"British Muslims" …A Challenge

Dr. Zakaryya Mohamed Abdel-Hady
Ph.D Glasgow University, UK

Associate Professor of Islamic Thought & Culture
College of Shariaa & Islamic Studies
Qatar University

"البريطاني المسلم" تحديا...

تواجه الجالية المسلمة في بريطانيا اليوم تحديات عدة على مختلف الأصعدة بداية من الحق في الوجود، ومواجهة الاتجاهات المتزايدة لرهاب الإسلام، وعدم تكافؤ الفرص والمساواة، والمشاركة في الحياة العامة والسياسية، إلى الاندماج الإيجابي الكامل في المجتمع مع التمسك والمحافظة على الهوية. وبأحداث الحادي عشر من سبتمبر في الولايات المتحدة، والسابع من يوليو في المملكة المتحدة، ومؤخرا الموقف من النقاب والحجاب ، ومحاولة حظره في كل من بريطانيا وعدد من البلدان الأوروبية الأخرى، كل ذلك أضاف تحديات هائلة على الجالية المسلمة.

ومع ازدياد البيانات والإحصاءات الرسمية المتاحة عن المسلمين في بريطانيا وضح للعيان محنة التهميش التي يعاني منها عدد كبير من أبناء الجالية، كما أعطى بعداً جديداً إلى وجود المسلمين في المملكة المتحدة بكونهم أكبر أقلية أثنية، وأن ما يقرب من 50 بالمائة من المسلمين ولدوا في بريطانيا، وأن هذا الجيل من الشباب المسلم الذي ولد ونشأ في بريطانيا لم يعد يعيش على "وهم العودة" التي ظل أبائه وأجداده يُمنون أنفسهم بها.كما أنه لا يقبل أن يتم إقصائه أو حتى تهميشه من قبل المجتمع الذي ولد بـه, إنـه بكـل وضـوح يعتبـر نفسه "بريطاني" و "مسلم" في آن واحد، ولا يمكن الاستمرار بوصفه "مسلم يعيش في بريطانيا" بل هو "بريطاني مسلم".

هذا البحث يلقي الضوء على ظاهرة "البريطاني المسلم" وتحدي الاندماج مع المجتمع، ومواجهة التمييز ورهاب الإسلام والمسلمين، كما يبرز الدور الذي يلعبه المسلمون في جعل من تلك الظاهرة واقع معيش.

Abstract

The Muslim community in Britain today face multiple challenges covering a wide range of spectrum from the basic right to exists, fighting the increasing trends of Islamophobia, having equal opportunities, to participate in public life, fully integrate within the society and be a positive member of the community. The recent events of September 11th in the US, July 7th in UK and the more recent row over the ban of the headscarf in UK and other European countries have placed tremendous challenges for the Muslim community.

The increasingly available data on Muslims in the UK serves to highlight the plight of marginalisation faced by significant numbers of this group. The latest information from the last census on 2001[1] has given a new dimension to the Muslim presence in the UK. It shows that Muslims as the largest ethnic minority and that almost 50 percent of the Muslim population is now British born. Young Muslims generation can no longer live on their elders "the myth of return." Nor are they accepting to be marginalise within the society they were born in. They clearly identify themselves as being "British" and "Muslims" at the same time. They can no longer be called Muslims living in Britain, they are basically *"British Muslims"*

Despite that, prejudice against Islam and Muslims has acquired new dimensions in recent years. Islam and its followers are being maligned, and the systematic distortion of Islam and Muslims is no longer a minor irritant that can be ignored. This paper intends to discuss the "British Muslims" phenomenon, the challenge of integration within the wider society, discrimination, Islamophobia, Muslims recognition, their response, the British government's response post the first Runnymede report[2].

Introduction:

The presence of Muslims in Europe seems to be perceived by some as a cultural or terrorist threat. With this reductive and biased point of departure, many reflections on Islam in Europe fail to reach any

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[1] The latest census took place in 2001, the next census is planned for 2011, till then those figures would act as the most accurate
[2] A group of British experts in race relations announced their decision to set up a special commission to study and analyse "Islamophobia," as manifested in the British media in particular. The commission on British Muslims and Islamophobia was established in 1995 by the Runnymede Trust.

enlightening conclusion. The very question that many of these analyses seek to answer—"Do Muslims fit into European societies?"—presupposes a radical opposition between Islam and the west. This opposition formed the basis of Orientalism, which has implicitly informed many subsequent theories on Islam and politics,[1] such as Samuel Huntington's theory of "clash of civilizations".[2] The recent terrorist attacks both in the US and the UK have also contributed widely to this negative image. Thomas L Friedman from the New York Times says "most important aspect of London's jihadist-style bombings is that every Muslim living in Western society suddenly becomes suspect, and Western countries are going to be tempted to crack down even harder on their own Muslim populations; which could further alienate already alienated Muslim youths" [3]

Muslims in Britain

Significant numbers of Muslims have migrated to Britain in the last fifty years According to the 2001 UK National Census (hereafter, 2001 Census) there are 1.6 million Muslims in the UK,[4] constituting 3 per cent of the UK population[5] of which 40,000 are in Scotland[6].

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[1] John Esposito and François Burgat (ed), *Modernizing Islam: Religion in the Public Sphere in the Middle East and in Europe,*
Rutgers University Press, 2003, pp. 251-269. *Muslim Minorities In Europe: The Silent Revolution,* Jocelyne CESARI CNRS-Paris and Harvard University

[2] Huntington Samuel 1996, The Clash of Civilizations and Remaking of World Order. New York: Simon and Schuster

[3] Thomas L. Friedman, *If It's a Muslim Problem, It Needs a Muslim Solution,* (NYT);
Editorial Desk, Final, Section A, Page 23, Column 1, July 8, 2005, Friday
http://select.nytimes.com/gst/abstract.html?res=F7081FFE3D540C7B8CDDAE0894DD404482

[4] Office of National Statistics, "Profiles", available on the ONS website at
http://www.statistics.gov.uk/census2001/profiles/uk.asp (2 November 2004),
(hereafter, UK 2001 National Census, *Profiles*). According to the 2001 Census, the total population of the UK was 58,789,194 million people.

[5] The MCB website quoting The Guardian, June 17, 2002, 'British Muslims' series - A map of Muslim Britain, the figures of Muslim population 1.8 million (3% of total British population) The Muslim population of London – 1 million (total 7.2 million); Birmingham - 150,000 (1 million) – this includes the world's biggest expatriate Kashmiri population Scotland 60,000 (33,000 in Glasgow); Wales 50,000; N. Ireland 4000, for more information see http://www.mcb.org.uk/library/statistics.php

[6] General Register Office, Scotland http://www.gro-scotland.gov.uk

Muslims are the largest faith group after Christians and constitute 52 per cent of the Non - Christian religious population.[1] Almost 50 percent[2] of the Muslim population is now British born, they are now an integral part of a multi-faith Britain. Muslims in Britain, like the followers of Islam throughout the world, are diverse in terms of cultures, languages and traditions. They come from different countries and belong to different ethnic groups.[3]

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office[4] points out to some key fact about Muslims in Britain such as; The Muslim population in Britain dates back to the C18th when Muslim sailors, known as lascars, serving on British merchant ships began to settle in the port cities of Cardiff, Liverpool, Glasgow and London. These sailors, many from Yemen, played a vital role in maintaining supplies across the Atlantic during the Second World War. The largest migration of Muslim communities began in the 1950s, coming mainly from South Asia and settling in inner-city London, the industrial towns of the Midlands, and the textile towns of Lancashire, Yorkshire and Strathclyde.

British Muslims are ethnically diverse: according to the 2001 census, 74% are Asian/ British Asian, 11.6% are white, 6.9% are black/ black British, and 7.5% are other ethnicities. Others have immigrated from South Asia (31%), the Middle East (6%), South and East Africa (6%), Eastern Europe (4%), and North Africa (2.5%). Muslims are the youngest of Britain's faith communities. Over half of British Muslims are under 25. Muslim households have the largest numbers of dependent children.

Britain now has four Muslim MPs, five Muslim members of the House of Lords, one Muslim MEP, and over 200 Muslim councillors. The first British Muslim parliamentarian was the C19th peer Lord Stanley of Adderley, followed by Lord Headley, who converted to Islam in 1913.

The first Muslim school in Britain opened in the late C19th in Liverpool. There are now over 110 Muslim schools in the UK, five of which are state-

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[1] Of census respondents who stated that they had a religion, 42 million people described themselves as Christian, 1.6 million Muslim, 559,000 Hindu, 336,000 Sikh, 267,000 Jewish, 152,000 Buddhist, and 179,000 from other religions. A further 13.6 million people stated that they had no religion or did not state a religion. See: UK 2001 National Census, *Profiles*.

[2] Office for National Statistics http://www.statistics.gov.uk - 7 May 2003

[3] M. Anwar (1979) The Myth of Return, London. Heinemann.

