

ID cards:

A snapshot of the debate in the UK press

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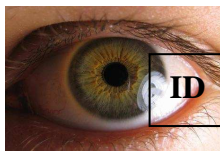
Acknowledgements

This work was conducted to provide a case study of frame analysis for a larger project looking at introducing text mining to support frame analysis. Further details on that project can be accessed here: http://www.ncess.ac.uk/research/hub_research/tmfa/
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About the author

Elisa Pieri is an applied linguist and a social scientist with a background of interdisciplinary research in controversial aspects of science, technology and policy. Her research interests and publications are in the areas of: public engagement with science; sociology of science and technology; ethical, legal and social aspects of new technologies; human and plant genomics; biopolitics, surveillance and biometrics; language and power.

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Executive Summary

This study investigates the debate in the UK national newspapers around the introduction of biometric ID cards and the creation of an ID database, the National Identity Register.

The aims of this study are:

- 1) to look at the extent to which the prevailing frames or arguments promoted in policy discourse at a certain time might be said to feature into the media coverage released over that same period;
- 2) to look at the ways in which such frames or arguments might be transformed, resisted and re-framed in the media coverage;
- 3) to identify the frames and arguments prevailing in the newspaper coverage and analyse the strategies and expedients used to promote them.

Both UK broadsheet and tabloid newspapers have been followed, and their coverage of the debate has been collected for a period of four months, from 1st February to 31st May 2008. This period coincides with the launch of the *Delivery Plan 2008*, the revised strategy for implementation of the ID Scheme and Register, by the Home Secretary Jacqui Smith on 6th March 2008.

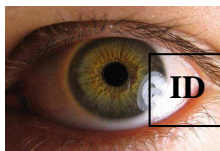
The report does not seek to contrast the coverage of each specific newspaper, as to do so would require following the trends in each individual paper for a longer period of time. Rather, the findings reported below offer a snapshot of general trends that can be observed in many – if at times not all – the newspapers that have been studied.

The major finding of this study is that the ID Schemes is presented in a negative light in the coverage collected over these four months. The report presents and discusses in detail the overarching frames recovered that contribute to the ID Scheme as a whole being presented as

- **not secure;**
- **lacking accountability;**
- **compulsory, rather than based on choice;**
- **universal;**
- **tough on immigration;**
- **creating an imbalance between liberty and security;**
- **one in a series of government failed IT projects.**

Together these frames contribute to **argue that the ID Scheme is illiberal and being introduced by stealth**. They do so also by corroborating other minor frames - for example the portrayal of the Scheme as too costly – as well as by resorting to strategies such as those afforded by the use of irony, humour and sarcasm, which are discussed in the report.

The report claims that **key frames and argument promoted in policy discourse are generally resisted in the media coverage**. It illustrates and discusses the strategies employed in the coverage to transform, resist and re-frame these policy-promoted arguments.



1. ID cards and the National Identity Scheme

This study investigates the debate over the introduction of the National Identity Scheme in the UK.¹

When the idea of a National Identity Scheme was first launched by Tony Blair's Government five years ago (Identity Card Bill 2004), it immediately proved controversial and plans to implement it were rejected several times, particularly through the opposition of the House of Lords. Despite legislation eventually being passed in 2006, the Scheme still remains a political hot potato, generating a great deal of media coverage and debate.

The key elements of the Scheme include the creation of a centralised database, the National Identity Register (NIR) containing a wide range of details about UK citizens aged 16 and over; the collection and storage of biometric identifiers (including fingerprints) to be kept both within the Register and on the ID token (the card), and to be used for data-matching, identification and verification purposes; the issuing of an ID token (card) also containing a unique National Identity Registration Number; the legal requirement to produce the card in order to access certain public services, and the introduction of new penalties and offences for those who will not comply.²

Central to the idea of the Scheme is the sharing of a citizen's information across government departments, as well as across approved private entities, and the collection of a so-called 'biographical footprint', that is a full record of all the occurrences that required us to verify our identity through the system, and a log of our changing personal information (for instance changes of address, but also a record of past addresses).

On 6th March 2008 the Home Secretary launched the *Delivery Plan 2008*, a document presenting the revised government strategy and plans for implementation of the National Identity Scheme.³ The statements and reports that accompanied the launch of the Plan, together with the idea of a biometric card and a National Identity Scheme, continue to fuel debate.⁴

1.1 Aims

This project investigates the debate as covered in national newspapers in the one month preceding the launch of the Delivery Plan (Feb 08) and in the three months following it (March-May 08).⁵


¹ Home Office (2008) *What is the National Identity Scheme?* UK Identity and Passport Service. Available at <http://www.ips.gov.uk/identity/scheme-what.asp> [last accessed 11 Feb 2009]

² Whitley E. and Hosein I. (2008). 'Doing the politics of technological decision making: due process and the debate about identity cards in the UK'. *European Journal of Information Systems* (17):668-677; p.669.

³ Home Office (2008). *The National Identity Scheme. Delivery Plan 2008*. Home Office Identity and Passport Service.

⁴ Smith J. MP (2008). *The National Identity Scheme – Delivery Plan 2008*. Speech delivered at Demos, London, 6th March 2008.

⁵ This section has been adapted from E Pieri - Output D1.2 Topic of Frame Analysis and Research Questions, May 2008



The project explores the arguments mobilised to frame the Scheme as they emerged in the papers over the four month period. For this study, media content has been analysed, drawing on frame analysis as its main methodology (see section 2 below).

The aims of this study were:

- i) to look at the extent to which the prevailing frames or arguments promoted in policy discourse at a certain time might be said to feature in the media coverage released over that same period;
- ii) to look at the ways in which such frames or arguments might be transformed, resisted and re-framed in the coverage;
- iii) to identify the frames and arguments prevailing in the newspaper coverage and analyse the strategies and expedients used to promote them.

In presenting the findings, these aims will be discussed in relation to each frame recovered.

1.2 Identity

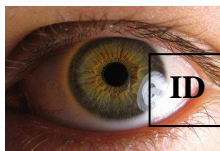
Both private and public sectors attribute great importance to identity management and assurance. The number of transactions that take place remotely and involve people ‘we do not know’ has increased exponentially, due to the digitisation of payment over the internet, and the increased mobility of businesses and citizens. This poses challenges in identity assurance and verification that were first identified by the financial and banking sector and have since percolated to other service providers – public and private.

Citizen mobility also poses other challenges, for instance at border control, and in the climate of heightened security, in the aftermath of the recent terrorist attacks, nations like the USA and the UK have tried to deploy new ways of capturing and managing passengers’ and citizens’ identities.

As citizens and consumers we leave daily trails of digital data recording our habits – the transport we use, the food we buy, how we use our mobiles, how we access public and private services – and this information affects our identity, partly as it may contribute to our sense of who we are and what we do, but mainly because it allows various entities in the private and public sector to *profile* us, marketing or tailoring services to us on the basis of our recorded behaviour.

Identity assurance and profiling are different activities, but the plans to introduce a National Identity Scheme in the UK bring together many issues arising from both. For instance not only will the Scheme seek to verify that we are who we claim we are, but it will also aim to keep track of the various ‘encounters’ with public and private services that require us to verify our identity with the new ID token (the card), as well as storing records of our data and biometrics.

In doing so, and in encouraging a level of access and exchange of our identity data across different public bodies, many issues arise, including privacy and the effects of surveillance and profiling, possible misuse of data, loss of data, as well as the risk of having one’s identity - and one’s biometrics - compromised.



1.3 Assembling the newspaper dataset

With a view to being inclusive, both quality and tabloid newspaper coverage was collected in a dataset.⁶ The dataset only includes national papers, and where a different version (of a national paper) is available across the UK, the version included is the English/London Edition (for reason of readership size mainly).

The newspaper coverage collected includes four broadsheets and their Sunday editions (The Daily Telegraph; The Telegraph on Sunday; The Guardian; The Observer; The Independent; The Independent on Sunday; The Times; The Sunday Times), and three tabloids and their Sunday editions (The Daily Mail, The Mail on Sunday; The Mirror, The Sunday Mirror, The Sun).

Having selected a range of keywords, these were input into the LexisNexis⁷ search engine (used for academic purposes, and accessed in compliance with The University of Manchester licence). This process was informed by the preliminary research questions, as well as the pragmatics specific of this project, including the wish to generate a snapshot of a topical debate in the press, rather than aiming at following these issues in the press over time. The pragmatics of this project also meant that the frame analysis of media texts remained at the core of this study, as it was used as a benchmark within a larger investigation of text mining applications to frame analysis.⁸ Section 2 below explains what frame analysis is and how it is used in studies of the media and in other areas. However, the fact that this study was a case study for a larger project looking at text mining meant that the triangulation that would normally take place in a study that uses frame analysis – for instance by interviewing or running focus groups with the producers of the texts and/or the recipients/readers – could not be carried out. These areas, therefore, remain important avenues for further research to triangulate the findings presented here. Another area in which important additions to this study could be made is that of the semiotic analysis of the images associated with the UK ID debate in the press.

In this study the process of selecting a dataset was also informed by reviewing the ID debate at large. As significant events can be used as milestones and act as catalysts of debate, the Home Secretary J Smith's launch of a new Delivery Plan⁹ for the ID Scheme was taken as a landmark point. The launch of the Delivery Plan on 6th March 2008 is precisely the type of landmark event that prompts increased public attention and media coverage of the issues that we were interested in exploring. The coverage available from the one month preceding the launch and from the three months following it was therefore analysed.

Texts on ID cards and the ID scheme were retrieved through the use of keywords. The selection of keywords were informed by a brief review of literature, reports and legislation and other documents concerning the ID cards/scheme, including academic

⁶ This section has been adapted from Pieri E. 'Output D3.1 A short report on how the sources are assembled: NCeSS corpus', May 08.

⁷ <http://www.lexisnexis.com/>

⁸ The frame analysis of the newspaper coverage of the ID Scheme debate was used as part of a JISC funded project looking at Text Mining for Frame Analysis. Further details on the JISC project on http://www.ncess.ac.uk/research/hub_research/tmfa/ [last accessed on 11 Feb 2009]

⁹ <http://www.ips.gov.uk/identity/downloads/national-identity-scheme-delivery-2008.pdf>

articles, scientific reports (cost-benefit analysis, reviews/polls of public opinion, reports on aspects of the scheme – for instance over the biometrics to be collected), and literature produced by NGOs. This condensed review alerted the analyst to the ‘discourses’ and variety of frames circulating in the area. To give a concrete example, authors like Martin and Whitley¹⁰ have claimed that the policy and parliamentary debate on the National Identity Scheme in the UK has been focusing ‘on the handheld’ - the ID card - rather than on the scheme itself and the collection, storage and sharing of information and biometrics. In their paper they see this as the Government’s attempt to manage public expectations and expert intervention in the debate (thus reducing the scope for discussion and deliberation over other, more important, issues and aspects of the Scheme). Martin and Whitley suggest this emphasis on cards may perhaps exist also in the media. So it was interesting to test whether this is confirmed in the dataset collected. Consequently, both ‘NIS’ and ‘National Identity Scheme’ (and even ‘National Identity Register’) were included amongst the search terms used on LexisNexis (as opposed to just terms referring to the ‘ID card’ in the sense of the ‘handheld’ device).

All newspaper items (news, comment, letters, sport, etc) containing the key words/phrases were selected and electronically stored,¹¹ and an index was compiled containing article titles, dates and other information on them.

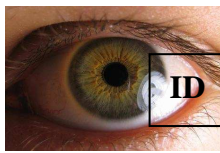
The initial texts identified were then divided into two sets, a core dataset and a tangential one. The criterion applied was not to distinguish between texts relevant and not relevant to the wider ID debates, but rather between texts that related to the ID scheme/cards in the UK context and those that did not. This had two implications: those articles that dealt with IDs in other countries were still saved and indexed in a dataset for the tangential. This dataset alerted the analyst to ‘issues’ or ‘frames’ (similarly to the documents read in the literature and policy review) but were not the primary data analysed. The second implication is that claims of ‘relevance’ within a text were not made. The core data set contains a variety of texts, including articles that deal with the UK ID scheme from beginning to end, and others that only dedicate a paragraph to the topic. The aim is to be inclusive and feature in the core dataset all texts that mention even once the keywords selected, and relate to the UK ID Scheme and card debate¹².

For each text collected the information (metadata) specifying the newspaper source from which it came, its position in the newspaper, the date, author (where available), length, and title were also stored.

¹⁰ Martin A. K and Whitley E.A. (2007). ‘Managing expectations of technological systems: A case study of a problematic government project’. *Spontaneous Generations* 1(1): 67-77.

¹¹ This was done in compliance with The University of Manchester licence of use of LexisNexis.

¹² The need to do this first ‘sorting’ of primary dataset and tangential dataset stems by the fact that there would be little point in introducing ‘UK’ in the search terms for retrieval, given that an article may be about ID cards in the UK (making reference for instance to J Smith’s delivery plan) without mentioning the ‘UK’ openly. Such an article would therefore not be captured by a more restrictive search on ‘UK ID cards’ or similar. As a result, the search keywords used were less restrictive and articles on IDs in other countries were initially retrieved and subsequently placed in the tangential dataset.



2. Methodology

Frame Analysis was the main methodology adopted to analyse the newspaper coverage collected.¹³

A wide range of disciplines have conceptualised and capitalised on the idea of frames, either as cognitive schemata through which we perceive, organise and communicate experience or as conscious devices used strategically for casting ‘events’ in a certain light, defining ‘the issues’ that we ought to attend to, and prioritising some interventions and responses over other possible ones.

It is perhaps unsurprising that the different disciplines involved in using frame analysis – including Cognitive Psychology, Sociology, Politics, Journalism, Media, Communication, and Cultural Studies – emphasise different accounts of framing, the more or less conscious use of these frames, and a more individualistic or culturally-embedded notion of what it means to ‘use frames’. A more postmodern take, and the contributions of cognate disciplines such as critical discourse analysis, have also engendered the need to explore not only the ‘intentions’ of frame producers, nor just the frames as recovered by analysts, but also to pay attention to frames as these may be perceived by communities of readers/consumers of texts and discourses.

This means that frame analysis can be thought of a multi-method approach and one that relies and lends itself to making use of a variety of data sources too – including for instance written texts and oral accounts and interviews, images and visual representations.

In this study, though, the focus was on textual data, and no triangulation of findings from the newspaper analysis with a (qualitative) analysis of the views and ‘intentions’ of the frame producers was carried out, nor did we look at how such frames may be perceived, received or rejected by various communities of readers/consumers of texts and discourses. As mentioned before, this was due to the ID research being a component of a larger project looking at text mining applications,¹⁴ and as such it was subject to several scope and time constraints. In view of this, the findings ought to be taken as preliminary, while further research on the topic would benefit from integrating and complementing these findings within a larger exploration of how this coverage and the frames presented in the following section might be perceived, produced and received.

2.1 Qualitative analysis

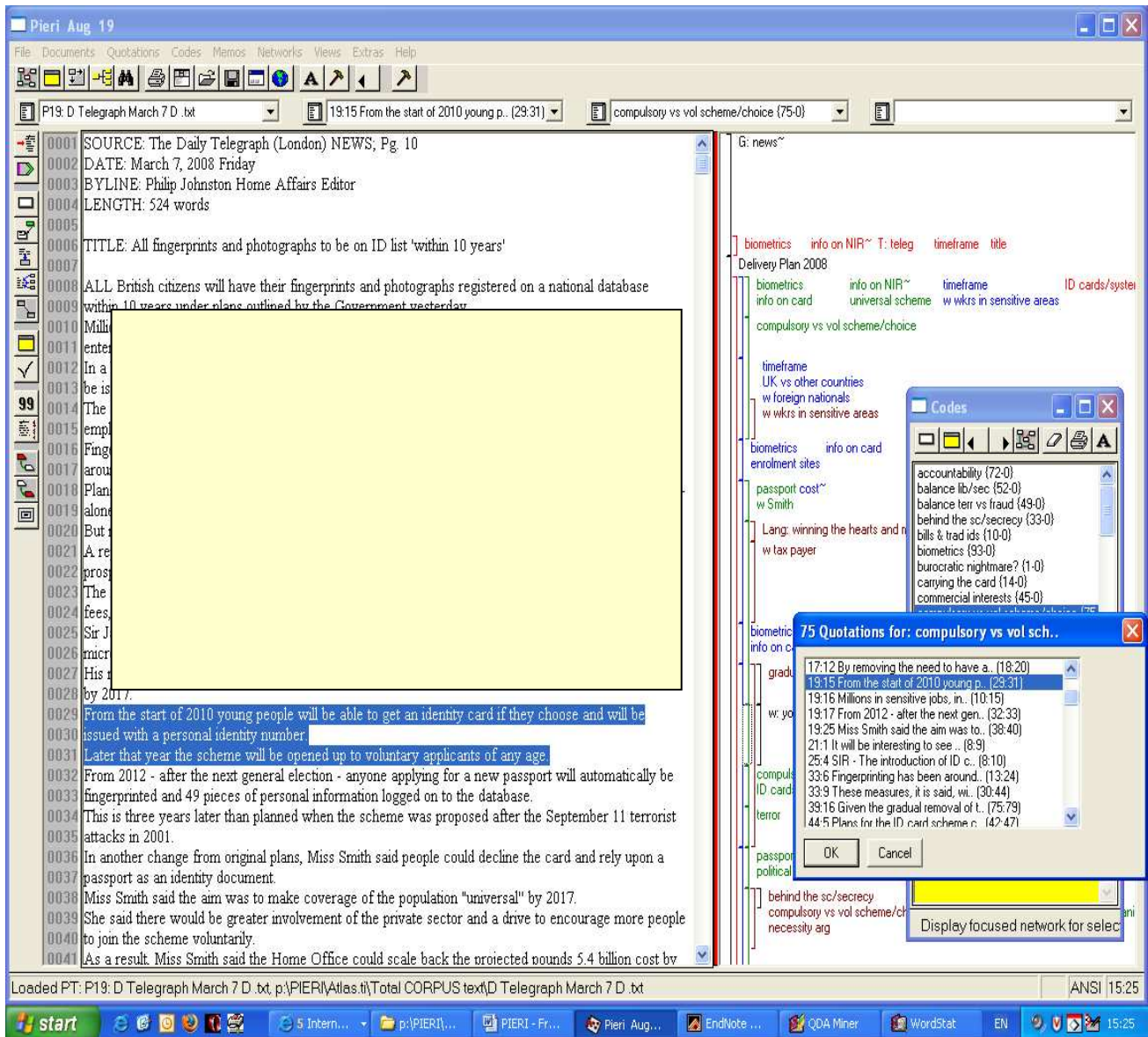
The analysis of the newspaper texts was carried out through manual annotation and with the assistance of Atlas.ti software.¹⁵ Each text was read and (electronically) marked, and the analytically interesting sections were assigned codes and memos, and retrieved in various combinations.

