

## **What the British Papers Said on the First Anniversary of the London Bombing**

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### **Abstract**

On 7 July 2005, three bombs exploded on London underground trains, with a fourth on a double-decker bus. Four British Muslims – Mohammed Siddique Khan (30 years), Shehzad Tanveer (22 years), Germaine Lindsay (19 years) and Hasib Mir Hussain (18 years) carried out the terrorist acts. Reports in the immediate aftermath confirmed that 52 people (including one Muslim girl, Shahara Akhtar Islam, 20 years) had been killed, and many more were injured. British Muslims claim the unacknowledged victims of this tragedy are the mainstream Muslim population who have borne the brunt of the repercussions and that, one year on, little has been done by the Blair government to combat the threat of terror or to build stronger bridges between the Muslim community and the wider British society (Chowdhury, 2006, p. 35). This paper examines in general terms what the print media in the UK say on the first anniversary of the 7/7 atrocity. It draws on four British broadsheets and four tabloids published on 7/7/2006. It is based on a snapshot analysis of the media's reporting of the London bombings on the occasion of the first anniversary of the attack.

## Introduction

With 3 per cent of the total population, Muslims in Britain number some 1.6 million people. Although Muslims have lived in the United Kingdom for at least the past 300 years, the first settlers being Arab traders, it was not until after World War II that many South Asian Muslims migrated to Britain and, in so doing, planted a number of distinctively British Muslim communities. Since that time, British Muslims have become a particularly disadvantaged group within the British labour market. They are three times more likely to be unemployed than the majority Christian/notionally Christian/secular group. They have the lowest employment rate of any religious population (38 per cent) and the highest economic inactivity rate (52 per cent) (Choudhury, 2005, p. 14; Modood, 2005, p. 81).

Notwithstanding widespread economic disadvantage, however, the London bombers did not represent the overall lower socio-economic status of their community. For example, British-born Shehzad Tanweer (22) belonged to an economically affluent family. His father ran a fish-and-chip shop and Tanweer “who fancied himself as a young entrepreneur left [GBP]121,000 after tax” (*The Times*, 7 July 2006, p. 4). Not motivated by exclusion from Britain’s general status of economic prosperity, Tanweer and his associates seem to have been incensed by British foreign policy, which they constructed as anti-Islam. In a video made shortly before he carried out the attack, and screened on *Al Jazeera* on the eve of the anniversary, bomber Shehzad Tanweer said, “What you have witnessed now is only the beginning of a string of attacks that will continue and become stronger until you pull your forces out of Afghanistan and Iraq and until you stop your financial and military support to America and Israel” (Chowdhury, 2006, p. 35).

In *Reporting Islam: Media Representations of British Muslims* (2002), Poole discussed how the British broadsheet press has generally covered Islam and Muslims since the Salman Rushdie affair (1989, when a *fatwa* [death warrant] was issued against Rushdie by Iran’s Ayatollah Khomeini following the 1988 publication of his book, *the Satanic Verses*). Poole observed that in the late 1990s, international events dominating the news media’s attention included conflicts in Algeria, Afghanistan, Bosnia, Chechnya, Kashmir and Kosovo (2002, p. 57). Poole observed that coverage by the *Guardian* appeared generously disposed towards British Muslims, giving voice and space to a range of commentators who raised the West’s treatment of Islam and Muslims as instances of ‘Other’ing. Commentators such as Edward Said, Salman Rushdie, Ziauddin Sardar and Tariq Modood were given space in the newspaper’s opinion section. The *Guardian* also began generally sympathetic coverage of a range of cultural issues raised since 9/11 including, for example, the choice of some Western Muslim women to wear the *hijab* (head scarf). Whilst *The Times* also covered some Muslim issues sympathetically, the approach of the *Guardian* was usually from a secular perspective highlighting civil liberties and freedom of speech, while *The Times* was more likely to adopt a ‘Christian perspective’ and focus on Muslim extremism (2002, p. 5-7) setting up a clash of cultures/clash of faiths discourse. However, Poole had identified (2002, p. 84) some defining themes in Britain’s broadsheet coverage of Muslims and Islam prior to the 2005 bombings, as follows:

- Muslim involvement in deviant activities threatens security in the UK;
- Muslims are a threat to British ‘mainstream’ values and thus provoke concerns about integration;
- There are inherent cultural differences between Muslims and the host community, which create tension in interpersonal relations;

- Muslims are increasingly making their presence felt in the public sphere.

