Cardiff School of Journalism, Media and Cultural Studies

Images of Islam in the UK

The Representation of British Muslims in the National Print News Media 2000-2008

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Contents

Acknowledgements

Overview

Our report on the media coverage of British Muslims is based on three complementary pieces of research:

1. A content analysis of 974 newspaper articles about British Muslims in the British Press from 2000 to 2008;

2. An analysis of the visuals/images used in articles about British Muslims in the British Press in 2007 and 2008;

3. A series of case studies of stories about British Muslims in the British Press.

Our findings suggest that the coverage of British Muslims has increased significantly since 2000, peaking in 2006, and remaining at high levels in 2007 and 2008. This rise is partly explained by the increase in coverage devoted to terrorism and terrorism related stories - 36% of stories about British Muslims overall are about terrorism. This is especially notable after the terrorist attacks in the US and the UK in 2001 and 2005.

In recent years, however, we have seen the increasing importance of stories focusing on religious and cultural differences between Islam and British culture or the West in general (22% of stories overall) or Islamic extremism (11% overall). Indeed, 2008 was the first year in which the volume of stories about religious and cultural differences (32% of stories by 2008) overtook terrorism related stories (27% by 2008). Coverage of attacks on or problems facing Muslims, on the other hand, has steadily declined as a proportion of coverage. In sum, we found that the bulk of coverage of British Muslims - around two thirds - focuses on Muslims as a threat (in relation to terrorism), a problem (in terms of differences in values) or both (Muslim extremism in general).

The language used about British Muslims reflects the negative or problematic contexts in which they tend to appear. Four of the five most common discourses used about Muslims in the British press associate Islam/Muslims with threats, problems or in opposition to dominant British values. So, for example, the idea that Islam is dangerous, backward or irrational is present in 26% of stories. By contrast, only 2% of stories contained the proposition that Muslims supported dominant moral values.
Similarly, we found that the most common nouns used in relation to British Muslims were terrorist, *extremist, Islamist, suicide bomber* and *militant,* with very few positive nouns (such as 'scholar') used. The most common adjectives used were *radical, fanatical, fundamentalist, extremist* and *militant.* Indeed, references to radical Muslims outnumber references to moderate Muslims by 17 to one.

One in five stories about British Muslims makes comparisons between Islam and other religions. While around half of these comparisons do not make explicit value judgments, of those that do, negative assessments of Islam outnumber positive assessments by more than four to one. Negative assessments are particularly prominent in the tabloids.
The visual representation of Muslims reflects the portrayals described in the content analysis.

We found a widespread use of police mugshots used in the portrayal of Muslim men (with all the negative associations these carry), while two of the most common venues used for

images of Muslim men were outside police stations and law courts. This is very much in keeping with the high proportion of terrorism related stories about British Muslims.

The visuals used also indicate the focus on cultural/religious differences, with Muslims seen engaged in religious practice in a way non-Muslims rarely are, and with Muslim men being far more visible than Muslim women (while we found more equal proportions of images of non-Muslim men and women). We also found that Muslims are often identified simply *as* Muslims rather than as individuals or particular groups with distinct identities. So, for example, Muslims are much less likely than non-Muslims to be identified in terms of their job or profession, and much more likely to be unnamed or unidentified (especially in groups).

Our case studies focussed upon stories that foreground the 'war on terror', cultural/religious differences and Muslim extremism, as well as the use of certain discourses. We also examined news reports where information had been exaggerated or distorted. Overall, while we found articles that worked hard to remain objective and impartial, many others played up these newsworthy angles at the expense of balance and context. Thus, a number of stories were framed within the perceived threat and fear of Islam. Britain was, for example, becoming a place of Muslim only, "no-go" areas, where churches were being replaced by mosques; and Sharia law would soon be implemented.

This was further personalised in the reconstituting of statements by community leaders, such as the head of the Muslim Council of Britain and the Archbishop of Canterbury. Both had statements taken out of context, and reinterpreted in the worst possible light, often ignoring the caveats, nuances or relevant details of the original statements. In the first case, an expression of concern about the rise of Islamophobia and a parallel drawn with the intolerance to Jews in 1930s Germany became, ironically enough, a story about Muslim extremism (FURY AS MUSLIM BRANDS BRITAIN 'NAZI'). Similarly, a rather dense discussion of the relation between theology and the law became an 'OUTBURST' and a 'VICTORY FOR TERRORISM'. In the latter story, the 'dangerous' Archbishop of Canterbury's considered speech on Sharia law became a treatise on the necessity for limb removal and stoning.

In short, these stories were written to emphasise their newsworthy elements to such an extent that the original facts quickly became obscured in a tide of outrage and condemnation. Decontextualisation, misinformation and a preferred discourse of threat, fear and danger, while not uniformly present, were strong forces in the reporting of British Muslims in the UK national press.

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Introduction

There has been a huge volume of coverage of Muslims in Britain in the news media in recent years. Since 2000, a number of extraordinarily newsworthy events involving Muslims have been reported, including the terrorist attacks of September 11th 2001, 11th March 2004 in Madrid and July 7th 2005 in London. During this period, in which four major new acts of parliament have introduced an extensive array of counter terrorism measures[1], Muslims have regularly featured in news reports about terror raids, foiled attacks and terrorist trials. These have included, most recently, the thwarted airlines terror plot on London and Glasgow Airport in 2006, the trial of the 21.7 bombers in 2007, and the erroneous raids in Forest Gate in June 2006. Earlier, in the heightened political context of the build up to the UK and US military attack of Iraq in March 2003, the 'ricin terror raids' in Wood Green, North London were also widely covered.

Beyond the reporting of terrorist events, stories highlighting a politicised, Islamist or radical Muslim identity have frequently featured as news. The 'cartoon controversy' demonstrations in London and other major cities in early 2006 protesting the publication of an image of the prophet Mohammed in Danish newspaper *Jyllands Posten* in September 2005, serves as one important example of this. More generally during this period, the British press have regularly reported on the activities, pronouncements and measures to control so called 'radical clerics' such as Abu Qatada, Omar Bakri Mohammed and, notably, Sheikh Abu Hamza al-Masri.

The high profile presence of such figures in Britain is perhaps best symbolised by images of Abu Hamza. He is depicted hook-hand in shot, preaching from a soap box in the streets outside Finsbury Park Mosque in 2002, although numerous vivid and rather menacing photographs featuring Abu Hamza have populated the pages of the national press. How to deal with figures like Abu Hamza has become the object intense debate within and beyond the print media[2], and he has served also as a potent symbol informing more generalised polemics about the threatening presence of Islam in Europe.

Print news media discourse since 2000 has increasingly featured stories concerning the social, cultural or political role and/or experience of Muslims in Britain. As such, stories have focused attention upon debates about religious and cultural values. These have included controversies surrounding Muslim dress codes, such as the debate in October 2006 sparked by (now Secretary of State for Justice and Lord Chancellor) Jack Straw in his comments expressing a preference that Muslim women did not wearing the Veil in his constituency surgeries. More recently, however, stories concerning the local negotiation of religious difference and cultural practices between Muslim and non-Muslim communities have suggested more antagonistic cultural encounters.

Previous academic studies have suggested that representation of Islam and of Muslims in the news media tend to be confined to a rather narrow framework of understanding. In other words, the kinds of stories about Muslims which are told by the news media, and which seem

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[1] These include: Terrorism Act (2000), Anti-terrorism, Crime and Security Act (2001), Prevention of Terrorism Act (2005), Terrorism Act (2006). Further measures are currently under debate in the form of the Counter Terrorism Bill (2008).

[2] See for example books such as *Londistan* by Melanie Phillips and *While Europe Slept: How Radical Islam Is Destroying the West from Within* by Bruce Bawer, both published in 2006.

to 'ring true' or to 'make sense' *as news* are fairly limited. These analyses follow on from Edward Said's well-known work on 'orientalism', which argued that established patterns of ideas about Islam position Islam in an 'us-them' relation to the West, which is how Islam itself has often become a meaningful entity for a Western audience:

> 'The idea that Islam is medieval and dangerous, as well as hostile and threatening to "us," for example, has acquired a place both in the culture and in the polity that is   very well defined [...] such an idea furnishes a kind of *a priori* touchstone to be taken account of by anyone wishing to discuss or say something about Islam' (Said, 1997:157)

Whilst the volume of news coverage featuring Muslims has increased dramatically since 9.11 (Whitaker, 2002), the representation of Islam in the West as a dangerous cultural 'other' and as a potential 'enemy within' are by no means 'new' to the post-9.11 era (Macdonald, 2003; Said, 1997).   More recent scholarship has suggested that the news media tend to position Islam as a threat to security, to 'our way of life' and to reproduce common sense ideas which position the religious and cultural values of Muslims and those of 'mainstream' British society in a relation of conflict (Poole, 2002, 2006; Richardson, 2004; Runnymede Trust, 1997). Poole found that the majority of coverage featuring Muslims in the British press focuses upon global events, which tends to entail a regular association of Muslims with situations of conflict and violence[3].

When coverage of Muslims is domestically orientated, studies have indicated that the 'framework of reporting' has also usually led to an emphasis upon violence and conflict (Richardson, 2004). Poole's study of the print news media in 2003, for example, found that the main topics associated with Muslims were 'terrorism', 'politics' and 'reactions to the war in Iraq' (Poole, 2006).   News media coverage, these studies suggested, has focused upon social tensions, raised questions about the 'loyalty and belonging' of Muslims living in Britain, and emphasised concepts such as 'integration' and 'social cohesion' as pressing political issues.

A growing body of evidence suggests that Muslims themselves consider the news media to 'misrepresent' or to represent them unfairly, and to be an important factor contributing to discrimination and/or a lack of understanding between communities (Ahmed, 1992; Armeli *et al.*, 2007; Fekete, 2006; Weller *et al.*, 2001).   At the same time, evidence from the Home Office and independent research suggests that violence and discrimination towards Muslims, already significant pre-September 11th 2001 has indeed palpably increased since that date (Allen & Nielsen, 2002; Fekete, 2006; Weller et al., 2001).   However, whilst the news media is often cited as a likely contributor to the tensions and hostilities Muslims experience, it is very difficult to establish the extent to which it is directly responsible for constructing them.

Indeed, the print news media is just one site of representation through which ideas about Muslims in Britain are constructed. We would nonetheless contend that it is an immensely important one.   Journalism specifically seeks to persuade its audience that a particular version of events or is the most meaningful or 'true', including expressions of opinion which are 'embedded in argumentation that makes them more or less defensible, reasonable,

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[3] For example in relation to the Taliban in Afghanistan, the conflict in the Middle East or the 2003 War in Iraq (Poole, 2002, 2006) .

justifiable or legitimate as conclusions' (van Dijk in Richardson, 2004:227). Print journalism in particular has an important determining role in the circulation of news, contributing to broadcast news agenda setting practices (Gross *et al.*, 2007). Furthermore, it serves as a forum for communication between political and other elites in ways which potentially influence the political and policy agenda (Davis, 2003). However, journalists and the news media do not operate in a cultural and political vacuum. Like the rest of us, they function within and make sense of the world through existing frameworks of understanding, or discourse. Journalists may have more influence than ordinary people upon a dominant public discourse which continues to articulate Muslims as potentially threatening and 'other' to mainstream British society, but they nonetheless remain constrained by it, as well as by the professional and institutional structures within which they work.

This report examines print media representations of British Muslims and Islam in Britain. It presents findings from a systematic analysis of national print media content in Britain between 2000 and 2008 Our central aim has been to explore the nature of the coverage as objectively as possible, and with as few presuppositions as possible. We are mindful too that we also do not operate in a cultural vacuum, and whilst our awareness of previous research in the field provides an important context for our study, we have approached the research material with minds open to the prospect that our findings may or may not corroborate those of previous studies. Moreover, as this research has been commissioned to inform a television documentary[4], we are also very conscious that the research undertaken for this report not only analyses media coverage of Muslims in Britain, but also contributes to the production of further media coverage in this area. We hope that our research and its dissemination in this forum will help to highlight some important and challenging issues regarding news media representations of Islam and to contribute to an informed debate about the role of the media in constructing ideas about Muslims in Britain.

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[4] The study was commissioned by *Channel 4* for a *Dispatches* documentary entitled, *It Shouldn't Happen to a Muslim* broadcast on 7th July 2008.

1. Content Analysis

1.1. Methodology

The sample for the content analysis was gathered from the Lexis Nexis database of British newspapers. The use of Lexis Nexis database has limits – keyword searches are indicative rather than comprehensive – and thus most of our analysis is based on a more detailed study of a sample of news articles (although we report on the results of our initial data gathering in 1.2.1 below).

We began by searching for all stories about British Muslims from 2000 to the end of May 2008, using various strings of key words that connected Muslims or Islam to the UK or to parts of the UK[5]. We tested various keys words, and while the list can never be entirely comprehensive, we are confident that our search captured most stories about British Muslims during this period. This search yielded around 23,000 stories (broken down in Table 1 below).