¹³ This section has been adapted from Pieri E ‘Short Statement on Frame Analysis and the Bibliography Collected’, March 08.

¹⁴ See footnote 8.

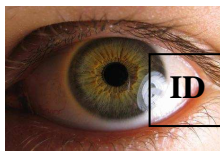
¹⁵ The section has been adapted from Pieri E ‘A short statement on how the codes are developed’, Deliverable 5.2, August 2008.

Below is an example of a manually annotated section of a text on Atlas.ti (part of the text of the article that is being annotated is obscured to protect its copyrights):



The theoretical framework behind the analyst's use of the Atlas.ti tool is Grounded Theory¹⁶. The codes are developed inductively and iteratively. Through reviewing existing literature of some of the key issues discussed in policy documents and reports an analyst becomes aware of certain themes. The analyst may also be interested in searching for certain elements in the texts (for instance, references to immigration or biometrics). Nonetheless, the code list is not produced a priori. It is produced during the process of coding itself and through constant iteration. So without a starting list,

¹⁶ Glaser BG and Strauss A. (1967). *Discovery of Grounded Theory. Strategies for Qualitative Research*. Sociology Press. Also see Strauss 1987, Glaser 1992, Goulding 2002.



the first codes emerge with the reading of the first few articles. The list then grows, gradually changes and then consolidates towards the end of the process.¹⁷

Finally, a code book can be produced. A total of 120 codes emerged to annotate the texts in the dataset at different levels. As Atlas.ti aims to support inductive research, and discourage hierarchical ways of approaching the data, it is at this stage that the codes can best be mapped out and grouped together to form a broader interpretative overview of the dataset¹⁸:

‘With data and analysis being on screen at once, it becomes possible to visually map out relationships between different parts of the data and theoretical ideas, to form links between them and jump back and forth, and to encourage the creative process of sparking ideas and pattern recognition’¹⁹

The key codes applied included two sets of semantic codes, one referring to issues or themes (such as the balance between liberty and security, accountability, trust) and the other to topics that are mentioned in the papers together with ID (such as use of CCTV, bugging, the proposed children INDEX database). A third set of codes annotates actors or groups that, as we will see below, are affected in different ways by the ID Scheme. Finally the rest of the codes annotate for the name of the paper that each text appeared in and similar ‘metadata’ (for instance, position in the paper).

2.2 Where the ID scheme gets discussed

The dataset was created to be as inclusive as possible, and therefore the texts it incorporates are diverse. Indeed, one of questions that the study wanted to answer was where (in the newspapers) the ID scheme gets to be discussed.

The core dataset of over 280 texts discussed the ID card scheme in various comment articles (102), and news articles (86), but there were also a large number of letters to the papers on the topic (45) and even leading articles (12). Perhaps a more interesting finding was that references to the ID plans and debate were present also in other sections of the papers, including business and finance (14), reviews (12), obituaries and birthdays (6), travel (2), jobs (1), sport (1) and even beauty (1).²⁰

¹⁷ Although the process of code consolidation takes place throughout the analysis, it is especially useful to review codes, rename them and consolidate them (either by splitting them or imploding them) also once the main coding process has been completed. This allows the analyst to establish whether new codes are needed (more commonly through a subdivision of a given code) or whether a level of code saturation has been reached. Thereafter, one can begin to consider which codes can be seen as evoking frames in their own right, and which may do so in combination with others.

¹⁸ The main strategic modes of operation of Atlas.ti tool can be termed ‘VISE’: Visualization, Integration, Serendipity and Exploration.’ From <http://www.atlas.ti.de/atlasneu.html> [last accessed July 08].

¹⁹ Barry C (1998). ‘Choosing Qualitative Data Analysis Software: Atlas.ti and Nudist Compared’. *Sociological Research Online*, vol. 3, no. 3, available on <http://www.socresonline.org.uk/socresonline/3/3/4.html>

²⁰ This was discussed more in depth in Pieri E. (2009). *The introduction of ID Cards in the UK: a snapshot of the debate in the press*. Paper given at the Media, Communications & Cultural Studies Association (MeCCSA) Conference, Bradford 14-16 Jan 09.

2.3 Estimated readership

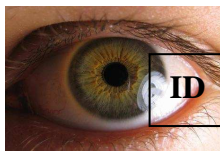
As mentioned above it was not within the scope of this study to carry out research on readership responses to the coverage that appeared on the ID scheme debate in the four months we surveyed (Feb- May 2008). However, while it remains impossible to estimate how many of those articles and texts were read, let alone what impact they may have had on readers, one can at least try and estimate the size of readership of the newspapers looked at. It is generally accepted that TV and other new media are taking an increasingly high share of audience attention, also when it comes to news coverage. However, newspapers' power to reach readers also ought not to be underestimated.

To try and assess the size of this reach on a quantitative basis, referring to the circulation figures for the British newspapers that were covered in our study proves quite indicative. The figures were collected by the Audit Bureau of Circulation (ABC) and subsequently made available for general release.²¹

Average circulation figures per issue are calculated on segments of time that are roughly monthly. In the case of this study, the period 25th February 2008 to 30th March 2008 is probably the most interesting, as it overlaps with the launch of the ID Delivery Plan (6th March). The figures for this period from each individual paper report, which were published on 24th April 2008, are collated in the table below. They represent the average circulation per issue:

The Guardian	358,142
The Observer	461,739
The Daily Telegraph	874,124
The Sunday Telegraph	625,549
The Times	622,186
The Sunday Times	1,206,517
The Independent*	243,398*
The Independent on Sunday*	225,403*
The Daily Mail	2,308,325
The Mail on Sunday	2,213,112
The Daily Mirror	1,483,749

²¹ The ABC is an independent body owned by the media industry, which verifies and reports on media performance, providing a major trading currency for media buyers and owners across print, events, digital and evolving platforms. Further detail available from <http://www.abc.org.uk> [last accessed Jan 09].



The Sunday Mirror	1,338,822
The Sun	3,096,086

*Unfortunately, figures for The Independent and Independent on Sunday were unavailable for this period. Those inserted in our table are those that the ABC website above reports as average circulation figures for the period from 31st March 08 to 21st April 2008.²²

Focusing on our dataset instead we can report the following spread in newspaper texts that cover the UK ID card scheme and debate (sometimes discussed extensively, other times only briefly) over the four months we followed:

The Guardian	54
The Times	51
The Daily Mail	44
The Daily Telegraph	44
The Independent	22
The Sun	16
The Daily Mirror	12
The Mail on Sunday	12
The Sunday Times	12
The Observer	11
The Sunday Telegraph	3
The Sunday Mirror	1
The Independent on Sunday	0

²² See <http://www.abc.org.uk/cgi-bin/gen5?runprog=nav/abc&noc=y> [last accessed 22 May 08].

3 Findings

The following sections present and discuss the findings of this study, in terms of the key frames recovered in the UK national newspaper coverage of the ID debate over the period between 1st February and 31st May 2008. While the findings remain to be tested and triangulated in the fashion described above - by looking at audience reception for instance - the main objective in presenting these findings is to shed some light on the extent to which the prevailing frames promoted in policy discourse at a certain time might be said to feature into the media coverage released over that same period. Moreover, the findings highlight the ways in which such frames might be transformed, resisted and re-framed. The other key aim in presenting the findings is that of identifying the frames prevailing in the newspaper coverage and analyse the strategies and expedients used to promote them. No general claims are made here about contrasting the coverage of one specific newspaper to another, as to do so would require following each newspaper's coverage for a longer period of time. The findings reported below, however, reflect general trends in framing that can be observed in many – if not all – the papers that have been studied.

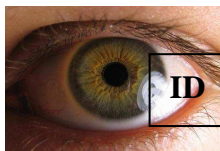
The first finding of this study is that the ID schemes is generally presented in a negative light in the coverage collected over these four months. The following sections will present and discuss in more details the overarching frames recovered and argue that the Scheme as a whole is being presented as

- not secure (frame A);
- lacking accountability (frame B);
- compulsory, rather than based on choice (frame C);
- universal (frame D);
- tough on immigration (frame E);
- creating an imbalance between liberty and security (frame F);
- one in a series of government failed IT projects (frame G).

Together these frames accumulate to argue that the ID Scheme is illiberal and being introduced by stealth. They do so also by corroborating other minor frames - for example by presenting the Scheme as too costly – as well as by resorting to strategies such as those afforded by the use of irony, humour and sarcasm, which are discussed in section 3.8 below. In presenting the findings frequent recourse is made to quotes and examples extracted from the texts, so that readers can observe how the frames and argument emerge. This is done in accordance with fair dealing for 'criticism or review' and with an acknowledgement of each source. However, copyright holders are encouraged to get in touch should they wish to further limit the amount of their text being quoted. Finally, the last section includes some reflections and concluding remarks.

3.1 Frame A: 'The ID Scheme as not secure'

The papers sampled in this study portray the Scheme as not secure, despite the Government's intention to present it as a safe and well protected system, with robust oversight.



As it becomes clear throughout the following sections, the Government-generated frames from official policy statements are only rarely reproduced 'as they are' in the papers. Rather, they are more commonly 'de-constructed', challenged and re-framed in a different fashion. The original Government's framing of the Scheme as secure appears reproduced in these articles:

A1. Hillier also defended the government's ID card scheme and said information on the planned ID card database would be kept safe. [Guardian 6 March 2008, L31-32]

A2. Jacqui Smith, the Home Secretary, will today shrug off fears over the security of personal records held by the state as she vows to press ahead with introducing identity cards. [Independent 6 March 2008, L 8-9]

However, the choice of words in the second example already seems to suggest that concerns over security may not be openly addressed, but only dismissed or 'shrugged off'. More direct challenges to the Government's confident pronouncements on the security of the ID scheme tend to be more common. They typically focus on the Government's very poor track record in collecting, handling, and sharing securely sensitive and confidential citizen information:

A3. The Government's record on data protection is abject, almost as bad as its record on delivering complex IT schemes. Yet this will not deter ministers. [The Daily Telegraph, 7 March 2008, L32-33]

A4.[...] the scale of the losses cast more doubt on plans for a national ID card scheme. According to MoD figures released in a Commons written answer, 4,433 [military] ID cards disappeared in 2006 and 6,812 more went missing last year. The Tory defence spokesman Gerald Howarth said: "This is yet another reason why the public has no confidence in the Government's ID card plans for the rest of the population." [The Independent 13 March 2008, L10-14]

A5. Protestations about the security of the data are equally unconvincing. The recent mislaying of bank account details of 25million child benefit claimants emphasised the danger of putting the entire country on to an identity database. [The Daily Mail, 7 March 2008, L20-22]

A6 THERE'S nothing more private than your medical records. Yet it seems anyone can access the NHS computer database. The Government promised it couldn't happen. Yet a GP finds he can log in without security checks. Labour insist that the ID cards database will be totally secure. But how can we believe them? [The Sun, 10 May 2008, L7-11]

Framing the ID Scheme as not secure is not simply achieved on the ground of recent scandals around the latest Government's negligence in mislaying large quantities of sensitive information. The framing also rests on other arguments, including the possibility that the Government or State may put the information in the database to ill use:

A7. Under the National Identity Register, it seems that 49 pieces of information will still be required by the state and that every important transaction in the citizen's life recorded. And there is a new proposal to collect 19 pieces of information, including mobile phone and credit-card numbers from people travelling abroad, which the government plans to use for 'general public policy purposes' (...) I remind the committee of something American cryptographer and computer expert Bruce Schneier wrote: 'It is poor civic hygiene to install

technologies that could some day facilitate a police state.' [The Observer, 9 March 2008, 62-69]

A8. They [Ministers] see within their grasp a national population database, a cradle-to-the-grave tag on every citizen. No other country has such a powerful tool - for good or for ill - at the disposal of its government. Is this really what we want here? [The Daily Telegraph, 7 March 2008, L33-36]

Even without envisaging state abuses of power, the news coverage analysed contained several references to the likely security breaches and ill uses that the Scheme could be put to by third parties, such as individual hackers, organised criminals and even terrorists, contributing to reinforce this frame:

A9. At a time when the Government has demonstrated that it is unable to keep our data secure, can we really trust it to keep all our critical data in one place and stop it falling into the hands of criminals and hackers? Identity cards are not the problem; it's the database. [The Daily Telegraph, 8 March 2008, L11-13]

A10. [W]e should also be aware that the recent Prum treaty sets a precedent for sharing national data with the 26 other countries of the EU. So not only would we have to guard against "sleepers" waiting to hack into data in government departments, but also against hackers and criminals in 26 other member states. [The Times, 10 March 2008, L9-11]

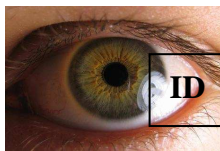
A11. Shadow Home Secretary David Davis said the database would be a 'sitting target' for terrorists, who would seek to hack into it and steal multiple identities. He added: (...) Her [The Home Secretary's] suggestion that there won't be a central database is pure spin - personal details will still be clustered on a national identity register, a sitting target for criminal hackers and terrorists. The Government has lost the argument. They have lost 25million personal records. And they have lost the public's trust. It's time they ditched ID cards for good.' [The Daily Mail, 7 March 2008, L 55-63]

A12: You could have your fingerprints read at border control, Smith tells us. Aha! (...) That means the database would have to be online. But the Home Secretary told Today that the National Register wasn't going to be online. For security reasons. So people can't hack into it. Not online? As a security measure? This is going to be so secure as to be unusable. [The Independent, 7 March 2008, L27-33]

A13. A GOVERNMENT-appointed panel of experts is warning that the new ID cards system will be open to fraud by the people running it. In a potentially damaging revelation, which undermines claims that the scheme will enhance national security, the group has concluded that it will be prone to corruption. A new report by the Independent Scheme Assurance Panel (Isap), set up to advise the government on the implementation of ID cards, states: 'Based on the likelihood that the scheme will aggregate a lot of valuable data, there is the risk that its trusted administrators will make improper use of this data.' [The Observer, 11 May 2008, L 7-14]

As suggested by the last example above, security threats could also come from insiders, rather than from external hackers. Alongside the chances for corruption and illicit trafficking of sensitive data, other security breaches were reported in the articles in our data, including those resulting from human and machine error:

A14. The Independent Scheme Assurance Panel said that both human and machine-caused mistakes would be inevitable. [The Guardian, 16 May 2008, L10-11]



Other significant security threats were identified as resulting from poor planning of the Scheme and the wish to cut corners and reduce costs:

A15. [T]he Government announced it had shaved another pounds 1 billion off the cost of its proposed identity card scheme. It did so by deciding to let the "open market" capture citizens' biometrics, effectively outsourcing the cost of enrolling people on to the ID database. You could end up getting your fingerprints taken at a supermarket, rather than at a passport office as originally proposed. Almost imperceptibly, the security architecture originally built around the ID card project has been dismantled. (...) Does any of this sound secure to you? It seems to defeat the purpose of the whole exercise, which is to protect identities, capture terrorists, bear down on benefit fraud and stop illegal immigration. But of course none of these will be ameliorated by the possession of an ID card, which nobody will be required to carry with them. As one perplexed campaigner said after the publication of the new costings: "The Government now appears to have junked the primary pretext for the scheme. So what is it for?" The answer has nothing to do with security. [The Daily Telegraph, 12 May 2008, L7-38]

To summarise then, in the media coverage analysed the ID scheme is being constructed as lacking security and even posing a serious threat to citizens' security. While the recent scandals about data losses resonate powerfully in the making of this frame,²³ the arguments mobilised are many and varied, spanning from issues of potential abuses of power by the Government, potential corruption within the Scheme or via the contracting out of key aspects of the Scheme, the likelihood that terrorists and hackers would be able to focus on one centralised target, and the potential for human and machine errors.

Interestingly, in the newspapers surveyed the security of the Scheme is attacked also on account of its heavy reliance on biometrics. This very feature that the Government hails as guarantee of the integrity of the whole Scheme and as pivotal in locking one's identity with one's specific and 'unique' physical features, is framed in the papers as its Achilles' heel. Biometrics, it is argued, are easy to capture and forge. During the four months covered in our data collection, a TV series called *The Last Enemy* was broadcast on one of the BBC channels, and discussed in the printed news coverage of the debate:

A16. [L]ike all technology, ID cards are open to fraud. The series demonstrates how to forge fingerprints for £10. [The Sunday Times, 10 February 2008, L44-45]

In an attempt to contain the damage, David Blunkett intervened by writing an opinion piece entitled 'Beeb play big brother card' and published on *The Sun* on 13th February 2008, which stated:

A17. (...) in the words of the author, it is proven they [fingerprints] can be forged. This is complete rubbish. The fact that the cards will contain our unique biometric data - such as fingerprints and facial details - seems to have passed the BBC and Mr Berry by.
There is no doubt that existing means of identity can be forged as an increasing number of cases come to light. But the new passport system, with those unique biometric details, ensures no one can simply pretend to be you if they get your document by theft or forgery. [L21-26]

²³ Incidentally, so do recent Government's fiascos in implementing large IT-based project, as we will discuss under section 3.7 below.

The papers, however, repeatedly featured the claim made by Sir Crosby,²⁴ in his report commissioned by the Government, warning against the current plans to include images of biometrics data (fingerprints or face photos) on the cards issued to citizens, and suggesting more secure solutions ought to be pursued:

A18. Sir James Crosby, commissioned by Gordon Brown to write a report on the subject, also cautioned against including a digital image of fingerprints on an ID card's microchip. He said that for security reasons the card and database should hold only some biometric elements. [The Times, 7 March 2008, L10-15]

A19. Sir James Crosby, who was commissioned by Gordon Brown to report on ID cards, cautions against putting digital images of fingerprints on the card's microchip. [The Times, 11 March 2008, L43-44]

The papers, however, are selective in relating the doubts concerning the deployment of biometrics covered in the report. The report poses many questions concerning the current architecture for the deployment of the scheme and its biometric components, and offers useful suggestions on how to improve it, including the recommendation that

[Th]e amount of data stored should be minimised. Full biometric images (other than photographs) should not be kept. Only non-unique digital representations of biometric images should be stored. Additional data accessed during enrolment and records of verification enquiries should not be retained. All data and systems should be protected by "state of the art" encryption technology.²⁵

Other key suggestions that might affect the security of the Scheme do not appear to be covered in the printed media. These include Sir Crosby's recommendation that 'verification of identity should be performed without the release of data'²⁶ and that

Instead of each public sector database holding citizens' personal data, departments could store only the data relevant to the service they provide (benefits data by DWP, medical data by the NHS, etc). Without the release of any data, the universal scheme could provide the necessary assurance of an individual's identity to each department.²⁷

Whitley and Hosein, through their involvement in the LSE Identity Project,²⁸ have been closely monitoring and analysing the ID debate as it went through the UK parliamentary system. They reported a similar situation arising in parliament, where they claim that key security issues of architecture, as well as those linked to uncertainties about biometrics and other technological aspects of the Scheme, were sidelined, and important deliberations were 'short-circuited'.²⁹ Throughout both the parliamentary debate observed by the LSE group and the snapshot of the 2008 debate in the printed media in this study, the Government remained determined to present the

²⁴ Crosby J., Sir (2008). Challenges and opportunities in identity assurance. London, HM Treasury.

