslim issues dwarfs that of Muslims 'at home', but that the way Muslims are portrayed globally affects the way they are seen locally.

The conclusion that Poole draws from the quantitative analysis is that British Muslims were consistently represented within a very narrow framework. Islam in Britain was most likely to be reported if it was seen to affect or impinge on the lives of 'normal' British people. The four dominant meanings derived from ways in which topics were discussed together were:

- The threat to security in the UK posed by the involvement of Muslims in deviant activities
- The threat to British 'mainstream' values posed by Muslims and the subsequent concerns about integration
- The tensions created in interpersonal relationships because of the inherent cultural differences between Muslims and the host community
- Muslims increasingly making their presence felt in the public sphere

Stories that fell outside of this limited framework were not selected for publication, and thus only a very limited range of stories on Muslims made available to the public. There was not a great deal of difference between the two newspapers studied, though the *Guardian* provided more spaces for oppositional perspectives, and was more likely to report on problems faced by Muslims in the form of racism and Islamophobia.<sup>177</sup>

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<sup>177</sup> Poole, 55-100

Poole draws much the same conclusion from the discourse analysis of reporting in 1997: Overall, the coverage on Islam and Muslims fell within a similar limited framework found in the quantitative analysis. The reporting was mostly negative, and there was evidence of aversion towards Islam. This conclusion is qualified by two remarks: firstly, as a redeeming feature, reporting on British Muslims did display a greater diversity than that on Muslims abroad, and secondly, there is nothing to suggest that the negative coverage was a result of malicious intent to defame Muslims, as it could just as well be the result of uncritical or conservative modes of thought and journalistic practises. However, the framing of Islam in this manner was found to be consistent enough to have a significant impact in generating ignorance regarding British Muslims. The newspapers capitalise on the perceived threat posed by growing cultural diversity in the UK to certainties in 'British' perceptions of nation and national identity. A 'Britishness' is constructed, with which 'Islam' is apparently at odds due to the belief, perpetuated in the papers, that Muslims are so completely different as to be excluded from it.<sup>178</sup>

This is corroborated by the findings in the third section of Poole's study, on audience interpretations. Poole finds that knowledge about Islam among non-Muslims is generally limited, thus precluding a critical reading of newspaper reporting on Islam and alternative viewpoints. The discourse of the (non-Muslim) readers interviewed on the whole matches that of the newspapers: the image people have of Islam is mostly negative, Muslims are seen as fundamentally different and a mainly cultural and economic threat. Though they were also associated with some forms of physical threat (terrorism, war, human rights abuses), these were seen as problems connected to Muslims abroad, not in Britain.

The group which reproduced the frames and meanings found in the newspapers to the greatest extent was that of non-Muslims who had no contact with Muslims in their daily lives, suggesting that British Muslims are mainly known to non-Muslims in the UK through the media. One article in particular, regarding possible public funding of Islamic schools, brought to the forefront the dominant viewpoint among this group that *all* minorities (foreigners) were excluded from Britishness, with the implication that Muslim children should go to school with "normal" kids. This was the case even for those in the group that *did* have contact with Muslims in their daily lives: they felt that their Muslim friends, neighbours and co-workers were exceptions, while 'real Islam' was what was portrayed in the media. They felt that Islam in general was a restrictive and oppressive religion which was at odds with their liberal values.

The Muslim groups in the study saw the media in general as biased against Muslims, and they read the articles for the study with the expectation that they would be biased. The group of non-Muslims that had contact with Muslims in their everyday life thought that the media were probably biased to a degree, but also argued that that bias might be justified, suggesting that these were realistic representations. Based on their newspaper readership this group was

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<sup>178</sup> Poole, 101-187

predominantly positioned left-of-centre, and they struggled with the articles where their support of multiculturalism clashed with their support of freedom of speech, for instance an article debating the reinstatement of ancient blasphemy laws in connection with the Salman Rushdie affair. In this particular case they felt that freedom of speech was more important, but thought that laws against religious discrimination (i.e. protecting those practising a faith rather than the faith itself) might be a solution. Where the articles covered topics that the readers knew little about, they tended to attempt to formulate meanings that were aligned with their own, existing ideologies. However, all members of all groups – including those who had accepted the dominant meaning of the text without criticism – felt news reporting was biased, some going so far as to say everything written was ‘rumour and lies’<sup>179</sup>

Richardson employs a similar combination of quantitative and qualitative analysis, with Critical Discourse Analysis as his central method. He studies the reporting around a number of themes and news stories as reported in a number of British broadsheets. The themes and news stories he covers are British Islam and British Muslims, Iraq and the US Desert Fox operation in 1998, and Algeria and terrorist attacks there in 1997 and 1998. The focus here will be on his research into reporting on British Islam and British Muslims as it is the most closely linked to the issues under investigation in this study.

Richardson places reporting on British Muslims in the broader context of race reporting: he quotes various studies that show that the press tend to be very limited in their reporting on race, and restrict themselves largely to repeating a group of key racist messages and stereotypes, focusing on three features: conflict, controversy and deviance according to one study, and a with concentration on a perceived threat to the white majority through black immigration to another. Richardson also cites studies that show that though it is important that hardships that minority communities face are reported on – something which is often done with the best intentions of the journalists or editors involved - doing so excessively brings a risk of providing ‘evidence’ that may be used by racists or racist groups and political parties to support their ideas of ‘natural hierarchies.’<sup>180</sup>

While it still occurred regularly, especially in the tabloid press, in the 1970s and 1980s, overt racism is no longer acceptable in any media expression in current day Britain. However, it is still common practice to juxtapose representations of ‘normality’ with negative ethnic representations. Over the same time period, ‘race’ has been substituted with ethnicity and culture, which are represented as primordial and immutable and therefore in actual fact no different from ‘race’.<sup>181</sup> This is echoed in Silverman and Yuval-Davis research into the ‘racialisation’ of Islam,

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<sup>179</sup> Poole, 231

<sup>180</sup> Richardson 47 - 52

<sup>181</sup> Richardson, 52

with religion and culture superseding colour and origin as foremost signifier of identity of Muslims in the eyes of others.<sup>182</sup>

The first thing Richardson remarks upon in his study of broadsheet reporting on British Muslims in 1997 and 1998 is the constant juxtaposition of “Islam” and “the West”. When this is applied to Muslims *in* Britain, it excludes them semantically from the domain of the “British”, identifying them as “Other”. They are presented as lacking certain qualities that denote “Britishness”, while having certain other qualities that constitute their “Islamicness”, neatly separating “Them” from “Us”. At the same time, Richardson finds that anti-Muslim racism and violence is consistently relegated to a place in the background of news reporting, further emphasizing a positive self-representation combined with largely negative other-representation.

Over half the almost 80 articles Richardson studied for his research on British Muslims in the broadsheet press dealt with ‘Muslim violence in the public sphere’. He illustrates this with an in depth exploration of the reporting surrounding protests over the change of the name of a bingo hall in Luton from ‘Top Rank’ to Mecca. The name was deemed offensive because it connects the name of Islam’s holiest city with gambling, which is forbidden in Islam. The story was picked up in the news only once some protesters had thrown stones through the windows of the bingo hall, and all articles but one ignored not only the fact that weeks of peaceful protest had preceded the incident, but also that the name change had been recent (and that the issue was changing it *back* to what it had been), and that it concerned only one bingo hall. With the exception of an article in *The Independent* all articles referred to Muslim ‘demands’ to the owners of a *chain of bingo halls* to change their name after the *arrival* of Mecca bingo in Luton. The only direct quote in support of the campaign for changing the name back used in all the reporting came not from the campaigners themselves, but from a local councillor, not herself a Muslim. All other information on what the campaigners were asking came from the opposing party, Top Rank Bingo Halls. In the article dealing with the matter, *The Guardian* went on to mention a completely unrelated campaign by a completely different group of Muslims to get a logo on a certain type of Nike running shoes changed, suggesting that the protest over the bingo hall name should be seen in a broader context of over-sensitive Muslims objecting just for the sake of it.<sup>183</sup>

The second area Richardson focuses on is the coverage of discrimination. He finds that in his sample not a single article mentions discrimination on religious grounds explicitly, rather couching it in racial terms, even when it is obvious from context that religion is the issue. For instance, in an article on the failure to integrate British Asians into cricket teams populated by Britons, the emphasis is on racial prejudice. However, later in the article, the journalist goes on to say that Asian’s ‘special religious needs’ and ‘food requirements’ are problematic because the ‘culture of the game’ is oriented apparently around drinking alcohol. Here, the ‘special needs’ are

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<sup>182</sup> Silverman & Yuval-Davis in Brah, Hickman & Mac An Ghail (eds.), p.35

<sup>183</sup> Richardson 113 -122

framed as the problem, rather than the reluctance of 'cricket' to adapt to make room for them. Another article on racism in sport – football this time – also refers only to anti-Asian bias, even though examples of verbal abuse cited in the text clearly point towards anti-Muslim bias.<sup>184</sup>

The examination of articles on Muslim violence and anti-Muslim discrimination taken together point to a disturbing trend – at least in 1997 and 1998 – of attributing negative acts to the Islamic-ness of the perpetrator, but ignoring religion when examining discrimination against Muslims, rather focusing on race.

Richardson's study is extremely detailed and well-researched. However, in some cases one is left wondering how well-founded some of his claims of generalities in British broadsheet reporting are. This concerns particular themes chosen by Richardson – such as 'Muslim Violence in the public sphere' - where he speaks of a trend, but uses only *one* newspaper article to illustrate his point. This is especially the case when the article he uses is a column. While the impact of columns should by no means be discounted, news reporting tends to carry more weight as it is perceived to be unbiased.

#### **2.4.2. After 9/11**

Some aspects of media coverage after the September 11 attacks in 2001 have already been covered in the previous chapter. The focus in this section is specifically on press reporting.

The EUMC reported that in the immediate aftermath of the attacks of September 11 2001, many national newspapers used their editorial leader column to defend Islam and British Muslims, saying that the attacks did not represent either the religion or most of its adherents. Others encouraged people to reach out to Muslims in their communities or in the street to let them know they need not fear a backlash. However, there were also a number more critical articles and opinion pieces, among others questioning the consensus that "September 11 had nothing to do with Islam", saying that Muslims in Britain did not appreciate the lengths people in Britain were going to to accommodate them, that they insisted on playing the role of victims. Other articles contested that the majority of Muslims opposed terrorist attacks, called Muslims paranoid for feeling the 'war on terror' was a war on Islam.<sup>185</sup>

As the focus shifted to radicalisation in the UK and stories of young British Muslims fighting in Afghanistan, there were more critical reports, some of them from Muslims. Ziauddin Sardar questioned in an article in *The Observer* why fanaticism had been allowed to rise, and blamed the unwillingness of Muslims to look critically at their religion. What they would see if they were to look inwards, he states, is firstly that in much of the Muslim world with autocratic, theocratic, despotic regimes there is no place to express dissent. Secondly, the answer lies in Islamic movements

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<sup>184</sup> Richardson, 123-125

<sup>185</sup> EUMC, Anti-Islamic reactions in the EU after the terrorist acts against the USA, December 2001, UK country report compiled by the CRE, p. 28-29

such as the Muslim Brotherhood and Jamaat-e-Islami that in the 60s and 70s represented hope, justice and the ideal of self-reliance for the suffering masses and struggle against despotism in Muslim societies. However, Sardar says, the movements have been unable to come to terms with modernity: the intellectuals that drove the movements were replaced with 'semi-literate demagogues', generating fanatic militancy, as repressive as the regimes they seek to replace.<sup>186</sup>

The mainstream press gave ample room to Muslim responses to bombings in Afghanistan, covering both the moderate and hard-line views – both of which appeared to be overwhelmingly against military action, with a BBC poll showing that 80 per cent of British Muslims thought the war was not justified, and a further 57 per cent did not believe assertions that the war was not against Islam<sup>187</sup>. The Muslim Council of Britain however voiced concerns over hardliners receiving far more press attention than their support warranted, a concern is echoed in the EUMC report, noting that increasingly mainstream groups were only in the media to respond to comments from hardline groups such as Al Muhajiroun which were thought to have no more than 2000 supporters in the UK at the time. There was also an increase in assertions – mainly in the letters pages – that Muslims should be grateful for their presence in Britain.<sup>188</sup>

There is also research into changes over a longer period of time: Poole and Richardson co-edited the book *Muslims and the News Media* in 2006, covering a broad range of topics. In one chapter, Poole examines reporting in *The Guardian* and *The Times* in 2003, using the same quantitative method as in her own 2002 work *Reporting Islam* in order to make a direct comparison possible. Her first finding is that there had been a significant increase in reporting on Muslims compared to her previous period of research, with double the number of reports on international events, and more than double the amount on home events.<sup>189</sup> Terrorism was the top 'home' story covered in both newspapers, with a shift in focus from the previous periods of research to extremism in Britain. *The Guardian* was more sympathetic to Muslim concerns, focusing for instance on British Muslims held in the Guantanamo Bay detention centre.<sup>190</sup>

Both papers, Poole finds, gave space to Muslim opinions against the war in Iraq, and especially the *Guardian* was sympathetic, though often using Muslim opposition as a vehicle for its own criticism of the government. However, Poole also finds that both papers place the reactions of Muslims in Britain in the context of a broader, global 'Islamic discourse' and at odds with the UK government, thus offering space to Muslim voices, she argues, whilst still representing them as

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<sup>186</sup> Sardar, Z. *Islam has become its own enemy*, in *The Observer*, 21 October 2001

<sup>187</sup> BBC website, *UK Muslims 'against Afghan war'*, 14 November 2001,

[http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk\\_news/1655288.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/1655288.stm)

<sup>188</sup> EUMC 2001, p.32

<sup>189</sup> Poole, E., *The effects of September 11 and the War in Iraq on British Newspaper Coverage*, in Poole & Richardson, *Muslims in the News Media*, London 2006, p.93

<sup>190</sup> Poole in Poole & Richardson, p.96

troublemakers.<sup>191</sup> Finally, Poole criticises articles which she feels reinforce dominant ideas about Muslims, focusing on the radicalisation of young British Muslims and the possibility of British suicide bombers. She concludes that the dominant themes are still the same as the four cited in paragraph 3.4.1, namely the threat posed by Muslims to security in the UK due to their involvement in deviant activities; the threat they pose to British mainstream values; cultural differences that create tensions with the host communities; and that Muslims are increasingly making their presence felt in the public sphere.<sup>192</sup>

Though Poole's method is thorough and does indeed make comparisons between her different studies possible, it does appear that in her view there is very little the newspapers can do right in terms of covering Islam, as she is critical even when they give space to Muslim voices and concerns and, in the case of the Guardian, share those concerns.

