Erja Simuna

THE MANY FACES OF A CONFLICT

REPRESENTATIONS OF THE 1981 NORTHERN IRISH HUNGER STRIKE IN INTERNATIONAL PRESS
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Representations of the 1981 Northern Irish hunger strike in international press

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to examine the international news coverage of the 1981 Northern Irish hunger strike. The media had plenty of emotionally and politically charged incidents to report, and they rendered it in various manners. This study discusses why these different representations of the hunger strike were born.

This thesis analyses news about the hunger strike published in fifteen international newspapers. For this kind of research, historical contextualization is of great importance. Methodological starting point lies in the traditions of imagological methods. A mental image is understood here as something in our thoughts that steers us to see the world in a certain way. A newspaper depicts news stories in a way the newspaper and the society in which it operates see its worth.

Media representations have a very complex background. Based on the findings, it seems likely that existing mental images play a major role in the way a news topic is covered and given meaning. In this case, news coverage was not based solely on the hunger strike but also on historical discourse which had created a certain meaning for the event. The coverage of each newspaper was based on their own worldviews. Internationally, the level of interest is determined by varied cultural and political factors. News coverage both reflects and affects. News from other countries is more likely to be reported if some links exists, something to identify and consider significant.

The findings of the research suggest that news coverage is not always just the reporting of events. It can reflect more profound features. Each media source has its own reasons to represent news in a certain way. Primarily, the reasoning points to the medium itself. However, we can argue that news coverage also reflects the values of a community. News is usually produced to appeal to the majority of the intended audience. This case illustrates that international news coverage is a useful method in revealing and understanding mental images and their influence.

Keywords: conflict, mental image, Northern Ireland, press coverage
Oulun yliopiston tutkijakoulu; Oulun yliopisto, Humanistinen tiedekunta, Historia
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Tiivistelmä


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January 2017

Erja Simuna
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Introduction

During a time of conflict people tend to divide themselves into ‘us’ and ‘them’ in a more noticeable way. An emotionally charged situation reveals attitudes and beliefs both in favor and against something. One person’s rational justification can clash with another’s emotions. One very clear example of this has been the Northern Irish conflict and its coverage in the media. This study explores the conflict in focusing on the year 1981. That year opened a new chapter in the complicated and peculiar history of Northern Ireland. Ten Irish republican prisoners died as a result of a hunger strike that also tested the credibility of British authorities.¹ The event was reported widely all over the world, with differing views. In the pages that follow, I will examine why international newspapers covered the same event in a clearly distinct way.

This dissertation analyses representations of the conflict in the international press. The newspapers analysed in this study were chosen in an attempt to provide a diversity of content. The following newspapers were selected: The Age (Australia), the Arab News (Saudi Arabia), Dagens Nyheter (Sweden), Le Figaro (France), The Globe and Mail (Canada), the Helsingin Sanomat (Finland), The Irish Times (Ireland), Neue Zürcher Zeitung (Switzerland), The New York Times (United States of America), El País (Spain), La Prensa (Argentina), the South China Morning Post (Hong Kong), The Sowetan (South Africa), The Times (Great Britain) and Die Welt (Germany).

This topic is of great importance as newspapers have become an important source of information. A famous scholar Benedict Anderson has written that in an (imagined) society numerous people unaware of each other start their day with the same ritual, reading the same news from the same newspaper.² This means that a large group of people receive the same information and it is used as the basis of their worldview. This leads to conscious and unconscious dissimilarities in groups’ worldviews, creating opportunities to compare group views in relation to others. This search for similarities and dissimilarities provides a fertile basis for the understanding of international relations. This dissertation discusses the ever-

¹ The hunger strike was considered as a propaganda victory over the British authorities and gained a lot of international attention for the Republican movement. Not only did the IRA benefit from the attention but more importantly, Sinn Féin achieved political support in the following elections. This eventually led to the emergence of Sinn Féin as a major political force. The aftermath of the hunger strike has also been seen as one key reason for the birth of Anglo-Irish Agreement.
² Anderson 1991, 35–36
important question of how differing political, sociological and cultural environments, as well as intercultural interactions, affect everyday knowledge of the world as a whole, and each nation’s sense of their place in it. In addition, as conflicts are an ever more common part of modern societies, this research helps to understand attitudes in different cultures towards conflict.

GROUNDS FOR RESEARCH

Some background and a brief outline of the hunger strike

The early 1970’s was the bloodiest time of the Northern Irish conflict. In 1971, the British government gave the security forces special interment powers to arrest and jail suspected terrorists without filing charges. These were almost exclusively applied to those on one side of the conflict, the Catholics. Those arrested and interned were given rights that other suspected terrorist prisoners did not have. Internes were, for example, segregated according to paramilitary alliances and they were treated like prisoners of war, wearing their own clothes and associating with each other. Other prisoners started to protest against this inconsistency. At the same time, the British were negotiating a cease-fire with the IRA. The then Secretary of State accepted an agreement in 1972. Political prisoners were given Special Category Status. Soon the government changed its politics and wanted to criminalize these prisoners. This was carried out in 1976. The prisoners did not approve of the new law and launched a protest campaign. At first some loyalist prisoners took part in protests but they were few in number. The protest started as a “blanket protest” as the prisoners refused to wear prison clothing and covered themselves with only blankets. As the number of prisoners joining the protest grew, the authorities’ attitudes hardened. In 1978 protests escalated into a “no wash protest” in which prisoners did not wash themselves, and finally into a “dirty protest” when they started to smear cells with their excrement.

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3 Hennessey 1997, 194  
4 O’Malley 1990, 18–19  
5 Hennessey 1997, 210  
6 O’Malley 1990, 19–20  
7 Campbell 1998, 94  
8 O’Malley 1990, 3, Campbell 1998, 31
Outside the Maze prison interest in the protests was increasing. In 1979 a National H-Block/Armagh Committee was founded to provide a voice to the prisoners’ cause.9 At this time the five demands of the prisoners were summarized. These demands were: 1) to wear their own clothes 2) to refrain from prison work 3) to associate freely with other prisoners 4) to organize recreational activities, with a certain number of letters and visits allowed 5) to have a remission of their sentences. This protest had no effect on the authorities, so the prisoners had to find new methods. In October 1980 seven prisoners launched a hunger strike. During the following weeks the prisoners and the authorities negotiated over the demands made. In December, a proposed settlement was presented to the prisoners, who expected that their demands would be met, and the hunger strike was called off after fifty-three days. Soon it became clear that there was not going to be any reforms.10 A new hunger strike was planned with greater determination.

The Commanding Officer of the IRA prisoners, Bobby Sands, started his hunger strike on 1 March 1981. He was joined at two-week intervals by other prisoners. At first, the hunger strike did not attract any large amount of attention outside the prison, but the MP for Fermanagh and South-Tyrone died and Sands was nominated for a by-election. Sands ended up as the sole Nationalist candidate against a Unionist candidate. The election results came in on April 9 and Bobby Sands was elected MP for Fermanagh and South-Tyrone. This gained plenty of publicity for the prisoners.

After sixty-six days on a hunger strike Bobby Sands died on 5 May 1981. The hunger strike continued and within the next few weeks three other prisoners, Francis Hughes, Raymond McCreech and Patsy O’Hara, died. The British government’s hard line against the hunger strikers aroused much publicity, and a significant part of it was critical of the government. More publicity resulted as Ireland was getting ready for a general election in early June. Due to Sands’ success, nine prisoners, including four hunger strikers, were nominated as candidates. The election turned out to be a success for them: hunger striker Kieran Doherty was elected, as well as one other protesting prisoner.

As the hunger strike went on, there were a few attempts to try to resolve the situation, but because either side did not yield, the deaths continued. In early July two more hunger strikers, Joe McDonnell and Martin Hurson, died. In August they

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9 Campbell 1998, 84
10 O’Malley 1990, 3
were followed by Kevin Lynch, Kieran Doherty, Thomas McElwee and Michael Devine. By August 20 ten prisoners altogether had died.

Even though the prisoners still had support supported to some extent, the most intensive stage of the strike was over. Attempts to bring the hunger strike to an end reoccurred. The families of the hunger strikers were recommended to authorize medical intervention. The hunger strike was seen as more and more futile. On 3 October 1981 the prisoners released a statement that the hunger strike was to be ended. Shortly after, the British government introduced a set of reforms.11

The 1981 hunger strike has been widely described as a defining moment for the Republican movement as well as for relations between the IRA and British authorities. After the hunger strike, Sinn Fein redefined itself as a political movement. Electoral successes during the strike encouraged the party to continue the political process as well.12 On the other hand, the hunger strike also radicalised the Republican movement: attacks against the British intensified. In particular, relations between the IRA and the British Prime Minister suffered.13 On a broader level, the hunger strike has attracted interest: it has been discussed in many books and in all forms of media, becoming a famous event outside its own community. Via newspaper articles, murals, movies, and other forms of commemoration, knowledge of the strike has spread to many corners of the world.

Earlier research

Media coverage of the Northern Irish conflict can be regarded as unique: its balance and objectivity has been questioned constantly. Often attempts to explain the conflict have become subsidiary. Ever since the so-called troubles began in 1968, the vast majority of news about Northern Ireland has been about disturbances and violence. WAR AND WORDS: The Northern Ireland Media Reader (1996) edited by Bill Rolston and David Miller is a compilation of commentary regarding media coverage of the Irish conflict. The book includes writings from several experts who discuss various issues such as problems with broadcasting propaganda, censorship and representations. The book offers basic knowledge of a very complex matter.

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11 E.g. Beresford 1994, passim.
12 The changes of tactics has been discussed, for instance, in Ian McAllister’s article The Armalite and the ballot box: Sinn Fein’s electoral strategy in Northern Ireland.
13 E.g. Hennessey 2014
The media’s involvement in the Northern Irish conflict has been the subject of a few good analyses, but the hunger strike has usually been mentioned only incidentally. Significant academic research on the press coverage of the 1981 hunger strike has been made by EVELYN PATRICIA FLANAGAN, whose thesis *Press coverage of the 1981 H-Block hunger strike: An analysis* (2001) examines the coverage of the hunger strike in nine Northern Irish and Irish newspapers. The study focuses on how these papers covered the main events during the strike. Flanagan’s most important conclusion is that the Northern Irish newspapers had clear political and ideological stances and tried to influence the opinions of their readers.

Can the same be said of the international media? The subject has not been widely researched. One important study with an international perspective is AOGÁN Ó MAOLCHATHA’s *Accounting for death: Press coverage of the 1981 Northern Irish hunger strike* (1990) which examines the coverage of The Times, The Irish Times and The New York Times. The study focuses on how the papers covered the legitimacy of the prisoners’ protest against the policy of criminalisation. According to Maolchatha, the papers did not support the prisoners but there were some significant differences between them. Maolchatha’s conclusion is that The Times adopted the position of the British administration whereas The New York Times’ stance was more liberal and was not bound to the authorities. These conclusions align with the research results of my master’s thesis, in which I began to explore these questions. I discovered that newspapers with different national contexts and diverse interests in the situation were indeed creating diverging mental images of the event.

Literature concerning the 1981 hunger strike refers to the media coverage of the hunger strike only occasionally. The most important contemporary accounts are based on the means of communication, interviews and subjective experiences, which have to be taken into account when reading them. I have used a few accounts of this kind to obtain a general view of the hunger strike and its’ participants:

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14 E.g. Liz Curtis, *Ireland: the propaganda war, the British media and the ‘battle for hearts and minds’* (1984); Philip Elliott, “Reporting Northern Ireland, a study of news in Great Britain, Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland”. *Ethnicity and the media, an analysis of media reporting in the United Kingdom, Canada and Ireland* (1977); David Miller, *Don’t mention the war, Northern Ireland, Propaganda and the Media* (1994).

PADRAIG O’MALLEY’s *Biting at the grave, the Irish hunger strikes and the politics of despair* (1990), DAVID BERESFORD’s *Ten men dead, the story of the 1981 Irish hunger strike* (1994) and RICHARD O’RAWE’s *Blanketmen, an untold story of the h-block hunger strike* (2005). These books briefly mention how the media of that time reacted to the hunger strike. They focus mainly on the English media and how it condemned the hunger strikers. This emphasis is presumably due to the links between the authors and the prisoners. For instance, Richard O’Rawe was himself in the prison during the hunger strike and was involved in organizing the hunger strike by writing bulletins.

The political aspects of the event are significant. Some books have discussed the role of the British government, and that of the Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher, in particular. THOMAS HENNESSEY’s *Hunger strike: Margaret Thatcher’s Battle with the IRA 1980–1981* (2014) focuses particularly on the prison dispute. The book relies on contemporary British government records, as they reveal what happened from a British perspective.

Proper research regarding media operations during the conflict is fragmented, and it has focused mainly on the British and Irish media. Therefore, this dissertation will provide new information as the focus is on an analysis of international newspapers.

The hunger strike was regarded as a conflict situation. Media actions during conflict have been examined by many scholars. Recently, the focus has often been on the role of the Western broadcasting media, in how the media affect the conflict. This approach is not relevant to this study but it does confirm the effect of the media. International representations of other nations in newspapers have been studied to some degree. They have mainly focused on a particular theme between two cultures. These fragmented studies are incomplete in regards to the focus of this dissertation, and discuss only a few cultures. However, they provide valuable insight into news as a product of a complex set of cultural factors. FOLKER HANUSCH compares Australian and German newspapers in his *Distant Deaths - How Newspapers Report Fatal Events from Abroad*. This is a good examination of how cultural connections affect journalistic processes.

*Selling War: The Role of the Mass Media in Hostile Conflicts from World War I to the ‘War on Terror’*, edited by JOSEF SEETHALER, MATTHIAS KARMASIN, GABRIELE MELISCHEK, and ROMY WÖHLERT, is a collection of articles discussing the relationship between conflict and the media. The book

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16 Rolston – Miller 1996, xv
offers a multidisciplinary view on the issue, thus providing an important source regarding how to examine conflict coverage. Similar writings have been popular in recent years. In particular the September 11 attack and its aftermath have given birth to a whole lot of discussion. Even if the focus has been on later events, the same principles often apply to the coverage of earlier conflicts as well.

There is no denying that strong stereotypes are and have been connected to the Irish. Several studies have looked into these international depictions. *The Representation of Ireland/s: Images from Outside and from Within* (2003), edited by ROSA GONZÁLEZ, is a collection of essays about depictions of the Irish. The brief articles provide a basic survey of different themes and disciplines, thus emphasizing the versatility of representations. ADRIAN GUELKE’s *Northern Ireland: The International Perspective* (1989) examines how the position of Northern Ireland has been viewed in other countries. Again, the focus has been on what has been said in the media, with little consideration given to the more fundamental reasons, such as cultural or social factors acting in the background. Therefore, the results of my research are unique from an international perspective and they broaden research regarding conflict coverage by providing an imagological perspective.

**RESEARCH PROBLEM**

The research subject here will be approached from a point of view of historical image research\(^{17}\). According to OLAVI K FÄLT, “the historical study of images tells us more about the creator and examiner of an image than about the subject of it”\(^{18}\). A mental image\(^{19}\) is closely connected with the concept of a world view, as perceptions of others are influenced by previous experiences and knowledge. Mental images can be seen as subjective views of the world.\(^{20}\) Historical image research is interested in the process of how mental images are born and shaped, and

\(^{17}\) The definition of historical image research has been discussed, for instance, in *Looking at the Other, historical study of images in theory and practise*, Edited by Kari Alenius, Olavi K Fält & Seija Jalagon. (2002), and in Kenneth E. Boulding's *The Image, knowledge in life and society* (1973).

\(^{18}\) Fält 2002, 10

\(^{19}\) Mental images have often been described as 'inner pictures’. MANFRED BELLER’s definition sums a mental image as "... the mental silhouette of the other, who appears to be determined by the characteristics of family, group, tribe, people or race. Such an image rules our opinion of others and controls our behaviour towards them.” Beller 2007, 4.

\(^{20}\) Fält 2008, 41
as personal opinions and emotions are difficult to trace, the research focuses on source material that can be regarded as representative: the source material is made by the possessor of the image\textsuperscript{21}. Based on this assumption, the research questions in this study are: What kinds of mental images of the hunger strike were represented in different newspapers? What reasons were there behind the mental images of the papers? Did the images change during the hunger strike? What do the images tell about their creators? These questions are answered by looking at images constructed of the two parties of the conflict: the hunger strikers and the British authorities, as well as the context created for the conflict. The event itself enables further specific themes to be examined.

Firstly, conflicts are challenging situations for gathering news. How do the working circumstances affect the mediated outcome? The news process is a complex set of factors, and each newspaper has its own culture. Do depictions of the hunger strike reflect these differences?

Secondly, because of the obvious connections of the hunger strikers with terrorist groups it is necessary to examine whether the newspapers emphasized this aspect or not. Did newspapers that did not have a history of covering domestic terrorism threatening their own communities treat the situation differently from newspapers in countries where terrorism was prevalent? Did the newspapers with experience regarding terrorist activity profile the hunger strikers and authorities differently from the other papers? Were newspapers endorsing one point of view, or were they providing comprehensive information?

Thirdly, how do international relations and political climates affect the views represented by the newspapers? The international environment of the early 1980’s was more pluralistic.

The above-mentioned questions provide points of view from which to examine press coverage. The primary focus is the on the different mental images of the newspapers themselves but, as media coverage is, according to DANIEL C HALLIN, to some extent a product of public sentiment\textsuperscript{22}, one must also consider the more profound aspects of political and societal influence.

The time frame for my study spans the whole the hunger strike, including the week after, that is 1 March to 10 October 1981. During that time both sides commented on the hunger strike itself. This time frame provides an opportunity to clearly focus on the hunger strike and its coverage, as it was a distinguished event.

\textsuperscript{21} Fält 2002, 9

\textsuperscript{22} Hallin 2013, 99
of its own. Instead of analysing the complex Northern Irish question as a whole, the hunger strike provides a precise event for coverage. This time frame also enables an analysis of the more reflective depictions of the media.

**METHODOLOGICAL APPROACHES**

The source material for this study was gathered from a systematic review of newspapers. All commentary and news material with relevance to the hunger strike was included. Editorial and other commentaries are conscious expressions of the stance taken by newspapers. Therefore, they can be treated as primary sources in revealing a newspaper’s stance. In addition, when analyzing press coverage in a more comprehensive way, news is a valuable indicator. In this, the quantitative nature of historical image research comes in handy. Quantitative analysis considers the interest given to an event, thus laying a foundation for analysing the subject. The mental image of a newspaper detected first in its technical features: where in the paper the news has been placed, how much space it gets, what does the headline say and/or emphasize, what kind of visual material has been used. After this, a qualitative analysis of the content is needed. The mental image is expressed within the content: what has been told, who has been the source of the information published, what kinds of concepts have been used. The stance of a paper is created as a sum of written text and visual material. Therefore, this dissertation will also analyse what has been relayed through visual images and why. By combining all these factors the mental image published by a newspaper becomes apparent. In this dissertation, the contents of newspapers are illustrated with example quotations. It is not possible to provide a detailed analysis of the whole of a vast amount of source material. These examples are chosen with an emphasis on presentability: they contain themes and attributes that were typical of the coverage of each newspaper. To be able to understand mental images, several methodological tools are used.

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23 In this case, a detailed (and calculated) content analysis of each newspaper was seen to be immaterial. The main aim of this research is not to classify the news material into hypothetical categories. Instead, while analysing the content, the focus has been on recognizing recurrent themes: which depictions reoccurred time after time in the way the hunger strike was explained (contextualized) and its participants portrayed. These themes were found after continuous rounds of reading the whole of the material. Based on these results, it was possible to determine which depictions determined the “nature” of each newspaper’s mental image. The contents in these depictions are analysed throughout this thesis.
Methodological tools

A basic newspaper study examines newspapers and their histories, as well as their stances. One main explanatory focus has been on the economic and political alignments of papers. Different methods of analysis (regarding preoccupation, attitudes, and objectives of a newspaper) have been used to determine a newspaper’s stance. While it is important, this type of research fails to address the diversity of newspapers and their positions. An in-depth analysis requires additional methodological tools.

Quantitative newspaper analysis has its roots in a very simple question: how much news does a newspaper contain? Even though the approach has become more complex, the underlying question remains the same. Quantitative analysis provides the first glimpse into what the creators of a newspaper see to be newsworthy. This data forms a baseline of any research. A quantitative analysis may reveal some interesting findings in the context of researching a larger group of newspapers: the numbers can reveal significant phenomena. Quantitative analysis can be used in many ways. Depending on what is researched, almost anything can be counted. It is essential that material is coded and categorized consistently. In this research, quantitative analysis highlights the nature of the news coverage: what kind of news event the hunger strike was in different parts of the world. The comparison of quantitative data reveals differences and similarities between the papers.

News articles are based on words and sentences; they are stories. This understanding offers one approach in conducting research. In this context, the idea of discourse is the most useful one. Though the term discourse is widely used, it is defined vaguely. Broadly, discourse refers to communication methods that include a social dimension. Discourse refers to interaction in social practices. In other words, discourse is the convention of using language in a certain environment or situation. Therefore, newspapers are a discourse. They can also mediate other discourses. When examining newspaper discourse, there are four essential points of examination: 1) the social practices of the newspapers; 2) the discourse practices of journalism; 3) how meaning is communicated; and 4) relations to power, ideology, and hegemony. There is no certain method used to perform an analysis:

24 Vuorio 2009, 10–11
25 Krippendorff, 2004, 5
26 Richardson 2007, 222 – 225.
it must be formatted on a case-by-case basis. Discourse analysis utilizes different linguistic tools (e.g. functional, anthropological)\textsuperscript{27} to recognise the principles of the structure of news text. Vocabulary, modality, and argumentation reveal different styles and textural strategies.

For historical research, the discourse-historical approach offers a natural point of contact: it emphasizes the significance of historical settings within which texts are being produced.\textsuperscript{28} In other words, discourse can been seen as a text in a context. Ruth Wodak has defined four levels of context: 1) the immediate contexts (language, internal text); 2) the intertextual and interdiscursive relationships between texts, discourses etc; 3) the extralinguistic social/sociological and institutional frames of a specific situation; 4) the broader sociopolitical and historical contexts.\textsuperscript{29} This approach suits historical image research: they share similar levels of speculation and emphasize the importance of context. In this research, the idea of context is understood in its broadest meaning: as conditions and circumstances that are relevant to the issue.

The idea of political discourse is also useful in this type of research: how language is used in political forums (e.g. speeches, debates, demonstrations and informal statements). Defining a discourse as political can be challenging. However, TEUN VAN DIJK has highlighted some properties of political discourse. Many factors, such as topic, schema, semantics, lexicon, syntax and/or rhetoric, shape political discourse. Van Dijk has summarised the reasoning in political discourse:

\begin{quote}
But if we go 'clown' to the nitty gritty of how politics is actually being 'done' in everyday life, we usually end up studying what some political actors were saying or writing. A detailed discourse analysis of such everyday political practices in that case not only contributes to our understanding of these (discursive) practices per se, but also of their relations with the social and political context and its detailed properties, including the constraints on discourse as well as their possible effects on the minds of the public at large. It is precisely this integrated analysis which also offers a more adequate insight into the complexity of political processes, institutions and systems, that is, the kind of objects of analysis political scientists are interested in.\textsuperscript{30}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{27} E.g. Fowler 1991; Fairclough 1995
\textsuperscript{28} E.g. Wodak 2001
\textsuperscript{29} Wodak 2001, 67
\textsuperscript{30} van Dijk 1997, 41
Fifteen newspapers published plenty of news text in the course of seven months: a detailed content analysis of all these texts is not a realistic task. Instead, this research focuses on the most prominent and apparent themes in coverage. These themes appeared continuously and can be described as the main features of the coverage. Some quotations are used as examples to illustrate the nature of the contents. News headlines are also used as examples as they have a major role in attracting interest.

In addition to texts, visual elements have a major role in news coverage. As photos are (together with headlines) the most viewed features in a newspaper, they must support messages that the news makers aim to relay. The journey of the photo from the place of the event to the page of a newspaper is a variegated process. Not a single photo ends up published by accident; rather it is a result of careful consideration. It is important to understand some basic principles of visual analysis. A mental image can be analysed by focusing on its content, its structure (form), or on associations which it inspires. Interpretation can also be extended to its context. The context of an image can be viewed in relation to its creator or the surrounding world. An image may contain symbolic meanings and other allusions. Semiotics is a doctrine that is usually associated with visual analysis. According to this doctrine, an object visible in a mental image has two levels of meaning: firstly, everything that is concretely visible (denotation) and secondly, all those ideas, matters and experiences that come to mind when seeing it (connotation). Understanding this paradigm helps to grasp the idea of visual analysis. However, this is not the most significant aspect in relation to historical research. For a historian, the content of a mental image and its contextualization are the most useful aspects. Content is important, as it affects how something is depicted, and the context helps to understand and explain the reasons why the event took place. Visual elements have a great impact on representations. Standpoints can be easily emphasized or even hidden.

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31 All published texts have been read for this research, and the selection of the most prominent themes is based on this work. This research is not a linguistic analysis rather than a more overall survey.
32 Heikkilä 2006, 13
33 Heikkilä 2006, 69
34 The principles of visual representations have been studied by many scholars. In this thesis, The Handbook of visual analysis (edited by Theo Van Leeuwen and Carey Jewitt) and Gillian Rose’s Visual Methodologies: An Introduction to Researching with Visual Materials have been used to form the methodological baseline.
Another visual element in newspapers are caricatures. It must be remembered that caricatures are deliberately exaggerated. They can be complimentary or insulting; they can be mere entertainment or serve a certain purpose, most commonly a political purpose. Caricatures are always drawn by an individual. However, as they are subject to the approval of editors, it can be assumed that they represent the stance of the newspaper. As caricatures are a form of communication, some particular identifiers need to be recognised. As depictions they are "neither truly realistic nor wholly abstract." Caricatures are rhetorical and symbolic by nature, something which needs to be taken into account when interpreting them.

When examining elements of a newspaper, one must be careful with singular appearances. An individual news photo may end up published due to some coincidences that are impossible to trace. The existence of thematic continuity makes it easier to draw conclusions. Visual elements can be interpreted from many angles. The relationship between visual images and the mental images in which they are based is multifaceted. Visual elements are never univocal - this a challenge that researchers face.

The elements of a newspaper provide one aspect for research. Another equally important aspect is related to this. To completely understand the news, one must gather some knowledge from a number of disciplines: media studies, communication studies, cultural studies, sociology, cognitive science, economics, and so on. Additionally, this research topic requires knowledge from political science and international relations. For this thesis, the principles of the different disciplines have been gathered from a set of writings. In the field of media and communication, Jostein Gripsrud’s Understanding media culture, and Media, Culture and Society: An Introduction by PAUL HODKINSON helps to understand the fundamental aspects of the field. I must also mention the Finnish book, Mediatutkimuksen vaeltava teoria (edited by TUOMO MÖRÄ et al), which introduces several useful viewpoints from which to observe the media. The books Cultural studies: a practical introduction (by MICHAEL RYAN et al), and Cultural studies and communications (edited by JAMES CURRAN et al) have been useful in understanding the broader level of cultural phenomena. The same applies to the book Social psychology and cultural context, edited by JOHN ADAMOPOULOS and YOSHIHISA KASHIMA, which provides a cross-cultural view on social psychology. To understand how the human mind works, Cognitive

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35 Moyle 2004, 30
36 Moyle 2004, 52
Science: An Introduction to Mind and Brain (edited by DANIEL KOLAK et al) is a good introduction to a very complex issue. The topics of international relations and global politics have been discussed by a vast number of scholars. For this thesis, PAUL KENNEDY’s The Rise and fall of the great powers, FRANCIS FUKUYAMA’s Political Order and Political Decay: From the Industrial Revolution to the Globalization of Democracy, and Communicating politics in the twenty-first century by KAREN SANDERS have provided important remarks on international politics. All these disciplines provide background understanding in that they support the main methodology. When all these aspects are combined, a more profound understanding can be reached as to how the coverage of a newspaper can be regarded as a mental image. An analysis of newspapers can be used to highlight differences and similarities between societies.

In this research, the main approach is based on historical image research. The main focus is on newspapers – which are regarded here as the possessors of mental images – and the reasons why different representations are born. Historical contextualization and the different approach of newspaper studies (e.g. discourse analysis) help to reveal a multifaceted reasoning, and they agree with historical image research on the importance of the societal aspect of phenomena.

News, conflict and society

Newspaper coverage of a certain event can be carried out in many ways. As a result, different interpretations are born and shaped. This dissertation focuses primarily on how each newspaper depicted the hunger strike and why. The main focus lies on the several factors that defined the process of making news, from editorial to societal ones. No single theory explains the behavior of the media but there are some underlying principles as to how the media operate. As news is always manufactured, depictions – the mental images – are first of all expressions of their own views and operations. All the steps of the news process are impossible to pinpoint after the fact but the most important journalistic practices are known. These are discussed in more detail in the next chapter (Chapter 2).

Conflict coverage essentially follows the same principles. In practice however, the reality may not be so simple. The hunger strike was considered a conflict, and was treated as such by the media. In many cases, disturbances and conflicts are covered from a human interest perspective. These human interest stories are

37 Carruthers 2000, 17
typically based on the experiences of an individual and they focus on the development of a single event. News pieces reveal information on the persons involved, on the course of events and about the scene. This kind of information is descriptive by nature and detached from a wider context that explains the causes behind the event.\textsuperscript{38} In addition to the human interest aspect, news about conflicts is usually simplified. Because of this, it is not necessary to mention this aspect separately when studying each newspaper. The main focus is on the themes and attitudes that were repeated in newspapers.

Conflicts are usually societal and cultural events, and as such they undergo processes that produce meaning to them.\textsuperscript{39} In other words, media discourses are not produced from scratch. According to SHANI ORGAD, media representations need to have recognizable meaning. Therefore, media coverage reflects societal and cultural meanings to some extent. In exploring these, the principles of imagological research become valuable.

\textit{An imagological perspective}

Historical contextualization is of great importance in conducting internationally comparative research. An imagological perspective offers one tool with which to discuss the topic.

One fundamental supposition of imagological research is that there is a cultural difference, a sense in which one nation is perceived to be different from the rest. We know most foreign cultures by reputation only. We have mental images of specific national characteristics even though we may lack personal knowledge regarding how typical they are. We recognize certain attributes as being typical of certain nations.\textsuperscript{40} These ethnic or national stereotypes are studied in the field of imagology. Imagology as a method is primarily comparative. Therefore, it is well adapted to research that focuses on different interpretations.

An imagologist is mostly concerned with how national reputations become recognizable. In other words, mental images are seen as properties of their context. Stereotypes and generalities inherited from the past (traditions) overshadow the experience of reality. This means that the strength of national stereotypes lies more in their recognized values than in their truth. An imagologist studies not only the

\textsuperscript{38} Elliott 1977, 318–319; Curtis 1984, 112
\textsuperscript{39} Lazzarich 2013, 52
\textsuperscript{40} Leerssen 2007, 17
mental image of the nation but also the context, and more importantly, the attitude of the author.

An image is understood here as something in our thoughts that steers us to see the world in a certain way. It is said to be much longer-lasting and complex than an opinion. A mental image is born, shaped and stabilized when enough information about the object has been gathered. However, an image does not only consist of information; it also includes beliefs, attitudes, opinions, and emotions. Therefore, an image is usually a simplification of the world: the possessor of the image does not include all the details in his or her image. People tend to rather strengthen the image they have than to challenge it with new information. Because the creator of the image thinks it is truthful, the main subject in image research is the creator.41

On an international level, stereotypes can be positive or negative depending on the political circumstances. Countries that present a threat of political or economic rivalry are usually described in negative terms, and countries that do not pose any threat are represented in more positive terms. Thus, a mental image can shift along with the changing political circumstances. An image can also shift between contrasting modalities.42 Under troubled circumstances, an image has a tendency to stiffen. During a time of conflict, we may be dealing with images of an enemy that are typically stereotyped, negative and based on nationalism. Images based on a sense of nationality and community are shaped not only by information but also by emotion. This is evident when thinking, for example, about the Northern Irish, the Irish and the English, who are neighbours with a shared, troubled history and frequent contact with each other. It can be assumed that the Irish and the English newspapers had clear positions regarding the hunger strike. It seems obvious that the complex natures of mental images themselves create various possibilities for explaining the outlooks of the newspapers.

The mental images mediated by newspapers need to be examined with a certain cautiousness. These images derive from each newspaper’s ideology and each writer’s views. First and foremost, newspapers’ images reveal something about newspapers themselves. However, the mental images of newspapers can be described as mass images, that is to say mental images possessed by a larger number of people, perhaps even a whole community. The reason for this is that newspapers want to appeal to a specific group of readers; they need to be in

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41 Imagology, the cultural construction and literary representation of national characters 2007, 342-344

42 Wunsch 2002, 74
accordance with public opinion. On the other hand, when dealing with a distant object, the newspaper may well be the only information source for individuals; therefore they can directly affect the way individuals perceive the distant object.

Key concepts

In this study, the most complex set of concepts are associated with expressions of opinion and views. The terms depiction and representation are used to describe the process when the phenomenal world is transformed as texts or pictures. In other words, what can be read and seen from the pages of the newspapers. In many cases, these expressions are the main focus of the study. However, occasionally we can detect reflections of a more profound, mental nature. These are the mental images. Here, the meanings of depiction and mental image overlap somewhat: the distinction is small. Both refer to the overall ‘stories’ told by the newspapers.

The visual elements of the press coverage are referred to as photos and pictures.

THE STRUCTURE OF THE WORK

Chapter 1 takes a detailed look at the newspapers examined in this dissertation. It will also give a brief overview of the process of making news.

The main features of the coverage in each newspaper will be examined in Chapter 2. In order to be able to have control of the ample research material, I will use tables and charts to outline some main components of the coverage. I have selected essential observations and expressions to act as indicators when describing and outlining the newspapers’ mental images. Through quantitative analysis I consider whether the newspapers considered the hunger strike major news, what kinds of differences in coverage were there during the event, and whether some clear emphasis can be found.

The context created for the conflict in newspapers is of great importance. Chapter 3 will reveal how each newspaper contextualized the event.

The hunger strike was commonly described as a conflict between the prisoners and the British authorities. Therefore, it is well-founded to focus on the mental images that were represented of these two sides. Chapter 4 will discuss the depictions of the hunger strikers, and Chapter 5 focuses on how the British authorities were depicted.

To conclude, Chapter 6 gathers the most relevant research results and discusses how and why conflicts are processed in the media. It discusses the ever-important
question of how differing sociological and cultural environments, as well as intercultural interactions, affect media coverage, and consequently, our everyday knowledge of the world.
1 Newspapers

In the early 1980s newspapers had a more univocal place in societies: they were regarded as important sources of information, particularly regarding international issues. There are almost endless numbers of newspapers in different parts of the world, all with something to add to the research focus of this study. For this study, the newspapers were chosen to suit the main research arguments, although practical resources limited many interesting opportunities. All papers are generally regarded as being interested in international affairs and aiming to provide an all-around survey of the world, thus forming an even baseline for research. Newspapers primarily represent themselves: they all have their own editorial and practical procedures which determine the outcome. However, the chosen newspapers also provide different contexts to compare. The newspapers originate from countries with differing relations with the subjects (in this case, British and Irish affairs), and individual societies, each providing their own context.

The newspapers examined in this study are so-called quality papers, in other words newspapers whose objectives are to transmit information and encourage discussion. One popular definition describes the quality paper as “a courageous, independent, news-views-oriented journal, published in an open society”. 43 Comprehensiveness is an important standard. 44 Quality papers consider international news a major part of general knowledge. Their style of news coverage is said to be based on facts. They have a vast network of correspondents and they use experts from different fields if necessary. These papers have always been read by influential audiences as well as by a significant portion of the population. In having similar standards, quality papers are comparable with each other.

This chapter will briefly introduce each newspaper. The chapter will also take a look at the general procedure of making news.

1.1 Newspapers examined in brief 45

The Age was established as an independent, liberal paper in Melbourne, Australia in 1854. The paper has been described as being politically liberal. The early 1980’s was a time of moderate political positions. The paper has always had a strong emphasis on international news. News texts are written in a straightforward manner,

43 Merrill & Fisher 1980, 13
44 Merrill & Fisher 1980, 8
45 If not mentioned separately, general information is based on reference books (see bibliography).
without editorial interpretation (which is closer to an American than a European style). Furthermore, the feature material has a key place in the paper. The Age has almost always been widely read in governing circles, and since the 1970’s more political material has been apparent in its feature writings, guest columns and cartoons than in editorials. It has, for instance, bluntly expressed its opinions about politicians. This style of reporting has been described as aggressive.46 The paper is not afraid to express opinions but it does not do it in a provocative way. At the time of the hunger strike, in Australia, there was no direct control over the media but, because of complex regulations, the media were known to sensor themselves during strained situations. However, such situations were rare.

The Arab News was founded in 1975 as the first English-language paper in Saudi Arabia. Despite using the English language, it claims that it provides a Saudi perspective.47 Some critics have argued that the English language papers of the country are intended for non-Arabs, and therefore are not authentic representatives of the culture. However, the Arab News was founded by Saudi Arabian publishers. It is likely that their background has had a major effect on the outcome. Traditionally, the Saudi Arabian press has been loyal to those in power.48 The country’s news media differs slightly from the Western media. For instance, the political influence of the media is stronger than in Western countries.49 There is no formal censorship in the country but communication has been monitored.50

The Swedish Dagens Nyheter was founded in Stockholm in 1864. The paper’s stance is independent and liberal. Dagens Nyheter is known for its thorough coverage. Its editors have aimed at an “all round, factual and impartial presentation of the news”51. In the mid-1970s, the paper’s circulation began to decline, and, according to some, it lost its reputation as one of the leading newspapers in Europe.52 However, the paper has been described as the most influential in Sweden. Freedom of the press has a long history in the country: newspapers have been able to function freely. It has been said that economics have been the biggest problem for Swedish newspapers. According to JESPER STRÖMBÄCK and DANIELA V. DIMITROVA, for Swedish journalists, objectivity often means “going beyond the

46 Merrill & Fisher 1980, 48
47 "About us" 2014, electronic document
48 Rugh 2004, 59
49 Mellor 2005, 31; Rugh 2004, 7
50 Rugh 2003, 17
51 Gustafsson & Rydén 2010, 304
52 Gustafsson & Rydén 2010, 288
statements of the contending sides to the hard facts of a political dispute.”

The French **Le Figaro** was founded in Paris in 1826 as a satirical sheet. In 1866, the paper became a daily. Le Figaro has emphasized political affairs in its coverage. Its stance is considered to be conservative (right-center). During the 1970s the paper faced difficulties when its owner started to use the paper for political means, and the reputation of the paper deteriorated. However, in the early 1980s the paper was still known to clearly express its opinion. The French press have traditionally seen themselves as partisan actors rather than mere observers. Le Figaro was not the biggest newspaper in the country but it had some importance.

**The Globe and Mail** was established when two newspapers – the liberal **The Globe** (founded in 1844) and the conservative **The Mail** (founded in 1872) – merged in the 1930s. The Globe and Mail has been regarded as an independent paper that follows the Canadian “calm and level-headed tone”. It is one of the most popular newspapers of the country, providing information from different perspectives. The paper devotes a considerable amount of coverage to international events and it is known for its in-depth political coverage. Canada’s press system is libertarian, although the government has had the means to curb the press. It has been said that the English and French media in Canada may view the world differently.

The Finnish **Helsingin Sanomat** was founded in Helsinki in 1904 and is owned by the Erkko family. The paper is formally independent. Its position has been described as “middle-of-the-line”. In the early 1980s, the circulation of the Helsingin Sanomat surpassed 400,000, which made it the biggest newspaper in Scandinavia. The paper has been considered a major player in the Finnish media. It is the only newspaper in Finland that is read nationally. The Finnish press system is traditionally transparent. Helsingin Sanomat is known for speaking out in political and societal matters. The paper’s editors have advocated for the paper’s responsibility as an independent media to report on relevant societal issues from different political perspectives. It has been said that the Helsingin Sanomat often

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53 Strömbäck & Dimitrova 2006, 134
54 Merrill & Fisher 1980, 124
55 Hallin & Mancini 2004, 98
56 Merrill & Fisher 1980, 140
57 Merrill & Fisher 1980, 159
58 Puhakka & Ridell 1996, 177-178
supports the views of the ruling parties regardless of their political perspectives. According to some studies, the Helsingin Sanomat emphasizes individual values.

The Irish Times was established in Dublin in 1859 as a Protestant nationalist paper but it soon turned unionist. Later on, it adopted a liberal and neutral stance. The paper’s own history and editorial stances have changed with the evolution of the country. This indicates that The Irish Times has traditionally had an open-minded worldview in which editorial practices have changed according to political and societal circumstances. Currently, according to a statement by The Irish Times Trust, the purpose of the body is to publish The Irish Times as “an independent newspaper primarily concerned with serious issues for the benefit of the community throughout the whole of Ireland free from any form of personal or of party political, commercial, religious or other sectional control.” The Irish Times is one of the most influential papers in the country. The press legislation in Ireland has reacted to the challenges caused by the ‘troubles’: the media have been pressured to some extent. However, in practice, these limitations have proven to be difficult to adhere to.

The Swiss Neue Zürcher Zeitung is often mentioned as one of the best newspapers in the world, if not the best. It has been described as the most individual, the most serious, the most responsible, and the most cosmopolitan. The paper was founded in Zürich in 1780 as the Zürcher Zeitung (the current name was introduced in 1821) and through the course of time, it has built up a tradition of high-quality news reporting that is admired all over the world. Its reporting is depicted as non-sensational and thoughtful, with plenty of background information. The paper is one of only a few national papers in Switzerland. Neue Zürcher Zeitung is well known for the quality of its international news coverage. The paper has a classical liberal stance. It has been said that the paper seeks to shape public opinion in accord with its own views, an attitude that is typical of all of the Swiss press. Switzerland has no specific press legislation, although some legislation could limit the otherwise free press.

The New York Times has been widely considered one of the best newspapers in the world because of its extensive and varied news coverage. The foreign news is given plenty of space, which is unusual in the American press. The New York Times

59 Puhakka & Ridell 1996, 184–185; Jämiä 2012, 24
60 Jämiä 2012, 24; Salminen 1988, 156–158
61 “About The Irish Times”, electronic document
62 Mercereau 2011, 71
63 Ibid.
Times was founded in 1851, and throughout its history, it has remained politically independent, although it has occasionally strongly supported a democratic mindset and liberalism or conservatism in turn. The paper has sometimes been criticized for the lack of a consistent stance. The New York Times is not a national newspaper in the full sense of the word but it does represent the American culture. The paper is famous for restrained and objective reporting. It also uses outsiders as columnists.\textsuperscript{64} The paper’s journalists may vary in their writing styles but they all are socialized in the ideology of the paper. This tradition of independent journalism is cherished in many ways. The American media system is unique in that there is an insistence on the freedom of the press. For instance, the press has been a fundamental part of national debates.

The Spanish \textit{El País} is a relatively young newspaper. It was founded in Madrid in 1976, during the early stages of the country’s transition to democracy. It quickly became one of the biggest newspapers in the country. After a period of dictatorship, the Spanish press attained a new kind of freedom. \textit{El País} took advantage of this and published views from left to right. The editor-in-chief Juan Luis Cebrián has said that the paper supports democracy and the freedom of speech. Reporters are encouraged to seek information freely.\textsuperscript{65} The stance of the paper has become liberal. In the early 1980s, the press in Spain was still occasionally under pressure from the government because of the old press legislation, and the press did not have any tradition of freedom. \textit{El País} aimed to break the old traditions of politically charged reporting.\textsuperscript{66}

The Argentinian \textit{La Prensa} was founded in Buenos Aires in 1869. During the 20th century, \textit{La Prensa} has occasionally faced difficulties because of the political situation of the country, as it has not agreed with governments in power. \textit{La Prensa} is often regarded as one of the best Spanish-language papers in the world due to its unbiased reporting. The paper’s viewpoint has been somewhat conservative. In Argentina, freedom of the press has changed in accordance with governments. In practice, officials have not been criticized. Terrorism has been reported on with some restrictions.

The \textit{South China Morning Post} was founded in Hong Kong in 1903. Its reporting has been described as independent and influential. It is read by a small but powerful part of society. The style of the paper is said to be investigative and

\textsuperscript{64} Diamond 1994, 278
\textsuperscript{65} Merrill & Fisher 1980, 240
\textsuperscript{66} Hallin & Mancini 2004,
fact-oriented. The paper has been regarded as following a Western style of journalism.\(^{67}\) It has been said that one reason for the authoritative position of the paper is due to a multicultural readership.\(^{68}\) However, one can assume that all papers reflect their own societal circumstances to some extent. In Hong Kong, the press has been able to act quite freely, with only occasional restrictions based on legislation.

**The Sowetan** was founded in February 1981 as a newspaper that was greatly influenced by the ideals of the struggle for liberation in South Africa. Even though the title itself was new, the paper had a journalistic background. The first year has been described as a period of gathering a readership, so it is likely that the editorial practices of the paper were still finding their form.\(^{69}\) In South Africa, the media has traditionally been very fragmented, and nation-wide forums are rare. The press is able to act quite freely but they do not control themselves. The coverage in South African papers has been moderate in general.

**The Times** was published for the first time in the 1780s, and it became one of the generators of the Western press. The Times has always been the newspaper of the English establishment: it has been read by the authorities and the ruling class. It is still considered to have a conservative worldview. The paper is known for supporting leaders from different sides of the political spectrum, which can generally be interpreted as support for leaders of society. The 20th century has been more difficult for The Times in regard to its financial problems. In the early 1980s, the paper faced minor internal disputes with a change of ownership. However, the paper’s operations have continued without significant transitions. In the UK, freedom of the press is valued. However, some laws limit the process of gathering news.

The German **Die Welt** was founded by authorities of the British occupation in Hamburg in 1946. Four years later the British stepped out and the paper became a German company. In the 1950s, the majority of shares in Die Welt were sold to Axel Springer, who became the biggest publisher in the country. Over time, the paper has been considered conservative in many respects, but progressive in utilizing innovations. Traditionally, the paper has a straightforward manner of news coverage, preferring shorter stories and seeking to make distinctions between news

\(^{67}\) Lai 2007, 109  
\(^{68}\) Eg. Hutcheon 1998, 7  
\(^{69}\) Research on the history of the paper has focused on the later years, so definite conclusions regarding the editorial stance of the paper cannot be made.
and opinion. In 1975, Die Welt transferred from Hamburg to Bonn. Die Welt has seen some turbulent times, as its journalists have disagreed with the owner. Nevertheless, Die Welt has been called the “voice of Germany”\textsuperscript{70}. In the early 1980s, the state was not allowed to intervene with the media.

**Grounds for the selection**

The examined newspapers are, as was already mentioned, independent without having close connections to a certain political or ideological view. This does not mean that the papers are without a specific outlook.\textsuperscript{71} The Times, Die Welt, Le Figaro, and La Prensa, with some reservations, are regarded as conservative papers. Many of the papers (The Age, Dagens Nyheter, The Irish Times, Neue Zürcher Zeitung, The New York Times, El País, and the South China Morning Post) are considered to be liberal, although liberalism can be defined in many ways, each stressing different aspects (e.g. social, economical) and different levels. For this research, the most fundamental aspect (of liberal papers) is that they have an open-minded approach. Some of the papers (particularly The Globe and Mail and the Helsingin Sanomat) fall somewhere between. The Arab News is the only paper with overt governmental connections, thus partially reflecting its current outlooks. The Sowetan had the clearest motivation of the papers: it sought to promote political reform.

Another interesting aspect concerning the newspapers is the age of the papers. As mentioned, The Sowetan was a very young paper. El País also was still establishing itself, although it was already recognised as a newspaper of considerable worth. At the other end of the scale were the newspapers with centuries of history, The Times and Neue Zürcher Zeitung being the oldest. It seems likely that traditions in news making have had an effect on how different issues are reported.

Each newspaper and its coverage primarily represented their own views. However, the papers were also chosen as representatives of the various political and cultural circumstances in which the newspapers operated. As the hunger strike had a strong Irish and British involvement, it is important to survey different

\textsuperscript{70}Merrill & Fisher 1980, 360

\textsuperscript{71}The categorical allocations are relative. For this research, e.g. conservatism and liberalism are terms which are used to describe different traditions of news making in the early 1980s. For instance, a conservative paper relied more on official sources and was more likely to openly support the establishment. Liberal newspapers were more likely to give attention to different opinions.
relations with them. The Age, The Globe and Mail and The New York Times operated in societies that had a strong political and cultural connections with the British, as well as the Irish. On the other hand, Dagens Nyheter and Helsingin Sanomat operated in countries that had more distant or neutral relations with the British Isles. They represent smaller and more homogenous cultures than Le Figaro, El Pais and Die Welt. These newspapers exist among traditional European societies, each having somewhat contradictory relations with the British in particular. Neue Zürcher Zeitung can be regarded as having a neutral position.

In addition to their geographical distance from the conflict, the rest of the papers provide further aspects for examination. Although the Arab News and the South China Morning Post have a clear Western outlook, they represent their own cultural contexts. Both papers were known to have a certain pro-establishment stance and furthermore, slightly differing relations with Britain. La Prensa operated in a very different societal context as did The Sowetan. They faced challenges that the Western papers did not.

The Times and The Irish Times were obvious choices in this research as the conflict affected their own societal circumstances. However, they had very different approaches.

