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ENGAGEMENT WITH THE MUSLIM COMMUNITY AND COUNTER-TERRORISM: BRITISH LESSONS FOR THE WEST

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Dr. Hellyer writes on European Muslim communities, European law, political philosophy, and the interplay between Islam and modernity, including the rise of radical extremism. His academic publications include chapters in a number of books including a recent Edinburgh University Press volume on Muslim radical extremism and a volume published by Amal Press entitled, "The State We are In: Identity, Terror and the Law of Jihad." He is a regular commentator for the Guardian (UK), the Washington Post (USA) and Prospect Magazine (UK). In his latest book (due in 2008 from Edinburgh University Press under the title of The 'Other' European: Muslims and Multiculturalism), he argues that Europe must come to terms with all of her history, past and present, and that Muslim communities should work to be integral to Europe.

# INTRODUCTION

H istorians will undoubtedly record that the events of September 11th, 2001 were a turning point for policy makers and politicians in the United States of America. America faced a new kind of security threat, the response to which would spark a series of difficult chain-reactions and challenge core national values. More than six years on, America is still grappling with the question of how to respond, both domestically and internationally, to the terrorist threat.

The nineteen perpetrators of the 9/11 attacks were not American citizens; they were foreign born and held foreign passports. To Western eyes, the threat thus came from a far away place. In every sense of the word, the terrorists were 'alien.' Following the initial shock of the attacks, many in the West felt driven to understand "the Muslim world" (with much of that world being in, and of, the West) and the environment believed to have produced this new, very foreign, threat.

Yet the notion that this threat was solely 'alien' to Western society was soon challenged. The American-led invasion of Iraq in 2003 was followed by still more terrorist attacks – this time in Spain and the UK. The latter attack, on the London Transport system in July 2005, sent shockwaves throughout Europe – not because of the scale of the atrocity but because of the nationalities of the perpetrators. They were British-born. For some in the West, this confirmed their worst fears: that Muslim communities within their very midst could pose a security threat. After 7/7, concerns surrounding integration and assimilation became intertwined with counter-terrorism and counter-radicalisation agendas and took on urgent importance.

Six years after 9/11 and two years after 7/7, these issues remain important. Indeed, as the gravity of the situation became clear, America began to suspect that if 9/11 were to repeat itself, the scenario would involve violent radicals entering the country with Western passports. This paper looks to provide policy recommendations for Western governments with significant Muslim populations. To provide useful counsel, these recommendations are based on a narrative of events in the UK surrounding the 7/7 bombing and its aftermath (with some reference to the wider European context).

Following the attacks in London, seven communityled working groups were set up under the banner of "Preventing Extremism Together" (PET) to develop practical recommendations for tackling violent extremism.<sup>1</sup> The groups offered counsel in a number of key areas, including measures to combat radicalisation. The recommendations were delivered to the Home Office Minister, Hazel Blears, with the following advisory: "We do not yet know what we do not know."

This advisory has not changed. Certain aspects of the extremist threat have been grasped more fully, but not all. Somewhat useful but one-dimensional answers have been put forth, identifying and amplifying one issue over others. Some argue that Western foreign policy is the overriding problem and the root of all terrorism. Others identify a neo-religious imperative, and insist that its evil is enough to cause any act of radical violence. Still others point to a lack of Muslim integration in Europe, which makes violence the most attractive method of expressing frustration.

While none of these explanations is sufficient alone, together they point to questions that must be answered if we are to respond effectively to the threat of terrorism. It is hoped that this work identifies some of those questions and provides some tentative answers. It remains a possibility that Western-born Muslims will attack the West again.

So far, the aforementioned advisory to the British Home Office Minister has not been taken with due seriousness. Worse, several initiatives and policies have been proposed (and in some cases, pursued) that may

<sup>1</sup> Working Groups Report, "Preventing Extremism Together," Home Office, 2005, see <a href="http://www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1501973">http://www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1501973</a>>.

simply aggravate the situation. To a degree, this is understandable. The West felt under attack, and with good reason. But the response must be strategic and improve – not worsen – our security. Nor can we allow our enemies to win by default, which would be the case if we respond in a way not befitting our values and history.

In essence, there is a generation of Muslim youth in Europe who are extremely alienated because they, unlike their parents, expect to be integrated, but find doors closed and at the same time are not at home in their parents' native culture. They are also offended and enraged by images of Muslims being killed or mistreated around the world as a result of Western foreign policies. They are often political idealists, but are religious neophytes who are being targeted by unorthodox, 'takfiri'<sup>2</sup> preachers because mainstream religious authorities have been ineffective in reaching them. By and large, such preachers are unsuccessful in exploiting their indignation—but a miniscule minority do become vulnerable.

Despite differing demographics, America could face a similar challenge if the government continues to mis-

handle relations with Muslim communities domestically and abroad. Western governments would be well served to follow the example of the London police, which in the interest of preserving a public order that is gravely threatened, is reaching out aggressively to the full spectrum of Muslim groups within their community as partners, save those advocating violence against the state whom they are just as aggressively imprisoning. The outreach includes using Salafis, however unpalatable their social views may be, to deradicalize radicalized youth by teaching them a more generally accepted form of Salafism, which eschews vigilante violence.

These are testing times, but they are not hopeless times. Hope is neither taken away nor given by terrorists. The West must go forward now with knowledge and a refusal to abjure justice and integrity.

Al-Qa'ida's dream is that the West will give up on hope and choose despair. But the choice is not Al-Qa'ida's to make.

The future will depend upon what choices and actions we in the West choose to take in addressing the threat in our midst.

<sup>2</sup> Please see below for a description of this term and the author's upcoming terminology paper with Brookings to be published in late 2007.

Modern Britain and Muslim British Communities Whether the hyperrealistic 'Other' of urgent history is controlled or feared, remains to be seen, but what is for sure, is that in the foreseeable future, Europe's 'Other'<sup>3</sup> will remain undoubtedly Muslim."<sup>4</sup>

"Islam is not separate from European history, with which it is interwoven. On the contrary, it is an essential component of the history of Europe. The question of Islam's presence and condition in Europe therefore seems to be an aspect of the character of our institutions and of our system, and not just a marginal chapter concerning the treatment of transitory colonies of migrant foreigners."<sup>5</sup>

# THE 'OTHER' WITHOUT BECOMES THE 'OTHER' WITHIN: MUSLIM MIGRATION TO EUROPE

To remedy a desperate labour shortage following the 2nd World War, Europe opened its doors to immigration. Workers from the Indian subcontinent flooded into the UK, North Africans went to France, and Turks became "guest workers" in Germany.

For European societies, these communities had been the "Other without;" now they were "within." Upon arrival, they did not just constitute small ethnic or national minority groups; they represented large populations with a culture and faith that spread amongst indigenous Europeans. The integration of Muslim communities was particularly problematic. European Muslims were not envisaged as permanent citizens and certainly not as Europeans. Unlike immigrants to Canada or America, these groups were assumed to be temporary, there to provide a limited service that eventually would end. From the Muslim community's point of view, they could be none other than temporary. Yet as time went on, it became clear that the "myth of return" was exactly that - a myth. Muslim migrant communities were there to stay and would irrevocably change the makeup of European societies.

By and large, the new immigrants came from rural areas in their homelands. If the rural Pakistani communities that migrated to England after the 2nd World War had gone to Karachi or Lahore, they would have felt out of place. They went to Bradford and Birmingham. Their different economic status was amplified by their different cultural heritage. These communities were not Caucasian. They were brown and black, and were perceived primarily through a racial prism of reference. Europe was and remains very conscious not only of class, but also of race, and not in a positive sense. Worse, the new immigrants could not have come from a region that was more problematic for the European psyche. Their presence brought back uncomfortable reminders of a buried past. Moreover, their religion was Islam, which in pre-modern Europe had served as the 'Other,' simultaneously stimulating European development while providing Europe with a counter-civilization against which to define itself.

The revival of religion in the public sphere within the Muslim world also had its effects on Muslim communities in Europe. The emergence of a political identity based on religion clashed with European notions of secularism, particularly in places like France, where French Republicanism had developed a strong anti-religion current, as evidenced by the *foulard* (head-scarf) debate that began in the 1980s and continues to this day. Incidents such as the Rushdie Affair of the early 1980s reminded Britain that there was a large section of its population that took religion very, very seriously.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> The concept of the 'Other' has been aptly described elsewhere, but will be elaborated later in this work.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Christopher Allen, "Endemically European or a European Epidemic? Islamophobia in a Post 9/11 Europe," *Islam and The West: Post 9/11* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), p. 141.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> Giorgio Conetti, "Concluding Remarks," Islam and European Legal Systems (Vermont: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2000), p. 200.

If Muslim immigrants had been rich, white, non-religious and not of Muslim heritage, integration may have been easier. Even so, alienation of first generation immigrants was not judged to be exceptionally problematic. These communities were known to be law-abiding, and generally minded their own business. Their migration in large numbers to specific geographical areas made it possible for them to settle in distinct sub-cultures within their host society (unlike the U.S. and Canadian experience, where settlement was generally dispersed). Still believing their stay to be temporary, they tolerated their lot and hoped for a better life one day back in their homeland.

#### MUSLIM BRITONS: IDENTITY POLITICS AND THE SECOND GENERATION

Second generation Muslim Europeans came of age in the 1980s. They witnessed the social (and often legal) discrimination that characterised their parents' lives, and were unwilling to settle for it. But they had little power to change or escape it.

Unlike their parents, who sought refuge in their own immigrant sub-cultures, the younger generation expected to be integrated into mainstream society. While they may have been of Turkish, Arab or Indian subcontinental extraction, they were not Turkish, Arab or Pakistani/Indian/Bangladeshi. They were European, born and raised. They could not relate to their parents' old-world ethnic communities. Nor could they relate to the religious functionaries brought over by their parents to teach them. In a society like the U.S. or Canada, they may have been assimilated; but it was not the same in Europe. No role models emerged for them to emulate, unlike, for example, what the African American community of the U.S. had in the civil-rights activists Malcolm X and Martin Luther King Jr.

The challenge of internal integration continued, causing some commentators to portray Muslims in Europe as impossible to incorporate, except in a way that would bring chaos. Examples across the continent abound. During the late 1990s in Greece, itself a religious country, the Metropolitan Damaskinos orchestrated demonstrations against the building of mosques in Kimmeria and Pelekiti.6 In the Netherlands there was the anti-Muslim Pim Fortuvn, who was at the centre of controversy for his views on Islam and his anti-immigration position. Obviously, there are differences between the two countries-Greece is the home of Hellenic Orthodoxy, and genuine integration is thus hindered. Damaskinos was a logical, if zealous, example of anti-Muslim sentiment; Fortuyn was more virulent, and explicitly identified Muslims as a threat to Dutch culture. German state policies towards Turkish residents may not have pushed them to send their dead to Turkey (as Turkish Germans frequently did), but they certainly did not assist or encourage Turkish integration into Germany. In Sweden, it could be said until recently, "the formula according to which Sweden was governed was: 'One nation, One people, One religion."7 This was a model of integration that could not accommodate Muslim migrant communities.

The second and third generations thus found themselves alienated twice over. First from their parents' sub-cultures, and then from the mainstream culture. They needed a way to belong. One vocal minority found it by listening to the arguments of Islamist revivalist movements.

The Islamist revivalist movements in the Muslim world affected the Muslim diaspora in Europe, and those movements placed a pronounced emphasis on a 'Muslim identity'. This was particularly the case in the UK where Islamist organisations were quite active. However, it was not Islamism as a political movement that played the strongest role. Opposition to the 1979 Iranian Revolution and Western support for Israel visà-vis the Palestinian *Intifadah* caused the West to become identified as a source of opposition to Muslim autonomy. In the wake of the 1991 Iraq War, American military troops found themselves implanted in Arabia,

<sup>6</sup> Stefano Allievi, "Relations and Negotiations: Issues and Debates," *Muslims in the Enlarged Europe: Religion and Society*, (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2003), p. 353. <sup>7</sup> Ake Sander, "The Status of Muslim Communities in Sweden," *Muslim Communities in the New Europe*, (Reading: Ithaca Press, 1997), p.187. the land of Islam's holy sites—this only strengthened anti-Western sentiment. Finally, the early 1990s saw the genocide of Muslims in Bosnia. Young British Muslims saw white Muslims being slaughtered in the hundreds of thousands on their television screens. From their standpoint, this massacre was more evidence that Muslims could not belong in the West. The fact that the U.S. finally intervened was cynically dismissed as part of a larger geo-political strategy to extend American hegemony.

The next generation saw the rise of a politicized Muslim identity, and it saw in this identity a way to belong —even though that particular type of politicisation was not shared by a majority of Muslims. In the Muslim world, revivalist movements were formed with minimal contribution from Islam; mainstream religious authorities were generally not a part of the process, as their credibility was compromised due to their relations with the state. There was some engagement, but across the Muslim world, the 'ulama (religious scholars) were separate from the Islamist movement, and did not join. This contrasts with earlier political movements in which the 'ulama were heavily involved, as in the Libyan resistance to Italian occupation, for example. Nor did European Muslim communities quite buy into Islamism, which was specifically aimed at political action in the Muslim world. But in the absence of any credible alternative, a non-religious 'ummah-nationalism' became the basis of a politicised Muslim identity. The concept of *ummah* (nation) was and is a deeply rooted concept in Islam, and as Muslim communities, even if only nominally Muslim, these communities demanded that sentiments be expressed in a religious vocabulary.

Thus it came to a pass that a particular sense of belonging emerged in a part of the UK Muslim community, quite distinct and separate from mainstream Islamic thought due to the absence of religious authorities in the Islamist movements as well as the British Muslim community as a whole, and sufficiently powerful to claim a significant portion of the political identity of the second and third generation of Muslim youth. That sense of belonging became a more potent force when Islamist movements physically arrived from the Muslim world; none of them necessarily violent, but with very anti-establishment views, considering that they had developed in the face of significant political repression in the Muslim world. That anti-establishment identity, in the face of social barriers to integration from the mainstream vis-à-vis the Muslim communities, proved immensely attractive to the second and third generations of Muslim youth. In the 1980s, Muslim identity politics was born, particularly in the UK, and although only a small portion of Muslims would become members of Islamist-based groups, it would nonetheless affect how Muslim communities would develop their political consciousness.

