

Islam in New Zealand – A Mixed Reception: Historical Overview and Contemporary Challenges

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Abstract

Purpose: This research aims to discuss the history of Islam in New Zealand, together with some of the pressing issues and challenges Muslims have encountered along the way. Looking back at the history of early Muslim settlers and the emergence of Muslim organizations and allied enterprises, it is clear that the Muslim community in New Zealand has had a rather mixed reception in a land that, on the whole, is perceived to be benignly tolerant and accepting.

Methodology: The research is based on a critical analysis of the available literature, both contemporary and historical. This paper explores complicated community developments, conversions to Islam, the violence experienced with defacement and destruction of mosques in reaction to overseas events over recent decades, ongoing Islamophobia, and the infamous 2019 terrorist attack on two mosques in the city of Christchurch.

Findings: The research highlights the status of the New Zealand Muslim community and the extent and nature of their influence in the country. It constitutes a social hierarchy with a complex past and multiple internal issues. Accordingly, this paper concludes with a brief discussion of the migrant experience of Muslims. It also elucidates the necessity of further research in the future and emphasizes the need to study the culture, faith and history of New Zealand from various angles.

Originality: This is illustrated in the direct attachment of the research to the core topic of religion. This is the first academic study to deal directly with both the history of the Muslim minority and contemporary issues such as Islamophobia following the 2019 massacre.

Keywords: New Zealand; Islam; Muslims; Integration; Islamophobia

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الإسلام في نيوزيلندا.. بين الحفاوة والعداوة الخبرة التاريخية والتحديات الراهنة

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ملخص البحث

أهداف البحث: يهدف هذا البحث إلى استعراض تاريخ الإسلام في نيوزيلندا، بالإضافة إلى بعض المشكلات الكبرى والتحديات الخطيرة التي واجهها المسلمون عبر التاريخ. يتضح من النظر إلى تاريخ المسلمين الأوائل الذين استوطنوا البلاد، ونشأة المنظمات الإسلامية والمؤسسات الموالية لها أن الجالية المسلمة في نيوزيلندا قد استقبلت حيناً بالحفاوة وحيناً بالعداوة في بلاد عُرِفَت عامّةً بالتسامح والترحيب بالجميع.

منهج الدراسة: تعتمد هذه الدراسة منهج التحليل النقدي للأدبيات المتوافرة، التاريخية منها والمعاصرة. وتبحث في التطورات المتشابهة التي مرت بها الجالية المسلمة، واعتناق السكان للإسلام، والعنف الذي مورس من خلال حملات التشويه وتدمير المساجد كرد فعل على الأحداث الخارجية في العقود الأخيرة، إضافةً إلى ظاهرة الإسلاموفوبيا والهجوم الإرهابي الأخير الذي استهدف مسجدين في مدينة كرايست تشيرش.

النتائج: تسلط الدراسة الضوء على موقف الجالية المسلمة في نيوزيلندا ونطاق تأثيرها في البلاد وطبيعته، فهي تشكل تراتباً اجتماعياً ذا ماضٍ معقد ومشكلات داخلية متعددة. لذا فقد اختتمت هذه الدراسة بنبذة وجيزة عن خبرة المهاجرين المسلمين في البلاد، وأوضحت كذلك ضرورة إجراء المزيد من الأبحاث في المستقبل مع ضرورة دراسة الثقافة والدين والتاريخ في نيوزيلندا من زوايا مختلفة.

أصالة البحث: تتبين أصالة هذه الدراسة من ارتباطها بمسألة الدين؛ التي تمحورت حولها الدراسة؛ فهي الدراسة الأكاديمية الأولى من نوعها بعد مجزرة ٢٠١٩ التي تناولت بصورة مباشرة كلا من تاريخ الأقلية المسلمة والقضايا المعاصرة مثل ظاهرة الإسلاموفوبيا. الكلمات المفتاحية: نيوزيلندا، الإسلام، المسلمين، الاندماج، الإسلاموفوبيا

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أو بأية وسيلة، ومزجه وتحويله والبناء عليه، طالما يُنسب العمل الأصلي إلى المؤلف. <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0>

1. Introduction

New Zealand is a very recent modern nation state. The indigenous peoples, the Maori, have been residing in the islands that make up this country for about a millennium.¹ European settlement emerged as a challenging and reshaping force during the 19th century – initially as a colonial outpost of Great Britain and by the beginning of the 20th century an independent dominion within the British Empire. Since the mid-twentieth century it has been a member country of the British Commonwealth, with the Queen of England as the Head of State. Although now very multicultural and ethnically diverse, the origins of this nation forged in the interaction between European and Maori means there is a bi-cultural foundation which is writ large into law and cultural life. It underlies the now highly diverse nation within which the Muslim community plays a part. A century ago, Christianity was almost ubiquitous – over 90% of the population then registering as Christian in the national census. Today, however, slightly less than half the population identify as Christian and over one-third claim no religious affiliation or identity.²

According to the 2013 census, there were over 47,000 Muslims in New Zealand: around 21% were born in the Pacific Islands, 25% in New Zealand, 23% in Africa and the Middle East and 26% in Asia. Over 32,000 Muslims then lived in Auckland and 20,000 Muslims in New Zealand identified as ethnic Asians.³ There were approximately 2000 converts to Islam, coming from both the indigenous and the Anglo-European populations.⁴ The 2018 census reported 57,276 Muslims in New Zealand but as the collection of data that year was severely compromised, the results may not be entirely reliable.⁵ Nevertheless it is clear, the overall Muslim community has grown steadily both in numbers and in its relative proportion of the total population. While the general perception of both the wider society and many in the Muslim community is that New Zealand is a land of benign tolerance and welcoming of a diversity of peoples to its shores, in point of fact the reception Muslims have received, as well as others who are perceived as “different”, is rather mixed. Comfortable acceptance sits alongside a disquieting level of prejudice and ignorance that manifests in a variety of discrimina-

1 James Belich, *Making Peoples: A History of the New Zealanders from Polynesian Settlement to the End of the Nineteenth Century* (Auckland: Penguin, 2007).

2 D. Pratt, “Secular New Zealand and Religious Diversity: From cultural evolution to societal affirmation”, *Social Inclusion* 4/2 (2016): 52-64.

