

## **The War on Terror and Muslim Britons' Safety: A Week in the Life of a Dialogical Network**

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### **Introduction**

There is a growing body of academic work analysing presentations of the attacks on the USA on 9/11/2001 and their consequences. This includes recent special issues of *Discourse and Society* (2004, vol. 15, No. 2&3) and *Journal of Language and Politics* (2005, vol. 4, No. 1), Lincoln (2003), Chilton (2004, chapters 9, 10) and Hodges and Nilep (2007). One shortcoming in much of this excellent work is that it adopts a western perspective: as a matter of routine the corpus used gives voice to some participants in the hostilities rather than others. This is apparent even in explicitly politically aligned and critical work such as Richardson's (2004) book on misrepresenting Islam. No analysis can, of course be 'transcendental' - each has grounding, perspective and a purpose. Yet, if the aim is not just to subject a particular text to a formal analysis, using it as 'evidence', but to make visible the links between texts so as to grasp the conflict, analysts need to aim at a practically accomplishable completeness of the corpus. We had this problem in mind when analysing presentations of Roma in Czech media (Leudar and Nekvapil, 2000, Nekvapil and Leudar, 2003). We made some effort to include in our materials not just the pieces *about* Roma but also the admittedly rare public events in which Roma participated. Using such a corpus we demonstrated that representations of Roma are contested, with the Czechs' rejections of Roma not simply reflecting fixed stereotypes but contingent on specific social activities. In our recent paper (Leudar, Marsland and Nekvapil, 2004),

we analysed the affinities in presentations of the attacks in George Bush's addresses to the nation, statements to the British House of Commons by Tony Blair (and the ensuing debate) and statements by Osama bin Laden's broadcast on Al Jazeera Television. Bush, Blair, and Bin Laden used 'us/them' minimal category pairs with the distinction between 'us' and 'them' drawn in different but contrasted and hence connected terms, distinguishing 'us' from 'them' in secular and religious terms, respectively. The two pairs of categories, glossable respectively as 'defenders of civilisation'/'terrorists' and 'defenders of Islam'/'infidel crusaders' were not independent. They were coordinated through their common incumbency - any participant in the 'war on terror' has a double and contrastive identity, each version grounded in competing perspectives on that conflict. Bin Laden is an incumbent of the category 'us' as he formulates it - he is 'a defender of Islam'. He is, however, also one of 'them' as that category is formulated by Bush/Blair - he is 'a terrorist'. The same goes for his enemy: President Bush is one of 'us' - a defender of freedom and democracy but also one of 'them' - a crusader attacking Islam.

The representations of the parties to the conflict were, however, not simply coordinated referentially, through the obviously common incumbency of competing categories. The two 'us/them' membership category pairs were *joined* in their mutual opposition, grounded in the enemies' formulations of the conflict - the war between civilisation and barbarism on the one hand, and the religious war against

the infidels, the enemies of Islam, on the other. The contrary formulations of the conflict were not just words, they were consequential: they provided moral justifications for violence and served to recruit allies.

Our analysis revealed that the enemies' statements were dialogically networked, as was revealed by the coordination of their membership category work. One interesting commonality between Bush and Blair's arguments in the days following 9/11 was their systematic and public effort to take religion out of the conflict. Yet there was a subtle difference between them which we did not focus on at the time. Blair narrated the events so as to minimise the backlash against the Muslim community, especially in the United Kingdom whilst Bush did not evidence such concern. In fact, according to Lincoln, his statements employed Old Testament derived references and indicated to his radical Christian allies that the conflict was a war between religions (Lincoln, 2003). In this paper we further develop our analysis of how, through membership categorisation, Blair and the representatives of the Muslim community in the UK managed in public-view the relationship between Islam and the terrorism. We extend the corpus used in Leudar, Marsland and Nekvapil (2004) to include additional Muslim parties, thus obtaining a more complete view of the happenings.

Before we proceed to do this, however, we first spell out the way we do the analysis. We analyse 'discourse' but we do not aim to isolate invariants, that is de-situated discursive structures or strategies or devices, nor do we read texts through the forms discovered by other analysts even though this may be occasionally helpful. Some ways of studying practices of membership categorising (i.e. how categories of people and their activities are composed and used) border on formal semantics (e.g. Jalbert and David, this issue). Unremarkably in

ethnomethodology, our analysis is, however, of participants' practical reasoning in and about happenings, with the aim of making such reasoning, its grounds and consequentiality, clear. The aim of Leudar, Marsland and Nekvapil (2004), and of this paper, is to make visible the links between the reasoning of those involved in violent conflicts – the allies, the enemies and those caught in between – working towards an account of how such links are accomplished without necessarily engaging in face to face interactions. Our analytic 'routine' has four logical characteristics. First, since argumentation in the political domain tends to be partisan, it is at least membership 'category indicative' (i.e. category incumbency can be allocated on the grounds of how a person argues), possibly 'category transformative' (a category can be transformed on noting how its incumbents typically argue) and even 'category constitutive' (arguing in a particular manner may not be incidental to a category but essential). We therefore always pay attention to how membership categories are managed and are concerned with both category maintenance and change. Second, the reasoning in and about conflict is not a disinterested meditation but lays the ground for future violence and moralizes past violence. As Sacks (1992) commented, membership categorizations are consequential; they provide moral grounds on which to speak and act (cf. Edwards, 1997). Third, practical reasoning is occasioned – even an argument that is a recognizable repeat still has to be performed somewhere and so is never quite like what others argued elsewhere or how they did so. The fourth and crucial aspect of our method involves putting 'an utterance' in an appropriate setting. Levinson, following Goffman, noted some time ago that participants may be situated in interactions as overhearers, this providing them with limited rights to contribute (Levinson, 1988). Media audiences are sometimes thought of as overhearers, but Greatbatch (1992), analysing turn-taking in studio debates,

noted that participants in the studio do not position viewers/listeners as 'eavesdroppers' on their private exchanges but rather as 'primary addressees'. We observed in addition, that politicians participating in TV debates may *address* their remarks to *specific* parties not in the studio, and occasionally get a response (Leudar, 1995). These physically absent parties are obviously more than 'overhearers', and more than members of a grouped audience. The setting of political talk is typically broader than the immediate sequential context (which is of course essential).

Our analysis then crucially involves setting an activity into a progressively broader flow of happenings thus gradually revealing its meaning (cf. Anscombe, 1959; Sharrock and Leudar, 2003). This analysis in turn draws on the work of John Austin who commented that the identity of an action is to be sought not in psychological depths (i.e. by inferring or even just attributing cognitions to individuals) but instead by providing a progressively 'thicker' description of activities (Austin, 1970, chapters 7 and 9; cf. Leudar and Costall, 2004). The analytic problem is to bring together happenings that are mutually relevant for those who participate in them (this is what used to be in Pragmatics 'the context selection problem'). To accomplish this we have formulated the conception of 'dialogical network' (see, e.g., Leudar and Nekvapil, 1998; Nekvapil and Leudar, 1998; Leudar and Nekvapil, 2004). We are concerned with two contingent issues. First, we demonstrate that dialogical networks *are distributed* in face-to-face interactions and media discourse and have some unique properties. Second, we are concerned with the *local* work that is required to initiate a network, or orient and contribute to an existing one. The relevance of an 'exophoric' setting is locally indicated by addressivity markers in talk or a text. These may include explicitly addressing absent parties and referring to other dialogical events, as well as oblique textual

and argument affinities. The relevance can, however, also be a matter of the subsequent uptake, where two initially apparently unconnected spatially and temporarily separate dialogical happenings are grouped together in talk of a third party - maybe a politician or a journalist - and so made mutually relevant for others. The local conversation with all it entails is absolutely necessary for the emergence of a dialogical network, but not just in one place and at one time, but in several, maybe many places and the network is distributed over these.