The newspapers selected provide an international dimension to this research. There is value in exploring how a news topic is reported in different parts of the world. As was mentioned before, the potential choices for source material are almost endless, and some other researcher would have probably selected a different range of newspapers, even with the same research questions. The selection of newspapers is the most debatable aspect in this kind of research: different choices (of newspapers) may provide differing results. However, in historical image research, all representative mental images are true in their own right. The main focus is on explaining why each image appeared. First, reasoning is based on the newspapers themselves. The selected newspapers are regarded as important and ideologically independent mediators of information in their own societies, and they thus help to reveal the possible impact of society on news reporting. In this study, the newspapers and countries were selected to examine key aspects regarding the topic. The hunger strike was a conflict situation, and conflicts tend to expose political relations and cultural opinions. Relations and opinions are relative by nature: each society has its own perspectives, and other phenomena are viewed in relation to those. By comparing international newspaper coverage, it is possible to find out if indeed different societal and political contexts matter.
However, one must be really careful with cultural generalisations. A bulletproof argument would require an investigation of all newspapers, a task that is impossible to carry out. It is very likely that some other newspaper in all of these countries has represented a different mental image of the hunger strike than the newspapers selected here. However, the main aim is not to discuss which of the mental images is the correct one in each culture. Instead, plausible connections between newspaper coverage and societal factors can be hypothesized. Historical image research focuses on what explains a phenomenon. The explanations consist of a complex set of factors: primarily the actions of the newspapers themselves but also somewhat broader issues. The aim of this research is to find at least some of those plausible reasons. Having this in mind, it is difficult to draw cultural conclusions based on a singular newspaper, and that is not the purpose of this research. News coverage in a singular newspaper is partly based on societal and cultural factors. By comparing news coverage in many parts of the world, similarities and differences between these factors become more visible.

1.2 The principles of making news

News conveyance is and has been an essential part of every society.72 Newspapers have had a major role in fulfilling it. Despite their long traditions of news making, the newspapers of the early 1980s were facing many challenges: economic struggles, technological changes, rivalry with broadcast media, and so on. However, the process of news making was stable. One must always remember that news is consciously constructed. Behind each newspaper, there is a bureaucratic chain of authority that monitors and debates events that are seen as newsworthy. News organizations and reporters compete with resources: temporal limitations have always been an integral part of newspaper publishing. News texts are edited, but the process of gathering news is less controlled. Journalists seek information from sources that they themselves find trustworthy. 73 From the 1970s onward, agency services have become important sources of material.74 As the same practices are carried out continuously, they become routine. In other words, newsmakers

72 Martin 2003, 8
73 Tuchman 1980, 12–13
74 Hooper Gottlieb 2003, 128
produce news in a manner that is familiar to them. From this perspective, each news article reflects those manners.

The practices of a news organization are not, however, the only factor in making news. Each country has its own legislative rules and cultural norms that provide direction to the media. In the case of the examined papers here, freedom of the press has been considered self-evident in their cultures. Even if alliances are not visible, they may have an impact on a more unobtrusive level: no newspaper functions without outside motives. Each newspapers discusses issues that are seen as important in its own context.

Advances in communication technology have made news global. The Western media in particular is filled with bad news. Headlines of violence and disasters sell newspapers. News is produced even during troubled times. Terrorism provides a further challenge. During a conflict situation, the media is generally allowed to act according to the threat posed by the incident. If a state is not directly threatened by violence, there is usually no control over the media. But if, for instance, a terrorist threat causes an emergency state, governments often expect compliance from the national media. Even more often, voluntary restraint by the media itself is preferred. Journalism also becomes shaped by propaganda from all sides.

In addition to an organizational level, a conflict situation provides challenges on the ground. Journalists can face several difficulties when reporting on a violent situation: information can be difficult to get, and in some cases, the given information may be biased. Sometimes a journalist is in real danger. Several accounts by the journalists and photographers, who had spent time in Northern Ireland during the troubles, reveal that the conditions for working were occasionally difficult. Riots were always risky situations, and sometimes incidents broke out without warning. Both republicans and loyalists were interested in what was said of them by the media. The British army was not fond of photographers.

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75 Clausen 2003, 40–41
76 Simuna 2015a, 103
77 Hooper Gottlieb 2003, 134
78 Carruthers 2000, 16–17
79 Carruthers 2000, 172
80 Carruthers 2000, 166, 172
81 Richardson 2007, 180–181
82 Eg. John Conroy, Mark Devenport, Brendan Murphy, Kevin Myers (see bibliography for detailed information)
One must remember that not all journalists experienced the situation similarly. It is likely that local, and therefore more well-known reporters were more exposed to pressures.

**International news agencies**

In the 1980s, the Western newspapers usually provided up to 70% of news agency material.\(^{83}\) Each newspaper had the final say on what got published: even news agency material could be modified to align with the paper’s view. However, often agency reports have been copied without changes.\(^{84}\) As the news agencies had their own set of practices, it is important to recognise the role they had. In the 1980s, international news distribution was dominated by the so called ‘big four’: the British Reuters, the French Agence France–Presse (AFP), and two American agencies, the Associated Press (AP) and United Press International (UPI). They all collected news from and distributed news to most countries.\(^{85}\) All the newspapers examined here also used several of these agencies, if not all of them. As the same agencies provided information to all kinds of media around the world, they have been considered agenda-setters, influencing what news became news.\(^{86}\)

Besides reporting news, international news agencies had become a significant source of news photos. In particular photos from wars and conflicts more often originated from agencies.\(^{87}\) A collection of the same photos were on hand to newspapers in different parts of the world. On one hand, this limited the depictions. On the other hand – and more significantly – this offers an opportunity to compare the choices the newspapers made. As the news agencies provided a selection of diverse photos, the newspapers were able to choose the published pictures.

The greatest difference between newspaper journalists and news agency journalists is that the latter have a continuous deadline: news topics are sought and produced all the time. The need for a speedy report leads to a certain style of coverage: facts are collected promptly. Contextualization is of less importance.\(^{88}\)

\(^{83}\) Machin & Niblock 2006, 17  
\(^{84}\) Stenvall 2011, 147  
\(^{85}\) Boyd-Barrett 1980, 14  
\(^{86}\) Boyd-Barrett 1980, 17  
\(^{87}\) Zelt 2012, 21–22  
\(^{88}\) Boyd-Barrett 1980, 74–76
The style of writing is fact-oriented and scarce.\textsuperscript{89} Due to many clients, expressions remain neutral.\textsuperscript{90}

In addition to international agencies, many countries have their own national news agencies. They often work closely with the international agencies but focus on national news.\textsuperscript{91} Therefore, national news agencies did not have a major role in news about the hunger strike.

Even though it is important to recognize the influence of international news agencies in news coverage, one must not overemphasize the role they had. At the end of the day, each newspaper had an opportunity shape information.

\textbf{Framing the news}

The concept of framing is a useful aspect when examining news coverage. In essence, framing includes all the choices that are made when newsmakers are choosing which stories to tell and the ways in which to tell them. For instance, a reporter organizes the information of what is going on, selects the aspects he/she finds newsworthy and tries to narrate the story in a way he/she thinks the audience will understand. News is thus framed within selected contexts. According to many scholars, these contexts and frames are usually chosen quickly and in a routine manner.\textsuperscript{92} In other words, framing is often based on information and perceptions that already exist in the writer’s mind. In order to decode the news, a reader (and a researcher) must identify the given framework. This is easier said than done, as the framing is not literal but is rather something that must be read between the lines. Recognition is based on unconscious mental knowledge that has formed via previous experiences and societal learning.

For this research, the most essential aspect of framing is the social nature of it. Frames are shared socially \textsuperscript{93}, members of the same community recognise the given interpretations. This recognition is based on the idea that a reporter knows which frames are familiar to the audience: both have the same socially formed comprehension of it. When reporting on a certain topic or theme, a writer utilizes

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{89} Stenvall 2011, 58–59
\item \textsuperscript{90} Stenvall 2011, 147
\item \textsuperscript{91} Boyd-Barrett 1980, 205–206
\item \textsuperscript{92} E.g. Karvonen 2000, 80, Clausen 2003, 40
\item \textsuperscript{93} Karvonen 2000, 81
\end{itemize}
schemata to provide a framework for the news. The framework includes preconceptions of reality and its significant features. These preconceptions guide the reporting in highlighting certain aspects. ERKKI KARVONEN has named this process selective contextualization. In other words, framing a subject means choosing a particular meaning over others. Based on this idea, a war for instance can be framed either as a great power conquering its weaker neighbour without rightful reason or as a small nation’s justifiable struggle for independence. It is significant which frame is selected for reporting the war, as it determines which aspects are emphasized and which are disregarded.

For this research, the most useful concept is framing: the media’s ability to control the way they present a news topic. The media sets an agenda by drawing attention to certain issues. Furthermore, the social aspect of framing can be beneficial in understanding the differences in news coverage. Here the idea of framing is primarily used to take into account the process of news production and its effect on published depictions. A news story results from multiple subjective decisions.

The examination of international newspapers adds a global dimension to this study: the same event can be reported worldwide, based on similar information. However, as LISBETH CLAUSEN has stated, “...news is ‘domesticated’ through production processes” In other words, news is shaped according to societal and cultural perspectives: differences in coverage may reflect differences in societal perspectives. This idea agrees well with the most pivotal motifs of historical image research: the mental images mediated by a newspaper result from organisational as well as from broader factors. On the other hand, the practices in international news reporting have led to a situation where a small number of news organisations are

94 A schema is a mental structure that organizes information and the relationships among the different categories of information. Stereotypes are a good example of how a schema processes information: generalisations are a quick way to recognize attributes that are regarded as typical of someone or some group. When a person learns new data, he/she handles it in relation to existing information. New information that agrees with the existing perception is easier to receive.
95 Karvonen 2000, 82
96 Ibid.
97 However, this research does not aim to emphasize the global dimension. The source material is inadequate. Instead, the source material enables a glimpse into the principles of news circulation on a global level.
98 Clausen 2003, 33
defining the interests and framing of the media. However, a singular newspaper has the opportunity to localise globally distributed news material through minor editing.

Framing includes several angles. First, the news producers’ conventions for presenting events form textual frames and second, news presentations follow models of social interaction (social framing). Thirdly, contextual framing consists of the influences of actors and factors on news production at a global, national, organisational and professional level. LISBETH CLAUSEN has summarised the levels of production strategy as follows: 1. Themes, topics, sources and other international outputs in national media constitute the global level of news production. 2. Political, statutory and technological circumstances shape the national level. 3. The organisational level indicates the practices and principles of each medium while the professional level contains the general principles and values of journalism. All these aspects have an impact on shaping and circulating information. For this research, the significance of framing lies in understanding the multifaceted nature of news production. The purpose is not to focus on what kinds of frameworks the newspapers were using, but instead, the most valuable aspect is that framing reflects culturally bound ideas. Certain themes are more exposed to such framing. For instance, during conflict situations, the frames adopted by the media – as well as the authorities – can be regarded as a strategy to identify the guilty parties of the conflict and to suggest responses to the event. In such cases, the media follow the culturally bound schemata of what is good and what is evil.

With this in mind, the news articles, editorials and other material published by a newspaper constitute a socio-cultural representation of reality. Representations of the hunger strike presented by the newspapers selected reflected their own socio-cultural circumstances. Recognising the affects of those circumstances enables us to compare the representations with each other. This is in turn will reveal the diverse actions of the media as well as the social and cultural contexts. However, the main purpose of this research is to reveal the different mental images of the hunger strike that the newspapers produced and discuss the plausible reasons behind them.

99 The major international news agencies have had the best resources to be able to provide breaking news, thus defining the newsworthiness of an event. van Ginneken 1997, 113–114
100 Clausen 2003, 60
101 Clausen 2003, 80
102 Papacharissi & Oliveira 2008, 54
103 Clausen 2003, 65
2 Main features of coverage

When Bobby Sands launched his hunger strike on 1 March 1981, the world outside the Maze prison was not interested in it. According to PADRAIG O’MALLEY, the reason for this was that people were still fed up with the previous hunger strike. In addition, as the authorities were the main source of information, the willingness of the government to give information was a major cause of the low amount of news. In this case, the authorities were not very keen to inform. But as it turned out, the turn of events during the following months proved to be so strange that the hunger strike gained plenty of international publicity.

This chapter will create an overview of news coverage by focusing on how much and what kind of news material was published by the newspapers. These statistics reveal the foundations of the newspapers’ depictions. Quantitative newspaper analysis has its roots in the very simple question of how much news a newspaper contains. Even though the main idea of this research is more complex, the underlying significance remains the same. Quantitative analysis provides the first glimpse of what the writers of the newspaper see as newsworthy. On many levels, the hunger strike was regarded as an interesting news event.

The amounts in coverage are primarily compared to each other in this study. In other words, the main aim is to clarify the differences between the selected papers (and countries, to some extent). Whether the hunger strike was a significant global news topic is a moot point. For historical image research, even the lowest amount of coverage is significant evidence: higher amounts of coverage per se do not necessarily mean better research results. In this research, the most important fact is that the hunger strike passed the news threshold at an international level and that the intensity of the coverage varied.

2.1 The overall amounts of published material

Before examining the most significant statistics in relation to the newspaper coverage of the 1981 hunger strike, some defined terms are required. In this

104 O’Malley 1990, 58. The first hunger strike began in October, 1980. The prisoners called off their strike 53 days later, believing their demands had been met by the government.
105 Beresford 1994, 43
106 Krippendorff 2004, 5
107 There are no specific indicators to define what is a “truly” a global news topic. There are no directives as to what quantitative limits need to be exceeded before a topic is regarded as global news. To measure coverage is relative by nature.
research, newspaper material has been categorized into four types. The first consists of standard news articles, and is the largest group. News articles are the backbone of each newspaper, providing most of the information given to the readers. The second type of text consists of the various feature articles including columns and other in-depth stories published by newspapers. The use of feature articles varies between the papers, and in some cases it can be difficult to determine the difference between a news article and a feature article. Therefore, these are added together to form a basis for analysis. However, to conduct a more specific analysis, these types of articles are separated when required. The third type of text includes editorials. A fourth type of material used includes news material published by the papers.

Figure 1 and appendix 1 provide a summary of all the material gathered for this research, indicating how many news and feature articles as well as editorials were published in each newspaper between 1 March and 10 October 1981. The amount of published material provides basic information on how much attention was given to the hunger strike by each of the newspapers, therefore providing a starting point for analysis.

![Figure 1. The amount of published material between 1 March and 10 October.](image1)

108 Appendix 1 combines the amount of published material.
109 The Irish Times was excluded from the figure in order to display the differences between the other papers more clearly. A similar figure including the The Irish Times can be found in Appendix 1.
Reports by The Times and The Irish Times on local news

The Irish Times was by far the most active paper in covering the hunger strike (figure 2 \(^{110}\)). This is hardly surprising, as events in Northern Ireland were and are considered local news. The other paper that covered the hunger strike as local news, The Times, was a clear second in overall coverage in comparison to international newspapers\(^{111}\). What is interesting is the startling difference between the amount of coverage in The Irish Times and The Times. The Irish Times published four times more material than The Times. In practice, the difference developed as The Irish Times usually published several articles a day, whereas The Times covered the conflict usually in one news article per day. The number of editorials supports the fact that The Irish Times covered the hunger strike much more actively than any of the other papers, and that The Times was a clear second. Again, the difference between these two papers is notable. The 74 editorials of The Irish Times compared to the 21 of The Times is significant. The rest of the newspapers published under ten editorials each regarding the hunger strike, and some papers did not publish any.

The underlying reasons for these differing practices present an intriguing question. Using more material, The Irish Times reported the event from differing perspectives, indicating that it did not see any problem in doing so. The paper has traditionally been described as having an open-minded attitude towards Irish issues.\(^{112}\) By reporting the event in varied texts, The Irish Times was able to discuss the issue from many perspectives. On the other hand, this makes it more difficult to determine what stance the paper took.

\(^{110}\) Figures 2 and 3 include frequency of coverage in each of the newspapers. In other words these numbers reveal how often a news article and/or editorial about the hunger strike was published during the given time. The lowest incidence number (The Sowetan with 0,1) means that an article related to the hunger strike was published every ten days, whereas the highest (The Irish Times with 4,38) means that the paper published just over four articles and/or editorials per day.

\(^{111}\) In this study ‘international newspapers’ refers to all other newspapers apart from The Irish Times and The Times.

\(^{112}\) Mercereau 2003, 64
Fig. 2. A proportional comparison of material published.\textsuperscript{113}

Fig. 3. A proportional comparison of published material. The Irish Times is excluded from the figure in order to visualize the numbers more clearly.

\textsuperscript{113} The ratio was attained by dividing the amount of published material with the number of issues.

46
The difference between the two papers was apparent, as The Times seemed to give as little attention to the hunger strike as possible. This was done by reporting on events in brief and focusing on other matters. The amount of photos published (figures 4 and 5) in The Times indicates that the paper did not want to give too much attention to the hunger strike. Pictures are as powerful tools that can draw attention to an issue. Local news was more often reported with photos, and the number of photos related to the hunger strike was actually high, but in relation to the overall numbers these did not correspond. Some international newspapers published more news photos than The Times. The decision of The Times not to provide vast coverage of the strike reveals something significant. The paper considered the event to be distasteful. In doing so, it adopted a stance common of the British media when reporting on Northern Ireland. Several studies have shown that British news coverage tended to reflect the positions taken by authorities in relation to the conflict.114 In Britain, authorities wanted to keep their distance from the conflict in Northern Ireland.115 The Times was adopting this position.

Even though both The Times and The Irish Times treated the hunger strike as local news, the amount of attention given to the event by these papers clearly indicates differing stances towards it. It also underlines differences between the British and the Irish media in regards to the North, as the Irish have traditionally been much more interested Northern affairs.116 This fact alone indicates that events in Northern Ireland have deeper meaning in Britain and Ireland.

114 E.g. Miller 1994b, 164
115 Guelke 1989, 82
116 Curtis 1984, 107
Fig. 4. The proportional numbers of published photos.

Fig. 5. The proportional numbers of published photos. The Irish Times is excluded from the figure in order to visualize the numbers more clearly.
**Active international newspapers**

Of the international newspapers, The Age was the most active when considering the number of published news articles, followed by The Globe and Mail, the South China Morning Post, the Arab News, and The New York Times (figure 3). The other published material illustrates the same. The statistics indicate that newspapers with more overall coverage were more likely to publish more versatile material, although this cannot be regarded as a given.

Geographical distance is therefore hardly evident in these statistics. This is obviously due to the fact the many of these distant nations have other connections with the British Isles. A rather interesting detail is that there was more coverage in Australia and Canada (as well as in Hong Kong and Saudi Arabia) than in the US which has traditionally had more interest in Irish issues. This difference is not large but is definitely worthy of consideration. Obviously, the newspapers studied here are only individual representatives of their countries, so solid conclusions cannot be made from these statistics. But on one hand, this could indicate something.

The number of articles in the Arab News and the South China Morning Post was significantly high. Interestingly, they reported on the hunger strike slightly more than The New York Times, and also more than any of the European papers that can be labelled international (in this context). This illustrates that geographical distance does not always provide an explanation. Reasons must be found elsewhere. Cultural and political relations may prove to be more significant factors.

All of these active newspapers seemed to have a similar style of reporting. For example, news photos were more or less used in the same way. However, The Age and the Arab News published significantly less news photos in regards to the hunger strike than other active papers. The Arab News also published fewer editorials (only one) on the hunger strike. Thus, minor differences appear even among the active papers. Yet again, this quantitative information reveals a further need for clarification.

Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that, based on the newspapers used here, the coverage was slightly greater outside Europe than within Europe (with the exception of the British Isles themselves). The statistics also indicate that within Europe there were small differences in the level of interest.
Observations on a European level

On a European level, Scandinavian papers had slightly more coverage than German-language papers, and the French Le Figaro was somewhat more active than Die Welt and Neue Zürcher Zeitung. The Spanish El País had the least coverage of the European papers. The differences were not large but they existed. The amount of versatile material also indicates the same. For example, Die Welt and Neue Zürcher Zeitung published far less news photos. This can be partially explained due to the nature of these papers. They differed from the rest of the newspapers in that they did not use many pictures in their coverage in general. Their news pages were filled with text.

It is surprising that the Scandinavian Dagens Nyheter and the Helsingin Sanomat reported more about the hunger strike than the majority of the papers in the leading European countries. At this point, mere statistics do not provide enough evidence into any particular reason as to why this occurred. However, it is known that the Scandinavian papers have a strong tradition of international coverage.

Less coverage with greater distance

The Argentine La Prensa did not cover the hunger strike as actively as the majority of the papers examined here. This was probably due to combined geographical and cultural distance. It is noteworthy that both Spanish-language papers were among the least active newspapers in the amount of coverage. However, a more detailed look at the statistics reveals that the nature of news coverage varies. La Prensa published relatively many photos (figures 4 and 5) which suggests that the hunger strike was considered an interesting news topic. It is also noteworthy that El País published more news articles written by its own staff than many of the other papers. 117 Therefore, the lower amount of coverage in these papers cannot be explained by cultural factors, in that the hunger strike was interesting in certain cultures. The event was reported on in features, which indicates interest. Distance from the event meant that all the details were not seen to be so important.

The Sowetan had the lowest amount of coverage. The hunger strike was reported on in South Africa but the low amount of coverage suggests that it was not considered to be as interesting as it was in the other countries studied here. There was also no continuum in the coverage. The low amount of coverage can be

117 See figure 12 in Chapter 2.2
partially explained by editorial decisions. In the fragmented South African media, The Sowetan was founded only some time before the hunger strike and was probably still focusing on more familiar issues with which it could draw readers.

However, considering the amount of material in general in The Sowetan, the number of photos (5) is relatively high. There could be several reasons for this: the paper considered the topic worthy of coverage, including photos, or as a new paper, it had made a decision to invest in visuals. These editorial decisions seem more likely. Both La Prensa and The Sowetan are the only newspapers in this study published far away. It is possible that the distance resulted in less coverage.

Does cultural context influence newsmaking?

Based on the amount of published material, one main conclusion that can be drawn is that the hunger strike can be considered a conflict that was covered all over the world. The newspapers closest to the conflict reported on it most actively, emphasizing the local nature of the conflict. From an international perspective, attention given to the hunger strike depended on other factors. The level of interest was based on connections with the cultures that were affected by the conflict. At the same time, the amount of coverage suggests that the level of interest was not straightforward, as there were some unexpected differences in the amount of coverage.

One way to examine the level of interest is to take a look at the nature of the published material and find any specific types of material that can be used to indicate interest. The basic assumption is that the more interesting an event is considered to be, the more varied material published regarding the event. In this case, the amount of news photos published roughly corresponds with the amount of published material in general. The fact that most of the photos were published by all of the papers during May highlights the fact that the hunger strike was an international media event for a brief period.

Another conclusion that can be drawn is that newspapers with less news coverage discussed the hunger strike only in individual editorials or not at all. This confirms the belief that editorials were used to comment on issues that were regarded to be relevant. Editorials consist of a rather limited space and they cannot cover all the issues. A selection has to be made, and the result of this selection can be revealing.

The basic amount of published material reveals that, as anticipated, the hunger strike gained more attention in countries that had some kind of connection to the
societies involved in the conflict. However, the amount of material provides only a limited analysis of the issue. A more thorough analysis is required here.

2.2 The hunger strike as a news story

A closer look at the quality of the material in each paper reveals a few interesting themes. These themes reveal how and with what kinds of characteristics the hunger strike was represented. This in turn reveals the nature of the hunger strike as a news story.

It is interesting that each newspaper had a rather similar pattern in their coverage (figure 7). When the hunger strike started in March, coverage was scarce: just a few pieces of news were published and they were mainly short texts containing basic information. In April, there was a clear rise in the amount of coverage as the hunger strike started to draw attention after Bobby Sands was elected. May was by far the most active month in every paper as there were all sorts of events to report. Then in June, there was a clear drop in the amount of coverage. July saw an increase in the amount of coverage in the majority of the newspapers. Even though there were several deaths due to the hunger strike and several other turns in events, in August the amount of coverage started to decrease. Towards the end of the hunger strike, the amount of overall coverage had clearly decreased. In late September in particular there was hardly any (major) news regarding the event. The news coverage during the fall differed from earlier months in all of the papers in that the articles were more unremarkable. An example from Le Figaro (figure 6) illustrates this difference: in May coverage of the hunger strike included a whole page while in September, a typical news story contained only a few sentences. After the hunger strike was called off on 3 October, the end of the hunger strike gained more attention within a few days than in the preceding few weeks collectively.
Fig. 6. The clear difference in news coverage between the most turbulent time and the latter part of the hunger strike (Le Figaro, May 6 on the left and September 7 on the right).

The quality of material published supports this pattern. Almost all the newspapers published several feature articles and editorials related to the hunger strike during April and May. In many papers it was actually the only time period when this kind of ‘extra’ material was published. After May, the coverage in newspapers changed, not only in the amount but also in style. Events were not covered in as much detail as before. News coverage normalized. For instance, the context was not provided, the amount of pictures decreased, and news reports merely included factual events. The coverage in each newspaper became more fragmented.
Fig. 7. The monthly news coverage in international newspapers. The Times and The Irish Times have been excluded from the figure in order to illustrate the numbers more clearly. The coverage in all papers is illustrated in more detail in Appendix 2.

The amounts of news photos published illustrate the same pattern. The pattern of news photos published (figure 8) is strikingly similar to the one of monthly news coverage: a clear peak was reached in May and the amount rose again in July and August. However, the amount of news photos published is even more revelatory. It illustrates how the peak in May was significantly higher.
Fig. 8. Published news photos by month. The Times and The Irish have been excluded from the figure in order to illustrate the amounts more clearly. The amounts of published photos in all papers are illustrated in more detail in Appendix 3.

Based on this, the main conclusion that can be drawn is that the hunger strike was a similar news event in different parts of the world. It is fascinating that the amount of published material follows the same pattern. More research is required to determine if this is due to the newspapers as media or whether some universal factor is the cause.

**Observations regarding newspaper material**

Even though the general patterns were rather similar, a more precise examination of the amount of coverage uncovers differences as well. For example, the size of news articles may also provide some clue as to how the hunger strike was regarded as a news event. For this study the news articles were divided into three groups based on length. Short news articles included brief news agency articles and other articles with only a few short paragraphs of text. Medium size news articles consisted of a few columns and perhaps a photo. Large news articles contained
several columns and usually at least one news photo. This group also included sets of several news articles published on the same day. The results are both predictable and somewhat unexpected.

As predicted, news articles in The Irish Times were large. The Irish Times often published several articles per day, and the texts were usually longer than an average news article published by the paper. This supports the fact that the hunger strike was major news in Ireland. In comparison, The Times published more moderate news articles, with only 20 percent of the articles being large. The difference with The Irish Times is therefore obvious. As The Times treated the hunger strike as an unfavorable event, it was not given too much attention.

In general, the hunger strike was treated as a typical news event: the majority of news coverage was average in size. Only during a few events (particularly the death of Sands) were the news articles longer worldwide. Of the newspapers examined here, The New York Times can be considered typical: a clear majority of its news articles were medium sized, and shorter news articles were more common than longer ones. This same pattern also applied to The Age, the Arab News, The Globe and Mail, the Helsingin Sanomat, Neue Zürcher Zeitung and the South China Morning Post. As the relations of these newspapers with the conflict were different, the causes (of these differing relations) may have been more general. The hunger strike was regarded as worthy of considerable news coverage. Each newspaper had their own reasons for reporting on the event. For instance, in North America and Australia, cultural and historical connections were a major factor. Neue Zürcher Zeitung was interested in the political dimensions, and the South China Morning Post and the Arab News had a strong emphasis on international news. The hunger strike was not only an interesting event but also an event that revealed different media practices. Those practices are typical of each newspaper and each culture.

A comparison of the amount of coverage illustrates interesting aspects. For instance, El Pais published relatively longer news articles than many of the other papers. One explanation for this is merely technical: the paper did not publish so-called agency news stories, so the general amount of shorter news pieces was lower. It is also interesting that La Prensa published slightly longer (16%) news articles than shorter ones (13%), although the emphasis was clearly on medium sized news stories. These numbers suggest that publishers at a greater geographical distance were more likely not to publish shorter pieces of news regarding events that were not considered significant enough.

118 See appendix 4 for detailed numbers.
The emphasis on shorter news articles by Dagens Nyheter and Die Welt is also an interesting aspect, especially when compared to the publishers closest to them in geographical distance, the Helsingin Sanomat (closest to Dagens Nyheter) and Neue Zürcher Zeitung (closest to Die Welt). The amount of overall material was quite the same in each paper but the the news profile differed slightly. This illustrates the fact that between seemingly similar contexts there can be considerable differences. After all, newspapers operate primarily based on editorial factors.

The Sowetan is a distinct case. The very low amount of material published needs to be taken into consideration, but it is worth noting that all the articles published were either medium length (54%) or longer (46%) in size. As a new newspaper, it was probably still somewhat hesitant in its practices. The layout of its news sections was not stable. However, it is significant that when the hunger strike was reported on in South Africa, it was done in a visible matter (figure 9). This suggests that the hunger strike was regarded at the very least as an interesting news event. Dramatic turns of event are always appealing stories globally.

The amount of longer news articles published reflects the fluctuating nature of the hunger strike as a news story. Most of the longer news articles were published in May by each newspaper. Even those newspapers that were not the most active in their coverage published several long news articles. This again supports the nature of the hunger strike as a major international news event, particularly during May.
Fig. 9. The death of Bobby Sands as reported by The Sowetan. The Sowetan 6.5.1981
The amount of coverage also reveals some journalistic factors that shaped coverage. For instance, the Arab News and the South China Morning Post, which were among the most active in their coverage, did not report on the event on a large scale. One clear reason for this was that both papers relied on material provided by international news agencies (figure 11). News material provided by agencies usually tends to be more compact. This conclusion is backed up by the fact that during those months when other foreign papers used more material from news agencies, the news articles published were shorter. Another example of how the editorial practices of a newspaper may affect the outcome is that of El Pais. The statistics suggest that a paper that had a rather low amount of published material had a considerable amount of longer news articles. This was partly due to the practice of not publishing short news stories in general. The above mentioned cases illustrate that information based on mere statistics is not straightforward.

The hunger strike attracted international attention. However, interest towards it varied quite a bit. Again, journalistic resources determined what and how a newspaper reported on an event.

**Was the hunger strike a top news story?**

In journalism, top stories generally appear on the front page and one might expect an unusually dramatic and newsworthy incident to warrant such placement. Additionally, editorials and columns indicate that newspaper editors consider an incident important enough to be discussed with differing views and opinions.\(^{119}\)

The amount of such material also demonstrates interest towards the event. In this, the The Irish Times was yet again distinct from the other papers (Table 1 \(^{120}\)). Roughly two-thirds of the time The Irish Times reported something about the hunger strike on the front page. During some months (May, July) the hunger strike was covered on the front page almost daily. This amount of front page news supports the fact that local news is more likely to be published on the front page, as The Times was a clear second with a quarter of its news published on the front page.

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\(^{119}\) Letters to the editor are usually regarded as indicators of interest in a subject. However, in this study letters to the editor were not included a) because of the different practices of the newspapers (all papers do not have the same approach) b) the already vast amount of material c) considering the context and reasoning in each letter in all of the newspapers would have been an overwhelming task.

\(^{120}\) The Sowetan did not publish anything on its front page.
Table 1. The monthly amount of news published on front pages (This amount is calculated based on the head news articles). Note that the Helsingin Sanomat did not publish any news on the front page. Instead, it had a separate front page for news. The column on the right hand side includes the relative proportion of front page news relating to the hunger strike in each newspaper. For example, The Irish Times published 64.7% of its news articles about the hunger strike on the front page.

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Out of the international newspapers, the most active were also the ones with more coverage on the front page. On the front pages of the The Age, the Arab News, The Globe and Mail and the South China Morning Post, over 10% of news related to the hunger strike (figures 10 and 11). The rest of the papers were well below this figure. As the figures suggest, the coverage in May made the difference: papers with more coverage also used the front page more. During the later months the amount of front page news was more or less the same. Most interestingly, The New York Times had a very low amount of front page news. This leaves the impression that the stance of The New York Times towards the hunger strike was cautious, despite the strong Irish connection on the east coast.
Fig. 10. News about the hunger strike on the front page of each newspaper (%).

All of the newspapers had similar patterns of use regarding the front page in general: they published around ten news stories on the front page. Often one or two of these stories were the main stories, while the rest were more brief (and usually continued on the inside pages). News articles about the hunger strike were not exceptions; occasionally they were among the main stories but more often they were included among other articles. Again, there were some differences between the papers: The Irish Times was more likely to have larger front page news stories than the rest of the papers. The other papers were more likely to report on the hunger strike with shorter stories. It was not unusual that only a headline and few sentences regarding the hunger strike were mentioned on the front page. Only the first deaths and severe riots were given more attention. As the hunger strike went on, even deaths were only mentioned in brief on the front page, if at all. There were no significant differences between the papers in this aspect. Therefore, one can only conclude that the hunger strike was important enough to be mentioned occasionally on the front pages. Furthermore, none of the international papers gave special attention to it. The hunger strike was an average news topic in this sense.
Fig. 11. News about the hunger strike on the front page of each newspaper (%). The Irish Times (as it had a ratio of different scale) is excluded from the figure in order to visualize the numbers more clearly.

However, the amount of news photos published on the front pages provides more contradictory results. The newspapers can be roughly divided into several categories. The first includes papers that were more likely to include a photo (when news stories about the hunger strike were published on the front page): La Prensa (87.5% of the news articles included a photo), El Pais (66.7%), Le Figaro (66.7%), the South China Morning Post (65.7%), and the Helsingin Sanomat (60%). The Globe and Mail (41.7%) and The New York Times (36.4%) form the second category. The third category consists of papers that published less than a third (and even less than a quarter in some cases) of articles with a photo: The Irish Times (29.3%), The Times (24.5%), The Age (23.1%), Dagens Nyheter (23.1%), and Neue Zürcher Zeitung (21.4%). The Arab News (14.3%), and Die Welt in particular (7.1%) had the lowest ratio in regards to photos. However, these results are somewhat ambiguous, as the exact numbers are quite low. During the hunger strike, the majority of papers published seven or less news photos on their front pages. The Globe and Mail published ten and The Times 12 photos. The South China Morning Post (23) and The Irish Times (36) were the only papers with a larger amount of photos. However, it is interesting that papers with a geographical and/or
political distance were more likely to publish front page stories with a photo. This suggests that whenever the hunger strike was discussed, it was regarded as an important news story. In practice, this usually happened during the most dramatic events. Overall, the statistics reveal how each of the newspapers depicted the hunger strike. Coverage was carried out according to editorial practices. A more detailed look at each of the newspapers is discussed in Chapter 2.3.

The amount of front page news suggests that the hunger strike was a so-called top story, at least at some points. However, the statistics regarding editorials tell a bit of a different story. Excluding the The Irish Times, the hunger strike was commented on only occasionally. Even an event-filled May did not result in extensive newspaper editorials: only a few editorials were published by the majority of the papers. The hunger strike was an interesting topic, but not important enough to be discussed at length. The topic itself was probably somewhat problematic: the hunger strikers were prisoners with links to paramilitary organizations. Discussing such a topic was risky.

The sources used for news articles suggest that the hunger strike was followed and reported on but was not considered a really important news story. The underlying assumption here is that significant news stories are covered mainly by the papers’ own journalists. As figure 12 points out, the vast amount of material published was from international news agencies121 (with the exception of The Irish Times and The Times, which did not use agency material at all). This is obviously a question of resources, as not all newspapers had their own reporters in different parts of the world.

The Arab News, La Prensa and the South China Morning Post relied solely on material provided by different news agencies. These newspapers can be considered to be the most geographically and culturally distant. Cultural connections seem to be imperative, as other papers thousands of miles distant but having certain cultural connections (The Age, The Globe and Mail and The New York Times) had their own reporters on the case. The Age in particular relied less on news agencies.

121 News photos are not included in these statistics.
On a European level, the most interesting statistics are from El País and Neue Zürcher Zeitung, which used news agencies the least. Considering the otherwise narrow scope of European coverage, the emphasis on using stories written by their own journalists is worth noting. The fact that these papers reported on an event that was not considered to be significant using their own staff reveals something about the general editorial stance of the papers. They preferred using their own material.

All in all, it is significant that the hunger strike was covered in different parts of the world. The hunger strike was primarily a local conflict, so worldwide coverage was not a given. The patterns in news material published around the world are strikingly similar. This illustrates that the hunger strike was a media story that drew similar attention regardless of cultural contexts. The same events were considered dramatic, and therefore newsworthy (figures 13–15), but they also illustrate how the media can become immune to drama when an event continues without startling change. In May, many of the newspapers reported on the hunger strike in more colourful tones, whereas closer to the fall, the style of reporting was bland. Even death became routine news.

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122 Monthly numbers in appendix 5.
The figures reveal some facts about the international news coverage of the 1981 hunger strike in Northern Ireland. The amount of published material varied from 16 to 832 articles per newspaper during the same time. That is a significant difference. However, it primarily reveals only extremes. The big picture is much more complex. The previous chapters have revealed some aspects of how quantitative analysis can be useful.
Due to information provided in statistics we know several essential features about the coverage of the hunger strike. We now know that the conflict was followed worldwide, and that there were significant differences in different parts of the world. Based on statistics, we can assume that major news events are covered with more variety of material. We know which themes were the most discussed. We also know that the coverage changed during those months. An event that continues without change loses its news value. We can also assume that certain cultural and political factors determined the level of interest.
Fig. 15. The hunger strike gained wide coverage (The Irish Times 20.7.1981)
2.3 Conclusion

The quantity of coverage is a useful tool in finding out if something is considered to be worthy of public attention. The hunger strike was in many ways a unique event: it continued to draw attention for a longer period of time. Not many news topics are discussed several times a week for months, especially at an international level. It is only natural that significant differences in coverage will appear.

Roughly speaking, these newspapers can be divided into groups based on a quantitative analysis of news coverage. The Irish Times was in a class of its own. The Times was a clear second in news production. However, several international papers had more varied coverage, and those can thus be classified in the second group together with The Times. These are papers that clearly regarded the hunger strike as an important topic for news (The Age, The Globe and Mail, the Arab News, and the the South China Morning Post). The New York Times was also active in production, but the quality of its coverage was closer to those papers that reported on the event regularly but were not too keen on it. In addition, The New York Times, Dagens Nyheter, the Helsingin Sanomat and Le Figaro can be included in this group. There is only a small distinction between these papers and the other European papers (El Pais, Neue Zürcher Zeitung and Die Welt), which had lowers amount of coverage and reported on the event with a degree of caution. The last group consists of the papers that had a certain distance from the hunger strike, La Prensa and The Sowetan. There was a clear difference between these papers as well.

The statistics also suggest that there might be some correlation between interest in the hunger strike and the nature of the material published. Despite the interesting possibilities of such an analysis, these details are not the most relevant information in historical image research. The big picture – including a varied set of other factors – remains the main focus. Quantitative analysis provides a general overview of the main features of coverage in each newspaper.

It has already been mentioned on several occasions that The Irish Times was by far the most active in reporting on the hunger strike. The paper published plenty of varied material. For The Irish Times, the hunger strike was a top story. Depictions of the strike were abundant and it gained more attention than any other event during that time. The paper created a mental image of a significant event. This is unique among the newspapers examined here. The hunger strike was treated as local news, even more so than in The Times (which was reporting on a domestic event). This illustrates the specific nature of the circumstance, as it concerned an event in Northern Ireland in the British Isles.
The Times did not report on the hunger strike in a similar fashion. Even though the paper was the second most productive in many of the indicators, its coverage was not lengthy. For The Times, the hunger strike was a far less important news topic than for The Irish Times. It is noteworthy that after May, its interest in the hunger strike decreased considerably (figure 16). Even the dramatic events of July and August did not result in more coverage in the same way they did in other papers. The Times’ interest in the hunger strike did not last. As the strike continued, its newsworthiness diminished. The coverage of The Times reflects a conflict that was losing its significance as its coverage was more similar to that of international papers. Therefore, the clear differences between the two papers that were geographically closest to the conflict are significant. Based on the statistics, The Times seemed less interested in the hunger strike than The Irish Times. For The Times, the event had little bearing.

![The Times' monthly news coverage.](image)

Fig. 16. The Times’ monthly news coverage.

International newspapers were less active in reporting on the hunger strike. Minor events gained little attention and they simply had little effect abroad. However, several papers followed the event with interest. The overall coverage of The Age suggests that the hunger strike was seen as an interesting event. The Age was among the most productive papers in terms of coverage. The nature of its reports suggests the same: the hunger strike was front page news, and reports were more often written by its own reporters. Its coverage was relatively stable throughout the hunger strike (figure 17), and interest in the hunger strike did not drop as dramatically as it did in some of the other papers. The amount of news photos published was very small, but little use of photos was typical of the paper.
Fig. 17. The Age’s monthly news coverage of the hunger strike.

The Age’s active coverage of the hunger strike gave the impression that it was an important event. The Globe and Mail had a similar amount of coverage. The paper actively covered the hunger strike. The hunger strike gained front page publicity, and several news photos were used. In comparison to The Age, The Globe and Mail used slightly more photos. In this sense, both papers were following their own practices. The Globe and Mail used slightly more news agency material than The Age but the difference is not dramatic. Overall, both papers depicted the hunger strike as an interesting and newsworthy event.

The Arab News and the South China Morning Post were also active in reporting on the hunger strike. Both relied on news agency material, but as this was typical of international news in both papers, it does not lessen the importance given to the event. Both papers actively published articles on the front page. The clearest difference between the papers was the use of news photos: The South China Morning Post was more likely to publish photos. Again, both papers were following their own practices. The Arab News used slightly less photos in its pages, especially on the last page of the paper, which focused on international news. The hunger strike was often reported on the back page of the Arab News.

The New York Times was also among the most active papers in coverage. However, some indicators suggest that the paper was more moderate in its coverage in comparison to the above-mentioned papers. The amount of front page news and news photos was small, and news agency material was often used. Coverage of the strike did not stand out: depictions of the hunger strike were routine, even perfunctory. One must remember that The New York Times contained plenty of

123 The paper also covered international news on some inside pages.
news, and therefore, not all news stories could be given extensive attention. It is noteworthy that this conflict was not covered as widely as it was in many of the other papers. The difference is not large, but it is apparent.

(Continental) European newspapers were not as active in covering the event as the above-mentioned papers. Many indicators suggest an average style of reporting, but there are some interesting details that reveal differences in depictions. On a European level, the hunger strike was covered similarly in some aspects, but some indicators illustrate different patterns.

According to the statistics, the coverage of Dagens Nyheter was unexceptional in every aspect: the paper published stories on the front page on an average scale, the number of photos was average, and material was gathered both from own its staff and news agencies. There is nothing exceptional in the statistics, and the hunger strike was treated as an average news event. Reports on it did not differ from the general style of the paper.

In many respects, the coverage of the Helsingin Sanomat resembled that of the other Scandinavian papers. Some attention was given to the hunger strike but there was no significant interest in the event. Furthermore, the Helsingin Sanomat published fewer stories on the front page, and more news agency material was used. Both Dagens Nyheter and the Helsingin Sanomat had a similar way of reporting international news, so the small difference in coverage could suggest that the hunger strike was less appealing to the Helsingin Sanomat. However, this slight difference in coverage should not be ignored. Overall, there was interest in the hunger strike in the Helsingin Sanomat and Dagens Nyheter: the turns in events were reported on in both the papers, even moreso than in papers that were closer in geographical distance to the British Isles.

The coverage in Le Figaro was average. The quality of material published suggests that the hunger strike was seen as a somewhat newsworthy event. However, the relatively low amount of front page news suggests that it was not among the most important topics. The paper also used significantly more news agency material than reports by its own staff in reporting on events. This is significant as the paper usually preferred to use its own journalists in covering international news. For some reason, the hunger strike was only occasionally reported on in this way. This leaves the impression that there was no great level of interest in the hunger strike.

The coverage of El Pais was different to that of Le Figaro. The amount of coverage in El Pais was low, but the news material was more often written by a member of its own staff. In relation to the amount of news material, photos were
also used slightly more often. This creates the impression that El Pais was more interested in the event, even though the hunger strike was rarely reported on the front page. It is also noteworthy that after May, interest in the hunger strike decreased significantly. El Pais reported on the later months of the hunger strike with less coverage.

Neue Zürcher Zeitung’s coverage is a good indication of the nature of the paper. The amount of published material suggests less interest in the hunger strike, but when attention was given to the event, it was done in a more visible way. For instance, when the paper published a news photo, it was very likely to put it on the front page. The paper used reports by its own staff more often than news agency material. In this sense, the hunger strike was treated like any other news topic. It wasn’t mentioned as often as in many of the other papers. This suggests that when Neue Zürcher Zeitung reported on the event, it had something to say about it that was more significant.

Die Welt had also had a low amount of coverage. The quality of the material suggests that the hunger strike was not regarded as important: a small amount of news photos were published, and news agency material was preferred. The lack of photos was typical of the paper, but not the use of news agency material. Therefore, it is significant that almost 80% of its news articles came from news agencies. This suggests less interest in the topic.

The use of news agency material was typical in La Prensa’s international coverage, therefore it is understandable that all the news regarding the hunger strike was attained this way. The editorial practices of the paper explain the relatively high number of news photos in the paper, as it used more pictures in general. Overall, the coverage in La Prensa suggests that the hunger strike was newsworthy but not important.

The Sowetan had the lowest amount of coverage. Depictions of the strike appeared to be random and suggest that the hunger strike was not seen to be important. Only the most dramatic events, the first deaths, were worthy of coverage. Otherwise, the hunger strike did not gain attention.

It seems that the majority of the newspapers adopted their normal editorial practices while reporting on the hunger strike. Only The Irish Times strayed from its normal practices by publishing a vast amount of material. Based on statistics, it is significant that the hunger strike appeared to gain more attention outside Europe (with a few exceptions) than in continental Europe.

Statistics help reveal the basis of news phenomenon but they do not fully explain them. The above-mentioned statistics provide somewhat contradictory
results. They illustrate that despite its many advantages, quantitative analysis alone is not enough. On several occasions, the newspapers were more interested in occurrences related to the crisis than the hunger strike itself. This was the case particularly with The Times (this is discussed later in more detail). For the other papers, explanations are more diverse. As the hunger strike seemed to increase incidents of violence and provoke opinions, it is understandable that the media addressed topics such as these.

News coverage of the hunger strike roughly followed the same pattern in all of the papers: the turn of events was reported on with similar accounts of what was happening. The majority of news articles consisted of fact-oriented accounts of who had died, what kind of responses the event gained, and what was happening in the streets of Belfast. However, occasionally, each paper published some elements and contents that can be interpreted as expressions of opinion. These expressions, together with the way the news was narrated, reveal features that were typical of each paper. These features made each newspaper’s coverage distinctive. The differences between the papers were not large, but even the smallest variation can lead to different representations. Based on this, it is possible to outline the main characteristics of each paper’s coverage. Naturally, the method of comparison stresses the differences between the papers and it is does not exclude the fact that the papers did create somewhat different representations.

As this research\textsuperscript{124} is primarily focused on content-related meanings and how they are formed, a detailed quantitative content analysis is not essential. The main features and themes of the coverage can be detected by examining the material. It is possible to recognize continuous themes without an exact count of the statistics. Furthermore, the fundamental nature of international news material as an informative forum\textsuperscript{125} makes it more difficult to define news texts using singular attributes.\textsuperscript{126} News articles usually contain so many issues that it is not appropriate to attribute singular characteristics to them. Counting the ratios between individual

\textsuperscript{124}This research can also be viewed as a case study. The purpose is not to produce general statistical results but to examine the topic in an attempt to provide a thorough presentation of the case. A case study produces new research results of a topic by trying to explain how and why something occurred. For more information of case studies as a method, see Case study method: key issues, key texts 2000; Laine et al 2007

\textsuperscript{125}This means that international news pieces are often fact-oriented accounts of what has happened and where.

\textsuperscript{126}Some news articles were more difficult to categorize, as they occasionally mentioned other Northern Irish issues as well. For instance, violent incidents in some parts of the province which were not directly connected to the hunger strike were reported in the same news article. Such cases would distort quantitative analysis.
issues and analysing sentence structure could have been one approach in examining the coverage, as the vast amount of material would have provided large amounts of data. However, this kind of data would have not provided answers to the fundamental questions of this dissertation. An imagological approach is more interested in broader themes than singular occurrences. Therefore, the content here was analysed by identifying the continuous elements of coverage: which themes appeared regularly in newspaper depictions of the participants of the event and in explanations regarding why the hunger strike occurred. In addition, the content was analysed by examining the most obvious depictions, narratives and visual material. This was possible as the nature of the coverage in each of the newspapers was consistent during the whole hunger strike. The same features appeared continually, providing a conclusive evaluation of the contents.

The rest of this thesis can be viewed as content analysis: the contents are analysed by providing examples from each of the papers. However, the contents in fifteen newspapers includes a great deal of information, and it is impossible to focus on all of the content in this thesis. The focus is on the issues that stand out, thus providing visible examples of the mental images depicted by the newspapers. The main aim is not to explain why a singular paper reported on the event the way it did, but to illustrate how the same event can be viewed differently. The 1981 hunger strike was a news story that brought out different opinions. The following pages will examine some plausible reasons for these opinions.
3 Contextualizing the hunger strike

Throughout the hunger strike, all the newspapers represented the event as a campaign to achieve political status for the prisoners. The detailed demands of the prisoners were mentioned, but the focus was usually on larger issues. This gave the newspapers an opportunity to contextualize the hunger strike in differing ways. In other words, the newspapers depicted the causes of the hunger strike differently. Depending on the views of the paper in question, the hunger strike was considered either a cause or reflection of the Northern Irish conflict in general.

This chapter will take a look at how each newspaper described the hunger strike. The contexts depicted by the papers varied. Some emphasized violence and in others historical explanations for the conflict prevailed. It is also noteworthy that the level of contextualization was fragmented on many occasions. This kind of contextualization is revelatory, as it reveals more profound factors. A complex set of factors was in operation behind each newspaper’s depiction, as is reflected in each depiction.

