



**WORKING PAPER 13**

**A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE REPRESENTATIONS OF “SUSPECT”  
COMMUNITIES IN MULTI-ETHNIC BRITAIN AND OF THEIR IMPACT ON  
IRISH COMMUNITIES AND MUSLIM COMMUNITIES – MAPPING  
NEWSPAPER CONTENT**

**Henri C. Nickels,<sup>1</sup> Lyn Thomas,<sup>1</sup> Mary J. Hickman,<sup>1</sup> Sara Silvestri<sup>2</sup>**

**<sup>1</sup> Institute for the Study of European Transformations**

**London Metropolitan University**

**166-220 Holloway Road**

**London N7 8DB**

**[suspectcommunities@londonmet.ac.uk](mailto:suspectcommunities@londonmet.ac.uk)**

**<sup>2</sup> School of Social Sciences**

**City University**

**London EC1V 0HB**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This article investigates how Irish and Muslim communities in Britain have, to varying degrees, been constructed as “suspect” and as threatening the fabric of British life in public discourse. This construction process has been influenced by counterterrorist policy and has led to violations of civil liberties, with innocent people being wrongfully arrested, deported, excluded or imprisoned as a result of their presumed religio-ethnic backgrounds. Although the media are thought to play a central role in this process, little comparative research has been carried out to date investigating how the press contributes to constructing Irish communities and Muslim communities as “suspect”. We address this through a comparative analysis of national and diaspora newspaper coverage of key events directly and indirectly involving the communities over a period of four decades (1974 - 2007). Our analysis shows that Irish communities and Muslim communities have been represented as “suspect” in different ways, and that the police and the judiciary are also sometimes represented as “suspect” or untrustworthy. We also find that despite the high level of IRA activity in Britain over the years, there is less coverage of Irish-related events in our sample than Muslim-related events. We attribute these differences in the construction of Irish communities and Muslim communities to different perceptions within the press of the nature of the perceived threat they pose to British civil society and to different perceptions of their relationship to Britishness. We conclude that one of the main concerns of the various press organs under analysis appears to lie with defending their own constructions of Britishness against perceived extremists, and against abuses of power and authority by the state security apparatus.

**Keywords:** Suspect communities; Irish; Muslim; terrorism; news discourse; Britishness

## **Acknowledgements**

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## INTRODUCTION

Parallels between the impact of counterterrorist legislation on Irish communities and Muslim communities have often been hinted at by activists, policymakers and academics (e.g. Miller 2006, Ballard 2007) but rarely studied systematically or comparatively. Publications on terrorism and political violence have tended to focus on the Northern Ireland conflict; violence connected to Islamism; terrorist threats and state responses to them; the relationship between violence and religious beliefs; and the curtailment of civil liberties and human rights when adopting (ad hoc) security measures (e.g. Abbas 2007, Clutterbuck 2004, English 2003, Hillyard 1993, Stern 2004, Wilkinson 2001, Wolfendale 2007). Few studies have looked specifically at the effects of counterterrorism policies on minority communities (e.g. Blick et al 2006, Briggs et al 2006, Hillyard 1993, Pantazis & Pemberton 2009), and the majority have tended to focus on Muslims. Although it is commonly accepted that the press plays a key role in the construction of minority communities as “suspect”, research comparing media representations of minority communities has so far been lacking (see Poole 2002, Poole & Richardson 2006, and Richardson 2004 for studies of media representations of Muslims in Britain). This paper contributes to filling this gap by offering a comparative analysis of press representations of Irish communities and Muslim communities in the national and diaspora press.

This article forms part of a larger ESRC-funded (RES-062-23-1066) comparative study analyzing representations of Irish communities and Muslim communities as “suspect” in media, policy and public discourses, and analyzing the impact of such representations on minority communities in multi-ethnic Britain. While remaining conscious of differences that exist between the “Irish” and “Muslim” categories, and of diversities within these communities, the project as a whole aims to provide a new analysis of Irish experiences and to compare them with current Muslim experiences. It will also establish what insights this may afford Muslim communities, and policymakers who seek to implement counterterrorism

policies without alienating communities. The larger project investigates transformations over time in the social construction of Irish communities and Muslim communities by comparing and contrasting media, policy and public discourses over a period spanning four decades, beginning with the November 1974 Birmingham pub bombings by the (Provisional) IRA, and ending with the police raid targeting alleged Islamist terrorists that took place in Birmingham in January 2007. The remainder of this article consists of a comparative analysis of press coverage of key events involving Irish communities and Muslim communities over a period of four decades, spanning the years between 1974 and 2007. The purpose of this initial analysis of media content is three-fold:

- to provide a global overview of press coverage of Irish communities and Muslim communities over the last 40 years;
- to prepare the ground for a forthcoming, in-depth, discourse analysis of how Irish communities and Muslim communities are represented in the British press; and
- to inform the policy and public discourse components of the project.

### **MAPPING NEWSPAPER COVERAGE OF KEY EVENTS, 1974-2007**

Our selection of key events involving Irish communities and Muslim communities spans 19 events that occurred in the United Kingdom between 1974 and 2007, nine of which are Irish-related, another nine which are Muslim-related, with one event spanning both communities (Table 1). We consider these key events to be possible construction moments that defined how Irish communities and Muslim communities were and are perceived and treated. Not only do construction moments impact on how communities are treated, they are also catalysts for the emergence, recycling and (re-)framing of multiple, competing and sometimes even contradictory discourses relating to, among others, the (potential) devastation caused; the perpetrators and their motives; victims and their plight;

security forces and how they operate; the nature of and threats to Britishness and British values; and the (self-)representation of (members of) the communities concerned. Policy events (e.g. the adoption of anti-terrorist legislation) can also be construction moments in their own right because of their societal implications. Societal implications, here, are taken to mean the effect events or issues (can) have on society as a whole, on individual members thereof, or on entire communities within society.