We constructed a sample of just under a thousand articles, focusing on five alternate years from 2000 to 2008. This allowed us to avoid what we anticipated as the two *most* newsworthy relevant events in the period – the terrorist attacks in September 2001 and July 2005 – while capturing the longer term aftermath of those events. Our aim, here, was to focus on routine, everyday coverage of British Muslims. It also allowed us to refine the sample, eliminating stories that were not relevant to the analysis.

While we avoided coverage of 2001 and 2005, we did want to reflect the overall ebbs and flows in the coverage, so our samples from each year were commensurate with the volume of coverage in that year. So, for example, our sample from 2006 was proportionately larger than our sample from 2002, to reflect the greater volume of coverage of British Muslims in 2006. We therefore sampled one in every 20 stories between 2000 and 2008, eliminating those that only referred to British Muslims in passing[6]. This gave us a sample of 974 stories across our five selected years.

After a pilot coding exercise, all these stories were then coded in order to capture the character of the coverage. We were careful, in so doing, to avoid more interpretative judgments – classifying stories as 'positive or 'negative - for example. Our aim was to construct qualitative data based on clear criteria, minimising more ambiguous measures. This provides the best basis for any subsequent interpretation of the data itself.

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[5] Specifically: Islam! OR Muslim! OR Mosque OR Jihad Or Sharia OR Moslem OR Mullah W/3 Brit! OR GB OR UK OR Eng! OR Scot! OR Wales OR welsh OR London! OR Birmingham OR Manchester OR Newcastle OR Liverpool OR Cardiff OR Glasgow OR Edinburgh OR Burnley OR Bradford OR Oldham

[6] We also eliminated the few article turned up by the keyword search that did not refer to British Muslims at all, but nonetheless used the relevant keywords.

1.2 Findings

### 1.2.1 The Volume of coverage of British Muslims

Our analysis of the Lexis Nexis database (see Table 1) suggests that the coverage of British Muslims in the British Press increased dramatically after September 11th, 2001 (with 74% of the coverage in 2001 falling in the months of September, October and November). This was the starting point of an increased focus on British Muslims, and although coverage in 2002 fell back a little, coverage in 2002 appears to be nearly five times higher than in 2000.

Table 1: Stories about British Muslims over time

Year	Frequency of Stories
2000	352
2001	2185
2002	1673
2003	1917
2004	2399
2005	3812
2006	4196
2007	3213
2008	3466[7]

From 2002, we see a steady increase in coverage year on year until 2006 (see Figure 1). What is notable about this increase is that it appears to have its own momentum, so that by 2004 coverage surpassed 2001 levels.

Figure 1: Stories about British Muslims over time

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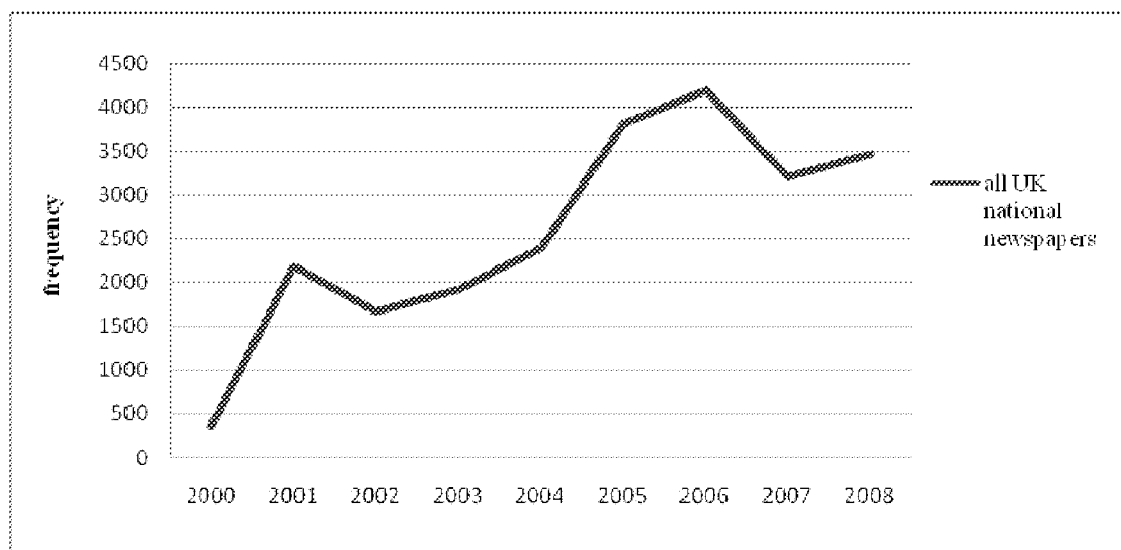
[7] This figure is based on an extrapolation of the five months of coverage available to us, assuming that coverage from June to December 2008 will be commensurate with the coverage from January to May.

As we might expect, we see another significant increase in 2005 (the year of the July 7th attacks), *although coverage continued to increase further in 2006*, reaching a level 12 times higher than in 2000. Although coverage appears to level off a little in 2007 and 2008, it remained higher than in any year before 2005

This suggests that:

1. The increase in coverage of British Muslims from 2000 to 2008 is clearly related to the terrorist attacks in 2001 and 2005, *however*:
2. It has also developed a momentum of its own, lasting well beyond and independent of these highly newsworthy events.

We also note that US State Department's figures on the global level of terrorist incidents does not suggest a commensurate increase in terrorist activity, at least in the earlier period between 2000 and 2003, with more casualties in 1988 than in 2001 and with the two years after 2001 recording fewer terrorist incidents than in any of the previous 20 years (see Lewis, 2005)[8].

As we shall see, the increase in media coverage is elucidated by our subsequent analysis. The 'war on terror' has become a long-running story in its own right, and this is the main lens through which British Muslims are reported. However, in recent years we have also seen the growth of other related topics – notably cultural differences between Muslims and non-Muslims in Britain. The rest of our analysis is based on our sample of 974 news articles from 2000 to 2008.

1.2.2 In what context do British Muslims appear in the news?

We categorised all the stories in our sample by what we call a 'news hook'. This refers to the *main focus* of the story or the element that makes it newsworthy. The three most common 'news hooks' for stories about British Muslims accounted for more than two thirds of stories (Figure 2). These were:

- *Terrorism or the war on terror*, accounting for 36% of stories overall. This involved stories about terrorism trials, stories about the 'war on terror' and about hostage taking, although most of the stories in this category were about terrorism more generally, rather than a specific terrorist event (so, for example, statements or reports about terrorism by politicians or police chiefs).

- *Religious and cultural issues*, accounting for 22% of stories overall. This included discussions of Sharia Law, debates about the wearing of veils, dress codes, forced marriages, the role of Islam in Britain and the Danish cartoon story. These stories generally highlighted cultural differences between British Muslims and other British people.

- *Muslim extremism*, accounting for 11% of all stories. Stories about Abu Hamza, as the single most newsworthy British Muslim, were especially prominent in this category.

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[8] The US State Department no longer publish reports on the patterns of global terrorism.

These three news hooks are likely to cast Muslims as the source of problems or in opposition to traditional British culture. By contrast, we found that only 5% stories were based on attacks on or problems *for* British Muslims. Perhaps ironically, the notion of Islamophobia scarcely featured as a news topic.

Figure 2: News hooks for stories about British Muslims (n=974)
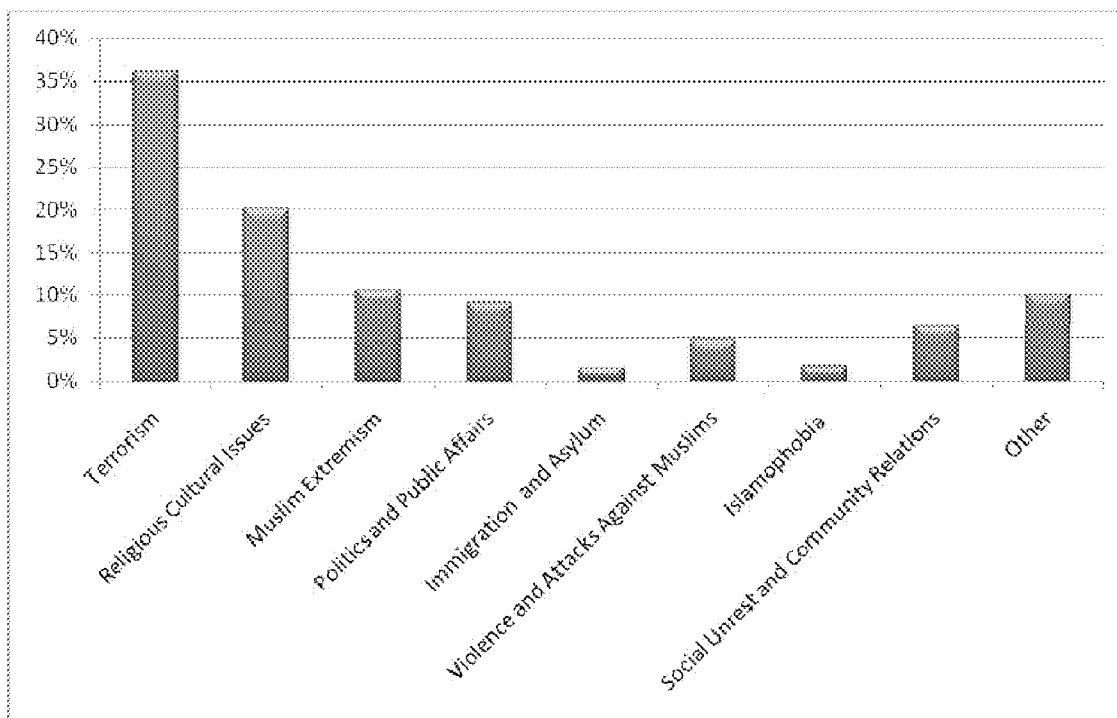
If we look at the prominence of these issues over time (Table 2), a few patterns begin to emerge. Terrorism remains consistently high, although as a proportion of coverage it reaches its peak in 2002 and then declines. This is not because there are fewer terrorism related stories from 2004 (as we have indicated – coverage overall generally increases over time), simply that *after that date other kinds of stories about British Muslims become more significant* (the figures for 2000 should be treated with caution, as the numbers here are low across the board).

Table 2: Prominence of news hooks from 2000 to 2008 (n=974)

	2000	2002	2004	2006	2008
Terrorism	28%	51%	34%	34%	27%
Religious Cultural Issues	20%	8%	12%	27%	32%
Muslim Extremism	3%	8%	14%	11%	10%
Politics and Public Affairs	10%	8%	8%	10%	8%
Immigration and Asylum	0%	3%	1%	1%	2%
Violence and Attacks Against Muslims	10%	5%	9%	3%	1%
Islamophobia	0%	1%	4%	1%	1%
Social Unrest & Community Relations	13%	6%	7%	7%	2%
Other	18%	10%	12%	7%	16%
Totals	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

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In Figure 3, we have picked out those stories where there appears to have been a shift in prominence. Most notable is *the increase in the coverage of religious and cultural issues, which increased steadily as a proportion of stories from 8% in 2002 to 32% - overtaking terrorism as the largest single category of stories* - by 2008. Stories about Muslim extremism also increase in prominence between 2000 and 2004, and remain high in 2006 and 2008.

By contrast, *the potential downside of this prominence – the increase in attacks on British Muslims – is not reflected in the coverage.* Indeed, while stories about anti-Muslim racism and attacks on British Muslims constitute 10% and 8% of stories in 2000 and 2004, this drops to 3% in 2006 and 1% in 2008.

Figure 3: Changes in news hooks 2000-2008
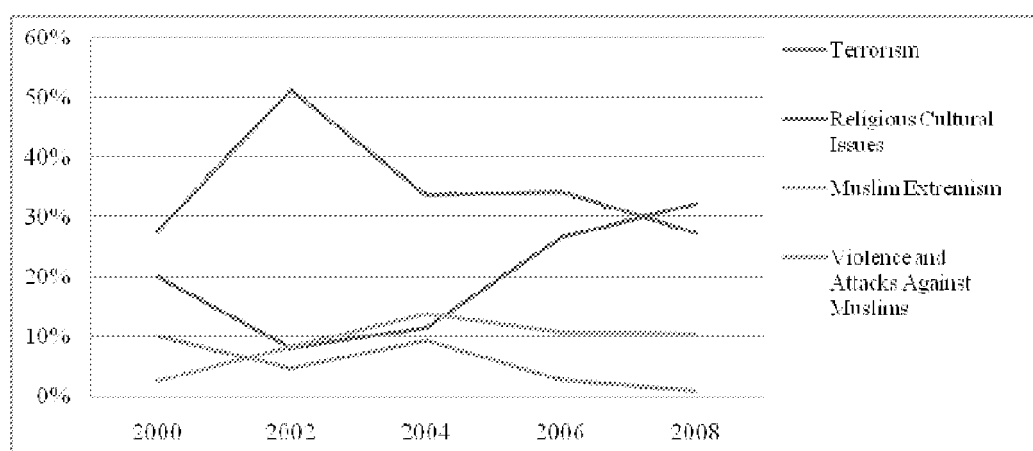
If we break down coverage between tabloid and broadsheet newspapers, we can see that patterns of coverage are, on the whole, fairly consistent across the British press (Figure 4). Nonetheless, some differences do emerge. In particular, we found *a greater proportion of stories about Muslim extremism in the tabloids.* As we shall see in our case studies, this manifests itself in the volume of coverage given to Abu Hamza, who has become a popular hate figure in the tabloids, with Abu Hamza related stories becoming a genre in their own right.