3 Lincoln Tan, “Religion at work under spotlight”, *New Zealand Herald*, 23 May 2014, p.20; Lincoln Tan, “Changing-Faith”, *New Zealand Herald*, 19 May 2015, pp.1,14-15. Various census reports from the Dept. of Statistics.

4 Michael Field, “Elder learns Te Reo to translate Koran”, *Sunday Star Times*, 3 November 2013, p. 3; Ruth Keber, “The New Maori Muslims”, *North & South*, March 2013, pp. 44-51; “Noeleen van de Lisdonk”, *Canvas – New Zealand Herald*, 18 November 2017, p. 11.

5 See: Abdullah Drury, “Mahometans on the Edge of Colonial Empire: Antipodean Experiences”, *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations*, Vol. 29, no. 1 (2018): 87-71; “Wish You Were Here: A Short History of New Zealand Muslims and Integration”, *Nazhruna: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, Volume 3 (2020): 355-370; William Shepard, “New Zealand Muslims and Their Organisations”, *New Zealand Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 8, no. 2 (2006): 4-44; Erich Kolig, *New Zealand’s Muslims and Multiculturalism* (Leiden: Brill, 2010); Ahmad Hidayat Buang, “Islam and Muslims in New Zealand”, *Jurnal Usuluddin* 16 (2002): 135-158.

tions and rejections, albeit more at a mostly interpersonal level. Formally and officially New Zealand ranks as one of the more tolerant countries, but not every individual citizen necessarily reflects that.

2. Early Muslim Settlement

Muslims arrived in New Zealand with the Anglo-European settlement process. The earliest Muslim visitors were South Asian sailors, lascars, working on British and European vessels in the South Pacific. The first of these arrived in Northland in December 1769. Recent research has revealed two Indian Muslim sailors working on board a French ship.¹ The British colony of New Zealand was created over 1840-41 when the Colonial Office sent Captain William Hobson to assert sovereignty and negotiate a treaty with the native Polynesian tribes.² Formed under Queen Victoria, the territory was briefly part of the British colony of New South Wales, Australia, until July 1841 when it became an independent colony. European, especially British, immigration increased and in 1852 a legislative chamber was voted in. After 1856 the colony was effectively self-governing in all internal affairs, and in 1907 King Edward VII proclaimed New Zealand a Dominion within the British Empire. Forty years later, the nation adopted the Statute of Westminster, confirming loyalty to the British crown but retaining full autonomy for the New Zealand parliament.³

The majority of early Muslim settlers who arrived during the colonial era, especially from 1840 onwards, were drawn from or through British interests in South Asia. A small but not insignificant minority came from other areas that were outside the British Empire, in particular from Asia, Africa and Europe. The first Muslim family in the colony of New Zealand arrived in 1854. Wuzerah and his family came from India in the employ of Sir John Cracroft Wilson, a civil servant born in the Indian subcontinent to English parents. Wilson purchased land in New Zealand's South Island, near the then fledgling city of Christchurch, and called it 'Cashmere' after the Indian province of Kashmir. Wuzerah died in 1902 and was described in local newspapers as a "venerable Indian settler". In the 1880s and 1890s he had been involved in the transport of stone to build the famous Christchurch Anglican cathedral. None of his sons married.⁴

After 1890, men from the Punjab and Gujarat regions of India began arriving in significant numbers. Many began working as hawkers and rural laborers, and then later operated small shops.

1 Todd Nachowitz, "Towards a Framework of Deep Diversity: Identity and Invisibility in the Indian Diaspora in New Zealand", PhD diss. (University of Waikato, 2015), pp. 206-207.

2 For an excellent introduction to the establishment of modern New Zealand, see: Paul Moon, *This Horrid Practice* (Auckland: Penguin, 2008); Stuart C. Scott, *The Travesty of Waitangi: Towards Anarchy* (Dunedin: Campbell Press, 1995); Erich Kolig, "Deconstructing the Waitangi Treaty Narrative: Democracy, Cultural Pluralism, and Political Myth Making in New Zealand", *Sites: A Journal of Social Anthropology and Cultural Studies*, N.S. 1, no. 2 (May 2004): 84-118.

3 See Belich, *Making Peoples*.

4 Abdullah Drury, "Once Were Mahometans: Muslims in the South Island of New Zealand, mid-19th to the late 20th century, with special reference to Canterbury", MPhil diss. (University of Waikato, 2016), pp. 28-35.

Most moved on to Australia, or otherwise departed, but a few settled. Some of these men married local women, others kept wives and children in their home country. Many of those who stayed operated small shops, often in rural or obscure suburban locations. For example, Ahad Baksh Malik, who arrived in 1890 from India, settled in the village of Arrowtown, in the heart of Central Otago in the south of the South Island. He lived and worked in the region as a hawker and a small businessman until his death in 1918. He was married to a European woman at one point but there do not appear to be any descendants. His funeral service was conducted by a Presbyterian Minister.¹

Abraham Walley Mohammad Salaman (or Ibrahim Wali Mohammed Suliman) from the Punjab is one of the few Muslims recorded in the official New Zealand Dictionary of Biography, published by the New Zealand government. He appears to have arrived before World War One, married twice, both times to European females, and had one daughter named Ayesha. He was a businessman who Anglicized his name and who became very prosperous. When he died, in New Plymouth, in 1941, local newspapers reported that over three thousand people attended his funeral, including the Mayor. His funeral service was also conducted by a Presbyterian Minister.²

Not everyone who came to New Zealand from India, was Indian. For example, in 1894, father and son Sultan and Saleh Mahomet from Turkmenistan arrived in Southland, the far south of New Zealand. The pair had fled the Russian invasion of Central Asia together and settled in British India briefly, before moving to work as hawkers across Otago and Westland. They eventually settled in Christchurch in 1903. The 1905 death of Sultan Mahomet was reported in a local newspaper where he was described sympathetically as an “old Assyrian”. Saleh set up a popular ice cream business in Christchurch and married a woman of Scottish heritage. Interestingly, he gave Ceylon (Sri Lanka) as his place of birth on his marriage certificate, suggesting he felt it was important (or better) to emphasize some sort of connection with the British Empire. The couple had four daughters, who were given both Muslim and non-Muslim names: Rehona, Rupee, Tulah and Florence. His friendly personality earned him the affections and goodwill of Christchurch citizenry and he acquired the nickname ‘Ice cream Charlie’ (Charlie being a New Zealand-Anglicization of Saleh). In April 1943 Saleh entered the Old Men’s Home in Ashburton, and died in October. He was buried with his late father Sultan in the Linwood cemetery.³

Ahmet ben Redi – also known to the New Zealand authorities as Ali Mahomet or sometimes Mahomet Ali – was born in Muscat, Oman, in 1866. Evidently, he worked as a stoker for the British

1 Drury, “Once Were Mahometans”, p. 26.

2 Louise Buckingham, “Salaman, Abraham Walley Mahomed”, *The Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*, Vol. 4, 1921-1940 (Auckland, 1998), pp. 447-448; see also “Salaman’s Tomb” in Paul Gittens, *Epitaph II*, (Random House New Zealand, 2001), pp. 200-207.