The next section of the paper provides a snapshot analysis (a frozen moment of time, divorced from other contexts, eg Mouzos et al 2006, p. 116) of Britain's national broadsheet media representations of the first anniversary of the 7/7 London bombings. It will help determine whether analysis of coverage in *The Times*, *The Guardian*, *The Daily Telegraph*, and *The Independent* support the currency of Poole's observations following the tragedy of the 7/7 killings.

On the other hand, research on young people conducted by the Mori Social Research Institute in London (Mori 2004) concluded that broadsheets, tabloids and local papers tend to be focused on negative reporting. In this paper, we will also examine "what the tabloids said", and compare the similarities and differences of both sets of papers.

## What the broadsheets said on 7 July, 2006

### The Times

*The Times* of 7 July 2006 dedicated pages 1-7 to the anniversary of the 7/7 bombing. The cover page juxtaposed the images of 22-year old bomber, Shehzad Tanweer (as broadcast the previous day on *Al Jazeera*) and 20-year old victim Shahara Islam. It revealed two faces of Islam through its headlines – the militant Islam of the terrorist, and the moderate Islam of Shahara, a victim of the attacks. Shahara Islam (Hamilton, 2006, p. 3) was reported to be "a devout Muslim who worked as a cashier at the Co-operative Bank. Shahara straddled the Muslim and the Western worlds, going to the mosque every Friday while enjoying Western independence and fashion".

However, in line with Poole's observation that *The Times* tended to make explicit reference to Christian values, the paper implied to its readers that Judeo-Christian values were superior to others in an article entitled 'Faiths unite against terrorism' (Gledhill, 2006, p. 3), which concentrated exclusively on Jewish and Christian leaders who had "called for renewed efforts to combat terrorism". The Archbishop of York, Dr John Sentamu was quoted as saying: "We must out-imagine terrorism and that means believing and living a faith which will attract all idealists. I challenge all those who claim to be Christian to come off the sidelines, become active Christian disciples and share their faith by word and deed". Although Hamilton had mentioned (p.3) that "The biggest Islamic cultural festival staged in Europe will take place today at Alexandra Palace in North London. Organisers of IslamExpo said that visitors would observe the two-minute silence at noon", Gledhill – *The Times's* Religion Correspondent – made no comment on religious Muslims' response to the anniversary.

*The Times* (7 July 2006, pp. 4-5) also explicitly connects 'the home-grown terrorist' (UK) with 'the western-born convert' (US) which might reflect the habit of Murdoch papers to use the same stories in different markets. The connection is made through publishing the images of the two London suicide bombers and (on the opposite side of the double-page spread) a photograph of Adam Pearlman, the Californian convert to Islam suspected of masterminding the filming of the bombers' suicide messages. Pearlman (Adam Yahiyeh Gadahn) is on the FBI's 'Most Wanted Terrorists' List and is the first American since 1952 to be indicted by a federal grand jury for treason (although his whereabouts are unknown). The two stories in

tandem add weight to the videotaped claim that the 7/7 atrocities are “only the beginning of a string of attacks” (O’Neill & McGrory 2006, p. 4), and that the West is at risk from its own.

### **The Guardian**

Tanweer’s suicide video also sets the tone for the *Guardian*’s (7 July 2006, p. 1) front page. Identified as “one of the homegrown terrorists”, the grainy video image of Shehzad Tanweer is surmounted by the headline ‘One year on, a London bomber issues a threat from the dead’ (Laville & Dodd 2006, p. 1). Alongside the main story – which uses a subhead banner to quote Tanweer who linked his attack to British foreign policy in Afghanistan and Iraq – is a report on a ‘Confidential dossier’ compiled “by anti-terrorist specialists”. The report is quoted as arguing that “it is over-simplistic to describe terrorism as the result of foreign policy. What western foreign policy does provide is justification for violence” (Dodd 2006, p. 1).

Guardian reporters also filed a reaction to the screening of the Tanweer video from Beeston, Leeds, “the ethnically mixed area which spawned three of the four bombers” (Vulliamy & Wainwright 2006, p. 6). It is perhaps unsurprising that the headline for this article is ‘A video is a way to keep it going. I wish it would go away and you would too’. The story gives space to local conspiracy theories about the bombings, which appear to have persisted even after the release of Tanweer’s suicide video, alongside the screening – some months previously – of the video made by Mohammad Siddique Khan (30), the group’s leader. As one man (named simply ‘Sadiq’) said to the reporter: “A video proves nothing. I don’t think it was who they said it was blew up London and I don’t think it was bin Laden did 9/11” (ibid.). The pattern of denial and the seeking of refuge in conspiracy theories has been noted elsewhere in coverage of the 9/11 attacks (Friedman 2003, p. 327).