In all the newspapers, coverage of the hunger strike was most prevalent during the turbulent weeks of the hunger strike. For example, the great majority of feature material – an element that created context – was published during May. The hunger strike was still considered dramatic in May. The dramatic nature of the conflict could have affected coverage. The emotional atmosphere was something that the media wanted to discuss. It made good news. Therefore, one must take into consideration that some of the context was created during these emotionally charged weeks. However, each newspaper continued to produce similar depictions, but in a more modest way. In a way, the drama brought out the stances of the papers more vividly. Contextualizations of the hunger strike are good illustrations of how a news story is assembled from small elements that create meaning when combined together. A newspaper is always the result of many people’s work, and they all bring their own nuances to news coverage. News stories are written consciously, but one must remember that some ideas are more subconscious (culturally adopted stereotypes about others, just to name one example). The news doesn’t reveal them but their possible influence needs to be taken into consideration.
3.1 Violent depictions of the hunger strike

The hunger strike was reported on in grim tones in many of the newspapers. The Times referred to it as false martyrdom\(^\text{127}\) and as suicide\(^\text{128}\) that served only the interests of the IRA\(^\text{129}\). The stance of The Times was the harshest of all the papers. The hunger strike was contextualized as being very violent. Additionally, Die Welt, Neue Zürcher Zeitung, The Globe and Mail and the South China Morning Post also highlighted the violent aspects.

These newspapers regarded the situation as a severe threat. The involvement of a paramilitary organization made it easier to assess the event in negative tones. It appears that the hunger strike was compared to violent conflicts in general.

Chapters 3.1.1 – 3.1.4 outline how the The Times, The Globe and Mail, the South China Morning Post, Die Welt, and Neue Zürcher Zeitung reported on the hunger strike by focusing on some examples of violent depictions. The hunger strike was strongly associated with themes like violence and conflict. Chapters 3.1.5 and 3.1.6 explore this coverage.

3.1.1 An act of terrorist propaganda

The overall mental image of the hunger strike as depicted by The Times was that it was an isolated incident that had no connection to the Northern Irish conflict or history in general. The lack of this kind of contextualization can be regarded as a clear statement.

The mental image relayed of the hunger strike by The Times depicted it as an Irish weapon by which the Irish attempted to achieve their goals. The Times depicted the hunger strike as a form of violence.\(^\text{130}\) The paper was concerned with how the British authorities were coping with the hunger strike. According to the paper, the government had been patient and flexible, and there was no reason for further concessions. It felt that the prisoners were the ones who had to accept the situation, as they had no judicial grounds for their demands.\(^\text{131}\) One of the main points of coverage in The Times during the strike was to find someone to blame. From the

\(^{127}\) "Ten wasted lives" (editorial) The Times 5.10.1981
\(^{128}\) E.g. The Times 24.4.1981
\(^{129}\) The Times 23.7.1981

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paper’s point of view, this lay with the IRA. The depiction of the IRA as a master of manipulation has been regarded as characteristic of the British media in general. During the most intensive period, the hunger strike was directly connected to terrorism. The paper emphasized the role of the IRA and was, therefore, able to treat the hunger strike as a terrorist event.

The Times’ reaction to the hunger strike can be viewed as an explicit example of how the British in general regarded the event. According to LIZ CURTIS, both British politicians and media emphasized that the hunger strike had emerged without any obvious reason. She has concluded in her research that the British tended to explain everything as being IRA propaganda. The findings in this dissertation agree with Curtis’s conclusion. The Times did indeed repeatedly discuss the propaganda issue:

It is a brilliant propaganda coup for the Provisional IRA. It authenticates their H-block protest as never before. More than that. The value they will put on the face of it is that the nationalist electors of Ireland do not merely back the Provisionals in their heart of hearts but, given the chance, come out en masse to vote for them.

They portray him in a sympathetic light, as do many of the stories told by his prison friends. He was described by one as a quiet man with a passionate political commitment. As part of their propaganda campaign, Sinn Fein claimed he had memorized Leon Uris’s book Trinity and for two hours over eight nights had shouted to his fellow-prisoners to keep them entertained.

The republicans’ flair for propaganda is not confined to issuing statements, which when they deal with incidents, are often reliable and accurate. At the recent funeral of the hunger striker, Martin Hurson, the republicans erected scaffolding for the press in the little country churchyard where he was buried, so that cameramen could have an uncluttered view of the Provisional IRA’s defiant graveside volley.

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132 Curtis 1984, 128
133 “Hunger strikers and the Church”. (editorial) The Times 27.5.1981
134 Curtis 1984, 202–204
137 Tim Jones, "Sympathy turns to alienation in republic" (feature) The Times 3.8.1981
These few examples demonstrate how The Times focused on one aspect in the story: the hunger strike was a calculated campaign of the IRA. This partiality was also revealed in the way the paper awakened sympathy towards victims of IRA violence. The Times rarely depicted republicans as victims. On several occasions, the paper described the hunger strike as a propaganda war. However, it only saw one participant in that war.

Several studies have posited that the British press did not contextualize the Northern Irish question within the past due to political reasons. In addition, the British have traditionally considered themselves the good actors who have helped the Northern Irish every way they could. These previous studies have generalized British attitudes. From the point of view of this dissertation, such a generalization requires more examination. However, it seems that the attitude of The Times towards the hunger strike is similar: the paper’s depictions agreed with political voices in Britain.

When politicians expressed their opinions regarding the situation in Ireland, The Times was not keen to question them further. As a conservative paper, The Times was not willing to go against the position taken by authorities. Had The Times contextualized the hunger strike within history and included the views of other parties, it would also have had to discuss the role of British authorities in Northern Ireland’s troubled past. During the conflict, a newspaper in favour of the government did not want to arouse distrust. In the case of Northern Ireland, The Times preferred to view the government as a national rather than a political actor. To support the stance of the authorities was the main motive.

In part, the stance of The Times can be explained with the involvement of the IRA. The paper wanted to condemn the organisation it considered to be terrorist. This is a common practice among the media. Still, it does not explain the lack of historical and political contextualization. The lack of contextualization in conflict and war is often explained by the necessity of focusing on reporting during chaotic events. Even if the hunger strike was not a war, it has been seen that in conflicts connected to terrorism, the media acts in ways similar to those during war. The Times considered the hunger strike to be a terrorist event. Therefore, the paper’s

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138 Curtis 1984, 112–113
139 Curtis 1984, 107; Elliott 1977, 318; Miller 1994a, 282–283
140 O’Malley 1990, 205
141 The majority of news reports published by The Times were based on statements from officials.
142 Machin & Niblock 2006, 101
143 Eg. Carruthers 2000, 164
response and coverage of the event can be regarded as a normal reaction to the conflict. For The Times, the hunger strikers were the enemy that threatened British society.

The stance of The Times was based on a conception of the hunger strike as terrorism. It is hardly a coincidence that the British authorities shared this opinion. The Times created a mental image that provided no explanatory context to the hunger strike. According to the paper, there were no “outside factors” that could have caused the situation. For example, the historical background or British actions were not discussed. The lack of context was a question of attitude.

3.1.2 ‘Bloodbath’

The most prominent element in the coverage of The Globe and Mail was the violent aspect of the hunger strike. It reported on violence against soldiers and police as a continuous feature in news articles. The experiences of reporters within the violence were discussed, and forceful words (“Irish bloodbath feared”144, “bloodpath to follow”145) were used. It also criticized the situation in stating that this was not the way to solve the troubles.146 The hunger strike was clearly viewed through a lens of violence: the paper expressed violence with concrete elements (words and photos) as well as with connotative descriptions.

The Globe and Mail definitely regarded the hunger strike as a cause of the strained atmosphere. For example, the paper discussed how conversations between ordinary people focused on the hunger strike.147 Interestingly, on some occasions the paper pointed to the Catholics in particular as being violent148, even though it did recognize the many parties of the conflict149. As the hunger strike had a very republican label, it might have been easy to connect religion to the republicans.

The Globe and Mail’s judgement against the hunger strike was clear:

Bobby Sands is not dying because of the tyranny of the British. He is sacrificing himself for the political advantage of a terrorist organization.150

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144 The Globe and Mail 1.5.1981
148 E.g. The Globe and Mail 2.5.1981
The Globe and Mail described the Maze “as a modern prison in which the prisoners have no reasons to complain”\(^\text{151}\). In the early stages of the hunger strike, The Globe and Mail did see the complexity of the issue, stating that there were within the same prison prisoners with varied advantages.\(^\text{152}\) Nevertheless, violence was the main element. The depictions in the paper were strong:

> There really can be no compromise on this. Someone who shoots down another man in cold blood on his doorstep, in full view of his family, simply because he happens to worship God in a marginally different way, is no hero fighting a war of liberation. He is a murderer, a thug, and when convicted by the courts becomes a convicted thug.

… The hard men were robbed of a Christmas season bloodbath by the last-minute decision of a prior group of hunger strikers to live rather than die. This time, with Bobby Sands, they feel lucky. They will have their corpse, and feed of it.\(^\text{153}\)

The paper created a mental image in which the hunger strikers were responsible for the horrific events. These coloured, and sometimes misleading, depictions are typical when images of an enemy are created. Even though the hunger strike was not a direct threat from a Canadian point of view, the depictions in the paper had attributes that seemed to portray a threat. The Globe and Mail considered hunger strikers to be dangerous. They were associated with extreme violence. In comparison to The Times, it is noteworthy that The Globe and Mail did not illustrate the role of the IRA in the same way. Connections between the organisation and the hunger strike were drawn, but they were not the primary focus. The violent atmosphere gained most of the attention.

However, towards its end, causes to the hunger strike were questioned. According to The Globe and Mail, the longer the strike went on, the more obvious the political nature of it.\(^\text{154}\) The paper did also occasionally try to explain the situation in a historical context.\(^\text{155}\) Nevertheless, the overall coverage had an emphasis on violence. The paper depicted the situation as pointless and gloomy.


The contextualization of The Globe and Mail is interesting in many ways. Despite the geographical distance to the conflict itself, the coverage was intense. The paper expressed its opinions in strong tones. Distance partly enabled this commentary, but there had to be reasons why the conflict was viewed in such a manner. On one level, the reasons were apparent in the editorial practices of the paper. Furthermore, Canadian culture and its close relation and history with Great Britain could have explained this stance.

The vast majority of news and feature articles in The Globe and Mail were written by Jeffrey Simpson. Hence, the experiences of a single reporter had a major role in coverage of the event. This is an aspect that applies to the majority of the international coverage. However, in some cases, the impact is greater than in others. Jeffrey Simpson admitted that he faced dangerous situations during his stay in Northern Ireland. Similar conditions have been described by many journalists. They stated that they learned to live with them. Jeffrey Simpson had just arrived in Ireland when the hunger strike started. For him, the situation was new. It is almost impossible to assess if that had any effect on the nature of his coverage. However, from a Canadian perspective, he was experiencing a conflict that seemed endless. Such a hopeless perspective made the issue less attractive in the eyes of a larger audience.

Simpson himself was interested in the situation, and that showed in his many investigative articles. He wanted to explain it. The reports were based on his own experiences, but also on broader perceptions that prevailed in his own country. The reports were supported by news photos selected by the photo editors in Toronto. Riots, violence and other signs of disturbance were the most common themes in the photos.

The result was a violent depiction of the situation. From The Globe and Mail’s perspective, the hunger strike was predominantly a violent conflict. It is plausible that interest in the situation was partly a reason why the violent aspect was emphasized: dramatic incidents easily dominate news content. However, as the

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156 Interview with Jeffrey Simpson. Email 23.10.2014
158 Interview with Jeffrey Simpson. Email 23.10.2014
159 Ibid.
160 See appendix 6.
paper seemed to view the hunger strike as a criminal event, this stance colored the
tone of its content.

3.1.3 The hunger strike as a cause of the conflict

The South China Morning Post viewed the hunger strike as a fight by the IRA to
end Northern Ireland’s links with Britain.161 The hunger strike itself only acted as
a reminder of this fight:

And after the recent terrorist killings of more Northern Ireland policemen and
an attack on a British army vehicle resulting in a soldier losing both legs, it is
impossible to consider the perpetrators as any other than criminals. Those who
indulge in acts like this can expect no mercy from the state. Yet the hunger
strikers serve to remind us that we are still a long way from finding an overall
solution162

The South China Morning Post called Northern Ireland “a disgrace”163. The paper
presented a grim view of the conflict. Headlines such as “No end to the Irish
tragedy”164 and “…a miracle to end this war”165 described the situation in a
negative light. The South China Morning Post created a context by discussing
political and religious conflict 166 but gave less attention to the historical
background. The stance taken by the South China Morning Post towards the
conflict was one of futility. The paper questioned the conflict in many ways and it
even discussed the role and benefits of the presence of the British army in Northern
Ireland167. The hunger strike was seen as one indication of this difficult situation.

In many ways, the hunger strike was almost a subplot in the coverage of the
paper. The news articles published by the South China Morning Post were quite
factual in nature. However, the editorials and feature articles represented the
situation in stronger tones. These created a context of conflict. The hunger strike

161 E.g. South China Morning Post 1.5.1981
162 "No end to the Irish tragedy" (editorial) South China Morning Post 6.8.1981
163 Flora Lewis, "Ulster crying out for act of statesmanship” (feature) South China Morning Post
26.5.1981
164 “No end to the Irish tragedy” (editorial) South China Morning Post 6.8.1981
165 Stephen Webbe, “Wanted: a miracle to end this war” (feature) South China Morning Post
28.8.1981
166 Jeff Bradley & Ed Blanche, "When church gives ‘benefit of the doubt’ (feature) South China
Morning Post 1.5.1981; "Still searching for a solution” (editorial) South China Morning Post
6.5.1981; "Deepening divisions in Ireland” (editorial) South China Morning Post 13.5.1981
167 "Why does Britain oblige the IRA” (editorial) South China Morning Post 21.5.1981
was depicted in a negative light. For example, after the Irish elections, a news article described the result by focusing on the criminal record of the elected (figure 18). The headline was strong, and the text included several references to the violent nature of the conflict:

It lost one seat to a convicted terrorist behind bars in neighbouring Ulster and was expected to lose another to a terrorist hunger striker in a major propaganda coup for the outlawed Irish Republican Army.168

News stories regarding the hunger strike described it with factual information. They contained some detailed descriptions that usually focused on elements that created strong criminal associations:

He won one of the four seats in Louth, a county bordering Northern Ireland’s Armagh country, where the IRA has killed more than 60 British soldiers in its terror campaign to end British rule in the province and reunite it with the Republic.169

A literally irrelevant fact was in this way connected to the hunger strike, thus creating a violent description.

168 South China Morning Post 14.6.1981
169 Ibid.
The factual nature of the news reports can be explained by the use of news agency material. Similar characteristics were found in other newspapers as well, but it is noteworthy that violent depictions were often selected.

As the South China Morning Post relied solely on agency news, the role of commentary in creating mental images strengthened. The background of writers could have influenced the tone. As it turned out, the feature articles published in the South China Morning Post consisted of articles written by several western journalists. Most of them were either British or American. Feature articles were also often provided by the news agencies. Interestingly, in addition to Reuters and AP, the South China Morning Post used several articles from the news service of The New York Times. The same reporters also wrote articles about the hunger strike that were published in The New York Times. The South China Morning Post

170 Anthony Lewis and Bernard Weinraub
also published a few articles from British papers\textsuperscript{171}. With this in mind, the conflicting and somewhat violent contextualization of the coverage is more readily explained.

The editorial stance of the paper resulted in such articles being published, and they were chosen to support the stance of the paper. Hence they can be regarded as representative of the paper’s stance in general. Their content did not differ from the attitudes expressed in editorials.

The coverage of the South China Morning Post is a good example of how international media operates. The material is collected from several agencies. The context provided by these writings is often fragmented. In Hong Kong, the hunger strike was a distant event that did not affect the everyday life of citizens. However, the event was closely followed, which indicates that it had some importance. The contents of commentary in particular suggests that the paper depicted the hunger strike as a part of the Northern Irish conflict in general, and thus the attention given to violence seems natural.

### 3.1.4 Threatening the status quo

Due to an almost total lack of commentary in regards to the hunger strike, the contextualization of the event in German-language newspapers was more modest than in papers that discussed the topic in editorials and feature articles. Additionally, the style of news reports in German papers was compact. However, there are some indicators regarding the stance that Die Welt and Neue Zürcher Zeitung took.

Die Welt viewed the event as an IRA attempt to gain more power.\textsuperscript{172} According to the paper, Northern Ireland was on the verge of a civil war.\textsuperscript{173} In stating this, the paper suggested that a two-way conflict existed. To be more precise, Die Welt claimed that Northern Ireland was only on the verge of war (it stated that the county was not at war), so in this sense the prisoners’ demands (as prisoners of war) were not relevant.\textsuperscript{174} In this way, the paper adopted a similar viewpoint to that expressed by British officials.

In comparison to Die Welt, Neue Zürcher Zeitung took a similar stance but used stronger tones. Neue Zürcher Zeitung claimed that the IRA was using the

\textsuperscript{171}The Guardian and Financial Times
\textsuperscript{172}Die Welt 4.5.1981
\textsuperscript{173}Die Welt 28.4.1981
\textsuperscript{174}Fritz Wirth “Ulster bangt jetzt vor einer neuen Explosion der Gewalt” (feature) Die Welt 6.5.1981
hunger strike as a means of extortion.\textsuperscript{175} The paper portrayed the IRA as the major actor in the conflict. According to the paper, the main aim of the IRA’s propaganda was to get the international (especially the US) media to pressure the British government.\textsuperscript{176} Neue Zürcher Zeitung claimed that the hunger strikers had not died by their own will.\textsuperscript{177} In other words, the paper considered the IRA in general to be dictating events.

Even though Neue Zürcher Zeitung took a strong stance regarding the causes of the hunger strike, it did see the complex nature of it. It briefly discussed the complex history of the troubles\textsuperscript{178}, giving some historical context to the conflict. The hunger strike was considered to be a particular Irish tradition.\textsuperscript{179} However, this kind of coverage aimed not to expand knowledge of the issue itself, but focused on how the situation was not desirable. Political requirements were the main focus for Neue Zürcher Zeitung. This was clearly apparent in the way the political aspect was emphasized. For instance, the front page of Neue Zürcher Zeitung most often dealt with political issues related to the event.\textsuperscript{180} It appeared that violence was threatening the political status quo.

The German language papers provided somewhat similar contexts for the hunger strike. Both papers saw it as endangering the status quo. In a way, political change was not welcome. The lack of explanatory context in the coverage of Die Welt might have been a consequence of a custom adopted by German newspapers during the 1970’s. According to SUSAN L CARRUTHERS, the German press published only official statements during actions against the Red Army Faction (RAF).\textsuperscript{181} Therefore, it seems plausible that a certain editorial attitude against paramilitary organisations existed. It is notable that Die Welt’s depiction of the IRA resembled their depictions of the RAF during that domestic conflict, but it is difficult to draw definite conclusions. It is noteworthy that similar findings have been found in other research. This suggests that the press made a conscious decision to depict paramilitary organisations in a certain manner.

Both Die Welt and Neue Zürcher Zeitung have become known for their serious approach towards news stories. The contextualization of the hunger strike reflects

\textsuperscript{\footnotesize{175}} Neue Zürcher Zeitung 23.4.1981  
\textsuperscript{\footnotesize{176}} Neue Zürcher Zeitung 6.5.1981  
\textsuperscript{\footnotesize{177}} Neue Zürcher Zeitung 13.8.1981  
\textsuperscript{\footnotesize{178}} Neue Zürcher Zeitung 6.5.1981  
\textsuperscript{\footnotesize{179}} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{\footnotesize{180}} See appendix 7.  
\textsuperscript{\footnotesize{181}} Carruthers 2000, 188
the same: it was a news story in which depictions were cautious. It is noteworthy that papers that have been praised for their courage in expressing their opinions were more cautious in this case. It suggests that the topic was regarded as difficult. Both papers reported on the event irregularly\textsuperscript{182} and they seemed more likely to report on the most negative aspects: deaths and violent incidents. For this reason, the papers’ mental image of the hunger strike was dominated by these aspects.

3.1.5 How discourses of violence form

The depictions of violence in regards to the hunger strike provide a good opportunity to examine media coverage from a discoursive point of view. The mental image created by The Times in particular, discussed in chapter 3.1.1, is a good example of how representations are created by choosing certain types of words. Those words construct a context that is used to give meaning to the issue. The coverage of The Times is full of examples\textsuperscript{183} where linguistic and associative means are used to create a representation that is particularly violent. To demonstrate the idea behind this conclusion, let’s take a closer look at the last sentences of one editorial that was published when the health of Bobby Sands had started to deteriorate rapidly. The paper wrote:

"Yet he is dying and if he dies now will die by no hand other than his own. It is a hand that was active in the service of an organization, the provisional IRA, which maims and murders for its own ends with a readiness that holds the lives of others cheaper than cattle."\textsuperscript{184}

The editorial includes several expressions that have emotional bearing. This is not a factual account. The message is clear: he (Bobby Sands) is a part of a murderous group that has no respect for others. The sentences rely on previous stereotypes and mental images: they associate Bobby Sands with the crimes committed by the IRA in general. This use of association and the utilization of already existent perceptions is typical of discoursive contructions. The very basic idea of discourse analysis is that all representations are conscious stories which are based on discoursive structures recognised by the intended audience. Words and sentences are formed to create meaning. The process of creating meaning always includes a social dimension: it reflects contexts on many levels. The above-mentioned sentences can

\textsuperscript{182} In comparison to the majority of the other papers examined in this thesis.
\textsuperscript{183} Only some of them are quoted throughout the thesis.
\textsuperscript{184} “The politics of suicide” (editorial) The Times 24.4.1981
be viewed in light of this idea. In addition to the immediate textual context, the editorial needs to be viewed within broader contexts as well. RUTH WODAK states that representations consist of social, institutional and historical frames and contexts.185 The tone of writing may reflect several discursive contexts. The stance of The Times in general (towards Northern Ireland and/or the IRA) could reflect habits of journalism in general, the atmosphere of a specific situation, the sociopolitical circumstances of British society and other contexts. The aforementioned quotation, as well as the coverage of The Times, was constructed in these multilayered contexts.

Many scholars186 have discussed the media’s treatment of violent situations and incidents this can be viewed almost as its own genre. News regarding conflict tends to include recognizable elements such as naming the participants, especially the active perpetrators, and judging who is good and who is bad. TEUN A VAN DIJK has found that the media assigns positive and negative roles for participants of a news event. The media creates significant meaning by emphasizing these roles.187 In analysing the depictions of The Times it becomes evident that the negative role assigned to the hunger strikers was highlighted through word choice, association and other elements. This is one discoursive layer of The Times’ coverage. Another layer is in the paper’s general attitude towards the Northern Irish question: several studies188 have found that it was typical of The Times to represent issues regarding Northern Ireland in violent and judgemental tones. In addition, other scholars189 have found that similar attitudes were common among the British media in general. Negative attitudes toward the hunger strike190 and the Northern

185 E.g. Wodak 2001, 67
186 Writings from e.g. Tim Allen, Susan L Carruthers and Jean Seaton have been helpful in this research. Their works examine how the media operates during conflict and how the relationship between the media and other actors can be multifaceted. The media’s treatment of terrorism-related incidents is also discussed in Chapter 4.4 of this research.
187 E.g. van Dijk 1989, 213–214
188 E.g. Apassi & Soubiale 2006; Mulcahy 1995
189 The British media’s coverage of the Northern Irish troubles have been studied extensively. All studies take a similar stance towards the issue regardless of what media has been studied. The British media have traditionally relied on official sources, thus providing a one-sided account of the events. Some have even described the actions of the British as manufacturing propaganda. The book War and Words: the Northern Ireland media reader (1996) edited by Bill Rolston and David Miller is a revealing compilation of the media coverage of the conflict. See also e.g. Curtis 1984; Elliott 1977; Lelourec 2003; Miller 1994a; Miller 1994b.
190 As the aim is to focus on the reasons behind the coverage of The Times, it is irrelevant to compare The Times’ coverage of the hunger strike with other British media. Again we must remember that historical image research is not interested in which mental image is the most correct.
Irish question were generally prevalent. The findings of this dissertation support these previous studies. The more detailed content analysis of this study and its emphasis on explanatory factors reinforces the idea that The Times’ stance towards Northern Ireland at that time reflected broader issues. The discursive decisions suggest that there might be some broader sociopolitical causes behind the The Times’s depiction of the hunger strike. Here, discourse means manner and tone, how something is reported. From this point of view, The Times’s discourse was dominated by violence and other negative aspects, which were partly based on issues that had nothing to do with the hunger strike per se.

In analysing the coverage of The Times and comparing it with other newspapers in this research, one must remember that The Times was in a very different situation compared to the other papers. It was the only paper that had to deal with the conflict as a domestic issue. This was probably a major reason why the paper took a much stronger stance towards the event.

On the other hand, the negative depictions of violence in some of the international newspapers are intriguing. These papers were not dealing with a domestic conflict, yet their coverage had similar tones to The Times. Whether their stances were also based on sociopolitical factors can be further explored, as is done below.

3.1.6 The possible influence of experiences with domestic conflict

The Times unilaterally focused on the hunger strike as an act of propaganda. The verdict was apparent. The paper did not even consider any other alternatives in explaining the situation. The Globe and Mail had a clear interpretation of the situation. According to The Globe and Mail, the hunger strike was an attempt to up the political advantage of a terrorist organisation. From the perspective of The Globe and Mail the hunger strike was “becoming a grotesque caricature of a noble action.” The South China Morning Post called the situation ruinous. As a whole, the paper was more concerned over the violent causes and consequences of the hunger strike. A somewhat similar emphasis was found in the coverage of the German language papers, Die Welt and Neue Zürcher Zeitung. They both emphasized the threatening nature of the hunger strike. Hence, these newspapers

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193 “Deepening divisions in Ireland” (editorial) South China Morning Post 13.5.1981
constructed a negative context for the hunger strike. Violent aspects dominated their coverage. They referred to chaos and disorder and did not discuss possible historical and political causes. This in turn emphasized the unjustified nature of the event. In other words, the papers saw no excuse for the violence. These stances were a result of a set of factors, but they were hardly a coincidence, as these papers existed in societies that had experienced domestic disturbances of their own.

There was one clear difference between these papers. Whereas The Times focused solely on one aspect of the event, the other newspapers briefly considered other elements. This difference was due to the fact that The Times was facing a current, domestic threat, whereas the others had some distance from the event itself. The Times thought that it had to constantly counterattack against its opponent.

Violent incidents during the hunger strike were a common theme in newspapers all over the world. This provides one lens through which to view the situation. Some newspapers put more emphasis on violence than others. The coverage in The Times, The Globe and Mail, the South China Morning Post, Die Welt, and Neue Zürcher Zeitung can be viewed as narratives of violence: all the papers highlighted violent incidents and used terminology that can be regarded as violent. The discursive context was dominated by negativity: violence against innocents and the criminality of the hunger strikers and the IRA. The coverage in these papers focused on such themes, which created a context of violence for the event. Naturally, each newspaper had their own reasons for doing so, but it is interesting to examine if there were more general reasons behind this contextualization. The narrative of the hunger strike as a violent phenomenon is similar to that of news regarding conflict in general. Therefore, it is plausible that these papers associated the hunger strike with experiences during other conflicts. Those experiences might have created a mindset that was reflected in the coverage of this event.

On a broader level, the depictions of violence in all of these newspapers offer a chance to examine the significance of experiences of domestic conflict in different societies. The Times is the most clear example of this. The conflict in Northern Ireland shaped judgments in Britain to the extent that Northern Ireland became a synonym for bad news. Opposition towards the conflict was so strong that the British distanced themselves from it. Northern Ireland was not considered to belong to the same community. The Times’ depiction of the hunger strike included a clear enemy. Images of the enemy are constructed by emphasizing the otherness of one’s

Lelourec 2003,123
opponent in relation to one’s own community. Geographical closeness and a shared history – preferably full of conflict – strengthen this image of the enemy.195 With this in mind, the depiction of the hunger strike by The Times is an archetype of this image construction.

From a British perspective, the domestic conflict was long-lasting and ongoing. This only strengthened images of the enemy. Connections to the conflict proved to be a decisive factor. However, it is noteworthy that in some other societies that had also experienced domestic conflict, stances towards the hunger strike were also negative. The involvement of the IRA connected the hunger strike to terrorism.196 This connection was reflected particularly in the news coverage of The Globe and Mail and Die Welt.

About a decade before the hunger strike, Canada experienced a brief period of separatist terrorism when the Quebec Liberation Front (FLQ) sought to separate Quebec from the rest of the country.197 Essentially, the demands made by the FLQ were similar to those of the IRA. Taking this into consideration, the negativity in Canada in regards to the hunger strike is understandable. Even though the threat of domestic terrorism was defeated relatively quickly198, a certain attitude remained. Public opinion favoured other means to seek political change.199 The Globe and Mail seemed to agree with this idea.

About the same time, West Germany had faced the rise of the Red Army Faction (RAF) that became known for many violent incidents.200 A general stance against terrorism was adopted by the German media. According to GROENEWOLD, Die Welt argued in 1975 that “any humanizing portrayal of the terrorists was irresponsible and unintelligent”.201 Even though this judgment referred to the RAF, it is likely that international terrorists were treated in the same way. Additionally, officials in West Germany regarded hunger striking as a form of blackmail.202 Therefore, attitudes towards the IRA and the hunger strikers were uncompromising. Die Welt’s depiction of the 1981 hunger strike clearly reflected this.

195 Wunsh 2001, 166–167
196 The aspect of terrorism is discussed also in Chapter 4.4
197 Lutz & Lutz 2008, 105
198 Ibid.
199 Ross 1995, 293
200 Lutz – Lutz 2008, 139
201 Groenewald 1993, 142
202 Groenewold 1993, 145
The treatment of the hunger strike in The Times, The Globe and Mail, and Die Welt was probably a result of conscious and unconscious reactions to these experiences. These newspapers acted in ways they had previously in threatening situations. These reactions combined with existing political relations helped explain the nature of contextualization in regards to the hunger strike.

The coverage of Neue Zürcher Zeitung also revealed a contextualization constructed around terrorism. Switzerland had not had any notable experience of domestic terrorism, but because of its international connections the country had had to deal with terrorism. The Swiss stance opposed terrorism. As a conservative paper, Neue Zürcher Zeitung followed this official line.

The stance of the South China Morning Post was a result of slightly different circumstances. Western terrorism was not relevant from its point of view. However, Hong Kong had had its own domestic disturbances. During the 1970s in particular, Hong Kong witnessed a rise in the amount of crime. Society was undergoing change, and authorities took a more hard-lined approach. It has been said that the South China Morning Post often expressed viewpoints that were similar to government policy. However, editorial factors likely had more effect. The paper had a particularly western way of operation. This explains the quite frequent commentary regarding the hunger strike.

Overall, contextualizations of violence were partly results of experiences with conflict. Based on these experiences, these newspapers regarded the hunger strike primarily as an act carried out by the IRA. It must be emphasized that although these decisions were made by the newspapers themselves, societal contexts also played a role. This demonstrates how news publishing is affected by a complex set of factors.

However, experience with domestic conflict does not mean that the media would inherently oppose any conflict.

Attitudes towards domestic terrorism in different countries

The events in Northern Ireland affected the Irish Republic as well. The conflict had a very domestic nature in the Republic. Coverage in the Irish Times provides a good illustration of how a closely experienced conflict can be viewed from different

203 Stahel 1993, 206–207
204 Broadhurst 2000, electronic document
205 World Press Encyclopedia 1982, 448
angles. The paper did report on the violent aspects of the event but the focus was elsewhere. This did not mean that The Irish Times was supporting the hunger strike. Primarily, it suggests that experiencing conflict alone is not enough to explain the adoption of a stance in opposition to it. Similar hypotheses can be made of some other papers as well.

Spain and France\(^{206}\) have both experienced similar nationalist conflicts. In particular, the controversy in the Basque area has been compared with the Northern Irish question.\(^{207}\) The ETA’s\(^{208}\) violent strategies have been seen similar to those of the IRA.\(^{209}\) Taking this into consideration, one could assume that the Spanish media would have a very opposed stance towards paramilitary organizations in general. However, this was not the case. El Pais did recognise the violent aspects of the hunger strike but it depicted them as a ‘normal’ part of the conflict. The hunger strike was not supported by the paper. Le Figaro took a similar stance.

In the USA, the biggest concern was international terrorism, and domestic incidents were more uncommon. The New York Times shared this concern in general but the hunger strike was not viewed from this perspective alone. It seems that the conflict was not regarded as a ‘real’ threatening conflict. La Prensa also had an unconcerned attitude in regard to the hunger strike, even though Argentina itself had struggled with internal conflicts.\(^{210}\) Societal circumstances were not always reflected in the contextualization of the hunger strike. The same can be said of the Arab News and The Sowetan, located within societies that had experienced political disturbances. The papers’ coverage suggests that conflicts are not treated similarly by the media. Similar conditions do not result in a similar stance. Each newspaper has its own reasons for depicting events the way it does.

However, it seems more likely that the papers here that had no experience with major domestic (terrorism related) conflict – Dagens Nyheter, the Helsingin Sanomat and The Age – were more likely not to highlight the violent nature of the situation. For instance, in Scandinavia, problems were solved differently: violence

\(^{206}\) The National Liberation Front of Corsica (NLFC), which aimed to separate Corsica from France, launched violent attacks during the 1970s. Its emergence led to counteractions. Guelke 2001, 244–245

\(^{207}\) Keating 2001, 181

\(^{208}\) Euskadi ta Askatasuna is an armed organization that has attempted to gain independence for the Basque country.

\(^{209}\) Both have attacked the same targets (police, army, civilians, economic), but while the IRA has mainly limited their attacks to England, the ETA has the whole of Spain as a target. Keating 2001, 194–195

\(^{210}\) The so called ‘Dirty War’ (1976–83) was a period of state violence: tens of thousands of people were killed and disappeared when the military dictatorship acted against suspected opponents.
was not an option. This was perhaps reflected in Dagens Nyheter’s and the Helsingin Sanomat’s astonished reactions to the violence.

Why did The Times, The Globe and Mail, the South China Morning Post, Die Welt, and Neue Zürcher Zeitung emphasize the violent nature of the hunger strike? Their experiences with domestic violence could have been one factor, but most likely other factors were involved as well. Similar experiences did not necessarily result in similar attitudes towards the hunger strike.

3.2 Historical relations with Britain as a context

The Age and The Irish Times were the most thorough in creating a historical context for the hunger strike. However, these two diverged in the way they constructed this context. The Age created the mental image that Northern Ireland’s chaotic past was responsible for the contemporary situation. The Irish Times depicted the hunger strike as one battle in an ongoing battle. Both papers considered the hunger strike a clear result of troubled relations between Northern Ireland and Britain. However, it is hardly a mere coincidence that the two newspapers, which each existed in cultures that had their own frictions with Britain, were the ones that regarded the British as one piece of the puzzle.

Chapter 3.2.1 sums up the main traits of coverage in The Irish Times, while chapter 3.2.2 discusses the central aspects of The Age’s coverage. Only a selection of examples are used to illustrate the nature of its coverage. However, similar trends were typical of the rest of the coverage. These papers were the only ones that provided a historical and societal context for the hunger strike. Chapter 3.2.3 discusses whether this was due to political relations in general.

3.2.1 One episode in a long and complex battle

The Irish Times regarded the hunger strike as one part of a long struggle.211 According to The Irish Times, the conflict had its roots in the 1920s.212 When the hunger strike ended, the paper claimed that “…hunger strike was not won or lost, merely chapter one in larger battle”213. This summarizes well the stance of the paper:

212 “Reliving history” (editorial) The Irish Times 7.5.1981
213 Ed Maloney, ”The battle fot Catholic minds and hearts” (feature) The Irish Times 10.10.1981
it discussed the hunger strike within a broader contextualization. On one hand, it stated that the prison dispute was long-running and that there were prisoners with a special category status. On the other hand, it stated that the strike had little to do with the (five) demands of the prisoners. Although on one hand the Irish Times understood why the conflict had risen, at the same time it questioned it. The Irish Times was able to depict the situation from several points of view. This is an indication of how the paper’s stance towards Irish identity had developed. JEAN MERCEREAU has noted that the paper claimed allegiance both to Ireland and Britain. Its definition of Irish identity was not based on exclusiveness. The Irish Times did not support the hunger strike itself but was able to portray it within a broader context. In comparison to the rest of the papers, the broad context in The Irish Times was possibly due to its already vast coverage of the situation in Northern Ireland. However, the paper chose to provide such a broad context. This is a significant indication that the hunger strike was considered a major event, and the historical context was to blame.

The Irish Times regarded the IRA as a major player in the situation. It viewed the hunger strike as a successfully publicised political move and as the most powerful and persuasive weapon of the Provisionals. According to the paper, “the Northern Ireland problem is seen worldwide as the Provisionals have always wanted it to be.” Due to the involvement of a paramilitary organization, it was easy to denounce the hunger strike. In a way, as a representative of the European media, The Irish Times was compelled to condemn the IRA. No Western news media wanted to endorse terrorism.

Even though The Irish Times did not support the aims of the hunger strike, it did contextualize the event as being more complex than simple IRA propaganda. According to the Irish Times, the support given to the strike was due to more general negative opinions towards the British. On several occasions, the paper

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214 The Irish Times 16.4.1981
217 Mercereau 2003, 64
218 “South Armagh” (editorial) The Irish Times 20.5.1981
220 David McKittrick, "Provo politics more effective than the gun" (feature) The Irish Times 9.5.1981
221 "Listen" (editorial) The Irish Times 10.7.1981
emphasized that it was a conflict with several parties. An editorial published in late
April summarises well the stance of the paper:

Bobby Sands hasn’t had much of a life. Most of his adult years have been spent
in prison. He is said, after well over 50 days of fasting, to be still lucid and
determined; but no-one can look into the mind and emotions of another as death
stands at the bedside. Sands companions do not choose to dissuade him from
saving his life. Some of them may live to regret that decision.

There are, too, many others in Northern Ireland who haven’t had much of a life
in the last few years. Mrs. Elliott, who lost her UDR husband and brother and
has appealed to the Commissioners of Human Rights, for example. She and
thousands – on both sides of the political fence – have suffered.

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The Sands case and the continued assassinations – even while the H-Block
supporters plead for justice and humanitarian – have sharpened the old
antagonisms in the North as nothing else in recent years. On both sides of the
political fence the stragglers and the reluctant are tending to be drawn in.

It should be possible for rational people to separate the case for relaxation of
regulations in Long Kesh from the activities of the Provisionals outside; but
whatever slight hope there was of that has been dashed by recent killings;
perhaps deliberately so. And Britain, through ineptitude, has helped the
Provisionals to bring the North to the boil.

What political sense Britain has often deserts her when the matter concerns
Ireland. In this case the attention of much of the world’s press, radio and TV is
focussed on Long Kesh. What credit for firmness or level-headedness will be
given to a Prime Minister who allows a man to do himself to death while
colleagues of his walk around in the same prison enjoying the very privileges
and rights for which he has died? This is not resolution or firmness on Britain’s
part, it is stubbornness and stupidity. Overall, this clash of wills does nothing
for anyone on this island. It should have never arisen.222

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222 “Needless” (editorial) The Irish Times 27.4.1981
The Irish Times did not blame the hunger strikers individually. Their deaths were considered needless.\textsuperscript{223} The paper saw the event as part of a larger issue. In August, the paper asked the Provisionals to end the hunger strike. The inflexibility of the British authorities was mentioned, and the paper did not see that changing.\textsuperscript{224} The deaths and violence were lamented.

Notably, the role of Irish officials was not discussed much. The Irish Times depicted the situation as a particularly northern problem. The role of the Republic was played down, and the role of the British government was emphasized in resolving the conflict. In a way, this attitude paralleled the stance of The Times. In a conflict situation, taking one’s own side is normal. In Ireland, the problematic situation in the north was regarded as a complex matter.

Overall, the context in The Irish Times varied and was based on historical and political relations with the British. Considering the close relations between the two countries, this was inevitable. The Irish Times itself had undergone change during the 20th century and its stance on Irish issues diversified. The paper’s Protestant background has been reflected in its occasional criticisms of the Catholic Church.\textsuperscript{225} However in this case, the religious aspect was not highlighted by the paper. This suggests that The Irish Times considered the nature of the hunger strike to be more political. In fact, the paper has often stated that northern issues should be included in the politics of the Republic. There has been differences between the north and south in regards to solving the national question.\textsuperscript{226} For The Irish Times, the hunger strike was yet again a symptom of the need to address the historical question about relations between Ireland and Britain. In this regard, The Irish Times has been in the minority in Ireland.\textsuperscript{227} Thus, the stance of the paper is more fully explained by examining its own worldview. The question of how well this corresponds with general Irish views is more difficult to define.

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{223} E.g. "Conditiond" (editorial) The Irish Times 27.7.1981; "Looking back" (editorial) The Irish Times 5.8.1981
\item \textsuperscript{224} "Impasse" (editorial) The Irish Times 29.8.1981
\item \textsuperscript{225} Mercereau 2003, 66
\item \textsuperscript{226} Mercereau 2003, 67
\item \textsuperscript{227} Mercereau 2003, 67–68
\end{itemize}
3.2.2 A consequence of the past

The Age discussed the context of the hunger strike in several ways. This was remarkable among international newspapers. Some examples of article headlines are quite revealing:

“Martyr in the making” (23.4.1981)

“The land where hate has grown” (28.4.1981)

“Belfast prepares for the long wake” (5.5.1981)

“Sands, a shadowy figure, more symbol than person” (6.5.1981)

“Ireland, a land held captive by history” (6.5.1981)

“The scarred streets of hopelessness” (9.5.1981)

“Ireland: why?” (27.5.1981)

“A bleak future for Disunited Kingdom” (11.7.1981)

“Is Britain going down the drain?” (20.7.1981)

“Voting for a ghost” (20.8.1981)

“Ulster’s climate worsens” (24.8.1981)

“Where death is a grim ritual” (27.8.1981)

These headlines are meaningful when examining the overall mental image of the paper. Similar views were expressed throughout the content. The Age saw the past as an important explanation for the hunger strike. According to the paper, Irish history was full of conflicts and political flaws, and a new phase had begun with the hunger strike. The Age created a mental image of a chaotic atmosphere where “symbolism is everything.” The hunger strike had

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228 Obviously news headlines are only one part of the news entity and do not determine the nature of news coverage. However, headlines have a significant role in attracting attention to a news topic. A news headline is always constructed by its writer and it reflects the meaning given to the event.

229 Peter Smark, “Ireland, a land held captive by history” (feature) The Age 6.5.1981

230 Ireland gets a new martyr” (editorial) The Age 6.5.1981

231 Peter Smark, “Martyr in the making” (feature) The Age 23.4.1981; Peter Smark “Belfast prepares for the long wake” (feature) The Age 5.5.1981

traditional meanings. The paper described the situation as a deadlock in which both sides had revealed their principles and were not going to give in. The aspect of struggle was emphasized in depictions. Furthermore, the paper followed the hunger strike consistently throughout the seven months and its interpretation remained the same. The coverage of the paper remained strikingly similar both in quantity and quality, which indicates that the paper had a particular and permanent view of the situation.

It is noteworthy that The Age did not overemphasize the role of the IRA in the hunger strike. In April, the paper reported:

The only person who can order Bobby Sands to end his fast is Brendan McFarlane… But it seems that Sands himself, McFarlane, and IRA leaders outside the jail, have accepted that Sands must die.

When the hunger strike ended, the paper stated that the prisoners themselves started and organized the hunger strike. In other words, the IRA's participation was mostly ignored. The Age instead focused on the hunger strikers and other prisoners. It depicted them as struggling against the British authorities.

The Age claimed that the prisoners’ demands were not impossible to meet, as, according to the paper, they were not demanding full political prisoner status. This was a statement that differed from many of the other newspapers. It is interesting to consider possible reasons for this. It appears that The Age did not support the cause of the hunger strikers but it regarded the situation as an opportunity to question British politics and the implications they had. The paper’s stance against the current government was revealed when The Age reported that election results proved that people were ready to vote for IRA rather than for someone supporting the Union. The Age had a different opinion of the past. According to The Age, the IRA was a product of the late 1960’s when violence occurred on both sides but the Protestants were dressed in uniform. These

234 The Age 21.4.1981
235 “Ulster’s circle of despair” (editorial) The Age 20.5.1981
236 The Age 29.4.1981
237 Peter Smark, “Britain in a bind as the fasts end” (feature) The Age 5.10.1981
depictions created a mental image of a struggle against the British in which the key aspect was resistance. This stance was reflected in the way The Age reported on the role of violence:

> It is easy to believe that people in Northern Ireland have become so brutalised by civil war that they are dead to ordinary emotions.\(^{241}\)

The paper did not emphasize the violent aspects of the situation. On the contrary, The Age commented that the lack of heavy violence was a sign of regeneration.\(^{242}\) The paper’s coverage created a mental image of a conflict that had a long and troubled history, and the hunger strike was a consequence of that.

### 3.2.3 A reflection of complex relations?

Both The Irish Times and The Age depicted the hunger strike as a result of historical battles. The Age examined history in contextualizing the situation, whereas The Irish Times focused on the troubled relationship as the context. One reason for this difference is that The Irish Times had no need to discuss the historic conflicts, as its audience was familiar with them. It is also likely that the hunger strike needed more clarification and broader contextualization due to geographic distance. Both papers used similar narratives to highlight the impact of the past. The current turn in events was directly paralleled with historical and political events. Both papers utilized history as the main discourse. In other words, both papers seemed to adopt a certain perspective of the Northern Irish question in general, and the hunger strike was reported on through a similar lens.

The need to create contexts is recognized in the media. However, in practice it is often another matter and coverage is based on reporting the facts without explaining them in any depth. It is significant that only these papers provided a broader context for the event. It suggests that they had specific reasons to do so. As there are several distinguished newspapers among the papers examined here, it is likely that the motives for providing extensive coverage were important factors. In this case, the event enabled a discussion of the wider issues.

The most interesting aspect in both papers is the treatment of the British as active participants in the conflict.

\(^{241}\) The Age 20.8.1981

\(^{242}\) Eg. “Ulster’s circle of despair” (editorial) The Age 20.5.1981
In Australia, experiences of terrorism and domestic disturbance were infrequent. Australia had witnessed only sporadic acts of violence, and there were no specific factions that caused friction. Taking this into consideration, it is likely that The Age did not consider the hunger strike to be a particularly dangerous situation.

The Irish Times and The Age brought up the issue as it suited their purposes on a broader scale. It is hardly a coincidence that the role of the British was assessed the most in newspapers that existed in societies that had somewhat complex historic relations with the British. Both papers had a liberal attitude, which enabled expressions of opinion with more diverse outlooks. The hunger strike was seen as an opportunity to scrutinize the larger political issues. However, one must note that the hunger strike was not portrayed as a cause of the conflict, but the general conflict was seen to cause the hunger strike. The viewpoint of these papers was that history had proven the complexity of Irish-British relations.

The media reflects on and discusses issues that have significance, whether political or cultural. It has been found that journalists depict conflicts based on historical parallels. The coverage in The Irish Times and The Age can be partially explained by this paralleling. Both papers created a context that was easy to recognize. The hunger strike was seen to be a result of historical and political events. Both The Irish Times and The Age were particularly interested in the situation. It is plausible that the interest of the papers in the event was also a reason why they were the only papers with a more comprehensive contextualization. However, the overall stances of both papers suggest that societal factors could also explain their contextualizations.

3.3 The hunger strike as part of the ‘troubles’

As the hunger strike went on, many of the international newspapers published feature articles related to Northern Irish history and its troubles. These created a mental image that the hunger strike was one episode of this. The New York Times, Dagens Nyheter, the Helsingin Sanomat, the Arab News and El Pais were of the opinion that the IRA’s means of fighting was not acceptable but at the same time, the papers recognized that there were more profound causes behind the hunger

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243 The question of Northern Ireland has traditionally been a stumbling block between Ireland and Britain. In Australia, the post-colonial experience was not solely positive. Relations between the countries are discussed in more detail throughout chapter 5.

244 Gorin 2013, 142
strike. Historical factors, legal aspects and political issues were discussed on many occasions, thus creating an image that the hunger strike was part of a bigger picture.

The hunger strike was seen as an inseparable part of the Northern Irish conflict. However, there were minor differences in which aspects of the conflict these papers emphasized. The emphases in contextualizations of the conflict differed from one paper to another, and was partly due to societal circumstances.

Chapters 3.3.1 – 3.3.4 discuss the main depictions in these newspapers. The last chapter discusses some plausible reasons behind these similar yet slightly different interpretations. It is argued that there are some elements that are universally typical of conflict coverage.

### 3.3.1 The hunger strike as a difficult event to cover

The New York Times was rather cautious in its coverage, even though it did occasionally discuss the political nature of the hunger strike. AOGÁN MULCAHY has found in his research that the paper lacked context in its news articles.\(^{245}\) However, the more comprehensive analysis of this dissertation reveals that the paper’s overall coverage was not lacking in context. The paper publishd some articles that attempted to explain and discuss the situation:

> And the Sands victory only reaffirms what everyone already knows – that many Catholics feel estranged in a British-ruled, Protestant-dominated province. That estrangement will continue as long as the Protestants appear to enjoy an arbitrary veto over every proposal to devise new links between Northern Ireland and the predominantly Catholic Irish Republic.\(^{246}\)

> With all avenues of compromise apparently closed, Northern Ireland’s Roman Catholic militants and the British Government are again at the brink of a possible violent showdown.\(^{247}\)

These statements depict a broader conflict that had resulted in the hunger strike. The situation was clearly seen as a battle between Republicans and the British government. The New York Times did not always support the way the British were handling the situation.\(^{248}\) On the other hand, it did partly view the hunger strike as

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\(^{245}\) Mulcahy 1990, electronic document

\(^{246}\) "Prisoner Sands, Member of Parliament" (editorial) The New York Times 22.4.1981

\(^{247}\) The New York Times 27.4.1981

a case of IRA propaganda. However, it did not accept that propaganda was the only reason for the interest and sympathy that the hunger strikers gained.249 The New York Times questioned the opinion of Prime Minister Thatcher that the leaders of the IRA were instructing the hunger strikers.250 The New York Times depicted a situation where both parties were to blame. Most of the time the caution of the paper resulted in descriptive reports. Only occasionally did the paper present stronger tones and stances, and its the overall content was more cursory.