### Analysis

We shall analyze and inter-relate the following texts.

1. the record of a Downing Street press conference on 11<sup>th</sup> of September 2001;
2. a press release by the Muslim Council of Britain on 11<sup>th</sup> of September 2001;
3. a record of a Downing Street press conference on 12<sup>th</sup> September 2001;
4. *The Guardian* report on 12<sup>th</sup> September 2001;
5. a press release by the Muslim Council of Britain on 13<sup>th</sup> of September 2001;
6. a Hansard record of Anthony Blair addressing the House of Commons on 14<sup>th</sup> September 2001;
7. The contributions on 14<sup>th</sup> September 2001 of Khalid Mahmood and Mohammad Sarwar to the debate in the House of Commons following (6);
8. a press release by the Muslim Council of Britain on 18<sup>th</sup> of September 2001; and
9. An editorial in the *Muslim News* on 28<sup>th</sup> of September 2001

On 11<sup>th</sup> of September 2001, the British Prime Minister issued the following statement.

**(1) A. Blair, Downing Street, 11/09/01** <sup>64</sup>

1. The full horror of what has happened
2. in the United States earlier today is
3. now becoming clearer. It is hard even
4. to contemplate the utter carnage and
5. terror which has engulfed so many
6. innocent people. We've offered
7. President Bush and the American
8. people our solidarity, our profound
9. sympathy, and our prayers.
10. ((20 lines omitted))
11. As for those that carried out these
12. attacks, there are no adequate words of
13. condemnation. Their barbarism will
14. stand as their shame for all eternity.
15. As I said earlier, this mass terrorism is
16. the new evil in our world. The people
17. who perpetrate it have no regard
18. whatever for the sanctity or value of
19. human life, and we the democracies of
20. the world, must come together to
21. defeat it and eradicate it. This is not a
22. battle between the United States of
23. America and terrorism, but between
24. the free and democratic world and
25. terrorism. We, therefore, here in
26. Britain stand shoulder to shoulder
27. with our American friends in this hour
28. of tragedy, and we, like them, will not
29. rest until this evil is driven from our
30. world.

Blair contrasts two versions of the conflict: *USA vs. terrorism* and '*free and democratic world*' vs. *terrorism*, opting for the second view. As we have shown elsewhere (Leudar, Marsland and Nekvapil, 2004), this formulation is designed to make religion irrelevant to the conflict, since the 'free democratic world' includes secular societies and those with diverse religions (including Islam which has as much regard for the sanctity or value of human life as Christianity does). The notable aspect of (1) is, however, that Blair is offering 'prayers' and using words with religious connotations ('evil' and 'sanctity'). The use of these words by itself of course does not necessarily make one accountably religious, or specifically a Christian. Their use is however indexical – here against the background knowledge

<sup>64</sup> <http://www.number-10.gov.uk/output/Page1596.asp>

that Blair is a practicing Christian. Using the words with this contingency makes his Christianity notable and relevant in situ. The use of these words is unlikely to be accidental – the statement is not an improvised, spontaneous or an emotional piece – it is prepared, and most likely not just by Blair himself.<sup>65</sup> Moreover, he is not talking *about* the 'free and democratic world'; rather in speaking from Downing Street he *represents* that world. His religious status is not just a matter for his individual consciousness but a possible category-bound characteristic of the defenders of the 'free and democratic world'.

It is arguable that if those defenders are Christians, then the terrorists are likely to be Muslims. Why? Using one member of 'minimal category pair' in the right setting invokes the other member (cf. Sacks, 1992) and 'Christian'/'Muslim' pair is salient. That pair has been explicitly invoked by bin Laden and denied by Blair and Bush (see Leudar, Marsland, Nekvapil 2004). Blair is, however, not a Christian all of the time - his social identity is normally carefully managed and contingent on settings. So why is he a Christian now? One possibility is that like Bush's, Blair's speeches indicate to some that his understanding of the attacks is religious. Chilton (2004) remarked that "in some western states politicians have to take account of religious sensibilities, both in the negative direction of not *offending* any religious group and in the positive direction of *favoring* (maybe despite appearances) some particular group" (ibid, p. 175). The expression 'sanctity' or 'value of human life' indeed joins two different understandings – religious and secular - and could have been *designed* for a dual audience.<sup>66</sup> To understand the design of

<sup>65</sup> Levinson's (1988) analysis of White House tapes and Lynch and Bogen's (1996) of Contra affair make visible cooperative nature of political speech construction.

<sup>66</sup> On designing political speeches for multiple addressees see Kühn (1995).

the statement, however, we have to relate it to how it was taken up elsewhere.

It is more likely that Blair is squaring two, at first sight contrary, requirements. One is the need to take the religion out of what will become the 'war on terror'; this in order to secure allies in the Muslim world.<sup>67</sup> The second is to allow these allies to support the 'war on terror' in their own (religious) registers. The rhetorical power of having Muslims, speaking as Muslims, rejecting the violence carried out in the name of Islam is obvious. Speaking as a Christian may carry the danger of indicating that the conflict is between Christians and Muslims but it also sets the precedent for the Muslim allies to condemn the attacks as Muslims. The Muslim Council of Britain (MCB) fills the niche.

## (2) Muslim Council of Britain 11/09/01

1. 11th September 2001
2. MCB expresses total
3. condemnation of terrorist attacks
4. British Muslims, along with
5. everyone else, are watching events
6. in America with shock and horror.
7. Whoever is responsible for these
8. dreadful, wanton attacks, we
9. condemn them utterly. These are
10. senseless and evil acts that appal
11. all people of conscience. The
12. MCB stands shoulder to shoulder
13. with remarks made by our Prime
14. Minister Tony Blair. Our thoughts
15. and prayers are with all the
16. innocent victims, their families
17. and communities. We convey our
18. deepest sympathies to President
19. Bush and the people of America.
20. No cause can justify this carnage.
21. We hope those responsible will
22. swiftly be brought to justice for
23. their unconscionable deeds. As the
24. British Muslims come to the full
25. realisation of these most awful
26. events, which they condemn
27. wholeheartedly, they too are
28. beginning to feel a huge sense of

<sup>67</sup> Chomsky (2001) notes the terms used by Bush to denote actions following 9/11, and points out the assets of the vague designation 'war'.

29. fear. Terror makes victims of us
30. all, it is beyond reason. Terror on
31. this scale must not be compounded
32. by knee-jerk reactions that would
33. make victims of other innocent
34. peoples of the world. This would
35. only add to the devastation caused.

