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**The subjective and objective violence of terrorism: analysing "British values" in newspaper coverage of the 2017 London Bridge Attack**

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# **The subjective and objective violence of terrorism: analysing “British values” in newspaper coverage of the 2017 London Bridge attack**

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## **Abstract**

This article examines how Žižek’s analysis of “subjective” violence can be used to explore the ways in which media coverage of a terrorist attack is contoured and shaped by less noticeable forms of “objective” (symbolic and systemic) violence. Drawing upon newspaper coverage of the 2017 London Bridge attack, it is noted how examples of “subjective” violence were grounded in the externalization of a clearly identifiable “other”, which symbolically framed the terrorists and the attack as tied to and representative of the UK Muslim community. Examples of “systematic” violence were most notable in the ideological edifice that underpinned this framing but also in the ways in which newspaper reports served to draw upon British values in the aftermath of the attack. This directed attention away from the contradictions within the UK, towards narratives that sought to “fix” these contradictions through eradicating the problem of “the other” and/or by violently protecting the British values “they” seek to undermine. As a consequence, newspaper coverage worked to uphold the illusion that “peace” could be achieved by eradicating terrorism through further forms of objective violence, including, internment without trial; the “ripping up” of human rights; and, closer surveillance of Muslim communities. Indeed, it was this unacknowledged violence that worked to maintain British values in the press’ coverage.

## **Keywords**

Žižek, London Bridge, British values, Muslim/Islam, media analysis

## **Analysing the London Bridge attack: aims, purposes and methodological concerns**

In May and June 2017, the United Kingdom (UK) was subject to two terrorist attacks, the second of which took place in London on June 3.<sup>1</sup> While driving in a rented van, the three

attackers: Khuram Shazad Butt; Rachid Redouane; and, Youssef Zaghba, mounted the pavement along London Bridge, driving into pedestrians, before exiting the van and proceeding to Borough Market, where they stabbed four people.<sup>2</sup> Eventually, the attackers were shot dead by police. In total eight people were killed and 48 injured.

While not deferring from the severity of the atrocity, this article will critically examine UK (London-based) newspaper coverage of the London Bridge attack.<sup>3</sup> Informed by Slavoj Žižek's conceptualization of violence, it highlights how Žižek's (2010) analysis of "subjective" violence can be used to explore the extent to which media coverage of a terrorist attack is contoured and shaped by forms of "objective" violence (Žižek 2013). In particular, it is this paper's contention that examples of objective violence were most noticeable in the media's demarcation of certain outsider groups, in this instance, the UK Muslim community. Implicit in this process, is the way in which newspaper representations of British values were symbolically used in newspaper coverage of the attack and how these representations can be examined and challenged in order "to uncover their latent significance" (Taylor 2010, 92).

Methodologically, this analysis is drawn from an initial sample of 359 newspaper articles, which were collected from the following broadsheet: *The Daily Telegraph*, *The Times*, *The Guardian*; and, tabloid: *Daily Mirror*, *Daily Mail*, *Daily Express*, *The Sun*, newspapers. Newspapers were collected on the days following the attack (4 June – 6 June 2017) and were subject to a qualitative thematic analysis (Neuman 2003). This followed a process of open and axial coding (Strauss and Corbin 1990). That is, while the original sample included any newspaper article pertaining to the attack (open coding), closer analysis served to reduce this sample to 235 newspaper articles. In this second sample, each article was read and relevant themes were identified (axial coding) (Van Gorp 2010). Here, the discursive construction of the attack, its perpetrators and wider debates regarding: multiculturalism; Islam; immigration; political correctness; and British values, were noted.

By applying a Žižekian analysis of the media (Taylor 2010; Žižek 1989, 2010), the following sections will highlight how media coverage of terrorism can more purposefully be used to identify underlying contradictions within the representation of British values. Aside from the media's often dramatic and spectacular focus on subjective violence, soon to be discussed, a Žižekian approach “enables media audiences to perceive the ‘contours’ – the ‘background’ that make subjective violence possible and inevitable” (Howie 2012, 115). This will now be considered.

### **Žižek: subjective and objective violence**

In his layered approach to violence, Žižek (2010) distinguishes between two forms: subjective and objective. Subjective violence is the act committed by an agent and it is a form of violence that is easily attributable to a particular individual or group. According to Žižek (2010), brutal and violent “acts” are forms of subjective violence, “which [... are] experienced, observed and enacted on individual victims by perpetrators” (Rudge et al. 2012, 34). More importantly, it is subjective violence which “serves to deliver us from the responsibility to act” (Žižek 2012, 5), by focusing attention on the act of violence and its immediate brutality.

For Howie (2012, 59), “terrorist violence is clearly subjective violence”. It is often committed by an individual or a small group of individuals, it is “dramatic” in its perpetration and it is usually committed against members of the public. Accordingly, it is “the overpowering horror of violent acts and empathy with the victims [which] inexorably function[s] as a lure which prevents us from thinking” (Žižek 2010, 3). Media coverage implicitly supports subjective violence by failing to confront the underlying problems that sustain terrorism, instead focusing on its brutality (Howie 2012; Taylor 2010). As a result,

subjective violence is not unique, in the sense that it is unprecedented or without cause but, instead, such violence emerges from and is shaped by the “contours that sustain and organize visible and brutal acts of violence” (Howie 2011, 3).

In elaborating upon these contours, Žižek’s (2010) objective violence refers to two interrelated dimensions: symbolic violence and systemic violence. Symbolic violence is the violence of language and the “imposition of a certain universe of meaning” (Žižek 2010, 1). This highlights the ways in which hegemonic discourses provide particular representations of reality. It reflects the inherent exclusions within language, so that while “There are language acts that are direct violent outburst such as discrimination and verbal abuse, ... there are also structural features of language that impose more subtle, objective language violence” (Howie 2011, 20).<sup>4</sup>

Systemic violence is the unending expansion of capitalism and the economic activities that maintain neoliberalism. This is violence which is reflected in the increase in inequality between rich and poor and in the move from rural traditions to urban industrialism.<sup>5</sup> In such instances:

The conventional notion of violence [... is] widened to include de facto economic coercion. For example, a cleaning worker on minimum wage may not be frog-marched out of the house each day to scrub toilets, but basic economic pressure acts as an effective force in its own right. (Taylor 2010, 122).

Furthermore, systemic violence can be used to examine the consequences of Western economic practices and political systems globally.

In drawing a link between subjective violence, systemic violence and “The War on Terror”, Žižek (2006, 370) explains how the subjective violence of the American soldiers –

pictured torturing Iraqi prisoners in leaked photos from the Abu Grahیب prison, Iraq – was the result of the systemic violence which structures and shapes US society. The leaked photos served as an exposition of the “obscene underside” of US culture. Žižek’s comments refer specifically to the culture of “hazing” at US fraternities, which often reflect explicit sexual themes. Notably, the leaked photos portrayed the US Army personnel performing acts of sexual violence against the detainees. As a result, while certain forms of violence can remain hidden, they can be objectively real, especially in systemic forms. As evident in Žižek’s (2006) reference to US society, such systemic forms of violence can also be reflected in the perpetuation of national values which are sustained by obscuring their “obscene underside”. This will be returned to in the following discussion on British values.