When the paper did express an opinion, it did so on various topics. Different aspects of the conflict were articulated:

A group of terrorists, highly disciplined and utterly brutal in its disregard for human life, set out to overthrow the existing order and establish a Marxist state. Its methods are murder and intimidation; most of its victims are innocent civilians. Such a group would be almost universally detested and condemned in this and other Western countries – right? Wrong: not if it is the Provisional Irish Republican Army… Bobby Sands was about as poetic as the characters in the old Warner Brothers gangster movies. He had a long record of criminal violence. Ah but the cause, the sympathizer will say, the glorious cause. Some glory. Some cause.251

Matching the I.R.A gunmen now are the well-armed forces of the Protestants ultras… Given those facts, what would be likely to happen if British forces dressed up and left one day? The Protestant gunmen would no doubt move on the catholic population centers in Belfast and Londonderry, trying to bottle them up or occupy them. The Provisionals would resist and call for help from outside. You could have a civil war that would make Cyprus look like a picnic.252

The gaunt young hunger striker, wearing striped pyjamas, sat on a grey steel bed reading a newspaper, a blue blanket pulled close around him because he now feels chilly most of the time. His tidy hospital room, with yellow walls, shiny grey linoleum and a square of bright orange carpet, looks like any other modern hospital room except that there is always a tray of food sitting on the table. When the attendant brings in lunch, he takes away the untouched

252 Ibid.
breakfast, when he brings in dinner, he takes away the lunch. This is the hospital of Maze prison, where 10 Irish nationalists have died of starvation since May as part of a continuing hunger strike in support of a demand that the British government treat them not as common criminals but as political prisoners.253

The violence depicted by Anthony Lewis in the first two citations creates a violent context for the hunger strike. The focus on the IRA reveals attitudes towards terrorism in general. In his research, ADRIAN GUELKE found that Americans were concerned over international terrorism.254 This concern led to cautious reporting. It is plausible that The New York Times shared this concern, and thus condemned the violent aspects of the hunger strike.

The feature article also reveals that the conflict was at its height at the time of publishing. A strained atmosphere can more easily result in stronger tones. In comparison, in August, the newspaper (and its readers) had already grown accustomed to the violence and death in Ireland, and it was not as newsworthy. As the situation in August was not as constrained as in May, other aspects could be discussed. The third quotation is a good example of this. This news story written by William Borders is remarkable in its perspective. The perspective of the prisoners was discussed, yet not supported. This supports the independent and liberal policies of The New York Times.255 The paper ‘dared’ to discuss the situation from this aspect. In comparison to the other newspapers, this was an exceptional statement. For instance, both The New York Times and The Globe and Mail mentioned the cleanliness of the prison in their reports from the Maze. Only The New York Times suggested that this was not a relevant point. The point of view of the prisoners was also discussed.

In a way, the paper was able to portray the human side of the conflict as well. The hunger strike was a conflict that had an impact on a human level. This aspect was discussed, for instance, in articles that depicted the lives of the Northern Irish in general.256 Overall, the contextualization of the hunger strike by The New York Times was a mixture of cautious opinions and strong stances. This variety suggests that the paper did not want to take sides in the conflict. On one hand, the paper did

254 Guelke 1989, 144
not want to disagree with the stance the American administration had adopted. President Reagan had resisted the involvement of his administration. On the other hand, the paper did not want to simply condemn the hunger strikers. This was probably partly due to the editorial practices of the paper. Furthermore, the paper was cautious because of the Irish connection in the region. The low level of opinionated coverage is interesting, as The New York Times is known for its ability to express opinions. Considering all these aspects, the hunger strike was definitely considered a difficult event cover, and the variability in the content supports this conclusion.

### 3.3.2 An unfamiliar conflict

From a Scandinavian point of view, the hunger strike appeared to be an unlikely political weapon. Due to this impression, Dagens Nyheter discussed it within a context of Irish history. The hunger strike itself was not the only focus, and the conflict was discussed in a more general context. Dagens Nyheter viewed the hunger strike as an attempt by Bobby Sands to achieve his goal. It also recognised the symbolic meaning of the event. According to an article published in the paper, the hunger strike was a protest against injustices within society. The traditional aspects of the hunger strike were recognised. Dagens Nyheter reported that there was a war-like situation in Northern Ireland, and it was because of this that young men were willing to join the IRA.

The roots of today’s war in Northern Ireland – as it is a sort of war that goes on even if the intensity changes – go back to the days when Catholic Ireland was a colony of Protestant England.

Dagens Nyheter published detailed background information on the conflict. In these kinds of reports, the paper was again contextualizing the hunger strike within

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257 Guelke 1989, 144
258 The New York area has one of the largest populations with Irish ancestry in the country.
260 Ibid.
262 Dagens Nyheter 2.5.1981
a broader conflict. It was the norm to discuss the event from different points of view. One good example of the paper’s open attitude was an article published in a section written for children.264 The article ended with the following sentences:

When the Catholic children are playing on the streets in their neighbourhood they are not at all amazed at soldiers with weapons at the ready sneaking around house walls. They have grown up with it. And many have relatives or neighbours who have died or been in prison. Neither a Protestant nor a Catholic child leaves his own district to play with children from the other side. It can dangerous to go outside the neighbourhood borders.265

This type of reporting was unique among the newspapers. The dying hunger strikers were even discussed with children. On one hand, this reveals that the paper had an open minded publishing policy. On the other hand, such a report reflected distance. From a Swedish point of view, the hunger strike was a distant event. It needed to be explained, and from a distance, the paper was able to do this without any charged emotions. In Sweden, hunger strikes in general were considered to be unlikely events.

The article written for younger readers is also a good example of Dagens Nyheter’s approach to news coverage. When the paper started to report on the hunger strike with by using its own reporters, it published several stories that differed from many of the other papers. The news articles discussed the history of Northern Ireland at length as well as the tense atmosphere. The paper discussed how the conflict affected everyday life in Northern Ireland. The paper also made exceptionally strong, plain-spoken observations from a human-interest perspective. In April, the front page of the paper claimed:

Two times a month, for a half hour at a time, Margaret MacArdle is allowed to meet her youngest son Chris. This has been the case for three years and so it will continue to be until 1990.266

264 Dagens Nyheter have a section named ”Barnens Nyheter” (’news for children’) where articles for children are published.
266 ”Två gånger i månaden, en halvtimme åt gången, får Margaret MacArdle träffa sin yngste son Chris. Så har det varit i tre år och så kommer det att förbli till 1990.” Dagens Nyheter 23.4.1981
The article continued by describing a visit to the Maze on an inside page:

Margaret MacArdle traveled to the prison early on Wednesday morning. The family is informed beforehand on which day they’ll meet their son but not at what time. Sometimes she will sit until the evening before her name is called out and she gets 30 minutes with her son. ‘I usually travel here with a neighbour’, she says. They also have a son here. The waiting room is full of family members waiting to meet their sons, husbands, fiancés. Almost all of them seem to know each other. Many of them are young women with small children, wives who have ended up alone.267

The news article discussed in detail the everyday ordeals of an average person. The depiction is moving, not only in this article but also in many others. On the other hand, the paper did mention on many occasions that not everyone in Northern Ireland shared the same views of the conflict. The style of Dagens Nyheter can be considered as evidence of its commendable practice of providing contextualization and background information. Specifically, it highlights the significance of human interest stories in reporting. Human interest stories are a very common method for drawing interest. Dagens Nyheter upheld this tradition.

The evocative depictions in Dagens Nyheter were common only when the hunger strike was at its height. Later on, the coverage became more impersonal. One significant reason for this was that the paper published more material from news agencies, as was mentioned in chapter 2.2. Emotional desensitization with the event was also another reason for less coverage, and as the months went by, the strained atmosphere lost its newsworthiness.

The Helsingin Sanomat was quite cautious in its stance in comparison to Dagens Nyheter. Its coverage focused on background information and historical context.268269 The Helsingin Sanomat regarded the conflict between the IRA and the authorities as the norm in Northern Ireland. According to the paper, the current

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situation was due to the conflicting attitude of the British towards the prisoners and the Northern Irish question. The paper viewed the situation as reactionary and claimed that all the parties involved were unrealistic:

Sands, a member of the Irish Republican Army, the IRA, died supporting the delusional faith of Catholics that the two parts of Ireland can be united through armed violence. This is as an unrealistic idea as is the mistaken belief of the Protestant majority that they can continue to oppress the Catholics forever or crush their will for good.

The hunger strike was difficult to comprehend from a Finnish perspective. In his memoirs, the London correspondent of Helsingin Sanomat, Erkki Arni wrote:

The current enmity started over 20 years ago, and no one has invented magic tricks to stop it. Sometimes, after sorting the background information has become extremely laborious and exhausting, even I have been tempted to conclude that the Northern Irish are obsessed by some collective insanity. And sometimes, causes and consequences seem very obscure to an outsider.

Arni’s depiction of the Northern Irish conflict in general is probably quite typical of someone from a background with no similar experience. From his perspective, the deep divisions of the community seemed strange. In some ways, this same attitude might have been reflected in coverage.

The death of Bobby Sands was depicted both as “a dramatic suicide” and as tradition. In other cases, the hunger strikers were depicted as criminals. However, the historical context for the violence was also discussed. This
incongruity reveals a few things. First, journalists did not have to stick to specific policies in their writing, and they expressed different views. Personal opinions or editorial decisions resulting in slightly differing views are not so relevant, but they reveal that the Helsingin Sanomat did not have any specific policy in reporting on the hunger strike.

Overall, the hunger strike was loosely connected to the Northern Irish troubles in the Helsingin Sanomat. The events were discussed in grim tones. In this sense, the difference with Dagens Nyheter is clear. It indicates that, on an international level, coverage of the hunger strike in Scandinavian countries cannot be summarized collectively. As was mentioned in chapter 2, the coverage in Dagens Nyheter and Helsingin Sanomat shared similar features. The papers were close in their amount of content and in other quantitative features. This supports the fact that the hunger strike was seen to be equally newsworthy by both papers. However, the minor difference in the way the papers depicted the hunger strike reveals that the same amount of coverage can be utilized in different ways. This is apparent in perceptions and existing mental images.

Another minor explanation is the fact that the journalists of Dagens Nyheter often visited Belfast themselves, whereas the reporters from the Helsingin Sanomat remained mainly in London. This kind of difference can alter perspectives in that different aspects of events are noticed. Journalists are more likely to report on matters that they experience themselves. It is quite obvious that the atmosphere surrounding the hunger strike was different at the location itself. However, definite conclusions would require a broader analysis of the issue.

Both Dagens Nyheter and Helsingin Sanomat depicted the hunger strike as a foreign and somewhat strange event. This suggests that the hunger strike had to be given a context, so that readers could try to comprehend what was going on. In Sweden and Finland, the idea of someone killing himself in this way seemed remote. Newspapers, especially Dagens Nyheter, adopted the role of interpreter.

### 3.3.3 An Irish problem

The contextualization of the hunger strike in the coverage of the Arab News was not consistent. On one hand, the news articles depicted the hunger strike as a campaign for political status. On the other hand, news articles reported that the

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hunger strikers were attempting to force the government to grant five demands, and that it was the government that claimed these demands amounted to the status of political prisoner. 279 This contradiction can be explained by the use of news agency material. However, it also shows that there was no one particular stance taken by the paper.

However, the Arab News did publish feature material that was more opinionated. It attempted to explain the historical background of hunger striking280 as well as other historic motives281. According to the Arab News, deep-rooted sectarian hatred had caused the conflict.282 In an editorial, the paper stated:

It is ironical that the violence-prone Irish Republican Army has regained some of its waning support by resorting to typically Gandhian non-violent methods…While the hunger strikers have made the supreme sacrifice by taking their own lives in defense of a political demand, the Irish problem is destined to remain a long time without a solution acceptable to all parties…283

The Arab News considered the hunger strike a sacrifice. This created the mental image that the paper thought there was obvious reason for the strike. The hunger strike was regarded as a test of wills,284 This clearly illustrates that the paper depicted a conflict between several parties.

A notable aspect of coverage in the Arab News was the depiction of the situation as Irish. The conflict was usually referred to as the ‘Irish question’ or the ‘Irish dilemma’. After his election, Bobby Sands was called an “Irish MP”.285 These reports created the context of an Irish conflict. The division between Northern Ireland and the Republic was rarely clarified. This was probably due to geographical distance. From an Arabian point of view, it most likely did not matter.

As the feature articles in the Arab News were written by western journalists and were more likely to clarify differences between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, a disregard for these kinds of details or generalizations were

280 Arab News 1.5.1981
282 Robert Little, "Northern Ireland’s fateful inheritance" (feature) Arab News 5.6.1981
283 “Irish dilemma” (editorial) Arab News 23.5.1981
284 Arab News 18.6.1981
more likely due to the use of a local discourse. As was already mentioned in connection with the South China Morning Post, these articles were selected to support a specific stance. Moreover, many of the feature articles were taken from the Outline news service (ONS), which was a news service for the Asian media. In some articles, an Arabic perspective was bluntly emphasized.\footnote{E.g. Michael Adams, "Palestine cause in the Irish Republic" (feature) Arab News 24.4.1981} Therefore, the feature articles can be used to examine the stance of the paper, and somewhat in regards to cultural factors that had an affect.

The contextualization of the hunger strike in the coverage of the Arab News was based on depictions that the hunger strike was a particularly Irish conflict. This depiction gave both national and historical dimensions to the event:

The guerrillas still retain considerable sympathy because of their fight for the cherished Irish dream of becoming a unified nation once again.\footnote{Arab News 8.5.1981}

Examples from the content of the Arab News indicate that the paper was interested in the situation but, at the same time, it did not have any particularly perception of its own. The use of international news agency material accounted for the generality of the material. However, it is intriguing that the paper often used expressions that contextualized the situation within a nationalist conflict.

\subsection*{3.3.4 Problems of the Catholics}

Despite its relatively low amount of news coverage, El Pais discussed the possible causes of the hunger strike more than some of the other papers that had more coverage. Its news articles were often longer\footnote{Appendix 4.}, and contained some contextualization. The practices of the paper favoured longer texts, and the quality of its coverage also indicated interest. This conclusion is supported by the fact that on average, the paper used its own reporters more than other international papers did. Again, the technical characteristics of news coverage can be treated as indications of the significance given to a news event. It is plausible that if a newspaper involves its own resources (its own reporters) and gives plenty of attention to an event, that event is seen to be important. In the case of El Pais, it is also important to remember that the paper used agency news less, so the extent of
its coverage can also be a result of technical aspects. However, a look at the contents reveals that the event had a certain meaning for El Pais.

El Pais depicted the hunger strike as a consequence of a longer Irish battle.\textsuperscript{289} The historical background was examined as far back as the time of Oliver Cromwell\textsuperscript{290}.\textsuperscript{291} According to the paper, the causes behind the conflict were a mixture of societal problems and mythology.\textsuperscript{292} Hence, El Pais created a broader context for the hunger strike. Historical and societal contextualization created a mental image of the hunger strike as part of a larger conflict.

El Pais also considered the conflict to be a propaganda war between the IRA and the British government.\textsuperscript{293} Therefore, the paper depicted the hunger strike as a struggle between two parties. It is noteworthy that the paper did not clearly blame one side of the conflict. The paper depicted a conflict that was caused by so many complex issues that it was useless to blame only one party.

Most notably, El Pais used the hunger strike as a platform to discuss larger issues. The religious aspect was mentioned in many reports and commentaries. According to the paper, the events were caused by injustices.\textsuperscript{294} The position of the Catholics was described as powerless.\textsuperscript{295} The paper considered there to be a fear of Catholicism in Northern Ireland:

Fear? They certainly would not admit the cause of the condition, nor admit that this is hate. Protestants in Northern Ireland (I lived seven years among them) have become convinced that their version of Christianity is truthful. And that if Ulster became part of a united Ireland, the Catholic Church would do everything possible to oppress, to wrest their liberties (right to abortion, contraception, divorce, etc.) and impose their views on other areas of private life.\textsuperscript{296}

\begin{footnotes}
\item[289] El Pais 6.5.1981
\item[290] Oliver Cromwell led the forces of the English Parliament to Ireland in 1649, starting the occupation of the island. Cromwell passed several laws against the Catholics, and his conquest has been described as brutal in many ways. In Ireland, Cromwell has remained a disliked figure.
\item[291] "El Ulster" (editorial) El Pais 21.4.1981
\item[292] Ibid.
\item[293] El Pais 5.5.1981
\item[294] "La muerte por hambre en Irlanda" (editorial) El Pais 23.5.1981
\item[296] "Temor? Ellos, desde luego, no admitirían este diagnóstico de su condición, como tampoco admitirían que se trata de odio. Los protestantes del norte de Irlanda (vivi siete años entre ellos) han llegado a convencerse de que la versión suya del cristianismo es la veridica. Y de que, si el Ulster entra a formar parte de una Irlanda unida, la Iglesia católica haría todo lo posible por oprimirles, por
\end{footnotes}
The Catholic connection seemed to be the reason why the conflict gained more extensive coverage. Even though El Pais was not a particularly religious newspaper, this aspect is plausible. Likely due to religious reasons, the paper on several occasions discussed the issue of death from a moral point of view. On one hand, El Pais condemned certain types of deaths. On the other hand, it also pointed out that death signified the importance of the issue.297 One editorial summons well the paper’s view:

Death is so devalued in our time that only in particularly horrifying conditions it reaches attention: starvation, extended for months, with a subsequent loss of physical abilities and prolonged suffering, causes horror among the monks burned in Vietnam, which also failed to impress those whom they denounced…. The string of deaths that are happening one by one, the solidarity of the families of those killed, including the Catholic Church, which refuses to conside them suicide deaths and accompanies the bodies to sacred land, the protests and of thousands demonstrate the importance of the phenomenon: the political situation has become fanaticism.298

El Pais closely connected the hunger strike to the Northern Irish conflict in general, even to the extent that the strike itself was regarded as a subplot in commentary. According to the paper, the hunger strike evoked debate about the broader conflict.299

The lack of detail regarding the hunger strike itself is an interesting issue. One wonders if it was caused by moral doubts, but this is a difficult motive to prove. It is also possible that the paper did not feel the causes of the hunger strike were worthy of detailed coverage. Dramatic general depictions might have been

arrancarles sus libertades (derecho al aborto, a la anticoncepción, al divorcio, etcétera) y por imponer sus criterios en otras áreas de su vida privada.” Ian Gibson, "El Ulster y el temor al catolicismo” (feature) El Pais 9.5.1981

297 "La muerte de Bobby Sands” (editorial) El Pais 6.5.1981; "La muerte por hambre en Irlanda” (editorial) El Pais 23.5.1981

298 "Está tan devaluada la muerte en nuestro tiempo que sólo en condiciones especialmente espeluznantes llega a impresionar a la opinión: la muerte por hambre, alargada durante meses, con una sucesiva pérdida de facultades físicas y un sufrimiento prolongado, gana quizá en horror a la de los bonzos incendiados en Vietnam, que tampoco lograron impresionar a aquellos a quienes denunciaban. La cadena de muertes que se van sucediendo una a una, la solidaridad de las familias de los sacrificados, incluso la de la Iglesia católica, que se niega a considerar como suicidio las muertes y acompaña los cadáveres a tierra sagrada, las manifestaciones de protesta y adhesión de millares de personas, demuestran la importancia del fenómeno: la situación política se ha convertido en fanatismo.” “La muerte por hambre en Irlanda” (editorial) El Pais 23.5.1981

299 El Pais 23.5.1981
considered more interesting. The nature of its coverage supports this conclusion: the paper’s content focused on the most significant events such as deaths and their consequences. Dramatic events were reported in stronger tones. It is difficult to view this aspect as particular of a certain society, as it was similar in the contents of almost all of the papers. However, the mention of religion suggests that the strike was a significant event for El País.

### 3.3.5 Small but significant differences in interpretation

All of the newspapers examined in this section depicted the hunger strike as an expression of the Northern Irish troubles. The coverage of the situation was quite similar in each of the papers: the hunger strike was regarded and reported on without putting emphasis on one aspect only. This reveals that all the papers had similar practices. The nature of the event determined the nature of the coverage. Furthermore, the dramatic turns in events – particularly in May – attracted more attention, which confirms that the hunger strike was regarded as a conflict situation and was interesting for that reason. The New York Times, Dagens Nyheter and the Helsingin Sanomat were fair and neutral in their reporting. El País, which was established to pursue democratic journalism, adhered to the same lines. The minor differences between the papers highlighted local connections with the conflict. Due to its editorial background, the Arab News followed the same editorial principles as the other papers. At the same time, a certain distance from the conflict itself was more apparent in the Arab News. The Arab news did not describe the hunger strike in as much detail as newspapers closer to the event did.

The contextualization in these papers reveals how newspapers acted similarly in different parts of the world. Difficult situations were reported on and evaluated from an angle that agreed with their own views. Some aspects are more cross-cultural than others.

The contextualization in El País also indicates that the experience of domestic terrorism does not automatically result in attitudes that condemn terrorism. Spain has experienced acts of political violence as have Germany and Canada, and yet the stance of El País differed from the stance taken by papers in these countries. In other words, domestic experiences are not the only explanatory factors. The causes consist of more complex factors. Furthermore, the status of the United States

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300 The Basque nationalist and separatist organization ETA (Euskadi Ta Askatasuna) intensified the violent campaign during years prior to 1981.
as an international power meant that the Americans had to deal with political violence on a regular basis, even though there had not been similar systematic violence within the country. In part, this experience with violence was reflected somewhat in the pages of The New York Times.

The lack of experience with domestic violence in Scandinavia enabled Dagens Nyheter and the Helsingin Sanomat to view the situation without any prejudices. They did not associate the hunger strike with any of their own experiences, and experience did not colour their depictions. The coverage of Dagens Nyheter and the Helsingin Sanomat was typical of papers that had a certain distance from the event in that the foreignness of the event needed to be made comprehensible. In such cases, incidents were contextualized within a bigger picture which was more familiar to the audience. It seems likely that it was easier to comprehend the situation when contextualizing it within the Northern Irish conflict in general. The same applied to other newspapers as well.

The hunger strike was a news topic that The New York Times, Dagens Nyheter, the Helsingin Sanomat, El Pais and the Arab News found interesting enough to discuss beyond providing mere reports of what had happened. However, at the same time the papers had no strong connections to the conflict. This meant that their coverage lacked the intensity which was typical of the papers that were the most interested in the event. The New York Times, Dagens Nyheter, the Helsingin Sanomat, El Pais and the Arab News are all papers that take pride in providing extensive reports on international issues. A European conflict was seen to be worthy of explanatory coverage, but it was a more newsworthy event only during its most shocking stage, when the first deaths occurred.

It is significant to note that the interest of The New York Times, Dagens Nyheter, the Helsingin Sanomat, El Pais and the Arab News was far less intense than that of the papers mentioned in the previous chapters. The papers used fact-oriented narratives that didn’t have strong opinions. One must be careful when drawing conclusions of such coverage. An individual expression of opinion easily stands out from narratives that are otherwise uniform. Each newspaper consistently held to the same discourse and the nature of coverage did not change during the hunger strike. More opinionated expressions during the more intense stages of the hunger strike can be regarded as natural results. The media uses more dramatic narratives when reporting on a particularly heated topic.

In general, the quality of the coverage supports its statistical features. The papers most active in coverage also reported on events in stronger tones, and papers with less coverage were only occasionally more versatile in their coverage. All in
all, this is common of the media: significant incidents are more likely to gain attention for longer periods of time. After all, the hunger strike lasted over seven months and this was a long time to cover a foreign event. The fact that the event was covered for several months in different countries emphasizes its unusual nature. In different contexts, the event had slightly different meanings. From this point of view, it seems plausible that wider cultural and societal factors do indeed affect media coverage, even though this is difficult to verify.

More importantly, coverage of the event reveals the process of framing news. Each newspaper shaped information by selecting the most significant aspects (as they saw them) of the hunger strike to create meaning for the event. On one hand, the conflict had some universal meaning, but on the other hand, one can also see how the local context affected news. International news coverage seems to reflect local circumstances to some extent. Its contextualization is not completely a conscious process, thus it is more difficult to examine its significance.

3.4 No particular causes for the hunger strike

Some of the newspapers merely reported on the hunger strike and almost no contextualization was made. Only a few words and phrases suggested a wider context. It is more difficult to make conclusions of the depictions in Le Figaro, La Prensa and The Sowetan. The reasoning behind their culturally distant coverage differed.

The first two chapters briefly discuss some key elements in the coverage in these papers. As their depictions are fragmentary, one explanation – in addition to cultural distance – could be in the news process in general. Chapter 3.4.3 discusses how international news production can impact news coverage on a national level.

3.4.1 Glimpses of a strained atmosphere

The contextualization of the hunger strike in Le Figaro was very fragmented. The content of the coverage can be mainly described as a collection of notices. The paper reported what had happened but the causes were only discussed casually. A few small indicators were present though.

301 According to Lisbeth Clausen, international news material is always shaped to adapt to local circumstances. Clausen 2003, 14
After the death of Bobby Sands, Le Figaro proclaimed him the victim of a religious war. The paper did create some context by explaining that the situation had its roots in the process of Irish independence. Therefore, some historical background was provided, even though it remained brief. The quality of news articles explains at least some of the lack of contextualization. The majority of the news articles were quite average and were often from news agencies. The tone of the paper has traditionally been serious, and therefore, the collective tone is understandable.

More attention was given to the strained atmosphere. A certain dread caused by the hunger strike seemed to be an important motive in the coverage. When Le Figaro did report on something in stronger tones, the event was usually something dramatic. Before the funeral of Bobby Sands, the paper stated:

Yesterday morning, the body of Bobby Sands was unveiled in this house. It was dramatic. About thirty people were queuing outside the modest door, entering three by three. There was a small hallway with a large crucifix and, to the left, the living room. The body was in front of the bay window, placed on two chairs. The coffin had not yet been closed. The face of Bobby Sands was horrible to see, with its death mask - a colored wax skeleton. At the same time, a mummy's face and that of a mortal who had finally slept. Childlike. The body was covered with a green, white and orange Irish flag. Beside the flag, there was the symbolic “uniform” of the IRA: black beret, dark glasses, black gloves. On each side of the coffin two activists of the IRA, a man and a young woman, provided an honour guard, frozen in position, standing to attention, all in black, also with dark glasses. Beside the coffin, in this small room, there was a sofa.

302 “La 2.096* victime de cette guerre de religion qui duve depuis plus de dix ans.” Le Figaro 6.5.1981
303 Le Figaro 6.5.1981
304 Appendices 4 and 5.
305 Merrill & Fisher 1980, 129
It is interesting that this kind of depiction was rare among the newspapers. Such a depiction also reveals distance: it was easier to publish such a narrative from afar without it becoming opinionated. In this case, the distance seems societal as the event did not affect the distant community. It was also a strong reaction to the first death of the hunger strike, and it was the only one of its kind. Otherwise, news coverage often focused on the strained atmosphere and the possible consequences. These obviously created a certain context for the event, but the paper did not try to explain what was happening. Therefore, it is difficult to find a particular stance in its coverage.

Le Figaro’s coverage was fact-oriented. The paper focused on relating what had happened where and when. The news articles were usually brief, general, neutral accounts of incidents. There was no room or need to explain the situation further. It seemed that it was enough for the paper to only note the event. The fractured contextualization in Le Figaro also illustrates the significance of commentary in creating context. It is hardly a coincidence that a paper with with only few articles or editorials including commentary failed to examine the event further. As these types of texts are often used to discuss issues that have significant meaning for a publisher, their exclusion can be regarded as a sign of little interest. If a news event does not draw interest, contextualizing it is not a priority.

### 3.4.2 Fragmented observations

From a geographical distance, contextualization of the hunger strike was lacking, especially when newspapers had no specific reason to follow the situation closely. The Sowetan illustrates this best. Its low amount of coverage included short reports. The one case of brief commentary by the paper was published when an Irish rugby team was touring South Africa. The paper reported:

> At this very moment Northern Ireland is assailed by the most dramatic episode in its strife-torn history, with a man sacrificing his life for a political ideal.

> We are simply not the ones to explore rights and wrongs surrounding Bobby Sands, but publicity of his hunger strike is so powerful that even the strongest stomach gets upset.308

This quotation suggests that the hunger strike was considered to be one episode of a longer conflict. More interestingly, the commentary focused on the separation of

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308 “The Irish will play off-sides” (feature) The Sowetan 5.5.1981
sports and politics. The hunger strike was considered to disturb normal life. This is a clear sign of distance from the conflict itself.

Only after the death of Bobby Sands did The Sowetan briefly discuss the historical context:

The Irish Republican Army militant and British MP Bobby Sands, who died yesterday from a hunger strike, was a pure product of the violent conflict that for 12 years has pitted Northern Ireland’s Republican Catholics against loyalist Protestants and the British army.309

Hunger striking, a traditional political weapon of the Irish, has become one of the most grisly trademarks of the island’s Republican cause.310

The most significant conclusion that can be drawn here is that the hunger strike, especially the death of Bobby Sands, was such an important event that it was reported in the media even if the conflict itself was not seen as worthy of wider coverage. On the whole, the content of the paper lacked any continuity. For this reason, these conclusions are not definite.

La Prensa was also brief when it came to contextualizing the hunger strike. It did publish some pieces that suggested perspective. The paper compared the situation to a civil war.311 The violent aspects were discussed with phrases such as "blood bath"312. However, these were on separate occasions that did not reoccur. Therefore it is difficult to make any definite conclusions. The paper used news agency material, which explains the lack of any opinion in the news articles. As the paper did not publish any commentary, its actual take on the situation was not visible. The practice of the paper suggests that the hunger strike was regarded as an interesting news event, but wasn’t important enough to be investigated by its own reporters. One revelatory, albeit a singular, indication of the somewhat fragmented coverage was the paper’s report on the death of Kevin Lynch. La Prensa published this news on August 19, 313 although he had died on August 1. This error could have been caused by technical factors, but it also reveals that turns in events were not closely followed by the paper. The article was selected from news agency material.

La Prensa, as well as The Sowetan and Le Figaro, published relatively few statements from either side of the conflict. This reduced the amount of context. It

309 The Sowetan 6.5.1981
310 Ibid.
311 La Prensa 29.4.1981
312 "bano de sangre" La Prensa 28.4.1981
313 La Prensa 19.8.1981
is noteworthy that the only suggestions in regard to opinion in these newspapers were published with the death of Bobby Sands. The tension around the event was so notable that it was covered in more detail. The same happened in different parts of the world. But after the first shock faded, the hunger strike was just one more news story among others.

3.4.3 Uneven coverage in international news

Le Figaro, La Prensa and The Sowetan seemed to lack any continuous narrative regarding the hunger strike. One reason for this is that their coverage did not place the hunger strike within any context, for example. Their lack of contextual reporting is interesting. Their geographical closeness or distance does not fully explain this lack of contextualization, as France is not that far away, and there were many newspapers, with thousands of miles of distance, that reported on the event with more interest. Obviously, cultural connections between Ireland and the United States as well as Australia (just to name a few) made the hunger strike major news, but it is noteworthy that the conflict was followed in other countries as well. Therefore, reasons for the small amount of contextualization must be found somewhere else.

Traditionally, the French have been interested in Irish affairs. Events have been reported regularly in French newspapers.\(^{314}\) In this case, Le Figaro did briefly cover the situation in more detail. However, this interest did not last the same way that it did in many other European countries. The most intensive focus on the event was before and after the death of Bobby Sands. This can partly be explained as a societal phenomenon. In her research, KARINE DESLANDES, found that Bobby Sands’s death gained far more attention in the French press than any other topic regarding Northern Ireland.\(^{315}\) The coverage of Le Figaro confirms this to some extent but overall, its interest was diluted. A more detailed look at its coverage reveals that even though the paper reported on events, it did not seem very interested in them. The articles were lacking in any expression of opinion and the situation was scarcely explained. As a conservative paper, Le Figaro could have chosen a dispassionate attitude towards what they saw as a dubious situation. The hunger strike itself could have been a challenging topic, and the connection with the IRA made it more difficult. It is more likely that the reason for this amount and style of

\(^{314}\) O’Hanlon 2011, electronic document

\(^{315}\) Deslandes 2013, 91
coverage was more editorial than cultural, as similar trends can be found elsewhere. For example, in South Africa, The Sowetan was a new paper that was still trying to find its place. It is understandable that distant events were not among its priorities. Therefore, its contextualization was insubstantial.

The hunger strike was probably not under-reported intentionally. It was merely considered as a distant event, and the lack of context can be explained by editorial reasons. With international news, newspapers have to make selections. Furthermore, the reliance on international news agencies decreases the possibility of expressing the stance of the paper. It is hardly a coincidence that these papers (Le Figaro, La Prensa and The Sowetan) did not publish any feature material regarding the hunger strike. Feature articles, columns, and other ‘extra’ material provide more in depth coverage on news topics. The German language papers also lacked feature material, but their choice of terms and narratives was more revealing. These papers took a stronger stance towards the hunger strike. Newspapers with no particular interest in the event did not depict it in a similar fashion. Their reports were fact-oriented and concise, and thus provided no contextualization. As was already mentioned in the previous chapter, journalists seek historical and cultural parallels. If there aren’t any, the coverage remains superficial. Moreover, several studies have found that reports about terrorism are often lacking in context. It is plausible that the connection with the IRA made the hunger strike somewhat dubious as a news topic, and as the topic was not seen to be important, it was probably easier to remain disconnected from it.

It seems that there is not any particular reason why precisely Le Figaro, La Prensa and The Sowetan were the most brusque in their depictions. From an editorial standpoint, the papers were not similar. Le Figaro for instance was an established conservative paper whereas The Sowetan was a newly established paper that endorsed liberal perspectives. From a social standpoint, the cultural contexts of the papers were also dissimilar, so they do no provide any particular explanation.

Therefore, it is more likely that external reasons help to explain this aspect. These papers regarded the hunger strike as a distant event, and therefore, the main aspects of coverage were produced externally (by news agencies).

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316 Appendix 1
317 Eg. Gallimore 1991, 116
The news agencies' impact on news production

The pivotal role of the international news agencies in distributing news material can be regarded as a major reason why some events become major news, and also why the majority of events do not gain attention on a global level. Newspapers have limited space for news, therefore selection is necessary. Several studies have pointed out that selection is based on multiple, often complex, sets of factors.\(^{318}\) It is plausible that the newspapers with less detailed coverage of the hunger strike merely preferred to report on other events. As the hunger strike did not have a direct affect on the papers, more significant issues were preferred.

On the other hand, the use of agency material can lead to uniformity in international news. Many scholars see the role of international news agencies as a force of globalization.\(^{319}\) The same information gets shared in different parts of the world. The hunger strike was a typical example of this: the same details about the hunger strikers were mediated, and the same narratives of the conflict were told. Furthermore, the exact same news photos were published in several newspapers and the same visual depictions of the hunger strike spread all over the world.

One photo that was published by many newspapers depicted Catholic women banging lids after a hunger strike death (figure 19). The picture was published by Dagens Nyheter, Le Figaro, The Globe and Mail, the Helsingin Sanomat, The New York Times, La Prensa, and the South China Morning Post. Clearly, the papers selected the photo from an agency flow.\(^{320}\) The photo was a symbolic gesture.\(^{321}\) Iconicity is an important motive in the use of visual elements. Like any other significant occasion, the hunger strike has been identified with certain symbolic mental images. The complexity of the event guarantees significance.\(^{322}\) This is why the media picks up news photos that stand out and are recognisable. The photo of women banging lids relayed a message but, more importantly, it was an appealing news photo.

It is noteworthy that the papers closest to the hunger strike did not publish the photo. This confirms that the picture was chosen primarily based on editorial interests. From an international standpoint, it was a fascinating photo. On the other

\(^{318}\) Eg. Willis 2007, 44-47
\(^{319}\) Boyd-Barrett & Rantanen 1998, 1
\(^{320}\) The photo was licensed to UPI.
\(^{321}\) Banging lids was a means of communication: it was used to inform the community that something significant had happened or to warn of (British) military raids. It had become a recognizable element of the Republican struggle.
\(^{322}\) Simuna 2015b, 227
hand, it is likely that The Irish Times and The Times were more aware of the symbolic nature of the photo, and were thus reluctant to publish it. The international media probably did not consider the meaning of the picture as much as it did not offend their readers. It was merely a good news photo.

Fig. 19. A popular news photo (Helsingin Sanomat 10.8.1981).
The use of the same picture reveals that the same news material circulates around the world. It is also noteworthy that the headlines\textsuperscript{323} of news reports including the picture were somewhat similar:

"Ninth prisoners dies after 62 days – the IRA prisoners’ demand is again rejected"\textsuperscript{324}(Dagens Nyheter)

"Death of a ninth hunger striker - Violent clashes in Ireland"\textsuperscript{325}(Le Figaro)

"Two die in wake of 9th fast death"\textsuperscript{326}(The Globe and Mail)

"Bloody riots in Ulster – Two got killed after the death of a ninth prisoner"\textsuperscript{327}(Helsingin Sanomat)

"A Ninth Hunger Striker Dies in Ulster"\textsuperscript{328}(The New York Times)

"Another IRA hunger striker died in Maze prison"\textsuperscript{329}(La Prensa)

"Two die in wake of 9th fast death"\textsuperscript{330}(South China Morning Post)

Most significantly, the headlines in The Globe and Mail and the South China Morning Post were exactly the same. Both papers used reports from news agencies. The Globe and Mail had taken the text from Reuters, while the South China Morning Post had combined information from two agencies, one of them being Reuters. This reveals that news agencies can have a major role in the depiction of an event. It is not clear whether the headline was provided by the agency, but it is likely. The other papers used material from different agencies.\textsuperscript{331} The Helsingin Sanomat also used Reuters on that day. It modified the title slightly, but this was probably due to the fact that the text had to be translated.

The above-mentioned example illustrates the role of international news agencies. Even if the differences between newspapers are minor, there can be

\textsuperscript{321} According to the basic principles of journalism, news headlines are intended to be informative and recognisable. Even though a headline does not tell the whole story, it has an impact and creates meaning for the news event.

\textsuperscript{324} "Nionde fången död efter 62 dygn – IRA-fångarnas krav avvisas åter" Dagens Nyheter 9.8.1981

\textsuperscript{325} "Mort d’un neuvième gréviste de la faim – Violents affrontements en Irlande” Le Figaro 10.8.1981

\textsuperscript{326} The Globe and Mail 10.8.1981

\textsuperscript{327} "Verisiä mellakoita Ulsterissa – Kaksi sai surmansa yhdeksännen vangin kuoltua” Helsingin Sanomat 10.8.1981


\textsuperscript{329} "Murió otro huelguista de hambre del IRA en la prisión de Maze” La Prensa 11.8.1981

\textsuperscript{330} South China Morning Post 10.8.1981

\textsuperscript{331} The New York Times only mentioned that the report was a special to the paper, but it did not name the writer of the report, which suggests that it was not written by its own staff.
differences in how something is seen. For instance, the headline of The New York Times, together with the photo, focused only on the death of the hunger striker. In using the same photo, some papers emphasized rioting, particularly casualties that were apparently innocent. The differences in interpretation are small but they exist. Discoursive decisions are often based on existing local perceptions.

As did many of the papers, The Globe and Mail and the South China Morning Post in particular created a context of violence for the hunger strike. The headline suited their agenda. The overall mental image relayed was supported with appropriate details. This example illustrates that it can be challenging to put news into perspective. An average reader does not know how much a news article is modified, nor what has been said elsewhere. In this sense, the newspaper editors had a lot of responsibility. The agency material provided the same information, which was then locally modified to appeal to the readership of each paper.

3.5 The many sides of contextualizing news

The contextualization of the hunger strike is revealing. News coverage and commentary reflected the differences both in editorial practices and social and cultural circumstances, thus creating different contexts for the hunger strike. The contextualisation of news is a multifaceted process that includes many variables. Only a few of them are discussed here.

By the 1980s, visual elements had become an important part of news stories. As news publishing had become a competitive area, newspapers were compelled to increase the visual component of news.332 News photos were given a larger role in creating context for news stories. Photos do indeed have an effect on the nature of coverage: the same event can be reported with different pictures, thus creating different mental images of the situation. The power of visual elements is fundamentally based on human psychology: a great majority of human observations originate from the sense of sight.333 Visual perception is a fast process: the mental processing of meaning begins even before an image is consciously recognized. The use of visual elements is a very effective way to guide attention in a desired direction. News photos published by the papers during the hunger strike depicted the event differently. This, together with other parts of the news process,

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332 Although some papers, such as Neue Zürcher Zeitung and Die Welt, still preferred a layout dominated by text, the majority of newspapers were using more and more photos and other visual elements.
333 Barry 1997, passim
guaranteed that the contexts mediated by the newspapers told distinct stories of the hunger strike.

Another factor that needs to be considered relates to differing views of Irish identity. The hunger strike was depicted as an Irish affair, and it is likely that the papers were reflecting – consciously or subconsciously – the conceptions shared by their communities.

3.5.1 Creating and reflecting context – news photos

The selection of news photos in publishing is always an active process; so is the editing of photos. From this perspective, news photos are significant indicators regarding the stance of a paper. News photos have their own discourses: they are selected and constructed based on the same principles as words, sentences, and texts. There are reasons why a particular picture is chosen to be published over others. Furthermore, visual elements have a strong impact on how a situation is depicted: a picture can contain more meaning than a verbal account. As visual elements guide the process of providing meaning, they can be regarded as having a central role in representation. For instance, different selections regarding visual elements provide different focal points for the same news event. When the focus is different, the discourse and context of the event also differs. As historical image research is interested in different depictions (and the reasoning behind them), it is necessary to first notice the different content in published pictures, and second, determine the (different) meanings that can be conveyed.

During the hunger strike, the newspapers did indeed differ in their use of photos. The amount of published news material reveals significant differences between the newspapers. In Chapter 2.1, I discovered that, for instance, the use of news photos is a good indicator of how a newspaper depicts a situation. In addition to the number of photos, the nature of photos is meaningful. On a broad scale, the nature of news photos was similar between the papers. The hunger strikers and violence were the most common themes in photos (table 2). Both people and shocking events are universally appealing as news stories. Therefore, it is hardly surprising that during this event they were also relatively common. However, a closer look at the statistics reveals interesting aspects about the relationship between the selection of news photos and contextualization.

334 Apel 2012, 1
Table 2. Themes in published photos during the hunger strike.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Newspaper</th>
<th>Hunger strikers</th>
<th>Families</th>
<th>Funerals</th>
<th>Support</th>
<th>Soldiers / police</th>
<th>Thatcher</th>
<th>Rioting, violence</th>
<th>The IRA</th>
<th>Else</th>
<th>Total</th>
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</thead>
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<tr>
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<td>1</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td>17</td>
<td>23</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<td>4</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>The Globe and Mail</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Irish Times</td>
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<td>5</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12</td>
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<td>11</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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</tbody>
</table>

Violent mental images about riots and the IRA were slightly more common in newspapers that emphasized the violent nature of the conflict. For instance, in The Globe and Mail and the South China Morning Post, violent pictures were the most common single theme in published pictures. The Irish Times had a large amount of pictures depicting rioting but this was not a consistent trend. The majority of these pictures were published when a single march turned into a riot in Dublin (some of the photos can be seen in figure 15).335

335 Altogether 12 violent pictures were published in one issue of the paper. The Irish Times 20.7.1981
It is also noteworthy that The Times published several photos about the IRA\textsuperscript{336}. These pictures depicted guns and other objects of violence. This parallels well with the paper’s willingness to create a context depicting an event caused by terrorists. The significance of this detail is illustrated in comparing the paper to the rest of the papers. The IRA was only depicted occasionally by a few papers. The Times also published more pictures including the British soldiers and the local police force, and thus strengthened this depiction. As the paper seemed to use visual material moderately (in comparison to many of the other papers), the contents of these pictures becomes even more revealing.

Outside the UK, photos of soldiers, police and other authorities were not as interesting. Only the Arab News published several photos of the event. Interestingly, the photos in the Arab News were quite similar to the ones in The Times: they depicted soldiers on duty, with children. However, The Times was the only paper that published photos of injured soldiers or policemen. This small difference could be meaningful. Whereas the photos of soldiers on duty were interesting (all the papers published such a photo at least once), the depiction of them as victims highlighted the nature of the conflict. The Times supported the contextualization of the event as a terrorist campaign by publishing such photos.

Most of the papers published a balanced set of photos with different themes, and thus mediated versatile depictions of the hunger strike. However, all the papers recognised the conflicted nature of the event, and this was apparent in the visual elements. Visual elements including violence are without a doubt easy to use, as they draw attention. The use of such pictures makes the news story more appealing when the event is distant. The use of a photo depicting violence alone does not define the nature of a depiction, but if the imagery consists mainly of certain types of characteristics, one can assume that there was at least some sort of conscious decision behind their use.

At the other end of the scale was Dagens Nyheter, which pictured the hunger strikers in over 40% of its news photos, thus emphasizing the human nature of the conflict. This agrees well with the overall content of the paper, and the human aspect can be regarded as typical of the coverage of Dagens Nyheter. The selection of published photos affirms this conclusion. Other newspapers that published a significant amount of pictures of the hunger strikers and their families were (in

\textsuperscript{336} The number of photos including the IRA does not include photos taken from funerals. Instead, these images focus solely on the organisation.
addition to The Irish Times) The Age, The New York Times, and Le Figaro. These papers depicted the hunger strike as a struggle between two parties. The Globe and Mail also published a similar amount of photos of the hunger strikers. These highlight the complex nature of the conflict. However, it was more typical of those papers that recognised the dual aspect of the context to publish more pictures including the hunger strikers.

The Arab News published remarkably few photos of the hunger strikers. It published only one picture of the prisoners themselves. It did portray supporters more, but the overall focus was on the conflicted nature of the event. This is in accordance with its overall contextualization. The paper focused on the aspects of conflict and criminality in regards to the hunger strike. The hunger strikers were viewed as criminals and were thus less desirable subjects in news photos. Neue Zürcher Zeitung published only five photos during the whole hunger strike. This lack of visual elements is typical of the paper, but it is noteworthy that no photo of hunger strikers was published. Even Bobby Sands, who became a symbolic figure, was not pictured by the paper. Instead, the element of conflict was visualised. Again, the photos were chosen to support contextualization. As these selections demonstrate, the visualization of a news story is based on a complex set of factors. One must also remember that only a very limited amount of visual material was used and this is not reliable evidence. Visual material, however, contributes to the overall mental image relayed of the situation.

On the other hand, only some international papers published a photo or a few photos of the British prime minister, thus providing a political aspect. These included the Age, the Arab News, Dagens Nyheter, Le Figaro, The Globe and Mail, La Prensa, and the South China Morning Post. The Times published a photo of Prime Minister Thatcher only once, whereas The Irish Times published multiple photos. Again, these amounts are too small to draw definite conclusions but it seems that some papers considered the conflict to have a more political character. In most cases, these were also the papers that took a stronger stance in regards to the event; the papers that created a more substantial context. However, the two photos published by La Prensa are interesting. Their appearance could be pure coincidence, as the paper published relatively many news photos, but there is also the possibility that the paper had other reasons in publishing them. La Prensa also

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337 The great majority of photos published in The Sowetan pictured the hunger strikers, but because of the low number of pictures published this conclusion is less solid.
published plenty of photos depicting British soldiers. The majority of the pictures were published during the most turbulent stages of the hunger strike, so the selection could have been due to this. However, it is notable that, at one stage, photos of soldiers were published almost daily\textsuperscript{338}. In publishing these pictures, the paper emphasized the role of the British, and it is plausible that they were chosen precisely for this reason.

Another interesting detail is the number of published photos of supporters, relatives of the hunger strikers or those marching in peaceful support of them. Obviously, The Irish Times published plenty of such pictures. More notably, the Helsingin Sanomat had a significant amount of such photos. A third of all its pictures displayed those supporting the strikers. The majority of the photos were taken from different marches. It seems that demonstrations in support of the hunger strike were considered interesting news photos. For instance during July, the Helsingin Sanomat published four\textsuperscript{339} such news photos in total. This amount is low but it is noteworthy that all the pictures showed people supporting one side of the conflict. Three were in support of the hunger strikers and one depicted a Protestant march. At the same, there was no such trend in the other papers. The low amount of photos makes drawing conclusions difficult but it is likely that there was a reason why the paper chose these pictures instead of photos of the hunger strikers or rioting, which were the two most common themes among other papers during that month. With these photos, the Helsingin Sanomat created a mental image of the hunger strike as a conflict that affected people. A conflict that was difficult to comprehend was depicted with elements that people could relate to. Furthermore, demonstrations are usually regarded as interesting news photos. The photo is also a good indication of the low level of coherence in the Helsingin Sanomat: the paper’s content included, if not contradictory, then alternating elements.

Regardless of how many or how few news photos were published in each of the newspapers, specific content in them reoccurred, creating context for the hunger strike. Obviously, all the papers used different kinds of photos, but as there often was a certain trend (some topics were more common than others), they confirm the mental images portrayed by the papers. It is not a coincidence that the newspapers (The Times, The Globe and Mail, and the South China Morning Post) that created a context of violence for the hunger strike were also the ones that used more

\textsuperscript{338} La Prensa published news photos of soldiers on 29 April, 2 May, 3 May, and 6 May (also on 10 May).