The statement does not stand alone. The MCB, speaking for British Muslims, does not just condemn the attacks, it does so 'along with everyone else'. Blair, representing the Great Britain, 'stood shoulder to shoulder' with the 'American friends' (extract 1, line 26-27); MCB stands 'shoulder to shoulder' *with remarks* of Tony Blair (extract 2, lines 12-14). (The alliance has limits.) Not knowing the perpetrators is also significant – denying privileged knowledge sets British Muslims apart from the attackers. The statement thus attends first to the participant position of the MCB and does this, so to speak performatively, by acting in spirit. MCB is joining the dialogical network initiated by Blair's calling for allies in the 'war on terror'. The MCB statement *endorses* Blair's formulation of the conflict (a dialogical connection) without specifying exactly which remarks it responds to. This is common in dialogical networks – remarks are grouped together and responded to jointly rather than individually. There are some obvious textual affinities between the statements (1) and (2). Both represent the attacks in *similar* terms ('horror', 'carnage'), both *offer* 'sympathy' and 'prayers'. Analysing the links between Bush and Blair's statements we observed that Blair did not simply reproduce Bush's statement, he amplified it in certain respects (Leudar, Marsland and Nekvapil, 2004) Blair's assessment of the events is likewise somewhat amplified in the MCB statement – 'horror' for instance becomes 'shock and horror'; and attacks are described as 'dreadful wanton destruction'.

The MCB statement, however, does not simply echo and amplify Blair's formulations. It positions Muslims as victims - these victims cannot be treated as perpetrators, and the 'war on terror' cannot

simply be a conflict between Christianity and Islam (as Osama bin Laden claims.) The MCB statement also warns against ‘knee jerk reactions’. The victims of these are not specified, but they obviously include Muslims in the UK whom the MCB represents. The MCB statement then does two things in the dialogical network. It *fulfils* Blair’s argument that the conflict is not between Islam and Christianity. Second, from the position of an ally, the MCB works to defend Muslims in the UK and elsewhere.

The design of Blair’s statement then only becomes obvious as the dialogical network unfolds. He defines the 9/11 attacks and their perpetrators so as to allow Muslims into an alliance; once they are in, he uses their voices to continue to dissociate religion from the conflict. The lesson for the analyst is that one can only properly understand political statements by noting their uptake elsewhere; in our terms understanding them in a dialogical network.

Blair used the MCB statement in a press conference at 10 Downing Street the next day.

### (3) Press conference, Downing Street, 12/09/01<sup>68</sup>

1. Blair statement
2. ((28 lines omitted))
3. ... the world now knows the full evil
4. and capability of international
5. terrorism which menaces the whole of
6. the democratic world. The terrorists
7. responsible have no sense of
8. humanity, of mercy, or of justice. To
9. commit acts of this nature requires a
10. fanaticism and wickedness that is
11. beyond our normal contemplation.
12. The USA will be considering the
13. action it considers appropriate against
14. those found to be responsible. But
15. beyond that, there are issues
16. connected with such terrorism that the
17. international community as a whole
18. must consider: where these groups are,

19. how they operate, how they are
20. financed, how they are supported, and
21. how they are stopped. One final point.
22. I was pleased to see the very strong
23. statement of condemnation from the
24. British Muslim Council, echoing that
25. of the American Muslim Council. As
26. Muslim leaders and clerics around the
27. world are making clear, such acts of
28. infamy and cruelty are wholly
29. contrary to the Islamic faith. The vast
30. majority of Muslims are decent,
31. upright people who share our horror at
32. what has happened. People of all
33. faiths and all democratic political
34. persuasions have a common cause: to
35. identify this machinery of terror and to
36. dismantle it as swiftly as possible.
37. With our American friends, and other
38. allies around the world, this is the task
39. to which we now turn.

The alliance is now explicitly opened to ‘people of all faiths’ and Blair stresses the variety of its membership – of political systems (he says not ‘democratic persuasion’ but ‘*persuasions*’) and of mode of religious faith (‘all faiths’). The actual *presence* in the alliance of Muslims is demonstrated by the statement of the MCB, which Blair makes relevant. Note, though, a small discrepancy. The MCB, representing British Muslims, rejected the attacks along with everyone else and ‘standing shoulder to shoulder’ with Blair. Blair, however, presents it as a spontaneous reaction to the 9/11 attacks and groups it with the like reaction by the American Muslim Council (line 25), and then attributing it to Muslim leaders and clerics in general (contrast extract 2, lines 11-14 and extract 3, lines 26, 27). He is, moreover, not just talking about Muslims but *with* Muslim ‘leaders and clerics’ and dissociates Islam from the attacks in their voices. Blair of course does not speak just in the voice of his Muslim allies. ‘The vast majority of Muslims are decent, upright people who share our horror at what has happened’ is in his own voice, he holds this view.

Blair then takes two steps to safeguard Muslims in the UK from the backlash. One

<sup>68</sup> <http://www.number-10.gov.uk/output/Page1597.asp>

is to dissociate Islam from the attacks, the other is to endorse most Muslims. The former is done in the voice of his allies and has to be done in a dialogical network. The latter is done in his own voice and in principle does not require a network. Dissociating Islam from the 9/11 attacks and having Muslim representatives to condemn them might of course have other consequences than protecting Muslims from a backlash. It might, for instance, work to attenuate possible Muslim support for the attackers.

Blair's uptake of the MCB press release is, however, selective. The point the MCB made about Muslims also being direct victims of the attacks is not taken up at all (and the MCB will reiterate it, as we shall see below). The warning against the 'knee jerk reaction' is arguably taken up in lines 3-14. Saying 'The USA will be considering the action it considers appropriate against those found to be responsible.' implies that neither Blair, nor the other allies of the USA have control over what the USA will 'decide' and do (the role of the allies is to provide intelligence, information and support - extract 3, lines 12-21). In using the words 'appropriate' and 'consider' to describe the eventual reaction of the USA, Blair tacitly discounts the likelihood of a 'knee jerk reaction'. Since he, however, starts with an extreme case description of the attackers he warrants an extreme reaction by the USA, and indicates that one is to be expected.

The way Blair removes the religion from the 'war on terror' depends on the Muslim bodies publicly rejecting the attacks and Blair's arguments make sense in and are contingent on this developing dialogical network – the analytic routine has to respect this.

What is notable is that Blair and the MCB not once identified the perpetrators as Muslims or of Islam avoiding expressions such as 'Islamic terrorists' and 'Islamic fundamentalists'. The perpetrators are

instead defined by reference to their deeds. Muslims, on the other hand, are identified by their positive moral qualities. Religious understanding of the attacks and of the ensuing conflict was, however, not to be avoided for long. The first question put to Blair in the press conference on the 12/09/02 was as follows:

**(4) Press conference, Downing Street, 12/09/01**

1. **Q:** This is maybe one of those
2. questions, Prime Minister, you can't
3. answer but there have been official
4. and semi-official comments from the
5. United States about Osama Bin
6. Laden's group being the likely culprit
7. for this. What is the British view of
8. that, and do we have any intelligence
9. about where these attacks came
10. from?
11. **A:** I won't comment on the
12. identification of who is responsible at
13. this stage but obviously this is
14. something that is under consideration
15. by our agencies here as well as other
16. agencies round the world and
17. particularly those in the United States
18. of America. Yes, Sir.