#### A LETHAL INJECTION INTO AN UNSTABLE Cocktail: Radicals into Alienated Communities

In the mid 1990s, there were deeply alienated Muslim populations in Europe. Some Muslims (although by no means a majority) found their belonging in Muslim identity politics, and due to the perception that Western foreign policy abroad and discrimination at home was harming Muslim interests, they remained alienated. 'Alienation' in this narrative is not about a lack of social cohesion, but rather, psychological distancing. Socially, integration was not the issue: these communities certainly were integrating on social levels. However, their alienation prevented full psychological integration: they perceived the West as a place where Muslims could not belong. This was due primarily to reluctance on the part of the mainstream to incorporate these communities, and secondarily to the failure of immigrant sub-cultures to provide their youth with alternative ways of belonging.

It was into this milieu, particularly in the UK in the 1990s, that more radically extreme activists arrived, fresh from the politically repressive societies of the Muslim world. Abu Qatada, Omar Bakri Muhammad and other radical preachers found asylum in the politically open societies of Europe. The UK itself had a long tradition of hosting resistance movements, the anti-apartheid movement being but one example. The British authorities treated the Islamists as opposition movements, acceptable as long as they did not indulge in violence. A minority of extremists, such as Abu Qatada, managed to come in under the same rubric as the Islamists, even though the Islamists themselves did not adhere to such radical views.

The ideological standpoints of these types of neoreligious extremists will be examined later in this work, but it should be noted here that their ideologies never converted the Muslim populations of Europe, or indeed, anywhere else. All radical extremist movements are by nature marginal, and cannot take root or be implanted unless the soil has been conditioned and fertilized. If such wide-scale alienation had taken place in the 1950s or 1960s, these radical movements would have likely emerged as nationalist or Marxist organizations. The soil was such that these alienated communities would only accept movements that used a religious vocabulary (even if, as will be discussed below, this was far removed from mainstream Islamic thought).

It was only a matter of time before this soil, so consistently and continuously cultivated by alienation, and now implanted with a radical seed, would produce a limited number of fruits that would lead to terrorism on European soil.

# BRITISH MUSLIM IDENTITY POLITICS AT THE TURN OF THE CENTURY

Multiculturalism in Britain, and to a lesser degree elsewhere in Europe, gained significance in the 1980s and 1990s as a way to formulate identity and the structure of the state. Racism ceased to be publicly acceptable in the same way it had been hitherto, and the incorporation of different ethnic groups was declared to be a goal of the state.

This shift obviously had huge repercussions for the British Muslim community, which is predominantly of immigrant origin. In 2001, the community numbered 1.6 million people (it has now probably surpassed 2 mil-

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lion). British Pakistanis account for 43% of the Muslim population; British Indians 9%; British Bangladeshis 17%; Black Britons 7% and the rest, including a sizeable convert community, make up the remainder.<sup>8</sup> Well over two-thirds of the British Muslim community was therefore affected by the multiculturalist discussion.

Hence, Muslim identity politics in the 1990s emerged as part of that multiculturalist discussion, and Muslim populations formed lobby groups through which to participate. In order to reach institutional agreements, European governments encouraged Muslim communities to form representative bodies; in some cases they demanded it. There could be no integration without a single "face" to deal with as a community representative. In the UK, this requirement led to the formation of the Muslim Council of Britain in 1997, with similar lobby groups in other countries.

But these developments did not solve the problem. The emergence of Muslim youth groups and then lobby groups was positive in that it provided avenues through which Muslims could mature, but they would not mature into members of the mainstream. Many barriers to integration still existed, even if the political doctrine of multiculturalism and the race-relations industry had created legal regimes to protect them from discrimination in some areas, but not all. These populations had no role models, and Muslims remained on the sidelines of mainstream society.

It is useful here to recall the state of affairs in Britain at the turn of the century, and how it differed from the U.S.:

1. Muslim immigrants to Europe came primarily from a different cultural and religious context, in which both culture and religion shaped their identity. This characteristic itself is unremarkable, but different from migrations to the U.S. There, Islam was not the religion of the state, but modern American society is far more accepting of religion *per se* than are modern European societies.

<sup>8</sup> Statistics Online, *The British Census*, 2001, see <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/statbase/Expodata/Spreadsheets/D6891.xls>.

- 2. Most Muslim migrations to Europe came from the rural and working class. American Muslim immigrants, by contrast, were typically professionals, had significant socio-economic power, and had been exposed to urban modernity. European Muslim migrants would have felt alienated in an urban environment within their own countries, thus, they formed sub-cultures.
- 3. Migration proceeded at a rapid pace.
- 4. The Muslim communities also had to overcome the challenge of indigenizing itself in new surroundings, following similar histories of other migrant communities. Integration happens, but over time, and with effort from both the demographic majority and the minority, and non-indigenous Muslim communities are no different in this regard.
- Despite progressive laws, European society is not accustomed to ethnically diverse civic national identities, as in the Canadian or American experience.

For all of these reasons, it was inevitable that the integration of Muslim migrant communities was going to be difficult. A certain cultural dislocation should have been expected and accounted for in reaching an effective settlement of these new components of European societies. Unfortunately, this was not the case. In 1999, Sardar, a British academic, made the following observation on some movements in Europe that were not representative of the majority, but still significant:

"Muslims are dreaded and loathed not just in Serbia, but throughout Europe. In France, they have been dubbed 'blood-thirsty savages' (by Brigitte Bardot, no less)<sup>9</sup> and an aromatic affront to civilisation (by Jacques Chirac). Jean-Marie Le Pen's National Front has fought two elections on a singularly anti-Muslim ticket. The designer fascism of the Deutsche Alternative party in Germany is fuelled by anti-Muslim sentiments. The Progressive Party of Denmark openly campaigns on a 'Denmark with no Musselmen' ticket, as does the Swedish New Democratic Party."<sup>10</sup>

Ferrari and Bradney, also European academics, followed with this observation a year later:

"As we move from one Christian millennium into the next and Christians war with Muslims within Europe, the way that European legal systems treat Muslims becomes a matter of great moment both for Muslims and for hopes for freedom of religion. For countries often accustomed to the idea that freedom of religion has largely been won, the presence of large numbers of Muslims within their borders tests whether notions of neutrality towards different faiths and acceptance of difference are rhetoric or reality."<sup>11</sup>

Eventually the situation was likely to stabilize, if there was willingness among both the minority and the majority. History shows that Muslim communities have skillfully adapted to new cultural circumstances,<sup>12</sup> and Europe, for its part, had been moving toward inclusionary policies, in spite of persistent sentiments to the contrary (as shown above). British Muslim identity in fact did evolve to insist on constructive, citizen-based engagement in ways that will be discussed later in this work. Political developments, however, demanded quicker progress.

#### 9/11 AND 7/7

When the Twin Towers in New York were struck on 9/11, the repercussions in Europe were intense. Feelings against Muslims and Islam intensified. The Italian

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> Bardot described the situation as thus "My country, France, my fatherland, is once again being invaded, with the blessing of our successive

governments, by an excessive influx of foreigners, notably Muslims, to which we are giving our allegiance." See Joel S. Fetzer, and J. Christopher Soper, Muslims and the State in Britain, France and Germany, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 130.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> Sardar Ziauddin, "Where are my Muslim brethren?" 1999, available at < http://www.newstatesman.co.uk/199904190010.htm>.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> Silvio Ferrari, and Anthony Bradney, Islam and European Legal Systems, (London: Ashgate Publishing, 2000), p. ix.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> Umar Faruq Abd-Allah, Islam and the Cultural Imperative, The Nawawi Foundation, 2004, available at <<u>http://www.nawawi.org/downloads/article3.pdf></u>,

Northern League party exploited the situation, reducing the immigration issue to 'fighting against terrorism.' In August 2002, the number two party whip suggested that it was time for the Italian state to close down Islamic centres and mosques "frequented by possible supporters of terrorism." Clearly, the events of September 11, 2001 provided an excuse for anti-Muslim sentiment under the pretext of protecting Italy from a fifth column. Muslim communities had previously been viewed with disdain, but after 9/11, when it became clear that these attacks and others were to be attributed to Muslims fighting for Islam, the idea of a dangerous Islamic 'Other' became ever more entrenched. These sentiments did not spread to the general majority, but they remain significant when analysing the discourse.

This shift in point of view was largely due to media coverage, which focused on Muslims in a generally unfavourable manner, leaving other threats unexamined. A recent case in point: shortly after the fifth anniversary of 9/11, police arrested two men in the UK who, it was claimed, had the ability to carry out the largest chemical attack on British soil in history. Neither was Muslim, let alone a "radical Islamist." They were Anglo-Saxon Englishmen, former members of a farright British nationalist party.<sup>13</sup> The media paid these men scant attention, choosing instead to focus on the small percentage of British Muslim women who chose to wear the face veil (niqab). While this was an important story, it was hardly comparable in terms of security considerations. Nonetheless, the face-veil story was emphasised by the press for months, and the arrests were barely reported.

The events of 9/11 brought to the fore many issues surrounding the integration of Muslim communities, but not in a way comparable to what happened later as a result of the Iraq war. The Madrid bombings took place on European soil; terrorists acting in the name of Islam attacked a European city. In July 2005, the same happened again, but this time, it was arguably more disturbing. Four bombs went off in the London public transport system, killing dozens (including the bombers themselves) and wounding around 700. Two weeks later, four more bombings were attempted but failed.

What came as a revelation to the British public was the claim, following a preliminary police investigation, that the London attacks had not been carried out by Muslims abroad. Britain had been bombed by Britons. The shock that the suspects were British was compounded by the fact that they appeared to be wellintegrated members of British society; the real surprise was the degree to which radical criminal extremists had become immersed in Western societies.

In the 1990s and early 2000s, as noted above, Britain had officially embraced a doctrine of multiculturalism. Immigrant communities were integrating, and diversity was increasingly respected. Yet the new policies were not sufficiently developed to roll back decades of marginalization and psychological alienation. While one of the accused was a teacher responsible for children with special needs and worked at a community centre, and another was a university graduate active in local sporting activities, none were psychologically integrated into the mainstream and all were vulnerable to radical ideologues who appealed to their Muslim identity. The grievances that Muslim communities felt as a result of repression elsewhere in the world provided fodder for radicals to exploit, and they did so in their search for recruits.

#### ENGAGEMENT WITH THE MUSLIM COMMUNITY POST 7/7

In response to the shock of 7/7, many theories were considered and various initiatives discussed. The idea that the radical violence was actually a "problem with Islam" caused some to claim that Islam itself had to be "reformed" in order to protect society. Salman Rushdie, the famous novelist, wrote in *The Washington Post* on August 11, 2005: "The Islamic Reformation has to begin here, with an acceptance of the concept that all ideas, even sacred ones, must adapt to altered realities." Norman Tebbit, a noted British politician declared in

<sup>13</sup> BBC News report (2007), "Ex-BNP man wanted to shoot PM," 2007, available at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/england/lancashire/6357261.stm>.

an interview with Epolitix.com, that "the Muslim religion is so unreformed since it was created that nowhere in the Muslim world has there been any real advance in science, or art or literature, or technology in the last 500 years."

Many, both Muslim and non-Muslim, suggested that the attacks could be linked to the failure of European societies to integrate Muslim communities, as well as to European foreign policy in the Middle East. If these issues were resolved, it was claimed, the problem of terrorism would disappear. In the government's own task force on "Preventing Extremism Together" there was an overwhelming recognition of foreign policy as a key issue to be considered. Muslim opposition to foreign policy ebbs and changes, but it is hard to think of a period in recent history when British foreign policy has been identified by so many Muslims, of so many different persuasions, to be a cause of great distress. As previously mentioned, the perception, fair or not, in many Muslim communities is that where foreign policy pertains to Muslims, it is patently unjust and contributes disproportionately to Muslim suffering. In particular, they point to Western support for tyrannical regimes in the Muslim world (a policy carried over from the 1980s and 1990s to exclude Islamists from political power), the invasion of Iraq, and a reluctance to support the Palestinians.

In 2005, reports from both Chatham House (an independent think-tank) and the Joint Terrorist Analysis Center (which includes officials from MI5, MI6, General Command Head Quarters and the police), insisted that U.S.-led involvement in Iraq was explicitly linked to terrorist activity in the UK, and to the subsequent rise in the threat level. Current foreign policy had become a security risk; indeed the security services made no secret of the fact that they were handling the repercussions of Government strategies abroad.

Prior to July 7th, however, the Joint Terrorist Analysis Center had concluded that no group had the intent and capability to mount an attack. Clearly, they miscalculated. Britain's security services publicly acknowledged that al-Qa'ida had begun targeting the UK, and they took measures accordingly. More than a thousand people have been arrested in the UK on terrorism-related charges since 9/11; of those, two hundred await trial and twenty-three have been convicted. In November 2006, the head of MI5, Dame Eliza Manningham-Buller, estimated that there were thirty major plots underway, and that an attack in the UK remained a strong possibility. Other members of the security services agreed and urged the Government to take heed.

After the 7/7 attacks, several initiatives were undertaken to avoid a repetition of the tragedy:

- 1. New Scotland Yard continued to run a Muslim Contact Unit set up in the aftermath of 9/11, composed of non-Muslim and Muslim police officers who advised the police on how to engage with the Muslim community.
- 2. The wider police force in London had the Muslim Safety Forum, where Muslim representatives engaged with the police to express their grievances and come to policies that would not alienate the community further, in a Britain where many Muslims felt unfairly targeted.
- 3. The Home Office and Foreign Office funded non-radical religious Muslim intellectuals and scholars to tour the UK and give lectures to Muslim youth that encouraged their integration into British society through religious arguments (the 'Radical Middle Way' program).<sup>14</sup>
- 4. The Foreign Office funded British Muslims to travel overseas and speak positively of the lives they lived in Britain, to ensure that Muslim communities abroad knew that Britain was not diametrically opposed to Islam.

All of these initiatives, and others, it was felt, were positive and needed to be supported.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup> "The Radical Middle Way" project; see <http://www.radicalmiddleway.net>.

However, other recommendations were not given such wide support, and not without just cause. The Home Office, which hitherto had been responsible for anti-terrorism initiatives as well as pro-integration measures, felt it could no longer fulfill its duties in its present format. The agendas for anti-terrorism and integration had to be separated if they were to be successful. The Home Office was left concerning itself with legal affairs and crime-related issues while a new department, the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG), was set up in 2006. It dealt exclusively with the "social cohesion" agenda and with all other issues relating to the "what it means to be British" debate. It also assumed responsibility for engaging with the Muslim community.