For now, it is important to emphasize that the significance of Žižek’s (2010) argument, is that rather than viewing subjective violence as the destabilising act of an otherwise stable peace, Žižek directs us to consider how such “peace” is sustained by forms of objective violence (symbolic and systemic). In doing so:

*objective violence* is misrecognized and normalized; ... *subjective violence* is noisy, riotous and a perturbation of the norm. For Žižek, each form of violence is not to be viewed as an opposite pole; rather each is implicated and implicit in the activities and operations of the other. (Rudge et al. 2012, 34 [italics in original]).

Therefore, without drawing a discussion to the individual motives of the terrorist, it is important that one considers “the conditions that make terrorist atrocities seem morally acceptable to desperate, radicalised people” (Sharpe and Boucher 2010, 37). Indeed, examples of terrorism, such as:

9/11 did not happen in an ahistorical vacuum. There were systematic and structural forces – a particular brand of US democracy, the fighting of a proxy war against the other Cold War superpower, a militarised everyday culture, Reganomics, a particular attitude towards the world, and a host of other objectively violent features – that formed the background for the subjectivity of US and Soviet led violence in many parts of the world. (Howie 2011, 16).

Similarly, in the case of British-Islamic relations, objective violence can be identified in the failure to understand how:

British encounter[s] with Islam [... have] a long and extensive history into which is inscribed a complex array of sentiments of affinity and respect for Islam and its expression in the cultures of particular peoples, coupled with a parallel trajectory of virulent enmities and the rhetorics of denigration. (Alam and Husband 2013, 237)

In view of the above, it is this article's contention that while objective forms of violence are not spectacular and, as a consequence, do not receive as much attention, the media's preference for news features that focus on terrorism's "subjective" aspects provides an opportunity to examine how objective forms of violence can be made visible. That is:

Rather than violence being something the news media disinterestedly transmits as factual images of violent acts from around the world, violence is re-conceptualized by Žižek as the innate oppressiveness of the media's SOP [standard operating procedure] – the powerful and harmful constraints it imposes upon language and thought despite its purported neutrality. (Taylor 2010, 146).

The significance here is that “[media] passivity can also be violent” (Valentic 2008, 2). As a result, mediated violence, such as, the 24-hour coverage of terrorist attacks, as well other global events including: environmental disasters; humanitarian crises; and, political scandals, are imbedded in forms of objective violence (Taylor 2010; Valentic 2008; Žižek 2010). Before turning to newspaper coverage of the London Bridge attack, the following section will serve to relate Žižek’s subjective and objective violence to media coverage of terrorism. In this discussion specific attention will be given to the framing of Islam, the UK Muslim community and British values.

### **Terrorism, violence and the media’s framing of the UK Muslim community and British values**

While the role of the mass media in acts of terrorism has been widely noted (Clutterbuck 1977) – with Howie (2012, 44) asserting that “it is the media itself that drives discussions, explorations and public discourses on terrorism” – it is evident that the media and terrorism continue to maintain a level of symbiosis (Schlesinger 1991), with media coverage of terrorism increasing since 9/11 (Rohner and Frey 2007). Accordingly, Alam and Husband (2013, 246) argue that:

The [UK] government is not without assistance in [... the] process of selling the risk of imminent terrorist threat, for there is an incestuous relationship between the media, the terrorist and government; all of them have a vested interest in exploiting terrorism through the media.



Furthermore, whereas the benefits of prolonged and extensive media coverage can help to support terrorists who wish to garner global attention, as noted by Derrida, media coverage can also serve to aid those who need, require or wish to frame certain groups as “evil” (Borradori 2003).

Consequently, in the UK, Alam and Husband (2013, 250) detail how Muslim communities have increasingly come under attention within government rhetoric and media coverage as culturally “alien” and “as a potential risk to British social order”. As a result, Muslim communities are “seen as constituting both a symbolic and a realistic threat to majority ‘British’ interests” (Alam and Husband 2013, 250). Indeed, this extends the “violence” of terrorism beyond the victims to include those communities who are deemed to be responsible for such acts.

When “Targeted as alien and threatening”, Alam and Husband (2013, 249) contend that government policies have served to present “British Muslim communities as marginal to the mainstream of British life and as a threat to the British way of life”. Such forms of systemic violence have been widely noted within the literature (Awan 2010). In 1997, the Runnymede Trust identified values and practices that served to frame Muslims along hostile lines. Here, the media was derided as encouraging and perpetuating a view of Muslims and Islam as one based upon fear (Allen 2011). As a result, there has been “an undeniable escalation of the negative othering discourse concerning Muslims from the early 2000s onwards, which many connect to the events of September 11, 2001 and the subsequent violence in various European cities” (Eijberst and Ghorashi 2016, 165).

Additionally, when considered in accordance with Žižek’s analysis of violence, then the media’s framing of terrorist attacks and the apparent “threat” of Muslim communities can serve to reveal how such exclusion becomes a product of underlying forms of systemic violence (Žižek 2010). In fact, this directs attention to how certain values, perpetuated by

politicians and the media, are constitutive of systemic violence and, more importantly, work to obscure this violence by focusing on the spectacular effects of subjective violence. This can be seen in the taken-for-granted, “common sense” projection of British values, which objectively serve to maintain the status-quo (Black 2016). Ideologically, these values are inherently alienating, particularly when one considers how national values work to delineate between certain individuals/groups who are perceived as following or undermining such values (Black 2016). Consequently, as an example of objective (systemic) violence, references to British values in media coverage can provide an “invisible”, zero-level standard from which the perpetuation of subjective violence is measured against. That is, as a reflection of the status-quo, British values remain uncontested and, in the media coverage of terrorist attacks, are presented as a bulwark against terrorism. This highlights how British values can work as a form of systemic violence which both sustains and perpetuates symbolic and subjective forms.

Given the intersections between terrorism, the media and violence, the following section will apply Žižek’s (2010) subjective and objective violence in order to examine the ways in which media coverage of a terrorist atrocity works to ideologically locate certain groups, while at the same time, promoting certain values through calls for further violence. In particular, the following sections will explore how the media can passively serve in the functioning of violence, by examining the subjective and objective dimensions of newspaper coverage of the London Bridge attack. While attention will be given to examples of subjective violence within newspaper reports, selected extracts will also be used to detail how the press’ coverage and, in particular, its ability to demarcate and essentialise “the other”, served as a form of symbolic violence that, in conjunction with discourses on British values, presented “veiled discussions about who, or who not, to include in a society” (Rudge et al. 2012, 36).