As discussed earlier, Poole noted in 2002 that the *Guardian* was generally sympathetic to Muslim issues. On first anniversary of 7/7, however, the newspaper was prompt to remind its readers that the threat “from the dead” indicates that more carnage is imminent. This sense of threat is reinforced by the space given to opinions voiced by the Muslim ‘Other’ that deny the 7/7 atrocity had a homegrown genesis. Two opinion pieces – one from a UK professor of defence studies (Clarke 2006, p. 32) and the other by a US professor of religion and international affairs who was also a keynote at the Islam Expo mentioned by the *Times* (Esposito 2006, p. 32) – remind Guardian readers that the threat is real. Clarke argues (2006, p. 32) that even “if the government thinks it is holding its own in the war of policing, it is losing ground fast in the war of ideas. Wild conspiracy theories run unchallenged”. Esposito, reporting upon a poll of 10 Muslim countries, argues that (2006, p. 32) “Anti-western feelings result from what we do, our policies and actions, not from our way of life” and comments that “the war on terrorism is seen by many Muslims as a war on Islam”.

### **The Daily Telegraph**

*The Daily Telegraph*’s main headline on 7 July 2007 focussed on domestic politics (anti-Labour) but the second most important front page story included the ubiquitous still of Tanweer underneath the headline: ‘Suicide bomber’s video won’t frighten us, say July 7 families’ (Steele 2006, p. 1). Further discussion was carried on page 2, and pp. 14–15 with editorial comment on p. 23. Staff writer Philip Johnston, in a story entitled ‘Home-grown extremists are the biggest threat to life and liberty’ (p. 14), warned *Telegraph* readers that:

“Hundreds of mainly young Muslim men, some influenced by outside *jihadis*, who despise Britain because of Israel, Iraq or because of its perceived decadence, are posing a threat to the country that it has not known in peacetime”. Farrar (2006, p. 98) defines *jihadi* Islam as suicidal, militarist Islam associated with the al Qaeda ideology.

Johnston also comments that “as Tony Blair said this week, there is still a state of denial in the Muslim community over the poison in its midst”. This perspective is echoed in the stories carried on p. 15 where the families of two of the bombers, Hasib Hussain (18) and 22-year old Shehzad Tanweer, are shown to be unable to accept the reality of the situation with Tanweer’s uncle quoted as saying “I still don’t believe he could do this sort of thing. I don’t know what was inside. Only God knows.” (Gardham 2006, p. 15). A central image of this page’s coverage was a photograph of Hasib’s father Mahmood Hussain; a bearded man wearing a Muslim cap or *topi*. In her research on the Australian media representation of Islam and Muslim since 2001, Kabir (2006) found Australian print media regularly used images of bearded Muslim men, or veiled women, alongside reports on terrorism. For example, a *West Australian* ‘War on Terror’ news page carried both images of Osama bin Laden and veiled Muslim women. While the press reported sympathetically on the women, the images were inappropriately associated with other news to give readers the impression that the nature of “Muslimness” is violence (Kabir 2006). Similarly, the use of the graphic of Hasib Hussain’s father on the *Telegraph*’s page could be used to reinforce a generalised communication that bearded men of Muslim appearance live in a culture of denial, and pose a potential security threat.

### **The Independent**

Unlike the other broadsheets (notwithstanding that the *Times* and *Independent* are now tabloid in size), *The Independent*’s front page did not have a scare-mongering graphic or headline. At one level, this indicated that 7/7 2006 was just an ordinary day. However, this ‘everydayness’ was secured by a special 9-page ‘*The Independent EXTRA*’ with a black faced front page and bold title proclaiming ‘One day, seven lives, one year on’, and telling the stories of: a tube driver; the friend of one of the bomber’s families; an on-call anaesthetist; a bereaved partner; a police officer; the Lord Mayor of Leeds, and a train bomb survivor.