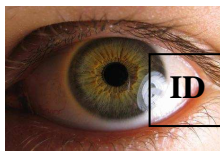
²⁵ Ibid., p. 7

²⁶ Ibid., p.36

²⁷ Ibid., p.34

²⁸ See LSE Identity Project (2007). *LSE Identity Project Summary Briefing about Security Concerns relating to the National Identity Register*. Press released on 21st November 2007.

²⁹ Whitley E. and Hosein I. (2008). 'Doing the politics of technological decision making: due process and the debate about identity cards in the UK.' *European Journal of Information Systems* (17): 668-677.



Scheme with its central database, its information sharing architecture, and the biometric technology involved as fool proof and beyond doubt.

However, the examples in this section illustrate the variety of approaches and arguments that do feature in the newspaper coverage that contribute to framing the ID Scheme as not secure. These arguments are often aggregated rather than presented in isolation, as the final example below illustrates:

A20. [H]owever scrupulous the managers might be, errors leak and take on a life of their own. They are sampled by other databases, known as "farming": errors, even when corrected in the original database, live on elsewhere.

But the ID project will be different, we are told. According to the rhetoric, an ID card, one central point of reference, will be so much more efficient and beneficial than you having to prove your identity daily, by producing driving licences, gas bills and so on. Its proponents fail to see that if any of these documents is erroneous, then we don't use the one with, say, a mistake in the address to prove our identity (..). However, the ID card itself isn't the real problem: it's the ID register. There, each entry will eventually take on a legal status. In time, all other proofs of identity will refer back to the one entry. If the register is wrong - and remember fallible human hands will at some stage have to handle your personal information - then all other databases will be wrong too. Given the propensity of officialdom to trust the details on their computer screen, rather than the person in front of them, you will have to conform to your entry in the register - or become a non-person. [The Times 07.03.08b, L33-49]

This long passage highlights how changing, updating and challenging incorrect information might turn into a nightmare experience for the average citizens. The extract also suggests that restoring one's compromised identity might become a very daunting task too. It touches on frames that will be discussed in other sections below, such as the construction of the Scheme as being compulsory, through the suggestion that at one stage it may become too expensive to (continue to) opt out of the Scheme.

Two concluding points can be made about the framing of the Scheme as not being secure - the first relates to the envisaged risks, which would not be equally shared. The newspapers reported that some groups would be affected by the lack of security more than others. The Guardian in particular covered the claim contained in the annual report by the recent Independent Scheme Assurance Panel (May 2008) that people with a rich biographical record will have better protection against identity theft than those with a poor biographical record, when the cards are introduced.³⁰ Again the Government intervened to deny the claim, with a letter by Meg Hillier MP, the Minister for Identity published in the Guardian (23 May).³¹ The second point relates to the issue of trust, as the papers directly link lack of security (real or perceived) to lack of public support for or trust in the Scheme, as we shall see also in the following section.

³⁰ ISAP (2008). Independent Scheme Assurance Panel Annual Report 2007. Published May 08. Available on http://www.ips.gov.uk/identity/downloads/ISAP_Annual_Report.pdf [last accessed 3 Feb 2009].

³¹ Hillier, M (2008) 'Parliamentary rejoinders'. Letter published in The Guardian, Guardian Leader pages, p 41.

3.2 Frame B: ‘The ID Scheme as lacking accountability’

A very small proportion of the newspaper coverage analysed reproduces the Government’s claim that all is on course to achieving good stewardship and oversight of the ID Scheme, that the oversight will guarantee that the Scheme will be appropriately implemented and operated, and that possible abuses and misuses of the Register will be prevented:

B1. Ministers said yesterday they were convinced of the security of the ID card database and were confident it could handle the vast amounts of information involved. Mr Brown has already promised fresh safeguards over public databases. He has commissioned a review by Richard Thomas, the information commissioner, and Mark Walport, head of the Wellcome Trust, into data security in the public and private sectors. [The Independent, 6 March 2008, L28-31]

Much like the previous frame, even when this happens, the claims are reported only to be challenged by recent examples of Government’s failures to act with accountability. These examples, as in the infamous case of Mr Khan MP, who was bugged while performing his MP functions, are then connected to the ID plans:

B2. The Sadiq Khan affair has killed stone dead the thesis, beloved of Tony Blair and Gordon Brown, that any accretion of power to the state is sustainable because ministers are in control.

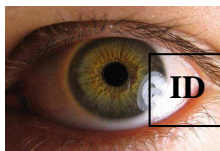
Whether this applies to phone tapping, bugging devices, ID cards, NHS records, childcare computer systems, video surveillance or detention without trial, it is simply a lie. Nobody can control this torrent of intrusion. Nobody can oversee a burst dam. [The Guardian, 6 February 2008, L15-19]

B3. Meanwhile security services and the police occasionally get away with excesses because they are not properly scrutinised. Ministers do not always know what is going on and act too leniently sometimes when they do. Officials do not bother to tell ministers, comfortably aware they will never have to face a grilling on the Today programme.

There are some obvious implications to this relating to clearer lines of accountability and more effective scrutiny of groups other than the cabinet ministers. More immediately it is obvious that in such a chaotic climate the Government would be daft to press ahead with ID cards. [The Independent, 7 February 2008, L77-83]

B4. Brown produces a spurious caveat. All of this is perfectly defensible, he says, as long as the oversight procedures are strong. But, as has been shown by the case of the Labour MP Sadiq Khan, any junior police officer can order a tap. It would be one thing if decisions were the preserve of the Prime Minister or Home Secretary, but how could they remotely cope with the flood of bugging applications? [The Daily Telegraph, 8 February 2008, L43-48]

B5. Such reassurances would sound less hollow if we could be certain that the Government, the police and intelligence services were not guilty of abusing their ever-expanding powers not simply to expose misdoings, but to conceal them. While Scotland Yard has refused to comment on whether it was involved in the bugging of Khan, its past role in counterterrorism arouses deep concern. Frightening. Take, for example, the aftermath of the shooting of Jean Charles de Menezes, the Brazilian electrician shot by police in Stockwell Tube station. Regardless of police incompetence leading to the innocent man’s death, the depressing legacy is that no single officer has been blamed or punished. [The Daily Mail, 5 February 2008, L59-67].



In other cases lack of accountability arises through allusions to ‘producer capture’, the suggestion being that the Government is dependant on a limited pool of contractors with whom they have previously worked (even when these have not delivered good results on the previous contracts). Lack of accountability is then seen as both the result of a dependency path, and of the incestuously close relationship with certain industrial partners. What exacerbates matters is that these relationships are allegedly cultivated behind the scenes, and the process of contract bidding appears to be less than transparent:

B6. [T]here is the priceless nugget that the man chosen to run the government's disgraceful ID card programme was one Richard Granger, the consultant under whose aegis the cost of the NHS computer programme escalated from pounds 2.3 billion to pounds 12.4 billion in three years. Do these people have no shame? Do they never learn? The answer to both questions is no. [The Daily Telegraph, 19 April 2008, L49-52]

B7. Most outrageous are those involved in the government computer programmes, with Britain (according to the Guardian last year) reported to be the worst of the seven biggest users of computers in competitive supply, negotiating competence and scrap rate. Firms such as EDS have been walking away from the Treasury with huge sums in their pockets for kit that nobody appears to want. They are the unacceptable face of crypto-nationalisation.

The Treasury's fond belief is that "efficiency savings" and "risk transfer" make these deals worthwhile. Yet risk is seldom transferred. Savings are notional and are tested not by the Treasury but by outfits such as PricewaterhouseCoopers, KPMG, UBS and Morgan Stanley - themselves heavily reliant on government contracts and unlikely to bite the hands that feed them. [The Guardian, 20 February 2008, L45-53]

B8. The technology industry will next week learn who the Government has awarded contracts to supply the £2bn biometric identity card programme, the last and among the most secretive of the recent crop of major public-sector IT schemes. [The Independent, 19 May 2008, L7-9]

The same article that contains the last example goes on to argue that ministers are victims of high pressure consultancy, and cannot break free even in the aftermath of a long series of disasters:

B9. ‘Jacqui Smith and Alan Johnson have neither the competence nor the courage to end the absurdity of the ID card and NHS computers, both victims of high-pressure consultancy with billions of pounds at stake’ [The Guardian, 20 February 2008, L64-68]

Current and former ministers are certainly not always being portrayed as passive victims of the tendering system. In the newspaper coverage analysed they are also presented as benefiting on a personal and professional level from their recent involvement in the ID Scheme and close contacts with specific companies involved in the tendering process:

B10. David Blunkett MP, the former home secretary, who is paid more than £ 25,000 as adviser to Entrust, which has expertise in identity card projects and wants to provide technology for the British scheme. [The Sunday Times, 24 February 2008, L48-50]

B11. FORMER Home Secretary John Reid has been paid up to £15,000 for meeting executives from a company behind a bid to run Britain's multi-billion pound ID card scheme.

Dr Reid was instrumental in pushing through legislation that will result in £5.5 billion of public money being spent on the high-tech identity recognition system in the next ten years.

Now the Mail on Sunday can reveal that, within five months of leaving office last year, the Airdrie and Shotts Labour MP was flown to Dublin to address executives of a company actively seeking lucrative work with the UK Government. For the lunch-time engagement, Dr Reid was paid up to £15,000. [The Mail on Sunday, 6 April 2008, 7-14]

Aside from the more or less implicit accusations of colluding with industry to bring about the Scheme, the newspaper coverage analysed also brings to the fore other forms of unaccountable behaviour. The use of television to 'spin' the launch of the ID Scheme's latest strategy for implementation – the Delivery Plan 2008 – has been under attack. The strategy document was launched by Jacqui Smith MP, the Home Secretary, in a televised event held at the London-based think tank DEMOS. The papers took this as an example of lack of accountability towards parliament and due democratic procedure, and portrayed it as the latest example of New Labour flair for spin:

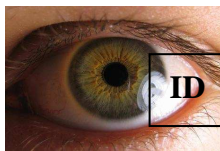
B12. Miss Smith said on television that the ID scheme "should be subject to intense scrutiny and robust argument", in which case why did she make her announcement before an invited audience at a friendly think tank?

Theresa May, for the Tories, complained to Harriet Harman, the Leader of the House, that Miss Smith had made "an oral statement to the media" but no "oral statement to this House". Miss Harman retorted that Miss Smith had not announced "a change in policy", but just "the rolling out of policy", so no statement was needed. As with the Lisbon Treaty, this Government just wants to roll over its opponents and avoid awkward questions. [The Daily Telegraph, 7 March 2009, L38-45]

The framing of the Scheme as lacking accountability is closely connected to the overall framing that sees the introduction of ID cards as proceeding by stealth. Lack of proper public debate and participation, as well as lack of parliamentary deliberation in setting the agenda behind such large scale changes in identity management and verification are often mentioned. Frequently, articles make references to the need for a further parliamentary vote before the Scheme can become universal and point to the conflicting messages that the Government sends on this issue. Both frames also rest on the lack of transparency and lack of debate over the cost of the Scheme. Cost-benefit assessments and technical reviews are frequently not available to the public. Attempts to make some of these reviews public have been challenged and the Government, for the time being, has been able to avoid public scrutiny of these expert reviews:

B13. A fight to keep secret details of two early assessments of the Government's ID cards scheme began in the High Court. The Office of Government Commerce said that failing to keep the reviews confidential could damage the system of assessing the cost and feasibility of government schemes. Requests had been made to see details of the reviews under the Freedom of Information Act. [The Times, 4 March 2008, L8-11]

B14. COMMONS speaker Michael Martin is using a 319-year-old law designed to protect freedom of speech to try to stop the publication of Home Office reports



on the failing ID card scheme. Lawyers for Mr Martin appeared unexpectedly at a High Court hearing last week aiming to prevent potentially damaging internal assessments being published under the Freedom of Information Act. (...) The latest twist in the dispute over ID cards occurred as the Government was appealing against an Information Commissioner's Office decision to publish the 'gateway' reviews, which monitor and assess the ID scheme's chance of success. [The Mail on Sunday, 9 March 2008, L8-17].

Debating cost projections is of course key to ensuring that appropriate accountability is in place and that policy making is based on expert advice and public consultation, particularly in a project whose direct and indirect costs to tax payers are so high. It is worth noting for instance that other EU countries with compulsory ID schemes in place either offer enrolment to citizens for free or at a purely nominal cost.³²

To conclude, this section illustrated how the UK ID scheme is framed in the newspaper coverage as lacking accountability. Despite Government's remonstrations and vague professions of goodwill in setting up oversight of the Scheme, the papers reported concrete examples of serious lack of accountability, of undue secrecy in aspects of the Scheme, such as the tendering process or assessment of the cost-benefit analysis, even hinting at improper behaviour and politicians' (alleged) collusion with industry, and the (appearance of) avoidance of normal parliamentary procedure, in favour of televised statements made outside Westminster.

However, the most effective argument used in the papers to support this frame is perhaps the idea that Government ministers and officials are in denial about the seriousness of the lack of accountability demonstrated so far. Without an appreciation of how badly out of hand things can go and have gone, any claims to provide effective oversight appear to be mere empty rhetoric. No trustworthiness can be claimed, nor trust be negotiated in this situation, a point stressed also by the Crosby Report, which for instance vigorously argues for putting in place well thought plans for dealing with foreseeable problems arising from the Scheme, rather than denying that these will arise.³³

3.3 Frame C: 'The Scheme as compulsory, rather than based on choice'

Plans for deployment of the ID Scheme remain in many areas under-specified and vague, while in others, where more details had been released, changes have been considerable over time. Enrolment in the ID Scheme, the Government maintains, has remained something that ordinary citizens can volunteer for. However, the frames presented in policy statement and governmental documents are rarely reproduced a-

³² These schemes also differ widely from the proposed UK one, as they do not presuppose the existence of a huge centralised database, they do not keep an individual citizen's trail, and the details stored vary considerably (no scheme aims to enrol as many biometrics as the UK one, and in fact some do not enrol any biometrics at all).

LSE Identity Project (2005). *The Identity Project: an assessment of the UK Identity Cards Bill and its implications*. Report. London School of Economics.

LSE Identity Project (2006). *House of Lords: all party briefing for report stage. Amendments 38&54, and 46 & 52: voluntary v. compulsory regime*. January 23rd 2006.

³³ Sir Crosby for instance suggests focusing on efficient systems of tackling new opportunities for fraud and of restoring a citizen's compromised identity. See: Crosby J, Sir (2008). *Challenges and opportunities in identity assurance*. London, HM Treasury.

critically in the press we reviewed. Generally, they are contested, and in this case too the key frame put forward by the newspapers is that enrolment in the scheme is - ultimately and practically, if not initially and openly - compulsory.

The recent Delivery Plan 2008 has delayed the timetable for entry of 'ordinary UK citizens' in the Scheme.³⁴ However, it has also set a timetable that specifies categories of citizens that are expected to be enrolled earlier on:

How the timetable has slipped

David Blunkett's blueprint (November 2003)

- 2007-08: First cards to be issued to UK nationals as they renew passports. Foreign nationals also to be given cards.
- 2012-13: Eighty per cent of population covered.
- 2013?: Cards compulsory

Jacqui Smith's strategy (March 2008)

- November: First foreign nationals to be registered.
- 2009: Airport staff required to sign up.
- 2010: Teenagers aged 16 and upwards to be invited to register.
- 2011-12: People added as they renew passports.
- 2017: Vast majority of population with cards.
- 2018?: Cards become compulsory.

This overview of the changes in timeline and the creation of differential plans for groups to join appeared in an article published on 7th March 2008 in the Independent,³⁵ immediately after the Delivery Plan launch.

It is evident from the Delivery Plan that some section of society will be required to sign up rather than be offered the choice to opt in. What remains to be seen is whether ultimately (in time or after a further parliamentary vote) the scheme will be compulsory for all to join. The first to be forced to join will be all foreigners from outside the European Economic Area (EEA):

C1. Under the plans, foreign nationals who want to settle in Britain from later this year will have to have an ID card. [The Daily Telegraph, 6 March 2008, L21-22]

C2. The first compulsory cards for foreign nationals arriving to work or study in the UK will be issued in November [The Independent, 7 March 2009, L41-42]

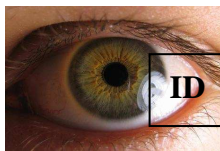
C3. Foreign nationals from outside the European Economic Area will be issued with the compulsory card from November and within three years all foreign nationals arriving in Britain will have to have a card. [The Times, 7 March 2008, L25-26]

However, as readers were keen to point out in letters to the papers, compulsory enrolment for foreign nationals (from outside the EEA) ought not to be thought as something merely affecting new arrivals:

C4. My husband has been in this country since 1967, teaching British children in British schools until he retired. He has never been in trouble with the police, and has done a great deal of voluntary work within the local community. But he is now required to have an ID card because all this time he has retained his Indian passport, out of sentimental attachment, and to avoid the hassle of having to get a

³⁴ See footnote 3.

³⁵ 'Doctors and teachers will be among first issued with ID cards' The Independent, 7 March 2008, p.8



visa to visit his family every time he wants to. If I were he, I would be even more reluctant to become a citizen of this increasingly fascist state. The alternative, however, is to be viewed as a potential terrorist by our paranoid government. [The Guardian, 10 March 2008, Letter].

The letter extract above touches on another issue, which we will discuss more in detail in section 3.5 below – that of the Government framing the Scheme as ‘being tough on immigration’. Indeed, much coverage in the newspapers is of the penalties introduced for foreigners who are non-compliant, as well as of suggestion that foreign nationals are targeted as guinea pigs for coercive measures that will later be rolled out for everyone:

C5. FOREIGN nationals could be thrown out of the country if they flout identity card regulations, the Government said yesterday. Immigrants will have to apply for ID cards from later this year and will have to give two fingerprints, iris scans and personal details to the Home Office.

If they repeatedly fail to comply with these 'primary requirements', ministers said they could have their permission to stay in the UK revoked.

Initially they would face fines of up to a maximum of £1,000.

Refugees would only face fines because human rights law means they cannot be deported.