By contrast, the tabloids were less concerned with stories about social unrest amongst Muslim communities or community relations generally. Although terrorism stories and religious/cultural issues dominated broadsheet coverage, we found a broader range of stories about British Muslims in the broadsheets, with Muslim extremism, social unrest and attacks on/ treatment of Muslims all receiving comparable levels of coverage. We also found more broadsheet stories about British Muslims that did not come under any of these headings (generally stories in which Muslims appear in more conventional settings, like business news).

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Figure 4: Broadsheet vs tabloid news hooks
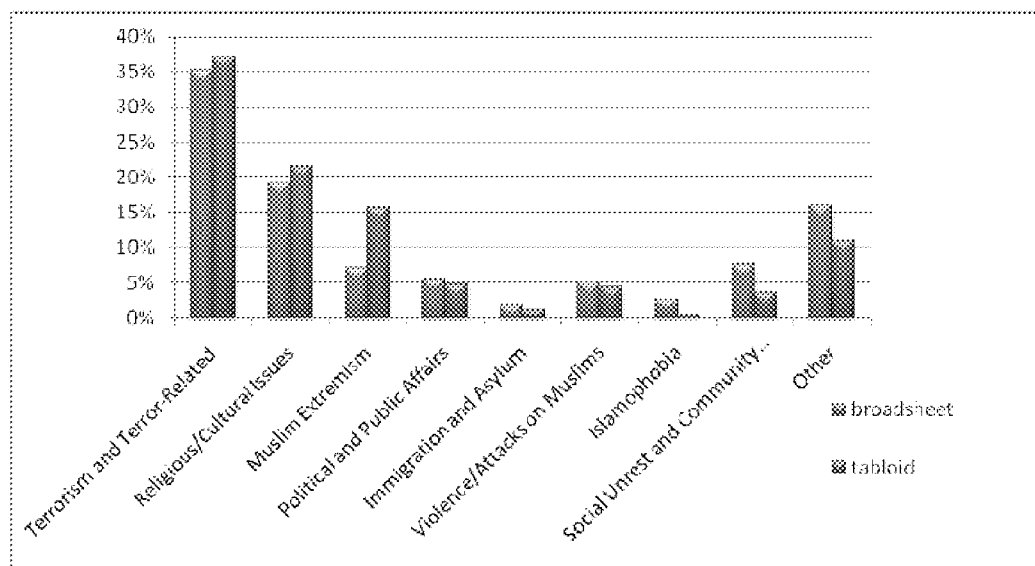
1.2.3 How is Islam compared to other religions?

Roughly one in five stories about British Muslims in our sample (19%) compared Islam to other religions. This demonstrates the degree to which the focus of coverage is on *religious* differences between Muslims and other British people, rather than on political issues that are significant amongst many Muslim communities (about the war in Iraq, Israel and the Palestinians etc). This contrasts with coverage of the troubles in Northern Ireland, which saw the divisions as sectarian but tended not to dwell on religious differences between the Catholic and Protestant Communities.

As we might expect in Britain, Islam was most commonly compared to Christianity (13% of news articles did so), around twice as often as it was compared to other religions (such as Judaism or Hinduism).

Fewer than half these comparisons were not explicitly judgmental (47.8%); drawing out differences rather than making *overt* value judgments. Slightly more articles did make comparisons, however, and these tended to be negative: *unfavourable comparisons (42.5%) outnumbered those that compared Islam favourably (9.5%) by more than four to one* (see Table 3).

Table 3: Percentage of stories that compared Islam to other religions (n= 188 - 122 for broadsheets, 64 for tabloids)

	Neutral	Favourable	Unfavourable
Broadsheet	57%	10%	34%
Tabloid	36%	9%	55%
Total	47.8%	42.5%	9.5%

Table 3 also shows that although broadsheets and tabloids were equally unlikely to compare Islam favourably with other religions - broadsheets tended to be more even-handed than the tabloids. We found that 57% of broadsheet comparisons were neutral, compared to only 36% of tabloid comparisons. Over half the tabloid stories made negative comparisons, compared to a third of broadsheet stories.

1.2.4 What does the coverage say about British Muslims?

To a great extent, the impression created about British Muslims is likely to come from the context in which they appear: thus the fact that the stories tend to be about terrorism, cultural differences or extremism (especially in the tabloids) is likely to create associations in people's minds between Islam and these issues[9]. In order to explore this issue in more detail, we looked for specific kinds of statements or ideas – 'discourses' – used repeatedly in the coverage of British Muslims.

As we have suggested, this approach allows us to be much more precise about the coverage, rather than categorising stories under broad evaluative headings such as 'negative' or 'positive'. While it may be possible to *subsequently* cluster discourses under headings like 'positive' or 'negative', this more discursive approach allows us to be much clearer about what such descriptions really mean.

In our sample of 974 stories, we found 1412 instances of particular discourses being used. As these figures suggest, many stories contained more than one discourse: so, for example, an article might propose, on the one hand, that most moderate Muslims oppose the use of terrorism, although a growing minority are falling into the hands of terrorist extremists. This would be seen as containing two discourses: one suggesting that Muslims support dominant moral values and one linking Muslims to terrorism.

The most commonly used discourses about British Muslims were, in order of prominence (see Figure 5):

- Muslims linked to the threat of terrorism, used in 34% of stories, or 23% of all discourse used.
- Islam as dangerous, backward or irrational, used in 26% of stories, or 17% of all discourse used.
- Islam as part of multiculturalism, used in 17% of stories, or 11% of all discourse used.
- A 'clash of civilisations' between Islam and the West, used in 14% of stories, or 10% of all discourse used.
- Islam as a threat to a British way of life, used in 9% of stories, or 7% of all discourse used.

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[9] See Kitzinger (2000) on the power of media templates or Lewis (2001) on the role of repeated associations in news coverage.

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**Figure 5: Most commons discourses used about British Muslims (n=1412)**
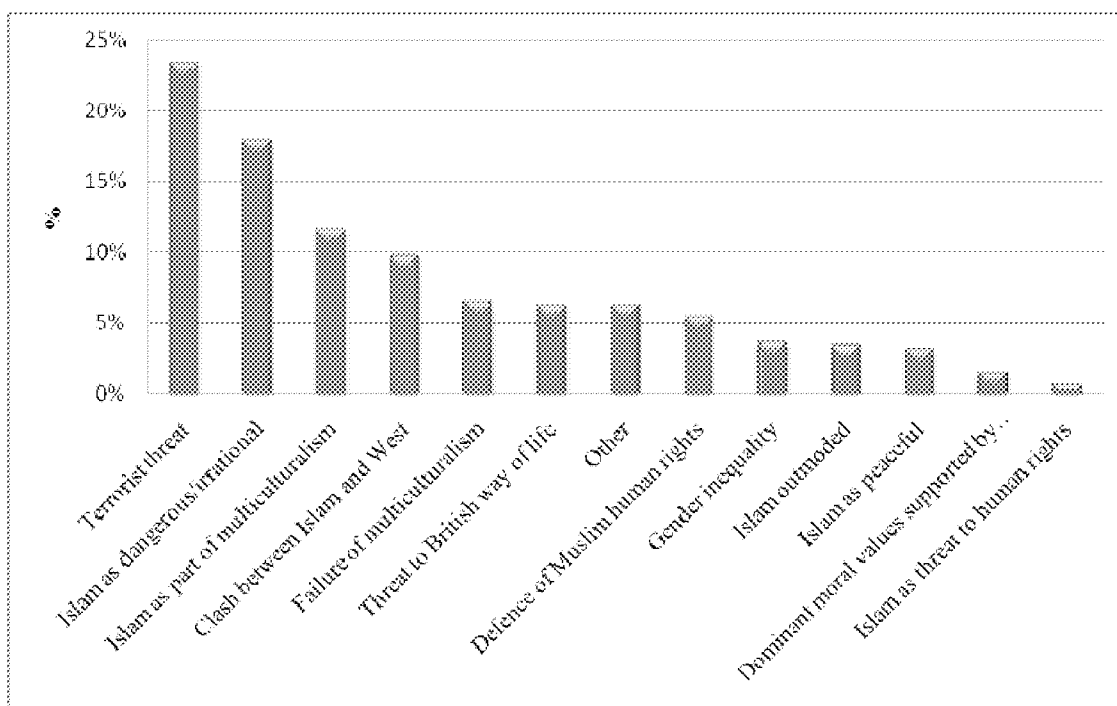
We cannot assume that these discourses were necessarily explicitly positive or negative or that they contained overt positive or negative assertions. What we can say, however, is that *four of the five most common discourses about Muslims in* Britain in the British press *associate Islam/Muslims with threats, problems or in opposition to dominant British values.* By contrast, *only 2% of stories contained the proposition that Muslims supported dominant moral values.*

Most of these discourse are consistently prominent from 2000 to 2008, although we do see some shifts. So, for example, *discourses in defence of Muslim human rights have, on the whole become less prominent, while the idea that Islam is dangerous or irrational has become more commonplace.*

If we compare the discourses used in tabloid and broadsheet newspapers, we see, once again, that similarities are more striking than the differences (see Figure 6). Nonetheless, some of the more negative discourses do appear to be more prominent in the tabloids. We found that the two most common discourses, 'Muslims linked to the threat of terrorism' and 'Islam as dangerous, backward or irrational' are both more common to tabloid newspapers (although we should note that these are also the most common discourses in the broadsheets as well, albeit by a smaller margin).

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Figure 6: Discourses used in tabloids vs broadsheets (n=1412)
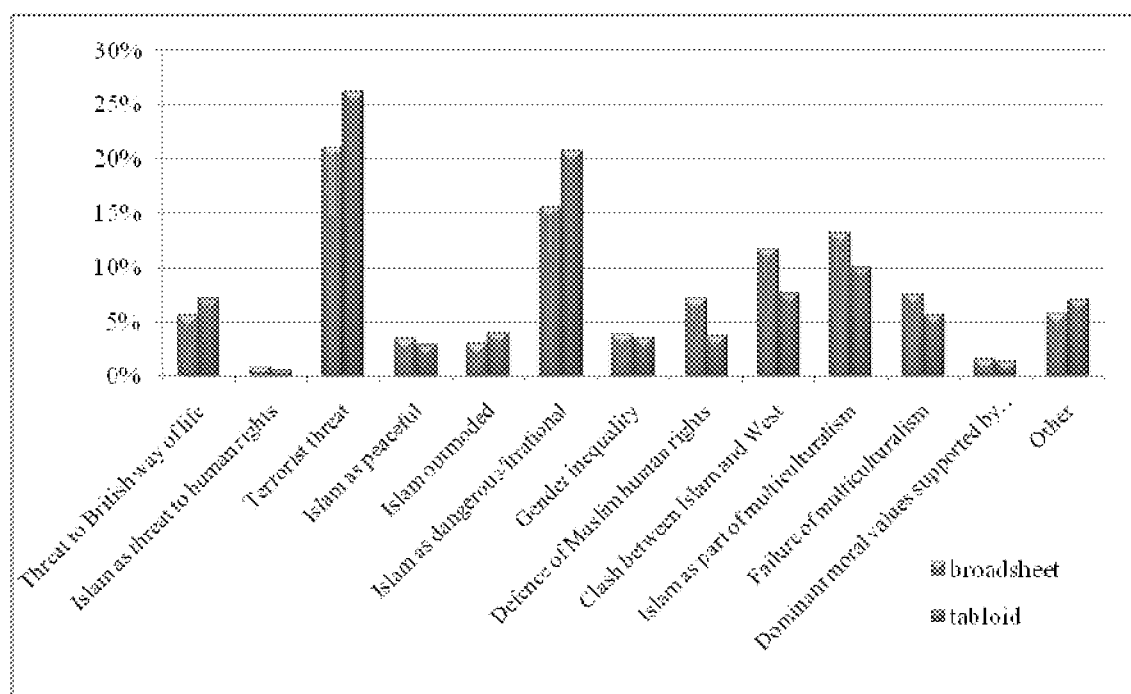
The broadsheets are, accordingly, more likely to feature some of the less pejorative discourses, such as 'defence of Muslim human rights' and 'Islam as part of multiculturalism' (although they are also more likely to discuss the failure of multiculturalism). The idea of the 'clash of civilisations' – with its more negative connotations – also tends to be a broadsheet rather than a tabloid discourse, placing Muslims in opposition to Western values in a more internationalist framework.