\textsuperscript{339} The news photos were published on the 9, 10, 14, and 25 of July.
pictures depicting violence. In fact, those pictures only strengthened these discourses of violence.

As was discussed in the previous chapter, some of the same photos were published by several newspapers. In comparing them, one can easily notice the difference which the nature of the news story reveals. For instance, both The Times (figure 20) and The Age published the same photo, yet the message was different. The Times focused attention on the injured man, whereas The Age contextualized him as only one aspect of the conflict. The Age used the photo more as mere illustration: he was not identified as a policeman. Primarily, this reveals how The Times was closer to the conflict, but it also illustrates how the role of the authorities was emphasized by The Times. One could conclude that The Times was showing sympathy towards officials. Visual elements can also be treated as discourses: the same principles apply to them. Visual elements are used to emphasize the already existing idea we have of a situation: their representations form meanings based on existing information (or stereotypes, emotions etc) we possess. For instance, The Times’ picture of the injured policeman suited the paper’s existing attitude towards the situation.

A few newspapers further away from the event pictured the harm caused to officials and this was not only a local phenomenon. Not surprisingly, in particular, the papers that adopted a context of violence included these kinds of photos. A news article published by The Globe and Mail (figure 21) illustrates this depiction of violence. On one hand, the news story relays information regarding both sides of the conflict. The text focused on Bobby Sands’ history but the photo selected drew attention to the grievances of the family of a dead official. The overall context was violent. The dead official was also mentioned by name, an aspect that is usually typical of close coverage. To report such details on an international level is uncommon. This suggests that the death of an official was regarded as important evidence of violence. It is noteworthy that the majority of the international papers did not usually name the casualties of violent incidents. Therefore, it was significant when this occurred and it provided more weight to the event.

The same picture was published by El Pais (figure 22). However, the paper did not name the dead official and only mentioned the death of a policeman. The significance of this death was not emphasized: it seemed to be only one incident among others. This aligns with the way the paper depicted the hunger strike as part of a complex struggle. The same photo was used with different text, thus providing a different context.
Fig. 20. An injured policeman as pictured by The Times. (1.5.1981)
The mother of Gary Martin, of the Royal Ulster Constabulary, who was killed when a booby-trapped truck exploded in Belfast earlier this week, comforts a young relative during the funeral of the constable in Bangor, Co. Down, yesterday. Fellow officers acted as pallbearers.

**Sectarian wars molded Sands**

By JEFFREY SIMPSON

Belfast — One of the three men who died recently in Northern Ireland had never heard of Bobby Sands.

When Mr. Martin's name was mentioned, it was promptly passed around the room as a reminder of the danger of political activity.

A 25-year-old Protestant farmer, who had been a member of the Ulster Volunteer Force, was killed in a shooting incident in the village of Loughinisland.

The family moved to the west Belfast neighborhood of Shankill, a new housing development planned between Catholic and Protestant areas.

The government was also supposed to be coming to terms with the situation.

In the meantime, the government was putting more pressure on the loyalist paramilitary organizations to disband.

The claims that the loyalist paramilitary organizations were being disbanded were in the nature of political fiction and had no basis in fact.

Sands is also known for his outspoken views on the issue of the Troubles.

Mr. Sands was described by Mr. Sands as a man who was always ready to listen to the views of others.

These meetings were often described as a way to bring the Troubles to an end.

Mr. Sands left school at 16 and took a construction job.

**‘My life was sleepless nights, dodging Brits, calming nerves’**

Sands was a former officer in the Ulster Volunteer Force.

The Troubles were not new to Mr. Sands.

He was married and his wife became pregnant. They lived apart, and Mr. Sands moved to England with her. He then returned to Northern Ireland.

The government was not happy with this arrangement.

Sands later became a member of the Ulster Volunteer Force, or UVF, and was convicted of murder in 1974.

These writings, however, were written by the Provisionals and Mr. Sands' natural movement.

From a public relations point of view, Mr. Sands' writings were not well received.

Fig. 21. The Globe and Mail 1.5.1981
The selection of published photos occasionally created unusual depictions. For instance, the Helsingin Sanomat published a photo of a Protestants’ march (figure 23) while reporting on the death of one hunger striker. The headline focused on the death of Martin Hurson but the main focus of the article was on the march. Some historical background regarding the tradition of marching was provided but it remained unclear how the two (the death and the march) were connected. This kind of coverage reveals a certain distance from the situation. It is difficult to imagine that The Irish Times would have published the same article. From a Finnish perspective, the events in Northern Ireland were disconnected. Similar depictions occurred in international papers. Northern Ireland was not seen to be ‘worthy’ of

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140 Helsingin Sanomat 14.7.1981
several news stories, so different elements were combined into the same news story, creating mixed depictions. At the same time, there was little contextualization. In such cases, minor elements like news photos or the selection of terms may prove significant. They may guide the interpretation in a particular direction. The above-mentioned cases are only a few examples. Each newspaper had their own idea of how to visually depict the conflict. Most importantly, the pictures supported the contexts created.

Fig. 23. Helsingin Sanomat 14.7.1981
News photos are significant indicators: they are visual narratives of a news event. While examining the news photos published, one must remember that it is probable that the newspapers did not have any strategies in visualizing the hunger strike in a certain way. Each photo was selected from among the alternatives that were available at a certain time. However, when looking at trends (themes) in the photos published during the hunger strike, it becomes evident that pictures with certain themes were more likely to be published, and thus created representations of the hunger strike. There must be more fundamental reasons why similar pictures were selected time after time. This suggests that it is justifiable to view news photos as reflecting the reasoning that guides news production.

3.5.2 Are differing perceptions of Irish identity a factor

The contextualization of the hunger strike in different newspapers reflected broader issues of how the Irish question was regarded, and how the societal framework produced meanings. One quite small but very interesting aspect in this contextualization was the characterization of the hunger strike as part of the Irish question. For instance, The Age and the Arab News were more likely to refer to the event as being Irish. This reveals that in many ways the situation was regarded more as a cultural issue by these papers. The German and Scandinavian papers (Dagens Nyheter in particular) were more likely to characterize the conflict as Northern Irish by often using the term 'Ulster’, thus providing a more political definition. This also suggests that in Europe, the event was characterized more precisely. From a further distance, conceptualization of Ireland was more vague. First impressions in the headlines often referred to 'Ireland’ while detailed information regarding the north was provided later in the text.

Furthermore, The Times referred to the the hunger strike as an Irish weapon, whereas, for instance, Dagens Nyheter referred to it as a weapon of the IRA. This was a small but significant difference. The Times contextualized the hunger strike negatively, as part of a larger Irish community, whereas Dagens Nyheter contextualized it more narrowly. These differences are of great importance when examining different stances towards the hunger strike. How Irishness was perceived had an impact on how the hunger strike was seen. It seems unlikely that newspapers had their own perceptions of the Irish. Instead, they probably reflected the perceptions shared within their societies.
In addition to Britain, the United States and Canada, Australia and Argentina also have significant populations of Irish descent. Therefore, it is hardly surprising that the newspapers in these countries were among the most active in their coverage (apart from La Prensa, which published a notable amount of content). More interestingly, there were clear differences in how the hunger strike was depicted.

Canada has often been referred to as a nation of immigrants. The Irish have been only one group among many. They have not become a particularly powerful group. Therefore, the Irish question did not rouse any specific reaction in Canada. In addition, the majority of Irish immigrants to Canada have a Protestant background. In many ways, Irish identity in Canada has not been specified. For instance, the Canadian census used the term British Isles instead of identifying Irish identity separately. These factors might further explain indifference towards the hunger strike and its goals. There were no strong connections to Ireland that would have caused emotional reactions. Canadians were more like bystanders in regard to the Northern Irish conflict. The news coverage of The Globe and Mail was similar in attitude. Therefore it is likely that the paper reflected the general atmosphere somewhat. The correspondent of the paper, Jeffrey Simpson, noted the indifference of Canadians towards the Northern Irish conflict when he visited his home country.

A shared history and culture as well as closer relations with Britain ensured that Irish affairs were relevant in Australia. During the previous decades, discussion of the Irish question was as a common feature in the Australian media. The political struggle even gained some support during the 1970s. Therefore, the general attitude towards the Irish issue was different in Australia. The contextualization of the strike in The Age reflected this. Events in Ireland were followed with interest.

However, close relations do not solely explain this interest. The coverage in The New York Times illustrates why. The Irish have traditionally had a strong

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341 Narratives of the occluded Irish diaspora: subversive voices 2012, passim
342 This has been examined by many scholars. For this thesis, the collection of essays entitled 'A nation of immigrants: women, workers, and communities in Canadian history, 1840s-1960s' (1998) provided valuable background information.
343 Wilson 2009, 3,9
344 Stevenson 2009, 164
345 Interview with Jeffrey Simpson. Email 23.10.2014
346 O’Donnell 2008, 224
347 O’Donnell 2008, 236
position in American culture and politics, and the New York area has one of the largest Irish American communities. This was reflected in active coverage by the paper, but the stance of The New York Times reflected broader issues. According to JACK HOLLAND, the American press had adopted a stereotype of the Northern Irish conflict as being ‘inexplicably Irish’. The New York Times considered the conflict a result of irrational hatred. The hunger strike was the first occasion that resulted in a questioning of this attitude. According to Holland, The New York Times was among the first to imperceptibly question prevailing perceptions. Holland’s findings help to explain the mental image depicted in The New York Times. In a way, American attitudes were in a state of change during the hunger strike, and therefore, the paper’s cautious commentary is more understandable. However, the more detailed analysis of this dissertation reveals that trying to understand newspaper coverage by examining mere cultural attitudes or stereotypes is far too simplistic and a host of other factors need to considered as well.

Previous research has claimed that the American press traditionally supported the British government in its challenges. However, as this research illustrates, the matter is not that simple. Political commitment was a strong factor but the hunger strike was such a volatile situation that it appeared that The New York Times had difficulty in deciding how to react. The paper only questioned the stance of the American administration towards the event occasionally. One possible explanation for this indecision may be the fact that, although relations were peaceful between the United States and Ireland, one group of Irish-Americans had adopted a more forceful position. This caused unease. The situation could have been regarded as a threat and the media may not have wanted to provoke this unease. Romanticizing the hunger strike was the last thing they would have wanted to do in such an atmosphere.

The coverage of the hunger strike in the New York Times appeared to be a delicate balance between a news topic of great interest and consideration for the possible implications it could have. Its contextualization also appeared to indicate

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349 Holland 1996, 396–397
350 Holland 1996, 377; McElrath 2000, 87–88
351 The Irish Northern Aid Committee (NORAID) is a fundraising organisation in North America. During the troubles, it was accused of raising funds for the IRA.
352 Kenny 2006b, 298–299
some signs of deliberate distance from the event. Similar conclusions have been made by LINDA DOWLING ALMEIDA:

Even the resumption of violence in Northern Ireland, the most compelling news stories to come across the sea from that island, centered on an issue that was neither new nor modern to the Irish in America: it was just the sorry resurrection of a centuries-long battle. Many of the immigrants left in the city were veterans of the 1920s Civil War struggle that ultimately divided the country into the twenty-six and six counties of the Republic and Northern Ireland, respectively. 'The troubles’ were no indication of the great change in the country. 353

The depictions of violence in Northern Ireland were not newsworthy anymore. The editors of The New York Times might have felt the same way.

The low amount of coverage in La Prensa also suggests that the presence of a large Irish community in the country was not the main catalyst for coverage. La Prensa has been known for its journalistic style, so the lack of commentary in regard to the hunger strike is noteworthy. It is also interesting to note that, despite the tensions between Argentina and Britain354, they were not reflected in the coverage of the hunger strike. The low amount of coverage was primarily an indication of distance from the event. The hunger strike did not have any effect locally, and therefore, mere coverage was enough. After all, it is not self-evident that European events are reported outside Europe.

European relations with Irishness are diverse. Many European countries had large Irish communities (eg. Spain, France and Germany), and it is likely that all European countries had some Irish connections. However, these were not evident in the coverage of the hunger strike. However, some stereotypes regarding the Irish are apparent in these newspapers. 355 For instance, in Germany the Irish were considered to be irrational habitants on the periphery of Europe. 356 In other words, the Irish were considered to be different from the German community. DORIS DOHMEN has claimed that attitudes toward the British have been key in defining the Irish: those who have a positive mental image of the English have a negative

353 Almeida 2001, 59
354 The Falkland Islands have been a continuous source of tension in relations between the countries.
355 One must remember that research on these stereotypes is insufficient.
356 Dohmen 1994, 168
mental image of the Irish, and vice versa.\textsuperscript{357} Perceptions of the English were indifferent due to ideological and political reasons.\textsuperscript{358} Again, it would be too simplistic to explore the coverage of a particular newspaper using general cultural stereotypes, but it is interesting that Die Welt’s depictions of the Irish fit this observation. The English authorities were depicted as rational actors while the Irish hunger strikers were an illegitimate group. However, it is more likely that Die Welt’s judgment was based more on its attitudes towards paramilitary organisations and resistence against them.

Historical and political relations between France and Ireland have seen highs and lows.\textsuperscript{359} Cultural relations in particular have been active.\textsuperscript{360} However, the coverage of Le Figaro does not reflect this. The hunger strike was not considered to be an event that affected relations between the countries.

Although in many of the European countries Irish issues in general did not attract much attention, but the hunger strike was such a compelling event that it was followed and covered by the media in these countries as well.

### 3.5.3 Mental images are created from the ground up

The previous chapters have demonstrated that newspapers acted differently. For example, The Times had a narrow-minded approach whereas Dagens Nyheter covered the hunger strike from several points of view. In doing so, Dagens Nyheter was creating a mental image that did not silence either side of the conflict. Giving voice to both sides of the conflict was an indication of the paper’s ability to discuss the issue without political alignments. As distance from the event grows – whether it is cultural, political or geographical – indifference towards news coverage of the event increases. However, this does not automatically mean there is approval of the issue.\textsuperscript{361} This difference between The Times and Dagens Nyheter is one of the clearest examples of how the same issue can be reported on using various tones. The reasoning for using such tones consists of a complex set of factors that news

\textsuperscript{357} Dohmen 1994, 189
\textsuperscript{358} Dohmen 1994, 164–168
\textsuperscript{359} Maher & Maignant 2012, 3–5
\textsuperscript{360} The topic has been examined for instance in the book \textit{Southern Ireland and the liberation of France: new perspectives} (2011)
\textsuperscript{361} Miller 1994a, 196
makers have to deal with in their everyday operations. The circumstances under which newspapers and journalists operate are of primary concern.

Each of the newspapers had their own news culture, and this has to be taken into consideration when evaluating the end results. Unfortunately, it is difficult for outsiders to know exactly how these cultures worked in the early 1980s. However, some journalistic principles remain more or less the same. The coverage of the hunger strike offers a chance to explore the affect different media operations had during times of conflict. As it turns out, media did have an affect on depictions to some extent. Media practices include many aspects, from the working conditions of reporters to editorial issues that guide the publishing process.

As The Times and The Irish Times regarded the hunger strike as local news, both papers were able to use several journalists to cover the event. Journalists from different sections of the paper were able to reflect on the situation using their expertise. Both papers had a political emphasis but the attitudes of each were different. One clear reason for this was the use of the English officials as sources. It appears that The Times trusted the authorities without questioning them. This again illustrates the fact that The Times acted as if it was on a war footing. Officials of the British government and others were regarded as the only trustworthy sources. The coverage in other papers indicates that they were not the only possible sources. Therefore, The Times deliberately adopted this strategy.

The coverage in The Irish Times as well as in the international newspapers reveals that journalists had many ways in which they could report on the events. Based on the information provided in news articles, the international newspapers that did send their own reporters to Belfast (or other parts of Northern Ireland) at some point during the hunger strike included The Age, Dagens Nyheter, The Globe and Mail, Le Figaro, The New York Times and El Pais. The Sowetan once made mention of a reporter in Belfast but no name was provided. Just about half of the papers sent their own reporters to Belfast. Those who did go

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362 Out of the selected newspapers, only a few have been subjects of some research. Even these accounts are based more on subjective experiences, and have not covered journalistic processes in a detailed manner. It would have been interesting to interview more journalists and editors from that time (in order to find out more about the newspapers’ operations) but unfortunately, not many of them are living. As the main focus of this research is on the year 1981, it is of no use to rely on the experiences of earlier or later members of staff.

363 Based on the given place line of the news articles.

364 The Times and The Irish Times had their own correspondents in Northern Ireland.

365 The Sowetan 7.5.1981
there remained there for only a brief period of time, in most cases during early May. Only the journalists from The New York Times visited Northern Ireland more frequently. This reveals that the resources of the newspapers enabled them to have their own journalists on the spot only if something significant occurred. The death of Bobby Sands was such an occasion.

The hunger strike was otherwise reported on (by newspaper staff) from correspondents in London. The Helsingin Sanomat, Neue Zürcher Zeitung and Die Welt did not have their own reporters in Northern Ireland at any time during the hunger strike. I would argue that this was apparent in their coverage: a certain lack of any personal note can be detected in their coverage. These papers also published material from news agencies that was often written from the location. In this way, their news articles did include local information. However, end results were different when a journalist from a particular newspaper reflected on his own observations. It is hardly a coincidence that the news coverage of the Helsingin Sanomat, Neue Zürcher Zeitung and Die Welt, as well as that of the Arab News, La Prensa and the South China Morning Post, which published only news stories from the agencies, were the ones that had the most fragmented contextualizations of the hunger strike.

Foreign correspondents usually have to rely on official sources for practical reasons. During a conflict, this practise is emphasized even more. During the hunger strike, the authorities tried to control the information given to reporters. The Northern Ireland Office (NIO) even categorized reporters. Representatives of the media that were seen to be more important were given access to information that was different from that given to journalists from "less important" newspapers and broadcasters. To some extent, reports that were based in London probably reflected the practise of relying on official sources. Whether this was done intentionally or through necessity is more difficult to determine. However, some of the journalists who reported on the hunger strike found other ways of collecting information. The situation on the ground was not as severe and chaotic as a war, and therefore, the journalists had more options. Those who were motivated created more versatile depictions.

One interesting aspect regarding the coverage of the hunger strike in international newspapers is that articles during the whole period were often written

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366 From a few days to a few weeks.
367 Based on the information provided for location.
368 Hanusch 2008, 28
369 Curtis 1984, 256
by a single journalist. Obviously, the articles of the newspapers were in line with policy, but this aspect illustrates how depictions were affected by reporters themselves, especially a situation further away was covered. Peter Smark of The Age, Bo A Ericsson of Dagens Nyheter, Jeffrey Simpson of The Globe and Mail and Andrés Ortega of El Pais were the journalists that had the most influence regarding the overall mental images relayed by their own newspapers. They all seemed motivated in explaining the situation. It is more interesting however, that differences appeared among them.

Jeffrey Simpson’s articles often emphasized the violent nature of the conflict while Bo A Ericsson emphasized the human interest angle. It is also important to take into consideration their personas. Unfortunately, not all these journalists are available to discuss their views but some conclusions can still be made. For instance, other articles by Peter Smark suggest that he had a very anti-war attitude. This could have affected the way he reported on the hunger strike. Jeffrey Simpson had personally experienced intimidating situations with paramilitary organisations, which could have coloured his interpretations. Journalists are humans after all, and experiences colour perceptions.

The journalists’ visits to the Maze must also be taken into account. Work-related visits to the prison were officially prohibited. Journalists could visit the prison as visitors, but if they were recognised they had to sign a contract that forbade them to publish anything regarding their visit. This ban was not always obeyed. Bo A Ericsson and Jeffrey Simpson at least visited the prison and published stories about these visits. According to Simpson, the visit was closely supervised, and the journalists did not have opportunities to wander freely. It seems that the foreign journalists at least were not too closely observed. For instance, Thomas Hennessey, a journalist from The Irish Times, visited the prison during the early stages of the hunger strike. He published a news article after his visit. These stories illustrate that it was easier to publish material abroad that was not censored before the escalation of the conflict.

It seems plausible that the habits and manners of a certain newspaper and its reporters affect the outcome. However, we can only speculate on the significance

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370 Eg. Smark 1990
371 Curtis 1984, 258–259
372 Interview with Jeffrey Simpson. Email 05.01.2015
373 Hennessey 2014, 161
374 The Irish Times 5.3.1981
of this. All of the factors affecting news publishing can only be revealed by interviewing all those who were involved in the news process. Unfortunately, this is not possible. Based on the results of this research however, we can conclude that conflicts provide many challenges for a journalist: the manipulation of information by interested parties, safety, cultural barriers, and so on.\textsuperscript{375} All in all, the working circumstances of a journalist can have a major impact on how a news story is told.

The hunger strike was a good example of this. The strained atmosphere was experienced in many ways, and these experiences coloured depictions. It is important to recognise that human characteristics and experiences are potential influences as well as organisational, political or societal ones.

\textit{Journalistic styles in different cultures}

One factor that could explain some of the difference in news making relate to the societal circumstances that newspapers operate in. None of the newspapers studied here were sensationalist but they did have to attract readers. This is one factor that needs to taken into consideration in examining the news coverage. The Age is a good example of this. Even though the written texts and commentary did not draw much attention to the violent side of the hunger strike, the published news photos told a slightly different story. Aspects of violence had a relatively larger role in photos. One can only speculate if the published pictures were selected precisely because they depicted violence or simply because they were interesting. Although The Age did not have financial difficulties, Australian newspapers were said to prefer sensationalist coverage, as their circulation was based on newsstand sales.\textsuperscript{376} It is easier to sell papers by using bold headlines and dramatic pictures.

Die Welt (and Neue Zürcher Zeitung) were the opposite. According to FOLKER HANUSCH, the German newspapers were not forced to ‘sell’ their issues, as they had a significant number of subscribers.\textsuperscript{377}

The appearance of the Die Welt was less attractive in that it had fewer pictures and more text. These stylistic differences can be explained by more fundamental aspects. The Age and Die Welt can be used as examples. Several studies have shown that there are different models of journalism.\textsuperscript{378} Both European and Anglo-

\textsuperscript{375} Picard 1991, 65
\textsuperscript{376} Hanusch 2008, 133
\textsuperscript{377} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{378} E.g. Williams 2006
American journalism have had distinct attributes that can be recognised. The Australian media has been adopted an Anglo-American style that differs from the German style. Therefore, the cultural framework is an essential factor. A great difference, according to HANUSCH, lies in the interpretation of the term ‘freedom of expression’. The Anglo-American style interpretes this as freedom of social communication, whereas the European style interpretes it as a personal right. In other words, the Anglo-American style regards all information as being equally important, while, for example, German journalists view themselves as interpreters. Even though this division is not uncomplicated it allows us to possibly recognise the affects of different styles on newsmaking. The findings of this dissertation reveal that Hanusch’s generalized conclusions do not automatically apply to individual papers or to singular events. However, his findings can serve as background information. It is important to recognise that a newspapers practices or traditions can originate from far back.

As it was earlier discussed, news is affected by organizational and professional frames. Several scholars have analysed the media systems of different countries and cultures in order to find out how different journalistic traditions affect news production. Here I will briefly consider the possible effects of different media systems according to research by DANIEL C. HALLIN AND PAOLO MANCINI. MANCINI and HALLIN created a systematic approach to compare the relationship between the media and politics. Their research is not thorough (it lacks many forms of public policy) but it provides an interesting angle from which to examine the issue. The comparison includes ten countries examined in this research: Great Britain, the United States, Canada, Ireland, Finland, Sweden, Germany, Switzerland, France, and Spain, thus covering the majority of the subjects of this research.

379 Hanusch 2008, 63  
380 Hanusch 2008, 63–64  
381 The book Comparing Media Systems: Three Models of Media and Politics (2004) compares the media systems of 18 different countries. The focus is on Western democracies. Press systems include elements such as the structure of media markets, political parallelism, journalistic professionalism and the role of the authorities.  
382 Further studies by Bogusława Dobek-Ostrowska et al (Comparative Media Systems, European and Global Perspectives, 2010) and Hallin & Mancini (Comparing Media Systems Beyond the Western World, 2012) have broaden this view by analysing other parts of the world as well. For instance, the book Comparing Media Systems Beyond the Western World takes a brief look at the media system in the Arab world and South Africa. However, as the nature of coverage in the Arab News and South Africa was fragmented, it is not beneficial to examine their coverage from this point of view.
According to HALLIN & MANCINI, the three media systems are: 1) The North Atlantic or Liberal Model, 2) The North/Central Europe or Democratic Corporatist Model, and 3) The Mediterranean or Polarized Pluralist Model. Great Britain, the United States, Canada, and Ireland belong to the liberal model, while Finland, Sweden, Germany, and Switzerland are parts of the democratic corporatist model. France and Spain are categorised in the polarized pluralist model. Each of the systems have recognisable characteristics:

1) The North Atlantic or Liberal Model is characterized by: average newspaper circulation, information-oriented journalism; internal pluralism (external pluralism in Great Britain), a formally autonomous system, non-institutionalized self-regulation, liberalism, and a strong rational-legal authority.

2) The North/Central Europe or Democratic Corporatist Model is characterized by: a high newspaper circulation, external pluralism, especially in the national press, institutionalized self-regulation, strong state intervention but freedom of the press, organized pluralism, and a strong rational-legal authority.

3) The Mediterranean or Polarized Pluralist Model is characterized by: a low newspaper circulation, an elite, politically-oriented press, commentary-oriented journalism, high political parallelism, strong state intervention, the strong role of political parties, a weaker rational-legal authority (excepting France).

A glimpse at the three media systems reveals that membership in a certain group does not explain the nature of coverage regarding the hunger strike. For instance, newspapers that had different stances (The Times, The Irish Times) existed in countries that belonged to the same media system. However, whether those circumstances enabled the strongest views can be considered. The Times’, The Irish Times’, and The Globe and Mail’s (as well as The Age’s) depictions were definitely the most opinionated. It seems plausible that cultural, political and historical relations were the strongest influences but it is noteworthy that a similar style was typical in these papers. The papers operated in media systems wherein they were able to express their positions in a way they thought was appropriate.

Journalistic practices provide only a partial explanation of the differences in coverage. According to characteristics, the liberal model is described as

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383 Hallin & Mancini have noted that this division is not simple (each country contains characteristics typical of other systems). However, some generalisations have been made. Hallin & Mancini 2004, 10–11
384 Hallin & Mancini 2004, 75
385 Hallin & Mancini 2004, 74–75
386 Hallin & Mancini 2004, 73–74
387 Australia’s media system can be considered part of the liberal model.
information-oriented journalism. The papers were following the liberal model, but at the same time there were some suggestions of a more commentary-oriented approach. The significance of the event most likely explains this distinction. The coverage of The New York Times is another example of how this model only partially applies. The paper has traditionally prided itself on its opinionated style of journalism.388 However, in this case the paper chose a more moderate style. The event itself determined the nature of coverage more.

The same applies to the other countries as well: there are no strong indications that different media systems as such would have had an impact on news production in this case. Overall, the Western style of journalism does not significantly differ from country to country. Many scholars have found that relations between the media and authorities in these examined countries were generally similar.389 This illustrates that a comparison of this type would require more versatile circumstances, as well as a topic that would evoke reactions on a similar level.

However, it is intriguing to note how abstract phenomenon of journalism guide the process of news production. In this case, there is no evidence that the coverage of the hunger strike was affected by media systems as concepts. It seems that the choices of individual journalists had more of an impact on the coverage of the hunger strike.

The most important bases for the research methods used here have already been mentioned several times. Journalists and editors are not objective: they all have subjective perceptions that guide their selection and mediation of information. They frame news events the way they themselves understand and construct reality. Their mental images are relayed in the pages of the newspapers. However, subjective images are often societally formed, and therefore, newspaper coverage may reflect societal aspects to some extent. However, as this research primarily deals with Western societies, societal differences are a minor factor.

3.6 Conclusion

The newspapers in this study were classified by the amount of coverage and by their depictions of the main subjects. The contents reflected stances that can be considered positive or negative (or neutral). However, as historical image research aims to explain phenomena instead of evaluating them, the newspapers here were
not primarily categorized according to a positive or negative stance. By comparing the main features of each newspaper’s coverage, it was possible to determine each newspaper’s unique "set" of features. Even if the newspapers shared some features, the overall "set" was different in all of the papers. The main features of each newspaper are briefly introduced below.

The Age followed the hunger strike actively: it published plenty of news and feature articles. It treated the hunger strike as an interesting and meaningful event. The paper constructed a clear context for the hunger strike. The Age used strong narratives to build context for the event. The paper had a clear "story" regarding why the hunger strike happened. Furthermore, the paper often used expressions that created a distinctive discourse, such as "rebel dies,"\textsuperscript{390} and "hunger death,"\textsuperscript{391} creating revealing narratives. The context was also easily recognizable: the paper constantly emphasized the historical relations between the British and the Irish while reporting on and explaining the event. From the paper’s point of view, the hunger strike was a result of past historical and political mistakes, as was often mentioned. The Age considered the British, and particularly the Prime Minister, active participants of the conflict. This opinion was expressed through many features with commentary. The paper regarded the hunger strike as a conflict between the British authorities and the hunger strikers. Even though their participation was occasionally discussed, the paramilitary organizations were not depicted as key players by The Age. Like all the papers, The Age reported on the violent incidents throughout the hunger strike, but they were not the focus of attention.

The Arab News followed the hunger strike actively by publishing news articles regularly. It did not publish commentary as often but nevertheless published a relatively significant amount. The news articles were mainly factual accounts of events that indicated no particular narratives. The only forum where the paper included opinionated discourse was in commentary in editorials and feature articles. Through commentary, the paper depicted the hunger strike as a conflict that was based on nationalist feelings on both sides. Furthermore, the criminal aspect of the situation was also recognised. The involvement of the IRA, the rioting and other conflicts were continuous narratives, which suggest that the paper viewed the hunger strike primarily from this point of view.

\textsuperscript{390} Eg. The Age 23.5.1981
\textsuperscript{391} Eg. The Age 21.8.1981
The amount of coverage in Dagens Nyheter was low. However, the style of reporting had a very unique feature, particularly during the most eventful time of the hunger strike. The event was often discussed from a local or individual point of view: how the troubled situation affected the lives of normal citizens, how prisoners also had mothers, wives, and children, and how the situation appeared to an outsider. The paper created a clear historical and social discourse for the event. Dagens Nyheter also reported on violent incidents and the participation of the IRA, but the narratives used to depict them were less prominent.

Le Figaro followed the hunger strike quite actively but it seemed to be less interested in it. The event was commented on only occasionally. Only some particularly eventful aspects were discussed in more opinionated tones. Even in this case, the narrative was merely more detailed than opinionated. In general, the main focus was on the strained atmosphere and its consequences. Both the hunger strikers and the British authorities were described in neutral tones: neither party was directly blamed for the situation.

For The Globe and Mail, the hunger strike was an interesting news event: it was reported on actively and in relatively many features. The majority of the coverage adhered to similar tones: the paper depicted the hunger strike as a violent conflict caused by the criminal prisoners. The paper made clear connections between the hunger strike and the IRA: the paramilitary organisation was viewed as an active participant. The prisoners were continuously referred to as "IRA faster" or 'IRA man'. Even brief wire news pieces created a distinctive discourse with such wording. The paper supported the view of British authorities and regarded the authorities as passive actors in the conflict. The coverage was dominated by violence and its dangerous effects. For example, the paper contained plenty of detailed accounts of how bystanders had died. The emphasis on violence occasionally resulted in strong narratives: "N.Ireland violence claims more innocent blood". The Globe and Mail used similar expressions regularly, which indicates that the paper had a strong stance in regards to the hunger strike.

The Helsingin Sanomat didn’t have a consistent stance in regards to the hunger strike: its modest expression of opinion depicted the event both as a result of historical conflict and as an act of criminality. The hunger strike was followed quite actively but reports mainly consisted of brief accounts of what had happened. The

use of news agency material may explain this narrative detachment but it can also
be an indication that the event had no specific meaning. The Helsingin Sanomat did
not create any specific discourse in regards to the event, which suggests that the
hunger strike was regarded as a distant event. The most recognisable narratives told
a story of a conflict that was not easy to understand. From the paper’s point of view
the hunger strike appeared to be more evidence of disorder in Northern Ireland.396

The varied nature of The Irish Times’ coverage makes it difficult to define its
main features, but it seems clear that the paper regarded the hunger strike as part of
longstanding troubled historical and political relations between Britain and Ireland.
This was a self-evident fact for the Irish Times. It seems that the hunger strike itself
was often a mere tool with which to discuss the larger issue: for example, the IRA
was often blamed for the situation but the hunger strikers as individuals were not
held responsible. The same applied to the British: they were usually treated as a
group and no one was held accountable individually. The paper’s narrative seemed to
refer to the hunger strike primarily as one aspect of a larger battle.

The amount of coverage in Neue Zürcher Zeitung was low, but when the paper
published something it used powerful tones. The hunger strike deaths were referred
to as suicides397 and the hunger strikers as terrorists. The paper created narratives
which defined the hunger strike as an criminal and violent incident. The paper was
particularly worried about political consequences, and in its view, a hunger strike
was not a desirable occurrence in any society. Neue Zürcher Zeitung highlighted the
role of the IRA in causing the troubled situation, while the British were viewed as
passive actors.

The New York Times actively reported on the hunger strike but the tone of its
coverage was less revealing. This suggests that the paper considered the event to
be significant, but failed to take a strong stance in regards to it. The hunger strike
was viewed as one part of 'the troubles', thus reflecting the historical and political
context of the event. In fact, the historical background was often referred to and
given a more vivid narrative. Expressions such as "uncovers old pain"398, "ancient
anguish of the struggle for Ireland"399 and "reminders of old enmity"400 created a
discourse in which the past had significant meaning. At the same time, the hunger
strike itself was depicted in blander tones. The paper’s stance was moderate: it

396 Eg. Helsingin Sanomat 2.7.1981
397 The paper often used the expression "Hungerselbstmord" while reporting on the deaths.
depicted the hunger strike as a battle between two participants, without blaming or endorsing either side. Violence was viewed almost as a natural state: violent incidents were not depicted with charged wording, and although IRA was mentioned as a criminal organization, the narratives did not emphasize this aspect of terror.

El Pais was not as active in its coverage as many of the other papers but when the paper published articles it did so in a more elaborate manner. The articles were longer in average and contained cautious accounts. The hunger strike was depicted as a battle between two equally relevant participants, each having their own reasons. The paper did not favor either side but seemed concerned about the overall situation. Interestingly, El Pais was the only paper that occasionally made religious associations: it discussed some issues from a Catholic point of view. However, a religious discourse did not dominate its coverage.

La Prensa published news articles quite actively but lacked any clear stance of its own. The content focused on the violent incidents surrounding the hunger strike, thus depicting a battle between the hunger strikers and the British authorities. There was hardly any background context as to why this was happening, and articles were fact-oriented accounts of events. It is thus obviously difficult to make any conclusions regarding this kind of coverage, and observations need to be made with some caution.

The South China Morning Post was interested in the hunger strike, as it actively reported and commented on it. Overall, the paper depicted the hunger strike as a violent situation that needed to be opposed. The paper also gave credence to the historical context of the event but emphasized its criminal nature. The hunger strikers were viewed primarily as criminals against who the British authorities must fight. The South China Morning Post mainly used news agency material, which contained objective accounts, but also commentary. Many details (news headlines, wording, news photos), revealed a strong discourse. Expressions like "terror amounts"401, "Terrorist 'answer' to Thatcher"402, "Ultimatum led to life of terror"403, and "Hunger striker’s family break the code of terror"404 can be interpreted as indicators of the paper’s mental image of the situation. As the paper used similar narratives, even small elements can be considered reliable evidence of its stance.

401 South China Morning Post 21.5.1981
402 South China Morning Post 20.5.1981
403 South China Morning Post 5.5.1981
404 South China Morning Post 2.8.1981
The Sowetan published news material so irregularly that it is impossible to draw any definite conclusions. Its coverage suggests that the hunger strike was seen as a conflict with a historical and political background. The paper did not create any permanent 'story': fragmented articles focused on the hunger strikers and their struggle, and their fate seemed to be the only newsworthy feature.

The Times treated the hunger strike as a significant news event but at the same time it seemed to be concerned about not giving too much attention to it. Its tone of coverage was the most revealing: the discourse depicted a battle between good and evil, the British government being the good and the hunger strikers the obvious enemy. The paper used narratives that solely put the blame on one side, that of the hunger strikers, while the British authorities were supported without question. The Times depicted the hunger strikers as less important as persons as well. It defended its stance by emphasizing the criminal and violent nature of the event. The paper often used narratives of horror to emphasize its own view: "As the battle raged, women and children screamed. Some mothers threw their children on to the ground and lay on top of them".405

Die Welt seemed less interested in the hunger strike: its coverage was not that active and it lacked any insightful discussion. The paper did not create any explanatory context but highlighted violent incidents. The IRA was viewed as the main cause of the conflict while the British authorities were viewed as passive actors. The paper created a clear discourse of terror by often referring to the hunger strikers and the IRA as terrorists.406 This violent narrative was strengthened by a focus on the violent aspects of the situation.

The features mentioned above are somewhat simplified but they can be regarded as typical of each newspaper. These features are open to interpretation.

Conclusions from contexts

The contextualization of a news story determines the kinds of mental images expressed and shared. Each newspaper had its own particular view of the hunger strike. Some of the mental images were more powerful than others. This is normal, as issues that are seen to be relevant – and are therefore depicted in stronger tones – change according to many factors.

405 The Times 11.7.1981
The Times relayed the strongest mental image. All the aspects of the hunger strike were depicted as if the paper was dealing with a powerful enemy. The paper’s coverage fulfilled all the characteristics typical of an enemy image: the hunger strikers were portrayed as the opposing group, with many negative properties. The enemy was depicted as the sole source of the conflict. The image relayed by the Times’ reveals that the paper regarded the event as a threat. It’s stance was primarily its own. On the other hand, this was also the only stance within these newspapers that could without a doubt be linked to a habit that was adopted by the media on a national level. In matters related to the Republican movement, the British media almost unanimously allied with the state. The British authorities continually treated events in Northern Ireland as a war-like situation, and urged the media to do the same. It was easy to condemn the other side, as the readers were disconnected from Northern Irish affairs. The province was not regarded as a part of the nation by the British. The context created for the hunger strike, therefore, was largely based on the traditional British approach, which was largely determined by historical and political factors.

While the mental image relayed by The Times’s mental was one-sided, the rest of the papers relayed more varied mental images. Some of the papers had a somewhat clear stance, and some were more undefined. Interestingly, the papers with a negative mental image of the hunger strike were the most outspoken. In addition to The Times, The Globe and Mail, and Neue Zürcher Zeitung, the South China Morning Post and Die Welt used a more opinionated style in reporting on the hunger strike. The violent aspects of the event were emphasized, and by using references to terrorism, the papers broadened the nature of the event. It has been found that, by connecting singular incidents with terrorism, the meaning of an event can be amplified as the framing associates it as a part of other incidents. It seems likely that these papers did consider the involvement of paramilitary organizations as the defining attribute of the hunger strike. These papers depicted the hunger strike as a part of violent conflict in general. The coverage in these papers’ sided with the attitudes of British authorities, even though they were not

407 Hayes & Norris 2011, 67
408 Moorcraft & Taylor 2008, 141
409 Moorcraft & Taylor 2008, 143
410 Rappert 2012, 108–109
411 Rappert 2012, 110
dealing with a national conflict. Several studies have found that during national conflicts, the coverage of the media tends to be patriotic. As these international papers adopted similar attitudes, it reveals that their mental images of the Northern Irish conflict as terrorism also determined the nature of their coverage on the hunger strike. The reason for this was primarily editorial: all the papers were known to adopt formal tones. However, consideration should be given to whether any cultural or societal links, or a lack of them, had any role. For example, is it only coincidence that the papers that relayed negative images existed in cultures that had no significant connections with the Irish?

Some studies have found that the American media, including The New York Times, have traditionally favored British interpretations of the conflict in Northern Ireland. In this case however, the mental image relayed by the paper was slightly different. It was cautious in its reports, and it did occasionally express concern. The paper was known to oppose terrorism, and the hunger strike was not treated as such. The mental image relayed of the event was more complex: in addition to violence, political and historical factors were involved. It is almost impossible to know if the presence of a strong Irish community on the East Coast was the cause of this, or whether the paper simply regarded the hunger strike as more of a human event. Most likely, the paper’s image was a result of many factors.

There were newspapers that primarily considered the hunger strike a human event. The deaths of individuals and hunger strikers were depicted as human drama rather than as political violence. Dagens Nyheter was probably the best example of this: the mental image relayed by the paper primarily considered how such drama could happen. The Irish Times and The Age depicted the hunger strike from a more human point of view, and these papers had their own agendas. Dagens Nyheter appeared to view the event from a distance, (and as the hunger strike continued, coverage became even more distant) but the paper had a strong outlook on the situation. The image relayed reflected a certain liberal way of seeing things. This was the paper’s perspective, but could it also in some way be a Swedish way of thought?

In addition to The Times, The Age and The Irish Times were also newspapers that took a certain stance. According to the mental image relayed by both papers, the hunger strike was a result of the Northern Irish conflict in general. These two papers were the only ones that depicted the British government as an active

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Footnotes:

412 Eg. Taylor 2003, 70
413 McElrath 2000, 85, 88
participant during the event. The historical and political connections of these societies had such a significant impact that the newspapers, (which are generally regarded as independent actors), reflected them clearly. This reveals that the hunger strike was considered an indication of political and cultural differences. To have had such a view, a close connection to the issue was required. It is interesting that again more negatively charged perceptions were the motivating factor.

A great number of the newspapers took no particular side in the hunger strike. The mental images they relayed were, if not indifferent, then more distant. The Helsingin Sanomat, Le Figaro, El Pais, the Arab News, and La Prensa treated the hunger strike like any foreign conflict. Their coverage was mainly based on facts and a collection of narrations of what had occurred. The papers’ coverage lacked intensity. This occurs when the media does not have its own or national interests at stake. In such cases, the mental images relayed remain fragmented. The Sowetan was the most extreme example of this fragmentation. As a paper that supported liberation, one could have assumed that it would have been more interested in the hunger strike. However, its coverage was sporadic and there was no interest in the event. This indicates that on an international level, newspapers needed to make choices regarding what to publish and how. These papers had no reason to support or oppose any participants of the hunger strike. It was merely a conflict that took place somewhere abroad.

However, the fragmented coverage of one paper is as equally revelant in this research as the strong stance taken by another. Depictions in the news are based on a level of significance given to the story (for news makers). Furthermore, the commonalities of coverage in papers that were disinterested in the event suggests that papers that are not ideologically bound to an event do not need to stress any particular viewpoint.

It is noteworthy that this national conflict was followed around the world. It was significant enough that it attracted attention. One reason for this was the fact that it resulted in actual deaths. Death is often a newsworthy event when political or other societal elements are involved.

*Contexts and discourses interact*

The contextualization of the hunger strike is interesting. The same conflict resulted in various interpretations. It is significant that the newspapers can be divided into different categories based on their views regarding the event, from impassioned stances to indifference. Some papers saw a violent threat, while others regarded the
event as part of a larger dispute. These different perceptions were the result of differing backgrounds and practices among the newspapers.

A more detailed examination reveals that the process of reasoning in using the mental images portrayed by each newspaper involved a complex set of factors. It can however be concluded that there are certain factors that affect news processes in any case. First, news regarding conflict is dependent on the publisher’s perceptions of conflict, and – with some reservations – on the larger society. When these are taken into consideration, it is apparent why newspapers (or any media) report the way they do.

The second factor that is common to all news processes involves the media’s use of discourse, according to editorial and/or societal conditions. News discourses are shaped according to circumstances. Furthermore, historical circumstances can be viewed as plausible factors affecting coverage. News discourses are shaped within broader historical and socio-political contexts. In the case of the hunger strike, there are some indications that the situation reflected these contexts: the more involved a newspaper was, the stronger the discourse was. I would argue that this trend is universal. The meaning of an event becomes central. The discourse in The Times is a very good example of a situation in which certain attributes are emphasized. The paper used a one-sided rhetoric to create and reinforce its own views. Furthermore, several studies have indicated that this kind of behaviour was typical of a large group of the British media. Thus, it can be concluded that a certain general national perspective exists in a conflict situation, and that the media express in supporting their side in the conflict. The historical, political and/or cultural factors in a society are so strong that independent media express this same perspective. A certain group becomes the enemy.

In this case, the coverage in The Times and The Irish Times was shaped by similar factors: both papers had a certain societal role in supporting the interests of their own societies. The meaning of the conflict was communicated in a certain way in relation to power and media operations.

The goals of international papers were different. Their discourses were defined by other factors that were more often based on journalistic principles. Their coverage was determined more by editorial practices. Obviously, The Times and The Irish Times had their own journalistic practices and discourses that affected coverage, but their societal involvement in the conflict lent societal factors a much greater weight. Abroad, societal involvement was irrelevant, and therefore, editorial factors and circumstances guided reporting. However, it became evident that if some societal links (whether political, historical, etc) existed with either side
of the conflict, the international papers were more likely to be opinionated. This confirms the opinions of many scholars that the media reflect societal circumstances.

The need to take a stance in regards to a societally significant topic explains why a media can react strongly. In a conflict situation, the media adopt a nationalistic stance. For example, during the hunger strike, The Times regarded the British government and other authorities as more national than political actors.

On the other hand, international coverage of the hunger strike reveals how the news process has become more uniform globally. The same texts and visual elements circle around the world. As newspapers (or any other media) have limited resources, the more available options are used often. In regards to international news, this applies to the use of news material provided by international news agencies. In this case, the quality papers in different countries relied on the same sources. The largest international news agencies were, in practice, used by all the newspapers. Similar facts and descriptions of the event were published all over the world. As the news agencies had their own ways of operation and discourses of their own, their affect on the news process must be recognised. Their accounts were often brief and without contextual explanations. This kind of news coverage was (and is) typical of the majority of the media. Thus, the significance of a news event is evident when more versatile coverage appears. During the hunger strike, this occurred rarely on an interational level. Only a few events were reported universally with more variety in coverage. Events in early May and the death of Bobby Sands were the only top stories in different parts of the world. The later hunger strike deaths did not gain as much attention. This suggests that dramatic topics are essential for news producers, but even they become less interesting if the level of drama remains the same.

Despite using the same news sources, there were some differences in the coverage of international papers. They reveal that news processes are bound to societal and cultural circumstances. Differences may not be large but even minor disparities are revealing if they are due to certain perceptions. As mental images have the tendency to take into account features that strengthen rather than question perceptions, existing perceptions guide the mental images formed. The hunger strike did not change existing perceptions.
4 Depicting the hunger strikers

The prisoners who died as a result of the hunger strike in the Maze prison near Belfast formed one side of the conflict. They proved to be an interesting topic in the news. The amount of coverage illustrates this in many ways, as has already been mentioned in Chapter 2. Furthermore, the majority of the newspapers were more likely to discuss the hunger strikers on the front page more than any other topic, throughout the strike. The remainder of the papers had some front page news focusing on the hunger strikers (the focus was on Bobby Sands). The hunger strikers were one of the most common themes in news photos.\textsuperscript{414} Hence the hunger strikers formed a common theme in coverage of the situation and depictions of them in newspapers reveal significant perceptions.

This chapter discusses how these ten hunger strikers were depicted by the newspapers and why. Firstly, the focus is on the terminology used in naming the hunger strikers. This might seem to be a minor detail but as it turns out, nuances can change the tone of the mental image relayed.

Secondly, the chapter examines how the deaths of the hunger strikers were covered. Death is such a significant event that its representation is a challenge for the media. Death is a delicate but revelatory topic. This chapter will demonstrate how death can become routine news, and it also illustrates how even the smallest nuances can be used to create a certain desired mental image of an event (or a person). The last part of this chapter discusses why the newspapers represented the hunger strikers the way they did. It is particularly interesting that some papers treated the hunger strike as a terrorist-type event, while some others did not draw similar connections. The media often have certain methods in reporting on terrorism-related events. These methods partly explain some of the depictions.

4.1 Words matter

How newspapers name the participants in a conflict can be significant, as names help to condition the way a conflict is perceived. The terms used reveal more about the labeller than they do about the nature of the conflict.\textsuperscript{415} From a discoursive point of view, the terms used are not the only important indicators, but equally revealing are the way terms are used and under what circumstances they appear. The hunger

\textsuperscript{414} Figure 20.

\textsuperscript{415} Carruthers 2000,165
strikers were a group that aroused interest of various kinds. Therefore, the terminology used in regards to them shaped the mental images relayed. The terms ‘hunger striker’, ‘IRA prisoner’ and ‘member of the IRA’ were the most commonly used. They can be considered a rather neutral way to describe one side of the conflict. All the newspapers used these neutral terms most of the time. In some papers – Dagens Nyheter, the Helsingin Sanomat, The Irish Times, and The New York Times – these were more or less the only labels used for the prisoners. This suggests that these papers did not have any reason to emphasize any certain aspect connected to the hunger strikers. Factual descriptions are usually used to avoid emotive expressions and difficult words that can mean different things to different members of an audience at differing times. This kind of thought was dominant in newspapers that did not stress the violent or criminal side of the hunger strikers or sympathize with them. A hunger striker was simply that – a hunger striker.

There were some newspapers that chose to use more charged terms and words to label the hunger strikers. The use of terms like ‘guerrilla’, ‘militant’ and ‘terrorist’ created different mental images.