So, the suspicion that the attacks had been carried out by Osama bin Laden's group was gaining currency and Blair's attempt to argue religion out of the 'war on terror' was challenged. The second question was as follows.

**(5) Downing Street, 12/09/01**

1. **Q:** Noting what you said about
2. Britain's
3. Muslims, it is nonetheless the case
4. isn't it that this international terrorism
5. over the past decade has had a
6. common thread of Islamic
7. Fundamentalism and isn't it rather
8. inadequate to try and address this
9. problem by treating it as evil
10. terrorism and (sic)<sup>69</sup> isolation and
11. looking at the functionalities of where
12. the money comes from without
13. looking at the basic clash of ideologies
14. and indeed the basic concept of what

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<sup>69</sup> The word 'and' should presumably have been 'in'.

15. human rights and the value of human  
 16. life is?  
 17. A: Of course it is evil terrorism and  
 18. we shouldn't disguise that for a  
 19. moment but I think you are right in  
 20. saying that we also have to make it  
 21. clear and this is done best indeed by  
 22. voices within the Muslim community  
 23. and the Islamic faith that such acts of  
 24. wickedness and terrorism are wholly  
 25. contrary to the proper principles of  
 26. the Islamic faith. And one of the  
 27. reasons I mentioned the statement of  
 28. the Muslim Council of Britain was in  
 29. order to underscore the shock and the  
 30. sense of horror and sense of outrage  
 31. felt by the vast majority of Muslims  
 32. round the world. So this is not a  
 33. situation in which we should see this  
 34. as a cause between the Muslim faith  
 35. and the world but between terrorism  
 36. and the rest of the world, including the  
 37. Muslim faith.

The journalist tentatively accepts the dissociation of 'Britain's Muslims' from the attacks, but argues that the motivation is likely to have been 'Islamic fundamentalism', suggesting that Blair's understanding of the conflict is inadequate (it ignores the 'basic clash of ideologies', the contrary conceptions of 'human rights' and the values put on 'human life'.)<sup>70</sup> Blair rejects the criticism - the identity of perpetrators relevant to the 9/11 attacks is not that they are 'Muslims' but that they are 'evil terrorists.' Blair argues that such acts of terrorism are against 'proper principles of the Islamic faith' (misattributing this view to the journalist – line 19). Important for our analysis is that, as in (3), Blair supports his argument not by his own exegesis of Islam but by pointing out that the Muslim community, represented by the MCB, publicly strongly condemns the attacks as against Islam.

<sup>70</sup> The journalist's argument brings up an interesting point about Blair's construction of the attackers – they are defined entirely in terms of what they have done on 9/11 and then in terms of the physical and moral impact of their acts; they have almost no other 'qualities'. The journalist, on the other hand, provides a broader description which would clarify the intentions in the attacks.

Blair is not himself in a position to declare who is and who is not a proper Muslim – hence he speaks in the voices of his Muslim allies, reporting what they have said.

Events external to the press conference are thus crucial for understanding what Blair does in the press conference. The important point is that in referring to and quoting statements, Blair himself indicates which external events are relevant and hence should be included by us in the analysis.

Blair's press conference statement was referred to in many, if not all British national dailies. The Guardian reported it as follows:

**(6) The Guardian, 12/09/01, 1.15pm update**<sup>71</sup>

((26 lines omitted))

1. The prime minister was also quick to  
 2. stress that this was not a battle  
 3. between Islam and the west. He said  
 4. that such acts of terrorism were  
 5. "wholly contrary to the proper  
 6. principles of the Islamic faith". "This  
 7. is not a situation in which we should  
 8. see this as a cause between  
 9. the Muslim faith and the world, but  
 10. between terrorism and the rest of the  
 11. world, including the Muslim faith."

((22 lines omitted))

There are some discrepancies in what Blair said and what he was reported to have said - for instance, 'such acts of wickedness and terrorism' (extract 5, lines 23, 24) became 'such acts of terrorism', editing out the moral/religious dimension. What Blair said in counter-argument to a journalist is presented as his non-contingent view and broadcast to all and sundry and nobody in particular. This is a characteristic role of journalists in dialogical networks – they make local arguments public and redirect them. Leudar and Nekvapil (1998) noted how a relatively geographically hidden

<sup>71</sup> See <http://www.guardian.co.uk/wtccrash/story/0,,550619,00.html>



press conference became a significant event when the elements of it were reported by journalists and brought to politicians for comment. More importantly, however, Blair's careful rhetoric seems to be lost on the Guardian journalist - the view Blair expressed using voices of Muslim 'leaders and clerics' is simply attributed to him as his own and his point that it is Muslims who are rejecting the attacks does not carry.

The second statement of the MCB again in part fulfils Blair's argument. In (3), Blair said that Muslim leaders are making it clear that such acts of infamy are 'contrary to Islamic faith' and in (7) they do just that (extract 7, lines 3-5). He declares that Muslim leaders condemn the attacks (extract 3, lines 26-29) and here they do so (extract 7, lines 11-13).

#### **(7) Muslim Council of Britain 13/09/01**

1. MCB expresses total condemnation of
2. terrorist attacks in US
3. The Holy Qur'an equates the murder
4. of one innocent person with the
5. murder of the whole of humanity.
6. We, the Muslims of Britain, wish to
7. offer our deepest sympathies to the
8. families of those who have been killed
9. or injured following the atrocities
10. committed in the United States.
11. We utterly condemn these
12. indiscriminate terrorist attacks against
13. innocent lives. The perpetrators of
14. these atrocities, regardless of their
15. religious, ideological or political
16. beliefs, stand outside the pale of
17. civilized values.

The statement subtly differentiates the MCB from the attackers. The latter are presented as being without civilised values and the MCB, by implication, is upholding these. The attackers are however not necessarily devoid of religion (lines 13-15). Their creed, ideology or politics are, however, irrelevant to, and do not excuse, the attacks.

Having denounced the attacks and the attackers, however, the MCB statement

reinstates the point that Blair did not take up - Muslims are *victims* of terrorism, and therefore not perpetrators (extract 8, lines 18-21), and so should not be further victimized.

#### **(8) Muslim Council of Britain 13/09/01**

18. Terror affects us all. Terror of this
19. enormity must not be compounded by
20. knee-jerk reactions that would make
21. victims of other innocent people. We
22. would remind the government and the
23. media that the consequences of
24. unsubstantiated speculation in the
25. past, such as the case of the
26. Oklahoma
27. bombing, produced a climate of fear
28. among Muslims that should not be
29. repeated.

Compare this to what MCB said in its first statement:

#### **(9) Muslim Council of Britain 11/09/01**

27. they too are beginning to feel a huge
28. sense of fear. Terror makes victims of
29. us all, it is beyond reason. Terror on
30. this scale must not be compounded by
31. knee-jerk reactions that would make
32. victims of other innocent peoples

Both texts position Muslims as victims of terrorism, 'along with everyone else' (extract 8, line 18 and extract 9, lines 28,29). Muslims are, however, in addition potentially victims of backlash, 'knee jerk reactions'. Psychologically in fact they are victims already - in fearing such knee jerk reactions. There is a significant difference between the two MCB press releases, understandable in the network sequence. The second statement does not just warn of a backlash but also provides an instance (i.e. what happened in the aftermath of the Oklahoma bombing.) Providing the instance amplifies the previously ignored point. The fear and warning implicit in Blair's comments is made explicit and documented.