## 2.5 The London bombings

On July 7<sup>th</sup> 2005, the day after London had won the bid for the 2012 Olympics and during the British-led G8 summit in Gleneagles, Scotland, four bombs went off in central London during the rush hour. The first three were simultaneously detonated at 8:50 am on underground trains, and in the initial confusion the explosions were thought to have been caused by an electrical fault. When a fourth bomb exploded an hour later on a bus in Tavistock Square, it became clear that London was dealing with an organised terrorist attack. In total 56 people were killed in the attacks (including the four bombers), and 700 injured.<sup>193</sup>

In the days that followed it gradually became clear what had happened, and even to a city used to IRA bombings, the news was shocking for two reasons: firstly, for the first time ever, the explosions had been caused by suicide bombers, and secondly, the bombers were 'home-grown'. All four bombers were young men, three of whom were born in Britain, and led apparently successful and contented lives, two of them with wives and children. Though Britain had been prepared for the eventuality of a terrorist attack, the threat was generally thought to come from outside. When the possibility of home-grown terrorists did come up, they were expected to be disaffected problem youth, not well-adjusted, well-educated young Brits.

Thirty-year-old Mohammed Sidique Khan is believed to have been the leader of the entire operation, and responsible for the Edgware road blast, which killed seven people. He was a teaching assistant in the Beeston area of Leeds, and was extremely well-liked by pupils and parents alike. However, in 2004 extended periods of sick leave which the school did not believe to

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<sup>191</sup> Poole in Poole & Richardson, p.97-98

<sup>192</sup> Poole in Poole & Richardson, p.101-102

<sup>193</sup> House of Commons, *Report of the Official Account of the Bombings in London on 7th July 2005*, 11 May 2006 and [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/shared/spl/hi/uk/05/london\\_blasts/what\\_happened/html/default.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/shared/spl/hi/uk/05/london_blasts/what_happened/html/default.stm)

be genuine, led to his dismissal in November.<sup>194</sup> At that time, he went to Pakistan with fellow bomber Shezad Tanweer, ostensibly for religious studies. It is thought that they could have been radicalised or trained there by extremists. Khan had previously visited Pakistan in 2003, though again, it is not clear what he did there.<sup>195</sup> In September 2005<sup>196</sup>, a videotape of Khan emerged in which he made a statement (presumably) explaining his involvement in the London bombings, though he does not refer to them explicitly. His message seems to be directed at the British public, and as explanation for his actions, he names the atrocities perpetrated by 'your' democratically elected governments against 'his people', presumably Muslims as the line is followed by his declaration of his responsibility to avenge his Muslim brothers and sisters.<sup>197</sup> He holds the people of Britain or possibly the West directly responsible for these atrocities committed against Muslims, because of their support of the governments responsible. He states that many others have said the same things before him far more eloquently, and that the message has failed to have any impact, and "therefore I'm going to talk to you in a language that you understand"<sup>198</sup>. The atrocities and the "bombing, gassing, imprisonment and torture of my people" were generally assumed to refer to the current wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Twenty-two-year-old Shezad Tanweer (sometimes spelled Shazad Tanweer) detonated his bomb on the Circle Line between Liverpool Street and Aldgate stations, killing eight people, himself included. A video of Tanweer was aired on Al-Jazeera almost a year to the day after the attacks, on 6 July 2006. In this video, among other things, he states that attacks will continue "until you pull your forces out of Afghanistan and Iraq".<sup>199</sup> He was a former sports science student, and was described by family and friends as religious, but not particularly interested in politics. Though he was arrested and cautioned for disorderly conduct in 2004, he had an otherwise clean track-record, and, as with Kahn, all who knew him expressed bafflement at his involvement in the bombings.

The same was true for the nineteen-year-old Jamaican-born convert to Islam, Abdullah Shaheed Jamal (born Germaine Lindsay), who is thought to be responsible for the Kings Cross bomb blast, which killed twenty-six and injured hundreds more. He had moved from Jamaica to the UK with his mother in 1986, where they settled West Yorkshire – from whence the other three bombers also hailed – and converted to Islam in 2000 along with his mother. At the time of the bombings, he was married with a young child, and had a second on the way.<sup>200</sup>

Of the four bombers, eighteen-year-old Hasib Hussain was the only one with a slight

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<sup>194</sup> *Report of the Official Account of the Bombings in London on 7th July 2005*, House of Commons, 11 May 2006, p.15

<sup>195</sup> *Intelligence and Security Committee Report into the London Terrorist Attacks on 7 July 2005*

Chairman: The Rt.Hon.Paul Murphy,MP, May 2006

<sup>196</sup> BBC website, *London bomber video aired on TV*

<sup>197</sup> BBC website, *London bomber: text in full*

<sup>198</sup> BBC website, transcript: [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk\\_news/4206800.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/4206800.stm), video:

[http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/shared/spl/hi/uk/05/london\\_blasts/investigation/html/bombers.stm#](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/shared/spl/hi/uk/05/london_blasts/investigation/html/bombers.stm#)

<sup>199</sup> BBC Website, *Video of July 7 bomber released*

<sup>200</sup> BBC website, Profile: *Germaine Lindsay*

record of trouble, from fights over racial tensions at school – in which he was involved but not as a ringleader - to a shoplifting offence in 2004. He had spent time in Pakistan with relatives, and had gone on the Hajj pilgrimage to Mecca after he completed his GCSE exams in 2002, and on his return showed outward signs of becoming more serious about Islam, wearing robes and growing a beard. Hussain is believed to have been responsible for the explosion on the no. 30 bus in Tavistock Square, which killed 13 people. Hussain had shown signs of sympathy for terrorism prior to the London bombings, open in his support of Al Qaida and calling the perpetrators of the September 11 attacks martyrs.<sup>201</sup>

Khan, Tanweer and Hussain were all second generation British citizens of Pakistani descent. They were all involved in the same social scene in the Beeston area of Leeds where they lived, around the mosques, gyms, youth clubs and local Islamic bookshop. While news coverage at the time suggested some, if not all, of these places were centres of extremism, the official government report states that information about these places is mixed and incomplete, much of it based on rumour. What is clear is that Khan was very much a youth leader in the area, seen as a mentor and looked up to by many, organising activities and giving talks. The Home Office report concludes that it seems likely that Khan, assumed to be the ringleader, used the opportunities presented by these places to at least identify possible targets for indoctrination. Khan, Hussain and Tanweer were seen frequently in each others' company in the months leading up to the attacks.<sup>202</sup> It is not clear how Khan and Lindsay met, but they are thought to have come across one another in the Islamic circles of Huddersfield and Dewsbury, where Lindsay lived and which Khan frequented. By the end of 2004 they were close associates.<sup>203</sup>

The bomb attacks were denounced by all representative Islamic Forums, and by many Muslim individuals speaking in the media as well. Many of them did however express sympathy for the motives of the bombers, if not their actions. That sympathy was also expressed by members of the public and politicians who had opposed the war in Iraq – a stance which was labelled as bordering on treacherous in the more right-wing media. British PM Tony Blair had often called for solutions to the root causes of Islamist terrorism, such as the continued Israeli occupation of Gaza and the West Bank, but blankly refused to accept a link between the London bombings and Iraq<sup>204</sup>, and continuing UK and US support to various repressive regimes in largely Islamic countries in the Middle East, Africa and South Asia.

Both media and politicians emphasised that these bombers did not represent Islam and called for restraint, aiming to prevent a backlash against Britain's Muslim population. Nevertheless, the month following the July 7 attack saw a 600 per cent increase in discriminatory attacks against Muslims or people mistaken for Muslims, some of them violent, and one of them

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<sup>201</sup> House of Commons 2006, p.15

<sup>202</sup> House of Commons 2006, p.16

<sup>203</sup> House of Commons 2006, p.18

<sup>204</sup> Economist, *Baghdad's bombs, and London's?*, July 21 2005

deadly.<sup>205</sup>

### 2.5.1 Press reporting after 7/7

In its report *Impact of 7 July 2005 bomb attacks on Muslim communities in the EU*, published in November 2005, the EUMC dedicates a small section to the media response to the attack. It finds that in the initial period after the bombings, the press did a great deal to report in a fair and balanced way, for instance by focusing on the Muslim victims of the attack and by warning against an anti-Islamic backlash. The EUMC reports a change after it became clear that the bombers were British, with the debate shifting to radicalization of British youths and integration issues, some outlets focusing on betrayal and ingratitude towards the host society. The report quotes a letter from the Muslim Council of Britain expressing the concern that some media were producing 'Islamophobic propaganda'. However, the EUMC finds, the overall reporting remained fair and balanced, with examples of reporting on the backlash against the Islamic community and giving space to (moderate) Muslim voices.<sup>206</sup>

Immediately following the attacks, the Government convened a group of people with diverse skills and backgrounds in a number of working groups, with the objective of "working together to prevent extremism". A synthesis report of the working group recommendations was published in October 2005.<sup>207</sup> While there wasn't a particular focus on media or analysis of media reporting in the weeks following the attacks, some remarks on media coverage of Muslims are made in the report. The findings, while not referring specifically to the immediate aftermath of the bombings, has a different perspective than that of the EUMC. In a section on backlash, a paragraph in the working group report on community security states that there is a very insidious form of backlash in the form of media reporting:

*"The media (often assisted by the political discourse) is developing a worrying picture of an 'enemy within', singling out respectable members of the Muslim community for particularly nasty treatment, and systematically and relentlessly bringing out the worst elements of the community for public scrutiny and critique. This is resulting in both schisms between different sections of society and a complete siege mentality in the Muslim community."*<sup>208</sup>

In a later section, the working group on tackling extremism and radicalisation also finds that British media coverage on issues related to Islam and Muslims is often disparaging and even incendiary, unbalanced at best and often negative and potentially harmful. It is remarked that

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<sup>205</sup>European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC), *The impact of 7 July 2005 bomb attacks on Muslim communities in the EU*, Vienna, 2005, p.31

<sup>206</sup> Ibid., p.20-21

<sup>207</sup> Preventing Extremism Together Working Groups, October 2005, p. 2

<sup>208</sup> Ibid., p. 75-76

young Muslims cite this as a cause for disaffection, and that this is backed up by research studies.<sup>209</sup>

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<sup>209</sup> Preventing Extremism Together Working Groups, p. 91 and 94

## Chapter Three: The reasons for the attacks

This chapter deals with the question: *How did each of the newspapers cover the various suggested reasons for the attacks?*

The video of Mohammed Siddique Khan outlining his reasons to commit an attack (no specific reference was made to London or a suicide bombing) wasn't released until September 1<sup>st</sup>, when it was aired on the Al Jazeera television network. The video message of Shezad Tanweer was aired on the same station almost a year to the day after the attacks. Until that time, there were no documents or messages from the bombers detailing their reasons for the attack, and they did not confide in anyone who came forwards after the bombings occurred. Therefore, there was a great deal of speculation on the reasons for the attacks. The immediate assumption – before the identity of the bombers became known – was that the attack had been carried out by Islamic militants following the ideology of Al Qaeda. A claim of responsibility was made on a website on the day of the attacks by a group calling itself “The Secret Organisation Group of Al Qaida in Europe”, though no evidence was ever found to support the claim.<sup>210</sup>

In politics, MP George Galloway for the small left-wing party Respect (which in 2005 held one seat in Parliament), asserted in the House of Commons on the day following the attacks that London had paid the price for the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, the abuse of prisoners by US soldiers in the Iraqi Abu Ghraib prison and the continuing confinement of people in Guantanamo Bay. He said that the attacks were despicable, but that it was the actions of the West that inflamed hatred in the Muslim World.<sup>211</sup> His remarks were strongly criticised by other politicians and in certain media outlets, both on the grounds that he was using the tragedy for political gain, and that he was deemed to be wrong. Prime Minister Tony Blair refused to acknowledge at the time and in later years – even after the suicide bombers' videos had been released – that there was a causal link between the attacks and UK foreign policy in Afghanistan and Iraq and the government's support of the war on terror.<sup>212</sup>

### 3.1 The Sun – news reporting

In the early days following the attacks, the Sun frequently reproduced the rather simplistic arguments that emanated from the government regarding the reasons for the attack. It was construed as an attack from an ‘evil ideology’ that hated ‘the West’. Before anything was known about the bombers or their motives, the Sun immediately attributed the attacks to ‘savage Al-Qaeda fanatics’, and quoted the Prime Minister as saying “*When they seek to change our country and our way of life by these methods, we will not be changed. (...) Britain will show by its spirit*

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<sup>210</sup> Report of the Official Account of the Bombings in London on 7th July 2005, House of Commons, 11 May 2006, p.8

<sup>211</sup> BBC website, *Galloway: Bombings price of Iraq*, [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk\\_news/politics/4661633.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/politics/4661633.stm)

<sup>212</sup> Economist, “There may be a link. But so what?”, July 21 2005

*and dignity that our values will long outlast theirs*”, the implication being that it was indeed a change in Britain, of the ‘British way of life’ that the attackers sought, rather than political change in British foreign policy. No other reasons for the attacks were speculated upon in the article.<sup>213</sup> While the view was simplistic, the Sun was very quick to deny that this ‘evil ideology’ was in any way representative of ‘moderate’ Islam, and quoted many Muslims as saying that it was in fact by its very nature *not* Islam (see Chapter four). Therefore the ‘good’ versus ‘evil’ paradigm can not be said to be a closed view of Islam as such, as the ‘evil ideology’ was emphatically separated from Islam.