Specifically, this will explore how the perpetuation of British values was predicated on forms of systemic violence.

**Subjective violence in newspaper coverage: a “terrifying spree of indiscriminate carnage”**

With regard to the work of Ellis (2000, 2009), Howie (2012, 26) highlights how the “the most common type of witnessed mediated event sees journalists deploy particular reporting strategies which are pieced together and displayed in aesthetically clean and spectacular forms that can be easily and unproblematically consumed”. However, what became apparent from newspaper coverage of the London Bridge attack was that this reporting followed a “carefully cultivated sense of shock” (Taylor 2010, 127).

Notably, the shock of the attack was evidenced in the press’ reference to a number of “traumatic images” that emphasized the attack’s subjective dimensions. The *Daily Mail* drew upon witness videos which had filmed the attack (both during and after):

In one Borough Market pub, The Globe, a man soaked in blood patiently waited as someone dressed his wounds. Footage of the scene showed a policewoman crawling on the floor with drinkers, ordering them all to keep down. Another terrifying video posted online showed officers sweeping through a restaurant bar as petrified drinkers dived under tables. (June 5, 2017)

The shock of the attack was, according to *The Daily Telegraph*, “the second time in less than a fortnight, [that] the nation has woken to a story of carnage, horror and heroism that has taken place overnight” (June 5, 2017). Here, the “terrifying spree of indiscriminate carnage”

(Littlejohn, *Daily Mail*, June 5, 2017) was committed by “knife-wielding jihadis ... wreaking terror in the packed bars and restaurants around Borough Market, slitting throats and shrieking: This is for Allah” (Greenhill et al., *Daily Mail*, June 5, 2017). For Leo, “London was now a war zone” (*The Sun*, June 5, 2017), with “The ... police ... being ... expected to serve as infantrymen in a brutal war being fought in our streets, pubs and restaurants” (Phillips, *Daily Mirror*, June 7, 2017).

While not deflecting from the severity of the attack, it is clear from the above examples that it was the “terrifying” nature of the attack, the carnage it created and the horror that it brought to pedestrian streets, which was laid bear in spectacular form in newspaper reports (Howie 2012). In doing so, “the grave sense of irreversible loss [... and] the humiliation of fear” (Williams, *The Guardian*, June 5, 2017) which the attack provoked, was closely allied with the press’ framing of subjective violence. Indeed, while Taylor (2010, 122) asserts that “the invisibility of objective violence makes it media-unfriendly”, it is apparent that such violence is rendered insignificant to those reports that seek to emphasize the dramatic nature of the attack.

Here, the spectacle of terrorism is something that goes beyond the act itself, forming a central part of how the event is reported, a process that inevitably adds to the attack’s “spectacular” effects (Hoskins and O’laughlin 2007). This was efficiently rendered in those examples that contrasted the attack with the “buzzing” bars from which “laughter and conversation was shattered by a devastating terrorist attack, as brutal as it was quick” (Topping et al., *The Guardian*, June 5, 2017). By focusing on the attack’s subjective brutality, the “shattered” “normalcy” of a Saturday night in London could be established. In so doing, newspaper reports were able to highlight how news of the attack revealed a break in normality. For Cox:

NEWS of this latest barbaric act of senseless violence reached me at the end of a day that until then had been both peaceful and beautiful. Camping with the kids. Toasting marshmallows. Crawling into bed in our tepee by the river. Simple pleasures but ones that – once again – we are reminded we can never take for granted. (*Daily Express*, June 6, 2017)

While the “simple pleasures” and domestic serenity of Cox’s (2017) family camping trip were brought to bear amidst news of the attack, for Phillips the atrocity was a direct attack against the “spirit” of London:

A spirit seen in its full, raucous, gobby glory in the capital’s pubs on a Saturday night. Those few hours of the week when, free from work and responsibilities, life is full of laughter and long stories, too much to drink and just enough romance. (*Daily Mirror*, June 5, 2017)

In addition, Whittow stated:

AS I write this, diners enjoying a pizza are laughing all around me. Outside the restaurant at a set of traffic lights naughty children are gently winding up their parents. A motorist slows to allow a family of foreign tourists to cross the road. Nothing strange in all that. A typical Sunday afternoon in our beautiful country. *Except* that I am just 400 yards from London Bridge where unimaginable horror erupted just 15 hours earlier. Life goes bravely on in our splendid British way. (*Daily Express*, June 5, 2017 [italics added])

In each of the above examples, newspaper reports rendered a depiction of “British” society that was idealistically natural (“spirit”), romantically free (“simple pleasures”) and harmoniously ordered (“A typical Sunday afternoon”). In these instances, it was clear that the brutality of the attack was a “perturbation of the ‘normal’, peaceful state of things” (Žižek 2010, 2 see also Cox 2017).

Yet, “objective violence is precisely the violence inherent to this ‘normal’ state of things” (Žižek 2010, 2); evident in the sense that it is not the act of terrorism which reflected the disruption of civil society, but the “manifest[ation] [of] its underlying phantasmic structure” (Žižek 2012, 2). To clarify, it was only *after* the attack that such “fantasies” of a peaceful, non-violent British society were apparent, fantasies that ultimately served to accentuate the attack’s subjective violence. Here, “Žižek’s analysis of fantasy demonstrates how it plays a powerful structuring role in our real, pragmatic lives”, so that, in short, “life without fantasies is essentially not possible” (Taylor 2010, 152). In the above examples, it was the symbolic framing of the terrorist’s subjective act which revealed the underlying fantasy of an illusory British society, represented in romanticized accounts of a harmonious London, naturalized in “spirit”. In doing so, the explicit nature of the attack and its subversion of the “normal” prevented any considered reflection of its causes. Instead, as the following sections will detail, possible causes were found elsewhere.

### **Symbolic violence and “the other”: immigration, Islam and the “enemy within”**

Since 9/11, the argument that there is a “crisis of multiculturalism” has served to characterise and “justify political initiatives in relation to integration, security and immigration” (Lentin and Titley 2011, 2). This follows that multiculturalism and immigration have resulted in a crisis within British society and a degradation of British values. In various reports, the

London Bridge attack echoed these concerns, with Samuel noting that, “Britain is facing something it hasn’t seen before: *a threat from within*” (*The Daily Telegraph*, June 5, 2017 [italics added]). Such fear of a residing enemy, located within British society, was echoed by Deen, who asked, “How do we tackle an enemy that seems to be emerging from thin air?” (*Daily Mirror*, June 5, 2017).