There is also an indication that the representatives of Muslims are less

sanguine than Blair about the effectiveness of dissociating the Islam from the attacks as a means of safeguarding their community.

**(10) Muslim Council of Britain 13/09/01**

29. There exists a heightened sense of  
30. insecurity amongst Muslims in Britain  
31. though we warmly welcome our  
32. Prime Minister's comments yesterday  
33. when he emphasised that Muslims in  
34. this country clearly condemn this  
35. atrocity. The Prime Minister warned  
36. against speculation that can endanger  
37. the lives of the entire community.  
38. Our thoughts and heartfelt concerns  
39. are with all those affected at this  
40. mournful moment.

The defence of British Muslims against the backlash is thus managed jointly by Blair and the Muslim representatives interactively in the dialogical network. Let us summarise this network so far. Two interactions were *distributed* in the press conferences and press releases. One can be glossed as follows: Blair and the MCB are taking religion in general and Islam in particular out of the 9/11 attacks: Blair asserted that Muslims condemn the attacks and the MCB did so; he then publicly welcomed the condemnation and used it in subsequent argument. The second interaction involved the MCB warning against knee-jerk reactions which would make Muslims double victims in the 'war on terror'. Blair here responded only weakly and in part and MCB reiterated the point in its second statement. This is not a theoretical piece, but let us draw out a point implicit in this analysis. The sequence of activities that *supervenes* on face-to-face interactions is readily understandable in terms of the same pragmatic categories that we find in face to face conversations – one does not have to formulate abstract, previously unnoticed social structures. We have shown elsewhere that dialogical networks are partly understandable in terms of standard adjacency pairs and three-part sequences (Leudar and Nekvapil, 2004). The turn-allocation mechanism (cf. Sacks, Schegloff

and Jefferson, 1974), however, does not seem to operate in dialogical networks.

The next crucial happening in the dialogical framework was Blair's statement to the House of Commons and the ensuing debate. Our analysis of the statement's dialogical connections and textual affinities with speeches of G.W. Bush and Osama bin Laden is available in Leudar, Marsland, Nekvapil (2004). What concerns us here is how Blair managed the religious aspects of the events, and how the representatives of British Muslims responded. The responses we shall analyse are (1) those by two MPs with Muslim connections (Khalid Mahmood and Mohammad Sarwar), (2) a further press release by the MCB and finally (3) an article in Muslim News.

**(11) Hansard, 14/9/2001: Column 604**

82. The Prime Minister: We do not yet  
83. know the exact origin of this evil.  
84. But if, as appears likely, it is so  
85. called Islamic fundamentalists, we  
86. know that they do not speak or act  
87. for the vast majority of decent law-  
88. abiding Muslims throughout the  
89. world. I say to our Arab and  
90. Muslim friends: "Neither you nor  
91. Islam is responsible for this; on the  
92. contrary, we know you share our  
93. shock at this terrorism, and we ask  
94. you as friends to make common  
95. cause with us in defeating this  
96. barbarism that is totally foreign to  
97. the true spirit and teachings of  
98. Islam."

Hitherto, Blair systematically denied that the motivation for the attacks was in Islam and that the perpetrators were Muslims - they were 'terrorists' and defined in terms of consequences of their deeds on 9/11. At the press conference on 12/09 Blair avoided denoting the attackers as 'Islamic fundamentalists'; here, however, they become 'so called Islamic fundamentalists' indicating that that may be a view at large. Blair used the expression with reluctance and in somebody else's voice; even so he introduced the possibility that the attacks were religiously motivated.

**(12) Hansard, 14/9/2001: Column 604**

((x lines omitted))

1. The Prime Minister: There will, of
2. course, be different shades of opinion
3. heard today. That again is as it should
4. be, but let us unite in agreeing this:
5. what happened in the United States on
6. Tuesday was an act of wickedness for
7. which there can be no justification.
8. Whatever the cause, whatever the
9. perversion of religious feeling,
10. whatever the political belief, to inflict
11. such terror on the world; to take the
12. lives of so many innocent and
13. defenceless men, women, and
14. children, can never ever be justified.

Hitherto the attackers were not simply Muslims, now Blair dissociates the terrorism from Islam by dividing Islam properly understood from the false Islam of the 'so called Islamic fundamentalists.' In fact, Blair presents the attacks as being caused by 'perversion of religious feeling' (line 9). Blair's formulation of the attacks and the enemy then still draws away from religion but less resolutely – a Muslim can be a friend or a foe and the attackers could have been religiously motivated. It is now the status of the religious motivation that is downgraded – it is a wrong understanding, a perversion. In this formulation, the West and the Muslim world are not divided by the attacks, but the Muslim world is fragmented.

Who, though, is Blair's argument for? - there is no single audience. He speaks to those present in the House, but the argument is also publicly available - in full to anybody with access to Hansard and Cable TV, and abridged in media reports. (We have already considered one Guardian report, extract 6.) Blair statement assumes that his arguments will be reported widely - he directs some of his comments to his 'Arab and Muslim friends throughout the world'. This expression sets up a category with an open and partly self-selecting incumbency (cf. Kühn 1995). What concerns us now is how Blair's arguments were taken up by Muslims. Khalid

Mahmood represents a constituency with a large Muslim population in Birmingham and responded to Blair in the House of Commons.

**(13) Hansard, 14/9/2001: Column 604**

364. Mr. Khalid Mahmood (Birmingham, Perry

365. Barr): Will the Prime Minister accept my
366. unreserved condemnation of the
367. atrocities carried out in the United
368. States? Will he also accept that that
369. terrible act of terrorism claimed the lives
370. of many people of many faiths, including
371. Muslims? In addition, will he assure the
372. House that it would be quite wrong for
373. British Muslims to be tarred with the
374. same brush following that dreadful act of
375. terrorism?

((the statement in full))

Mahmood's contribution to the parliamentary debate is designed for an audience prepared to believe the worst about Muslims - are they complicit in the attacks? This is not surprising, since at the time the national press drew controversial statements out of some Islamic militants in the UK, and reactions in Palestine and Iran celebrating the attacks were publicised in the British national press. The sequential character of Mahmood's parliamentary question is contingent - he starts by managing his participant position in the conflict. He condemns the attacks on the United States, with his formulation of the events echoing Blair's (line 365-367). He is a Muslim, represents Muslims and is condemning the attacks. This condemnation needs to be understood not in isolation but in the dialogical network. Mahmood fulfils Blair's point that the attacks did not result from Islam – but he is not the first Muslim to do so, the MCB did so previously. Having managed his participant position, Mahmood uses it to characterize Muslims as victims (this point has also been made by the MCB, see excerpts 2, 8, 9), and asks for a reassurance from the Prime Minister that he does not hold Muslims *in general* to be responsible for the attacks. Note that he does this as an ally. His description of the attacks

resonates that of Blair, and the possibility that the attackers were Muslim is left open. In other words, Mahmood does not argue that the attacks were nothing whatsoever to do with Islam. His concern is local, and his strategy is to dissociate 'British Muslims' from the attacks - they should not be 'tarred with the same brush' (line 373). Blair implies that the attackers' motivation was a perversion of Islam and Mahmood does not reject the implication that the motivation came from Islam. In his reply in the House of Commons, Blair takes up and develops Mahmood's representation of British Muslims.