The penalties were outlined in a consultation document on the ID scheme, which is a forerunner of the card planned for all citizens. [The Daily Mail, 26 February 2008, L8-15]

C6. If they [foreigners] don't get fingerprinted and iris-scanned they'll be fined pounds 250, rising to pounds 1,000 for further offences. Expulsion from the UK is the next level of punishment. (...) Shami Chakrabarti, head of rights group Liberty, accuses the government of using foreigners as "ID card guinea pigs". She adds: "Anyone who thinks this will be limited to foreign nationals should think again." She's right. They are a test bed for the ID repression of everybody. You have been warned. [The Mirror, 29 February 2008, L7-19]

C7. The sanctions regime proposed for the compulsory ID card for foreign nationals, which comes into effect from November, is expected to be a pilot for the UK residents' ID cards to be introduced from next year.

The Liberal Democrat home affairs spokesman, Chris Huhne, said: "This shows the kind of punitive measures that every British citizen can expect when ID cards are eventually rolled out nationally." [The Guardian, 26 February 2008, L13-17]

Another group particularly affected by the plans for early and compulsory enrolment in the Scheme are those individuals working in high security settings. This category certainly includes airport workers. Beyond them just who this group includes remains vague, and reports vary considerably from article to article, with some articles mentioning nurses and teachers, others workers in power stations or even workers on the construction sites of the forthcoming London Olympics:

C8. (...) by next year certain workers in "key sensitive areas" such as airports and ports will have to carry the new document. That will be part of long-term anti-terrorism measures. [The Daily Telegraph, 6 March 2008, L23-24]

C9. Under her new timetable, up to 200,000 airport workers will, next year, have to go on the new identity register that will underpin the scheme. Staff in other "sensitive roles", such as power station employees and construction workers on the Olympics site, will follow.

[The Independent, 6 March 2008, L16-20]

C10. AROUND 100,000 airport workers will be among the first Britons forced to carry ID cards from next year, leaked papers show. [The Sun, 5 March 2008, L8-9]

C11. Compulsory cards will be introduced first for workers in sensitive locations such as airports and power stations, or those who work with children. [The Daily Telegraph, 7 March 2008, L21-22]

C12. Millions of Britons may face pressure to apply for cards because of the nature of their jobs. Two hundred thousand airport workers, staff and volunteers at the 2012 Olympics, and power station employees could be forced to apply from next year. [The Times, 7 March 2008, L19-21]

Over the four months under observation, which overlap with the launch of these plans, airport workers were the only ones amongst this still vaguely defined target group who wrote in to the newspapers to object to the proposal. In their letters, they objected mainly on the ground that other basic, more cost-effective and less high-tech changes could be introduced to improve airport security, instead of the ID Scheme. However, a few months later, in November 2008, as the prototype of the first ID card was being unveiled, the whole debate came to the fore, with the British Airline Pilots Association (Balpa) taking an official stance against the plans,³⁶ and threatening to oppose it even through industrial action:

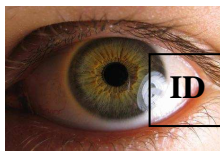
The British Airline Pilots Association (Balpa), which represents 10,000 of the 12,000 commercial pilots and flight engineers in Britain, said its members were being treated as 'guinea pigs'. Jim McAuslan, Balpa's general secretary, said the Government's 'early warning system should be flashing' over opposition to the plans.

(...) Mr McAuslan told the newspaper that he would be consulting members on the possibility of industrial action if the Government presses ahead with the plans. He said: 'We want the Government to think again about the compulsory nature of it and think again about the whole scheme.'³⁷

Initially, it appeared that the Government had had a relatively easy ride on its plans for compulsory enrolment of foreign nationals and workers in sensitive areas. In the case of foreigners (from outside the EEA), this was achieved through the framing of the Scheme as a way of somehow controlling and curbing (illegal) immigration. Although this may still backfire (as we propose in section 3.5 below), targeting foreigners, particularly in the current political and economic climate, is very unlikely to provoke an immediate public backlash in the UK. Targeting workers in key sensitive areas also appeared to be a safe bet for the Government, as workers will be pressured to register with the scheme in order to keep their job or required to enrol in order to be issued with an offer of employment. However, despite the initial lag before a concerted response appeared in the press, the Government seems now certain to encounter fierce opposition to the implementation of compulsory cards, at least in the case of airport workers. As the term 'workers in sensitive sites' is still rather vague, it is reasonable to expect more opposition from other groups, as more and more professional groups are subsumed under this category.

³⁶ Pilots threaten to strike over ID cards, The Independent, 18 November 2008. Available at <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/pilots-threaten-to-strike-over-id-cards-1023098.html> [last accessed on 4th Feb 2009]

³⁷ See 'Pilots could strike over ID cards' available on <http://www.uk-airport-news.info/manchester-airport-news-191108.htm> [last accessed 4 Feb 2008]



If we turn our attention to the groups being involved in the Scheme on a supposed voluntary basis, the picture remains quite contradictory, and there is a considerable discrepancy in the way the Government and the newspapers frame their arguments. The Government throughout the three months following the Delivery plan launch (March-May 2008) was at pains to stress how the Scheme was voluntary for British nationals (at least initially, and with the exception of those citizens in sensitive jobs of course). The newspapers took this claim and entirely deconstructed it, showing that the various caveats that lay behind it qualified this supposed 'freedom' to join in, while making it difficult or impossible to exercise the freedom to opt out.

From the analysis of coverage it is clear that the only choices open to citizens are 'narrow' choices. They are narrow in the sense that citizens appear only to be at liberty to choose over minor variations rather than on the key question of enrolment generally. To start with, they may choose to renew their biometric passport without being issued an ID card:

C13. Miss Smith said citizens would have a 'choice' over whether to accept a card, or opt for a biometric passport or driving licence instead.

Ministers want a person's fingerprints, facial scan and biographical details on a central database, the National Identity Register.

The ID card, passport or driving licence are all capable of carrying the biometric chip needed to check this information, officials said.

(..)The Tories said Miss Smith's concession that people could opt to carry a passport rather than an ID card made little difference, as they would still be forced to enter their details on the National Identity Register. [The Daily Mail, 7 March 2008, L32-54]

C14. 2011-12: Mass implementation starts with details of all passport renewals entered on national ID database, with choice of passport or ID card or both. [The Guardian, 7 March 2008, L11-14]

C15. Ms Smith will say that for the vast majority passports containing fingerprints and other data will do. A source said: "In terms of proving your identity, a biometric passport will be another way of doing it." [The Sun, 6 March 2008, L20-23]

C16. From 2012 - after the next general election – anyone applying for a new passport will automatically be fingerprinted and 49 pieces of personal information logged on to the database. [The Daily Telegraph, 7 March 2008, L32-33]

As shown above, the newspapers frame the 'option' of going for a biometric passport instead of an ID as a false freedom to opt out, since it would still require enrolment in the Scheme and its database, even without the issuing of the ID token (the card itself).

The framing of the scheme as compulsory is achieved by the newspapers also via their offering expediency as the only sure way of (temporarily) avoiding the coercion of enrolment. Citizens are advised that, in order to boycott the introduction of either biometric documents, they could try to renew their passport as soon as possible, before its expiry date.

Another way in which the Government frames the supposed freedom of enrolment is by offering citizens the option of voluntarily entering the Scheme even before the date originally indicated. Again the newspapers and frame this as a mockery of a choice:

C17. Miss Smith told the Demos thinktank in London: “(..) one of the strengths of this choice is that now people will be able to get a card when they want, rather than wait until they renew their passport.” [The Daily Mail, 7 March 2008, L40-43]

The papers frame this as yet another attempt to gloss over the lack of the substantial freedom to opt out altogether. While foreigners from outside the EEA and workers in security sites are the groups that the Government will openly (try to) coerce to join, students and young people are those targeted by the Government for the first phase of voluntary enrolment:

C18. From the start of 2010 young people will be able to get an identity card if they choose and will be issued with a personal identity number. [The Daily Telegraph, 7 March 2008, L29-30]

C19. She [the Home Secretary] also announced that students will be able to "volunteer" to hold the cards from 2010, to help them open their first bank account or take out a student loan.

It is quite clear what is going on here. (..) In short, the Government is trying to introduce ID cards by stealth. The targeting of young people seeking student loans is particularly sinister. [The Independent, 7 March 2008, L20-28]

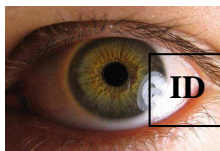
C20. But the shadow home secretary, David Davis, said that (..) "The home secretary's claim that she is offering people a choice is misleading - identity cards will still be compulsory". (..) Phil Booth, of the No2ID campaign, said it was a marketing exercise: "Whether you volunteer or are coerced on to the ID database, there's no way back. You'll be monitored for life. That's why the government is targeting students and young people, to get them on before they realise what's happening." [The Guardian, 7 March 2008, L41-49]

The third element of choice offered to citizens relates to the carrying of the ID token. The United Kingdom has had an ID card scheme before, during the war years,³⁸ which was abolished after World War II by Churchill. As we mentioned before, the architecture of the current scheme is very different and much more encompassing in its data collection and audit trail. Even without taking those changes into account, public opinion appears unchanged. Just as it was after WWII, members of the public appear to oppose the idea that a citizen could possibly be stopped in the street and asked to show an ID document on demand. So choice has been offered by the Home Secretary (at least in principle) on whether citizens will have to carry their ID token with them on a daily basis, or leave it at home until needed for ID verification.

However, framing the carrying of the card as voluntary is problematic for at least two reasons. On the one hand, as pointed out in the alternative framing offered by the newspapers, it is the National ID Register that matters, in terms of all the risks associated with invasion of privacy, surveillance and protection of sensitive data, not the token itself that we may carry in our pockets or leave at home:

C21. However, the ID card itself isn't the real problem: it's the ID register. There, each entry will eventually take on a legal status. In time, all other proofs of identity will refer back to the one entry. If the register is wrong - and remember

³⁸ Agar J (2005). *Identity cards in Britain: Past experience and policy implications*. History and Policy. Available at <http://www.historyandpolicy.org/archive/policy-paper-33.html> [last accessed 9 Feb 2009]. Elliot R (2006). 'An early experiment in national identity cards: the battle over registration in the First World War'. *Twentieth Century British History* 17(2):145-176.



fallible human hands will at some stage have to handle your personal information
- then all other databases will be wrong too. [The Times, 7 March 2008, L44-47]

Secondly, even if on paper the carrying of the card remained voluntary, it is likely that, if or once the Scheme is endorsed by industry (banks, employers, shops) to the level that the government hopes, it will in practice become impossible to avoid carrying one's card in one's wallet:

C22. Miss Smith is actually playing a rather clever game. By removing the need to have a card, she may reassure some of those who feel uneasy about Labour's Big Brother mentality. Yet at the same time she is seeking to ensure that it will eventually be impossible to manage without one. Just look at how she intends to roll out the policy. (..) At the same time, young people will be told that, without an ID card, access to all sorts of services, from bank accounts to student loans, will not be possible. [The Daily Telegraph, 7 March 2008, L17-24]

The argument becomes one around circuits of inclusion and circuits of exclusion, as noted by Nikolas Rose in his theorisation of Governmentality in 'advanced' liberal democracies.³⁹ Within this framework, citizens are exposed to two opposing trends, those that pressure them to be included (for instance through inclusion into work, for reasons that go beyond the mere economic benefit and cause enrolment into a 'system of values' - a move visible also through the New Labour language shift and emphasis in turning the *unemployed* into *jobseekers*), and those that mark their exclusion. Rose takes the credit card as an example of enrolment or exclusion from circuits. Without a credit card it is practically impossible to book and stay at most hotels, and our credentials are constantly updated via our credit card usage. It is interesting to speculate whether the ID will have a similar impact in our daily life. It is possible that the ID card will be a token that we will constantly need to produce to make internet bookings, to check in at hotels, and so forth. If so, does it really matter that we are reassured that it will not be legally compulsory for us to be issued with one or carry it at all times (although we will be enrolled in the database nonetheless)? In reality the way we live will possibly require that we have and carry one, if we are to be included in the usual circuits of operation and consumption that we have grown accustomed to. The same frame is also reiterated in the news coverage:

C23. With the ID card, we won't have the choice. Even if the card is not compulsory, all financial systems will converge on it, and anyone without a card faces great cost and inconvenience. Just like Oyster cards on the London Underground, you're not forced, but it's so much more expensive and tiresome without one. [The Times, 7 March 2008, L40-43]

³⁹ Rose N (2003). *Governing at a Distance: some modest thoughts on information technology, democracy and security*. Paper, ESRC 'ICTs in the Contemporary World' series, LSE 18 March 2003. See <http://www.lse.ac.uk/collections/informationSystems/newsAndEvents/2003events/rose.htm> [Paper last accessed 10 Feb 2008].

Rose N (2000). 'Governing Cities, Governing Citizens' in Isin E (ed.), *Democracy, Citizenship and the City: Rights to the Global City*. Routledge, pp. 95-109.

Rose N (2000b). 'Government and control' in Garland D and Sparks C (eds.), *Criminology and Social Theory*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 183-208.

Rose N (1999). *Powers of Freedom: Reframing Political Thought*. Cambridge University Press.

Rose N (1999b). *Governing the Soul*. Free Associations Books.

Rose N (1996). 'Governing 'advanced' liberal democracies', in Barry A, Osborne T, and Rose N (eds.), *Foucault and Political Reason*. London, UCL Press, pp. 37-64.

Perhaps before we can talk of inclusion and exclusion from certain circuits, it would be prudent to follow closely the behaviour of industry for clues of what the future may hold for the average citizen, in terms of whether Industry would commit itself to deliver many of the incentives that the Government wants to see around the ID Scheme. In fact the fourth element of 'choice' in respect to ordinary citizens joining the scheme, as framed by the Government, is precisely the possibility of enjoying extra benefits and services offered by Industry through the ID card:

C24. She [the Home Secretary] said there would be greater involvement of the private sector and a drive to encourage more people to join the scheme voluntarily. [The Daily Telegraph, 7 March 2008d, L39-40]

C25. The Government has switched to Plan B on ID cards. Having failed to convince the public that this unwanted, expensive and intrusive scheme is vital on grounds of national security, it is trying a different tack. The idea now is to make them seem as desirable and essential as a credit card. [The Daily Telegraph, 7 March 2008b, L39-40]

Even the Government commissioned Crosby Report (2008) pointed to the importance of 'winning the hearts and mind' of citizens – incidentally, the term used is 'consumers' - by improving the trustworthiness of the ID Scheme, as well as by providing the 'incentive' of issuing the card at no cost to citizens:

[Principle 9] To engage consumers' hearts and minds on the scale required, enrolment and any tokens should be provided free of charge.⁴⁰

This idea of winning over citizens percolated through the press, and was first reported, then sneered at in the newspapers we looked at:

C26. No charge for identity cards 'would dispel public doubts' [Title]
Identity cards should be provided free as a way of winning the "hearts and minds" of the public, the Government's own expert recommended yesterday. [The Times, 7 March 2008, title and L8-9]

C27. But ministers have been told that enrolment should be free if the scheme is "to win hearts and minds". [The Daily Telegraph, 7 March 2008d, L20]

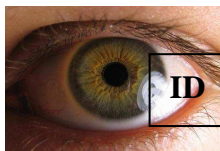
C28. A national identity database is - on all the evidence we have - extremely unpopular. A Home Office Minister, Beverley Hughes, admitted to Parliament only under duress that the Government's consultation exercise on what it was then, insultingly, calling an "entitlement card" had been overwhelmingly against the scheme. [The Daily Telegraph, 8 March 2008, L41-44]

More will be said in section 3.8 on satire and irony as a powerful tool used by newspapers to subvert the frames pushed by the Government.⁴¹ This tactic, however, is most effective in the amusing example below, where the journalist (Q) conducts a mock interview with Prime Minister Gordon Brown (A):

C 29. Q: Young people are not mugs, you know. How are you going to talk them round into accepting your madcap plan? Bribery?
A: That word is not in our vocabulary. We prefer to say we're offering incentives. For instance, with an ID card they will find it easier to enrol on a course, apply for a student loan or open a bank account.

⁴⁰ See footnote 33 for full references of Crosby 2008. Page 8.

⁴¹ For examples of humour, irony, sarcasm and satire, see examples H1-15 below.



Q: How?

A: How what?

Q: How will they find it easier to do all these things? It's already easy to enrol on a course lecturers depend on students for a living, so they more or less shanghai them as they walk past the classroom door. Student loans they've already got coming out of their ears, and as for bank accounts, the local bank managers hang about outside the student unions with hooks on the end of a long pole.

A: And your point is?

Q: We're told that the great thing about ID cards is that they remove the need to produce other forms of identity such as gas bills, final demands for council tax and so on. In what way does this improve life for the under-20s?

A: By removing the necessity for carrying other documents around with them, such as gas bills, etc. Young people are notorious for losing papers of this kind.

Q: Like the Home Office.

A: We will ignore that. Next question.

Q: What if, instead of losing the gas bill, this forgetful young person of yours loses his ID card?

A: Then he must apply for another one, turning up for interview at some remote office in the Midlands or somewhere, with a clutch of recent public utility bills to establish his identity.

Q: Such as the gas bill?

A: Something of the kind, yes.

[The Daily Mail, 10 March 2008, L24-43]

Not only do newspapers challenge the Government's general framing of the Scheme as voluntary, and expose the narrow senses in which choices are still possible. The papers go even further and frame, as in the example above, even those limited choices – the choice of accessing the 'benefits' offered to young consumers by the ID Scheme for example – as little more than empty rhetoric. The incentives offered, it is suggested, might not be novel, and perhaps not even useful.

Moreover, Industry would be involved in the provision of (these or potentially other) incentives only if the Government succeeds in securing a large base of enrolment. Circular as this argument might be, in a market economy it is not likely that any significant investment in the Scheme will be made by Industry (in adapting its operations to read ID cards and use them for ID management and assurance) for the benefit of very few users.⁴² Pin and Chip technology is an example of a technology that would hardly have been introduced – given the huge Industry investment it required – unless Industry was certain that it would be rolled out across the board to all or most cardholders.

To sum up, newspapers reframe the elements of choice open to citizen as merely offering the option to renew their biometric passport without being issued an ID card (at this stage); the option of enrolling even earlier than planned in the Government timetable; the choice to carry an ID token (the card itself) or not; and the 'choice' to enjoy incentives – although the types of incentives available remains vague and contested, as well as generally dependent on a large base of enrolment in the Scheme in the first place.

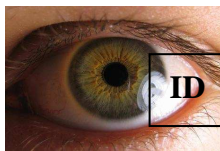
As a whole the newspapers covered propose the alternative frame that sees the Scheme as being compulsory and gradually introduced by stealth, because of the lack of transparency, accountability and open debate about the possible benefits and the

⁴² See footnote 33.

risks of the Scheme, and of the values promoted behind this specific identity management scenario.