We took this discursive analysis further by examining the descriptive nouns and adjectives used directly in conjunction with British Muslims. We found 796 instances where descriptive nouns were used in relation to Islam or Muslims (as in 'Muslim Preacher' or 'Islamic Zealot'). By far the most common nouns used were:

- Terrorist - used in 22% of stories; and
- Extremist - used in 18% of stories.

The other nouns frequently used were:

- Cleric (used in 11% of stories)
- Islamist (used in 7% of stories)
- Suicide bomber (used in 7% of stories)
- Convert (used in 5% of stories)
- Militant (used in 5% of stories)

Apart from 'cleric' and 'convert', it is fair to say that *all the most commonly used nouns – terrorist, extremist, Islamist, suicide bomber and militant - have generally negative connotations.* As Figure 7 suggests, we found very few positive nouns used (such as 'scholar', used in only 0.5% of stories).

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Figure 7: Most common nouns used in conjunction with British Muslims (n=796)
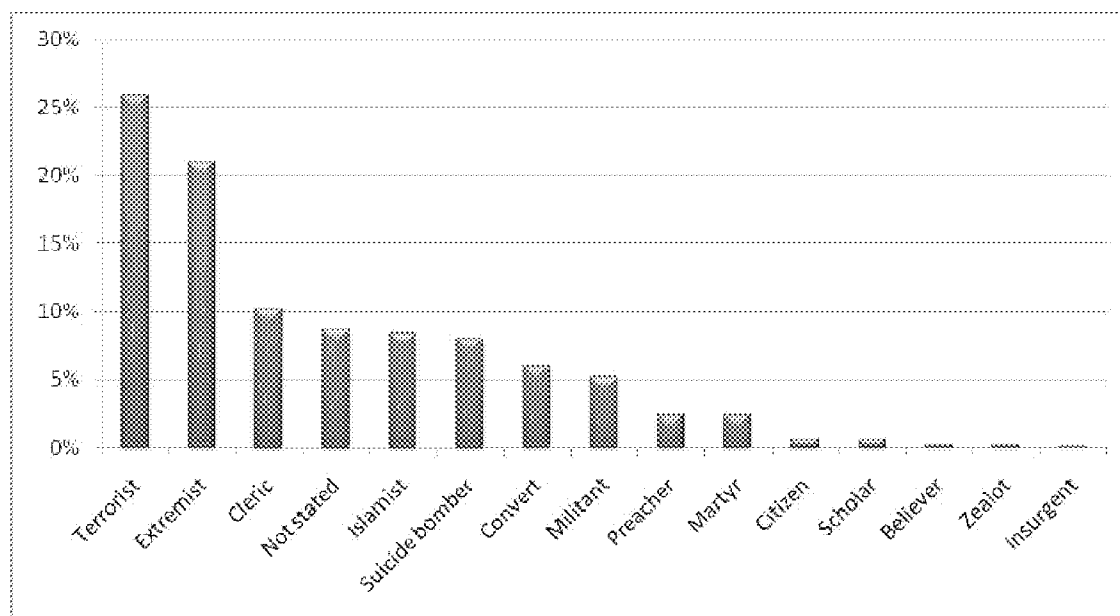

This is not to say that these nouns were used inaccurately or indiscriminately: as our other findings suggest, if British Muslims are most likely to feature in news about terrorism, extremism or religious and cultural differences, then it is not surprising if the nouns used reflect these topics. What these finding do indicate, however, is the extent to which the dominant 'news hooks' have implications on the way British Muslims are generally described.

We conducted the same analysis with adjectives, with very similar results. We found 287 adjectives used in relation to Islam or Muslims (as in 'moderate Muslims' or 'militant Muslims'). The most common adjectives used were:

- Radical (used in 10% of stories)
- Fanatical (used in 7% of stories)
- Fundamentalist (used in 5% of stories)
- Extremist (used as an adjective - in 2.5% of stories)
- Militant (used as an adjective - in 1.5% of stories)
- Moderate (used in 1.5% of stories)
- Evil (used in 1% of stories)

Again, as Figure 8 below suggests, we found few instances of more apparently positive adjectives – such as 'respected' – used in the British press. Although words like 'evil' are fairly unambiguous, some of these adjectives might be seen as positive in some contexts. How we see the word 'radical', for example, depends on our point of view and the context in which it is being used. What is striking, however, is that the five most common adjectives used – radical, fanatical, fundamentalist, extremist and militant – might all be found under the same heading in a thesaurus, all being in marked contrast to the lesser used 'moderate'.

Figure 8: Most common adjectives in conjunction with British Muslims (n= 287)
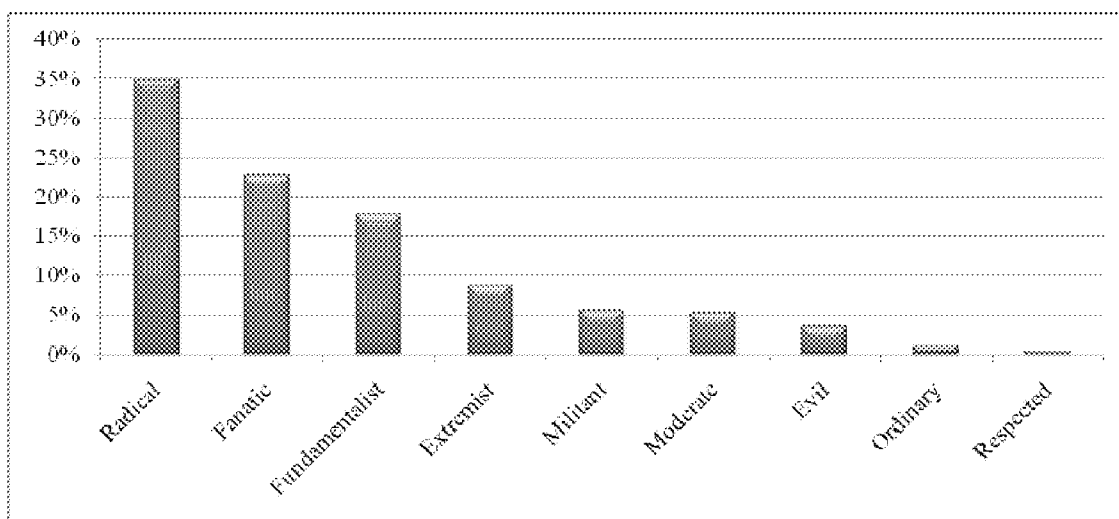
In short, we see far more references to a radical, fanatical, fundamentalist, extremist and militant Islam than to a moderate Islam. Indeed, *references to radical Muslims outnumber references to moderate Muslims by 17 to one.*

If we break these data down by newspaper type, we see a remarkable level of consistency, suggesting that these words are not simply part of a more colourful tabloid vocabulary. The differences that do emerge are fairly nuanced. So, for example, Figure 9 indicates that the broadsheets favour the word 'Islamist' in a way that the tabloids do not, and that the broadsheets favour the word 'cleric' to describe religious figures, while the tabloids prefer 'preacher' (despite preacher the slightly longer of the two).

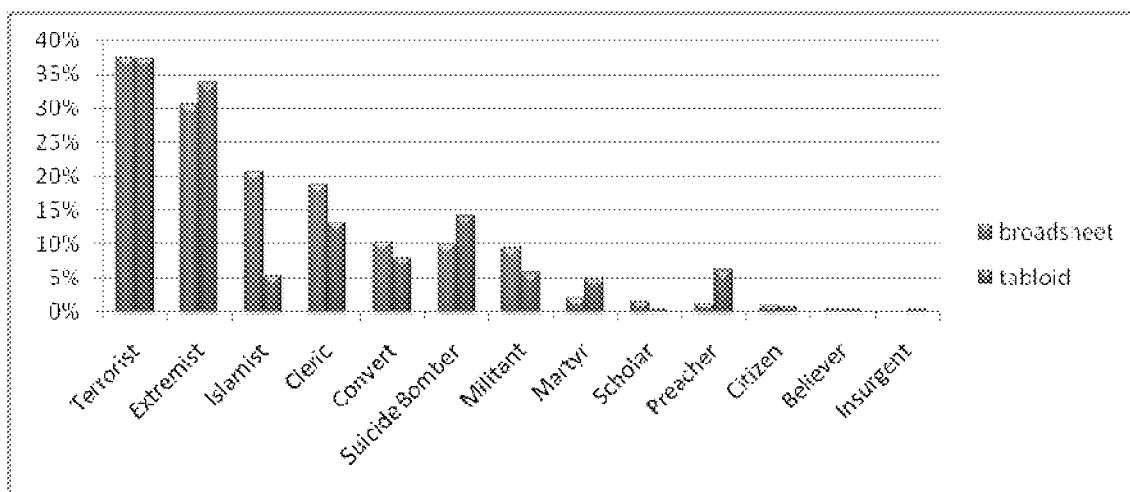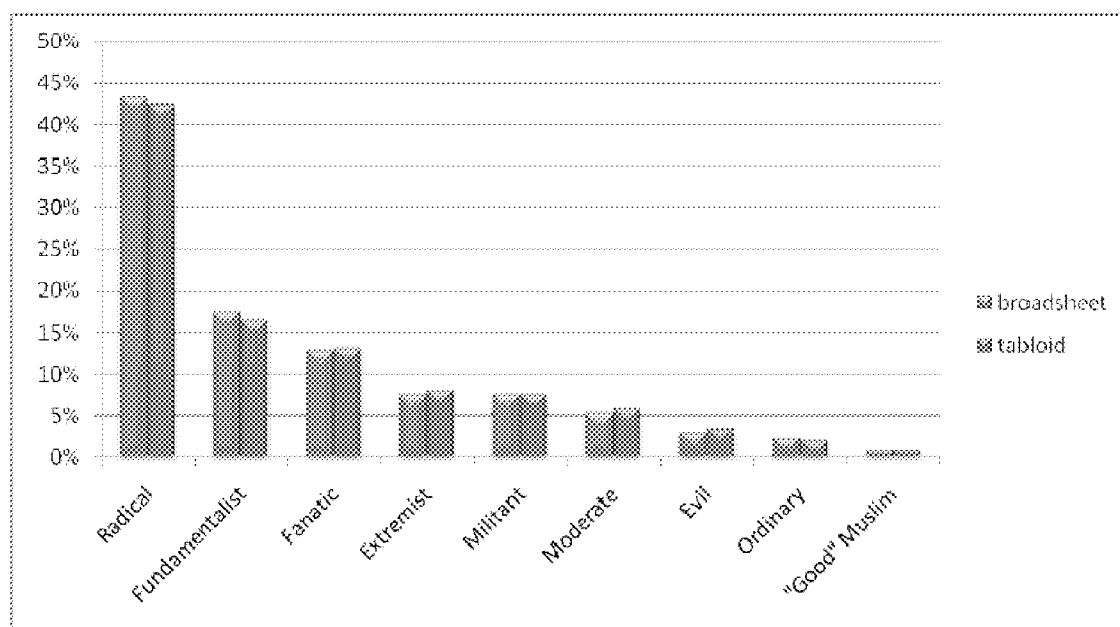**Figure 9: Nouns used: tabloids vs broadsheets (n=796)**

Figure 10 suggests very little variation at all in the adjectives used across the British press: with even the most pejorative – fanatical and evil – being used by broadsheets and tabloids in equal measure.

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Figure 10: Adjectives used: tabloids vs broadsheets (n=287)

1.2.5 Sources

We found 1250 sources quoted across our sample. Table 4 overleaf indicates that the dominant source for stories about British Muslims is politicians (generally white, British politicians), who comprise nearly a quarter of all sources. This figure indicates the degree to which the Muslim community has been a subject of political debate, as well as the willingness of some politicians to be quoted on the dominant issues in which British Muslims make the news (terrorism, cultural values and extremism). Members of the public are also widely used – often to add colour to a story in the 'vox pop' tradition. This is common to most kinds of story: Lewis *et al.* (2005) have documented the degree to which the 'vox pop' is used in contemporary news, their findings suggesting that there are more than 20 'vox pops' for every one opinion poll.

A few other points to note are:

- The widespread use of criminal justice professionals, such as police chiefs and judges, who comprise 11% of all sources used. This reflects the focus on terrorism related stories.

- By far the most dominant Muslim voice is the Muslim Council of Britain (MCB). While they are sometimes used as a 'moderate' Muslim voice, they are also portrayed to suggests the degree to which Muslims leaders are out of touch with mainstream British opinion – as our case study on the 'Nazi UK' story suggests. More radical Islamic groups are also widely quoted.

- More Christian religious leaders were quoted in articles about British Muslims than Muslim religious leaders.

- Although the 'British Muslim community' and is often the subject of discussion (a point stressed by our visual analysis), community groups are rarely used as sources.