However, as it began to emerge early on that the bombers were likely Brits; the Sun began to explore what was to become a recurring theme: that of the ‘72 virgins’ (though the exact number varies between texts). In *Hate Britain*, the authors describe how young Britons were brainwashed to hate Britain and to committing terrorist attacks against “*their adopted country*” (emphasis added). They are lured, the journalists write, “*into dying for Al-Qaeda with the promise of sex in heaven. They are hypnotised by hate-filled extremist clerics into believing that the West is the great “Satan” and must be attacked. And they are told that 75 virgins await their pleasure in paradise if they martyr themselves with the name of Allah on their lips.*”<sup>214</sup>

The article gives no further explanation, implying that a simple mixture of sex and hate is enough for young Muslim men to want to commit suicide bombings. The rest of the article is devoted to a list of potentially dangerous foreign nationals residing in Britain, and three Brits who have either committed an act of terrorism abroad or who have been convicted of plotting to do so. The entire article is dedicated to (foreign) Muslims who are dangerous and (British) Muslims who are, apparently, gullible and lecherous (with the second being a classic Orientalist stereotype), the closed view lying somewhere between the Runnymede Trust’s ‘threatening’ and ‘inferior’. Furthermore, the use of the word ‘adopted’ in relation to Britain implies that though the article is about Muslims born and raised in Britain, they are not considered truly part of the country, adding the ‘separate and other’ closed view to the list.

After the identities of the suspected perpetrators were revealed on the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> of July, as well as certainty that they had been suicide bombers, there was renewed speculation into the reasons for their actions. The simplified explanation of ‘promises of endless sex sessions in heaven’ was again repeated. Security expert Chris Dobson, who is described as having studied why young Muslims are prepared to become suicide bombers is quoted as saying “*What could possibly induce a young well-educated Muslim to blow himself into smithereens, taking with him to a ghastly death innocent people who have done neither him nor his religion any harm? They die with the name of Allah on their lips, certain that they will go directly to paradise where cool fountains and 75 virgins await their pleasure.*”

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<sup>213</sup> Hepburn, I., *56 minutes of hell*, The Sun, July 8 2005

<sup>214</sup> Hughes, S. and Kay, J. - *Hate Britain*, The Sun, July 9 2005

This is not the sole reason though, Dobson continues, sometimes they are motivated by shame that the Arab states have lost their power to the West, and they accuse Great Britain and the United States of mounting a modern crusade against Islam.<sup>215</sup> The second reason here is constructed as Muslims feeling *shame* that Arab states have *lost* their power to the West, simultaneously reproducing a closed view of Islam as inferior, and absolving the West of an active role in the 'losing' or Arab power.

However, political explanations did eventually begin to make it into the Sun's news articles (though they were present at an earlier stage in the opinion pieces, see 3.2) An article that describes bomber Tanweer's involvement in race hate crimes goes on to quote a friend as saying that he and 'the other lads' were shown videos of Muslims being killed by soldiers in Chechnya and Iraq. They were also shown women being beaten, after which the man showing the video said: "*What are you going to do about it? You can die for your religion and be martyrs. As a suicide bomber you go straight to heaven*"<sup>216</sup> However, the Sun offers no comment on this.

On the 17<sup>th</sup>, The News of the World ran an interview with bomber Tanweer's uncle Bashir Ahmed, in which he gave very different reasons for the attacks than those suggested in The Sun up until that point. Ahmed is quoted as talking of the West's treatment of Muslims, and how young Muslims want to be accepted by the British community, but become enraged when they are constantly taught about human rights in school, while seeing abuses of fellow Muslims by those that preach human rights around the world, the abuse of prisoners in Guantanamo Bay and US plundering of oil in Iraq and the Middle East. Terrorism could be stopped in an instant, says Ahmed, if Bush and Blair were to apologise and stop the injustices.<sup>217</sup> While News of the World gives ample space for Ahmed's comments, it presents them in a way that states its clear disagreement. It warns that 'some of his claims will outrage readers'. "*But we publish them because we believe- like the Prime Minister – that his views should be dealt with head on.*" Scepticism is conveyed by placing quotation marks around certain words in various places in the article, e.g.: "*He said America should stop plundering oil in Iraq and the Middle east and the "abuse" of suspected Islamic terrorists held at Guantanamo Bay*", the quotation marks suggesting either that no actual abuse is taking place, or that it is deserved because the detainees are 'suspected Islamic terrorists'. In a clearly closed view, criticism of the West is here very strongly rejected – the 'outrageous' claims are printed because they ought to be 'dealt with head on'.

And they are dealt with head on: in a lead article, Ahmed's explanations are called 'justifications' in a 'grotesque logic'. As previous commenters had done, News of the World cited 9/11 as a reason why Ahmed could not be right – 9/11 took place before the wars in Afghanistan

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<sup>215</sup> Pascoe-Watson, G. *200 more Brits ready to blow themselves up*, The Sun, 13 July 2005

<sup>216</sup> Parker, A., Harvey, O., *Tube bomber a month ago*, The Sun, 16 July 2005

<sup>217</sup> Mahmood, M., *He wasn't terrorist*, News of the World, 17 July 2005

and Iraq, and therefore Afghanistan and Iraq could not be reasons for terrorist attacks now. *“Indeed, if these are the opinions of an apparently moderate Muslim, heaven only knows what ferments in the minds of the raging fanatics. The Prime Minister recognises this. As he said yesterday, it is only by power of argument that the threat can be overcome. Confronting an evil ideology means exposing it for the rubbish it is.”*<sup>218</sup>

The previous fairly abstract ‘evil ideology’ that drove the terror attacks was thus made synonymous with the very real grievances and issues many Muslims – and non-Muslims – had with UK foreign policy, as they threatened the comfortable ‘good’ versus ‘evil’ image that both Tony Blair and the Sun attempted to create, and that had already run strongly through the discourses of the ‘war on terror’ prior to the attacks. The tactic also falls under the Runnymede Trust’s sixth closed view of Islam, in which criticism of ‘the West’ is rejected out of hand.

In the same issue, Tony Blair is quoted as saying *“They demand the elimination of Israel; the withdrawal of all Westerners from Muslim countries (...); the establishment of effectively Taliban states and Sharia law in the Arab world en route to one Caliphate of all Muslim nations.”* Afghanistan is then taken as an example of what such a state would look like – girls put out of school, women denied even rudimentary rights, people living in abject poverty and oppression, all justified by reference to religious faith.<sup>219</sup> The discourse on the reasons for the attacks had thus shifted to further include political aims, but they were the political aims of an ‘evil ideology’ that would lead to a nightmare state. The article ends with a call to join up with moderate Muslims. The juxtaposition of moderate and extreme Muslims in this context suggests that the ‘evil ideology’ is simply an extrapolation of moderate Islam.

On the 19<sup>th</sup>, The Sun announced that Prime Minister Tony Blair would *“tell Muslim leaders the London bombers were driven by a warped interpretation of Islam – NOT the Iraq war. The PM has already told Cabinet colleagues that the four killers were motivated by their faith”*<sup>220</sup> The message enclosed in the phrasing was that Tony Blair had the final say over ‘truth’ in this matter.

Overall, Sun news reporting on the reasons for the attack stuck to a simplistic good vs. evil paradigm, in which any criticism of the ‘good’ landed the critic in the camp of the ‘evil’. In the Sun’s news reporting on the reasons for the attack, there was little room for Muslim voices, save that of Bashir Ahmed who was instantly vilified, much as described in Jabri’s inclusion/exclusion model. However, on other topics (which will be covered in the following chapters) a relatively high number of Muslim voices were included, and unlike the period following the attacks of September 11 2001, the Sun did not provide overmuch space for (actual) extremists. Additionally, though many closed views of Islam were put forward, Islam was quite emphatically not the ‘evil’ in the “good versus evil” rhetoric.

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<sup>218</sup> *Let’s fight evil together*, News of the World, 17 July 2005

<sup>219</sup> *Twisted bid to change our world*, News of the World, 17 July 2005

<sup>220</sup> *Don’t blame war*, The Sun, July 19 2005

### 3.2 The Sun - Opinion

The “good versus evil” theme also ran through much of the editorial and column writing in the Sun. However, there was a little more room for dissent.

In its “Sun Says” editorial on the first day after the attacks, the Sun ran a rallying piece, referring to London’s ‘Blitz spirit’ (thereby indirectly equating the attack to Nazi Germany’s actions in the Second World War) and standing up in defence of “our way of life” titled *Our spirit will never be broken*. Regarding reasons for the bombings, George Galloway, like Ahmed Bashir, comes under attack for his remarks on the connection to the UK’s involvement in Afghanistan in Iraq: “...these wicked men mock our tolerance” it says of the attackers “as does that disgusting slimeball George Galloway MP, who plumbs the depths with his claim that ‘Londoners have paid the price’ for the PM’s policy in Iraq and Afghanistan.” Not the fact that Galloway made the statements in the immediate aftermath of the bombing, but the statement itself is under attack: he ‘plumbs the depths’ with his ‘claim’. The rest of the editorial refers to the perpetrators and the attack as ‘evil’ on multiple occasions and ‘fighting a holy war’ on one, and a reference to the ‘mad’ IRA bombers of previous decades is made. Britain, on the other hand has, throughout history ‘fought on the side of good’, and will continue to do so, the editorial promises, because Tony Blair and George Bush would not be “knocked off course in their battle against terror”<sup>221</sup>. Though no-one would disagree that the attacks were horrific, this is placed opposite absolute infallibility on the part of the UK, again in a closed view rejecting all criticism of ‘the West’.

An opinion piece by Sun Muslim columnist Anila Baig also refers to ‘massacres’ committed by the UK in Iraq and Afghanistan as the reasons named by a website that made an unsubstantiated claim or responsibility for the attacks. However, Baig writes, “Do they not remember that 9/11 helped trigger those conflicts?”<sup>222</sup>, thereby ignoring history prior to 9/11. In a later column though, she contradicts herself, describing young Muslim men who feel torn between their life in the West and their duty to God. She argues that Muslims should be allowed to speak out on injustices against Muslims, the plight of the Palestinians and those who have lost their lives in Iraq, and their belief Blair should not have gone to war, without being viewed with suspicion. If their voices are silenced, she says, it leads to extremism.<sup>223</sup>

News of the World columnist Eilis O’Hanlon also strongly disagrees with George Galloway, firstly interpreting his words as meaning Londoners *deserved* to get hit over Iraq and Afghanistan, and secondly as she believes he is factually wrong for the same reasons as Anila Baig, that the US wasn’t at war with anyone when the September 11 attacks occurred. The real reason for terrorist bombings, she says, is “That they hate the fact that any of us is alive at all” and the only way to deal with them is tough government action.<sup>224</sup> In the same edition, MP

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<sup>221</sup> Sun Says - *Our Spirit will never be broken*, July 8 2005

<sup>222</sup> Baig, A. *They do not act in the name of God*, The Sun, July 8, 2005

<sup>223</sup> Baig, A. *All of us must pull together*, The Sun, 13 July 2005

<sup>224</sup> O’Hanlon, E. -*Crawl back into the woodwork, George*, News of the World, July 10 2005

William Hague accuses George Galloway of attempting to make political capital out of a tragedy, and presents his own view that the terrorists' objection to western society is that it's free, open and multicultural, which would have made the UK a target even if it had never taken part in the 'coalition of the willing.' He does not however present this as the view of all of Islam, but rather a 'narrow and perverted' version thereof.<sup>225</sup>

Michael Griffin, author of a book on Al Qaeda, presents a slightly more nuanced view of the motivations of the attackers, citing the fight against the US-led coalition in Iraq and the 'battle for regime change' as an inspiration and recruiting ground for new terrorists. Furthermore, second and third generation descendants of immigrants are considered easy targets, with recruiters playing on dissatisfaction with the Western lifestyle and shame they feel at their parents' integration with Western ideals. However, Griffin doesn't suggest in any way that it's only a small group that feels this way, leaving the analysis open to the interpretation that these feelings are widespread in the community, suggesting a closed view that Islam is incompatible with the West.<sup>226</sup> Moreover, though this is an opinion piece, he is labelled an expert, thus lending weight to his opinions.

All the alternative views to the 'good versus evil' paradigm that are accepted – not attacked – in *The Sun*, deal with the inability of Eastern youngsters to settle in the West – or rather, their inability to reconcile their faith with modernity, a strongly neo-Orientalist approach. In terms of Muslim voices in *Sun* opinion pieces, Anila Baig generally stands alone, certainly as an author. Muslims were quoted in the *Sun* quite frequently during the two weeks under investigation here, but rarely on in-depth issues. The dominant Muslim view presented in – and presumably dictated by – *The Sun* was that of Muslims expressing their horror at the attacks and distancing themselves from them. While this is positive, it is also very limited.

### **3.3 The Daily Mirror**

The *Daily Mirror* itself does not distinguish between news and opinion, and frequently makes use of the vehicle of 'experts' to present opinion as fact. In the debate surrounding reasons for the attack, *Mirror* news reporting did very little more than reproduce the governmental discourses on the attacks, often transcribing entire speeches. However, the *Daily Mirror* does sport a far greater diversity of opinions than the *Sun* in all its opinion, background and analysis articles.

