Representations of British Salafi Responses to the 7/7 Bombings

An Iconographical Analysis

Yahya Barry

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Uppsala University
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PART 1: CONCEPTUAL OUTLINES OF THE STUDY: THEORIES, METHODS & APPROACHES

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Contextualizing the Research Problem

Mainstream media and academic discourse have tended to associate Salafism with violent Jihadism and transnational terrorism (Baker 2009; Hafez 2004; Hemmingsen 2012; Singerman 2004). Salafis have therefore come to be represented as extremely exclusivist and have been implicated in the propagation of violent Jihadism and transnational terrorism. The clandestine and insular nature of the group has further made it difficult for academic researchers to access its communities. This indicates a problematic issue: that in the wider social and academic fields, Salafis are portrayed in homogenized monolithic ways which in actuality render this particular religious community powerless and voiceless in the shaping of public discourse. As researchers, we cannot afford to make such taken-for-granted assumptions that Salafis are indeed powerless. For all we know, they could well be reconfiguring the strategic social structures in very powerful and dynamic ways to negotiate their own identities, imagine their own communities and even shape public discourse. This is the ambit of my thesis: it explores the responses of a British Salafi community toward the July 7 atrocities and juxtaposes them against the narratives popularly featured in mainstream media.

1.2 Literature Review

Hemmingsen (2012) stated that for the most part, studies on Salafism have focused on the ‘illegal activities’ that individuals affiliated to it have been implicated in, instead of looking at the wider ‘milieus’ of these cases in order to contextualize and deconstruct some of the grand schemes. She employed a series of methodological approaches to gain access to such milieus before conducting an ethnographic fieldwork of Salafist Muslims in Aarhus, Denmark. Baker’s work (2009) on the other hand is a case study unearthing how convert British Muslims in Brixton, London ascribing to Salafism are countering violent extremism within
their community. The two pieces of work are different; not only in terms of their theoretical and methodological frameworks, but also on their points of focus. In Baker (2009), Salafism is defined by the individuals who practice it; and in their view, they see no reason why they can’t be British and Salafi at the same time whilst contributing to social harmony. In Hemmingsen’s study (2012), Jihadism is inherently associated with the group; and hence the emphasis of her work was on exploring how the agents shape this ideology within the contexts of their cultic milieus. These two perspectives raise interesting questions for me where I would like to explore how European Salafists make sense of their own religiosities without making \textit{a priori} assumptions about the extremist nature of their ideology.

1.3 A Brief Presentation of my Material & Area of Research

Since this MA pertains to religious peace and conflict, I chose to concentrate on \textit{radicalism} – wherein an \textit{Islamified} religion is perceived to be in conflict with western society. I outlined \textit{Salafism} as a target group/ideology because both media and academic discourse identify it as extremist, isolationist, and hence incompatible with Western social cohesion. I aimed to explore how Salafis go about living in Europe whilst ascribing to their doctrinal foundations; exploring whether they are at peace or in conflict with their society. However, in consideration with the time frame allocated by the programme, I decided to study this theme of social peace/conflict in light of a specific event tied to a specific national context. I decided to study how British Salafist responses to the London 7/7 bombings have been represented. The aim has been to study how such an atrocious act which has the capacity to divide society has stimulated the will to live in peace or conflict; and moreover, I aim to look at how these responses have been portrayed by Salafis themselves over against the depictions given by mainstream media.

1.3a The Topic

For this thesis, I wish to analyse the discourses around British Salafist responses to the tragic and infamous 7/7 bombings. On the morning of July 7, 2005 what has been described in media as four ‘home-grown’ Islamist terrorists detonated four separate bombs in rapid succession in the London central area: three in
underground trains and the fourth on a bus. Their devastating actions resulted in 52 deaths and over 700 casualties. An entire capital was brought to a standstill. I see 7/7 along with 9/11 as key watershed moments for Islam–Western; and even Islam–Global relations. In line with my research interests in Salafism, I have decided to see how particular media sources linked Salafist ideology to the bombings over against how the Salafi community itself reacted to the incidents.

I have however chosen to focus on the visual and iconographic representations of these responses because I found them intriguing. “A picture paints a thousand words” said my Maths teacher in secondary school. Machin & Mayr (2012) highlighted the power which imagery has in constructing both visual and lexical fields of discourse. Image makers can be indeed manipulative in their selection of semiotic resources to communicate to us certain ideologies both through denotation and connotation (Barthes, cf. Machin & Mayr 2012). “Visual communication, by its nature, tends to be more open to interpretation, which gives the author some degree of manoeuvre not permitted through language use.”

My topic addresses the disparity between the media’s visual representations of these responses over against those from certain constituencies of the British Salafi community. The disparity between discourse and actual social reality; or in more operational terms – theory and practice is one of the key elements which recently emerging research models such as Action Research (AR) and Participatory Action Research (PAR) have addressed (Johnson 2012; Kindon et. al. 2007). Besides the priority of linking theory and practice; a central concept of AR and PAR I import in this study is the conceptualization of power as something situational and relational. What this means is: we cannot assume a priori that the subjects or participants we engage with are ‘powerless’. One way of doing this is to allow such minority groups to manifest their own narratives (visual representations) within their own local contexts and then see how they reconfigure the social structures to negotiate their identities and/or shape discourse. Considering these alternative narratives allows us to juxtapose them against the mediated ones, i.e. those created by media. By this, we are able to see a better picture of the lexical

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1 Machin & Mayr, p31.
fields of discourse being shaped wherein we can situate the discourses of each entity within its respective locus – tactically or strategically.

1.3b The Research Problem

The tendency to ‘blanket’ Muslim constituencies in media and ethnic minority studies is prevalent (Baker 2009; Hemmingsen 2012; Jeldtoft 2012). Muslim agency tends to be framed within power-structural frameworks which focus on grand schemes such as transnationalism and don’t actually consider the local grassroots level (Allievi & Nielsen 2003; Jeldtoft 2012; Mandaville 2009). Such approaches frame Muslim social agents in typologizing ways which neglect a reality: Muslims creatively shape their own discourses in quite diverse ways. Integration and counter-radicalisation strategies remain ineffective because they are not informed by the actual paradigms shaping Muslim communities. The way this research problem pertains to my thesis is that 7/7 has become another ‘grand scheme’ against which European Muslim identity in general, and Salafism in particular has been framed against. The risk of homogenizing entire religious communities such as Salafis is therefore inherent, especially when Salafist ideology has been implicated in the atrocities. This thesis adopts a critical stance with respect to this, and instead aims to look at what the Salafis themselves have to say whilst comparing that with the mediated discourses.

1.3c The Research Questions

How have British media represented Salafist responses to 7/7? How have the Salafists represented their own responses; and how does it relate to their sense of belonging or not belonging to the wider society?

Before we begin addressing these research questions, we need to first outline the operational frameworks for the thesis, detail the methodology to be employed, delineate the theoretical frameworks undergirding the empirical data analysis as well as define the study’s essential analytical categories. There is also a need to address some of the collateral issues which in one way or other influence the study’s validity and reliability.
Chapter 2: Methodological & Theoretical Frameworks

The methods and theories which undergird a study are crucial to its reliability and the validity of its findings. It is therefore important for any study to adopt the operational frameworks which best correspond with the research problems being addressed. There has to be a clear degree of coherence between what is being studied and how that particular element is going to be investigated. And hence, the objectives behind the study therefore also have to be congruent with the adopted operational frameworks. In this chapter, I will provide an operational outline of my study in order to clarify what it is that I am looking at, before proceeding to detail my methodological and theoretical foundations.

2.1 General Operational Outline of the Study

I highlight two key units of analysis. The first is: {a} Media representations of the Salafist responses to the 7/7 bombings. I have identified some of the media sources which made links between the 7/7 bombings and Salafist ideology. During my data collection, it became evident that the Daily Mail in particular made quite clear links between the bombings and certain responses termed ‘Salafists’. These were not only more relatively frequent in the Daily Mail; they were also more visually portrayed.\(^2\) I aim to use Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to study how the Daily Mail defined and shaped ‘Salafist’ discourse, and how they visually portrayed the Salafist responses to the tragic events. My second unit of analysis is: {b} Salafist representations of their own responses. I have outlined one group which self-identifies as Salafi in its social media platforms and publications.\(^3\) I aim to conduct a case study of the group’s visual responses to 7/7 through the lens of CDA. With regard to gathering data from a multiplicity of sources which aim to validate the study’s results in a triangulating fashion, then I’ve outlined the SalafiTalk forum together with the group’s various printed/online publications and social media outlets. With the operational scope of my study outlined, I can

\(^2\) The Daily Mail’s articles and online news features are characterized by rich stocks of visual references along with the grouping of these images. This style of visual representation is not seen in sources like the BBC, the Telegraph and the Guardian, further justifying my empirical focus on the Daily Mail.