3 Richard Greenaway, *Rich Man, Poor Man, Environmentalist, Thief: Biographies of Canterbury Personalities Written for the Millennium and for the 150th Anniversary of the Canterbury Settlement* (Christchurch: Christchurch City Libraries, 2000), pp. 41-44.

merchant navy before taking up similar employment with the New Zealand Railways. He entered a retirement home for elderly gentlemen in Ashburton, a short drive out of Christchurch, in September 1930. He died and was buried in an unmarked grave in November 1937. Ali Mahomet never married or had children. His biographical detail remains interesting for several reasons. First, the presence of an Arab is a reminder that not all early Muslim settlers in New Zealand were Indian. Secondly, his name change suggests he simplified rather than Anglicized his name in order to facilitate integration rather than assimilation.¹

In 1907, an incident occurred which well illustrates the socio-religious complexity of colonial New Zealand in a positive light. It seems that, in 1904, 13 Slavic Muslims from Hercegovina arrived in Auckland and took up work with the Dalmatian gum-diggers in Northland. In 1907 two of these Herzegovinian men were called to give evidence at the local court and were asked to remove their fezzes. At the time, pious Muslim men used to wear their fezzes, topi, turban and similar headwear quite devoutly. However, the men complied with the law of the land, although their group leader, Mustafa Fetagic, took the issue to their diplomatic representative who then wrote a formal letter on September 27, 1907 to the New Zealand Justice Minister. In the 1900s, Hercegovina was part of the Austrian Empire and their diplomatic representative at that point was a German-born Roman Catholic with an English wife. The Minister of Justice, James McGowan, was an Irish-born Protestant. So here we have a rather curious, and somewhat ironic outcome of New Zealand's cosmopolitanism or multi-culturalism in the early 20th century: Slavic Muslims asking a German born Catholic to intercede with an Irish Protestant to insist on the right of Muslims to wear their Islamic headgear. It was formally requested that "Herzegovinians of Mohammedan religion be allowed to appear in court in dress prescribed by their religion". The Ministry replied in the affirmative, presumably making it legal to wear a fez inside a New Zealand Court even to this day. It is likely this group of men formed the first "jamaat" or Islamic congregation within New Zealand. However, they left New Zealand before World War One and have largely been forgotten.²

3. Conversions / Reversions

The first known converts / reverts to Islam were the Marsack brothers from Auckland. They were sons of the English-born Dr Marsack of Remuera, Auckland. The pair joined the British Air Force and were stationed in Egypt during World War Two where they learnt Arabic and embraced the Islamic faith. Dudley Hardwicke Marsack adopted the Muslim name "Bouredin" and his younger brother Alfred became "Shamsudin".³ Although very little is known of their early life, there is little

1 Drury, "Once Were Mahometans", p. 54.

2 'On the Gumfields', *New Zealand Herald*, 14 October 1909, p. 6. For more on these men in the Bosnian-Serbo-Croat language, see: Fikret Karčić, 'Prvi Bošnjaci na Novom Zelandu', *Oslobođenje* (4 April, 2015), p. 29; □efik Rizvanović 'Priča o dedi mustafi', *Oslobođenje* (18 June 2016), pp. 30-31.

3 'Moslem New Zealander', *Evening Star*, 9 June 1945, p.7; 'Reads like book', *Auckland Star*, 28 June 1945, p.6.

doubt that the brothers possessed powerful intellects and acquired an impressive store of knowledge, being skilled in languages, engineering and, later, politics. In the 1960s, Alfred “Shamsudin” Marsack was director of civil aviation in Aden, Yemen.

The issue of religious conversion to Islam in New Zealand is both a profoundly personal and a public event: a private decision with very communal consequences and manifestations. Conversion to and from one faith group to another is a contentious, emotive and sensitive topic, and many societies manifest prejudices regarding apostasy (and the apparent bifurcation of communal solidarity and identity, as much as any suggestion of theological betrayal).¹ In fact, religious conversion is both an immediate living reality and a signal to future possibilities, as much as a spiritual quest for the transcendent.² In spite of what any private ideological presuppositions might have suggested, personal religious enlightenment or conversion is not a grand epiphany, it is not all roses and sunshine in the park – rather it is often prompted by an awareness of one’s personal proclivity for ethical and moral transgression. In religious conversion, an individual decides to devote themselves to an abstract idea of a higher authority or a higher purpose. This is also to argue that there is an essence, a code, a culture and there is a truth to theology, and this is all antithetical to the discordant rhyme of postmodernism.

This was most evident during the 1970s when Sheikh Abdullah Isa Neil Dougan (1918 – 1987) was active and many converts to Islam started attending the Islamic Centre in central Auckland. Dougan was a World War Two veteran who studied the teachings of Gurdjieff and led a study circle in Auckland in the 1960s. He travelled to Afghanistan in 1968, seeking spiritual enlightenment. There he was initiated as a Naqshbandi Sufi Sheikh by Sheikh Abdul Al Khayyum of Kandahar and Sheikh Ibrahim Mujadiddi of Kabul, Afghanistan. In late 1974 he undertook a 40 day fast on water alone, and reported his experiences in his book “40 Days: An Account of a Discipline”. His primary objective was to undercover the psychological and spiritual potential of himself and his students. Dougan was actively involved in the New Zealand Muslim Association in the 1970s but ultimately his group of converts drifted away in their own spiritual direction. A mature mind and intellect, and a persuasive speaker, Dougan made a powerful first impression – especially in the discussions in the 1970s. He was, however, intellectually and temperamentally unsuited to ‘court life’ and after un-

1 The phenomena and experience of religious conversion exposes a curious process that concurrently adopts and rejects faith: it was a two-way street. The basic question is whether it was a matter of qualitative theological principle or evolving private faith? Is the phenomenon reflective of an incremental shift in moral codes and personal beliefs, or one of extensive societal allegiances and customs, and intergenerational collective psychology? Was the process basically one of acceptance or a form of negation? Or opportunism?