Up until 7/7, the British government had dealt with the Muslim Council of Britain (MCB) as the main representative of the Muslim community in Britain. Post 7/7, this was no longer the case. The media brought to light that the founding individuals behind the MCB had been, decades previously, associated with the Jama'at Islami - an Islamist political movement from the Indian sub-continent, founded by Abu-l-'Ala Mawdudi, one of the inspirations of Sayyid Qutb (an imprisoned member of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood who was later executed by the Egyptian state). Radical extremists after his death found justification for some of their ideas in his writings, although it remains unclear how directly responsible his writings were; Qutb died before any of these movements emerged, and they appeared to draw on their experiences, rather than his writings, to justify their ideas.<sup>15</sup> Nevertheless, the Muslim Brotherhood did write tracts against him, suggesting that the bulk of the Islamist movement viewed his ideas as mistaken. The groups that founded the MCB had never interpreted Qutb's writings in a way that drew them to violent radicalism: on the contrary, they advocated participation in the mainstream, and this was part of the rationale behind setting up the MCB.

Although this association with Islamist organizations was entirely in line with how Muslim identity politics had formed in the 1990s, and none of the British lobby groups had ever been associated with violence, the DCLG in 2006 took the decision to stop dealing with the MCB, claiming the MCB had not been able to show that it had the support of the wide majority of Muslims in the UK, and that it harboured anti-Western views. That these anti-Western views were primarily related to foreign policies, and shared by many other sections of Western society, was ignored.

The rest of the Government did not take such drastic steps, perhaps recognizing that across Europe, many lobby groups inspired by Islamist movements provided the conduit for Muslims to enter mainstream community politics and were useful interlocutors in the democratic process. The al-Muhajiroon group (which by the time had already been disbanded) and its offshoots were banned. Although in Germany Hizb ut-Tahrir was already banned, this idea was later shelved in the UK. This was due to the express objections of the security services who knew it would be counterproductive, as the group had not broken any law, and would be interpreted as a double standard, since farright groups like the British National Party remained active. The political establishment was convinced, albeit reluctantly, that it could not fairly ban Hizb ut-Tahrir, and when the issue re-emerged in July 2007, the former Home Secretary, John Reid, said:

"I confirm what the Prime Minister said: we have recently carried out two reviews of Hizb ut-Tahrir and we have decided that there is insufficient evidence to ban it. I therefore ask the Prime Minister to stay absolutely on the course that he set today, and to stick by the law and the evidence and not to be swayed by any arbitrary political advantage that he thinks might be gained. May I also tell him— nothing would be more politically disadvantageous

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup> See Abdelwahab El-Affendi, *The Conquest of Muslim Hearts and Minds? Perspective on U.S. Reform and Public Diplomacy Strategies*, Brookings Institution, p. 18, 2005, available at <a href="http://www.brookings.ed/fp/research/projects/islam/paper\_elaffendi.pdf">http://www.brookings.ed/fp/research/projects/islam/paper\_elaffendi.pdf</a>>.

than taking on a case without evidence and losing it. That would confirm all the accusations made against us by our opponents.<sup>16</sup>

The *Salafi* movement (a religious revivalist movement emanating from the Muslim community in the 18th century) became extremely suspect since 'Osama Bin Laden, the head of *al-Qa'ida*, claimed to be a *Salafi* (even though the religious authorities of the *Salafi* movement had disowned him as early as 1993).

In addition, new legal measures were introduced criminalising certain types of speech. This was highly controversial since such measures were perceived to go against Britain's tradition of free speech.

As is clear from the above discussion, Britain in particular, and Europe in general, had many issues to face following the attacks of 7/7. Two years on, questions are still waiting to be answered: which policies failed and which policies worked? On what assumptions were the failed policies based, and on what premises were the successful ones built?

In the aftermath of 7/7, a number of issues and themes became topics of societal discussion. Some were discounted and rejected; others became entrenched in the discourse. Academics and policy makers (as well as those who moved between both worlds, such as the author) were confounded. Now that the dust is settling, it may be easier to understand the questions and move on to more comprehensive answers.

Most Europeans recognized that something had to be done – not only to defend against the ravages of terrorism, but to protect the long-term stability of Europe.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup> House of Commons Hansard Debates for 4th July 2007, see <a href="http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200607/cmhansrd/cm070704/debtext/70704-0003.htm">http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200607/cmhansrd/cm070704/debtext/70704-0003.htm</a>>.

Reflections on Contemporary British Engagement with the Muslim Community

#### **MOTIVATIONS OF RADICAL EXTREMISTS**

In the aftermath of 7/7, the British government reached a number of interesting conclusions concerning the process of radicalization, which it made public through the MI5 website and in a speech by the Prime Minister to the House of Commons.<sup>17</sup> There were six main points, highlighted as follows:

- 1. An alienated individual who has become highly radicalised is not necessarily a terrorist. Only a tiny minority of radicalised individuals actually cross over to become terrorists: by financing, lending facilities to, or encouraging active terrorists, or by actively participating in terrorist attacks.
- 2. There are a range of potential factors in radicalisation and no single factor predominates. It is likely the catalyst for any given individual becoming a terrorist will be a combination of different factors particular to that person.
- 3. Potentially radicalising factors include the development of a sense of grievance and injustice.
- 4. Another potential factor is a sense of personal alienation or community disadvantage, arising from socioeconomic factors such as discrimination, social exclusion, and lack of opportunity. While an individual may not be relatively disadvantaged, he or she may identify with others seen as less privileged; also different generations within the same family may have significantly different views about these issues.
- 5. An important factor is exposure to radical ideas.
- 6. None of these factors is conclusive and they are probably best viewed as considerations which may influence radicalisation.

[MI-5, Countering International Terrorism]

As mentioned, radical extremists tend to be fundamentally motivated by mundane concerns, perhaps the most potent among them objections to Western foreign policy in the Muslim world. While these radical extremists come from the Muslim community, all available evidence indicates that their motivations are not religious, although religion does play a certain role.

Political extremism, of any type, can only grow if the following two conditions are present: the alienation of a population vis-à-vis the mainstream and a perceived provocation.

#### **CONDITION ONE: ALIENATION**

The alienation of European Muslim migrant communities is evident. Alienation of extremists within the Muslim world is also clear: political repression, rife throughout the region, has created a lack of faith in engaging with the mainstream. 'Osama bin Laden was and is alienated from mainstream Saudi society, which he regards as corrupt and morally compromised. Outb (discussed below) viewed Egyptian society in much the same way, and this perspective is true of all political extremist movements. Violent extremism is not limited to Muslims; using violence to further political ends is an activity that groups and individuals from all backgrounds participate in. The belief that the mainstream is in dire need of change is also common among radical Marxists, for example. With the rise of Muslim identity politics, it is to be expected that radicalism would express itself using a religious vocabulary, even if these ideologies are deeply removed from mainstream Islamic thought.

Alienation is not necessarily a result of physical separation, as some commentators have claimed, pointing to Muslim ghettos across Europe. Indeed, the concentration of alienated communities may actually provide an alternative identity – one that mitigates the sense of alienation. Historical examples of this would be the Jewish and Christian quarters of cities in the Muslim world. Moreover, Britons living abroad today are famous for creating their own ghettos (euphemistically called compounds), but they do not turn to extrem-

<sup>17</sup> Tony Blair, Countering International Terrorism, 2006, see <http://www.mi5.gov.uk/output/Page31.html>.

ism. However, whereas expatriate Britons and their offspring are psychologically comfortable in the belief that they will one day return to Britain, immigrant Muslim communities in Europe no longer harbour such desires. Their offspring are doubly alienated: from both the societies in which they live, and the cultures from whence their parents came.

Within the framework of multiculturalism, many in the European intelligentsia proposed a form of integration that allowed the Muslim community to maintain its connection to Islam, while recognizing the community's integral nature to the broader society. Nevertheless, there is a sense that the public discourse of multiculturalism has not delivered in terms of bringing Muslims into mainstream European society. Marginalized communities were not particularly welcomed, and in the aftermath of 7 July, even less so. It remains to be seen how the "mainstreaming" process will be accomplished without multiculturalism.

Several obstacles have been identified. The public relationship between Islam and the West, for one, is inextricably associated with prejudice and discord. This matter is now infamous.<sup>18</sup> Recognised by the United Nations<sup>19</sup> as a problem throughout the world (and in Europe specifically), "Islamophobia" has been widely documented. It cannot be ignored, and indeed must be addressed for Muslim communities to survive and thrive as healthy components of the broader society.

But the discussion within those communities, and in some parts of the Western mainstream, has taken an interesting twist in recent years. It used to be about the West *and* Islam; i.e., about something "out there," not "in here." When people in the West said "Islam," they meant the outer frontier; not their neighbours next door. When Muslims talked about the "West," they were not referring to something familiar; but to an alien environment. That has changed. There continues to be fear-mongering book titles, but now there are also titles such as "The Case for Islamo-Christian Civilization." Richard Buillet argues<sup>20</sup> that Islamic and Western civilization are in fact variants of the same civilization, and that conflict within them should be viewed as a struggle within a single "family." It is no longer even remotely justifiable to speak of Islam as something "out there." Islam and the West are connected to each other and exist, in different ways, within each other. The Burda of Busayri (a Muslim devotional poem) is recited in the heart of London, and Apple iPods are used in Mecca. This is globalisation.

The challenge of "integralization" is not new for the Muslim community. Historically, the Muslims of China were fewer in number and had far fewer resources than today's European Muslim communities. Yet within a few generations, the Chinese Muslim community had heavily influenced the economy. This community had become not merely integrated or assimilated, but *integral* to the country, to the point that Islam was recognised as one of the great religions of the Empire. They met the non-Muslim Chinese with words they understood, they demonstrated concern for Chinese society, and indeed they became Chinese—yet to this day they remain Muslim.<sup>21</sup> The religious establishment led this process; it did not oppose it.

In the aftermath of Theo Van Gogh's murder and the subsequent attacks on Muslim communities, an author in *The Spectator* noted that a "recent study suggested that within six years at least three large Dutch cities will have an effective Muslim majority. There's also the nightmare scenario of the Low Countries' caliphate... And all of this is aided and abetted by the European Union, its liberal immigration laws, its espousal of multiculturalism and, crucially, its implicit disavowal of the concept of a sovereign nation state with a coherent national identity... How, then, do you attempt to inculcate a belief in unity and nationhood

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>18</sup> Allen, op.cit.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>19</sup> United Nations, "Seminar Participants Stress Importance of Tolerance, Understanding, Education in Countering Islamophobia," 2004, see <a href="http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2004/hr4801.doc.htm">http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2004/hr4801.doc.htm</a>>.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>20</sup> Richard Buillet, The Case for Islamo-Christian Civilization, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>21</sup> IslamOnline.Com, "Chinese Islam with its Own Unique Characteristics," see <<u>http://www.islamonline.com/cgi-bin/news\_service/world\_full\_story.</u> <u>asp?service\_id=1392></u> [now offline].

among new citizens when the nation is with ering away in front of you?"  $^{\!\!\!\!^{22}}$ 

The writer may be commenting on Islam and European Muslims, but a key point that he exploits, about which many sectors of European society feel vulnerable, is the dissipation of social and national cohesion—a problem that exists irrespective of the Muslim presence.

## ALIENATION OF MUSLIM COMMUNITIES WITHIN THE MUSLIM WORLD

It was also alienation that fertilized the ground for radical ideologies in the Muslim world. Discontent could not be expressed violently through mainstream Muslim thought. From the earliest days of Islam, Muslim thought developed a formula for tolerating repressive conditions by channelling objection through moral imperatives. Sunni mainstream thought insisted that living under a corrupt ruler was better than a single day of social upheaval. It thus demanded that the individual view repressive conditions as a test to be endured; channels for protest should not disrupt society, and harmony should be sought through character improvement. Muslim extremist movements, throughout history, thus had to reject mainstream religious authority since they could not find the basis for social upheaval within it. They justified their actions based on Islam, but in fact they have created their own vocabulary and remain alienated from mainstream religious authority.

In modern times, non-violent Islamist movements also arose alienated from mainstream religious authority, but their main impetus was the loss of power that accompanied the dismantling of the Caliphate in 1924. Muslim political power was disassembled, and the alternative did not result in an observably better situation for Muslim communities or their political autonomy. Nevertheless, these groups were neither radical nor violent. Indeed, due to Islam's abhorrence of civil disorder, they sought gradual social change, not violent revolution. The exception was Iran, largely due to the repression of the Shah's regime which changed the nascent Islamist movement of the 1970s. Otherwise, mainstream Islamist movements did not partake in revolutionary violence against the state.

However, some groups did advocate violence, and it is interesting to note how these movements justified their violence. The *Takfir wa-l-Hijrah* group in Egypt, for example, claimed that Egyptian society had become as morally decrepit as a pre-Islamic pagan society. This provided justification for takfir (excommunication or anathema) on a societal scale; the only solution was to leave (*Hijrah* meaning to migrate) and attack from the outside.

#### THE DEADLY SEED: RADICAL NEO-RELIGION

A combination of political discontent and psychological alienation (whether in the Muslim world or elsewhere) motivate acts of vigilante violence. However, terrorists require an internal "amoral permission" to retroactively justify acts of violence. Where there is no clear mainstream religious authority, radical interpretations of Islam can find sympathetic ears. Whereas a large part of the British Muslim community developed a politicised Muslim identity (although not all did), such a radical reading found a following only in a minority of the British Muslim community. Still, it allowed the aforementioned discontent to become violent.

For some commentators, this radical interpretation *is* Islam, much as the terrorists claim. However, the security establishment and the broader political community, including the British Prime Minister at the time, rejected this idea:

"The principal current terrorist threat is from radicalised individuals who are using a distorted and unrepresentative version of the Islamic faith to justify violence.... They are, however, a tiny minority within the Muslim communities here and abroad."

[British Prime Minister Tony Blair]

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>22</sup> Rod Liddle, "No Tolerance, Please, We're Dutch," The Spectator [London] 5 Feb 2005.

