On Islamophobia

Policy Exchange

The Problem of Definition

Trevor Phillips, Sir John Jenkins
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Foreword

by Khalid Mahmood MP

The shocking events at Christchurch, New Zealand, earlier this year brought home to many the existence of anti-Muslim bias, prejudice and discrimination and their capacity to metastasize and manifest in the most extreme and violent ways.

But as equally terrible atrocities at the Poway synagogue in California and, especially, Sri Lanka, have since reminded us, anti-Muslim bigotry does not exist in isolation. It is bound up with a broader menace from far-right, white nationalism; and it exists in symbiotic relationship with Islamist extremism. The latter cannot be erased from the equation. And we do ourselves no favours, if we try to ignore the fact that anti-Muslim hatred is continuously nourished by the scourge of Islamist extremism.

Two years ago, the UK witnessed a series of terrorist attacks that bore out this reality. 2017 was truly an annus horribilis for the British security services. Five terrorist attacks were carried out on British soil: four inspired by the poisonous strains of Islamist radicalism, and one at the hands of a far-right, anti-Muslim extremist.

Since then, there have been renewed efforts to combat this many-headed beast of extremism – and in recent times, there has been much focus on its anti-Muslim variants. How, then, should we deal with anti-Muslim bias, prejudice and discrimination?

Some of my colleagues on the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on British Muslims have become convinced that the answer lies in the adoption of a particular definition of Islamophobia – as outlined in the report that was released late last year. This makes 'Islamophobia' coterminous with 'anti-Muslim racism'. For my part, I have always retained my doubts. I applaud the sentiment and appreciate the sincerity, with which many MPs and commentators approach this issue. But equally, I am troubled by the way in which the definition has been framed and seems intended to operate.

At the broadest level, it has long been clear to me that the term 'Islamophobia' has – as this excellent new Policy Exchange report makes clear – a deeply problematic history. For all that it speaks to genuine problems in our society, it is a word that has been weaponized by some of the most controversial groups within British Muslim communities in order to exert power and influence over those same communities. Organisations like the Muslim Council of Britain (MCB), whose pretensions to be the representative voice of British Muslim opinion remain deeply questionable, seek to police the rhetorical and intellectual boundaries of our diverse communities. They use the cry of 'Islamophobia' as a 'heckler's veto' to shut down alternative points of view. Moreover, in levelling the accusation they

arrogate to themselves the right to define what Islam is – and what Muslims think – thereby engaging in the ultimate form of gatekeeper politics.

Until now, 'Islamophobia' has been a highly loaded term – used to advance a particular, sectional agenda. It has been deployed to frame the limit of what can, or cannot, be said, about Islam and Muslims – both by non-Muslims and by Muslims themselves.

It is striking that I, a proud Muslim and an MP for the city of Birmingham which has the largest Muslim community in the UK, am routinely labeled an 'Islamophobe' by the MCB and its fellow travelers. I know fellow Muslim parliamentarians, like Baroness Falkner, have likewise been targeted; so too have Muslim anti-extremists like Sara Khan. Doubtless, my endorsement of this report will ensure that the word is hurled at me with renewed vigour in the future. But that exactly proves my point: too often, the term 'Islamophobia' has been politicised to service the interests of the most controversial sections of our community.

The definition put forward by the APPG seems unlikely to reverse this situation; indeed, if anything it deepens the problem. With its vague references to "Muslimness", it leaves open the question of what this is, and who gets to define this phenomenon? The risk must surely be that it will serve as a stalking horse for a new form of communalist, gatekeeper politics.

In addition, the attempt to conflate anti-Muslim sentiment with racism seems highly flawed. I know from discussions with my constituents – of all ethnic, national and racial backgrounds – that they simply do not see Islam as a race. The definition therefore creates confusion – when surely the point should be to bring clarity. What, then, is to be gained by this approach?

My doubts on this score have been reinforced by the potential negative consequences of embracing an expansive definition of Islamophobia. As figures like Richard Walton, the former head of Counter-Terrorism Command at the Metropolitan Police, as well as the authors of this current report, have made clear, such a definition imperils a range of government policies – as well as the operation of a free media. The latter strikes me as especially concerning, because of what it means for the broader struggle against extremism.

If we are properly to tackle radicalization and reverse the tide of extremism that is undermining the fabric of our society, then we have to be prepared to have frank and honest conversations: yes, about the prevalence of anti-Muslim bias and prejudice, which has seeped into the socio-political mainstream; but also about the serious and enduring threat posed by Islamist extremism – and the failure of too many in our communities to call out and face that threat. One of the key issues here are the causes of Islamophobia – one of which is the Islamist grievance culture put forward by groups who then insufficiently challenge extremism. This issue is not addressed by the APPG.

To return to where I began, we know that there is anti-Muslim bigotry and hatred in Britain. Organisations like Tell Mama and activists like Fiyaz Mughal have done sterling work to shine a light on the soft underbelly of such bigotry. We should challenge it wherever we find it;

it can never be acceptable.

But, we must proceed with care. The first principle of trying to deal with any problem should be: do no harm. Do not make the situation worse. There is a serious danger that initiatives like that upon which the APPG is embarked, will do precisely that.

Second, we should not allow ourselves to be distracted into endless, and ultimately sterile debates about terminology and definitions. We should examine critically those who are obsessed with such issues and ask: why do they invest such energy in these issues? What is it they are really trying to achieve?

For the danger of the definitional cul-de-sac is that, far from 'lancing the boil' – as some seem to imagine (or indeed, delude themselves) – it will open us to unending and ever more vitriolic culture wars.

We need to look beyond all of this and instead focus on what really matters: tackling deprivation and discrimination wherever they exist; and improving the life chances and opportunities for British citizens, whether they are of a Muslim faith or not.

The authors of this report have done a remarkable job in laying out the complexities of the debate that surrounds 'Islamophobia' – its history, the present realities and the important challenges that policy-makers must face. This is a serious, nuanced piece of work that will enrich a debate that too often degenerates into myopic mud-slinging; and for this reason, I am delighted to commend it to you.

Khalid Mahmood is MP for Birmingham Perry Barr.

Executive Summary

- The question of 'Islamophobia' has risen to the top of the political agenda. Calls for an inquiry into the alleged pervasiveness of 'Islamophobic' sentiment within the Conservative Party have been paralleled by demands for the government to adopt an official definition of the term. The All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on British Muslims came up with such a definition in late 2018 and since then, its advocates have promoted its adoption across the board. To date, they have enjoyed success in persuading the Liberal Democrats, the Labour Party, the Scottish National Party, the London Mayor's Office, and a number of local councils, to endorse the definition. Increasing political pressure has been placed on the Conservatives to follow suit. But as we argue in this report, such a step would be a mistake.
- It is clear that there is a problem with anti-Muslim hatred and prejudice within the UK. There is no doubting the extent to which far-right groups and individuals have sought to foment and exploit prejudice against Islam and its adherents in order to promote their divisive agenda; there is also no denying the existence of lower-level, but perhaps more pervasive examples of discrimination and bigotry.
- But we remain sceptical that the existing campaign against Islamophobia either properly identifies the nature and scale of this problem, or brings forward the right solutions. In particular, the proposed APPG definition of the term seems fundamentally misconceived.
- To begin with, it is worth asking, what problem is that definition meant to solve? At present, the UK has one of the most progressive, anti-discrimination legislative frameworks in existence in the world. As enshrined in the Equality Act 2010, it prohibits discrimination against individuals on the basis of a number of 'protected characteristics', including race, religion and belief. It is further recognised that discrimination and prejudice can take multiple forms at the same time. So, what is it about that that existing framework that is deemed insufficient? What behaviours not captured by the Equality Act would the APPG wish to see addressed? And in what way?
- As this report shows, these questions are fundamental to the whole attempt to define Islamophobia, but until now they have not received satisfactory answers. This matters because the debate

around the term 'Islamophobia' has, historically, been highly politicised.

- The word 'Islamophobia' comes with a deeply problematic history. Many of the groups and individuals that have driven the campaign on this issue are not disinterested observers, inspired solely by a sincere commitment to anti-racism; on the contrary, they constitute some of the most controversial forces within Britain's Muslim communities and they are pursuing a highly political agenda.
- Furthermore, the effort to promote a particular definition of Islamophobia domestically, parallels an international campaign – led by the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) – which has sought to prohibit the 'defamation of religion' (with an obvious focus on Islam). This endeavour effectively aims for the introduction of a global blasphemy law, and would seriously impinge on established rights to freedom of speech.
- In this context, there is a danger that the efforts of otherwise well-meaning politicians and anti-racist campaigners are being misdirected. A laudable desire to ensure that Muslims face no discrimination or prejudice risks facilitating a very different kind of agenda – one that does impinge on free speech and undermines government policy in several critical areas.
- Ever since the 1997 Runnymede Trust report that brought the term to public prominence, much has changed in order to protect the rights of Muslims. There have been revisions to the legal framework that exists to combat discrimination and hate crime, so as to elevate religion and belief, alongside race and gender. Enforcement mechanisms have been created which offer redress to those who experience discrimination – notably, the Equality and Human Rights Commission and the tribunals system. Alongside this, the UK government has acted to criminalise hate crime that victimizes people on account of their religion; a significant and growing number of people have been brought before the courts for anti-Muslim hate crimes. Consequently, Muslims in the UK now enjoy legal protections superior to those in place in many other jurisdictions. This is not a counsel of complacency, but it is to acknowledge the progress that has been made. Moreover, it is surely worth considering whether there is not merit in allowing the existing system – still less than a decade old – time to function, before once more wishing to overturn the applecart?
- There is a danger that the APPG definition would undermine the progress that has been made. It does so, in part, because it seems to muddy the waters between the unlawful and the undesirable. Proponents of the APPG definition might respond that they seek not a 'legal definition', but a 'working definition' of Islamophobia. But again, the question is, to what end? Is this conceived as a largely cosmetic exercise? (One which would, therefore, surely disappoint many British Muslims) Or, is this envisaged as the

first step towards a more formal, or at least more interventionist apparatus? (As many sceptics fear).

- These questions matter because the APPG inquiry process was not some disinterested neutral investigation. Instead, it betrays the influence of precisely those groups, like the Muslim Council of Britain (MCB) and Muslim Engagement and Development (MEND), who have done most to 'weaponise' the campaign against Islamophobia for their own sectional purposes – not least to have themselves recognised as the self-appointed gatekeepers of Britain's Muslim communities. The Government must surely ask itself why it should wish to facilitate such an agenda?
- Further, the adoption of the APPG definition of Islamophobia would have a negative effect on Government counter-extremism and counter-terrorism programmes (CONTEST). It could also be used to challenge key public policy initiatives such as Peter Clarke's investigation into the 'Trojan Horse' affair in Birmingham schools; or Eric Pickles' inquiry into the corrupt and illegal practices in which Lutfur Rahman was engaged in Tower Hamlets; or Amanda Spielman's sterling work to promote shared values at Ofsted; or the Counter-Extremism Commission.
- The APPG definition would also be likely to diminish media freedom in the UK by encroaching on existing conventions of free expression that already take account of hate crime legislation. The mainstream media have been a consistent target for anti-Islamophobia campaigners like the MCB and MEND. They have lined up alongside the Hacked Off campaign to demand that the Independent Press Standards Organisation (IPSO) change the editors' code of practice to curtail reporting on 'Muslim' issues. Already, it is clear that sections of the media are beginning to fight shy of covering 'Muslim' stories – because of the likely consequence in terms of IPSO's complaints' procedures. How much more would this be the case, if the APPG definition were to be implemented and weaponised by activist groups who wish to prevent any critical portrayal of Islam, or individual Muslims – regardless of how legitimate that might be?
- In the past, a remarkable array of mainstream political and cultural figures have been labelled 'Islamophobic' by their opponents – including those groups and individuals pushing hardest now for the APPG definition. This includes: the Prime Minister; Peter Clarke, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons; Amanda Spielman, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted); Dame Louise Casey, the government's former community cohesion 'tsar'; Sara Khan, Lead Commissioner for Countering Extremism; Maajid Nawaz, founder of Quilliam; Sarah Champion, the Labour MP for Rotherham who publicly raised the issue of grooming gangs; and Yasmin Alibhai Brown – journalist and author. Is it really likely that those groups and individuals who

have been so free in making accusations of 'Islamophobia' will act with greater restraint if the government now concedes their expansive definition of the term? Why should the government facilitate this kind of assault on free speech and public policy?

- More broadly, as all of this makes clear, the government should be under no illusion that the adoption of any broad definition of Islamophobia – let alone that proposed by the APPG – would make its problems on this front go away. The acceptance of such a definition would mark the beginning of a new phase in the culture wars, not the end.
- No one doubts that there is a level of anti-Muslim hatred and prejudice within the UK. But the question remains: how much? It is clear that in pursuit of their political objectives, groups like MEND play fast-and-loose with statistical evidence in order to advance a narrative that places a premium on victimhood and a sense of communal grievance. Such "grievance" narratives – such as those which hold Muslim life in Britain to be akin to that of the Jews in Nazi Germany, or rather more prosaically, those that claim Muslim students are denied access to Russell Group universities simply because of "Islamophobia" – resemble those utilised by extremists to "poison" the minds of young people.
- Opinion polling of British Muslims reveals a complex picture: the overwhelming majority feel free to practice their faith and see Britain as a good place to live as a Muslim; a clear majority say there is no problem with 'harassment on religious grounds'; equally and paradoxically, many Muslims continue to hold the perception that there is a serious problem; but this itself is often narrated through third-party experience.
- Government must challenge anti-Muslim prejudice; it should seek to eradicate discrimination and disadvantage – but it should be wary of accepting simplistic solutions that might do more harm than good. The APPG definition of Islamophobia falls into that category.
- By the same token, the government should be wary of resorting to a 'one size fits all' approach to tackling prejudice, discrimination and hatred. Part of the drive to establish a definition for Islamophobia appears to stem from the reductive view that the existence of a near-universally accepted definition of antisemitism (as created by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance) *necessitates* a parallel definition for anti-Muslim sentiment. Why should this be so? Is it not better to acknowledge these are problems in their own right, each requiring distinct remedies? And to recognise that doing otherwise actually risks ignoring the specific contours of the problems faced by Muslim and Jewish communities respectively?
- As we make clear, the term 'Islamophobia' has, historically, been highly problematic. At the same time, we acknowledge that it may have passed the threshold of popular acceptance. A critical mass of

commentators, experts and members of our society now readily use the term. Yet this makes the question of meaning and definition all the more important – and again, the government must eschew the kind of nebulous and expansive definition proffered by the APPG and its supporters.

- Our preferred approach is that adopted by the Office for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), which uses the term "Bias against Muslims" in its regular reports on such subjects. It places this alongside other forms of prejudice such as antisemitism, racism and xenophobia, bias against Roma and Sinti and Bias against Christians. The ODIHR rightly recognizes that such biases exist and need to be addressed sensibly, sensitively and proportionately, on the basis of credible evidence – not self-interested assertions. Equally, it highlights the fact that we need to distinguish between bias or prejudice and informed criticism. Therein, perhaps, lies the beginning of wisdom and a way towards a genuinely progressive policy that eschews the pernicious politics of victimhood.
- By rendering Islamophobia synonymous with anti-Muslim bias, the government can move on from interminable debates about language and identity and instead focus on taking steps that will actually improve the lives of its Muslim citizens.
- To this end, the Government should also revive and build upon the Casey report of 2016, which exposed the disadvantages faced by various ethnic/religious communities. Dame Louise should be asked to return to head a task-force that would produce and then oversee a five-year plan for challenging deprivation and promoting equality within all classes and communities across the UK.
- We also recommend that the government signal its commitment to tackling prejudice and discrimination in all its forms by tasking the Counter Extremism Commissioner Sara Khan to lead an inquiry that would bring forward concrete policy solutions for addressing anti-Muslim hatred.
- The Government can also underline its commitment to countering anti-Muslim hate crime (and indeed, all forms of hate crime) by establishing a single, credible and authoritative body that will collate such statistics. This would bring clarity to an issue that is the subject of too many unsubstantiated, often partisan, claims.
- Finally, government should embrace those voices who are determined to challenge *both* anti-Muslim hatred *and* Islamist extremism – recognising the extent to which these two forces feed off one another, and together stand implacably opposed to a vibrant, liberal and successful multicultural Britain. It should heed the words of Yahya Cholil Staquf, General Secretary of the Nahdlatul Ulama (an Indonesian Sunni Muslim organisation that claims more than 50 million members), who has urged western politicians to "stop pretending that extremism and terrorism have

nothing to do with Islam. There is a clear relationship between fundamentalism, terrorism, and the basic assumptions of Islamic orthodoxy…The West must stop ascribing any and all discussion of these issues to 'Islamophobia'."

