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Victims of Terrorism and Political Violence: Identity, Needs, and Service Delivery in Northern Ireland and Great Britain

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[AB:]

Terrorism and political violence exist fundamentally as communicative acts; inherently the acts themselves serve to inspire anxiety and fear. As the recipients of such a communicative act, victims of terrorism and political violence serve as the vehicle for the dissemination of these communications to both the intended and broader audiences. Their victimising experience is thus a complex interplay between a profound personal trauma and the political/communicative dimension of the attack. Given this complexity, this paper addresses how victims' needs are understood by victims of terrorism and political violence in both Northern Ireland and Great Britain. Through engagement with practitioners, victims, survivors, and community activists, this paper conceptualises the existing perceptions amongst these different groups regarding needs, the delivery of services to victims in NI and GB, and examines the origins of the different approaches. Results demonstrate that victims' needs are highly context-dependent at a public level, but however relate heavily to the experiences of other victims of terrorism and political violence at a private level.

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Keywords identity, needs, Northern Ireland, terrorism, victims

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Introduction

The Troubles in Northern Ireland (NI) and their manifestation in Great Britain, along with a host of other single-issue and broader ideologically based political violence, have left a legacy of loss and trauma in their wake. The period between 1969 and the signing of the

Good Friday Agreement (GFA)/Belfast Agreement resulted in the deaths of more than 3,600 people, injuries to at least 30,000 people, and the displacement of tens of thousands.¹ In addition to the violence related to events in NI, Great Britain has been subjected to many varied attacks over the years: as well as the 125 victims of NI-related violence, there were a number of one-off *spectacular* terrorist attacks, the most memorable being the case of the Pan Am bombing which caused 270 deaths and the 7/7 transport attacks resulting in 56 deaths and over 900 injured. In addition to these large-scale incidents, there have been numerous instances of low-level violence emerging from a variety of individuals and groups espousing extreme ideological positions. There also exist a large number of victims, who as British citizens, have experienced terrorist violence abroad.

Yet, even though modern political violence has been a significant feature of British society for the past fifty years, measures to deal with the many victims created by this violence have only emerged, in the case of Great Britain (GB), in a piecemeal fashion,² and in Northern Ireland (NI) only after the peace process had been signed.³ It took both national British and local NI governments decades to address victims' needs and—in fact—it could be reasonably argued that in NI, the authorities have yet to come to terms with the legacy of political violence. Nonetheless, currently both Northern Ireland and GB have developed and continue to refine a significant body of policy and related support systems for victims of this category of violence. Both have established a comprehensive legal framework and a significant list of associated statutory bodies. More so in NI, but also in England, Wales, and Scotland, a network of statutory and non-statutory victims' support organisations exist with the aim of addressing their needs. However, there are notable contextual differences not only regarding the shape of service delivery, the context in which it is embedded, and the implementation of policy, but also the manner in which the services evolved over time.

Northern Ireland has witnessed a considerable increase in the statutory services available to victims of the Troubles, due in large part to EU and national (UK and Ireland) funding related to the peace process. These provisions have emerged in large part driven by the developments in the private or community sector, where voluntary organisations have actively lobbied for and provided services directly to victims. Within the community sector in NI there is a clear division in the orientation of the organisations. Mirroring the conflict divisions, support organisations have emerged that predominantly serve the Nationalist or Unionist populations. Of these organisations, the determinedly single-identity community groups are more politically divisive, have become engaged in political posturing, and have been manipulated by political actors. Additionally some organisations, for example the Omagh Support and Self Help Group, focus on specific instances of victimisation and as such are truly cross-community. In the broadest sense, these groups are united in the aim of providing services to victims and survivors of the conflict. These services range from the provision of legal advice (e.g., The Pat Finucane Center), to befriending services (e.g., WAVE Trauma Centre), alternative therapies (e.g., Calms), advocacy work (e.g., FACT), and youth and ex-prisoner services (e.g., Prison to Peace). Many of these groups provide multiple services that include counselling and psychological support and the provision of education or training.

In the case of Great Britain, although there is comprehensive legislation and a significant number of voluntary and statutory organisations in existence in order to meet the needs of victims of violent crime, unlike in NI, specialist services for victims of terrorism and political violence are exceptionally rare. In recent years, there have been specific measures put in place for GB victims of terrorism including support for individuals victimised abroad,⁴

but these are subsumed under a more general approach to victims of crime (for example, those offered by Victim Support, a national charity for victims of crime and witnesses).⁵

Unlike NI, a region that can reasonably be referred to as a divided society and (more controversially) post-conflict, GB has witnessed terrorism and political violence, but in a peacetime environment. However, GB has had sufficient reason to address the particular needs of victims of terrorism and political violence given the occurrence of a number of spectacular large-scale attacks within its borders. In the aftermath of the London transport bombings in 2005, the survivors and bereaved drew attention to the limited specialist services, actively lobbied for government to meet their particular needs, and objected to what they describe as the failure of statutory agencies in providing such services. These failures were vocalised by the victims of the 7/7 bombings at the official inquest but also through ephemeral lobby groups set up by the survivors with the intention of drawing attention to, amongst other issues, what was perceived as the medical neglect of the victims; the London Bombing Foundation was set up with this aim in mind. The issue of perceived medical neglect was related to a belief by some victims that they should receive priority medical treatment due to the nature of their victimisation. Similar issues arose regarding funding for the continuation of psychological treatment,⁶ assistance with adaptive housing expenses, and recognition through memorialisation. Families of the Pam Am victims have also been politically active, particularly concerning the controversial trial and release of Al Megrahi as well as at an international level concerning access to information regarding additional suspected perpetrators.⁷

In light of these issues, this paper aims to examine the subject of need specifically related to the victims of terrorism and political violence in NI and GB. While the issue of need has received some attention in both arenas independently, a comparative undertaking is

lacking. Through engagement with practitioners, victims, survivors, policy makers, academics, and community activists, this paper aims to conceptualise the existing perceptions amongst these different groups regarding the construction of need and the delivery of services to victims and also to examine the origins of the different approaches.