[4] The website of the FCO, FCO Research Analysts Islam Team, July 2005. http://www.fco.gov.uk/servlet/Front?pagename=OpenMarket/Xcelerate/ShowPage&c=Page&cid=1134650559096

funded. Hijab has been incorporated into school uniform for Muslim girls at a number of state schools.

There are references to Islamic scholars in the Canterbury Tales. Oxford and Cambridge Universities established chairs of Arabic in the 1630s, and the first English translation of the Qur'an was published in 1649. Eleven British universities now offer courses in Islamic studies. The first purpose-built mosque opened in Woking in 1889. There are now over 1,200 mosques in the UK.

The Challenge of Integration

Like many other minorities of diverse religious and ethnic backgrounds, Muslims have been challenged to define and determine their place in Britain. In trying to do so, they struggle with issues related to identity, intermarriage, gender relations, worship, health, employment, education, as well as issues related to civil rights and social and political responsibilities.

This feeling is compounded by the fact that older generation, do live in "the myth of return." They often tend to live in denial of the fact that they have lived in Britain for so many years and are not going back to their home land. Rather, they are going to die here[1].

Living as a minority in a dominant culture that is often ignorant about Islam or even sometime seen hostile to it, many Muslims experience a sense of marginalization, alienation, and powerlessness. They are seen to be different from the rest of the community and not accepted. Moreover, Muslims are receiving contradictory messages from their own community leaders and from broader society in terms of their relations to Britain. Some community members urge them to return to their forefather's home land, another minority encourages them to distance themselves from the rest of society. Meanwhile, a significant number of Muslims have chosen to build strong institutions, to become more integrated in the society.

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[1] The researcher during his 12years of residence in UK have came across number of Muslim elderly members of the society who expressed time after another their determination to return back to their home land, this off course have never materialize simply for been unpractical move, especially when their own children who were born and brought up in UK, will find it extremely difficult to fit in a society that they are alienated from.

Muslims in the UK: Deprivation, Disadvantage and Discrimination[1]

Muslims in the UK are ethnically diverse with a young age profile. They are disproportionately represented in the most deprived urban communities and experience poor housing conditions. Muslim children experience high levels of the risk factors associated with child poverty. A higher proportion of working age Muslims have no qualifications than for any other faith group. Muslims are by far the most disadvantaged faith group in the British labour market. They suffer from disproportionate levels of unemployment and inactivity and are over-concentrated in certain low-paying sectors of the economy. UK Muslims report higher rates of illness than all other faith groups and fare poorly on certain health indicators.

The UK Muslim population is ethnically diverse with the majority (73 per cent) of Asian ethnic background. In 2001, 43 per cent were Pakistani, 16 per cent Bangladeshi, eight per cent Indian and six per cent of other Asian ethnic background.[2] In addition to this there are Arab, Afghan, Iranian, Turkish, Kurdish, Kosova, Malaysian and Somali Muslims. Although figures for these ethnic groups are not captured by existing census data, Muslims from some of these groups may account for the 12 per cent of Muslims who identified themselves as either 'White' UK or 'White' other in the 2001 Census.[3] In addition, six per cent of Muslims were of Black African origin. The main write-in response to the census 'Other' categories was 'Arab'.[4] Data from the census also reveals that 46 per cent of Muslims living in Great Britain were born in the UK, while 18 per cent were born in Pakistan, nine per cent in Bangladesh, nine per cent in Africa and three per cent in Turkey.[5]

Muslims have the youngest age profile of all faith groups in Great Britain. In 2001, one third of Muslims were under the age of 16 as compared to one fifth for the population as a whole.[6] The average age of Muslims is 28, 13 years below the national average. As a result of this younger age profile,

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[1] Some of the references in this section is from "Muslims In The UK: Policies For Engaged Citizens, Open Society Institute 2005,
http://www.soros.org/resources/articles_publications/publications/muslims_20041122/5_Overview.pdf
[2] Office of National Statistics, *Focus on Religion*, London, ONS, 2004, p. 5, available at http://www.statistics.gov.uk/downloads/theme_compendia/for2004/FocusonReligion.pdf (accessed 20 October 2006), (hereafter, ONS, *Focus on Religion*).
[3] This includes the Turkish/Turkish-Cypriot population in the UK, which is estimated at between 125,000 to 300,000. See: Ansari, *The Infidel Within*, p. 169.
[4] See: Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies, *Muslim housing experiences*, London, Housing Corporation, 2004, p. 7, (hereafter, Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies*, Muslim housing* experiences).
[5] ONS, *Focus on Religion,* p. 6.
[6] ONS, *Focus on Religion,* p. 3.

which is expected to grow higher as in a survey of 100 respondents from Indian and Pakistani ethnic groups interviewed (random selection). 46 percent of young British Pakistanis and 48 per cent of young British Indians want four or more children, compared to just 19 per cent of white people. [1] Thus, Government policies aimed at children and young people will have a disproportionate impact on Muslim communities. It is vital, therefore, that Government departments and agencies implementing and delivering policy in relation to children and young people lead the way in ensuring that policy is sensitive to the needs of Muslims.

Poverty and social exclusion

Muslims in the UK are disproportionately represented in the most deprived urban communities – 75 percent live in 24 cities or authorities,[2] including around 38 per cent in London. Even within these cities, Muslims are highly concentrated spatially. 67 per cent of people from minority ethnic communities live in the 88 most deprived districts in England, as compared to 37 per cent of the White population.[3] The concentration of Muslims in the poorest areas of cities is indicative of the marginalisation of Muslims, and means that the inter-faith and inter-ethnic interactions are often of a confrontational nature, resulting from fear and mistrust of the "other side".[4]

Muslims are more likely to live in socially rented housing than all other faith groups (28 per cent live, as compared to 20 per cent for the general population). Muslims are also the most likely faith group to experience poor housing conditions: 32 per cent of Muslim households live in overcrowded accommodation, as compared to 22 per cent of Hindu, 19 per cent of Sikh and six per cent of Christian households.[5] Bangladeshis and Pakistanis are twice as likely not to have a bank or building society account than the rest of the population.[6] Over two-thirds of Bangladeshi and Pakistani households (68%) are living below the poverty line (incomes

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[1] Population Trends, Summer 2002, ONS: 'Attitudes towards ideal family size of different ethnic/nationality groups in Great Britain, France & Germany'

[2] R. Richardson (ed.), Islamophobia – issues, challenges and action: A Report by the Commissionon British Muslims and Islamophobia, Stoke on Trent, Trentham Books, 2004, p. 29, (hereafter, Richardson, Islamophobia).

[3] Neighbourhood Renewal Unit 2004, cited in *Strength in Diversity: Towards and Community* Cohesion and Race Equality Strategy, London, Home Office, 2004, p. 13.

[4] See: R. J. Pauly Jr., *Islam in Europe: integration or Marginalisation?,* Aldershot, Ashgate, 2004

[5] ONS, Focus on Religion, p. 11.

[6] New Policy Institute www.poverty.org.uk

below 60% of the median, after housing costs). This compares with just under a quarter (23%) for all households.[1]

Muslim children experience high levels of the risk factors associated with child poverty: 42 per cent live in overcrowded accommodation, compared to 12 per cent for the population as a whole; 12 per cent live in households without central heating, compared to six per cent for all dependent children; and 19 per cent live in single parent households, compared to 23 per cent for all dependent children. Over one third (35 per cent) are growing up in households where there are no adults in employment, compared with 17 per cent for all dependent children, and 28 per cent live a household without a car or van, compared to 16 per cent for all dependent children.[2]

Health

There are also indications that the deprivation and disadvantage experienced by many Muslims in the UK may also have implications for their health status. In the 2001 Census, Muslims reported the highest rates of illness of all faith groups. After taking the age structures of the population into account, it is found that 13 per cent of Muslim males and 16 per cent of Muslim females reported that their health was "not good", compared to 7 per cent for Christians. Compared to other faith groups, Muslims also have the highest rate of disability.[3]

Prenatal mortality rate amongst Pakistani mothers is 16%, twice UK average. Respiratory symptoms amongst Muslims are higher than Hindus or Sikhs (18% compared to 14%). Diagnosed heart disease or severe chest pain is 18% amongst Pakistanis, 14% in Sikhs, and 8% in Hindus. Reported long-standing illness is 20% among Muslims, compared to around 16% for Hindus and Sikhs.[4] 44% of men of Bangladeshi origin smoke, compared with 29 per cent of the general male population, 56% of women of Bangladeshi origin aged over 55 chew tobacco.[5] Self-reported diabetes

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[1] Department for Work and Pensions. Households Below Average Income 1994/5 – 2000/01

[2] Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies, *Muslim housing experiences*, p. 13, Table 3.

[3] 24 per cent of Muslims females and 21 per cent of Muslim males had a disability, as compared to 15 and 16 per cent for Christian males and females, ONS, *Focus on Religion*, p. 8.