Introduction

The question of 'Islamophobia' has risen to the top of the political agenda. For some time now, the Conservative Party had been dogged by allegations of Islamophobia – not least from Baroness Warsi. It was Warsi who several years ago insisted that Islamophobia had 'passed the dinner table test' in Britain and who further accused the Conservatives of having failed to deal with the issue.[1] According to Warsi, "there is a general sense in the country that Muslims are fair game".[2]

To tackle the problem she identified, Warsi has joined with others in demanding an inquiry into the scale and character of Islamophobia within the Conservative Party.[3] In parallel with this, there has been a concerted push to define this term in a particular way. Last year, the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for British Muslims held its own inquiry into Islamophobia, which came up with proposals for a "working definition" of this concept, as follows: "Islamophobia is rooted in racism and is a type of racism that targets expressions of Muslimness or perceived Muslimness."[4]

At first glance, the logic behind such initiatives is unassailable – after all, who could object to an initiative to challenge hatred and discrimination? Moreover, there are ample grounds to be concerned about the extent to which divisive, anti-Muslim sentiments exist across society. Far-right groups and individuals have made Muslims the principal target of their invective (in place of their earlier obsessions with the Jews). Unquestionably, anti-Muslim bigotry has bled into sections of the social and political mainstream. Successive polls have shown that Muslims do feel very much a part of British society.[5] Policy Exchange's major 2016 poll, for instance, of British Muslim communities, found that a mere 2% of Muslims believed they could *not* practise their religion freely.[6] Even so, there is no doubting that many Muslims face discrimination and prejudice, which impedes their prospects for a successful life. A *Times* editorial surely had it right when it observed, "nobody could credibly deny that a certain level of prejudice exists against Muslims in Britain".[7]

Moreover, successive government/police reports point to a rise in the numbers of hate crimes, including against Muslims. By some estimates, the number of such crimes has roughly doubled in the period since the Brexit referendum.[8] Others, including the police, have challenged this assertion – arguing that there has been no significant, or sustained surge in hate crime (see chapter three).[9] Nonetheless, there is certainly a perception that anti-Muslim hate crime is a growing and ever more serious problem.

And yet, the issue of Islamophobia is more complex than appears at first glance. Far from being a neutral, analytical term, the word 'Islamophobia'

1. D. Batty, 'Lady Warsi claims Islamophobia is now socially acceptable in Britain', *The Guardian*, 20 January 2011, https://www.theguardian.com/uk/2011/jan/20/lady-warsi-islamophobia-muslims-prejudice.
2. 'The Islamophobia scandal in the Conservative party goes "right up to the top"', UK Business Insider, 11 June 2018, http://uk.businessinsider.com/islamophobia-scandal-conservative-party-goes-right-up-to-the-top-baroness-warsi-interview-2018-6.
3. S. Warsi, 'No more excuses. Time for an inquiry into Tory Islamophobia', *The Guardian*, 4 July 2018, https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/jul/04/inquiry-tory-islamophobia; C. Johnston, 'Pressure grows on May to tackle Islamophobia in Conservative party', *The Observer*, 3 June 2018, https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2018/jun/02/pressure-grows-for-theresa-may-to-tackle-islamophobia-in-conservative-party; 'CMF considers an independent enquiry into Islamophobia essential', Conservative Muslim Forum, 4 June 2018, http://www.conservativemuslimforum.com/news~events/news-&-past-events/cmf-considers-an-independent-enquiry-into-islamophobia/388; 'Jeremy Corbyn backs calls for inquiry into allegations of Islamophobia within Conservative Party', *The Daily Telegraph*, 5 June 2018, https://www.telegraph.co.uk/politics/2018/06/05/jeremy-corbyn-backs-calls-inquiry-allegations-islamophobia-within/; 'Isolating Islamophobia', *The Times*, 1 June 2018, https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/isolating-islamophobia-dmw3dxphv; 'The Observer view on Islamophobia in the Conservative party', *The Observer*, 3 June 2018, https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/jun/03/observer-view-islamophobia-conservative-party. See also, N. Malik, 'The Tories haven't just popularised Islamophobia – they've gentrified it', *The Guardian*, 4 June 2018, https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/jun/03/tories-islamophobia-gentrified-theresa-may-right-wing-politics; P. Oborne, 'Tories' Islamophobia is pushing Muslim voters into Corbyn's arms', Middle East Eye, 7 June 2018, http://www.middleeasteye.net/columns/tory-partys-islamophobia-pushing-voters-arms-jeremy-corbyns-labour-party-204714408; 'Tories accused of turning blind eye to Islamophobia in the Party amid fresh new revelations', The MCB, 26 June 2018, https://mcb.org.uk/press-releases/tories-accused-of-turning-blind-eye-to-islamophobia-in-the-party-amid-fresh-new-revelations/.
4. *Islamophobia Defined: The inquiry into a working definition of Islamophobia* (All Party Parliamentary Group on British Muslims, November 2018), https://static1.squarespace.com/static/599c3d2febbd1a90cffdd8a9/t/5bfd1ea3352f531a6170ceee/1543315109493/Islamophobia+Defined.pdf.
5. 'A review of survey research on Muslims in Britain', Ipsos Mori, 21 March 2018, https://www.ipsos.com/ipsos-mori/en-uk/review-survey-research-muslims-britain-0.
6. M. Frampton et al, *Unsettled Belonging: A survey of Britain's Muslim communities* (Policy Exchange, 2016), https://policyexchange.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/PEXJ5037_Muslim_Communities_FINAL.pdf
7. 'Isolating Islamophobia', *The Times*, 1 June 2018, https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/isolating-islamophobia-dmw3dxphv.
8. 'Islamophobic hate crimes in London have nearly doubled in the last two years as Muslims say they are "very conscious of keeping your head down"', *The Daily Mail*, 3 January 2016, http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3358535/Islamophobic-hate-crimes-London-nearly-doubled-two-years-Muslims-say-conscious-keeping-head-down.html.
9. 'Khalid Mahmood MP calls for new hate crime panel', BBC News Online, 9 July 2016, https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-birmingham-36754276; B. O'Neill, 'Britain's real hate crime scandal', *The Spectator*, 3 August 2016, https://www.spectator.co.uk/2016/08/the-real-hate-crime-scandal/; D. Goodhart, 'No, there isn't a surge in hate crime. It's confusion that's running riot', *The Sunday Times*, 10 December 2017, https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/no-there-isnt-a-surge-in-hate-crime-its-confusion-thats-running-riot-mqjl9d5mw.

is one that comes with a deeply problematic history. Far from a benign descriptor, this loose term has long proved impossible to pin down; and its definitional elusiveness has allowed it to be deployed by politically-motivated groups for various purposes. There are those on the liberal-left, for instance, who insist that Islamophobia is merely another example of structural and politically-rooted racism within the UK. Even more significant is the fact that the campaign against Islamophobia has been instrumentalised by Islamist-inspired groups in the purposeful pursuit of often unacknowledged self-serving and divisive goals.[10]

Unfortunately, the APPG inquiry process merely reflected many of the historical deficiencies of the term. The resulting report was deeply flawed and – as described in detail below – ended up largely replicating the suggestions of Muslim Engagement and Development (MEND), one of the most divisive and problematic organisations that purports to speak for British Muslims.

Moreover, there is perhaps a more fundamental set of questions arising from the APPG process – not least that of, what *exactly* it is that their definition is meant to achieve? At present, the UK has one of the most progressive, anti-discrimination legislative frameworks in existence in the world. As enshrined in the Equality Act 2010, it prohibits discrimination against individuals on the basis of a number of "protected characteristics", including race, religion and belief. It is further recognised that discrimination and prejudice can take multiple forms at the same time. So, what is it about that that existing framework that is deemed insufficient?

The APPG might well respond that it seeks not a "legal definition", but a "working definition" of Islamophobia. But again, the question is, to what end? There is no discussion in the APPG report of what should happen in the event that someone expresses hostility to "expressions of Muslimness". But this omission merely raises further troubling questions: is this conceived as a largely cosmetic exercise (one that will likely therefore disappoint many Muslims who are being led to believe that an acceptance of this definition will provide some kind of panacea to their problems)? Or, is it envisaged as the first step towards a more formal, or more interventionist apparatus to 'police' what can, or cannot be said in relation to Islam (as many sceptics fear)?

There is another practical set of questions on the likely impact of this definition of Islamophobia being adopted by Government and institutions. What would the effect be on Government counter-extremism and counter-terrorism programmes (CONTEST)? Would it diminish media freedom in the UK by encroaching on existing conventions of free expression that already take account of hate crime legislation? What would be the effect on individual Muslims and different Muslim communities, including those engaged in counter-extremism or who might contest the highly politicised definition offered here? Does it represent a genuine attempt to promote integration of Muslims into British society or does it encourage the creep towards communal identity politics?

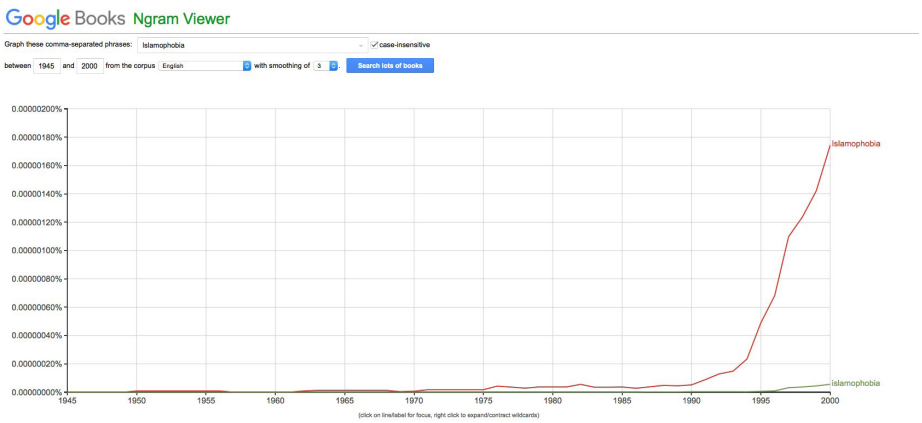
It is the hope of this report's authors that we can shed some light on these and other important questions.

10. This is not to say that every individual associated with those groups is an Islamist – but it is to note that the origins of the groups were intimately connected with Islamism; that their founders were inspired by key Islamist thinkers and movements; and that, historically, the centre of gravity within each organization has resided with those of an Islamist persuasion.

1 Islamophobia – A History of an Idea

Origins

The word 'Islamophobia' is of relatively recent provenance. A quick Google 'n-gram' search reveals that the term 'Islamophobia' was almost unheard of in English – and certainly not used in its current format – before the 1990s:[11]



By some accounts, French colonial officials were the first to use the term in the early twentieth century – to critique those who demonised Islam.[12] But as the academic Chris Allen has suggested, it was mostly used in reference to "disputes and differences within Islam rather than as a phenomenon against Muslims [by non-Muslims]".[13]

More broadly, of course, it is possible to trace the existence of crudely negative views about Islam within western discourse going back centuries. As Ziauddin Sardar has observed, "Islamophobia and prejudice against Muslims, has a long memory"; it resides "deeply in [the western] historical consciousness".[14] Colonial era perspectives on the Muslim world took it for granted that Islam was a backward, irrational religion, whose adherents were prone to 'holy war' and the appeals of demagoguery.[15] In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the adjective 'fanatical' was a natural partner to references to 'Mohammedans' and Islam.[16]

A readiness to challenge such caricatures became increasingly evident from the late 1960s onwards with the rise of the 'new left' and the 'cultural turn' in academia. This came in parallel with a broad-based religious revival across much of the Middle East, which undermined the hitherto-dominant idea that Islam was inherently pre-modern and backward. Emblematic of the new intellectual age was Edward Said, whose

11. N-Gram of word 'Islamophobia', https://books.google.com/ngrams/graph?content=Islamophobia&case_insensitive=on&year_start=1945&year_end=2000&corpus=15&smoothing=3&share=&direct_url=t4%3B%2CIslamophobia%3B%2Cc0%3B%2Cs0%3B%3BIslamophobia%3B%2Cc0%3B%3Bislamophobia%3B%2Cc0.
12. P. Bruckner, *An Imaginary Racism: Islamophobia and Guilt* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2018), pp. 1-3.
13. C. Allen, 'Islamophobia and its Consequences', in S. Amghar et al. (eds), *European Islam: Challenges for Public Policy and Society* (Brussels: Centre for European Policy Studies, 2007), http://aei.pitt.edu/32602/1/41._European_Islam.pdf.
14. Z. Sardar, 'Racism, Identity and Muslims in the West', in S. Z. Abedin and Z. Sardar (eds), *Muslim Minorities in the West*, (London: Grey Seal, 1995).
15. F. Robinson, 'The British Empire in the Muslim World', in J. Brown and W. R. Louis (eds), *The Oxford History of the British Empire: Volume IV: The Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), pp. 405–407; F. Robinson, 'The British Empire and Muslim Identity in South Asia', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 8 (1998), pp. 271–289.
16. P. Mansfield, *The British in Egypt* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1971), p. 31.

work on 'Orientalism' drew attention to what he claimed were politically purposeful, but disguised, epistemological flaws in western learning. The latter was said to be indelibly imbued with cultural representations of "the East" (the Orient), including Islam, which portrayed it variously as reactionary, violent, sensual, exotic and above all, inferior to the West. Building on the work of critics and activists such as Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida and Franz Fanon, Said accused Orientalist scholars of being implicated in the project of western colonialism, producing knowledge to facilitate the functioning of power. In so doing, he argued that Arabs and Muslims were subject to inherently racist, one-dimensional caricatures.[17] Moreover, in 1985, Said referred explicitly to "the connection… between Islamophobia and anti-Semitism", in an article claiming that "hostility to Islam in the modern Christian West has historically gone hand in hand" with antisemitism and "has stemmed from the same source and been nourished at the same stream".[18]

Elsewhere, Said expanded upon this analysis, pointing to the impact of the Iranian revolution in helping to stir new fears about Islam, which was deemed to be irretrievably tainted with violence and extremism. Western coverage of the Muslim world, Said argued, as epitomised by depictions of Iran, was "reductive and monochromatic". Islam, he said, was routinely demeaned and defamed – in a manner that would be deemed unacceptable vis-à-vis any other religion or race.[19] Once more, therefore, Said highlighted the existence of a vein of anti-Islamic prejudice within western societies which had, in his view, been turbo-charged by the impact of events in Iran.[20]

From a rather different perspective, French intellectuals like Pascal Bruckner and Caroline Fourest have also argued that the term 'Islamophobia' first gained meaningful traction post-1979, in the hands of apologists for the Islamic Republic, who used it to neutralise its western (often feminist) critics.[21]

At some point in the 1980s, the word seems to have crossed the Channel. Chris Allen has speculated that "whoever first used the word in English" may have been "simply translating a French word that was already in existence, merely applying it to the hostile attitudes and actions of non-Muslims towards Muslims."[22]Elsewhere, there have been suggestions that the English word 'Islamophobia' was first,

> *coined by the late Dr Zaki Badawi, or else by Fuad Nahdi, founding director of Q News. The date of the coining by either of these would have been the late 1980s. The context would probably have included the campaigns led by MuslimWise, the predecessor of Q News, and by the An-Nisa Society, a community organisation based in Brent in north-west London, to counter anti-Muslim hostility not only in society at large but also amongst people working in the field of race relations. The latter were perceived to be insensitive and indifferent to the distinctive forms of prejudice and discrimination suffered by Muslims.*[23]

Both Badawi (in testimony given to a House of Lords Select Committee hearing) and Nahdi (on his CV) later claimed authorship of the word.[24]

Irrespective of what exactly was the *fons et origo* of the term, the emergence

17. E. Said, *Orientalism* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978).
18. E. Said, 'Orientalism reconsidered', *Race & Class*, 27, 2 (1985).
19. In making this claim, too, Said rather ignored the various strands of 'occidentalist' thinking that could be found in anti-imperialist and anti-western movements around the globe. See I. Buruma and A. Marghalit, *Occidentalism* (London: Penguin, 2004).
20. E. Said, *Covering Islam*, 2nd ed. (Vintage Books: New York, 1997).
21. Bruckner, *An Imaginary Racism*; C. Fourest and F. Venner, 'Islamophobie?: Islamophobes? Ou simplement laiques!' *Pro Choix* (Autumn/Winter 2003): 27–8. See also, P. Andriotakis and A. Chambers, 'In the Name of Sisterhood, Kate Millett Finds Herself in the Eye of the Storm in Iran', *People*, 2 April 1979, http://www.people.com/people/archive/article/0,,20073303,00.html; C. Allen, *Islamophobia* (Ashgate E-Book, 2010), https://serdargunes.files.wordpress.com/2015/04/islamophobia-christopher-allen-2010.pdf.
22. Allen, 'Islamophobia and its Consequences'.
23. *The search for common ground: Muslims, non-Muslims and the UK media: A report commissioned by the Mayor of London* (Greater London Authority, November 2007), http://www.insted.co.uk/search-for-common-ground.pdf.
24. Minutes of Evidence, Select Committee on Religious Offences in England and Wales, Oral Evidence Question 425, House of Lords, 23 October 2002, https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld200203/ldselect/ldrelof/95/2102307.htm

of a discourse around Islamophobia was framed by the wider public debate about multiculturalism that took off in the early 1980s.