**(14) Hansard, 14/9/2001: Column 604**

375. The Prime Minister:

376. I thank my hon. Friend for his words. He  
 377. speaks on behalf of many Muslims in  
 378. this country when he says that they  
 379. share the shock and horror at this  
 380. outrage. The fact that the Muslim  
 381. Council of Britain issued a statement of  
 382. such strength and so quickly indicates  
 383. what we know to be true: that those who  
 384. truly follow the religion of Islam are  
 385. decent, peaceful and law-abiding people.  
 386. Like us, they have often been victims  
 387. of terrorism and, like us, they want it  
 388. stamped out.

He recognizes Mahmood's position in the House - 'he speaks on behalf of many Muslims *in this country*'. He thus accepts the understanding of the events Mahmood voices not as his own only but also as that of others of his faith. Blair in effect uses Mahmood's intervention together with the statement of the Muslim Council of Britain as evidence for his claim that those who *truly* follow the faith of Islam could not have carried out the attacks. Blair and Mahmood then both acknowledge that the attackers may have been religiously motivated, but their 'Islam' is a perversion, and they both explicitly distance the majority of Muslims from them. So as we argued elsewhere, the category 'Muslims' becomes a heterogeneous collection.

This three-part exchange between Blair and Mahmood is not a private matter – it is

in the public domain. In public view, Mahmood aligns British Muslims with Blair and in doing so provides the evidence for Blair's argument that Islam is not intrinsically related to the attacks. Blair groups together the reactions of different Muslim representatives distributed in time and space and uses them jointly to document Muslim reaction to the events. What Blair and Mahmood say has to be understood not simply as an encapsulated face to face interaction in the House but as a part of a dialogical network. Talk issued in different places is collated and broadcast to multiple audiences at the same time, and one designs contributions in alignment with other contributions in the network. Note also that even though Blair refers to 'a statement' of the MCB he does not specify which one; this is not important, and in fact Blair could have been responding to either statement by the Muslim Council of Britain on 11<sup>th</sup> or 13<sup>th</sup> of September. Both take up Blair's invitation to join his position in the conflict.

We have noted that when the MCB presented Muslims as victims of terrorism and possibly of a backlash, they did not get a clear response from Blair. Mahmood reiterates both points and now Blair accepts that Muslims (or at least some of them) have also been victims of terrorism, characterizing them as 'decent, peaceful and law abiding people' (extract 14, lines 383-385). The question then is, why does Blair answer now, but ignored the point when it was put to him by MCB? There are several possibilities, which are not mutually exclusive. One is that when the question is put to him in a face to face situation, he is obliged to respond. The obligation is produced by the turn allocation system, which operates in face to face conversations but not in dialogical networks. (These are distributed and *not* constrained by 'one person speaks at a time' and 'next turn allocation' rules – see Leudar and Nekvapil, 2004; cf. Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson, 1974.) Not responding to the question as put by

Mahmood would be hearable in Parliament as not agreeing that Muslims can be victims of terrorism and backlash.

Blair could also be taking up the point now for an additional reason— we observed that in dialogical networks politicians do not respond to single questions but only when these have been duplicated several times (see Nekvapil and Leudar, 2002b).

Mohammad Sarwar is another member of the House of Commons with Muslim links.

**(15) Hansard, 14/9/2001: Column 634**

1. Mr. Mohammad Sarwar (Glasgow, Govan):
2. It is hard to comprehend or to come to
3. terms with the tragic and staggering death
4. toll that has been inflicted upon the
5. American people and those of other
6. nations. Our hearts and our thoughts are
7. with all those who have lost friends and
8. family. People of all nationalities and
9. faiths have perished in this meaningless
10. atrocity. I speak on behalf of my
11. constituents, and undoubtedly on behalf of
12. the Muslim community in this country and
13. beyond, when I say that this barbaric and
14. inhumane terrorist atrocity must be
15. condemned unreservedly.

Like Blair, the MCB and Mahmood, Sarwar endeavours to forestall the victimisation of the Muslim community in the UK. He begins his statement by establishing his participant position in the conflict by denouncing the attacks (lines 2-8), speaking for his constituents and the Muslims in the U.K. and beyond (lines 10-13) - Khalid Mahmood spoke just for the British Muslims. The denouncement sets these Muslims apart from Osama bin Laden, whose group is suspected to have carried out the attacks (extract 4) and who three weeks later declared that God was the agent or principal of the attacks (Leudar, Marsland and Nekvapil 2004). Sarwar includes Muslims amongst the victims of the attacks, as the MCB did (lines 8-9), and, in addition, he is cautious about joining the 'war on terror'.

**(16) Hansard, 14/9/2001: Column 634**

16. Mr. Mohammad Sarwar:
17. We would solidly support all legitimate
18. efforts to bring the perpetrators to justice.
19. Whoever the culprits turn out to be, it is
20. critical that we send a clear message that
21. they cannot possibly claim to represent
22. the true interests of any religious or
23. ethnic group. In the recent past we have
24. seen how hysteria can be whipped up at
25. times of tragedy and the corrosive effect
26. that that has on society. It is for that
27. reason that I support the Prime Minister
28. in his clear message about the danger of
29. stereotyping communities, particularly
30. the Muslim community. With those
31. words, my right hon. Friend has given
32. comfort to people in this country and
33. across the world. It is critical that, in
34. giving support to any action, we do so
35. observing the principles of justice and
36. within the framework of international
37. law. We must naturally give our support
38. to our American allies, but we must
39. counsel against unilateral action. We
40. must avoid action that could result in the
41. deaths of thousands of other innocent
42. civilians, thus perpetuating the cycle of
43. violence. We cannot afford to isolate an
44. of our allies in finding solutions, and in
45. particular, if there is evidence that
46. Osama bin Laden is responsible, our
47. allies who recognize the Taliban
48. Government—namely, Saudi Arabia,
49. Pakistan and the United Arab
50. Emirates—will be crucial to influencing
51. the situation.

He conditionally supports 'legitimate efforts' to bring the perpetrators to justice. Such efforts are those based on principles of justice and in accord with international laws (lines 32-36). This is what 'unilateral action' (i.e. the war against terrorism) would side step. The position of the Muslim community in Britain as represented by Sarwar is thus potentially complex. They denounce the attacks and the attackers alongside with Blair and Bush. They however expect and are opposed to inappropriate responses to those acts in the future which would victimize the innocent and alienate potential allies.

We have already noted that Blair was unwilling to analyse the broader causes of the attacks. Sarwar does exactly this. His representation of the intentionality of the attacks is worthy of note.