In doing so, it draws on the results of a recent research project⁸ commissioned by the European Union to explore the experience of victims of terrorism and political violence in relation to the provision of support initiatives by victims' organisations and the relationship between service users (victims) and service providers. Whereas this project examined the experience of victims in the UK and Spain, the focus in this paper will be related to the UK experience only.

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Methodology

In order to examine the issues highlighted above, a UK-based research team developed a qualitative methodological research design that involved the collection of data in both Northern Ireland and Great Britain. Using semi-structured interviewing, data was collected from representatives of victims groups, statutory bodies, government representatives, as well as individual victims and their families. Insights from interviews were contextualised using a thorough documentary analysis of journalistic, government, and academic sources.

In Northern Ireland, 20 in-depth semi-structured face-to-face interviews were conducted (see Appendix A). Participants were selected to represent those working within the Nationalist (n=5) and Unionist communities (n=6), along with cross-community organisations (n=9). In the GB study, 14 interviews were carried out (see Appendix B). The sample included those dealing with and directly or indirectly impacted by jihadist terrorism

(n=10) (7/7) and Troubles-related violence (n=4). Victims of Troubles-related violence include those individuals victimised within Great Britain, but also those who were victimised in NI and subsequently moved to live in Great Britain. Interviews were conducted in Northern Ireland and England between May 2011 and December 2013; on average, interviews lasted 60–80 minutes.

While initially a master interview schedule incorporating the key issues related to the research questions was developed (e.g., the nature of victimhood in NI, a hierarchy of victimhood, compensation, the victims sector more generally, media issues, representation, and sectarian divisions), the schedule evolved according to location and participant. Furthermore, the aim of this study was not to elicit information regarding the state of play of victims' needs but to understand how the construction of victimhood and victim representation reflected and informed issues around needs.

Given the nature of the population, a multiple entry point snowball sampling method was undertaken, thus by its nature including and excluding a number of (possible) participants. While the conclusions drawn in this article reflect the findings from the study, they cannot be said to cover all relevant aspects nor to represent the entirety of the victim population. That said, the issues that have arisen here are evidence-based and informed by the notions of saturation and collaborative analysis. At the very least, these notions point to necessary future directions for research and, at best, demonstrate the variability in the construction, management, understanding, and grounding of victims' needs.

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Northern Ireland Victims

For many of the victims who participated in this study and were impacted through injury or loss during the Troubles, their status and identity in NI society was a complicating feature that impacted their perception and portrayal of need.

From the outset, during the interview process, the victims and victims' representatives spent some time and effort constructing their position as a legitimate *voice* for the victims of the Troubles. There was a tacit recognition that their acceptance as victims' representatives was not a *given*, and an acknowledgment that there was an absence of widespread agreement on the legitimacy of their status as representatives. They did not claim to speak for all victims of the Troubles, but only for those individuals in their organisation. This initial interaction with the NI sample highlighted the difficulties inherent in *representing* victims but also the internal and external conflict regarding legitimacy: legitimacy at a national level to have a voice, to be recognised as a part of the history and future of NI society and to be given space and support to maintain this voice, but also legitimacy that manifests itself as an internal struggle *between* the victims organisations.

This issue became apparent in this research via the natural emergence of two populations—the victims' representatives and the victims themselves. While there was at times overlap in the membership of this population, in this paper we will refer to the two populations as representatives (non-victim) and victims (can also be representatives). The two groups worked to construct their legitimacy to represent their constituents, but the result was that victims' needs were understood and thus portrayed differently by each population. For service providers, the area of focus was legitimacy to lobby on behalf of victims, issues of neutrality, multi-denominational provision, and professionalism.

[BQ:]

We are a registered charity, we have a cross community management board, we have cross community staff, we deliver our services on a cross community basis, in fact in

multiple communities now, not just simply the two traditional communities here—yesterday afternoon for example I had a group of Somalis in here, refugees who are living in Belfast and we were giving them support.”⁹

It was often the case that representatives served to provide the interviewee with a *categorical and factual* account of victims’ needs. The position was delivered as an objective account of needs as fixed, unchanging, and identifiable notions.

[BQ:]

There are 7 identified areas of need—you are aware of those areas—yes—so I don’t want to repeat things that you already know.¹⁰

Alternatively, victims in this study were more likely to rely on their personal traumatic experience to justify their claim to represent broader victims of terrorism and political violence.

[BQ:]

The people that know what is best are the victims so let them make the decisions.¹¹

This tension between victims and representatives did not manifest in day-to-day interactions but what it demonstrates is the insecurity about voice and place. Furthermore, victims’ organisations have been used in some instances as political tools but also have been cited as spoilers in the NI peace process: for some, victims need to *move on* from their experience.

[BQ:]

They want us silenced, they want [society] to forget, move on....¹²

However, regardless of perceived efforts to silence victims, participants emphasised the need to treat the trauma experience as having a lifelong impact, rather than being perceived as a short-term or fixed-term incident. At the same time, participants did refer to specific periods of time related to specific need. For example, the absence of acute interventions in the immediate aftermath of the event was an issue that arose for the victims and representatives alike.

In particular, they often referred to the total absence of professional psychological support in the aftermath of the attacks. One of the victims recalls how issues of addiction arose many years after the incident and only on seeking treatment was he encouraged to speak about the violence he experienced. He related that much of his addiction could be attributed to the attack, something he felt he should have dealt with at the time of the violence, but social norms prevented him seeking this type of support.

[BQ:]

You had to just get on with it, it wasn't done to mention it.¹³

Furthermore, the issue of financial reparation emerged as a significant and ongoing matter for participants. In Northern Ireland, discussions on reparations inevitably brought up the contentious recommendations emerging from the Eames Bradley report¹⁴ that stated that all victims of the Troubles (perpetrator victims included) should be given a one-off payment in recognition of their suffering. This was widely rejected due to the inclusive victim definition implied, vehemently so by the victims themselves, but was considered less problematic and even a viable option by some of the representatives in this study.