[4] Aziz Shaikh 'Caring for Muslim Patients' - mainly based on 1997 data

[5] BMA News, May 25 2002

among Bangladeshi men and women is six times more than the general population.[1]

Harassment and discrimination

Despite, that the response to the London bombs that over 500 British Muslim religious leaders and scholars issued a religious decree stating that Islam condemns the use of violence and the destruction of innocent lives and that suicide bombings are "vehemently prohibited". They expresses condolences to the families of the victims of the atrocity and wishes the injured a speedy recovery[2], that the number of attacks on the Muslim Community have raisin. Met Police Assistant Commissioner Tarique Ghaffur said "Religious hate crimes, mostly against Muslims, have risen six-fold in London since the bombings. There were 269 religious hate crimes in the three weeks after 7 July, compared with 40 in the same period of 2004. Communities were particularly frustrated by the increased use of stop-and-search and the new "shoot-to-kill to protect" policy of dealing with suicide bombers. "There is no doubt that incidents impacting on the Muslim community have increased." And he warned: "It can lead to these communities completely retreating and not engaging at a time when we want their engagement and support." Mr Ghaffur revealed that in the first three days after suicide bombers killed 52 people and injured 700 more, there were 68 "faith hate" crimes in London alone."[3]

Recent research has concluded that in the post-September 11, religion is more important than ethnicity in indicating which groups are more likely to experience racism and discrimination.[4] Other studies found that "practising" young Muslim women encountered hostility from students,

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[1] The Health Survey of Minority Ethnic Groups, Health Survey for England 1999, Department of Health, http://www.statistics.gov.uk/
[2] The fatwa was issued by the British Muslim Forum (BMF) outside Parliament. The BMF is an umbrella group launched in March 2005 with nearly 300 mosques affiliated to it. The fatwa was reed out in mosques across the country on 22 July. On Friday, a separate public statement was made by more than 40 Islamic leaders and scholars at a meeting at London's Islamic Cultural Centre, organised by the Muslim Council of Britain (MCB). That declaration also denounces the suicide bombings.
http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/politics/4694441.stm 19 July, 2005
[3]http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/england/london/4740015.stm 4 August, 2005,
[4] See: L. Sheridan, *Effects of the Events of September 11th 2001 on Discrimination and Implicit* Racism in Five Religious and Ethnic Groups, Leicester, Leicester University, 2002.

lecturers and employers, and that they faced "double discrimination based on the grounds of gender and religious adherence".[1]

A total of 206 incidents were reported to the Islamic Human Rights Commission (IHRC) during the month after the attacks in the USA, ranging from serious crimes of violence (43 per cent), verbal and written abuse (36 per cent), to psychological pressure and harassment (8 per cent), discrimination (4 per cent) and miscellaneous incidents (9 per cent).[2]

Another survey, conducted by several Muslim groups, found that since 11 September 2001, 80 per cent of Muslim respondents reported being subjected to Islamophobia; that 68 per cent felt they had been perceived and treated differently; and that 32 per cent reported being subjected to discrimination at UK airports.[3]

According to the Forum Against Islamophobia and Racism (FAIR), the enforcement of anti-terrorism legislation "has led to the victimisation and stigmatisation of the Muslim community".[4] FAIR has also found that: "victimisation of Muslims under the anti-terrorism legislation has lead to increased incidences of Islamophobia and racism against Muslims. This has manifested itself in the form of vandalism of mosques, Muslim graves and homes" and that "the increased hostility towards Muslims has also seen an increase in hate campaigns against Islam and Muslims from far right groups".[5]

All this discriminations have led two- thirds of the Muslims in Britain to consider leaving UK, this is an alarming response barring in mind that nearly 50% of the population are UK born. As The Guardian Newspaper shows "Hundreds of thousands of Muslims have thought about leaving Britain after the London bombings, according to a new Guardian /ICM poll. The figure illustrates how widespread fears are of an anti-Muslim

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[1] M. Parker-Jenkins, K. F. Haw, B. A. Irving and S. Khan, "Double Discrimination: An Examination of the Career Destinations of Muslim Women in Britain", *Advancing Women* in Leadership, 2:1 (1999)
[2] IHRC, 'UK today: the anti-Muslim backlash in the wake of 11th September 2001', London, IHRC, 2001.
[3] Forum Against Islamophobia and Racism, Al-Khoei Foundation and the Muslim College, *Counter-Terrorism Powers: Reconciling Security and Liberty in an Open Society: Discussion Paper – A Muslim Response,* London, FAIR, 2004, p. 22. The FAIR survey was based on questionnaires sent out to Muslim schools, Mosques, charities, Islamic students' societies, NGOS and members of the community. Over 200 people responded to the Survey, providing information on how they had been affected by Islamophobia.
[4] Forum Against Islamophobia and Racism, *A Submission to the Home Affairs Committee's Inquiry into Terrorism and Social Cohesion,* London, FAIR, 2004, p. 4, (hereafter, FAIR, Terrorism and Social Cohesion).
[5] FAIR, *Terrorism and Social Cohesion,* pp. 5–6.

backlash following the July 7 bombings which were carried out by British born suicide bombers. The poll also shows that tens of thousands of Muslims have suffered from increased Islamophobia, with one in five saying they or a family member have faced abuse or hostility since the attacks.

Police have recorded more than 1,200 suspected Islamophobic incidents across the country ranging from verbal abuse to one murder in the past three weeks. The poll suggests the headline figure is a large underestimate. Nearly two-thirds of Muslims told pollsters that they had thought about their future in Britain after the attacks, with 63% saying they had considered whether they wanted to remain in the UK. Older Muslims were more uneasy about their future, with 67% of those 35 or over having contemplated their future home country compared to 61% among those 34 or under. Three in 10 are pessimistic about their children's future in Britain, while 56% said they were optimistic."[1]

Despite the legislation in Britain against racial discrimination for the last 37 years, ethnic minorities including Muslims are still victims of racial discrimination. The Race Relations Act 1976 does not fully protect Muslims because religious discrimination is not unlawful in Britain. It is worth mentioning that due to case law two religious groups, Sikhs and Jews are protected by the Race Relations Act. However, in Northern Ireland, religious discrimination is unlawful under the Fair Employment (Northern Ireland) Act 1989. A close examination of this Act shows that there is nothing in it which could not be implemented in Britain for Muslims and other religious groups. Therefore, this anomaly could be removed, if the political will were there.[2]

Another shocking report that appeared in the Guardian Newspaper was that the government would request lecturers and staff to watch Muslim students suspected of involvement in extremism - and report them to Special Branch. Paul Mackney, University and College lecturers' union joint leader, says that they were concerned about being "sucked into a kind of anti-Islamic McCarthyism"[3].

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[1] Two-thirds of Muslims consider leaving UK, Vikram Dodd, Tuesday July 26, 2005, The Guardian Newspaper.
ICM interviewed a random sample of 1,005 adults aged 18+ by telephone on July 15-17 2005. Interviews were conducted across the country and the results have been weighted to the profile of all adults. ICM is a member of the British Polling Council and abides by its rules. Further information at http://www.icmresearch.co.uk
http://www.guardian.co.uk/attackonlondon/story/0,16132,1536222,00.html
[2] M. Anwar (eds) "The Impact of Legislation on British Race Relations" From Legislation to Integration? London: Macmillan. 2000
[3] http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/politics/6053992.stm Monday, 16 October 2006

Another form of discrimination was the comments made by House of Common's leader Jack Straw in calling for a debate on banning Muslim women from using the face veil.[1] "His intervention, the bullying attacks of (Home Secretary) John Reid and other ministers, and stories in some sections of the media seem designed to isolate and demonize British Muslims". "The result has been violence against, and intimidation of, Muslim people," said the signatories of a letter that was sent to the media, which included three MPs, former British Ambassador to Uzbekistan Craig Murray and former Guantanamo detainee Moazam Begg among others. The Muslim News this week reported a series of Islamophobic attacks, including an attempted shooting, against Muslims in the past month.

Apart from Straw, Prime Minister Tony Blair has warned that the face veil was a "mark of separation and that's why it makes other people from outside the community feel uncomfortable." The frenzy was also added to by Minister for Justice Harriet Harman, who declared the veil as "an obstacle to women's participation, on equal terms, in society," while Higher Education Minister Bill Rammell praised the Imperial College in London for banning it.

London Mayor Ken Livingstone warned that the demonizing of Muslims had parallels with the hounding of Jews in Nazi Germany in the last century.[2] While the head of the Muslim Council of Britain, Muhammad Abdul Bari, has also complained that a "drip feed" of ministerial statements on the veils issue has "stigmatised" the entire Muslim community. [3] The out spoken MP George Galloway went further to say "Everybody with a brain knows the reason why Jack Straw got down and dirty and scraped the bottom of this filthy barrel was to join the Dutch auction in New Labour of who can be most beastly to a minority ~ a minority which is already beleaguered and anxious in this country. "And it's a disgusting, ugly sight and sound to see or listen to."[4] In his response the Labour peer, Lord Nazir Ahmed, criticised the way the government treats Muslims in the UK saying that There was "a constant theme of demonisation of the Muslim community", he added that politicians and journalists were jumping on a bandwagon because "it is fashionable these days to have a go at the Muslims"[5].