In fact, the newspapers brand the Scheme as compulsory, employing the language of coercion and obligation. This is apparent also in the screenshot below, with which we conclude.

Keyword-in-Context		
List: <input type="button" value="Included"/>	Sort by: <input type="button" value="Case number"/>	
Keyword: <input type="button" value="A"/>	Context delimiter: <input type="button" value="Window of n words"/>	
RECNO		KEYWORD
8	Prior's first package by making strike ballots	compulsory . Howell gained his "bully pulpit" in July 1983 when
20	BAA should consider redirecting the massive costs of	compulsory ID cards for airport workers to paying for
24	doubt that is why it carries a stigma.	Compulsory mass fingerprinting is regarded as "unBritish", but the
24	has not yet dared to make mass fingerprinting	compulsory . What this Government fears to do openly it
24	passport. That's the final step before the	compulsory ID card. I already refuse to visit the
28	stress that there is still a case for	compulsory ID cards but that the scheme needs to
30	how she intends to roll out the policy.	Compulsory cards will be introduced first for workers in
30	now be introduced by stealth. Making all cards	compulsory will require a vote in Parliament; it is,
38	This is also why it will eventually be	compulsory to join in. You should start working out
43	to the electronic patient register, set to be	compulsory for every NHS user. There'll be no
48	take possession of the individual. It will mean	compulsory ID cards and registration with yet another unaccountable
53	in Australia, a new unified border force and	compulsory ID cards for foreign nationals! Immigration: The Inconvenient
56	track them until they retire. It will be	compulsory for every 14-year-old to have one. Margaret
63	have to undergo biometric scans. Fingerprinting will be	compulsory for all passengers flying to Edinburgh, Glasgow and
63	passengers guinea pigs in a move to introduce	compulsory fingerprinting 'by the back door'. BAA insisted there
69	Gordon's Open Government is trying to slip	compulsory ID cards through the back door without anyone
69	name were among the 60 million entries on a	compulsory ID card database, you wouldn't have to
77	age. In the Netherlands, an identification card is	compulsory at the age of 14, in Portugal it is
77	at the age of 14, in Portugal it is	compulsory from the age of just ten. In Poland
77	age of just ten. In Poland it is	compulsory at the age of 18, and in Germany the
79	fingerprinted before they reach here, ID cards become	compulsory for all foreign nationals from November and £10,000 on-
81	included by 2017. At that point, it could become	compulsory to sign up. Miss Smith told the Demos
81	choice is misleading - identity cards will still be	compulsory . Her suggestion that there won't be a
81	help prevent organised crime. A separate scheme introducing	compulsory ID cards for foreign nationals will begin later
81	fully. Comment - Page 14 ID CARD TIMELINE Late 2008: First	compulsory cards for foreign nationals issued 2009: Compulsory cards issued
81	Late 2008: First compulsory cards for foreign nationals issued 2009:	Compulsory cards issued to 200,000 airport workers 2010: Students and other
81	citizens registered on database 2018: onwards: 'Universal' registration made	compulsory ?
84	have cards, we might as well make them	compulsory ? This is a cynical and underhand strategy. Perhaps
84	time being, it's difficult to accept that	compulsory ID cards would not be a very significant
103	fine of £125. The sanctions regime proposed for the	compulsory ID card for foreign nationals, which comes into
105	will have to be introduced before it becomes	compulsory for British nationals to register for the ID
106	succeeds, the question of whether ID cards are	compulsory or voluntary becomes irrelevant. The government will already
120	first softly-softly union reforms by insisting on	compulsory strike ballots. He did, however, resist Thatcher's
123	to court than give my data to a	compulsory government ID card database or Vince Cable's
124	there are no plans to introduce a universal	compulsory or voluntary DNA database, the police, and some
126	its popular acceptance. ID cards are to become	compulsory this year for foreign nationals from outside Europe
126	on whether the scheme is to be made	compulsory . Smith announced yesterday that people will then be



While not all occurrences of the term ‘compulsory’ reported above refer to the scheme or to the ID card, this type of screenshot⁴³ is visually powerful to give us a sense of the prevalence of this frame.⁴⁴ The next section instead explores the related and partially overlapping suggestion that the ID scheme will be universal.

3.4 Frame D: ‘The ID Scheme as being universal’

The newspapers frame the Scheme as (ultimately) being universal and requiring the enrolment of every UK citizen. However, this is achieved in rather different ways – on the one hand by employing a language that evokes ideas of inevitability. The Scheme is framed as being a *fait accompli*, without necessarily resorting to a vocabulary of coercion, as in the example below:

D1. All British citizens **will have** their fingerprints and photographs registered on a national database within 10 years under plans outlined by the Government yesterday. (...) His report was published alongside a new Government **timetable for introducing a universal ID** scheme by 2017. (...) Miss Smith said the aim was to **make coverage of the population "universal"** by 2017. [The Daily Telegraph, 7 March 2008, L8-9; L27-28; L38; my emphasis in bold]

Alternatively, the language of coercion and compulsion can be directly employed to convey the idea that if or when the Scheme becomes universal, this will be through its imposition by the Government:

D2. Under the Government's timetable, the **final move to compelling people** to have the cards is not likely until well into the next decade. [The Independent, 6 March 2008, L21-23; my emphasis in bold]

D3. Their latest wheeze is to give every 14-year-old child in the country a personal number to last it for life. Not tattooed on the wrist thank heavens for small mercies but stored on an electronic database along with exam results and personal details such as exclusions or expulsions from school. The dangers of such a barmy scheme not least that it is **another sneaky back door into the dreaded universal ID card** are self-evident. [The Daily Mail, 14 February 2008, L10-15; my emphasis in bold]

In some cases the universality of the Scheme is directly portrayed as intrinsic to the whole ID Scheme project:

D4. It is about **setting up a glorified population register** to keep track of us. Those who think the Government will scrap the ID cards are mistaken, since **its main purpose is to establish a population database**. [The Daily Telegraph, 12 May 2009, L76-78; my emphasis in bold]

⁴³ To discriminate between usages that refer to the ID cards and Scheme, one can look at a wider chunk of context, which is possible in WordStat by clicking onto each instance of the keyword. Incidentally, using WordStat is not the only way of achieving this type of screen results– Atlas.ti manually coded retrievals, as well as corpus concordance software packages are also powerful in this respect. For this study, Atlas.ti was the software principally used to assist with coding and analysis, and the analysis was then from time to time supplemented with QDA Miner and WordStat.

⁴⁴ In fact, in the case of some frames, it might be possible to identify some of the lexical components that may be contributing to the creation of a frame. In this instance, as we explore the framing of the scheme as compulsory, related keyword searches can for instance be conducted on items such as: *choice*, variations of the verb to *choose* and to *force*; *voluntary* and variations of this adjective; *inevitable*, *inevitably*; verbs like *join*, *encourage*, *opt*, *impose*, *volunteer*; nouns such as *incentives* or *stealth*; adjectives such as *stealthy*, *willing*, *universal* and so on.

However, other coverage focuses on the lack of (constitutional) legitimacy that such a move would have, and on how closely the Scheme is linked with Labour's policy agenda, an agenda that is not shared by either of the main opposition parties. The Conservatives have, in fact, sworn to drop the Scheme if elected (incidentally, to fund the construction of more prisons with the money saved),⁴⁵ whereas the Liberal Democrat leader has sworn that he would appear in courts and face prosecution rather than sign up in the ID Scheme.⁴⁶ So while the language of coercion still prevails, there is also an attempt to hold these plans in check through the legislative framework, as well as the political outcome of the next national election:

D5. The Government now envisages that the biometric details of the majority of the population could be held by the state by 2017, some five years later than originally planned. A move to compel remaining "refusniks" to register could follow towards the end of next decade, if Labour is still in power. [The Independent, 7 March 2008, L12-14]

D6. The prime minister, Gordon Brown, has confirmed that legislation will have to be introduced before it becomes compulsory for British nationals to register for the ID cards scheme. [The Guardian, 6 February 2008, L52-54]

D7. The contentious plans finally made it on to the statute book more than two years later after Mr Blunkett's successor, Charles Clarke, promised that the final move to compulsion would not take place without a fresh vote in both houses of Parliament. [The Independent, 6 March 2008, L52-54]

Reporting the need for a fresh parliamentary vote on a universal Scheme, in combination with framing the Scheme as being (ultimately) compulsory rather than voluntary, supports the overall frame promoted by the newspapers of the Scheme being introduced by stealth:

D8. No convincing case having been made for a national ID card scheme, it will now be introduced by stealth. Making all cards compulsory will require a vote in Parliament; it is, therefore, in the Government's interests to make them seem both innocuous and invaluable, hence Miss Smith's strategy. [The Daily Telegraph, 7 March 2008, L25-27]

To conclude this section, we briefly turn to the past, and look at the UK history of universal registration in an ID system. Historian Jon Agar in a recent paper reviewed the first two attempts at introducing a national ID card system in the UK - the first, failed attempt in 1915-1919, and the second, a very marginal success, in 1939-

⁴⁵ See the following articles:

'16,000 prisoners set free early to ease jail numbers'. The Daily Telegraph, 1 February 2008, p.6.

'The savings game'. The Guardian, 20 May 2008, p. 30.

'ID cards scheme is open to fraud: Fingerprinting to be contracted to private firms'. The Observer, 11 May 2008, p. 2.

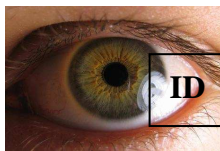
'We'll lock away 100,000 in jail, vows Cameron'. The Daily Mail, 3 March 2008, p. 10.

⁴⁶ See the following articles:

'Dutch courage: Nick Clegg vowed to take risks as Lib Dem leader, but was a Commons rebellion what he meant?'. The Guardian, 22 March 2008, p. 39.

'The savings game'. The Guardian, 20 May 2008, p. 30.

'Smith will support ID cards in defiance of fierce opposition'. The Independent, 6 March 2008, p. 16.



1945.⁴⁷ Agar claimed that 'universal registration systems have repeatedly been proposed as solution to short-lived moral panics. But there is little evidence that national registers effectively resolve such panics' (2005:1 and 13). In his analysis of the current Scheme, Agar claims that this resembles more the first (failed) attempt, also in terms of its lack of clarity and vision about its objectives, and the desire to answer all (and thus effectively none) of the moral panics of the time. About the current Scheme, he adds:

A quick list shows that there has been no settled view of the targets for the contemporary card schemes. New Labour has proposed identity cards first as tools for combating underage drinking, then, as a tool against identity theft, illegal working and benefit fraud (the 'entitlement card'), and, more recently, as a tool against terrorism.⁴⁸

The suggested aims of the ID Scheme have shifted considerably over time and, it may be argued, they have effectively come to cover a long list of aspirations about tackling many if not all the woes of modern life in Britain. This has not gone unnoticed in the newspaper coverage, as the many quotes below illustrate:

D9. The Home Secretary (..) embarked on one of her endless sentences about why ID cards are a cure for all the ills of the world. [The Times, 20 February 2008, L23-24]

D10. Our own government is justifying the introduction of ID cards linked to a centralised national data register as a means to combat violent crime, illegal immigration, benefit fraud, identity theft and tax evasion. [The Guardian, 3 March 2008, L36-39]

D11. (..) ministers have never advanced a consistent argument for introducing the cards. One minute they cite the need to counter terrorism, the next to prevent identity fraud, or perhaps deal with illegal immigration or welfare cheats. There is some truth in all these points, but the Government has yet to state a proper case for any of them. [The Daily Mail, 7 March 2008, L14-17]

D12. Ms Smith will argue that ID cards are essential both for fighting terrorism and combating identity fraud. [The Independent, 6 March 2008, L16-17]

D13. According to the figures most people also rejected the claim that ID cards would prevent underage drinking and smoking. [The Daily Telegraph, 6 February 2008, L16-17]

D14. Miss Smith says (..): "We are all familiar with the increasing need to be able to prove who we are." No, Miss Smith, we are not all familiar with the increasing need to prove who we are. Most of us know perfectly well who we are, as do the people with whom we have dealings. Our banks need to keep ahead of credit card fraudsters, but that is a task at which they are generally more agile than the Home Office. [The Daily Telegraph, 7 March 2008e, L317]

With the launch of the Delivery Plan in March 2008, the Government tried to re-focus attention around a handful of (very encompassing) targets. This is particularly true of the Delivery Plan introductory pages and of the accompanying speech that Jacqui Smith gave at Demos,⁴⁹ though at times the document and speech fall back into the

⁴⁷ Agar J. (2005). *Identity cards in Britain: past experience and policy implications*. History and Policy

⁴⁸ Ibid., p.13.

⁴⁹ See footnotes 3 and 4.

trap of advertising the Scheme as a panacea for most (if not all) the problems mentioned above. The Delivery Plan clearly states that ‘we need to protect ourselves and our families against identity fraud, and protect the community against crime, illegal immigration, and terrorism’.⁵⁰ In the foreword to the Plan, the Home Secretary is even more explicit in making the bold claim that ‘the Government’s National Identity Scheme will give us all a new way to protect ourselves and our families against identity fraud, and to protect our communities against crime, illegal immigration and terrorism’.⁵¹ It is unfortunate that in the concluding remarks of her speech accompanying the launch Jacqui Smith is again quoting at least nine areas where the ID Scheme is supposed to make a positive impact:

As I have set out today, the duty of public protection and the impetus for greater citizen convenience are the two drivers for our plans for the National Identity Scheme.

The benefits are clear:

- to counter illegal immigration and illegal employment;
- to tackle crime and terrorism;
- to lessen the burden for employers and employees involved in proving identity;
- to improve access to the public services to which we are entitled; and
- to, quite simply, make life easier for all of us in the modern world.⁵²

Of all these claims, the next section focuses on the first supposed benefit that the Home Secretary listed in her bullet points – the framing of the ID Scheme as having a strong effect on curbing illegal immigration and tackling illegal employment.

3.5 Frame E: ‘The Scheme as tough on immigration’

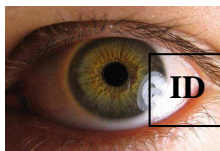
As we saw in the previous section Agar argues that the creation of a national register is often envisaged as a *fix* to tackle a moral panic – and this section develops around the discourses and the framings and reframing of the panic around immigration in contemporary Britain. Specifically, the section looks at how the Scheme is being framed by the Government as a way of ‘acting tough on immigration’, and how the newspapers respond and reframe the Scheme in respect to that claim.

The Government promoted frame of presenting the ID Scheme as the Government being tough on (illegal) immigration is constructed through a series of official pronouncements within and beyond the Delivery Plan itself, including a series of official policy statements and strategy documents. The extract below for instance is from a document compiled for the Home Office by Border and Immigration Agency Communication Directorate also released in March 2008:

⁵⁰ Home Office (2008). *National Identity Scheme. Delivery Plan 2008*. London, HO Identity and Passport Service, p. 6.

⁵¹ Smith J. (2008). ‘Foreword’ to *National Identity Scheme. Delivery Plan 2008*. London, Home Office Identity and Passport Service, p. 5.

⁵² Smith J. (2008). *The National Identity Scheme - Delivery Plan 2008*. Speech delivered by the Home Secretary on 6th March 2008 at Demos, London. The extract quoted comes from the final section entitled ‘Conclusions’. The speech is available at <http://www.ips.gov.uk/identity/downloads/secretary-speech-2008-03-06.pdf> [last accessed 12 Feb 2009].



The UK is now leading the world in the successful delivery of this [ID] technology. Our first line of defence against illegal immigration at the offshore border (fingerprint visas) is now in place. (...) Our programme for identity cards for foreign nationals will begin in 2008.⁵³

The newspapers cover extensively the claims about controlling (illegal) immigration and also report extensively the various penalties and fines that the Government is introducing to prosecute citizens (foreign nationals from outside the EEA, initially at least) who try to resist enrolment in the Scheme (also see section 3.3 above and examples C5-C7). In the same opinion piece mentioned before, and which appeared in The Sun on 13th February 2008, David Blunkett intervened in the newspaper debate to attack the media take on the predicted effects of IDs on immigration:

E1. The BBC, in a heavyweight discussion about the programme, failed to mention that ID cards will also make life extremely difficult for illegal immigrants and welfare cheats. Thank goodness Brits have more common sense than those preaching to them over the airwaves. [Letter to The Sun 13.02.08, L32-34].

The newspaper coverage often vocally contests these claims by the Government:

E2. The justification for ID cards regularly trotted out by ministers is that they will boost security, tackle identity fraud and help prevent illegal immigration. None of these arguments stands up to scrutiny. [The Independent, 7 March 2008, L29-32]

E3. Fewer than a quarter of people think that ID cards will have any effect on preventing illegal immigration and foiling terrorists, a report has found. [The Daily Telegraph, 17 February 2008, L8-11]

E4. HOME Secretary Jacqui Smith was most insistent. Identity cards are essential in the fight against illegal immigration, crime and terrorism. Of course they are, pet. Unless, that is, said illegal immigrants, foreign criminals and assorted jihadists attempt to enter Britain at a weekend. In which case, Labour's policy is: Come On Down. While school marm Smith was banging on about the merits of ID cards, you may have missed the announcement that officers in Britain's 'new' border patrol force have been told not to arrest anyone on Saturdays and Sundays. [Daily Mail 7.03.08, 9-27]

E5. Only 27 per cent of the 2,000 surveyed found it 'very believable' that ID cards would disrupt terrorist plots (...). On the matter of making it more difficult for illegals to work in the UK - one of Labour's key aims for the cards - the figure fell to 24 per cent. [The Daily Mail, 13 February 2008, L12-15].

The re-framing takes place by portraying the Government's statements on the effects of the ID Scheme on illegal immigration as empty rhetoric, and by reporting opinion polls revealing public scepticism about the Scheme's chances to succeed in tackling illegal immigration.⁵⁴ Attacks on Government's empty rhetoric are made by papers on

⁵³ Home Office (2008). *Introducing compulsory identity cards for foreign nationals*. Border and Immigration Agency Communication Directorate, p. 4. Available at <http://www.ind.homeoffice.gov.uk/sitecontent/documents/managingourborders/compulsoryidcards/> [last accessed 12 Feb 2009].

⁵⁴ In an article published on the same day (13 Feb 2008) The Times reports a higher figure, although the figure remains low. According to the Times, 32 percent of the 2,000 people over 16 that have been polled are said to believe that the scheme will prevent illegal immigration.

both sides of the political spectrum. Even the newspapers that are thought to be most right-leaning dismiss the Government's claims as empty rhetoric, pointing to the Government's incompetence, albeit only to suggest other (tougher) measures that could be taken to curb (illegal) immigration.