Table 4: Sources quoted in articles

Source	n	%
Politicians	286	23%
Public (other)	160	13%
Criminal Justice Professionals	134	11%
Campaign Groups	108	9%
Muslim Council of Britain	105	8%
Victims	58	4%
Radical Islamic group	56	4%
Religious leader (Christian)	55	4%
Religious leader (Muslim)	34	3%
Academic	34	3%
Statistics/Surveys	28	2%
Celebrity	24	2%
Defendant/Perpetrator	20	2%
Education (other)	18	1%
UK military	16	1%
Community group	15	1%
BNP	9	1%
International military	8	1%
Terrorist organisation	6	0%
Religious leader (other)	5	0%
Not Stated Other	71	6%
Totals	**1250**	**99.00%**[10]

As the case studies will suggest, we cannot assume that being quoted means that the newspaper is giving voice to a certain group or providing balance. In particular, as the case studies suggest, radical Islamic voices (or voices portrayed as radical) are sometimes used as a way of provoking disquiet or outrage.

1.2.6 Conclusions

Overall, our data would seem to suggest that:

1. Coverage of British Muslims has increased over the period from 2000 to 2008. This rise is clearly tied to the increase in coverage devoted to terrorism and terrorism related stories, although in recent years we have seen the increasing importance of other kinds of stories about Muslims in Britain, notably those focusing on religious and cultural differences or Islamic extremism.

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[10] Numbers are rounded up/down hence total is not 100%

2. The bulk of coverage of British Muslims focuses on Muslims as a threat (in relation to terrorism), a problem (in terms of differences in values) or both (Muslim extremism in general). Thus, regardless of the tone of the coverage, the *contexts* in which Muslims or Islam are reported tend to negative.

3. One in five stories about British Muslims makes comparisons between Islam and other religions. While around half of these comparisons do not make explicit value judgments, of those that do, negative assessments of Islam outnumber positive assessments by more than four to one. Negative assessments are particularly prominent in the tabloids.

4. The language used about British Muslims reflects the negative or problematic contexts in which they tend to appear. Four of the five most common discourses used about Muslims in the British press associate Islam/Muslims with threats, problems or in opposition to dominant British values. By contrast, only 2% of stories contained the proposition that Muslims supported dominant moral values. Similarly, the most common nouns used in relation to British Muslims were *terrorist, extremist, Islamist, suicide bomber* and *militant* with very few positive nouns (such as 'scholar') used. The most common adjectives used were *radical, fanatical, fundamentalist, extremist* and *militant*, suggesting that we see far more references to more threatening versions of Islam than to moderate Islam.

2. Image analysis

2. 1 Methodology

In order to complement our text-based content analysis, we conducted an analysis of the images used in the British Press in articles about British Muslims. Our sample was based on a 7 month period from 1st November 2007 through to 25th May 2008. We began with the Lexis Nexis search used in the content analysis, and moved to hard copies of the newspapers (based on our library collection, which holds the most recent year of UK newspapers) to see if images accompanied stories. We then categorised those images.

We found that approximately one in four articles used accompanying images. An examination of approximately 1800 articles therefore gave us a sample of 451 articles with images. Where articles involved multiple images or actors doing different things, these were coded individually, giving us, in some cases, over 700 units of analysis. Since images tend to be less precise than text, the verifiable forms of information contained in those images are less detailed than in our content analysis.

2.2 Findings

2.2.1 Types of image

As we might expect, most images – 69% - were photographs taken by journalists, agencies or other photojournalism sources. What is striking, however, is that the most significant other category by some distance – comprising 11% of all images used – involved police mugshots (see Figure 2.1). As our content analysis indicated, a high number of stories about British Muslims are terrorism related, which explains the prevalence of mugshots in our sample. Needless to say, the police mugshot is an image that comes encoded with a number of negative associations.

Around half the images of actors in articles about British Muslims *were* of British Muslims. Figure 2.2 below looks at the gender of people used in images of British Muslims, as well as whether they are shown as individuals or in groups. This indicates that *by far the most dominant image is of a single Muslim male.* This is, of course, in keeping with the use of mugshots. As our content analysis and case studies suggest, these images tend to be of people – terrorist suspects or 'extremist' figures such as Abu Hamza – who are the subject of the article rather than those defining its terms (a third of those quoted in news articles are politicians or criminal justice professionals, who are more likely to define the terms a story, - see, for example, the Phil Woolas 'inbreeding story' in the case studies).

Although most pictures of Muslims show individual men or women, a fairly high proportion – 29% - show men or women in groups. Table 2.1 breaks this data down to establish whether the people in photographs were identified or not (either by name or as a group).

Figure 2.1: Type of images used in articles about Muslims (n=451)
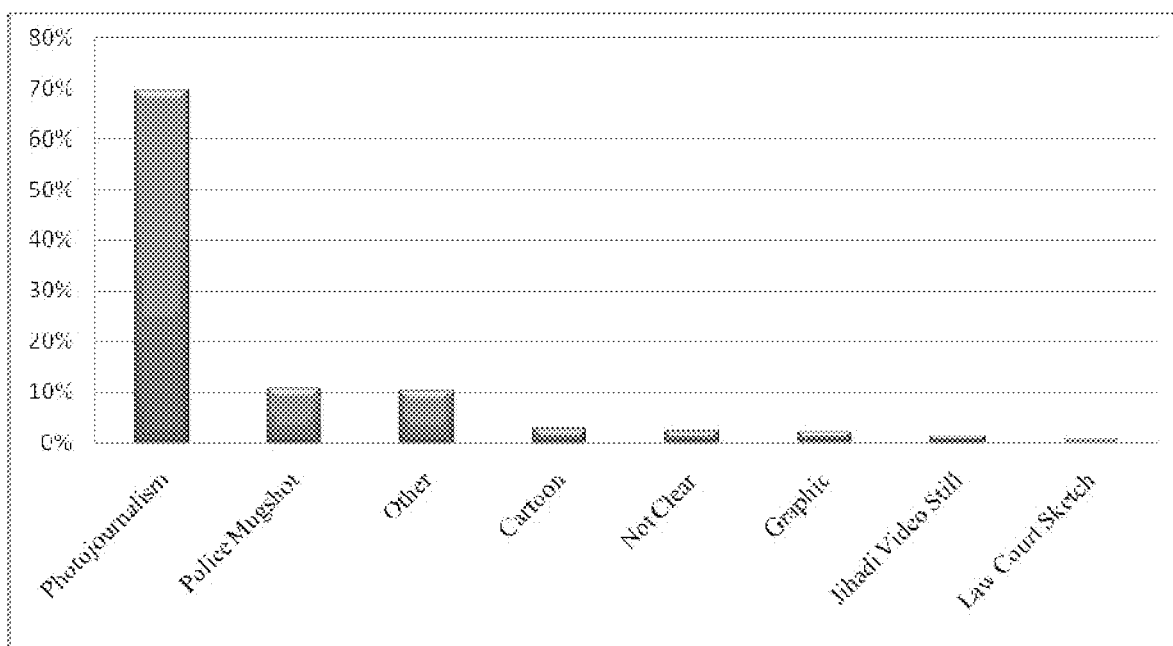
Figure 2.2 How British Muslims are represented (n=315)
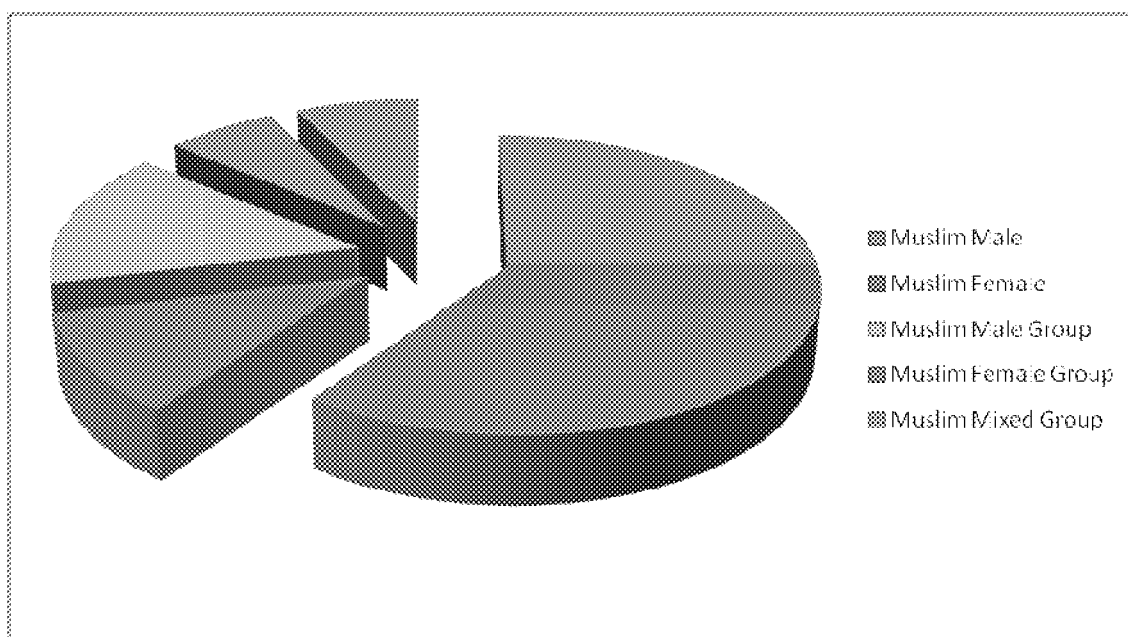
While individuals tend to be identified (it is unusual to show a picture of an individual without naming them), Muslims shown in groups are often *not* identified. This is especially the case with groups of Muslim men, who are approximately twice as likely to be shown in an unnamed group as in an identified group. This suggests two points:

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- That Muslim men are often represented as an anonymous group – the *object of* rather than the *source of* statements;

- That a group of unidentified Muslim men is seen as an image that 'speaks for itself', thus requiring no further specificity.

Table 2.1 Are pictures of British Muslims anonymous or identified? (n=315)

	Number	%
Muslim Male	189	60%
Identified Muslim male	176	56%
Unidentified Muslim male	13	4%
Muslim Female	35	11%
Identified Muslim female	30	9.5%
Unidentified Muslim female	5	1.5%
Muslim Male Group	47	15%
Identified male Muslim group	16	5%
Unidentified Muslim male group	31	10%
Muslim Female Group	21	7%
Identified Muslim female group	11	3.5%
Unidentified Muslim female groups	10	3.5%
Muslim Mixed Group	23	7%
Identified Muslim mixed group	14	4%
Unidentified Muslim mixed group	9	3%
Totals	315	100%

Table 2.2. looks at how the non-Muslims in pictures (in stories about British Muslims) are represented. A comparison with Table 2.1 suggests a number of points:

- While the individual Muslims we see are overwhelmingly male – by a ratio of more than five to one - the ratio of individual men and women in non-Muslim photos is much closer, men outnumbering women by less than two to one.

Table 2.2 How non-Muslims and mixed groups are represented (n=325)

	Number	%
Male	171	57%
identified male	165	55%
unidentified male	6	2%
Female	90	30%
identified female	82	27%
unidentified female	8	3%
Male Group	34	11%
identified male group	17	5.5%
unidentified male group	17	5.5%
Female Group	7	2%
identified female group	5	1.5%
unidentified female group	2	0.5%
Totals	302	100%

- Muslims are more than twice as likely to be pictured in groups – 29% of Muslims are pictured in groups, compared to only 13% of non-Muslims.

- Muslims are also twice as likely to be unidentified – 22% were unidentified, as opposed to 11% of non-Muslims. Although this is, in part, because they are more likely to be pictured in groups, we found more unidentified Muslims in all categories.

- Groups of women in both Muslim and non-Muslim images are more likely to be identified than groups of men.

2.2.2 Location of images

Figure 2.3 shows that, as we might expect, most images are based in the UK, although the prominence of the 'war on terror'/clash of civilisations frameworks even in the coverage of British Muslims means that 8% of images are from Muslim countries, especially Pakistan, Iraq and Afghanistan.

Figure 2.3 In which country are British Muslims represented? (n-=725)
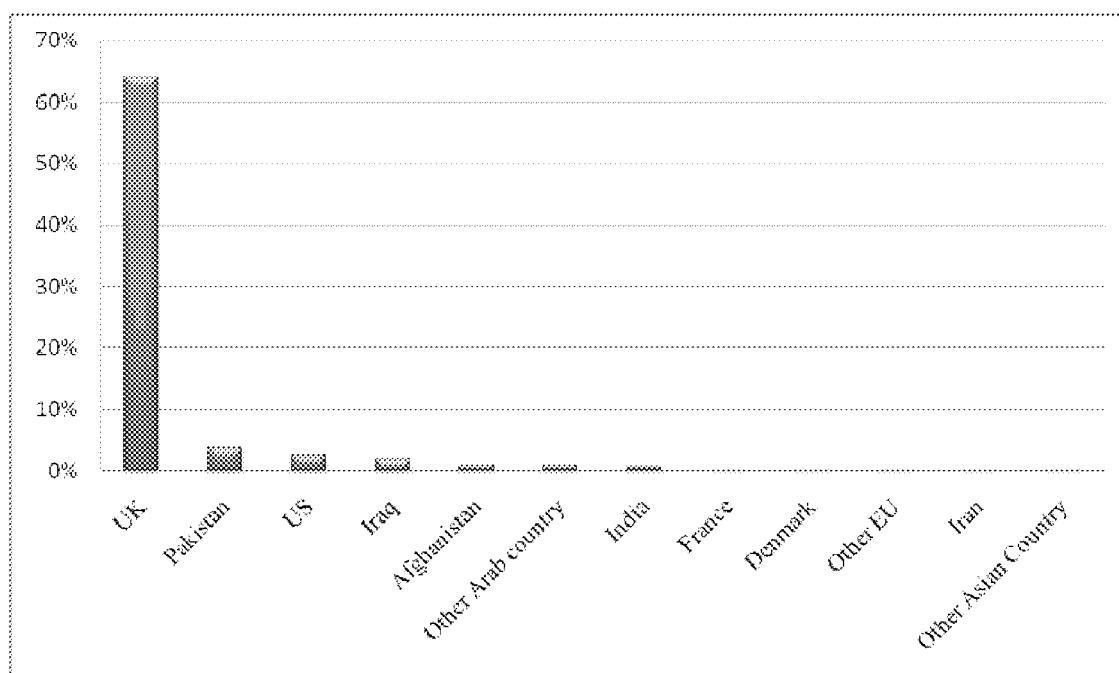
While most pictures we examined (79%) did not show specific types of location, if we look at those that did, we find that one of the most popular locations for photographs of British Muslims is outside a police station or a law court (Figure 2.4): 12% of the images in our sample were in this setting.