In one of the first news reports of July 8<sup>th</sup>, *The Daily Mirror*, like the *Sun*, cites the speech held by Prime Minister Tony Blair and President Bush at the G8 summit in Gleneagles, in which Blair asserts that the terrorists would not be able to change "our way of life". Bush promises that 'we' will bring them to justice and at the same time spread an ideology of hope and compassion that

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<sup>225</sup> William Hague - Stick Close to our allies, news of the World, July 10, 2005

<sup>226</sup> Michael Griffin - *Bin Laden's evil martyrs in our midst* – News of the World, July 10 2005

will overwhelm their ideology of hate.<sup>227</sup> This echoes the discourse emphasizing western civilization also noted by MacDonald in the wake of the September 11 attacks of 2001.<sup>228</sup>

An article on the same day by a writer labelled as a terrorism expert, Simon Reeve, states that given the UK's close support for President Bush and the War on Terror, an attack was practically inevitable. Reeve however goes on to say that "*These terrorists hate the West for a litany of reasons. Jealousy, anger and fear are among their motivations.*", and doesn't further clarify, launching in stead into an explanation of tactics and methods in terrorism.<sup>229</sup>

In his opinion piece *We Cannot Surrender* Christopher Hitchens thinks back to the IRA bombings, which were fundamentally different, he feels, as he was aware there were ancient historical disputes involved and a potential political solution. 7/7 he feels, is different: The grievances of the 'jihadists' are the grievances of seeing unveiled women, of democracy, of the Jewish people rather than the state of Israel, of music.... Hitchens' list goes on. "*All of these have been proclaimed as a license to kill infidels or apostates, or just anyone who gets in the way.*" He addresses Galloway's speech in parliament: "*you can be as opposed to the Iraq operation as much as you like, but you can't get from that "grievance" to the detonating of explosives at rush hour on London buses and tubes. (...)The grievances I listed above are unappeasable, one of many reasons why the jihadists will lose.*" The only option, he concludes, is to hunt down those responsible.<sup>230</sup> Hitchens does equate the suffering of the people of London to the suffering of the people in Iraq and Afghanistan – but specifically the suffering of those people at the hands of Muslims, thus constructing a discourse of worldwide suffering caused by Muslim extremists, and absolving the 'coalition of the willing' of its part in human suffering, echoing the legitimate versus illegitimate violence also identified in the post 9/11 period by Lewis.<sup>231</sup>

Kevin Maguire, writing on the 13<sup>th</sup>, concurs with Hitchens' view that the goal is the imposition of values: "*Their goal is simple - that we all submit to the perverted values and way of life they espouse.*" Throughout his article he refers to the bombers as mad: 'a lunatic fringe', these four 'demented men' acting on an 'ugly psychosis'. "*Unlike the IRA bombers,*" he writes "*there seems to be no possible compromise nor solution that any government or the people of Britain can offer.*"<sup>232</sup> While it is hard to disagree that suicide attacks are not the sanest forms of political action, if the attackers are presumed to be insane and their motives ludicrous, it neatly absolves the government from any form of action bar retaliation and increasing security.

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<sup>227</sup> Blackman, O., Prince, R - *Blair and Bush vow to beat threat to 'all we hold dear'*, Daily Mirror, July 8 2005

<sup>228</sup> Macdonald, p.176

<sup>229</sup> Reeve, S., *They don't need signed orders from Bin Laden... They know what he wants them to do*, Daily Mirror, July 8 2005

<sup>230</sup> Christopher Hitchens *We cannot surrender; states which shelter these killers will know no peace*, Daily Mirror, 8 July 2005

<sup>231</sup> Lewis, p.23

<sup>232</sup> Maguire, K – *They're here – British suicide bombers are Blair's worst nightmare*, Daily Mirror, July 13 2005

Terrorism expert Kevin Toolis launches in with a vision of what Britain would look like if the perpetrators got what they wanted, an Iranian style repressive republic. Then, however, he adds a little more nuance: *“At the root of the Islamic philosophy of Osama bin Laden and his followers is the belief that America and its allies, such as Britain, are occupying Muslim lands and waging a modern-day Christian crusade against Islam.”* They want, he says, to control the oil wealth of Saudi Arabia, get American troops out of Iraq, and obliterate Israel. They want Islamic rather than US hegemony over the world, and will do anything to achieve their aims. Home-grown bombers, such as Toolis thinks might be behind these attacks, are driven by US support for Israel and the invasion of Iraq. However, according to Toolis, the bottom line is that they see everything about the West as corrupt and evil. Killing the innocent was just part of their greater crusade.<sup>233</sup> Frank Gardner follows Toolis’ line of thinking: The Al-Qaeda ideology, he says, holds that Western governments are waging a global war on Muslims and the only way to resist is by force. In fact, all Muslims have a sacred duty to do so.<sup>234</sup> Toolis is not particularly careful in distinguishing the Al-Qaeda brand of Islam from other movements within Islam, thus possibly giving the impression of referring to Islam as a whole, and displaying nearly all the Runnymede Foundation’s closed views.

Richard Stott’s view is that it is nonsense to deny that there is no connection with the Iraq war, firstly because there is no way of knowing that, but secondly that *if* the attack was Islamic-terror based there *must* be some link. Stott holds that killing such as occurred in London happens on a daily basis in Iraq. The US and British invasion thus becomes a justification that is easily swallowed by ‘vulnerable, disillusioned young men, looking for a cause’. *“Al-Qaeda and its supporters want Britain out of Iraq and Afghanistan. We cannot leave now, any more than we could pull out of Ireland. Yet Tony Blair and his ministers must not be allowed to fool themselves that the London attack was purely as a result of 9/ 11, however convenient it is for them. We must face the hard and unpalatable truth that although our own civilians were cut down ruthlessly, many Iraqis - including women and children - were blown to smithereens by allied cluster bombs. War does that. The innocent die. Indiscriminately. Horribly. Without purpose. The reaction is the same. Hatred. Revenge. More bloodshed.”*<sup>235</sup> Stott displays open views of Islam, seriously considering criticism of the West, and roots the actions of the terrorists in human reactions to violence, rather than in their ‘Islamicness’.

In the Sunday Mirror of 17 July, Farzana Hakim questions the thesis of the roots of terror lying in young Muslims feeling marginalized, socio-economic troubles, and the war in Iraq. The first simply isn’t true anymore for many young Muslims, Hakim states: Many of them go to university and live happily between two cultures. If the war in Iraq were a real reason, she

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<sup>233</sup> Kevin Toolis - *So what do they want? ...And how do we stop them?* Daily Mirror, July 9 2005

<sup>234</sup> Gardner, F. *The BBC’s security correspondent on why the ‘New Al-Qaeda is even more terrifying’* Daily Mirror, July 12 2005

<sup>235</sup> Stott, R. *Defeating the Army of ghosts*, Sunday Mirror, July 10 2005

questions why middle-class white people aren't joining the ranks. These reasons are cover-ups, and it is time, she says, for Muslims to face the extremism in their midst.<sup>236</sup>

## Conclusion

Overall, The Sun allows very little room for dissent on the debate surrounding the reasons for the terror attacks. Not much space is given to alternative views than a limited construction of good versus evil, and where alternative views appeared to criticize the "good" side, the Sun seeks to re-frame the dissenting views as extremist. The Sun's position was held more broadly in the UK around the time of the attacks, with widespread condemnation for anyone who advocated seeking to understand the grievances from which the bombers' actions sprung. Implying that the government might also be in some way at fault was considered practically treasonous. This could be particularly problematic for Muslims, as is illustrated by the response to Bashir Ahmed. To the Sun – and presumably some of its readership – a non-Muslim seeking understanding of terrorists motivations is wrong, an 'apologist' seeking to justify terrorism. If a Muslim seeks to do the same, they come under suspicion of being an extremist themselves, as is illustrated by the Sun's treatment of both Tariq Ramadan (see chapter four) and Bashir Ahmed. The Muslim community was expected to simultaneously look inward and address its problems, while remaining loyal "our way of living", which in the early days following the attacks left little room for criticism.

The Daily Mirror, on the other hand, has room for a number of opposing views, and does in fact frequently not appear to have a dominant discourse of its own, with regular columnists often posing wildly differing positions. Broadly speaking, the Daily Mirror is opposed to the War on Terror and is multiculturalist in its approach, but it gave space to columnists protesting the 'whining human rights brigade' as well those who shared views closer to its own. A surprising absence, especially from the Daily Mirror, is the lack of attention paid to discrimination and social exclusion as root causes for terrorism, particularly as it is so widespread within the Muslim communities of Britain.

Both tabloids were careful to state frequently that terrorism had 'nothing to do with real Islam', in what was probably a genuine attempt to be fair and assuage tensions. However, especially the Sun sometimes implicitly did make the link between either Islam and Terror, or Islam and backwardness and presented a generally more closed view of Islam than did the Daily Mirror. Neither tabloid gave a great deal of space to Muslim opinion on this subject, with the exception of the article on Ahmed and the articles by Baig and Hakim. However, both Baig and Hakim to a degree reproduced dominant views on the reasons for the attacks, laying the problem within Islam itself, the only alternative Muslim voice was shouted down.

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<sup>236</sup> Hakim, F, *The home truths we Muslims must face*, Sunday Mirror, July 17 2005

In the previous chapter, widespread Islamophobia and discrimination of Muslims in Britain has been amply described. However, both the Sun and the Daily Mirror barely touch upon this in their search for reasons behind the attacks.

## Chapter four: The threat of Muslims in Britain

This chapter deals with the question: *How did each of the newspapers cover the debate around the threat posed by Muslims in Britain?*

There was a great deal of consternation about the fact that the bombers were 'home-grown', and the question of how much of a threat Islam posed to Britain rose in various ways. Previous research into newspaper reporting on Muslims in Britain showed that British Islam was frequently constructed as posing a cultural threat. Now, the security threat which had previously been attributed to Muslims abroad had to be examined in a local context also. This section will look at the degree to which Islam itself is seen and presented as the source of the threat, rather than a broader socio-political situation, and the degree to which customs and opinions associated with Islam are seen as a threat in and of themselves.

However, there were also a great number of articles and opinions that attempted to deconstruct the image of Islam as threatening, and these were a lot more overt than the more threatening depictions. They are included here to paint an overall picture of the discourse on threat and Islam.

There were two areas which constituted a large part of the discourse on threat (or lack thereof) and Islam where the treatment of the topics in the two different tabloids was near-identical, namely that of the perpetrators of the bombings, and that of a Muslim victim of the attacks. To avoid repetition, these will be studied for both tabloids together.

### 4.1 The Sun – news reporting

In “*56 minutes in Hell*” on the 8<sup>th</sup>, there are oblique references to threat only, though a litany of adjectives and descriptions are clearly aimed at imparting the horror of the scene, referring to hell, carnage, body parts thrown hundreds of feet and piles of bodies. Where Muslims are concerned, the newspaper again uses a quote from Tony Blair which is probably well-intentioned, but is somewhat marred by placing the “Muslim” opposite the “mainstream” community, as the PM “*called upon the nation to resist fanatics attempts to drive a wedge between mainstream and Muslim communities*”, thus excluding Muslims from the mainstream. The sentence is not in quotation marks, so it is unclear whether these were the exact words used by Tony Blair, but well-intentioned though it may be, the effect is the second of the Runnymede Trust’s closed views of Islam, namely constructing Islam as separate and other.<sup>237</sup>

Also on the 8<sup>th</sup>, countering the image of Islam as threat, the Sun dedicates an entire article

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<sup>237</sup> 56 Minutes of Hell

to the outraged responses of Muslims, as the title suggests, in *Muslim's rage at slaughter*<sup>238</sup>. It relates the experience of 'British-born Mustafa' who was caught up in one of the attacks, and his assertion that "as a British Muslim, I am absolutely outraged by this attack on London". In addition to the 'ordinary Muslim' represented by Mustafa, Sir Iqbal Sacranie, Chairman of the Muslim Council of Britain (MCB), the largest Islamic umbrella organisation in the country, is quoted calling upon everyone to unite in helping the police in capturing the perpetrators, and the Chairman of the East London Mosque is also quoted in expressing his shock and horror at what has happened. Though Muslims are singled out to respond separately rather than being taken up in other articles expressing the opinions of members of the public, the intent is clearly to show that Muslims too are angered and shocked by the attack, and therefore not construed as a threat. A short article on the same day, *Britain's Muslims urged to pray for victims* quotes another spokesperson of the Muslim Council of Britain expressing utter condemnation on the perpetrators on behalf of the Council. It is unclear from the article who exactly has urged Muslims to pray for the victims, but it is possible given the proximity of the quote that it was also the MCB.

However, a subsequent article, *Disciples of Osama* is the first to raise the possibility that the bombers were young British Asian graduates who had travelled to 'Islamic schools' in Pakistan, near the Afghan border. While the information about the perpetrators is correct, no further clarification is given of the 'Islamic school', thus implying that Islamic schools are threatening in and of themselves. Secondly, the Muslim responses included in the article are all 'extremist' in nature, coming in turn from a militant website and known militant Sheik Omar Bakri, who is quoted as saying in a Portuguese magazine interview three months earlier that an attack was going to be launched, and that "We don't make a distinction between civilians and non-civilians, innocents and non-innocents, only between Muslims and unbelievers. And the life of an unbeliever has no value, no sanctity"<sup>239</sup>. No balancing remarks are made in the article about other viewpoints in Islam, and no other Muslims are asked to comment. The whole article frames Islam in a threatening and violent manner, along the lines of the Runnymede Trust's fourth closed view of Islam.

In *Our Mecca of Murder*, News of the World on July 10<sup>th</sup> reports on large numbers of 'Muslim extremists' and terrorist cells under MI5 surveillance in London. After what appeared to be attempts to be balanced and even supportive of Muslims in some previous articles, the insensitive and suggestive use of 'mecca' (lower case in original) to describe the attraction of London for terrorists is surprising, connecting the most holy place in Islam with violence and terrorism, taking a closed view and further entrenching the already existing discourse that the two are intrinsically linked.