In the Muslim world, radical extremists had to reject mainstream religious authority in order to justify their revolutionary violence. In European Muslim communities, extremists didn't need to reject mainstream religious authority; it had never been established:

- The migrant communities brought imams to officiate at their mosques, but these imams did not speak to cultural realities that the youth could relate to. Young Muslims living in Europe by and large are not educated by religious authorities, and they spend their youth alienated from the mainstream.
- 2. Rejecting the political and cultural identity of their parents, but also unable to fit in psychologically to the mainstream, they latch onto the idea of a Muslim political identity. This identity is informed less by a religious imperative than it is by the moral imperative they imbibe from a mainstream that does not fully accept them.
- 3. Eventually, they find other ways to relate to the world around them, and the majority do so peacefully. A minority do not, finding an outlet through an ideology that exploits their discontent: this is the neo-religious imperative.

It is important to understand what the "distorted and unrepresentative version of the Islamic faith" is, and how it relates to conventional Islamic orthodoxy.

# THE CRISIS OF MUSLIM RELIGIOUS AUTHORITY<sup>23</sup>

It has become common parlance in much of Western culture to view Islam as a religion without religious authority. The absence of a Church and a clear hierarchical structure along the same lines of what has come to be expected in the modern West strengthens such an assumption. As such, the argument goes, radical extremists are as justified in claiming the right to interpret Islam as anyone else. Yet this is spurious. Religious authority dates from the first generation of the Muslim community and continues to this day for both Sunni and Shi'i Muslims.

Amongst the Sunni community, who account for some 90% of all Muslims around the world, currently and historically, these authoritative transmitters developed into an orthodoxy in theology (*'aqidah*) and an orthopraxy in canon law (*shari'ah*). From that point, it became an academic process; the best academics become the equivalent of tenured track professors, and so forth.<sup>24</sup> In theological terms, this resulted in three approaches to metaphysics: the Ash'ari, the Maturidi and the 'Athari approaches. In legal terms, this eventually resulted in four juridical paradigms: the Hanafi, the Maliki, the Shafi'i and the Hanbali schools of law, as noted in contemporary academia:

Through the formation and consolidation of the classical Sunni juridical madhhabs, traditionalist jurists were able to gain exclusive control over institutions of Islamic religious education and establish their collective authority for the interpretation of Islamic law. From the tenth century until the present, the Sunni madhhabs have dominated Islamic religious discourse... in the community of interpretation constituted by the *madhhabs*, legal consensus (ijma'), the unanimous opinion of qualified jurists, defines Islamic orthodoxy. Only the opinions of scholars who belong to one of the recognized madhhabs, and have completed study in a curriculum defined and controlled by the jurists, may be taken into account in debate on religious questions. All other opinions, whether supported by evidence or not, are considered heterodox.25

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>23</sup> The Brookings Institution will release a paper in September 2007 that explains the terminology included in this work, tentatively entitled *Calling It* What It Is: Terminology in Counter-Terrorism.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>24</sup> For a brief outline of these ideas, comparing to Western legal systems, see H.A. Hellyer, "Who's in charge?" *Washington Post*, 2007, available at <a href="http://newsweek.washingtonpost.com/onfaith/muslims\_speak\_out/2007/07/whos\_in\_charge.html">http://newsweek.washingtonpost.com/onfaith/muslims\_speak\_out/2007/07/whos\_in\_charge.html</a>.

<sup>25</sup> Devin J. Stewart, Islamic Legal Orthodoxy: Twelver Shiite Responses to the Sunni Legal System, (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1998), p. 25.

One can look elsewhere for supporting evidence of this view of Muslim juridical history; Makdisi propounded the comparisons with other legal educational systems, where the *madrasah* of the *madhhab* is similar to a college of law, and the *ijazat al-tadris wa-l ifta*' (license to teach law and grant legal response) is the equivalent of a professional doctorate.<sup>26</sup>

All of these schools and approaches continue to train contemporary exemplars and exponents through institutions such as al-Azhar University in Cairo, and the schools (*madrasahs*) of the Nahdah al-'Ulama in Indonesia. Together, they represent the mainstream of the Muslim religious establishment, and have for roughly 1,000 years.<sup>27</sup> In 2005, religious scholars from that establishment formulated and promulgated the Amman Message<sup>28</sup> which put forward certain principles that will be elaborated later in this work.

At the root of this establishment is respect for religious authority, which has traditionally rejected any sort of social upheaval and civic unrest. This is why the Muslim world, despite severe internal political repression, has not erupted in wide-scale explosions of internal conflict. This orthodox orthopraxy was originally marked by a continual process of investigation and re-application of the principles of the *shari'ah*, but in the last few hundred years, there has been a marked separation between religious and secular education. This is a modern separation, the credibility of which was questioned by the masses and by later political movements.

With some caveats, the Sunni mainstream remains the dominant religious authority for practically all of the Muslim world. There are Shi'i communities in some parts of the Muslim world (perhaps 8-12%) which developed slightly different forms of religious authority, but essentially along the same lines.<sup>29</sup> There are Ibadis in Oman (1% or less of the total Muslim world population), which have their own system.

Beyond the classical forms of religious authority (four *madhhab* Sunnism, and *akhbari* and *usuli* Shi'ism), which account for perhaps 99% of the Muslim world, there are two other religious movements that warrant attention: purist and modernist Salafism.

In the 18th century, a controversial religious figure by the name of Muhammad bin Abdul Wahhab of the Najd region of Arabia established a political alliance with the al-Saud family. His students established a reform movement that rejected the mainstream Sunni religious establishment of the time. Emerging as a minority off-shoot of mainstream Sunni thought, even more detached than Ibn Abdul Wahhab, it became the religious establishment of Saudi Arabia. The contemporary authorities of that religious establishment do not endorse terrorism, but they need to be mentioned if we are to understand the milieu in which radical extremism found its moral permission to carry out acts of violence. In addition, popular discourse has created a close association between radical extremists and the Wahhabi movement (which later became known as the purist Salafist movement).

This reform movement upheld certain non-mainstream positions in theology that continued to make it a target of criticism by the religious establishment in the rest of the Muslim world. Calling itself Salafism, after the period of early Muslim history entitled "the time of the Salaf," the movement in the modern period nonetheless was, and is, generally non-violent. None of this should be taken to imply that the movement is not problematic-certainly it clashes with the majority of Muslim groups on theological points, and is very conservative. However, it is mostly pietistic and quietist; the overwhelming majority of this reform movement remains in this vein, which can be called "purist Salafism." At its root was a rejection of the established authority of the four schools of law and non-compliance with accepted mainstream religious authority, which proved to be significant later on in history.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>26</sup> George Makdisi, Rise of Colleges: Institutions of Learning in Islam and the West, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1981).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>27</sup> In earlier Muslim legal history, there were many more schools of law, but owing to the tradition of directly transmitting the methodological principles of school in practice, all of them died out, except these four, when they lost students to other schools.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>28</sup> See <http://www.ammanmessage.com> for the declaration. Commentaries on its relationship to counter-terrorism include H.A. Hellyer (2007) "Who's in charge?" Washington Post, <http://newsweek.washingtonpost.com/onfaith/muslims\_speak\_out/2007/07/whos\_in\_charge.html>.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>29</sup> Stewart, op.cit.

In the late 19th century, Muhammad Abduh of Egypt, Jamaluddeen al-Afghani of Afghanistan and Rashid Rida of Syria began another reform movement: the "modernist Salafi" movement. It was far more friendly to the normative tradition of mainstream Sunni thought, even though it was censured by some within the mainstream establishment for certain theological and interpretative differences which remain a subject of discussion today within the Sunni mainstream. The cliché that 'the West brought this on itself through foreign policy' is partially correct in that the deconstruction of mainstream institutions during the colonial period allowed the emergence of the "modernist Salafi" movement that created voids in religious authority.

The atrocities of 9/11, Bali, Beslan, 7/7 and others, as well as the religious interpretations that 'permitted' them, have not been validated by any religious establishment. Rather, they were condemned as wanton violence that went beyond the permissions of Islamic law (*shari'ah*). The Amman Message, which brought together hundreds of religious authorities and intellectuals on a single platform, made this abundantly clear.

#### MODERNIST SALAFISM AND TAKFIRISM

In the 1940s, the Muslim Brotherhood, founded by Hasan al-Banna, began to mobilize. The Brotherhood was influenced by modernist Salafi dogmas (al-Banna having been a student of Rashid Rida) but was not identifiable with them. Indeed, a number of mainstream Sunnis have historically supported the Brotherhood for its social programs designed to improve the lot of Muslims living in the Arab world. The Brotherhood did not support vigilantism; in a political sense, it shared a lot with the purist Salafism of Saudi Arabia that would not countenance armed revolution against the state. Its jihad (struggle) would be limited to effecting positive change within society through social means. They had a more nuanced view vis-à-vis mainstream religious authorities; however, they generally regarded these authorities as out of touch with the contemporary world, believing they had lost their previous dynamism. For the majority of the Brotherhood, the '*ulama* had closed the gates of '*ijtihad* (re-application of the reasoning of the *shari'ah*) centuries ago, making it largely irrelevant vis-à-vis the contemporary Muslim community. In this way, rather than encouraging a revitalization of contemporary religious authorities, the Muslim Brotherhood helped popularize a sense that religious authority could, and indeed should, be vested beyond the classical systems of religious scholarship.

As a direct result of political oppression, (including the assassination of the founder of the Brotherhood in 1949, presumably by a government-linked agent), some of the Muslim Brotherhood members moved further to extremism. The most famous of these was the aforementioned Sayvid Qutb. Prior to his incarceration, Qutb was anti-Western but not militantly extreme; in large part due to the torture he faced in Egyptian prisons, he became incredibly radicalised. Like the purist Salafi movement, but unlike the predominant view amongst the Muslim Brotherhood, Qutb rejected the authority of the mainstream Sunni religious establishment. Educated in the West, he had imbibed a number of ideas from both the far-right and the far-left of Western political theory, which proved to be a deadly mix.<sup>30</sup> The Brotherhood leadership rejected his ideas; Hassan al-Hodeibi, for example, the second leader of the Brotherhood, wrote a book denouncing Qutb's ideas, if not his person. Others interpreted Qutb's writings in a way that led to even deeper radicalism. They subsequently left the Brotherhood and formed other groups, such as the Gamma' al-Islamiyyah, distinguished by their belief in excommunicating other members of the faith on purely political grounds.

It is important to emphasize these differing ideologies. The Brotherhood has given rise to many who left its movement, ranging from popular televangelists who abhor violence in all forms to others who, repressed by certain parts of the Egyptian security services, became more extreme. Yet the mainstream of the Brotherhood

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>30</sup> A number of commentators have written on this, most recently in the May 2007 New English Review article "There Is No God but Politics" by Theodore Dalrymple, see <a href="http://www.newenglishreview.org/custpage.cfm?frm=7240&sec\_id=7240">http://www.newenglishreview.org/custpage.cfm?frm=7240&sec\_id=7240</a>.

was never an advocate of civil unrest and vigilantism, unlike al-Qa'ida and other similar groups. In many ways, the groups that emerged from the modernist Salafi movement were rejections of the Brotherhood's willingness to tolerate the status quo; they were offshoots of the modernist Salafi movement, not representatives of it. One of the main influences upon Bin Laden was Ayman Zawahiri, an ideologue from the *Gamma' al-Islamiyyah*, one of the groups that left the Brotherhood.

Some of those who imbibed the idea of excommunicating Muslims for wrong political acts traveled as exiles from Egypt to Saudi Arabia and became more radicalized, mingling with a section of the religious establishment there (in particular, with what became known as the Sahwa movement). Ironically, other parts of the Saudi religious establishment condemned Qutb as deviant, based on what some extremist movements had read into his work. Nevertheless, the rejection of both religious (in terms of the Sahwa offshoot of the purist Salafi movement) and political authority (drawing on revolutionary aspects of Qutb's writings) would serve as the precursor to other movements that would become highly significant in the future.

Some might argue that the radical ideology underpinning a movement like al-Qa'ida is also the driving force behind it. However, al-Qa'ida's record shows that ideology has little to do with it. This was a group of deeply political individuals looking for ways to make sense of the chaos within which they found themselves. They created an ideology that would validate their 'struggle.' It was not the other way around: al-Qa'ida's ideology was essentially an excuse to justify its political actions. In the 1980s, Muslims from around the world, whether mainstream Sunnis, modernist Salafis, or purist Salafis, came to Afghanistan to fight the Soviet occupation. They had support from around the world, including the West. Many belonged to splinter groups informed by the idea of *takfir*, or excommunication. The war in Afghanistan introduced many others to this idea of excommunicating rulers and societies from the Muslim community for political reasons. The Iraq War, during which Saudi Arabia permitted American forces on Arabian soil, caused great distress within Saudi Arabia, and provided the final provocation for an ideology that would justify vigilante violence.

A cocktail of heterodox religion that rejected the more accommodationist mainstream combined with some ideas from modern Western political thought to form a radical neo-religious extremism that the overwhelming majority of Muslims rejected and condemned. This is now called takfirism.

On the face of it, takfirism is confusing; its proponents often quote mainstream scholars and draw on traditional religious symbolism. However, the mainstream religious establishment has rejected takfirism. There is a hermeneutic (similar to Rabbinical Judaism), that religious scholars employ, based on knowledge and learning that is taken directly from mainstream religious authorities; takfirism was never validated in this way. As far as the mainstream is concerned, takfirism is as unrelated to Muslim thought as the Ku Klux Klan is to Roman Catholicism. However, it did serve as the excuse for movements like al-Qa'ida to justify themselves ideologically.

It is vitally important to get this relationship correct if the struggle is to be undertaken correctly. During the Cold War, the leaders of the West identified the difference between Socialism and international Communism, and were thus able to isolate and defeat international Communism. In the end, the West managed to bring socialists of all types to their side by being very clear that international Communism was a threat to all societies. This strategy was vital in the defeat of Communism. In the current antiterrorism effort, there is a danger of ignoring this crucial lesson.