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[1] This comments came after a Muslim classroom assistant suspended by a school for wearing a veil in lessons, see
http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/england/bradford/6066726.stm 19 October 2006
[2] http://www.irna.ir/en/news/view/line-22/0610265400133305.htm 26 October 2006,
[3] http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/politics/6068320.stm 20 October 2006,
[4] http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/6051814.stm 14 October 2006
[5] http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/6052394.stm 15 October 2006

Tariq Ramadan, A leading Muslim scholar said the debate on women wearing veils highlights a growing "global polarisation" between the West and the Islamic world. And that the debate sparked by Jack Straw, who said the veil hampered integration, was part of a global phenomenon in which a "them versus us" attitude was being fostered between Muslims and non-Muslims.[1]

As a result of such negative comment, more attacks on Muslims were reported. "On the same day, a young veiled Muslim girl was attacked by three youths in Straw's Blackburn constituency. One young man threw a newspaper at the Muslim girl and shouted "Jack has told you to take off your veil"[2].In a Poll was undertaken by Ipsos Mori on behalf of the Greater London Authority have shown that 75% of Londoners support "the right of all persons to dress in accordance with their religious beliefs", with only18% against[3].

On a European scale a 2005 Pew Global Attitudes Project survey in the Netherlands found that 51% of the Dutch public favoured banning head scarves in public. In Germany, 54% also supported a ban while in France an even larger majority -- 78% -- did so. But in Great Britain, a solid majority (62%) thought the banning of scarves was a bad idea. Opinion was more evenly divided in Spain, where 43% said the ban is a good idea and 48% opposed it.[4]

Political Participation and Representation

Political participation is a good measure of the integration of Muslims in Britain. Most British Muslims have a right to vote and stand for elections. The concentration of Muslims in certain areas means that in statistical terms they are in a position to influence the political and electoral process in the areas of their settlement. [5]

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[1]http://news.independent.co.uk/uk/this_britain/article1932752.ece Independent, 27 October 2006

[2] For full information see: http://www.islamonline.net/English/News/2006-10/14/03.shtml 14 October 2006

[3] Hugh Muir, Guardian Unlimited, 20 November 2006, http://politics.guardian.co.uk/gla/story/0,,1952628,00.html#article_continue

[4] Richard Morin and Juliana Menasce Horowitz, Pew Global Attitudes Project 20 November 2006 http://pewresearch.org/obdeck/?ObDeckID=95 to know the view of The Islamic veil across Europe see http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/5414098.stm

[5] M. Anwar Race and Elections, Coventry: Centre for Research in Ethnic Relations. (1994)

Participation in the electoral process has increased in the last 20 years but their representation has made slow progress. Britain now has four Muslim MPs, five Muslim members of the House of Lords, one Muslim MEP, and over 200 Muslim councillors. The first British Muslim parliamentarian was the C19th peer Lord Stanley of Adderley, followed by Lord Headley, who converted to Islam in 1913.[1]

Despite that the number of Muslim members of the British parliament has doubled, yet it remains a meagre representation for the country's Muslim community, which numbers around two million. The Muslim News noted that there should be at least twenty Muslim members of parliament to represent the community adequately. It criticised the three main political parties for fielding most of their candidates – 48 between them – in "un winnable" seats[2].

Education and employment

In education, data continues to be collected on the basis of ethnicity alone. Available data indicates that the levels of academic achievement of Muslim students are low, but improving. In 2002, 40 per cent of Pakistani children and 45 per cent of Bangladeshi children in England and Wales gained five or more GCSEs at grades A*-C, as compared to 50 per cent for the population as a whole.[3]

Almost one third of Muslims of working age have no qualifications, the highest proportion for any faith group.[4] A major study, published in 2004, examined the influences on participation in higher education on the achievement and transition to the labour market of minority ethnic students.[5] On the whole, minority ethnic students are more influenced than White students by the expected better labour market opportunities that higher education qualifications would bring.[6] Nonetheless, the initial

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[1] The Foreign and Commonwealth Office website
http://www.fco.gov.uk/servlet/Front?pagename=OpenMarket/Xcelerate/ShowPage&c=Page&cid=1134650559096
3.http://www.mabonline.info/english/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=394 News
[3] G. Bhattacharayya, L. Ison and M. Blair, *Ethnic Minority Attainment Participation in Education and Training: the Evidence*, DfES, Nottingham, 2003, p. 12.
[4] ONS, *Focus on Religion,* p. 12.
[5] H. Conners, C. Tyers, T. Modood and J. Hillage, *Why the Difference? A Closer Look at Higher Education Minority Ethnic Students and Graduates,* Research Report 552, London, Institute of Employment Studies, 2004, (hereafter, Conners, *Why the Difference?*)
[6] Conners, *Why the Difference?,* p. 37.

unemployment level[1] amongst full-time Pakistani graduates, at 14 per cent, is the highest of all ethnic groups and compares to six per cent for White graduates.[2] Muslims are by far the most disadvantaged faith group in the British labour market. They are three times more likely to be unemployed than the majority Christian group.

Muslim has the lowest employment rate of any faith group (38 per cent) and the highest economic inactivity rate (52 per cent).[3] Of young people aged 16-24, Muslims have the highest unemployment rate of all faith groups; 17.5 per cent are unemployed, compared to 7.9 per of Christians and 7.4 per cent of Hindus.[4] A 2002 government report highlighted that Muslim men of Pakistani and Bangladeshi backgrounds are currently more likely to be unemployed than other 'Asians'. Muslim men and women are less likely than members of other religious groups to be in paid work.[5]

In 2004, the BBC conducted a survey in which fictitious applications were made for jobs using applicants with the same qualifications and work experience, but different names. A quarter of the applications by the candidates with traditionally English sounding names – Jenny Hughes and John Andrews – were successful in securing an interview, compared to 13 per cent for the applicants with Black African names and only nine per cent of applicants with Muslim names.[6]

There are currently about 120 Muslim schools in the UK, all of which – apart from 5 schools– are funded by parents and the community. There are about 750,000 Muslim children in the UK. About one per cent attends Muslim schools and 0.5 per cent is in non-Muslim private schools. The vast majority are in the mainstream state sector.

Of nearly 7,000 state faith schools in England, 33 are Jewish, two are Sikh, one Greek Orthodox and one Seventh Day Adventist. The Jewish community in Britain numbers just under 260,000 and the Sikh

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[1] The study uses information from *First Destination Surveys*. These surveys ask students about their activities six months after obtaining their qualification, so reveal a snapshot of the students' initial employment situation.

[2] Conners, *Why the Difference?*, p. 88.

[3] Figures provided by the Ethnic Minority Employment Division, Department for Work and Pensions, 2004, (hereafter, EMED, DWP).

[4] EMED, DWP, 2004.

[5] Performance Innovation Unit/Cabinet Office, *Ethnic Minorities and the Labour Market: Interim Analytical Report*, London, Cabinet Office, 2002, pp. 82–3.

[6] See: 'Shocking Racism in job market', BBC News, 12 July 2004, available on the BBC website at http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/business/3885213.stm (accessed 28 November 2004). See also J. Wilson, "Muslim says he was sacked for wearing beard", *The Guardian*, 11 August 2004; and V. Dodd, "City Firm Sued for Bin Laden jibes", *The Guardian,* 9 April 2004.

community just under 330,000 – compared with a Muslim population of 1.6 million. The disparities between numbers in the population and numbers of faith-based schools in the state education system continues to be a source of great grievance.[1]

The chairman of IHRC, Massoud Shadjareh, says: "The situation of the Muslim community is made much worse by the refusal of the British government to provide adequate - or even equitable - funding for Muslim schools, or even to provide consultancy services to assist Muslim groups in setting up schools that can obtain government funding. The objective should be to develop an education system that provides real choice at all levels for all groups in society, without discrimination and bigotry." [2]

Media

As the shock from September 11 subsided, however, Muslim concern about the media's tendency to elevate fringe figures to a place of mainstream importance became a live issue once again.[3] For many years Muslims had complained about the prominence given to Omar Bakri Muhammed – the North London cleric with a penchant for publicity and the provocative quote. For all the good intentions, after September 11 many newspapers and broadcasters still found him a hard habit to break. But the appeal of Omar Bakri paled dramatically when set against the attractions of Abu Hamza. Here, just waiting for an unquestioning press, was a villain straight out of central casting. He has an eye patch, a hook replacing an amputated hand, a claimed association with Taliban training camps and a knack for issuing blood-curdling threats.

In an analysis of the media post September 11, the *Daily Mail* printed the same photo of Abu Hamza on the 15th, 17th, 18th, 20th and 21st.[4] It also printed an interview with him on the 13th September that was partially repeated on the 15th and 18th as well. Days after the beginning of the war in Iraq, his views were sought again. The Press Association, which supplies all national and regional papers, described him as 'one of Britain's best known Muslim preachers'.

