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‘Suspect Communities’? Counter-terrorism policy, the press, and the impact on Irish and Muslim communities in Britain

July 2011

A Report for Policy Makers and the General Public – July 2011

Report of a research project: A comparative study of the representations of 'suspect' communities in multi-ethnic Britain and of their impact on Muslim and Irish communities 1974-2007

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Executive Summary

1. Introduction

This comparative and historical project, covering the period 1974-2007, is focused on two eras of political violence in Britain, the first coinciding with the Irish 'Troubles' and the second since 2001.

The research examined to what extent and in what ways Irish communities and Muslim communities were represented as 'suspect' in public discourse in these two eras; it examined the similarities and differences in the impact of these representations and counter-terrorism measures on Muslim communities and Irish communities in Britain.

Our aim was to explore the implications for social cohesion of representing some groups as 'suspect' and what lessons can be learnt from evolving understandings of and responses to national security threats. The research provides a new analysis of Irish experiences and compares this with current Muslim experiences. Our critical assessment of British counter-terrorism policies over four decades offers useful insights to policy-makers who seek ways to implement counter-terrorism policies without alienating communities.

This report highlights the main findings of our research in relation to four questions:

- How is a community constructed as 'suspect' in public discourse (government and media) and through the implementation of counter-terrorism measures?
- What differences and similarities are there in the construction and representation of Irish and Muslims as 'suspect' communities?
- What impacts do representations of being 'suspect' and counter-terrorism measures have for the everyday experiences and sense of belonging of members of these communities?
- How do these constructions and representations of 'suspect' communities inform reconfigurations and representations of Britishness?

2 Methods

We adopted a multi-level method of research. This involved the analysis of a) public discourses in policy documents and the media, and of b) experiences and memories of ordinary invididuals belonging to the two sets of communities, and of privileged witnesses of the period under investigation. 19 'key events' between 1974 and 2007 constituted the basis of the comparison.

The key events

Irish-related events

21 November 1974: Birmingham pub bombings

29 November 1974: adoption of the PTA

3 December 1974: arrest of the Maguire Seven9

17 December 1983: Harrods Bombing

19 October 1989: release of the Guildford Four

14 March 1991: release of the Birmingham Six

26 June 1991: release of the Maguire Seven

23 September 1996: shooting of Diarmuid O'Neill

10 April 1998: Good Friday Agreement

20 July 2000: adoption of Terrorism Act 2000

Muslim-related events

14 February 1989: fatwa on Salman Rushdie

Spring/Summer 2001: race riots

March 2004: release of the Tipton Three

July 2005: London bombings

22 July 2005: shooting of Jean-Charles De Menezes

30 March 2006: adoption of 2006 Terrorism Act

2 June 2006: Forest Gate anti-terrorist Raid

5 October 2006: Jack Straw veil controversy

31 January 2007: Birmingham anti-terrorism raid

2.1 The study of public discourses involved:

- Over **800 policy documents,** including government statements, strategic papers and political speeches as well as parliamentary debates, and reports by select committees and public agencies, at key moments between 1974 and 2011.
- **2798 news items** We evaluated representations of Irish communities and Muslim communities 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)

2.2. Investigation of the experiences of Irish and Muslim communities through:

- **42 key informant interviews** with community and religious leaders; human rights activists; journalists, politicians and lawyers and others who had some involvement with the communities or community members during the period under study.
- **Seven mixed Irish and Muslim discussion groups** (three in Birmingham, four in London): a total of 38 people - 19 identifying as Irish, 19 as Muslim, 19 men and 19 women, and of different ages - participated in these events.

3 Findings

3.1. Public Discourses

Similarities and Differences between the two eras

The two eras of political violence are frequently described as very different. Public perceptions of 'Muslim terrorists' are different in that they are seen as a global ideologically-motivated threat in a way that the IRA and Republicanism were not. Yet, our research shows that both counter-terrorism policies and the process of representing both sets of communities, in the press and political debate, are remarkably similar. This has produced negative effects across four decades for Irish communities and Muslim communities.

- **Terrorism** remains a central security concern for the state and its response continues to be couched within the notion of 'emergency' and 'exceptionalism', despite the apparent normalisation of terrorism with the Terrorism Act 2000, through which counter- terrorism laws were made permanent, and despite pressures for the respect of Human Rights.
- In both eras political figures and journalists of all political orientations are at pains to distance themselves and the institutions they belong to from such violence. This results in **the deployment of strong language,** in the press and in political debate, with the perpetrators of violence described as 'evil', 'fanatics' and 'barbaric', and many variations on these terms.
- The **society 'under attack'** is represented as consisting of decent, civilised, law-abiding, moderate and secular citizens and values.
- In both eras, the press and policy study identified a prevalent discourse of **Britishness** and of a unified nation in the face of the threat, with 'us' and 'our' people and values diametrically opposed to Irish and Muslim 'extremists'; Britishness is seen both as resilient, for instance through a vocabulary of war and victory, and vulnerable to attack by 'the enemy within'.
- There is frequent juxtaposition in the press, in political debate and in policy documents of 'the innocent Irish' and 'moderate Muslims' with 'Irish terrorists' and 'Muslim extremists'. This leads to the 'law-abiding' always being defined in relation to 'extremists' and the **blurring of boundaries** between them and the perpetrators of violence.
- One of the **areas of strongest similarity** in the public discourses in both eras is the ambiguous representation of the communities, who are seen simultaneously as:
    - allies in the struggle against 'extremists'
    - victims or potential victims of the terrorists' violence and of potential backlash
    - under suspicion as they may be harbouring or supporting 'extremists'
- It is in these ambiguous representations of Irish and Muslim communities, and in their construction as separate, bounded communities (with varying degrees of 'integration into British society'), that public discourse has most impact on the lives of people identifying as Muslim and Irish and living in multi-ethnic Britain.
- **Press coverage is not homogeneous** in either era; there are variations which result from the political orientation of the newspaper and its readership. Unsurprisingly there are differences between the diaspora press and the national press, with the former more concerned with impacts on the communities it addresses.

We identified significant **differences** between the two eras resulting from different historical contexts:

- The press study found **20% less coverage of Irish-related** events, despite the far greater incidence of actual physical violence perpetrated by the IRA (approximately 500 attacks in Britain over the years).
- Even taking the increase in newspaper size in the period into account, this is a significant finding, which suggests there was an effort to delegitimise threats to the integrity of the United Kingdom in that period, and, in Margaret Thatcher's words, to deprive 'terrorists' of the **'oxygen of publicity'.**
- Irish individuals and groups are represented as both a **threat to security and to British values and society,** but the representation of a perceived threat to British values and, in particular, to British culture is intensified in relation to Muslims

- Strikingly, with the notable exception of the 2005 London bombings, **politically and culturally significant events** (i.e. the fatwa 1989, the so-called 'veil controversy' 2006, the Good Friday Agreement 1998) tend to attract more media coverage than enacted violence. The extent of coverage of the fatwa and the 'veil controversy' are indicators of the representation of Islam as a threat to British (and Western) values and culture.

- **Muslim women**, as is particularly apparent from the 'veil controversy', are simultaneously perceived as victims and as symbols of Muslim cultural difference.

- Political violence in both eras is associated with **fanaticism and extremism**. However, the policy study found that allegedly Islamic political violence was associated with a coldly rational, and incomprehensible ideology, whilst that of the IRA was portrayed more in terms of madness and irrationality.

- **Religion** is an important feature of identifications and of tensions within both Irish communities and Muslim communities. Nevertheless, faith traditions are not equally articulated in public discourse and addressed in public policies: only in the case of Islam is religion identified as the source of a potential **ideological threat.**

- Only in the current era of political violence have government responses incorporated religion as an **instrument in the fight against terrorism.** This results in religious terms such as Islam and Muslim being associated with terrorism in public discourse.

3.2 Experiences, Interpretations and Impacts

Numerous similarities can be found in the experiences of those affected by the discourses and policies we have analysed:

- Both Irish and Muslim participants suffered verbal and physical **abuse in everyday encounters**. The similarities in the type of abuse experienced, included jokes about terrorism, being asked to speak for Islam or Ireland, being called names in the street or even being directly accused of terrorism. Irish people (identified as Irish by their accent) were ignored or shunned at work or in shops or banks, while Muslims recounted being stared at and shunned in the street or on public transport.

- Many participants in the discussion groups felt that the **media** were in some way responsible for this kind of response; they were particularly critical of the headlines of the tabloid press.

- The experience of **discrimination** while travelling internationally is common to both Irish and Muslim respondents, who recounted incidents where they were subjected to extra or intrusive checks, particularly at ports and airports.

- There were some positive comments on the **role of the police,** but negative accounts were more numerous. A third of the incidents recounted involved policing. Irish or Muslim spaces (mosques, Catholic churches, Irish pubs) were felt to be under surveillance. Irish respondents recounted the arrests of friends and family, while Muslim respondents recounted several instances of 'stop and search' including onecase involving young children.

- The dominant response to this treatment was **a state of fearfulness,** which in turn resulted in behaviour such as lying low, keeping quiet, and avoiding certain places or areas of the city. This provoked diverging reactions ranging from feelings of alienation, with implications for sense of belonging and trust in institutions. to various forms of politicisation.

- **Resilience and resistance** were also central features of these accounts. Some interviewees commented that Muslims were more assertive than Irish people had been in response to being treated as suspect Their more confident public response can partly be attributed to the second generation Muslims being oldernow than the equivalent Irish second generation were in the 1970s.

- **Structural transformations** in policy-making processes together with the long-term effects ofanti discrimination policies have also enabled minority (especially Muslim) communities to assert their voice within mainstream democratic processes to a degree that was not available to Irish communities.

- Some Muslim participants asserted their **Britishness** when faced with people treating them like foreigners or outsiders; for many Irish respondents, particularly those born in Britain, the issue was more how to be Irish in the face of both the stigmatisation of an identity tainted with 'suspectness' and the assumption that being white they must be English.

- Many Irish and Muslim respondents identified strongly with the culturally, religiously and ethnically **diverse cities** that they were living in. For many Muslim respondents the city represented a safer space compared to the rest of Britain, in a way it had not been for Irish participants.
- This pride in being part of these cities expressed itself in **practices of multiculturalism.** In the discussion groups attempts were made to understand the experience of others and to build bridges. The high level of trust established in some groups allowed people to recount quite disturbing experiences. There was a consensus in all the groups that the comparison had been useful and beneficial.
- Bringing Irish people together with Muslim people was also useful because the Irish participants spoke about (and in fact where the actual embodiment of) the possibility of coming out from the category of 'suspect', of becoming 'normal' again, of being **rehabilitated as good citizens.** This was an important sign of hope, a reassuring factor for many Muslim participants.

4 Conclusions

This is the first comparative and historical project engaging simultaneously with two large ethnic and religious minorities in Britain who have been at the centre of security policy concerns for several decades. Our multi-level, and multi-disciplinary, approach has enabled us to contribute to the understanding of interconnected issues that are high on the agenda of policy makers in a number of sectors.

We conclude that the representations and treatment of the Irish in the past have set a precedent for the treatment of Muslims in the current period. We have traced the way in which the reactions and responses to political violence in 1974 clearly had embedded within them the principles, and gave rise to, the prevention measures that have been practised on an even more systematic scale throughout the 2000s. Despite anti-discrimination legislation, Muslim communities today are subjected to a similar process of construction as 'suspect' as Irish communities in the previous era. Few lessons appear to have been learnt from the period of 'The Troubles', despite the fact that those who were previously vilified are now part of the government in Northern Ireland with electoral support.

The current government has stated that it seeks to separate the community cohesion agenda from the counter-terrorism agenda. This is useful but their location of the problem of political violence and the focus of counter-terrorism remains fixed on Muslim communities and a strategy of rooting out extreme ideas. This is a classic counter-insurgency strategy of the type that was unsuccessful in Northern Ireland. It is only likely to further reinforce the negative impacts on Muslims in Britain of counter-terrorism policies. It is also likely to further encourage the public at large, on this evidence, both to be more fearful (as it is rarely linked to any transparent assessment of risk) and therefore to treat Muslims as potential 'suspects' or legitimate objects of abuse.