Figure 2.4 Locations in which British Muslims represented? (n=725)
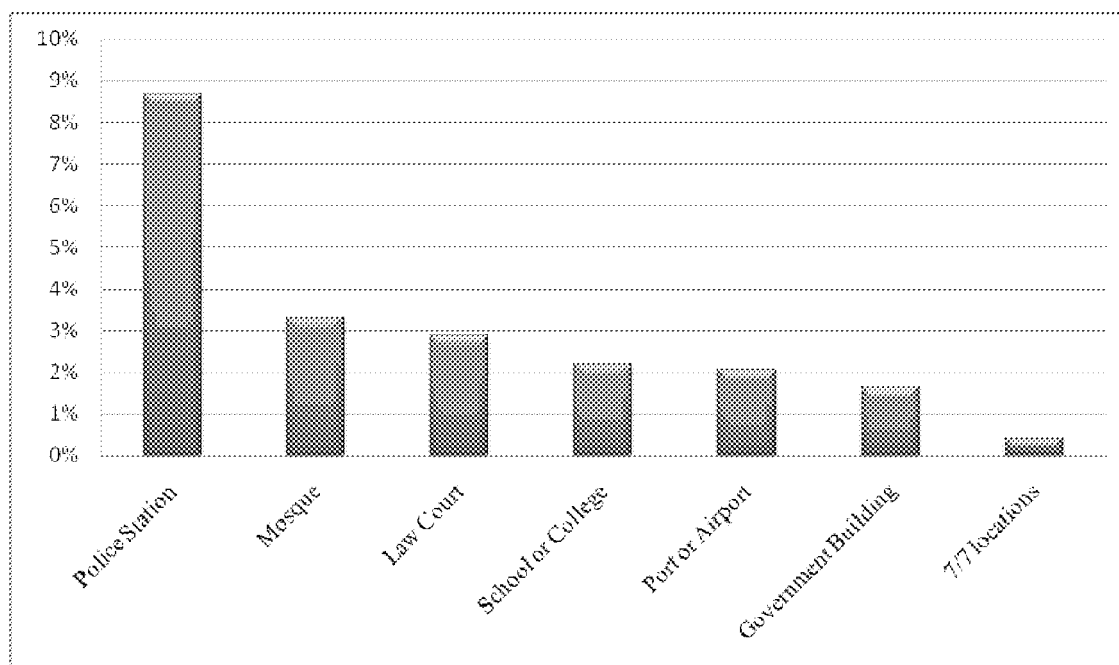
This, once again, confirms the link between terrorism and Muslims (these stories were nearly always about terrorism related stories rather than more conventional crime reports).

2.2.3 What Muslims are seen doing

While many images – police mugshots or close ups, for example - do not show people actively doing something, we also looked at those that did in order to get a sense of what we were most likely to see British Muslims – and non-Muslims - pictured doing in newspaper images. Figure 2.5 shows that the largest category involved people at work in some way (e.g. in a classroom, making a speech etc.). What is striking, however, is the high proportion of images of people protesting or demonstrating. Other studies suggest that protests are the *least* common form of citizen representation in news: Lewis, Wahl-Jorgensen and Inthorn (2005) found that of all the ways in which citizens were represented or invoked in the British media, on only 1.5% of occasions where they shown protesting or demonstrating. Our analysis confirms that the image of a group of Muslims in protest has become a familiar archetype.

If we break this down to compare images of Muslims with non-Muslims, a number of points emerge (Figure 2.6 – this breaks down each category, excluding mixed group images, so that, for example over 90% of those seen preaching are Muslims).

- Although our content analysis found that Christian religious figures were used more than Muslim religious figures, Muslims are more likely to be seen in prayer and much more likely (by a factor of more than ten to one) to be seen preaching.

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Figure 2.5 What people in photographs are seen doing
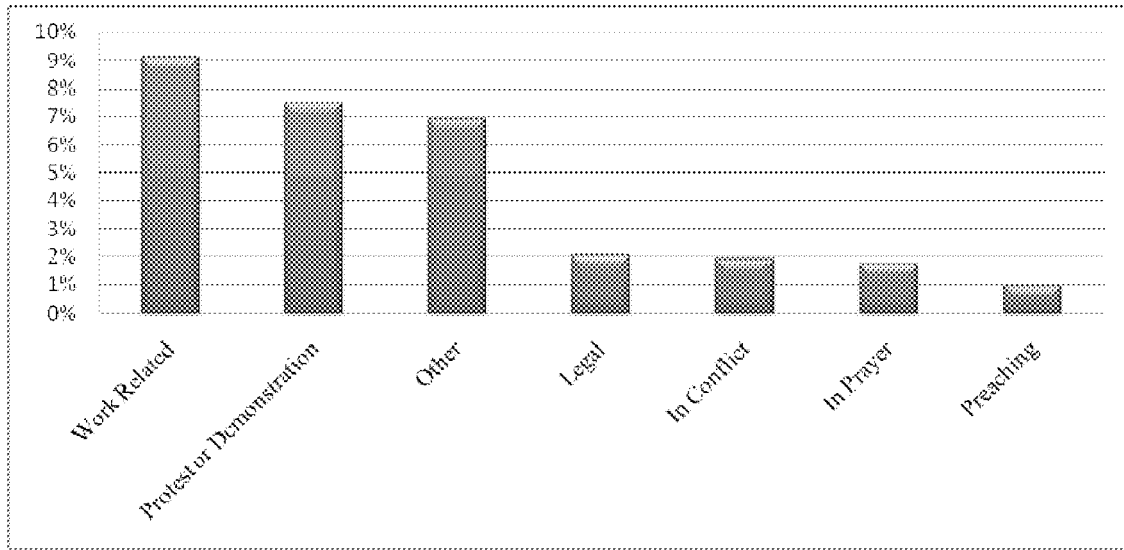
- By contrast, non-Muslims are much more likely to be seen in work related roles (e.g. government minister, police chief).

- Although we see Muslims protesting slightly more than non-Muslims, the number of non-Muslim protest shots is also fairly high

Figure 2.6 What people in photographs are seen doing: Muslims vs non-Muslims
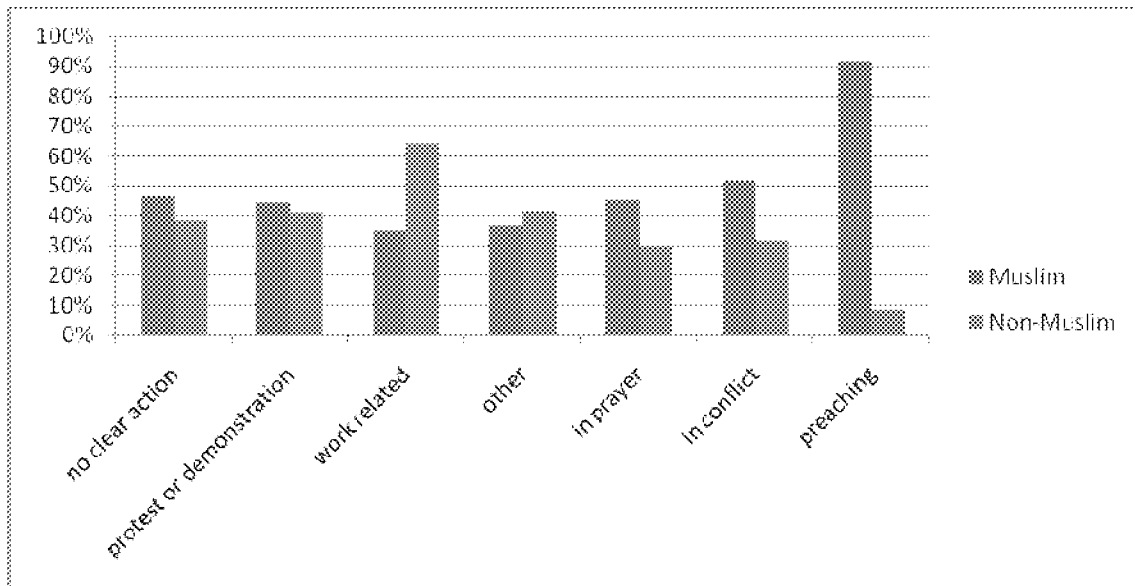
2.2.4 Conclusions

The findings of our image analysis are rather less clear than our content analysis. This is, in large part, because of the ambiguity of images, as well as the widespread use of conventional images of individuals. While we did find some evidence of stereotypical images – such as groups of Muslim male protesters, the quantitative nature of the analysis does not pick up many of the nuances of these images. So, for example, it is difficult to code for the pantomime quality of some of the pictures of Abu Hamza (which often go to great efforts to include his hooked hand in a head and shoulder shot), while a quantitative analysis tells us little about the more egregious use of stereotypes – such as mocked up the picture of Britney Spears in a burka, following a story that her boyfriend came from a Muslim background.

Nonetheless, we do see a number of indications that the visual representation of Muslims reflects the portrayals described in the content analysis. The widespread use of mugshots and images of Muslims outside police stations and law courts is very much in keeping with the high proportion of terrorism related stories about British Muslims. Similarly, we see some indications of the focus on cultural/religious differences, with Muslims seen engaged in religious practice in a way non-Muslims rarely are, and Muslim men far more visible than Muslim women.

There are also suggestions in these data that Muslims are identified simply *as* Muslims rather than as individuals or particular groups with distinct identities. So, for example, Muslims are much less likely than non-Muslims to be identified in terms of their job or profession, while the greater use of unnamed or unidentified images of Muslims (especially in groups) suggests a degree of stereotyping in which images are deemed to speak for themselves.

3. Case studies

3.1 Methodology

The aim here is to add a qualitative dimension to the content analysis. We have focused on two kinds of stories:

- those that typify the quantitative findings, notably stories that foreground the 'war on terror', cultural/religious differences and Muslim extremism, as well as the use of certain discourses.

- those in which information has been exaggerated or distorted to create certain impressions, such as the Nazi UK or Mosques vs Churches stories.

As we shall see, these two criteria often overlap. In what follows, we sum up the nature of the story, and the way(s) in which the story was covered.

3.2 In-Bred Muslims

On 10th February 2008, Environmental Minister, Phil Woolas suggested to *The Sunday Times* that inter family marriage among rural Pakistani families were to blame for a dramatic rise in birth defects. He was quoted as saying that:

> "...levels of disability among the...Pakistani population are higher than the general population. And everybody knows it's caused by first cousin marriage. That's a cultural thing rather than a religious thing. It is not illegal in this country".

Despite referring to 'genetic defects' and 'genetic problems', *The Sunday Times* headline read MINISTER WARNS OF 'INBRED' MUSLIMS (10th February). Woolas never used this word, yet it appeared in half of the ten stories which reported his comments, as an indirect quote. These included 'INBRED' MUSLIM WARNINGS (*News of the World*, 10th February); OUTRAGE AT INBRED MUSLIMS WARNING; MORE DISABLED BABIES BORN (*The Sun*, 11th February) and DEFECTS 'DOWN TO MUSLIM IN-BREDS' (*Daily Star*, 11th February).

The key statistic on which many of these stories were based was that while British Pakistani's are responsible for 3% of all births, they account for 33% of British children born with genetic illnesses. No newspaper reported any medical evidence to support this claim but several referred to 'medical research'. We found no medical backing for this claim either. However, journalists appear to be relying on a report commissioned by MP Ann Cryer into the British Pakistani community in 2005, picked up by *Newsnight* on 16th November 2005 and reported in the *Daily Mail* and *Daily Telegraph* on that day.

We also noted that all newspapers engaged in generalising about 'Muslims' from Woolas's original comments about rural Pakistani families. *The Express* also linked the story to

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immigration reporting that 'Minister blamed in-breeding among some immigrants for a surge in birth defects' (11th February).