Indeed, the sense that the UK had been corroded from the “inside” was reiterated across numerous reports of the attack (*The Daily Telegraph*, 2017), with the cause of the problem being aligned with immigration. Littlejohn added that “The politicians have opened the floodgates to mass immigration without insisting on integration” (*Daily Mail*, June 5, 2017). In addition, McKinstry stated:

APATHETIC comfort blanket of tears, tweets and tea-lights is central to the politics of denial where the public is not meant to question the revolution inflicted by mass immigration or challenge the import of an alien, primitive culture into our midst (*Daily Express*, June 3, 2017).

According to Murray, the attack “might help us weigh up the ongoing cultural benefits of large-scale Islamic immigration versus the downside of dozens of obliterated lives every now and then” (*The Sun*, June 5, 2017). As evidenced by Littlejohn (2017), McKinstry (2017) and Murray (2017), while politicians and “intellectual elites are held to disdain the capacities of ordinary people, with their experimental imposition of multiculturalism being among their most self-serving gestures” (Lentin and Titley 2011, 156), it is evident that these gestures can be reworked to provide a cause for popular mobilization against immigration and multiculturalism.

Furthermore, as noted by Murray (2017), it was the “cultural benefits” of immigration that required consideration. In fact, such calls are often grounded in arguments for ethnic integration and/or assimilation, a process that can only occur when “the original ethnic difference is either wholly effaced or of only minor, optional value” (Valluvan 2017, 4). As a result, for Phillips, there was a clear distinction between “Islamists” and those who are “merely cultural Muslims who observe no religious practices” (*The Times*, June 6, 2017). Here, the demarcation of “Islam” as culturally separate and the segmentation of the Muslim community, reflected in those who were only “cultural Muslims”, worked to politicize culture through a process of identifying and selecting a subject to be “othered” (Black 2016).

Notably, “As multiculturalism’s impossible subjects”, Lentin and Titley (2011, 19) highlight how it is “Muslims” who often “sit at the apex of a triangulated politics, aligned with accommodating relativists and assertive liberal-nationalists in a political geometry convinced of these axes as fixed relationships and final horizons”. In coverage of the London Bridge attack, the political consequence was that the problem of immigration and “the pernicious doctrine of ‘multiculturalism’” were subsequently linked with the creation of “vast, monocultural Muslim ghettos in *our* great cities” (Littlejohn, *Daily Mail*, June 5, 2017 [italics added]). Consequently, while serving “as lightning rods for writers who were set against the policy” of multiculturalism (Karim 2008, 76), it was the Muslim community who were viewed as *responsible for* the London Bridge attack.

### **Symbolic violence and “the other”: segmenting the Muslim community**

While not “suggest[ing] that the vast majority of Muslims in Britain support the terrorists”, Littlejohn was clear to point out that “it is incontestable that the terrorists are all Muslims who quote the Koran to justify their deranged war against those they consider to be filthy infidels



i.e.: anyone who fails to subscribe to their fundamentalist beliefs” (*Daily Mail*, June 5, 2017). Murray added, “After every such attack, a parade of political leaders say the atrocities have ‘nothing to do with Islam’. Now, after yet another night of terror, can we finally ask: Who do they think they are kidding?” (*The Sun*, June 5, 2017). Indeed, the conflation of Islam with terrorism – a conflation that worked to subsume the actions of the terrorists with the wider Muslim community (Gerhards and Schäfer 2014) – emphasized that while the press was able to detail the actions and debate the possible reasons why the terrorists chose to commit such atrocities, in many instances, these actions were simply viewed as a problem of “Muslims” in general. According to Roycroft-Davis:

Until decent Muslims accept that those who kill supposedly in the name of Allah actually live in their apartheid-like communities, pray in their mosques, seek justice in their sharia courts and shop in their halal stores – *and are therefore little different to the rest of them* – then it will always be much easier to take the PC [politically correct] way out and shift the blame away from where it really lies. (*Daily Express*, June 6, 2017 [italics added])

Despite drawing a distinction between “decent” Muslims and the terrorists, the above comments highlight the ways in which “decent” Muslims are viewed as culturally inseparable to the terrorists, who live, prey and follow the same cultural practices. Subsequently, as evidenced elsewhere (Eijberst and Ghorashi 2016), the paradox facing Muslim communities is that while “On the one hand they are called to lessen their religious attachments, on the other hand they are mainly approached as Muslims” (Eijberst and Ghorashi 2016, 165), who are subsequently levelled with the *cultural burden* of terrorism.

As a result, the *Daily Mail* stated that “Ordinary Muslims must take responsibility for the terrorists in their midst and root them out” (June 5, 2017) and while “Urging Britain’s mainstream Muslims to play their part in tackling extremism” (Twomey and Pilditch, *Daily Express*, June 5, 2017), Phillips argued that “We must require Muslims to take responsibility for the actions of all in their community” (*The Times*, June 6, 2017). In fact, despite members of the Muslim community denouncing the attacks, Littlejohn “would have preferred to see a few prominent Muslim clerics giving press conferences condemning the slaughter committed in the name of their faith” (*Daily Mail*, June 5, 2017).

Elsewhere, Jones and Clarke (2005, 306) have highlighted that in media portrayals of the “war on terror”, the media “all too easily strays into a somewhat delusional, but diametric opposition ... that of a Manichaeian conflict of Good and Evil – an opposition that, in reality, does not exist (in the terms in which it is conventionally set)”. Instead, the above examples reveal how ethnic inclusion/exclusion followed a process of segmentation within the press’ discourse, most notable in the distinction between “good” and “bad” Muslims (Roycroft-Davis 2017). In fact, other examples highlighted that while “Frightened people turned to social media to explain how Muslim taxi drivers especially had come to their aid with free lifts” (Retter, *Daily Mirror*, June 5, 2017), at sites of mourning in London:

Many among the multi-faith crowd held up signs calling for solidarity in the face of adversity. One Muslim's message read: “I am London. I am British. I am human.” Another stated: “We stand united with you.” Another said: “You are in our hearts and prayers. We stand united with you. Terrorists ain’t no Muslims.” And a group held posters spelling out: “We Love London.” Pupils in hijabs from Eden Girls’ School in Walthamstow, North East London, laid flowers. (Moyes and Philips, *The Sun*, June 6, 2017)

In the same way that ethnic-management becomes the responsibility of the individual (Rudge et al. 2012), Moyes and Philips's (2017) example details the extent to which individual Muslims were called upon to display their approachability (Rudge et al. 2012; Valluvan 2017), and when they did, such examples were viewed as exceptional or even congratulated (Valluvan 2017).

In elaborating upon this process, Awan (2010), while drawing upon the work of Said (1997), highlights how:

The narrative depiction of Islam through the acts of terrorism, wars, deaths, fatwas, jihads or bombings sustains a Western sociological imagination of Islam but at the same token, it thrusts the Ummah, or the global Muslim community, into a constant struggle to re-represent Islam. (Said 1997, 55 cited in Awan 2010, 535).