In the aftermath of 9/11, the claim "you are either with us or against us" explicitly laid out a choice for peoples and nations of the world to follow one path or the other. Understandable though this may have been at the time, a more nuanced approach is now needed. It is clear that the overwhelming majority of the Muslim world does not support al-Qa'ida's ideology, neither at the governmental nor the grassroots level. Even while some support Bin Laden as a sort of romantic icon against Western hegemony, it is doubtful that any more than a tiny percentage would want to live under his brand of Islam. We must carry out our policies domestically and internationally according to a new maxim — if you are not with them (i.e. the terrorists), then we (the West) are with you (everyone else). This struggle requires allies — and allies are there, if we approach them correctly. As David Forte of the *National Review* said:

"Bin Laden's kind of extremism has much more in common with Stalin, Hitler, and Mao than it does with Islamic tradition. Like those state terrorists, Bin Laden is at war with his own people. And finally, I have boldly asserted that Bin Laden and his extremists are evil, pure and simple, and Islam is not."<sup>31</sup>

[David F. Forte, The National Review]

#### RADICAL MOVEMENTS IN BRITISH MUSLIM COMMUNITIES

Takfirism emerged as a full-fledged ideology in the 1980s in Afghanistan, encouraged by the West in order to fight the Soviets. It was then exported. The first time was to Algeria, by splinter groups opposed to military intervention in the democratic process that would have brought an Islamist party to power. Takfirism came to the UK at the end of the 1980s, and in the early 1990s. Many of those who had fought against the Soviets found that their home countries were no longer particularly hospitable towards them. This reception was hardly surprising, considering that a number of them were now vigorously opposed to the Muslim governments they had returned to for being insufficiently pious. Others who had not fought in the Afghan war, but had nonetheless imbibed the ideology of takfirism from those who had, proved troublesome. Many travelled to the West to rally against the status quo in the Muslim world. When they arrived in the UK, they began looking for recruits.

At this point, takfiris were less interested in attacking the West and more interested in the Muslim world. Britain is rightly proud of its tradition of hosting political dissidents. Political repression within the Muslim world was not insignificant, and as long as the takfiris obeyed the law, which included not attacking the UK, they were not hindered in spreading their message. Whether this much talked about 'covenant of security' was specific to the takfiris is not clear; any political group from overseas in London is aware that breaking the law in any way will trump any sympathy that the political establishment might have.

On a religious level, many Muslim groups argued directly against the takfiris, including purist Salafis (who had been warned of these movements by contacts in Saudi Arabia, where the religious establishment had been criticizing takfiris for years after Saudi takfiris returned from Afghanistan) and the Islamist establishment. This part of the historical chronicle in the development of British takfirism has yet to be adequately documented; however, all indications show that the purist Salafi movement was particularly vocal about opposing takfirism within their own communities, often at extreme risk.

On a political level, other Muslim groups either argued against the takfiris or, more typically, ignored them. At this point, it must be recalled, the takfiris were generally speaking out against repressive Muslim regimes, and politically, this was popular within the British Muslim community. Islamist and non-Islamist movements shared in this sentiment of outrage against the Muslim world. Again, while the outrage was not violent, frustration at the condition of the Muslim world became deeply rooted within the British Muslim community.

None of the Islamist movements attempted to solve this frustration. On the contrary, they drew on those frustrations. For their part, mainstream Muslim organisations and religious authorities did not take the frustrations seriously, which only animated huge portions of British Muslim youth already alienated from British society.

In this sense, the Muslim mainstream failed to provide effective leadership and guidance to young Muslims, a community that was becoming politically aware but lacked hope both in their future in Britain and in the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>31</sup> David Forte, Religion is not the Enemy, 2001, see <a href="http://www.nationalreview.com/comment/comment-forte101901.shtml">http://www.nationalreview.com/comment/comment-forte101901.shtml</a>>.

status of Muslims worldwide. The mainstream did not encourage alienation, but did little to prevent it. As a result, the works of Sayyid Qutb remained on the shelves. It bears repeating that Qutb's works were ignored by the older generation, and by themselves were of little importance. They required a set of political events, and then a particular interpretation, to have any impact. But they did speak to the contemporary concerns of a large segment of British Muslim youth.

In the mid-1990s, young Muslims were increasingly attracted to an identity that took their politics seriously, but channelled it in ways that effectively linked them to the religious mainstream of the Muslim world. The youth became more connected to the scholastic traditions of the '*ulama*.

Previously, Muslim identity politics had been solely political, bereft of classical Islamic ethics. It could not have been otherwise; there were no authoritative religious figures that were taken seriously. The 'Hamza Yusuf phenomenon' in particular changed that. When he first appeared on the scene, Hamza Yusuf Hanson (Islamic scholar who teaches at the Zaytuna Institue in California) was perceived as anti-Western (philosophically speaking), and he was thus credible. Although he eventually redeveloped his thinking vis-à-vis the West, becoming a strong supporter of an indigenous American Muslim culture, Hanson brought with him something very different than previous anti-establishment figures: a connection to Islam that was not just political, but ethical and spiritual. That had lasting effects. Hanson called for a deepening knowledge of Islam within Muslim communities, through the mediation of 'ulama and the scholarly tradition as a whole. Through initiatives like the Deen Intensives, young Muslims were inspired to learn Islam in the same way that Hanson had-and he was clearly a knowledgeable individual from the privileged white class of America (arguably the most powerful sector of the most powerful society in the world). This re-assertion of the scholastic tradition built on the politicized Muslim identity that had taken root in the 1980s and early 1990s-an identity that had found itself facing a crisis of ethics since it was disconnected from the tradition of Islamic morals and mainstream spirituality.

For a time, this was called the 'traditionalist movement,' as it explicitly laid claim to the 'Islamic tradition.' In the beginning, it was guided by converts to Islam, particularly white Muslims, such as Nuh Ha Meem Keller (American) and Abdal Hakim Murad Winter (British). Later, the link was made to the mainstream Sunni religious establishment through leaders such as al-Habib 'Ali al-Jifri of Yemen. This movement is far more inclined to spiritual piety, and gained a following that effectively shifted the center of the British Muslim experience from frustration to effective engagement in hopes of changing matters for the better. Whereas the various student associations of the 1980s and early 1990s were primarily concerned with transmitting frustration and despair into youthful idioms, more and more Muslim students became engaged in making mainstream Islamic virtues of good citizenship and conduct relevant to their lives, without disavowing their commitment to Muslims worldwide.32 Muslim identity was still politicized, as it was in the Muslim world, and had been throughout Muslim history; but it now took seriously the need to ground itself in an ethical and spiritual framework.

The movement had an effect on Muslim populations in the West beyond the 'neo-traditionalists' and the youth. Hizb ut-Tahrir began to engage with Sufi *shaykhs* (Muslim spiritualists), a move that would have been practically unthinkable for an Islamist movement in the West previously. Many who had popularized the politicized Muslim identity of the 1990s signed a 2007 declaration against Sunni-Shi'i violence that insisted on mediation through classical, orthodox forms of Islam. This was a shift that should not be underestimated.

#### ENGAGEMENT WITH THE MUSLIM COMMUNITY: PART OF THE SOLUTION

If engaging the Muslim community is part of the security solution, one clear premise must be established: the Muslim community is not part of the problem.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>32</sup> A recent, if short, overview of many of these developments can be found in a review of "The Islamist" by the British Muslim commentator, Yahya Birt, who directs a British Muslim organisation, see <a href="http://www.yahyabirt.com/?p=71">http://www.yahyabirt.com/?p=71</a>.

The idea that Muslims were somehow protecting radical extremists within their ranks was debunked by the Muslim communities themselves and by the security services in the UK, who confirmed after 7/7 that, if not for the assistance of the Muslim communities, there would have been many more atrocities. This admission was a lesson in itself; Europe needed the help of its Muslim communities. This sentiment was shared by policy advisors, academics and the British Prime Minister, as demonstrated by the following quote:

"The Working Groups [set up by the British Government in the aftermath of 7th July bombings] are therefore also united in urging the Government to engage with Muslim communities at all levels in a sustained dialogue, and not as a one-off event. It is imperative to recognise that this report is regarded as the initiation of a long term process, and is a summary of the work undertaken to date."<sup>33</sup>

In the UK, at both the local and national level, the government attempted to increase cooperation with Muslim communities by the following means:

- Internal organizations that advised the wider administration (such as the Muslim Contact Unit within New Scotland Yard, composed of experienced Muslim and non-Muslim police officers). These groups were lauded by the British government and administration in the aftermath of 7/7 for having foiled a number of terrorist attacks.<sup>34</sup>
- 2. External organizations that represented specific forums for engagement with the security services (such as the Muslim Safety Forum, composed of Muslim community representatives and senior police officers). This effort has been praised by both community organizations and security services for providing a forum to share expertise and air disagreements.

3. Consultations with Muslim lobby groups to allow their concerns to be heard within Government, as these concerns did not reach Government through normal political processes.

In general, in the immediate aftermath of the bombings, the British security services were widely praised for "presenting the terrorist threat in an even-handed way, which did not stigmatize specific communities" and which rested on a strategic approach comprised of four elements: a) Improving community links, especially in Muslim communities, to develop intelligence; b) Ensuring that forces share best operational practices for addressing the community context of terrorist incidents; c) Addressing wider problems of victimisation, alienation and communication by working towards reassurance and cohesion; and d) Enabling staff to respond with improved knowledge and capability.<sup>35</sup>

Much to the dismay of the security services, however, some British politicians and commentators did not take the same approach. As recently as May 2007, members of the security services were bemoaning Government actions which they considered to be deepening the alienation that was already endemic in the Muslim community. Their work depended on gaining the trust of those communities. Government policies, it was claimed, were destroying whatever trust remained, through advocating further counter-terrorism measures, and selectively dealing with Muslim community organisations.

# DECOUPLING INTEGRATION AND COUNTER-RADICALISATION

One of the most positive measures taken was the creation of the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG), separate from the Home Office mandate. The DCLG would deal with societal issues, such as integration, over the long term. Counter-radicalisation would inevitably be part of the new mandate, but only in so far as radicalisation interrupted the

<sup>35</sup> Robert Beckley, "Briefing Note for Participants at the Wilton Park Conference on a Community Based Approach to Counter-Terrorism," 2006.

<sup>33</sup> Working Group Report, "Preventing Extremism Together," Home Office, 2005, see <a href="http://www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1501973">http://www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1501973</a>, p. 3.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>34</sup> Vikram Dodd, Special Branch to track Muslims across UK, 2005, see <a href="http://www.guardian.co.uk/attackonlondon/story/0,16132,1532212,00.html">http://www.guardian.co.uk/attackonlondon/story/0,16132,1532212,00.html</a>.

goals of a cohesive society. The coupling of integration with the counter-radicalisation agenda was thus abandoned. Violent and criminal activity whether committed by radicals or others, would be the domain of the Home Office.

# ISLAM WITHIN THE STRUGGLE OF IDEAS STRATEGY

As mentioned previously, the British Muslim community lacks an indigenous religious authority, the presence of which historically has been the hallmark of Muslim communities worldwide. It also suffers severe alienation from the mainstream and perceives that Muslims elsewhere live under difficult conditions, a problem they identify as stemming from Western foreign policy. To put it simply, many Muslims, including the mainstream religious establishment, share the political grievances of 'Osama bin Laden vis-à-vis Iraq, the presence of American troops on Saudi soil, and the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. The difference is that any resistance validated by the mainstream religious establishment must hold up to a classical interpretation of Islamic law, which eschews the violent anarchy of takfiri ideology.

Still, for an alienated few, takfiri ideology provided a way to violently "let off steam." As explained above, this is an ideology that justifies itself by tactically appealing to mainstream religious discourse; however, it exploits discontent and allows excesses to emerge from the Muslim community when that community is provoked by difficult circumstances. If a politicized Muslim identity had not become so strong, perhaps the ideology would have been Marxist in orientation. It most certainly would have been a few decades ago in the Muslim world, when Marxism was the ideology in vogue. (Indeed, most suicide bombers in the West Bank and Gaza were Arab nationalists, as Arab nationalism was still the mobilizing force in those areas).

#### **Re-engagement with Mainstream Religious Institutions**

In the aftermath of 7/7, many in the West propounded the idea of pushing forward an "Islamic reformation"

as part of the process of engaging Muslim communities in Europe. To be sure, there is good reason to support certain types of reform within the Muslim world; many social and political ills, not least political repression, suggest potential areas. However, takfirism was itself an "Islamic reformation" in progress, and its main contribution to the world was 9/11 and 7/7.

The lack of familiarity with Islamic intellectual history and the reality of takfirism led some commentators to make dubious claims. Though meant to simplify matters, they only led to unsustainable analysis: Sufis are pacifists; Islamists are inextricably linked to violent revolutionary struggle with the state; the *hijab* (traditional head-scarf) is associated with radical political agendas – the errors abound.

More bizarre has been the attempt by some civil society groups (though not government) to enfranchise certain modernist "reformers" who reject mainstream religious authority. This attempt, however, has not taken root; those who publicly declared themselves to be "ex-Muslims" grew estranged from the Muslim community, or were discredited by it for rejecting (knowingly or unknowingly) a millennium of Islamic intellectual thought. These modernist reformers had many beneficial insights, but they lacked grassroots credibility within the Muslim community and they were viewed as lacking academic credibility vis-à-vis Islam.

In addition, once it became evident that the historical basis of takfirism was the rejection of mainstream religious authority, supporting other such "reformist" agendas became more problematic. For many within the Muslim community, further rejecting traditional religious authority would open a Pandora's box that might never be closed; it was simply too dangerous.

The wanton violence of 9/11 and 7/7 was not the result of any need within Islam for a reformation. On the contrary, it was the product of a particular type of "reformation" that rejected mainstream religious authority. Fareed Zakaria of *Newsweek International* stated:

"For those in the West asking when Islam will have its Reformation, I have good news and bad news. The good news is that the process appears to have begun. The bad news is it's been marked by calumny, hatred and bloody violence."<sup>36</sup>

[Fareed Zakaria, Newsweek International]

The rise of radical extremism did, however, lead many in the Muslim world and in the West to embrace not reform, but an Islamic renaissance through engagement with existing religious institutions. This distinction is more than simple nuance; it is a substantial difference. A renaissance takes place from within and through existing frameworks -- and it has had a positive track record in the Muslim world. The eleventh century scholar Abu Hamid al-Ghazali was a renaissance man, and there have been others throughout history. Indonesia's 20th century renaissance campaign involved al-Nahdah al-'Ulama; the Aal al-Bayt Foundation in Jordan has participated in some renaissance efforts, and Egypt's al-Azhar University supported another through the offices of al-Dar al-Ifta'. The director of the Dar, the Mufti of Egypt, is infamous for giving no quarter to violent extremists, and insisting that no tolerance be given to their ruthless ideology, which would

destroy the Muslim world if given half a chance.<sup>37</sup> All of these "renaissance" groups remained connected to religious authorities and responded to modernity by embracing Islamic thought -- not rejecting it. Tellingly, Al-Qa'ida saves its most poisonous diatribes for such groups precisely because they quickly negate any legitimacy that al-Qa'ida has on religious grounds.