\(^3\) http://salafitalk.net/st/
now begin to elaborate on the specifications of my methodological and theoretical frameworks.

2.2 The Study’s Methodological Frameworks

2.2a Case Study as Method

When I say I am doing a case study of the representations of Salafist responses to 7/7, I need to make sure that I outline enough reliable operational measures for empirically tracking the central analytical units being addressed in my research questions. As such, I will make sure to outline how I am going to analytically track discourse formation to answer: how can we empirically see that a sense of discourse is being shaped. With these measures, I aim at construct validity. Before proceeding to outline these operational measures, it is important to outline my case study protocol – i.e. the study’s instrument by which I dismantle the pieces of the case and reassemble them in a coherent report. I have adapted Yin’s framework (2009), and hence my protocol consists of defining and delineating the following: study questions, study propositions, units of analysis, an analytical strategy, and a case study database to enable independent verification of the sources.

2.2b The Case Study Protocol Outline

The study questions have already been outlined in §1.3.3 wherein I highlighted that I am interested in looking at how the British media represented Salafist responses to 7/7 over against how the Salafists themselves represented their own responses; and how this related to their sense of belonging or not belonging to the wider society? The study’s central units of analysis have likewise been clarified in §2.1 above. The analytical strategies I will employ in this study are: pattern matching, explanation building and time series analysis (Yin 2009).

With regard to the data analysis, I will use the frameworks provided by CDA. This particular methodological model is distinguished by its critical and objective stance towards the representation of worldviews which therefore makes it highly potent for unlocking the construction of opinions and fields of discourse. (Jorgensen & Phillips 2002) What makes it particular relevant is it provides an
operational set of resources to critically analyse both lexical and visual semiotic resources which social agents employ in shape their fields of discourse. This provides heterogeneity and flexibility as well as operationability since it gives us a framework for analysing, categorizing and by it interpreting discourses (Machin & Mayr 2012). I highlight a potential shortcoming in this model. As analysts, we shape discourses by our own interpretations. This can be particularly the case in abstract visual resources wherein the more abstract the image, the wider the possible outcomes of interpretation, the more the potential manipulation form the side of the agent, but also the wider the possible meanings, connotations and interpretations. It is therefore highly important to have as many perspectives as possible, besides having an open mind and creative way of thinking and making connections.

During the course of designing my case study project, I had already decided on doing an iconographical analysis of the Muslim responses to the 7/7 bombings; and hence that more or less defined the empirical data I was going to collect. I knew from the start that I was going to study images mostly; and any textual data was perhaps going to be complementary and secondary. Although this restricted the scope of data to collect, I however saw it as positive and especially helpful in sticking to the time and space constraints of the MA thesis. Furthermore, I was attracted to this type of analysis because of the numerous and diverse potentials it had in uncovering certain interesting findings which might perhaps be overlooked in conventional textual analysis: “visual communication, by its nature, tends to be more open to interpretation, which gives the author some degree of manoeuvre not permitted through language use.”

2.2c Operational Specifications of the Case Study Protocol

Having already demarcated my sources (The Daily Mail & SalafiTalk) along with the type of data I will collect (images), I now proceed to operationally specify my case study protocol. I used the case descriptive strategy (Yin 2009) to structure the study’s central analytical units into chapters or sections to provide a basic skeleton to place my findings as they emerge. I thus came to outline four separate sections
with regard to my analytical units. (a) The structural level – looking at how the mainstream media; here – the Daily Mail – was shaping the discourse around the Salafist responses to 7/7. (b) The tactical level – looking at how the Salafi community was shaping its own responses to 7/7; whether that was in interaction with the mediated discourses or independent of it.

I had already staring looking at my sources of data and began collecting images and visual representations. During that; and also after having outlined my case study protocol, I noticed that my two sources actually had certain things in common; especially in their portrayals and depictions of the culprits and chief proponents of the 7/7 ideology. And hence this represents section (c) of my case study protocol. This section looks at the commonalities in discourse creation. And finally, section (d), having outlined the similarities, I then obviously saw the differences between my two data sources which basically lay in their depictions of 7/7, and of course – the Salafi ideology and community.

Using this four-part sectioning, I arranged the images that I had collected in my data search. I did initially encounter some challenges in searching for iconography. These challenges were of a contrasting nature with regard to my two data sources. As for the Daily Mail; I found that although the paper had given due attention to the 7/7 tragedy, and its stockpile of images for reporting, analysing and narrating the sequence of events which led up to the disaster and the follow up from it was extensive, I found significantly less ‘direct’ reference to Salafi ideology. Even though the inferences were abundant, I couldn’t however rely on that for data. I was therefore left with relatively sparse imagery to choose and focus on, because in selecting them, they had to fulfil the criteria of making clear references and links to Salafi ideology. This was however good because it narrowed the pool of images for me; leaving me with a realistic selection of images which could be given sufficient analytical attention in this thesis. As for the Salafi source, I found quite the opposite in terms of image availability. Even though the 7/7 atrocities initiated a ‘frenzy’ of Salafi online and social activity, their visual representations of these responses were significantly less. This extends from the Salafi doctrine prohibiting the photography of ‘living’ animate objects; and hence most of the images I collected were abstract in nature – mostly flyers.
advertising conferences and seminars; there was the odd ‘living’ photograph with the eyes ‘obliterated’ – which speaks a lot for itself. Nonetheless, there was ample data to conduct a case study. I will now outline my analytical strategy.

2.2d The Case Study Analytical Strategy

It’s all good that I make a nice outline of the images in my case study instrument; but there is a dire need to lay out my analytical strategy. Because if all I’m going to do is a one-by-one iconographic analysis of these images, there lies a risk in not identifying the broader themes underlying the iconography. The possibility of collecting more data than can be adequately analysed, the risk of over-focusing on disparate samples and the monotony of this methodology further encourage an inclination away from this particular approach. Rather, by employing a clear and precise analytical strategy, the objective is to be able to analyse the images as blocks, focusing on the main themes, categories and schemes. The analytical strategy I employ in this project relies on the use of *theoretical propositions* to provide certain *study propositions* (Yin 2009). This involves the use and development of theoretical frameworks to make hypotheses about the expected trends in the data. This is helpful because it tells me where to focus my CDA on. There is a need to now clarify the theoretical frameworks I shall be working with in my analytical strategy.

2.3 Theoretical Frameworks

From the previous section, I outlined the importance of developing relevant theoretical frameworks as a guide for data collection and analysis. As pointed out earlier on in this chapter, it is essential that a clear correspondence between the study’s research problems and its theoretical and methodological frameworks exist. In line with this, the research problems I address centre on the representations of Salafist responses to 7/7. I have devised a CDA-based case study of these representations as my principal methodology. Since my analytical strategy depends on prior theoretical propositions about these responses and their visual representations, I have to focus on the spaces/places where these elements are constructed. I also need to consider how the social agents in these loci shape their
own worlds of discourse; and specifically to 7/7, why how did such an event stimulate such responses.

As for the impact of 7/7 in stimulating a plurality of responses, reactive identity theory (Allievi 2005) could provide some useful insights. The conceptual basis of this theory proposes that certain events have a profound effect on religious identity. The nature of such events, and the responses are indeed diverse, however, the unifying factor remains that they evoke certain sentiments which stimulates social agents to re-explore their ties to a particular religious tradition. This is relevant to the study insofar as it provides a conceptual basis for contextualizing the Salafist responses. This provides a starting point for analysis of the community’s visual representations of their positions towards the 7/7 ideology. Interpreting the ‘flurry’ of activity which occurred within the Salafi community in the aftermath of 7/7 as a series of reactive identifications enables us to focus on the ways they reconfigured space and place to shape their own discourses. This leads us to the next theoretical premise which brings our second source – the Daily Mail’s visual representations – into the picture.

When we say we are going to look at discourse creation and shaping, we have to acknowledge that we are dealing with power contentions within space/place. These contentions involve the shaping and re-shaping of symbolic worlds in ways which make sense for the various social agents engaged in the discourse making. For this reason, it is essential to import theoretical concepts which link social power structures to the creation of space/place. In this regard, social agency theory SAT (de Certeau 1984) is relevant in a number of ways. Firstly, this theoretical model enables us to conceptualize the locus of both our sources. It further provides a framework for looking at how the social agents reconfigure discourses to create their own spaces.