[BQ:]

I am a fan of that [financial reparations], I think it could be really good. Whether you were a combatant or a completely innocent victim.¹⁵

[BQ:]

I am not against the concept of compensating victims but I am against the idea that you group the innocent victims together with the perpetrators.¹⁶

For some victims, awarding everyone affected by the violence an amount, regardless of the *innocence* of the party, was tantamount to rewarding those who carried out violence against them. In effect the victims saw this as attempting to equate them, as *innocent* victims, with the *criminals* who killed or maimed them or their family.

[BQ:]

First of all people use this fancy word “perpetrators,” let’s forget these fancy words, they are murderers.¹⁷

[BQ:]

There is an innocent victim and there is a perpetrator.¹⁸

[BQ:]

This is why I can’t agree with the definition of a victim, if you went out and lifted a gun and killed someone doing it, tough.¹⁹

However, a different approach was taken by the victims’ representatives. For many in this category, they were willing to consider that the conflict in NI was complex and the boundaries were unclear. For them, the notion that there were victims on all sides and some people became perpetrators due to their experience of victimisation was at least open for consideration. This was the point at which the victims and the representatives significantly differed.

[BQ:]

People who didn't object to it are as guilty as the people who took up a gun and allowed it to happen. I don't think there is anyone in NI who is innocent of what happened here.²⁰

[BQ:]

Our view is that there have been massive human rights violations by all sides, the IRA, the other republican groups, loyalist paramilitaries and by the state.²¹

This stark difference in position between victims and representatives who each separately represent the broader needs of victims, appears to relate to issues around the identity needs of the victims of the Troubles. It also relates to the directionality of the representative: For the victims, there was a clear inward-looking trend where the need was to protect their experiences from possible dilution, however for the non-victims victims' representatives there seemed to be a more outward-looking perspective, whereby the broader political narratives about peace were incorporated into their account of victims needs. In effect, in this sample, the (non-victims) representatives were sensitive to the societal and political rhetoric surrounding the issue of victimhood and this was reflected in their account of victims' needs.

Given that the societal divides in NI are an omnipresent consideration in dealing with these issues, it must be recognised that the many and competing narratives that sustained the Troubles and continue to exist and evolve, are a major element in the construction of legitimacy amongst victims' groups. The representatives are sensitive to these narratives and work to disassociate themselves from the traditional conflict divides.

For participants in this study, public needs, in the form of social recognition of their experience, were a significant issue that needed to be addressed. For these individuals, recognition was most likely to be achieved through ensuring that victims were visible, politically and historically, but not necessarily on a national platform. Many individuals spoke of their participation in local initiatives and more private memorialisations as a means of ensuring this visibility. Participants also spoke of documenting their experience as personal truths.

Furthermore, intrinsically linked to the issue of visibility is the creation and maintenance of a victim identity firmly rooted in a framework of *victim and offender*. Linked to the notion of victims' visibility is their need for acknowledgement that others are responsible for past injustices. By seeking to clearly demonstrate who the perpetrators are and have this publically declared, the victims could then solidify their identity as *innocent* victims in opposition to those who committed the violence. From this position the notion of justice developed due to the need to identify the perpetrators in pursuit of accountability through the courts. Importantly, the key issue in this position was the need to make visible the perpetrators as a means to reinforce the identity of victimhood.

[BQ:]

Let's get this clear, there are victims and murderers, they are not the same.²²

Alternatively, representatives were less likely to focus on the possibility of retributive justice nor rely on traditional criminal justice methods as a means of addressing the needs of victims. Representatives were pragmatic about the possibility of achieving a prosecution and oftentimes referred to alternative restorative methods (e.g., seeking information external to the criminal justice system) as options.

[BQ:]

We have to be realistic here, a lot of time has passed.²³

Regardless of the focus on the actual perpetrators of the violence in terms of prosecution and accountability, across the spectrum of participants in this study, there was little engagement with the notion of individual blame nor individual responsibility for the attack, outside of the identity issues mentioned above. In terms of suffering and need, victims spoke of the traumatising experience of their treatment by the state, the (lack of) delivery of services, issues of recognition, memorialisation, and reparations. Reference to re-victimisation was associated with their experience *after* the attack and these experiences were dominant throughout. In particular, access to the truth, oftentimes constructed as being shrouded in government secrecy, was a particular concern. For the victims in this study, more often than not, the state was constructed as being responsible for righting the wrongs they experienced and a failure to live up to expectations was a source of considerable discomfort.

[BQ:]

The perpetrator may not feature in any discussion on blame, but local government or national government will.²⁴

[BQ:]

She is more angry with the system than the IRA.²⁵

Similarly, in Northern Ireland, reports commissioned to look into events during, and the impact of the troubles, [~~←AUTHOR QUERY: to look into events during the troubles as well as the impact of the troubles?~~] particularly related to issues of legacy, acted in some instances to re-victimise individuals, again not based on the initial experience of victimisation but based on their perceived mistreatment by the state. In the case of the Eames Bradley

report, the suggestion that all victims “innocent” or otherwise might be equalised through the distribution of a universal compensation scheme was roundly rejected by victim participants.

[BQ:]

The Eames Bradley report brought a lot of people through to us who were really distressed about it.²⁶

Therefore, for the victims’ representatives in this study, both victims and non-victims alike, existing in what is essentially a divided society, competing with prevailing and emerging narratives of *truth* and negotiating the politicisation of victimhood, a primary concern is merely managing to exist and maintain a voice. For the representatives in NI, creating their place is as much an ongoing struggle as identifying needs for victims of the troubles.

[level 1 heading:]

Great Britain: Victims of the Troubles

Victims of terrorism and political violence in GB can be predominantly grouped into two categories—NI Troubles-related victims and victims of other specific attacks. In this article we sought to sample individuals from both categories, focusing on Troubles-related victims and victims of the 7/7 attacks in London. The findings are presented separately below.