On July 12<sup>th</sup>, The Sun picked up on the fact that Tariq Ramadan, a Swiss Islamic scholar,

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<sup>238</sup> Clench, J. *Muslim's rage at slaughter*, The Sun, July 8 2005

<sup>239</sup> Flynn, B. and Kay, J. - *Disciples of Osama* – The Sun, July 8 2005

was to hold a speech in London at a conference funded in part by the Metropolitan and Association of Chief Police Officers. The Sun branded Ramadan a fanatic and 'Islamist rabble rouser', based, it seems, mainly on the fact that Ramadan had not been allowed entry the US to take a tenure at Notre Dame University under the Homeland Security Act. After three years the reasons were made known, namely that he had made a contribution to a Palestinian charity that was placed on a list of charities that supported Hamas two years *after* he had made his donation.<sup>240</sup> Though there is some controversy surrounding Ramadan, he is widely respected in academic circles and has had tenure at a number of European universities. He also joined a UK government taskforce on combating Islamist extremism in Britain at the invitation of Tony Blair in August 2005.<sup>241</sup>

In a news article on the subject, Anthony France cites the ban from the US, but neglects to mention that Ramadan has also been banned from Saudi Arabia, Tunisia and Egypt following his call for a moratorium on corporal punishments, stoning and beheading under Sharia law. Self-proclaimed terrorism expert Steven Emerson is quoted as saying: "*The telegenic, soft-spoken and charming professor is just the modern, Westernised face of the same enemy that wears a different mask on other battlefields*". A response from the police is also quoted, saying that Ramadan is a regular part of conferences on dealing with tensions within communities, and that part of the response to attacks must be an open debate<sup>242</sup>. A response from Ramadan was printed the following day, in which he stated that he never justified suicide bombings, but in stead sought to understand them. "*Prof Ramadan also claimed not to be banned from France* (as The Sun had asserted on the previous day) "*- but admitted that the US had revoked his visa*". (emphasis added) Though both these issues are matters of public record, the use of the word 'claim' suggests the statement might be untrue, whereas 'admitted' implies it was something Ramadan was trying to hide. Though allowing Ramadan to respond, the article portrays him as devious, opens with the statement that The Sun 'revealed' that he was to speak to young Muslims, and ends in a call from shadow foreign secretary Liam Fox to ban Ramadan.

## 4.2 Sun – Opinion

In the editorial "*Our spirit will never be broken*" on the 8th, threat is everywhere: "*Britain*", the article states "*is crawling with suspected terrorists and those who give them succour*". The use of crawling summons up the image of a plague of vermin, and the literal statement is that they are everywhere. The image is one of omnipresent threat – and though the words Islam and Muslim are not used here, they appear two sentences earlier, suggesting strongly that all these 'crawling' suspected terrorists are Muslims, as are those who 'give them succour', supporting the closed

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<sup>240</sup> Laurence, J. *The Prophet of Moderation: Tariq Ramadan's Quest to Reclaim Islam*, in Foreign Affairs, May/June 2007

<sup>241</sup> Dodd, V. *Blair backs banned Muslim scholar*, The Guardian, August 31 2005

<sup>242</sup> France, A. - *Why here? Why now?*, The Sun, 12 July 2005

view of Muslims as threatening and supportive of terror.<sup>243</sup>

SAS veteran Chris Ryan, who became famous for his book *Bravo Two Zero* on his experiences in Iraq during the first Gulf War writes a lengthy piece on the threat of 'religious fanatics' and how to deal with them. The threat according to Ryan exists in the fact that you can't recognise the terrorists – you might be living next to them or sitting next to them on a bus - and they are ruthless, illustrated by the fact that Muslims were among the victims of the blasts as the killers '*are not frightened of taking out their own people*'. Framing Muslims in this way as the 'own people' of the terrorists places them discursively closer to one another, implying they have a great deal in common, more than Muslims do with non-Muslims. In combination with the 'it could be anyone' line which he repeats frequently, Muslims are constructed as the ubiquitous 'enemy in our midst'. Ryan then closes by stating that 'Al Qaeda will not lay down their arms until Britain has become Muslim state'.<sup>244</sup>

On the Ramadan affair, columnist Richard Littlejohn launched a vicious attack on the invitation extended to "Ramadan-ding-dong" to speak at the July conference, calling him a fanatic and an Islamist hater. The *Sun Says* editorial on the same day called him 'more dangerous than ranting Abu Hamza or Omar Bakri', as Ramadan's moderate tones present a reasonable, "acceptable" face for young Muslims, and an 'apologist for terror'. "*We don't need scholars justifying suicide bombers and analysing for us the grievances that drive them. We don't need lectures on understanding the monsters who slaughtered innocent Londoners. To hell with them. And to hell with this professor too.*"<sup>245</sup> The Sun's closed-view approach here is extremely short-sighted: Firstly, it is crucial to understand the causes of terror in order to be able to combat it. Secondly, if debate on terrorism in Britain were to be shut down or confined to those who reproduced the simplified 'good' versus 'evil' dichotomy, scholars and clerics such as Ramadan, Qaradawi and even Omar Bakri could not seriously be questioned in public debate by Muslims and non-Muslims alike on the vital issues of identity, citizenship and shared and contested values. The Ramadan articles prompted a shower of angry letters about the issue on the 15<sup>th</sup>, calling the financial contribution from the police – effectively from the taxpayer – an insult to the victims of the attack. Towards the end of the period of reporting here, a similar controversy arose around the visit of cleric Yusuf Al-Qaradawi to speak at a conference in Manchester.<sup>246</sup>

In a July 18<sup>th</sup> editorial, The Sun praised British Muslim star boxer Amir Khan for standing up and saying he's proud to be British, having just fought his professional debut match, coming in draped in the Union Jack with 'Land of Hope and Glory' playing at his request. Amir Khan expressed his wish to be someone who brought people together and who could help stop the violence. The editorial goes on to say that being British is an honour and a privilege, that "*British*

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<sup>243</sup> *Our spirit will never be broken*

<sup>244</sup> Ryan, C - *Secret war of whispers* – News of the World, July 10 2005

<sup>245</sup> Sun Says – *Abuse of Britain* – The Sun, July 12 2005

<sup>246</sup> Pascoe-Watson, G. *Suicide Martyr's Cleric is on Way*, July 19 2005

*Muslims who foment hatred of their own country turn our stomachs. And those who seek to justify the London terrorists are no different.*” The editorial then praises Britain’s multicultural society, but says that does not mean people can forget their Britishness. “*Amir Khan knows his community has a duty to stand*”<sup>247</sup>.

The call for Muslims to assert their Britishness is a recurring theme in the Sun: despite all the Sun’s assertions that most Muslims are not supportive of terrorism, the burden of proof lies with the Muslims themselves, and they, it appears, more than others, are to demonstrate where their loyalties lie.

### **4.3. The Daily Mirror**

On July 8<sup>th</sup>, The Daily Mirror merely reports that police are investigating whether the bombers came from extreme factions within the Muslim community in Britain. It goes on to relay a joint statement from the Muslim Council of Britain and Churches Together in Britain and Ireland condemning the attacks, saying that the scriptures and traditions of both the Muslim and Christian communities repudiate such violence, and that religious precepts could not be used to justify crimes completely contrary to their teaching and practice. The article goes on with quotes from a number of religious leaders from Christianity, Islam and Judaism condemning the attacks. The Daily Mirror thus gives ample space to all faiths to condemn the attacks and disassociate themselves from them.<sup>248</sup>

However, in the same issue an article by “terror expert” Simon Reeve talks of the dangerous younger generation of Islamic extremists that has emerged. These extremists aren’t part of any kind of network, but simply follow an ideology. Because they have no connections with established groups, police and MI5 are unaware of them.<sup>249</sup> Two days later, a long article establishes all the international links: “famous” terrorists who have been in and out of Britain establishing sleeper cells.<sup>250</sup> Further references are made to ‘the new Al-Qaeda’ in which volunteers, including from Britain, went to fight in Afghanistan and Iraq. British counter terrorist officials, it states, believe that the threat is from a minority of Asian Muslims who trained in Afghanistan.<sup>251</sup> – and the list of articles of this nature continues.

While the distinction is constantly made between “Muslim extremists” and “moderate” or “mainstream” or even “peace-loving” Islam, the sense conveyed by these articles is a pervasive sense of threat of an enemy within. The sleeper cells, the British Asians who have passed

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<sup>247</sup> Sun Says – *Hero Amir is Pride Fighter* – The Sun, July 18 2005

<sup>248</sup> Armstrong, J., *Were the bombers British? UK Muslim leaders condemn ‘evil deeds’ but fear backlash*, Daily Mirror, July 8 2005

<sup>249</sup> Simon Reeve, *They don’t need signed orders from Bin Laden... They know what he wants them to do*, Daily Mirror, July 8 2005

<sup>250</sup> Wright, S., *Third Bomb boast*, Sunday Mirror, July 10 2005

<sup>251</sup> Gardner, F. *Why the New Al Qaeda is even more terrifying*, Daily Mirror, July 12 2005

through training camps, could be anyone. It is hard to determine whether it is the reporting that is at fault here, rather than the actual existing threat. The reporting does however seem unnecessarily sensationalist in places, geared towards instilling a sense of fear rather than informing.

However, throughout the reporting on Islam and threat, the Daily Mirror also constantly repeats the mantra of terrorism not being representative of Muslims in Britain. On July 12<sup>th</sup>, the Mirror quotes Tony Blair as saying "*People know full well the overwhelming majority of Muslims stand four square with every other community in Britain. We were proud of your contribution to Britain before last Thursday. We remain proud of it today. "Fanaticism is not a state of religion, but a state of mind."*"<sup>252</sup> And these and similar statements from non-Muslims but also very frequently from Muslims are constantly repeated throughout.

*They tried to make me a suicide bomber* conveys both threat and the triumph of 'good'. A young man describes how when he was fifteen and had recently lost his father, he became increasingly interested in religion and started attending all kinds of religious gatherings and conferences. During one of these conferences, two men approached and befriended him. They showed him videos of Muslims suffering in Iraq and Afghanistan, images which horrified him. They then tried to convince him to become a suicide bomber, and for a while, he says he was drawn into their discourse. However, it was the memory of his father's life of peace and prayer that convinced him that it was the wrong path to take.<sup>253</sup> This story provides a refreshing contrast to the stories of radicalization of the four London bombers. Though the ubiquitous '70 virgins in heaven' are present, the emphasis is very strongly on how the images shown to him affected him. Furthermore, it is his view of his father's peaceful Islam that decides him against the violent path, an open view showing Islam as a deterrent from violence.

#### **4.5 Common themes in The Sun and The Daily Mirror: Shahara Islam and the bombers**

Though there were others, Shahara Islam, who died in the Tavistock Square bus blast, soon became the face of Muslim victims of the attack. She made her first appearance in The Sun on July 9<sup>th</sup> in a human interest story about relatives looking for their missing loved ones, under the heading "*Two beautiful, decent women. One Christian. One Muslim. Both missing with dozens more. Pray for them all.*"<sup>254</sup> The headline set the tone for all the following reports on the young woman: she became the symbol both of British Islam, with later reports describing how she moved with ease between the two worlds, and of the perfidy of the bombers, for killing 'one of their own'. On July 14<sup>th</sup>, Shahara was featured again under the headline *Shahara's evil killers aren't true*

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<sup>252</sup> Blackman, O. - *Blair's vow on atrocities*, Daily Mirror, July 12 2005

<sup>253</sup> Matt Roper - *They tried to make me a suicide bomber*, Daily Mirror, July 14 2005

<sup>254</sup> Steve Kennedy and Tracy Kandohla - *Two beautiful, decent women. One Christian. One Muslim. Both missing with dozens more. Pray for them all.*- The Sun, July 9 2005

Muslims. Shahara is described as a devout Muslim, and her friends and family are quoted, one of them saying, "The British Muslims who did this have no right to call themselves Muslims."<sup>255</sup>

The Sunday Mirror also focused on the Muslim victims, describing the despair of the family of Shahara Islam, and the Muslim partner of one of the missing women, who is quoted as saying "I am a Muslim but nowhere in the Islam of the Koran does it say that this is acceptable."<sup>256</sup> When it becomes clear that Shahara has indeed died in the attacks, the Sunday Mirror ran another article on her, about her bridging of two worlds, "going to the mosque every Friday while revelling in Western independence and fashion.". Shahara's freedom is then placed opposite what the fanatics want: "Such joy in being young, beautiful and free while respecting your faith is something bin Laden's fanatics cannot tolerate. Fundamentalism allows no freedom, no independence, particularly for women. The terrorist has nothing to offer but murder, bloodshed, savagery, tyranny and tears. Shahara and her family chose another way. A life in Britain that gave them hope, freedom and happiness."<sup>257</sup> Since the way of hope, freedom and happiness is placed geographically "in Britain" for Shahara and her family, the implication is that where they came from – Bangladesh – this hope and freedom could not be achieved. Read as such, the text appears to imply that happiness and freedom are possible within Islam, but only if you come to Britain: a closed view of an inferior Islam, which needs a veneer of Britishness to bring joy.