**Table 1: The key events**

<b>Irish-related events</b>	<b>Muslim-related events</b>
21 November 1974: Birmingham pub bombings	14 February 1989: fatwa on Salman Rushdie
29 November 1974: adoption of the PTA	Spring/Summer 2001: race riots
3 December 1974: arrest of the Maguire Seven	9 March 2004: release of the Tipton Three
17 December 1983: Harrods Bombing	July 2005: London bombings
19 October 1989: release of the Guildford Four	22 July 2005: shooting of Jean-Charles De Menezes
14 March 1991: release of the Birmingham Six	30 March 2006: adoption of 2006 Terrorism Act
26 June 1991: release of the Maguire Seven	2 June 2006: Forest Gate anti-terrorist Raid
23 September 1996: shooting of Diarmuid O'Neill	5 October 2006: Jack Straw veil controversy
10 April 1998: Good Friday Agreement	31 January 2007: Birmingham anti-terrorism raid
20 July 2000: adoption of Terrorism Act 2000	

For instance, the adoption of the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act (hereafter referred to as the PTA) in 1974 led to a host of wrongful arrests being made within Irish communities in Britain (Hillyard 1993) and eventually to a fundamental questioning of the English legal system and of the modus operandi of the security forces (partly as a result of the release of the Guildford Four in 1989), without mentioning the grave personal consequences of being wrongfully arrested for the people concerned. Muslims have also been wrongfully arrested (and continue to be so) under the terms of more recent formulations of the Terrorism Act, albeit to a seemingly lesser extent than was the case in the Irish context. Indeed, as Table 2 shows, since the inception of the PTA in 1974, 86.9% of all Irish people detained as a result of being suspected of terrorism were released without charge, compared to 53.1% for those detained as a result of

being suspected of international terrorism. Although not all suspects of international terrorism are Muslim, 34 out of 42 international terrorist organizations proscribed in Great Britain have some form of agenda they claim themselves is Islam-related (Home Office 2009a), and 'At 31 March 2008, there were 142 extremist/terrorist prisoners in England and Wales, of which 125 were terrorism related (including 8 prisoners convicted before the introduction of the Terrorism Act 2000) ... The majority (91%) of terrorist prisoners classified themselves as Muslims. For the 17 domestic extremists/separatists, 3 classified themselves as Church of England, 3 Buddhist and 8 gave no religion or described themselves as agnostic.' (Home Office 2009b: 6-7). From this, it can be extrapolated that the greater majority of suspected international terrorists detained are in fact Muslim.

**Table 2 : Numbers of detentions, exclusions/deportations, charges, and releases without charges of alleged Irish and international terrorists in Great Britain, 29 November 1974 - 31 March 2008<sup>a</sup>**

Detentions		Exclusions/Deportations		Charged under Terrorism Acts		Charged under other legislation		Released without charge	
<i>Irish<sup>b</sup></i>	<i>Int'al</i>	<i>Irish</i>	<i>Int'al</i>	<i>Irish</i>	<i>Int'al</i>	<i>Irish</i>	<i>Int'al</i>	<i>Irish</i>	<i>Int'al</i>
7546	2024	414	56	475 (6.3%)	237 (11.7%)	930	444	6477 (86.9%)	1074 (53.1%)

<sup>a</sup> Compiled from: Home Office (1984, 1991, 1997, 2000, 2009b)

<sup>b</sup> Data on Irish cases cover the period 29 November 1974 to 11 September 2001, as 'a number of convicted terrorists, particularly Irish Republican and Loyalist paramilitaries, have been released either through completion of sentence or under the terms of the Belfast Agreement of 1998 [also known as the Good Friday Agreement]. These cases are not included in these figures.' (Home Office, 2009b: 28). Also, data on international cases were not included in Home Office statistics until 22 March 1984, when the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1984 came into force and introduced provisions against international terrorism.

### **The press sample**

We analyzed coverage of the 19 key events in the national press (*Daily Mail & Mail on Sunday, Daily Telegraph & Sunday Telegraph, Guardian & Observer,*

*Sun & News of the World*) and in the diaspora press (*Asian Times*, *Irish Post*, *Muslim News*). Each of these papers has its own identity, character, political orientation and readership, which all affect how Irish communities and Muslim communities are reported and constructed within their pages. The weekly *Asian Times* targets the multi-ethnic, multi-confessional British-Asian market. The readership of the *Asian Times* consists of ‘opinion makers, teachers and lecturers, social workers, and people involved professionally in the UK Asian community at all levels. [The *Asian Times* is] not content with merely reporting [, it aims to] upset as many people as possible, on issues that matter to [the Asian] community [in Britain]: like racism, job opportunity, the Police, immigration policies, women’s role” (Asia Major 1996). In 1996, the *Asian Times* had a circulation figure of about 28,000 (Asia Major 1996), although since December 2006 it has exclusively been published online.

The weekly *Irish Post* ‘target[s] the second-generation Irish in the UK and more affluent young Irish people who are coming to Britain to work in business and the professions’ (Lagan 2005). It has a circulation figure of 21,794 and its readership exceeds 95,000 (Irish Post 2009a). Finally, the readership of the monthly *Muslim News* is mainly second and third generation Muslims and the newspaper purports to ‘report ... on what the non-Muslim media does not report. It is proactive and sets the vision for the Muslim community’ (Muslim News 2009a). The *Muslim News* caters to a variety of ethnic groups (Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Indian, Malaysian, Turkish, Arab, African, and African-Caribbean). Its readership figure of 140,000 covers the whole of Britain (Muslim News 2009a) and its website gets about 1.5 million hits a month (Muslim News 2009b). The diasporic newspapers under study therefore reflect the differences between the term “Irish” as an ethnic category encompassing religious differences; “Muslim” as a religious term encompassing differences of ethnicity; and “Asian” as a broad ethnic category.

The identities and readership of the national newspapers are recapitulated in tables 3 and 4. In 2008, the most widely read newspapers in the national sample

were the *Sun* and *News of the World*, which cater mainly to the working class (C2DE), albeit with a sizeable middle class (ABC1) readership. The *Daily Mail* and *Mail on Sunday* are also widely read, and cater to both the middle and working classes, although they have a stronger reach in the former. The *Daily Telegraph*, *Sunday Telegraph*, *Guardian* and *Observer*, while highly influential, are less widely read and their readership stems mainly from the middle class.

**Table 3: Identity of the national newspapers**

<b>Newspaper</b>	<b>Market</b>	<b>Political Orientation</b>
<i>The Sun &amp; News of the World</i>	Down-market/Tabloid	Centre-right (but endorsed Labour at last two general elections)
<i>Daily Mail &amp; Mail on Sunday</i>	Middle-market/Tabloid	Centre-right
<i>Guardian &amp; Observer</i>	Upmarket/Quality	Centre-left
<i>Daily Telegraph &amp; Sunday Telegraph</i>	Upmarket/Quality	Centre-right

**Table 4: National newspapers readership, January 2008 - December 2008**

<b>Paper</b>	<b>Total readership – 000s of readers</b>	<b>Total readership - %</b>	<b>ABC1 – 000s of readers</b>	<b>ABC1 - % of total readership</b>	<b>C2DE – 000s of readers</b>	<b>C2DE - % of total readership</b>
<i>The Sun</i>	7872	16%	2963	10.9%	4909	22.5%
<i>News of the World</i>	7795	15.9%	3119	11.4%	4676	21.4%
<i>Daily Mail</i>	5062	10.3%	3307	12.1%	1755	8%
<i>The Mail on Sunday</i>	5612	11.4%	3690	13.5%	1922	8.8%
<i>The Daily Telegraph</i>	1901	3.9%	1657	6.1%	244	1.1%
<i>Sunday Telegraph</i>	1703	3.5%	1478	5.4%	225	1%
<i>The Guardian</i>	1240	2.5%	1124	4.1%	116	0.5%
<i>The Observer</i>	1379	2.8%	1188	4.4%	191	0.9%