Much of the policy attention has been directed towards to the supposed difficulty of managing diversity and Islamism. The empathetic connections established between participants in the discussion groups indicate the limitations of the community cohesion agenda with its identification of separate and distinct 'communities' as the site of the problem of preventing political violence and as the site of strategies of social cohesion. The main counteracting force that we identified to a categorisation of Muslims as potential 'suspects' lay in the cosmopolitanism that characterises places like London and Birmingham. The sympathetic exchanges in the discussion groups demonstrated this repeatedly. If discourses of 'suspectness' were not so widespread perhaps deeper connections would also develop with the majority ethnic group.

It appears from our research that a major concern for public authorities should be to ensure that security policies do not isolate and threaten communities and do not undermine their trust in state institutions and their sense of belonging. We have indicated that there are many more continuities between the two eras of political violence, particularly in counter-terrorism policies, than politicians and policy makers readily admit. A more successful policy would involve learning from this past

5 Recommendations

- There should be more historical awareness of the relative effectiveness of past (and not just the immediate, recent past) counter-terrorism measures, and of their consequences, when developing new frameworks to counter-terrorism.
- Greater awareness of, and sensitivity to possible impacts on individuals and communities should underpin the formulation of counter-terrorism policies.
- Greater awareness in and by the press and political establishment of the dangers of characterising communities as 'harbouring extremists', as responsible for solving the problem of terrorism, or as split between the innocent,law-abiding, moderate majority and the extremist, criminal minority, would help to diminish the negative focus on Muslim communities..
- The conscious avoidance of extreme language and terminology such as 'evil', 'perverse', 'barbaric' and so on, and particularly the association of these terms with Islam and Muslim/s (or any other group), in the media, in political commentary and in policy documents would help to diminish the negative impacts of such representations on Muslim communities.
- Policies that foster the practices of multiculturalism based on less bounded notions of communities may be more successful in promoting social cohesion within an increasingly ethnically, religiously and culturally diverse society, than the focus on suspect communities as a source of and responsible for a solution to political violence.

1. Introduction

This comparative and historical project, covering the period 1974-2007, is focused on two eras of political violence in Britain. The first coinciding with the Irish Republican Army's (IRA) bombing campaigns in England between 1973 and 1996, when the perpetrators were perceived as 'Irish terrorists'. And the second since 2001, when, in Britain and elsewhere, the main threat of political violence has been portrayed as stemming from people allegedly motivated by extreme interpretations of Islam, and who are often labelled as 'Islamic terrorists'.

The research examined to what extent and in what ways Irish communities and Muslim communities were represented as 'suspect' in public discourses in these two eras of political violence. It also examined the similarities and differences in the impact of both these representations and counter-terrorism measures on Muslim communities and Irish communities in Britain.

The research provides a new analysis of Irish experiences and compares this with current Muslim experiences. The aim was to establish what useful insights this might afford both Muslim communities and policy makers who seek ways to implement counter-terrorism policies without alienating communities.

Rationale and Aims

Our aim was to explore the implications for social cohesion of representing some groups as 'suspect' and the implications of counter-terrorism measures for the everyday lives of Irish communities and Muslim communities. This research report considers how the practice of conceiving of groups within civil society as 'communities' (eg. Home Office 2001) meshes with the conceptualising of certain populations as 'suspect'. It analyses how this impacts on social cohesion and exerts constraints not only on members of these communities in Britain but also on the population as a whole.

The IRA's campaign in England caused over 500 incidents between 1973 and 1996 and focused on both military/police and civilian targets (English 2006). A landmark in this campaign of political violence was the bombing of two pubs in Birmingham, on 21 November 1974, when 21 people were killed and over 180 were injured. Although earlier attacks had taken place that year in other locations, including Woolwich and Guildford, the Birmingham occurrence was the bloodiest event and the trigger that led Parliament to pass draconian anti-terrorism measures applicable in Britain, akin to those already in force in Northern Ireland. Over the next quarter of a century the Prevention of Terrorism Act (Temporary provisions) 1974 (PTA) was reviewed and renewed regularly until it became the foundation of permanent law with the passage of the Terrorism Act 2000 and its subsequent amendments.

Starting at the end of the 1990s, British counter-terrorism measures became increasingly tightened and focused on Muslim communities, as the idea of 'religious terrorism' and 'extremist Islamism' permeated policy communities and as the threat of Irish republicanism retreated (Lloyd 1996; Rowe 1997; Straw 1999; Terrorism Act 2000). This process accelerated in the aftermath of the attacks of 11 September 2001, which triggered the passage of the Anti-Terrorism, Crime and Security Act 2001 and of the Prevention of Terrorism Act 2005, and especially after the London bombings of July 2005, which in turn led to the Terrorism Act 2006 and the 'Prevent' agenda (DCLG 2007).

Methods

The analysis of public discourses was based on the following data:

- Government statements, strategic papers and political speeches as well as parliamentary debates at key moments between 1974 and 2007. We examined parliamentary debate and documents produced by relevant ministries and agencies (e.g. Cabinet of the Prime Minister, Home Office; Police; Commission for Racial Equality), as well as Royal Commissions of Inquiry, independent reviews, statutory bodies, and local authorities. We analysed speeches and programmatic statements, strategic papers, commissioned research and command papers, Parliamentary committee reports and minutes: over 800 sets of policy documents produced between 1974 and 2007.
- National and diaspora press coverage of 19 key events between 1974 and 2007. Our study evaluated representations of Irish communities and Muslim communities 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*) - a total of 2,798 news items.

The investigation of the experiences of Irish and Muslim communities was implemented through:

- 42 key informant interviews with leaders of community and faith-based organisations; human rights activists; individuals who had been wrongly imprisoned or arrested; journalists, politicians and lawyers who had some involvement with the communities or community members during the period under study.
- Seven mixed Irish and Muslim discussion groups (three in Birmingham, four in London): a total of 38 people (19 identifying as Irish, 19 as Muslim) participated in these events.

(see full description of the research methods used in the Appendix).

2. Reasons for the comparison

The two eras of political violence we examined are frequently described as very different and this has, in particular, been used to justify the passage of a series of further counter-terrorism measures during the 2000s. There are three main reasons why the eras are seen as distinctive:

- The current political violence is said to be motivated by ideology in a way the IRA were not
- The methods used in the current phase of political violence are described as more indiscriminate, including 'suicide' bombers
- The 'Irish' threat was viewed ultimately as negotiable compared with what is viewed as the absence of concrete demands of current perpetrators of violence

There are, however, five ways in which the commonalities of the two eras are striking:

- The main counter-terrorism measures employed today stem directly from the period of IRA violence
- The experiences of many Irish and Muslims both at the hands of the police and in their everyday lives are similar
- Both these populations result from post-1945 migrations in the 1950s and 1960s, plus their children and grandchildren; and of subsequent significant immigrations of both Irish and Muslims since the 1980s
- Both Irish communities and Muslim communities form part of the complex cultural, religious and ethnic pluralism that characterises Britain's urban space
- The religious dimension constitutes both a similarity and a difference in the experiences of the two sets of communities: although in both religion can be an important dimension of identity, it is only perceived as an ideological motive in relation to Muslim communities in Britain

Our research challenges the official discourse of discontinuities between the two eras. There are also many reasons to compare the contemporary context with events in Northern Ireland between 1968 and 1998. However, others have already contributed to this discussion (see Hillyard 2005 and McGovern 2010) and we wished to concentrate on Britain where debates about 'community cohesion' and Britishness have been actively engaged throughout the past decade, with a particular resonance in England.

There has been no previous systematic research exploring the parallels and differences between these two eras of political violence in terms of the experiences of these two sets of communities and the implications across four decades for social cohesion and for effective security.

Key informants' view of the comparison

We asked our key informants what they thought about the validity of making the comparison. Here are some of their responses:

> I think there are definitely benefits, we need to actually learn from our mistakes and we need to actually build up on our achievements. And if you look at the Irish experience that could be done. We will surely come to the situation that we need to deal with criminality rather than communities. And criminalities and communities are separate. You can never associate the whole community with a particular criminality - we need to create a society in which everybody is a stakeholder (Chair of an Islamic organisation)

I am not sure how many benefits there are in making a comparison. I think we will know that when you've finished your study. (Member of the House of Lords)

... it's possible that some people in the Muslim community may feel very marginalised and may feel that the rest of society is suspicious of them but they don't want to be in that role particularly, they just want to get on with their life and be part of society. They may find it very interesting and a bit of a support to hear in some detail that another community went, another community who are now thought of as being part of the main, the majority society, actually went through a period of a hundred years or so when they went through something very, very similar. (Chair of a Catholic organisation)

... the Irish community originally were [suspect] and it would be interesting to see how we've developed that now since the Seventies and how we've moved on and how they feel at the moment... Are those same practices that were developed in the Seventies is that the same thing we are now doing to a different community. And that comparison would be interesting and good research. Not only is it research that the government should be looking at but locally, local forces should be looking at and maybe there's lessons that we can learn ... something which we can learn about change and adopting different methods of improving that engagement and how we go about dealing with people. (A counter-terrorist officer in the police force in Birmingham)

I think there is benefit in the sense that you don't feel so vulnerable and you feel that there other communities who suffered more or less if not that severe but at least suffered like you. And it helps you in recovering from internal despondency. And also, also it teaches us that what were the causes of the IRA crisis, Irish crisis, there was political will of solving this. I think this [the research] will be useful in giving young Muslims perspective of where to stand because many of them don't have that much knowledge in how a white community, if I can use this word, suffered similar sort of discrimination and suspicion by the society. (Chair of a Muslim organisation)

People who would be upset about your notion (of suspect communities) would be people who have just lost sight of human empathy and what it and just are lacking in sufficient experience or imagination to understand what it must have felt like to have an Irish accent in Central London in the 1970s or what it might have felt like to be a young Asian man getting on a tube train a few days after 7/7, for example. ... I think it would be useful to have something which using the Irish example and would help us look at where it went wrong and what were the big mistakes so we can avoid making them - But also what went right, you know. How, how was significant progress made to take a community from being suspect to now. (Director, Civil Liberties organisation)

I think from what I understand from this is that it's like erm [pauses] just sort of the assumption that like the Irish were all supportive of the IRA activities and that Muslims are all supportive of this terrorism that's going on at the moment in, you know, the 7/7 [sic] and that. And that there is probably just a very small minority of people, the same as with the Irish, that sort of like pro those. And that is somehow or other to erm, get that message across, you know, that's not the view of all ... the IRA and that, okay they did a lot of bombing and nobody could say that in the end they had to sit down, they had to talk and things are better now and I think they probably need to do the same. (Irish woman, retired from NGO position)

I think enormous, I think there are enormous benefits because one of the battles that Muslims are facing in the present state is for, I think for society to recognise the continuities in a lot of things that Muslims are currently experiencing. Continuities in terms of demonisation of communities. Continuities in terms of threat to national security. Continuities in terms of the way legislative reactions have sometimes only fostered further difficulties in terms of grappling with some of the problems we are facing, in terms of knee jerk reactions or, you know, harsh legislation. (Member of a Muslim women's organisation)

Generally the response was that the comparison would: enhance mutual communication; encourage lessons to be learnt from one era to the other as many felt there had not been enough lessons learnt from the Irish experience; demonstrate that all terrorists are not Muslims; open eyes on what a white group experienced and bring minority perspectives to the fore. It was also hoped that the broader focus of this project (compared with much current research which is focused on extremism) would inform policy by providing a richer contextualisation of the issues.

3. Notions of 'Suspect Communities'

The notion of 'suspect community' first appeared in Paddy Hillyard's (1993) work on the growth of the 'secret state' and the effects of the PTA. His study of the application of the PTA focused on individuals at the receiving end of these measures and included interviews with people examined, detained or arrested in England, Wales and Scotland between 1978 and 1991.