In its coverage, the *Daily Mail* noted that Woolas had been admonished by Downing Street for his comments and did include a quote from a genetics Professor suggesting it was not' by any means uniquely an Islamic issue'. However, the rest if the article rehearses the same arguments as other newspapers.

Most of these stories appeared in conjunction with the larger story about Archbishop Williams' speech about Sharia law, dealt with further in 3.3 below.

3.3 Nazi UK

On 10th November 2007, Dr Muhammad Abdul Bari, head of the Muslim Council of Britain, was interviewed by the *Daily Telegraph.* The paper carried a number of strongly expressed views, including this quote:

> "Every society has to be really careful so the situation doesn't lead us to a time when people's minds can be poisoned as they were in the 1930s. If your community is perceived in a very negative manner, and poll after poll says that we are alienated, then Muslims begin to feel very vulnerable".

In the week that followed, 21 articles and Letters to the Editor were printed by the UK press, basing their story on the *Telegraph* interview. Headlines included FURY AS MUSLIM BRANDS BRITAIN 'NAZI' (*Sunday Express*, 11th November); COMPARISONS TO NAZI GERMANY INACCURATELY REFLECT MUSLIM STATUS IN BRITAIN' (*Daily Telegraph*, 12th November) and 'MUSLIM IN FEAR OF A 'NAZI UK'' (*The People,* 11th November).

As in the inbred' Muslim story, the word 'Nazi' was never used by Dr Bari in his interview but still appeared in much of the coverage. Here, 'outrage', 'insult' and 'fury' were common adjectives used to describe Dr Bari's comments. We found the following themes prevalent in the reports:

3.3.1 Foregrounding of Terrorism and War

The original interview was printed in *The Telegraph* the day before Remembrance Sunday. This increased the magnitude of the backlash in leaders and Letters to the Editor. The theme of terrorism is drawn upon in the coverage, ignoring the broader arguments made by Dr Bari in his interview. Direct comparisons between Jews in Nazi Germany and Muslims in the UK are made in the reports, for example: 'It was British Muslims who committed mass murder on July 7, 2005. It is Muslim extremists whom MI5 is keeping under surveillance by the thousand because of the danger they pose to the rest of us' (*The Express*, 13th November 2007) and 'I don't recall Jews carrying out suicide bombings or calling for their own form of law in Germany' (*The Sun*, 13th November 2007). Insults and anger were widely expressed: "How dare the head of the Muslim Council compare Britain to Nazi Germany after 305,800 of our soldiers died fighting the Nazis." (*The Sun*, 15th November). Alison Pearson in the *Daily Mail* wrote 'In Nazi Germany, Dr Bari may recall, it was Jewish children who were

rounded up to be killed. Not the Jewish children who were trained to do the killing' (*Daily Mail*, 14th November).

3.3.2 Attacks on/delegitimation of the Muslim Council of Britain and Bari

The language used to refer to the Muslim Council of Britain served to delegitimise the organisation, presenting it as out of touch with 'moderate' opinion. The Council was described as 'the unelected so-called Muslim Council of Britain' (*Sunday Express*, 18th November) and 'has long been a source of controversy' (*Sunday Express*, 11th November). Dr Bari himself was described as 'an idiot' (*The Sun*, 13th November) and sarcastically in *The Express* as 'the esteemed head' (15th November).

3.3.3 Mockery

A number of the stories, especially those *The Express* and *The Sun* used mockery and incendiary language:

> 'The loudmouth leaders of British Islam are the equivalent of the self-centered stiletto wearers who have damaged St Paul's. They are abrasive rather than soothing presences, leaving dents and craters in our civilization' (*The Express*, 13th November).

and

> "Come to think of it, I don't think there were stupid Jewish girls using public money to bring court cases about their rights to dress like Daleks in the classroom, or not show their hair if they wanted to be hairdressers." (*The Sun*, 13th November)

Dr Bari's original comments are consistently printed out of their original context and responses to them consequently hyperbolic - "SURELY the comments made by Dr Bari, the head of the Muslim Council of Britain, must constitute some sort of offence for which he could be arrested?" (*Sunday Express*, 18th November).

3.3.4 Claims of Islamophobia Dismissed and Ridiculed

Dr Bari's comments about Islamophobia were largely dismissed by the print media, and belittled in comparison to perceived Muslim 'extremism'. *The Express* leader suggested that 'Instead of facing up to the problem of extremism in their own ranks they are being encouraged to wallow in an imagined sense of victimhood' (*The Express*, 13th November), while *The Sun* ran the headline ONLY PEOPLE STOKING ANTI-MUSLIM FEELING ARE IDIOTS LIKE BARI (*The Sun*, 13th November). A letter to the Editor in *The Telegraph* suggested that Dr Bari's was wrong to 'promote a medieval ghetto mentality'.

3.4 Sharia Law in Britain

On 7th February 2008, Dr Rowan William, the Archbishop of Canterbury delivered a lecture at the Royal Courts of Justice, London. The lecture was primarily, but not solely, concerning Islam and Sharia law. In the speech, Williams argued for the current English legal system to acknowledge religion and to avoid "ghettoising and effectively disenfranchising a minority". He further suggested that aspects of Sharia law could be adopted in the UK, but acknowledged some features, including violence, as "wholly unacceptable".

Between 7th February and 14th February, the speech generated over 250 articles in the UK press. Much of the coverage was inaccurate and sensational. Headlines such as ARCHBISHOP SAYS UK MUST ACCEPT ISLAMIC SHARIA LAW (*The Sun*, 8th February) and ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY WARNS SHARIA LAW IS INEVITABLE (*The Independent*, 8th February) were commonplace. The key themes in these reports were as follows:

3.4.1 Decontextualisation, Exaggeration and Misinformation

In comparison to the transcript of the Archbishop's lecture, much of the coverage we found to be inaccurate. The vast majority of Williams' speech was omitted from news reports, including his acknowledgement of the existing "dangers" of Sharia law.
The word "unavoidable", used once in the speech itself,

> "If what we want socially is a pattern of relations in which a plurality of diverse and overlapping affiliations work for a common good, and in which groups of serious and profound conviction are not systematically faced with the stark alternatives of cultural loyalty or state loyalty, it seems unavoidable"

However, it is employed throughout the press coverage, and leads to a shift in context of the speech. The press tended to make an inferential jump from the quote above, to statements about both the imposition of Sharia law in Britain, and its inevitability. *The* Express for example uses speech marks (inaccurately) to suggest 'MUSLIM LAWS MUST COME TO BRITAIN' (*The Express*, 8th February). The *Daily Mail* noted that the speech 'raised the prospect of Islamic courts with full legal power' (*Daily Mail*, 8th February).

3.4.2 Sharia Law, Islam and Muslims as Barbaric and Dangerous Threat

We found journalists' discussion of Sharia law in Britain regularly and consistently focused upon violence, barbarism and irrationality. In 52% of stories, we found the dominant frame to be either concerned with Islamic threat to British culture, the delegitimation of Williams, or the construction of Islam as violent. In contrast, only 6% of reports expressed support for Williams, and only 5% discussed the complexities and nuances of Sharia Law at all.

In our analysis of the acts that newspapers associated with Sharia Law, we found that the three most frequent were stoning (26%), limbs/limb removal (16%) and beheading/execution (11%). In contrast, there were only 4% of adjectives which did not carry negative connotations. *The Express*, *The Daily Star* and *The Mirror* associated Sharia Law with these three acts more than other papers. Indeed, these acts contributed 64% of all descriptions of Sharia Law in *The Express*.

This emphasis on brutality was underpinned visually in news reports, which depicted stoning, flogging and beheading in Iran and Afghanistan. This was in contradiction to the very clear comments by the Archbishop in his speech:

> "Nobody I his right mind…would want to see in this country a kind of inhumanity that sometimes appears to be associated with the practice of the law in some Islamic states, the extreme punishments, the attitudes to women as well."

Islam more widely was juxtaposed to democratic Western society, which is presented as embodying freedom, equality and fair practice. *The Express* calls the Archbishop's speech, 'a dangerous moment in our national story' (*The Express,* 8th February).

We found press reaction to the threat to be defensive, overtly advocating a British way of life and British values. Historic British achievements were drawn upon - the Magna Carta, the Suffragettes and so on. The perceived threat of Islam to these values was blamed in several papers on the failure of multiculturalism. Both *The Sun* and *The Express* began phone-ins and 'Should the Archbishop be sacked for his comments on Sharia law?' asked *The Sun*, while *The Express* noted that 'Thousands of Daily Express readers posted comments on our website www.express.co.uk and 95 per cent of callers to our phone vote line said Sharia law should be banned'.

3.4.3 Links to Terrorism / Muslim extremism

Many of the articles, especially the tabloid press, presented the prospect of Sharia law as a 'victory for terrorists'. Links were made between Sharia law, past terrorist activities, the Taliban and al-Queda. *The Sun* suggested that Williams, 'handed al-Qaeda a victory last night' in his speech (*The Sun*, 8th February).

3.4.4 Delegitimation of Williams

Like Dr Bari, Williams was delegitimized for his speech throughout the press. This was achieved often through humour, graphics and cartoons. Much of the focus in the tabloid press was on his 'leftist' views and references to his past arrest in 1985 at a Nuclear disarmament protest in Suffolk. The *Daily Mail* described Williams as A BATTY OLD BOOBY, BUT DANGEROUS WITH IT (*Daily Mail*, 8th February), *The Star* called him 'a prize chump' (*The Star*, 8th February) and *The Sun* summed up the speech with the front page headline WHAT A BURKHA (*The Sun*, 8th February). In our analysis of adjectives used to describe Williams, he was referred to as 'liberal' as often as he was 'dangerous' (12%). He was also twice as likely to be described as 'bearded' (24%). In only 6% of all the adjectives used, was Williams discussed as 'moderate'.

Not all coverage of the Archbishop's speech was negative or hyperbolic however. He was more likely to be depicted as 'intelligent' than any other adjective used (47%), although we found this was often used in conjunction with less favourable representations, such as 'lefty' or 'dangerous'. Some broadsheet newspapers presented a more balanced view. The *Daily Telegraph* suggested Williams views were ' not that outlandish' (*Daily Telegraph*, 8th February) and *The Guardian* (8th February) noted that the Archbishop was attempting to

encourage social cohesion in Britain. It also points readers to the full text of the speech on its website.

3.5 'Mosques Beat Churches'

The 'mosques beat churches' story featured in 16 articles between 25th March and May 26th 2008. Its main point was to assert that due to an increasing number of practising Muslims, the number of mosques was on course to outnumber the number of churches in the UK. With falling church congregations and increasing numbers of active Muslim worshippers, the story suggested, Islam would supersede Christianity as Britain's majority religion.
Tabloid headlines in March to this effect included: ISLAM SET TO BE TOP UK RELIGION; MOSQUES TO BEAT CHURCHES" (*Daily Star*, 26th March); MORE ATTENDING MOSQUES THAN MASS BY 2020 (*Daily Express*, 26th March). The story was also carried in the broadsheet press: MUSLIMS 'WILL SOON OUTNUMBER TRADITIONAL CHURCHGOERS' (*Daily Telegraph*, 25th March).

3.5.1 Fear of (a future) Islamic Britain

The 'mosques beat churches' stories shared narrative themes which, to varying extents, framed the prospect of greater numbers of practising Muslims in Britain as a problem or legitimate concern. They generally represented Islam as in competition with Christianity; potentially challenging the latter's status as the national religion of the UK. Articles in both tabloids and broadsheets carried the implication that Britain might be losing its Christian identity – a shift towards Islam being a likely outcome of current trends. Articles included for example, 'UK MUSLIMS "TO OUTNUMBER CHRISTIANS" (*The Express*, 8th May), which opened with the phrase, 'Britain's practising Muslims will overtake churchgoing Christians within 30 years'; and, CHRISTIANS LACK THE SELF CONFIDENCE OF MUSLIMS IN SHAPING THE FUTURE OF BRITAIN *(The Daily Telegraph*, 9th May).