An early flash point was the controversy generated by the head-teacher of an inner-city Bradford school, Ray Honeyford, who in 1984 openly criticised what he saw as the negative impact of multiculturalism on education.[25] Honeyford questioned the prevailing pedagogical ethos of state education, which, to his mind, was failing to promote a cohesive national culture and was instead facilitating the preservation of the "values and attitudes of the Indian sub-continent". The result, Honeyford warned, was the creation of "Asian ghettoes" isolated from mainstream society.[26] His critics accused him of racism and "cultural chauvinism"; he was first suspended from his post and, despite being reinstated, he opted to take early retirement soon after.[27]

The storm unleashed by the Honeyford affair, however, was as nothing compared to the 'Rushdie Affair' that erupted at the end of the decade. For present purposes, the campaign against Salman Rushdie's novel, *The Satanic Verses*, was critical for two reasons: first, it served as a catalyst for Islamist mobilisation in the British context; and second, it saw the articulation of a distinct narrative about allegedly anti-Muslim discrimination that would later feed into discussions about Islamophobia. As Tariq Modood observed in a 1991 book review, for instance, there were those who believed that *The Satanic Verses* was "a deliberate, mercenary act of Islamophobia", even as he indicated that his own view was that "while Islamophobia is certainly at work, the real sickness is militant irreverence".[28] "Sickness" was an instructive choice of word.

In regard to Islamist mobilisation, meanwhile, groups like the Jamaat-e-Islami aligned Islamic Foundation, the UK Islamic Mission and Young Muslims UK played a critical role in driving forward the campaign against Rushdie, as did the magazine, *Impact international*.[29] In so doing, they showed a readiness to cooperate with others, and they established new organisational structures to facilitate this endeavour. One of the new bodies to emerge at this time was the UK Action Committee on Islamic Affairs (UKACIA), which was created in October 1988 and later served as the nucleus for the foundation of the Muslim Council of Britain (MCB – see below).[30] The UKACIA steering committee included representatives of all the main Islamist-influenced organisations in the UK. Its chairman was Dr Ali al-Mughram al-Ghamdi, who headed the Islamic Cultural Centre in Regent's Park (and also enjoyed diplomatic status), and the co-convenor was Iqbal Sacranie.[31]

Groups like the UKACIA made it their business to argue that Muslims were in an iniquitous position, because of a refusal by the state to properly protect their faith. Legislative instruments like the 1976 Race Relations Act, which had prohibited discrimination on "racial or ethnic grounds" were deemed insufficient, given their failure to mention religion explicitly (and indeed, when tested in the courts, the protections of the 1976 Act were deemed applicable to Sikhs and Jews, but *only* because they were also held to be racial groups; the same interpretation was not applied to

25. G. Kepel, *Allah in the West: Islamic Movements in America and Europe*, trans. S. Milner (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), pp. 118-119.

26. R. Honeyford, 'Education and Race – An Alternative View', *The Salisbury Review* (1984), available at, https://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/3654888/Education-and-Race-an-Alternative-View.html.

27. 'Ray Honeyford: Racist or right?', BBC News Online, 10 February 2012, https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-16968930.

28. R. Richardson, 'Islamophobia or anti-Muslim racism – or what? – concepts and terms revisited', Insted, http://www.insted.co.uk/anti-muslim-racism.pdf.

29. 'The Rushdie Affair, 1988-91', Salaam portal, 31 December 2003, https://web.archive.org/web/20031231114425/http://www.salaam.co.uk/themeofthemonth/september03_index.php?l=1. On the ties between the Islamic Foundation, the UK Islamic Mission and the Jamaat-e-Islami, see T. Modood, 'British Asian Muslims and the Rushdie Affair', *Political Quarterly* (April 1990), reprinted in T. Modood, *Still Not Easy Being British: Struggles for a Multicultural Citizenship* (Stoke on Trent: Trentham Books, 2010), pp. 13-32. See also, I. Bowen, *Medina in Birmingham, Najaf in Brent: Inside British Islam* (London: Hurst, 2014)

30. Modood, 'British Asian Muslims and the Rushdie Affair'; Kepel, *Allah in the West*.

31. 'Members of UKACIA's Steering Committee', Salaam Portal, 13 October 2003, https://web.archive.org/web/20031013173459/http://www.salaam.co.uk/themeofthemonth/september03_index.php?l=18.

Muslims).[32] The UKACIA argued that the "root problem" of the Rushdie episode had been the capacity of the author to publish "sacrilege". On this basis, they campaigned explicitly for a change to the blasphemy law, demanding "legislation against sacrilege in the interest of harmony and mutual self-respect in society".[33] This effort proved fruitless, but it did help put on the agenda the question of how Islam should be treated in the UK.[34] Equally, there was renewed reflection on issues of integration and the extent to which Islam was fully compatible with pluralist and secular democratic societies.

Again here, too, geopolitical events played a part. The end of the Cold War and expectations that Muslim majority countries in the Middle East might at last experience a democratic awakening, fuelled debates about these issues. At one end of the spectrum were those who saw in Islam a new 'green peril' to replace the now defunct communist menace.[35] At the other were those who insisted that there would be no problem at all for Muslim societies in embracing democracy. Between these 'confrontationalist' and 'accommodationist' poles, the debate played out – and policymakers struggled to come to grips with the diversity of Muslim societies and politics.

The same issues also had a clear domestic relevance and fed into the emerging debate about Islamophobia. In 1994, the Runnymede Trust first used this term in a report entitled *A Very Light Sleeper: the Persistence and Dangers of anti-Semitism*. This recommended the creation of a commission to examine the problem of Islamophobia – a project that produced a landmark report three years later.[36] The 1997 report identified Islamophobia as a major problem in the UK and, in the process, popularised a hitherto little-known word.[37] It drew a distinction between "open" and "closed" views of Islam – seeing the latter as the source of Islamophobic bigotry.[38] Islamophobia, said Runnymede, comprised an "unfounded hostility towards Islam", as well as the "practical consequences of such hostility in unfair discrimination against Muslim individuals and communities, and…the exclusion of Muslims from mainstream political and social affairs."[39]

As the then chairman of the Runnymede Trust, Trevor Phillips later recalled, "We thought that the real risk of the arrival of new communities was discrimination against Muslims. Our 1996 survey of recent incidents showed that there was plenty of it around."[40] It was with the laudable aim of challenging such discrimination – at a time when there was no legislation that protected Muslims, as Muslims – that the Runnymede Trust published its seminal report the following year, which, in the words of Tariq Modood, effectively "launched the career" of Islamophobia "as a concept of public discourse in Britain and much beyond it".[41]

By its own admission, the UKACIA played a "full part in the consultations" conducted by Runnymede and it welcomed the Commission's report as "ground-breaking" and "a major attempt at understanding the nature and needs of the Muslim community".[42] In a press release, the co-convenor of the UKACIA, Iqbal Sacranie, observed that the report

32. On this point, see J. S. Fetzer and J. C. Soper, *Muslims and the State in Britain, France, and Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 30-1, 35.

33. 'Press release: Book – Not the Fatwa', UKACIA, 25 September 1998, http://web.archive.org/web/20011211111203/www.ukacia.com/page8sv1.html.

34. Kepel, *Allah in the West*, pp. 130-40.

35. J. Miller, 'The Challenge of Radical Islam', *Foreign Affairs* 72, 2 (Spring 1993); L. T. Hadar, 'What Green Peril?', *Foreign Affairs* 72, 2 (Spring 1993).

36. Runnymede Commission on Anti-Semitism, *A very light sleeper: the persistence and dangers of anti-Semitism* (Runnymede Trust, 1994), http://www.runnymedetrust.org/uploads/publications/pdfs/AVeryLightSleeper-1994.PDF; Allen, *Islamophobia*. On the Commission that was formed, see Runnymede Trust, *Islamophobia: A Challenge for us all* (Runnymede Trust, 1997), https://www.runnymedetrust.org/companies/17/74/Islamophobia-A-Challenge-for-Us-All.html and http://www.runnymedetrust.org/uploads/publications/pdfs/islamophobia.pdf.

37. S. Vertovec, 'Islamophobia and Muslim Recognition in Britain', in Y. Y. Haddad, Muslims in the West: From Sojourners to Citizens (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 19-35,.

38. Runnymede Trust, *Islamophobia: A Challenge*.

39. Runnymede Trust, *Islamophobia: Still A Challenge for us all* (Runnymede Trust, 2017), https://www.runnymedetrust.org/uploads/Islamophobia%20Report%202018%20FINAL.pdf.

40. T. Phillips, 'What do British Muslims really think?' *The Times*, 10 April 2016, https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/my-sons-living-hell-j72t7fppc.

41. T. Modood, 'Islamophobia: a form of cultural racism', in I. Ingham-Barrow (ed.), *More than Words: Approaching a Definition of Islamophobia* (MEND, 2018), p. 39. https://mend.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/Approaching-a-definition-of-Islamophobia-More-than-words.pdf.

42. UKACIA, 'Press release on OIC Summit', 6 December 1997, http://web.archive.org/web/20031104163146/www.ukacia.com/page7a.html.

> *for the first time treats British Muslims as a supra ethnic community rather than a collection of ethnic entities and this, we believe, is a major attempt towards understanding the nature and the needs of this community.*[43]

For this reason, the UKACIA endorsed the recommendations of the Runnymede Commission, which demanded state action on a number of measures to tackle discrimination against Muslims:

- The inclusion of Muslim schools in the state education sector; a review of the criteria and procedures for providing state-funding to religiously-based schools; and meeting the academic, religious, cultural and pastoral needs of Muslim pupils in state schools
- The passage of new legislation to make discrimination on grounds of religion unlawful; to require all organisations to incorporate respect for religious and cultural traditions into their personnel policies; and to incorporate a reference to religion into statements on equal opportunities;
- The amendment of the Public Order Act 1986, to outlaw religious hatred;
- A review of the law against blasphemy in Britain; and examination of how relevant legislation in other countries works in practice;
- The promotion of Muslim candidates for election to winnable seats in parliament; the appointment of Muslims to the House of Lords; and an increase in the representation of British Muslims on public bodies and commissions, including quangos of all kinds.[44]

It is striking, when looking at that list, how much of that agenda has been implemented. Tony Blair's New Labour government approved the creation of Britain's first Muslim state schools in 2000-01;[45] the Equality Acts of 2006 and 2010 prohibited discrimination on, inter alia, grounds of religion and belief; enforcement mechanisms (the Equality and Human Rights Commission and the tribunals system), which allow individuals to challenge episodes of discrimination; the Racial and Religious Hatred Act 2006 prohibited incitement to hatred on the basis of religious difference; and there is a small, but growing cohort of Muslim members of parliament, with representation in both chambers. The obvious issue on which groups like UKACIA have been disappointed is that of blasphemy; for rather than see an extension of such laws to cover Islam, we have instead seen the final removal of blasphemy from the common law in England and Wales. This move must surely be welcomed by all those who wish to see a genuinely pluralist, liberal society.

However, it is perhaps salutary that such advances as described above have barely been acknowledged by those most strident in their denunciations of Islamophobia. Instead, they have simply produced fresh demands, whilst continuing to insist on the bad-mindedness of the British State. There is little explanation of why earlier putative remedies failed to deliver; or why further measures will serve to transform a situation of supposedly entrenched iniquity.

43. UKACIA, 'Press release on Runnymede's Islamophobia report', 22 October 1997, http://web.archive.org/web/20011027113642/http://www.ukacia.com/page5a.html.
44. Runnymede Trust, *Islamophobia: A Challenge*; UKACIA, 'Press release on Runnymede's Islamophobia report'.
45. M. Wainwright, 'Approval for first Muslim secondary state school', *The Guardian*, 7 October 2000, https://www.theguardian.com/uk/2000/oct/07/religion.world.

Going beyond Runnymede

After 1997, the UKACIA was effectively superseded by new activist groups that claimed to speak for Britain's Muslim communities. The most important of these included the Muslim Association of Britain (MAB) and the Muslim Council of Britain (MCB). Such groups placed ever-greater focus on the campaign against Islamophobia – both domestically and internationally. According to Robin Richardson, the former director of the educational consultancy Insted and the editor of the 1997 Runnymede Trust report, they succeeded in "credibly and legitimately establishing Islamophobia on the British public and political agendas".[46]

The MCB, for instance, insisted that "institutional Islamophobia" was driving a "relentless increase in hostility towards Islam and British Muslims". The group claimed that the British government was not doing enough to "protect its Muslim citizens and residents from discrimination, vilification, harassment and deprivation."[47]

Islamophobia became an issue on which groups of different background could come together and act in unity, often through the formation of dedicated umbrella organizations. One such entity was the Forum against Islamophobia and Racism (FAIR), which was established as "an independent charitable foundation" in 2001, under the chairmanship of Ahmed al-Rawi, a one-time president of the MAB and the head of its associated European wing, the Federation of Islamic Organisations in Europe (FIOE).[48] The FAIR website stated that,

> *British Muslims suffer significantly from various forms of alienation, discrimination, harassment and violence rooted in misinformed and stereotyped representations of Islam and its adherents - the irrational phenomenon we have come to as Islamophobia. Islamophobia has now become a recognised form of racism. Furthermore, as with the inaccuracy of such terms as "anti-Semitism", to describe the anti-Jewish hostility that developed in the late nineteenth century, "Islamophobia" bears many similar hallmarks.*[49]

FAIR led the way in insisting that the 11 September 2001 (9/11) attacks had produced a spike of Islamophobic incidents across Britain. It declared that the following two weeks alone saw "more than 600 cases of Islamophobic harassment, violence and criminal damage".[50] Yet often these claims seemed, at best, of questionable provenance. They were countered by official statistics collated by the London Metropolitan Police, which found there was not "really evidence of an increase" in attacks on Muslims.[51]

Elsewhere, it was striking that the Islamic Human Rights Commission (IHRC), an entity tied to the Iranian Government, became a forceful voice in the campaign against Islamophobia. In 2003, the IHRC established its annual "Islamophobia Awards" – in order to "highlight the serious issue of mounting Islamophobia in Britain". At the inaugural event, the Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon was deemed to be the "Most Islamophobic International Politician"; and President George Bush won the "Islamophobe of the Year" award. British Home Secretary David Blunkett shared the "Islamophobic British Politician of the Year" award with Nick Griffin.[52] The

46. Allen, *Islamophobia*. For more on Richardson, see 'About Insted', Insted, http://www.insted.co.uk/insted.html.
47. 'The Rise of Institutional Islamophobia', Muslim Council of Britain (MCB), 1 June 2004, https://mcb.org.uk/press-releases/the-rise-of-institutionalised-islamophobia/.
48. 'FAIR Organisational Structure', FAIR, http://www.fairuk.org/structure.htm.
49. 'Welcome', FAIR, http://www.fairuk.org/introduction.htm.
50. Ibid.
51. T. Black, 'The Myth of Islamophobia', Spiked Online, 7 July 2014, http://www.spiked-online.com/newsite/article/the-myth-of-islamophobia/15336#.Wz4oJH4nYcg.
52. 'Channel 4 News, The Islamophobia Awards', Youtube, 27 January 2014, 2003https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MR6Dkd9FPtE&feature=youtu.be.

following year, Polly Toynbee was the recipient of the "Most Islamophobic Media Personality Award" – on account of her public concern about the dangers posed to free speech by any effort to stifle criticism of religion.[53] More recently, those nominated for this award have included Trevor Phillips and Louise Casey.[54,55]

Labelling the 'Islamophobes'

One of the striking things about the accusation of Islamophobia, is the range of people who have been tagged with this label – many of them Muslim themselves. The latter is significant because of the way it seems to imply that those same Muslims sit outside the boundaries of the Islamic community. In short, the levelling of allegations of Islamophobia against Muslims represents an insidious, implicit form of takfir (excommunication), the process that in the hands of radicals might legitimate the targeting of ex-Muslims, and even reformist Muslims, with violence.