Hillyard explained the concept of 'suspect community' as the process of identification of a threat and of a sign of abnormality which exemplified and legitimated the politics of exception put in place by the state:

> 'a person who is drawn into the criminal justice system under the PTA is not a suspect in the normal sense of the word. In other words, they are not believed to be involved in or guilty of some illegal act [...] people are suspect primarily because they are Irish and once they are in the police station they are often labelled an Irish suspect, presumably as part of some classification system. In practice, they are being held because they belong to a suspect community' (Hillyard 1993: 7)
>
> 'In attempting to prevent the spread of political violence to Britain, anyone living in Ireland as well as anyone with an Irish background living in England can be seen as falling within a category of people who may legitimately be stopped. The Irish community as a whole can therefore be legally viewed as a suspect community. (Hillyard 1993: 33).

An example of this was the arrest and subsequent imprisonment in 1976 of the Maguire Seven. The seven family members including two children were tried and convicted for a crime that not only had none of them committed but also had not been committed in the first place: participation in running an alleged IRA bomb factory in their west London home. For this non-crime the family were sentenced between them to 73 years in prison.

In our research we incorporate Hillyard's concept but not his approach – in that we were not primarily interested in people who were detained or arrested but about the impact on people going about their everyday lives. We take from his analysis, however, that to be considered a 'suspect' is unrelated to a real offence. Yet, whoever falls into this category de facto becomes a 'suspected terrorist'. This can have long term consequences for the psychological well-being of the individual and for his/her family and friends.

It is important to investigate how 'suspectification' works. While initiated by the authorities, the process of detecting 'suspect' individuals and behaviours can gradually expand and be reproduced by a range of people and social groups, including the media, the general public, and even members of the communities under suspicion.

In this report we concentrate on the main findings in relation to four of our research questions:

- How is a community constructed as 'suspect' in public discourse (government and media) and through the implementation of counter-terrorism measures?
- What differences and similarities are there in the construction and representation of Irish and Muslims as 'suspect' communities? What symbolic and discursive continuities and discontinuities are there in relation to both sets of communities?
- What impacts do representations of being 'suspect' and counter-terrorism measures have for the everyday experiences and sense of belonging of members of these communities?
- How do these constructions and representations of 'suspect' communities inform reconfigurations and representations of Britishness?

4. FINDINGS - Public Discourses

4.1 Policy Study

Official policy documents offer one important dimension of public discourses, not only because they represent the voice of state institutions and of those holding authoritative positions, but also because they produce policy actions, which then impact directly onto people, who in turn may engage with and contest such discourses.

This policy study traces the evolution of the British establishment's characterisations of terrorism and suspectness in relation to the two eras of political violence. Discourses of suspicion are central to the anti-terrorism measures of the last four decades in Britain. Rather than being based on a precise offence, they proceed along a logic of association, thus identifying as security threats markers of identity and behaviours that are specific to particular social groups, which could potentially become 'suspect communities'.

We have sought to unpack the elements and attributes associated with what is identified as a terrorist threat and thus as designating a 'suspect', and to ascertain whether these terms have been associated with Irish and with Muslim communities.

Examining the terms through which security threats are identified and acted upon enabled us to identify transformations and continuities in policy-making processes, as well as visions about national unity, competing understandings of security and freedoms, and the position of ethnic and religious minorities in a democratic society characterised by religious diversity, large immigration flows, and continuing episodes of political violence.

As an example of this exercise, here we present extracts from our comparison of the reactions and responses to the bombings of 21 November 1974 in Birmingham and of 7 July 2005 in London.

Characterisations of the threat in two eras of political violence

'Extremism' is commonly used in the present to define actions and people associated with political violence, and especially with Islamism:

> 'It's important however that those engaged in terrorism realise that our determination to defend our values and our way of life is greater than their determination to cause death and destruction to innocent people in a desire to impose extremism on the world' (Blair, 7/7/2005)
>
> 'After all, extremism is not confined to Muslims, as we know from Northern Ireland and fringe elements in many ethnic groups. But actually what should give us optimism in dealing with this issue, is precisely that point. It is true there are extremists in other communities. But the reason we are having this debate is not generalised extremism. It is a new and virulent form of ideology associated with a minority of our Muslim community' (Blair 2006).

However, in 1974, and roughly up to the early 1980s, 'extremist' does not appear to be a major qualifier designating terrorism. When it is (rarely) used, it refers to the extremists associated with various groups, and qualifies their extreme tactics, not their political claims. The perpetrators of attacks in Britain were rarely openly identified as 'the IRA' but were portrayed as mindless 'criminals' and 'fanatics', as a 'lunatic fringe' (Thierney, *Hansard*, 25/11/1974; Bennett, *Hansard*, 11/12/1974) engaged in 'insensate' acts (Jenkins, *Hansard*, 22/11/1974), as 'evil men who are beyond reasoning' (Johnston, *Hansard*, 19/12/1983). While 'murderers are seldom rational people' (Sir Geoffrey de Freitas, *Hansard*, 22/11/1974), the state needs to respond rationally, but firmly, emphasised the Home Office minister just before introducing the PTA 1974: 'We want a rational response, and I believe that the response I am giving, whilst an urgent response, is also rational' (Jenkins, *Hansard*, 22/11/1974).

When the IRA planted bombs in Britain, their political claims were omitted or downplayed in the establishment's reactions, and Northern Ireland featured as something relatively remote. It seems that anonymising the IRA and associating it with irrationality was a method to discredit and weaken any credence that might be given to its political agenda. A constant dichotomy was therefore sustained between the irrationality of, in particular, the IRA, and the rationality of the state and its actions.

In 2005 the perpetrators of violence were perceived as 'evil' too, but in a different sense. They were no longer described as insane but as rational actors carefully planning and calculating their actions, as these excerpts show:

> 'This morning's explosions were acts of almost unspeakable depravity and wickedness, planned with the deliberate intention of taking innocent life, and the whole House condemns them utterly. This is an attack not just on our capital city, but on our country and our way of life as a whole' (Davis, *Hansard*, 7/7/2005).

> 'The greatest danger is that we fail to face up to the nature of the threat we are dealing with. What we witnessed in London last Thursday week was not an aberrant act. It was not random. It was not a product of particular local circumstances in West Yorkshire. … Senseless though any such horrible murder is, it was not without sense for its organisers. It had a purpose. It was done according to a plan. It was meant
> […] (Blair, 16/07/2005).

The binary opposition between the evil and wickedness of the perpetrators and the innocence of the civilian victims is another component of the narrative of both eras. For instance, the language utilised immediately after the November 1974 attacks can easily be compared, and indeed interchanged, with that of July 2005:

> '… the deepest anger that a tiny minority of fanatics should be able to inflict appalling suffering and loss on innocent people, and in doing so, should be doing damage to our whole society' (Lord Chancellor, *Hansard*, (28/11/1974).

> '… they are trying to use the slaughter of innocent people to cow us, to frighten us out of doing the things we want to do, of trying to stop us going about our business as normal as we are entitled to do and they should not and must not succeed' (Blair 07/07/2005).

In the post 7 July 2005 context, the words extremism, ideology, evil and Islamism are frequently repeated and become almost intertwined, as exemplified by this speech by Tony Blair one week later:

> 'What we are confronting here is an evil ideology […]
> And, of course, they will use any issue that is a matter of dissent within our democracy. But we should lay bare the almost-devilish logic behind such manipulation […]
> This is a religious ideology, a strain within the world-wide religion of Islam, as far removed from its essential decency and truth as Protestant gunmen who kill Catholics or vice versa, are from Christianity' (16/07/2005).

These ideas had become consolidated in previous years as other policy documents demonstrate (Rowe 1997; Straw 1999; Blunkett 2003; Blair 2004; and as discussed by Rehman 2007). Moreover, it is interesting to note that there is a convergence among politicians of different orientations in espousing this view of the threat and its nature. For instance, Conservative MP Michael Howard praised British 'citizens' and the British 'way of life' for proving 'once again resilient in the face of evil' and the terrorists' 'warped ideology' (*Hansard*, 11/07/2005).

Another recurring theme present in both eras is 'barbarism'. This term is associated with a moral and cultural metaphorical struggle for the values of civility which is evident in the offsetting of, on the one hand, 'terrorists' and, on the other, 'civilised people' and 'those Muslims who represent 'the decent, humane and principled faith of Islam' (Blair, 27/09/2005). A similar idea was conveyed in the previous decades by references to the animal violence and loss of human quality of the 'bestial bombers' (Lord Hunt, *Hansard*, 28/11/1974; cf. Lord Hailsham of Saint-Mary-Lebone, *Hansard*, 28/11/1974). The linked idea of disorder was also conveyed by references to bestiality and barbarism, as well as by the metaphors 'scourge' and 'plague' utilised by various politicians to describe IRA attacks in the 1980s (Pitt, *Hansard*, 20/07/1982; Lord Belstead, *Hansard*, 27/10/1981; Griffith, *Hansard*, 19/12/1983).

Shortly before the attacks of 21 November 1974 the IRA had openly declared itself at war with the government of the United Kingdom. Rather than rejecting this notion, the semantic field of war was repeatedly summoned up in many of these early Parliamentary debates:

> 'Is it not right to recognise that this event is another act in the ruthless war of aggression which is being waged against the United Kingdom and its integrity, a war of which the brunt has mainly been borne for over five years past by our fellow subjects in Northern Ireland' (Powell, *Hansard*, 22/11/1974).

> 'This is a war we have to win. Our duty is to wage it without sacrificing the ideals which make it worth while winning' (Lord Hailsham of Saint Mary-Lebone, *Hansard*, 28/11/1974).

The same idea was also implicit in the use of the expressions 'victory', 'submission' and 'will to win' by former Home Affairs Secretary Roy Jenkins (22/11/1974).

Forty-one years later similar remarks were made by former Defence Secretary John Reid:

> 'I am also sure that all of us will want to express our utter condemnation of those responsible for today's attacks. We must ensure that they understand that they will not win in their attempt to break our will or undermine our democratic response to today's events' *Hansard*, 7/7/2005)

and by a powerful statement of former Prime Minister Tony Blair:

> 'it is a global struggle and it is a battle of ideas, hearts and minds, both within Islam and outside it.
>
> This is the battle that must be won, a battle not just about the terrorist methods but their views. Not just their barbaric acts, but their barbaric ideas. Not only what they do but what they think and the thinking they would impose on others.
> [...] We must be clear about how we win this struggle' (Blair, 16/07/2005).

The repetitious use of terms evoking war: 'struggle', 'battle', 'won', 'confront' is compelling. The notion of a war-like confrontation with the perpetrators of violence appears to be a constant feature of British and American thinking on counter-insurgency, according to which political dissent brings disequilibrium to the given social order and to the legitimacy of the state. From this perspective, 'no political activity can be above suspicion' (Schlesinger 1991:76) and counter-insurgency becomes a systemic approach involving all 'theatres of action' (Kilcullen 2004).

The feeling left by both events, regardless of the executants' ideologies and slogans, was that Britain was under attack and that national values and national unity were under threat, people were inevitably fearful. In both periods the response was that the nation would resist and stand united. Pride in the British qualities of 'resilience' and orderliness is expressed:

> 'even at moments of shock and emotion as great as that of the present time it is important that we should remain rational and calm, and not respond too hastily'. (Jenkins, *Hansard*, 22/11/1974).
>
> 'the community as a whole, in my opinion, should seek to respond to these events in a calm and considered way' (Clarke, *Hansard*, 7/7/2005)
>
> 'the British people will not be cowed and the terrorists will not win' (Davis, *Hansard*, 7/7/2005).

The tone of these statements resonates with responses to earlier atrocities, such as Brittan's call (*Hansard*, 19/12/1983), after the Harrods bombings in 1983, to be 'united' and 'stand firm against the evil men', without making 'concessions to the bullet and the bomb'. Resilience was also the key theme of a Home Office (1999) document providing advice to the business sector faced with the potential threat of terrorism even after the Good Friday Peace Agreement of 1998. The Mayor of London's speech, after the 'cowardly attacks' of July 2005, was well-received, with his appeal to the 'harmony', 'unity', and 'solidarity' of a capital city that prides itself on its cultural and religious diversity (Livingstone 07/07/2005).