Broadly speaking, victims experience varying degrees of media attention, public empathy, service and, as a result, visibility. For example, a recent report²⁷ highlighted the isolation and neglect experienced by those individuals injured during the Troubles in NI. Other communities have similarly claimed neglect, creating what has been termed a hierarchy of victimhood.²⁸ In particular, GB victims of Troubles-related violence have voiced concerns about perceived exclusion, or invisibility. The Warrington Peace Centre, founded after the deaths of Tim Parry and Jonathan Ball caused by the Warrington PIRA bombing in 1993, act

as advocates for this population. These victims became known as the “Great Britain victims of the Troubles,” to differentiate them from the NI victims of the Troubles and other victims of political violence more generally in the UK. A centre representative pointed out that, before the work of the Peace Centre, no collective identity existed for these GB victims.

[BQ:]

We had to develop an entire identity for people who were victims and survivors [of the Troubles but lived in the UK]—we called them GB victims and survivors.²⁹

For the GB victims of the Troubles, until the Warrington Peace Centre began their work, there were no developed pathways for interventions, nor any organised support for these individuals. Often the only available resource was, for those who were on active service during the Troubles, through their regiment or retired military clubs. Even then, the lack of a broader understanding, support, and recognition was a significant barrier to coping. In later years, the emergence of the peace process and related policing reforms led some victims to feel their contribution was denied and they were vilified and so further silenced. In particular, former members of the police (RUC) who were victims of the Troubles felt that they were being scapegoated as villains in the narrative of the peace process.

[BQ:]

The RUC became a dirty word.³⁰

Of particular concern for these victims was their isolation from the context of the Troubles and, as a result, an almost total lack of community awareness about their experience. The victims recall experiencing a particular lack of empathy regarding their victimisation, conceived to be as a result of ignorance about the situation in NI more

generally. In most instances, individuals were faced with surprise that the Troubles were still an *issue*, having essentially been resigned to history in the public sphere.

[BQ:]

As far as they are concerned [the public] the troubles are over.³¹

For civilian victims, recognition of their loss was a particular issue. One individual recalled that efforts at memorialisation were often dismissed or diminished, as in GB people assumed that the Troubles were a relic of the past and generally misunderstood the conflict.

[BQ:]

Oh my god are you still going on about that, it was 20 years ago.³²

For GB victims of the Troubles who are former police and military, they oftentimes in their later years, sought to return to NI in order to understand the conflict more broadly and to visit places and communities that were out of bounds to them during their deployment. As with other victims' populations, some of these individuals sought to explore the conflict beyond their own experiences and, in order to do this, they participated in organised group workshops with a support organisation in GB. In other cases, individuals travelled to NI to participate in restorative justice initiatives.

[BQ:]

We have workshops for them, about history, about the flag, about culture.³³

This involved meeting with former perpetrators and occasionally with victims of state violence. However, such services are exceptionally time-consuming, sensitive, and psychologically taxing. The majority of the victims suffer their experience alone.

[level 1 heading:]

Victims of the 7/7 Attacks

The victims of the Troubles in GB have experienced a very particular trajectory through their victimhood unique to their situation and the context of the violence. In the case of 7/7, while the conflict complexities related to the Troubles did not confound the treatment of 7/7 victims in GB, there were significant issues for the victims regarding their experience after the attacks. Medical treatment, availability of acute services, memorialisation, access to the “truth,” and management of the media intrusion into their lives were all significant concerns for the victims and their families.

The victims of 7/7 spoke of the (in)ability of medical front line services to meet their needs. The participants in this study identified a distinction that could be drawn between the satisfaction with the NHS service for individuals who were severely physically injured versus those who needed minor hospital treatment. For these victims, oftentimes, individuals who were not severely physically injured were not even recognised as victims of terrorism in the hospital setting and so did not receive care on this basis. Individuals felt this prevented them accessing services such as victim support and other psychosocial interventions due to being effectively invisible to these agencies once they left the acute setting unrecognised.

However, unlike physical treatment after the bombings, which was accessed by the individuals themselves, there was a recognition by medics in London that the mental health implications of the attack would be especially severe for many of the families and survivors.³⁴ As a result, efforts were made by a specialist psychological service (Brent Bereavement Services) to contact as many of the survivors of the bombing as possible. This was managed through public information campaigns, records from the scene, and hospital and police data.³⁵ While the service managed to contact over 80% of the individuals they

suspect were caught up in the bombings, there were of course issues with those who were not contacted as well as issues about the criteria for and duration of treatment.

This matter of being able to contact the survivors was not unique to this psychological service. In the official review of the bombings in 2006, the management of data on the victims and survivors was seen as a distinct weakness. At the hearing it was revealed that many survivors were never contacted despite, as they recalled, having their name taken multiple times over the course of the day of the bombings.³⁶ Reasons for this related to ill-conceived interpretations of data protection legislation, poor planning, and a London-centric approach.

[BQ:]

I must have given my name ten times.³⁷

While public services, both medical and psychological, were made available to the victims and survivors and their families, a number of other services were put in place for them also. In particular, a number of online resources were developed to assist those impacted by the bombings. Both victim-led and expert-led initiatives emerged in the aftermath of the attack. An individual victim of one of the bombings set up a private online site called “King’s Cross United” and a public site called “London Recovers” also emerged. The Metropolitan Police also provided services online for those directly affected by the bombings. They created a private mediated online forum. This tool acted as an information resource as well as a communication medium for victims and families. Access to this site was strictly controlled.

For those who engaged with the services on offer after the attack, they were given access to therapy and befriending and other relevant amenities. However, many others never had this opportunity due in part, as mentioned, to issues over data protection and the use of information such as medical records, but also due to what participants described as a London-central [←AUTHOR QUERY: London-centric as above?] focus to victim support.