The assertion that Islam is left in a constant "struggle" of (re)presentation, is reflected in Valluvan's (2017, 2) contention that "the production of identities of ethnic difference and the incorporation into normative Western practices of urban life is better seen as constituting one and the same process". As an example of symbolic violence, this same process can be seen in the ambivalent way Muslims are framed within press reports; that is, as being required to show allegiance to the nation, while at the same time, being positioned as outside the nation. As noted by the *Daily Mail*, "These terrorists may be on the fringes of mainstream Islam, *but they are Muslims nonetheless*" (June 5, 2017 [italics added]).

Therefore, while examples of "neo-racism" dictate a move from biological to cultural racism (Balibar and Wallerstein 1991), the latter reflecting the ways in which Muslims are perceived as culturally external to hegemonic conceptions of British culture, the above

examples highlight how the segmentation of the Muslim community (“decent Muslims”) worked to culturally locate them as “outside”, yet also, “within” the nation. In other words, as a group “unnaturally” in *our home*. The effect of this separation is that it ambivalently worked to prescribe the Muslim community with a preconditioned inability to integrate with British culture while also being endowed with the responsibility to “fix” Islamic terrorism in order to integrate with British culture. For example:

On the morning of this attack, the brave former police chief and Muslim lawyer Nazir Afzal said there is an “industry” of Muslim groups spreading lies about this country and its counter-radicalisation policies. He is right. And it is time that British Muslims sorted this out. *Because if they do not, the rest of the nation will.* (Murray, *The Sun*, June 5)

The message should be that British Muslims are welcome citizens but on the same basis as everyone else: that they subscribe to the binding nature of foundational British laws and values. *If not, they will be treated as subversives.* (Phillips, *The Times*, June 6, 2017)

Both Murray (2017) and Phillips’s (2017) remarks reveal how representations of “British values” were symbolically grounded in the demarcation of a specific group of national traitors (“subversives”, i.e. The Muslim community) and in the subtle call for this group to fix *their* problem, or else (“if they do not, the rest of the nation will”). Here, the ambiguity of Murray’s (2017) comments reflected how calls for violence – against Muslim communities – could be subtly performed. In fact, it was this symbolic violence – the selective and pejorative

portrayal of the UK's Muslim community – which was systemically sustained by references to British values. This will now be considered.

### **The framing of systemic violence: The perpetuation of British values in newspaper coverage**

While remaining aware of the integrative and disintegrative effects of social norms (De Swaan 1995), the above examples have served to highlight how these attributes can ambiguously locate Muslim communities as both “inside” and “outside” the nation. Here, the UK Muslim community was subject to a “familiar double bind” in that “compliant integration into a prescribed national ‘way of doing things’ depends on being recognized as integrating, and this is a fragile basis on which to ensure equality” (Lentin and Titley 2010, 192). While this serves as an example of symbolic violence within the press, such ambiguity can work to maintain a level of subversion from which the promise of “inclusion” is buttressed by a dogmatic and absolute adherence to a specific set of British values that are conceived and presented as a formative part of British society. In fact, when presented as ‘common sense’, such values can serve to reveal underlying form of systemic violence by alienating certain groups.

The significance of this is reflected in Žižek's (1989) assertion that ideologies work to preserve voluntary consent, giving the impression that the subject is acting “non-ideologically” (Daly 1999). In part, this works by associating other groups' values and beliefs as being ideologically driven (Žižek and Daly 2004). Indeed, this was reflected in *The Times's* assertion that “the recent terrorist attacks, although not linked organisationally, are certainly linked ideologically. There is a perversion of Islamic thought which regards people at leisure in the metropolis as decadent and diabolical” (June 5, 2017). In contrast to British freedoms, it

was Islamic ideology which “denigrates the freedoms and rights that people enjoy in liberal democracies as secondary to the wisdom exhibited in divinity” (*The Times*, June 5, 2017).

Furthermore, in accordance with *The Times* (2017) article, notice how, in the following examples, the notion of “freedom” ideologically functioned as an accepted and unquestionable trait of British society:

If you are British, you do not plot against Britain. If you want the protections, security, services, and yes, freedoms which this country has fought to be able to give its citizens over centuries, then you do not respond with violence. (Ibrahim, *The Daily Telegraph*, June 6, 2017)

It will also send a clear message to everyone in Britain: That our society prizes freedom of speech above everything else, including your religion, your prophets, your holy book and your feelings. (O’Neill, *The Sun*, June 7, 2017)

With regard to the work of Latour (2004), Jones and Clarke (2005, 303) highlight how “the primary pitfall of Anglo-American ... politics”, suggests that the notion of “freedom is ‘our’ own; it belongs to ‘our’ own world and leaves it only in the form in which ‘we’ cast it”.<sup>6</sup> What we see in the above examples, therefore, is how the value of “freedom” becomes assertively conceived as an inherent trait of Western societies and as a non-ideological fact of what is “true”, “right” and “sensible” (Žižek 1989). Moreover, it was in adhering to such freedoms that the notion of British values could be dogmatically represented as non-contestable. Indeed, Conservative MP, Michael Gove, noted that as part of the UK’s counter-terrorism strategy, “Prevent”, “Organisations that were unwilling to promote British values not only had their funding stopped, but were not allowed to work with government” (*The*

*Daily Telegraph*, June 7, 2017).<sup>7</sup> Similar comments were echoed by the British prime minister, Theresa May, who – in her widely recited speech, given in the aftermath of the attacks – stated:

Defeating this ideology is one of the great challenges of our time ... it will only be defeated when we turn people’s minds away from this violence and make them understand that our values – pluralistic British values – are superior to anything offered by the preachers and supporters of hate (Theresa May cited in Rayner, *The Daily Telegraph*, June 5, 2017 [ellipses in original] see also Moyes and Philips, 2017; Travis, 2017)

As can be seen, such notions of “freedom” were paradoxically grounded in a dogmatic following of British values, echoing previous assertions which stated that Muslims “must” accommodate with these values. Here, the “ideological processes” underlying British values could be “hidden by their very explicitness and *natural feel*” (Taylor 2010, 12 [italics added]). That is, by presenting such values as natural and an accepted part of British society, then their elicitation could appear non-ideological and apolitical, a process that served to further cement “the terrorists” and their associated Muslim communities as “unnaturally” outside these values.

Ultimately, by elevating British values beyond the realm of politics, such values could be de-politicized (Žižek 1989). This serves to underscore how the representation of British values was objectively violent by systemically structuring a perceived status-quo, which had subsequently been undermined by the terrorists. More importantly, while this framing rested upon presenting British values being as “uncontestable”, in doing so other interests could be promoted. This occurred in three ways: first, by identifying how these values were subverted

by “the other”; second, by critiquing the apparent tolerance of British society; and, third, by denouncing human rights in favor of furthering state control.