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[1] *Richard Stone,* Islamophobia issues, challenges and action, A report by the Commission on British Muslims and Islamophobia http://www.insted.co.uk/islambook.pdf
[2] End Institutional Islamophobia in the British Education System, Islamic Human Rights Commission, 28th October 1999 http://javan.co.uk/rd/ihrc_search.jsp
[3] I. Bunglawala, (2002a) British Muslims and the Media, in Muslim Council of Britain, *The Quest for Sanity,* pp 43-52. and I. Bunglawala, (2002b) It's Getting Harder To Be A British Muslim, *The Observer,* 19 May
[4] I. Bunglawala, (2002a).

Of course, figures like Hamza and his associates have a right to have their views reported, as does any other citizen of this country. But too often such views are reported as representative of all Muslim communities. Moderates who sought to place them in their proper context struggled to make their voices heard. Inayat Bunglawala of the Muslim Council of Britain voiced the frustrations of many. 'There are over 800 mosques in the UK and only one of them is run by a known radical. Yet this one mosque (Finsbury Park, London) seems to get more coverage than all the rest put together! The situation is akin to taking a member of the racist BNP (British National Party) and saying his views is representative of ordinary Britons.'[1]

The problem, however, is that, because of the Western media's coverage of Islam, it is still groups such as Hizb-ul-Tahir, and its contemporary spin-off, Al-Muhajiroun that attract the headlines because they fit the cognitive framework that the Western media have devised for Islam. Through their vocal militancy and intolerance, they confirm the stereotypes and commonly held assumptions. Unfortunately, they also attract all the attention; whereas, those interpretations of Islam that condemn Hizb-ul-Tahir or similar groups receive significantly less coverage because they don't fit the "conventional wisdom" about Islam. But whose conventional wisdom, we have to ask ourselves, is this? What are its sources? Does it really bear any resemblance to the beliefs of the vast majority of Muslims in Europe (or the world, for that matter)?[2]

Policing and anti-terrorism

In 2002 the European Centre on Racism and Xenophobia warned, from widespread anecdotal evidence, of a rise in Islamophobic violence.[3]

Research for the European Commission in 2003 reported that a high proportion of British Muslims perceive the police service to be racist.[4] There were references to disproportionate use of stop and search powers, discrimination in responding to calls, harassment of Muslims, 'macho, nationalistic and colonial' attitudes, and the failure of the service to recruit

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[1] I. Bunglawala, (2002a).
[2] P. Mandaville, "Europe's Muslim Youth. Dynamics of Alienation and Integration", in S. T. Hunter and H. Malik (eds.), *Islam in Europe and the United States: A Comparative Perspective,* Washington, Centre for Strategic and International Studies, 2002,
[3] Allen, Christopher and Jørgen Nielsen (2002) *Summary Report on Islamophobia in the European Union after 11 September 2001*, Vienna: European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia
[4] Anwar, Mohammed and Qadir Bakhsh (2003) *British Muslims and State Policies*, Warwick: Centre for Research in Ethnic Relations pp. 34-36

and retain Muslims. The accumulation of complaints and grievances meant that there is growing mistrust between the police and Muslim communities.

Islamophobia and its features[1]:

There are many definitions of islamophobia. Consequently, a group of British experts in race relations announced their decision to set up a special commission to study and analyse "Islamophobia," as manifested in the British media in particular. The commission on British Muslims and Islamophobia was established in 1995 by the Runnymede Trust. Its report, "Islamophobia: a challenge for us all", was published in 1997 and launched at the House of Commons by the Home Secretary then Jack Straw. According to the report, Islam is percept as essentially a threat, both in the world at large and within Britain in particular. They mentioned Islam as a successor to Nazism and Communism, and it contains imagery of both invasion and infiltration. It "is referring to dread or hatred of Islam- and therefore, to fear or dislike of all or most Muslims. Such dread and dislike have existed in Western countries and cultures for several centuries. In the last twenty years; however, the dislike has become more explicit, more extreme and more dangerous"[2]

The Runnymede report also stated that "The word 'Islamophobia' has been coined because there is a new reality, which needs naming. Anti-Muslim prejudice has grown so considerably and so rapidly in recent years that a new item in the vocabulary is needed so that it can be identified and acted against. The use of the new word 'Islamophobia' will not in itself prevent tragic conflict and misuse. But, we believe, it can play a valuable part in the attempt of correcting perceptions and improving relationships"[3]

It must be emphasised that we are not talking here about legitimate critical analysis of Muslim politics, society and even culture. It is healthy to debate, criticise and condemn, sometime robustly, opinions and practices with which one disagrees. But this should not, demonisation of Islam, which in turn leads to an alienation of Muslim communities as minorities in the West.

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2. See Z. Abdel Hady, (2005) "Islamophobia"…A reality. *Universal Academy Journal*, England, Spring, issue 17.
3. Runnymede Trust, Commission on British Muslims & Islamophobia, Islamophobia: A Challenge for us all, London, Runnymede Trust, 1997
1. Young European Muslims. "Islamophobia and the west". Young European Muslims. 5, 2002: 10th April. 2004 http://lancashiremosques.com/data/newsletters/issue5.pdf

Muslims in Britain are unable to resort to legal remedies to address this problem as religions are not covered by anti-racist legislation. If some of the writings were written about Blacks rather than Muslims, they would have been hauled in front the Race Relations Board and the Press Complaints Commission, if they were written about Jews, they would have been instantly accused of anti-Semitism and condemned.

Islamophobia has a number of features. To understand these features, the Runnymede report, suggests drawing a key distinction between open and closed views of Islam. Phobic dread of Islam is the recurring characteristic of closed views. Legitimate disagreement and criticism, as also appreciation and respect, are aspects of open views. They itemise eight main features of closed views, and contrast them in each instance with eight main features of open views as summaries in the following table. These include the portrayal of Muslim cultures as monolithic, intolerant of pluralism and dispute, patriarchal and misogynist, fundamentalist and potentially threatening to other cultures. A further and particularly disturbing feature is its apparent acceptability. As the report claims, "the expression of anti-Muslim ideas and sentiments is increasingly respectable."

Closed and open views of Islam		
Distinctions	Closed views of Islam	Open views of Islam
Monolithic / diverse	Islam seen as a single monolithic bloc, static and unresponsive to new realities.	Islam seen as diverse and progressive, with internal differences, debates and development.
Separate / interacting	Islam seen as separate and other – (a) not having any aims or values in common with other cultures (b) not affected by them (c) not influencing them.	Islam seen as interdependent with other faiths and cultures – (a) having certain shared values and aims (b) affected by them (c) enriching them.
Inferior / different	Islam seen as inferior to the West – barbaric, irrational, primitive, sexist.	Islam seen as distinctively different, but not deficient, and as equally worthy of respect.
Enemy / partner	Islam seen as violent, aggressive, threatening, supportive of terrorism, engaged in 'a clash of civilisations'.	Islam seen as an actual or potential partner in joint cooperative enterprises and in the solution of shared problems.
Manipulative / sincere	Islam seen as a political ideology, used for political or military advantage.	Islam seen as a genuine religious faith, practiced sincerely by its adherents.
Criticism of West rejected / considered	Criticisms made by Islam of 'the West' rejected out of hand	Criticisms of 'the West' and other cultures are considered and debated.
Discrimination defended / criticized	Hostility towards Islam used to justify discriminatory practices towards Muslims and exclusion of Muslims from mainstream society.	Debates and disagreements with Islam do not diminish efforts to combat discrimination and exclusion.
Islamophobia seen natural / problematic	Anti-Muslim hostility accepted as natural and 'normal"	Critical views of Islam are themselves subjected to critique, lest they be inaccurate and unfair.

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MUSLIM RECOGNITION

"Recognition" carries varying informal and formal/legal meanings in different national contexts, it generally implies a provision of equal and positive public place for the unique identities, interests, and needs of specific groups. [1] In another similar argument,[2] recognition may mean redressing serious forms of discrimination and inequality that arise from prior withholding of recognition of certain minority groups.

Further, their misrepresentation or false depiction can be a form of oppression. This certainly applies to British Muslims, for whom frequent maligning of image has contributed to forms of discrimination and even violence directed against them. As a kind of corrective, Nancy Fraser proposes a different way to characterise recognition, namely as "upwardly revaluing disrespected identities and the cultural products of maligned groups" with the specific aim of "positively valorizing" them.[3]

The response of British Muslims

With the significant demographic change which has taken place within the Muslim communities in Britain, namely a shift from first generation migrants towards second and third generation British-born citizens the question of identity is now part of an on-going discussion within the Muslim communities in Britain. It is relevant, among other factors, to community facilities, and the responses of relevant authorities to the needs of Muslims in the areas of their residence.