Who are the 'Islamophobes'?

In 2014, the winner of the IHRC's "Overall Islamophobe of the Year" was Barack Obama. In the awards ceremony, the IHRC presenter made reference to "Barack Hussein Osama, sorry Barack Hussein Obama". A young boy then sang a song which began with: "I am just an American idiot..." That same year, Egypt's President Abd al-Fattah al-Sissi was awarded the title, "Islamophobe of the Year" in the Middle East and Africa category. Whatever the merits, or otherwise of al-Sissi's period in power, he is certainly a practising Muslim – yet here he is being labelled as anti-Islamic.

In 2015, the IHRC made another Muslim, Maajid Nawaz, its winner of the UK Islamophobe of the Year Award. Soon after, the Southern Poverty Law Center in Alabama included Nawaz on a list of "anti-Muslim extremists" – a move that Nawaz stated had likely increased his vulnerability to attack from extremists. He later successfully sued the SPLC, which issued a full apology and paid compensation.

Back in 2015, the IHRC also gave Charlie Hebdo the award for being "the world's most Islamophobic person or publication", two months after 12 members of staff were shot dead in a terrorist attack.

In the post-9/11 world, groups like the IHRC and the FAIR found new allies on the hard left of the political spectrum, a section of which had come to see Muslims as the new "oppressed" of the world -- a global, identity-based substitute for Marx's proletariat, which had proved so disappointing. In the UK, activist journalists like Seumas Milne were to the fore in arguing that Muslims were "at the sharpest end of conflict with the new imperial world order"; within western Europe they were said to be "the target of an unprecedented level of hostility and attacks, while segregated at the bottom of the social hierarchy". In Milne's view, a failure by the "secular left" to stand "with British Muslims over Islamophobia or the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq would have been the real betrayal".[56]

Elsewhere, a growing body of scholarly work drew attention to the issue of Islamophobia. Tariq Modood, for instance, noted in 2005 that "an anti-Muslim wind" was "blowing across the European continent" – driven by a perception that Muslims were "making politically exceptional, culturally unreasonable or theologically alien demands upon European states". (In Modood's view, such demands as were being made were entirely comparable to earlier demands for racial or gender equality.)[57] In similar

53. P. Toynbee, 'Leave God out of it', in M. Bunting (ed.), *Islam, Race and Being British* (London: The Guardian, 2005), pp. 53-6.

54. N. Hellen, 'Islamophobia award "puts target on back" of former equalities chief Trevor Phillips', The Sunday Times, 26 November 2017, https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/islamophobia-award-puts-target-on-back-of-former-equalities-chief-5j3swc7dg.

55. 'PRESS RELEASE: Islamophobia Awards winners', Islamic Human Rights Commission (IHRC), 20 February 2014, https://www.ihrc.org.uk/activities/press-releases/10938-press-release-islamophobia-awards-winners/; 'Islamophobia Awards 2014: Worst Islamophobe of the Year', Youtube, 27 February 2014, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t-2B21UePTBA; 'Event Report: Islamophobia Awards 2015', IHRC, 12 March 2015, https://www.ihrc.org.uk/activities/event-reports/11384-event-report-islamophobia-awards-2015/; N. Cohen, 'The white left has issued its first fatwa', The Spectator Blog, 31 October 2016, http://blogs.spectator.co.uk/2016/10/white-left-issued-first-fatwa/; 'SPLC statement regarding Maajid Nawaz and the Quilliam Foundation', SPLC, 18 June 2018, https://www.splcenter.org/news/2018/06/18/splc-statement-regarding-maajid-nawaz-and-quilliam-foundation; V. Richards, 'Charlie Hebdo given "Islamophobe of the Year" award', *The Independent*, 11 March 2015, https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/charlie-hebdo-murdered-staff-given-islamophobe-of-the-year-award-10100317.html.

56. S. Milne, 'The struggle is no longer against religion, but within it', *The Guardian*, 16 December 2004. https://www.theguardian.com/world/2004/dec/16/religion.politics.

57. T. Modood, 'The emergence of a Muslim identity politics', in Bunting (ed.), *Islam, Race and Being British*.

vein, Steven Vertovec argued that Muslims in Britain had been vilified in the media, and "subject to considerable discrimination and violence".[58]

More significantly, in the wake of the July 2005 bomb attacks on London's transport system, the Preventing Extremism Together (PET) taskforce highlighted Islamophobia as a major cause of extremism. It claimed that this phenomenon was prevalent throughout British educational institutions and wider society, with British Muslims suffering from "various forms of alienation, discrimination, harassment and violence rooted in misinformed and stereotyped representations of Islam and its adherents". On this basis, three of the recommendations produced by the PET working groups were geared towards "addressing Islamophobia". These called for: the extension of "race monitoring" to include religion "wherever appropriate – with particular emphasis on extending to Muslim communities"; the creation of a dedicated unit at the Department of Culture, Media and Sport, which would "encourage a more balanced representation of Islam and Muslims in the British media, (popular) culture and sports industries"; and the drawing up of a strategy for "combating Islamophobia through education". Additional recommendations called for the recording of Islamophobic crimes; the elimination of discrimination against Muslims; the creation of a "Muslim Forum Against Islamophobia and Extremism"; and support for an independent "Muslim Affairs Media Unit", which would, inter alia, seek to rebut extremist and Islamophobic sentiments.[59] In short, the overriding ethos of the report was to suggest that the 7/7 attackers were, to some extent, propelled to act as they did by the pervasive experience of Islamophobia across British society; it was partly for this reason that it met such a lukewarm response from the Labour government that had established the Commission.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, those inclined to see the London bombings as a symptom of British racism and prejudice went on to insist that in the aftermath Muslims were the foremost victims of the attacks. IHRC chairman Massoud Shadjareh, for instance, publicly asserted that after 7/7 there had been a steep escalation in Islamophobic attacks, stating: "Normally we get something in the region of between six and seven every week. Now in less than two weeks we have had 170 reported to us alone." These attacks, he said, covered "everything" from verbal abuse and spitting to arson; nine mosques had been attacked, a garage firebombed, people assaulted in the street, and windows of homes had been broken.[60]

This narrative was also echoed by the Muslim Safety Forum (MSF) – an advisory body for the Metropolitan Police, then chaired by Azad Ali.[61] One of the key 'workstreams' identified by the MSF was the battle against Islamophobia – in particular as allegedly fostered by policing activities that disproportionately targeted the Muslim community, or generated anti-Muslim feelings.[62] Amongst the members of the MSF were aforementioned groups like the MCB, MAB, MWH, UKIM, IFE, as well as 'Stop Political Terror/Cage Prisoners'.[63] For a period, the Muslim Safety Forum was an influential voice in debates about the character of British counter-terrorism policing. Yet it later became mired in controversy because of the stated

58. Vertovec, 'Islamophobia and Muslim Recognition in Britain'.

59. '*Preventing Extremism Together' Working Groups August-October 2005* (London, October 2005), https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20120920045201/http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/communities/pdf/152164.pdf.

60. 'Hate crimes "rise after UK bombs"', BBC News Online, 28 July 2005, http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/4723339.stm.

61. On the MSF, see 'About us', Muslim Safety Forum, https://web.archive.org/web/20071207172950/muslimsafetyforum.org/about-us/history.html; 'Community Update & Press Release', Muslim Safety Forum, 21 August 2006, https://web.archive.org/web/20071109131637/http://muslimsafetyforum.org/press-media/msf-press-release-21st-august-2006.html.

62. 'MSF – Workstreams', Muslim Safety Forum, https://web.archive.org/web/20060906230225/http://www.muslimsafetyforum.org/.

63. 'MSF Members', Muslim Safety Forum, https://web.archive.org/web/20071207173148/http:/muslimsafetyforum.org:80/msf-members.html.

views of its chairman, Azad Ali (also a one-time member of the MCB's national leadership).[64]

Back in 2005, Ali's group, the Muslim Safety Forum reported that there had been a 500% increase in Islamophobic attacks across London after 7/7, in comparison with the previous year.[65]

And yet, as in 2001, these statistics – and the broader picture to which they purportedly gave light – were open to serious challenge. In late 2006, the Director of Public Prosecutions, Ken Macdonald QC, said fears of a backlash after the London bombs had been unfounded. Out of the 43 cases of religiously aggravated crime in the year after 7/7, MacDonald said that just 18 of them had been carried out against Muslims (or "perceived" Muslims); a figure that actually represented a decline, when set against 23 anti-Muslim crimes in the previous year.[66]

Another (perhaps surprisingly) sceptical voice was that of the former mayor of London, Ken Livingstone. When interviewed by the UK-based Arabic TV channel, Al-Ghad Al-Arabi TV, on 4 May 2016, he insisted that there had been no attacks against Muslims after 7/7:

> *If you reexamine the bombings that took place in London in 2005 - the bombings in the Tube were carried out by young angry Muslims. In the weeks that followed, there was not a single case of an anti-Muslim attack - no screaming at Muslims, no attacks on mosques. We were not divided then, but recently, things have begun to change.*[67]

More broadly, meanwhile, it is striking that in this period some earlier advocates of 'Islamophobia' as a concept began to have second thoughts. This was tied to a broader reappraisal of multiculturalism – and the extent to which its impact on society had perhaps not been wholly positive. Some now warned that Britain might be "sleepwalking to segregation".[68]

In the same period, Kenan Malik dismissed Islamophobia as a "myth", and questioned whether "the hatred and abuse" to which Muslims were subjected was "being exaggerated to suit politicians' needs and silence the critics of Islam". He further suggested that the MCB was desperate to emulate the "political success" of the Jewish Board of Deputies, and was "using Islamophobia in the same way that they perceive Jewish leaders have exploited fears about anti-Semitism".[69] It was a thesis that was echoed by others, such as Yasmin Alibhai Brown.[70]

Even so, such evidence of critical reflection remained the preserve of a small minority. On the contrary, there is no doubting that by the middle of the last decade a groundswell of activism had built up around the problem of Islamophobia. A *cause celebre* for many of the groups identified above was the 'Danish cartoons' crisis of February 2006.[71] This began after the newspaper *Jyllands-Posten* published a set of cartoons held to be derogatory and offensive to the Prophet Muhammad. Internationally, the Brotherhood-aligned cleric Yusuf al-Qaradawi was to the fore in orchestrating a campaign that demanded a boycott of all Danish goods, until the government in Copenhagen apologized for the publication of drawings deemed offensive to Islam.[72] A major Islamic conference was

64. 'Advisors, Office Bearers, CWC Members, Board of Counsellors', MCB, 19 August 2011, https://web.archive.org/web/20110819095344/http://www.mcb.org.uk/comm_details.php?-heading_id=105&com_id=1; 'Legal Affairs', MCB, 27 June 2006, https://web.archive.org/web/20060627164609/http://www.mcb.org.uk/comm_details.php?heading_id=53&com_id=7; 'Membership', MCB, 9 February 2008, https://web.archive.org/web/20080209181913/http://www.mcb.org.uk/chomepage.php?com_id=13.

65. 'Hate crimes "rise after UK bombs"', BBC News Online.

66. 'Race crime charges "rise by 28%"', BBC News Online, 4 December 2006, http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/6206140.stm.

67. 'Former London Mayor Ken Livingstone: The Establishment of Israel "Fundamentally Wrong", In '32, Hitler Wanted to Deport the Zionists, Not to Kill Jews', Middle East Media Research Institute (MEMRI), 4 May 2016, https://www.memri.org/tv/former-london-mayor-ken-livingstone-establishment-israel-fundamentally-wrong-32-hitler-wanted/transcript

68. 'Britain "sleepwalking to segregation"', *The Guardian*, 19 September 2005, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2005/sep/19/race.socialexclusion.

69. K. Malik, 'The Islamophobia Myth', *Prospect Magazine*, February 2005. https://web.archive.org/web/20050207050117/http://www.prospectmagazine.co.uk/article_details.php?id=6679

70. Ibid.; Kenan Malik, Are Muslims hated? Channel 4, 8 January 2005. https://web.archive.org/web/20050123093111/https://kenanmalik.com/tv/c4_islamophobia.html

71. The crisis followed the publication of several cartoons deemed offensive to Islam by the newspaper *Jyllands-Posten*, though as has been pointed out the furore only arose after some concerted lobbying by a group of Danish Muslim Imams, who toured the Middle East to raise support for their cause and who, in the process, falsified claims about what had actually been published.

72. B. Gräf and J. Skovgaard-Peterson (eds), *Global Mufti: The Phenomenon of Yusuf al-Qaradawi* (London: Hurst & Co., 2009), p. 8.

also held in Copenhagen (organized by the British-based Islam Channel), which produced a Declaration against "the growing phenomenon of Islamophobia". The signatories endorsed seven recommendations:

1. Freedom of expression, to which we are committed, is not absolute. It is qualified by legal restraints such as those banning defamation. We call on all States and the European Parliament to ensure the effectiveness of legal restrictions against incitement to violence, discrimination or the spread of hatred towards any group in society on the basis of religion, race or sex.
2. The encouragement of dialogue at all levels and the promotion of institutions aimed at opening bridges of understanding and respect between all faiths and communities.
3. The formation of inter-faith committees to review curricula and activities in educational institutions relating to other religions and cultures to avoid the generation of prejudice or misunderstanding.
4. The establishment or continued support of bodies, including human rights associations, to monitor discriminatory or other activities inciting hatred, including Islamophobia.
5. We endorse and embrace the proposal put forward by The Honourable former Prime Minister of Australia, Bob Hawke that the United States should take the lead in undertaking a massive injection of capital and technology to establish a viable economy and education system, which offers employment and hope to the people and State of Palestine.
6. Islam Channel with other concerned organisations to make appropriate arrangements to follow up the recommendations of this conference and to monitor any new developments in Islamophobia.
7. To hold an annual conference to promote the aims of the Copenhagen Declaration.[73]

Within the UK, the MAB and its offshoot, the British Muslim Initiative (BMI), together with the Muslim Council of Britain, called for protests against the cartoons; and a rally was held on 11 February under the banner of "United Against Islamaphobia and United Against Extremism".[74] One of those who spoke from the platform was Jeremy Corbyn, then a backbench MP for Islington North, who told the crowd: "The only way our community can survive is by showing mutual respect to each other. We demand that people show respect for each other's community, each other's faith and each other's religion."[75]

Elsewhere, the MCB and MAB were to the fore in arguing that the UK was becoming an ever-more hostile environment for Muslims. In December 2006, the then Secretary-General of the MCB, Muhammad Abdul Bari, criticised the British Government for "unfairly targeting" Muslims and claimed that this "small, largely deprived community" was being demonised. This demonisation was said to undermine the ability of

73. 'Press Release, The Copenhagen Declaration on Islamophobia', May 2006, http://www.panhumanism.com/press/copenhagen_declaration.php; See also, Allen, *Islamophobia*.

74. O. Bowcott, 'Arrest extremist marchers, police told', *The Guardian*, 6 February 2006, https://www.theguardian.com/uk/2006/feb/06/raceandreligion.muhammadcartoons; 'Press Release: Cartoons not Freedom of Expression but Incitement to Religious Hatred', Muslim Association of Britain (MAB), 3 February 2006, https://web.archive.org/web/20060320234308/http://www.mabonline.info/english/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=655; 'Press Release: Muslims Across Europe Unite Against Extremism', MAB 28 March 2008, https://web.archive.org/web/20080403192151/http://www.mabonline.net/press.php?id=1&art=13; 'Thousands join pro-Islam protest', BBC News Online, 12 February 2006, http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/england/london/4700482.stm.