**(17) Hansard, 14/9/2001: Column 634**

51. Mr. Mohammad Sarwar: It is a difficult  
 52. time, but I believe that it is the right  
 53. time to examine more deeply our role  
 54. and responsibilities in the world.  
 55. We must attempt to understand why  
 56. some extremists feel driven to the  
 57. abhorrent madness that we have  
 58. witnessed in New York and  
 59. Washington. There can be no  
 60. justification for this vulgar terrorist  
 61. atrocity, but we cannot be blind to the  
 62. plight of oppressed people who look to  
 63. Europe and the USA for support. As a  
 64. former colonial power we have a  
 65. special responsibility. We should use  
 66. our influence with the Americans and  
 67. other allies to redouble our efforts in  
 68. search of a just solution to the  
 69. outstanding issues in the middle east  
 70. and other parts of the world. This brutal  
 71. terrorist attack is profoundly contrary  
 72. to the doctrine of Islam and has been  
 73. strongly condemned by Muslim states,  
 74. Muslim clerics and individual Muslims  
 75. throughout the world. I can only  
 76. reiterate that condemnation and, on  
 77. behalf of all my constituents, express  
 78. my hope that the international  
 79. community can achieve justice for the  
 80. innocent victims and their grieving  
 81. families.

Up to this point in the network the attacks were presented as caused by absent moral 'qualities' of the perpetrators, and their religious perversions. In Sarwar's account individual features are still present, but they result from something else – the 'terrorists' felt 'driven to the abhorrent madness'. There is both a delicacy and ambiguity to this statement – he does not say they *were* driven (which would in effect excuse them) but they '*felt* they were driven' (but was this feeling just a part of madness and completely unjustified?). So, without excusing the attacks and shifting the blame, he distributes the blame, presenting the attacks as carried out in

abhorrent madness caused by oppression (lines 55-62).<sup>72</sup> Note further that UK and USA are not presented as the agents of the oppression but as potential agents of remedy (lines 62-70). The reaction to the attacks should be not just retribution but also attending to the deeper causes.

Notice the sequencing of Sarwar's contribution: he (1) establishes his participant position and only then (2) he objects to reprisals that would victimize the innocents and topicalizes the problem of the broader causes of the attacks; then (3) he re-establishes his participant position (as one of 'us' – lines 70-76). The disagreement with Blair and Bush is done from within the membership category, it is a matter of internal variation to be accommodated without affecting Sarwar's incumbency. Clearly, in dialogical networks, the analysis of the membership category work and the analysis of sequencing cannot be divorced from each other. As in face-to-face conversations, establishing a participant position is a precondition for doing things but it is also produced by doing things (see Watson, 1976; 1997).

Khalid Mahmood contributed once more to the debate, later on the same day. He already spoke once to dissociate British Muslims from the attacks in his previous contribution to the parliamentary debate (excerpt 13). Now he provides an extended biographic narrative sharing his experience of the 9/11 attacks as they happened.

**(18) Hansard, 14/9/2001: Column 649**

1. Mr. Khalid Mahmood (Birmingham, Perry  
 2. Barr): On Tuesday evening, I sat with my  
 3. family in my home in Birmingham,  
 4. watching television with increasing horror  
 5. and revulsion as the pictures from New  
 6. York and Washington were repeatedly  
 7. shown. We watched the images of an

<sup>72</sup> Blair did not respond to Sarwar's contribution - only the British secretary of defence J. Hoon did. He just acknowledged the need to maintain allies in the Muslim world and his speech thus need not be subjected to a detailed analysis here.

8. airliner filled with passengers smashing  
 9. into the World Trade Centre; we watched  
 10. the buildings explode and collapse. We  
 11. watched terrified New Yorkers staring at  
 12. the sky with horror and disbelief, matched  
 13. only by their sense of helplessness. We sat  
 14. there, as a family, sharing the grief that  
 15. most people in the United States and most  
 16. people in Britain were feeling. Like many  
 17. members of our extended family and  
 18. members of our community who were  
 19. watching television that evening, we were  
 20. all saddened and grief-stricken by what  
 21. had taken place. We were no different  
 22. from any other family in Britain: we were  
 23. all the same, grieving over a great loss of  
 24. life

Here Mahmood does not simply denounce the attacks and the attackers. He describes vividly his experience - including 'the horror and revulsion' - of the events as they unfold. The experience is, however, not just his – it is a collective one, that of his family and his community's. Moreover, that community is united in that experience with 'most people' in Britain and the USA. Mahmood in effect sets up a collection, glossable perhaps as 'ordinary people', defined in terms of shared experience of the events, subsuming the British Muslim community in it. The community is united in grief. Mahmood, however, does not establish the communality just with respect to the experience of the 9/11 attacks. He also stresses his own roots in the community – and ties it to a broader integration in the UK of diverse groups.

**(19) Hansard, 14/9/2001: Column 649**

25. I grew up, went to school  
 26. and did my engineering in Birmingham.  
 27. It is also where I joined the Labour party.  
 28. I could go to school and to my place of  
 29. worship without feeling different from  
 30. the rest of the community. I believed that  
 31. our nation's integration and cultural  
 32. diversity was what we wanted. It is what  
 33. this country is. Those are our strengths  
 34. and I do not want to see them broken  
 35. down by those who purport to be  
 36. Muslims.

Having established the place of the Muslim community in UK society, Mahmood turns to the religious uniqueness of that community. It sets them apart, but the difference is immaterial with respect to 9/11 attacks.

**(20) Hansard, 14/9/2001: Column 649**

50. People look at me and ask what my  
 51. religion is. It is not the religion of the  
 52. people who carried out that act. My  
 53. religion is the religion that believes in  
 54. peace and harmony. Above all, I am  
 55. British—and, in fact, a Brummie,  
 56. having been brought up in  
 57. Birmingham and having lived there.

The danger for the British Muslim community is that they will be put together with the attackers on the basis of the common religion, especially if that religion is understood as motivating the attacks. Mahmood therefore (1) differentiates his from the attackers' religion, and dissociates his religion from the attacks. His Islam is a peace loving religion (extract 20, lines 54). In fact, he specifically brings the Muslim identity of the attackers into doubt – 'they purport to be Muslims' (extract 19, line 34-6).

Mahmood works explicitly to prevent a backlash against British Muslims. The second MCB statement reminded us of the backlash following the Oklahoma bombing. Mahmood recounts a terrorist attack in Birmingham and the subsequent backlash against the Irish Catholic community and their representatives.

**(21) Hansard, 14/9/2001: Column 649**

58. Birmingham faced similar problems in  
 59. 1974, when a building there was bombed  
 60. by the IRA. Councillor John O'Keefe, a  
 61. prominent member of the Sparkbrook  
 62. community, was focused on by the rest  
 63. of the community because he was Irish.  
 64. It was not because he had any links with  
 65. the IRA or anybody else. He had settled  
 66. in Birmingham and wanted to play a part  
 67. in society there, but he was picked on  
 68. because of his Irish heritage.

Blair's, Mahmood's and Sarwar's arguments did not remain without impact elsewhere. They were reported, evaluated and used. On the 18<sup>th</sup> of September, the MCB issued its third statement, assessing the strategy to forestall the backlash by taking religion out of the conflict. This statement acknowledges and appreciates Blair's attempts, but they are obviously not enough.