Compiled from the National Readership Survey (2009)

Because coverage of construction moments extends over time, we collected data for one month after each event took place, except for the Good Friday Agreement, and the 2000 and 2006 Terrorism Acts, for which longer periods

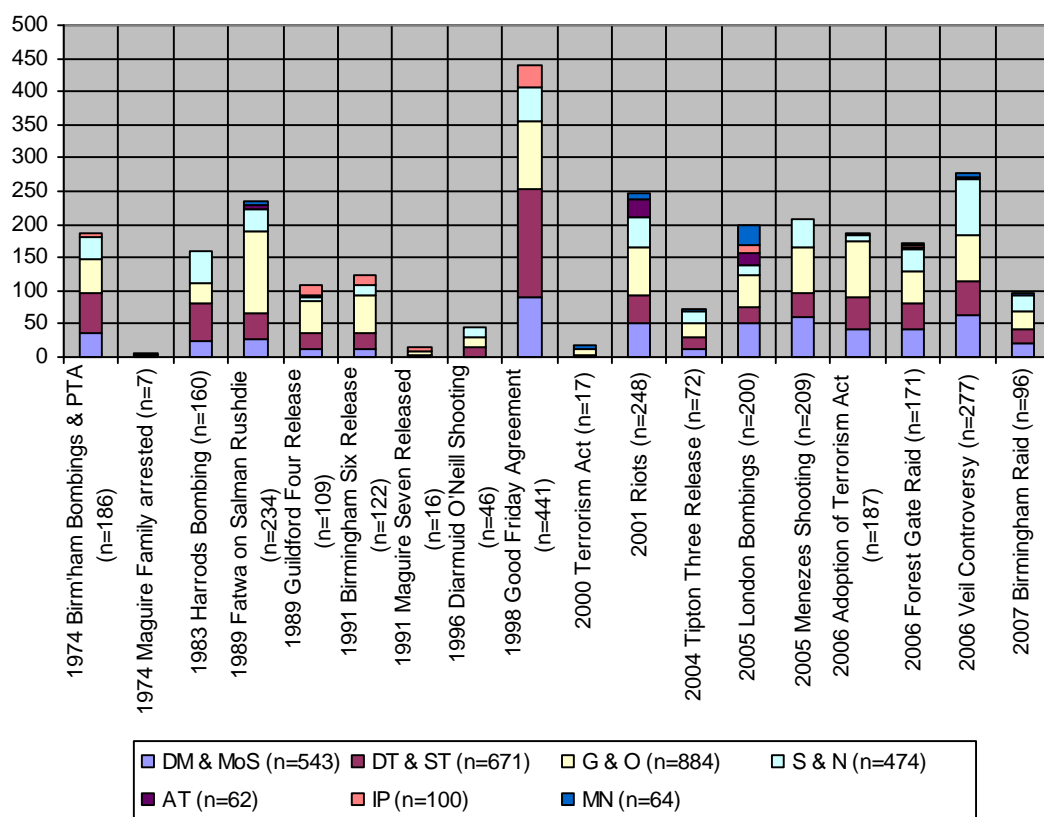
covering the span of the policy making process were collected. In order to keep the sample to a manageable size and to allow us to focus on the themes of the research, only items referring to British Muslims and/or Islam in Britain were collected for the July 2005 London bombings. It was necessary to take this step as the number of news items collected for these bombings alone would have been in the thousands. News items available in electronic format were collected using the Lexis/Nexis newspaper database and the online archives of the *Asian Times* and *Muslim News*. Back copies of newspapers unavailable electronically were collected at the Newspaper Archive of the British Library, except for the *Irish Post*, which was entirely accessed at the London Metropolitan University library.

This yielded a total of 2,798 news items (Figure 1), 39.4% of which are Irish-related, 60% Muslim-related, with the remaining 0.6% relating to both. Note that because the adoption of the 1974 PTA and the 1974 Birmingham pub bombings were more or less always mentioned in the same breath in the news, these events were collated into one for the purposes of the present mapping analysis of media content. As Figure 1 shows, some events attracted more media attention than others, with Muslim-related events tending to be covered more extensively than Irish-related ones, with the exception of the Good Friday Agreement, which was the most covered event in our sample ( $n = 441$ ), perhaps as a result of it being taken to signify the end of the *Troubles*. It is notable that both the arrest ( $n = 7$ ) and the release ( $n = 16$ ) of the Maguire Seven, although significant for Irish communities in Britain, attracted little press attention.

A number of factors may explain this. First, their arrest took place immediately after the Birmingham pub bombings and the adoption of the PTA, events that gained a large degree of press attention, with a combined total of 186 news items devoted to them. A second, related, factor is that the arrest of the Maguire Seven took place at a time of heightened IRA activity in Britain, when many bombs were planted and many people suspected of terrorism were arrested. The arrest of the

Maguire Seven could therefore be argued to have been part of broader media and societal discourses relating to IRA activity, how it should be dealt with, and its consequences for Britain. Thirdly, the release of the Maguire Seven was arguably part of broader media and societal discourses relating to miscarriages of justice; the release of people wrongfully suspected of terrorism and the implications thereof for the English legal system; and the modus operandi of the security forces and the judiciary in pursuing counterterrorist policies.

**Figure 1: The complete sample, 1974-2007**



Note: DM & MoS: *Daily Mail & Mail on Sunday*; DT & ST: *Daily Telegraph & Sunday Telegraph*; G & O: *Guardian & Observer*; S & N: *Sun & News of the World*; AT: *Asian Times*; IP: *Irish Post*; MN: *Muslim News*.

Not only did the release of the Maguire Seven immediately follow the release of the Birmingham Six, but their potential release was already being discussed in the news when the Guildford Four were released, two years prior. It can be then argued that the case of the Maguire Seven did not stand out enough for it to

attract a great degree of media attention, and that it was effectively incorporated into broader societal problematics of the time. It must be borne in mind, however, that while an event may not be key in terms of the extent of its coverage by the press, it can remain a significant event to members of the communities concerned. We anticipate that this point will become evident in the key informant interviews and discussion groups we will undertake with members of Irish communities and Muslim communities as part of the project as a whole.