75. 'Thousands join pro-Islam protest', BBC News Online, 12 February 2006, http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/england/london/4700482.stm.

Muslims to be "equal citizens" as well as contributing to a "deterioration of community cohesion and fuel[ling] xenophobia". He even went so far as to compare this situation to the one faced by the Jews in Nazi Germany during the 1930s asking, "What is the degree of xenophobia that tipped Germany in the 1930s towards a murderous ethnic and cultural racism?"[76] Despite criticism, the following year, Abdul Bari reiterated the comparison with the 1930s.[77]

Such rhetoric only intensified as the British Government, during Tony Blair's final year in office, began to place more emphasis on the need to tackle ideological extremism in order to overcome the terrorist threat posed by groups like al-Qaeda. This meant casting a more critical eye on bodies like the MCB and MAB, which were deemed problematic. The foiling of the August 2006 liquid explosive, 'transatlantic airliner' plot, in particular, marked a key point of departure. In the wake of that episode, the MAB and MCB joined with various other groups and individuals to publish an open letter that appeared to blame British foreign policy for the existence of the terrorist threat.[78] The letter pointed to the "debacle of Iraq", Israel's 2006 war against Hezbollah and the trajectory of British foreign policy more generally, to assert that "British government policy risks putting civilians at increased risk both in the UK and abroad".[79] Such arguments met a cool reception in Downing Street and then Home Secretary John Reid described the letter as a "dreadful misjudgment", which appeared to suggest UK policy should be "dictated by terrorists".[80] Soon after, an effort was made to recast the government's approach towards British Muslim communities, in particular connected with the Prevent strategy, in order to reduce the reliance on so-called 'gatekeeper' organisations like the MAB and MCB; increasingly, such groups came to be seen as part of the problem, rather than the solution.

For their part, the MAB and MCB remained unapologetic in their views and, if anything, became even more fierce in their criticism of the authorities. The accusation that they were the victims of "Islamophobia" now became a central element in their attempts to challenge the post-2006 trajectory of government policy. In October 2009, for instance, the MAB claimed to recognize, "a dark political undercurrent of hostility engineered by the Zionist, Islamophobe and Neo-Con alliance (ZINC)". They called on the government to scrap the "discredited and wasteful" Prevent programme.[81]

More broadly, the battle against Islamophobia became a central theme, driving their activity.[82] In March 2008, for example, the MAB condemned the video produced by the ultra-nationalist Dutch politician Geert Wilders, 'Fitna', which attacked Islam. In a statement, the former president of the organization, Ahmed al-Rawi suggested that European Muslims had been "victimised twice" – first by being targeted, along with everybody else, in terrorist attacks and second "by far right and fascist groups". The MAB called on political leaders to "promote community cohesion rather than hate and evil".[83] The following year, the MAB offshoot, the BMI, arranged for a demonstration in front of the German embassy, to protest against the murder of Marwa al-Sherbini. Amongst the banners on display were those

76. T. Harper, 'Ministers compared to Nazis over Islam stigma', *The Sunday Telegraph*, 17 December 2006, https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/1537129/Ministers-compared-to-Nazis-over-Islam-stigma.html.

77. R. Sylvester and A. Thomson, 'Dr Bari: Government stoking Muslim tension', *The Daily Telegraph*, 10 November 2007, http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/1568881/Dr-Bari-Government-stoking-Muslim-tension.html. For criticism of Abdul Bari, see, for example, M. Parker, 'Warning of Tensions Arising From British Terror Policies Draws Mixed Responses', *Arab News*, 11 November 2007, https://web.archive.org/web/20071114172141/http://arabnews.com/?page=4&section=0&article=103412&d=11&m=11&y=2007.

78. 'Open Letter to Tony Blair', Centre for Contemporary Islamic Studies, 11 August 2006, http://web.archive.org/web/20070316182925/http://www.ccis.org.sg/ccis-web/web/T_details.asp?ptype=August%202006&sno=893&art_id=ART00065-2006&pn=1&fout=1&kw=.

79. 'Full text: Muslim groups' letter', BBC News Online, 12 August 2006, http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/4786159.stm.

80. 'Muslim letter "misjudged" – Reid', BBC News Online, 13 August 2006, http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/4788133.stm.

81. 'The Wisdom of Sawalha', Harry's Place, 20 October 2009, http://hurryupharry.org/2009/10/20/the-wisdom-of-sawalha/ [Original link, now defunct, at: http://www.bminitiative.net/bmi/en/details_home.aspx?ID=289&table=sub]. See also, 'The Guardian: Muhammad Sawalha Leads "Anti-Racist" Group', Harry's Place, 14 March 2010, http://hurryupharry.org/2010/03/14/the-guardian-muhammad-sawalha-leads-"anti-racist"-group/.

82. L. Vidino, *The New Muslim Brotherhood in the West* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), p. 108.

83. 'Press Release: Muslims Across Europe Unite Against Extremism', MAB, 28 March 2008, https://web.archive.org/web/20080403192151/http://www.mabonline.net/press.php?id=1&art=13.

that read, "Stop the culture of hatred towards Muslims" and "The Muslims are not second-class citizens".[84]

In March 2010, meanwhile, the MCB organized a special event entitled 'Tackling Islamophobia: Reducing Street Violence Against British Muslims'.[85] This gathering of parliamentarians, journalists, police, public servants, academics and community representatives "endorsed calls for the establishment of an All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Islamophobia with a view to holding a parliamentary inquiry on Islamophobia in the UK".[86]

This appeal came almost parallel with the publication of a major report on Islamophobia that was published by the 'European Muslim Research Centre' (EMRC) at Exeter University – a body devoted to the study of Islamophobia and combating the notion that European Muslims, Islam and strict adherence to Islam posed a threat to the safety, cohesion and wellbeing of European nations.[87] The EMRC had aroused controversy when it was revealed that it had previously received funding from two bodies allegedly tied to the Muslim Brotherhood, IslamExpo and the Cordoba Foundation.[88] The report in question, entitled 'Islamophobia and Anti-Muslim Hate Crime: UK Case Studies 2010', was co-authored by EMRC co-directors, Jonathan Githens-Mazer and Robert Lambert, and contained a foreword by John Esposito; it was sponsored by the al-Jazeera Centre for Studies. The report opened with a tribute to the "courage and fortitude" of EMRC advisory board member (and MCB Secretary-General) Muhammad Abul Bari, who was said to have been subject to vitriol and abuse from "extremist neo-conservative" campaigners such as Ed Husain, Maajid Nawaz and Shiraz Maher.

Thereafter, the report's central thesis was that "Since 9/11 Muslims in the UK have faced increased intimidation and violence because their faith or political activism has often been maliciously and falsely conflated with terrorism." Githens-Mazer and Lambert laid the blame for this development at the door of "mainstream political commentators" and the media more broadly, who stood accused of fomenting a "negative view of Muslims"; Muslim organisations were said to face "political discrimination"; and there was judged to be "institutional discrimination against mosques and Islamic centres" in local government and local politics.[89] The Blair government's "enthusiastic participation in the war of terror" was said to have "unwittingly and negligently fuelled Islamophobia and anti-Muslim hate crime in the UK."[90]

In making its case, the report relied on a mixture of fieldwork and data collected by, inter alia, the Islamic Human Rights Commission, the Muslim Safety Forum and a body called 'Islamophobia Watch'.[91] Moreover, the report then offered a series of case studies purporting to show the existence of an Islamophobic climate in the UK. One such case study was deemed to be the "creation of a narrative of 'Islamist' infiltration" in Tower Hamlets, via journalistic exposure of the workings of Lutfur Rahman's mayoral administration. Rahman, of course, was later found guilty by the Electoral Court of "corrupt or illegal practices, or both", removed from his position and disbarred from standing again as a candidate for five years.

84. See, 'Tathahira fi lundun tunadid bi-qatal al-shirbini', Al-Jazeera, 12 July 2009, http://www.aljazeera.net/news/international/2009/7/12/%D8%AA%D8%B8%D8%A7%D9%87%D8%B1%D8%A9-%D9%81%D9%8A-%D9%84%D9%86%D8%AF%D9%86-%D8%AA%D9%86%D8%AF%D8%AF-%D8%A8%D9%82%D8%AA%D9%84-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B4%D8%B1%D8%A8%D9%8A%D9%86%D9%8A.

85. 'Tackling Islamophobia: Reducing Street Violence Against British Muslims', The Cordoba Foundation, 3 March 2010, http://www.thecordobafoundation.com/events.php?id=1&art=32; 'MCB Brings Experts and Parliamentarians Together to Discuss Islamophobia', MCB, 5 March 2010, https://web.archive.org/web/20100318004157/http://www.mcb.org.uk/article_detail.php?article=announcement-862.

86. MCB, *Contributing to a Just and Cohesive Society, Annual Report, 2009-2010*, http://archive.mcb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/Annual-Report_2009-2010.pdf.

87. 'About us', European Muslim Research Centre (EMRC), http://wayback.archive-it.org/3097/20120229190011/http://centres.exeter.ac.uk/emrc/about.php

88. In parliament, Robert Halfon MP raised questions about the EMRC's funding. His Freedom of Information request confirmed that the EMRC received £50,000 each from Cordoba and IslamExpo, and it also showed a £35,000 gift from al-Jazeera. See, M. Bright, 'New questions on Exeter's Middle East funding', The Jewish Chronicle, 14 April 2011, http://www.thejc.com/news/uk-news/47877/new-questions-exeters-middle-east-funding. On IslamExpo and the Cordoba Foundation, see S. Maher, 'Lawfare in the UK: Who Is Behind It This Time?' The Hudson Institute, 16 September 2010, http://web.archive.org/web/20100919144635/http://www.hudson-ny.org/1545/lawfare-in-the-uk-who-is-behind-it-this-time.

89. R. Lambert and J. Githens-Mazer, Islamophobia and anti-Muslim hate crime: UK case studies. An introduction to a ten-year Europe-wide research project, (Exeter, 1 November 2010), https://web.archive.org/web/20111217034619/http://hurryupharry.org/files/islamophobia_report.pdf.

90. Ibid., p. 39.

91. Ibid., p. 38.

Yet, Githens-Mazer and Lambert criticised the investigative journalism of Andrew Gilligan and Channel 4's Dispatches programme – suggesting they were beholden to a "New Labour" faction that opposed Rahman and purveying a false story of "entryism" into local government by the Islamic Forum Europe (IFE, the group supporting Rahman). What Githens-Mazer and Lambert called "the 'Islamist' paradigm" was allegedly used to "lend weight to criticism of Rahman and his supporters"; allegations about the relationship between Rahman and the IFE were said to be "entirely unsubstantiated"; and he was deemed to have "suffered prejudice in the literal sense of the word, in that he had been judged before he had acted, on the basis of suspected collusion with an allegedly radical Muslim group."[92]

Needless to say, groups like the Muslim Council of Britain endorsed the work of Githens-Mazer and Lambert – yet their findings were quickly challenged, particularly in relation to Tower Hamlets. The local Labour MP, Jim Fitzpatrick, along with several local councillors, vehemently objected to their portrayal in the report as being effectively Islamophobic.[93] Soon after, Exeter University withdrew the report, and re-issued it in February 2011 after the offending chapter had been removed; co-authors Robert Lambert and Jonathan Githens-Mazer were obliged to publish an apology; and the EMRC was itself later shut down.[94]

Still, Githens-Mazer and Lambert were not alone within the scholarly community in arguing that Islamophobia was widespread in the UK. Another to make this case was Chris Allen, who claimed in a 2010 article for Arches magazine (a publication produced by the Cordoba Foundation) that Islamophobia "manifested itself in quite basic and low level ways".[95] By 2010, Allen had evidently changed his mind, claiming in *Arches* magazine (a publication produced by the Cordoba Foundation) that Islamophobia had been a dangerous phenomenon even before 9/11:

> *If the pre-existent forms of Islamophobia are forgotten, then attempts to combat and counter the reality of today's post-9/11 Islamophobia will be made that much harder. This cannot be tolerated. As mentioned at the outset, this reality is routinely derided and is far from being given the credence and seriousness of concern that Islamophobia clearly demands. To do this, one of the biggest obstacles will be to overcome the widespread belief that Islamophobia is consequential of events such as 9/11. It is because of this that the 'short history' of contemporary Islamophobia is needed to be both reiterated and remembered.* ***Perceiving Islamophobia as a mere post-9/11 phenomenon makes it easy for its detractors to make simplistic assumptions: stop the terrorism and the Islamophobia will stop also. Reiterating how Islamophobia preceded 9/11 – how it was already being recognised as a phenomenon that was extremely dangerous – will help to negate this lazy argument*** *[emphasis added].*[96]

Other academics, many of them inspired by critical theory, likewise argued that Islamophobia was a growing problem within the UK. Tariq Modood, for example, suggested that it was a form of "cultural racism", which saw Muslims relegated to the status of "second class citizens". On this reading, Islamophobia

92. Ibid., pp. 179-97.

93. Bright, 'New questions on Exeter's Middle East funding'.

94. Lambert and J. Githens-Mazer, Islamophobia and anti-Muslim hate crime, p. 11. For the apology, see also 'Islamophobia and Anti-Muslim Hate Crime: UK Case Studies', EMRC, 21 February 2011, https://web.archive.org/web/20110808152051/http://centres.exeter.ac.uk/emrc/news.php#apology. For the revised version of the report, see R. Lambert and J. Githens-Mazer, Islamophobia and anti-Muslim hate crime: UK case studies 2010. An introduction to a ten-year Europe-wide research project, (Exeter, 11 February 2011). http://web.archive.org/web/20110322080330/http://centres.exeter.ac.uk/emrc/publications/IAMHC_revised_11Feb11.pdf. On all this, see A. Gilligan, 'Islamophobia: Is this the year's most embarrassing academic report?', The Telegraph Blog, 2 December 2010, https://web.archive.org/web/20110617151320/http://blogs.telegraph.co.uk/news/andrewgilligan/100066569/islamic-extremism-is-this-the-years-most-embarrassing-academic-report/; T. Jeory, 'Another dodgy dossier', Trial by Jeory, 30 November 2010, http://trialbyjeory.wordpress.com/2010/11/30/another-dodgy-dossier/.

95. C. Allen and J. Nielsen, Summary report on Islamophobia in the EU after 11 September 2001 (European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (Vienna: EUMC, 2002), http://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/199-Synthesis-report_en.pdf.

96. C. Allen, 'Contemporary Islamophobia Before 9/11: A Brief History', *Arches Quarterly* (Winter 2010), http://www.thecordobafoundation.com/attach/ARCHES_Vol%204_Edition%207.PDF.

was a "form of structural violence",[97] which operated to regulate and control the Muslim minority in a subordinate position within society. Modood believed Islamophobia to be a reaction to the decline of western power and the loss of western privilege; he has repeatedly insisted that it should be seen as "a form of racism in its own right – like anti-Semitism".[98]

Others to arrive at this conclusion include the US-based academics Arun Kundnani and Nathan Lean. Kundnani has developed Said's notion of Orientalism, to consider the way in which interlocking perceptions of what constitutes "Muslimness" (as static, backward, irrational etc) creates an ideology that sustains Islamophobia. This in turn, he argues, is used to legitimate western neo-imperialsim and disable resistance to "the US-led system of global capitalism". Islamophobia, Kundnani, has written, is "a structural feature of capitalism in the twenty-first century".[99]

In similar vein, Lean diagnoses the racial/religious inequalities that are said to be inherent within capitalism, and to have driven xenophobia in various forms – not least through the othering of Muslims.[100] Lean's concept of "the Islamophobia Industry" has been taken up in a UK context by academics such as Hilary Aked and David Miller. According to Aked, this industry "consists primarily of a network of think tanks and pressure groups in civil society whose activities contribute to fomenting Islamophobic narratives and putting in place policies which exclude and discriminate against Muslims".[101] This image relies on a complete distortion of the views and output of many of the individuals, or groups concerned – often by the deliberate conflation of those who genuinely belong on the far right of the political spectrum, and those who hold more nuanced positions. On this reading, Katie Hopkins is bracketed together with Lord Finkelstein; Sara Khan and Fiyaz Mughal are placed alongside Raheem Kassam; all are held to be different parts of the same "counter-jihad" whole.[102]

On the basis of such crude and distorted logic, academics like Miller (who would later publicly indulge in conspiracy explanations of both chemical weapons attacks in Syria and the Skripal poisoning in Salisbury), have developed elaborate theories about, for example, the "five pillars of Islamophobia", which are said to exist within the UK. These are said to encompass the institutions of the State (especially the counter-terrorism apparatus), and four "social or political movements" which are judged to "bolster the state or push it further right". These include: the far-right; the neo-conservative movement; Zionism; and left/liberal currents such as those within the "pro-war" left. According to Miller and his collaborators,

> *These social movements, though divided on some matters, do work together—in combination with the state—to produce, reproduce and enact anti-Muslim racism, in the process putting in place the policy frameworks and practical arrangements which ensure the subordination of ordinary Muslims.*[103]

97. In a good illustration of how Islamists adapt western ideas, this is an adaptation of the Gramscian notion of "symbolic violence", rebadged by Jürgen Habermas' as "secret violence", a key idea in the leftist critique of liberal societies. See his, *Die Utopie des guten Herrschers, Kultur und Kritik* (Frankfurt-am-Main 1973), pp. 386-7.
98. Modood, 'Islamophobia: a form of cultural racism', p. 39.
99. A. Kundnani, 'Islamophobia: lay ideology of US-led empire', Arun Kundnani, 13 January 2016, https://www.kundnani.org/wp-content/uploads/Kundnani-Islamophobia-as-lay-ideology-of-US-empire.pdf.
100. N. Lean, *The Islamophobia Industry: How the Right Manufactures Fear of Muslims* (London: Pluto Press, 2017).
101. H. Aked, 'The "Islamophobia Industry"', in Ingham-Barrow (ed.), *More than Words*, pp. 50-65.
102. Ibid.
103. D. Miller et al., 'The five pillars of Islamophobia and the roots of anti-Muslim racism', Open Democracy, 8 June 2015, https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/opensecurity/five-pillars-of-islamophobia/ .