In summary, while differing in ideology and strategy, all the attacks caused similar levels of fear and despair. Policy-makers responded demonstrating equal levels of shock and disgust but also firmly condemning the 'barbaric' and 'murderous' occurrences and promising a prompt, adequate, rational and balanced response.

This indicates that, whenever national security was at stake in the period under investigation, the government and parliament in office shared a common self-understanding and appreciation of the role of state institutions, of the national interest, and of the control of violence. The urgent sense of risk and responsibility resulted in the passage of illiberal emergency measures couched in arcane references to a battle between good and evil. Despite divergences in political and ideological affiliation and the variable of time, Labour and Conservative governments similarly endorsed 'extreme' emergency measures in order to fight the 'extreme' methods of the terrorists. This constitutes a major line of continuity in public discourse over the four decades.

The establishment stressed the abnormality of those engaged in political violence through a binary taxonomy between an idealised version of British values and symbols and two extreme opposites; the 'madness' and irrationality of the 'Irish threat' in the past, and the evil rationality of a faith-based ideology in the 21st century. Both rhetorical strategies have the effect of de-politicising and de-legitimising the claims of those engaged in violence as well as in broader forms of dissent (cf. Schlesinger 1991).

Representations of Irish communities and Muslim communities

The ambiguous position of Irish and Muslims – as victims, partners and threats – became clear in the analysis. In both eras the minority ethnic/religious communities who are perceived to be associated with the violence are characterised: as allies in the struggle against 'terrorism', as victims needing protection from a potential backlash and as communities that might be harbouring extremists and threatening individuals:

> 'I have represented for nearly 25 years the city of Birmingham, which has a large Irish community of about 100,000. During the whole of that period relations have been excellent between that community and the native-born population. It would be a tragedy if these relations were damaged by what has been done by a tiny majority. It is of great importance that we should recognise how utterly alien and repugnant to the overwhelming majority of the Irish is what is being done by a few totally unrepresentative fringe figures of their community' (Jenkins, *Hansard*, 22/11/1974)

> 'We must not [...] condone retaliation upon the broad mass of our neighbours in this country who may be of Irish extraction—as indeed I am myself—for the wicked deeds of a guilty minority of which the enormous majority are wholly innocent' (Lord Hailsham, *Hansard*, 28/11/1974).

> 'I endorse the sincere hope that Irishmen in this country as a whole will not be blamed in any way for the actions of the criminals' (Lord Janner, *Hansard*, 28/11/1974).

> 'We stand united against the perpetrators of those evil, barbaric acts of terrorism. Can he [the PM] assure me that the Government recognise that the overwhelming majority of the Muslims who live in this country are tolerant, law-abiding citizens who respect other religions and do not support terrorism? Can he assure me that the Government will do everything they can to prevent any backlash against Muslims?' (Sarwar, *Hansard*, 11/07/2005).

> 'Muslims, like all of us, abhor terrorism. Like all of us, are its victims' (Blair, 27/09/2005).

The parallel emphasis on the innocence of the mainstream Irish and Muslim population is worthy of note. Although on both occasions the minorities are seen as part of the 'injured' side, each time emergency counter-terrorism policies then evolved in a way that targeted and negatively affected these minorities: the 1974 measures developed explicitly against 'Irish' terrorism; the Terrorism Act of 2000 included the notion of 'religious' motivation for terrorism and proscribed several Muslim organisations.

The subsequent laws of 2001, 2005, and 2006 expanded the offence of terrorism in a way that meant anything remotely associated with Islam and possible dissent became the object of suspicion. This has parallels with the establishment's perception of Irish communities in the 1990s:

> 'the defeat of terrorism also requires the whole-hearted co-operation of the vast majority of law-abiding Irish men and women' (Hattersley, *Hansard*, 06/03/1990)

> 'the public should be totally aware that these terrorists are in their midst, and suspicious activities of any kind such as Irish people hiring cars, booking short-term stays in guest houses, using lock-up garages for short periods at a time, and so on, must be reported to the police. Harassment pays, and although some innocents may be perturbed and affected, chasing the terrorists will certainly pay. On the whole they have been harassed and chased out of Northern Ireland. Now that they are here, we have to do the same in Great Britain'. (Lord Mason of Barnsley, 26/06/1990)

> 'And I say to our Muslim community. People know full well that the overwhelming majority of Muslims stand four square with every other community in Britain. We were proud of your contribution to Britain before last Thursday. We remain proud of it today. Fanaticism is not a state of religion but a state of mind. We will work with you to make the moderate and true voice of Islam heard as it should be' (Blair, *Hansard*, 11/07/2005).

> '... we want to work with the Muslim community to isolate and weaken dangerous extremists' (Clarke 20/07/2005).

These extracts show how Irish communities and Muslim communities found themselves situated in an ambiguous position, both as a consequence of the political violence and of the anti-terrorism measures. Whether pointing openly to the 'enemy within' or calling for the cooperation of the 'moderate' and 'law-abiding' members of these communities in order to eradicate extremism, the implicit message of the establishment seems to be that they have become 'suspect communities'.

Numerous policy documents actually explain that the emergence of extremists or terrorists from certain minority communities should not lead to the conclusion that those communities are also guilty. However, these apparently nuanced statements are not necessarily matched by equivalent practices; the way in which counter-terrorism policies are conducted, implemented and how they impact on the populations in question suggests the opposite.

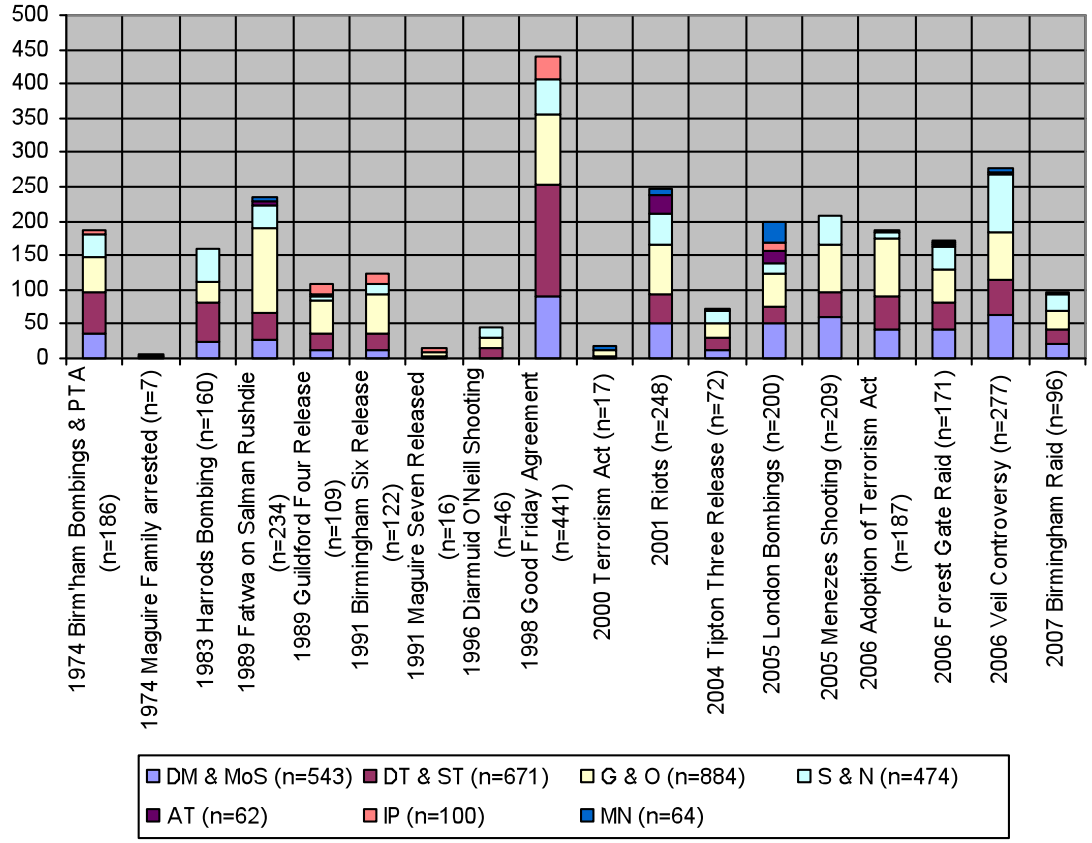
The continuation of draconian anti-terrorism measures and the development of the idea of prevention, accompanied by a range of policies loosely connected with counter-terrorism, led to an excessive focus on these communities. This gave them an ambiguous status of victims and partners with an aura of suspicion. The positioning of the Muslim communities is however different from that of Irish communities in the past, in that societal transformations (e.g. the Rushdie affair, 9/11, the 2006 veil debate, continuing though diversified immigrations into Britain) and policy evolutions beyond the domain of counter-terrorism,[1] have altered the position, both the difficulties (e.g. exposure to stop and search) and the opportunities, that are available for minorities in Britain today.

4.2 Media Study

Mapping analysis of headlines in the press

Our analysis shows that the British press participates in the construction of Irish and Muslim communities as 'suspect' to varying degrees and in divergent ways. For instance, we found 20% less coverage of Irish-related events, despite the far greater incidence of actual physical violence perpetrated by the IRA. Even taking the increase in newspaper size in the period into account, this is a significant finding, which suggests that there was an effort to minimise threats to the integrity of the United Kingdom, and, in Margaret Thatcher's words, to deprive 'terrorists' of the 'oxygen of publicity' in this period. The tendency to invisibilise and incorporate the Irish in Britain (Hickman, 1998), the climate of media censorship, with the Broadcasting Ban enforced between 1988 and 1994, and the strategy of depoliticising the struggle for a united Ireland (such as the withdrawal of Special Category Status for convicted paramilitary prisoners in 1976) may all have contributed to this phenomenon.

Table 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*.

[1] For instance in race relations; religious discrimination; the inclusion in the census of the categories of 'ethnicity' and 'religion', respectively in 1991 and 2001; the creation of new areas of ministerial competence, such as Communities and Local Government; the evolution of a culture of open consultation with stakeholders; parliamentary reforms, such as the inclusion of nominated peers in the House of Lords that come from ethnic minorities.

As well as mapping the amount of coverage of each event, we also analysed headlines. These are particularly significant because of their probable impact on readers: 'skilled newspaper readers spend most of their reading time scanning the headlines – rather than reading the stories' (Dor, 2003: 696).

Table 2: Top 20 terms used in the headlines of Irish- and Muslim-related key events, 1974 - 2007

	Irish-related terms	N	Muslim-related terms	N
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 20s of both sets of news items, albeit with greatly varying frequencies. POLICE (204) is the most frequently used word in Muslim-related headlines, with associated terms such as (Sir Ian) BLAIR (95), MET (i.e. London Metropolitan Police, 46) and CHIEF (47) also figuring prominently. In contrast, POLICE appears 69 times in Irish-related headlines. This difference is striking when considering that the modus operandi of the police was questioned intensively in the press in the aftermath of the releases of the Guildford Four and Birmingham Six, just as it was after the De Menezes shooting and after the botched terror raids in Forest Gate and Birmingham. Although we identified scrutiny of the security apparatus in our sample of Irish-related events, this scrutiny is more intensive in the recent period of Muslim-related events. While large sections within the press were initially uncritical of police operations targeting alleged Irish terrorist suspects, this attitude changed with the release of wrongfully arrested people on the basis of unsafe forensic evidence in the late 1980s and early 1990s. When compared with coverage of Irish-related events, the press are quicker to criticize the state security apparatus in its reporting of Muslim-related events, adopting a more guarded stance when covering anti-terrorist operations. This may also have been influenced by a number of factors, such as the publication of the Macpherson (1999) Report in 1999 on the enquiry into the death of Stephen Lawrence, and the passage of the Human Rights Act in 1998.