The Age and the Arab News used the term ‘guerrilla’ more often than other papers. The term ‘guerrilla’ refers to a specific style of warfare. According to Encyclopedia Britannica, this type of warfare is fought by a small number of irregulars against conventional administrative or military forces. The term per se is vague but when it is connected with the IRA the meaning often connotes the terrorist aspect as well as the historical background. It is often argued that the IRA successfully fought a guerrilla war against the British forces in Ireland between 1917 and 1921 when the foundation for the Irish state was formed. Later actions of the IRA have added attributes of a terrorist nature to the concept. What did the Arab News and The Age aim to depict by using the term? Considering the context created by these papers, it can be argued that The Age emphasized the historical and political nature of the conflict. This type of representation is one way to portray background information. It is also milder as an expression of opinion. It is likely that it was easier for the newspapers to use terms that were not too provocative but

416 Taylor 1996, 334–335
417 In this study this means that the terms were not necessarily used constantly but often enough to be recognised as typical of a certain newspaper.
419 Townshend 1979, 318
yet held some meaning. In comparison, in Britain the media was not able to label
the members of the IRA as guerrillas as the term connoted good guys.\textsuperscript{420} There is
no indication that The Age sympathized with the hunger strikers. Therefore, the
reasoning behind the use of this terminology is more complex. The paper
contextualized the hunger strike historically, as a struggle between the Irish and
British, a struggle in which the Irish were the underdogs. In such an arrangement,
Australians identified more with the Irish. In this perspective, a certain romanticism
is evident. Terms such as ‘rebel’\textsuperscript{421} have a certain nuance. It is also noteworthy that
The Age did not depict the hunger strikers as bad, and they were somewhat separate
from the IRA (although their membership was always mentioned). By downplaying
this connection with violence, The Age portrayed the hunger strikers in a more
human light. They were depicted as individuals fighting against a larger opponent,
a definition that is used to describe guerrillas.

The terms used by the Arab News were more multifaceted. The paper referred
to the hunger strikers as “jailed guerrilla”, “convicted guerrilla”, “Irish guerrilla”
and “Irish nationalist guerrillas”. On one hand, this was a clear violent and criminal
depiction. On the other hand, a nationalist connection was often drawn, in that the
terms highlighted the Irishness of the hunger strikers, which in turn referred to the
historic nature of the conflict. As the Arab News relied on news agency material,
the variations were in part a result of this. At the same time, the paper created a
context of conflict for the hunger strike. The terminology supports this aspect.

The term ‘guerrilla’ can be used to associate a person or a group with a battle
that has two or more sides. The same can be done by using the term ‘militant’. This
was often used by Le Figaro, El Pais and La Prensa. ‘Militant’ refers to an active,
combative and aggressive way to achieve an objective. Militant actions are usually
used to achieve political aims. This connection was made especially by the Spanish-
language newspapers as they used it among other expressions such as “militante
nacionalista” (El Pais) and “encarcelado activista irlandes” (La Prensa). The reason
for using the ‘militant’ term might be due to mere linguistic factors, as both French
and Spanish are related Romance languages. However, the connotations connected
with the term suggest that there were more profound reasons for using the term.
The term ‘militant’ implies that the hunger strikers were considered participants in
an interactive conflict by these newspapers. This conclusion is supported by the
fact that these papers regarded the hunger strike as a conflict between two parties.

\textsuperscript{420} Taylor 1996, 331, 336
\textsuperscript{421} Eg. The Age 23.5.1981
Taking this into account, it seems plausible that the term militant suggested a certain view of the conflict. Militant contains a combative or even aggressive element. The papers could have used the term to refer to the criminal side of the hunger strikers but they did not create a particularly criminal depiction of them. This illustrates how the media’s use of singular words and meanings can be difficult to explain. It is also a good indication that one must be careful in not overestimating the significance of a singular term.

‘Terrorist’ was the most charged term used. There is hardly any international consensus regarding its definition but broadly speaking it is used to describe the use of violence to achieve a desired political outcome. In particular, Neue Zürcher Zeitung used the term. It was used on a regular basis so this choice of terminology was a conscious decision. It supported the strong stance Neue Zürcher Zeitung adopted. Its depiction of the hunger strikers was straightforward – they were violent. This suited the context created by the paper. By using ‘terrorist’, Neue Zürcher Zeitung emphasized its own stance.

Other papers that used the term ‘terrorist’ were Die Welt, the South China Morning Post and The Globe and Mail. The term was not the only term used but it was a general one. It emphasized the criminal aspect in many ways. The hunger strikers were generally referred to as members of the outlawed IRA. All the terms used depicted the hunger strikers as violent criminals. These papers created a context of violence. A newspaper that considered the situation violent and threatening was likely to depict participants who opposed the authorities as opponents who had to be neutralized.

Interestingly, the use of the ‘terrorist’ term had differing nuances. Die Welt associated being a terrorist as a personal attribute, “der terrorist Sands”, whereas The Globe and Mail referred to the hunger strikers as “IRA terrorists,” emphasizing their connection with a paramilitary organization. A different view was represented by the South China Morning Post, which used the expression “Catholic terrorist”. This emphasized religious association. These differences, albeit minor, are revealing. As I found in Chapter 3.1.4, Die Welt saw no reason for the hunger strike. Thus, the hunger strikers were illegitimate actors. By focusing on their individuality, the paper was able to give as little attention to the IRA as possible. It is plausible that Die Welt still followed the practices of the German media, adopted in the 1970s when incidents caused by the RAF were reported, of not giving attention to paramilitary organizations.422 In any case, Die Welt depicted the hunger strikers as

422 Carruthers 2000, 188
prisoners who protested without any reason. To call them terrorists was a suitable practise.

The terms used by the Globe and Mail and the South China Morning Post had a broader meaning. The Globe and Mail created a mental image of a very violent conflict, so it was only natural to draw connections between the hunger strikers and the well-known paramilitary organization. The South China Morning Post had a slightly differing view of the hunger strike. The paper regarded it as a conflict that had political yet also religious aspects. The hunger strikers were given attributes that suggested a more complex background to the conflict. On the other hand, from a distance, it was easier to make generalisations. Overall, the international papers were more eager to use stronger tones. This confirms that coverage of conflicts is more straightforward when the conflict itself does not affect the media in question. The terminology in The Times supports this idea.

The Times occasionally used the term ‘terrorist,’ although not as much as the above-mentioned papers. The Times preferred not to use any labels. This cautiousness supported the paper’s unwillingness to draw attention to the issue. It seems that the paper considered formal expressions a better alternative. This was obviously due to the paper’s stance against the hunger strike.

The use of the terms ‘guerrilla’, ‘militant’ and ‘terrorist’ in the mass media is complex. According to BRIGITTE NACOS, the media often seem inconsistent in reporting on political violence. Several terms are used to describe the same kinds of actions. For instance, ‘militant’ may seem a more neutral term, whereas ‘guerrilla’ or ‘terrorist’ indicates stronger disapproval. On the other hand, the term ‘militant’ – particularly when it is combined with words like radical or nationalist – may also be an euphemism for ‘terrorist’. Understanding concepts is a complex matter. Therefore, solid conclusions based on published terms alone cannot be made. However, this study demonstrates that terms were used consciously. Different terms were used to tell different kind of stories. Each term created a certain nuanced narrative.

Most of the terms used by the newspapers to describe the hunger strikers were neutral or negative in nature. No idealization or adulation could be found. The only term that can be considered sympathetic was the term ‘martyr,’ which many of the papers used on a few occasions. However, the word was used mainly when

423 See Chapter 3.1.3
424 Nacos 2002, 16.
discussing the dilemma caused by the hunger strikers. It was used to counterbalance violent features. None of the newspapers considered the hunger strikers solely as martyrs. In many of the papers, mixed terms were used. This suggests that one particular attitude was not adopted. Terminology is only one small part of representation, but, as the following pages will demonstrate, terms were chosen to emphasize the overall mental image each newspaper relayed.

Language choice is significant as it shapes narratives told by newspapers. Narratives always need to have active actors, and therefore how those actors are labelled is meaningful. Each newspaper had a view of the hunger strike and each decision in regards to the discourse used was likely based on these views. It is hardly a coincidence that there are clear correlations between the use of certain terms and overall views of the situation.

Based on the principles of framing, it must be remembered that news producers choose the way news stories are told and those choices are based on previous knowledge and experience. The terminology used suits agendas by drawing attention to specific issues. For example, if a newspaper made the choice to label the hunger strikers terrorists, that choice was based on perceptions that already existed in the news producer’s minds. Choices of terminology are therefore significant indicators in discourse. It seems plausible that, for instance, a paper that referred to the hunger strikers as terrorists did not base its perceptions solely on the situation, but its choice reflected knowledge and experience from the past as well. The hunger strikers were associated with broader knowledge. Furthermore, at the same time, the terminology used shaped representations, and thus reinforced previous knowledge. Each newspaper had reasons in choosing the terminology it did.

4.2 Deaths with many meanings

The deaths of the hunger strikers provide an opportunity for research as these same deaths could be interpreted from several perspectives: death as martyrdom, death as a symbolic gesture, death with an apparent connection to terrorism, death as a human event, and so on. Death is a powerful narrative, and thus portrayals of death can reveal fundamental issues. Here the theme is discussed by looking at how the deaths and the funerals of hunger strikers were covered in each newspaper. As will

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425 The Sowetan can be considered an exception. It used terms such as ‘martyr’ or ‘Republican activist’ relatively often, but as the samples from the paper are very small this is not a solid conclusion.
be seen, different meanings given to the same event were the result of complex editorial, political and cultural issues.

The first deaths in May were dramatic and made headlines. As the number of deaths rose, coverage became more one-sided, and less and less information was provided. From an editorial perspective, a situation that continues without a remarkable turn in events loses its news value. The hunger strike followed this pattern. However, the newspaper coverage in this case suggests that a long-term event can remain in the headlines if a newspaper has reasons to continue covering it. In defining significant events, the news coverage of a paper reflects not only issues that are important to the paper itself but to the community as well. In this case, the hunger strike deaths had more significance in some societies.

4.2.1 The hunger strike deaths as a news topic

The first hunger strike death in early May, that of Bobby Sands, made the headlines. The front pages were filled with articles and pictures in all of the newspapers. Some papers had several pages dedicated to the story. Reasons why Sands’ had ended up as he did were often discussed. More than his stay in prison and protest by hunger strike were discussed. There was a clear difference in the coverage of the death of Sands and the coverage of the last hunger strike deaths, which were mainly covered in a few short paragraphs and often without pictures. In August, hunger strike deaths no longer made the headlines. This change in coverage illustrates how technical features can be a measure of significance: wide reports on the front page suggest that a newspaper regards those issues as important and meaningful, while short stories somewhere on the inside pages create the impression that those are not seen to be as important by the paper. Obviously, it must be remembered that each newspaper issue contains several topics, and choices of what is published and where are made daily, but technical features are significant indicators when the same patterns continue or change. The last deaths of the hunger strikers gained less attention.

Another major shift was the way newspapers treated the hunger strikers. The first few of those who died were portrayed in some personal detail but as the hunger strike went on, the amount of information about those who died decreased. The rest of the hunger strikers who died became numbers in headlines: “Second IRA-
prisoner died as a result of hunger strike”426, “5th hunger death in Northern Ireland”427, “9th fast death,”428 and so on. Personal information was often limited to name, age and home town. Providing such details could be interpreted as humanizing the hunger strikers but, as these narratives also included a detailed account of the crimes they had committed, the overall portrayal criminalized them.

The amount of personal information provided on those who had died decreased quickly. The second death due to the hunger strike was covered in a less personal way. It has been said that the focus on Bobby Sands was due to two factors. First, he was an elected Member of Parliament so there was a certain contradiction in regards to his character. Second, he was seen as a person who was easy to identify with.429 These might hold true on a local level but that was hardly enough of a reason for publicity on an international level. Therefore, the reasons for the amount of publicity lie in the way the media operates. A person who stands out somehow is more likely to become a public figure, and the media loves public figures. From this point of view, Bobby Sands was unique among the hunger strikers. After he died, it seemed that the process of dying itself was more important than who had died. There was something universal in this kind of attitude as it appears that it applied to each newspaper.

The same decreasing trend in the amount of coverage is found when viewing the pictures the newspapers published of the hunger strikers. The photo of Bobby Sands was published in almost all of the newspapers and usually on several occasions. This supports the idea that Bobby Sands became a kind of symbolic figure for the hunger strike. The same smiling portrait (figure 24) of him became well known all over the world. Other hunger strikers (Francis Hughes, Raymond McCreeesh, Patsy O’Hara) who died during May were also more likely to be pictured than the rest of the hunger strikers. After May, the hunger strikers were pictured only occasionally in the majority of the newspapers.

426 “Toinen IRA-vanki kuoli syömälakkoon” Helsingin Sanomat 13.5.1981
429 O’Malley 1990,61
Fig. 24. On the left, a picture of Bobby Sands published by Le Figaro on May 6, 1981. Similar photos of him became symbolic of the conflict.

The quantitative statistics suggest some significant differences in the way the newspapers represented the hunger strikers. To some papers they were less appealing as people than to others. The only newspaper that did not publish a picture of Sands – or any of the hunger strikers – was Neue Zürcher Zeitung. Much of this can be explained by the paper’s mode of operation, as it did not publish many pictures in general. But could there have been other reasons? Die Welt also published only one picture (of Bobby Sands) of the hunger strikers. As both papers took a negative stance towards the hunger strike, it might have been a conscious decision not to publish photos of the hunger strikers. On the other hand, there were also other papers that emphasized the violent nature of the hunger strikers and they published some photos of the hunger strikers. These papers had their reasons for doing so. Again, newspaper publishing is a challenging topic to explore. Each paper acted according to its own practices and sometimes it can be difficult for
researchers to determine why something was published in a certain way. We can only speculate. However, it is noteworthy that the media can reveal some aspects of the perspective taken by ignoring some aspects.

The lack of published photos of the hunger strikers was not always an indication of possible resistance to doing so. In the case of the Arab News, the Helsingin Sanomat and The New York Times, the low amount of photos can be explained by the fact that the newspapers might have considered other kinds of photos to be better. In fact, this could also explain the low amount of photos in Die Welt and Neue Zürcher Zeitung as well. As an analysis of the published visual material illustrates, some newspapers preferred a certain type of photo. On the other hand, the low number of photos suggests that perceptions of the hunger strikers were not particularly personal. The mental image of them remained distant.

The differences in these depictions are clear when comparing with those newspapers that published the most pictures of the hunger strikers, The Irish Times and Dagens Nyheter. They were also the papers that depicted the human side of the hunger strikers, even though it was not emphasized. This was hardly a coincidence. Photos of the hunger strikers usually depicted them as young and smiling. The photos were distributed to reporters and news agencies, as the media were not able to get recent photos of the hunger strikers. Some papers might have been uncertain in publishing photos of people that they considered to be criminals.

The most interesting photo was published in El País and the South China Morning Post in August. It showed (figure 25) a deceased Kevin Lynch lying in an open coffin. This was the only time when a deceased hunger striker was visually represented in the newspapers examined here. The picture was provided by the international news agency AP so it might have been available to other newspapers as well, but only these two decided to publish it. One can only speculate whether there was some reason for the fact that only two newspapers decided to publish the photo. The early 1980’s was a time of transition in public attitudes towards death. After the Second World War, Western societies adopted a culture of avoidance in regards to death. This slowly started to change several decades later. In the media, discussing death itself was still unusual. Perhaps El País and the South China Morning Post were far enough from the conflict that publishing such a picture was

430 See Chapter 3.5.1.
432 Jalland 2010, 11, 252
possible without it being interpreted as propaganda in favour of the hunger strikers. Lying in state has traditionally been seen as a reverent ritual.

Interestingly, El Pais and the South China Morning Post took a slightly similar view of the hunger strike. They both, despite the later having a more violent contextualization, depicted it as a conflict caused by historical and societal factors. A photo of a deceased hunger striker represented the ultimate nature of the conflict.

![Fig. 25. Photo of a deceased hunger striker in the South China Morning Post (4.8.1981)](image)

This kind of picture can be considered personal but as it was a clear exception among the published photos, its meaning must not be overrated. These newspapers did not portray the hunger strike as a personal event; it was not seen to have any personal significance for readers. As the hunger strike went on, deaths became routine news. The hunger strike itself gained more attention than the hunger strikers. The conflict overshadowed the people. Deaths are considered significant if the innocent die. Context defines who is innocent and who is not. From this perspective, the deaths of the hunger strikers were more significant in some contexts than in others. The depictions of these deaths revealed the stance taken towards them. For instance, the South China Morning Post depicted the hunger

\[433 \text{ Taylor 1991, 159}\]
As terrorists whose deaths were self-inflicted. Such a photo, together with the headline "IRA death sparks riots," created a mental image of violence. A certain symbolism was emphasized: the violence was caused by the deceased hunger strikers. The hunger strikers were more important as representatives of the undesired event than for example as individuals.

The hunger strikers were after all convicted criminals. Many studies have shown that media representations of crime play a role in the social construction of crime and its place in society. Therefore, it could have been possible that the newspapers were not willing to give the hunger strikers too much attention in providing personal details. This was true of all of the newspapers. The second major reason for the scarceness of personal details in the mental images relayed was that the hunger strike was primarily viewed as a conflict by the papers. News coverage of a conflict tends to focus on issues rather than individuals. Violence and its consequences are usually more appealing topics.

However, the deaths of the hunger strikers were covered in a detailed enough manner to reveal differences in the mental images relayed by the newspapers. These are examined next.

4.2.2 Differences in funeral coverage

The funerals of the hunger strikers are a good object for research as they were covered in all the newspapers, providing a chance for comparison. For the media, funerals are a way to make death visible and an opportunity to mediate a wide range of tones. A funeral may not be good news as such but under the right circumstances it can become one. Politically significant funerals have even become actual media events. For instance, the funeral of Bobby Sands was attended by up to 100,000 people, and could be considered a media event. Although the funerals of the other hunger strikers attracted less people (occasionally thousands) they were seen to be newsworthy on many occasions.

When Bobby Sands died, the media was faced with a politically and culturally charged situation. News coverage of his funeral revealed how differently the same

\[434\] "Deepening divisions in Ireland" (editorial) South China Morning Post 13.5.1981
\[435\] South China Morning Post 4.8.1981
\[436\] The topic has been discussed in the book 'Criminal visions: media representations of crime and justice', edited by Paul Mason.
\[437\] Seaton 2005, 210-213
\[438\] Beresford 1994, 137
event could be rendered in different political and cultural circumstances. An article in the Irish Times began with the following sentences:

In the biggest demonstration of Republican sympathy since the protest rally immediately after Bloody Sunday in 1972, tens of thousands yesterday followed the coffin of the IRA hunger-striker and MP Bobby Sands, through west Belfast.

Thousands more lined the three-mile route and waited at Milltown Cemetery, in near silence and almost continuous rain. The procession was somber and heavily-steward ed. A diversion around a small Protestant community on the route was accepted silently and the crowds dispersed without incident after the Milltown ceremony.\(^439\)

The narration in The Irish Times created an image of a somber and calm event. The paper focused on the mourning. The violent side of the conflict was marginalized. It is probable that The Irish Times wanted to cater to the feelings of the community rather than giving support to the hunger strikers. The readers of The Irish Times presumably felt a connection with the event. The links between the Irish and Northern Irish were tight, and the Irish Times reflected this. This conclusion is shared by JEAN MERCEREAU, who has stated that the paper has always considered Northern issues to be relevant\(^440\), therefore making it understandable that the situation was depicted in a certain manner.

The Times instead took a very harsh stance. These opening sentences are noteworthy for several reasons, as they summarize the paper’s attitude:

The Roman Catholics buried Robert Sands yesterday as Protestants lamented their 2,000 dead from 12 years of terrorism. Both were, moving, tragic occasions.

As the widows and children of men murdered by the Provisionals laid their wreaths at the Cenotaph in Belfast city centre, the IRA laid their hero in a republican grave in the Milltown cemetery, in the west of the city.

Robert Sands, who dies, at the age of 27, was not a particularly important Provisional: from leaving school at 16 and being put behind bars at 18 he had achieved little. But his prime place in republican history is assured.

\(^{439}\) The Irish Times 8.5.1981
\(^{440}\) Mercereau 2003, 61
The 2,000 victims of his collaborators will never be as famous. Few will remember for long the name of police-constable Philip Charles Ellis, aged 33, a Protestant, father of three, and a policeman for less than a year. He died the day after Mr Sands, but with a bullet to the head.  

The very first sentence implies that all fatalities of the Northern Irish conflict had been Protestant and had been caused by the IRA. The sentence is unreasonable and contains incorrect information. This kind of stance is an extreme example of how The Times, and the British media in general, reacted to Northern Ireland during the troubles. LIZ CURTIS concludes the same. According to her, the British media had a tendency to blame the IRA for all the violence in Northern Ireland. The Times’ coverage of Sands’s funeral was a good example of this. The article’s factual errors were not corrected. This kind of coverage illustrates how the facts are changed to depict the desired representation. For The Times, the reason for doing so was viewing the hunger strike as something to oppose by any means.

Secondly, these sentences illustrate how The Times viewed the hunger strikers. The paper’s characterization of Sands is negative and lacks any respect. It became obvious that The Times’s mental image of the hunger strikers was a predominantly violent one and its attitude towards them was condescending.

This quotation is also a revealing example of how The Times seemed to have a type of formula in reporting on the funerals of hunger strikers. The paper juxtaposed the funerals of the hunger strikers with the funerals held on the 'other side'. After Sands’ funeral the headline stated: "Day of mourning in Belfast – Republicans bury their hero as Protestants honour their dead". The same type of headlines appeared later. For instance, in August the headline was “Doherty and Ulster PC buried”. These give the sense that The Times did not want to give attention solely to the hunger strikers, as they did not seem as worthy of the attention. The Times also regarded the funerals as an opportunity to emphasize the violent role of the IRA. Headlines such as "Gunmen out in force at funeral" and "Army swoop on funeral riflemen" were often used.

441 The Times 8.5.1981  
442 According to Malcom Sutton, just over half of all the deaths in Northern Ireland between 1969 and 1980 were caused by Republicans. Sutton 2002. (5.7.2013)  
443 Curtis 1984, 108 – 109  
444 The Times 8.5.1981  
445 The Times 5.8.1981  
446 The Times 26.5.1981  
447 The Times 11.7.1981
For The Times and The Irish Times, the funeral of Bobby Sands was an opportunity to take sides in a conflict that was familiar to them. For the other papers, connections to the event were more remote. The event was reported on in a slightly different tone:

A priest stood over the coffin of IRA hunger striker Bobby Sands today and made an impassioned plea for peace in Ireland.

Father Liam Mullan said further violence would only be an insult to the memory of the Republican gunman who died on the 66th day of his fast at Ulster’s Maze prison.

An estimated 20,000 people gathered outside St Luke’s Catholic Church in the Twinbrook Estate, near Belfast. Apart from the 40-minute Requiem Mass the IRA handled the funeral arrangements from start to finish.

Six hooded men wearing combat jackets and black berets waited outside the church to take delivery of the coffin after the service. It was immediately draped with an Irish tricolor, hoisted on to the shoulders of the six-man ”color party” and carried through the housing estate at the start of a 6-kilometre route for burial in the Republican plot at Milltown Cemetery.

Black flags hung from windows of nearly every house in the housing estate where Sands had lived for six months. He spent the best part of the past nine years in jail.

The mourners stretched for nearly half a mile as Sands’ coffin was carried through the housing estate. Apart from an army helicopter circling overhead there were no police or troops to be seen.448

This quotation from The Age illustrates well how many of the other papers represented the funeral. The papers focused on observations and detailed descriptions of what happened during the process. There was something common in this kind of reporting as it was similar in almost all the international newspapers. For example, the news article in the South China Morning Post began with a similar depiction:

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448 The Age 8.5.1981
About 10,000 Irish Catholics led by a piper marched behind the coffin of IRA hunger striker Bobby Sands today after a night of violence in which a policeman and a civilian were killed.

A priest called for peace in Northern Ireland during a requiem Mass for Sands, who died on Tuesday on the 66th day of a hunger strike.

Father Liam Mullan urged the congregation to pray for the policeman killed in Belfast last night as well as for Sands, and for all the 2,000 people killed on both sides in Northern Ireland’s troubles since 1969. “We are all Christians,” he said.

Seven hooded members of the outlawed Irish Republican Army, to which Sands belonged, later took delivery of his coffin and draped it with an Irish tricolour which had been removed during the Mass at the request of the church authorities.449

Both depictions are similar narratives of a unique event that aroused strong emotions. It is noteworthy that many of the papers published similar news articles after the funeral. The similarity of their contents can be explained by publishing factors as well. The funeral was considered a unique event, and therefore, covering it was seen as an opportunity to create a touching story.

Not all newspapers regarded Sands’ funeral as worthy of wide coverage. Both German language papers published only brief articles and Die Welt in particular provided only basic information:

Thousands of people of Ulster came yesterday to the capital of Northern Ireland, Belfast, where the IRA terrorist Bobby Sands was buried in the afternoon. Sands died on Tuesday after 66 days on a hunger strike. He wanted to achieve recognition as a political prisoner.450

This kind of report again illustrates how the hunger strikers were treated by Die Welt and Neue Zürcher Zeitung. They were almost invisible. Only a few facts were provided. The lack of information makes it difficult to define the nature of the mental image relayed by these papers. However, the lack of information can also

449 South China Morning Post 8.5.1981
be considered an indicator of the stance the paper took. In this case, the stance was hardly positive. As both papers equated the hunger strike with terrorism, there was no reason to provide any coverage that might have been more touching.

Media interest towards in hunger strike funerals was at its highest during May. Internationally, only the funeral of Bobby Sands gained wide attention. Other funerals were reported on sporadically by the majority of the newspapers. Later, they were only briefly mentioned, and even The Irish Times gave less attention to the last funerals. Overall, the hunger strike funerals provided an opportunity to depict the conflict in a certain light, but only a few papers did so. The Times and The Irish Times were the only papers that had continuous coverage of the funerals. This illustrates the relevance of the events. For international papers, the funerals primarily provided interesting news material without having any political significance. However, it must be noted that even though the attention given to them was scarce, it included some notable expressions of stance.

*Photos from Sands’ funeral suggest stances taken*

News coverage of Sands’ funeral illustrates how visual elements have an effect on representations. On one hand, they reveal how technical elements create an impression: viewpoints can be emphasized or de-emphasized with minor elements. On the other hand, it is important to remember that published news photos are chosen consciously. The news photos published in Dagens Nyheter (figure 26), Die Welt (figure 27) and La Prensa (figure 28) provide an informative case for comparison.

The news photo published on the front page of Dagens Nyheter created the impression that the event affected plenty of people. Sands’ death had meaning for all kinds of people: relatives, members of the IRA, even those who may not have known him. Another kind of focus was provided in the picture published in Die Welt. The photo was cropped more, showing just the coffin and the masked members of the IRA. This created the sense that the death had meaning for that paramilitary organization alone. A slightly similar impression was given by the picture published by La Prensa. It focused on the IRA’s salute over the coffin. Instead of focusing on violence, it contained a sense of tradition.

It must be noted that in particular, the photo published by Die Welt could have had a strong effect on the overall mental image relayed. The paper published only a few news photos during the seven months. It is plausible that a single picture had a significant impact on how the situation was interpreted. However, the impression
relayed by the photo was supported by news texts so it can be concluded that the photo supported the stance taken. Obviously we do not know the details of how that exact photo was selected for publication but in this research it can be viewed as a reflecting the stance of Die Welt.

Fig. 26. Dagens Nyheter 8.5.1981
Pictures of the same event depicted different tones. Photos with a focus on the grieving family were common after Sands’ funeral. The Age, Dagens Nyheter, Le Figaro, The New York Times and El Pais chose to publish such pictures with their top stories that were published on their front pages (except in El Pais). The Times published a picture of Sands’ son but its news article was different from the others (as was already mentioned), so its meaning was not the same. Pictures of family members relayed a more humane side of the situation, and that the hunger strikers were missed. These kinds of pictures were published by papers in which the coverage contained more elements than that in newspapers that treated the hunger strike as mere propaganda. This applied to the Helsingin Sanomat and the South China Morning Post, which pictured big crowds taking part in the funeral procession. This type of coverage created the impression that Sands’ death concerned the majority of the community. These newspapers did not consider the hunger strikers misfits. This kind of perception seemed to be typical in countries that did not feel obligated to support the stance of British officials.
Almost as popular were photos depicting the coffin of Sands being carried by masked IRA men and a volley of shots being fired over the coffin. These kinds of pictures were published as main news photos by Die Welt, The Globe and Mail and La Prensa (figure 28). These kinds of photos emphasized the violent side of the hunger strikers. The Arab News’ coverage also emphasized violence. It published a photo of hooded youth when reporting on Sands’ funeral. In comparison to the pictures of families, the mental image relayed is different. The emphasis is on more on the violence of the IRA and de-emphasizes the humane side of the hunger strikers.
The experienced photographer, BRENDAN MURPHY, has claimed that the editors of different media prefer paramilitary funerals because they offer rare opportunities to provide visual images of armed men and women.\textsuperscript{451} There could have been editorial reasons for publishing such pictures. However, not all newspapers did so. Therefore, there must other reasons why some papers focused on these elements. It is hardly a coincidence that the role of a paramilitary organization was emphasized in countries that had experienced domestic terrorism to some extent. The Times, Die Welt, The Globe and Mail, and La Prensa were located in countries that had recently encountered domestic violence. For them, their own negative experiences reaffirmed their attitudes against terrorism. Violence was the most natural way for them to visualize a conflict.

It is noteworthy that not all the newspapers located in countries that had experienced domestic terrorism reacted in the same way. The Irish Times and El Pais had differing views of the situation. For instance, the main news photo after Sands’ funeral in The Irish Times was unique (figure 29). The cartoon published on the front page shifted attention to the bigger issue of the Northern Irish conflict. The mental image relayed was somehow bleak: the conflict dragged on on without any solutions in sight. The Irish Times did not support the conflict even though it acknowledged the grief it was causing.

These differences illustrate that even if newspapers exist in societies that have experienced terrorist violence, their stances can differ. Violence was not the only explanatory factor, although it was a powerful one. Each newspaper acts according to its own policies but there can also be societal factors that have an influence. In this case, as was mentioned in the previous chapter, the political factors proved to be more significant.

\textsuperscript{451} Murphy & Kelters 2003, 121
Even though the details mentioned above mainly concern the coverage of Bobby Sands’ funeral, these types of differences between the papers also occurred later on. A closer look at the news photos published of all the funerals of hunger strikers reveals a few interesting aspects. Funeral photos usually consisted of the same elements: they pictured the coffin, the grieving relatives, masked members of the IRA, and people in general. What is significant here is that these elements were used in different ways. Different representations could be mediated simply by cropping the pictures.

The coverage of the funerals of the hunger strikers clearly indicates that there were more profound reasons why certain details were published. One very
revelatory detail was how the newspapers dealt with IRA salutes during funerals. In this case, they were not publicized and in many papers the salutes were only briefly mentioned as if they was normal routine. But there were a few exceptions. The Irish Times published several pictures that showed masked IRA members firing shots over a coffin. In May the paper’s headline read: ”Irishness emphasized at McCreech funeral,” 452 together with a picture. This created a very nationalist representation. It differed completely from The Globe and Mail’s depiction of the same ritual. The Globe and Mail published a photo depicting the salute with the headline ”IRA terrorist buried in Belfast” 453. This created a context that emphasized violence instead of ritual. This emphasis on violence was in line with the mental image of The Globe and Mail. It also differed from the headline provided by La Prensa, which stated: ”Sands buried, escorted by a crowd – military honors were paid by an IRA guard” 454. The impression given was more moderate. These differences again illustrate how representations in each paper were dependent on their own societal contexts. For instance in the coverage of The Irish Times, the cultural link was apparent. The hunger strikers were not idealized nor were they condemned.

The above-mentioned choices were not coincidental. It is interesting to note that the published photos do in fact reflect the overall stance of each newspaper. On the other hand, photos have a strong impact in forming impressions. A wider analysis shows that even small elements such as headlines and news photos were chosen to support the stance of each newspaper. For instance, The Times considered the hunger strike a mere exercise in IRA propaganda and treated the deaths of hunger strikers accordingly. Papers such Dagens Nyheter or The Irish Times regarded the situation from a more diverse point of view and were able to publish material of a different kind. Obviously one cannot conclude too much from news photos even though they are significant factors. The overall mental image is a sum of many things.

These elements and differences in coverage might seem minor but when they appear regularly they are significant. They had a major role in creating narratives of the hunger strike. Again, it is significant that papers with differing conceptions of the hunger strike published news photos from different angles. These differing

452 The Irish Times 25.5.1981
454 “Fue inhumado Bobby Sands, despedido por una multitud – Una guardia del IRA le rindió honores militares” La Prensa 8.5.1981
conceptions resulted in different stories and the focus of each narrative determined the main aspects of the message.

4.3 Portrayals of hunger strike deaths: a sign of distance?

Deaths caused by hunger strikes were not that common, so this unusual way of dying made news that would sell. But as hunger strikes had a certain place in Irish history, there were also more broad reasons for this discussion. Some papers definitely saw the symbolism of the hunger strike deaths. As one could expect, there were also differences in how the newspapers regarded this symbolism. Dagens Nyheter was aware of the historical significance of hunger striking.455 The Helsingin Sanomat thought that the hunger strike revealed a depth of emotion 456. At the other end of the scale, papers such The Times regarded the hunger strike as mere suicide. The Times also made strong religious connections (“Suicide: the Catholic dilemma”457). The purpose of this might have been to distance itself from what was happening and to emphasize that an act that was considered dubious was characteristic of others. The predominant British opinion has been that Northern Ireland is not a part of the British community.458 In a conflict, it becomes imperative to strengthen the gap between one’s own group and others.

This chapter further examines the ways in which each newspaper portrayed the hunger strikers, and if any broader, cultural or political reasons are apparent in these representations.

4.3.1 Strong depictions in local newspapers

The mental images relayed of the hunger strikers were the strongest in the local newspapers. At the same time, the mental images in The Times and The Irish Times were drastically different.

The stance of The Times was apparent in its editorial after the death of Bobby Sands:

455 Dagens Nyheter 2.5.1981
456 Helsingin Sanomat 23.5.1981
457 The Times 1.5.1981
458 Guelke 1989, 100

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By refusing to submit to Mr Sands’s blackmail, the British government bears no responsibilities whatever for his death… He committed suicide, in full knowledge of what he was doing and determined to reject all initiatives designed to save his life. He was not hounded into death… There is only one killer of Bobby Sands and that is Sands himself. 459

The Times regarded the hunger strike as a distinct situation in which the historical context had no relevance. The only historical context the paper regarded as meaningful was the perception of hunger striking as an Irish form of protest.460 The Times considered the hunger strikers the only active actors in the conflict. In The Times’ view, the hunger strikers did not even have any reason to protest.461 The Times was reinforcing stereotypes of the Irish in Britain. It pointed out that the hunger strikers were Irish Catholics and madmen who were going to extreme measures in attempting to achieve something they had to right to.

The Times treated the hunger strikers as opponents who were a threat to the British government. All of its narrative choices supported this view. The Times’ mental image of hunger strikers was merely that of an enemy. Its coverage can be described as, if not propagandist, then at least manipulative, as it so strongly emphasized one view. This was a conscious decision of the paper itself but at the same time, it is important to consider the possible affect the paper’s relations with the government could have had. It has been noted that in countries that have a terrorist problem, governments tend to influence the national media.462 Based on this research, it seems that indeed a national paper can actively support its own government against terrorism. The Times, being a national newspaper, might have felt obligated to adopt the stance of the government. The difficult political and security situation was a challenge for the media. The Times decided to take a clear stance and make the IRA (and thus the prisoners) an enemy. The paper created the impression that this enemy threatened the security of society. In portraying the enemy, the newspaper firmly supported its own group and portrayed the enemy as evilly as possible. An image of an enemy is usually created under emotionally charged conditions. At the same time, an opponent cannot be presented as too powerful, otherwise confidence in ones own success declines.463 The Times did not

462 Schmid – de Graaf 1982, 169
463 Wunsch 2002, 84–85
focus on the weak points of the IRA, but instead aimed to point out the negative characteristics connected with the opposing side. This attitude was a result of existing opinions of the British that the IRA and the prisoners were a dangerous element that had to be defeated.

In addition to this emphasis on negative characteristics, the other dominant feature of The Times was giving little attention to the hunger strikers and their cause, instead focusing on consequences. The Times was particularly concerned that the political system not be compromised. This again illustrates how the paper preferred to defend its ‘own side’. The hunger strikers were the bad guys.

If The Times ignored the hunger strikers, The Irish Times did the opposite. Just by looking at the statistics, it is apparent that the mental image relayed of the hunger strikers by The Irish Times was more complex and informative than those in other papers. At the same time, the overall image was also more difficult to define. The paper published all kinds of viewpoints and statements. On one hand, it questioned why the deaths of the hunger strikers were even allowed.464 On the other hand, it saw the hunger strike as a form of violence as well.465 It recognised the partial responsibility of the hunger strikers.466 This varied coverage of The Irish Times was obviously possibly due to the amount of material but it also suggests that the paper felt diverse coverage was essential. In providing this, The Irish Times strongly contextualized the hunger strike as part of a historical conflict.

The mental image of the hunger strikers in The Irish Times therefore contained contextualization. Their backgrounds were retold and related to the past. It is significant that the paper did not sympathise with the hunger strikers and their cause, but it saw the human side of the conflict. Its contextualization was less violent than that of The Times’s. In comparing how The Irish Times depicted a death of a hunger striker to one of The Times’ depictions, it is clear that (see quotation on the previous page) the tone is different. The Irish Times stated:

… the man dying in bed in such a miserable way is not killing anyone except himself.467

The stance taken by The Irish Times can be explained by political and cultural factors. The long and troubled history between Ireland and England was reflected

467 Ibid.
in the way The Irish Times represented the conflict. According to the Irish view, the conflict in Northern Ireland was and is a historical battle that has caused considerable suffering.

The above-mentioned examples illustrate how the deaths were portrayed in a different light in The Times and in The Irish Times. Different narratives and discourses were used to mediate information. It matters that The Irish Times portrayed the grieving of families and relatives. It matters that The Times emphasized the responsibility of the IRA for the deaths. These were not one-off events but continuous themes in coverage. Publishing and editorial factors have naturally influenced the outcome. Both papers created their own contexts for the hunger strike and depictions of the hunger strikers were formed on that basis. It is also likely that the wider interdependency between the countries was a more significant factor. The relationship between Britain and Ireland has been described as ambiguous, anomalous and paradoxical.\(^{468}\) This was a context that had an affect, and is reflected in the pages of the newspapers. When news is about an emotionally charged situation, different interpretations are an anticipated outcome.

The closer the conflict occurs, the more dramatic the coverage. This was one of the main reasons why The Times and The Irish Times represented the hunger strikers in a stronger way than other newspapers. In turn, as the international newspapers were not so deeply involved in the conflict itself, their coverage was upfront without taking sides. But as it turns out, other interdependencies also impact the mental images mediated.

### 4.3.2 Disconnected portrayals from a greater distance

The newspapers further away from the conflict relayed more dispassionate mental images of the hunger strikers. To some extent, these images were so superficial that it is difficult to make solid conclusions of them. However, there were some interesting narrative details that separated the newspapers from each another.

A comparison between The Globe and Mail and The Age offers a clear illustration of how different relations between countries may affect media coverage. The Age stated that the prisoners had their reasons for hunger striking.\(^ {469}\) The Globe and Mail instead stated that the prisoners had no reason to complain, by

\(^{468}\) Kenny 2006a, 3

emphasizing the modernity of living conditions. The hunger strikers as people were portrayed in a different light. The Age softened the mental image relayed of the prisoners by claiming that the crime for which Sands’ was imprisoned was not the most severe, and that during the hunger strike the general conception of Sands had become more multifaceted. The Globe and Mail also discussed the backgrounds of the hunger strikers but often ended up stressing violent features. According to the paper, Bobby Sands was sacrificing himself for the political advantage of a terrorist organisation, and it was difficult to sympathize with Francis Hughes due to his murderous past. There was a significant difference in how these newspapers portrayed the hunger strikers. The Globe and Mail’s mental image resembled the strict stance of the authorities whereas The Age questioned their stance. Primarily, this difference can be explained by the overall mental images relayed regarding the hunger strike. The contents in both papers told certain story of the event. It is hardly a mere coincidence that these papers took these stances. Australia and Canada had had similar histories with Britain but in the early 1980’s their relations with Britain began to differ. In Canada, there was strong traditional support for the British administration, as the British had supported Canadians. Even though the country was more independent by the early 1980s than in previous decades, it is plausible that a certain support for British authority remained. At the same time, in Australia there was a tendency to break away from British authority. This kind of attitude could have easily influenced the media as well. Obviously these were not the only factors, but they indicate how political climates can make a difference.

Another place that had a close a relationship with Britain was Hong Kong. This closeness was apparent in the way the South China Morning Post represented the hunger strikers:

472 Peter Smark, “Sands a shadowy figure, more symbol than person” (feature) The Age 6.5.1981
475 Eg Michaud & Nossal 2001, 9
476 Roberts 2006, 533
477 In the early 1980’s Hong Kong was under the jurisdiction of the United Kingdom but was not part of it. Already at that time there were discussions about the sovereignty of it. Carroll 2007, passim
Robert Sands is not an underdog, denied human rights. Neither is he the victim of cruel, repressive imperialism, as some of his supporters make out to be. And the filthy conditions in which he and his fellow prisoners choose to live as part of the “dirty protest” are of their own making.  

Political relations were indeed reflected in the paper’s mental image of the hunger strikers primarily as criminals, but at the same time the South China Morning Post was reflecting on British rule in Northern Ireland. It is likely that the image of the hunger strikers as criminals was a result of more general attitudes. This is typical of societies that believe in public order. The South China Morning Post could have wanted to uphold order by emphasizing time after time that the hunger strikers were convicted terrorists belonging to the outlawed IRA.

The strong judgment of the South China Morning Post was unique among the newspapers examined here (that had more distance from the conflict). Other newspapers that had negatively colored mental images of the hunger strikers were not as judgemental, even though even they had stronger tones. This might have been due to experiences with domestic terrorism, for example. Both Canada and West Germany had had their share of terrorism, which might explain why The Globe and Mail and Die Welt regarded the hunger strike as a potential threat. In comparison, the Scandinavian countries had no experiences of their own with such a threat, and therefore Dagens Nyheter was able to be more open in its views. One interesting aspect is in how the Swiss Neue Zürcher Zeitung referred to the hunger strike deaths rather strongly as "hungerselbstmord," but its overall coverage was less emotional and even terse. The paper considered the hunger strikers a mere medium of the IRA. It suggested that the hunger strikers did not die according to their own will. Neue Zürcher Zeitung approached the whole event from a political perspective. The political meaning and consequence of every aspect was discussed. Again, this kind of coverage was a result of many factors, from editorial practices to attitudes and political relations.

It has been argued that many countries were not willing to risk damaging relations with the British even though there was demonstrations and media commentary criticizing British policy in many countries. The moderate stances of many of the national newspapers might have been due to alignments with

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479 See Chapter 5
480 Hong Kong had a rather controlling legislation to maintain public order ("Public Order Ordinance").
481 This theme recurred for instance in all the editorials of the paper.
482 Guelke 1989, 170–171
administrative positions. Countries such as Switzerland and West Germany had good working relations with Britain, which could have had an affect on the media as well.

Active relations did not however guarantee that the mental images relayed of the hunger strikers were similar to that of the British. The Saudi Arab News illustrates this. The United Kingdom and Saudi Arabia had a shared history of active relations. The Arab News’ depiction of the hunger strikers differed from the British view:

It is ironical that the violence-prone Irish Republican Army has regained some of its waning support by resorting to typically Gandhian non-violent methods… While the hunger strikers have made the supreme sacrifice by taking their own lives in defense of a political demand, the Irish problem is destined to remain a long time without a solution acceptable to all parties concerned and a serious and frustrating embarrassment to the British government and that of the Republic of Ireland, Dublin.

The reasoning for this portrayal could be multifaceted. Being geographically further away, The Arab News could have been freer to present this view than for example in Europe. There was a lower risk of immediate consequences. The Arab News’ image of the hunger strikers also implies that the hunger strikers themselves were minor perpetrators of the conflict. They were not regarded as the main problem.

A similar mental image of the hunger strikers was presented by The New York Times. The New York Times considered the hunger strikers "the lightning, not the storm". The hunger strikers were portrayed within a wider perspective. The paper recognised the dilemma of defining someone as a terrorist or as a patriot. When the hunger strike ended, the paper claimed that "By hazarding their own lives, the protesters in H-Block of the Maze prison endowed their cause with a poignant dignity that killing others could never bring." The New York Times was able to create a more diverse mental image of the hunger strike and the fact that the hunger strikers were IRA members was not such a sensitive issue from this perspective.

483 Vasil’ev 1998, passim
484 “Irish dilemma” (editorial) Arab News 23.5.1981
The New York Times is considered quite liberal in general. Additionally, according to AOGÁN Ó MAOLCHATHA, the coverage of The New York Times could be explained by the fact that the British government had very little influence at the other side of the Atlantic.\textsuperscript{488} The stance of The New York Times was distant to an extent despite the strong cultural links between the Irish and the Americans. The conflict was treated pragmatically. It might have been possible that The New York Times decided to follow the position taken by the US government not to intervene,\textsuperscript{489} instead of capitalizing on the emotional turmoil that the hunger strike was arousing. This is supported by Guelke’s finding that the distant reaction of the United States was partly due to the concern over international terrorism.\textsuperscript{490}

The New York Times is a good example of an international paper that was able to report on the conflict without a black-or-white attitude. The same can be said of Dagens Nyheter and the Helsingin Sanomat. The mental images relayed of the hunger strikers in these newspapers included IRA membership, but terrorism did not become their main feature. This indicates that especially in countries that had no domestic problems of terrorism it was possible to see the situation without this strong connection to terrorism. Distance mattered. For example, in the United States or in Scandinavia, it was possible to discuss the situation from different points of view without being labelled as supporting one side of the conflict. On the other hand, neither side of the conflict had real importance in the United States or in the Scandinavian countries. Secondly, the editorial procedures of the papers reflected the way these societies worked. They possess a tradition of discussion or debate in which different opinions are allowed and welcomed.

Obviously there were differences between these papers as well. What is especially intriguing is the fact that the mental images relayed of the hunger strikers in Dagens Nyheter and in the Helsingin Sanomat were slightly different. From an international perspective, the Scandinavian cultures seem similar enough that they would adopt similar stances. However, the portrayals of the hunger strikers were the largest differences between the papers. Dagens Nyheter represented the hunger strikers in a very humane way. The Helsingin Sanomat instead adopted a factual approach. Was this difference due to editorial issues or is there a significant distinction between the cultures? The answer is not that simple, as both editorial

\textsuperscript{488} Ó Maolchatha 1990, electronic document
\textsuperscript{489} Guelke 1989, 144
\textsuperscript{490} Ibid.
policy and cultural and political differences have played a part. This illustrates how seemingly similar circumstances may not be so similar after all.

The mental images relayed of the hunger strikers in Le Figaro, El País and la Prensa were shallow and they were based on the few facts provided. The stances of these papers were more apparent in the way they contextualized the hunger strike. Interestingly, the newspapers that had no clear mental image of the hunger strikers were located in countries that had somewhat troubled relations with Britain.491

To conclude, relations with or the impact of the British government on other countries proved to be a factor. There are some indications that representations of the hunger strikers in different countries were connected to the relations of those countries with the British government. Of course, the newspapers examined here are only singular examples, but there are some interesting indications. More about the importance of political relations is discussed in Chapter 5.

The mental images relayed of the hunger strikers in the newspapers lacked personal attributes in most of the cases. Representations made of them were distant, with the exception of Bobby Sands. He provided a face to the hunger strike, to the extent that the other hunger strikers remained more or less unknown. It is worth noting that even today when the hunger strike is discussed, the most likely visual element seen is the picture of Sands. Their links with the IRA made the hunger strikers a difficult subject for the media. The hunger strikers were not personally available so images of them were based on secondhand information. Therefore, it is evident that both the support forces for the Republican prisoners and the authorities acted as sources for the media. The process of hunger striking itself became more significant than the ones who carried it out.

Even though the mental images relayed of the hunger strikers were fragmented, they reflected different stances and opinions. There were differing opinions due to cultural and societal reasons. However, we must remember that the experience of distance or closeness is a relative and subjective issue. Cultural generalisations are equally difficult to study. In this case, for example, the hunger strike was not merely a societal phenomenon: it included political aspects that were not necessarily

491 Argentina and Britain were drifting towards a conflict of their own over the Falklands. The latter part of 1990’s witnessed troubles in Anglo-French relations. Spanish-British relations have also been complicated due to political reasons, even though after the democratisation of Spain, relations started to warm.

492 The history between Britain and South Africa would also be interesting to consider here but the lack of material in The Sowetan does not give enough evidence.
culturally valid. The primary observation here is that the newspapers portrayed the hunger strikers as participants in a political conflict, not only in the British Isles but also abroad. Political tones dominated the coverage, making the hunger strike a conflict of political nature. Although the newspapers depicted the hunger strikers this way it is impossible to conclude if this was a reflection of wider opinions.

4.4 Frames of terrorism influence coverage

One aspect that needs to be considered in examining the newspapers’ depictions of the hunger strikers is the question of how terrorism is treated in the media. As the hunger strikers were members of the IRA or INLA, it was evident that some parallels with terrorism existed. However, hunger striking per se is not usually regarded as a form of terrorism. Furthermore, from today’s perspective, we must remember that the relationship between the media and terrorism was different in the early 1980s: both had a different nature back then and the relationship was not as intense as it has been in the 21st century. As the main focus of this research is to study the news coverage of particular newspapers, the most useful tool in examining the ‘role’ of terrorism (in the coverage) lies within the process of news framing. Did the newspapers use frames that can be regarded as terrorist?