**(22) Muslim Council of Britain 18/09/01**

1. Statement by the Muslim Council of
  2. Britain on the occasion of the special
  3. House of Commons Debate
  4. ((7 lines omitted))
  5. Muslims in Britain and around the
  6. world feel a huge sense of fear,
  7. vulnerability and insecurity in the wake
  8. of Tuesday's awful events.
  9. Commendably the Prime Minister said
  10. "...this is not a situation in which we
  11. should see this as a cause between the
  12. Muslim faith and the world, but
  13. between terrorism and the rest of the
  14. world, including the Muslim faith."
  15. However, anti-Muslim sentiments are
  16. manifesting themselves in both calls for
  17. retribution against Muslim states and
  18. by anti-Muslim attacks here in Britain.
- ((17 lines omitted))

This statement is explicitly indexed to more than one event in the network. It is issued specifically for the occasion of the debate, to accompany it, but it reacts to what Blair said at the press conference. The quote is from what Blair said at the press conference on 12<sup>th</sup> and what was also reported in the Guardian (see above).

Another relevant newspaper article was published in *The Muslim News* on 28/9/2001. It summarizes in detail the strategy of Blair and Muslim representatives to forestall the backlash, explicitly presenting the condemnations of the attacks as attempts to safeguard the Muslim community (note the text in lines 30-33).<sup>73</sup>

**(23) The Muslim News, Issue 149,  
Friday 28 September 2001  
Outpouring of Muslim grief by Hamed  
Chapman**

((18 lines omitted))

1. The speed of condemnations and
2. expression of condolences from numerous
3. Muslim organisations was welcomed by
4. Prime Minister Tony Blair. "The vast
5. majority of Muslims are decent, upright
6. people who share our horror at what has
7. happened," he told a news conference
8. on September 12. Both Muslim MPs also
9. made their voices heard during the
10. emergency debate when Parliament was
11. recalled on September 15. "I sat with my
12. family in my home in Birmingham,
13. watching with increasing horror and
14. revulsion as the pictures from New
15. York and Washington were repeatedly
16. shown," Khalid Mahmood said.
17. Mohammad Sarwar said it was "hard to
18. comprehend or come to terms with the
19. tragic and staggering death toll inflicted
20. upon the American people and those of
21. other nations." Messages of disbelief and
22. sympathies were also widely expressed by
23. all Islamic countries and even outlawed
24. groups. Among them, chairman of the
25. Nahda Party of Tunisia said "any Muslim,
26. however much he may disagree with
27. American foreign policy, particularly its
28. clear favouritism to the Israeli occupation
29. forces in Palestine, cannot but express his
30. condemnation of these terrible acts." But
31. despite the number of statements, the
32. backlash against the Muslim community
33. came with vengeance largely due to the
34. irresponsibility of the mainstream media
35. and comments by certain 'experts' and
36. officials. Warnings about the likely
37. repercussions were made in virtually every
38. statement issued by Muslim groups. Both
39. the Muslim Welfare House and Council of
40. Mosques in Tower Hamlets referred to the
41. 1995 Oklahoma bombing and called on the
42. need to resist the temptation to scapegoat
43. the Muslim community. The MCB warned
44. against compounding the scale of the terror
45. by "knee-jerk reactions that would make
46. victims of other innocent peoples of the
47. world." During the Parliamentary debate,
48. Mahmood warned MPs to be aware of the
49. media's role in igniting further tensions.
50. Sarwar also spoke of the dangers of
51. stereotyping communities, particularly

<sup>73</sup> The Muslim News is a monthly and the issue of 28/9/2001 we use here was the first issue after 9-11.



52. Muslims. Some MPs in constituencies with  
 53. sizeable Muslim populations, like former  
 54. Foreign Office Minister John Battle from  
 55. Leeds voiced concern against the blame  
 56. being put on Islam and called for a  
 57. deepening of the traditions and religions in  
 58. Britain and internationally.  
 ((35 lines follow))

The article collects statements which were voiced on different occasions: in Parliament (Mahmood, Sarwar), at the Downing Street press conference (Blair) and at the press conference by Muslim Council of Britain on the 11<sup>th</sup> September. The author not only quotes from Mahmood's and Sarwar's speeches, but he also interprets fragments of them as 'warnings', in particular with regard to the important role of the media in the impending conflict. Importantly, he mentions those actors and settings which we as analysts included in our analysis presented above. This indicates that our analysis of the dialogical network is not arbitrary but something participants themselves oriented to (in detail, see Nekvapil and Leudar 2002b). As is obvious from the article, our analysis however dealt only with a fragment of the dialogical network. We didn't pay any attention, for instance, to 'chairman of the Nahda Party of Tunisia', 'Muslim Welfare House', 'Council of Mosques in Tower Hamlets', 'former Foreign Office Minister John Battle from Leeds' and other actors mentioned in the rest of Chapman's article (not cited above). This is not surprising as we dealt with verbal reactions related to an event which has become a part of world history – no paper can cover all contributions to such a dialogical network.

### Concluding remarks

1. Following the 9/11 attacks there was an immediate and concerted effort to forestall a backlash against the Muslim community in the U.K. Prime Minister Blair's strategy was to set apart religion and terrorism, denying that the attacks were religiously motivated, thus securing allies for the 'war on terror' to

come, and removing support from the culprits. The central role of the representatives of British Muslims was to fulfill the points Blair made by publicly denouncing the attacks and demonstrating their contrariness to the teachings of Islam. The second line of interaction consisted in Muslim representatives trying to limit the reprisals for the attacks and to ensure that the innocent would not suffer; all this with cooperation from Blair.

2. These interactions supervened on a set of face-to-face interactions – press conferences, press releases and debates in the House of Commons. The role of the media in general was to make each face-to-face interaction public. The role of newspapers was specifically to summarize the network interactions for the public, and to assess their effectiveness.
3. Our analysis indicates that in political discourse that is contingent on violent conflict, it is always necessary to pay attention concurrently to both pragmatic and membership categorization aspects of interactions. Muslim representatives were obliged scrupulously to establish and maintain their participant identities as quintessentially British, opponents of terrorism and allies of Blair/Bush, and to make any potentially controversial points from within that membership category. This subsequently reproduced their membership..
4. This indicates that social identity needs to be conceived in a situated manner, paying attention to how it is managed in situ rather than to how such categories are psychologically represented and the function they may have in reducing 'information overload' (cf. e.g. Antaki and Widdicombe, 1998).
5. We observed that dialogical networks are (partly) organized in the same structures as face-to-face conversations, i.e. adjacency pairs and three part sequences. These structures are, however, not quite adjacent or

'local' – the first part need not be followed by the second part in the here-and-now, but in a different place and after a day or more. The fact that network interactions are distributed in time and space means that the turn-taking mechanism cannot operate and the relevance of participants' activities is accomplished through addressivity markers. This allows parts of conversational structures to be duplicated, meaning that, for instance, a single question can receive a multiple answer, and an answer can be not to a single question but to several questions collated. As a result, the obligation to perform second parts of adjacency pairs is attenuated.

6. There are methodological advantages in using the concept of a network. It is required to understand the behaviour of participants in face-to-face interactions in public. It enabled us to analyze in a joined way very different formats of discourse. We attempted to collect a relatively complete corpus so that it would reflect orientations of the participants to each other. For this reason we restricted ourselves to the public domain without interrogating the participants about interactions hidden from the media and the public. Even so, we did miss some local events, which would have completed the record of the network.

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