International Dimensions

Anti-Islamophobia campaigners in the UK have perhaps been encouraged by the emergence of an increasingly sophisticated network of campaign groups internationally. In particular, the fight against Islamophobia was taken up by the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC – formerly known as the Organisation of the Islamic Conference), initially in part through the prompting of the UKACIA.[104] Indeed, former UKACIA founder and MCB Secretary-General, Iqbal Sacranie, was an especially keen advocate of the idea that the OIC should take a more active role on the question of Islamophobia and he lobbied hard on this issue.[105]

The OIC had originally been established in Rabat, Morocco, in 1969. Its charter makes clear that it exists not only to promote the economic and humanitarian goals of member states, but also to "defend" and "disseminate" Islam.[106] Increasingly, this mission has been framed through the lens of the campaign against Islamophobia. In August 2001, for instance, the OIC played a key role in having the UN formally recognize Islamophobia as a form of racism, at its World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia, and Related Intolerance in Durban. (This was the same meeting from which the United States and Israel delegations had withdrawn, in protest at OIC-sponsored draft declarations – circulated at a preparatory meeting in Tehran – that equated Zionism with racism.)[107] Such lobbying helped move Islamophobia towards the top of the organisation's agenda. In 2004, for example, Secretary-General Kofi Annan spoke out publicly against the "increasingly widespread bigotry" of Islamophobia.[108]

The Secretary-General of the OIC between 2005 and 2013[109], Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu, evidently took these injunctions very seriously, seeing it as his mission to promote ties of affinity between Muslim communities around the world. In one speech at Columbia University, for instance, he asserted that,

> *The Muslim Ummah means the 'community of the faithful'. It is a unique bond that has no similar example under any other political or religious system in the world. It is a belonging to ideals which bring Muslims together in an eternal brotherhood lock which transcends all other consideration of allegiance or loyalties or barriers of nationhood, ethnicity, geography or language.*[110]

Under Ihsanoglu, the OIC came to devote ever more energy to the struggle against Islamophobia and the promotion of UN resolutions against the 'defamation' of religion.[111]

In 2007, the foreign ministers of the OIC expressed grave concern at the rising tide of discrimination and intolerance faced by Muslims, especially in Europe and North America. They termed Islamophobia "the worst form of terrorism", and described it as a deliberate defamation of Islam and discrimination and intolerance against Muslims.[112] The following year, Ihsanoglu launched a project called the 'Islamophobia Observatory' to monitor the problem and counter fears about Islam; since then, it has published annual reports on the subject, which take for granted the idea

104. UKACIA, 'Press release on OIC Summit', 6 December 1997, http://web.archive.org/web/20031104163146/www.ukacia.com/page7a.html.

105. Ibid.

106. 'Charter of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference', Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC), 14 March 2008, http://www.oic-oci.org/is11/english/Charter-en.pdf.

107. Report of the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance: Durban, 31 August - 8 September 2001, http://www.un.org/WCAR/aconf189_12.pdf; On the role of the OIC, in bringing about this outcome, see H. O. Schoenberg, 'Demonization in Durban: The World Conference Against Racism', American Jewish Yearbook (2002), pp. 85-111, http://www.staff.city.ac.uk/p.willetts/NGOS/WCAR/SCHOENBG.PDF.

108. 'Secretary-General Kofi Annan, Addressing Headquarters Seminar on Confronting Islamophobia, stresses Importance of Leadership, Two-Way Integration, Dialogue', United Nations (UN), 7 December 2004, http://www.un.org/press/en/2004/sgsm9637.doc.htm.

109. 'General Secretariat', OIC, https://www.oic-oci.org/page/?p_id=38&p_ref=14&lan=en.

110. 'Speech by Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu, Secretary General of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference, Columbia University, New York', OIC, 18 September 2008, http://www.oic-oci.org/oicv2/topic/?t_id=1419&ref=667&lan=en.

111. P. Goodenough, 'Criticism of Obama's OIC Envoy Raises Questions About the Need for Such a Post', CNS News, 24 February 2010, https://www.cnsnews.com/news/article/criticism-obama-s-oic-envoy-raises-questions-about-need-such-post.

112. S. Wahab, 'Islamophobia Worst Form of Terrorism', Arab News, 17 May 2007, http://www.arabnews.com/node/298472.

that Islamophobia is on the increase, especially in the West.[113] The second report, issued in May 2009, for instance, declared that:

> *Islamophobia signifies the contemporary proliferation of discrimination against Muslims and distortion of Islam and is partly due to the ignorance and lack of understanding of Islam in the West. It would be an unfortunate error in judgment in believing that Islam is linked to terror; that it is intolerant of other religious beliefs, that its values and practices are not democratic; that it favors repression of freedom of expression and undermining human rights.*[114]

Rising Islamophobia in the West was attributed to the actions of the media and certain right-wing politicians who were wilfully misrepresenting Islam and Muslims; the presence of "institutional Islamophobia in education" was also identified as a major problem.[115] To combat such problems, the OIC continued to highlight the need for an international strategy to prevent the defamation of religion.

Just over a year previously, the UN General Assembly had, under pressure from the OIC, adopted resolution 62/154, on "combating the defamation of religions". Although framed as being of general applicability, it is clear from the text of this resolution, that it gave priority to a defence of Islam – which was held to be under assault. Amongst its provisions, the General Assembly expressed "deep concern that Islam is frequently and wrongly associated with human rights violations and terrorism". It went on to state that the fight against terrorism had led to "the denial of fundamental rights and freedoms of members of target groups, as well as their economic and social exclusion"; reference was made to the use of the media (and social media) to stir "intolerance and discrimination against Islam or any other religion". And the Assembly stressed the "need to effectively combat defamation of all religions and incitement to religious hatred, against Islam and Muslims in particular."[116]

Evidently, not everyone was convinced. In 2008, the US administration criticised the OIC at the UN – and its reference to the "flawed" concept of the defamation of religions which "seeks to weaken the freedoms of religion and expression by restricting the rights of individuals to share their views or criticize religions — in particular, Islam".[117] Undeterred, Ihsanoglu refused to shift course. In 2013, for instance, he warned European governments against making policies based on hatred, hostility and discrimination against Islam; he called for the strengthening of ties between the Islamic world and Europe.[118] More recently, the OIC held a meeting at the Regent's Park Mosque in London, in coordination with the Islamic Scientific, Educational and Social Organization (ISESCO), to explore "mechanisms to counter Islamophobia legally and in the media". The final communiqué of that gathering, while declaring Islamophobia to be "in total contradiction" with the UN Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, called on "Muslim representatives of the civil society and Islamic institutions in the West" to be far more active in putting their case across in the media and public domain.[119]

Several weeks after the right-wing terrorist attacks in Christchurch,

113. 'OIC endeavoring to rectify Muslim image', Zaman, 10 May 2008, https://web.archive.org/web/20080514085309/http://www.todayszaman.com/tz-web/detaylar.do?load=detay&link=141450; Tenth OIC Observatory Report on Islamophobia, October 2016-May 2017 (July 2017), https://www.oic-oci.org/upload/islamophobia/2017/10th_islamophobia_rep_en.pdf. See also, for example, 1st OIC Observatory Report on Islamophobia, May 2007-May 2008 (June 2008), http://ww1.oic-oci.org/uploads/file/Islamphobia/islamphobia_rep_may_07_08.pdf.

114. *2nd OIC Observatory Report on Islamophobia, June 2008-April 2009* (May 2009), p. 1, http://ww1.oic-oci.org/uploads/file/Islamphobia/Islamophobia_rep_May_23_25_2009.pdf.

115. Ibid., pp. 8ff.

116. 'Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 18 December 2007: UNGA Resolution 62/154: Combating defamation of religions', UN, https://undocs.org/A/RES/62/154

117. M. Perelman, 'U.S. Mounting Effort To Counter Limits on Speech Critical of Islam', Forward, 2 October 2008, http://www.forward.com/articles/14318/.

118. 'Europe must see Islam as family member not as guest', *Turkish Weekly*, 25 June 2013, http://www.turkishweekly.net/news/152359/-39-europe-must-see-islam-as-family-member-not-as-guest-39.html.

119. 'At close of an ISESCO/OIC meeting in London, Participants emphasize Islamophobia's contradiction with UN Charter and Human Rights Universal Declaration and call for joint countermeasures by governments, civil society and the media to the phenomenon', Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO), 16 July 2017, https://www.isesco.org.ma/blog/2017/07/17/at-close-of-an-isescooic-meeting-in-london-participants-emphasize-islamophobias-contradiction-with-un-charter-and-human-rights-universal-declaration-and-call-for-joint-countermeasures-by-g/.

New Zealand, the Turkish government used its status as the current chair of the OIC to convene an emergency meeting to consider the "increasing violence based on Islamophobia"; that meeting called, inter alia, on the UN General Assembly to declare Islamophobia a form of racism, and for the appointment of a special rapporteur to monitor the problem.[120]

Interestingly, though, the OIC's campaign against Islamophobia does appear to have its limits. A resolution recently adopted by the OIC's Council of Foreign Ministers, on "safeguarding the rights of Muslim communities and minorities in non-OIC member states" included the following:

> *"[The Council]* ***welcomes*** *the outcomes of the visit conducted by the General Secretariat's delegation upon invitation from the People's Republic of China;* ***commends*** *the efforts of the People's Republic of China in providing care to its Muslim citizens; and* ***looks forward to*** *further cooperation between the OIC and the People's Republic of China [emphasis in original]."*[121]

Given the Beijing government's ongoing crackdown on its Uighur Muslim population, this statement seems remarkably effusive; no mention was made of events in western China.[122]

Within Europe, meanwhile, the Muslim Brotherhood-inspired umbrella body, the Forum of European Muslim Youth and Student Organisations (FEMYSO), has been a key voice in the campaign against Islamophobia.[123] This Brussels-based umbrella organization currently comprises 34 youth and student groups from across the continent. It was set up following a June 1996 meeting between the Federation of Islamic Organizations in Europe (FIOE) – the umbrella body founded as the 'European wing' of the Muslim Brotherhood – and the UK Islamic Foundation. FEMYSO claims to have become the "de facto voice of Muslim Youth in Europe", being regularly consulted by, *inter alia*, the European Parliament, the European Commission, the Council of Europe, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and the United Nations.[124]

In March 2006, FEMYSO published a report titled *Overcoming Islamophobia – promoting inter-religious dialogue and co-operation* – the result of inter-faith work carried out in collaboration with the Ecumenical Youth Council in Europe (EYCE). This called for a concerted effort to tackle both "Islamophobia" and "Christianophobia".[125] Subsequently, in 2011, FEMYSO announced a long-term campaign to fight Islamophobia in Europe, working alongside prominent figures such as Tariq Ramadan and UK-based organisations like the Federation of Student Islamic Societies (FOSIS) and the aforementioned Islamic Human Rights Commission (IHRC).[126] FEMYSO explained that there was,

> *undoubtedly a clear need for targeted guidelines to tackle discrimination and intolerance against Muslims, as this is a particular form of discrimination, which has certain features, manifestations and causes specific to it, which require specific solutions… Islamophobic attitudes are not just an extension of racist attitudes, but are based on their own distinct system of power and domination which manifests itself as individual and ideological forms of discrimination and intolerance.*

120. 'Turkey calls OIC meeting on Islamophobia after NZ attacks', Al-Jazeera, 21 March 2019, https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/03/turkey-calls-oic-meeting-islamophobia-nz-attacks-190321072719814.html; 'Foreign Minister Qureshi presents global strategy against Islamophobia at OIC emergency meet', Dawn, 22 March 2019, https://www.dawn.com/news/1471203; 'OIC Calls for Int'l Action Against Hatred, Islamophobia', *Asharq al-Awsat*, 23 March 2019, https://aawsat.com/english/home/article/1647171/oic-calls-intl-action-against-hatred-islamophobia.

121. *Resolutions on Muslim Communities and Muslim Minorities in the non-OIC Member States adopted by the 46th Session of the Council of Foreign Ministers* (Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, 1-2 March 2019), https://www.oic-oci.org/docdown/?docID=4447&refID=1250.

122. L. Kuo, 'Revealed: new evidence of China's mission to raze the mosques of Xinjiang', *The Guardian*, 6 May 2019, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/may/07/revealed-new-evidence-of-chinas-mission-to-raze-the-mosques-of-xinjiang; 'China is now using facial recognition cameras to monitor Uighur Muslims across the country, report claims', *The Daily Mail*, 15 April 2019, https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-6924349/China-using-AI-identify-Uighurs-China-NYT.html.

123. Vidino, *The New Muslim Brotherhood in the West*, pp. 51-2; 'Our History', Forum of Muslim Youth and Student Organisations (FEMYSO), https://femyso.org/history/.

124. 'Our History', Forum of Muslim Youth and Student Organisations (FEMYSO), https://femyso.org/history/.

125. *Overcoming Islamophobia – promoting inter-religious dialogue and co-operation: Report of the study session held by Ecumenical Youth Council in Europe and Forum for European Muslim Youth and Student Organisations in co-operation with the European Youth Centre Strasbourg of the Council of Europe* (March 2006), https://rm.coe.int/16806fd555.

126. 'Campaigns: Fighting Islamophobia', FEMYSO, https://femyso.org/fighting-islamophobia/; *Combating Islamophobia through Intercultural and Inter-religious Work* (FEMYSO, May 2011), https://rm.coe.int/16806fd5a7.

What was required, said FEMYSO, was a "coherent policy response" to Islamophobia in all its forms. It therefore proposed a five-pronged strategy:

- To ensure participation of Muslim youth in European policy-making;
- To raise awareness of Islamophobia and its impact on European Muslim youth and fight for a European strategy against Islamophobia;
- To combat Islamophobia through lobbying, advocacy and awareness raising;
- To support, motivate and train Muslim youth to fight Islamophobia and promote Human Rights approach of this issue; and
- To develop a coordinating network of organisations working to combat Islamophobia.

In order to implement this approach, FEMYSO looked towards strong engagement with the European political institutions on the one hand, and various civil society organisations on the other. One such group among the latter that it identified was a body to which it was already affiliated: the 'European Network Against Racism' (ENAR). This too had become an important vehicle for anti-Islamophobia activism in the first years of the twenty-first century.