Newspapers depicted the hunger strikers differently. The Irish Times, The New York Times, Dagens Nyheter, the Helsingin Sanomat and The Sowetan preferred the neutral term ‘hunger striker’. The Age, the Arab News, Le Figaro, El Pais and La Prensa chose to use terms that emphasized the aspect of battle. Die Welt, Neue Zürcher Zeitung, The Globe and Mail, and the South China Morning Post depicted the hunger strikers as terrorists. The Times had a similar depiction, even though the

493 Political emphasis was clearly seen in the mental images that the newspapers mediated of the British authorities. These images became even more important than the images of the hunger strikers, and thus more revelatory. The mental images relayed of the British authorities and the reasoning behind them are examined in Chapter 5.

494 A detailed examination of societal opinions would be interesting and revealing but it is not the focal point of this research. The main aim here is to focus on the newspapers.

495 Looking at research on media coverage on terrorism, it becomes evident that 9/11 and the war on terror has led to an almost separate genre of research. The topic is discussed from multiple perspectives. However, the same ideas do not automatically apply to an earlier era. They cannot be utilised as a tool of comparison as such. Unfortunately, research on media and terrorism in the early 1980s is more scattered and provides a weaker basis, particularly in regards to countries where terrorism was not a significant phenomenon. Therefore, the results of this research are not directly comparable to any particular research. Instead, the coverage of terrorism is discussed here from a more general point of view to shed light on what kinds of news frames in regards to terrorism were used.
term ‘terrorist’ was used more carefully. According to JUDITH M. BUDDENBAUM, labels used by the media are rarely neutral facts or independent observations. More often, the media rely on labels that make sense in their society. Therefore, the terminology used by the papers indicates not only the stance taken by a paper itself, but also more general societal attitudes. In the case of the hunger strike, the aspect of terrorism was probably one of the key determinants. The use of certain terms and phrases created different mental images. These differences illustrate how the coverage of issues related to conflicts and terrorism can be challenging in terms of discourse. There is a strong focus on ‘us’ and ‘them’.

Roughly speaking the common and universal method of condemning violence follows the same pattern: when violence is carried out by the opposing side, the other’s actions are condemned as unjustified and immoral. Violence perpetrated by one’s own side, on the other hand, is acceptable and justifiable. When there is no direct involvement, the issue gets more complicated. However, even then sides are often taken.

The Times’ coverage can be regarded as a classic discourse of war. In addition to a focus on the violence of the hunger strikers, the paper also distanced it’s ‘own side’ – that of the British – from the conflict. According to the paper, the conflict was caused by others. The Times’s coverage adhered to a discursive habit that ADAM HODGES refers to as a tactic of distinction: differences are highlighted, while similarities between ‘us’ and ‘them’ are ignored. Without a doubt, The Times treated the hunger strike as a serious conflict: its coverage included elements that are typical of war and terrorism related reports. The Times’ discourse can be considered political, taking one side. During a conflict situation, language is an important tool in constructing ideological stances. The Times’ strong reaction to the situation can be partly explained by the fact that violence within a national context gains more attention than violence on an international level. The Times depicted the hunger strike as more threatening than The Irish Times. It seems that the involvement of the British government as one participant of the conflict was the decisive factor. The coverage of The Irish Times supports the fact that national violence is reported on more frequently. It also suggests that, as the Irish as a nation

496 Buddenbaum 1991, 132
497 Cooper 1991, 10
498 Hodges 2007, 69
499 Becker 2007, 161
500 Gerbner 1991, 5–6
were not directly threatened, The Irish Times’ coverage did not treat the hunger strike as a terrorist event. There was a difference between the two papers. Both papers acted depending on their own national context. Both papers were also following patterns that have been found to be universal.

It is noteworthy that many scholars have found that in covering terrorist events, the media does not legitimize actions. However, it is also known that events labelled as terrorism are often isolated from or not given any context. Taking this into consideration, the stance of The Times is even more revealing. The paper really did oppose the hunger strike. Even if it did not directly and constantly refer to it as terrorism, all its actions suggested this. Again, we must remember that The Times was in a very different situation compared to the rest of the papers: the hunger strike was focused on authorities in its own society. In such situations, discourses strengthen.

It seems that for some of the papers – those that had a negative view of the strike or contextualized it through violence, the hunger strikers provided an opportunity to focus on the threat created by this type of violence. These papers mentioned the criminal activities of the prisoners almost every time something about them was reported. The hunger strikers were primarily seen by these papers – The Times, The Globe and Mail, Die Welt, Neue Zürcher Zeitung, and the South China Morning Post – as representatives of the violent IRA. Even if the hunger strikers were not systematically called terrorists, the end result was similar: they were primarily seen as members of a terrorist organization. The hunger strikers were clearly the ‘other’.

The rest of the papers did not take as clear of a position. Terminology used by the media can be vague, and different labels can be used for the same people. This occurred for instance in the Helsingin Sanomat which, although it usually used the term hunger striker, occasionally referred to the hunger strikers as guerrillas or outlawed criminals. This vagueness was primarily caused by the paper’s distance from the event. It has been found that the inconsistent use of terminology can be the result of a lack of information or a lack of understanding in the media. It is likely that the Helsingin Sanomat was not as interested therefore it did not need to consider the terminology used as carefully. Secondly, the use of news agency material could also result in different terms. The majority of the papers which used agency material the most had also some variation in the terms used. It is difficult

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501 Gerbner 1991, 6  
502 Stoltz 2007, 105
to draw any conclusions from them. Again, those newspapers that had the strongest views regarding the hunger strike were more likely to stick to certain labels, although this was not always the case.

Interestingly, The New York Times depicted the hunger strikers vaguely. According to several studies, the paper has often created powerful stories of issues related to violence and terrorism, because it has been aware of its own role in shaping societal and cultural opinions. It is significant that in this case the paper chose a more modest stance: it suggests that the paper was not willing to condemn the hunger strikers as terrorists. As I concluded in Chapter 3.5, The New York Times seemed to be in a difficult position. However, it is noteworthy that, even if the paper was cautious due to British relations, the paper did not share the view of the hunger strikers in regards to the British. Instead, the hunger strikers were treated in a detached manner.

It seems that the choice of terminology was primarily an editorial choice in all of the papers. However, if there was a prevalent attitude within a society, it is plausible that the newspapers reflected this. Many scholars have stated that news language is a refracting medium. [unclear to me, but if its in source OK] In other words, the news media itself adopts a position that it is not always unbiased. This position usually reflects the societal surroundings.

**Drama and symbolism as motives for coverage**

All the newspapers, especially in the early stages of the hunger strike, had interest in the hunger strikers. Even papers such as The Globe and Mail which had a rather negative outlook, published stories about the hunger strikers and their background. Bobby Sands in particular and his personal history were discussed in all the papers. This illustrates how personal profiles are important for news makers. They provide one way to create drama. The hunger strike itself was a drama. Furthermore, the connection with terrorism made it more dramatic. Such topics are often reported by using certain discourses. News reports utilize general perceptions of the theme.

According to JACK LULE, news about terrorist events can be considered drama. Details of an incident are arranged in a story form to invite the involvement

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503 Eg. Lule 1991, 36
504 Stoltz 2007, 106
505 Eg. Jeffrey Simpson, ”Sectarian wars molded Sands” The Globe and Mail 1.5.1981
of the audience. Some news reports about the hunger strikers indeed resembled dramatic stories. Depending on the stance of a paper, the hunger strikers were given different characteristics.

The Irish Times and Dagens Nyheter portrayed the hunger strikers as not only prisoners but humans. Many papers (The Age, Arab News, El País, Le Figaro, La Prensa) portrayed them as fighters and, as already has been mentioned, some considered them terrorists. Almost all the papers had a strong label for the hunger strikers. This indicates that the hunger strikers were regarded as interesting objects. One aspect that added to their interest was the symbolism connected with the hunger strikers. Several photos in particular portrayed symbolic gestures. The photo discussed of women banging garbage lids (figure 19) had a symbolic nature. This symbolism had some value, but it was subsidiary.

Other types of news photos can also be regarded as symbolic: pictures showing burned trucks, rioting youth with masks, and IRA men carrying coffins were all themes that were easily recognizable as representative of the conflict. Again, the negative aspects were easier to highlight. All the newspapers depicted the hunger strikers as prisoners, and therefore criminals, but there were differences in how they did so. All the same, they provided dramatic news stories. Newspapers were more likely to depict the conflict of the event. This is understandable as news is generally about surprising and frequently negative subjects. From this perspective, the papers were just doing their job.

The above-mentioned examples can be examined within a context of framing. Frames define news topics and their problems and solutions. As has already been mentioned, framing may also contain moral statements. News stories regarding issues associated with terrorism are easily constructed within such frames. For instance ZIZI PAPACHARISSI and MARIA DE FATIMA OLIVEIRA state in their research that topics related to terrorism are often discussed with stronger tones: for example, negative stereotypes form frames through which the issue is interpreted. This dissertation agrees with this view. It seems obvious that papers such as The Times and The Globe and Mail framed the hunger strike news as a terrorist event. Other studies have found that domestic terrorism in particular is reported on more negatively than international terrorism. This partly explains the strong stance taken by The Times. It is significant that some international papers

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506 Lule 1991, 32
507 Simuna 2014, 224
508 Papacharissi & Oliveira 2008, 57
509 E.g. Papacharissi & Oliveira 2008, 66
were also much more prejudiced against the hunger strikers. This reveals that the hunger strikers represented an opposing idea.

All in all, it is safe to say that quality papers do not support terrorist or violent views. From this perspective, the examined papers had the same basis in depicting the hunger strikers. Nevertheless, the papers created different contexts and frames for them. It is intriguing that for some papers terrorism was a primary theme, while some others did not regard it as significant. This reveals that the hunger strike generated opinions formed through different processes.

4.5 Conclusion

The newspapers had differing mental images of the hunger strikers. This can be concluded from the different narratives and discourses used to depict them. It seems likely that the contexts created for the event resulted in these depictions. The papers with the most violent and negative contexts depicted the hunger strikers as an evil opposition. The Times regarded the hunger strikers as an enemy that was clearly separated from its own side. The Globe and Mail, Die Welt, Neue Zürcher Zeitung, and the South China Morning Post were also clearly against the hunger strike, and therefore, the hunger strikers were viewed as villains. These papers also used tougher terms and they referred to the hunger strikers as terrorists. While The Times seemed to hesitate in its use of the term, the international papers were more outspoken. From a distance it was likely easier to take a tougher stand as they were not reporting on a domestic event. Even though The Times took a similar stance, it remained more concise, as it did not want to give any additional attention to its opponent. Abroad, the papers were more open-minded. The hunger strikers were condemned as representing violence. Representations of the hunger strikers were more personal, but they also represented the IRA and the phenomenon of terrorism in general. In other words, the hunger strikers became scapegoats for a larger issue. As has already been found, the reasoning for this portrayal was multifaceted. The papers had hardline attitudes that were based on not only editorial but also political and societal reasons.

The mental images relayed by the other papers also support the idea that the depictions of the hunger strikers resulted from the context created for the hunger strike. As The Irish Times considered the situation one episode in a long battle, it is not surprising that the paper depicted the hunger strikers more from this point of view. They were seen as participants in a timeless conflict, as if their participation was predetermined. Moreover, the grief of family members of the prisoners was
emphasized, thus providing a more humane image. The hunger strikers were not seen to be solely responsible for the conflict.

A similar stance was apparent in the pages of The Age. The paper depicted the chaotic past of the province as the reason why the hunger strike happened. The hunger strikers were depicted as underdogs who were fighting against a bigger opponent. The paper did not support the demands made by of the hunger strikers themselves. Instead, the reasoning behind the stance taken by the paper was more about opposing the British. In this, the paper was in many ways in a league of its own.

The rest of the papers considered the hunger strike as a conflict and the hunger strikers as one participant in it. Complex sets of factors resulted in minor differences in emphasis. For the Scandinavian papers, the hunger strikers were an odd phenomenon. The Helsingin Sanomat in particular had difficulty in understanding their actions. Dagens Nyheter instead took a broader stance: it saw the hunger strike as a result of injustices in society, thus trying to understand why it happened.

The New York Times, the Arab News, El Pais, Le Figaro, and La Prensa all depicted the hunger strikers as one side of the conflict. They all considered the hunger strike a part of a larger issue. Furthermore, they all viewed the conflict as a typical Irish one. From a certain distance, but with some interest in the strike, they were tempted to rely on stereotypes and simplifications. The history of Northern Ireland had become a narrative that was easily recognised. The hunger strikers were treated almost as a normal consequence of that story. It is widely known that hunger striking has a very political label in Ireland. It is also a phenomenon that attracts attention. It seems plausible that the newspapers used stereotypes based on historical events as a shortcut in interpreting the 1981 hunger strike. It was treated as yet another aspect of a conflict that had continued for too long. This is supported by the fact that the papers did not change their views during the seven months. It is likely that the treatment of the hunger strike was in accordance with enduring beliefs. Mental images are long-lasting and they change slowly and after significant shifts. Based on the coverage in each newspaper, the hunger strike reflected conceptions of the Northern Irish conflict. In addition, the hunger strike offered dramatic themes, which are hardly encumbrances for news makers.

510 Eg. Fredricks 2012, 332
Otherness, terrorism, and death: Difficult, yet intriguing topics of discussion

The newspapers examined depicted the hunger strikers in somewhat different tones. It seems obvious that the depictions of the hunger strikers and the contextualization of the strike were partially interdependent. Notably, the papers that emphasized the violent nature of the hunger strike depicted the hunger strikers with stronger narratives. It was easy to emphasize negativity. Each newspaper had their own reasons for taking a particular stance but, at the same time, the coverage of the papers provides a good example of a more general habit: the media’s practice of othering. According to SHANI ORGAD, the media separate those who are not considered to be normal, safe, or correct. 511 For some papers, the hunger strikers represented otherness. It is interesting to compare different international perceptions. Even though none of the papers supported the cause of the hunger strikers or admired their actions, some papers were able to depict them without a violent label. It is obvious that the papers had different perceptions of the situation. These different perceptions were expressed through different discourses.

The mental images relayed of the hunger strikers as people remained distant. Only Bobby Sands was given more attention. It is significant that, for instance, a majority of the papers published a smiling portrait of him, while the others had visual representations only occasionally. On one hand, this reveals how news is often made personal. The human interest aspect is a tool to attract readers. The first death of the hunger strike resulted in a special, even universal interest. On the other hand, the lack of attention given to the rest of the hunger strikers suggests that, especially during conflicts, other aspects are considered more appealing. Violence and political controversy were more significant for the quality papers.

The connections between the hunger strikers and terrorism were key aspects in some papers, while others did not pay too much attention to them. This difference reveals that the issue was considered complex. In such cases, final judgments are made by journalists and newspaper editors. However, it is significant that there were differences between certain cultures. The information gathered for this research is inadequate in providing answers to such a large question and further research is required for this. However, one can assume that terrorism is a topic with many meanings and explanations. The papers’ differing views only emphasize the complexity of terrorism on an international level. Understanding all of the factors

511 Orgad 2012, 54
causing these differences in coverage requires a lot of consideration. One must remember that daily reports in the media may not always reflect the long-term mental images prevailing in a society. The purpose of publishing news could be to provoke debate, and debate is natural. However, depictions of the hunger strike continued for months with little change. Apparently, the newspapers were depicting the event in a way they, and their surrounding societies, perceived to be true. As these truths were different, there must be a reasons for them. It becomes obvious that societies and cultures experience things differently. If these differing views are true in their own contexts, then context must be explored as it explains differences. At this point, cultural difference, in its broadest sense, becomes evident. A conflict with different opinions or interpretations is more likely to expose cultural differences. These are long-lasting and are not easily overturned. Even though it is difficult to fully know what the newspapers and the societies thought of the Irish conflict in general, it seems plausible that prevailing perceptions did not differ from the mental images relayed of the hunger strike. It is more likely that the conflict was interpreted through previous knowledge and emotions experienced during the hunger strike.

In addition to the societally difficult theme of terrorism, coverage regarding the hunger strikers dealt with the subject of death, which was difficult. The attention given both to the hunger strike deaths and deaths during various incidents indicates that death is good news in that it draws attention. It has been found that death is a fundamental issue that is discussed in societies. News coverage of death illustrates this. In societies close to the conflict, more detailed accounts of the hunger strike deaths were published, as they had more relevance. Even papers that were geographically distant covered the deaths related to the hunger strike, although they did not need to. Commentary on death was used to emphasize different views. The mental images regarding issues related to the hunger strike became visible in these differing views. The basic idea of imagology is that societal (as well is individual) actions are based on complex sets of information, beliefs, and emotions. They all are true in their own contexts and varied sets of factors result in different outcomes. One must remember that mental images are often simplifications of the world. However, mental images are dominated by information that is relevant and meaningful for the possessor. All in all, there were significant differences between the mental images relayed of the hunger strikers.

512 The issue of death in society is discussed by Mary Bradbury in her book *Representations of death: a social psychological perspective*. 
As it turned out, the hunger strike resulted in political discussion. It was considered to be a political conflict, a perspective that determined some of the coverage.
5 Depicting the British authorities

The British government adopted a clear stance against the hunger strikers. A characterization by PADRAIG O’MALLEY summarised this stance:

It absolved itself of responsibility in the matter, publicly casting itself in the role of the model jailkeeper who refused to submit to blackmail by hardened inmates acting under the orders of unscrupulous masters.513

The involvement of the British authorities in the conflict made them a participant in the eyes of the media. This chapter examines what kinds of mental images of the authorities514 were depicted in the newspapers. One aspect that resulted in strong reactions was the stance of the British Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher. The papers paid a lot of attention to her statements, which resulted in the fact that representations in the papers were often political. International reactions were also occasionally affected by their own perceptions of the British authorities.

5.1 ‘The Government had it right’

The British authorities have rightly decided to not to grant the basic demand of the strikers for political status, and the impression has been created that the strikers have hardened their position whenever any compromise short of that demand has been in prospect. For the British government to negotiate directly with the strikers, as they are now asking, would therefore give the IRA another propaganda victory without any grounds for believing that the strike could then be ended except by conceding the basic point. The strike can serve the IRA’s interest in two ways. So long as it lasts, it gives them great propaganda; and if it is bought off on their terms, it will increase their standing at home and abroad. It would be futile for the British Government to stumble out of one trap straight into the other.515

The Times’ position regarding the role of the British authorities was straightforward. It considered the involvement of the government to be passive in regard to the

513 O’Malley 1990, 191
514 The use of the term ‘(British) authorities’ refers to the British government, British officials in Northern Ireland as well as the representatives of the British army. When needed, more specific indications are made.
515 “A Help to steady the nerves” (editorial) The Times 23.7.1981
hunger strike. The Times’ depicted the British government as if it was a victim of the circumstances. The paper consistently supported the stance of the authorities. On several occasions, the paper claimed that the government had it right.\textsuperscript{516} International criticism was rebuffed with the statement that the government knew the reality better than foreigners.\textsuperscript{517} The authorities were depicted as firm and righteous. The paper instead criticised other (those of the Irish and the Catholic Church) stances towards the hunger strike\textsuperscript{518} but failed to discuss the role of the British. In August, an editorial commented:

It must be also said, with sadness, that the gains the Provisionals are making out of their gruesome policy of suicide would be markedly less were it not that the Irish Government and the Roman Catholic Hierarchy of Ireland so conspicuously qualify their condemnation of this extension of terrorist violence by piling the blame on British ministers for allowing it to continue. By doing so they articulate and reinforce the feelings of many Irishmen: they also, unintentionally but obviously, confer on the hunger-strikers something of the status of martyrdom and therefore of legitimacy.\textsuperscript{519}

The Times regarded the IRA as the culprit. Even the Irish were given a bigger role in the conflict than the British government. All responsibility was aimed at anyone but the British. The Times denied opinions that were expressed abroad: “That the whole world knows of alleged British intransigence is mainly a result of the untiring efforts of the Republican press centre…”\textsuperscript{520} This rhetoric was repeated on many occasions. A certain blindness towards the role of the British authorities is apparent and significant. The hunger strike was viewed as a conflict that threatened British order. This was a classic “us versus them” situation in which the Times sided with its own.

The Times’s stance has been described similarly in other studies. It has been said that the British media had over time adopted a practice of not denouncing the

\textsuperscript{516} Eg "Coffins still to come" (editorial) The Times 16.5.1981; "Ten wasted lives" (editorial) The Times 5.10.1981

\textsuperscript{517} "Beyond the limits of charm" (editorial) The Times 1.5.1981; "Coffins still to come" (editorial) The Times 16.5.1981

\textsuperscript{518} "Hunger strikers and the church" (editorial) The Times 27.5.1981; "Fermanagh does it again” (editorial) The Times 22.8.1981

\textsuperscript{519} "Fermanagh does it again” (editorial) The Times 22.8.1981

\textsuperscript{520} Tim Jones, "Sympathy turns to alienation in republic” (feature) The Times 3.8.1981
views of the British government in regards to Northern Ireland. For several decades, conflict in Northern Ireland was reported on by the British media but depictions were limited. According to LIZ CURTIS, the conflict in Northern Ireland was depicted as a battle between the IRA and the British army, while all its other aspects were ignored. During the hunger strike, the perspective was even narrower. The Times regarded the IRA as the only participant.

In particular, the editorials of The Times strongly supported the government. The news articles of the paper were more moderate. However, they were also framed to depict the British officials positively. This was done in many ways. Most significantly, the paper published statements from the representatives of the government. All the events in relation to the hunger strike included comments from officials. The ‘other side’ was hardly ever given the opportunity to tell their side of the story. This can only be partly explained by the fact that The Times used officials as sources. The investigative nature of news production was lacking in this case. It would not have been difficult for the reporters of The Times to get statements from the hunger strikers. Therefore, the emphasis in quoting officials can be regarded as deliberate. The many details in coverage support this deliberate intent.

521 Curtis 1984, 18
522 Curtis 1984, 99
The treatment of the British soldiers in the coverage of The Times was unique among the examined newspapers. They were depicted as guardians (figure 30). Quite often personal information and photos of the deceased soldiers were published.\textsuperscript{523} For The Times, the deaths of soldiers were the greatest loss. These deaths were seen to be much more important than the deaths of hunger strikers (or even civilians). This kind of coverage has been a common practice of the British

\textsuperscript{523} Eg The Times 21.5.1981

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{soldier_with_children.jpg}
\caption{A soldier making friends with children in the Crumlin Road area of Belfast yesterday.}
\end{figure}
press. Deaths of soldiers have been portrayed as heroic sacrifices.\(^{524}\) Again, from the British point of view the soldiers represented ‘us’ whereas the prisoners represented ‘them’.

The local police force was also represented the same way as were British soldiers. Their injuries were reported in detail. The picture of an injured policeman along with the phrase “the face with agony”\(^{525}\) (figure 20) sent a clear message: the officials were the victims in the situation. Similar depictions were published by The Times throughout the hunger strike. Often, its impressions were bolstered with comparisons:

An Ulster policeman and a terrorist went to their graves yesterday. They had died on the same day, one from a 600lb bomb, the other from 73 days of starvation.

Police Constable John Smyth, aged 34, had three children. The private moments of his funeral, the screaming and hopeless pleading from his wife Doreen, were broadcast with breathtaking insensitivity over local radio.

Kieran Doherty, aged 25, Irish MP for Cavan-Monaghan for just 52 days, died wretchedly and willingly in the Maze prison, where he had spent three years.

He became an IRA martyr on Sunday, the day his compatriots blew PC Smyth and PC Alfred Woods to pieces with a landmine near Omagh, co Tyrone, taking the toll of murdered policemen to 154 in 12 years.\(^{526}\)

Only the policeman was depicted sympathetically. These depictions were powerful juxtapositions. This was a simple yet very effective way to emphasize only one side of the story. On one hand, this was obviously a conscious decision by the news makers themselves, especially when it was done on a regular basis. On the other hand, during a conflict reporters rely on official statements in particular. For instance, in Britain the press did not question accounts from the army that referred to the victims of shootings (involving the army) as gunmen.\(^{527}\) In this case, the choice of angle was intended. As examples from the other newspapers indicate, it was possible to cover the story without depending on official sources. The Times was willing to support the stance of the British government.

\(^{524}\) Taylor 1991, 97  
\(^{525}\) The Times 1.5.1981  
\(^{526}\) The Times 5.8.1981  
\(^{527}\) Curtis 1984, 26
Smaller details also supported the stance taken by The Times. Northern Ireland was often referred to as Ulster, as if it was a neutral term. Again, this is typical of the British media in general.\textsuperscript{528} Local authorities in Northern Ireland were more visible in the coverage of The Times than the British government itself. In emphasizing them, the paper was able to turn attention away from the British government. The same did not happen in the other newspapers.

The Times treated the hunger strike as a threatening conflict that was caused by the ‘other’, an opponent that had to be resisted by any means. In addition to the conflict itself, broader and more profound factors also affected the attitude taken by the paper. The stance of the British government in general towards Northern Ireland has often been distant. The Northern Irish problem has been kept at arm’s length for political reasons.\textsuperscript{529} Northern Ireland presented a possible threat to the political order in Britain. That was not acceptable. Historical assessments have been difficult for British politicians and media.\textsuperscript{530} In light of this, The Times was continuing a practise that had become tradition.

The other important reason for the stance taken by The Times was that the British in general considered Northern Ireland a burden, as many scholars have found.\textsuperscript{531} In such an atmosphere, it was almost obligatory to fall in which the prevailing attitude. This attitude materialized after the death of Bobby Sands, when the British media almost unanimously supported the government.\textsuperscript{532} As a very conservative paper, The Times was among the most loyal.

All The Times’ coverage supported the government as the good party. It can be argued that The Times was doing what was typical of the British media. However, several studies have shown that the stance taken by The Times was persistent. The paper adopted an attitude that had remained for a longer period:

Findings showed that The Times was far from neutral in its reporting of the Northern Ireland conflict. On the contrary, by its partial discourse, it turned out to be a part of the Northern Ireland conflict favouring the Protestant/Unionist community to the detriment of the Catholic/Republican/ Nationalist one.\textsuperscript{533}

\textsuperscript{528} “The United Kingdom is made up of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. Northern Ireland is the only correct name but ‘Ulster’ (the name for nine Irish counties of which six are in Northern Ireland) is so widely used as a synonym that it is acceptable.”, Miller 1994b, s 171
\textsuperscript{529} Guelke 1989, 82
\textsuperscript{530} Curtis 1984, 212
\textsuperscript{531} O’Malley 1990, 190; Guelke 1989, 100
\textsuperscript{532} Curtis 1984, 203
\textsuperscript{533} Abassi & Soubiale 2006, 3
The hunger strike was just one occasion to emphasize the British view of the Northern Irish conflict. The Times expressed its mental image continually within its content. The paper used similar narratives and discourses expressed by the British authorities, and officials were used as the primary sources of information.

Quantitative conclusions suggested that The Times was of the opinion that the hunger strike was not worthy of too much attention. This opinion is supported by the way the paper reported on the event, regarding the affect the hunger strike had on the British. The hunger strike itself was viewed as negative.

**Patriotic reporting**

The Times’s depiction of the hunger strike resembled the coverage generally provided of wars. According to DIEGO LAZZARICH, in war, the actions of one’s own side are regarded as rational ways with which to solve the problem.534 The Times’s treatment of the British role during the hunger strike fits this conclusion. The British were depicted as taking care of a problem caused by others. The Times’ coverage was a typical example of a situation in which the conflict extended to a long period. Over several decades, the paper – as well as the British media in general – had adopted a certain perspective of the conflict in Northern Ireland. The coverage of the hunger strike was merely a continuum of this perspective. As the British government had a clear stance in regards to the event, The Times also had no reason to reconsider its position.

As has already been discussed, several studies have found that the media tends to be patriotic in reporting on national conflicts. In this sense, The Times was just doing what any other media would have done. The paper felt such a strong alliance with the authorities that it was able to relay a one-sided version of the event. The paper was able to do so as the audience shared the same perceptions. Public opinion about the conflict sided with the paper’s.

The Times’s mental image relayed of the British authorities provides a good example of conflict coverage in general. Furthermore, it was also a response to public sentiment. In this, the paper clearly differed from the others. No other newspaper adopted a similar stance. Obviously, the international papers were not dealing with a national conflict. The Times’s depictions were an extreme.

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534 Lazzarich 2013, 50
5.2 Support for the stance taken by authorities

It is noteworthy that some international newspapers – The Globe and Mail, the South China Morning Post, Die Welt, and Neue Zürcher Zeitung – supported, or at least appreciated, the way the British authorities were dealing with the hunger strike. This suggests that they viewed the hunger strike in a similar manner to the British. Furthermore, it is significant that the same papers considered the hunger strike to be a violent event. The authorities were regarded as the correct party of the conflict.

5.2.1 Necessary actions

Of the international newspapers, The Globe and Mail was the closest to The Times in its stance towards the British authorities. Especially during the first months, the paper agreed with the attitudes of the authorities. According to the paper, the Prime Minister had it right.\textsuperscript{535} In many articles, British policy was the primary focus. For instance, after Sands’ death, the focus was on the actions of officials:

Police and British soldiers were in firm control of Belfast yesterday... In an impressive display of organization, security forces prevented the violence from spreading.\textsuperscript{536}

These minor aspects suggested that the paper considered the British view to be justified. It was not questioned.

However, an interesting change occurred in the Globe and Mail towards the end of the hunger strike. The perspective was more complex. When the hunger strike finally ended, The Globe and Mail declared Margaret Thatcher as the winner of the conflict.\textsuperscript{537} According to one article, the terrible costs of the conflict were the 19 dead soldiers and an increase in extremism.\textsuperscript{538} It is significant that the writer mentioned the deaths of the soldiers first, as if they were the main consequence. This reaffirms the mental image of violence as depicted by the paper. However, at the same time, the paper expected sympathy from the British.\textsuperscript{539} This small contradiction could perhaps be a result of the end of the conflict. As the hunger

\textsuperscript{536} The Globe and Mail 6.5.1981
\textsuperscript{537} “A futile campaign ends” (editorial) The Globe and Mail 5.10.1981
\textsuperscript{538} Jeffrey Simpson, “Irish deaths may prove a tragic waste” (feature) The Globe and Mail 6.10.1981
\textsuperscript{539} “A futile campaign ends” (editorial) The Globe and Mail 5.10.1981
strike was over, the paper worried about the consequences. An anti-violent attitude preferred a peaceful means of solving the conflict.

Overall, The Globe and Mail depicted the role of the British government as passive. It did not consider the government to be an active participant of the conflict. Most likely the paper did not want to include the authorities in a situation it considered to be extremely violent:

In Belfast, as elsewhere, two wrongs do not make a right, they make many more wrongs in endless, mindless, pitiless succession. The criminal means is justified neither by its end, nor by the wrong that provoked it. Crime is crime. Murder is murder. And the lust for vengeance is a bloody futility.540

The unwillingness to depict the British government as an active participant is an interesting feature. The presence of the British in Northern Ireland was described as a necessity:

Belfast was once a lovely city, but is now encircled by a ring of steel studded checkpoints manned by armed soldiers and police. Everyone going through is thoroughly frisked, including children. Paul541 has already learned to raise his hands and spread his legs so the police officer can pat him for concealed weapons or explosives. The same thing happens when one enters a store. Guards carry out body searches with electronic detectors.

Armored cars constantly patrol the streets, soldiers scanning the roof tops for IRA gunmen they fear might be waiting to open fire. The Catholics ignore the troops as if they didn’t exist.

It is easy to see the soldiers, most of them scarcely out of their teens, are terrified. Squads walk the streets, the last two men moving backwards as cover. The eyes of the soldiers, constantly watching for ambush, are never still. They are ready to shoot.542

This depiction of the soldiers was quite unique. Not even The Times portrayed the soldiers in such detail. With distance from the event, it was probably easier to create more dramatic depictions. The conflict did not affect the Canadian community, so it was easier to use stronger tones without having to fear possible consequences.

541 A 5-year old boy who was interviewed for the article.
These highlighted the violent nature of the event. The Globe and Mail’s mental image of the situation was straightforward in a way: the hunger strike was a violent conflict wherein the British soldiers acted as the protectors of order. The paper created a particular context for the hunger strike, and participants of the conflict were depicted accordingly. The hunger strike was primarily treated as an illegal event that had negative outcomes. From this point of view, the authorities were considered the righteous participants.

5.2.2 Support for the stance of officials

Other papers that took an appreciative view of the actions of British authorities were the South China Morning Post, Die Welt and Neue Zürcher Zeitung.

The South China Morning Post emphasized that the government had to stand firm, and that the Prime Minister rightly refused to compromise on the issue. There was clear evidence of this stance in the paper. The British government was considered to be justly acting against criminals.

However, in one editorial the South China Morning Post had a slightly different perspective:

The tragic death of another five British soldiers in the landmine explosion of a Saracen armoured vehicle in Northern Ireland sharply underlines the futility of the present military strategy against IRA terrorists. Whatever the IRA’s policies may be towards the political future of Northern Ireland, their military target is the British army wherever it may be found in the province.

This means British soldiers patrolling the countryside or in Belfast itself; yet, other than a desire to show the flag, there is no reason why British troops have to be visible except to support the police during periods of rioting in the city, and even then they should be a backstop, used only in the last resort when the police are strained beyond endurance.

In other words, the paper regarded the British army as a necessary force, but in the long run, according to the paper, it was better if the number of troops was decreased and the remaining ones were left out of the public eye. There was sympathy for the position of the army:

543 “The problem of Bobby Sands” (editorial) South China Morning Post 28.4.1981
544 “Still searching for a solution” (editorial) South China Morning Post 6.5.1981
545 “Why does Britain oblige the IRA?” (editorial) South China Morning Post 21.5.1981
If many British troops loathe service in Ulster, and many of them do – as much for its frustration and boredom as its perils – they generally feel they are performing a necessary though thankless task.

… But the British Army clearly finds urban counterinsurgency a frustrating business. Officers bewail their inability to bring decisive firepower to bear on the IRA. Nevertheless, the Army’s frequent distaste for its Ulster assignment is offset by a fierce professionalism and an intense regimental pride.

Even though the paper valued the role of the army, it saw that there were drawbacks associated with the troops. In this sense, its depiction was different from that of The Times. This was due to distance, as the situation did not affect Hong Kong. The hunger strike was generalised as criminal activity that had to be counteracted. The policy of the British government was not supported as much as it was in The Times. It seemed that the situation in Northern Ireland was considered to be serious, and violence in general was condemned. A similar attitude was expressed by the German papers.

The stance of the Neue Zürcher Zeitung was more mild in comparison to those of The Globe and Mail and the South China Morning Post, but it also sympathized with the stance taken by the authorities. According to the paper, the authorities could not compromise as the prisoners were not willing to do so. In other words, the paper thought the government was not obliged to solve the situation. Furthermore, the paper stated that the government did not want to concede because it had done so previously, and more problems resulted. Neue Zürcher Zeitung claimed that the authorities had already done their share. The responsibility of resolving the hunger strike was not in the hands of the government. This exemption from liability reveals the paper did not regard the British as the cause of the conflict.

It became obvious that Neue Zürcher Zeitung thought that the British government suffered as a result of the conflict. A similar position was adopted by Die Welt. It also considered the British government to be in a difficult situation. Die Welt noted that the government faced a dilemma: no matter what it did, one side of the community would have reacted.

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546 Stephen Webbe, "Wanted: a miracle to end this war" (feature) South China Morning Post 28.8.1981
547 Neue Zürcher Zeitung 2.5.1981
549 Die Welt 27.4.1981
Both newspapers emphasized that the government was supported by its own people, irregardless of the fact that the same government operated in Northern Ireland. These papers also thought that international criticism was unfounded. According to Die Welt, the British government deserved recognition that it had kept to its position despite outside pressure. These statements again created a mental image in which the government suffered due to the situation.

Both Die Welt and Neue Zürcher Zeitung stuck to fact-based coverage, which makes conclusions regarding their stances a little uncertain. However, a few aspects reveal that the papers did support the attitude of the British government.

The German papers as well as the South China Morning Post regarded the British government as a passive participant that was not a cause of the hunger strike. It is evident that those newspapers that depicted the hunger strike as a violent event were the same ones that criticized the British authorities the least. Their stances were based on attitudes against terrorism and violence. As the hunger strike was regarded as violent terrorist-related action, their judgment favoured the officials.

**Shared opinions with the British government**

It is not a coincidence that the papers that contextualized the hunger strike as violent were also the ones with the most positive attitudes towards the British. Depictions of the authorities reflected this stance. In supporting the authorities, the papers were creating narratives that emphasized the negative nature of the other participants. These were the same papers that labelled the hunger strikers terrorists. In other words, the discourse in The Globe and Mail, Die Welt, Neue Zürcher Zeitung, and the South China Morning Post aligned with British views.

Studies of later conflicts have found that politically aligned or otherwise close cultures can have an indulgent attitude towards the military actions undertaken by allied states. It is likely that similar alignments were plausible during the early 1980s as well. As has already been mentioned, Canada had close relations with the British. The Globe and Mail’s view can be regarded, at least partly, as a reflection of these. In Hong Kong, the British had a positive reputation. Therefore, it is understandable that the South China Morning Post expressed a similar stance. Both

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553 Seethaler & Melischek 2013, 191
554 Sanders 1990, 126
The Globe and Mail and the South China Morning Post were papers that were read by the political administration, therefore ties with authority existed. Die Welt and Neue Zürcher Zeitung had similar relations with authority, but on the other hand the relations of these countries with Britain were different. Their concerns over general safety in relation to the hunger strike were major factors in their coverage.

For these papers, the hunger strike involved issues in which they had shared opinions with the British authorities. International newspapers can have particularly strong views when certain topics are handled. In the case of the hunger strike, terrorism was definitely a topic on which the papers agreed with the British. However, it is interesting that not all these papers made as strong connections between the hunger strike and terrorism. It was possible for them to view the conflict from a different angle, one in which it had a multifaceted background. This suggests that there could have been other reasons why some papers were stronger in their opinions. Political relations between societies could be plausible factors when dealing with volatile issues.

### 5.3 Differing levels of responsibility

Some newspapers criticised the British authorities. The Age criticised the British with harsh wording, whereas some of its judgements were more moderate. Chapters 5.3.1–5.3.3 focus on the most apparent depictions of the British authorities in The Age, The Irish Times, The New York Times, the Arab News, Dagens Nyheter, and Le Figaro. Political and historical relations affected the way the British were treated in these newspapers. The role of Margaret Thatcher seemed to color their depictions, which is discussed in Chapter 5.3.4.

#### 5.3.1 Harsh tones

The British are a wonderful race, but they sorely misunderstand Ireland.\(^{555}\)

From the start, The Age depicted the position of the British government as difficult.\(^{556}\) However, the paper viewed the government itself as partly responsible for the situation. On several occasions, The Age emphasized the failure of British policy, both current and past policy The paper criticised the hardline attitude of the

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\(^{555}\) Peter Smark, "Voting for a ghost" (feature) The Age 20.8.1981

\(^{556}\) The Age 21.4.1981
government. According to The Age, the government wanted to force and humiliate the hunger strikers. The tone of the paper remained harsh until the end of the strike. Only occasionally did The Age soften its attitude towards the British authorities. When the hunger strike ended, the paper was still doubtful that British attitudes would change.

Coverage in the early stages of the hunger strike suggests the reasoning behind the stance taken by The Age. According to the paper the British believed that the world would accept their actions in Northern Ireland without objections. The paper’s suspicions, specifically regarding the head of government, are apparent in the focus on the British Prime Minister. The Age was of the opinion that Margaret Thatcher had a large role in the hunger strike deaths:

Sands’ death can only exacerbate the problems and the tensions. It could even trigger an all-out civil war. If it does – and yesterday the prospects were decidedly ominous – Mrs Thatcher and her Government must accept some of the responsibility.

The Age portrayed Thatcher in harsh tones. Several news articles and other texts included similar depictions. Therefore, its opinion of her was not based solely on one individual’s opinion. She was described as stubborn and more implacable than the prisoners. According to one article, the Prime Minister did not understand the situation in Northern Ireland. Another article stated that Thatcher was not doing anything to unite her fractured nation. The latter article compared the hunger strike with other tensions in Britain and claimed they were signs of decay.

The Age has become known for its caricatures. The depictions of the British government during the hunger strike were significant. They depicted the British in
a less sympathetic light (figures 31 and 32\(^{567}\)). In particular the caricature published in early September (figure 32) clearly illustrated the paper’s stance against the Prime Minister. She was depicted as callous.

The caricatures were quite straightforward in their opinions of the Prime minister. On one hand, the caricatures utilized Thatcher’s opinion of the situation. She had repeatedly said that she was against the hunger strike. Her stance was so adamant that it was an easy target for criticism if, as it was by The Age, the situation was viewed differently.

On the other hand, this portrayal could have been an accumulation of opinions or impressions in regards to Thatcher’s image that had formed over the years in relation to other issues. The hunger strike offered an opportunity to combine these impressions. \(^{568}\) However, the most significant fact is that in regards to the hunger strike Thatcher was represented in a negative light by the paper. This portrayal was primarily based on the paper’s view of the hunger strike. It regarded the British as partly responsible for the situation. As the paper created a particularly strong historical and political context for the event, it was almost natural that heads of government were seen as key players. The negative impression of Thatcher was most likely based on several factors, not just on the way the British authorities handled the hunger strike itself.

\(^{567}\) The examples are drawn by Bruce Petty and Peter Nicholson who are among the most famous Australian political cartoonists. They have produced cartoons for different media for several decades.

\(^{568}\) In the early 1980s, British society struggled with many challenges. Unemployment and other economic issues were creating tension, relations with the European community were troublesome to some extent and the international reputation of the country suffered.
case in Caribbean

an Administration could do worse than heed the advice on El Salvador - the Europeans and the Mexicans.

Fig. 31. The Age 13.5.1981
Fig. 32. The Age 1.9.1981
Obviously one has to remember that caricatures are deliberately provocative. They rely on the significance of visual stimulus in creating mental images and are thus intentionally drawn to evoke emotions. However, as the nature of the caricatures was consistent with other depictions in the paper, it is evident that The Age wanted to portray the British, and the Prime Minister in particular, in a negative light. In the past, the paper had strongly supported liberal values. Even though later editors were more moderate in their liberalism, some influence could have remained. The Age’s attitude was a result of both the paper’s own stance and collective perceptions of the surrounding community. Margaret Thatcher was considered a contradictory figure worldwide. The same applied to Australia. The close relations between the countries only strengthened the stances taken.

The Age’s depictions of Thatcher illustrate how the mental image of a paper is a result of both written text and visual elements that can create strong portrayals. The paper was clear in its portrayal of Thatcher therefore it is important to try to understand why such a strong portrayal of her was created. In the end we can only speculate on why certain meanings were created, but a discourse-historical approach offers a plausible explanation: the historical and sociopolitical background created a context where such framing seemed natural. Negative perception of Margaret Thatcher already existed. This dramatic situation only solidified opinions.

5.3.2 Astonishment over British incompetence

When the hunger strike began, The Irish Times questioned the competence and attitude of British authorities in stating that “Mr Atkins is not the brightest thing Britain has sent us”569, and “Thatcher, …, is a little too fond of the grand phrase and gesture”570. Similar commentary continued throughout the hunger strike. The changing relationship between the Irish and the British governments during the hunger strike was reflected in the pages of The Irish Times.

The Irish Times depicted the British government in a less than complementary light, especially during the first half of the conflict:

The British Government, indeed, has made a matter of principle what should more appropriately be a matter of practise… Sands can, of course, save himself;
but the British Government, having fumbled once – or deliberately misled, as the Provisionals maintain – is not showing strength by its present stance, merely obstinacy.571

But the British Prime Minister is far removed from the heat of Belfast. That Government is not directly involved in the passions that have long riven the Northern community in times of high tension. Above all, the British are thought to be a people much given to the idea of compromise and honest brokering – this from their long history as a trading nation, it may be. But not a move on Sands; not a sign that Carrington or Whitelaw, well-known negotiators, have a thought beyond 'No Surrender.' That attitude lies behind much of the North’s troubles.572

Governments have to win. In a trial of wills and strength which challenges authority as fundamentally as a hunger-strike to death, a Government must prevail or abdicate. But the wise Government does not seek, or move to, a confrontation without leaving for itself and for the other party some small room for manoeuvre.

… Government must wield authority, but it must also dispense justice with an even hand; it must know when to temper the rules of law with understanding, sympathy, mercy – for gunmen, for any human being. The British Government could not rise to this.573

Clearly, the British authorities have been concerned - too much concerned – with saving face. They have changed their position several times, without admitting it.574

The troubled political relationship between the Irish and the British was highlighted in many ways. Several reporters, columnists and cartoonists (figures 33 and 34) expressed opinions regarding the British authorities. These had a clear political tone. Thatcher’s policy was regarded as a failure.

During the later months of the hunger strike, commentary in The Irish Times decreased. The stance taken by the British authorities was not discussed in the same manner. This can be considered a sign of exhaustion with the topic. It might have seemed that nothing was changing, and therefore, discussion was pointless. Overall,

572 "Who lets him die" (editorial) The Irish Times 28.4.1981
573 "The first" (editorial) The Irish Times 5.5.1981
574 "Try again" (editorial) The Irish Times 23.7.1981
The Irish Times did not consider the British government guilty of causing the conflict. It was more astonished over the way the government was handling the situation. On several occasions The Irish Times considered the misconceptions of the British to be the cause of the situation. With these comments, the paper connected the hunger strike to the Northern Irish issue in general. This partly explains the paper’s portrayal of the British government.

Fiasco stamped with Mrs Thatcher’s hallmark

Fig. 33. The Irish Times 11.7.1981

It is noteworthy that usually The Irish Times treated the British authorities as a group. The attitude of Margaret Thatcher was, of course, occasionally discussed but the judgement was not as harsh as The Age’s. Some responsibility was given to her as well\(^{575}\) as other authorities. In particular, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Humphrey Atkins, was not among the favourites of the paper: "… perhaps the most damning thing to be said about him is that he may not yet realise how much damage he has helped to cause here."\(^{576}\) This again emphasizes the political

\(^{575}\) Eg "No break" (editorial) The Irish Times 29.5.1981; "Listen" (editorial) The Irish Times 10.7.1981

\(^{576}\) David McKittrick, "Atkins still learning after two years" (feature) The Irish Times 6.6.1981
nature of the conflict. From an Irish perspective, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland was often more important than the Prime Minister.

Fig. 34. The Irish Times 25.7.1981

The paper’s view of the hunger strike as a result of historical and political relations mainly explains its depictions. The British authorities were a natural party in any conflict in Northern Ireland. It is almost impossible to clearly separate opinions that existed in relation to the hunger strike from opinions that had some relation to the past.
5.3.3 Sporadic criticisms of the authorities

The Arab News, Dagens Nyheter, Le Figaro and The New York Times expressed sporadic criticism of the authorities. These occurred primarily during the most eventful months of the hunger strike. Therefore, some reasoning in regards to coverage of the event was most likely based on the fragility of the situation in general. In any case, the policies of the Prime Minister and her government attracted attention.

Cautious remarks regarding the role of the British authorities

The New York Times claimed that Thatcher was right in refusing the demands of the prisoners, but that she could have acted in a more effective manner:

But this dying young man has made it appear that her stubbornness, rather than his own, is the source of a fearful conflict already ravaging Northern Ireland. For that, Mrs. Thatcher is partly to blame. By appearing unfeeling and unresponsive, she and her Government are providing Bobby Sands with a death-bed gift – the crown of martyrdom.577

The paper claimed that there was a need for courage and compassion.578 According to the paper, the British government had failed to address the grievances of Catholics.579 On a few occasions, The New York Times did consider British policy to be partly responsible for the situation.580 In these statements, the paper criticised British officials but at the same time, the tone of criticism was restrained. The attitude of the British was explained with the troubled relationship:

British blindness toward Irish aspirations for territorial integrity and cultural freedom is confused by entirely too much history. The rules for the Irish are different.581

578 Ibid.
579 "If Mrs. Thatcher were Anwar Sadat” (editorial) The New York Times 6.5.1981. The editorial stated that the Prime minister did not understand the economic and social struggles of the Catholic minority and how the Catholics felt over the fact that they had no means to change politics.
Occasionally, The New York Times partly blamed Thatcher for British attitudes. It claimed that she was enforcing an unyielding stance.\(^{582}\) According to the paper, in addition to political reasons, Thatcher had personal reasons to judge the hunger strikers.\(^{583}\) These stronger tones were expressed during the most heated days of the hunger strike. Otherwise, commentary in the paper was more moderate.

The stance of The New York Times was somewhat unusual. Instead of outright criticism, the paper adopted the role of advisor:

> It would no doubt take courage for any British Prime Minister to move beyond resistance to terrorism to articulate home truths about an ancient enmity. It would take uncommon leadership to rise above cold logic to speak frankly about the bigotry and meanness that make Ulster a battleground.\(^{584}\)

Considering the significant Irish connections of the United States, the reaction of The New York Times was quite moderate. The paper aligned itself with the stance of the Reagan administration, one which intentionally avoided taking a strong position in regards to the situation\(^ {585}\). Whether this distance was partly due to concerns over international terrorism can be considered.\(^ {586}\) ADRIAN GUELKE found in his research that during the hunger strike, the Americans were cautious because of the possible association with terrorism.\(^ {587}\) It is plausible that The New York Times viewed the situation in a similar manner. The paper’s attitude towards British authorities aligned with a general stance. All its coverage avoided strong tones. Some details suggest that the paper disagreed with the British. However, they were not expressed as clearly as one would expect.

Several details in its coverage support the impression that The New York Times had the same cautious position as that of US officials. On several occasions, the paper referred to Bobby Sands as Mr Robert Sands. The only other paper that preferred use of a formal name was The Times. The New York Times also used the term ‘Ulster’ on a regular basis. Its reliance on officials for information reveals that the paper felt it was safer to use language similar to that of the authorities.

The New York Times did however question the role of the British to some extent. This usually occurred during the more intense phases of the hunger strike.