Shahara Islam is also the symbol of "good Islam" in Tony Parsons Daily Mirror opinion piece: *For Shahara's sake, don't hate Muslims*. Again the focus is her appearance: "Shahara is a lesson for us all. This lovely young woman saw no contradiction in being both a Muslim and a Briton. She was born in Whitechapel to a family who came here from Bangladesh, and although she could have gone to university she chose to go out into the working world because she had the modern young woman's taste for designer clothes." The symbol of the meeting of East and West once again lies in dress, reinforcing the discourse that 'Western-looking' Muslims are good, 'Islamic-looking' Muslims (like all the bombers) are at best suspect. Her 'modern' interest in fashion appears to be rooted in the British part of her identity, placing modernity opposite Islam in a closed view. That said, the message Parsons seeks to convey is a good one: "I don't think I am imagining it, but I truly believe that race relations in this country have improved since Thursday. I feel that people are going out of their way to be friendlier than they usually are, to be more helpful, to show that we are all in this thing together."<sup>258</sup>

The personal lives of the bombers receive even more scrutiny than that of Shahara Islam:

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<sup>255</sup> Wheeler, V., Kennedy, S, *Shahra's Evil Killers aren't true Muslims*, The Sun, July 14 2005

<sup>256</sup> Voice of the Daily mirror: *Pride out of Horror*, July 9 2005

<sup>257</sup> Voice of the Sunday Mirror: *Shahara: The true face of Islam in London*, July 10 2005

<sup>258</sup> Tony Parsons - *For Shahara's sake, don't hate Islam*, Daily Mirror, July 11 2005

On July 13<sup>th</sup>, the identity of one of the suspected bombers, 22-year-old Shezad Tanweer, was revealed. In a long article about his life, family and friends, journalist Charles Yates refers to the bombers as ‘monsters’ in the first line, but the remainder of the article seems surprisingly sympathetic to Tanweer. He is described lovingly by friends, who are all aghast that he could have been involved. He is described as playing football with friends, helping out in his father’s fish and chip shop. In terms of framing, however, his home ‘which was raided by police yesterday’, is described as being just a few hundred yards from a mosque. The location of the mosque is irrelevant to the story, but given that the story concerns a suicide bomber, proximity to the mosque appears to be somewhat implicated in his action.<sup>259</sup> In an article the following day the same effect is achieved when he is described as having become increasingly religious “*Praying up to five times a day at a mosque (...) 500 yards from his home*”. Both visiting mosques and praying five times a day are entirely normal, in fact central, features of Islam, but here they are equated with Tanweer’s radicalisation, making them appear threatening. The Mirror explores similar themes in its first article on Tanweer, citing his love of cricket and football, and the disbelief of his friends. His father’s fish and chip shop also crops up regularly as a signifier of Britishness. While the mosque is not mentioned in the Mirror article, Tanweer’s devout prayer is.<sup>260</sup>

On the 14<sup>th</sup>, The Sun ran a similar article on 18-year-old bomber Hasib Hussain, describing his love for football and cricket. Friends and neighbours are interviewed, again describing him as a good lad from a respectable family, with the exception of one run-in with the police over shoplifting. He is described as having started to wear Muslim robes at a certain point, to the same effect as the descriptions of Tanweer’s prayer and proximity to the mosque.<sup>261</sup> Mohammad Siddique Khan is described in much the same way, a special needs teaching assistant who was loved by pupils and colleagues. Again, there is a focus on the outward trappings of Islam, with a neighbour commenting that he had a beard and his wife sometimes wore a veil. Councillor Khizar Iqbal, described as a Muslim leader in the community, expresses his concern over the fact that Khan had a teaching job.<sup>262</sup> A further article on the 15<sup>th</sup> again described how well-liked he was and how good with children, how he was proud to be British – and how all that changed when he visited Pakistan with Tanweer. On his return, parents and teachers from his school said, he became quiet and withdrawn, and took sick leave citing depression. However, an anonymous source is quoted as saying that Khan was a ‘fruitcake’ long before his trip to Pakistan, going on military training in Afghanistan and frequently voicing anger over the effects Western policy in Palestine, Iraq and Afghanistan.<sup>263</sup> The Mirror reporting on

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<sup>259</sup> *Khaka, ... Tube bomber from a chippie*, The Sun, July 13 2005

<sup>260</sup> Edwards, J. and Mulchrone, P. - *The suicide murderers*, Daily Mirror, July 13 2005

<sup>261</sup> Russell, A., *The shoplifter Hasib Mir Hussain, 18*, The Sun, July 14 2005

<sup>262</sup> Parker, A., *The Teacher, Mohammad Siddique Khan*, July 14 2005

<sup>263</sup> Parker, A., *Khan was proud to be British – but he changed on his trip to Pakistan*, The Sun, July 15 2005

Khan and Hussain again follows that in the Sun almost word for word, also mentioning Hussain's wearing Islamic dress at school and reporting that he 'rarely mixed with white kids'.<sup>264</sup>

Information on the fourth bomber, Germaine Lindsay, released on the 15<sup>th</sup>, was sketchier, and in initial reporting contained a lot of inaccuracies, saying he was in his 30s rather than 19, and that he had been under FBI surveillance for suspected terror links when he visited family in Cleveland in 2000 – at which point he would have been 14 and had not yet converted to Islam. His wife, Samantha Lewthwaite, is described as 'always seen in Muslim dress'.<sup>265</sup> A more in depth article the following day described Lindsay's convert English wife going from 'a teenage prom queen wearing fancy dresses' to a 'devout mum swathed in Muslim robes'. Friends' accounts of Lindsay's conversion also focus on his 'black Islamic hat' and his persuasion of a teacher to open a classroom during breaks so that he could pray with Asian friends.<sup>266</sup> The Mirror article is again very similar, and adds that Lindsay was learning Arabic and was very devout.<sup>267</sup>

In a later article in the Sun, Hussain is contrasted with fatal victim of his bomb, Shahara Islam. Shahara is described as 'straddling two cultures effortlessly', a 'thoroughly modern Muslim' who 'loved her Burberry handbag as much as the Shalwar Kameez she occasionally wore at home'. Hussain on the other hand struggled with both cultures, and 'drifted into another world' when his father sent him to Pakistan to visit relatives and learn discipline. On return, he started wearing robes and growing a beard. "*While Shahara had come to call Britain home (...) Hussain had harked back to the harshest roots of his heritage*". In that final sentence, the problems of terrorism and extremism are rooted firmly *within* Islam, the 'harshest roots of his heritage', which is again connected to the outward trappings of the robes and the beard. Similarly, Shahara's different path and 'effortless straddling' of two cultures is also linked to dress – the Burberry handbag she loved.<sup>268</sup>

Shahara Islam's funeral, the first of the bomb blast victims to be buried, is also covered in The Sun. The Imam addressing the mourners is quoted as saying: "*Killing innocent people is not allowed at all in Islam, rather it is one of the major sins. (...) If they had any proper understanding of the teachings of Islam they would never have committed such evil deeds.*"<sup>269</sup> After various assertions that most Muslims do not approve of terrorism, this is the first time The Sun quotes an Islamic religious authority stating this.

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<sup>264</sup> P. Byrne et al, *The Four Fanatics*, Daily Mirror, July 14 2005

<sup>265</sup> Sullivan, M. *No4 Was Jamaican*, The Sun, July 15 2005

<sup>266</sup> Plyatt James Clench, J., Hughes, S., *Jamal wouldn't leave me alone to bring up his child. I want to see DNA proof*, The Sun, July 16 2005

<sup>267</sup> Jeremy Armstrong and Jeff Edwards, *The 4<sup>th</sup> bomber*, Daily Mirror, July 15 2005

<sup>268</sup> Hendry, A. *Same religion but different worlds*, The Sun, July 15 2005

<sup>269</sup> Worden, A, *Our dear daughter, cause of our joy, light of our eyes, Shahara is returning to her lord*, The Sun, July 16 2005

## **Conclusion**

Neither tabloid ever explicitly refers to Islam in itself as threatening. Indeed, all overt statements regard the opposite, that terror is not condoned by most Muslims, that they are as horrified by the events as anyone else. Islam is referred to on multiple occasions as a peaceful religion. This is also where both tabloids give space to most Muslim voices: they are the defendants of their own religion. Shahara Islam becomes the embodiment of 'good' Islam in both cases, though frequently it is her outward appearance and degree of integration into British culture that is the main signifier.

The focus in the Daily Mirror lies more strongly on the military threat than on the ideological. Though both tabloids call for the banning of extremist preachers, the Sun does so far more vociferously. The Daily Mirror for instance barely picks up on the Ramadan story, mentioning it only once as an aside.

What is most troubling is the constant association of devout religion with threat, where dress and devotion are constantly linked with the increasing radicalization of the young men. While they might indeed have been indicators in their specific cases, in many others they signify no more than they seem to, namely devoutness. The constant framing of traditional Islamic dress as a threat or signifier of danger casts suspicion on anyone who wears it.

In spite of this, it can not be said that either tabloid had a strong closed view of Islam when dealing with issues of threat. While there is room for improvement, the context in which the articles were written must be taken into account. In the wake of a horrific terrorist attack, naturally, terrorism and threat are highly reported. Both tabloids aimed to balance this with 'good' representations of Islam.

In all likelihood, in addition to Muslim voices being heard in defence of Islam and condemning terror, many of the friends and neighbours interviewed about the four bombers were also Muslims (based on their names or familial ties), but they were not interviewed for their "Muslimness" per se.

## Chapter Five: Backlash against the Islamic community

This chapter poses the question: *How did each of the newspapers cover the backlash against the Islamic community?* Following the London bombings, the metropolitan police reported a 600 per cent increase in religious hate crimes<sup>270</sup>, many of them against Muslims or those perceived to be Muslims (Sikhs were often targets) and Islamic buildings such as mosques and Islamic schools. These attacks even resulted in a death<sup>271</sup>. In spite of the large increase in attacks, the number of incidents that were considered newsworthy was extremely limited. However, a lot of attention was paid to fear of reprisals and calls for calm from various politicians and community leaders.

### 5.1 Sun – News Reporting

On July 10<sup>th</sup>, News of the World makes the first mention of actual backlash against the Islamic community, which the Sun had thus far not reported on in news stories, with a report of the petrol bombing of a mosque in Birkenhead. The perpetrators are labelled white ‘jobs’ who shouted racist abuse, and “This one’s for London!”. The chairman of the Mosque is quoted as condemning the London attacks, saying “*The Islamic religion is about living with others in harmony*”.<sup>272</sup>

On the 13<sup>th</sup>, the Sun reported on the murder of Pakistani Kamal Raza Butt in Nottingham, who was beaten to death in what was believed to be a racist attack, although the police could at that time not confirm that the incident was related to the London bombings. The article also refers to a spate of attacks on mosques around the country. A spokesperson for the Muslim Council of Britain is quoted as saying that a backlash does appear to be taking place, and with a murder involved it has become far more serious. The article is headed by an appeal to calm from unspecified Muslim leaders in the wake of the killing.<sup>273</sup> The incident is reported fairly and in the context of a possible backlash, but the man is described only as ‘Asian’ rather than ‘Muslim’.

On July 14<sup>th</sup>, The Sun again reported on the backlash, citing nearly 100 faith or race hate crimes against Muslims and Asians since the attacks, and quoting an Association of Chief Police Officers as describing a palpable fear in the communities and promising a ‘robust’ response.<sup>274</sup>

### 5.2 Sun – Opinion

In her column *They do not act in the name of God* on the 8<sup>th</sup>, Anila Baig is the first Sun writer to refer to a possible backlash against Muslims after the attacks: “*They don’t care that these events*

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<sup>270</sup> EUMC, *The impact of 7 July 2005 bomb attacks on Muslim communities in the EU* <http://fra.europa.eu/fra/material/pub/London/London-Bomb-attacks.pdf> p. 31

<sup>271</sup> Dodd, Vikram, *Islamophobia blamed for attack*, The Guardian, July 13 2005 [http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk\\_news/story/0,3604,1527288,00.html](http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk_news/story/0,3604,1527288,00.html) and Independent Race and Refugee News Network, *The anti-Muslim backlash begins*, 14 July 2005 <http://www.irr.org.uk/2005/july/ak000008.html>

<sup>272</sup> *Mosque hit in racist attack*, News of the World, 10 July 2005

<sup>273</sup> *Backlash hate mob kill Asian*, The Sun, 13 July 2005

<sup>274</sup> *Spate of 100 hate attacks*, The Sun, 14 July 2005

*will cause a rise in Islamophobia*” she writes about the attackers.<sup>275</sup> In the following week, Baig again addresses the fear of backlash, speaking of pervasive dread in her community, with women being advised not to wear headscarves when they go out. However, she calls upon Muslims to follow the example of Londoners, who, she says, are not afraid.<sup>276</sup> On the 13<sup>th</sup>, she writes of her firsthand experience of the backlash, as she was abused in the street.<sup>277</sup>

A letter writer on July 11<sup>th</sup> calls for calm. He says: “*We must stand together and show those who wish to perpetrate evil against us that we are not scared and we will not retaliate blindly. We cannot waver in our commitment to peace, equality and fairness*”<sup>278</sup>

As the news came out that the perpetrators of the bombings were British Muslims, The Sun ran an open-viewed editorial, strongly emphasising that the bombers were ‘extremist criminals’ who happened to be Muslims, and that they did not represent Britain’s Muslim community. Furthermore, ‘thugs’ who carried out ‘imbecilic’ reprisals against Muslims would in fact further Osama bin Laden’s cause, as he ‘loathes the idea of a harmonious, peace-loving Britain.’ The editorial cites the attacks against mosques and the murder of Kamal Raza Butt. “*Every brick the thugs throw, every blow they strike against Muslims, hands bin Laden a small victory,*” the piece concludes.<sup>279</sup> Though the article repeats simplified motives for terrorist attacks, it comes out very strongly in support of Muslims, against reprisals, and emphasises that the terrorist actions are not representative of Muslims in general.

Days later, columnist Robin Galloway also speaks strongly against a backlash against Muslims, and compares viewing all Muslims as terrorists to viewing all white people as members of the BNP. He calls for community leaders ‘on both sides of the divide’ to call for calm. The reference to the divide is unfortunate given the message Galloway is trying to put across, but the article as a whole is positive and open-viewed.<sup>280</sup>

This overview is merely a sample of the calls for calm, which appeared in both papers almost daily, certainly in the first days after the bombings.