2 Every functioning individual and society has a moral code but these vary. The universality of moral codes across humanity suggests that some sort of code is essential to life. The variety (or the absence of an absolute, widely acknowledged and recognized moral code) equally suggests that particular details are not as important as the presence and structure of the code itself. There is a relationship between the stories (histories and biographies) that a social group tells its members (through repetition, ritual, speeches, poetry, sermons and so forth) and moral codes. What is extracted from such tales? Proverbial knowledge. Moral, or the implications of the story for the morality of the group. All successful social groups and faiths tell stories with recognizable structures, themes and motifs.

successful efforts to negotiate within the New Zealand Muslim Association hierarchy, he returned to leading his own esoteric group. Some measure of responsibility for this state of affairs lay in the reluctance of the Muslim Association to encourage conversion to the Islamic faith, an apathy towards convert attendance, and a disquiet towards convert participation in the administration. To the horror of conservative Muslim immigrants, Dougan was an unapologetic Sufi and freethinker; he expounded heterodox beliefs, doctrines and practices that manifest a reverence for an esoteric understanding of Allah. In return, Dougan and his converts were deeply dissatisfied with the insularity of the somewhat unimaginative religious specialists and traditionalists of immigrant Islam and their wholesale condemnation of non-traditional beliefs, culture, ideas and practices. He died in 1987, leaving behind a dedicated study group and several curious books and artworks.¹ Incidentally, having gone on the Hajj, his report of it was the first by a European New Zealander.

The conversion of Maori, the indigenous Polynesian population, throws up specific and unique challenges. Before the arrival of the Europeans colonists, most Maori followed animist beliefs but over the nineteenth century, most converted to Christianity. In the 1970s several Maori converted to Islam and in 1985 one George te Heuheu was interviewed by a Canterbury newspaper in the newly constructed Christchurch mosque on Deans Ave.² However, it was not until 1990 that the Federation of Islamic Associations of New Zealand organized the “First Muslim-Maori Meeting” at a Maori *marae* (meeting house) in Wellington. Ten years later an informal Maori Muslim Association was set up in Hamilton and Te Amorangi Eshaq Kireka-Whaanga was appointed president. Kireka-Whaanga belongs to a prominent tribe on the East Coast of the North Island. In 2003 he and several new Maori converts to Islam were invited to a “Maori Muslim Day” organized by the Christchurch city mosque and partly held at the *Nga Hau e Wha* national marae. However, the critical follow up was limited and resources from mainstream immigrant-operated Muslim organizations have always been very modest. The Maori Muslim Association – remaining exclusively Maori in membership, focus and organization – has never really received the unequivocal support necessary for a substantial success. For example, in 2010 a Maori language translation of the Holy Quran – the *Kuranu Tapu* – was published by the Ahmadiyah / Qadiani community, rather than by Maori Muslims. (A copy was later presented to the Maori King Tuheitia).³ Furthermore the Maori Muslim Association itself has not gone unchallenged publicly. Media were quick to link *tino rangitiratanga* (a Maori concept of political self-determination) with a characteristically poor understanding of Jihad.⁴

1 Abdullah Dougan, *Forty Days: An Account of a Discipline* (Auckland: Gnostic Press, 1978); Arthur Frank Buehler, ‘Modes of Sufi Transmission to New Zealand’, *New Zealand Journal of Asian Studies* Vol. 8, Number 2 (December, 2006), pp.97-109 (esp. pp.103-104).

2 Ken Coates, ‘City mosque will promote understanding of Islam’, *Press*, 30 January 1985, p. 15.

3 Yvonne Tahana, “Koran’s message of unity shared in te reo translation”, *New Zealand Herald*, 15 April 2010, p. 11; Michael Field, “Elder learns Te Reo to translate Koran”, *Sunday Star Times*, 3 November 2013, p. 3; Ruth Keber, “The New Maori Muslims”, *North & South*, March 2013, pp. 44-51; “Noeleen van de Lisdonk”, *Canvas – New Zealand Herald*, 18 November 2017, p. 11.

4 See Roberta Francis, “Islam in New Zealand: Immigrants, Converts and Maori Muslims”, Unpublished graduate research paper, Tel Aviv University (2011).

4. Muslim Organizations

The first Islamic organization in this country was created by several Indian Muslim men in 1950 when the “New Zealand Muslim Association” was formed in the city of Auckland. On 1 May 1951, a Norwegian refugee boat, the *MS Goya*, made three trips to New Zealand and deposited hundreds of Eastern European refugees. Among them were many Muslims who would become active members of the New Zealand Muslim Association. Later, one of these, Mazhar Krasniqi from Kosovo, would serve as president of the New Zealand Muslim Association. Later still, in 1979, he became the president of the first national Muslim organization – the Federation of Islamic Associations. In January 1956 the New Zealand Muslim Association staged a formal congress in an effort to involve both the Indian and European Muslims together. Avdo Musovich – a Slavic Muslim from Montenegro in Yugoslavia – joined at this time and only retired in 1981, making him the longest serving member of the New Zealand Muslim Association Executive Committee. (His son Miralem joined the New Zealand Air Force in 1969, making him the first Muslim to serve in the NZ military). A few years after this congress, the Muslim Association purchased a house to use for regular prayers and acquired the services of an Islamic cleric, Maulana Said Musa Patel, from the Gujarat. The first Islamic Center and the first Islamic cleric in this country are thus identified.

During the 1960s and ‘70s there was a modest trickle of migrants, refugees and students who helped create new Muslim organizations in the regions outside Auckland. In Auckland itself, Namzi Mehmeti, an Albanian from Macedonia, who had arrived on the *MS Goya*, secured the first specifically Muslim burial plot in the country, at Auckland’s Waikumete cemetery in 1963. Curiously the first internment was a revert to Islam named Abdullah Kassim or Victor Henderson.