The EXTRA lift-out had clearly been prepared some time in advance: the news of the Tanweer video was carried on p. 5 of the main paper, ‘Bomber’s video shows hand of al-Qa’ida’ (Herbert 2006, p. 5). Although this article links the production of the video with American-born propagandist Adam Yahiye Gadahn, and notes that it includes “Ayman al-Zawahiri, al-Qa’ida’s second-in-command” it also cautions that “it is also possible al-Qa’ida has appropriated Tanweer’s video as a publicity stunt. Though it probably helped train the London bombers, no evidence points to a controlling al-Qa’ida mastermind behind the attacks”.

Alongside the report of the Tanweer video is a positive report on British Muslims: ‘Muslims set up coalition to fight extremism’ (Russell & Morris 2006, p. 5). The report on the collaboration between 14 British Islamic groups deals straightforwardly with the issue of denial: “Muslims must accept that there are extremists and terrorists that justify themselves by reference to Islam and this places a particular responsibility on Muslim citizens to expose these false claims and refute such false justifications for acts that are clearly against Islam”. Although *The Independent*’s ‘news’ coverage of the 7/7 bombings is modest, the page refers

its readers to four pieces of comment and analysis – and the Letters page – as also dealing with the 7/7 attacks.

The editorial and opinion pages (pp. 34–35) carried conciliatory coverage of the anniversary. The illustrative graphic of the editorial ‘The bombs that risk driving us apart’, features a map of the London Underground with the Central Line replaced by a “Blood Line” – running through stations which include Nairobi, Kabul, Bali, 9/11, Abu Ghraib, Fallujah and 7/7 (replacing Oxford Circus). This has the effect of positioning 7/7 in the midst of a range of atrocities both by and against Muslims; contexting the whole within the environs of the London Underground. Commenting on the award of the 2012 Olympics to London – followed so swiftly by the 7/7 bombings – the un-named leader writer notes: “Those 48 hours brought the country together. We must ensure that the longer-term response, with the prospect of more illiberal laws and heightened suspicion of the Muslim minority, does not end up driving it apart” (*Independent* editorial 2006, p. 34).

On the page opposite the *Independent* editorial, Dominic Lawson’s opinion piece (p. 35), ‘The British are not a people who can be terrorised into changing their ways’, helpfully draws parallels with the British reaction to the Irish Republican Army’s ‘mainland’ bombing campaigns during the 1970s and 1980s (typically against military targets), noting that “It led to no great call from the English to their government to abandon the Protestants of Northern Ireland. Nor, on the other hand, did it lead to attacks on the Irish diaspora in Britain.” Nonetheless, Lawson regrets that extremist *jihadi* Muslims believed themselves to be victims of Judeo-Christian imperialist regimes and asks “why should it never have figured in their minds [of the Muslims] that Britain had played a very significant role in defending the Muslims of Kosovo against the Serbs – and indeed forced through the independence of Kosovo against the wishes of their historic Christian oppressor?” Finally, underlining the *Independent*’s attempt at balance, Muslim columnist Shamim Chowdhury used her opinion piece ‘We cannot stop this extremism on our own’ (p. 35), to argue that “the forgotten victims of July 7 were the Muslims who bore the brunt of the repercussions”.

### **What the major tabloids said on 7 July 2006**

The tabloid newspapers, *The Sun*, *The Daily Mirror*, and *The Daily Mail*, mark the anniversary of the London bombings through images and headlines, rather than detailed commentary, and carry almost identical messages out in their cover pages. In sum, these assert that the terrorists failed; the British won and will survive. In contrast, and perhaps surprisingly, *The Daily Express* offered more balanced reporting.

#### **The Sun**

Of all the tabloid papers, *The Sun* offered the maximum coverage of the anniversary. As its cover image, *The Sun* carried the picture of a London double-decker Bus, route 30: the service that was blown up by 18 year old Hasib Mir Hussain. The headline, ‘7/7: One year on’, was complemented by the word in the bus’s destination display: ‘UNBEATEN’ The reports (pp. 4-6) in the *Sun* focus on the survivors’ comments and strength, while a special inside report contains 8 pages of tributes to the victims. The main news coverage (pp. 4-5), carries headlines that echo the front-page image, ‘7/7 ONE YEAR ON ... WE ARE STILL NOT AFRAID’ and use as a subheading a tagline from one of the people affected: ‘They won’t beat me and they won’t beat Britain’ (which may have inspired the ‘UNBEATEN’

destination indicator). *The Sun* uses the comments of a victim's mother, Marie Fatayi-Williams, to indicate that the killer's (Hasib Hussain's) family is still in a state of denial. The story reports that, "Marie issued her plea [to Hussain's parents] as it was revealed Hussain's dad is STILL in denial over his son's involvement in the bloodbath. He insisted at his Leeds home: 'No one has shown me any evidence that he did it'" (France 2006, p. 4).