[BQ:]

Once I left London, no one had a clue.³⁸

In this study and in comparison to the victims of the Troubles in NI, the 7/7 victims tended to focus less on abstract public notions of need, for example, justice, truth, etc. Perhaps due to the absence of a supportive community who understood the experience and shared an identity closely related to their experience, individuals spoke more about personal needs and the struggle of continuing on with daily life after the event. Issues of medical care dominated victims' recall of the immediate and medium term period after the attack. Victims of 7/7 expected to be treated as exceptional cases by the health and other public services. Individuals recalled how once the initial acute phase of their treatment was completed, they were entered into the mainstream health system and were expected to wait in line *with everyone else*. This was particularly riling for one participant as she expressed that her life-changing injuries were “not her fault.”³⁹

This participant struggled to reconcile her new life in light of her acquired disability and struggled to incorporate this forced change in identity, made more difficult by, as she saw it, a neglect by government and, at times, the general public. For this respondent, the political

nature of her victimisation, the responsibility she felt the state owed her, and the very traumatic and public nature of her experience negatively contributed to her ability to cope after the attack. Expressed as need, a recognition of her injury and importantly the cause of her injury through specialist medical services, including tailor-made disability support services, was what the participant sought.

[BQ:]

He [the doctor] said . . . so what happened? I told him I was going to give him five minutes to read my file and I would come back in.⁴⁰

The participant spoke of the trauma of reliving the event over and over for medical staff, disability support services, and social welfare officers. Having a joined-up approach to addressing needs, medical and social services, etc. would have allowed a more tolerable engagement with these agencies.

Reflecting the debates in the literature around the issue of *exceptional* victimisation,⁴¹ there were different perspectives on the issue for victims themselves and the individuals who represented them. For the victims, the political nature of their experience warranted extraordinary services tailored specifically for them. Victim support group representatives were less inclined to differentiate between types of victims and entitlement to specific services but pointed out that there were additional services that this group of victims needed, to get through the process of reconciling their experience. Most important was deemed to be the ability to contextualise the event, to make meaning out of the history to the violence and understand it in terms of its place in their society. As a means of offering this service,

providers in GB are actively working with victims on education programmes to meet this need.

In the immediate aftermath of the attacks, the victims and survivors were naturally concerned primarily with their physical health, coping with the life-changing circumstances they found themselves in, adapting their daily lives to this change, and attempting to consider a future. However, some victims also sought to make meaning of their experience through understanding the individuals or the ideology of the individuals who perpetrated the violence against them. For the victims of 7/7, there were distinct local and global narratives that the individuals looked to: the treatment of Muslims in Britain as well as the War on Terror. For some individuals, this interest morphed into activism to support efforts at building solidarity between parties to the event (broadly conceived), including working with Muslim youth in the UK, helping them understand the implications of terrorism for the victims themselves.

[BQ:]

Some people have really gone out of their way to try and learn about it as part of their way of trying to dealing with it.⁴²

[BQ:]

The loss or being injured spurred them on to learn and make meaning out of it.⁴³

In the case of the 7/7 bombings, what was seen as a failure by government to hold a timely, open, and honest inquest significantly affected the individuals' ability to reconcile what had happened to them and seek some form of resolution.

[BQ:]

Their (7/7 victims) progression (to recovery) was massively impacted by the inquest not taking place for 5 years.⁴⁴

While the nuances of the attack are of course important to the individual victims and oftentimes a particular identity is attached to those nuances, many support groups seek to encourage a sense of solidarity around the experience of trauma or loss. This is particularly the case with internationally focused support organisations. For example, the victims of 7/7, along with the Madrid bombing victims and the 9/11 victims, expressed a sense of solidarity around their experience, particularly given the rhetoric and narratives surrounding the War on Terror. For the victims who engage with such organisations, there is an emphasis on solidarity through shared experience. For example, after the Norway shootings a number of 7/7 victims sought to reach out in support to the survivors and families.

[BQ:]

When Norway happened 7/7 survivors were calling us up . . . can we help them, can we pass on any learning. . . . I know what that survivor is going to go through . . . completely different context, but they know that surviving a bombing or a shooting . . . there is a political aspect to it, a political reason.⁴⁵

Many of the activities of the UK (both GB and NI) groups are based around attempting to create a locus to share what they as victims see as a unique experience of violence. Some victims sought to prevent others going through what they had suffered by offering guidance through the process of coming to terms with their loss or injury; others sought to prevent further incidence of violence by engaging with potential or actual violent perpetrators to encourage them to desist from violence. Other individuals sought more creative ways of contributing to efforts to prevent further suffering by engaging with government on

counterterrorism initiatives (e.g., encouraging the development of appropriate public safety policy and architectural security in order to minimise the impact of an attack).

On the other hand, Northern Irish victims were less likely to identify with this narrative of “victims of global terrorism” due in part to the protracted nature of the conflict and the complexities of blame and responsibility within a divided society.

[BQ:]

The 7/7 people see themselves as part of [←AUTHOR QUERY: part of a?] global thing . . . the war on terror.⁴⁶

The exception to this was the Omagh group, who were active in international circles. Omagh, being the single greatest loss of life of the Troubles, is perhaps closer to the catastrophic attacks witnessed post-9/11 than the relatively smaller scale violence predominantly witnessed in NI.

While the individual dimension of their needs dominated responses in this study, 7/7 victims have also referred to the more public aspects of their experience. For instance, the short-termism and intrusiveness of the media attention to victims was a significant issue for the victims of the 7/7 attacks. Individuals were overwhelmed with attention in the aftermath of the bombings, but shortly afterwards, they rapidly disappeared from the public eye. A particularly painful experience recalled by victims, was the failure to include them in any form of public remembrance around the time of the London Olympics. The 7/7 attacks occurred the day after London was informed it was to host the 2012 Olympics; for the victims, this was an inherent part of the story of their victimisation. To have their suffering and sacrifice be minimised when the actual event took place reinforced their sense of neglect

by government and society. Victims expected that society would recognise their sacrifice; however, this expectation was never met.