The discrepancy in the extent of coverage of the shootings of Diarmuid O'Neill (n = 46) and of Jean Charles De Menezes (n = 209) is indicative of one of several factors that may contribute to making an event key for the press: its perceived societal implications. Thus, while the intervention of firearms officers is usually big news in Britain (as a result of regular police officers not carrying firearms), the shooting of O'Neill was covered less extensively than that of De Menezes. In the context of the O'Neill shooting, coverage centred on what the national press described as a straightforward case of armed police officers shooting an alleged member of the IRA – albeit an unarmed one – during a raid aimed at foiling a terrorist attack. In the context of De Menezes shooting, the coverage emphasized:

- the fatal shooting by armed police officers of an innocent man suspected of terrorism because of his *Asian/Muslim* appearance in the aftermath of a terrorist attack;
- the implications of that shooting for the Metropolitan Police and for the fitness for office of Sir Ian Blair, the Metropolitan Police Commissioner; and
- a questioning of the shoot-to-kill-to-protect policy implemented in the framework of counterterrorism.

The importance of the perceived societal implications of events in attracting media attention is perhaps best illustrated by the extent of coverage of the fatwa

on Salman Rushdie (n = 234), the Good Friday Agreement (n = 441) and the controversy sparked by Jack Straw's comments on Muslim women's wearing of the full-face veil (n = 277). These events consisted of declarations rather than of actual, physical events such as attacks, arrests, releases, shootings or raids. In effect, the significance of the Good Friday Agreement as the perceived end to the Troubles, and the implications of the fatwa and the veil controversy for multiculturalism, the integration of Muslim minorities and gender (in)equality resonated with broader societal discussions that were taking place at the time, discussions mainly relating to preserving Britishness and to defending British values.

Having established the typology of coverage of key events involving Irish communities and Muslim communities, we now turn to an analysis of word usage in the headlines of all the collected news items to draw an overall picture of the coverage of Irish communities and Muslim communities in the press.

## **WORD USAGE IN THE HEADLINES**

The first thing to note about word usage is that a more diverse vocabulary is deployed in Muslim-related headlines than in Irish-related ones, at least as far as the national press is concerned (Table 5). The number of news items referring to the other communities in the diaspora press is too low to make meaningful comparisons, with no Irish-related items in the *Muslim News*, two in the *Asian Times*, and two Muslim-related items in the *Irish Post*. This indicates that the gaze of the diaspora press is firmly directed towards the communities they cater to, with little to no attention paid to events and issues affecting other communities.

Differences in the diversity of words used in Irish- and Muslim-related headlines may be a reflection of processes whereby the Irish were rendered invisible within

Britain (Hickman & Walter 1997, Morgan 1997), and of (direct and indirect) constraints imposed upon journalists when covering Irish-related issues. Most prominent among these, was the Broadcasting Ban enforced between 1988 and 1994, which had a knock-on effect on the press, and for which there exists, as yet, no Muslim equivalent: ‘Using powers under the BBC's Licence and Agreement and the 1981 Broadcasting Act which governs ITV companies, television and radio organisations were forbidden from carrying interviews or direct statements from proscribed paramilitary groups in [Northern Ireland], from representatives of Sinn Féin, Republican Sinn Féin or the UDA [Ulster Defence Association] and from those who “support or invite support for these organisations”’ (Moloney 1991).

**Table 5: Number of different words used in the headlines of Irish- and Muslim-related key events, 1974-2007**

	Number of different words used in Irish-related headlines	Number of different words used in Muslim-related headlines
<b>DM &amp; MoS</b>	758	1,335
<b>DT &amp; ST</b>	1,077	1,365
<b>G &amp; O</b>	1,481	2,556
<b>S &amp; N</b>	636	837
<b>AT</b>	-	270
<b>IP</b>	394	-
<b>MN</b>	-	237
<b>All papers</b>	2,644	4,003

Note: News items relating to both Irish communities and Muslim communities have been included in both sets of headlines.

The differences identified in word usage are even more striking when considering that several of the 19 key events are of a similar nature:

- Terrorist attacks: Birmingham bombings; Harrods bombing; London Bombings.
- Anti-terrorist legislation: 1974, 2000 and 2006.
- Releases: Birmingham Six; Guildford Four; Maguire Seven; Tipton Three; Forest Gate brothers; Birmingham raid.
- Anti-terror raids: Diarmuid O’Neill; Forest Gate; Birmingham.

- Shootings: Diarmuid O'Neill; Jean Charles De Menezes; Abdul Koyar (Forest Gate).

A further axis of difference is that there is a low degree of overlap between words used in Irish- and Muslim-related headlines (Table 6. Note: Words such as *and*, *or*, *if*, *but* etc. were excluded from this analysis). This indicates that Irish communities and Muslim communities are portrayed differently in the news, despite the noted similarities between the events chosen for analysis.

**Table 6: Top 20 terms used in the headlines of Irish- and Muslim-related key events, 1974 - 2007**

	<b>Irish-related terms</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Muslim-related terms</b>	<b>N</b>
1	PEACE	132	POLICE	204
2	IRA	124	TERROR	170
3	ULSTER	107	RUSHDIE	100
4	SIX	72	MUSLIM	99
5	BOMB	71	BLAIR (Sir Ian)	95
6	POLICE	69	VEIL	94
7	BLAIR (Tony)	66	MUSLIMS	79
8	BIRMINGHAM	59	LONDON	72
9	DEAL	51	RACE	67
10	YES	47	BRITAIN	62
11	IRELAND	43	ATTACK	57
12	IRISH	40	BILL	48
13	SINN FEIN	39	OUR	48
14	VOTE	39	CHIEF	47
15	FOUR	37	MET	46
16	JUSTICE	34	STRAW	46
17	GUILDFORD	33	RIOTS	45
18	TERROR	30	DAY	44
19	VICTIMS	30	RIOT	44
20	RELEASE	29	US	44

POLICE and TERROR are the only words used in the top 20's of both sets of news items, albeit with greatly varying frequencies. POLICE (n = 204) is the most frequently mentioned word in Muslim-related headlines, and associated terms such as (Sir Ian) BLAIR (n = 95), MET (i.e. London Metropolitan Police, n = 46) and CHIEF (n = 47) also figure prominently. POLICE is the sixth most used word in Irish-related headlines, where it appeared 69 times. This large discrepancy in

the frequency of usage of POLICE is striking when considering that the modus operandi of the police (and the judiciary) was questioned in the aftermath of the releases of the Guildford Four, Birmingham Six, Maguire Seven and of the shooting of Diarmuid O'Neill, just as it was questioned after the De Menezes shooting and the anti-terror raids of Forest Gate and Birmingham.