With regard to the first concept, SAT derives from de Certeau’s conception of social agency being a result of modality between strategies and tactics. Strategies denote power. They are the overarching structures and hegemonic worldviews which constitute the foundations of a social structure. According to de Certeau, it is the social elite who operate on this level. Tactics on the other hand refer to a
subordinate agency operating below the overarching social structures. At this level, the interlocutors ‘make do’ with the resources within their disposal to reconfigure the strategies. When they do this, they create new spaces and localities. However, the reality isn’t black and white; indeed there can be crossovers between these two levels of analysis (Barry 2013). Adding to this, I do not agree with a polarization of power, especially when it becomes assumed a priori that tactically placed social agents lack power. The capacity to reconfigure the social strategies is an exercise of power in itself. However, SAT remains relevant in giving consideration to the contexts, spaces and places within which the Daily Mail, a strategically placed entity, and the Salafi community – tactically placed – operate. It provides a framework to gauge how their visual representations to 7/7 have been created.

Social Identification theory SIT (Anderson 1991, cf. Risse 2001) is the third theoretical concept to introduce. So far, we have highlighted how the responses to 7/7 can be explained in terms of reactive identification and how the discourses being shaped around these are taking place within the social tactical and strategic levels of analysis. We now need to consider that these discourses are being inherently shaped around notions of in-groups and out-groups. In this regard, SIT is relevant because the theory outlines that a society is composed of ‘imagined communities’ whose boundaries are demarcated by a distinct ‘in-group out-group’ dialectic. In discourse creation, this dialectic becomes an essential tool. In the CDA of the visual representations of the Salafi responses, bearing this in mind can perhaps help explain some of the ways which these iconographies have been shaped.

The project’s theoretical outlines have now been articulated. Reactive identity theory enables us to make the study proposition that the atrocious 7/7 event had a profound impact of British society in general, and specifically, it stimulated certain Salafist responses because the community was inherently implicated. They had to respond. Social agency theory is relevant insofar as it enables the study to contextualize the iconographic representations of the Daily Mail and the Salafi community. It provides a conceptual framework for looking at how the interlocutors were reconfiguring the social tactical and strategies structures to
produce their distinct visual fields of discourse. And thirdly, *social identification theory* gave a conceptual basis for linking the similarities and/or differences in discourse creation to the imaginations of in-groups and out-groups – key tools of demarcating who belongs and who doesn’t. With the project’s conceptual outlines elaborated, we can begin our case study report. But before that, I thought it would be important and useful to outline some problematic issues which could in one way or other invariably affect the study’s reliability and validity.

**Chapter 3: Issues, Problems & Priorities for Consideration in the Project**

Before entering the main thrust of this thesis, I thought it was important to outline some of the key issues, problems and priorities I had to grapple with in the formulation of my research problem, the designation of my conceptual, theoretical and methodological frameworks as well as in my collection and analysis of the empirical data. I thought this influences to a large extent, the reliability and validity of my study. There was however one additional element which provided much impetus in this section; this was something of an ethical obligation I feel owed to the readership. As academics, we exercise significant power in the way we shape our own intellectual fields of discourse. We owe it to ourselves and the people out there to be as transparent as possible about what is for and against us in our work. This section is devoted to this. I will systematically go through the key issues in a brief and comprehensive manner.

**3.1 Grand Schemes**

July 7 like 9/11, the Theo van Gogh murder and the Salman Rushdie affair is among the grand schemes which studies of Muslim minorities in the west have been framed. These sensational events neglect the everyday mundane interactions of Muslims in western society; and by focusing on them alone, we impose the resulting categories on entire Muslim populations. I acknowledge that this is a potential shortcoming in my study. However I argue that some representation can be claimed by confining the study’s scope to a particular group’s response to 7/7. I have therefore specified analysis at a group level; however this doesn’t necessitate neglecting the group’s tactical agency at the micro level. By this, we avoid the
characteristic focus of these ‘grand schemes’ on the strategic level. One way of considering tactical agency is to allow these groups’ narratives to surface and actually consider them or give them the power to shape their discourses.

3.2 Using Web Based Material

Validity/credibility issues are raised when we rely on web pages for data because of a lack of substantial context behind such sources. The web is renowned for providing a platform for people and groups to fantasize events and fabricate identities. One can argue that in the age of social media wherein ‘real’ events occurring are reported in real time, we can get some context. Besides awareness of this issue, one way I have designed my model to address this is having a dual point of reference. My two units of analysis provide this: what the media has reported against what the Salafi group is responding to. As long as I remain critical of both sources, I can present credible findings.

3.3 My Own Biases

An important factor to consider is confronting one’s own biases and pre-set agenda (Johnson 2012). In studying Salafism, I therefore point out that this is a group I have had substantial contact with over the years both during my stay in London as a teenager, and also during my BA at the Islamic University of Madinah whose methodology of teaching bears the hallmarks of Salafism. It’s natural that one becomes sympathetic and defensive of the group. However, I am critical of contemporary Salafi practice, and recognize the distinction between Salafism as a doctrine and its implementation as a way of life. I therefore consider myself as a privileged gatekeeper with unique insider knowledge of Salafism whilst being equipped with the academic insights to strive towards objectivity. So long as I remain objective, I have the capacity to bring out interestingly unique perspectives from this rather insular group and actually be an agent of constructive dialogue.

3.4 Power: Framing Stories & Discourses, Framing People & Groups

Every time we put pen to paper, we are picking up weapons of potential destruction and construction. By them, we shape discourses, expose and demolish
ideologies, and we inspire peoples and nations. We therefore exercise tremendous potential power which we have to acknowledge in an ethical and responsible manner. One way of doing this is by declaring what is for you and what is against you. It is an awareness that has to be highlighted, and as researchers, we do have to be consciously aware of this and really strive to communicate it to our readers. I believe that as readerships become more sophisticated, they become better equipped to see through opaqueness and pick upon the points where there seems to be an ideological contention.

3.5 Critical Reflections on the Study’s Central Analytical Categories

‘Islam/Muslims in Europe’ and ‘Salafist responses’ are all analytical categories which have to be carefully defined, hedged and related. The terms are so vast that problems of definition will always crop up; but I think as long as we are aware of this and try to delineate what we mean by such categories in our work then we come a step closer to validating our frameworks. When it comes to Islam, there is a tendency to give orthodoxy and visibility the greater attention. When it comes to sects, this is ever more problematic because we need some parameters to define what can be counted in such a sect, and again we risk falling into the trap of orthodoxy or representativeness. But as long as we remain critical of groups which claim to represent such a tradition (Bektovic 2012) and stand back to measure up what they claim against other sources of data or alternative trajectories we become more equipped to present more compelling research.

In choosing Salafism, I am aware that I will have to juggle between claims of orthodoxy and contextual reality. For this reason, and in order to avoid an unmanageable accumulation of data, I have selected one group which outwardly self identifies as Salafi. Its history and ideology can be easily tracked making the data empirically reliable as opposed to other groups or movements whose claims to Salafism can – at best – be described as undocumented, making analysis difficult.

With these critical issues, we can now take a look at the iconographical representations of the British Salafi responses to the July 7 bombings. In line with my case study protocol, my report comprises four main sections. I will first
examine the *strategic* level of analysis wherein I look at how media sources (the Daily Mail) visually portrayed these Salafist discourses. Having outlined this, I will proceed to study the *tactical* level of analysis, looking at how the Salafi community shaped its own discourses. The remaining two sections are of a comparative nature. In the third, I look at the similarities in the shaping of public discourse. Finally, I focus on the differences before concluding the case study with some general insights.

**PART 2: THE CASE STUDY REPORT — AN ICONOGRAPHICAL ANALYSIS OF THE DATA**

**Chapter 1: Analysis at the Strategic Level**

In this section of the report, I visually analyse the semiotic resources which the Daily Mail has employed in shaping the discourses around the ‘Salafist’ responses to the 7/7 atrocities. I have already outlined in my case study protocol that my approach was not to follow a one–by–one iconographic analysis. My analytical strategy was based on looking for general patterns and trends in the visual semiotic resources. This meant looking at the images in groups as a collective visual field of discourse. It followed from this that key images were later on subjected to intense analysis in order to focus on how their connotative and denotative values affected the general discourse being shaped.