[BQ:]

We are good at rebuilding things we can see, we are good at rebuilding the infrastructure after incidences, but the things that you can't see, like 7/7 is a really good example . . . it is seven years ago now, the Olympics is hugely difficult for them, there was no press about it, it wasn't on the BBC website, nothing.⁴⁷

While the initial coverage of the 7/7 attacks, as well as of the victims and their families, was intrusive, ongoing, and sensationalist, media interest waned very quickly. This short-termism was also witnessed in the supports available to those impacted; for example, there were no long-lasting support groups set up related to the attacks. However, families and victims have continually lobbied for increased visibility for those injured and killed in the bombings. For example, calls for memorials to be erected at the individual bomb sites, in addition to the existing communal monument, have been made publically and to the government.⁴⁸

[level 1 heading:]

Discussion and Conclusion

This article has examined the experience of victims of political violence in a transitioning but divided society as well as the issues for individuals who were the victims of an attack in what could be referred to as a peacetime environment. These victims are affected by an internal and an external hierarchy. In the former case, those who suffered in the distant past, those who were injured, and those with psychological repercussions due to their experience/s feature less prominently in media, political agendas, and academic study.⁴⁹ In the case of the

latter, inherently linked to the context of the conflict or incident, victims of terrorism and political violence who are a part of an ongoing conflict (e.g., NI) as opposed to victims who experience a one-off catastrophic attack (e.g., 7/7) have diverging expectations, are treated differently, and deal with notions of justice, legacy, and memory in very dissimilar ways.

While this distinction has significant implications for the experience of the individuals and their families, there are also a number of commonalities between the groups. For instance, a theme emerged across all groups of victims: that an expected time frame exists in which individuals should deal with and move on from their experience. This perceived time frame reflects the belief that there is a tolerance for their suffering—up to a point. Public fatigue around their victimisation was visible in the media treatment of the victims, government interest in associated issues, and the existence of specific support measures. The short-term interventions offered, while necessary in the early days after the attacks, were swiftly recognised as insufficient to assist the individual victims to return to a situation where some semblance of their former life could be achieved. Victims' organisations were keen to point out the deficits in services in general, but also that victims do not travel on some trajectory from injury/loss to recovery in a fixed pattern, or specific timeframe; there is no predictable progression that can be identified. More broadly, across GB and NI populations it was clear that the needs of victims of terrorism were multifaceted, spread across the lifecycle, sensitive to re-traumatisation, time dependent, and could be categorised into recognition and personal needs.

In terms of the personal needs, participants in all instances spoke of *immediate* needs: medical, psychological, financial, and occupational. In terms of recognition needs, there was some similarity across cases, but GB victims were most likely to seek a public acknowledgement of their experience. For these individuals, the sacrifice that they had made by being a very public victim of terrorism was something that they felt broader society should

recognise. In the case of NI, victims were less concerned with seeking recognition on a broader social platform and more concerned with local recognition of their loss or injury. For the NI victims there was a tacit acceptance that the complexity of NI society would not allow for a national-level memorial and so individuals and groups were more likely to position themselves and their narratives in their local sphere.⁵⁰

In the case of the NI victims, there were more nuanced narratives connected with the experience of victimisation that related to the complexity of the region that were not mirrored for the GB victims. For example, victims of the Troubles were quick to and persistent in pointing out that individuals who experienced injury and loss in the process of carrying out violence or in supporting violence could not be categorised as victims. For some NI victims, there are perpetrators and there are victims, and these identities are mutually exclusive.

Unlike the experience of victims in NI for whom notions of identity are central to understanding, situating, and mediating their experience, social identity was less essential for the victims of 7/7. There were two instances where individual victims reference specific identities that they related, in the first instance, to the location of the attack and, in the second, to a global identity related to the ideology of the perpetrator. In relation to a specific identity tied to a sense of shared experience in a specific location, this was mobilised in an effort to secure funding for a memorial specific to that event. In the case of a globally relevant identity, some victims aligned themselves with European and American organisations that were focused particularly around victimhood emerging from jihadist violence since 9/11. Identity in the case of British victims was perhaps less of an issue in comparison to the experience of individuals in a divided society due to the likelihood that the victim identity was not challenged, nor was there any question that those injured or killed were in any way, ideologically or actually, associated with or responsible for their own victimisation. The question of the innocence of victims was never raised. Particularly for the

victims of the London bombings, there was a sense that public empathy was high. Perhaps due to the random nature of their experience, it resonated with all Londoners who took a daily commute. One support group representative explained that the nature of the attack impacted on this experience of empathy.

While there were some efforts at identity protection in the case of the GB victims, given that there was no overt challenge to their identity as victims, due in large part to the clearly identifiable and publically reviled perpetrators, their actions did not mirror the efforts witnessed amongst the NI population. For the 7/7 victims, identity protection related to preserving their status as victims/survivors and an expectation that their experience should be remembered, acknowledged, and they should receive extraordinary care as a result.

In contrast, for the GB victims of the Troubles, the issue of identity was again central. These victims felt excluded from the relevant discourses that existed within NI, but also removed from the narratives that related to the post-9/11 Islamic-inspired attacks in the UK. For these individuals, positioning themselves within UK society and having themselves recognised as victims of the Troubles involved creating a separate identity, that of GB victims of the Troubles. So their struggle was not related to any entitlement to use the label victim, nor a hierarchy of victimhood as existed in the North of Ireland, but visibility—having even a basic level of recognition of their loss or injury. For these individuals, parity with other victims of the Troubles was a key issue. It appeared from the accounts of the GB victims that they had a somewhat inflated perception of the services for and treatment of victims in NI, but regardless they were excluded from certain restitution and support schemes by nature of their residence in GB⁵¹ and this was a significant issue.

In all the case studies, the needs as expressed by the participants can be positioned on a continuum ranging across personal and community/social supports but also related to the

passage of time from the initial incident. The need for personal support was relatively universal across both cases: in the short term, the need for information on entitlements, acute medical treatment, medical rehabilitation, and financial support. In the case of GB, the intrusion of the media was a significant issue particularly for the 7/7 victims; in NI, media *manipulation* of how victims perceived the incident was a central theme.