Many foreign students from South and South-East Asia started arriving during this era and a number of these were Muslims. However, their numbers, and their contribution to the Muslim community, fluctuated. For instance, during 1962-64 the Wellington-based “International Muslim Association of New Zealand” was created and in 1977 the “Muslim Association of Canterbury” was formed in Christchurch; in both cases, there were many overseas students and a few long-term residents. The New Zealand Muslim Association erected the first purpose-built mosque in New Zealand during 1979 and 1980, in Ponsonby, central Auckland. The architect was a convert to Islam named Abdul Salim Drake, who was involved in the Sufi group of Sheikh Abdullah Isa Neil Dougan.¹

5. FIANZ and Halal meat/food/certification

In 1979 there were around 2000 Muslims across New Zealand when representatives of the regional Islamic Associations congregated to form a new organization that would co-ordinate Muslim communal affairs at a national level. Thus, in April 1979, the “Federation of Islamic Associations of

1 Peter Trickett, “Minarets in Ponsonby”, *New Zealand Listener* (21April1979),pp. 18-19.

New Zealand” (FIANZ) was formed with Mazhar Krasniqi (1931-2019) as the inaugural president.¹ This was a statement of power, autonomy and agency in the overall development of the New Zealand Muslim community. In 1984 the Federation secured its first annual Halal meat contract with the New Zealand Meat Producers Board. Henceforth, all New Zealand meat exported abroad was examined and certified to ensure it was Halal, and so acceptable for Muslim consumption.² In 1982 Sheikh Khalid Kamal Abdul Hafiz (1938-1999) arrived to serve as Imam at the Newtown Islamic Centre in Wellington, the capital. Born in India, he trained at the *Darul Uloom Deoband* and later in Saudi Arabia. He was the senior most Islamic cleric in all New Zealand until his demise.³ During 1984-85 the Muslim Association of Canterbury erected the first mosque in the South Island, in central Christchurch, following a substantial donation from Saudi Arabia that resulted from the efforts of an enthusiastic Saudi student at the University of Canterbury.

From the 1890s to the 1950s there were in New Zealand no Islamic prayer facilities or butcheries that sold Halal meat or other Halal food. From the 1950s to the 1990s the situation changed substantially. The absence of Halal meat led many Muslim immigrants and refugees to forge relationships with friendly Christian and Anglo-European farmers who would allow them to slaughter livestock on their farms. Cross-confessional friendships were thus developed and, over time, businesses established. The process of constructing and fostering a tradition of New Zealand Halal foodstuffs, particularly meat, has proven flexible enough to gradually incorporate diverse opinions and views, without automatically creating divisions. It has also permitted an evolution of policy and perceptions, and even for a convergence on certain other subjects on a relatively conservative basis. The success and triumph of tradition as a process does rather confirm the point that extremes and strife can be prevented. The internal challengers have for the most part accepted the utility of a shared communal framework for defining shared ethics here, but also recognized the agency of the Federation in that very process. Presently, conservative or neo-Salafi voices are less concerned with Halal certification, rather they tend to be more concerned with pragmatic issues social relations such as family matters and religious morality.⁴

6. Community developments

The numerical growth of the Muslim community in the latter part of the 20th century led to

1 Ainsley Thomson, “Mazhar Krasniqi”, *New Zealand Herald*, 31 December 2002, p. A6; Zohoor Mohammad Khan, “Mazhar Shukri Krasniqi”, in *One Hundred Great Muslim Leaders of the 20th Century* (New Delhi: Institute of Objective Studies, 2006), pp. 157-160; Sabit R. Abdyli *Bijtë e shqipes në tokën e reve të bardha* (Auckland: Universal Print & Management, 2010), pp. 88-90; Kurt Bayer, “‘Kaumatua’ of Muslims in NZ dies aged 87”, *New Zealand Herald*, 22 August 2019, p. A19.

2 Chun Foo-Yuen “The Dynamics of the Halal Meat Trade in New Zealand and Australia”, in *New Zealand and the Middle East*, ed. Ron MacIntyre, (Christchurch: Australasian Middle East Studies Association, 1987), pp.149-176.

3 Bob Shaw, “An imam ‘as imams should be, but rarely are’”, *Evening Post* (16 December 1999), p.5.

4 Kolig, *New Zealand’s Muslims*, pp. 20-40.

growth in internal communal disputes.¹ Some of these were predicated on ethnic divides, others along theological lines. For instance, in 1987 a local convert to Islam named Nizam Flynn wrote in a regional Muslim newsletter:

Our community is made up of numbers coming from various parts of the world, people coming from many different backgrounds and bringing with them many diverse cultures. In general, similar events may be handled in a different manner when the event takes place in another part of the world. To understand one another's culture is very important when a multicultural society or community is trying to establish unity or trying to form one community. It is very easy and to a certain extent natural that splinter groups will arise within a community when its members try to impose their own cultural ideas on others in matters concerning mutual community affairs... By the same token, a particular grouping should not lose their composure if their suggestion is not adopted by the Shura.²

Just as the wider New Zealand society was obliged to wrestle with changing demographics across the country, so too did the local Muslim community find itself contending with these shifting sands of evolving population profiles. Although relatively small in numbers, the Muslim community in New Zealand, by the last quarter of the twentieth century, was ethnically, theologically and culturally diverse. That such a heterogeneous group, with many conflicting bonds of allegiance and identity, would yet constitute themselves, and be perceived, as members of the same faith 'community', was and is something rather remarkable. It certainly could not be assumed. But it was very much a reality – and continues to be so.

The 1990s saw substantial changes to the scope, shape and size of the resident New Zealand Muslim population. The Islamic Women's Council was created to give Muslim women a distinctive voice in national community affairs.³ Christian-Muslim interfaith dialogue was commenced and became a regular feature of civic society.⁴ There were several influxes of refugees from Bosnia, Somalia, Iraq and Kosovo, bringing widely variant levels of education and work skills. These were very needy migrants compared to earlier waves. Accusations of religious radicalism soon appeared for the first time in New Zealand history.⁵ The increase in numbers, and in the cultural and ethnic diversity of the New Zealand ummah, led to a considerable proliferation of Islamic organizations.⁶

1 E. Kolig, "An Accord of Cautious Distance: Muslims in New Zealand, Ethnic Relations and Image Management", *New Zealand Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 5, no. 1 (2003): 24-50.