It is significant that whereas the terms MUSLIM/S, ISLAM and ISLAMIC recur frequently, al-Qaeda is mentioned only twice. On the contrary, the term 'IRA' is used more frequently than 'Irish'. The headlines suggest that whereas terrorism is associated with Muslims in general, the IRA is targeted more specifically. Nonetheless, the IRA (the *Irish* Republican Army) will inevitably become associated with, and reflect on, Irish communities as a whole, as our Irish respondents' comments attest (see below).

With the notable exception of the July 2005 bombings, politically and culturally significant events in our sample - that is, the *fatwa* (1989), so-called 'veil controversy' (2006) and the Good Friday Agreement (1998) - tend to attract more coverage than enacted violence. Whilst in the case of the Good Friday agreement this is not surprising, given its historical significance, the extent of coverage of the fatwa and the 'veil controversy' indicates how the press participates in the construction of Muslims and Islam as a *cultural* threat. The media attention to the 'veil controversy' also demonstrates the symbolic role of 'woman' in the construction of national identity (Yuval-Davies, 1997; Meer, Dyer and Modood, 2010), and the requirement for women's social compliance to be demonstrated through reassuring facial expressions and modes of dress in western modernity.

The extensive coverage of the Muslim-related events, the focus on political and cultural issues, as well as the massive amount of coverage of the July bombings (which encompassed a questioning of the place of Islam and Muslims in Britain) imply a deeply rooted and prevalent construction of Muslims as threatening in the British press (see Poole, 2002; Poole and Richardson, 2006). Irish individuals and groups are represented as both a threat to security and to British values and society, but the representation of a perceived threat to British values and, in particular, to British culture is intensified in relation to Muslims (see also Ansari 2004). This connects, of course, with the 'clash of civilisations' thesis (Huntington 1993) often referred to after September 11th, 2001, with Islam representing a threatening 'Other' to Western cultures as a whole (see Poole 2006). Despite this intense focus on Muslims in the contemporary period, we identify continuities in discourse across the two eras, which we discuss below.

Detailed analysis of content in the press

The second stage of the media study consisted of the detailed analysis of a sample of articles. This analysis indicates that Irish communities in Britain are associated with discourses which are taken up later, and indeed dominate, in coverage of Muslim-related events.

In both cases the press across the board is at pains to distinguish between the law-abiding, decent majority and the violent minority, and there is a recurrent binary opposition of these two constructions. The 'innocent Irish' are contrasted with those belonging to or sympathising with the IRA and other paramilitaries (including their political representatives), or with *religious bigots:*

> 'Recently a social report on Glasgow said that the influx of Irish immigrants into the area 70 years ago had created "an abyss of religious bigotry ... an abyss which is still wide and has jagged, cruel edges to it"' ('The Irish in our midst', *The Sunday Telegraph*, 1 December, 1974, p.5).

Similarly, the opposite of the *moderate Muslim* is usually described as an *extremist*, a *radical* or a *terrorist*. In some oppositions of 'Muslim extremism' and moderate Muslims, violent terms such as 'poison' 'venom', 'evil', or 'perverse' are used to characterise the former: 'They (the British people) want their Muslim neighbours – the great majority of whom are decent, patriotic and law-abiding – actively to help find an antidote to the poison in our midst' ('How do we deal with this poison in our midst?', *The Daily Mail,* August 3 2005, p. 12). Whilst in general religion is less foregrounded in the Irish-related coverage, the discourse of 'religious bigotry' found in some articles is similar to the later focus on some Imams as 'preachers of hate'.

In this context, it must be noted that the mere fact of referring to the *innocent Irish* implicitly constructs the Irish as a potential threat, and contains an inbuilt presumption that while many are innocent, others are *guilty*. There is a clear parallel between the *innocent Irish* and *moderate Muslims,* a phrase that also implicitly suggests that some Muslims are not moderate but *extremist* and therefore dangerous. Although these phrases themselves appear innocuous, or even positive, in fact they participate in the construction of Irish communities and Muslim communities as harbouring, or potentially harbouring, extremists, terrorists or criminals, that is, as a danger to society.

The idea of an enemy hidden within the communities, and hence within British society is also a recurrent discourse in both sets of coverage; after the Birmingham pub bombings, for instance, *The Guardian* published an editorial with the headline ' Those who harbour terrorists' which comments that the police bomb squad must be allowed to be 'less fastidious in its enquiries among those suspected of guilty knowledge', adding later that the 'murderous tools' of terrorism 'are provided by sympathisers here' (*The Guardian*, 23 November 1974, p.10). This response, across the political spectrum at the time, was the context in which a series of miscarriages of justice occurred.

The discourse of the 'enemy within' is exemplified by the recurrence of phrases such as 'in our midst', with its implication of 'a traitor in our midst' in articles and headlines throughout the two eras. It leads directly to the discourse of community responsibility, which occurs in both sets of coverage, but particularly in that of the Muslim-related events and demands that communities, rather than government or the security forces 'tackle terrorism': 'Police, security services, politicians can't beat terrorism...only communities can do that. And I have no doubt it will be the Muslim community which will eventually destroy these Islamic terrorists' ('Young, Clever and British', *The News of the World,* 10 July 2005).

Members of Irish and Muslim communities are frequently represented as being both inside and outside British civil society; one example of this discourse can be seen on pages 4-5 of *The Sun* on 13 July 2005, which carried the headline:

> '7/7 Footie Fan who blew up commuters. Khaka ...Tube bomber from a chippie. Suicide Lad Age 22'.

Here terms associated with terrorism are juxtaposed with terms expressive of Britishness, thus 'tube bomber' is juxtaposed with 'chippie' whilst above it '7/7' is juxtaposed with 'footie fan', and below it 'suicide' with 'lad'. These juxtapositions transmit the notion of the 'enemy within', the idea that an attack on Britishness has occurred *from its heart*. Throughout the period under study we find the press simultaneously representing Britishness as fragile and threatened by a 'suspect' Other, and claiming its importance and association with values such as the rule of law, the right to security, tolerance, secularism, freedom of religion, fairness, and non-violence. The press appears here to participate in the discourse of a 'crisis of Britishness' which has clearly gained momentum in recent years (Byrne, 2007; Ward, 2008).

This is not a new phenomenon. On 10 December 1974, for instance, in a piece entitled 'English girl on bomb charge', *The Guardian* (p. 26) reports: 'The number of accused around the country concerning bombing incidents is causing great difficulties for the prison authorities, and it is proving hard for them to find suitable prisons for all of them'. This image of British prisons overflowing with Irish suspects clearly indicates the fear of Britain being swamped by the 'Irish problem'. The article purports to cover the appearance in court of a total of 14 people in relation to various offences related to the pub bombings that occurred in Guildford on 5 October 1974, paying particular attention to the case of Annie Maguire. These offences included murder, illegal possession of explosives, and conspiracy to cause explosions. 13 of the 14 people (including the Maguire Seven and the Guildford Four) are lumped together into one group of *Irish* people implicitly portrayed as having acted in concert in planning and carrying out the Guildford pub bombing.

At no stage does the *Guardian* article refer to the IRA. With the exception of the 'English girl' of the headline, who is later described as 'English-born', it refers only to Irish people (or people with Irish backgrounds) charged with terrorist-related offences, thereby implying that 'the Irish' are responsible for terrorism. The shock, embedded in the headline, that an 'English girl' could also be implicated, implies that Britain and Britishness might be contaminated by a threat that here is clearly identified as 'Irish'. The ambiguity of the phrase 'English-born' casts suspicion on Irish people born in Britain. The article does not clarify the girl's identity and this increases the sense of a hidden enemy within Britain. The coverage of the July 2005 bombings echoes this, particularly in the level of shock expressed about the discovery that the perpetrators were British, exemplified in the headlines like those from *The Sun* discussed above.

There were variations in the representations in the press. This was usually related to the targeted readerships and political orientations of the newspapers and to the perceived significance of the events and issues reported. In particular, we observed a divergence in coverage of some of these events between the centre-left press represented here by *The Guardian*, and the centre-right press, *The Telegraph* and *The Daily Mail* respectively. This is illustrated by our analysis of a sub-sample of 41 of the total of 277 articles on the so-called veil controversy, when former Home Secretary Jack Straw expressed his difficulties in talking to women wearing the *niqab*, or full-face veil. Whilst 13 articles presented the controversy in mainly neutral terms, it is significant that half (21) were sympathetic with Straw, often describing the wearing of the niqab as a threat to British values. Of the seven articles which were critical of Straw and sympathetic to Muslim women's right to choose their own version of modest dress, six appeared in *The Guardian*.

There is also a significant difference between the diaspora and the national press with the former unsurprisingly focusing more on events and issues directly relevant to their readerships, providing more positive images of Irish communities and Muslim communities, and focusing on the impact of being perceived as 'suspect' on members of the communities. This is consistent with recent research on how the perception among Muslims of negative representations has led to the rise of alternative media sources such as *The Muslim News*, and online interventions (see Gillespie, 2002; Ahmad, 2006; Noor, 2007; Van Zoonen et al, 2011).

Our critical discourse analysis of press coverage of events relevant to Irish communities and Muslim communities in Britain that occurred between 1974 and 2007 has shown that these communities have been principally defined in relation to perceived British values, and that they become 'suspect' when they, or their assumed members, are judged by newsmakers not to abide by these values. However, we also found that the defining characteristic of much news coverage has been its ambiguity. Indeed, while constructions and representations of Irish and Muslim communities as consisting mainly of 'decent, patriotic, law-abiding citizens' are arguably positive, these constructions and representations become problematic when they are nearly always accompanied by the characterisation of these communities as harbouring dangerous extremists.

5. Everyday Experiences of Being 'Suspected'

We base most of this section on the discussion groups in Birmingham and London. Most of the discussion groups opened with a general question about the experience of living through periods of political violence and counter-terrorism measures. In most cases, Irish respondents then began to tell their stories. After a while the discussion switched to Muslim experiences. In each case there was a period of more general discussion and comparison following this. There was a great deal of interest in and curiosity about each other's stories. Some of the younger Muslim participants (especially a few who had been in Britain for only 5-10 years) were not fully aware of recent British history and of the 'Troubles' period. So they were particularly surprised to hear about the precedents to contemporary counter-terrorism measures and of the impact these had had on Irish communities and to notice parallels with the current experiences of Muslim communities. Despite differences of generation and experience, the strong empathy between Muslim and Irish participants was a striking feature of the discussion groups. Each group had its own specific dynamic, but without exception attempts were made to understand the experience of others and to build bridges. A level of trust was established in some groups such that it allowed people to recount quite disturbing experiences. There was a consensus in all the groups that the comparison had been useful and beneficial.

Both Irish and Muslim participants reported having suffered verbal and physical abuse in everyday encounters. There were similarities in the type of abuse experienced, which could include jokes about terrorism, being asked to speak for Islam or Ireland, being called names in the street or even being directly accused of terrorism. Irish respondents recounted the experience of being ignored or shunned at work or in shops or banks, while Muslim respondents recounted being stared at and shunned in the street or on public transport.

In everyday communication the expression of negative attitudes towards these communities was similar, involving actual abuse or racist 'jokes' or remarks. For instance, a young Irish woman described being called 'Semtex' by an English colleague when working in a bar in London; a Muslim woman had a similar experience: 'I remember they called us Bin Laden, the Bin Laden family, just because my friends were covered' (Muslim woman, London). Negative responses in public space recounted by Muslim respondents were based solely on appearance, whereas the contexts in which Irish respondents were treated negatively involved speech and thus the revelation of 'Irishness' through accent:

> I arrived from Belfast here in 1983 and the minute I opened my mouth it was hell, you know. Well yeah, Belfast accent, IRA, I mean that's what they think. They plant bombs. And so even coming to this meeting I am nervous (Irish woman, London)

Clearly, the category 'suspect' is linked to, and determined by, different, historically rooted modes of racialisation, which use 'all kinds of signifiers and markers' (Anthias, Yuval-Davies and Cain 1993, p.15). It adds a further dimension to these racializations, and intensifies the sense of being regarded and treated differently.