In a sister report, '7/7 ONE YEAR ON: Legacy of fear and suspicion' (Kavanagh 2006, p. 6) the *Sun* reminds its readers of the constructions of the violent and emotional nature of Muslims in the west by publishing an image of mass protests over the Danish cartoons "ridiculing" Prophet Mohammed. Another image introduces the findings of a potentially divisive poll with a photo image of a police raid which resulted in a Muslim suspect being shot in the leg. The caption paragraph reads: "Views on the Forest Gate police raid, in which a Muslim man was shot, differed hugely. Two out of three non-Muslims say police were right to go in. But only 15 per cent of Muslims agree". Further, a clear majority of Muslims (55 per cent) believe that the police who shot Brazilian student Juan Charles de Menezes, following 7/7 and while in the grip of a terrorism scare, should be tried for murder or manslaughter. *The Sun* also published a poll indicating that almost half of the Muslim respondents to their poll believe the police are "not efficient or intelligent enough" for the task of counter terrorism; while less than a quarter of non-Muslims agree with this statement.

Other differences abound. 44 per cent of Muslims believe that British Muslims leaders are trying to build good relations between Britain's Muslims and non-Muslims, while only 18 per cent of non-Muslims agree that Muslim leaders are trying to establish harmonious multicultural relations. More than half of non-Muslims (54 per cent) want the death penalty for terrorists, with one in three Muslims (30 per cent) agreeing. *The Sun* reported that its poll suggests that tensions between Muslims and non-Muslims are increasing. It went on to report that a majority of Muslims condemn Britain's stance on the Middle East and Afghanistan as "anti-Muslim", while slightly more than half (51 per cent) "sympathise with Muslims fighting a holy war against the West" (Kavanagh 2006, p. 6).

*The Sun* – a Murdoch title – enjoys the highest circulation of any daily English-language newspaper in the world, with a readership of 3,047,527/day between 2-29 April 2007 (NMA 2007). Under the circumstance, the representations of British Muslim views via the poll results, published on the anniversary of the bombing, are likely to instill fear in non-Muslim Britons.

### **The Daily Mirror**

*The Daily Mirror* uses a still of Shehzad Tanweer from the *Al Jazeera* broadcast on its front page. The headline reads: 'On the day we remember the victims of 7/7, al-Qaeda releases this video of a London suicide bomber taunting Britain. We say.. "DAMN YOU TO HELL". Inside, (pp. 4-5) the *Mirror* also carries a threatening image from the suicide tape of Mohammad Siddique Khan. John Falding, partner of bombing victim Anat Rosenberg (who died in the 7/7 attacks) comments: "If this [Tanweer's] video is meant to twist the knife and wreck the anniversary I have one message for al-Qaeda.. IT WON'T". The paper also carries an article about British Muslims including a comment from the Muslim Council of Britain which (the *Mirror* says): "appears to confirm the bombers were radicalised due to aspects of our country's foreign policy and participation in wars against Afghanistan and Iraq" (Male 2006, p. 4). One might interpret this as commenting that British Muslims were blaming the British government's foreign policy for the atrocities, instead of the bombers' criminal acts.

In conciliatory contrast to this comment, however (while noting that “no one at Tanweer’s home would comment [on the anniversary]”), the *Mirror* quotes student Arashad Khan as saying: “This [Tanweer suicide video] was broadcast to cause maximum disruption for the anniversary. For the families who’ve lost loved ones it must be the final insult. To have to listen to this lunatic explaining his sick ideology is appalling” (Male 2006, p. 4).

### **The Daily Mail**

Echoing US coverage of the 9/11 attacks, *The Daily Mail* publishes an image of each of the 52 victims. The headline in the front page proclaims: ‘Yesterday, those behind the 7/7 atrocity released a video of one of the bombers. Their aim, on this poignant anniversary, was to keep the victims of their evil act off our front page. They failed’. Having honoured the dead, much of the internal *Mail* coverage (pp. 4-5) concentrates upon images of, and stories from, the survivors. The final comment of the coverage is that of Arshad Choudhry, a member of the Leeds Muslim Forum, “It’s very upsetting for Muslims for it [the Tanweer video] to come at this time, especially when we are trying to look ahead. It’s very sad for the people who knew those who lost their lives” (Williams 2006, p. 5).