This approach was actually complementary with the Mail’s own style of visual discourse creation. The paper had a noticeable propensity for clustering images together with the lexical fields of discourse being shaped. This section is therefore based on the CDA of three articles whose images are clustered together below from left to right: 'Have more babies and Muslims can take over the UK' hate fanatic says, as warning comes that 'next 9/11 will be in UK';

http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1054909/Have-babies-Muslims-UK-hate-fanatic-says-warning-comes-9-11-UK.html#ixzz2t0OADDFr

‘As Islamic extremists declare Britain's first Sharia law zone, the worrying social and moral
implications’;⁶ and ‘The Great Surrender: How Britain has given in to the religious fanatics intent on destroying our way of life.’⁷

When we look at this level of analysis, one of the first things to emerge is the emphasis placed on identifying the chief proponents behind the ‘Salafist’ responses. This particular element is therefore one of the visual representational strategies used to frame the Salafist responses. The images almost exclusively depict and portray individuals. Out of the 15 images collated under this section; only three depict non–individuals. From these three pictures, two show the

damaging impact of the 7/7 bombing, and the third shows the structural damages of 9/11. What does this mean?

I suggest that perhaps it shows that when it comes to evaluating and representing the Salafist responses to 7/7, emphasis has been placed on the social agents and ‘figureheads’ to infer to the wider community’s position. It already indicates a homogenizing tone. As our analysis proceeds, we’ll have to see how the following classification strategies have been employed in the visual representations of British Salafi responses to 7/7: personalisation vs. impersonalisation; humanisation vs. dehumanisation; individualisation vs. collectivisation; specification vs. generalisation (homogenisation); generic vs. specific depictions (Machin & Mayr 2012). It perhaps also indicates that the Salafist discourses are set in motion by certain individuals and key thinkers who not only shape the discourse; but are also representative of the wider Salafi community. This is an assumption we cannot take for granted; and hence have to test out and ascertain during our case study analysis.

The overdue focus on individual actors over against the wider collateral damage is nonetheless an interesting observation. It also ties in with the concept of suppression cf. Machin & Mayr; i.e. in choosing these depictions, and ignoring or marginalizing others, what do the media want to establish and how do they shape discourse by that? A number of things do need to be mentioned and questioned in light of this. As such: if Muslims were also affected by the 7/7 atrocities; how comes this is not portrayed or mentioned; and if there are other Muslim communities condemning these acts, where are their voices and/or images?

Sure, the Daily Mail article ‘The Great Surrender: How Britain has given in to the religious fanatics intent on destroying our way of life’ presents some of these ‘alternative’ voices and/or images to offset the focus on hypervisible radicalism; but these images are of individuals on the opposite end of the radical spectrum – Salman Rushdie and Ed Hussain. What this produces is a distinct polarization of positions where it seems as though there are no moderate voices in between the liberal and extremist ends. Does this hold? The collected data will in the next
section show that this is neither the case nor is it in full correspondence with the social discourses of the wider British Salafi community.

The Daily Mail seems to completely neglect the efforts of other groups ascribing to Salafism in addressing the violent Jihadist ideology behind 7/7. Other media sources like the Guardian for example have on the very least featured some of these tactical efforts from within the British Salafis.\(^8\)

In accordance with my analytical strategy as well as the theoretical premises of visual CDA, we have to ask what is the connection between these images and the 7/7 bombings; and more specifically, how are the Salafist responses related? Where are the established connotators; i.e. the “carriers of connotations, which [the image makers] feel confident their target audiences will understand (whether consciously or not)” \(^9\) Upon close inspection of the images, and reflection on their general connotative value, we see certain common themes are prevalent which perhaps all interact with one another to cumulatively produce a symbolic system of ‘established connotators’. One of the first themes we see emerge is: ‘otherness’.

The people shown in the images are distinctly ‘foreign’ and can be easily identified as ‘others’. In light of social identity theory, we can recognize how the discourse around this visual semiotic resource operates around the demarcation of ‘in–groups’ and ‘out–groups’. Here, we can see how some of the classification strategy binaries I mentioned earlier merge and crossover. An ‘apparent’ individualisation gradually morphs into a collectivized entity when the ‘Salafist’ proponents are visually represented as looking more or less the same. Once this connotative value has been established, the result is the images become impersonalized and even dehumanized. The field of discourse therefore yields a homogenizing portrayal of the Salafist responses.

Following on from this homogenizing connotative system, another theme to emerge is the ‘uniformity’ of their appearances, poses, gazes, actions and mannerisms – i.e. ‘they are all the same’ and ‘you can’t tell them apart’ cf. Machin

\(^8\) ‘Scholars hit back at ‘evil’ bombers’ from the Guardian. http://www.theguardian.com/uk/2005/jul/29/religion.july7

\(^9\) Machin & Mayr, p51.
Thus far, their responses are distinctly unapologetic. On the contrary, they are brazen and even menacing. It is something the target audience will never be able to relate to and hence; their positions are by default illegitimate and even revolting. The agents – all men, seem to belong to an entirely different world which the wider society cannot relate to. They are framed within their tiny; yet extremely volatile and dangerous world.

Another common connotative feature which appears across the images is the sense of audacity and defiance shown in the demeanour of all the visually portrayed agents. The defiance is really provoking and ‘in your face’. It is unapologetic; rather even threatening of more reprisal attacks mirroring 9/11. In line with some of the theories I developed during my study of Islam’s influence of the European Far Right, I came to recognize that such attitudes stimulate certain reactive identities within certain segments of the ‘native’ population. This is because these attitudes blur the social boundaries, compromise national loyalties and furthermore encroach upon public space and security (Barry 2013). These factors are a dangerous mixture for hatred and social division. And with such discourse being shaped in such a way, we have to question the wider social impact that media outlets like the Daily Mail are having on mainstream society.

I have in a general way highlighted the broader patterns and trends underlying how ‘Salafist’ responses to 7/7 were iconographically represented on the strategic level of analysis. I will now proceed to focus on one particular image which combines to a significant extent most of the visual semiotic resources analysed above. The objective is to focus on how its connotative and denotative value affects the general discourse being shaped. I have chosen the image below. It features in the article ‘Have more babies and Muslims can take over the UK’ hate fanatic says, as warning comes that ‘next 9/11 will be in UK’

1.1: Focused Visual Analysis of Discourse at the Strategic Level

Generally speaking, the Daily Mail article: ‘Have more babies and Muslims can take over the UK’ hate fanatic says, as warning comes that ‘next 9/11 will be in UK’ gives a representation of what can be termed as a ‘Salafist’ response to the 7/7 atrocities. It depicts a gathering of Muslim extremists in London who outwardly
express no remorse for the devastating attacks on the wider British society. On the contrary, they even warn of possible follow-up attacks mirroring 9/11 and 7/7 on a more local scale as long as the ‘Western governments’ – especially the UK and US continue their military operations in the Muslim lands of Iraq and Afghanistan.

The caption under the photograph reads: “Preachers: Afzal Khan Choudhary (left) chairs the meeting with banned Muslim cleric Omar Backri’s webcast on the wall behind.”

In line with Barthes’ binary analysis of imagery: denotation and connotation (cf. Machin & Mayr 2012); it is interesting to note the argument that no denotation is neutral because all images connote something for us. Upon this, I outline that even though the image outwardly serves to show these ‘Muslim’ agents engaged in some form of conference; it is loaded with connotations which actually serve the field of discourse being shaped by the article. When we look closer to the article, we begin to see that this discourse is created around highlighting the ultimate danger posed by extremist Islam, especially when they are linked with ‘Salafism’:

“Mr Islam, who is linked to an organisation called Salafi Youth for Islamic Propagation, warned that unless British and American troops were withdrawn from ‘Muslim lands’ they would be to blame for the

10 Machin & Mayr, p50.
consequences, saying the West would ‘never achieve security until own [Muslim] lands achieve security’. “11

1.2 Outlining the Connotators of Meaning in the Source

Looking at how the agents’ attitudes are represented through visual semiotic resources, we focus on attributes, settings and salience to unlock some of the reasons why this particular image was selected to go with the Daily Mail’s representation of Salafist responses to 7/7. In terms of attributes, we see that the agents are represented in a very isolationist and intensely focused manner: their gazes and poses show men who are intently serious and devoted to their purpose. They do not look at the viewer – suggesting distance and lack of dialogue/engagement. The figure on the far left has his hands folded one on top of the other suggesting a closed unapproachable stance, and he looks focused away from the frame as if he is thinking of something that we don’t know about. This makes the viewer uncomfortable. The photo is an ‘offer image’12 because it offers the viewer the chance to take a close look at these men and wonder what they are discussing and what is going on in their heads because they do not actually engage us in their gazes. This is actually quite intimidating because from what we do know: they are warning us of more 7/7s to come. The setting is equally unnerving. The lighting is dim, and the room seems enclosed; the ceiling is low. Furthermore, the Muslim shahadah, the declaration of faith is plastered across the background in Arabic script. These enclosing settings together with the foregrounding of the intimidating figures and back grounding of the shahadah produce a rather claustrophobic setting. In effect their views are delegitimised because the public can’t relate to it; it’s a closed worldview. The overall impression is these guys live in their own isolated world, plotting and planning against the wider society which is actually oblivious to what these people can really be capable of especially when they are so serious.