### **5.3 The Daily Mirror – News Reporting**

In *Were the bombers British?* on July 8<sup>th</sup>, the Daily Mirror reported on the condemnation of the killings by the Muslim Council of Britain, as well as its fear for reprisals against Muslims, stating that “*These evil deeds make victims of us all.*” The MCB received so much hate mail its computer systems crashed, and the chairman of the Islamic Human Rights Commission is also quoted as

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<sup>275</sup> *They do not act in the name of god*

<sup>276</sup> Baig, A. *Unveiled*, The Sun, 12 July 2005

<sup>277</sup> Baig, A. *All of us must pull together*, The Sun, 13 July 2005

<sup>278</sup> Newing, G. *Dear Sun*, The Sun, July 11 2005

<sup>279</sup> Sun Says, *Keep Calm*, The Sun, 13 July 2005

<sup>280</sup> Galloway, R. *Evil men, good faith*, The Sun, 15 July 2005

saying he was very concerned about backlash, warning Muslims to remain calm, and stay inside.<sup>281</sup>

Columnist Fiona Philips also calls for unity and calm, citing the example a Muslim caller on a London radio station saying he'd offered to help London transport workers dealing with the aftermath of the morning's devastation. *"They told him to "f\*\*\* off", because he was "one of them".*<sup>282</sup>

On July 10<sup>th</sup>, the Sunday Mirror reported on the same petrol bombing of a mosque as the Sun, but the Mirror story stated that there was 'apparently' a connection with the London bombings, whereas the Sun makes the link explicit by quoting the shout of "This one's for London!". However, the Sunday Mirror prints the mosque chairman's full quote: *"This was a dreadful act which could have been far worse had it not been for the fast actions of the emergency services. We condemn wholeheartedly the incidents in London and our sympathy goes out to families of the victims. The Islamic religion is about living with others in harmony, and there should be no connection with the people who committed these atrocities and the Islamic faith."*<sup>283</sup>

On the following day, the Mirror reports a man being charged with making threats against a mosque hours after the London bomb attacks. While the Mirror – rightly – doesn't assume the man's guilt, it also appears to call into question whether the calls were made in the first place: *"It is claimed an anonymous caller phoned the building in Aberdeen on Thursday and said: "We are going to get you." He allegedly made other abusive comments and then hung up."*<sup>284</sup> (emphasis added) As the anonymous caller does not necessarily have to be the man who was charged, there is no reason to construct the occurrence of event itself as dubious. The caption, also, reads *"7/7 Caller 'threat' to mosque"*. This is an example of one of the stratagems identified by Van Dijk as occasionally used by journalists to be covertly racist: creating distance or doubt over discriminatory acts.<sup>285</sup> However, this was the only news article on backlash in the Daily Mirror in which this was applied, so it can not be said to point towards a more widespread denial of Islamophobic attacks in the newspaper. Also, the article goes on to say that at the time there were Muslims present in the mosque praying for the victims of the London attacks, casting Muslims in a positive light vis à vis the caller who made the threats.

A glaring omission in the Mirror reporting is the murder of Kamal Raza Butt in Nottingham, which it simply does not pick up on.

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<sup>281</sup> Armstrong, J. *Were the bombers British? UK Muslim leaders condemn 'evil deeds' but fear backlash*, Daily Mirror, July 8 2005

<sup>282</sup> Phillips, F., *For our kids' sake we can't let evil win*, Daily Mirror, July 9 2005

<sup>283</sup> *Mosque Attacked*, Sunday Mirror, July 10 2005

<sup>284</sup> Thompson, C. *7/7 Caller 'threat' to mosque*, Daily Mirror, July 11 2005

<sup>285</sup> Van Dijk, 1991, p.190-191

## 5.4 The Daily Mirror - Opinion

Though actual backlash against Muslims is barely reported on in the Mirror, it is talked about an awful lot. On the day following the bombings, columnist Brian Reade is calls for calm: *“Let’s stay rational. Let’s embrace perspective. Don’t let this become an excuse for right-wing elements to wreak revenge on Muslims in your community. Don’t go there. Hold on to your intelligence and self-respect.”*<sup>286</sup>

Ruki Sayid, writing for the Daily Mirror, feels there has never been a more difficult time to be a British Muslim, that he and all other Asians are under suspicion. While British people kept their heads after 9/11, Sayid is afraid this attack is too close to home, and he describes a pervasive sense of fear throughout the community, intensified by the outward markers that could identify them as Islamic. These however, don’t mean as much as people might think: the clean-shaven Western European man sitting right next to you could be a Muslim, he says. Sayid’s article is a call for calm: he emphasizes the similarities between all peoples, the fears, anxieties and joys they share.<sup>287</sup>

Kevin Maguire also talks about backlash, and he is particularly forceful on an issue that didn’t make it into the Mirror news reporting, namely the BNP’s printing of a flyer with using an image from the London bombings, subtitled, “Maybe now it’s time to start listening to the BNP”. Maguire writes: *“Blair is praying there will be no backlash against innocent citizens and visitors who have nothing in common with the insane bombers other than a tenuous link of background or religion. Yet throughout the country there have already been numerous brainless acts of violence against Muslim and even Sikh communities and institutions. The boneheads lashing out fail to understand the overwhelming majority of Muslims are no more responsible for the fanatics than ordinary football fans are for hooligans. The maggots of the British National Party have a vested interest in spreading hate, exploiting the disaster by publishing an election leaflet an picture of the wrecked No 30 bus. Only a political faction devoid of humanity, steeped in hatred, would stoop so low”*<sup>288</sup>

## Conclusion

Both tabloids are open in their approach to backlash, with both papers condemning it vociferously, both in their editorials and in quotes from others. However, neither paper reports much on actual Islamophobic or racist incidents. This is particularly surprising in the case of the murder of Kamal Raza Butt in the Daily Mirror, but odd as a whole given the time and space devoted to discussing the *fear* of backlash and the calls to prevent it.

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<sup>286</sup> Reade, B. *How should we face our own 9/11?*, Daily mirror, July 8 2005

<sup>287</sup> Sayid, R. - *No need to be wary of all Muslims*, Daily Mirror, July 13 2005

<sup>288</sup> Maguire, K. *They’re here – British suicide bombers are Blair’s worst nightmare*, Daily Mirror, July 13 2005

This is one area in which both papers also allowed for the expression of Muslim voices in more than mere 'soundbites', both running full length articles written by Muslims and placing longer quotes.

## Chapter Six: What should the response be?

This Chapter deals with the final thematic question: *How did each of the newspapers cover the debate on the response required from various stakeholders?*

The bomb attacks resulted in a call from Prime Minister Tony Blair, some MPs, various sections of the public, and a number of newspapers for tougher legislation on a set of issues ranging from counter-terrorism to immigration and extradition for advocating violence in sermons or speeches. Exemplary of this was consternation in *The Sun* in particular, about the invitation for Swiss Islamic scholar Tariq Ramadan – seen by the *Sun* as extremist - to speak at a conference in part funded by the Association of Police Chiefs shortly after the bombings. There were also repeated calls upon Islamic communities and leaders to do more to combat extremism, and to approach the security services with any information they might have regarding militants in their midst. Some columnists and letter-writers called for an ‘end to political correctness’ and to ‘pandering to Muslim sensitivities’, which they viewed as one of the direct reasons the attacks could happen.

Though the focus in this question lies particularly on consequences for or demands of Muslims, broader issues of civil liberties and human rights are also addressed, as further curtailment of these could further contribute to a hostile environment that encourages rather than prevents terrorism. There is significantly less news reporting in comparison to opinion here, as new policies and measures would take longer to draft than the two weeks studied.

### 6.1 The Sun – News Reporting

On July 16<sup>th</sup>, *The Sun* reported on emergency measures that were announced, allowing detention for those caught learning how to make bombs or travelling to terrorist training camps. They also included a new measure of ‘indirect incitement to commit a terrorist act’ which was to be the centrepiece of a new Counter-Terror Bill that was to be pushed through in September. The *Sun* article then reads “*Muslim extremists who preach holy war will be silenced or face jail under the emergency powers*”. It is unlikely that the government texts refer specifically to *Muslim* extremists, but the *Sun* opts to refer to them as such, implying that it is a Bill specifically targeting Muslims – or that only Muslims need to be constrained by such a Bill.<sup>289</sup>

### 6.2 The Sun - Opinion

The editorial “*Our Spirit will never be broken*” is a strong call to action: “*In the name of New York, Washington, Bali, Nairobi, Madrid, and now London, we shall have vengeance and justice.*” The writer proclaims, and calls upon the government to act without delay to round up the *suspected* terrorists and lock them up in internment camps, as ‘*our safety*’ must not play second fiddle to their

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<sup>289</sup> ‘*Recruits*’ face jail, *The Sun*, 16 July 2005

*“supposed ‘rights’”* (emphasis added). Given the UK government’s repeated attempts to extend the already long time a UK citizen could be held without charge on the suspicion of terrorist activities, and the fact that various foreign citizens had been held for years without charge, this call in the Sun editorial is not as outlandish as it might seem, and there is no question it would disproportionately affect Muslims.

Richard Littlejohn’s column on July 9<sup>th</sup> is titled *Hello Bombers... and welcome to Londonistan!* and is aimed at what he perceives as a too-soft British justice and immigration system. He is outraged at the release from prison (and into house arrest, though he doesn’t mention this) of foreign nationals (“some of the world’s most dangerous terrorists” according to Littlejohn) who had been held without charge on suspicion of terrorist involvement, and their release is blamed on the “human rights brigade”. He follows this with *“Anyone who dares complain about the hundreds of thousands of foreign nationals and bogus asylum seekers allowed to settle here illegally is routinely smeared as ‘racist’”*. Following as it does the text on terror suspects, this line implies that these foreign nationals pose an equal level of threat. Littlejohn is equally disgusted at the ‘fêting’ of the ‘Tipton Taliban’ (three British men who were held in Guantanamo Bay for two years and released without charge) by ‘the left-wing press’ on their return. His solutions: the ‘evil and perverse’ Human Rights Act should be torn up, and *“Blair’s government must stop appeasing the hatemongers and pandering to the “human rights” vultures. Our borders must be secured, and those who wish us harm must be kicked out”*. Littlejohn mentions Muslims explicitly only twice, once describing the attacks as an ‘equal opportunities massacre’ for black, white, Christian, Hindu, Jew, and Muslim, and the second in the same list prefaced by “these animals seek to divide us.” While he appears to lay the blame for what happened more with the government than anywhere else, his solutions are entirely focused on security and justice, rather than addressing root causes.

Former Police High Commissioner Lord Stevens puts forwards a number of recommendations to improve security and prevent further attacks. They include compulsory ID cards and bringing back a closed border policy. However, he also advocates a closer involvement with and winning the hearts and minds of the Muslim community, as they are best placed to understand the workings of the radicalization of young Muslims, and so they will actively join the fight against terrorism. While this includes a presumption that (a section of) the community is not already willing to help, which may or may not be true, it also portrays an open view of the possibilities of cooperation with Muslims.<sup>290</sup> In a second article, News of the World throws its support behind Lord Stevens’ proposals, repeating that the community itself must be involved, in an equally open view referring to them as the ‘vast majority of law-abiding British Muslims’<sup>291</sup>, clearly setting them apart from those who are not law-abiding, and emphasizing the fact that they

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<sup>290</sup> Lord Stevens - *Killers leave clues, always*, News of the World, July 10 2005

<sup>291</sup> *Young, clever ...and British*, News of the World, July 10 2005

are few. Anila Baig, in her column on the 12<sup>th</sup> of July, echoes these sentiments, saying that the Muslim community must not shrink away and blame themselves, but face up to the extremist elements in their communities and not be afraid.<sup>292</sup>

Ulrika Jonsson also lays the blame squarely with the community itself. She feels that rather than criticize the decadence of the West, Muslims need to start acknowledging the problems in their communities. They need to open up, talk more, allow their children to become more British and encourage them to take a stake in the country,<sup>293</sup> and Britain's most senior Asian Police officer, Tariq Ghuffur, is quoted as urging Muslims to identify their hate-preaching hotheads and call the police.<sup>294</sup> Shahid Malik, MP for Dewsbury, echoes him, saying it is time for the silent majority of decent Muslims in Britain to stand up and be counted, and drive out the tiny extremist fringe.<sup>295</sup>

The call is also repeated by Tony Blair in an article on the 14<sup>th</sup>, in which he is quoted as saying that only the community itself can defeat the problem, by coming to the authorities with information on fanatics, rather than just condemning them. He also announces new laws which would stop extremists from inciting hatred.<sup>296</sup>

### 6.3 The Daily Mirror – News Reporting

Just days after the bombings, on July 11<sup>th</sup>, Prime Minister Tony Blair was pushing for tighter anti-terror laws. Oonagh Blackman, political editor for the Daily Mirror, writes: "*The Prime Minister blamed the atrocities on "Islamist extremists" and promised to fast-track new anti-terror laws and crack down on fanatical British-based clerics who fuel religious hatred among impressionable young Muslims.*" The leader of the Liberal Democratic Party warns against knee-jerk reactions though, fearing that draconian laws would stir up resentment and turn some Muslims against the authorities.<sup>297</sup> Furthermore, with the focus again on tougher laws and security measures, attention is redirected from the root causes of terrorism.

### 6.4 The Daily Mirror - Opinion

Brian Reade questions how Britain should face its 'own 9/11'. His answer is to learn from America – and do things differently. The Americans, he says, reacted with mindless aggression and little or no regard for life in Afghanistan and Baghdad, bringing terror to those countries. He warns not to let the government take away civil liberties and freedoms in a knee-jerk reaction to the attacks. Nor, he says, should the government try to make believe that "*we are at the forefront of some*

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<sup>292</sup> Baig, A., *Unveiled*, The Sun, July 12 2005

<sup>293</sup> Jonsson, U., *Mother of all burdens*, News of the World, July 11 2005

<sup>294</sup> *Let's fight this evil together*, News of the World, July 17 2005

<sup>295</sup> *Muslims must root out fanatics*, July 17 2005

<sup>296</sup> *Blair: Shop the fanatics*, The Sun, July 11 2005

<sup>297</sup> Blackman, O. - *Blair's vow on atrocities*, Daily Mirror, July 12 2005

*mythical war on terror which legitimises invasions of other countries.*” In war, he says, you face an army, not a rag-tag collection of murderers.<sup>298</sup>

Carole Malone takes an opposing stance. It is time, she says, that Britain do something about its laughably soft stance on terror. She believes human rights laws are outdated for dealing with terrorist suspects, as “*people who plot to kill us don’t deserve human rights*” and the government certainly shouldn’t have to worry about Muslim sensitivities in its approach.<sup>299</sup>

Richard Stott advocates the road of dialogue and introspection: the reasons for hatred must be removed, he says, and to do that you have to be painfully honest about your own side’s weaknesses and shortcomings – in this case, looking honestly at the way the war in Iraq and to a degree in Afghanistan were conducted by the US and Britain. The resolution lies in making sure *all* parties are represented in the Iraq government, providing water, electricity and jobs, and above all, protecting the people of Iraq from violence and intimidation.<sup>300</sup>

Muslim MP Kenan Malik has a very different view: Just as the BNP is a white problem, he feels terrorism is a Muslim problem. It is a minute element with a “perverted understanding of Islam”, and the Muslim community is best placed to find them.<sup>301</sup> Malik Meer of the Daily Mirror also feels that there is a responsibility within the Muslim community. However, he feels that the roots of terrorism currently lie in anger over the war on terror; he himself feels strongly that it is a crime against humanity. The role of Muslim leaders lies, he feels, in taking a far stronger stance over these issues, “*the war in Iraq and all the other political injustices that young Muslims feel so fervently.*” Muslim leaders, he says, have too long been focused on narrow issues such as the hijab and faith schools. Their inaction on political issues has left a gaping hole that has been filled by extremists – and it is time for the Muslim leadership to reclaim it.<sup>302</sup> While Meer’s viewpoint lays responsibility in part at the feet of the UK government, he identifies a way in which Muslims can engage.