In other instances, the newspapers accuse the Government of pandering to a traditionally right-wing sentiment and opposition towards (both illegal and legal) immigration, and of employing the rhetoric of xenophobia:

E6. Responding to the survey, Liam Byrne, the Immigration Minister, said: 'I've been saying for two years that immigration is top of the list of voters' concerns. The British public want to see change to the immigration system and the Government has got the message. 'That is why 2008 sees the biggest shake- up to immigration and border security in 45 years including a points system like the one in Australia, a new unified border force and compulsory ID cards for foreign nationals.' [The Daily Mail, 5 April 2008, L52-58].

E7. It began to appear that Labour post-Blair was being tricksier and more dangerously populist than when Mr Blair had been at the helm (..) there was the selling of ID cards as being about foreigners, there was "British jobs for British workers". [The Times, 27 May 2008, L44-49]

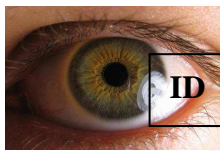
E8. The dominant theme of Brown's time in office has been national consolidation: ID cards, immigration control, a retreat from multiculturalism with calls for more explicit expressions of 'Britishness', populist rhetoric about 'British jobs for British workers. [The Observer, 16 March 2008, L75-77]

The Government's framing of the Scheme as being tough on immigration received exposure and intense criticism also through the coverage of the Labour by-election campaign in the constituency of Crewe and Nantwich in the second half of May 08. The alleged role of ID cards on immigration was repeatedly discussed and disputed in the pages of both the Guardian and the Daily Mail.

The Labour Crewe-Nantwich electoral campaign revolved around attempts to discredit the Tory candidate, Mr Timpson, who was portrayed as member of high society, enjoying a very privileged life in his large mansion, and being removed from the needs of the average voter in the area. Labour campaigners dressed in high top hats and formal evening suits to impersonate him and mock the high society he was meant to represent. Within the same campaign a flier was produced with a mock Tory candidate application form filled by Timpson that was meant to represent the ways in which he was going to alienate voters. The flier with the mock application is available on the Labour campaign website⁵⁵ and has been reproduced below:

⁵⁵ http://www.creweandnantwichlabour.org.uk/dont_be_conned_by_tory_boy

Also available at [http://www.politics.co.uk/news/party-politics/labour/exclusive-labour-activists-rage-over-racist-crewe-campaign-\\$1222500.htm](http://www.politics.co.uk/news/party-politics/labour/exclusive-labour-activists-rage-over-racist-crewe-campaign-$1222500.htm) [last accessed 16th April 2009]



TORY CANDIDATE APPLICATION FORM

Tory Boy Timpson

Do you live in a big mansion house? ☒ Yes ☐ No

Do you think that regeneration is adding a new wing to your mansion? ☒ Yes ☐ No

Have you and your Tory mates on the council been soft on yobs and failed to make our streets safer? ☒ Yes ☐ No

Do you oppose making foreign nationals carry an ID card? ☒ Yes ☐ No

Do you want to cut the funding going to our schools and children's centres? ☒ Yes ☐ No

The fourth point on the mock application states 'Do you oppose making foreign nationals carry an ID card?' with a 'yes' tick in the accompanying box. The coverage that this flier and the campaign received was quite extraordinary and all negative:

E9. Even Brownites are appalled (or should be) at the disreputable campaign fought at Crewe. Charges that the Tories oppose ID cards for foreign nationals are **a disgraceful throw of the race card**. [The Daily Telegraph, 22 May 2008, L35-37, my emphasis]

E10. [T]he fight for Crewe and Nantwich has got dirty. Labour activists have criticised a leaflet put out by their own party which shows a picture of Timpson and the statement: "Do you oppose making foreign nationals carry an ID card?" Foreign nationals will receive ID cards this year and British citizens next year but **the leaflet has been condemned for its far-right tone and suggestion the Tories are "soft" on immigrants**. Is it a sign of the increasingly partisan campaign or desperation that Tamsin is unrepentant? **"I don't think it sounds BNPish,"** she says. "I'm not apologising for the tone of it. [The Guardian, 14 May 2008, L55-61, my emphasis]

E11. [N]ow, there comes a very **nasty leaflet** titled "Tory candidate application form". (...) But the best is saved for question four, at which point **pantomimic class hatred is suspended and we get something altogether more sinister**. "Do you," it asks, "oppose making foreign nationals carry an ID card?"

Though the Tories seem to be hardly mentioning it, the presence of immigration in the campaign isn't a surprise. **What's unsettling is the language used by Labour, and the implication of a tough measure to be wrought on uncooperative outsiders.** It has to be said: there are **deeply unpleasant historical echoes here that would cause any decent person to blanch**, but the people behind the Dunwoody campaign surely know exactly what they're doing. There has been a Polish community in Crewe since the 1940s, but as many as 6,000 Poles have made their home there during the past four years. [The Guardian, 15 May 2008, L20-35, my emphasis]

E12. One Labour campaign leaflet suggests Timpson opposes "making foreign nationals carry an ID card". Race is undoubtedly an issue in Crewe, which like many places across Britain is home to many workers from eastern Europe. **"Labour thinks that this will appeal to working class people because they are racist,"** said Pickles. "They aren't and it won't. The people here are not racist and they are not stupid." [The Guardian, 17 May 2008, L66-70, my emphasis]

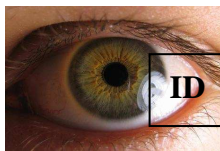
E13. But perhaps the **most sinister aspect of this campaign** is the production of an election leaflet which **could easily have been mistaken for BNP propaganda.** On a mock 'Tory candidate application form', the question is asked: 'Do you oppose making foreign nationals carry an ID card?' with a 'yes' tick in an accompanying box. This is **deeply insidious** in that it completely misrepresents the Tory position. The Conservatives are opposed to identity cards for everyone, not just foreigners. But **Labour are so desperate for votes, they are pandering to xenophobia.**

The **vicious racist tactic** plays on genuine local concerns about the burgeoning immigrant Polish community in Crewe, where Cheshire Police estimate Poles constitute one-tenth of the population and this is from a Labour party with a proud history of support for immigrants. [The Daily Mail, 17 May 2008, L46-55, my emphasis]

Labour's depiction of their ID scheme as a way of acting tough on immigration backfired enormously – not only did Labour in the end lose the electoral campaign in the Crewe-Nantwich constituency, a constituency previously repeatedly held by Labour. As evident from the coverage generated, Labour also seriously risked alienating their core base of supporters. Very open and strong criticism of this policy framing came as much from right-leaning newspapers, as from the more centre and left-leaning ones, as exemplified above (examples E9 to E13).

What is of great interest for the purpose of our analysis is that the other instances of resistance to the Government's framing of the ID cards as 'being tough on immigration' focused on depicting this claim as empty rhetoric. As a consequence, it was undermined in its truth claim. This was achieved by the coverage in newspapers occupying different positions across the political spectrum.

However, what is exemplified in the quotes E9 to E13 above is rather different, as the newspaper coverage *accepts* the policy framing offered by the Government. It does not dispute that the ID scheme is a way of acting tough on immigration - but rather it turns the frame on its head, by claiming that it is a *disproportionate* and *problematic* way of acting tough on immigration. The reframing of the Government's original frame is extremely powerful. It builds on the frame widely advertised by the Government, only to 'subvert' it from the inside. Ironically, the criticism is strengthened also by the fact that even the Daily Mail adds its voice to that of the



other newspapers in crying out against the playing of the immigration card - a game that The Daily Mail has certainly been accused of playing often times itself.⁵⁶

One may claim that in framing the ID Scheme as a way of acting tough on immigration the Government sought to implement a very powerful and encompassing national register in the hope to (be seen to) address one of the moral panics of contemporary Britain. Immigration is arguably framed as a moral panic today not only in the UK but also in many other advanced liberal societies.

Another of the moral panics prevalent in contemporary Britain, and more generally in Western Societies, is terrorism and the threat of future attacks. As noted when discussing the proposed (wide-ranging and very many) aims of the ID Scheme, tackling terrorism featured high on the agenda and always immediately following or preceding references to the urgent need to control immigration and curb illegal immigration (see pages 35 and 36). One could even perhaps claim that in the current policy discourse around IDs the Government is implicitly framing illegal immigration and terrorism as interconnected threats.

Studies on security at the European Union level have come to similar conclusions. One such study is the fifth framework project ELISE - European Liberty and Security: Security Issues, Social Cohesion and Institutional Development of the European Union.⁵⁷ In its final report, the authors claim that 'although there is no evidence of connections between terrorism and illegal immigration, it has now become normal to search for terrorists among migrants, especially those coming from Muslim countries'.⁵⁸

This implicit link in policy statements and practice – i.e. in policing and carrying out intelligence work - is challenged openly by some of the newspapers, again in an attempt to undermine the frame of the ID Scheme as a way for the Government to act tough on immigration. The challenge is not directed at whether the Government would be acting tough on immigration through the implementation of the Scheme, which is instead fore-grounded, but rather – turning the frame on its head – to claim that the Government's response of using IDs to act tough on immigration is disproportionate to the aims set out, and would fail to secure the desired effects. As such the ID Scheme is re-framed as a misguided response:

E14. [title]: Identity cards 'useless in fight against terrorism'

[article] it [a leaked European Commission report prepared for Home Secretary Jacqui Smith and other EU Home Affairs Ministers] says most people behind terror attacks in the UK and Europe were living in the EU legally and so would

⁵⁶ Incidentally, the Labour campaign has been criticised for playing the immigration card generally, but also specifically for doing so in a constituency where possible immigration tensions may resonate in reference to the large Polish community that has settled there. Both the frame proposed by the Labour campaigners and that presented by the various newspapers implicitly or explicitly make a reference to the specific immigration history of this constituency. However, neither seem to realise that any Polish immigrant would not (at least not for the moment) be forced at all to enrol in the ID Scheme, given that Polish citizens are citizens of the European Union.

⁵⁷ Further information on this EU project, which started in 2002, can be found with the project final synthesis report that was released in 2006 and is currently available at http://www.libertysecurity.org/IMG/pdf/ELISE_FINAL_SYNTHESIS_REPORT.pdf [last accessed 5 March 2009].

⁵⁸ *Idib.*, p10.

not be affected by increased security measures. [The Sunday Mail 17.02.08, lines 17-1]

The extract above dismissed the Government's (implicit) claim that terrorism is linked to illegal immigration, as the authoritative EU official document quoted reports that this is generally not the case. Even in the case of the recent terrorist attacks in the UK, the individuals who carried them out were legally residing in the UK. Furthermore, the papers report, it is common practice among terrorists willing to 'die for their cause' to divulge openly their identity on their death:

E15. These measures, it is said, will protect us against terrorism. That is nonsense. Modern Islamist terrorists want the world to know who they are. That's why they make video wills to show everyone exactly who has been martyred for the cause [The Daily Telegraph 22.03.08, lines 30-32]

E16. One of the 7 July London bombers took his driving licence with him on his suicide mission. How exactly would an ID card have helped prevent this crime? [The Independent 7.03.08, lines 31-32]

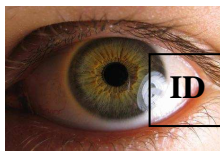
So terrorism is not framed in the papers as something that can usefully be fought through attempts to regulate the identity of individuals who, even if illegal immigrants, are not likely to be terrorists in the first place. Forcing them to appear on a UK national register or to carry an ID card would not affect their (un-) likeliness to be involved in terrorist attacks. Conversely, according to the newspaper coverage, 'real' terrorists would in the future only be affected in that they might choose to carry with them their ID card - rather than their driving licence or passport - when they trigger their suicidal attack.

This section focused on the Government's framing of the ID Scheme as a tough response to illegal immigration, a frame which was echoed in the newspapers, especially in reference to the new penalties and fines introduced for foreigners who do not comply with compulsory enrolment procedures. However, the two prevailing frames offered by the newspaper coverage either portrayed the claims as mere empty rhetoric (thus rejecting the Government-initiated frame altogether) or depicted the Scheme as a disproportionate and ill-thought policy response to illegal immigration (thus building on the frame offered by the Government, but only, as it were, to subvert it more effectively from within).

Previous sections have also highlighted the newspaper framing of the Scheme as lacking security, (technical and political) integrity and accountability. The following section will analyse the newspaper framing of the Scheme as creating an imbalance between liberty and security, and ultimately as being illiberal and introduced by stealth.

3.6 Frame F: 'The imbalance between liberty and security'

In the aftermath of the 2001 New York attack and the London terrorist bombings, the phrase 'balancing liberty and security' has often circulated in policy speeches announcing changes in legislation. Often these changes, while heightening a state's power of intervention, also entailed a curtailment of citizens' freedoms. The policy discourse around the ID Scheme has not been immune to this rhetoric:



F1. In several measured speeches, Brown made clear he understood the need to balance security concerns with individual liberty. [The Daily Telegraph 08.02.08, L26-27]

As exemplified in other sections of this report, one of the key aims on which the Scheme is being promoted is that it allegedly helps tackling terrorism and enhancing security. In the newspaper coverage this claim is hotly contested, even by resorting to public opinion polls and Government-originated survey data:

F2. The poll, by the Government's own Identity and Passport Service, showed that there is widespread scepticism about the plans. Only 27 per cent of the 2,000 surveyed found it 'very believable' that ID cards would disrupt terrorist plots. [The Daily Mail 13.02.08, L12-15]

It may be useful to start by reflecting on the very idea of achieving a balance between those imperatives, as suggested by the UK Government in the framing it promotes. The final report of the EU project ELISE⁵⁹ has been critically assessing 'what is at stake in the seemingly common sense idea that it is necessary to strike an appropriate 'balance' between the claims of security and the claims of liberty'.⁶⁰ The authors argue that in the aftermath of recent terrorist attacks premature judgements about the supposed novelty of the present situation have been made, and that these have been used to justify policies that were already in the pipeline, but which were previously too unpalatable to have been passed (2006: 7-8). In analysing the metaphor of striking a balance between liberty and security, their report argues that it

is a comforting metaphor. It suggests, not least, that someone is in a position to judge when a proper balance has been reached. Thus it is a metaphor that disables any understanding of how the relationship between these competing claims is, in practice, structurally one-sided. (...) [the metaphor] discourages people from thinking about the ways in which any possible judgement about when a balance has been reached will be made by agents who are very closely connected with security agencies (...) it encourages people to think about politics as a matter of simple choices, as if one can choose liberty or security, rather than as inseparable values that are always in potential conflict. (...) the metaphor of a balance, in short, detracts attention from all the hard questions about responsibility, about judgement, about who gets to decide that an act of violence warrants military action or legal action, derogation of the rule of law or responsibility under the rule of law.⁶¹

With this in mind, we turn to the newspaper coverage, where the relationship between liberty and security is instead framed as an imbalance. This framing is achieved through a variety of claims that span from the allegation that the Government does not adequately value civil liberties, to the suggestion that the key aim pursued through the ID Scheme is one of surveillance rather than security enhancement. As in some of the newspaper frames previously presented, in the most benevolent portrayals the Government is depicted as simply incompetent, whereas in the more cynical accounts it appears as trying to pursue anti-libertarian policies by stealth and in an unaccountable and undemocratic manner. Examples of the Government getting the

⁵⁹ This is the European Union project funded under Framework 5 referred to in footnote 58.

⁶⁰ Ibid., p.2.

⁶¹ Ibid., p.21-22.

balance wrong due to ineptitude include the following quotes about increasing security at borders and airports:

F3. The Treasury has imposed a ban on overtime for staff working at the Border and Immigration Agency (..) [The Daily Mail 07.03.08, L15-17, more extensively quoted within E4]

F4. Returning to Britain, I found only half the staff at passport control in uniform (..). None smiled. Not a customs officer was in sight. Perhaps instead of fingerprinting us all at airports or introducing ID cards, the Government could start by getting the basics right first. [Letter to The Daily Telegraph 15.03.08a, L12-15]

F5. As an airport worker for 35 years, I think the Government and BAA should consider redirecting the massive costs of compulsory ID cards for airport workers to paying for patrols of the perimeter.

While security staff don rubber gloves and test my tube of lip gloss before I reach my place of work, the perimeter remains uncontrolled. The front door is bolted, but the back door is wide open. [Letter to The Daily Telegraph 15.03.08b, L8-11]

F6. If I worked at an airport, I would be angry that the Government intended to foist ID cards on me and my colleagues as a test case before inflicting them on everyone else (..). If it's a question of trust, the airport authorities should improve their vetting practices, not with ID cards but with normal checking of references and criminal records. [Letter to The Daily Telegraph 10.03.08, L8-12]

More damaging are the newspaper claims that the UK Government has a penchant for disrespecting citizens' freedoms and even for fighting terror with terror:

F7. This is the direction in which the US and British governments are moving. Faced with the Islamist terror threat, they are increasingly fighting tyranny with tyranny: phone-tapping; 28 days' detention without charge; control orders; extraordinary rendition and torture. These measures are, of course, no defence of democratic freedoms, but their stealthy subversion.

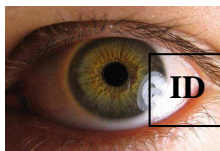
Our government has concluded that maintaining both security and liberty is too complicated, difficult and costly. Liberty has to be sacrificed for the greater good. This "ends justifies the means" rationale is (..) the slippery slope to an authoritarian, unaccountable state. [The Guardian 03.03.08, L45-56]

F8. The Government has a primary duty to defend Britain against an unprecedented terrorist threat. But the dangers in such circumstances are twofold. First, Labour administrations under Tony Blair and Gordon Brown have lacked a proper appreciation of civil liberties, as exemplified by their stubborn attempts to extend the period during which suspects can be held without charge, and to introduce ID cards. Second, unless there is firm control by the Home Office and the Justice Department, security operations can get out of hand - and this in a state already subject to excessive surveillance. [The Daily Telegraph 09.02.08, L28-34]

Specific examples are given of overstepping the mark (as in the case of the bugging of Mr Khan MP, quoted in B2) that disprove the thesis that an increase of state powers can be justified because there is oversight⁶². As an article in The Guardian puts it, 'nobody can control this torrent of intrusion'.⁶³ Framing the relationship between liberty and security as an imbalance centrally rests on the idea of a serious lack of

⁶² From The Guardian, 6th Feb 2008, lines 15-19. The same article was also quoted in example B2 on page 16.