11 ‘Have more babies and Muslims can take over the UK’ hate fanatic says, as warning comes that ‘next 9/11 will be in UK’, p4.
12 Machin & Mayr, p70.
What is interesting to note is that in framing the discourse of these responses, the article follows a quite distinct method in framing the proponents (although this will be studied in more detail later on.) The Daily Mail follows a quite consistent and distinct methodology in framing the proponents; i.e. those who are framed as being ‘Salafists’ over against those framed as more ‘establishment friendly’ Muslims. To contrast those two categories of agents, we can take a closer look at two articles/image clusters selected for this particular section. In the article: ‘Have more babies and Muslims can take over the UK’ we see the Salafist position constructed in a distinctly menacing and threatening way. The agents are all framed in ‘offer’ images. They do not directly look at the viewer, showing a lack of relation. Although the images are ‘offer’ images; they aren’t intimate, cf. Machin & Mayr’s concept (2012) that looking sideways off-angle enables the viewer to ‘come closer’ and get more intimate with the image. In the case of the agents here, we only see their menacing stances. Although the images are all close shots; which in Machin & Mayr’s framework (2012) should signify close social relation just as close-ups of politicians and celebrities “take us closer to these politicians and their inner states and feelings”;¹³ these images on the contrary serve to evoke repulsion and rejection.

We can see this methodology more clearly when we look at the article: ‘The Great Surrender: How Britain has given in to the religious fanatics intent on destroying our way of life’. Here, the source polarizes two groups or camps: on the one hand, you have the fanatical ‘Salafists’ and on the other, you have the more liberal and accepted Muslims. It is interesting to see how this relates to the imagination of ‘in-groups’ and ‘out-groups’ to demarcate the field of discourse, cf. social identity theory. What is immediately observable is the way in which the images of the first group are all ‘offer images’ with just one exception – Richard Reid’s picture (on the far right) is a ‘demand image’; although, as we can see, it clearly seems to serve the purpose of confronting the viewer.

¹³ Machin & Mayr, p97.
The images of Salman Rushdie and Ed Hussain (overleaf), two personalities representing a ‘liberal Islam’ are in their ‘textbook’ form; they are ‘demand’ images. The way they are framed in close shots creates a sense of intimacy; and their looking straight on suggests tackling the issues ‘head on’. These two proponents of ‘liberal Islam’ are given the legitimate seal of approval on this strategic level. And bringing to mind social agency theory, we can see how the discourse at the strategic level of analysis is being shaped to promote a liberalized Islam as being the structurally accepted ‘in-group’, and those not ascribing to this are subordinated to the tactical level. ‘Salafists’ are visually framed as belonging to the outermost extremes of these tactically located ‘out-groups’. The community is homogenized through a series of semiotic resources; namely: collectivisation, impersonalisation, and even dehumanisation.

Although slightly tentative, what this analysis shows is the subjective way which mainstream media can play with images in a very creative manner; hence ‘offer’ and ‘demand’ images both serve the purpose of creating ideological tension and confrontation between the image and its viewer cf. Richard Reid’s picture (above) in comparison with the images of Rushdie and Hussain below.
Another visual theme to emerge in the iconographical analysis is just how the Daily Mail makes sure to select and use images which frame the ‘Salafist’ proponents in a distinctly menacing, aggressive and threatening way. As we can see below, the agents are portrayed with either extremely negative and aggressive facial expressions; or threatening body language; or they are engaged in what can only be interpreted as ‘anti-establishment’ actions. These all contribute to shaping the discursive space of these people as illegitimate and destructive. It is automatically rejected and not even subject to negotiation. It is an extremely potent rhetorical device with the capacity to homogenize minority groups and hence categorize people into imaginary ‘in–groups’ and ‘out–groups’. I hold that such strategies construct barriers which impede social cohesion and understanding because they propagate generalizations about a much more complex community.
It is also interesting how the proponents are only ‘angled’ when there is something to show and not for the purpose of allowing intimacy. The visual semiotic resources used to frame the ‘Salafist’ responses are extremely potent in the way they have created a sense of homogeneity in the discourse with regard to the group’s position to 7/7. We have seen in this section how the chief proponents aligned with the devastating ideology behind 7/7 have been impersonalized and collectivized into one ‘out-group’ which is not only threatening of further reprisal attacks, but has nothing in common with the wider society. We now conclude this section looking at the strategic level of analysis to considering the Salafist responses constructed from a more tactically situated basis.

Chapter 2: Analysis at the Tactical Level

The previous chapter looked at the strategically situated constructs of British Salafist responses to the July 7 atrocities. In line with the case study protocol, we now proceed to consider how these iconographical representations were also being shaped at the tactical level of analysis.

The priority here is to stand back and see how the Salafi community was creating its own visual discourses. Whether this was in reaction to the mediated representations or not is irrelevant because the priority lies in acknowledging that the social agents at the tactical level may well have the ‘power’ to reconfigure the structural entities to produce their own distinct spaces and places of discourse. What we have to do is look at what the community has done, and allow that possibility of ‘empowerment’ manifest itself in the data.
As pointed out in the conceptual part of my thesis, the iconography collected from this particular source was primarily abstract in nature – and most often were fliers for conferences being hosted in response to the bombings. I selected some of these images, and display them here. Similar to the first chapter in this case study report, I will first try and identify the general visual themes employed in the iconographic representations before focusing on the more specific details.

What immediately stands out when we examine the collated images for this section is the abstract nature of the pictures; and how they do not contain any human figures. They are also heavily laced with texting in an intertwined yet carefully calculated way. They are clearly giving out certain messages. Amongst the most apparent and profound of these messages is the fact that this particular Salafi community is waging its own tactical ideological war against extremism and terrorism. It is very interesting because it shows how the social agents, despite
their tactical locus; are willing and prepared to engage the social strategic structures to give out their message that they are at one with majority British society in reviling the acts of terrorism which occurred in the wake of 7/7. This is in stark contrast with the mediated images we saw in the previous section. The homogenously constructed ‘Salafist’ community was supposed to be at loggerheads with the wider British society to the extent of threatening further terrorist attacks; yet here we see a Salafi community openly proclaiming an ‘orthodox Islamic’ war against terror. At this level of analysis, the homogenized representation is already challenged to a quite profound extent. I will now focus on one of the above abstract images created by the Salafi community to further inspect the visual semiotic resources employed to create a distinct ‘Salafist’ discourse in response to July 7.

2.1: Focused Visual Analysis of Discourse at the Tactical Level

The source I will focus on in this section is a forum posting taken from the ‘SalafiTalk’ website which describes itself as a discussion board about the affairs of Islam “in the way of the Salaf”. The forum is divided into several groups of topics. Interestingly, the section titled ‘Misconceptions about Salafism & Terrorism’ seems to have been initiated immediately after 7/7 because the first posting dates July 18 – about a week after the atrocities. Within a space of two weeks, ten forum posts denouncing terrorism appear, and a flurry of activity in the form of conferences, lectures and talks is apparent indicating a near ‘panic’ or at least a crises in need of urgent solutions. It was therefore interesting to see how ‘Salafists’ were shaping their own ‘war against terror’ away from the media which tended to implicate them in a homogenous and monolithic way. The one post I will concentrate on is this one below:

14 http://salafitalk.net/st/
It is a flyer for a conference on: “Orthodox Islam’s war on terror.” The conference details are foregrounded against an abstract image of an underground subway entry. Machin & Mayr (2012) noted: “the more abstract the image, the more overt and foregrounded its connotative communicative purpose.” But also, the more abstract an image, the more open it is to interpretation, and hence the greater the potential manipulation of its maker on the field of discourse. Because this source utilizes both lexical and visual resources, it is also important to evaluate how both the text and image complement each other and work together in sending out a particular message. This is what is termed as ‘representational strategies’. As we approached the iconographical representations in the previous section, we can similarly look at the same connotators of meaning. We therefore focus again on attributes, settings and salience (Machin & Mayr 2012).