***The framing of systemic violence: “They are seeking very specifically to rupture British security as a nation”***

As detailed in the above sections, the limits of liberal tolerance were clearly revealed in criticisms of Islam where the promotion of liberal values, such as, free speech, become arguments for racial bigotry and Muslim hostility. It is through examining these values that systemic forms of violence are made visible. This was most notable in newspaper reports that pointed out that the terrorists were motivated by a deep hatred for “our” values. The *Daily Mail* referred to “Islamist fanatics filled with hatred and contempt for our democracy and our secular freedoms” (June 5, 2017) and Whittow asserted that they “are determined to destroy everything that we cherish” (*Daily Express*, June 5, 2017). For Phillips, “They hate our drinking, our dancing, our swearing and our sex” (*Daily Mirror*, June 5, 2017), with their “goal ... to erode and ultimately destroy the political institutions of a free society and replace them with Sharia law” (Ali, *The Sun*, June 6, 2017). According to Ali:

Those who settle in migrant-dominated communities, who choose not to adopt British values, must no longer be allowed to go under the radar. This “cocooning” breeds hostility to the host culture. Perhaps most controversially, Islamic schools must be shut down if they are guilty of indoctrinating extremism. (*The Sun*, June 6, 2017)

Here, the “enemy within” was rendered through *their* pervasive rejection of the nation’s values, as noted by Conservative MP, Sajid Javid:



We have seen all too often that there are some people in our country who reject our shared values. Who are born here, raised here, have the same opportunities and advantages enjoyed by the rest of us, *yet choose* to turn on their fellow citizens in the most brutal way imaginable. (*The Times*, June 5, 2017)<sup>8</sup>

This rejection of British values was predicated on the terrorists' aim to destroy British society:

A terrorist is not the same as someone trying to cause physical damage for criminal motives. They are seeking very specifically to rupture British security as a nation, damage our institutions, and disrupt the quality of British daily life. And here's the point. They do not want to do these things to damage a building or cause injuries in a crowd. They want to do them because these things are British. (Ibrahim, *The Daily Telegraph*, June 6, 2017)

In Ibrahim's (2017) remarks, it becomes clear that the terrorists' motivations were fueled by their hatred for British society. While this corresponded with the aforementioned notion of a normal, peaceful British society, subsequently "damaged" by the terrorist attack, it also highlighted the extent to which such "daily life" was prescribed through less visible and more systemic forms of violence. Take, for example, Ibrahim's assertion that:

British subjects who plot to destroy the fabric of British life, aiming to kill as many innocent people as possible in random attacks, destroy government buildings, transport or businesses, who sow fear into the seams of the daily life, who seek to rupture the day-to-day workings of the economy or the business of state, or who act to

spread disorder and fear, should be considered not just terrorists, but traitors. They should be charged with treason. Treason, after all, essentially means betraying one's nation. All British nationals owe allegiance to the Queen, wherever they are. If you have the privilege to have a British passport, you should not be plotting violence against her subjects. (*The Daily Telegraph*, June 6, 2017 see also Littlejohn, 2017)

Notice how, in Ibrahim's (2017) example, the subjective violence of the terrorist becomes a motive for further forms of systemic violence enacted on behalf of the British state and evident in the desire to charge the terrorist(s) with treason. In the juxtaposition between the actions of the terrorist and accounts of British values, it was the values of the state which were presupposed as non-violent and, as a consequence, were able to stand in moral contradistinction to the values and actions of the terrorists.

Certainly, newspaper coverage can take on greater symbolic significance when the values of society are perceived to have been threatened or undermined (Nossel and Berkowitz 2006). As already evidenced, while the notion of national values is predicated upon the implicit assumption that there are certain "values" that certain individuals and/or groups are required to learn, in Ibrahim's (2017) remarks, it was apparent that the subversion of these values could serve as a way of maintaining their preservation (Daly 2010).

### ***The framing of systemic violence: The intolerance of British tolerance***

In their study of a "multiethnic workplace", Rudge et al. (2012, 32) detailed how the notion of tolerance "work[ed] to counteract obtaining inclusivity or equity". They identified "that it is the tolerator (the person who positions themselves as '*tolerant*') who retains definitional power of what is to be tolerated" (Rudge et al. 2012, 32 [italics in original]). In the case of the

London Bridge attack, such notions of tolerance, as held by the British state, were widely reported in newspaper accounts. According to Samuel:

Britain isn't perfect, of course, and many Muslims have no doubt come across discrimination or ignorance. But this is by and large a tolerant country, and surveys of Muslims suggest that the vast majority feel they benefit from its freedoms. Britain is not very good at explaining that these freedoms come as a package, along with tolerance, democracy and some degree of liberalism. (*The Daily Telegraph*, June 5, 2017)

However, despite Samuel's (2017) account of British tolerance, numerous reports sought to argue that Britain had become "too tolerant", with Afzal arguing that "There has been far too much tolerance of extremism in this country. And now in lost lives and spilled blood we are counting the cost" (*Daily Mail*, June 6, 2017). Others referenced May's speech, highlighting the fact that "Mrs May [had] said Britain had been too tolerant of Islamist extremism, allowing copycat killers to repeat atrocities in the wake of the Westminster and Manchester attacks" (Rayner et al., *The Daily Telegraph*, June 5, 2017). Citing May's speech, Blanchard stated, "While we have made significant progress in recent years, there is far too much tolerance of extremism in our country. We need to become far more robust in identifying it and stamping it out" (Theresa May cited in Blanchard, *Daily Mirror*, June 5, 2017).<sup>9</sup> For *The Daily Telegraph*, May was "right to warn that parts of British society may have become too tolerant of extremist views and that swathes of the public sector have not done enough to tackle the lethal threat in our midst" (June 5, 2017).

Consequently, while liberal multiculturalism is predicated upon calls for greater unity and British integration; indeed, a tolerance of "the other", such tolerance was discursively

grounded in forms of intolerance. That is, while on the one hand critics of British “tolerance” were explicit in their assertion that “the British” had been “too tolerant” of terrorists, on the other hand, notions of tolerance and plurality were commended as important attributes of British values, reflecting a tolerant, liberal and open UK. In the case of the former, it became clear that criticisms of tolerance could be used to not only deride terrorism but also serve as a segway for criticisms of multiculturalism, immigration and political correctness.

Here, the *Daily Mail* used the terrorist attack to level support for the UK Conservative government, by asserting that May’s speech, “signalled a final break with the multiculturalism approach championed by New Labour, [by] saying it was time to end the segregation in some parts of Britain and to have ‘some difficult, and often embarrassing, conversations with communities’” (June 5, 2017). In other instances, terrorism could also provide an opportunity for wider derisions of “political correctness”, as noted by Roycroft-Davis:

Speak your mind on immigration and you’re a racist; criticise scenes of gay men kissing on an early evening soap and you’re a homophobe; dare to remind women in burkhas that they’ve chosen to live in a Western Christian country and you’ve committed a hate crime (*Daily Express*, June 6, 2017 see also McKinstry 2017; Murray 2017; O’Neill 2017; *The Daily Telegraph* 2017b).