⁶³ Ibid., lines 15-19.



accountability in deciding which values can be sacrificed, to what extent and to what ends. There may be no agreement over whether certain values are tradable or untradeable, as illustrated by the quotes below:

F10. A DNA database would probably lead to the capture of more criminals; it might even make us safer. So might identity cards. That is not really the point. We are already the most spied-on nation on earth, with by far the greatest surveillance of the population. What next? A curfew? Why not simply lock up every male between 16 and 50? Fundamentally, civil liberties should not be curtailed to make the job of the police easier. [The Daily Telegraph 25.02.08, L8-12, Letter]

F11. And I am fed up of the human rights arguments. Look, it's simple: If you have nothing to hide, you have nothing to fear and everything to gain if police can easily, quickly and efficiently identify people. [The Sun 07.03.08, L14-15]

What emerges as key is the need for public debate and participation in deciding what to trade or not. The language of 'emergency' and the 'ruling by exception' adopted by politicians in the aftermath of the terror attacks, as argued also in the ELISE report,⁶⁴ may, however, contribute to defer and sideline any public involvement. The Government's strategic denial of the existence of any imbalance deflects attention and delegitimizes any call to justify its policy priorities in this area:

F12. [T]he National Security Strategy is a bland and oddly romantic document, strong on what we would like the world to be but weak on what we are actually going to do. It is a long, tedious statement of the obvious (..) Worst of all, it sidesteps the big questions. Our interventions in Iraq and Afghanistan are accepted implicitly as good, as are ID cards and migration. [The Guardian 20.03.08b, L42-46]


F13. The home secretary acknowledged that the ID cards debate evoked strong feelings but said that rather than thinking of the state as an opponent of civil liberties, its role was to "defend our interests, to offer reassurance and trust, and to work in the most effective way possible to ease and to enable our lives. [The Guardian 07.03.08b, L38-40]

The newspapers succeed in striking another blow and the most harmful allegation is achieved through the framing of the imbalance as resulting from the Government's attempt to pursue a policy of surveillance, whilst proclaiming to be seeking to strengthen security:

F13. [N]one of these will be ameliorated by the possession of an ID card (..) 'So what is it [the scheme] for?' The answer has nothing to do with security, any more than the presence of CCTV cameras everywhere has anything to do with stopping crime, as even senior police officers now concede. It is about political control. The state wants to know where you are, and those who run it have always believed it has a right to know, but have usually been beaten back by Parliament. [The Daily Telegraph 12.05.08, L34-40]

F14. The state's nightmarish lust for our personal data does not stop there. Already, all journeys undertaken on motorways and through town centres are recorded by the network of automatic number-plate recognition (ANPR) cameras, with the information retained for two years (..) the mass surveillance of a free people. [The Observer 09.03.08, L60-67]

⁶⁴ This is the European Union project funded under Framework 5 referred to in footnote 58 above, p.11.



In March 2007 an inquiry was launched by the Home Affairs Committee to explore the exponential growth of public and private databases and look at ‘those forms of surveillance directly relevant to the work of the Home Office’.⁶⁵ The enquiry results and evidence were later published as a report in 2008.⁶⁶ More recently, echoing the issues raised by that report, many commentators have highlighted the risks of irrevocably subverting the relationship between citizens and state and warned against the implementation of databases, including the National Identity Register that is envisaged by the ID Scheme, which are part of this Government’s Transformational agenda.⁶⁷ These databases, which are supposed to make public services better or cheaper, have been ‘repeatedly challenged by controversies over effectiveness, legality and cost’.⁶⁸

Importantly, this raises questions over the proportionality of response, over whether the ID scheme is indeed fit for purpose. As we saw in section 3.1, the news coverage challenges the idea that the ID Scheme and database will make society more secure on various grounds. Not least, it is argued that the Scheme will mean more insecurity in the face of terrorism or even simply in the face of fraud, given that the database could be a target of attacks or even abused from within, by individuals or the state itself. At the same time, mistakes - machine and human - are likely to occur. These threats - together with the possibility that cards will be forged and scepticism about the Scheme’s impact in preventing or containing terrorist attacks by enrolling illegal immigrant in the register - contribute to framing the scheme as a lose/lose policy option. As the newspapers have framed the Scheme as not affording increased security to the citizens, but as exposing citizens to greater risks, the imbalance between liberty and security becomes untenable.

Moreover, as attempts have been made by the Government to promote the ID card (also!) as an entitlement card, and a way for citizens to assert their rightful identity and access to services, the newspapers highlight another major contradiction in the policy discourse surrounding the Scheme. The Government - or the State more generally - expects its citizens to trust it to protect them, their data and identities, but it does not afford citizens the same level of trust in return. Citizens are instead mistrusted and spied upon at every opportunity:

F15. As with the introduction of ID cards, and the growing police lobby for a DNA database, and those four million CCTV cameras clocking our every movement, it's another sign of a disturbing imbalance of trust between the state and its citizens in modern Britain. We are expected to trust officials with more and more information about our private lives. But they clearly don't trust us to behave properly. You don't have to be paranoid, or a benefits cheat, to find that a bit sinister. [The Times 27.02.08, L70-76]

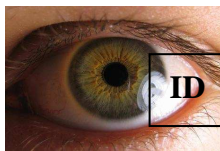
Not only are citizens the subject of increased surveillance, but also the surveillance apparatus that is increasingly at the disposal of both central and local government is

⁶⁵ House of Commons Home Office Committee (2008). *A Surveillance Society?* 5th Report of Session 2007-2008. Published June 08. London: Stationary Office Ltd, p.8.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Anderson et al (2009). *Database State*. Report commissioned by the J Rowntree Reform Trust Ltd, York.

⁶⁸ Ibid., p.4.



put to uses that bear little or no relation at all to the aims of enhancing national security, fighting terrorism or tackling organised crime:

F16. When Tony Blair forced through his controversial antiterror legislation, he vowed the draconian measures were needed to protect the lives of British citizens. Fast-forward to 2008, and we discover that those same laws have been used for surveillance of a family in Dorset (..) They were spied on by their local council, on suspicion of falsifying their address to get their daughter into the popular local primary school. This wasn't just a cursory background check. The details of the three-week surveillance operation read like an MI5 logbook (..) What on earth are local councils doing acting like the Stasi? (..) Under current legislation, there are 266 ways the Government can enter your house, by force if necessary.

And that's before we get to the issue of CCTV cameras on every street corner, or the wretched national ID cards.

In a world where terrorism and violent crime is an all-too-real threat, ordinary people are prepared to tolerate a heightened state of security. But only if surveillance is tightly controlled and targeted at those who wish us ill.

Sadly, the very opposite is true. [The Daily Mail 12.04.08, L9-34]

In conclusion, the newspapers surveyed attack the Government-promoted frame of the need to balance liberty and security, a policy frame that also presents the ID Scheme as contributing to this balance. It has been suggested that the idea of a balance between these always competing values may itself be problematic, not least as it may obscure debates about who is responsible of setting certain priorities and accountable of generating the supposed balance. The newspapers, however, mainly focus on presenting an imbalance between liberty and security, and re-framing the ID Scheme as emblematic of this imbalance. The Government is framed as pursuing this imbalance either because of its incompetence, or because of its hidden agenda. Ultimately, the key claim emerging from much of the newspaper coverage is that any security aim is only a red-herring planted by a Government that pursues instead an agenda of increased and disproportionate surveillance of its citizens.

A trust paradox emerges in this framing - the state requires to be trusted by its citizens in matters that concern their security and their identity management, while this trust is unreciprocated by a state that by default sets out to distrust its citizens. Not only does the Government appear to fight terror with terror, it also seems to 'fight its citizens with terror' – as epitomised by the reported mounting up of full-scale undercover surveillance operations to ascertain a family's claim to a school catchment area.⁶⁹

3.7 Frame G: 'The Scheme as one in a series of Government's failed IT projects'

As we saw in previous sections, one of the key weaknesses of any Government sponsored framing of the ID Scheme is the very low credibility that the Government enjoys in the media and – it may be claimed - in the public domain more generally, in terms of its ability to deliver on such a delicate and complex scheme. This credibility issue is all the more serious as it appears to stem from a lengthy and well documented track record involving a series of major IT and data security fiascos. These are not simply fiascos in delivering comparable schemes, in scale and level of complexity,

⁶⁹ Incidentally, the family in question, while being horrified to discover they were at the centre of this surveillance, were found to be correct in declaring their catchment area.

but more importantly perhaps they are fiascos in publicly owing up to these failings, and showing appropriate accountability for it. Far from acknowledging past mistakes, the policy discourse surrounding the ID Scheme shows no awareness of where and to what extent things could go wrong (again) in this case, as the Government continues to present all aspects of its ID plans as entirely fool-proof.

The language used by the newspapers to cover the debate over the ID Scheme challenges that in the most direct and uncompromising way. The Government is often framed as incompetent or inept, its track record as simply abject:

G1. The **ID project** is one of the biggest computer systems envisaged - far more complex than the failing NHS system. And it's **another disaster waiting to happen**. Still the politicians naively claim there will be no problems [The Times 07.03.08, L15-17, my emphasis]

G2. This plan rings **warning bells that ID cards may join the litany of government technology programmes sent off the rails** by unrealistic political timetables. [The Independent 24.05.08, L31-32, my emphasis]

G3. The government has a **terrible track record in managing complex IT programmes** (..) **Recent events have shown** that sensitive personal data is not safe in ministers' hands. [The Daily Telegraph 13.02.08b, L 21-23, my emphasis]

G4. This **very public failure adds to the long list of government IT woes** - most infamously HMRC's own loss of computer disks containing personal bank and other details of 25 million taxpayers late last year. It also **throws doubts over major computer projects ranging from identity cards** to plans to force more transactions with the state online. [The Guardian 01.02.08, L13-16, my emphasis]

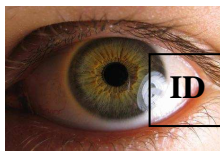
G5. The **computers seem again to have fouled up** at Terminal 5, as they have in the National Health Service, as **they will in biometric identity cards**. [The Times 31.03.08, L61-62, my emphasis]

G6. (..) the government (..) is bilking us of more of our hard-earned money than ever, and frittering it on creating wellbeing officers in marginal Labour constituencies, **and ID cards and yet more computer systems that don't work**. [The Sunday Times 03.02.08, L13-19, my emphasis]

As apparent from examples G3-G4 above and the quotes below, the failures in many cases involved the inability to deliver programmes and services that securely store and handle citizens' sensitive information, with huge data losses in 2007 being at the centre of some of these scandals:

G7. In the aftermath of the **government's recent embarrassing losses of confidential personal data**, public opinion appears to have turned sharply against the idea of sharing information within Whitehall (..) **public opinion was moving sharply away from the government's ID card scheme** (..) the more they saw that **officials were unable to keep confidential and personal data secure**. [The Guardian 06.02.08, L41-44]

G8. Towards the end of last year, **public anxiety** about data protection was decisively ramped up by the run of **high-profile data losses** that began with the now **infamous disappearance of two CDs** containing the **personal details of 25 million people**, mislaid in the internal mail system of HM Revenue & Customs, and took in **further blunders** involving the NHS, the Royal Navy, and the Driving Standards Agency. [The Guardian 05.04.08, L38-42]



G9. Serial scandals of loss of data have destroyed peoples' belief in this **white elephant** (..)The time has come for Jacqui Smith to abandon the expensive, illiberal and unnecessary ID card scheme. **Past experience** tells us this **Government can't be trusted with sensitive data or large IT systems**. [The Independent 06.03.08, L39-46]

Incidentally, in many of the quotes reported⁷⁰ and in the coverage more generally frequent reference is made to the squandering of public money on the ID Scheme, so that the Scheme is also framed as a failure in terms of the disproportionate and wasteful investment it requires. As noted in previous sections, the suggestion made is not only of overspending on the ID plans, but also (see for instance quote B6) the allegation that the Government has fallen victims to producer capture:

G10. The Government is a victim of producer capture. Every couple of years, we pay mind- mangling amounts of our money to enormous technology companies to build computer systems for medical records or criminal records or social security or what have you. And more or less every time, the company concerned makes a complete hash of it. And more or less every time, the only people to whom the Government can turn to fix said hash are the people who cocked it up in the first place.

So at some point, one or other of these companies turns round to the Government and says: we're about to go bust. At present, you have a botched system. But if you let us go bust, you will have a botched system with no technical support - and then you really will be stuffed. So we need you to think of a very lucrative new contract to give us: some vast boondoggle like, say, a national identity register...

[The Daily Telegraph 08.03.08c, L13-22]

The same people who have been responsible for running IT systems for the Government that have either failed and/or whose costs have spiralled out of control are being given yet more contracts also to implement the ID plans and the chance to possibly mess up another complex, large and expensive scheme.⁷¹

Going back to notorious cases of data mishandling and losses instead, these are framed as a combination of Government's ineptitude and sheer disregard for citizens' security:

G11. Whitehall. The Ministry of Defence is at the centre of a new security row, after the disclosure that 11,000 military ID cards have been lost or stolen in two years. Opposition parties said that the scale of the losses cast fresh doubt on plans for a national ID card scheme. (..) Tory defence spokesman, said: "This is another example of the Government's scandalous disregard for the security of our citizens and another reason why the public has no confidence in the Government's ID card plans." [The Times 13.03.08, L8-18]

The news coverage often concedes that major losses have also taken place within the private sector, as if to remind readers that serious risks may be endemic of the collection and handling of vast amounts of personal information. Companies too are rebuked for their carelessness and the damages they cause to consumers when they handle their data inappropriately, or even lose it:

⁷⁰ For further quotes on this also see examples A3-A4.

⁷¹ For an example of this, see quote B6 on page 16, or for a full article see 'The rotten ranks at Britain's core: Squandered: How Gordon Brown is Wasting over One Trillion Pounds of our Money' published in The Daily Telegraph on 19th April 2008, p. 27.

G12. Lest anyone think this is purely a public sector problem, last year also saw high-profile stories involving such companies as Marks & Spencer, Standard Life, HBOS and TK Maxx, who famously lost the credit card details of 200 million customers to online hackers. In December, Norwich Union was fined £1.26m by the Financial Services Authority, after £3.3m was stolen from its policyholders by fraudsters using false names, addresses and dates of birth; by Christmas, it was claimed that more than 4 million Britons had fallen victim to identity theft, and that essential personal details were being traded online for as little as £35. [The Guardian 05.04.08, L44-50]

However, even if the private sector has much to regret in its track record of data handling, the failings of the Government are always portrayed as more serious, perhaps because the Government has a more clear remit to function for the benefit of its citizens. This, in democratic societies, is understood to be a stronger imperative than any company's commitment to its customer base.

The display of the Government's cavalier and casual attitude is criticised in the coverage also in more general terms, in relation to abuses of power in carrying out surveillance. All the papers, for instance, covered the case of Mr Khan MP, who had been bugged while visiting in prison one of his constituents, thus breaking the rule that forbids to tap ministers as they exercise their ministerial duties:

G13. The case [of the bugging of Khan MP] displays the casual attitude and the lack of accountability and trust surrounding surveillance. (...) With more than 700 bodies in this country now permitted to request communication intercepts and the nightmare of identity cards in the offing, the public is entitled to know who is actually running our surveillance society. Who watches the watchers? [The Daily Mail 04.02.08, L26-32]

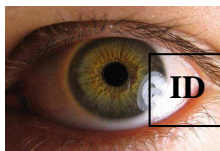
The case of Mr Khan MP was then related to the ID Scheme, together with a variety of other issues, from the vast number of CCTVs in the UK to the Government's proposals for extending detention without charge to 42 days. These were constructed as examples of illiberal policy and the pervasive malpractice of surveillance in the UK.

3.8 Humour and satire in the coverage of the ID debate

When expressing criticism and dissent, few strategies can work better than humour and satire, building an immediate bond between writers and readers and disarming with (intelligent) laughter the claims of those who are criticised.

All the newspapers analysed for this study make good use of this strategy, particularly in the aftermath of the launch of the new plans for delivering the ID Scheme (6 March 2008), and do so mainly by skilful recourse to brief but pungent one-liners. Occasionally, some newspapers offer more prolonged comic relief, with the introduction of long spoofs of interviews with key politicians, surreal accounts of debates in parliament and of the alleged motivations behind the ID Scheme.

Interestingly, humour features frequently also in the letters to the papers that were published on the ID plans in the period we looked at. Again this highlights the potential of humour to act as a catalyst for engagement with (other) readers.



The aspects of the ID Scheme targeted through the use of humour are wide in range, although some core recurring targets can be identified. These include the 'need' to prove one's identity, the asymmetry between goals and effects of the ID Scheme, the setting of priorities, the use of biometrics and technology generally, surveillance, the ambivalence and inconsistency of politicians' arguments about IDs.

The personalities at the centre of satire and humoristic sketches are mainly Prime Minister Brown and Home Secretary Jacqui Smith, and, less frequently, categories such as politicians, members of parliament, and civil servants:

H1. WE AWOKE to find someone stealing the Home Secretary's identity. A woman pretending to be Jacqui Smith came on the Today programme to outline her latest plan for identity cards.

We knew this woman was an impostor because the real Miss Smith was appointed by Gordon Brown, who promised on becoming Prime Minister that announcements of this kind would be made to Parliament rather than through the media. The dark era of Blairite spin was at an end.

But just to make sure, we rang the Home Office to check whether Miss Smith was expected to deliver a statement later that morning about ID cards. To our consternation, we learned that the Home Secretary would indeed be making an announcement at 11am, but not in Parliament.

It was now our plain duty to carry out a citizen's arrest on the fraudulent Miss Smith, after which we would expose her to an astonished world by ripping the latex mask from her face. So we asked where the statement on ID cards was to be given, only to be told that "if you haven't already been invited, you won't be able to attend". [The Daily Telegraph 07.03.08e, L8-20]

This tongue-in-cheek account of the launch of the Delivery Plan 2008 reinforces the frame of the ID Scheme as lacking (parliamentary and public) accountability and serious scrutiny, which we described in detail elsewhere (see section 3.2). The article continues with humorous remarks about DEMOS, the London think tank that hosted the event, to further reinforce the frame of unaccountability and critique the context of the Delivery Plan launch. Elsewhere, along with the Home Secretary herself, it is the content of the speech delivered by Jacqui Smith that day that is under attack:

H2. THE alleged Home Secretary, Jacqui Smith, says she needs to be able to prove who she is. I agree it's a problem. It is hard to credit that this deeply unimpressive person holds the great office once occupied by Winston Churchill. I expect she gets stopped by doubting 'security' men quite often.

I personally have trouble believing that she exists at all, or that this country should in general be run by witless wastes of space in thrall to all the stupidest ideas of the Sixties.

But Ms Smith's identity difficulty - sad as it is - is no excuse for forcing the rest of us to be fingerprinted. She says we 'need' to 'prove who we are'. But mainly we need to do this because the Government has spun a spider's web of silly rules, which snags the law-abiding and spares real troublemakers.

Just in case you are a Mafia money-launderer, you must show a passport to change currency, or produce a gas bill to open a bank account.

Just in case you are a child molester, you must have your entire biography checked by police before you can work in all kinds of places.