2.2 Outlining the Connotators of Meaning in the Source

What is immediately noticeable is the clattering of objects and texts; yet they are somehow delicately intertwined in a careful manner. The carefully worded messages together with the symmetry of the abstract imagery connote this: that what we have here is a ‘messy situation’ that has implicated the ‘Salafists’ and yet

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15 Machin & Mayr, p50.
16 Machin & Mayr, p96.
they are prepared to negotiate in a strategic and tactical way out of this mess. The word ‘Underground’ is in immediate focus and confronts the reader; but this is balanced and softened by the colourful London nightlights which connote liveliness, extravaganza, positivity, and even multiculturalism.

The conference will be held in London, and this imagery is something that all Londoners can relate to – it’s their city and they all live in it together. The words: “suicide bombers” in red together with “perpetrators of evil” is placed at the centre of the image – outlining with clarity, the position of these ‘Salafists’. They not only condemn the atrocities as evil, they even go out of their way to wage an ‘Orthodox Islamic’ war against terrorism – now that’s interesting.

This ‘Orthodox Islamic’ war against terror connotes power: that instead of being on the back foot here, the Salafists are stepping forward to take on the responsibility of fighting terrorism. A sense of legitimacy is created, and this power is manifested in openness and inclusivity: and hence all Muslims and non-Muslims and media alike are invited. There is an attempt to relate with and connect to all Londoners. The dark colours of the foreground on the top and bottom are repressed by the warm and bright colours and lights and lamps in the middle which dominates the mood. The impression therefore is there is a silver lining behind all the chaos, and that there is still hope for a peaceful coexistence. Thus far, this calls for a critical re-evaluation of the media’s representation of Islam, and some of its sects and groups. Salafism in particular has received quite significant negative publicity and this is just a start in addressing how and why this is the status quo. The tendency to represent groups as monolithic entities never takes into account the complex individualities at the micro-social level. We don’t hear in the media that ‘Salafists’ themselves are waging war on terrorism; on the contrary they are usually represented as harboring terrorist ideology.

When we look away from this focused perspective to reconsider how the identified themes correspond with the broader frameworks of Salafi representational strategies, we see that the careful composition of iconography is a commonly shared feature in all the images collated for this particular section. According to Machin & Mayr (2012), the more abstract an image, the more overt
the ideological discourse being shaped, and the more room the image maker has to shape it. In light of the collated images, we see that the image makers are working on certain unifying themes which are recognizable.

The first is the use of very clear connotative markers which the viewer can identify with and grasp. In the image we focused on previously, we saw usage of ‘London’ nightlife and iconography – connotative markers which the people invited to the conference and indeed the wider public can connect with. It is a very creative and constructive device almost a way of building bridges and mending fences. We can observe this theme repeated throughout the imagery collated below here.
The creative and yet subtle usage of font is likewise a very apparent trademark of the ‘Salafist’ imagery. Despite the critique that the font can be a little confusing to the eye (as one of my colleagues who peer reviewed my initial study said); we have to give credit and acknowledge that the imagery is actually resonating the very social reality out of which it emanated and for whose purpose it was created to resolve and address. What we therefore have is a ‘confusing’ situation filled with chaos and anarchy, and yet the tactical agency of the Salafists was well prepared to negotiate its way out of the mess in a very creative and calculated way. The font intertwines the ‘familiar’ which the wider society can relate to. This ‘familiarity’ can be interpreted in two ways broadly speaking. The first is that it is a stark and frank acknowledgment of the bitter reality; and hence we see the exploding cars, buses and buildings. There are also images of an aircraft backgrounded against a setting sun; London–British iconography such as Big Ben, the Houses of Parliament in Westminster, the red double-decker buses, Tube station entrances etc. all demonstrate this point quite well. The ‘familiar’ on this first interpretation is therefore with regard to acknowledging the problems ‘face-on’. Even though we do not see any of the Salafists within this particular community pictured directly looking at the camera – for doctrinal purposes, Salafis don’t tend to see the permissibility of taking facial or indeed human bodily photography – the abstract iconography represents that British notion of calling a spade a spade. It is therefore a way of accepting responsibility and taking on the challenges and problems head-on. Using the frameworks of social identification theory, we see the Salafists at this level of analysis actually shaping their discourses around the same ‘in-group’ as the rest of the wider society.

In this regard, the ‘familiar’ can also be representative of a ‘common ground’ which the wider British society should look to in making peace. It’s almost as though the Salafi community is evoking this spirit of multiculturalism and shared national heritage to say: look we all belong to this society; we should not allow extreme minorities spoil what we have. What is interesting to note is that from all the ‘explosive’ and ‘destructive’ imagery used, none seems to come directly from the actual 7/7 scene. It seems as though the images were taken from stunts or movies; and this in itself says quite a lot. Can it be a sense of denial of the real felt
aftermath and shock post 7/7? I don’t think copyright issues are necessarily primary here, because even in the imagery used, some degree of copyright permission must have been obtained. So we have an interesting dialectic at play: when it comes to building bridges, real iconography is used, and when it comes to depicting the deadly effects of extremist violent ideology, then the scene is open for fiction; or at the very least, what is certainly ‘far from home’. This is without doubt clear selection of imagery and iconography to suit the purposes of the discourse.

Another recognizable theme which we can see in the abstract images is the clear and systematic relationship between text, discourse and positioning. The Salafi community is clearly expressing its utmost rejection and rebuttal of terrorism; especially in the wake of the tragic event. They do not mince their words; and are clearly and outwardly rejecting ‘terrorist violence’ in ways which really contrast with the Mail’s depiction of the ‘Salafist’ responses which not only outwardly support terrorism; but even chillingly warn of reprisal attacks mirroring 7/7 and 9/11 in brutality. When we look at the images, there is a clear pattern showing how terrorism and terrorist ideology is dismissed as: ‘evil’; the perpetrators are described as: ‘perpetrators of evil’ in three images; they are even described rather graphically and perhaps even surprising to the wider public as: ‘brothers of the devils’. Their ideology is described as ‘the cancer .. in our times’ and as ‘corruption’; and the efforts taken to expose their extremist ideologies is described as ‘our fight against them’. The publications against them are titled: ‘Islamic condemnation’; three of the advertised conferences are titled: ‘Orthodox Islam’s war on terror’.

There is also a consistent style of font usage, positioning and even colour coding when it comes to this sort of critical labelling. In all of the images, the words or phrases of criticism and rebuttal are always centred on the image. They take centre space to give out a ‘central’ and key message that this is the unswerving and unequivocal stance of this particular Salafi community. This positioning is a useful tool which has been well employed to shape the discourse; because it is something the eye fixates on immediately and serves to draw the viewer’s attention. This is particularly useful in drawing the wider public’s attention especially when the
phrase: “Muslims, non-Muslims and media all welcome” accompany four out of the eight images, suggesting a concerted outreach effort. Whether this has been picked up by the media and indeed the wider public is questionable because we do not see it reported apart from one simple unsensational article from the Guardian.17 This suggests something quite serious and sad from the media’s part; their objectivity and constructiveness can be questioned as they look out for the sensational ‘killer’ stories which not only divide public opinion but also foster hatred and rancour in the society for certain minority groups.

The colouring of the critical words/phrases is likewise interesting. For the most part, the condemnation phrases have been written in red and bold font which is not only striking but also very clear in the ultimate danger it represents and poses. In a way it serves to represent a ‘common’ danger for both the Salafi community as well as the wider society to address. It is quite a bridge maker and fence mender which can really capture the public imagination if only this group had the resources to get their message across to the strategic level. In a way it does pose a serious ethical question with regard to how our societies are run and the role media play in representing the voiceless. Here we have a tiny group of Salafis desperately trying to mend the fences and warn of the danger of terrorism to all and sundry.

By triangulation, this message cannot be dismissed as lip service because we see the frequency and wide distribution of these seminars on not only a British national context; but on a very transnational level as well.18 What is however clear is that this particular Salafi community is deploying all the resources it has within its disposal to engage the tactical and strategic social structures. Whatever success they achieve of this should be credited and acknowledged and whatever shortcoming they might have should also be constructively addressed. A brief example of this is the critique that such flyers were ‘confusingly’ crafted with so much going on in the background that it confused the eye. To which I can respond that this is applicable to a certain extent; however in all fairness, we also have to take into consideration the ‘big’ message that this group wanted to share

18 Some of the seminars were held as far afield as Canada and the US.
vis-a-vis a limited space in terms of both media and spatial resources. And hence they have had to ‘make do’ with what they have and creatively reconfigure the grand narratives and wider schemes.

In this section, we have uncovered some of the broader and more specific visual representational strategies which the Salafi community under study used to create the discourses around their responses to 7/7. We have now seen the representations at both levels of analysis – the tactical and strategic. It is time to combine these two analytical levels to look at the possibility of shared elements and inherent differences in the shaping of ‘Salafist’ discourse. We begin with these commonalities in the following section.