In the medium term, more complex issues emerged for victims in both locations. For victims in NI, the Good Friday Agreement and the subsequent years in which the population existed in relative peace resulted in a number of significant changes. Issues of identity came to the fore when citizens of NI were encouraged to embrace inclusive identifiers such as *Northern Irish* and potentially experience the loss of security linked to their traditional conflict identities. Realising that their identity of Republican or Loyalist was in fact serving to give meaning to their victimhood, the potential to have this taken away or diluted caused significant re-traumatisation for victims in NI.

In GB, with little or no social support and empathy due to victims being so far removed from the conflict and its narratives, there was a significant need expressed for individuals to be identified as a coherent group. These individuals were excluded from the victim narratives in NI by virtue of their decision to leave NI or due to having experienced the violence in GB, and they felt they were misunderstood in GB due to apathy towards the NI conflict and misunderstandings or misinterpretations around the context to the violence. For the victims of the jihadist bombings in London, recognition in the short-term was less of an issue. However, this recognition was gained through an intrusive media attention that quickly faded once the *spectacular* imagery of the event was exhausted. This left these individuals dealing with the aftermath of the attack in isolation with little sense of public acknowledgment of their suffering and loss.

In the case of GB military and police victims of the Troubles, as they reach their later years, establishing meaning given their role in the Troubles, understanding the context to their victimisation and reconciling their perspective on the events and the public perceptions of it become more salient. Issues related to elder care, complicated by injury, are also prominent in the GB victims' dialogue.

In sum, in terms of analysis, it is clear that from the research conducted in this project, there are three populations of concern when considering victims of terrorism and political violence in the UK: NI victims, GB victims of the Troubles, and GB victims of one-off catastrophic attacks. Similarities can be drawn between the NI and GB victims of conflict-related events; however, for the victims of 7/7 and other one-off events, there is less comparison to be made.

For the 7/7 victims, there was an affinity amongst participants to empathise with other more globally relevant attacks: 9/11, Madrid, etc. Membership of or a connection with European and global organisations seeking to advocate on behalf of such victims was not uncommon. For the Troubles-related victims, there was little association with such groups. One instance in which such relationships did exist for a NI group was in the case of the Omagh organisation. However, this group is unique in the landscape of NI due to the nature and the scale of the attack.

This categorisation of victims' experience of service delivery and need falls in line with a framework we have advocated⁵² elsewhere where experiences are separated into a micro and a macro framework. The term *micro framework* refers to the manner of addressing and understanding victims' needs at the local level, using local and personal narratives to construct and meet needs.⁵³ This is predominantly the method used in NI and perhaps more appropriate in the case of an ongoing conflict or divided society. Addressing need is thus

conceived of as a local initiative, using local resources but supported by external (national and regional) funding. This notion of a micro framework is important in discovering and interpreting the needs of victims of terrorism in this local and victim-centred context as it is more likely to be void of a narrative that frames the needs according to a political discourse, or more specifically, can exist in cases where multiple narratives compete.

Understanding and addressing victims' needs using what we have termed a macro framework is inherently a top-down approach where more global narratives support a coherent political narrative that acts to explain, support, and justify the needs and related necessary services.⁵⁴ Related to this narrative is a dominant victim identity that emerges from and is supported by the political narrative. For the victims of 7/7 and other one-off catastrophic events, there exists a global narrative related to the war on terror that gives meaning to victimhood but also creates a fixed identity for individuals as well as a community of peers around the world. In this instance, meeting need is often an outward-looking process beyond the local community to national and international governments and institutions. While both the macro and micro frameworks were seen to emerge from the data related to the various sites of study, that is not to say such approaches can be transported to other sites. The context to the victimisation has influenced the emergence of the different approaches but elements of both are also found in each context.

This framework appears to accurately portray the predominant experiences of victims of, on the one hand, an ongoing conflict/divided society and, on the other, one-off attacks. However, the GB victims of the Troubles have not had experiences that are captured by either category. Similarly in Northern Ireland, there are groups who seek national level recognition, who are active at the European level and who seek legislation both national and international in support of their position, a position that operates based on an exclusionary definition of victimhood.

Finally, in considering the experience of victims of terrorism in GB and Northern Ireland, it is worth noting that both analyses shared a number of common themes. Of the most prominent themes that emerged over and over again were the notions of memory: public remembrance of loss and suffering. These needs and how they are interrelated and interpreted relate to the national level narratives and the existence of a divided society in Northern Ireland and its absence in GB.

From this interpretation emerges an understanding of the very particular experiences of victims of terrorism and political violence that—while it may lead to some notion of commonality between contexts—what it really reflects is an aspect of the conflict that is being played out through its victims. Whether this is through attempting to forget, exclude, glorify, or shape, being victims of terrorism is intimately related to the conflict/violence from which they were created and so is the nature of their needs.

[level 1 heading:]

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[Superscripted numbering in endnotes below should be replaced with non-superscripted numbering as follows: 1. 2. 3., etc.]

[level 1 heading:]

Notes

¹ Victor Mesev, Peter Shirlow, and Joni Downs, “The Geography of Conflict and Death in Belfast, Northern Ireland,” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 99, no. 5 (2009): 893–903.

² See Criminal Injuries Compensation Authority,
<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/criminal-injuries-compensation-authority>

³ M. Potter, *In Their Own Words: A Research Report into the Victims Sector in Northern Ireland* (Training For Women Network (TWN), 2004), <http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/issues/victims/docs/potter04a.pdf>

⁴ See: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-support-for-terrorism-victims>

⁵ Founded in 1974, this organisation has over 13,000 volunteers and over 1,000 staff, receiving significant government funding.

⁶ See: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2006/oct/01/july7.uksecurity>

⁷ See: <https://www.victimsofpanamflight103.org>

⁸ Apart from the project principal investigators—and co-authors of this article—and the director of the Spanish side of the project (Rogelio Alonso), the team included at different stages the following researchers: Egoitz Anton, Carmel Joyce, Cheryl Lawther, Gilbert Ramsay, and Agata Serrano. The two main institutional contributors were University of Saint Andrews (Project leader) and Universidad Rey Juan Carlos.