Note that the apparently higher incidence of criticism of the police in Muslim-related news may be influenced by previous experience, with the press having learnt from historic precedents in the Irish context; the press was initially fairly uncritical of police operations targeting alleged Irish terrorists, until it realized that some of these people were wrongfully arrested on the basis of unreliable forensic evidence and therefore had to be released. In a sense, the press can be said to have learnt from its past mistakes, and seems to have adopted a more critical and guarded stance towards the police and the judiciary in its reporting of Muslim-related terrorism. Nevertheless, the prevalence of the police in both sets of news items suggests that the security forces' actions are scrutinized in the news and that the security forces are held to account in/by the press; the far greater incidence of this in the Muslim related events indicates that this tendency has accelerated in recent years. It could be argued that this is symptomatic of a general and increasing distrust of those in power in contemporary Britain. We explore these issues in more depth in a critical discourse analysis of a smaller sample of news items we are carrying out to complement the present descriptive statistical analysis.

The high number of mentions of the police and associated terms in Muslim-related headlines indicates that the press is sensitive to the implications of police operations (e.g. anti-terror raids, stop-and-search, shoot-to-kill-to-protect) for members of Muslim communities victimized as a result of failures of intelligence, as evidenced in the De Menezes shooting, or in the release of all those arrested during the Forest Gate and Birmingham raids. Effectively, it appears that the police and judiciary are not held to account in the press as much in relation to

their behaviour towards Irish communities and Muslim communities, as they are in relation to their (occasional) disregard for the values and institutions they are charged with defending. In our discourse analysis we will question whether the concerns of the press do lie more with the failure of the security apparatus to protect the public interest than with the injury caused to Muslims. In the same way, we will also question whether press criticisms of the police and the judiciary resulting from the release of wrongfully arrested members of Irish communities relate more to a failure to uphold the values of the British state than to concern for arrested Irish people. We also address these questions in the key informant interviews and discussion groups we are conducting in the framework of the project as a whole.

TERROR is the second most frequently used word in Muslim-related headlines, where it appears 170 times, and the associated term ATTACK appears 57 times. At first sight, this appears to confirm that the issue of terrorism is often closely associated with Muslims in the news (see Poole 2002, Poole & Richardson 2006, and Richardson 2004). However, the bulk of these references relate to coverage of the 2005 July bombings, the related De Menezes shooting, the adoption of the 2000 and 2006 Terrorism Acts, and both the 2006 Forest Gate and the 2007 Birmingham anti-terror raids, which accounts for six of our nine Muslim-related key events. In this respect, it is not a surprising finding that the term TERROR should be used extensively in the headlines of our sample. It must therefore be borne in mind that the high incidence of TERROR, here, may be an effect of the key events chosen for analysis, rather than a characteristic of routine press coverage of Islam and Muslims. Terrorism also figures highly in Irish-related news, even if the term TERROR itself only appeared 30 times in the headlines. This low number is counterbalanced by the regular appearance of the associated terms IRA (n = 124), BOMB (n = 71) and, to a lesser extent, SINN FEIN (n = 39). This may again be more an effect of the sample chosen for analysis than a true reflection of routine news coverage. It is significant that in the Irish-related headlines, terrorism is more frequently associated with the IRA than with the Irish

population as a whole (a point reinforced by the fact that other Irish paramilitary groups rarely, if ever, get a mention in our sample).

It must, however, be noted that a slippage may occur where associations *are* made between Irish people generally and the IRA (the *Irish* Republican Army), both in public discourses and individual readings. This has potentially had the effect of associating all Irish people with terrorism, a feeling that has been expressed by several of our key informants. We will explore the nature of these slippages in more depth in our discourse analysis. There remains, however a significant difference between the coverage of Irish- and Muslim-related events, with Muslim communities as a whole tending to be associated more directly with terrorism, rather than terrorism being associated with specific organizations as in the case in the Irish context. This is evidenced in the fact that al-Qaeda is only mentioned twice in all Muslim-related headlines, despite it arguably being the functional equivalent of the IRA in the current period, at least in terms of the perceived terrorist threat to Britain.

Another significant difference in the coverage of Irish- and Muslim related events is the usage of the terms OUR and US in the headlines (Table 7). While neither term appears in the Top 20 words used in Irish-related headlines, both appear regularly in Muslim-related headlines. OUR does not appear at all in the headlines of the *Asian Times* and only once in those of the *Muslim News*, while US does not appear at all in the headlines of either newspaper. This is indicative of a tendency within national newspapers to portray Muslims as separate from the majority population they cater to, with the subtext being that Muslims are not part of “us” nor are they part of “our” community. In effect, distinctions are made between “us” and “them” in the national press when covering Muslim-related events and issues, a point reinforced by frequent references to BRITAIN (n = 62) in Muslim-related headlines, as opposed to Irish-related headlines where it only appears nine times. The lower frequency of appearance of the terms OUR and US in Irish-related headlines does not necessarily imply that the Irish are

represented as being part of “us” or of “our” community. It merely indicates that the Irish experience is portrayed differently to the Muslim experience, despite the noted similarities between the 19 key events.

**Table 7: OUR & US in the headlines, 1974 - 2007**

	<b>Irish-related headlines</b>	<b>Muslim-related headlines</b>
<i>OUR</i>	10	48
<i>US (excl. references to the USA)</i>	8	33

An example of this difference is the large discrepancy in the usage of terms with religious connotations in Irish-related news compared to Muslim-related news. Indeed, Muslim-related headlines emphasize religion, with words such as MUSLIM (n =99), MUSLIMS (n = 79), ISLAM (n = 23), ISLAMIC (n = 15), and VEIL (n = 94) used regularly. This contrasts with the near absence of mentions of religion in Irish-related headlines, despite the fact that many of the issues associated with the *Troubles* have religious connotations and undercurrents. It is almost as if the religious dimension of the Northern Ireland conflict is (voluntarily) underplayed. The only words with openly religious connotations used more than once in Irish-related headlines are CATHOLIC (n = 3), FAITH (n = 3), ORANGEMEN (n = 3) and CHURCH (n = 2). In this respect, it can be argued that religious difference is a key element of the contrast between the representations of the Irish and Muslim experiences, with Catholicism/Protestantism being made invisible or assimilated in news discourse, and Islam/Muslims being made highly visible and constructed as outside British culture. In the Irish context, a “suspect” community therefore appears to be framed in terms of ethno-national characteristics, thereby masking different religious identities and allegiances. In the Muslim context, on the other hand, a “suspect” community appears to be framed in terms of an apparently homogenized religious identity, thereby masking a wide range of ethnic and denominational communities. Both these sets of representations are bound up in the ethnic and religious histories of notions of Britishness, another theme we will investigate in the discourse analysis. Having said this, it is also likely that more direct references to religion

would be identified in an analysis of news coverage relating specifically to Northern Ireland, while our sample was limited to key events that took place in Britain.