Mainstream religious institutions such as these have proved remarkably effective in turning the tide against radicalism in Muslim societies. Young British Muslims, looking to ground themselves in the ethical and moral traditions of Islam, have travelled to these and other institutions including Dar al-Mustafa in Yemen and various madrasahs in Syria. Empowered with the theological tools needed to minister to their communities, they have returned to direct the growing Muslim community in Europe toward more effective modes of engagement. As the saying goes, knowledge is power, and the arguments of people like Abu Qatada are not remotely credible in a community that knows its religious tradition. In the British Muslim community, a minority did believe him because they lacked religious literacy. Beginning in the 1990s, that problem is being redressed.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>36</sup> Fareed Zakaria, The Road to Reformation, 2007, see <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/16960410/site/newsweek/>.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>37</sup> Willow G. Wilson, "The Show-Me Sheikh," The Atlantic Monthly, 2005, see <a href="http://www.theatlantic.com/doc/prem/200507/wilson">http://www.theatlantic.com/doc/prem/200507/wilson</a>.

Towards Establishing Recommendations for the West, and the U.S. in Particular

#### ENGAGEMENT WITH THE MUSLIM COMMUNITY: A Necessary Part of Western Security

Within Europe, it is understood that engagement with the Muslim community is a necessary and vital part of any counter-terrorism strategy. Failure to engage is widely recognised as a grave security risk because, as the London Metropolitan Police Commissioner made clear after 7/7, it is "the communities that defeat terrorism, not the police."

European policymakers have realized that their own Muslim communities can help to combat radicalisation and decipher the motivations of those who would seek to attack Europe. Their aid cannot be underestimated. These communities are indispensable allies, for the following reasons:

- a. Radical violent extremists construct a vocabulary of legitimacy by invoking and misreading Islamic doctrine and Islamic law. When that essentially immoral source of legitimacy is removed and castigated, radical violent extremism loses credibility, even among highly politicised sections of the Muslim community. That is work that can *only* be done by Muslims who are credible within their own communities.
- b. By their very nature, radical extremists exist on the fringes of society. Nevertheless, they have limited contact with the mainstream. The mainstream Muslim community, much more than other groups, will be able to distinguish violent tendencies from simple grievances. Indeed, the fact that radicals seldom operate in the mosques indicates that they are most concerned about being "outed" by their co-religionists because they adhere to heretical forms of religion.
- c. In the aftermath of 7/7, every security agency has argued that the Muslim community's consent is vital to their strategy and plan of action; no action can be carried out smoothly if the community at large believes itself to be stigmatized and demonized. More-

over, security policies cannot rely on surveillance alone. In Spain, radicals were under severe surveillance and yet the country was attacked. Without winning the hearts and minds of the Muslim community, no security plan can hope to succeed.

# COUNTER-TERRORISM, SECURITY SERVICES AND THE LAW

"As recent events have demonstrated, counter-terrorist operations can have an impact on relations between the police and local communities. It is in the interest of everyone - in particular the police and the affected local community - that these operations are conducted in the most appropriate and effective manner, and take due account of community relations issues."<sup>38</sup>

[British Prime Minister Tony Blair, 2006]

Effective policing and accurate intelligence are indispensable to any domestic counter-terrorism effort. There will be necessary and crucial police actions. It is important that these actions be surgical and precise. Law enforcement should go hand in hand with upholding the civil liberties of all citizens and non-citizens. Conflating this vital work with the criminalisation of dissent will cause our strategic considerations to crumble. There has been, is, and likely will continue to be a huge swell of dissatisfaction with Western foreign policy in the Middle East. Such dissent should not be criminalised, regardless of how distasteful such views may be to Western sensibilities. To criminalise dissent would be to criminalise potential allies, an unnecessary and broad sweep action that would compromise the counter-terrorism effort. The UK's Muslim Safety Forum model allowed for domestic concerns to be expressed to the security services; intelligence gathering was improved as a result.

Those who do not disavow violence should not receive any special treatment under the law, nor should the standard of the law be sacrificed to combat the mod-

<sup>38</sup> Tony Blair, Countering International Terrorism, 2006, see <http://www.mi5.gov.uk/output/Page307.html>.

ern phenomenon of religiously 'sanctioned' political vigilantism. In the end, this is precisely what the perpetrators want. Our greatest triumph is in upholding the highest standards of decency and integrity, for it is against these same standards that war has been waged.

In particular, the aforementioned model of the Muslim Contact Unit should be studied and replicated, not just in police forces but also in other sections of the security establishment (the FBI, the CIA and so forth). A large number of potential threats have been thwarted simply by having such expertise within. The British security services are attempting to roll out the Muslim Contact Unit model on a national level; other western governments should follow suit.

It bears repeating that this is a policy recommendation concerned with engagement and security; it is not about values that should be supported or thwarted. Western governments are not in the business of supporting values; that is the function of civil society, which is reflected through the law, which then defines how governments operate.

For example, the purist Salafi movement may have practices and norms that are offensive to Western (and often, non-Salafi Muslim) sensibilities. However, insofar as these practices and norms do not break the law, they are not a security concern and should not come under the purview of the state. When the state engages with such a movement, it need not, and indeed should not, be interpreted as supporting or legitimizing the values of such a movement. It only reflects the pragmatic belief that in the effort to secure our societies, we will work with anyone who does not pose a security threat.

The British security services have already recommended the following initiatives, which should be seriously considered by all western governments:

- Monitor community tension and formulate policing options to mitigate its causes and reduce adverse effects;
- Share information about the impact of proposed policies and strategies on diversity;

- Build trust and confidence through a counterterrorism communications strategy that "segments the market" to ensure that police messages communicate the right things in the right way to the right people through the right media;
- Set up a national Strategic Community Think Tank, establish Regional Advisory Groups, and hold community seminars and conferences;
- Carry out community impact assessments (including community risk assessments) after contentious incidents and events;
- Challenge the message of extremists both nationally and locally;
- Promote the UK police community engagement approach to international partners;
- Secure sophisticated training on Islam and local policing environments;
- Provide training and briefings about the radicalization process for officers deployed in communities vulnerable to recruitment into violent extremism;
- Maximize police service employees' skills and experiences to support the counter-terrorist effort;
- Find alternative ways to report suspicious activity.

All of these initiatives should be carried out in conjunction with local and national community partners.

#### A WAY FORWARD: ADDRESSING MUSLIM Alienation in Europe and the U.S.

Social exclusion, a problem that academics and practitioners have been talking about for decades, does not contribute to a healthy society. It breeds a society of disparate and disconnected entities, which in turn may exacerbate other social ills and result in social upheaval. The European experience indicates that "Islamophobia" and the resulting social exclusion is a problem that must be dealt with in order to 'drain the swamps' of individuals susceptible to takfiri ideologies. Alienated Muslim communities, particularly Muslim youth, must be integrated into a sufficiently pluralistic civic identity that can offer hope and promise for the complete range of different communities.

Though "other-ness" exhibits itself both within the non-Muslim and Muslim communities of Western societies, and while a novel form of partisanship as some sort of superior national identity combined with prejudice may be somewhat emotionally satisfying and psychologically gratifying, it does not come without consequences. Western Islam cannot rely on being inexorable: on the horizon, there may easily be a deepening of Islamophobia. Already, some members of non-Muslim intelligentsia exhibit regrettable bigotry under the fig leaf of "intellectual inquiry;" that needs to be challenged by anyone concerned about the future. This exhortation is not intended to be an alarmist call but rather to merely point out that the possibility exists and that it serves as a rallying cry for extremists.

The North American experience can be useful, and the U.S. and Canada should stand steadfast against any call to compromise their level of openness. Post 9/11, intolerance has become more of a danger in the U.S. and must be checked. When Keith Ellison became the first Muslim voted into Congress, he faced a reaction that would have been unlikely prior to 9/11 but was curiously acceptable after. Recent history suggests that Muslim European communities are uncomfortable being publicly European, whereas post 9/11, Muslim American communities are uncomfortable being publicly Muslim. Neither is conducive to creating a society where all sectors are equally at ease with themselves and with one another.

British security services have recommended that the monitoring of faith-hate crimes be expanded. As Robert Beckley of the Association of Chief Police Officers said:

"Specific recording of faith hate crime has been established by ACPO as a minimum standard of service for all forces and is now being rolled out as national practice with the publication of the new Hate Crime Manual. In the meantime we have launched, in partnership with the Muslim Safety Forum, a nation-wide project to encourage third party reporting of Islamophobic incidents, responding to fears that much of this type of crime goes unreported."<sup>39</sup>

[Robert Beckley, Association of Chief Police Officers]

It is difficult for the United States, which is a federal system, to incorporate such forums into their engagement strategies; but incorporate them they should.

As such:

- Western governments should encourage the education of government officials and those in the security services with regard to Islam. If part of the problem is alienation from the mainstream, then mainstream political and cultural leaders should be equipped with authentic information about the practices of its Muslim community in order to better assist in its integration. The alternative that has already been seen is the confluence of mainstream concerns about Islam (genuinely, if erroneously, held) with the fears of the far-right, as seen in the cases of the British National Party or the Fronte Nationale.
- 2. Imams, religious functionaries and educators of all types should be better equipped to relate religion to its context in the West, instead of merely concentrating on abstract notions that are effectively irrelevant. The failure of the mainstream Muslim religious establishment to do so already, in the West, has led to disillusionment within Muslim youth communities, creating a void where radicals find easy prey.
- 3. Encouraging indigenous expressions of Muslim identity and highlighting Muslim cultural contributions will help to remove the existing sense of

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>39</sup> Beckley, op.cit.

alienation. In this regard, there is much historical material to build on.<sup>40</sup> America was first recognised by a Muslim country (Morocco), and the roots of the European Renaissance lie partially in Muslim civilisation. More of this history should be brought out, and built on, both for the mainstream to feel at ease incorporating their Muslim compatriots and for Muslim communities to feel at ease at integralizing themselves.

The idea of "integralization" was hinted at earlier, but in short, it relates to communities seeking to contribute to the very makeup of mainstream society, as opposed to simply being "integrated" in it. This can only take place with an interpretation of multiculturalism that respects diversity and a common civic citizenship.

- 4. Most important, Western governments should remove barriers to integration from within their societies through anti-discrimination legislation and similar instruments. It's meaningless to talk about the integration of Muslim communities in France while stigmatising Muslim practices such as the wearing of a headscarf. American civil rights laws have been dedicated to ensuring that this type of attitude not be permitted in America, and American authorities should encourage the same in Europe.
- 5. Role models within the Muslim community should be encouraged to emerge and to share experiences from both sides of the Atlantic. The historically marginalized African American Muslim communities should be able to speak to marginalized European Muslim communities and offer their thoughts on how to integralize themselves in societies where social mechanisms continue to stigmatise them.

#### **COMMUNITY REPRESENTATION**

"You are right, we do not know about all of the issues which affect Muslim communities. It is only through our working with these communities that we can begin to understand these issues. It is important that there is dialogue and communication between Government and communities to discuss the issues you mention, such as foreign policy, so as to allow communities to voice their concerns and also to allow Government to dispel any myths put forward by the media." <sup>41</sup> [Meg Munn MP]

"The majority of groups usually referred to as Islamists are not terrorists."<sup>42</sup> [British Prime Minister Tony Blair]

Until the 7/7 bombings, the British Government generally dealt with the Muslim Council of Britain (MCB) as it had the largest number of Muslim community affiliates. In spite of this, the MCB did not have support from all parts of the Muslim community and was viewed by some in government to be problematic because of its connections to Islamist organisations. As a result, the Government chose to enfranchise other groups, such as the British Muslim Forum and the Sufi Muslim Council, to the exclusion of the MCB.

This was not an absolute mistake by the British Government. What was erroneous, however, was the assumption that in so doing, they were reaching a sufficient enough portion of the community to make engagement with the MCB unnecessary. The MCB may not have been wholly representative, but it was more significant than many of the other organisations brought in to take its place.

It is likely, however, that the rejection of the MCB will be unsustainable. The British authorities began to realize in the wake of 7/7 that while Islamist movements were not always liberal, those most active in Britain in particular and Europe in general, remained non-violent. As such, they could be engaged – a decision that the French authorities appeared to share.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>40</sup> See, for example, Hellyer, *The 'Other' European*, to be released in 2008.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>41</sup> Meg Munn, Duty Minister for the UK Department for Communities and Local Government, responding to a letter from the author.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>42</sup> Tony Blair, (2006), Countering International Terrorism, 2006, see <a href="http://www.mi5.gov.uk/output/Page29.html">http://www.mi5.gov.uk/output/Page29.html</a>.
French Minister of Interior Nicolas Sarkozy publicly stated that he believes the UOIF [Union des Organisations Islamiques de France] has always held positions that 'respected the Republic' and is a reliable partner in the delicate dialogue over the integration of the French Muslim community.<sup>43</sup>

It is well known that the UOIF has its roots in the Muslim Brotherhood, but it is equally well known that it respects the French government and is a partner in terms of integration. In the wake of the French riots, the UOIF even passed a *fatwa* against rioting:

"In fact, when the Islamists emerged, it was to try to calm the autumn rioters, who often greeted these missionaries with hails of stones. The Brotherhood-linked organization Union des Organisations Islamiques de France (UOIF) repudiated the riots in a fatwa. That fatwa was the culmination of a UOIF strategy, forged 15 years earlier, to be perceived as a reliable partner of the French government. The highest-ranking permanent official of the domestic surveillance agency told us that the UOIF 'needs' them, presumably to certify that the organization poses no danger."<sup>44</sup>

It became abundantly clear that the riots were carried out by alienated youngsters who had no faith either in their own future in France or in the ethical values of Islam. The *fatwa* was ignored.

Of course, fundamental differences remain between Western political philosophy and Islamist ideology (and between Islamist ideology and historical Muslim political philosophy, for that matter). Nonetheless, Islamism is a 'broad church' that accounts for a wide variety of political movements. Those movements have served as the inspiration behind civil society activists working against poverty and democratic social movements (such as the immensely popular AKP in Turkey and Hizb al-Wasat in Egypt). The precedent in the Muslim world shows that when Islamists have been brought into the mainstream, they moderate in order to maintain their populist support.<sup>45</sup> In 21st century Europe, they have also, by and large, bought into the effort to provide channels for dissent that do not result in catastrophic violence.<sup>46</sup>

Members of other radical movements in the West have gone through the same experiences. Many current members of European governments entered mainstream politics through radical left-wing student movements and subsequently moderated their discourse.