Simon Reeve agrees with Kenan Malik, in that the Muslim community itself needs to do more to root out extremists. “*Although MI5 is now receiving a degree of help from inside the Muslim community, and has recruited a number of young Muslim agents*”, he says “*most experts believe Muslim leaders are still not doing enough to protect impressionable youngsters from militant firebrands.*”<sup>303</sup>

Paul Routledge praises the government response to the bombings as ‘mature, proportionate and wise, with its appeals for the nation to come together in adversity, including the

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<sup>298</sup> Reade, B. *How should we face our own 9/11?*, Daily Mirror, July 8 2005

<sup>299</sup> Malone, C. *They Can’t Defeat Us.. Now let’s fight back; .. on the day that turned triumph into tragedy*, Daily Mirror, July 9 2005

<sup>300</sup> Stott, R. *Defeating the Army of ghosts*, Sunday Mirror, July 10 2005

<sup>301</sup> Lloyd Davies, M. - *Muslim MP’s Plea to defeat evil*, Daily Mirror, July 13 2005

<sup>302</sup> Meer, M. -*Our leaders must take some blame*, Daily mirror, July 14 2005

<sup>303</sup> Simon Reeve, *They don’t need signed orders from Bin Laden... They know what he wants them to do*, Daily Mirror, July 8 2005

country's two million Muslims. *"The Prime Minister's four-pronged strategy of consultation towards fresh anti-terror legislation, exclusion of fanatical Islamic clerics, a dialogue with Muslim MPs and community leaders at home and international co-operation to mobilise moderate Muslim opinion abroad is a canny package."* However, he says, that does not mean we should be uncritical: he describes the war in Iraq as *"wrong, divisive and ultimately futile. It is emphatically not an excuse for killing innocent people, and never can be."* Furthermore, the human rights abuses carried out in the name of the war on terror need to stop immediately.<sup>304</sup>

Kevin Toolis calls for harsh measures: *"In this pitiless war the British security authorities must endeavour to use all means to stop further terrorist outrages - even if it means hunting down and killing those responsible without a trial or a jury."*<sup>305</sup> Just two weeks after Toolis' call, a man was indeed shot without trial or jury by the police, on the wrongful assumption that he was a suicide bomber. These measures are called for with Islamic terrorism in mind, so it is not unlikely that were such measures to be broadly implemented, Muslims would be disproportionately targeted.

Carole Malone launches an attack on political correctness and 'appeasing Muslims'. She feels that an inordinate amount of time has been spent worrying about Muslims, Muslims' feelings and a possible backlash, especially as there are an estimated 3,000 further suicide bombers waiting in the wings. She accuses Tony Blair of pandering to them in order to win the Muslim vote, something she says he has been doing for years. She feels that it's time for a crackdown on Islamic extremists.<sup>306</sup>

## Conclusion

Though by no means all recommendations and ways forward covered in both tabloids could be presented here, the selection is representative of the whole. The Sun in general tended to advocate tighter security and anti-immigration measures, as well as a repeal of the Human Rights Act and extradition of suspect foreign nationals. It also frequently exhorted the Muslim community to address its own problems. Rarely if ever did the Sun run any articles criticising UK government policies abroad or recommending further addressing of discrimination and Islamophobia at home. Indeed, criticism of government policy with regard to its involvement in the war on terror in the time immediately following the attacks was generally met with venom on the part of the Sun. While these criticisms are by no means the domain of Muslims alone, they are viewpoints that are widely held among Muslims. Therefore a complete rejection of criticism of the government (except where the tightening of immigration laws and counter-terrorism-laws were concerned) on the part of the Sun can be seen as somewhat closed viewed.

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<sup>304</sup> Routledge, P. *At last, a grown-up response to terror*, Daily Mirror, July 15 2005

<sup>305</sup> Toolis, K. *They're here... and there's no way to stop them*, Daily Mirror, July 13 2005

<sup>306</sup> Carole Malone, *Who cares what religion they are*, Sunday Mirror, July 17 2005

The Daily Mirror on the other hand presented a far broader range of ideas, with recommendations varying from calls for stricter security measures similar to those in the Sun, to recommendations for dialogue and introspection regarding the UK's role in the war on terror, thus being somewhat more open viewed in nature.

In both tabloids, there are many calls upon the Muslim community to do more to fight extremism. While the greater involvement of these communities is positive and important, when these calls are made to the exclusion of the government taking responsibility for anything other than security, extremism is constructed as a purely Islamic problem, and the far more complex web of root causes in society and geopolitics are left unaddressed.

Both the Sun and the Daily Mirror printed articles with recommendations written by Muslims – and in fact many Muslims were calling for change within their own communities, in the Daily Mirror more so than the Sun.

## Conclusion

The central question of this study was: How did discourse regarding British Muslims develop in the two largest British tabloids during the two weeks following the London bomb attacks of July 7 2005? Five sub-questions were explored towards answering the overall question, namely

- 1) How did each of the newspapers cover the various suggested reasons for the attacks?*
- 2) How did each of the newspapers cover the debate around the threat posed by Muslims in Britain?*
- 3) How did each of the newspapers cover the backlash against the Islamic community?*
- 4) How did each of the newspapers cover the debate on the response required from various stakeholders?*
- 5) To what degree were Muslims given a voice in these debates in both newspapers?*

On the *reasons* for the attacks, there is a clear difference between both tabloids. The Sun allowed very little room for dissent on the debate surrounding the reasons for the terror attacks and not much space was given to alternative views than a limited construction of good versus evil. Where alternative views appeared to criticize the “good” side, the Sun sought to re-frame the dissenting views as extremist and treasonous when they were voiced by Muslims. Implying that the government might also be in some way at fault was considered practically treasonous. There was some development in the Sun’s assessment of the reasons, but overall, the view on Islam in the Sun regarding reasons for the attacks, remained closed.

The Daily Mirror, on the other hand, had room for a number of opposing views. Broadly speaking, the Daily Mirror is opposed to the War on Terror and is multiculturalist in its approach, but it gave space to columnists protesting the ‘whining human rights brigade’ as well those who shared views closer to its own. UK policy at home and abroad was criticised openly in the Daily Mirror, without suggesting that this view implied treason or justified terror. A surprising absence, especially from the Daily Mirror, is the lack of attention paid to discrimination and social exclusion as root causes for terrorism, particularly as it is so widespread within the Muslim communities of Britain. Though the Daily Mirror gave space to closed views, the overall discussion of reasons for the attacks was open.

Both tabloids were careful to state frequently that terrorism had ‘nothing to do with real Islam’, in what was probably a genuine attempt to be fair and assuage tensions. However, especially the Sun sometimes implicitly did make the link between either Islam and Terror, or Islam and backwardness and presented a generally more closed view of Islam than did the Daily Mirror.

On the *threat* posed by Islam, neither tabloid ever explicitly referred to Islam in itself as threatening. Indeed, all overt statements regarded the opposite, that terror was not condoned by most Muslims. Shahara Islam became the embodiment of 'good' Islam in both cases, though frequently it was her outward appearance and degree of integration into British culture that was the main signifier of her 'good'.

The most troubling aspect of the views posed on threat was the constant association of devout religion with threat, where apparel and devotion were linked with the increasing radicalization of the young men involved. The constant framing of traditional Islamic dress as a threat or signifier of danger cast suspicion on anyone who wears it. Furthermore, particularly in the Sun, a "with us or against us" approach was adopted, putting pressure was on Muslims to emphasise and stand up for their Britishness, and any attempt to explain – rather than justify - the attacks by Muslims was labelled extremist and treasonous.

However, given the explicit emphasis on the peaceful nature of Islam, neither tabloid had a *strong* closed view of Islam when dealing with issues of threat.

On *backlash* both tabloids were open in their approach, with both papers condemning it vociferously, both in their editorials and in quotes from others. However, neither paper reported much on actual Islamophobic or racist incidents. This was particularly surprising in the case of the murder of Kamal Raza Butt in the Daily Mirror, but odd as a whole given the time and space devoted to discussing the *fear* of backlash and the calls to prevent it.

On the required *response* The Sun in general tended to advocate tighter security and anti-immigration measures, as well as a repeal of the Human Rights Act and extradition of suspect foreign nationals. It also frequently exhorted the Muslim community to address its own problems. Rarely if ever did the Sun run any articles criticising UK government policies abroad or recommending further addressing of discrimination and Islamophobia at home. Indeed, criticism of government policy with regard to its involvement in the war on terror in the time immediately following the attacks was generally met with venom on the part of the Sun. The Sun's views in this matter were somewhat closed, constructing terrorism as a problem that lay purely within the Islamic community, not subject to the outside influence of geopolitics, and therefore inherent to the religion.

The Daily Mirror presented recommendations varying from calls for stricter security measures similar to those in The Sun, to recommendations for dialogue and introspection regarding the UK's role in the war on terror, thus being somewhat more open viewed in nature. The Daily Mirror also called upon the involvement of the Muslim community, but combined it with a call for a change in UK foreign policy and greater respect for human rights, thus presenting an open view of terrorism as a shared problem and a shared responsibility for dealing with it.

*Muslim opinion* was given a lot of space throughout, was presented in both news and opinion articles, and the range of Muslim voices was varied. 'Ordinary Muslims' were frequently quoted, as were community and religious leaders and Muslim politicians. Both papers also featured Muslim journalists and columnists writing specifically as Muslims. Where as the criticism of rights organisations following the September 11 attacks was that British newspapers gave undue attention to fringe extremist voices and marginalised mainstream Muslim opinion, this was not the case in either newspaper studied following the July 7 attacks. In fact, quotations from militants barely featured at all.

The breadth of Muslim opinion presented in the coverage however, varied strongly between issues. On the reasons for the attack it was greatly ignored, and in one case in the Sun vilified. In the coverage of these issues, Muslims were quoted throughout, but only as stating that they condemned the attacks and that terrorism had no space in true Islam. This was the case also on the issue of threat, with the same soundbites repeated over and over – 'we condemn the attacks, this is not Islam'. There was little room for diversity in Muslim opinion. On the issues of backlash and response, there was a great deal more depth and diversity in the Muslim opinions presented, with both papers running full length articles by Muslims on the issues, and presenting Muslims as willing to look inwards at the problems within their own communities. The Sun however gave no space for Muslim opinions critical of the government.

Returning to the overall question then, *How did discourse regarding British Muslims develop in the two largest British tabloids during the two weeks following the London bomb attacks of July 7 2005?*, the answer is mixed, but leans towards the positive. While the Sun presented significantly more closed views of Islam than the Daily Mirror, both papers throughout repeated frequently that Muslims in general condemned the attacks, and that terrorism was not condoned within Islam. However, both newspapers to a degree, and in particular The Sun, did make some implicit connections between Islam and threat, and also in The Sun, opposition to British government from Muslims was construed as synonymous with support of terror. The biggest issue for concern was the linking in both newspapers of both Islamic dress and religiosity with radicalisation, casting suspicion on anyone who was visibly Islamic or devout. Also unfortunate was the occasional placing, particularly in the Sun of 'Islamicness' opposite 'Britishness', implying the two were mutually exclusive, or that Muslims had to strongly assert their Britishness in order to prove their allegiance.

However, both newspapers spoke strongly against a backlash against the Muslim community, and called for calm. While implicit Islamophobic reporting is insidious, the obvious, explicit discourse throughout was open and supportive in both tabloids.

A direct comparison cannot be made between this study and the previous studies into British press reporting on Muslims described in chapter two as the methods of analysis used vary greatly, and the main focus in previous studies was on broadsheet rather than tabloid reporting. Still, a careful conclusion can be drawn that there has been an improvement in the manner in which Islam is covered in the British press, with more room for Muslim opinion, less room for non-representative extremist views, and a great emphasis on terrorism not being inherent to Islam.

However, this study covers only a very small section of British news reporting during an extraordinary time. Research into the developments over a longer period of time would reveal more as to whether the positive trends were lasting, or whether the newspapers reverted to their previous largely negative and limited coverage of Islam. Furthermore, though broad comparisons can be drawn on the basis of qualitative research such as this, rigorous quantitative analysis would be useful in order to draw stronger conclusions. Though the selection of articles cited here was representative of the entire body of reporting studied, the nature of the approach did not allow for the inclusion of all articles used in the findings, something which would be possible in quantitative analysis. Reader analysis would also be useful in order to ascertain the influence of press reporting over public opinion, and likewise, the degree to which public opinion is reflected in the press.

As the 'war on terror' continues, and tensions between communities and discrimination against minorities are still an everyday reality in much of the UK, it is vital that the media continues to be scrutinised and made aware of its influence and responsibility.

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