Such stories were framed in ways which often presupposed the exclusion of Muslims from 'common sense' ideas about Britishness. They often invoked issues which represented the practice of Islam in Britain as a threat, not just to the pre-eminence of Christianity, but also as to 'taken for granted' ideas about national culture and identity. This was perhaps most strongly articulated in the widely reported comments of General Synod member, Alison Ruoff, in a *Christian Premier Radio* interview at the beginning of April. Ruoff is reported to have advocated a halt on the building of mosques in Britain, warning that Britain risked becoming an Islamic state if current trends were allowed to continue, as these headlines indicate: 'NO MORE MOSQUES, SAYS SYNOD MEMBER' (*The Daily Telegraph*, 2nd April); 'SYNOD MEMBER'S CALL TO BAN THE BUILDING OF ANY NEW MOSQUES (*The Times*, 2nd April); 'WE MUST STOP BUILDING MOSQUES NOW' (*Daily Star*, 2nd April); 'STOP BUILDING MOSQUES IN UK' (*Daily Express*, 2nd April)

The focus on Mosques brings a powerful material as well as symbolic dimension to the story that Britain is becoming 'more Islamic' as an unwelcome change to 'our' identity. This anxiety ridden narrative presumes that the national 'we' does not include Muslims, for example: 'WE'VE LOST OUR FAITH' (*Daily Star*, 9th May); and that in future Islam is likely to threaten or supplant the existing cultural identity of Britain: 'BRITAIN TO TURN

ISLAMIC BY 2035' (*Daily Star*, 9th May); 'All that Britain stands for is up for grabs' (*Daily Mail*, 25th May)

These fears were further articulated through the connections drawn with two other stories: the row about the Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams' comments in February 2008 about Sharia law in Britain (explored in section 3.3 above), and that surrounding the Bishop of Rochester, Dr Nazir Ali's comments about 'No go areas in Britain' (explored in 3.6 below). For example, in 'ISLAM SET TO BE TOP UK RELIGION: MOSQUES TO BEAT CHURCHES, it is noted that 'The new findings follow fierce rows over the extent to which Islamic law should be recognised and over claims that "no-go" areas for non Muslims are emerging in parts of the country'. (*Daily Star*, 26th March)

These interwoven narratives seemed to mutually reinforce one another, and to substantiate the 'threatening Islamification of Britain' discourse. Whilst the 'no go areas' story hinted at a kind of 'colonisation from within' by Muslims (3.6 below), the idea that British values, laws and norms might be compromised by the Islamic presence in Britain was powerfully underlined by the 'prospect' of needing to accommodate Sharia law. The discourse of fear surrounding the latter was seemingly 'corroborated' by the representation of the 'mosques beat churches' research.

3.5.2 Dubious Research, Spurious Statistics, False Analysis

The evidence used to back up these claims was largely sourced from a book published in February 2008 by a think tank/lobby group called *Christian Research: UK Christian Handbook Religious Trends No.7 – 2007-8*, edited by Peter Brierley. Its survey research was described in the *Daily Mail* (26th May) to be 'recognised as the most authoritative snapshot of religious observance in the country'. In fact, *Religious Trends* presents demographic and attitudinal data which is overwhelmingly concerned with Christian populations in the UK and worldwide, with only minimal information provided about Muslims and observers of other faiths.

There are two serious problems with the way in which *Christian Research*'s statistics are used in the 'mosques beat churches' story: the non-comparability of the data cited and a lack of empirical research to substantiate that data. Firstly, nowhere in the original report are data about Muslims directly compared to data about Christianity. Indeed, the method of calculating the statistics on, for example, 'active members' of Islam and 'registered Mosques' in the UK (Brierley, 2008:10.9) are entirely different to the method used to calculate the numbers of Christian worshippers and the number of Churches in the UK (Brierley, 2008: 12.2-3). Whilst the 'Active Christians' are indeed derived from survey research, by contrast it is simply presumed that 'half the community figure of 1,591,126 in the UK as given by the 2001 Population Census' (Brierley, 2008:10.9) will be 'Active Muslims'. Not only are the figures non-comparable, they are also speculative, including projections to 2010, and to 2050 on the basis of those very different past trends of data on Christians/Churches and Muslims/Mosques.

Contrary to the impression given in most articles, the statistics presented for the projected number of mosques in Britain by 2050 (so central to the rationale for the story's appearance *as* news) are not based upon research actually conducted by *Christian Research*. A closer look at *Religious Trends* reveals that the 2006 figure for Mosques are derived from a database of mosques from the website www.salaam.co.uk accessed in 2006. However, the

report cites this figure from a secondary source, Colin Dye's 2007 book *The Islamisation of Britain: And What Can Be Done To Prevent It* (Dye, 2007). A less than objectively entitled publication perhaps, it is this work, rather than that of *Christian Research* which is the source for the 'number of mosques' cited in the national press. For the record, the highest number of Mosques indicated in the UK that we could find was from the Muslim Council of Britain's website, listed as "over 900". By contrast, 42,299 Christian Churches can be found in the *UK Church Directory* 1998-2008[11].

The headlines and narrative themes explored above are therefore premised on an incorrect analysis of rather dubious statistics. A couple of articles did include objections from Church spokesmen which highlighted potential problems, for example: 'These sorts of statistics, based on dubious presumptions, do no one of any faith any favours. Faith communities are not in competition and simplistic research like this is misleading and unhelpful' (*Daily Express*, 8th May)

However, further articles in May continued to promote the idea that the *Religious Trends* research had shown a striking increase in 'active Muslims' by comparison with Christians, with headlines including: 'MORE PRACTISING MUSLIMS THAN CHRISTIANS BY 2035'(*Daily Mail*, 8th May) and, PRACTISING MUSLIMS 'WILL OUTNUMBER CHRISTIANS BY 2035' (*Daily Telegraph*, 8th May) Indeed, the broadsheet press were not excluded from this uncritical or incorrect use of unreliable/misleading statistics, as the following quote demonstrates: 'The report makes it clear that Christianity is becoming a minority religion' (*The Times*, 8th May).

3.6 'No-Go' Areas

3.6.1 Self Segregation and Colonisation from Within

On January 6th 2008, the *Sunday Telegraph* carried a comment piece written by the Bishop of Rochester, Dr Nazir Ali entitled, 'EXTREMISM HAS FLOURISHED AS BRITAIN LOST ITS FAITH IN A CHRISTIAN VISION'. In it, Nazir Ali criticises the 'novel philosophy of "multiculturalism"' and the supposed emergence of what he asserts are 'no-go' areas for non-Muslims in certain areas of the UK. In declaring that 'worldwide resurgence of the ideology of Islamic extremism' has contributed to the segregation of communities in the UK, and to the alienation of young Muslims from wider British society, the article suggests that an alarming global trend stands a realistic prospect of achieving its local conditions of existence in Britain. As if to further support of this fear-provoking vision, the Bishop laments the decline in Christian congregations. As with the 'mosques beat churches' story presented in 3.5 above, concurrently, Nazir Ali maintains, a 'corresponding' rise in the strength of Islam threatens to transform the character of the UK. Warning of an 'attempt to impose an "Islamic" character on certain areas' symbolised by the introduction of the Adhan (Muslim call to prayer), the Bishop also contends that there is 'pressure already to relate aspects of the sharia to civil law in Britain'.

This story, therefore cuts discursively across several of our case study narratives: It suggests that Islam is qualitatively 'other' from British culture and positions Muslim Islam as if it

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[11] <http://www.findachurch.co.uk/home/home.php>.

were a rival to Christianity in a struggle to determine the cultural identity of the nation. But it also presents this relation between Muslim and non-Muslim British society in far more antagonistic terms than the more figurative, 'more mosques than churches' story. The '"No-go" areas' story also invokes a proactively 'self-segregating' Muslim community within Britain: an alien culture colonising Britain from within and dismissive of extant British norms and practices.

Between 7th and 13th January, 40 articles appeared across the broadsheet and tabloid press, discussing both the acuity and wisdom of the Bishop's intervention, as national politicians, Muslim spokespeople and various clergy responded to his article. In particular, reports highlighted his claims that 'no-go' areas for non-Muslims in Britain have developed. Headlines included: 'WE MUST LISTEN TO THE BISHOP'S WARNINGS OF THE DANGERS OF ISLAM (*The Express*, 7th January); 'HE'S RIGHT, AND WE MUSLIMS MUST TAKE HEED' (*Daily Mail*, 7th January); 'CHURCH LEADERS SUPPORT BISHOP OVER COMMENTS ON 'NO-GO' AREAS' (*The Telegraph*, 7th January); 'MAKE IT A NO-GO ZONE FOR MUSLIM FANATICS' (*The Sun*, 8th January); 'BISHOP LEADS THE WAY' (*Daily Telegraph*, 8th January); 'BISHOP DARES TO ENTER A NO GO AREA' (*Sunday Express*, 13th January); 'MUSLIM BRITAIN IS BECOMING ONE BIG NO-GO AREA' (*Sunday Times*, 13th January).

Interestingly, unlike the furore surrounding Dr Muhammad Abdul Bari of the Muslim Council of Britain's comments in the 'Nazi UK' story presented in chapter 3.3 above, the Bishop of Rochester's likening of the experiences of non-Muslims in so called 'no-go areas' to 'far right intimidation' in his 7th January article tended not to be mentioned in the coverage that followed.

Some articles did directly criticise Bishop Nazir Ali's article as inflammatory or potentially damaging to community relations, for example, Yasemin Alibhai-Brown's: 'NO-GO AREAS THAT ARE ALL IN THE BISHOP'S MIND' (*The Independent*, 7th January); Similarly, other articles focused upon the critical and disapproving responses of politicians, Muslims and church colleagues, for example: 'BISHOP OF ROCHESTER CRITICISED' (*The Times*, 7th January); 'MUSLIMS CALL FOR 'NO-GO' BISHOP TO RESIGN' (*Daily Telegraph*, 7th January). However, the volume of such coverage was largely confined to the letters pages and was far slimmer than that which supported the Bishop's comments.

3.6.2 'Irresponsible elites' and 'deluded critics'

Indeed, the coverage in support of Bishop Nazir Ali's 'no-go' areas article included some vociferous support for the prescience of his argument and backing of his position. By contrast, the Bishop of Rochester's critics were roundly condemned and dismissed as 'deluded' or 'irresponsible' in their failure to appreciate the perceptiveness of his message. Whereas in February, the Archbishop of Canterbury is articulated as a 'villain' failing in his presupposed role to protect Christian Britain from the penetration of a dangerous Islamic culture, Bishop Nazir Ali by contrast is positioned as a hero of British culture, rationally leading a counter-struggle to defend the nation's heritage:

> 'At last a trumpet blast has been sounded against the creeping Islamification of
> Britain. For too long our ruling elite has been in denial about the consequences

of this insidious process this insidious process, pretending the assertiveness of Muslim culture is just another element in the rich diversity of British society.' (*The Express*, 7th January).

Stories often highlighted the Bishop of Rochester's identity as a British Asian with a Muslim heritage in order to emphasise the privilege of his insight: 'Perhaps it had to be someone like Michael Nazir-Ali, the first Asian bishop in the Church of England, who would break with convention and finally point out the elephant in the room' (*The Sunday Times*, 13th January). As such the Bishop's role provided a striking counterpoint to that of the supposedly 'self-loathing liberal left, whose members are ashamed of their own culture and heritage' (*The Express*, 8th January).

3.6.3 Ambiguously threatening images

The censure of those who questioned the wisdom or disagreed with Nazir Ali's comments often obscured the fact that critics heralded from across the political spectrum (William Hague, Nick Clegg, and Gordon Brown). When the Prime Minister's responses were reported, it was often with the presupposition that Bishop of Rochester was right and that Brown was not standing strongly enough on these issues. Brown's rather equivocal comments '"I know that there are pressures in many areas of the country but I don't accept that there are, or should be, no-go areas in any part of the country"' were juxtaposed in one article with a photograph which seemed to powerfully deny their prudence. Above the headline: 'SO YOU THINK THE NO-GO AREAS DON'T EXIST MR BROWN? (*The Express*, 12th January) was positioned a large photograph depicting three veiled women looking defiantly into the camera lens. The figure on the right, hand to head obscures her eyes from the gaze of the audience; the figure in the centre, pushing a pram stares straight ahead; and the figure on the left is pictured with her hand raised in an insulting two fingered gesture. The overall image presents an image of Muslim defiance, reinforcing the idea that Muslims' rejection of mainstream culture may well have created places in Britain where non-Muslims would feel unwelcome.

This image, used in several newspapers to illustrate the 'no-go areas' story, allowed for an important slippage of meaning: the overriding message was one of a frightening hostility from Muslims towards non-Muslims, but what was intimated to be informing that position of hostility and feeling of fear was more ambiguous. Such 'no-go' areas could be frightening just because of their religious and cultural 'otherness', but, by the gestures and looks of the traditionally dressed women, the picture seemed to suggest, perhaps they harbour a more aggressive, and perhaps 'extreme' or radical element. This ambiguity and uncertainty allows for a greater legitimacy to be attached the call for intervention. The message is one of injustice at 'their' exclusion of 'us' and supposed will to curtail 'our freedom of movement': 'the prime minister might deny it but as the cases we highlight here prove, the claim by a leading bishop that people are scared to enter immigrant-dominated areas in some towns and cities is frighteningly true' (*The Express*, 12th January).

However, not only is 'our' freedom restricted by those whose status of belonging might be questioned (note the substitution of 'immigrant-dominated' for 'Muslim'), but that restriction in turn perhaps ought to be recognised as signifying a further threat: 'BISHOP'S "NO GO" WARNING: PARTS OF OUR COUNTRY "ARE BARRED TO NON-MUSLIMS' (*The Mail*, 7th January). This potential threat is arguably further emphasised by the use of 'former

extremists' as journalists and sources providing their 'insider' perspectives on this issue (for example, Ed Hussein in the *Sunday Telegraph,* 13th January and Shiraz Meher in the *Sunday Times*, 13th January).

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