Recently in the U.S., analysts on both the left and the right have criticised the policy establishment's move to disavow all Islamist movements as "the enemy":

"U.S. policymaking has been handicapped by Washington's tendency to see the Muslim Brotherhood—and the Islamist movement as a whole—as a monolith. Policymakers should instead analyze each national and local group independently and seek out those that are open to engagement. In the anxious and often fruitless search for Muslim moderates, policymakers should recognize that the Muslim Brotherhood presents a notable opportunity."<sup>47</sup>

#### And:

"The United States must be willing to set aside its qualms and instead focus on the principles of changes it seeks. Any group that accepts the system and the processes of democratic elections and good governance must be engaged, regardless of its ideology or opposition to our policy. The red line is violent action."<sup>48</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>43</sup> Fiammetta Venner, OPA sur l'Islam de France: Les Ambitions de l'UOIF, (Paris: Calmann-Levy, 2005), pp. 11-14.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>44</sup> Robert S. Leiden & Steven Brooke, "The Moderate Muslim Brotherhood," Foreign Affairs, Volume 86, No. 2, p. 118.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>45</sup> Steven Cook, "The Right Way to Support Arab Reform," *Foreign Affairs*, March/April 2005, pp. 91-102.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>46</sup> The oft-cited exception has been Hamas, but it is unclear whether this exceptional case is due to its Muslim Brotherhood connections, or because its exceptional situation in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Suicide bombings have been carried out by people in the Occupied Territories unrelated to Hamas: indeed, they have often been associated with movements that are ideologically in deep conflict with Islamism.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>47</sup> Leiden & Brooke, "The Moderate Muslim Brotherhood," *Foreign Affairs*, Volume 86, No.2, p. 108.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>48</sup> Peter Singer, The 9-11 War Plus 5: Looking Back and Looking Forward at U.S.-Islamic World Relations, (The Brookings Institution, 2006) p. 15.

### Thus:

- 1. Governments need to engage with as many parts of the community as possible in order to reach the majority.
- 2. All Islamist political movements should be approached with the understanding that each of them pledges *not* to overthrow their governments through violent means. This should be our rule not just with Islamist movements but with *all* movements. Refusing to deal outright with Islamist parties gives the impression that the West is less concerned with their actual political record and more concerned with creating a 'third alternative to both current governments and Islamists.<sup>249</sup> This perception may not be the truth but must be taken seriously.
- 3. In terms of legislation, any future measures should seriously consider Western traditions of freedom of expression and association. As long as Islamist movements do not exhort vigilante violence against civilians, they should not be penalized by being criminalised.
- 4. Hate speech or incitement to violence should be constrained across the board. Abu Hamza, an extreme preacher, was jailed for his hate speech while the leader of the British National Party, a far-right white-nationalist party, was not; the BNP remains a legal organisation.

### SCHOLARLY EXPERTISE : NO SHORT CUTS

In the post 9/11 effort to broaden the knowledge base regarding the Muslim community, policy establishments scrambled to identify new sources of expertise. It became tempting for certain segments of the political spectrum to focus on "experts" who had neither scholarly acumen nor grassroots experience, but shared their own ideological views. Sometimes preferential treatment was extended knowingly, other times it was not. The West cannot be blamed for seeking new sources of expertise. Many individuals presented themselves as 'representative,' possessing 'insider knowledge' and an ability to speak for the 'silent majority.' However, they were less grounded in the Muslim community than they appeared to be and did not have the requisite credentials.

There is a price to pay for such errors if community engagement is to be taken seriously. Our success in countering terrorism depends on the trust of the Muslim community. We threaten that trust when we turn to "experts" of the aforementioned type, as our community engagement strategy appears neither genuine nor sincere.

As an example: a number of self-proclaimed ex-Muslims, or extremist neo-liberal reformers who reject mainstream religious authority, are sometimes touted as experts on the faith and are consulted by government, the policy establishment and other parts of civil society. Other voices see Islam as the problem and conclude a priori that Muslims in general pose a security risk (although our own security services reject these alarmist calls without hesitation). These voices will continue to be heard in certain forums, but they should not be taken as representative; government and civil society must listen to majority voices within the Muslim community. If such 'reformers' are given credence, the majority of Muslims, who are either antipathetic to their messages or oppose them, may themselves become alienated and reject engagement.

Muslim lobby groups may lack a degree of credibility, but they are more representative of the Muslim community than individuals who have left the Islamic faith, or have little contact with the communities they claim to know. More representative *bodies* should be encouraged to emerge so we are not just engaging *individuals* who agree with a set of ideological precepts. Genuine engagement with the Muslim community through its representational bodies can only take place through organisations that have credibility within their own communities.

There is no doubt that the policy establishment is filled with well-meaning, good-intentioned people. Nev-

49 Ibid, p. 14.

ertheless, if they do not seek to engage credible and representative voices, their recommendations may be misinterpreted by the very community they are trying to reach. One recent report from a well-known U.S. think-tank has gained a great deal of notoriety in the Muslim world:<sup>50</sup>

"RAND's report is actually a call for destroying moderation in the Muslim world and driving Muslims to the very arms of extremism. It is an attempt by RAND to say to the Muslim world that there is no other way in front of you except for the way of extremism and violence. They actually welcome extremism and reject moderation."<sup>51</sup>

[Taha al-'Alwani]

"Concerning what is mentioned in the RAND report about Islam's attitude toward issues such as human rights, women, and minorities, it is clear that the report did not derive the relevant information from the genuine Islamic sources. Perhaps it was derived from some secularists or some of those who bear a grudge against Islam or know nothing about it."<sup>52</sup>

[Hussain Halawah]

Right or wrong, views such as these are widely held because the recommendations put out by RAND and other organizations (regardless of how useful they may be) typically include support for minority movements that have little credibility within the Muslim community, whether in the West or elsewhere. Our national and security interests demand that engagement take place with the mainstream, not with the minority.

There is no dearth of scholarship to draw upon; numerous experts within Western academia have built their careers researching Muslim communities. Dr. Umar Faruq Abd-Allah of the Nawawi Foundation in Chicago is an American who spent two decades in Saudi Arabia and is partly responsible for laying out the theological basis for an indigenous Muslim American identity. Professor Sherman Jackson of the University of Michigan is widely respected within Western academia for his innovative work in Islamic law, while Professor Sulayman Nyang of Howard University is a recognised expert on Muslim communities in the United States. These are committed Western scholars who have spent time in the Muslim world and have standing in Muslim communities. They know the languages of the region as well as the academic (non-political) discourse. They can help policy makers understand the situation, and also identify groups and public intellectuals with whom to engage.

## FACILITATING INSTITUTIONS OF RELIGIOUS AUTHORITY IN THE WEST

"Despite [the] common perception in Europe and the United States, bin Laden's primary target is neither Christians nor Jews (both of whom are referred to by Al Qaeda as 'the far enemy') but rather Islam's traditional clerical institutions along with those hundreds of millions of Muslims who do not share his puritanical worldview ('the near enemy') and who, as a consequence, make up the overwhelming majority of Al Qaeda's victims. It is a clever manipulative trick: convince Muslims to stop obeying their clerical authorities, while taking upon yourself their traditional clerical duties."<sup>53</sup>

[Reza Aslan, author of No God but God]

Fortunately, neither al-Qa'ida nor organisations like it have credibility among Western Muslim communities. Nevertheless, their lack of authenticity points to anoth-

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>50</sup> Islamonline.net Staff, *Building Moderate Muslim Networks*, 2006, see <a href="http://www.islamonline.net/English/In\_Depth/ShariahAndHumanity/Topic\_02.shtml">http://www.islamonline.net/English/In\_Depth/ShariahAndHumanity/Topic\_02.shtml</a>.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>51</sup> Taha al-'Alwani is a popular Muslim intellectual well known for his stances against extremism. He supported Muslim participation in the war against al-Qa'ida in 2001.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>52</sup> Hussain Halawah is a prominent Muslim jurist and critic of extremism. He is Secretary General of the European Council for Fatwa and Research, which has supported the integration of Muslims into European societies.

<sup>53</sup> Reza Aslan, The War for Islam, 2006, see <a href="http://www.boston.com/news/globe/ideas/articles/2006/09/10/the\_war\_for\_islam/?page=1">http://www.boston.com/news/globe/ideas/articles/2006/09/10/the\_war\_for\_islam/?page=1</a>.

er problem: the structural deficiencies that result from the absence of authoritative religious institutions.

Western societies uphold the doctrine of religious freedom in a way that other states do not; however, without established religious authorities, the state *cannot* understand or know what is required by a religion. Representative organisations and lobby groups cannot be expected to fill this gap.

One example is the Begum case in the UK, where a student demanded the right to wear a cloak to school, claiming it as part of her religion. The court was forced to adjudicate between differing religious opinions on the issue, almost making the court into an "Islamic Shari'ah Court" of the UK. In the final analysis, Western political philosophy holds that religious freedom is an individual, not a communal, right. As such, this case was judged on its individual merit, which meant that Ms. Begum did not need to prove that her interpretation of Islam was "the" interpretation; only that she sincerely held it. Nevertheless, courts legitimately weigh such claims in such cases more heavily when they are backed by a historical pedigree, i.e. a religious authority of some sort.

The integration of Muslim communities is also difficult when religious instruction comes only from individuals or groups that are fundamentally independent from political authorities, but recognised as credible to the masses of the Muslim community.

Institutions of religious authority are necessary to meet the following needs:

- a. To provide expert advice to the criminal justice system, as mentioned above;
- b. To license chaplains and imams in prisons, schools, universities, mosques and the armed forces;
- c. To counter radical interpretations with more credible religious arguments. A lack of recognised religious authority allows radicals to assume such

authority for themselves and influence impressionable youth. If the radicals are heterodox, and can be labelled as such by a respected religious authority, then these institutes will prove themselves a powerful tool in the arsenal. In the aftermath of the bombings, the leader of a far-right Muslim radical group (al-Muhajiroon) spread a so-called *fatwa* validating the attacks and others like them (although it was written pre-7/7). Part of an effective response to it was a rebuttal by a classically trained scholar<sup>54</sup> who used normative jurisprudential tools to invalidate the very basis of the *fatwa*.

d. To counter vigilantism. In Western Muslim communities, the youth are now turning to Islam to give their identity an ethical and spiritual component; this trend is particularly strong in English-speaking communities. Many young people travel abroad to study Islam, but when they return to the West, they find themselves without institutions through which to continue their studies and spread a message of anti-vigilantism.

Western governments should facilitate intra-Muslim discussion with the view of establishing institutions on a model that has already proven successful in America: seminaries that are connected to mainstream universities.

In this regard, there is a pertinent example that comes to mind, already in the United States. The Muslim Bosnian-American community was subjected to an immense amount of pressure in its ancestral homeland and faced genocide. Today, they remain acutely aware of their "Muslimness" when arriving in the U.S. Their most enduring institutions in the United States were places of worship; most other institutions did not last very long. Unlike most American Muslim communities, they did not come as rich or particularly welleducated. However, they have proven to be remarkably well-integrated, and they have not fallen to radicalism, despite having ample reason vis-à-vis foreign policies towards their ancestral home.

<sup>54</sup> Muhammad 'Afifi Al-Akiti, Defending the Transgressed, 2005, see <a href="http://www.livingislam.org/maa/dcmm\_e.html">http://www.livingislam.org/maa/dcmm\_e.html</a>>.

They have dozens of mosques in the United States, but unlike most other Muslim communities in the West, their mosques are generally led by imams appointed by a mainstream religious authority: the Mufti of Bosnia, Mustafa Cleric. Despite having served as the Mufti during the genocide of Bosnia, he has been open and warm to the idea of interfaith dialogue and rejected radical takfiri ideas early on, due to his initial training at the Azhar seminary in Egypt. He appoints all the imams, and ensures they receive orthodox training in Bosnia and elsewhere in the Muslim world, before (preferably) studying at universities in the West (the Mufti and other Bosnian imams are PhD holders from the University of Chicago).

Just as he appointed a mufti for the Slovenian community of Bosnian Muslims, the Mufti of Bosnia appointed one for Bosnian Muslims in America. Eventually, those Muftis will have their own institutions and authorities in Slovenia and America and will no longer be simply appointed individuals from Bosnia, as has been the precedent all through Muslim history. Despite the arrival of some extremist ideas into Bosnia during the 1990s, these ideas have been sidelined and marginalized in Bosnia and in Bosnian communities abroad due to this regulation process. This is not necessarily a model that can work for all Muslim communities, but it is nonetheless one that can be learned from in the creation of indigenous Muslim religious authorities.

Such authoritative institutions should emerge with the following considerations in mind:

- In the West, these institutions should not be funded by the state — the doctrine of separating Church and State remains valuable for policy purposes. The independence of the religious establishment must be safeguarded in order to maintain its credibility amongst the Muslim community, which traditionally has shied away from state-sponsored religious establishments.
- 2. Benefactors and donors in the Arab world, which is currently awash with funds, should be encouraged to donate anonymously to such institutions, particularly in European Muslim communities.

- 3. These institutions should be politically independent, particularly in the West where, currently, many mosques are functionally ruled by overseas governments and therefore do not serve as expressions of indigenous religion.
- 4. Such seminaries should not be given political or legal authority over any individual; individual rights should be respected in accordance with Western political philosophy.
- 5. Initiatives should emanate from within the Muslim community, facilitated by the government when necessary, but not the other way around. The Radical Middle Way project, funded by the British government, was both a success and a failure. It was a success in that it delivered more mainstream voices. chosen by a range of Muslim youth movements and cleared by the government. The type of individuals were intriguing; they generally adhered to the mainstream of Islamic thought, upheld the idea of an indigenous message of Islam within the UK, rejected violence against the state, and were often animated by foreign policy issues. Their message was popular and it served to identify scholars of repute. Unfortunately, once it became clear to the Muslim community that the initiative was linked to the government, and had not been so declared from the outset, the initiative suffered unnecessarily.
- 6. The model of religious authority would need to be sufficiently broad to cover different Muslim communities. The model emerging in the Muslim world at present is based on the framework of the Amman Message. This framework has the support of both the masses (particularly in the West; see the 2007 Declaration mentioned on page 14, in addition to the signatories to the Amman Message) and the religious establishment in the Muslim world.
- 7. These seminaries should begin by establishing ties with mainstream religious establishments in the Muslim world. This will help to establish their credentials and guard against any destruction of their religious authority. This destruction is an unfortunate, if unintentional, side effect of Salafi move-

ments and has allowed violent ideologies to find neo-religious justification in takfirism. As mentioned, some institutions have proved themselves to be key resources against extremism. The Qarawiyeen University in Morocco, which has combined classical Islamic learning with a modern university system, has already taught a number of Westerners who have gone on to minister to their communities. The Nahdah al-'Ulama organisation of Indonesia, whose leader became President of Indonesia, has proved to be squarely opposed to radicalisation and has been supported in current Australian counter-radicalisation initiatives. Al-Azhar University in Cairo, perhaps the most famous Sunni institution globally and historically, is a resource. Other institutions, such as the Tabah Foundation in the UAE, which has links to some of the most reputable scholars in the Muslim world and has done its part in promulgating the Amman Message, should also be engaged. When takfiri-style neo-religious ideologies are exposed as unjustified in Islamic tradition, they will not find sympathetic ears. Until a historically valid alternative is introduced, Muslims seeking solace in a religious vocabulary remain at risk from neo-religious ideologies.