9. [AUTHOR QUERY: Endnote info missing here—please supply]

¹⁰ Interviewee – Victims’ organisation representative.

¹¹ Interviewee – Victims’ organisation representative.

¹² Interviewee – Victim.

¹³ Interviewee – Victim.

¹⁴ The Eames Bradley report presented the findings of the work by the Consultative Group on the Past. This independent Consultative Group included representatives from government, the non-profit sector, and religious communities and it was set up by the British government to

develop public strategies to address the legacy of the Troubles. They conducted their work from June 2007 to October 2009.

¹⁵ Interviewee – Victims’ organisation representative.

¹⁶ Interviewee – Victim.

¹⁷ Interviewee – Victim.

¹⁸ Interviewee – Victim.

¹⁹ Interviewee – Victim.

²⁰ Interviewee – Victims’ organisation representative.

²¹ Interviewee – Victims’ organisation representative.

²² Interviewee – Victim.

²³ Interviewee – Victims’ organisation representative.

²⁴ Interviewee – Victims’ organisation representative.

²⁵ Interviewee – Victims’ organisation representative.

²⁶ Interviewee – Victims’ organisation representative.

²⁷ Marie Breen Smyth, *The Needs of Individuals and Their Families Injured as a Result of the Troubles in Northern Ireland* (Belfast: WAVE Trauma Centre, 2012).

²⁸ Kieran McEvoy and Kirsten McConnachie, “Victimology in Transitional Justice: Victimhood, Innocence and Hierarchy,” *European Journal of Criminology* 9 (2012): 527–538.

²⁹ Interviewee – Victims’ organisation representative.

³⁰ Interview [OR Interviewee?] – Victims’ representative.

³¹ Interviewee – Victim.

³² Interview [OR Interviewee?]- Victims’ representative.

³³ Interview [OR Interviewee?]- Victims’ representative.

³⁴ Naomi Wilson, Patricia d'Ardenne, Chris R. Brewin, and Mike Catchpole, "How Can the Experience of a Terrorist Attack Inform Public Health Priorities? Some Lessons from the London 7/7 Bombings," in Javier Argomaniz and Orla Lynch, eds., *International Perspectives on Terrorist Victimisation: An Interdisciplinary Approach* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, forthcoming).

³⁵ Chris R Brewin, Peter Scragg, Mary Robertson, Monica Thompson, Patricia d'Ardenne, and Anke Ehlers, "Promoting Mental Health following the London Bombings: A Screen and Treat Approach," *Journal of Traumatic Stress* 21, no. 1 (2008): 3–8.

³⁶ 7 July Review Committee, *Report of the 7 July Review Committee* (London: London Assembly, 2006).

³⁷ Interviewee – Victim.

³⁸ Interviewee – Victim.

³⁹ Interviewee – Victim.

⁴⁰ Interviewee – Victim.

⁴¹ Rianne Letschert, Ines Staiger, and Antony Pemberton, *Assisting Victims of Terrorism: Towards a European Standard of Justice* (London: Springer, 2010).

⁴² Interviewee – Victims' organisation representative.

⁴³ Interviewee – Victims' organisation representative.

⁴⁴ Interviewee – Victims' organisation representative.

⁴⁵ Interviewee – Victims' organisation representative.

⁴⁶ Interviewee – Victims' organisation representative.

⁴⁷ Interviewee – Victims' organisation representative.

⁴⁸ See: <http://www.standard.co.uk/news/london/77-victims-family-back-plans-for-tavistock-square-memorial-8540051.html>

⁴⁹ Breen Smyth, *The Needs of Individuals and Their Families* (see note 27 above).

⁵⁰ Neil Ferguson, Mark Burgess, and Ian Hollywood, “Who Are the Victims? Victimhood Experiences in Post-Agreement Northern Ireland,” *Political Psychology* 31, no. 6 (2010): 857–886.

⁵¹ This relates to the availability of EU funding for NI victims of the Troubles.

⁵² Orla Lynch and J. Argomaniz, “Meeting the Needs of Victims of Terrorism – Lessons for the International Context,” in Orla Lynch and Javier Argomaniz, eds., *Victims of Terrorism: A Comparative and Interdisciplinary Study* (London: Routledge, 2014).

⁵³ Lynch and Argomaniz, “Meeting the Needs of Victims of Terrorism” (see note 52 above).

⁵⁴ Ibid.

[level 1 heading:]

Appendix A – Northern Ireland Interviews

[TB:]

Location – Northern Ireland.

Interviewee 1	Oct. 4, 2011	Interviewee 8	June 8, 2011	Interviewee 15	June 25, 2012
Interviewee 2	Jan. 5, 2012	Interviewee 9	Jan. 11, 2012	Interviewee 16	May 25, 2012
Interviewee 3	March 6, 2012	Interviewee 10	April 17, 2012	Interviewee 17	Jan. 26, 2012
Interviewee 4	June 6, 2012	Interviewee 11	June 17, 2012	Interviewee 18	Jan. 27, 2012

Interviewee 5	Feb. 7, 2012	Interviewee 12	Dec. 22, 2011	Interviewee 19	Feb. 28, 2012
Interviewee 6	June 7, 2012	Interviewee 13	May 24, 2011	Interviewee 20	Jan. 30, 2012
Interviewee 7	July 8, 2011	Interviewee 14			

[level 1 heading:]

Appendix B – Great Britain Interviews

[TB:]

Location – North of England and London.

Interviewee 1	July 30, 2012	Interviewee 8	Oct. 18, 2013
Interviewee 2	July 30, 2012	Interviewee 9	Oct. 18, 2013
Interviewee 3	July 31, 2012	Interviewee 10	Mar. 9, 2013
Interviewee 4	Nov. 7, 2013	Interviewee 11	Mar. 9, 2013
Interviewee 5	Nov. 7, 2013	Interviewee 12	June 13, 2013
Interviewee 6	Nov. 7, 2013	Interviewee 13	June 13, 2013

Interviewee 7	Oct. 18, 2013	Interviewee 14	June 13, 2013
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