Chapter 3: Looking at the Commonalities in Discourse

Discourses intersect with one another; and at these points, certain similarities emerge to link disparate discursive spaces. The topic of Salafist responses to the July 7 bombings was no different. During the data collection for this case study, I began to notice that one of the most striking commonalities between the strategic and tactical representations of the Salafi responses lay in the way both sources identified the proponents of the 7/7 ideology. Ironically, the very agents identified by the Daily Mail feature as the culprits within the Salafi community being studied.

As pointed out in the previous chapter, the Salafi community under study seems to systematically and tactically work towards the ‘shared grounds’ and commonalities between it and the wider British society. It is a way of consensus building which the group has consistently used in its ideological propaganda against extremist *Jihadism* and *neo-Kharjite* thought. When we juxtapose this against the strategically calibrated imagery of the Daily Mail; and perhaps even to a fair extent – the mainstream media, we see very contrasting depictions. However, the empirical data clearly indicates to the study proposition that the Salafi community was negotiating its own sense of *Britishness* by using themes of ‘familiarity’ which both it and the wider British society can connect with to shape the field of ‘peace-making and social cohesion’ discourse. Needless to say; the group is under pressure to perhaps ‘conform’ to certain social trends and discourses; however to allege that the ‘crises management’ approach was entirely influenced by these strategic trends I think would be an inaccurate depiction of the actual situation because as we saw, there was a concerted effort to reach out, expose and clarify the ‘Salafi’ position as being unequivocally against violent extremism. In a way, this illustrates that was very much a doctrinal and ideological position from within the group’s own internal dynamic and not just one which 7/7 initiated.

Surprisingly enough, one of the commonalities between this Salafi community, the Daily Mail, and perhaps even the wider public position is the agreement on the figureheads of these deadly calamities. Rather surprisingly, the very people who the media (Daily Mail) labelled as ‘Salafist’ and therefore guilty of inciting anti-western sentiment and hence terrorist violence and reprisal attacks are the very people whom the ‘Salafi’ group highlight as the ‘perpetrators’ of this evil doctrine and as responsible for the propagation of violent *jihadist* ideology. And I don’t think it’s fair to interpret that as s Public Relations tactic to free themselves away from these figures as a matter of convenience. Because when we look at their representations within this particular Salafist community, they are framed in quite distinct doctrinal and ideological terms; it was unlikely for them to identify with and relate to their extremist viewpoints.
Proceeding along this line, we see that just as the mainstream media framed these ‘culprits’, the Salafi group has in a very similar fashion done the same; although with a significant twist which again only serves to reinforce the solid doctrinal and ideological foundations of their position (the culprits’ eyes are obliterated; and the fact that it is done in red is very interesting and thought provoking). Just as the mainstream media framed the proponents of terrorism and hate sentiment using *collectivisation, impersonalisation, and even dehumanisation* – cf. the monotonous way they are framed and angled as looking head on, we see almost the same visual representational strategies employed by the Salafi community here.

It should however be asked: what are the objectives behind each of these representations when ascribed to the *strategic* and *tactical* levels respectively? Is the Salafi representation of these individuals congruent with the *collectivisation, impersonalisation, and dehumanisation* objectives of the Daily Mail? I respond saying: not necessarily. Perhaps access to imagery is an issue wherein the Salafist community is forced to ‘make do’ and use what imagery and visual resources it has within its disposal. And hence; even though they may use the same imagery widely circulated in mainstream media, their intentions may be quite different. And I think the obliteration of the eyes says a lot. Firstly, it could connote that as a community; the Salafists are prepared to ‘make do’ with whatever they have to confront the stark social realities. Sometimes this may mean going to certain doctrinal or ideological compromises such as usage of human imagery and that’s only because of a necessity to refute and highlight the inherent danger of these individuals. And secondly, there is a clear and subtle message that despite the apparent homogeneity of the Muslim (Salafist) community; not all who are constructed (especially) by the media as ‘Salafist’ are at all sympathetic to extreme *Jihadist* ideology. In a way, it is a strong message that sometimes what you see is not always what you get. It is a rather profound and powerful and ironic message to give out.

Obliteration of the eyes really does say a great deal. In a way, it even seems more potent than the mainstream media’s visual representational strategies. Here, it is legitimate on religious, doctrinal and social grounds for them to dehumanize the
agents in this way; they cannot be criticised for being racist or prejudiced against their own brothers. The obliteration of the eyes in this regard is therefore even more powerful that the *collectivisation, impersonalisation, and dehumanisation* strategies employed by the Daily Mail because by removing from the agents their eyes, you are cutting off any potential means to connect with them on any level. It’s one of the most powerful means of delegitimizing someone because in a way you don’t even acknowledge their ‘existence’ through the eyes – the widow to the soul.

The way the proponents behind the 7/7 ideology are framed in both the strategically and tactically shaped visual representations is one of the most salient commonalities between these two levels of analysis. As we begin to approach the end of our case study, it is time to consider the differences between the two sources to complete the analytical outlook we have adopted so far. This is the ambit of my next chapter.

**Chapter 4: Looking at the Differences in Discourse**

We started this case report looking at the iconographical shaping of Salafist discourse at the *strategic* level of analysis; we then focused on the *tactical* level of analysis seeing how the Salafists as a community were shaping their own discourses. Having established the general themes and representational strategies at these two levels of analysis, the next priority was to look at the similarities in discourse. In this section, we aim to complete the analysis by studying the differences in the way ‘Salafist’ responses to the devastating July 7 attacks have been visually represented. In this section, I have included images from other media sources which like the Daily Mail are operating on the *strategic* level. The reason for this is to situate the analysis within a wider context of discourses so as to see to what extent the differences in discourse creation around the Salafist responses to 7/7 were of a distinct ‘strategic’ tendency over against the Daily Mail’s own ideological agenda.
It was established in the first chapter of this case study report that the Daily Mail made a clear link between 7/7 and certain hypervisible extremists using the term ‘Salafism’: “Mr. Islam, who is linked to an organisation called Salafi Youth for Islamic Propagation, warned that unless British and American troops were withdrawn from ‘Muslim lands’ they would be to blame for the consequences.”

The iconography selected and used in the articles served a purpose of supporting this lexical field of discourse. And when we take a look at the images collated for this section on the differences in discourse creation, we see that this is to a certain extent, an observable pattern recurring in other media sources; even those identified as being more liberal or neutral in their reporting. And hence in the shaping of discourse, a degree of emphasis seems to be given in making a clear link between Jihad, terrorism, social anarchy and Salafi ideology. Although the scope of this thesis doesn’t permit a more in-depth analysis of this, I theorize that this media association between Salafism and Jihadist violence is so prevalent that

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19 ‘Have more babies and Muslims can take over the UK’ hate fanatic says, as warning comes that ‘next 9/11 will be in UK’, p4.
cognitively operating attitudinal structures will form, leading the readers or viewers to make such a link by default whenever the term ‘Salafism’ is mentioned. This is the effect of representational strategies such as *collectivisation, impersonalisation, and dehumanisation*. A homogenous religious community is conceptualized making it considerably easier to ‘other’ them as an ‘out-group’.

The above representational strategies have been used to the extent that it has become somewhat normative for Salafism to be associated with violent Jihadism. When we examine the images, we see a number of these visual strategies employed to this effect. There is a clear *collectivisation and impersonalisation* trend wherein a standard homogenous image of the Salafi is produced. The images are uniform in their visual attributes – the beard, gown, similar gazes and postures. I argue that this homogenization results in erasing the contours of the Salafi community’s landscape. Entire communities fall under this generalized landscape and become implicated in terrorism and social upheaval. They aren’t even explored to critically ascertain the accuracy of these trends. Moreover, as we can see in the above images, the homogenization even occurs on a transnational level to the point of creating a global ‘Salafi’ presence wherein the group identified in one local or national context is immediately seen in reference to a much wider global phenomenon. Hence, the ‘Salafists’ ideology behind 7/7 is the same as that causing anarchy post Arab Spring, and the same one being experienced in Saudi Arabian suburbia.