Founded in 1998, this Brussels-based coordination group aimed to "put an end to structural racism and discrimination" and "make a real difference in ethnic and religious minorities' lives".[127] The Runnymede Trust acts as the UK co-ordinator of ENAR.[128] And the membership of ENAR has also included at least two major Muslim Brotherhood-affiliated umbrella bodies, close to FIOE (Federation of Islamic Organizations in Europe, founded by the Muslim Brotherhood in 1989):

- Forum of European Muslim Youth and Student Organisations (FEMYSO),[129] a youth and students' umbrella organization;
- European Forum of Muslim Women (EFOMW), a women's umbrella organization.[130]

The president of ENAR between 2007 and 2010 was Mohammed Abdul Aziz (also known as Mohammed Aziz). Aziz had previously been the founding CEO of the aforementioned Forum Against Islamophobia and Racism (FAIR), as well as a trustee of the East London Mosque (ELM).[131] In addition to these roles, he held positions in various NGOs, government departments and statutory agencies on religious discrimination. He served as: Vice-Chair of the Equality and Diversity Forum for (2010-2014); Commissioner at the UK Commission for Racial Equality (2003-2007); Commissioner of the UK Equal Opportunities Commission (2005-2007); a member of the Commission for Equality & Human Rights Taskforce and Steering Group (2003-2006); the TUC's Commission on Vulnerable Employment (2006-2008); and served as a Consultant Senior Advisor

127. 'About us', European Network Against Racism (ENAR), http://www.enar-eu.org/About-us.

128. 'United Kingdom', ENAR, http://www.enar-eu.org/united-kingdom.

129. Vidino, *The New Muslim Brotherhood in the West*, pp. 51-52; 'Our History', FEMYSO.

130. 'By Country', ENAR, http://www.enar-eu.org/By-country.

131. F. Bodi, 'Whose Equality Agenda?', *The Guardian*, 3 May 2006, https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2006/may/03/whoseequalityagenda.

to the UK Government on Race, Faith & Integration (2004-11).[132] More recently, he has been both a trustee and director to the Aziz Foundation – the organization that provided the secretariat to the All-Party Parliamentary Group on British Muslims (see chapter two).[133]

Even prior to his leadership of ENAR, Aziz had been active on the subject of Islamophobia. In June 2006, for example, he gave a lecture in Rotterdam in the Netherlands, which considered, "the concrete manifestations of Islamophobia in England", and ways to counter this problem.[134] Aziz was also a member of the steering committee of the UK Race and Europe Network (UKREN), which in October 2009, launched the 'Young, Muslim & Citizen project'.[135] This produced an educational pack of "ideas, activities and resources for parents, teachers and youth workers".[136] And the fourth of its five guiding principles referred to "an urgent need to challenge, resist and remove Islamophobia."[137] "Young British Muslims", it was argued,

> *are growing up in a society which contains much anti-Muslim hostility, ignorance and prejudice. The hostility is expressed throughout the media, particularly the print media, and sometimes in physical violence and verbal abuse in public spaces. Young Muslims may in consequence feel that attempts they may make to be active citizens are neither invited nor welcome. Equally unfortunately their confidence and self-esteem may be damaged. Young Muslims need to appreciate that Islam is not the cause of Islamophobia and they need moral, intellectual and emotional strength to resist and oppose it. Further, even more importantly, they need to join with others to combat, reduce and remove it. Amongst other things, this involves taking pride in their heritage; refusing to see themselves as helpless victims; and refusing to adopt an us/them view of the world in which all non-Muslims are disrespected as mere 'kafirs', 'kuffar' or 'kuffs'.*[138]

The pack offered "several activities designed to help young Muslims to understand Islamophobia, and to challenge, resist and remove it". Alongside Aziz, other key figures involved in its production included Tariq Modood, Tariq Ramadan, Emel Abidin-Algan, Ibrahim Mogra and Intissar Kherigi (daughter of prominent Tunisian Islamist leader Rachid Ghannouchi).[139]

Groups like UKREN, ENAR and FEMYSO have continued to work closely in driving forward numerous initiatives aimed at tackling Islamophobia across Europe. In March 2016, on the occasion of the European Action Week Against Racism, a consortium of NGOs including FEMYSO and ENAR announced the launch of the ADVISE project: Advocates Against Islamophobia in Education. This project aimed,

> *to identify and address gaps in national policies to protect against Islamophobia in education and to develop advocacy strategies towards stakeholders (such as education authorities, policymakers, student unions, educators and human rights NGOs) in order to make progress in introducing better protection for students who face Islamophobia in education, and mechanisms for reporting and recording of incidents as well as supporting victims of Islamophobia.*[140]

Alongside this, groups like ENAR have taken a keen interest in the work

132. 'Press Release: New President & Board for the European Network Against Racism', ENAR, 7 December 2007, http://cms.horus.be/files/99935/MediaArchive/pdfpress/2007-12-07.pdf; 'Muslim Aid Appoints New Board of Trustees', Muslim Aid, February 2018, https://www.muslimaid.org/media-centre/news/muslim-aid-appoints-new-board-of-trustees/.

133. 'Our People', The Aziz Foundation, http://web.archive.org/web/20180902093800/http:/azizfoundation.org.uk/who-we-are/

134. "Who's Afraid of Islam?' of: 'Islam eng? Hoezo?', Art 1, 16 June 2006, http://www.art1.nl/artikel/5426-_Whos_Afraid_of_Islam_of_Islam_eng_Hoezo.

135. 'Acknowledgements', Young, Muslim & Citizen, https://web.archive.org/web/20130322174906/www.youngmuslimcitizens.org.uk/acknowledgements.html.

136. UKREN is a UK-wide network representing over 160 organisations established in 1996 -- of which the Runnymede Trust serves as Secretariat. See, 'About UKREN', Young, Muslim & Citizen, http://web.archive.org/web/20160821225456/http://www.youngmuslimcitizens.org.uk/introduction/about-ukren.html.

137. 'Five Guiding Princieples', Young, Muslim & Citizen, http://web.archive.org/web/20161010091452/http://www.youngmuslimcitizens.org.uk/introduction/five-guiding-principles.html.

138. 'There is an urgent need to challenge, resist and remove Islamophobia', Young, Muslim & Citizen, http://web.archive.org/web/20160302113251/http://www.youngmuslimcitizens.org.uk/introduction/five-guiding-principles/principle-four.html.

139. See, 'Foreword', Young, Muslim & Citizen, http://web.archive.org/web/20180504163758/http://www.youngmuslimcitizens.org.uk/introduction/foreword.html; and from the same website, 'Acknowledgements' and 'Introduction: How the Pack Began'.

140. Launch of the ADVISE Project: Advocates against Islamophobia in Education (Brussels, 21 March 2016), https://www.femyso.org/sites/default/files/LaunchofADVISE%2021-03-2016.pdf.

of the newly appointed European Commission Coordinator on combating anti-Muslim hatred, David Friggieri.[141] In July 2018, ENAR, "together with 20 other organisations", published an open letter arguing that "the mandate and the approach of the coordinator has serious gaps to tackle the issue [of Islamophobia] effectively, to ensure meaningful participation of Muslim communities and anti-racism NGOs, and to develop policies to combat Islamophobia." The letter expressed concern over allegedly "inadequate human and financial resources, expertise, objectives and evaluation processes", saying that these "partly" explained the "disappointing results to date". More fundamentally, ENAR and its allies referred to,

> *The lack of transparency concerning meetings with national governments, the failure to organise a meeting between NGOs and Commissioners, the framing of anti-Muslim hatred as a religious issue instead of a human rights one, the absence of European Commission representatives at several events on Muslim women's rights and the engagement of the coordinator with very questionable figures fuelling Islamophobia, are among the most problematic illustrations of these systematic gaps.*
>
> *In addition, the coordinator has conflated the fight against Islamophobia, anti-blasphemy laws, Islamism and counter-terrorism in a number of social media posts and declarations. In a context of generalised suspicion of Muslims, EU policy makers advancing equality and non-discrimination must see Muslims as human beings who enjoy fundamental rights as any other person. The fight against Islamophobia is about politically addressing structural forms of discrimination and racism affecting Muslims or those perceived as such.*[142]

Among the signatories to the letter were several key umbrella organisations close to the Muslim Brotherhood-affiliated umbrella group, FIOE; UK signatories included the MCB and CAGE.[143]

Elsewhere, the IHRC has sought to establish itself as trusted interlocutor at the European level on the subject of Islamophobia. In the autumn of 2018, for instance, it launched at the European Parliament, a "counter-Islamophobia toolkit" that it had developed in partnership with a number of institutions, including the University of Leeds.[144] (After attention was drawn to the controversial nature of the IHRC, the European Commission announced that it was terminating funding for the project.[145])

Under Coalition and Conservative Government, 2010-2017

Within the UK, it seemed increasingly evident that arguments about the dangers of Islamophobia were gaining traction politically. In November 2010, after several months of lobbying, an APPG on Islamophobia was created at Westminster. Significantly, the position of secretariat to the new grouping was filled by iEngage (also known as Engage), an organisation that had emerged two years previously.[146] Among its trustees were several of those who had been to the forefront of activism on Islamophobia:

141. '4th Roundtable with NGOs working on anti-Muslim hatred and discrimination', European Commission, 8 December 2017, http://ec.europa.eu/newsroom/just/item-detail.cfm?item_id=611710.

142. 'Open letter: A meaningful coordinator on anti-Muslim hatred to transform EU approach on Islamophobia', FEMYSO, 9 July 2018, https://femyso.org/open-letter-a-meaningful-coordinator-on-anti-muslim-hatred-to-transform-eu-approach-on-islamophobia/.

143. Ibid.

144. 'Counter-Islamophobia Toolkit Launch – European Parliament', IHRC, 18 September 2018, https://www.ihrc.org.uk/activities/events/18968-counter-islamophobia-toolkit-launch-european-parliament/.

145. 'Funding deal for Al Quds rally group will be terminated, European Commission says', *The Jewish Chronicle*, 16 December 2018, https://www.thejc.com/news/uk-news/funding-deal-for-al-quds-rally-group-ihrc-will-be-terminated-european-commission-says-1.473996.

146. 'FAQs', iEngage, http://web.archive.org/web/20081224114426/http://www.iengage.org.uk/about-us/faqs; 'Press Release: Launch of All Party Parliamentary Group on Islamophobia', iEngage, 24 November 2010, http://www.iengage.org.uk/images/stories/appgpr241110.pdf; C. Allen, 'A Momentous Occasion -- A report on the All Party Parliamentary Group on Islamophobia and its Secretariat', 15 July 2011, https://conservativehome.blogs.com/files/appg-islamophobia-allen-2011-2.pdf; 'Register of All-Party Groups: Islamophobia', Parliament.Uk, http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm/cmallparty/register/islamophobia.htm.

former MCB Secretary-General Iqbal Sacranie; the Islam Channel CEO Muhammad Ali Harrath (who had organised the Copenhagen Declaration on Islamophobia); and the later CEO of iEngage's successor organisation MEND (see below), Sufyan Ismail. Robert Lambert, who co-authored the above-mentioned report on Islamophobia by Exeter University, served as a 'Policy Research Specialist'.[147] The appointment of iEngage to the APPG secretariat quickly proved controversial, amid a series of media revelations about the connections and agenda of iEngage – and in July 2011, an all-party coalition of MPs removed the organisation from its role.[148]

Earlier that same year, Baroness Warsi had made her oft-quoted observation that Islamophobia had "passed the dinner-table test".[149] Quickly, these comments had been taken up and endorsed by others. Farooq Murad, then Secretary-General of the MCB for instance, welcomed Warsi's acknowledgment of the problem and went on to claim, "Islamophobia is the number one concern of all Muslims in this country".[150] Ibrahim Mogra, another senior official at the MCB, once more drew a comparison with the Third Reich, saying:

> *When I reflect on the tragedy of the Holocaust I think about how the Jew was persecuted as a misfit and somebody not to be trusted, as an alien. The drip, drip of hatred and bigotry by the Nazis led to them being described as rats and murdered in a horrible way. This situation is nowhere near that but there is always a beginning for everything. I hope this is not the beginning of something that could be horrendous. We said 'never again' and we have to nip this in the bud.*[151]

Despite dissenting voices to the contrary, such sentiments only fuelled the growing attention placed on Islamophobia.[152]

Baroness Warsi was also to the fore in promoting the campaign against Islamophobia abroad. In 2010, she had met Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu (OIC Secretary General, 2005-2013), in the course of a visit to the OIC secretariat in Jeddah, while in Saudi Arabia for the hajj.[153] After being appointed Minister without Portfolio in David Cameron's government in May of that year, she became Britain's first minister to address the Organisation of the Islamic Cooperation (formerly the Organisation of the Islamic Conference), speaking to delegates at the June 2011 gathering in Kazakhstan.[154]

Thereafter, Warsi was a frequent attendee at OIC conferences. In early 2013, for instance, she attended an OIC summit in Cairo, accompanied by Farooq Murad – then Secretary-General of the MCB. This gathering called for renewed efforts to combat Islamophobia and extremism.[155] Warsi also supported the OIC-led campaign for a UN resolution on religion that would have criminalised the defamation of religion. At a 2013 speech in Georgetown University in the United States, Warsi had endorsed UN Resolution 16/18, as put forward by the OIC, which called upon member states to combat "intolerance, negative stereotyping and stigmatization of, and discrimination, incitement to violence and violence against, persons based on religion or belief".[156]

Meanwhile, groups such as the MCB and the MAB remained active on Islamophobia. In 2012, for instance, the MCB came together with several

147. See the iEngage power-point presentation available at https://www.scribd.com/doc/7634520/Engage-Powerpoint-Presentation.

148. A. Gilligan, 'MPs walk out in battle over Islamist group', The Sunday Telegraph, 30 January 2011. http://www.telegraph.co.uk/journalists/andrew-gilligan/8290965/MPs-walk-out-in-battle-over-Islamist-group.html; P. Goodman, 'Is it ever right to restrict the activities of an All-Party Parliamentary Group?', Conservative Home, 8 February 2011, https://www.conservativehome.com/thetorydiary/2011/02/is-it-ever-right-to-restrict-the-activities-of-an-all-party-parliamentary-group.html; P. Goodman, 'The All-Party Group on Islamophobia has dispensed with the services of iEngage', Conservative Home, 19 July 2011, http://www.conservativehome.com/thetorydiary/2011/07/the-all-party-group-on-islamophobia-has-dispensed-with-the-services-of-iengage.html.

149. 'Baroness Warsi says Muslim prejudice seen as normal', BBC News Online, 20 January 2011, https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-12235237.

150. 'MCB welcomes Baroness Warsi's Comments', MCB, 20 January 2011, http://www.mcbrestore.org.uk/mcb-welcomes-baroness-warsis-comments/.

151. R. Booth, 'Muslim leaders back Lady Warsi's comments on Islamophobia', The Guardian, 20 January 2011. http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/jan/20/muslim-leaders-lady-warsi-islamophobia

152. For such minority voices, for example, see M. Marrin, 'It's not a phobia — it's rational to fear Islam', The Sunday Times, 23 January 2011, http://www.thesundaytimes.co.uk/sto/comment/columns/minettemarrin/article519594.ece. This article has been removed from Times website, but is cited on the Letters page: https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/letters-and-emails-january-30-j72fnnp5hmk.

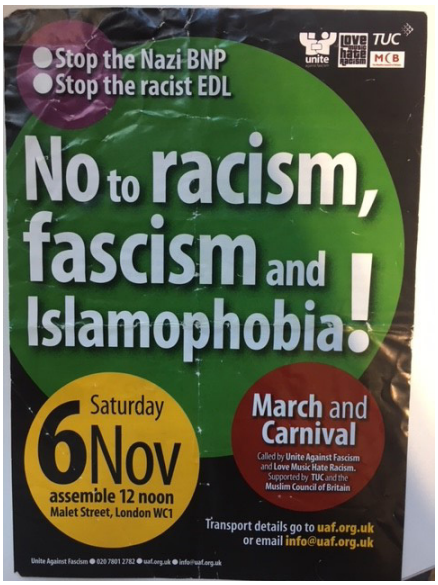
153. J. Lewis, 'Tory peer Baroness Warsi and her secret business: Baroness Warsi, the Conservative Party chairman, faces damaging new questions over her business dealings', *The Sunday Telegraph*, 2 June 2012, http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/politics/conservative/9308031/Tory-peer-Baroness-Warsi-and-her-secret-business.html; 'OIC Secretary General Meets Baroness Warsi', Saudi Press Agency, 21 November 2010, https://www.sauress.com/en/spaen/838206.