In an editorial entitled ‘A squalid stunt as a nation remembers’ (p. 14) the *Daily Mail* comments that “while most decent Muslims were horrified by Tanweer’s crime, polls suggest that 13 per cent regard the killers as ‘martyrs’. But it isn’t just this alienated minority that gives cause for concern [...] The feeble £500 fine on the Muslim extremist who organised inflammatory protests against cartoons of the prophet Mohammad and whose website spews hate seems to sum up official impotence”. The overall theme of day was that some British Muslims are violent and still remain a threat.

### **The Daily Express**

*The Daily Express* (as with broadsheet paper, *The Independent*) appears to have pitched its coverage to appear ‘balanced’. In contrast to the other tabloids, the front page carries reports and images of the late Princess Diana. Although the paper includes reports on the grief of the British people; and the frustrations and disappointment of a victim’s mother with respect to the mother of bomber Hasib Mir Hussain – who did not respond to pleas to denounce terrorism – it also reported positively on Hussain’s father who said that he had not known of his “son’s murderous plans” (Reynolds 2006, p. 7). In an editorial, ‘We must pull the plug on the television terrorists’ (p. 12), *The Express* argues that since the *Al Jazeera* Arabic television broadcasting service was giving terrorists the “oxygen of publicity”, by screening Shehzad Tanweer’s suicide video, it should be banned. In doing this the editorial returned the focus to terrorists and their desire for publicity, rather than turning the spotlight on Muslim communities in the UK.

### **Conclusion**

Comparing these findings with the trends discussed earlier, Poole’s observations before 7/7 seem to require some qualification and further consideration. Regarding broadsheet media representations Poole pointed out (2002, p. 84) that:

- *Muslim involvement in extremist activities threatens security in the UK.* There is some reason to believe that attitudes to Muslims following the 7/7 bombs was more polarised than was the case with Irish-heritage British and Irish nationals following the IRA

bombings. Many of Britain's 1.6 million Muslims feel they are paying the price for the actions of 4 terrorists. While there was some compassion towards the situation faced by mainstream British Muslims in the broadsheet press, with the exception of *The Daily Express* the tabloid papers failed to show any general sympathy for the circumstances faced by British Muslims following 7/7.

- *Muslims are a threat to British 'mainstream' values and thus provoke concerns about their ability to integrate.* While there was debate on Muslim integration on the first anniversary of the London bombing in the broadsheets, the poll discussed in *The Sun* showed that mainstream British Muslims hold a wide range of opposing views on current British politics and policies. In other words, British Muslim perspectives cannot be confidently seen as aligned with non-Muslim attitudes, raising the question as to whether a British Muslim can become one of 'Us'.
- *There are inherent cultural differences between Muslims and the host community, and these create tensions in interpersonal relations.* Balancing this, the UK broadsheet press indicates that many British Muslims have faced repercussions since the 7/7 tragedy, and that surveillance and community fear is greatly impacting on their daily lives. As discussed, in the tabloid press only *The Daily Express* appeared to have sympathies with this perspective. The other tabloid papers – *The Sun*, *The Daily Mirror* and *The Daily Mail* – constructed the 7/7 anniversary as a war between Muslim extremists and the British way of life in which the Muslim 'Other' is in a state of denial. Although the broadsheet *Daily Telegraph* adopted a similar theme, the choice of words in the tabloid press was harsher and more emotive: "UNBEATEN", "HELL" and "EVIL".
- *Muslims are increasingly making their presence felt in the public sphere.* The survey of 7/7/2006 newspapers does not make this obvious, and *The Independent* was the only paper that gave space to a British Muslim columnist, Shamim Chowdhury. The absence of Muslim comment might indicate a reluctance to make public statements on the anniversary of the 7/7 bombings, or the attacks may have further marginalised and silenced Britain's Muslim communities. In fact, most papers surveyed failed to mention the many home-grown Muslim initiatives to reduce the risk of future atrocities and Chowdhury's opinion piece was the only one to mention the litany of requests by British Muslims – including calls for a unit within the Department for Culture, Media and Sport – to work on promoting a more balanced view of Islam and Muslims in Britain.

Overall, the general theme of the broadsheet press was that the anniversary was time for grief and reflection, while the message from the tabloid press was one of defiance: 'we won't give in, and the terrorists should go to hell'. It will be interesting to see how the anniversary is handled in 2007, two years on.

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