These everyday experiences of being treated as suspect occur in a context of media representations where both Irish communities and Muslim communities and individuals are, or have been portrayed as in various ways 'outsiders' inside British society. All of the groups engaged in discussion of media, sometimes at some length. Several groups felt that the media were in some way responsible for their communities being treated as 'suspect'; they particularly problematised the tabloid press, focusing on the negative impact of headlines:

> And as an Irishman working and trying to earn a living for my family, it was very difficult. I used to find it difficult to buy a paper because on the headlines, the headlines would be enough to stop me buying that paper. And I would find it difficult to get on with daily life (Irish Man, Birmingham).

> But I think the thing that gets me the most is just media words. You know, things like fundamentalists, Islamists, Moslems instead of Muslims, things like that. That's the thing that gets me. There is no, there is no good word for us. There is no way to describe us (Muslim man, London).

Some respondents felt that *The Guardian* and *The Independent* gave more balanced coverage, and there was some praise of the BBC and Channel Four, though the representation of Muslims in the *Despatches* series was strongly criticised. One discussion group was made up entirely of younger participants. This group developed quite a detailed discussion of images of Muslim and Irish people in popular culture, commenting on the transformations in these representations since the period of the Troubles, and since 9/11. While, in their view, Irishness has become 'cool': 'the Irish people, you know, they are all fun guys who like to get drunk or whatever' (Muslim man, London), being Muslim is always represented as

a problem: 'there are no normal Muslims on telly' (Muslim man, London). Whilst our respondents were critical of media representations, their comments were nuanced and sophisticated, analysing divergences between headlines and the content of articles, and differentiating between media outlets, as well as commenting on audience responses.

The experience of being treated differently resulted not only from encounters in everyday life and negative media representations, but also directly from the implementation of counter-terrorism measures. There were some positive comments on the role of the police, but negative accounts were more numerous. A third of the incidents recounted involved police actions or activity. Both groups felt that Irish or Muslim areas or buildings (mosques, Catholic churches, Irish pubs) were under surveillance. Six instances of 'stop and search' were described, and five of these accounts were by Muslims (two women and three men). One case involved young children (aged 10) being stopped and searched by police. There were five accounts of actual arrests (of family members, friends or acquaintances), and all of these were by Irish respondents; in one case the account was of severe violence at the hands of police in the 1970s. These responses in the groups are characterised by a difference between the experience of actual arrests on the Irish side, and of stop and search on the Muslim side.

The experience of discrimination while travelling internationally is common to both Muslim and Irish respondents. Participants recounted incidents where they were subjected to extra or intrusive checks, particularly at ports and airports. Muslim respondents reported being taken off flights; being asked to remove clothing; and being interrogated and accused of having undertaken al-Qaeda training. Travel destinations such as Pakistan and Yemen seemed themselves to be treated as suspect by airport officials as travel between Britain and Ireland had been during the earlier era.

From all of this we can conclude that the experience of being treated as a member of a 'suspect' community was shared by Irish and Muslim respondents and that it resulted from: negative responses in everyday encounters; from police activity; and security operations at ports and airports.

Impacts of being 'suspected'

The accounts of the effects of such experiences on individuals and communities also showed strong similarities between the two eras. A state of fearfulness was described by Muslims in the present period and Irish in relation to the past, and in both cases, 'lying low' and 'keeping your head down' were common responses. In the Muslim case this involved not discussing politics (for example at work), avoiding certain areas of the city, being careful on the telephone and Internet, and taking care not to mention al-Qaeda or terrorism, even in jokes. Irish respondents frequently described keeping quiet so that their accents would not be noticed, or being asked to speak on behalf of their first generation parents in shops. In both cases the state of fearfulness and suspicion was said to lead to divisions within the community, and to community members suspecting each other. Fear and caution were also generated by knowledge of the Terrorism Laws and by what seemed to be the arbitrariness of their implementation.

However, anger and alienation were also felt, and both Irish and Muslim respondents made connections between being treated as 'suspect' and political mobilisation of various kinds. In the Irish case, the policy of internment in Northern Ireland was described as a 'recruitment tool' for the IRA. A young Muslim man of Eritrean background described how he and his friends had been regularly stopped and searched, and stared at in public spaces. He felt that these pressures could lead to various forms of politicisation:

> Because I don't know whether you are aware of this but young Muslims right now, are thriving on this image, this image of yeah, they are jumping on it, they are like yeah, this is the new cool. Do you know what I am trying to say. We'll go round in crowds. We will put our little things across our face and we're saying yeah, we're doing this, we're doing that and I'm going to Gaza and I'm going to [slaps his hands]. They are thriving on it. And I don't know whether this is new to people but young Muslims are going absolutely crazy. Because they've been labelled so much Muslims as being these terrorists and being this in these recent times that there is a group, a minority of people I should say who have actually decided that you know what *I am going to be what you are labelling me to be* (Muslim man, London; authors' italics).

This comment illustrates how the focus on the 'extremist minority' in public discourse can have unpredictable effects; this young Muslim man suggests that identification with 'extremism' can become desirable and 'cool' the more it is vilified by the media and establishment. He is however at pains to distance himself from such responses: 'And I'm saying to progress you have to be positive and go with your life as normal'.

More everyday forms of resistance and resilience became a recurring theme across the groups. A young, second generation Pakistani British woman, for instance, expressed her indignation at being treated as a foreigner because of wearing the *hijab* (head covering or headscarf; see Rizvi 2007 for analysis of the particular targeting of Muslim women):

> It's funny that, it's funny, you know, just a piece of cloth on your head people start to think a bit different. And yet people when I speak with them, 'Wow, you've got quite good English'. Well, I was born and raised here. My dad is here since he was nine so I kind of ... And they are like oh, okay. You know, it's funny when someone ... I am doing my degree and my class is full of, a lot of international students, a lot of Europeans, Eastern Europeans, Europeans. [...] A few of these Europeans were talking to me they were like 'wow' ... Sorry? 'You have really good English.' This is coming from a foreigner that I have got good English. [laughter] I was like thank you (Muslim woman, London).5

In this way she interrogates the exclusions she has experienced as a visibly Muslim woman in British society (which included being ignored when asking the way in the street) and asserts her British identity.

Irish respondents also described their resistance to being associated with terrorism:

> Obviously I am a Londoner as well as being half Irish, so whenever a bomb went off someone would come into the office and it would be 'effing Irish' this and 'effing Irish' that. And I would say, 'Excuse me, I am half Irish and I don't appreciate that.' And then there would be the, 'Well, you know we didn't ...'. Yeah. Right. (Irish woman, London)

Responses to being treated as 'suspect' shared by Irish and Muslim participants were fear, cautiousness, lying low, staying in 'safe' areas and keeping quiet. Resilience and various forms of resistance were also described. Both Irish and Muslim respondets made direct links between counter-terrorism policies and politicisation, which may or may not lead to violence. However, in the Irish stories there were no accounts of an equivalent to the contemporary cultural affirmation of Muslim identities in response to attacks in London and New York and counter-terrorism. On the contrary, the impression of a community being silenced and afraid was stronger and more widespread in the Irish accounts. Our discussion of this phenomenon and comparison of experiences in the two eras is developed in the next section where we draw on the key informants' responses.

6. Similarities and Differences in Experiences

Key informants were specifically asked to compare the contemporary period with the period when the Irish were 'suspect'. The similarity mentioned more than any other was that both Irish communities and Muslim communities were associated with terrorism and similar measures had been implemented in both eras. One second-generation Irish man working in a community organisation in Birmingham stated:

> Well, it's a bit I suppose the same as the Muslims are suffering now. Erm, all of the Irish people then were treated as terrorists and bombers and that...

Muslims, yeah. In general conversation, they say, 'oh, these Muslims, you know, they are all at it, they are all making bombs and that'. Same as the Irish. I mean, the Guildford Four. Look at how long they suffered.

A number of Irish key informants responded along similar lines. A young Muslim woman working in a community organisation in London commented on the similarities in another way:

> I would have been very young sadly to remember too much about the Irish experience. But I do remember the bombing of the Conservative Party conference. I remember the notion of it being a threat as great as you now hear in terms of the terrorist threat you now hear from Muslim extremists identified... I think there were resonances of what Muslims are now experiencing in terms of questions to whether or not they endorsed parliamentary democracy, whether or not they showed allegiance to the Queen

In this response the similarity is drawn in terms of the marginalisation of Irish and Muslims as perceived endorsers of political violence and as potential traitors. Implicitly both were positioned outside of or in ambivalent relation to Britishness, and the values British citizens are expected to share. Both these key informants are making connections between the two eras and commenting on the process by which whole communities are rendered as 'risk repositories by virtue of sharing some or other of the characteristics of the "typical" terrorist' (Mythen and Walklate 2006:390).

The main differences discussed by significant numbers of the key informants related to their assessments of the relative vulnerability of Irish communities and Muslim communities as immigrants to discrimination and harassment and of their comparative public profiles. Many interviewees thought that Muslims were more straightforwardly identifiable and therefore could not hide and were more easily harassed. A leading civil liberties activist in London argued:

> I am not saying there wasn't a racist element in the 1970s but you know, but you are more markedly different. I mean, what I am saying is in the 1970s you could probably lower your voice or not speak, which is not great for any human being but you can probably do that and be smart and get out of trouble and you can't, you know, lower your skin tone, that is an added dimension, I think, you know, that sometimes people forget.

A young Muslim professional in Birmingham viewed things to some extent differently:

> … in terms of differences yes, I think the Irish people probably had it hard because we haven't seen that but when you look at our side maybe they had it more harder than us because they were very much involved with the English community, with the British people, whereas the Muslim community are kind of a Muslim community itself. The only time they probably face our non-Muslim colleagues is probably at work or if we go out of the area where we live. So we probably get it easier to a certain extent… So I think the Irish probably had it harder some points but then if you look at the other points maybe not as hard because we don't just get attacked because of the religion that we follow, it's also because of the colour and the racism issue comes into it.

His perception of the positioning of Irish people in relation to the English/British results in empathetic comments on how things may have been harder for them in the past; he is implying that their degree of contact with the majority ethnic population and possibly their expectations may have led to a worse backlash. However, his description of Muslims being afforded protection from backlash through their place-based communities also implied the defensiveness against backlash that this can constitute as careful decisions have to be made about 'if we go outside of the area where we live'. He ends by echoing the point of the previous quotation that visible difference makes Muslims more susceptible to harassment than the Irish.

His analysis of the complexity was borne out in these comments by an Irish woman in Birmingham with long experience in local Irish organisations:

> See the sad part about the Irish as well is that in some cases erm, the older people now as well if they could … Because of the, how they felt and how they were discriminated against or how they felt not as valued as sort of like a, one of the host country, they felt like they were foreigners and that, if they could get away with being classed as English, they thought that was a great kind of achievement really.

Here she is expressing a view about the responses of many Irish people in the 1970s, and 'now as well', and their perception of not being valued (see also Hickman and Walter 1997). Her comments are similar to accounts of the 'confidence inside the Muslim community' being 'at an all time low' and that many feel like 'conditional Britons' (Bari 2011).

A final extract further illustrates the complexity of accounting for differences between the two eras and is taken from an interview with a worker in an Irish voluntary organisation in Birmingham:

> I don't know if there are similarities. Erm, I don't know if there would be the extreme fervour, the hatred of the Seventies because a major incident didn't happen in the city. That prompted perhaps the most mild mannered and congenial people to turn against the Irish. You know, little old ladies that wouldn't say boo to a goose would certainly throw in their comments against their Irish neighbours. So you know, I am sure it does go on. And as I said before there was the protection. There's more protection around legislation now then there was in the Seventies.

A number of key informants, both Irish and Muslim, held the view that the Irish had had no protection in the past; and that by comparison, due to a number of legislative changes, Muslims had more rights in the 2000s. This latter positioning, it was stressed, neither prevented or eliminated the risk of being constructed as 'suspect'.