The response has been influenced by the relative sense of marginalisation Muslim communities feels. Certainly in the early days, Muslims rarely, gave feedback to the media about their feelings on what is written or broadcast about them. This is also due to lack of experience and organisation on the part of the Muslim community and partly due to apathy and nonchalance. Such an attitude has been greatly induced by the inward-looking nature of many within the ethnic Muslim minorities. Many developed a siege mentality and do not even read, let alone wish to respond to the tabloids. The lack of any clear leadership and representative Muslim

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1. Rath, Jan. Groenendijk, Kees. and Pennix, Rinus. The Recognition and Institutionalization of Islam in Belgium, Great Britain and the Netherlands. New Community 18, 1991
2. C. Taylor, *Multiculturalism and "the politics of recognition"*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992
3. N. Fraser, from redistribution to recognition? Dilemmas of Justice in a "Post-Socialist" Age, New Left Review 212, 1995

voice has not helped either as the Media does not know who speaks for the community.[1]

Religious Affiliation as a Marker of Identity

The Home Office Citizenship Survey 2001 indicated that, for Muslims, religion was a more important aspect of identity (second to family) than ethnicity.[2] This finding is supported by other research that has tracked the rise, since the 1980s, of religion as a more significant marker of identity amongst Muslims than ethnicity.[3] Different[4] M. O'Beirne, the survey asked participants to list the top ten things that would say something important about themselves. For Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs the top three were family, religion and ethnicity. For Christians, religion was seventh on the list.

Explanations have been put forward for this. Muslim mobilisation may be a response to racism, in which Muslim identities provide a way to respond to inequalities and negative stereotypes. It may also be a reaction to the public devaluation and disparagement of Muslims and Islam that has led to increased in-group solidarity.[5] Muslim political activism can also be seen as part the "politics of 'catching-up' with racial equality and feminism".[6]

"For young people, Islam is a credible alternative to the prospect of unemployment, drugs, alcohol or delinquency. It allows them recover some

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[1] M. Anwar Q. Bakhsh, State Policies Towards Muslims In Britain, Part of the "State Policies Towards Muslim Minorities in the European Union" Research Project Funded by the European Commission, DG Employment and Social Affairs. January 2002, http://www.emz-berlin.de/projekte/pdf/Muslims_in_Britain.pdf

[2] M. O'Beirne, *Religion in England and Wales*, p. 20.

[3] See: S. Bouchner, C*ultures in Contact*, New York, Pergamon Press, 1982; N. Hutnik, "Aspects of identity in multi-ethnic society", in *New Community*, 12(1), 1985, p. 298; A. Saeed, N. Blain and D. Forbes, "New ethnic and national questions in Scotland: post-British identities among Glasgow Pakistani teenagers", in *Ethnic and racial studies*, 22(5), 1999, pp. 821–844, (hereafter, Saeed et al, *New ethnic and national questions in Scotland*); and L. Archer, *Race, Masculinity and Schooling: Muslim boys and education*, Maidenhead, Open University Press, 2003, (hereafter, Archer, Race, Masculinity and Schooling).

[4] M. O'Beirne, Religion in England and Wales, p. 20.

[5] See: Saeed et al, *New ethnic and national questions in Scotland*, pp. 821–844 and p. 826. See also: Y. Samad, "The politics of Islamic identity among Bangladeshis and Pakistanis in Britain", in Y. Samad, T. Ranger and O. Stuart (eds.), *Culture Identity and Politics: Ethnic Minorities in Britain,* Aldershot, Avebury, 1996.

[6] T. Modood, "Muslims and the Politics of Difference", in *Political Quarterly*, 74 (1), 2003, pp. 100–115. (Simultaneous publication in Sarah Spencer (ed.), *The Politics of Migration*, Oxford, Blackwell, 2003).

personal dignity and to project a better image of themselves. They seek to reaffirm their identity and to live according to Islamic teachings."[1]

In the 2002 OSI Report, for example, it was noted that few Muslim responded to negative media coverage by making complaints to press and television regulators.[2] Since 2002, however, there have been several instances in which Muslims have mobilised to complain about particular articles or programmes in the media. In two cases, complaints by Muslims and others have led to action against individuals.[3]

Muslim organisations are increasingly submitting responses to Government consultations, and submitting and presenting evidence to Parliamentary enquiries. Commentators have also noted the emergence within Muslim groups and organisations of a discourse of British Muslim citizenship.[4] The development of this discourse has been attributed to the emergence of a younger generation of British born Muslims, educated and socialised in Britain and embedded in communities whose future is in Britain.[5]

Several authors have noted a significant shift in the discourse within many British Muslim organisations, from a defensive isolationism focused on the good of the Muslim community, towards discussion of Muslim

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[1] P. Mandaville, "Europe's Muslim Youth. Dynamics of Alienation and Integration", in S. T. Hunter and H. Malik (eds.), *Islam in Europe and the United States: A Comparative Perspective,* Washington, Centre for Strategic and International Studies, 2002,

[2] 2002 OSI Report, p. 130.

[3] When Robert Kilroy-Silk, the presenter of the BBC 1 daytime discussion programme, published an article in the *Sunday Express* newspaper in which he called Arabs "suicide bombers, limb-amputators and women oppressors", his show was suspended by the BBC and eventually cancelled, due in part to complaints by Muslims. See: "CRE calls for Kilroy Apology", BBC News, 11 January 2004, available on the BBC website at http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/1/hi/uk/3387599.stm (accessed 26 October 2004). Similarly, the British Council fired a senior press officer, Harry Cummins, after it was discovered that he was the author of a series of anti-Muslim articles in the *Sunday Telegraph.* See: W. Cummins, "Muslims are a threat to our way of life" *Sunday Telegraph,* 25 July 2004, http://www.telegraph.co.uk/opinion/main.jhtml?xml=/opinion/2004/07/25/do2504.xml (accessed 2 November 2004).

[4] See, for example: T. Ramadan, *To be a European Muslim: a study of Islamic sources in the European context*, Leicester, The Islamic Foundation, 2002; J. Cesari, "Muslim Minorities in Europe, the Silent Revolution", in John L. Espoito and Francois Burgat (eds.), *Modernizing Islam, Religion and the Public Sphere in Europe and the Middle East*, London, Hurst, 2003.

[5] P. Lewis, "Beyond Victimhood: from the global to the local, a British case study", in J. Cersari, (ed.), in *European Muslims and the Secular State in a comparative perspective: final symposium report*, Network on Comparative Research on Islam and Muslims and Europe, Brussels, European Commission DG Research, 2003, (hereafter, Lewis, *Beyond Victimhood*).

contributions towards the "common good".[1] For example, Dr Manazir Ahsan, Director General of The Islamic Foundation, argues for the "need for British Muslims to define themselves in respect of their national and political loyalties and belonging with an emphasis on the mutualities and commonalities with the wider non-Muslim society".[2] Within Muslim organisations, "the debate is no longer centred on rights and has moved on to responsibilities in the broader context of Islamic altruism.

One in ten of London's 250,000 businesses are Asian owned. Pakistanis and Bangladeshis own 2,450 businesses.[3] Britain may have well over 5000 Muslim millionaires with liquid assets of more than £3.6bn. Their wealth will make them among the most sought after customers by Britain's financial services sector…the market for Islamic [sharia-compliant] finance in the UK is set to grow hugely.[4] There are around 900 mosques, and about 100 UK registered charities.[5]

Over the years and in different cities, public accommodation of Muslim needs and concerns has included permission to establish facilities for ritual slaughtering of animals for food; to set aside areas of local cemeteries for Muslim use; to provide Halal (permitted) meat in public institutions such as schools, hospitals, and prisons; to designate prayer facilities or time for prayer in the workplace and to allow time off for religious festivals. Other accommodations also have been successfully campaigned for regarding Muslim concerns in the education system particularly in cities with large Muslim populations. Such matters are not only often permitted routinely, but Muslim organisations are regularly included in local government consultations about matters concerning community relations. In some cities, they have effectively linked to provide a common front in dealing with local and county authorities, for example the Bradford Council of Mosques and Leicester's Federation of Muslim Organizations.[6]

It has been on this local level that Muslim political engagement has emerged most strongly. Nielsen observes that "the decade until 1988 had witnessed a major change in the way in which Muslim organizations took part in public life. They had previously been marginal and often timid; they

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[1] P. Mandaville, "Europe's Muslim Youth. Dynamics of Alienation and Integration", p.23
[2] M. S. Seddon, D. Hussain and N. Malik, *British Muslims – Loyalty and Belonging*, Leicester, The Islamic Foundation, 2003, p. viii.
[3] The contribution of Asian businesses to London's economy - a report prepared by the London Chamber of Commerce and Industry', December 2001, published by the Greater London Authority
[4] The Guardian, Feb 1, 2002 - based on a report published by Datamonitor
[5] The Salaam portal www.salaam.co.uk
3. P. Lewis, Islamic Britain: Religion, Political and Identity among British Muslims. London: Taurus, 1994

had tended to implicitly present themselves as ethnic minorities as they sought to fit in through the community and race relations structures. By the end of the decade many had laid claim to participation in the public space; they had effectively integrated into the organizational politics of the local scene functioning like most other special interest groups, standing out only by the express Muslim identity" [1]

One reason for this shift is doubtless the greater familiarity with and confidence felt by Muslims in engaging with formal structures such as government agencies. Part of this familiarity and confidence came through the emergence of a younger generation of Muslim community activists and organizers who had been raised and educated in Britain. Another reason for the shift is likely linked to the changes in the late 1970s and early 1980s, with the expansion of local government funding of minority groups [2]

A decade ago Muslim unification in Britain is shown with the inauguration of the Muslim Council of Britain (MCB) in November 1997. MCB is an umbrella organization of over 400 local, regional, and national Muslim institutions. It came as the culmination of various steps taken by British Muslim professionals and organisations to present a moderate Muslim public image, while lobbying for the recognition of various minority rights. It became essential that such an umbrella organization was needed when in 1994 the Home Office secretary demanded that Muslims form a single representative body or he would not even speak with them.