Following on from this pattern, one other trend which is apparent when looking at these visual and lexical discourses is the tendency for Salafis as a group to be framed and defined in relation to other groups, for example the Muslim Brotherhood in the Egyptian context or the more ‘militant’ political movements in Tunisia post Arab Spring. Once these referential frameworks are established, they are then widened to the transnational level through the usage of labels like *Salafi-Jihadism* to demarcate the group’s ideology and *modus operandi*. When we refer to the results of our analysis on the tactical level, we see a different picture. We saw a ‘British’ Salafi advocating an ‘Orthodox Islamic war on terror’. It is one case of contradiction between what the media is reporting and what is taking place on the grassroots level. This therefore constitutes a fundamental difference
in discourse creation around the Salafist responses to 7/7. Whilst mainstream media has focused on the structural level and therefore employed certain generalizing representational strategies, the ‘Salafi’ community we studied was 
tactically reconfiguring its own position as a part and parcel of British society.

Going back to the images selected for analysis in this section of the case report, I would like to focus on one final element before bringing the study to a conclusion. I bring into focus the initial comparative basis of this thesis by looking at two particular iconographical representations from the Daily Mail and the Salafi community which highlight the inherent differences in discourse creation around the ‘Salafist’ responses to the tragedy.

One of the iconic images of July 7 is the blown-up Tavistock Square double decker bus. A total of fourteen people died in the explosion. In my survey of images, I found that most of the media sources would show the bus as an isolated object as shown in the example on the right. What I found almost unique in the Daily Mail’s visual depiction of the bus was its rare picture (p41) which backgrounds the bus against particular foregrounded icons of ‘British’ and ‘London’ life – the black cab and coppers (the Metropolitan Police officers with their trademark helmets). The connotative value of this collateral imagery is personalization of the destruction; when we see the London cabbies, the coppers and the streets, the violation becomes much more personal and upfront. It clearly illustrates the danger and
close proximity of the event; it occurred in London streets and affected all our lives.

Here, ‘London’ iconography is used to demarcate ‘in–groups’ and ‘out–groups’. The implicated ‘Salafists’ belong to the latter. In contrast to this, we saw that in the Salafi community’s discourse, the ‘London’ themes were used as a tool for building bridges and making peace. The emphasis on these symbols seemed to have been directed towards evoking a sense of mutually shared culture – the London nightlights, the Tube station entry, and in other images we saw double decker buses, Big Ben and the Houses of Parliament. These symbols were used for recognition of the shared cultural traits; and hence we saw the messages: “all welcome, Muslim, non-Muslim and media”. This was the Salafi community negotiating its sense of belonging to Britain and clearly showing that they are part of the ‘in–group’ feeling the need to engage in fruitful dialogue to resolve the looming problems post 7/7.

Chapter 5: Conclusion of the Case Study

This thesis was a case study looking at the Salafist responses to the atrocious acts behind 7/7. Its underlying analytical focus was on the iconographical representations and the visual strategies used to frame the discourses around these responses. The main argument was that we cannot afford to make a priori assumptions about the power dynamics in force behind the shaping of these responses especially when we are faced with stark contrasts between what we sometimes see reported in media, and what occurs at the more grassroots level, and the disparities between theory and practice; and policy and reality.

The study then adopted certain conceptual frameworks which considered analysing the two levels of social agency – the tactical (grassroots) level and the strategic (structural) level. This corresponded with outlining two main sources of study and comparison. We consequently looked at these discourses as they were shaped by media sources such as the Daily Mail in particular and a community which self-identified as Salafi within a distinctly British context.
The case study protocol led to outlining four major units of analysis: we first looked at how the Salafist responses were being shaped at the strategic level of analysis. Here, we focused on the visual representational strategies employed by the Daily Mail as they reported on these distinctly ‘Salafist’ responses post 7/7. We came to recognize a prevalent use of certain visual semiotic resources such as collectivisation wherein the chief proponents of an extremist ‘Salafist’ ideology are framed in almost identical postures. This led to an impersonalisation wherein the viewer is led to cognitively think ‘they are all the same’. An element of dehumanisation was also present when the extremely menacing demeanours of these proponents in the way they were framed as not engaging with the viewer and in their entanglement in ‘anti-establishment’ actions delegitimized their positions. They are immediately recognized as an ‘out-group’ in a homogenized way which is not only refusing to engage in meaningful dialogue with the wider British society, but even provocatively threatens of more reprisal attacks.

In the second unit of analysis, we came to look at these ‘Salafist’ responses from the tactical level of analysis. Here, we considered the Salafi community being studied as having the capacity to reconfigure the ‘grand schemes’ to shape their own spaces of discourse and thereby create their own senses of belonging. In quite stark contrast from the previous section, we came to see an ‘orthodox Islamic war on terror’ being waged from the frontlines of this very Salafist community. In the iconographical representations used to shape the discourses around this community’s position on the 7/7 ideology, we came to recognize how the group was negotiating its way out of a ‘messy situation’ when it perceived of its incrimination in the atrocities. And hence it had to appeal to the wider British society and make a clear stance and position against violent Jihadist ideology. In the iconography, we came to recognize certain themes of shared commonality which the group used to show its stakeholder status in Britain. Icons like Big Ben, the Houses of parliament, and the London nightlights all clearly indicated to this group’s unequivocal identification as part of British culture; and its ‘harsh’ stance against terrorism and Jihadist violence was even more pronounced than what the media was reporting about the public perception. The agents of terrorism are termed ‘brothers of the devil’; and the ideology is termed a
cancer; and an orthodox war is declared against it and its proponents. This led to studying the similarities in discourse creation between the two sources.

The third chapter of my case study report looked at the similarities in discourse creation. Rather surprisingly, the one common theme which both the Daily Mail and the studied Salafi community shared was the way they framed the proponents of violent *Jihadism*. Despite the lack of ‘human-like’ or ‘facial’ representations from the Salafi source, we saw that when they indeed used such iconography, they were identical with the Daily Mail’s visual strategies in framing the agents. We hence saw that the identified ‘extremists’ are represented in terms which follow on from the strategies of *collectivisation, impersonalisation and dehumanisation*. With regard to the Salafi source, the latter strategy of *dehumanisation* was particularly pronounced when we saw the agents’ eyes obliterated – on doctrinal grounds obviously; but nonetheless, it gave a strong message outlining the illegitimacy of these people. This particular factor really challenged the *social identity thesis* which purports that nations are imagined communities whose boundaries are demarcated by an ‘in-group’ ‘out-group’ dialectic. Here, the boundaries were being strongly contested. Whilst the mail homogenized the Salafi community by representing them as an ‘out-group’; this particular Salafi group showed that they ascribed to the same ‘in-group’ which identifies these same culprits as responsible for the sort of ideology which gave birth to 7/7. This really questions the role of media in representing facts on the ground, and particularly of minority groups which although seemingly voiceless on the structural level, nonetheless can demonstrate considerable power in negotiating and reconfiguring their own distinct localities within the wider social space.

In the final section, we looked at the inherent differences in the creation of discourse around the Salafist responses. Here we considered some iconography from alternative strategically located sources in order to contextualize the representational themes on this level of analysis. In doing this, we saw that there was a clear tendency to homogenize Salafist discourse on local/national levels. Furthermore, this was taken to the transnational level wherein Salafi ideology is mapped as a globally operating phenomenon indiscriminative of the local forms it
took and the national contexts it was operating within. Terms like *Salafi-Jihadism* are used to label any groups with any form of affiliation to Salafism, even if it is as subtle as the name they use to identify themselves. We saw that this had the effect of generalizing the religious community’s landscape which can result in some inaccurate assumptions about the nature of their doctrines and *modus operandi*. In comparing the visual representations of the Salafist responses to the 7/7 attacks between the daily Mail and the Salafi community, we came to see how certain differences in terms of the themes being evoked in the representational strategies reflected the positions of the sources. Whilst the Mail used the icons which are distinctly British to show how the attack affected the city in a devastating way, the Salafi community used these same icons as points of commonality to call for recognition of the mutually shared culture as a means for a viable social cohesion.

My own reflections from this case study are that, I would like to see more critical scholarship conducted with regard to questioning some of the representational strategies used to shape public discourse especially when it comes to minority groups, and more specifically, Islam – a religion often portrayed to be at loggerheads with the wider Western, European and even global world. We need to be more critical of homogenizing representations because they take away from the complex diversity of such groups. This is particularly important in the domains of policy making because we are seeing some disparities between social reality, theory and practice. This is also an ethical challenge directed to all stakeholders in social cohesion and community relations. We should strive for that constructive objectivity where we should be prepared to set aside our assumptions and actually allow some of these marginalized communities to speak to us. Whether they speak to us using lexical or visual discourses is irrelevant; the crucial thing is that we do not assume them to be powerless or voiceless. By this, we allow them to speak to us and show us what they have done to create their own distinct localities. This thesis took a visual iconographical approach to show the alternatives out there in conducting studies of such issues.
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