- 8. Indigenous Western identities should be facilitated. The mainstream laity will insist upon this in any case, if the trajectory of Muslim identity in the West continues in the way it has already. Such has been the precedent wherever Muslim communities emerged; the "cultural imperative" has always been supported by the mainstream religious establishment. However, it remains important not to link this to a counter-terrorism agenda; it can be parallel, but the main point of supporting it is to ensure that the emerging religious establishment has credibility amongst the Muslim community. If it is linked directly to a counter-terrorism strategy, it will be considered similar to social engineering: social cohesion and counter-terrorism are wholly different fields of activity and should be recognised as such.
- 9. '*Ijtihad*, or the effort to find new interpretations through existing religious paradigms, has always

been the hallmark of mainstream religious authority. Yet *'ijtihad* has not been repeated in most attempts at developing institutions in the West. As a result, these institutions do not effectively minister to the overwhelming majority of Western populations. New institutions will have to overcome such barriers, as a matter of urgency for both counterradicalisation initiatives and social cohesion.

- 10. It is important to recognize that such institutions will not necessarily be allies with the political establishment; global political hegemony emanating from the Western world will never be accepted by non-Western institutions, and indeed, it is a subject of much controversy within the West itself. But what should be guaranteed is that the discontent directed at Western foreign policy does not result in another 7/7. Alternatively, linking recognition of religious authorities to their agreement on foreign policy will serve only to remove allies in the battle against extremists.
- 11. Until such institutions are established and are effective, scholarly resources should remain located in the Muslim world. Governments should facilitate engagement with such resources or remain uninvolved altogether.
- 12. The seminary model, such as that instituted in the University of Chicago's associated seminaries, is an interesting model to be studied. The forthcoming move of the Zaytuna Institute from Hayward, California to Berkeley, for the explicit purpose of gaining university accreditation, is a welcome step.

Beyond the establishment of mainstream institutions of religious authority, discussions between Muslims who disavow violence must continue to take place; those who are not necessarily theologically convergent should be drawn together, rather than be allowed to spiral out of control. Nor should exchanges be limited to the free public domain; in Yemen, the judge Hamoud al-Hitar challenged jailed radical extremists in prison, although his success was called into question recently.<sup>55</sup> In Singapore, the (non-Muslim) government made some progress facilitating discussions between mainstream Muslims and radical extremists under arrest. These and other efforts must be carefully considered, for the tendency in some quarters is to treat them as instant solutions. Radicalisation often takes many years, and it is not unreasonable to expect that de-radicalisation may also take a significant amount of time to fully run its course. However, such efforts are far more effective and ethically more viable than employing other methods, such as torture, which has a long-term price in that it can lead to the rise of radical extremism and terrorism, such as in the case of Qutb.

In short, the following should be undertaken:

- Institutionalizing independent and mainstream seminaries in the West to counteract neo-religious radical imperatives and assist in the integration of Muslim communities. Integration and counterradicalisation must be carried out separately to gain the trust of Muslim communities. Coupling the two agendas will be counter-productive.
- 2. Relating this institutionalization to the licensing of imams and chaplains in universities, schools, prisons, hospitals and other sectors; otherwise, unqualified individuals may be appointed to sensitive positions that give them undue influence over vulnerable communities.

### ENGAGEMENT WITH THE MUSLIM WORLD

While foreign policy questions (Palestine/Israel and Iraq) are beyond the scope of this document and are not likely to be resolved by domestic authorities involved in counter-terrorism, policy makers must recognise that these issues play a role, perhaps the greatest role, in motivating radical extremists. This in itself may not change foreign policy, but it is deeply relevant.

With regards to encouraging good governance in the Muslim world, there is more hope, and a number of European initiatives in this area have slowly borne fruit. Successful efforts range from the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office's Global Opportunities Fund, which has supported over 150 projects in the Middle East and North Africa and 25 programs in Afghanistan, as well as key countries in South East Asia and Africa, to promote human rights and accountable democratic government, to the British Council's efforts in raising educational standards. The more successful programs have not compromised on supporting social reforms but have sought to stimulate these reforms through existing cultural and religious paradigms. The British Council has sought to improve curriculum design at al-Azhar University by assisting pre-existing faculty initiatives. Another program aimed at improving women's rights in Nigeria engaged with mainstream religious organisations.

These initiatives and others have respected the history and civilisation of Muslim cultures and assisted development from within. Rather than condemning the *madrasah* system of education, for example, these initiatives have engaged citizens to improve standards within the traditional system. The British Department for International Development (DFID) has worked on improving governance (including anti-corruption), reforming security services and justice systems, reforming education systems, and passing laws on private sector development; in this manner, they have assisted in strengthening civil society in these countries, which is assuredly the most sustainable bulwark against extremism.

To be credible, it is also extremely important that such initiatives be multilateral, involving alliances between the United States, the European Union and others:

"Enhanced coordination with the European Union and Japan will not only assure additional funds but will also improve the legitimacy of the whole enterprise by multilateralizing it. This is crucially important given the level of anti-Americanism in the region and the absolute necessity of avoiding the image of a 'Made in America' stamp on any socioeconomic development and democratization project."<sup>56</sup>

<sup>55</sup> Tim Whewell, *Yemeni anti-terror scheme in doubt*, 2005, see <a href="http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/2/hi/programmes/crossing\_continents/4328894.stm">http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/2/hi/programmes/crossing\_continents/4328894.stm</a>. <sup>56</sup> Singer, op.cit., p. 15.

# CLOSING REFLECTIONS

In brief, the main recommendations are the following:

- 1. Western governments should remain engaged with their Muslim communities. This is a security imperative; counter-terrorism initiatives depend on the effectiveness of our engagement strategies. Within Europe, it is understood that engagement with the Muslim community is an essential aspect of any counter-terrorism strategy. A growing critical mass of European policymakers have realized that their own Muslim communities can help contest radicalisation and interpret the motivations of those who would seek to attack Europe.
- 2. The reduction of alienation should remain on the European agenda, and the U.S. should advise European allies accordingly. In addition, the U.S. should not make the mistake of allowing such alienation to emerge on its own soil. Social exclusion, a consistent problem that academics and practitioners have discussed for decades, does not contribute to a healthy society. It breeds a society of disparate and disconnected entities, which in turn worsen other social ills and result in social upheaval. Specifically, the European experience demonstrates that "Islamophobia" and the resulting social exclusion is a problem that must be dealt with in order to respond to individuals susceptible to takfiri ideologies.
- 3. Community engagement should be on the basis of credibility and representation, not ideological alignment. Before the 7/7 bombings, the British Government generally dealt with the Muslim Council of Britain (MCB) as it had the largest number of Muslim community affiliates. In spite of this, the MCB did not have support from all parts of the Muslim community and was viewed by some in government to be problematic because of its connections to Islamist organisations. As a result, the government chose to enfranchise other groups, such as the British Muslim Forum and the Sufi Muslim Council, to the exclusion of the MCB. It was assumed such enfranchisement did not have

to be done on the basis of grassroots support, that it would be positive to exclude a highly significant lobby group (the MCB) and that the community at large was represented comprehensively through lobby groups. There is significant evidence to suggest these assumptions were deeply flawed.

- 4. Establishing institutions of religious authority for Western Muslim communities remains indispensable in countermanding radical neo-religious ideologies. This can be related to the institutionalization of the licensing of imams and chaplains in universities, schools, prisons, hospitals, and other sectors; otherwise, unqualified individuals may be appointed to sensitive positions that give them undue influence over vulnerable communities. Western governments should facilitate intra-Muslim discussion with the view of establishing institutions on a model that has already proven successful in America: seminaries that are connected to mainstream universities. This facilitation, however, will be irrevocably damaged if the communities involved perceive government interference and manipulation.
- 5. Engagement should not abjure any of our traditions; the terrorists sought to change our way of life, and we should not give them a partial victory by regarding our civil liberties as dispensable. The enactment of any further legislation must be taken forward with awareness that our societies stand at a critical crossroad, where our civil liberties may be sacrificed on the altar of security. The legal profession, the security establishment and non-governmental human rights organisations should increase contact to suggest jointly conceived policies, removed from political agendas.
- 6. Western engagement with the Muslim world must be redefined for effectiveness. There are legitimate and imperative discussions to be had with the Muslim world on a variety of issues. Iraq, and the Palestinian-Israeli conflict in particular play great roles in the motivations and recruitment of

radical violent extremists. There are a number of initiatives at work already in the Muslim world that could be strengthened to improve good governance and development, while respecting the cultures of the nations involved. In the long-run, sustainable and multi-lateral development is the key to combating extremism.

This effort requires Europeans and non-Europeans, Americans and non-Americans, Muslims and non-Muslims to work together, for the good of us all. We cannot simply lay a problem at the feet of Muslim lobby groups or community leaders alone and ask them to deliver answers. This has been tried and does not work. We live in an interdependent world, where our counter-terrorism strategy depends on imaginative and effective forms of communication and action.

The Project on U.S. Relations with the Islamic World L is a major research program housed within the Saban Center for Middle East Policy at the Brookings Institution. The project conducts high-quality public policy research, and convenes policy makers and opinion leaders on the major issues surrounding the relationship between the United States and the Muslim world. The Project seeks to engage and inform policymakers, practitioners, and the broader public on developments in Muslim countries and communities, and the nature of their relationship with the United States. Together with the affiliated Brookings Doha Center in Qatar, it sponsors a range of events, initiatives, research projects, and publications designed to educate, encourage frank dialogue, and build positive partnerships between the United States and the Muslim world. The Project has several interlocking components:

- The U.S.-Islamic World Forum, which brings together key leaders in the fields of politics, business, media, academia, and civil society from across the Muslim world and the United States, for much needed discussion and dialogue;
- A Visiting Fellows program, for scholars and journalists from the Muslim world to spend time researching and writing at Brookings in order to inform U.S. policy makers on key issues facing Muslim states and communities;
- A series of Brookings Analysis Papers and Monographs that provide needed analysis of the vital issues of joint concern between the U.S. and the Muslim world;
- An Arts and Culture Initiative, which seeks to develop a better understanding of how arts and cul-

tural leaders and organizations can increase understanding between the United States and the global Muslim community;

- A Science and Technology Policy Initiative, which examines the role cooperative science and technology programs involving the U.S. and Muslim world can play in responding to regional development and education needs, as well as fostering positive relations;
- A "Bridging the Divide" Initiative which explores the role of Muslim communities in the West; and
- A Brookings Institution Press Book Series, which aims to synthesize the project's findings for public dissemination.

The underlying goal of the Project is to continue the Brookings Institution's original mandate to serve as a bridge between scholarship and public policy. It seeks to bring new knowledge to the attention of decisionmakers and opinion-leaders, as well as afford scholars, analysts, and the public a better insight into policy issues. The Project is supported through the generosity of a range of sponsors including the Government of the State of Qatar, The Ford Foundation, The Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, Lawrence Livermore National Laboratories, and the Institute for Social Policy Understanding. Partners include American University, the USC Center for Public Diplomacy, and Unity Productions Foundation.

The Project Conveners are Martin Indyk, Carlos Pascual, Peter W. Singer, Shibley Telhami, and Bruce Riedel. Stephen R. Grand serves as Project Director, and Hady Amr is the Director of the Brookings Doha Center. The Saban Center for Middle East Policy was established on May 13, 2002 with an inaugural address by His Majesty King Abdullah II of Jordan. The creation of the Saban Center reflects the Brookings Institution's commitment to expand dramatically its research and analysis of Middle East policy issues at a time when the region has come to dominate the U.S. foreign policy agenda.

The Saban Center provides Washington policymakers with balanced, objective, in-depth and timely research and policy analysis from experienced and knowledgeable scholars who can bring fresh perspectives to bear on the critical problems of the Middle East. The center upholds the Brookings tradition of being open to a broad range of views. The Saban Center's central objective is to advance understanding of developments in the Middle East through policy-relevant scholarship and debate.

The center's foundation was made possible by a generous grant from Haim and Cheryl Saban of Los Angeles. Ambassador Martin S. Indyk, Senior Fellow in Foreign Policy Studies, is the Director of the Saban Center. Kenneth M. Pollack is the center's Director of Research. Joining them is a core group of Middle East experts who conduct original research and develop innovative programs to promote a better understanding of the policy choices facing American decision makers in the Middle East. They include Tamara Cofman Wittes, a specialist on political reform in the Arab world who directs the Project on Middle East Democracy and Development; Bruce Riedel, who served as a senior advisor to three Presidents on the Middle East and South Asia at the National Security Council during a twenty-nine year career in the CIA, a specialist on counterterrorism; Suzanne Maloney, a former senior State Department official who focuses on Iran and economic development; Shibley Telhami, who holds the Sadat Chair at the University of Maryland; and Daniel Byman, a Middle East terrorism expert from Georgetown University. The center is located in the Foreign Policy Studies Program at Brookings, led by Brookings Vice President Carlos Pascual.

The Saban Center is undertaking path breaking research in five areas: the implications of regime change in Iraq, including post-war nation-building and Persian Gulf security; the dynamics of Iranian domestic politics and the threat of nuclear proliferation; mechanisms and requirements for a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict; policy for the war against terrorism, including the continuing challenge of statesponsorship of terrorism; and political and economic change in the Arab world, and the methods required to promote democratization.



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