Not only are there significant differences in the words used in Irish- and Muslim-related headlines, but there are also significant differences between the newspapers in the words they use when covering these events. Such differences probably originate in the newspapers' identities, preoccupations, expectations, political orientations, readerships and news values. These differences also suggest that there is no uniform construction of Irish communities and Muslim communities in the press. As Table 8 shows, there is little overlap between the newspapers in the words they used most frequently in Irish-related headlines. Note that the *Asian Times* and *Muslim News* were excluded from this analysis as there were only two Irish-related news items in the former, and none in the latter.

**Table 8: Top 10 most frequently used terms in the headlines of Irish-related key events, 1974 - 2007**

	DM & MoS	DT & ST	G & O	S & N	IP
1	PEACE (40)	IRA (44)	SIX (43)	PEACE (24)	SIX (12)
2	ULSTER (26)	ULSTER (37)	PEACE (39)	IRA (23)	PEACE (9)
3	IRA (22)	BOMB (27)	ULSTER (37)	BOMB (14)	BIRMINGHAM (8)
4	BLAIR (19)	BLAIR (24)	BIRMINGHAM (35)	YES (9)	GUILDFORD (6)
5	DEAL (15)	PEACE (20)	IRA (34)	BLAIR (8)	LAST (6)
6	POLICE (11)	POLICE (19)	POLICE (28)	BOMBERS (8)	POLICE (6)
7	BOMB (10)	SINN FEIN (18)	IRELAND (21)	COPS (7)	BOMB (5)
8	VOTE (10)	YES (16)	JUSTICE (21)	ULSTER (7)	IRELAND (5)
9	ADAMS (9)	DEAL (14)	RELEASE (19)	VOTE (7)	IRISH (5)
10	IRELAND (8)	HARRODS (11)	FOUR (18)	ADAMS (6)	LONDON (5)

Only PEACE and POLICE appear in the top 10 of the five other papers, while BOMB, IRA and ULSTER appear in four each. It is remarkable that ULSTER does not appear at all in the *Irish Post* and that IRA appeared only once in its

headlines. This is indicative of the great differences there are in the coverage of Irish-related issues between the diaspora press and the national press. Indeed, as this analysis confirms, Ulster is often wrongly used as a synonym for Northern Ireland (three of the nine counties within Ulster are part of the Republic of Ireland, while the six others are part of Northern Ireland), a factual mistake that the *Irish Post* is unlikely to make, considering it caters to an Irish audience that would be *au fait* with the correct terminology. Referring to Ulster rather than to Northern Ireland, the north of Ireland, or to the Six Counties is a political choice (whether conscious or not) aligning the utterer with a particular political agenda, whether it be Loyalism, Unionism, Republicanism or Nationalism. As Beresford (1994: 7) points out, 'There is no neutrality in Northern Ireland, at least in the terminological sense: the use of the term "Northern Ireland" places a writer on one side of the conflict, because to an Irish Nationalist there is no such entity.' The almost complete absence of the IRA in the headlines of the *Irish Post* is an unexpected finding especially when compared with its regular frequency of appearance in the national press. The reason for this absence can only be guessed at. It may be a conscious effort on the part of the *Irish Post* to portray Irish communities in a positive light, or not to give the IRA the 'oxygen of publicity' (to borrow a phrase from Margaret Thatcher), or perhaps clearly to separate the Irish from the IRA. That this absence is not accidental is reinforced by our unexpected finding that the *Irish Post* does not tend to cover IRA bombings in any great depth, if at all, as evidenced in its coverage of major bombings in England during the 1980s and 1990s: 1982 Hyde Park & Regents' Park: 0 articles; 1983 Harrods: 1 article; 1984 Brighton: 3 articles; 1989 Deal barracks: 1 article; 1990 Stock Exchange: 0 articles; 1992 Baltic Exchange: 0 articles; 1992 Manchester: 0 articles; 1993 Warrington: 7 articles; 1993 Bishopsgate: 0 articles; 1996 Canary Wharf: 12 articles; 1996 Manchester: 4 articles.

Just as was the case for Irish-related headlines, there is great diversity in the most frequently used words in Muslim-related headlines (Table 9), which

suggests that there is no uniform representation of Muslims in the press. Note that the *Irish Post* was excluded from this analysis because there were only three relevant Muslim-related news items in it. There is, however, more commonality in the words used in Muslim-related headlines than in Irish-related headlines. MUSLIM and MUSLIMS are used in the headlines of all six newspapers. One effect of extensively using these words may be that issues or problems covered in the news come to be seen as *Muslim-specific* issues or problems, i.e. they are inherent to Muslim communities. This contrasts with the lower number of times IRISH (n = 40) is used in Irish-related headlines, although, as it has been noted, the term IRA encapsulates “Irish”. In this respect, Irish communities (and perhaps mainly the IRA) may be said to be constructed as a problem *for* the state, while Muslim communities may be said to be constructed as a problem *in and of themselves*. In effect, there appears to be more projection of the perceived threat onto the whole of Muslim communities than onto the whole of Irish communities.

**Table 9: Top 10 most frequently used words in the headlines of Muslim-related key events, 1974 - 2007**

	DM & MoS	DT & ST	G & O	S & N	AT	MN
1	TERROR (38)	POLICE (51)	POLICE (95)	VEIL (27)	POLICE (8)	MUSLIM (11)
2	POLICE (37)	(Sir Ian) BLAIR (31)	TERROR (78)	TERROR (20)	MUSLIMS (7)	LONDON (5)
3	(Sir Ian) BLAIR (25)	TERROR (26)	LONDON (52)	RUSHDIE (15)	RACE (7)	MUSLIMS (5)
4	MUSLIM (21)	RUSHDIE (19)	RUSHDIE (48)	RIOT (14)	ASIAN (6)	BOMBINGS (4)
5	VEIL (19)	MUSLIM (17)	MUSLIMS (38)	COP (13)	BRITAIN (5)	DISTURBANCES (4)
6	RACE (17)	RACE (16)	VEIL (37)	COPS (13)	OLDHAM (5)	MOSQUE (4)
7	OUR (15)	CHIEF (14)	MUSLIM (36)	MUSLIM (12)	RIOTS (5)	TERROR (4)
8	BRITAIN (14)	MAN (14)	ATTACK (34)	OUR (12)	BLUNKETT (4)	7 (3)
9	RUSHDIE (14)	BRITAIN (13)	(Sir Ian) BLAIR (33)	7 (9)	BNP (4)	ATTACK (3)
10	CHIEF (13)	MET (12)	DEBATE (33)	HATE (9)	RIOTERS (4)	BRADFORD (3)