2 Nizam Flynn, 'Editorial', *Waikato-Bay of Plenty Association (Inc.) Newsletter*, August 1987, pp. 1-2.

3 Lincoln Tan, "Lifting the veil on the life of Muslim women in NZ", *New Zealand Herald*, 23 January 2014, p. 14.

4 Douglas Pratt, "Antipodean angst: encountering Islam in New Zealand", *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations*, Vol. 21, no. 4 (October 2010): 397-407; Leanne Moore, "Muslims and Catholics in single salute", *New Zealand Herald* (30 September 1995), p. 24.

5 E. Kolig, "Interfacing with the West: Muslims, Multiculturalism and Radicalism in New Zealand", *New Zealand Sociology*, Vol. 21, no. 2 (2006): 215-246; D. Pratt, "Islamophobia as Reactive Co-Radicalization", *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations*, Vol. 26, no. 2 (April, 2015): 205-218; For a more international account, see: Adis Duderija and Halim Rane, *Islam and Muslims in the West: Major Issues and Debates* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019).

6 David Garrett, "Muslim immigration: the political dilemma", *Investigate* (August-September 2014): 10-11; Joanna Wane, 'Test of Faith', *North & South* (June 2016): 36-49.

One area of visible change was the emergence of Islamic education in New Zealand. Prior to the 1990s, most Islamic learning took place at private homes or mosques. In August 1992, many Muslim immigrant families and teachers grouped together to establish the “Al-Madinah” primary school in South Auckland. Many of the individuals involved were loosely affiliated to the Tablighi Jamaat organization, whose origin is in India. The school was registered with the government and received state funding. A secondary section was added in 1995, to accommodate older students. The following year, the school was integrated into the official mainstream education system of New Zealand. At present, Al-Madinah has over 500 students and 30 staff. In the early 1990s, another group of Auckland based Muslim parents formed the “Auckland Muslim School” but this project was not successful and it was closed by the end of the decade. In 2001, the Zayed College for Girls was established with a substantial fiscal donation from the United Arab Emirates. However, over the years, it is worth recording that there have been multiple complaints directed at the Al-Madinah school – mostly concerned with issues revolving around staff recruitment and irregular financial expenditures. The New Zealand Education Ministry imposed a statutory manager in early 2019. Three months later, the Ministry appointed a commissioner and dissolved the school’s board of trustees. Muslim educational activities continue to be pursued, for example, the work of the Turkish oriented “Pearl of the Islands” foundation in Auckland that set up a primary school. Although the record of Muslim educational activities is mixed, the fact that the Muslim community has the freedom to pursue such activities, and can qualify for state assistance, is perhaps noteworthy. Certainly, there is the possibility of good things being feasible for the Muslim community in the secular society that is New Zealand. Of course, no one imagined the horror of terrorist violence was something that the New Zealand Muslim community would ever experience. But it did.

7. The Christchurch Mosque Massacre

On 15 March 2019 two consecutive terrorist attacks were staged at both the Masjid Al Noor and the Linwood mosque in the main city of the South Island, Christchurch.¹ The lone Australian gunman livestreamed the first attack via social media. The violence killed 51 people and injured 50 others, including men, women and children. The court hearing concluded in August 2020 and this white supremacist extremist was sentenced to life imprisonment without parole.² He had been motivated to undertake this heinous crime by, among other factors, a mix of racist hatred, anti-immigration sentiment and palpable hostility toward Islam and Muslims.³ Such violent behaviors in which extremists indulge are by no means random or arbitrary. There is a very particular logic and rationale that applies: “The groups and individuals engaged in violence construct and maintain a

1 Douglas Pratt, “Threads of Terror and Signs of Hope”, *Waikato Islamic Studies Review* Vol. 5, no. 1 (June 2019): 6-19.

2 “End of Innocence”, *Press*, 16 March 2019, pp.1-6; Martin van Beynen, “Muslim community takes back the story”, *Press*, 29 August 2020, p. B1.

3 Douglas Pratt, “Mosque shooter no ideological Einstein”, Newsroom – Ideasroom, March 18, 2019. <https://www.newsroom.co.nz/@ideasroom/2019/03/18/493097/mosque-shooter-no-ideological-einstein#>

social and theological reality in which killing and mayhem are legitimated”.¹ They generally take action against that which is perceived to be a threat or danger and regard any responsive measure as “an ethical and moral act”.²

Terrorism expert and former Head of United Nations’ security, Alex Schmid, argues that among the many factors that can contribute such an act of terrorism, and to our understanding of such an act, criminality is almost always present along with a political dimension. At times there is a clear religious element; but in all cases communication is paramount: terrorism thrives on publicity.³ Communication is central to the act of terror in that the act occurs not simply to cause some destruction, but to send a powerful message. This was dramatically the case in Christchurch on March 15. The message was that Muslims are the enemy and they are to be eliminated. As a result of the livestreaming of the act, this message was relayed world-wide and applauded in many quarters, including among like-minded Islamophobes in New Zealand. But, equally, the message was rejected by the wider population, especially in New Zealand, with a strong outpouring of acceptance and affirmation of the Muslim community from the local neighborhood of the targeted mosques, to the highest offices in the land.

It is perhaps worth noting that the Christchurch attack was not a simple case of an anti-immigrant event; that was only one element. Nor was it a case only of being opposed to non-white races as such. Although the supporting rhetoric was racist, the target was religious, not simply race. Among those executed were some who had the same skin color as the killer: Caucasian Muslims. Although the attacker was out to get immigrants, it was not just any immigrants. For the targeted group, in keeping with the religio-cultural ideology of white supremacy, is construed as having the aim, the ideological intent, of “replacing” white (Christian and certainly non-believing secularists) inhabitants. The internet abounds with claims that this is the intention and goal of Islam today. In the context of the motivating white supremacist ideology, mainly emanating from Europe, “white” is identified as Christian; in the conspiracy narrative it is not simply a matter of race replacement, but that of religious replacement also. This is, of course, aimed at denigrating Islam and Muslims. Although the Australian perpetrator of the New Zealand attack did not claim a specific Christian identity nor a direct religious motivation as such, there is certainly evidence of it in his manifesto in which he justifies his attack. The attacks were well-planned and efficiently executed, but the ideological justification appears to be confused and certainly highly derivative, demonstrating a mix of ideas, but mostly those of Islamophobic white supremacists such as the Norwegian Anders Breivik. And, ironically, but also underscoring the conclusion that the attack was not simply, or even pri-

1 Charles Selengut, “The Sociology of Religious Violence”, in Andrew Murphy (ed.), *The Blackwell Companion to Religion and Violence* (Malden MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), pp. 89-98; p. 89.