The Muslim Council of Britain (MCB), Muslim Association of Britain (MAB) and the Forum Against Islamophobia and Racism (FAIR), amongst others, have been active in monitoring media coverage of Islam and in organising forceful complaints. The MCB has held a serious of meetings with national newspaper editors.

Muslim groups and individuals now participate in a number of cross faith and non-faith organisations, including the United Britain Trust. Muslim organisations were heavily involved in mass anti-war demonstrations before and during the conflict with Iraq.

The Muslim Association of Britain in association with other anti-war groups organised a national demonstration entitled 'Don't Attack Iraq & Freedom for Palestine' that took place on Saturday the 15th of February 2003. Around two million people marched through the streets of London to

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4. J. Nielsen, Muslims in Britain and Local Authority Responses, p 53-77
1. I. Kalka, Striking a Bargain: Political Radicalism in a Middle-Class London Borough", in black and Ethnic Leadership in Britain. London: Routledge, 20-25

Hyde Park while over 100,000 marched through the City of Glasgow in Scotland. This event has been titled as 'Britain's biggest ever demonstration'.

Media operated and controlled by Muslims have developed considerably in the past ten years. Key examples include monthly Muslim newspapers such as Q-News and The Muslim News and the latest published Emel monthly magazine. Further, there are now at least fifteen "Ramadan radio" stations in places such as Birmingham, Bradford, Glasgow, Luton, and Manchester, granted licenses to broadcast for various periods of the day.

On April 30th 2003, in the Evening Times[1], the Muslim Association of Britain (MAB) in Scotland led the way to empower Muslims through a unique campaign to vote smartly for the Anti-war campaigners. Osama Saeed a MAB spokesperson said "What we are urging people to do is what is in the best interest of Muslim community". The Evening Times reveal activists were urging the community to vote Labour and other "war mongering parties" out of Scottish Parliament. The campaign was so significant that made the first minister of Scotland Jack McConnell meet up with the Muslim community in Glasgow.

The establishment of the European Council of Fatwa and Research signify Muslim recognition of the importance of having European scholars whom are fully aware of both the European culture and Muslim needs. On the 9th of April 2005, it issued a strong statement encouraging Muslims to vote in the upcoming elections, "Muslims' participation in elections is a national duty; in addition it falls under cooperation on that which is good and righteous for the society and wording off harms from it, Allah Almighty says: **"… help ye one another unto righteousness and pious duty. Help not one another unto sin and transgression..."** (Al-Ma'dah: 2) Therefore, we can say that Muslim's participating in elections held in non-Muslim societies is Islamically permissible and there is nothing wrong in doing so. Besides, it is a kind of mutual cooperation with those whom Muslims think as potential candidates who, if they win the elections, will bring benefits for the society in general and Muslims in particular." [2]

The Muslim Association of Britain (MAB) held a workshop on Tuesday 1 March 2005[3] to discuss Muslim participation in the forthcoming British national elections. The workshop was attended by 40 participants representing different main Muslim organizations in the UK. It highlighted the necessity of both mobilising Muslims to vote and propose to them a strategy of voting so as to serve British Muslim best interests. They agreed

[1]. O. Saeed, McConnell Muslim Voters, the Evening Times, 30 April 2003
[2] European Council for Fatwa and Research, seen at the Muslim Association of Britain website 9th April 2005, http://www.mabonline.info/english/
[3] For full information see, http://www.mabonline.info/english/

that: It is the religious duty of Muslims in the United Kingdom to be politically active. Muslim organizations need to cooperate together in order to mobilize the Muslim masses so as to take part in the elections.

Muslim votes should be cast wisely and tactically on the basis of the issues that matter. Therefore, candidates from all political parties should be assessed according to their standing vis-à-vis the issues that matter, such as; Opposition to draconian bills that violate the basic rights of individuals and confiscate their civil liberties. And to Islamophobic tendencies and to discrimination against the Muslims on religious or racial bases, Ending the occupation of Iraq and withdrawing British troops, recognizing the plight of the Palestinian people and sympathizing with their struggle for freedom and liberation.

Currently Britain now has four Muslim MPs, five Muslim members of the House of Lords, one Muslim MEP, and over 200 Muslim councillors. And for the first time Manchester City had its first Muslim Mayor in its history.

Muslims youth feeling fully integrated in the society, and who have the right to support their favourite football club at the same time not feeling they are forced to reject their beliefs, have managed to get Rangers club to drop the Carling (beer) logo from their shirts - for Muslim fans. The club said it would sell unbranded tops to supporters who don't want to advertise beer on their chests. The move comes after complaints from Muslims whose religion prohibits anything that promotes drinking[1].

Between two Reports:

On 15 February 2003 there took place the biggest public demonstration ever in British history. One of its many characteristics was the sense of shared community. 'Pakistani women shared pakoras and cucumber sandwiches with women from the shires in the biggest anti-war march ever,' wrote a Muslim journalist, 'a postcard image of race relations that no Home Office initiative could even dream of achieving'. But within weeks, the wonderful solidarity seen on that day seemed to be unravelling. There is now renewed talk of a clash of civilisations, a new global cold war, and mounting concern that the already fragile foothold gained by Muslim communities in Britain is threatened by ignorance and intolerance. 'For most Muslims,' continued the journalist quoted above, 'the war dramatically exposed how partisan the western media is – and, for many, how crass western politicians are and how gullible the western public is.

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[1] http://www.eveningtimes.co.uk/hi/news/5039479.html 01 June 2005

However, it is the despair, the frustration and the anger that should be noted. Today, Britain's 1.6 million Muslims are living on a diet of death, hypocrisy and neglect that is traumatising and radicalising an entire generation.[1]

The commission on British Muslims and Islamophobia was established in 1995 by the Runnymede Trust. Its report, "Islamophobia: a challenge for us all", was published in 1997 and launched at the House of Commons by the Home Secretary then Jack Straw. The report highlighted the issue of Islamophobia with its features by drawing a key distinction between open and closed views of Islam. The report criticised public bodies for failing to address institutional Islamophobia. The report concluded with sixty recommendations. Launching the new report 2003[2], Dr Richard Stone, chair of the commission warned that key recommendations had been ignored. In this following pages I will try to show what kind of progress have been done since the first report.

Much of the credit for combating and reducing Islamophobia in Britain over the last few years must go to Muslim organisations, working nationally, regionally and locally. But some credit must go to the government also. Notable developments introduced by the government include changes in employment law, so that Muslims are now protected from direct and indirect discrimination in recruitment and workplace practices; changes in the criminal justice system, so that crimes against Muslims attract higher sentences if they are aggravated by anti-Muslim hostility; the appointment of Muslims to chaplaincy roles in hospitals and prisons; the creation of Muslim schools within the state education system; encouragement of inter-faith activity and cooperation, and the involvement of faith communities in neighbourhood renewal; the potential of the community cohesion agenda to promote equality and dialogue in local settings; and greater sensitivity to the concerns and needs of Muslims throughout public services. It is relevant also to mention changes in the financial services industry to accommodate Muslim beliefs and values relating to loans, and increased sensitivity to the dangers of Islamophobia in the media.[3]

Some important developments since 2001

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[1] The quotations are from an article by Fuad Nahdi in The Guardian, 1 April 2003.
[2] *R. Stone,* Islamophobia issues, challenges and action, A report by the Commission on British Muslims and Islamophobia - http://www.insted.co.uk/islambook.pdf
[3] *R. Stone,* Islamophobia issues, challenges and action, A report by the Commission on British Muslims and Islamophobia http://www.insted.co.uk/islambook.pdf

Employment and Services

In autumn 2003 the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS) prepared draft guidance for employers on the operation of the new regulations against religious discrimination. Since December 2003 it has been unlawful to discriminate on grounds of religion or belief in recruitment and workplace organisation.