The word POLICE was used extensively in all newspapers but one – the *Muslim News* – although the *Sun* and *News of the World* preferred to use COP(S), which

reflects their editorial stance. The prevalence of the security apparatus in Muslim-related news is compounded when considering the extent to which terms associated with the police such as (Sir Ian) BLAIR, CHIEF and MET are used in the headlines. Admittedly, most of these words refer to the same person, the Metropolitan Police Commissioner (Sir Ian Blair), who played a key role in the 2005 July bombings, the De Menezes shooting, and in both the Forest Gate and Birmingham raids. In contrast to Irish-related headlines, words explicitly relating to terrorism are used more regularly in Muslim-related headlines (except for the *Asian Times*), with TERROR appearing in five newspapers, ATTACK in two and BOMBINGS in one. The higher incidence of terms directly related to terrorism in Muslim-related headlines compared to Irish-related ones needs to be contextualized with the synonymy of the IRA with terror, as well as by the fact that no Islamism-inspired organization in Britain has been singled out in the same way as the IRA has been, despite the reported presence and activity of al-Qaeda in Britain.

The regular appearance in the headlines of the words RUSHDIE, VEIL, RACE and RIOT(S) suggests that Muslim communities are portrayed as a symbolic threat to British values in the news. Indeed the issues raised by the fatwa on Salman Rushdie, the 2001 riots and Jack Straw's comments on the acceptability of the full-face veil strongly relate to the suitability of multiculturalism as a viable policy for the British state. A caveat needs to be introduced here though. Indeed, the relatively high incidence of RACE in Muslim-related headlines is solely a result of coverage of what were dubbed *race riots* in 2001, and should therefore not in itself be taken to mean that Muslim communities are racialized in the news. Note that the press dubbing these demonstrations "race riots" echoes with those that took place and were termed as such in 1981 in Brixton and Toxteth, two events which had a profound effect on British society. In this respect, newspaper discourse relating to Muslim-related events borrows from and expands upon societal discourses used to refer to key events from the past. Other examples of such parallels within our sample are the release of wrongfully arrested terrorism

suspects, bombings, anti-terror raids, and the adoption of counterterrorism policies. Parallels such as these, and the recycling of discourse within them, are not amenable to a quantitative approach and that is one of the reasons why our project will proceed to undertake a discourse analysis of newspaper coverage of Irish communities and Muslim communities.

## **IRISH COMMUNITIES, MUSLIM COMMUNITIES AND THE PERCEIVED THREAT TO BRITISH VALUES**

In order to be able to perform such a discourse analysis, a sample of news items responding to the research questions of the project had first to be drawn. To that effect, all 2,798 collected news items were coded according to four sets of mutually exclusive (although overlapping) selection criteria derived from the project's research questions (Table 10).

**Table 10: The coding categories**

<b>Communities</b>	<b>Social Cohesion</b>	<b>Rule of Law</b>	<b>Britishness</b>
Suspect Irish	Fundamentalism	Civil Liberties	Britishness
Non-suspect Irish	Multiculturalism	Shoot-to-Kill-to-Protect	Freedom of Speech
Irishophobia	Race Relations	Rule of Law	Religious Tolerance
IRA/Sinn Féin		Suspect Police/Judiciary	
Suspect Muslim		Wrongful Arrest	
Non-suspect Muslim			
Islamophobia			
Muslim Terrorist			

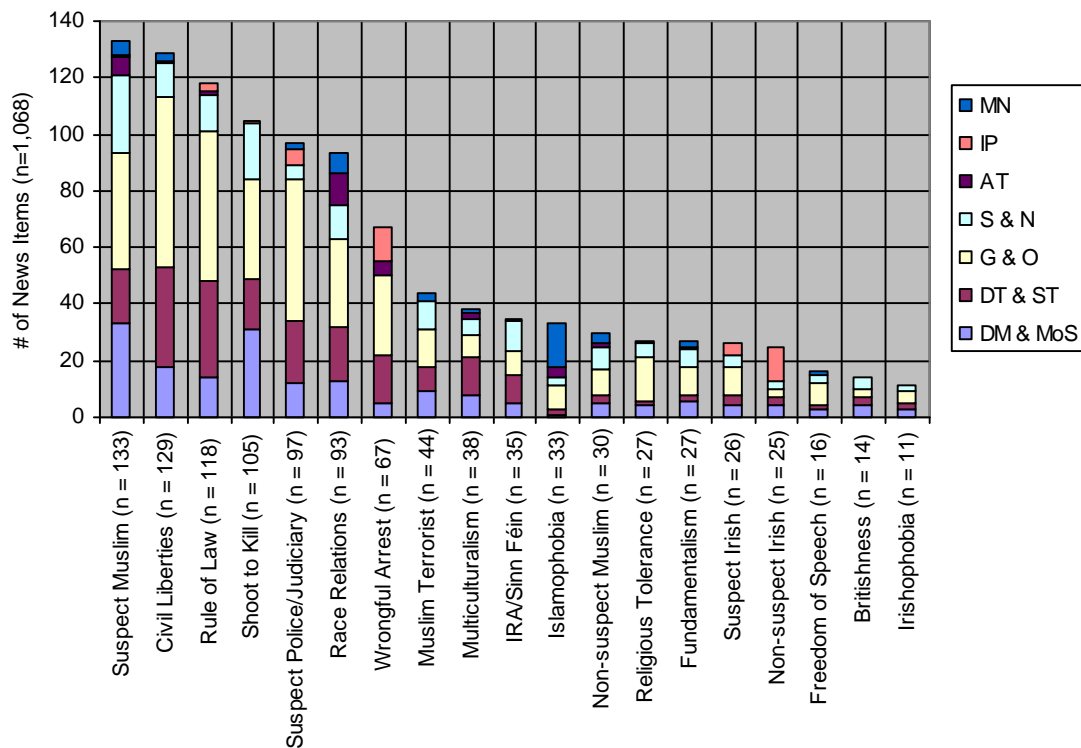
This coding process was based on the headlines in the first instance, not only because they are the entry point to newspapers but also because research has shown that 'skilled newspaper readers spend most of their reading time *scanning* the headlines – rather than reading the stories' (Dor 2003: 696, italics in original). If the headlines were ambiguous or inconclusive, the news items themselves

were looked at to determine how they should be coded. News items that did not respond to any of these coding categories were discarded from the sample. The *Suspect Irish* and *Suspect Muslim* codes cover news items where members of Irish communities and Muslim communities are explicitly referred to as “suspect” or as a threat. The related *IRA/Sinn Féin* and *Muslim Terrorist* codes cover news items where members of Irish communities and Muslim communities are explicitly referred to as being part of the IRA or Sinn Féin, or as terrorists inspired by Islam(ism). Conversely, the *Non-suspect Irish* and *Non-suspect Muslim* codes cover items where these groups are referred to in terms depicting them as ordinary citizens (i.e. as anything but “suspect” or a threat), with the related *Irishophobia* and *Islamophobia* codes covering news items reporting or relating to backlashes against (members of) Irish communities and Muslim communities. The *Suspect Police/Judiciary* code covers news items where the security apparatus and legal institutions/actors are represented as performing their duties in ways unbecoming their assigned social roles. The other coding categories are self-explanatory. 1,068 news items responded to the coding categories (see Figure 2), with 30.2% of them Irish-related, 68.4% Muslim-related, and the remaining 1.3% relating to both.