The contrast was also drawn between the more assertive public profile of some Muslims now compared with the lower public profile of the Irish in the previous era. Although the better legislative protection afforded for human rights and against discrimination was seen as underpinning this difference, the explanation was also seen to lie with the response of many of the younger generations of Muslims to being 'suspect'. One common response has been a reassertion of Muslim identifications amongst younger people, with many being proud to express this publicly. Their more confident public response compared with the similar Irish generations was partly attributed to the second generation Muslims being older now than the equivalent Irish second generation were in the 1970s. In contrast a majority of other Muslims, usually of the migrant generation, are characterised as keeping their 'heads down' in a similar manner to the response of many Irish in the 1970s.

7. Relationship to multi-ethnic Britain and Britishness

Many participants described their identities in terms of having a mixed or hybrid background, and many Muslim participants asserted British identity in the face of responses which racialised them or constructed them as outside Britishness:

> People, like really good friends of mine that don't have any fear of me because they are my friend they want to ask questions. I am thinking how long have you known me, what are you talking about. And they'll sort of say, 'So you, do you have a Somali passport?' And I am thinking what kind of a question is that? I said, 'But you've known me since primary school so is it likely that I wouldn't have a British passport?' (Muslim woman, London)

For Irish respondents, particularly those born in Britain, the issue was less about claiming Britishness, but more about the difficulty of working out how to be Irish, in the face of both the stigmatisation of an identity tainted with 'suspectness' and the assumption that being white they must be English:

> I mean, both my parents are Irish and I was kind of like, when I was young I didn't know if I was Irish or I was English and at school you were English but you were Irish really (Irish woman, London).

> I think the other thing is about talking about identity and stuff and keeping quiet. I mean for years a lot of second generation would not say they were Irish, probably until the Pogues came about in the Eighties (Irish woman, Birmingham)

In London, there was a very strong identification with the city:

> I mean, a lot of the reason why my life is the way that it is and I don't really find any stumbling blocks socially or sort of academically, I am born in London, I am raised in London, sort of thing, I am a Londoner. You know what I am trying to say. This is what I know as home. I am Eritrean originally but you know I've been here longer sort of thing. [everybody nods] (Muslim man, London)

> IF1[2]: There's me, born here, not quite sure what, you know, am I Irish or I am a bit English or maybe half English.

> IF2: No, you are a Londoner.

In Birmingham too, the city was an important focus for identification, and was perceived as 'safer' than the rest of Britain:

> I think as a community generally we feel more protected, partly because in Birmingham it's a large community and frankly, you know, if there is any abuse people will hear about it and it's, as you said [laughs] white people are a minority so they'd better be a bit careful (Muslim man, Birmingham)

There was a general sense among Muslim respondents in London and Birmingham of the rest of Britain being dangerous territory. It is significant that for Irish respondents the sense of threat was generalised, for instance, Irish participants in Birmingham spoke of feeling strongly targeted all over the Midlands after the Birmingham pub bombings. In contrast, most Muslim participants felt relatively safe in London, even though a bomb attack had taken place there. The possibility of the multicultural city representing a safe space for a targeted community seems therefore to be a recent phenomenon, and is perhaps a positive comment on how everyday multiculture can work in Britains' increasingly diverse urban spaces.

Several respondents were at pains to emphasise their connections with, and openness to other cultures, and a multicultural, urban identity was constructed in almost all the groups. This was sometimes opposed to a perception of white English people as monocultural, unfriendly and quite often threatening and hostile :

> I spoke to Irish people before and I found that probably, amongst English people very ignorant but Irish people tend to be very understanding because of the fact that they've come from a similar situation to what we've been through' (Muslim Man, Birmingham).

In some cases, friendliness warmth and family orientation were seen as common ground between Muslims and Irish people; in the quotation that follows 'the English' are not referred to directly, but are implied by the phrase 'Irish people were more welcoming and accepting':

[2]IF, MF: Irish woman, Muslim woman; IM, MM : Irish Man, Muslim Man. We do not give details of ethnicity here as we did not systematically solicit this information, given the small sample size, and emphasis on respondents volunteering information rather than being questioned in these groups.

MF: It's interesting because my family have lived in X since the early Eighties so pretty much all our neighbours were Irish. Everybody we knew was Irish except for the three other Somali families that were here in the Eighties that we knew. And definitely we found just as African immigrants that Irish people were more welcoming and more accepting …

IF1: But don't you think the cultures are something similar?

MF: The culture definitely.

IF: Because when I went out to Egypt to my husband's family it was like going to Ireland only instead of having sand, instead of having grass there was sand. But it was the same culture.

IF2: Hospitality

IF1: You know the key in the door, the door open. And everybody knew each other and would be in and out of each other's houses. They would be sitting with their rollers watching the telly. And it was exactly the same, except the telly was all in Arabic and everybody spoke Arabic. I've actually learned a bit about it. (Discussion between Irish and Muslim women, London).

At times religion itself was the linking factor, with the white English / British Other defined as secular, as this extract from one of the Birmingham groups attests:

IF: Even, even, might seem to be a bit strange but most Irish communities and obviously Islamic communities have a faith to start with which most secular British people don't. And I think we've got a starting point.

MM: We've got a common ground.

Clearly, these findings have important implications for debates about multiculturalism, and definitions of what it means to be British. Our respondents claim a multicultural, urban British identity which interrogates accounts of Britishness that are fundamentally based on white Englishness. The discussion groups also, and importantly, attest to the damage wrought to communities, individuals and social cohesion more broadly when certain groups are constructed, and treated as 'suspect'.

8. Conclusions

We set out to investigate across two eras of political violence whether communities had been represented as 'suspect' and if so to explore what the impact of this was for the everyday lives of Irish communities and Muslim communities. Our aim was also to consider the implications of constructing communities as 'suspect' for counter-terrorism measures and for social cohesion policies. We conclude that the representations and treatment of the Irish in the past have set a precedent for the treatment of Muslims in the current period. We have traced the way in which the reactions and responses to political violence in 1974 clearly had embedded within them the principles, and gave rise to, the prevention measures that have been practised on an even more systematic scale throughout the 2000s. Despite anti-discrimination legislation, Muslim communities today are subjected to a similar process of construction as 'suspect' as Irish communities in the previous era.

The frequent juxtaposition in the press, in political debate and in policy documents of 'the innocent Irish' and 'moderate Muslims' with 'terrorists' and 'extremists' effectively leads Irish and Muslim communities to be constructed as a two-faced Janus, with the 'law-abiding' always defined in relation to 'extremists'. Irish and Muslim communities are simultaneously and ambiguously depicted in public discourse as victims, allies and suspects, and the boundaries between the three are seen as shifting and permeable. This permeability and ambiguity has arguably contributed to fostering a social and political climate that has permitted, and seemingly continues to permit, grave violations of civil liberties and human rights with tragic consequences to take place, such as those we have witnessed in the Irish context in the past and continue to witness in the Muslim context in the current period.

From the evidence of the discussion groups and the key informants we concluded that the experience of being treated as a member of a 'suspect' community was shared by Irish and Muslim participants and that it resulted from: negative responses in everyday encounters, from neighbours, at work, in shops, on the street; police activity; and from security operations at ports and airports. Responses to being treated as 'suspect' shared by Irish and Muslim participants were fear, cautiousness, lying low, staying in 'safe' areas and keeping quiet. Resilient responses and practices of resistance were described for both eras. Irish and Muslim participants made direct links between counter-terrorism policies and various forms of politicisation. However, in the Irish stories there were no accounts of an equivalent to the contemporary cultural affirmation of Muslim identities in response to counter-terrorism policies. On the contrary, the impression of a community being silenced and afraid was stronger and more widespread in the Irish accounts.

In summary, this research has generated evidence across two eras of political violence that both representations of communities as 'suspect' and the implementation of counter-terrorism policies operate with notions of 'suspect communities'. Imposing boundaries around particular communities in this way – supposedly identified by appearance or accent or types of behaviour - limits and damages experiences of belonging. It induces a range of feelings and responses – anger, alienation, resignation, fear, resistance – all of which are potentially exclusionary in impact and undermine feelings of acceptance. The impacts of these representations and measures can include a process whereby forms of belonging that previously were part of a wider set of identifications for an individual (for example, being a Muslim) can become more important as a result of being 'suspected' of a likelihood of sympathising with (particular ideas or groups) or committing violent acts. In this situation when no other attributes of a person are recognised or valued the negative consequences for the individual and for society as a whole are serious and concerning.

Community cohesion policies throughout the 2000s emphasised the need to 'have a common vision and a sense of belonging for all communities' (*Guidance on Community Cohesion* 2008), the need to emphasise 'what binds communities together rather than what divides them' (*Commission on Integration and Cohesion* 2007) and the 'need to bring down the barriers that divide people in our country today' (Cameron, 2011). The ambiguity surrounding identifying who is an 'extremist' or a 'terrorist' has resulted in hostile encounters in everyday life between those who think they are under threat towards those who are associated with that threat. This has the effect of reinforcing boundaries between groups and is vividly expressed in our research by participants who lament that there seems to be only one vocabulary with which to discuss Muslims and their contribution to British society.

This research shows therefore that it is not sufficient to distinguish between the 'moderates' and the 'extremists' to guard against this impact. The constant recirculation of representations and practices of 'suspect communities' as groups of people made up of the 'innocent' and the 'threatening', and identified by generalised characteristics of ethnicity, religion, colour, accent or, now, supposed ideology, is inimical to social cohesion due to its potentially polarising effects on the population as a whole and its unjust consequences for Irish communities in the past and Muslim communities today.

Few lessons appear to have been learnt from the period of 'The Troubles', as key informants frequently remarked. Eventually the so-called 'irrational, mad, fanatics' of Irish republicanism were re-engaged in negotiations and the Good Friday Agreement of 1998 was the result. Those who were previously vilified are now part of the government in Northern Ireland with electoral support. The lifting of fear for Irish people in this country after 1998 was palpable, as reflected in our discussion groups. The recent assertions of the Prime Minister and the Home Secretary that what is referred to as 'non-violent extremism' is an incubator of 'violent extremism', despite contrary evidence, is only likely to further reinforce the negative impacts on Muslims in Britain of counter-terrorism policies. It is also likely to further encourage the public at large, on this evidence, both to be more fearful (as it is rarely linked to any transparent assessment of risk) and therefore to treat Muslims as potential 'suspects' or legitimate objects of abuse.

The main counteracting force that we identified to a categorisation of Muslims as potential 'suspects', as a result of official policies and government and media representations, lay in the cosmopolitanism that characterises places like London and Birmingham. The sympathetic exchanges in the discussion groups demonstrated this repeatedly. If discourses of 'suspectness' were not so widespread perhaps deeper connections would also develop with the majority ethnic group. These documented representations of communities as 'suspect' illustrate that hostile ideas about Irish in the past and Muslims in the present are not only generated by organisations like the English Defence League or Combat 18, in fact the former openly acknowledge that they feed off tabloid headlines.

The empathetic connections established between participants in the discussion groups indicate the limitations of the community cohesion agenda with its identification of 'communities' as the site of the problem of preventing political violence and as the site of strategies of social cohesion. There have been calls to engage community involvement more positively in a fight against extremism (Spalek and Lambert 2008, Jackson 2008, Bari 2011). Our research suggests that any positive representations of and engagement with Muslims in the current context would be beneficial. But our conclusion is different. This is because our focus has not been on extremism. We have been concerned to chart the impact of being 'suspected' on the everyday lives of the so-called 'innocent' or 'moderate' majority. It is necessary to change the negative impacts of the process of constructing communities as 'suspect'. This requires a change in the practice of conceiving of certain communities within civil society as problematic for social cohesion and of conflating this with conceptualising certain populations as 'suspect' where political violence is concerned.