\(^{582}\) The New York Times 5.5.1981

\(^{583}\) The New York Times 6.5.1981

\(^{584}\) "If Mrs. Thatcher were Anwar Sadat" (editorial) The New York Times 6.5.1981

\(^{585}\) Guelke 1989, 144

\(^{586}\) By the early 1980s, terrorist incidents had become more and more international. Western countries were increasingly becoming more worried of the effects of terrorism locally and globally.

\(^{587}\) Ibid.
The paper’s attitude became more moderate as general reactions to the strike decreased. The paper’s treatment of the British authorities reflects the coverage of the paper in general in that the stance taken was more mild. This again raises the question of whether the paper was consciously cautious in its coverage.

**Suggesting better ways to solve the conflict**

The Arab News, Dagens Nyheter and Le Figaro did not emphasize the role of the British in the conflict. However, some details suggest that the papers were of the opinion that the British held disregard for the situation.

Dagens Nyheter questioned the actions of the British government on a few occasions. In April, the paper claimed that Thacher would not budge an inch.\footnote{Dagens Nyheter 22.4.1981} A few weeks later, Thatcher was described as repressive.\footnote{Dagens Nyheter 16.5.1981} Again, the strongest commentary occurred during the tense weeks of the strike. The hunger strike was difficult to understand for Dagens Nyheter. The paper stated that there were more considerate ways to handle the situation. When Bobby Sands died, the paper stated that the government was doing nothing although that there might have been some issues worthy of discussion.\footnote{"Värre i Nordirland" (editorial) Dagens Nyheter 6.5.1981; Bo A Ericsson, "Moralisk seger – politiskt nederlag" (feature) Dagens Nyheter 6.5.1981} However, Dagens Nyheter also recognised the difficulty of the situation for the authorities.\footnote{Bo A Ericsson, "Moralisk seger – politiskt nederlag" (feature) Dagens Nyheter 6.5.1981} These statements indicate that Dagens Nyheter suggested that there were other ways of handling the conflict. In other words, the paper did not fully agree with the way the British were handling the situation. As the paper emphasized the human aspects of the conflict, it was likely of the opinion that the actions of the British government could have been more humane. The paper regarded the suffering of the local people as the main problem. In doing so, it was natural to expect officials to solve the problem. It seems that Dagens Nyheter viewed the hunger strike as a reflection of a societal problem that the authorities needed to solve. This would explain the paper’s statements that a different kind of approach was required. However, these statements were occasional. The majority of the paper’s coverage placed the British on the sidelines.

The Arab News’ front page article about Thatcher’s visit to Belfast included an interesting depiction:

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At one store, she ordered a set of towels, some local Tyrone county crystal glass, and an ornament which she wanted wrapped as a birthday present. A group of civil servants, among 530,000 in the country locked in a pay dispute with the government, held up protest placards.

Mrs. Thatcher’s visit came within hours of the latest violent death here.592

The news article was written by a news agency journalist but the Arab News was the only paper that published the story in a certain way, paying attention to details. There had to be a reason why the paper wanted to emphasize such details. This depiction was not flattering. On the other hand, it was only an individual article, and therefore its meaning cannot be generalized. Nevertheless, the Arab News focused on how the British would like to get rid of the Irish problem,593 not only the hunger strike but the Northern Irish conflict in general. The paper’s view of the situation as a nationalist conflict could have also resulted in depictions of the British as nationalists. This is only speculation as the content of the paper lacks continuity in this sense. However, the paper clearly viewed the hunger strike as a conflict between two parties. The role of the British seemed imperative due to the discussion of the historical background.

The contents in Le Figaro was lacking in detailed information. As a result there was no focus on the opinions of the hunger strikers and the British authorities and the atmosphere and violence drew more attention. The role of the British authorities was not discussed either. Only during the most tense stages of the hunger strike did the paper suggest some opinion. After the death of Bobby Sands, the British government was depicted as inflexible.594 The Prime Minister was the one who drew most of the attention:

Thatcher, supported in this by the House of Commons almost unanimously, preferred a more narrow approach to the problem than we are entitled to expect of a Prime Minister. More "Iron Lady" than ever, draped in her rights, her eyes flashing throughout the crisis, she repeated with the control of a robot that IRA terrorists ...

592 Arab News 29.5.1981
593 William Tuohy, "Britons growing restive over Northern Ireland" (feature) Arab News 12.7.1981
594 Le Figaro 6.5.1981
595 "Mme Thatcher, soutenue en cela par la Chambre des communes à peu près Unanime, a préféré une approche du problème qui relève davantage d’une morale puritaine étroite que du pragmatisme auquel on est en droit de s’attendre d’un premier ministre. Plus «Dame de fer» que jamais, drapée dans son bon..."
The depiction of Margaret Thatcher is interesting. Le Figaro referred to Thatcher quite often as "Dame de fer". The other papers did not use the 'Iron lady’ phrase at all in this context. It seemed that Le Figaro used the term to emphasize Thatcher’s adamancy. The term itself is interesting. It has been used by both Thatcher’s supporters and opponents. In other words, the meaning changes according to the user. In the case of Le Figaro, the phrase can be considered a partially negative judgement, as the hunger strike was depicted as a situation caused by the harmful decisions of all parties.

Otherwise, the stance of Le Figaro towards British authorities was mild. One cannot draw precise conclusions of the paper. A certain distance was typical of Le Figaro, as well as many other papers. The role of the British was not discussed. It is likely that the hunger strike was not significant enough for the paper to adopt a strong opinion. Intervention in the affairs of another state was likely viewed as unnecessary.

More importantly, the mild depictions in Le Figaro indicate that the hunger strike was seen more as an interesting news event based on the drama it caused. Death and other phenomena were more appealing than political aspects.

5.3.4 A provocative Prime Minister?

Some newspapers created narratives in which some of blame was laid at the door of British authorities. More importantly, these papers were not totally satisfied with the way the British government was handling the situation. The strongest criticisms were levelled from papers in countries that had a rocky relationship with Britain. This suggests that national relations have an affect on attitudes. In other words, the criticism was not only based on actions during the hunger strike but also on more general attitudes. For The Age and The Irish Times, the hunger strike presented an opportunity to reaffirm already existing opinions. The newspapers therefore reflected opinions within society. When an opportunity presented itself, it was used to support existing views.

On the other hand, the papers that withheld criticism existed in countries that did not have any particular problems with Britain. For these papers, a certain distance from the event and editorial policy enabled more outspoken journalism. For example, Dagens Nyheter and The New York Times shared similar editorial
values that took a stance on issues and had well-rounded coverage. Furthermore, both papers considered the hunger strike to be a conflict between two parties. Within such a context, it was natural that the participation of both parties was discussed.

The Northern Irish conflict was followed in many parts of the world. Dramatic events throughout the years had created differing perceptions of what was going on in Northern Ireland. These perceptions were formed on the basis of existing knowledge, and therefore it is likely that each newspaper reflected the knowledge within its own community. Many outside of the conflict claimed that in several ways the conflict was difficult to understand. It was probably easy to simplify depictions of the conflict. Conflicts usually have two parties. In this case, the British authorities were viewed as one participant that could end the conflict and end the suffering that was caused by the hunger strike. This was more of a human reaction than a political one. Even in countries that had no troubled political relations with Britain, coverage had political tones. It seems that Margaret Thatcher’s role raised the level of interest.

For the international newspapers in particular, Margaret Thatcher became a central figure that represented British authority. She was a controversial figure that attracted attention. It seems that her strong personality was one reason why it was easy to discuss the role of the British. She provoked opinions. In her memoirs, Thatcher has admitted that she viewed the Republic of Ireland as one part of the problem with terrorism as it provided arms.\textsuperscript{596} During the hunger strike, even she considered relations with the Irish administration difficult. She felt that concessions would appear to be British accession to the will of terrorists.\textsuperscript{597} It is not surprising that The Irish Times was suspicious of Thatcher. It is probable that Mrs. Thatcher’s stance was adopted by others as well. Several studies have concluded that the Prime Minister and her government did not enjoy trust abroad. Thatcher was suspicious of foreign countries, and they were suspicious of her.\textsuperscript{598} As the atmosphere became more tense during the hunger strike, it is plausible that these suspicions became more apparent. The findings of this dissertation support this claim as there are several examples of how several newspapers questioned the Prime Minister.

At the time of the hunger strike, Margaret Thatcher was still in her early years as Prime Minister. However, her reputation abroad had already begun to develop.

\textsuperscript{596} Thatcher 1993, 384
\textsuperscript{597} Thatcher 1993, 388
\textsuperscript{598} Eg. Reynolds 1991, 257–258; Sanders 1990, 159
It is almost impossible to determine what opinion was held of her in a particular society. She was considered a strong and controversial individual by everyone. People seemed to have both positive and negative opinions of her. What is noteworthy is that the depictions of her in these newspapers did not always agree with societal and/or political opinions of her. For instance, in France and West Germany, Thatcher was often viewed in a negative light. However, the criticism of her in Le Figaro was quite mild, and Die Welt supported the Prime Minister’s actions in relation to the hunger strike. This reveals that the nature of the conflict was regarded as more important than criticisms of Thatcher.

On the other hand, the Americans had a more positive mental image of Margaret Thatcher. However, The New York Times did not fully reflect this image as the paper did not completely agree with her actions. This is a good reminder that newspapers’ depictions do not always support public opinion. The media after all is an independent actor. The New York Times’ as a liberal voice was allowed to express its own opinion.

The above-mentioned examles are in the minority. The majority of the papers did not take any specific view of Prime Minister Thatcher. This indicates that the papers had no reason to evaluate the situation from this perspective. The hunger strike was a politically charged situation at least when a particular paper had reason to relate to it as such. It is plausible that those reasons already existed and the hunger strike did not generate new opinions of her. This again illustrates that news media use existing perception in creating stories.

The drama and death caused by the hunger strike provided an opportunity to criticise Thatcher, which sold news. More significantly, the depictions of the Prime Minister illustrate that the media primarily create context for a conflict, and depict the participants in relation to that. These depictions are shaped by known perceptions and narratives. Therefore, it is understandable that the two newspapers that had the most critical mental images of the British, The Age and The Irish Times, were the same papers that mediated a context in which the historical and political role of the British provided an explanation. In turn, the papers that emphasized a context of violence downplayed the role of the British authorities. However, even if the context of a news story defines the depictions of its parties, those stories can also reflect broader issues such as the historical background or relations.

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599 E.g. Deslandes 2013, 115; Steinberg 2008, 226
The narrative in these papers can also be viewed as political discourse, as by depicting the British as active participants the papers were giving political meaning to the event.

5.4 A participant in a conflict

Some of the newspapers commented on the role of the British authorities so little that there were not any real suggestions in regards to the stance they took. The Helsingin Sanomat, El Pais, La Prensa, and The Sowetan were brief in their depictions. They all considered the British government as a participant in a conflict but did not include more in depth discussion. The role of the British remained slightly undefined in these depictions.

After the death of Bobby Sands, El Pais accused the British government of having adopted a hard line attitude. However, the paper did not consider this to be a cause of the conflict. It emphasized other causes, as was discussed in chapter 3.3. A similar stance was adopted by the Helsingin Sanomat. The paper briefly described the difficult position of the government. At the same time, the paper considered the line of the officials to have become stuck in place. According to the Helsingin Sanomat, both sides (the British government and the hunger strikers) were equally reluctant to compromise. The Helsingin Sanomat regarded both sides as being responsible for the conflict. The opinion of the paper was that negotiation between the parties was the only way out. In other words, the paper did not blame only one party for the conflict. The Helsingin Sanomat was in many ways balanced in its coverage; it published statements from both parties involved in the conflict, and examined the situation from different viewpoints. The paper did not appear to have a pronounced opinion in regards to the hunger strike.

The coverage in regards to the authorities (as well as the hunger strike in general) in the Helsingin Sanomat illustrates what occurs when there is no real connection to an event. The British government did not have any special relationship with Finns, and the conflict itself was difficult to understand from a

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600 “La muerte de Bobby Sands” (editorial) El Pais 6.5.1981
601 Helsingin Sanomat 1.5.1981; Helsingin Sanomat 7.5.1981
603 “Ulsterin harhat” (editorial) Helsingin Sanomat 6.5.1981
604 Ibid.
Finnish perspective. In this case it is easy to understand why the coverage remained distant.

El País did not comment on the role of the authorities, and it did not even give much attention to statements made by officials. Again, the conflict and its drama drew more attention. A certain interest in the British appeared in May when five British soldiers were killed in Northern Ireland. El País reported on this in a news article just a few sentences long. In many of the other papers, the incident was a big news story. It is possible that El País’s coverage was scarce due to editorial reasons. This fits the way the British were depicted, without much detail or interest. The content of the paper focused on other issues, and it appears that the paper did not view the event as a particularly political one.

The remoteness of the event was clearest in the coverage of La Prensa and The Sowetan. There was little analysis and the British authorities were almost invisible in the coverage. The participation of the authorities was briefly mentioned but not commented on in any way. It is significant that these papers were published in countries that had connections with the British, however this was not enough reason to discuss the involvement of the British. It is interesting that La Prensa, considering the somewhat tense relations between Argentina and Britain, did not use the situation to comment on the issue. It seems that the lack of commentary was due to editorial reasons.

The low number of news articles partly explains the lack of commentary in these papers. As was mentioned in chapter 2.1, The Sowetan, La Prensa and El País were the least active papers in covering the event. The Helsingin Sanomat had a similar amount of coverage. Interestingly, these papers used differing amounts of material from news agencies. La Prensa relied solely on agencies, and as agency material is usually very fact-oriented, there was no content that expressed an opinion. On the other hand, El País used a lot more material written by its own reporters, and commentary on the role of the authorities was equally lacking.

It seems that the tense atmosphere and dramatic events made better news. The scarce commentary suggests that the political aspects of the hunger strike were not relevant to these papers. After all, the hunger strike was an event that required connections to really draw attention, otherwise, it was just one event among others. The depiction in El País illustrates this. Due to religious connections, the hunger

605 El País 20.5.1981
606 Figure 12

230
strike was considered interesting, but as it was not politically relevant, that aspect was not emphasized.

As the hunger strike did not have any connections with the domestic politics of these countries, these papers had no reason to pay attention to the political aspects of the conflict. In addition, the depictions and context in these papers are similar. Both their coverage and contextualization is fragmentary. Their emphasis was on fact-oriented reports of what had happened.

5.5 Observations on visual representations of the British

The newspapers’ depictions of the British authorities and their role during the hunger strike varied. The Times, The Globe and Mail, Die Welt, Neue Zürcher Zeitung, and the South China Morning Post depicted the British government as a passive participant that suffered due to the conflict. The Times fully agreed with the attitude taken by the authorities, and the other papers sympathized with and supported the British stance. All of these papers created a mental image in which the hunger strike had strong criminal connections, and therefore the authorities were entitled to oppose the strike.

At the other end of the scale were The Age and The Irish Times, which viewed the British government as protagonist of the conflict. Both papers emphasized the relevance of historical and political events to the current situation. The Irish Times in particular depicted the hunger strike as a political conflict in which the British were criticized for their rigid stance. The Arab News, Dagens Nyheter, Le Figaro and The New York Times also occasionally questioned the way the British handled the situation. Most of this criticism was expressed during the more tense phases of the hunger strike, suggesting that dramatic turns in events provoked opinions.

However, not all the papers discussed the British role. The Helsingin Sanomat, El País, La Prensa, and The Sowetan were scarce in their commentary. Their reports mentioned that the British government was involved in the conflict but the question of responsibility was hardly discussed. One must also remember that foreign authorities as such are not such an appealing news topic. Something extraordinary needs to happen before a government gains the attention of the media. As the British government was not determining the events of the hunger strike per se, its involvement was not considered the focal point.

One good albeit small indicator of this de-emphasis regarding the role of the British government was the visual representation of the British. As was discussed in Chapter 3.5.1, the British Prime Minister and/or British soldiers were pictured in
all the newspapers except The Sowetan. However, they were not a frequent theme (figure 35). Around 10–15 percent of all the photos involved the British. Interestingly, the Arab News was a clear exception: a third of its photos pictured the British. The paper focused particularly on soldiers. This again confirms the conclusion that the paper regarded the hunger strike as a conflict. This aspect was emphasized with the use of photos.

The Times, El Pais and La Prensa also had a higher ratio of photos picturing the British. Reasons for the specific depictions in The Times have already been explained in Chapter 5.1 The paper consciously created a mental image of the British as the ‘good guy’ in the conflict. The use of such photos supports patriotic coverage. The Photos published by El Pais and La Prensa focused on soldiers on duty. It is likely that such photos are chosen to support the narrative selected, but on the other hand it must be noted that interesting photos are chosen precisely for the reason that they are interesting. Unfortunately, it is impossible to know what kind of photos were circulated by the international news agencies. However, the papers chose to publish certain pictures.

![Fig. 35. Percentages of published photos displaying British authorities (government, soldiers)](image)

Almost all the papers published either one or a few photos of the British soldiers. They were usually depicted performing their duties (figure 36 and figure 37). This
reveals that pictures are a universal way to visualize a conflict. The oldiers were often regarded as heroic actors, particularly if they belonged to one’s own side. In practice, the photos of these soldiers also indicate how the same or similar photos circulated around the world from international news agencies.

The photo published by the Arab News (figure 36) supports the conclusion that the paper’s emphasis in depicting soldiers in its news photos was primarily a result of editorial decisions. The picture, containing two photos, portrayed the dramatic nature of the conflict in that violence was part of everyday routines. On the other hand, it depicted the situation in a more humane manner. The small girl represented the more positive aspects of the province. However, the photo cannot be considered an expression of opinion. Instead, it indicates what kinds of visual images had become typical. Similar photos were published by all the papers.

Fig. 36. Arab News 19.5.1981

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607 Eg. Taylor 1991, 97
Interestingly, The New York Times published only one photo of the British, portraying the funeral of a dead soldier. The choice of photo was in line with the paper’s depiction. The New York Times published several photos of the funerals of different parties. This again supports the paper’s overall stance. It seems plausible that the paper was unsure about connecting the British to the conflict. The New York Times was among the papers that did not publish a photo of Margaret Thatcher during the hunger strike, thus supporting the idea that the involvement of the British authorities was a complex issue.

The above-mentioned examples can be viewed as typical narratives of each paper in question. Similar visuals were represented throughout the coverage of the hunger strike. It becomes obvious that in particular the papers with a strong opinion of the situation created their own discourse in reporting on the hunger strike. The choice of elements seemed to always support the context. However, it is also

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important to note that there were several papers that did not have any specific discourse or narrative. In these, the narrative of the hunger strike consisted of a collection of factual accounts. This reveals that particular discourses and narratives are created only when a phenomenon generates meaning.

It is notable that some international papers were more willing to provide commentary than others. In such cases, it is likely that the reason for doing so was not only editorial. In other words, there were more significant reasons why the newspapers relayed different mental images of the British authorities. Many of these reasons have already been discussed in earlier chapters. It is not a coincidence that the newspapers that supported the British government were the same papers that created a context of violence for the hunger strike. These were The Times, The Globe and Mail, Die Welt, Neue Zürcher Zeitung, and the South China Morning Post. In these the pronouncement was clear: the authorities were justified in battling against a negative phenomenon. In such situations, the media tends to support the authorities.

On the other hand, it is equally understandable that the papers that criticized the British the most were the ones that emphasized the importance of historical and political factors of the hunger strike. Both The Age and The Irish Times depicted the authorities as one (but not the only) responsible party. This makes sense as they thought that the causes were complex. For them, the conflict involved several parties, and the British government was one of them. Both papers were known to discuss issues in stronger tones, so their criticism was not surprising. Furthermore, both papers existed in societies in which relations with the British were more complex.

It appears that the papers that had the strongest views of the situation were also the ones that were the most concerned with the British authorities and their role in the conflict. The other newspapers were less keen to evaluate the role of the British. Sporadic criticisms were mainly a result of the dramatic atmosphere. However, it is plausible that newspaper coverage reflected political relations.

5.6 Does media coverage reflect political relations?

Britain has traditionally had an active foreign policy. Several countries have more active political relations with the British, some of them more positive and others less so. Political relations between Britain and other countries during the early 1980s provide an interesting context for comparing the stances taken by these newspapers. Obviously the factors that were involved are not singular. Editorial,
cultural, and other reasons had an affect as well, but on several occasions, the stances taken by the newspapers reflected the political relations between the countries.

Political relations are always multifaceted. For this purpose, the nature of the relationship between Britain and each country has been simplified. The relations vary from close and functional to somewhat troubled. Furthermore, the stances taken by the newspapers have been categorized into three groups. The first group is composed of those papers that had a positive mental image of British authorities. The second group consists of papers that expressed some criticism of the British authorities and their actions. The newspapers that had no particular stance form the third group.

Several significant conclusions can be made regarding the influence of political relations on the stances taken by the newspapers. Firstly, there are significant differences between the papers that existed in countries that had similar relations with Britain. Secondly, there are also cases where correlations are more apparent. It seems that close relations were more likely to affect media coverage. This applies to both good and troubled relations. The Globe and Mail and The Age – published in Canada and Australia – offer the most intriguing comparison. Both countries had had similar historical bonds with Britain, and in the early 1980s, both countries still had formal ties to London. Despite their similar positions, attitudes towards the British in these countries differed slightly. Canadians have traditionally supported the British, whereas Australians were breaking away from British authority.

ANDREW ROBERTS has described this era as a period of “Australian anglophobia.” The governments, and especially the Prime Ministers (Malcolm Fraser of Australia and Margaret Thatcher) of the countries were not on the best terms with each other. Even if straightforward conclusions cannot be made based on this generalisation, it seems plausible that political relations between countries could affect the stance taken by newspapers. When the political climate of a country has a certain trend, the media often reflects this. In this case, the liberal oriented The Age could have used the hunger strike as an opportunity to express negative attitudes towards the British government. One minor but interesting detail is worth

609 Relations with Britain changed when the Canadian constitution was patriated in 1982 and the Australia Act was passed in 1986. McNaught 1988, 354; Australia Act 1986, electronic document
611 Roberts 2006, 533
612 Macintyre 2004, 255
mentioning. Until the summer of 1981 the editor of The Age was a Brit, Michael Davie. His personal influence is difficult to determine but it is known that he was interested in relations between the two cultures. In other words, attention was paid to relations between the countries. The troubled nature of the relationship was not ignored in the paper.

The relationship between Ireland and Britain is unique in many ways. It has been described in terms such as repugnant, anomalous and ambiguous. The long, close and complex history must have had an impact. The troubled relations were obvious during the hunger strike as the British authorities were portrayed as a major players by the paper, often in negative terms. It seems likely that the troubled history between the countries affected depictions. The actions of the authorities were judged not only based on events during the hunger strike but also in relation to historical and political relations in general.

The significance of close relationships is obvious. Despite some friction between Britain and Argentina, La Prensa’s attitude towards the British was distant. Obviously the nature of the coverage itself caused the distance, but it is likely that if a strong anti-British opinion would have existed, the strike would have presented an opportunity to present these opinions. On a larger scale, the strike was not considered important.

The Times’ support of the government has already been discussed. The paper aligned itself with the authorities, The hunger strike was seen as a conflict that threatened society. A similar context and a stance in support of the British was adopted by The Globe and Mail, the South China Morning Post, Die Welt and Neue Zürcher Zeitung. The positive depictions of the British authorities and their actions in these papers can be regarded not only as opposition to the event but as a reflection of relations between the countries. Canada and Hong Kong have traditionally had good relations with Britain. In these countries, British authorities have been considered important allies. Swiss and German relations with Britain were not as close but in many ways they were active, and neutral at least. In terms of opposition to violent organizations, the countries shared an understanding. Thus, the authorities were more likely to be supported as participants in the conflict. By depicting the British authorities as the ‘good guys’, the papers reflected these shared values.

613 In his afterdays, he wrote a book Anglo–Australian attitudes (Martin Secker & Warburg Ltd 2000).
614 Kenny 2006a, 3
615 British authority in the Falklands caused some controversy. Dodds 2002, 1–2, 5
Table 3. Newspapers’ mental images of the British authorities in comparison to each state’s political relations with Britain.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Newspaper</th>
<th>Depiction of the British authorities</th>
<th>State’s political relations with Britain</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Age</td>
<td>some criticism</td>
<td>historically and culturally close, but somewhat troubled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arab News</td>
<td>some criticism</td>
<td>active but ambiguous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dagens Nyheter</td>
<td>some criticism</td>
<td>working and/or neutral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Le Figaro</td>
<td>some criticism</td>
<td>active but ambiguous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Globe and Mail</td>
<td>positive image</td>
<td>historically and culturally close, and mainly positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helsingin Sanomat</td>
<td>no particular stance</td>
<td>working and/or neutral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Irish Times</td>
<td>some criticism</td>
<td>historically and culturally close, but somewhat troubled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neue Zürcher Zeitung</td>
<td>positive image</td>
<td>working and/or neutral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The New York Times</td>
<td>some criticism</td>
<td>historically and culturally close, and mainly positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>El Pais</td>
<td>no particular stance</td>
<td>active but ambiguous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>La Prensa</td>
<td>no particular stance</td>
<td>occasional friction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South China Morning Post</td>
<td>positive image</td>
<td>historically and culturally close, and mainly positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Sowetan</td>
<td>no particular stance</td>
<td>historically and culturally close, and mainly positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Times</td>
<td>positive image</td>
<td>‘own’ government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Die Welt</td>
<td>positive image</td>
<td>active but ambiguous</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

British-American relations were also trouble-free, and the personal relationship between Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan was depicted as a particularly close one.616 On one hand, the cautious opinions of the The New York Times can be explained by a certain respect for those relations. On the other hand, the depiction of the British in the paper was not only positive. This was probably more of an indication regarding the editorial position of the paper itself. Furthermore, the Americans were not dependent on Britain in any way. The stance of The New York Times reflected these aspects. It is notable that despite its anti-terrorism stance, the paper did not fully support the British authorities. Their actions were evaluated and criticized, although mildly. The New York Times was independent and able to take this position. This case illustrates that political and international relations consist

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616 Marsh 2005, 75
of a complex set of factors. Similar circumstances do not result in the same outcome. The depictions in European papers illustrate this.

Several studies have described the European perceptions as one that views them as as being reluctantly European. 617 In many countries, the atmosphere was ripe for criticism. Despite some co-operation between the countries, the French considered the British indifferent618, and in Spain, historically difficult relations were still in a state of change619. Moreover, the British themselves felt that the country had troubled relations with the international community.620 In spite of this, severe judgments did not occur. The European papers took a moderate stance towards the British during the hunger strike. It seems likely that the hunger strike was not considered relevant. As the authorities were dealing with an issue closely related to a paramilitary organization, it was natural not to criticize the government.

Interestingly, Dagens Nyheter was the most critical paper in mainland Europe. Political relations between Sweden and Britain were trouble-free, therefore this stance was based more on other perceptions. According to PATRICK SALMON, the Scandinavians were disappointed with Britain:

... the persistent disappointment in Britain as a country which supposedly shared many values and concrete interests with the Nordic countries, and yet so often seemed to disregard them in favour of short-sighted self-interest.621

During the more tense stages of the hunger strike, it was easy for this kind of attitude to appear. Dramatic events strengthened this attitude for a brief period and the criticism in Dagens Nyheter softened with time. This critical attitude was not strong enough to remain for long. The editorial position of Dagens Nyheter was probably the most imperative factor in this change, but cultural mental images also need to be taken into consideration. Sweden had a long tradition of neutrality622, and with this kind of perspective it was the norm to view the conflict from many points of view. In this sense, the critique of the authorities was normal. In comparing Dagens Nyheter and the Helsingin Sanomat, the Swedish approach is more apparent. Despite similar political and cultural relations with Britain, and with a similar editorial stance, the Helsingin Sanomat was much less opinionated. Even

617 E.g. Larsen 1997, 136; Marsh 2005, 81–82; Reynolds 1991, 252; Sanders 1990, 135
618 Larsen 1997, 143–145
619 Portero 1999, 210, 226, 245
620 Murphy 2012, 67–71
621 Salmon 2005, 22
622 Best et al 2004, 308
though it was a neutral country, the Finnish approach was more reserved. As the event did not affect Finnish society, it was safer to take distance from the event. There was no reason to emphasize the issue. In this case, the nature of the conflict explains a lot. A terrorism-related event was not of political interest in Scandinavia. The hunger strike’s connection with terrorism was an important factor. West Germany and Switzerland had a differing relations with Britain, yet both Die Welt and Neue Zürcher Zeitung depicted the British positively. In a situation where shared values are threatened, the authorities are more likely to gain support. Canada and Hong Kong were also societies that valued public order.

Overall, one cannot draw conclusions based on international relations alone. Media coverage does not always reflect international relations. However, during a conflict, the political atmosphere can easily affect cultures with shared values. It was possible that when outsiders portrayed the British government as unwavering in its position, these portrayals could have been exaggerated. Newspapers are after all independent actors who may need to adopt a certain perspective to draw attention. In a politically charged situation, it is possible that political relations affect mental images somewhat. There are similarities between the papers and in relations between Britain and the countries these papers were published in.

The newspapers’ mental images of the British authorities primarily reveal that foreign authorities are not easily criticised, at least in quality papers. Authorities have to make clear mistakes before their actions are discussed abroad.

*Context defines the nature of details*

The depictions of the British authorities were determined by the way the newspapers contextualized the hunger strike. The papers that supported the actions of the British government were the same that viewed the situation as a threat, or even as terrorism. On the other hand, the papers that contextualized the hunger strike within the troubled past were more likely to depict the British as a more active participant in the conflict. It appears that the media creates a context for conflict, and views participants and other features in a relation to that context. News reports of conflict are stories that follow the typical news patterns in that the most intriguing parts of the topic are emphasized. In the case of the hunger strike, its ‘role’ as a part of the Northern Irish troubles seemed to be the most important aspect. Depictions of the event were determined by how each paper viewed the conflict in general.
One of the most valuable conclusions here is that news coverage always consists of different sets of reasoning: the same event can be viewed from different angles and on different levels. Newspapers often use several discourses in their coverage. Some are based on universal principles while others have been formed locally. As a researcher, the real challenge is to recognise if some discourses are more effective than others. Quite often, we must concede that solid conclusions cannot be drawn. The imagological approach offers an opportunity to try to understand why different newspaper discourses have taken shape. It does not decide which is the right one but focuses on recognising the different aspects of discourse.

5.7 Conclusion

The depictions of the British authorities in these the papers are revealing. Most significantly, the correlations between a context of violence, one based on the criminality of the hunger strikers, and a positive mental image of the British government were the most consistent (see table 4). Firstly, this reveals that the news stories were created to be uniform. In a conflict, the need for uniformity is even more vital. Conflicts often require taking sides. Secondly, if a side is taken, alignment with authorities is easier for the media. The most fascinating observation is that internationally, the papers’ attitudes towards the British, both positive and negative, were more outspoken than attitudes towards the hunger strikers. This reveals the political aspects of the situation, as well as the nature of these papers. The papers with a particular political interest in the situation were more likely to make statements that were aligned with political attitudes. In The Times and The Irish Times in particular, the discourses used were clearly political. The meaning of the hunger strike contained plenty of references to politics and the event was commented on by politicians. Abroad, without any direct political interest in the event, political discourse was not necessary. However, it is notable that some papers were more in favour of British actions than others. We can only speculate why these differences existed. The news producers themselves were responsible for the depictions but we can also try to find more general reasons for their depictions.
Table 4. A comparison of mental images in the newspapers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Newspaper</th>
<th>Context</th>
<th>Labelling the hunger strikers</th>
<th>Depictions of the British authorities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Age</td>
<td>history, politics</td>
<td>guerrilla</td>
<td>some criticism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arab News</td>
<td>troubles</td>
<td>guerrilla</td>
<td>some criticism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dagens Nyheter</td>
<td>troubles</td>
<td>hunger striker</td>
<td>some criticism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Le Figaro</td>
<td>fragmentary</td>
<td>militant</td>
<td>some criticism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Globe and M.</td>
<td>violent</td>
<td>terrorist</td>
<td>positive image</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helsingin Sanomat</td>
<td>troubles</td>
<td>hunger striker</td>
<td>no particular stance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Irish Times</td>
<td>history, politics</td>
<td>hunger striker</td>
<td>some criticism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neue Zürcher Zeit.</td>
<td>violent</td>
<td>terrorist</td>
<td>positive image</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The New York Times</td>
<td>troubles</td>
<td>hunger striker</td>
<td>some criticism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>El Pais</td>
<td>troubles</td>
<td>militant</td>
<td>no particular stance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>La Prensa</td>
<td>fragmentary</td>
<td>militant</td>
<td>no particular stance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South China Morning Post</td>
<td>violent</td>
<td>terrorist</td>
<td>positive image</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Sowetan</td>
<td>fragmentary</td>
<td>hunger striker</td>
<td>no particular stance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Times</td>
<td>violent</td>
<td>hunger striker (terrorist)</td>
<td>positive image</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Die Welt</td>
<td>violent</td>
<td>terrorist</td>
<td>positive image</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It seems plausible that existing societal, political and/or cultural perceptions were reflected in some of the papers. It is possible to explain these different outlooks from an imagological point of view. Objects that are regarded as close or not threatening are treated more positively than objects that present a threat or rivalry of some kind. During the hunger strike, negative stances (contexts of violence) in reference to the event defined the strongest mental images. In some newspapers, and maybe even in some societies, the event presented an opportunity to oppose violence, or even terrorism. As all papers did not share the same perceptions, opposition to the hunger strike or those involved in it cannot be the sole reason for some depictions. Relations with, or perceptions of British officials affected coverage. The papers with pre-existing positive images of the British continued to support the British view, and the papers with certain reservations remained sceptical. Internationally, one must remember that most of the criticism towards the British was expressed in relation to the tense atmosphere caused by the first deaths.

It is possible that the situation itself resulted in the stances adopted. The need for a solution in general could have been the reason for criticism, not opposition to the British. However, in relation to historical and political circumstances, there were also criticisms of the British.
Overall, depictions of the British authorities illustrate that news events are viewed from differing viewpoints. When different views are compared with each other, it becomes obvious that editorial factors alone do not guide news coverage. Particularly in conflict, the media reflects wider perceptions even on an international level.
6 Understanding different interpretations

This study set out to explore the international news coverage of the 1981 Northern Irish hunger strike, and to find out what the coverage of it reveals about the newspapers and the environment they operated in. As previous studies have often focused on the Irish and British media, this research provides new perspectives on how the conflict was covered outside the British Isles. The hunger strike was indeed an international news event. The event was closely followed in different parts of the world. In the course of just over seven months, the international press told stories of death, violence and political controversy. Significantly, an event that took place in a restricted environment flared and generated reactions outside its own surroundings. It is notable that the hunger strike was covered similarly by all the papers in this study in that it was regarded as conflict news. The strained atmosphere and dramatic turn of events colored news coverage.

Furthermore, the hunger strike revealed different perceptions of what was going on, not only currently, but also more generally in Northern Ireland. The coverage of the hunger strike illustrates how the same event can be viewed differently. While one paper covered it as an event that had a connection with terrorism, another considered it to be part of a longer historical relationship. In other words, there was not one global perception. Instead, each newspaper depicted the event from their own point of view. All these perceptions were true in their own contexts.

Overview of the coverage

The newspapers examined can be roughly divided into four different groups based on the nature of their coverage: 1) the papers that depicted the hunger strike as a mostly violent event (The Times, The Globe and Mail, the South China Morning Post, Die Welt, Neue Zürcher Zeitung) ; 2) the papers that regarded the hunger strike as one battle in a long historical and political dispute (The Age, The Irish Times); 3) the papers that contextualized the hunger strike mainly as a conflict between two participants (Dagens Nyheter, The New York Times, the Helsingin Sanomat, the Arab News, El Pais ); 4) the papers that lacked any particular contextualization (Le Figaro, La Prensa, The Sowetan). Obviously, this kind of division is artificial, as each paper’s coverage had elements with all these aspects. However, the narratives and discourses used created distinctive narratives that can
be regarded as decisive factors. In this research, the narratives and the motives for their use were exposed by exploring the issue from several angles.

The purpose of this dissertation was to determine if a conflict can be interpreted differently by the so-called quality press. The quality press mainly shares the same principles of newsmaking, so possible differences in coverage may reveal more significant aspects. Several previous studies had already found that the British and Irish media’s depictions of the hunger strike – as well as the troubles in general – have often been coloured by historical and societal factors. The findings of this dissertation confirm this result. The Times and The Irish Times seemed to have specific discourses in covering the event. They both had a very strong view of the situation and used several elements and narratives to emphasize their own perceptions. It seems likely that their strong opinions were not based solely on the hunger strike but more on historical discourse which had created a certain meaning for events in Northern Ireland. The international perspective of this research illustrates that the same occurs universally.

Previous studies have only briefly examined international coverage of the hunger strike. A few researchers (Mulcahy, Guelke, Holland) have briefly described what was published by the international media but research on international perceptions is lacking. My findings are similar with earlier research but my work is based more on fundamental aspects. A more in-depth look at the coverage revealed that one element of a newspaper may not reveal the same as the overall coverage. Obviously these differences are only minor but they can prove to be valuable if put into context. It is significant that each paper used narratives that were typical of them. This means that their coverage was based on their own worldviews. The value of this dissertation is that it compares international news coverage within a single study, revealing the nature of this coverage. Hopefully, further research can expand on the possible affects of different worldviews. Currently, there are not many studies that are directly comparable.

One could broaden the focus here and use studies regarding the coverage of any other conflict or from some other time period as a point of comparison in order to determine if there are some universal or societal factors involved in news coverage, but a single doctoral dissertation is inadequate for doing so. Instead, the main aim of this research was to illustrate through a case study that international news coverage is a useful method in revealing and understanding mental images and their influence. The coverage of the hunger strike by the international press did indeed indicate that existing mental images play a major role in the way a news topic is covered and given meaning.
One significant finding of this research was that none of the papers changed their view of the hunger strike and its context during the seven months. This indicates that the hunger strike was not considered a pivotal event on a global scale. Secondly, these stable perceptions and contexts suggest that all the papers had pre-existing perceptions – mental images that were typically long-lasting – of the events in Northern Ireland. All the papers used narratives that suggested that the hunger strike was typical of Northern Ireland. The nature of the narrative was determined by these pre-existing mental images. It is interesting that even on an international level a local event can provoke strong reactions. This research also indicates that a topic that is relevant to some is not relevant to all. This indicates that news making is a communal phenomenon.

The basis for newsmaking

A factual, concise news report does not reveal anything. If a news report fails to provide context, and it often does, interpretations, conclusions and judgments are more likely to occur based on previous information and perceptions. This applies to all news, but a more concrete example is required to reveal the complex nature of interpreting news. News photos provide such an example. The newspapers in this study published very different photos of Bobby Sands’ funeral (chapter 4.2.2). How such photos are interpreted can be based on many existing views or contexts. Without any context, the photos are simply elements: a coffin, different kinds of people, a person or a group of persons wearing clothes of different colors, some men firing guns, etc. However, viewing does not end there. One recognises the meaning of a masked man. One also associates the guns with a certain custom. Furthermore, that custom is connected with different perceptions. Someone can see it as a salute and another as a violent incident. Someone recognises the custom as Irish, while someone else sees a global phenomenon. The photo itself does not reveal these aspects, but interpretations stem from what we already know.

The publication of such photos and how they are used adds context. Are they the center of attention on the front page or are they mere illustrations? What kinds of headlines and text are connected with them? All these aspects create an image of the news event. Elements chosen for publication are based on what we already know and prefer. Therefore, even newspapers are telling stories that reveal their perceptions and worldviews. Often, those views are similar to, and even based on, prevailing images in their societies. Newspapers thus reflect broader tendencies.
Newsworthiness is relative

The location of the hunger strike in a Western society provided an opportunity for newspapers to send their journalists to the location and to personally have a look at the conflict. Some papers (and news agencies) did exactly that but not all of them, and even the journalists who visited Belfast stayed there for only brief periods of time. As a result, in general, news was based on information gathered from some distance. This must have affected the general nature of the coverage. The majority of the papers perceived the hunger strike as rather unimportant. Turn in events were often covered without any particular emphases.

The most in-depth reports of the hunger strike were published after the first death(s) in early May. This was the same time period when the journalists themselves visited Northern Ireland. One can conclude that the hunger strike and the first casualties were newsworthy. The most dramatic news articles were published when the papers received firsthand information from their own reporters. These practices reveal that the newsworthiness of an event multiplies during the news process. More attention is given to topics that are already regarded as important or interesting. On the other hand, coverage of the hunger strike reveals how the media loose interest in a topic if there is no change. The later deaths and other incidents gained far less attention. The newspapers had seven months to reflect on events, yet this occurred only briefly. As has already been mentioned, contextualization has lessened in all news processes. Currently news seems to consist of accounts of what has happened, where and to whom. Background causes are less important. Furthermore, the conflict in Northern Ireland had already been going on for over a decade. As all the newspapers more or less connected the hunger strike to the conflict in general, it is likely that trouble in Belfast was regarded as old news. As the event did not affect the foreign papers (and their readers), it is understandable that coverage became shorter and less narrative. In many ways, this was a global phenomenon.

However, the newspapers examined in this thesis provided slightly different depictions of the hunger strike. It seems that they were the result of a complex set of factors that guided the news processes, from editorial principles to societal factors. After all, quality newspapers were independent actors. As it turned out, the more interested a newspaper was in the event, the stronger its image was. Newspapers with political or cultural connections with the region provided more opinionated commentary on the hunger strike. Media actions are based on the level of interest a subject provides.
Conversely, the depictions reveal that newsworthiness is a relative. News must bear meaning. A sense of closeness or remoteness is not based on geography alone. Even events that are geographically close can seem distant if the issue itself is not perceived as familiar or relevant. However, geographically distant phenomena can be relevant if they are considered significant for some reason. Perception is essential. From this point of view, it seems plausible that the newspapers were indeed reflecting societal perceptions as well.

Interestingly, the hunger strike as such was not a central motive. Instead, more attention was given to the British and their actions. First, this is an indication of the political aspect of the news process. Politically relevant events tend to gain media attention, particularly in the so-called quality press, which is often considered to be politically enlightened. Second, it also suggests that during a conflict, the authorities are an easier subject to deal with. Newspapers’ discussions of right and wrong are on surer ground when the focus is more defined. After all, the hunger strike and hunger strikers were associated with challenging and contradictory themes.

Covering conflicts

Some newspapers were more outspoken than others. The papers with a violent mental image of the event were the most clear in their stances. They depicted the hunger strikers negatively, whereas the images relayed of the British authorities were positive. In other words, the papers that connected the hunger strike to terrorism (in particular to the IRA) were more likely to depict the situation from a certain point of view.

Interestingly, there was a clear difference between the papers regarding the role of terrorism. Some papers regarded the hunger strike as terrorist activity, while others considered it to be a form of protest. It is important to consider why these different interpretations occurred. The harsh judgements in certain papers resulted from several factors. In part, experience with terrorism and disorder had created a general negative attitude towards political violence. However, even domestic experiences with violence or terrorism did not automatically create general opposition to them. The factors affecting coverage were more multifaceted. Therefore, it seems justifiable to view the coverage in each newspaper individually, as generalizations are problematic. However, some resemblances are worthy of noting. Historical, societal and political factors create meaning for international
events and this is a gradual process. This applies to interpretations made by the media as well. Existing perceptions guide media coverage.

Based on the findings of this study, it seems that if a conflict has historical roots and causes within long-term social turmoil, this event is viewed within the context of those roots and causes rather than as separate event. Previous knowledge and wider perceptions determined how the hunger strike was seen. In other words, this illustrates that the media are also guided by (mental) images that are more often connected with human behaviour. This is natural as news is created for people and by people. Furthermore, the coverage of the hunger strike followed patterns that are typical of conflict coverage in general. The first accounts relate what has occurred, and after this the significance of an event is strengthened by focusing, depending on the situation, either on the victims or the guilty party. The interpretations of a conflict are used to confirm existing thoughts.

I began with the claim that during a conflict people divide into ‘us’ and ‘them’. This human reaction is not foreign to the media either. Otherness is an effective way to define one’s own group. Conflicts always raise dissenting opinions. This division into ‘us’ and ‘them’ can occur even if one is not directly involved. Information, values, and emotions form a basis on which one determines who is good and who is bad. To some extent, the media also make such judgments, as this study has pointed out. More significantly, different people have differing opinions of the good and bad actors. Conflicts are covered using similar judgments but the tone of coverage is defined by different reasons. The media treat conflicts according to their own interests. In addition to editorial factors, the media reflects societal perceptions, either consciously or subconsciously.

The more a conflict concerns one’s own group the stronger the need for othering is. The media’s role in defining this otherness was strong in the early 1980s. Newspapers and other media were one of the most common sources of information. Thus, it seems important to discuss the relationship between the mental images depicted in the media, and mass images prevailing in a society. As I, along with other scholars, have mentioned on several occasions, The Times, the British media and even the British public had a certain view of events in Northern Ireland. What was the relationship between these mental images? Which one existed before the other or was the dominant one? Further research on this relationship could reveal significant information regarding the formation of these mental images. These questions apply to any culture or topic. There is a demand for more imagological research.
Earlier studies of the news coverage of the 1981 hunger strike are inconclusive in providing answers to several questions. First, how did the international media depict the event, and secondly, what do those depictions tell us about the media itself, as well as the context it operated in. This study sought to answer these questions. Obviously, it is impossible to examine all of the media or all cultures or societies here. Hopefully this research will encourage new research on a topic that is universally relevant. The focus can be broadened in many ways. A more in-depth look at the newspapers themselves opens up possibilities for a further understanding of how news processes affect the outcome. A more thorough international comparison could reveal more about the dynamics of international and political relations and their impact on news coverage. Understanding the relationship between society and the media is a very complex matter.

The imagological approach offers an opportunity to reveal existing perceptions by focusing on the possessor of the image. Historical image research is not interested in who is more correct more than trying to find explanations for differing interpretations. In this case, a conflict revealed differing views on why an event occurred. By focusing on the newsmakers and the contexts that they operated in, one can determine several essential factors. Primarily, the media does not operate in a void. On the contrary, it reflects societal attributes on many levels. Even the minor elements of a newspaper (headlines, news photos, terminology, etc) are revealing. Together they create an image that is based on a set of larger factors. This study provides a glimmer of what can be determined of societal perceptions by examining news coverage. A more thorough discussion requires more investigation. Deeper comparisons between differing views and explanatory factors could be the next step in continuing research on this topic. The same methods can also be used in other studies examining bilateral or multilateral relations.

The findings of this research suggest that internationally, different perceptions of the hunger strike were partly based on societal perceptions. A similar finding has been found of the local media, as Flanagan’s study illustrated. However, we cannot conclude that this is always the case. Sometimes news coverage is ‘just’ news coverage without any profound meaning or significance. The difficulty is to know when to look for deeper meanings. On an international level, the challenge is even bigger. Societies may have several more general perceptions, different forms of media have their own views, or political and cultural relations overlap creating complexity, and so on. The list of possible factors is endless.
Between cultures, the idea of otherness is an essential way to define one’s own group in relation to others. The media has a major role in this definition. They help to determine who are considered part of one’s group, sharing similar values and perceptions. For instance, on an international level, societies that have active relations with each other also have a stronger sense of who belongs to their side and who does not. The Northern Irish conflict, including the hunger strike, is a perfect example of this. Societies and cultures with a long and shared history of conflict define their own group in a strong and clear way. This thesis has only partially explored what affect the prevailing perceptions in a society may have, for example on the media. A more focused study can reveal deeper causes and implications of these perceptions.

Differing perceptions are equally true when viewed from this perspective. A perception prevailing in our own context is only one view of the world. If we compare our perception to someone else’s, we may find that someone from an apparently similar culture believes differently – or vice versa. During conflict and war, we tend to view our own side as the correct one. However, another person may see their perspective as the correct one. In many cases, it is more helpful to try to understand these differences rather than try to evaluate who is more correct. The world is full of different interpretations. The media’s resources are also limited but they are in a position where it would seem essential to provide as much information of the world as possible. Creating broad-minded contexts for news events would be a good start.
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El Pais 1.3. - 10.10.1981
La Prensa 1.3. - 10.10.1981
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The Sowetan 1.3. - 10.10.1981
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Appendix 1. Published material between 1 March 1981 and 10 October 1981

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Published news photos between 1 March 1981 and 10 October 1981.
Appendix 2. The monthly news coverage
Appendix 3. The published news photos monthly
## Appendix 4. Comparisons of the news article sizes

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Appendix 5. International news agencies as the source of the news articles (%)

*The sources can not be identified in the majority of the articles.

Note: The Irish Times and The Times are not included (they did not use agency material).

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### Appendix 6. Comparisons of the most common topics of news photos (%)

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Some generalisations have been made to be able to divide the photos into groups.

Hunger strikers: prisoners and their families, funerals of the dead hunger strikers
Support: relatives, friends and other supporters, peaceful marches
The British: authorities, soldiers, police, Thatcher
Violence: rioting, the IRA
Else: photos that cannot be categorized into the previous groups
Appendix 7. The most common themes of the front page news articles

For this section the news material was roughly divided to categories to describe the different attributes of the conflict.

The front page news were clearly divided to few differing themes (table compares the most common themes). The Irish Times was excluded from the table as, due to the bigger amount of front page news, the coverage was more multifaceted (there were no explicit preferences). The Sowetan did not publish any hunger strike news on its front page.

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139. Siitonen, Pauliina (2016) Ehdotuksen vastaaminen perheen vuorovaikutustestissä : keskustelunanalyysin näkökulma vuorovaikutuksesta ja sen arviointiin

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143. Lindh, Johanna (2016) Poikikristillinen identifioituminen vapauden ja yhteisyyden vuorovaikutuksena

144. Zachau, Swantje (2016) Signs in the brain: Hearing signers’ cross-linguistic semantic integration strategies


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Erja Simuna

THE MANY FACES OF A CONFLICT

REPRESENTATIONS OF THE 1981 NORTHERN IRISH HUNGER STRIKE IN INTERNATIONAL PRESS