In recent years of reasonable adjustment in the provision of services took place in the banking system. Under Islamic law, the receipt and payment of interest is forbidden and many Muslims are reluctant to take out mortgages from banks and building societies to finance home purchase. In response to this need, a working party was established by the Bank of England and in his April 2003 Budget the Chancellor introduced a measure (abolition of double stamp duty) that has opened the way for financial institutions such as HSBC to offer home purchasing schemes to Muslims in accordance with Islamic law. And lately the opening of the Islamic Bank of Britain (IBB).

Prison Service

In 1999 the post of Muslim Adviser was created in the headquarters chaplaincy team to supervise arrangements for imams to act as 'chaplains' to Muslim prisoners and, more generally, to advise on meeting Muslims' religious and pastoral needs.

Religiously aggravated crimes

There was consideration of this matter in autumn 2001. The government proposed the amendment but it was rejected by the House of Lords. Subsequently case law established that the principal harm covered by the concept of incitement to religious hatred (namely, abusive and offensive behaviour) does now attract higher sentences. All offences shown to be aggravated by religious hostility attract higher sentences. The Crown Prosecution Service published a formal policy statement on racist and religious crime on 14 July 2003.[1] In July 2004, the Home Secretary announced the Government's intention to introduce legislation to outlaw incitement to religious hatred.[2]

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[1] more information at www.cps.gov.uk
[2] Home Office, "Sideline the Extremists – Home Secretary", Press Release 222/2004, 7 July 2004, available at: http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/n_story.asp?item_id=993 (accessed 2 November 2004).

To Muslim disappointment and due to opposition from the Liberal Democrats and the Conservative Party, the Government announcement (7th April 2005) that it was dropping the Incitement to Religious Hatred section from the Serious and Organised Crime Bill. "Sadly, British Muslims will now continue to remain second-class citizens and denied the legal protection that is given to some racial and religious groups such as Jews and Sikhs under existing racial incitement laws. "We deplore the position of the Liberal Democrats – who had proposed an amendment backed by the Tory Party - that would have regarded Muslims as a racial group, notwithstanding the fact that Muslims transcend racial boundaries. We regarded this as a vital piece of equality legislation that would have accorded Muslims and other faith groups protection from those who are deliberately inciting hatred against them," said Iqbal Sacranie, Secretary-General of the Muslim Council of Britain.[1]

Recognition in the census

It was largely due to tireless and skilful lobbying by many Muslim organisations through the 1990s, robustly supported by the Inter Faith Network and a range of Christian organisations, that the 2001 census contained a question about religious affiliation.[2] It was answered by 92.7 per cent of respondents. The Muslim community was shown to be larger than all other non-Christian communities put together.

In the overall context of this report, British Muslims is extremely significant, for it strikingly shows that Islam in Britain, as indeed Islam world-wide, is a multi-ethnic community. This point has far-reaching implications for the legal system and anti-discrimination legislation. Age profiles differ greatly between Muslim communities and the population as a whole. Just over a third of all Muslims (33.8 per cent) are aged 0-15, and almost a fifth (18.2 per cent) are aged 16-24. The national average is 20.2 per cent aged 0-15 and 10.9 per cent aged 16-24. Since Muslim communities have proportionately more young people than the national average they are bound to grow in size, both proportionately and absolutely, over the next 20 years.

British people need to be educated about Islam and the Arab world

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[1] http://www.mcb.org.uk/
[2] For a detailed account of the campaigns see Sherif (2001). A key role was played in the 1990s by UK Action Committee on Islamic Affairs (UKACIA), the forerunner of the Muslim Council of Britain.

Although Islamic contributions to science, medicine and mathematics are documented in the academic literature, they are still not widely known or acknowledged in the West, and rarely do school or university curricula teach about these Islamic influences. The omission of such information only serves to confirm the prevalent racism that assumes all discoveries of importance arose in the West. These non-European discoveries, generally kept hidden from students and the public, could assist in challenging common-sense ideas of Muslims or Arabs being uncultured and backward.[1]

Edward Said highlight this issue by saying "I have not been able to discover any period in European or American history since the Middle Ages in which Islam was generally discussed or thought about outside the framework created by passion, prejudice, and political interests"[2]

The Islamic Society of Britain (ISB) a UK national organization, for years have been organizing one of its most successful events "Islam Awareness Week" to invite all Muslims to work together during the week in sharing Islam with the public at large, providing information regarding its message and way of life, and removing misunderstandings in the process. Last year theme was 'Your Muslim Neighbour' seeks to highlight the valuable contributions made by British Muslims to everyday British society. It follows on from the year before theme about Muslim Heritage and the influence of Islamic civilisation in British history,[3] this year theme is about "One World".

Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations

"British Muslims" today is a reality; they are now an integral part of a multi-racial, multi-cultural and multi-faith Britain. Religious organisations play an important role in civil society and provide substantial support for their members.

Muslims are over-represented in the prison population (almost 10% of the total). However, they are under-represented in the police, the judiciary, the civil service, the media, public appointments and also in the decision-making process. Recently there have been numerous press reports

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1. A. Shahid, *Tackling Islamophobia.* Students Youth Work Online, http//youthworkcentral.tripod.com/sashrif_tackling.htm
2. E. Said, *Covering Islam.* New York: Pantheon Book, 1981
3 For more information visit http://www.iaw.org.uk/

attributing violent assaults and attacks on individuals and property such as mosques. Generally, there seem to be an increase in Islamophobia.[1]

Islamophobia cannot be separated from the problem of anti-Muslim racism. As such, Islamophobia is not restricted to a hatred of Islam, but also prejudice and hatred directed against people who are or who are perceived to be Muslim. Anti-Muslim prejudice and racism is based upon claims that Islam is an 'inferior' religion and a threat to the dominant values of society. It may be evident in relation to employment, the provision of goods and services, and the general treatment of Muslim communities by non-Muslim individuals, groups or other bodies. It may include a range of behaviours and practices such as: direct verbal or physical attacks against individuals and groups; discrimination in relation to access to jobs, goods and services and other civic rights and entitlements; cultural or religious insensitivity which serves to exclude Muslims from exercising their rights as citizens.

There is general hostility towards Islam and Muslims in Britain by services, in the media and by the general public.[2] Racism and religious discrimination against Muslims, in the workplace.[3] In schools, on council estates is widespread. There is also serious under-representation of Muslims in the national and local level decision making process and in key agencies such as Government, the Health Service, Education Service and the judiciary.

Muslims in Britain have been the focus of increasing public attention most of which has been highly negative: Muslims have been portrayed in all kinds of media in very offensive and defamatory ways. On the other hand, another form of public attention has been much more positive. Muslims have made very significant forms of achievement, recognition and accommodation in a variety of public spheres and institutions in Britain, right up to representation in the House of Commons and Lords.

The needs of British Muslims have been poorly resourced from the public purse. As the Forum Against Islamophobia and Racism (FAIR) has stated: 'the building and maintaining of mosques, Islamic schools, Muslim community centres and facilities and the wide range of Muslim institutions that help to cater for British Muslim needs, preserve Muslim identities and

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[1] See European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC) (October 2001) Two Reports, Anti-Islamic reactions in the EU after the terrorist acts against the USA, Vienna, EUMC.
[2] P. Weller, A. Feldman and K. Purdam (2001) Religious Discrimination in England and Wales, London: Home Office.
[3] B. Hepple and T. Choudhry (2001) Tackling religious discrimination: practical implications for policy makers and legislators, London: Home Office.

keep the Muslim community together, are essentially an achievement of Muslims themselves with little support from mainstream funding sources'.[1]

Muslim communities in Britain had become increasingly organised and articulate in their calls for the recognition of minority rights, fair treatment, and political representation in a variety of public arenas. Muslim mobilisation has called for the broad acceptance and accommodation of practices, values, moralities, and legal systems quite different from long-standing British traditions. The struggle to achieve these accommodations has consolidated and galvanized many local Muslim groups, associations, and umbrella organisations.[2]

Despite acknowledging what the British government have given to its Muslim citizens is far below the minimum required, we can fairly say that some attempts are been made in some areas. What really deserves parsing is the significant role that the Muslim citizens played in the community by taking the lead and not failing to be passive members of the society. Another aspect that needs to be looked at is having British born Muslims trained and educated to act as imams and spiritual leaders to address the issues of the British Muslims today.

A policy of encouraging pluralism will meet the aspirations of mainstream Muslims in UK, Islam recognized as not an alien religion, Muslims as full citizens, avoiding the creation of a closed community, ghettos, and minority status.

As the emergence of a younger generation of Muslim community activists and organizers who had been born, raised and educated in Britain. And who feel that they can no longer be ignored or sidelined, at the same time they are proud to be "British Muslims "This shift is doubtless is a result of the greater familiarity and confidence felt by Muslims in engaging with formal structures such as government agencies.

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[1] FAIR homepage www.fairuk.org/introduction
2. J. Nielsen, *"Muslims in Britain and Local Authority Responses, in the New Islamic Presence in Western Europe"*. London: Mansell, 1988, p53-77

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