It is here that “the idea of tolerance becomes harder to sustain as multiculturalism increasingly comes under fire as mere political correctness which is stopping free speech and interfering in social relations” (Rudge et al. 2012, 43). Indeed, what is clear from these examples, is that “tolerance” becomes the problem, providing the opportunity for assertions of cultural accommodation and for tighter controls on immigration. In certain instance, this led to calls

for a rejection of human rights, in favor of internment without trial and stricter monitoring of Muslim communities.

***The framing of systemic violence: “ripping up” human rights***

In the aftermath of the attack, a number of articles revealed a distinct sense of justification in proposing stronger restrictive measures on terrorist suspects. While working to draw attention to the Muslim community, Kemp noted, “We must take a harder line against all forms of extremism, shutting down mosques, schools and Islamic organisations that incubate hatred, and seriously tackling radicalisation in prisons and universities” (*Daily Express*, June 5, 2017). The *Daily Express* added:

we have now reached a stage where it is reasonable to demand that mosques, schools and community leaders actively discourage the kind of separatism that we see in places such as London’s Tower Hamlets where Sharia law is strong. Police may need new powers which will inevitably lead to cries of racism. That is unfortunate but, yes, enough is enough (June 5, 2017).

For Phillips, “Until and unless Islam is reformed, we need to treat its practices on a scale ranging from extreme caution to outlawing some of them altogether” (*The Times*, June 6, 2017). Such calls for stronger action were discussed in relation to interning suspects without trial. McKinstry stated “Internment without trial, controversially used in Northern Ireland in early 1970s, has an ugly history but it might be a necessary emergency measure” (*Daily Express*, June 5, 2017) and Ford noted:

The most serious acts of terrorism carry a life sentence and judges impose lengthy minimum terms, but Mrs May hinted yesterday that she wants those convicted of a range of lesser offences to be locked up for longer. To do this she could introduce a system of extended sentences that is already used for people convicted of violent and sexual crimes which do not carry life sentences but where the court considers there is a significant threat to the public. (*The Times*, June 5, 2017)

While the above examples highlight how counter-terrorism strategies have been critiqued for the ways in which they serve to target British Muslims (Webber 2015), they also reveal how any restrictive action was not only normal but radically required.

According to Valentic (2008, 3), “today’s focus on terrorism as a ‘global’ destructing force demands thinking about the way in which ideological frameworks are deployed in justification of violence”. Indeed, Howie (2012) details how certain commentators of 9/11 promoted “metaphorically sanitized” forms of violence in the media. This was reflected in the following examples:

We cannot live in a country where attacks happen every few weeks, and an iron fist must now be used against the Islamist cancer in our society. (*The Daily Telegraph*, June 5, 2017)

There are multiple interpretations of the Koran. It’s not our job to decide which one is correct, simply to deal ruthlessly with any manifestation of Islam which wants to bring bloody mayhem to our streets. (Littlejohn, *Daily Mail*, June 5, 2017)

In certain instances, such assertions could become a conduit for fantasizing about the possibility of torturing terrorists:

The pub across the road from where I am sitting is called The Hung, Drawn And Quartered. I admit wicked thoughts race through my head as I think about the barbarians who killed and maimed in Borough Market. Being hung drawn and quartered is nothing more than they deserve after throwing men off tall buildings just for being gay, lowering people in cages into swimming pools to drown them, cruelly stoning victims to death and now causing havoc on our streets. (Whittow, *Daily Express*, June 5, 2017)

The tit-for-tat response to terrorism highlights how ideological perceptions of peace and freedom are grounded in violence towards others (Goudsblom 2001). As evident in Whittow's (2017) example, this can reveal a far more worrying curtailment of British values.

Furthermore, following 9/11, Sharpe and Boucher (2010, 6) have highlighted how "The Bush administration also demonstrated that the paradoxical flipside of its ideological advocacy of democracy against all radical ideas is in fact the suspension of human rights in the practical defence of parliamentary liberalism and the world market". This was echoed in UK newspaper reports. According to Kemp, "The threat these enemies pose to the lives of our people morally outweighs any risk to their own human rights" (*Daily Express*, June 5, 2017), with Hope and Rayner noting that, "In the past, attempts to impose tougher restrictions on terror suspects have been scuppered by the Human Rights Act, which enshrines the European Convention on Human Rights into British law" (*The Daily Telegraph*, June 7, 2017). Such calls were supported by May's speech, whereby, if elected, May "promised she would not let human rights laws stand in her way" (Hope and Rayner, *The Daily Telegraph*, June 7,

2017).<sup>10</sup> In fact, May was “prepared to rip up human rights laws to impose new restrictions on terrorism suspects” (Mason, *The Guardian*, June 7, 2017 see also Hall 2017; Dunn 2017; Stevens 2017; Zeffman and Ford 2017). Travis added:

The clear threat that she [May] is willing to amend human rights laws “if they get in the way of doing these things” is a recognition that some of the revived restrictions have already been subject to successful legal challenges in the British courts. This commitment appears to contradict the Tory manifesto pledge not to repeal or amend the Human Rights Act until after Brexit, but she may be relying on the fact that any legal challenges may well take at least two years to play out. (*The Guardian*, June 7, 2017)

According to Alam and Husband’s (2013, 245), “the 2010 report of the House of Lords/House of Commons Joint Committee on Human Rights provide[d] a distressing account of the government’s attempts to circumvent international human rights principles and law”. Sharpe and Boucher (2010, 198-199) underscore this by highlighting how terrorist groups and Western governments are paradoxically framed:

Because “Islamofascism” rejects liberal democracy and human rights as absolutely binding moral frameworks, these people are capable of every atrocity, from the slaughter of innocents in terrorist attacks to videotaped beheadings, which combine contempt for the humanity of their victims with ritualised barbarism. By contrast, when we engage in cruel and degrading forms of interrogation in a global network of secret prisons, up to and including perverse tortures recorded digitally at Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq, or when we drop massively destructive bombs on weddings in the hope



of taking out a single al-Qaeda operative, this is as a momentary and regrettable suspension of human rights in the interests of the greater good.

In a similar vein, calls for internment and a desire to “rip up” human rights revealed a clear rejection of the same values that previous articles had sought to promote. Instead, British tolerance was a “tolerance ... premised upon a much more powerful but foresworn intolerance towards an engaged analysis with the structural causes of ethnic conflict conveniently dismissed as tribal in origin” (Taylor 2010, 131).