2 Selengut, “The Sociology of Religious Violence”, p.89.

3 Alex P. Schmid, “Frameworks for Conceptualizing Terrorism”, *Terrorism and Political Violence*, Vol. 16, no. 2 (Summer 2004): 197-221.

marily, anti-immigrant or anti-racist, he who attacked the Muslim immigrants is not himself a New Zealand citizen; he is not of our land. He is himself an immigrant. New Zealand's policy of welcome and hospitality was extended to him, as it has been toward Muslim, and other, immigrants from many parts of the world.

Although now banned, so creating a real problem for accessing for research purposes, material that was widely circulating from the terrorist's so-called manifesto is revealing. Hyperbole and sheer falsehood are rampant. He spoke of taking revenge for the "hundreds of thousands of deaths caused by foreign invaders in European lands throughout history"; for the millions of Europeans enslaved by Muslims; the thousands of European lives "lost to terror attacks", and with a sudden shift to the present, to "reduce immigration rates to European lands by intimidating and physically removing the invaders". Very clearly, tropes were employed that directly parallel those of the manifesto of Anders Breivik, the 2011 Norwegian extremist, also a lone-wolf gunman, who in similar fashion, and despite a different target group, callously slaughtered unarmed innocents for parallel reasons: to stir up a wider resistance to, and rejection of, Islam and Muslims.¹ European tropes of Eurabia fear-mongering were simply copied and pasted into an Antipodean context. And, as with Australian Islamophobic extremists, including some political parties there whose platform is virulently anti-Muslim, the Antipodes – Australia and New Zealand – are regarded by white supremacists as inherently and rightfully European, so sharing in the same destiny.

8. The Scourge of Islamophobia

The mosque attacks were, at the very least, a manifestation of Islamophobia, the inchoate fear, and so rejection, of Islam and Muslims.² This is arguably the true focus of the white supremacist's extremism in the Christchurch attack.³ It was not simply an anti-immigrant and racially motivated event: it was deeply religious, if only because it had one particular religious' community in its sights. However, it is not just the religious identity of the targets, nor the religious elements in the attacker's ideology that is of relevance. Islamophobia is a widespread and pernicious component of contemporary social reality in this country, despite the tremendous expressions of empathy, respect, sympathy and acceptance that has been forthcoming within the country since the attack. This has come from the wider, secular, public and also from many religious communities, in particular a strong voice from the Christian community. In the aftermath of the attack, and in a context of widespread

1 Egil Asprem, "The Birth of Counter jihadist Terrorism: Reflections on some Unspoken Dimensions of 22 July 2011", *The Pomegranate* 13.1 (2011): 17-32 [doi:10.1558/pome.v13i1.17]; Douglas Pratt, "Reactive Co-Radicalization: Religious Extremism as Mutual Discontent", *Journal for the Academic Study of Religion* Vol. 28/1 (2015), 3-23.

2 See D. Pratt and R. Woodlock (eds.), *Fear of Muslims? International Perspectives on Islamophobia* (Switzerland: Springer International, 2016); V. Andre and D. Pratt (eds.), *Religious Citizenships and Islamophobia* (London & New York: Routledge, 2016).

3 D. Pratt, "Reacting to Islam: Islamophobia as a form of extremism", in John L. Esposito and Derya Iner (eds.), *Islamophobia and Radicalization: Breeding Intolerance and Violence* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), pp. 35-53.

shock in New Zealand society, there was an initial marked increase in sympathetic media coverage of the Muslim community and of matters pertaining to Islam. This positive response, encapsulated, perhaps, in the remark of the Prime Minister: “They are Us”, which was received as a cipher for genuine inclusion, served only to highlight the fact that the lived reality of many Muslims in New Zealand has been as recipients of immigrant, racist and Islamophobic prejudice. The reception and place of Muslims in New Zealand was highlighted as being mixed: there are many things which are positive, but still rather too many that are negative.¹ For many Muslims in New Zealand it is a case of tolerating the negative on account of the positive: for example, the most recent Islamicity Index has New Zealand as the best country in the world in which Muslims could live as it ranks overall first in respect to manifesting Muslim values.²

Whilst in a comparatively peaceful context religious commitment may be supportive of the positive valuation of diversity, and in this case the acceptance of Muslims, a recent large-scale study indicates that in New Zealand, in recent years, anti-Muslim prejudice has been stronger and more widespread than antipathy toward migrants in general across the community at large and certainly within some sectors of the Christian community.³ Another New Zealand study concludes that increased exposure to negative news featuring Muslims or Islam “is associated with both increased anger and reduced warmth toward Muslims”.⁴ The overall findings tend to support “claims that it is widespread representations of Muslims in the news, rather than partisan media biases, that drives anti-Muslim prejudice”. Nevertheless, the media, in relation to what information and representation of Muslims and Islam is selected, and so cast *as* news, plays a huge role in providing a seedbed of toxicity that nurtures not just reactive negativity but, from out of that, rejectionist views that set the scene for extremist ideologies and, eventually, violent action.

In general, when bad things happen to good Muslims, the response of the wider society within New Zealand is empathetic and supportive.⁵ For example, when our nearest neighbor, Australia, denied entry to Afghan refugees on the ship *Tampa*, in 2001, New Zealand took in 150 of them. These were mainly Hazara Shi’ite Muslims who have since integrated very well into New Zealand life. The subsequent murder of one of them in December 2008 provoked an outpouring of public sympathy, including donations to the surviving family. Similarly, in 1998, the fire-bombing of a newly opened mosque in the North Island town of Hamilton, provoked a very considerable outpouring of support from the wider society and other religious communities. First on the scene were members of the

1 See D. Pratt, “Antipodean angst”.

2 <http://islamcity-index.org/> Accessed November 19, 2020.