Just in case you are a terrorist, you are barred from entering an increasing number of buildings (..), unless you can produce a piece of plastic which supposedly says who you are. [The Mail on Sunday 09.03.08, L8-22]

In this case, humour is employed to discredit the claims that citizens need ID cards, and that they do because 'we all need to prove who we are'. Sarcasm is used to

strengthen the argument that the actions proposed by Jacqui Smith, and the Government more generally, are disproportionate to the aims this policy sets out to achieve. The Government stands accused of putting the average citizen at great inconvenience, while its official named targets - organised criminals and terrorists – allegedly remain unaffected. In previous sections of this report we saw similar claims being used to support the framing of the ID Scheme as creating an imbalance between liberty and security. Consider also the example below:

H3. Billions of pounds; a vast electronic apparatus which changes the balance between citizen and the state . . . to free us from the servitude of carrying around a utility bill.

It needs live parliamentary questioning. On the radio, the Home Secretary said that the al-Qa'ida handbook recommends multiple identities. Are we spending £15bn to get a bunch of scruffy criminals to change a paragraph in their operating manual? I can't believe this is the best use of public money. [The Independent 07.03.08a, L24-26]

It ridicules the Government for getting the balance wrong. This framing is commonly promoted by newspapers on both ends of the political spectrum. Even the papers leaning more to the right end of the spectrum accuse the Government of getting the balance wrong, though often this is framed as the Government's failing to act tough enough on the issues of crime and immigration:

H4. [O]ld-fashioned law enforcement is in retreat (..)

Hello, is that the police? Thank you for calling 999. Our business hours are nine to five, Monday to Friday. If you've been stabbed to death, press 1 and leave a message.

If you're ringing to report a lorry load of illegal immigrants tipping out at the end of your street, please call back after the bank holiday and give three weeks' notice. If you are an illegal immigrant and would like to apply for asylum, legal aid, health care, cash benefits, a council house and a free ID card, please stay on the line. Our operators are waiting to take your call 24/7. Press 3 and ask for Jacqui. [The Daily Mail 07.03.08c, L67-89]

Confusion about the real aims of the ID scheme and the suggestion that there are hidden agendas of surveillance are also apparent in a long spoof interview with Gordon Brown, of which here is a short extract:

H5. EVERYTHING you needed to know about the latest update on how Gordon's Open Government is trying to slip compulsory ID cards through the back door (..)

Q: So where are we this time round? Are you still maintaining that ID cards are essential in the fight against terrorism?

A: Absolutely. Make no mistake. It is our No. 1 priority.

Q: Are you sure you don't mean your No. 8 priority, or something of the sort? It's looking as if you're not now going to get this bizarre scheme going until the year 2017.

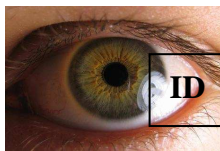
A: Rome wasn't built in a day, you know.

Q: No, but it could be bombed in a day. Now about these terrorists. What are you doing to get them on your records?

A: We have to prioritise. First in the queue must be the millions of public sector workers in positions of trust (..)

Q: What about those in positions of mistrust?

A: They will have to wait their turn. Then we've got to get the young people on board. If we can win them over, we'll be laughing all the way to the national identity database.



[The Daily Mail 10.03.08, L8-23]

This spoof continues with the hilarious discussion of the alleged benefits bestowed on students who volunteer for the Scheme (in example C29 on pages 30-31), such as easy access to student loans and course enrolment. It then comes to a conclusion as the mock Brown reveals that the real intention of the ID Scheme is to exercise surveillance on UK citizens, which he compares to dogs needing to be put on a licence register. The parallel between citizens and pets on an animal register is made also in another humorous article taken from The Sun, which comments on Labour's obsession for surveillance:

H6. EVEN pets can't get away from Labour's surveillance state. Not content with tracking humans, The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs has admitted spending £ 47,000 on an advertising campaign for compulsory passports for horses. Equine ID cards are next, perhaps with a biometric hoof print? [The Sun 03.04.08, L8-11]

Readers writing to the newspapers use humour and jokes too, as illustrated in the example below. This letter follows an announcement that the Government intends to introduce a (US-inspired) pledge in schools that all pupils would have to publicly recite. One reader wrote in with a spoof pledge that succinctly and effectively frames IDs as being illiberal and highlights some of the negative aspects of living in the UK today:

H7. I pledge allegiance to the ASBO, the Identity Card and Giro.
And the country for which it stands,
One nation, under CCTV,
With violence and bingeing for all.
[The Times 12.03.08 L125-126]

Another target of humorous criticism is the biometric technology that is promoted by the Government as a key component of the Scheme and its alleged security. While the Government has always been portraying biometrics as the fool proof component that would uncontroversibly lock one's identity to one's unique physical identifiers, many experts have vocally challenged the claim. One of the funniest and most enjoyable attempts at critiquing the single-mindedness with which the Government continues to endorse biometrics and the ID Scheme generally, even in the face of evidence of the (current) unreliability and limitations of the technology, comes from an article that appeared in The Daily Telegraph:

H8. Yesterday Mr Russell told the Home Secretary that he had been a guinea pig (which, I believe, are related to moles) for an ID card scheme.

"I regret to say that I failed the iris recognition test!" he chortled. I looked at the Home Secretary. She looked riveted. My, but she is a good listener. Mr Russell, encouraged, announced: "People have told me I have rather sexy blue eyes!"

I felt sorry for every person this man has ever chatted up. (..) He then asked, feebly and in what appeared to be an after-thought, if she would abandon her ID card scheme.

The Home Secretary smiled sweetly (I know it's a cliché but she does) and embarked on one of her endless sentences about why ID cards are a cure for all the ills of the world. I am now timing some of these sentences and they last for minutes. There is no punctuation. Indeed, there is no breathing. I don't know how she does it. Perhaps she trains for them with scuba gear.

After an age (one of her special advisers fell asleep in the middle) the sentence came to a shuddering halt. I searched her words for meaning and found none. Then she announced: "Where we do agree is that you have nice blue eyes!" Oh dear. This was a sickbag alert. It was at this point that I realised that the Home Secretary had become ruthless. She wants her ID card scheme and she doesn't care what she does to get it. [The Times 20.02.08, L13-31].

Humour is a strategy that other stakeholders in the ID debate have also been using - particularly campaigners from NGOs and more informal groups who oppose the introduction of IDs in the UK. The newspapers have in some cases reported these playful but punchy campaigns, effectively amplifying the amount of exposure and public impact that campaigners might have hoped to achieve. One example of this is the poster circulated by No2ID and Privacy International, which played on the idea of the Home Secretary and Prime Minister seeking to carry out the largest identity theft ever - by creating the National Identity Scheme and Register. The poster encouraged anyone to lawfully collect Brown and Smith's biometrics and hand them over to be made publically available, as this article in the Observer reports:⁷²

H9. The anti-ID cards group No2ID and the campaign organisation Privacy International will this week take out spoof 'Wanted' posters in tube stations and pub lavatories offering the cash to anyone who can lawfully obtain either the fingerprints of Gordon Brown or Jacqui Smith. (..)

The posters, resembling those issued by US sheriffs hunting outlaws in the Wild West, are backed by an internet campaign and accuse Brown and Smith of 'identity theft'. They stipulate that 'the fingerprint must be obtained lawfully and can be located on a beer glass, doorknob or any object with a hard surface. Corroborating evidence is required to ascertain the identity of these thieves'.

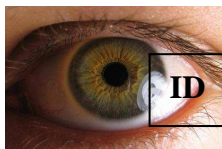
The £ 1,000 reward will then be paid to the charity of the 'bounty hunter's choice', as the posters put it. The poster continues: 'As fingerprint technology spreads, this government will essentially have back-door access to your computers, files, wallets and even cars and homes. We are offering this bounty to teach these individuals a lesson about personal information security.' [The Observer 06.04.08, L12-26]

Biometrics are at the centre of much criticism also as they are framed as a technological fix, rather than an appropriate and well thought solution to key identity management issues. The newspaper coverage does not spare punches, or sarcasm, in underlining the level of buying in that the technology enjoys within the ID Scheme from senior Government figures:

H10. Ms Smith is also yet another Home Secretary who subscribes to the "pixie dust" school of technology: computation is a magic substance to be sprinkled over problems, that, hey presto, then vanish. Little wonder that Britain has an appalling record in government IT projects. [The Times 07.03.08, L11-14]

The use of irony contributes to support the framing of the Government as either inept and naive (as in the example above) or as entangled in conflicts of interest that create a sort of dependency path, when it comes to contracting large-scale IT projects out to industrial partners. Again interpretations – and framings – vary. The more benevolent framing sees the Government as a victim of producer capture, the less sympathetic

⁷² The poster is available at <http://www.privacyinternational.org/images/wanted.pdf> [last accessed 7th April 09].



interpretation sees the Government as complicit in the commissioning of projects destined to fail and dissipate tax payers' money:

H11. The Government is a victim of producer capture (...) more or less every time, the company concerned makes a complete hash of it. And more or less every time, the only people to whom the Government can turn to fix said hash are the people who cocked it up in the first place.

(...) In this respect, IT procurement resembles primitive religion. Tribal elders, trembling with awe, approach feared witch-doctor. Here, they say, is an enormous package containing the shiniest rocks we have been able to dig out of this here hill, some top-quality drugs and a baker's dozen of the village's most nubile virgins for you to have your wicked witch-doctoring way with. Good, says the witch-doctor. Now, I shall burn this corn dolly as an offering to the gods, and they shall bless the harvest.

Six months on, the crops fail anyway, and the village elders return to the witch-doctor. We are starving to death, they say, and we are most peeved on account of having no crops, and no drugs, and no shiny rocks or nubile virgins neither. What giveth?

And the witch-doctor says: this is what you get if you do it on the cheap. The gods are exceedingly angry with you. The only way to fix the situation is to burn a much, much bigger corn dolly. And this is going to cost you, be warned, a whole bunch more drugs and shiny rocks - and, while you're at it, virgins. And the villagers, in fear and trembling, set about it. [The Daily Telegraph 08.03.08c, L23-34]

Irony and humour are also used in more veiled ways, as in the example below, where it is suggested that MPs and Civil Servants should be the first to be enrolled in an ID Scheme, as they are the best placed to assess and respond to anything that could be going wrong with the Scheme:

H12. ID card proposals offer a golden opportunity for the government to show real leadership (...). A serious trial programme for ID cards should first be applied to ministers, then all MPs, requiring them to have their irises and fingerprints scanned before each entry to parliament. (...)

The scheme should then be given a few years of extended trials involving all civil servants. (...) it would be more clear whether it is practical, economic, safe and useful enough to be extended to the rest of us.


The first testers should be the kind of people mentioned, who have the experience and maturity to be able to cope well if things go wrong. [Letter to The Guardian 10.03.08, L8-17]

Another core area where humour and sarcasm occur is over issues of political allegiance to certain visions and the ambivalence around whether the ID Scheme falls into a new vision for public service reform or not, and the extent to which the ideological line between left and right is increasingly meddled in British politics:

H13. Before Mr Brown even took office, pundits warned of an admixed embryo, in which Labour and Tory DNA would form a political cybrid. Both leaders would offer a businessmen's government.

Both would be moralistic, authoritarian; in love with the private sector and less fond of the poor.

This was not fair. Even so, Brown and Cameron sometimes seemed so closely entwined that you could barely slip an ID card between them. [The Daily Telegraph 22.05.08, L20-24]



In some instances, continuity in policy, rather than novelty is stressed. The letter below takes this to the extreme, making humorous remarks about the ID national register having its roots in Tudor policy:

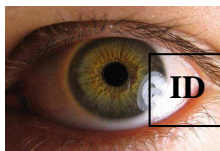
H14. [T]he strength or weakness of an ID system depends on the integrity of the ID database or population register (...). The process was started in 1538 when Henry VIII's Chancellor, Thomas Cromwell, ordered that registers of baptisms, weddings and funerals should be carefully kept in all the churches. (...) an Act of 1597 required that transcripts be sent to a diocesan registrar. Perhaps we could try to complete the process in time for the 500th anniversary. [Letter to The Times 11.03.08, L8-15]

In other instances, continuity is stressed within the context of a range of labour policies:

H15. [Title]: Government's Hidden Agenda to Control Our Lives (...) [article]: (...) This diatribe doesn't just take against identity cards; it casts the entire transformation and personalisation initiatives as covers for a data grab. To paraphrase, the road to serfdom begins with Sir David Varney. [The Guardian 07.02.08, L14-16]

In this quote the suggestion of a hidden agenda of surveillance behind the ID Scheme, and the whole of transformational government more generally, is humorously summed up as 'the road to serfdom beginning with Sir David Varney' - the Prime Minister's Adviser on Public Service Transformation. Further examples of using humour and sarcasm to critique surveillance and the intrusion of the state in its citizens' lives are found in H6 and H7 above.

In conclusion, within the coverage that was analysed, the frames that were described in previous sections are sometimes supported by recourse to humour, irony and sarcasm. These strategies allow for powerful, yet suffused, critiques of Government sponsored framings. They often – though not always! – are imaginative and engaging ways of relating concerns, particularly when an idea is encapsulated in a punch line or a surreal narrative. This has the potential to resonate with readers, as well as that of providing a more memorable and enjoyable way of dismissing a line of argument or of suggesting and promoting another one.



3.9 Conclusions

Several of the frames identified – if not all – contribute to an overarching negative framing of the ID Scheme in the newspaper coverage under observation. Frames often overlap, aggregate and ultimately converge to convey the key message that the Scheme is illiberal. This section presents a few reflections about how this master frame is achieved.


Firstly, the agenda for transformational government seeks to link up and share citizens' information across the public sector – and beyond. Whenever information, including citizens' biometrics, is collected at one end, the newspapers argued that citizens are legitimately concerned that their power to object further collection or enrolment in another scheme is effectively weakened, or even altogether invalidated. Examples appearing in the papers included the Unique Learner Number proposed for every child by the Government, as this was seen as a back-handed way of ultimately enrolling every citizen onto a national register (the National Identity Register by any other name). They also included references to the collection of biometric data taking place at Terminal 5 at Heathrow, which is operated by BAA and BA, but implicitly supported or tolerated by the Government, and which the papers reported as yet another attempt to coerce citizens to part with their biometrics, so as to 'desensitise' them to the issue by the time of their proposed enrolment in the National Register.

The Scheme is framed as stealthy through the portrayal of the many arrangements that the Government is seen to be making behind the scenes. Public policy pronouncements are no less problematic, especially when these are broadcast from think tanks rather than from Parliament, and when the Government appears not to even attempt to make a credible case for the Scheme and its components. We have indeed noted how the Scheme is instead officially presented as a panacea for almost all evils afflicting contemporary Britain, and supported by conflicting and contradictory claims of its aims.

While these vague, numerous and vastly overarching aims are proclaimed (fighting terrorism, illegal immigration and so on), official detailed reviews and evaluations of the scheme remain elusive. The evidence presented in parliament or produced by parliamentary expert committees remains, at least in part, undisclosed – the newspapers for instance covered the fact that public access to some key reviews of the Scheme's projected chances of successful implementation was stopped with formal appeals.

Simultaneously, the Government remains non-committal about whether aspects of its ID plans will need to go back to parliament for further debate and voting (including the issue of whether the Scheme ought to be a universal).

The presentation of the ID scheme as an ultimately stealthy and illiberal piece of legislation follows also from the association that the newspapers make between the ID Scheme and other measures introduced by the Government, such as the creation of a police National DNA Database, or the creation of the NHS electronic database of patient records. In both cases the resulting databases have far superseded the data capture originally envisaged, as well as the original usages that these databases were supposed to be put to. As mentioned before, the ID Scheme was also constructed in



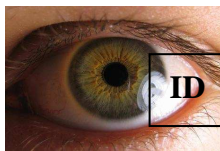
the coverage as responding more to the aims of surveillance than to those of enhancing security, and as such it has been linked to other controversial measure in the pipeline at the time, including the extension of the powers to bug and the attempts to increase detention without charge to 42 days. Associations were also made in the coverage between the ID Scheme and the pervasive surveillance powers and tools, such as CCTVs, bugging devices and similar, already at the disposal of central and local government authorities.

The suggestion of stealth is reinforced through reference to spin and manipulation of public opinion, though ‘imaginative’ presentation of poll results, or the design itself of poll questions. Not only did the papers report a low support for the Scheme and low public confidence that the Scheme would achieve its grandiose aims, they also reported the risks and new dangers – particularly in terms of security of sensitive personal data – that the ID Scheme would introduce.

Last, but not least, was the argument about conflict of interest and the exceedingly close links with (IT and Biometric technology) industry, and the issues of cost-effectiveness and appropriate use of public money, particularly at a time when the economy was already heading towards a downturn. The coverage suggested that the same contractors that have worked previously (even if unsuccessfully) on other government IT scheme or large programmes were being invited to develop aspects of the Scheme. This is sometimes conceptualised in the news coverage as a case of producer capture, and at other times of collusion. The latter is suggested by underling that the companies bidding for contracts were ultimately few and always the same, and also by reporting the ties of ministers and former ministers with these companies – including the lucrative consultancy work that current and former politicians have carried out for some of these companies.

In concluding, the final remark must be one of caution. This report aims to provide some insights into the extent to which the prevailing frames promoted in policy discourse at a certain time might be said to feature into the media coverage released over that same period. Moreover, the findings highlight the ways in which such frames might be transformed, resisted and re-framed. The frames identified as prevailing in the newspaper coverage have been analysed, to shed light on some of the strategies used to promote them. No general claims are made here about contrasting the coverage of one specific newspaper to another, although the main findings presented have been consistent across most newspaper coverage.

To a minimal extent it may be possible to get a sense of some of the impact of the frames circulating both in policy discourse and in the media coverage by looking at the letters published on these issues in those papers. Alternatively, a quantitative estimate of the circulation figures of the papers over the period under observation can give a cursory indication of the readership that each newspaper as a whole has. However, it is important that further research is carried out beyond the case study provided here. The impact of these findings ought to be tested, for instance by (qualitatively) researching how these frames may be received by the intended readers of the newspaper coverage. Exploring the development of trends in framing over time is another interesting avenue to further this type of research, by looking at whether some frames remain in the fore and constant over a longer span of time, and whether others disappear and new ones emerge. Engaging more directly – perhaps through



ID cards

A snapshot of the debate in the UK press

interviews – with the producers of newspaper articles could reveal important insights, not least on the extent to which much (re-)framing might be carried out consciously and strategically or otherwise. Finally, an interesting perspective could be gained by accessing the views of policy makers and those actors that are promoting specific policy discourses and frames. How they relate and respond to the frames identified as prevailing in the newspapers could perhaps contribute and feed into a type of policy-making that is more reflexive.