The current government has stated that it seeks to separate the community cohesion agenda from the counter-terrorism agenda. This is useful but their location of the problem of political violence and the focus of counter-terrorism remains fixed on Muslim communities and a strategy of rooting out extreme ideas. This is a classic counter-insurgency strategy of the type that was unsuccessful in Northern Ireland. We have outlined that there are many more continuities between the two eras of political violence, particularly in counter-terrorism policies, than politicians and policy makers readily admit. A more successful policy would involve learning from this past.

9. Policy Relevance

This is the first large comparative and historical project engaging simultaneously with two large ethnic and religious minorities in Britain who have been at the centre of security policy concerns for several decades. Our multi-level and multi-disciplinary approach is a contribution to ongoing reflections on the consequences and effectiveness of past and existing measures to counter-terrorism.

In this section we highlight the lessons learnt and the recommendations identified from the assessment of counter-terrorism policies, related discourses, and the experiences of Irish communities and Muslim communities.

- Political violence remains a central security concern for the state and its response continues to be couched within the notion of 'emergency' and 'exceptionalism', despite the apparent normalisation of terrorism with the Terrorism Act 2000, when counter-terrorism laws were made permanent.
- This is because the strategic ideas underpinning counter-terrorism over four decades have not changed.
- There has been a widening of interpretations of the notion of terrorism, which render the demarcation between what is lawful and criminal activities extremely thin and ambiguous.
- While it would seem that it was generally not the deliberate intention of policy-makers to actually demonise communities, counter-terrorism policies have always had the effect of frightening and alienating communities, regardless of the arguments through which they were presented and justified. So, while we acknowledge that those who make and enforce such measures might not believe in the idea of 'suspect communities', those at the receiving end are likely to perceive that they are considered as such.
- The recent linking of extremist ideas that are non-violent with violent extremism, on the one hand reinforces the notion of a 'suspect' community and on the other hand makes explicit what has always been implicit in the idea of 'the enemy within' and the injunction that dangerous people are lurking 'in our midst'.
- The impact of counter-terrorism practices and representations of 'suspectness' upon everyday relations and experiences have been very similar for Irish communities and for Muslim communities across four decades.
- The persistence of the negative effects of the reproduction of ideas of 'suspectness', shows that the legal protections afforded by anti-discrimination legislation and the Human Rights Act, despite some undoubted effectiveness, have not been sufficient to safeguard the well-being of the members of the communities exposed to counter-terrorism measures.
- Nevertheless, the long-term effects of anti-discrimination policies combined with a determination on the part of many Muslims to affirm their Britishness and assert their voice within the democratic process in a more confident way than was available to Irish communities in the 1970s.
- In the previous era of political violence recasting the 'threat' and engaging in direct negotiations, rather than the immediate effects of laws and policy slogans such as 'cohesion' or 'de-radicalisation', are what allowed communities to gradually exit the category of 'suspect' and to become rehabilitated into society.
- Bringing Irish people together with Muslim people was particularly useful not only because they could share similar experiences but also because the Irish participants spoke about (and in fact where the actual embodiment of) the possibility of coming out from the category of suspicion, of becoming 'normal' again. This was an important sign of hope, a reassuring factor for the Muslim participants.
- The reciprocal identification of experiences and the empathetic relationship established between Irish and Muslim participants in our discussion groups is on example of the lived possibility of coexistence and mutual trust based on shared social and political concerns in a diverse society. Valuing the legacy of multiculturalism and its everyday practice would help bring down barriers and emphasise what is held in common more effectively than constructing 'suspect communities'.

Recommendations:

- There should be more historical awareness of the relative effectiveness of past (and not just the immediate, recent past) counter-terrorism measures, and of their consequences, when developing new frameworks to counter-terrorism.
- Greater awareness of, and sensitivity to possible impacts on individuals and communities should underpin the formulation of counter-terrorism policies.
- Greater awareness in and by the press and political establishment of the dangers of characterising communities as 'harbouring extremists', as responsible for solving the problem of terrorism, or as split between the innocent, law-abiding, moderate majority and the extremist, criminal minority, would help to diminish the negative focus on Muslim communities..
- The conscious avoidance of extreme language and terminology such as 'evil', 'perverse', 'barbaric' and so on, and particularly the association of these terms with Islam and Muslim/s (or any other group), in the media, in political commentary and in policy documents would help to diminish the negative impacts of such representations on Muslim communities.
- Policies that foster the practices of multiculturalism based on less bounded notions of communities may be more successful in promoting social cohesion within an increasingly ethnically, religiously and culturally diverse society, than the focus on suspect communities as a source of and responsible for a solution to political violence.

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11. Appendix

Methods

For the study of public discourses we needed to operationalise the collection and analysis of an immense amount of data, over almost four decades. 19 'key events' were identified in the period 1974-2007 to facilitate the data collection. This choice is neither exhaustive nor representative of what happened in those years in Britain in relation to Irish communities or to Muslim communities. It was determined in part by the need to select points in time enabling us to establish some comparisons of similar events and crises. For instance, we drew parallels between reactions to bomb attacks, arrests and releases of suspects, unlawful killings of suspects and discussion of anti-terrorism legislation. We also included events that are not strictly comparable, but that are significant political and symbolic crises or turning points in relation to the communities studied, such as the Rushdie affair, the 'veil controversy' and the Good Friday Agreement.

Table 1: The key events

Irish-related events	Muslim-related events
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	

Nine of these events pertain to Irish communities and an equal number concern Muslims. The course of history is such that most 'Irish events' are located in the past while most 'Muslim events' are concentrated in the last decade. The Terrorism Act 2000 related to both communities. Despite its significance as an event with major long-lasting global implications, we did not select 11 September 2001 because of our focus on the specificity of events and communities in Britain and because of the considerable academic attention representations of this event have already received, and which we draw on (for example, Ahmad 2006, Banaji and Al-Ghabban 2006, Halliday 2002, Harb and Bessaiso 2006, Gillespie 2006, Poole 2006).

We set the study of the impacts of being 'suspect' as experienced in everyday encounters and incidents in the lives of people assumed to be Irish or Muslim in two cities: London and Birmingham. They were chosen because they are places with significant Irish and Muslim populations, and where bombings and/or arrests have taken place in both eras of political violence.

Policy Study

In the policy study we examined the language adopted in the key forum for public democratic deliberation, Parliament (both houses), including the processes whereby laws and policies have been discussed, implemented, monitored and reviewed. We also examined the output of relevant ministries and agencies (e.g. Cabinet of the Prime Minister, Home Office; Police; Commission for Racial Equality), as well as Royal Commissions of inquiry, independent reviews, statutory bodies, and local authorities. We analysed speeches and programmatic statements, strategic papers, commissioned research and command papers, Parliamentary committee reports and minutes. We looked for substantive and descriptive attributes of incidents of political violence and of their perpetrators and of other key events, and whether (if at all) they intersected with ideas of British identity, race, ethnicity, migration and religion.

Having coded and classified (by topic, author, and typology) over 800 sets of policy documents produced between 1974 and 2007, we conducted a close analysis of a smaller selection grouped together in 13 thematic 'packages'. Typically, packages were constructed around one or more (interlocked) 'key events', and included: a speech by the Prime Minister or other Government official, the relevant Parliamentary Debate; the law or policy measure triggered by or under discussion at the time of that event; if available, the independent review of the implementation of the said measure; if available, research or reports commissioned by the establishment around an issue closely related to the given event.

Whenever we encountered particularly relevant additional documents we examined them closely too. The analysis entailed tracing, dissecting and comparing over time the choice of words and phraseologies used to express political priorities, to identify threats, to communicate policy responses, and to refer to Irish communities or Muslim communities. We also considered how all these layers may have intersected with each other and with other external concerns. The comparison was conducted on two levels: by looking at similar events and proceeding thematically.

Media Study

We analysed the press because newspapers are accessible for the period of the study, remain widely read, whether online or in print, and retain an agenda-setting role in national politics (Gillespie 2006). Little attention has been paid in academic analyses of the media to the echoes, continuities, or ruptures in the media coverage across the two eras, with research on the representation of Muslims in the British media (Moore et al., 2008; Poole, 2002; Poole and Richardson, 2006; Richardson, 2001, 2004) rarely referencing previous work done in the Irish context (an exception is Miller 1994).

Our study evaluated representations of Irish communities and Muslim communities 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)* following our 19 key events.

We collected all news items referring to these events for one month after they took place, with the exception of the Good Friday Agreement and the 2000 and 2006 Terrorism Acts, where periods covering the time span of the policy making process were collected; a three-month period was covered for the monthly *Muslim News*. Only news items referring to British Muslims or to Islam in Britain were collected for the July 2005 London bombings, as otherwise the number of items collected for these bombings alone would have been in the thousands.

This selection process yielded a total of 2,798 news items, 39.4% of which are Irish-related, 60% Muslim-related, with the remaining 0.6% relating to both. Two methods were used to analyse this data: mapping analysis (i.e. descriptive statistical analysis establishing the typology of news coverage) and critical discourse analysis (Burr, 2003; Jaworski and Coupland, 2006; Van Dijk 1998). By combining these methods we were able to draw an overall picture of coverage of the events; evaluate the extent to which Irish and Muslim communities are represented as 'suspect'; examine how these representations work at a more subtle level; and identify discourses that circulate in the construction of Irish and Muslim communities in the British press.

Key Informant Interviews

We carried out 42 in-depth, semi-structured interviews with key informants in Birmingham and London. We selectively sampled specialised knowledge of: journalistic coverage of the eras; elected politicians at local and national level; legal knowledge of the system of justice across the two eras; religious leaders; and local organisations that address the welfare needs and cultural activities of Irish communities and Muslim communities. The criteria for selection of the key informants was that they be strategically positioned in one or more of these arenas and, where possible, have some knowledge or memory of both eras of political violence. The interview data was analysed using Systemic Network Analysis (see Holland 1981, 1986). A network is an instrument or a device that enables information to be transformed into data relevant to the exploration of a theory, a hypothesis or guiding ideas; it is rather like a map, it allows distinctions to be drawn and relationships between constituent parts of the data to be represented.

Discussion groups

Our aim in holding discussion groups was to bring Irish and Muslim people together to hold a conversation about their comparative experiences and views about the representation of communities as 'suspect' in Britain, in part to see if the participants thought this a useful exchange. The seven discussion groups took place in London (four) and Birmingham (three), and each involved between four and eight participants.

We recruited through existing contacts in both cities, a wide variety of mailing lists, through local community centres and in London through a large, private sector employer. The total sample consisted of 19 participants identifying as Muslim (10 men, nine women) and 19 as Irish (nine men, 10 women). The Muslim participants, a majority of whom were migrants or second generation, came from a variety of ethnic backgrounds including Somali, Moroccan, Yemeni, white British convert, Pakistani, Eritrean and Mauritian. The Irish participants were either migrants from Ireland or Northern Ireland or of Irish descent. The participants ranged from early 20s to late 70s, so an intergenerational, as well as inter-ethnic and inter-religious dynamic was a significant feature of the groups.

Our aim was to include non-hegemonic voices, rather than community leaders or political activists, and this was achieved. It is possible that individuals who had been subject to abuse were more likely to respond to our search for participants. In our search, however, we stressed that the main criteria other than identifying as Irish or Muslim was to have lived in either city during one or both eras of political violence. We did not seek people who had been arrested, rather we sought people whose first response was often 'nothing has happened to me personally'. Clearly, almost all respondents had some interest in the topic of the discussion, but their views and experience were very varied. The data collected from these recorded and transcribed discussions was analysed using Fairclough's framework of contents, relations and subject positions to carry out thematic and contextual analysis of the discussions (Fairclough 1989: 46).

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Nevertheless, all responsibility for the contents rests with the authors

Further information:

The full report, 'Suspect Communities'? Counter-terrorism policy, the press and the impact on the Irish and Muslim communities in Britain, by Mary J Hickman, Lyn Thomas, Sara Silvestri and Henri Nickels is available as a free download from: www.londonmet.ac.uk/research-units/iset/projects/esrc-suspect-communities.cfm.

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