### **Summary and concluding thoughts**

In her account of terrorism and its causes, Richardson (2007, xxii) argues that “the causes of terrorism are not to be found in objective conditions of poverty or privation or in a ruthless quest for domination but rather in a lethal cocktail that combines a disaffected individual, an enabling community, and a legitimizing ideology”. The issue here is that the “cocktail” which Richardson (2007) details is one based upon preordained conditions rather than the objective violence that contours these conditions (Žižek 2010). By way of meeting this critique, this article has drawn upon Žižek’s (2010) subjective and objective violence in relation to newspaper coverage of a violent terrorist attack. Implicit in Žižek’s (2010) analysis is that the representation of a normal/peaceful society is based upon other less noticed forms of violence. As a result, this analysis has served to examine how media coverage of the London Bridge attack could elicit deeper forms of violence. In doing so, it identified the following results.

First, examples of subjective violence were noted within the press’ coverage. This centered on the violent nature of the attack and the ways in which newspaper reports served to focus on its dramatic aspects. In particular, it was the apparent disruption of a “normal”,

peaceful, free and liberal UK which was brought to light in newspaper coverage of the terrorist attack. Notably, such examples of subjective violence were grounded in the externalization of a clearly identifiable “other”. Here, examples of symbolic violence served to frame the terrorists and the attack as representationally tied to the UK’s Muslim community.

Second, while framings of “the other” were predicated upon “a mysterious and partially defined *them*” (Howie 2012, 83 [italics in original]), this definition rested on examples of symbolic violence that followed a process of segmentation (Black 2016). This was evident in the press’ distinguishing between “good” and “bad” Muslims and in the ambivalent framing of the Muslim community, who were subsequently required to prove their allegiance to the UK and British values. As a result, Muslim groups were systematically caught between the prospect of being both *included within* as well as *excluded from* “the nation”. Like a Möbius strip, this inclusion/exclusion tension was symbolically reflected in forms of systemic violence, most notable in references to, and statements from, UK politicians and in newspaper representations of British values. As privileged actors of the UK state, the views and concerns of UK politicians highlighted the ways in which systemic violence could be symbolically performed.

Accordingly, if we consider subjective gestures to be linked with forms of objective violence (symbolic and systemic), then it is important that acts of terrorism are not considered as the actions of individual “men”, considered to be “mad” or inherently “barbaric”, but as a quite literal evocation of ignored violence within society. That is, as examples of symbolic violence reflected the ways in which newspaper discourses could select and position certain individuals/groups as outside “the nation” – a contention which rested upon a level of ambivalence – examples of systemic violence were most notable in the ideological edifice that underpinned the representation of British values. In such instances, newspaper coverage

worked to uphold the illusion that “peace” could be achieved by eradicating terrorism through forms of systemic violence, including: internment without trial; the “ripping up” of human rights; and, closer surveillance of Muslim communities. To this end, newspaper reports of the attack ideologically functioned by directing attention away from the contradictions within society, towards narratives that sought to “fix” these contradictions through eradicating the problem of “the other” and/or violently protecting the British values “they” seek to undermine.

In view of these contradictions, what we see in newspaper coverage is how the agents of subjective violence – “the terrorist(s)” – undergo a process of disenfranchisement that symbolically elevates them beyond comprehension. That is, while Žižek (2002) has commented upon “the metaphoric universalisation of the signifier ‘terror’”; a signification that could be tied to almost any message and “thus elevated to become the hidden point of equivalence between all social evils”, Richardson (2007, 10) contends that:

a terrorist is neither a freedom fighter nor a guerrilla. A terrorist is a terrorist, no matter whether or not you like the goal s/he is trying to achieve, no matter whether or not you like the government s/he is trying to change.

What is significant from Richardson’s (2007) assertion is that, when considered through a Žižekian lens, the notion of a “terrorist” transcends any perspective (“no matter whether or not”). In so doing, “the terrorist” occupies both perspectives, becoming “the hidden point of equivalence” (Žižek 2002) for the “contradictions *within* Western social reality [which] appear as an external threat arising from *without*” (Sharpe and Boucher 2010, 35 [italics in original]).

In fact, as that which occupies the antagonism between two opposing perspectives, the terrorists' "equivalence" reflects what Žižek (2006) has referred to as a "parallax view". According to Žižek (2006, 8), "the political parallax, [is] the social antagonism which allows for no common ground between the conflicting agents". This parallax was violently brought to bear in both the terrorists' subjective violence, and its subsequent reporting, but also, in the objective violence of the press, as seen in articles which prompted calls for internment without trial, violence against Islam and a rejection of human rights. In particular, this "gap" was reflected in the failure to offer any considered appraisal of the attack and/or a wider contextualization of terrorism. Instead, as the adversary of "our freedoms", *Islamic* terrorism stood as the opposite of liberal democracy, a separation that was enacted and maintained through calls for further violence and discursively promoted through the perpetuation of British values that were predicated on the pejorative framing of the Muslim community.

Indeed, by "learn[ing] to step back, to disentangle ourselves from the fascinating lure of this directly visible 'subjective' violence, ... performed by a clearly identifiable agent" (Žižek 2010, 1) and through examining how both "Objective and subjective violence operate together to form the façade of the smooth running system and its underpinning beliefs" (Rudge et al. 2012, 34), this article reveals the extent to which newspaper coverage of the London Bridge attack helped to maintain the fantasy of British values as grounded in examples of acknowledged (subjective) and unacknowledged (objective) violence.

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## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> The May attack took place in Manchester at the "Manchester Arena". A home-made bomb was detonated as people were leaving a concert.

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<sup>2</sup> Borough Market is located in Southwark, London. One of the largest markets in London, it trades in specialty foods. The London Bridge attack bared a similarity to a previous attack in March 2017, where, a 52-year-old Briton, Khalid Masood, drove along Westminster bridge, hitting pedestrians, before fatally stabbing a police officer outside the Palace of Westminster.

<sup>3</sup> Certainly, by focusing on the press' coverage of one particular attack, the aim is not to dislocate this attack from previous attacks nor to ignore the long-term processes and power relations that frame understandings of "terrorism" (Dunning 2017). Instead, it is to examine how the ideological significance of terrorism was presented in newspaper coverage of a terrorist attack.

<sup>4</sup> See Dunning (2017) for a considered analysis of the structural (or, relational) features underlying the concept of the terrorist.

<sup>5</sup> Valentic (2008, 3) adds that in the case of "systemic violence, it should be emphasized that every state is in a way founded on violence, as many authors have pointed out so far".

<sup>6</sup> The paradox here is noted by McDuff (2017), who highlights how "The west's vocal commitment to its supposedly foundational virtues of liberalism and freedom stand in direct contrast to its determination to sell weapons to repressive theocratic monarchies if it serves its material interests".

<sup>7</sup> Michael Gove is Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.

<sup>8</sup> Sajid Javid is Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government.

<sup>9</sup> This same section of May's speech was also cited in Dunn (2017), Elliot (2017), Hague (2017), Travis (2017), Wright et al. (2017).

<sup>10</sup> The London Bridge attack took place during the 2017 general election campaign.

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