The high incidence of the *Suspect Muslim* coding category (12.5% of all coded items) suggests that Muslim communities are indeed represented as “suspect” in the news, or at least as more “suspect” than Irish communities. The *Suspect Irish* category appears in 2.4% of the coded news items, which is almost equal to that of the *Non-suspect Irish* category (2.3%), and *Irishophobia* appears in about 1% of the items, while *IRA/Sinn Féin* appears in 3.3%. This suggests that Irish communities as a whole are not represented as “suspect” as frequently and as overtly as Muslim communities would appear to be in our sample. Whilst an analysis of routine coverage might suggest otherwise, this is nonetheless a significant finding. The detailed discourse analysis may reveal that Irish communities are constructed as “suspect” in the press at a subtler and less obvious level. The *Non-suspect Muslim* category appears in 2.8% of coded

items, with *Islamophobia* and *Muslim Terrorist* appearing in 3% and 4.1%, respectively. This suggests that no concerted effort is made in the press to dispel popular notions that Muslim communities as a whole are “suspect”.

**Figure 2: The communities and British values sample, 1974 - 2007**



Although the security apparatus and legal institutions cannot be called a community, it is notable that 9.1% of all coded items refer to the police or the judiciary as “suspect”. Although this may be an effect of the events chosen for analysis rather than a feature of routine news coverage, this finding suggests that the press casts a critical eye over the authorities, albeit often in retrospect, as was the case after the releases of the Guildford Four, Birmingham Six and Maguire Seven, after the De Menezes shooting, and after the botched raids of Forest Gate and Birmingham. In the case of the police and the judiciary, what the press deems “suspect” is not so much a community as a way of operating. Hence the high incidence of news items with policy and legal implications yielded

here. Between them, *Civil Liberties* (12.1%), *Rule of Law* (11%), *Shoot-to-Kill* (9.8%) and *Wrongful Arrest* (6.3%) cover 39.2% of all coded news items. The high number of news items relating to the rule of law, in the largest sense of the word, indicates that the press is as concerned with corruption within the British establishment as with the symbolic and physical threat of terrorist attacks. The perceived threat to Britishness appears less significant in this analysis, with 5.3% of coded items relating to it, and with *Religious Tolerance*, *Freedom of Speech* and *Britishness* appearing, respectively, in 2.5%, 1.5% and 1.3% of the coded news items. However, Britishness is unlikely to be an overt theme of newspaper headlines and is more likely to emerge as an implicit sub-text in the detailed discourse analysis. Even in this quantitative analysis, however, with 14.8% of items relating to *Race Relations* (8.7%), *Multiculturalism* (3.6%) and *Fundamentalism* (2.5%), we can observe a concern with perceived threats to 'British values', and with social cohesion

## **CONCLUSION**

This analysis of national and diaspora newspaper coverage of a variety of key events involving Irish communities and Muslim communities between 1974 and 2007 indicates that these communities are represented as "suspect" or as a threat to different degrees. We have found that a more direct association is made between Muslim communities and suspicion than is the case for Irish communities. In most cases, these associations, do not overtly encompass *all* Muslims or *all* Irish people. Instead, it is mainly perceived extremists within these communities that are represented as "suspect" and as a threat. However, slippages in discourse do occur, leading to innocent members of these communities being constructed and treated as "suspect", in the press and elsewhere. Such slippages escape the attention of a broad-sweep, quantitative analysis such as the one carried out here, which is why we examine them in more depth in the next stage of the research - critical discourse analysis of a smaller sample drawn from the collected news items.

Differences in the representation of Irish communities and Muslim communities have been identified at every level of analysis. One of the main differences is the focus on the IRA in the Irish context, with no direct equivalent appearing in Muslim-related news items, as evidenced in the low frequency with which al-Qaeda is mentioned, and in the absence of other such groups being mentioned. A more obvious conflation is made in the newspapers analyzed between Muslims and extremists, although this results more from a sin of omission than from a sin of commission, in so far as no great effort is made in the national press to dispel popular notions that Muslim communities are a threat to Britain. Although a conflation between the general population and extremists is also sometimes made in societal discourse in the Irish context (Morgan 1997) – associating the Irish as a whole with the IRA and terrorism – this analysis produces little evidence to suggest that the press actively did so in the case of the events selected here. Effectively, “guilt” is established more by indirect association than by finger pointing, with the result that the terms “Irish” and “Muslim” sometimes come to signify terrorism/t, suspicion/suspect or threat in societal discourse.

Perhaps one of the most significant findings of this analysis is that the security forces and the judiciary are also represented as threatening British values when these institutions are seen to violate what it is they are charged with defending, as a result of an aggressive pursuit of counterterrorist policies. The extensive coverage of fundamental examinations of the judiciary and security forces that occurred as a result of their modus operandi in the greater part of the events chosen for analysis indicates that these institutions are also represented as “suspect” and as needing to be held to account. In fact, the preponderance of news items relating to issues connected with the rule of law in the largest sense of the term and with social cohesion (which, taken together, cover more than half the coded news items) demonstrates that the press is concerned with preserving the integrity of the British state, British institutions, and British values. Abusing these is deemed intolerable by the press, whoever the perpetrators may be.

There is, however, a great difference between how such abuses are covered in the press. In the case of abuses by the security apparatus and the judiciary (i.e. the establishment), criticism usually takes place *a posteriori*, sometimes years after the incriminating events took place – while in the case of terrorism and extremism, judgments and pronouncements are often made immediately after the event. To conclude, this initial analysis of media coverage of Irish- and Muslim-related key events indicates that when these minority communities are represented as “suspect” in the press, this is rarely done directly or explicitly. One of the main concerns of the various press organs under analysis appears to lie with defending their own constructions of Britishness against perceived extremists, and against abuses of power and authority by the state security apparatus.

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