3 J. H. Shaver, G. Troughton, C. G. Sibley and J. A. Bulbulia, “Religion and the Unmaking of Prejudice toward Muslims: Evidence from a Large National Sample”. *PLoS ONE* 11.3 (2016): e0150209; see: <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0150209>

4 J. H. Shaver, C. G. Sibley, D. Osborne and J. A. Bulbulia, “News exposure predicts anti-Muslim prejudice”. *PLoS ONE* 12.3 (2017): e0174606; see: <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0174606>

5 Chris Barclay, ‘Churches Join Forces to Back City Mosque’, *Waikato Times*, 25 May 1996, p. 3; Chris Barclay, ‘City Mosque Wins Council Blessing’, *Waikato Times*, 28 May 1996, p. 1.

local Jewish community. Not far behind were local Christian Church communities, some of whom had lost rural wooden church buildings to arson. The support offered by these and other religious groups, together with material aid forthcoming from the wider community meant that when the mosque was refurbished there was enough to provide the safety fence and security apparatus that had been previously planned for, but for which there had not been enough funds at the time to complete.¹

9. The Muslim Migrant Experience

The historic experience and the ideal of a benign integration of all immigrants and refugees into the dominant social hierarchy lies at the heart of modern New Zealand public policy on multiculturalism. However, this hierarchy has always been, and remains, inherently complex – with intricate and intrinsic codes and practices of inclusion and exclusion at multiple levels. It is intimately connected to ideas and ideologies related to both labor division in a post-industrial nation-state and to race relations *per se*. Hovering in the background has always been the sensitive matter of social cohesion.² The Muslim immigrants and refugees who arrived in the 1950s appear to have integrated better than their later successors, especially those who arrived after the substantial changes to the immigration laws in 1987. For instance, in 1998, an Egyptian immigrant named Tarek Abaza in a newspaper interview praised New Zealand for its benign tolerance, but expressed his frustration in finding employment commensurate with his work experience and qualifications. He was genuinely surprised that he had such difficulty entering the societal hierarchy, noting that before departure from his homeland he had been assured that he would secure a senior management position.³ It is unclear who guaranteed Tarek that he would find little trouble in assimilating into the multifaceted industrial and social order of New Zealand. Unfortunately, his experience is not an isolated one – although it is not a uniquely Muslim one, rather a by-product of liberal immigration policies that often do not match the social and economic realities of the day. Some immigrants and refugees perhaps understood the complexity of integrating better than others.

In 1998, Abdurahman Jama Osman, a Somali refugee and community leader, was interviewed in a Wellington newspaper and protested that refugee agencies were actively inciting immigrants and refugees to “concoct complaints” in order to secure more state resources for their particular organizations. Unsurprisingly, the agencies concerned staunchly disagreed. A clearly astonished Osman reiterated that there was no racial discrimination and “no enmity with the New Zealand

1 Kris McGehan, “Fire Guts City Mosque”, *Waikato Times*, 6 August 1998, p. 3; Melissa Moxon, “Muslims not Daunted by Mosque Fire”, *New Zealand Herald*, 7 August 1998, p. A7; Kris McGehan, “Arsonist Hunted as Muslims Grieve”, *Waikato Times*, 8 August 1998, p. 3; Bruce Holloway, “Leader says Mosque Fire wasn’t an Act of Racism”, *Waikato Times*, 11 August 1998, p. 3.

2 Kolig, *New Zealand’s Muslims*.

3 Katherine Hoby, “NZ – land of milk and honey”, *Press*, 10 December 1998, p. 2.

people”.¹ The case of Osman elucidates the point that this society is composed of folk with diverse attitudes and opinions, aims and methodologies. Simple and simplistic answers to problem-solving can be unhelpful. Elsewhere, other Muslim immigrants and refugees possessed an even keener eye and more realistic view on this topic. For example, during the 1999 Kosovo crisis, the New Zealand government accepted hundreds of Albanian refugees. At the Auckland airport, their fellow countrymen greeted them upon arrival. At one stage, Mazhar Krasniqi (a former refugee who had arrived over four decades earlier, and former president of both the New Zealand Muslim Association and the Federation of Islamic Associations), received them with a brief but noteworthy public oration:

You are lucky ... New Zealand guarantees you all the rights. There is law here ... there is no discrimination here. You have double responsibility, as Albanians and citizens of New Zealand. Here you will be respected and welcomed ... together we will overcome all the difficulties.²

Evidently the Albanian Muslims did not understand this country to manifest unrelenting racial or religious discrimination or systemic subjugation. However, they did foresee the entirely predictable challenges characteristic of migration and integration into a host society. Although the response to the Christchurch mosque attacks, from both the government and the general public, has been most heartening, counterpoints of prejudice, negativity and discrimination undoubtedly remain. The experience of Muslims in New Zealand is nothing if not mixed, as Krasniqi indicated so long ago. Indeed, the case of Krasniqi illustrates the importance of experience and good leadership in preparing Muslim immigrants and refugees for the task of resettlement in a country governed by the vagaries and vicissitudes of neoliberal economics.

10. Conclusion

On the whole, Muslims who come to the country as immigrants seeking a better life, or as victims of other regimes and circumstances now seeking asylum and a fresh start, find a society by and large willing to accept and support them. Muslims in New Zealand typically support and understand multicultural diversity within the bi-cultural context that sets New Zealand apart from other western nations.³ They seek to participate within a context of an “incorporated multiculturalism” rather than, as elsewhere, find themselves set apart within what sociologists often refer to as “silo multiculturalism”, the form of multiculturalism that has arguably predominated in the UK and Europe, for example. In keeping with a general stance of positive integration into New Zealand society, whilst yet maintaining a Muslim identity, there are also many in New Zealand’s Muslim community who are very active in interfaith affairs and multi-faith organizations. The annual Islam Awareness week, held

1 Tom Cardy, “Somalians told to complain, says community leader”, *Evening Post*, 29 April 1998, p. 19.

2 Sabit, *Bijtë e shqipës në tokën e reve të bardha* p. 69.

3 Kolig, *New Zealand’s Muslims*.

in August, is a contribution to the multi-faith milieu that is now the reality for New Zealand society, and it is an attempt by the Muslim community to combine community outreach with the promotion of good relations and mutual acceptability and understanding.¹ The refusal of New Zealand to join the “coalition of the willing” in respect to the prosecution of the war in Iraq was widely appreciated within the Muslim community, both at home and abroad.

1 E.Kolig, “An Accord of Cautious Distance”, pp. 24-50.

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