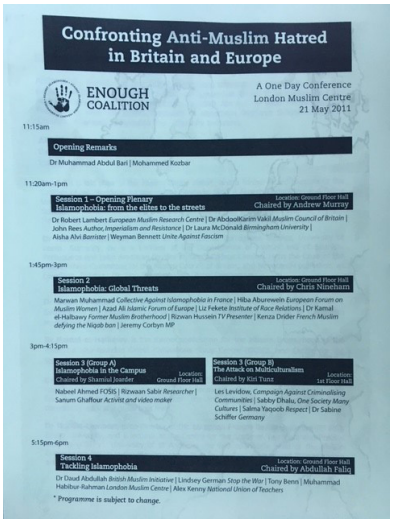
154. N. Watt, 'Muslim Tory minister says Pakistan's treatment of women fails Islam', The Guardian, 23 June 2011. http://www.guardian.co.uk/politics/2011/jun/23/warsi-says-pakistan-fails-islam-over-women

155. 'Baroness Warsi attends Organisation of Islamic Cooperation Summit', Gov.uk, 7 February 2013, https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/baroness-warsi-addresses-organisation-of-islamic-cooperation-summit; 'MCB Secretary General Attends 12th Islamic Summit in Cairo', Islam Online, 15 February 2013, http://www.islamonline.com/news/articles/84/MCB-Secretary-General-Attends-12th-Islamic-Summit-.html.

156. United Nations General Assembly, Resolution adopted by the Human Rights Council: 16/18: Combating intolerance, negative stereotyping and stigmatization of, and discrimination, incitement to violence and violence against, persons based on religion or belief (12 April 2011), http://www.refworld.org/pdfid/4db960f92.pdf; The Right Honourable The Baroness Warsi, Speech at Georgetown University, An International Response to a Global Crisis, 15 November 2013, http://repository.berkleycenter.georgetown.edu/131115WarsiInternationalResponseGlobalCrisis.pdf.

other organisations to establish 'Islamophobia Awareness Month'. Held annually in November, this event aimed to "challenge stereotypes about Islam and Muslims and highlight rises in anti-Muslim sentiment."[157] In the same period, the MAB hosted various events on these issues, including one held in March 2011, which featured the Kuwaiti Islamist scholar Tareq al-Suwaidan speaking to youth members about "Islamophobia".[158] Suwaidan was an interesting choice as the voice of opposition to bigotry, given that his past oeuvre of work includes the stridently antisemitic, *The Jews… The Illustrated Encyclopaedia*.[159]





Senior figures in the MAB, meanwhile, such as Mohammed Kozbar, have continued to label government counter-terrorism policy – and particularly Prevent – as 'toxic' and part of an effort to "silence Muslims".[160] The MAB and the associated North London Central Mosque (also known as the Finsbury Park Mosque) were to the fore in organising protests under the banner, "Unite against Islamophobia and Racism".[161]

Numerous coalitions of this kind were built, bringing together groups like the MCB, the MAB, or the BMI with an array of left-wing organisations

157. 'Islamophobia', MCB, 9 November 2017, https://mcb.org.uk/general/islamophobia/

158. 'Dr. Tariq Suwaidan speaks to MAB Youth about Islamophobia', Youtube, 27 March 2011, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DnVRBc0CRyk.

159. T. Suwaidan, *Al-Yahud… Al-Mawsu'ah al- Musawwarah* (Shirkat al-'ibda'a al-khaliji li-l-istithmarat wa-l-tadrib, 2009). See, https://jamalon.com/en/3073457.html?a_aid=ab.

160. B. Lazarus, '"The government wants to silence Muslims", says Mohammed Kozbar, chairman of Finsbury Park Mosque', *Islington Now*, 11 March 2015, https://web.archive.org/web/20150708140600/http://islingtonnow.co.uk/2015/03/11/the-government-eants-to-slience-muslims-says-chairman-of-finsbury-park-mosque/.

161. 'Unite against Islamophobia and Racism', MCB, https://web.archive.org/web/20151211004228/https://mcb.org.uk/unite-against-islamophobia-and-racism-stop-anti-muslim-hate-crime/.

such as Unite against Fascism, Stand up to Racism, or the Stop the War Coalition.

A June 2010 conference organized by 'Stop the War', for instance, featured a cast list from across this spectrum:

- Daud Abdullah, of the Muslim Council of Britain
- Anas Al-Tikriti, of the British Muslim Initiative (currently chair of the MAB)
- Moazzam Begg, the founder of CAGE
- Lindsey German, the convenor of the Stop the War Coalition
- Muhammad Habibur-Rahman, the vice-president of Islamic Forum of Europe
- Kate Hudson, CND
- Robert Lambert, the former head of Scotland Yard's Muslim Contact Unit
- Seumas Milne, journalist
- Peter Oborne, journalist
- Salma Yaqoob, of the Respect Party

Those who attended would have heard how "Muslims are under attack in this country as never before. Government policies and the media have created an atmosphere in which all Muslims are portrayed as reactionary and anti-western… Islamophobia is a direct consequence of the 'war on terror'".[162] Similar themes were also articulated in a leaflet produced by the Stop the War Coalition in 2013, which described Islamophobia as "one of the last 'respectable' forms of racism in Europe."[163]

The following year, a senior member of 'Stop the War', John Rees, penned a revealing piece in which he identified a slew of purportedly "Islamophobic" incidents that formed a "new wave of Islamophobia":

- The BBC's Panorama programme on the Mayor of Tower Hamlets, Lutfur Rahman
- David Cameron's announcement of an inquiry into the Muslim Brotherhood
- Michael Gove's setting up of an inquiry led by Peter Clarke, to examine the 'Trojan Horse' affair in Birmingham
- The decision by William Shawcross, head of the Charities Commission, to launch an investigation into subversion within certain charity organisations
- A speech by Tony Blair calling for more international action against 'Islamism'
- The arrest and charging of Moazzam Begg on terrorism offences connected with his visit to Syria

This list is striking for the way in which it censures an array of numerous government decisions, together with media reportage of events in Tower Hamlets, on the grounds that they were Islamophobic. In particular, the

162. 'Stop Islamophobia: Defend the Muslim Community', 20 May 2010, available at, https://web.archive.org/web/20110113222503/https://bristol.indymedia.org/article/692472.

163. *Islamophobia: Same Hate, New Target* (Stop the War Coalition, 23 May 2013), http://www.stopwar.org.uk/index.php/resources/leaflets/377-islamophobia.

accusation that government responses to the 'Trojan Horse' affair were defined by Islamophobia has become a signature claim for many leftists and their Islamist allies. Indeed, Rees went on to describe it as "one of the most outrageous examples of Islamophobia since the war on terror began."[164] Such arguments about the allegedly 'bogus' and 'Islamophobic' nature of the 'Trojan Horse' affair have found echo in more mainstream outlets.

Elsewhere, commentators like Mehdi Hasan continued to insist that Muslims in Britain faced "relentless hostility", "unprecedented scrutiny" and being "tagged as a suspect community". Their "grievances", said Hasan – pointing to the UK's involvement in the toppling of Muammar Qaddafi in Libya, and its support for Israel – were "mocked or ignored."[165]

Analyses of this kind gained further traction amidst the emergence of ISIS in the Middle East – and the revelation that significant numbers of young British Muslims were being recruited to their cause. To some, this was a reflection of the Islamophobia that Muslims faced in the West, with terrorism and violence a response to exclusion and "victimization".[166]

Arguments of this kind were also advanced by new more strident voices that emerged in this period – in particular 'CAGE' (formerly Cage Prisoners) and Muslim Engagement and Development (MEND). CAGE, for instance, folded the concept of Islamophobia into its broader critique of the British state's counter-terrorism strategies. Prevent, for example, was said to rest on "Islamophobic perceptions" and to be symptomatic of the State's stigmatisation of Islam.[167] Asim Qureshi, CAGE's research director, has routinely argued that Prevent disproportionately targets Muslims, as compared to other forms of extremism – pointing to the disparity between numbers of referrals for Islamist radicalism, as compared to the number for right-wing extremism, when set against overall population figures of Muslims versus white people. On this basis, he has claimed that "a Muslim child is 17 times more likely to be referred for 'deradicalisation' than a white British child of no apparent faith group". Such arguments, though, elide the security context in which Prevent referrals occur – a context in which it is widely understood that the threat posed by Islamist extremism significantly outweighs that from the far-right. Qureshi, though, ignores this, preferring instead to talk about the "underlying Islamophobia" of the State, which had led to the "pathologising of Muslim beliefs and behaviours". On this view, Islam has been criminalised and Prevent has led to the "securitising [of] Muslim communities".[168]

Likewise, in a recent contribution to this debate, CAGE claimed to have exposed the networks behind the "global Islamophobia industry", which was said even to have penetrated the government's Commission for Countering Extremism.[169] CAGE's report was received approvingly by MEND, which said that the report had shown how there was "an inherent Islamophobic bias within the CCE's epistemological outlook, theories and operation."[170]

MEND itself emerged in 2014 as a successor organisation to the now defunct iEngage.[171] It promotes itself as an "Anti-Islamophobia NGO aiming to empower and encourage Muslims to be more engaged in media and politics",[172] and it claims to have delivered Islamophobia presentations

164. J. Rees, 'A new wave of Islamophobia: where it comes from and how to stop it', Stop the War, 24 April 2014, http://www.stopwar.org.uk/index.php/news-comment/1492-a-new-wave-of-islamophobia-where-it-rsquo-s-come-from-and-how-to-stop-it.

165. M. Hasan, 'Life for British Muslims since 7/7 – abuse, suspicion and constant apologies', *The Guardian*, 5 July 2015, https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/jul/05/british-muslims-7-july-london-bombings.

166. D. Ignatius, 'The Islamic State feeds off Western Islamophobia', *The Washington Post*, 2 June 2016, https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/the-islamic-state-is-fueled-by-islamophobia/2016/06/02/37109540-28ff-11e6-b989-4e5479715b54_story.html.

167. *Cage Submission to HASC Countering Extremism Inquiry*, available at, https://www.cage.ngo/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/CAGE-submission-to-HASC-Countering-extremism-inquiry.pdf.

168. 'Prevent's work on far right extremism does not make it worth saving', Middle East Eye, 18 February 2019, https://www.middleeasteye.net/opinion/prevents-work-far-right-extremism-does-not-make-it-worth-saving.

169. *CCE Exposed: The Islamophobia Industry policing thoughts and beliefs*, CAGE, 7 January 2019, https://www.cage.ngo/cce-exposed-launch. See also, 'CAGE: Sara Khan's extremism commission is deeply motivated by Islamophobia', 5 Pillars, 7 January 2019, https://5pillarsuk.com/2019/01/07/cage-sara-khans-extremism-commission-is-deeply-motivated-by-islamophobia/.

170. 'Reflections on the CAGE report', Muslim Engagement and Development (MEND), 16 January 2019, https://mend.org.uk/news/reflections-cage-report/.

171. 'Activities Report 2014', MEND, 20 May 2015, https://www.mend.org.uk/news/activities-report-2014/; H. Black, 'MEND – The Rebranding of iENGAGE', Harry's Place, 11 July 2014, http://hurryupharry.org/2014/07/11/mend-the-rebranding-of-iengage/.

172. 'MEND Community', Twitter, https://twitter.com/mendcommunity.

to "over 30,000 British Muslims".[173] Supporters of MEND, like Baroness Warsi, claim that it is a "grassroots-funded and run" body, which is "results-focused". It is deemed preferable to alternatives such as Tell MAMA, which in Warsi's estimation lacks "credibility" and is "in many ways not fit for purpose". It is for this reason that she has endorsed MEND as the only national grass-roots and community-driven group tackling anti-Muslim hatred."[174] Yet as Warsi also admits, it has proven controversial (albeit she attributes this to "a number of media hatchet jobs").[175]

Just prior to the 2015 general election, Sufyan Ismail, MEND's CEO, described the group's strategy as being to mobilise the "Muslim vote" so that it might act as the "kingmaker" in UK elections. He said a strong performance by the group's chosen candidates could make it easier for British citizens to fight in Syria; and that British society "hates us" and that British law specifically allowed violence against Muslims while protecting other groups. [176]

The group's one-time director of engagement, Azad Ali, was recorded as having said that the March 2017 attack on parliament, which killed five people, was "not terrorism".[177] MEND officials and volunteers have also been accused of other expressions of extremism – by legitimising the killing of British troops; promoting conspiracy theories; encouraging the belief that Islamophobia is intentionally driven by government policies and the media; and promoting antisemitism and engaging in hate speech.[178] In February 2018, Sir Mark Rowley, the outgoing Assistant Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police, stated that MEND was "seeking to undermine the State's considerable efforts to tackle all hate crime".[179]

In spite of this rather problematic backdrop, MEND has been to the fore in insisting that Muslims face an ever-more hostile environment in the UK. It co-founded "Islamophobia Awareness Month" (IAM) in order to "deconstruct and challenge the stereotypes about Islam and Muslims". According to MEND, IAM is arranged in partnership with, variously, local Police and Crime Commissioners (PCC), local councils, journalists and local media, councillors and local MPs, mosques, universities, schools and community organisations, with a view to raising "awareness of the scourge of Islamophobia and encourage better reporting of incidents to the police".[180] MEND supplies its co-collaborators with a range of publications and online resources focused on identifying and tackling Islamophobia.[181]

In November 2017, the launch of IAM was hosted in parliament and featured speeches from a number of MPs including: Stephen Kinnock, Wes Streeting, Naz Shah, Afzal Khan and Jeremy Corbyn.

173. 'MEND's Achievements', MEND, https://mend.org.uk/about-mend/mends-achievements/.

174. S. Warsi, *The Enemy Within: A Tale of Muslim Britain*, (London: Allen Lane, 2017), pp. 275-6.

175. Ibid., pp. 269-70.

176. A. Gilligan, 'Muslim group with links to extremists boasts of influencing election', The Daily Telegraph, 4 April 2015. http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/general-election-2015/11515630/Muslim-group-with-links-to-extremists-boasts-of-influencing-election.html.

177. I. Ramzan and A. Gilligan, 'MPs ditch meeting with Muslim group Mend over Islamist claims', The Sunday Times, 29 October 2017, https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/mps-ditch-meeting-with-muslim-group-mend-over-islamist-claims-rgxqn0s05.

178. D. Kennedy, 'Muslim lobby group Muslim Engagement and Development "promotes extremism"', The Times, 31 October 2017. https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/muslim-lobby-group-promotes-extremism-muslim-engagement-and-development-mend-hkm87fx35.

179. 'Extremism and Terrorism: The need for a whole society response – The Colin Cramphorn Memorial Lecture', Policy Exchange, 26 February 2018, https://policyexchange.org.uk/pxevents/the-colin-cramphorn-memorial-lecture-by-mark-rowley/; 'Statement on Assistant Commissioner Mark Rowley's comments about MEND', MEND, 27 February 2018, https://mend.org.uk/news/statement-assistant-commissioner-mark-rowleys-comments-mend/.

180. 'Islamophobia Awareness Month', MEND, https://www.mend.org.uk/islamophobiaawarenessmonth/.

181. 'Resources and Publications', MEND, https://mend.org.uk/resources-and-publications/; *Islamophobia Khutbah* (MEND, October 2014) https://mend.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/MEND-Islamophobia-Khutbah.pdf; 'Hire the MEND Islamophobia Exhibition', MEND, https://mend.org.uk/get-involved/hire-the-mend-islamophobia-exhibition/.

The most recent iteration of the IAM initiative was also launched in parliament in November 2018, where speakers included Iain Duncan-Smith. Ironically, supporters of Islamophobia Awareness Month, such as Malia Bouattia, marked the occasion by saying that the government and other UK politicians were "emboldening the nation's Islamophobes".[182]

Moreover, MEND has successfully established itself as an interlocutor and partner of multiple institutions, both within the UK and globally. According to the organisation's own promotional material, among those to validate or cooperate with MEND are:

- The UK Electoral Commission, to which MEND is an official partner
- The Crown Prosecution Service, which has MEND on its hate-crime accountability forums
- The Police, with over twenty constabularies around the UK having worked with MEND on the subject of Islamophobia
- Multiple local councils, notably Manchester City Council, who work closely with MEND on tackling Islamophobia
- The National Association of Schoolmasters Union of Women Teachers (NASUWT) and other teaching unions, which endorse MEND's delivery of lessons on Islamophobia in schools
- The Independent Press Standards Organisation (IPSO), which recognises MEND as a representative body of the Muslim community[183]
- Network Rail, which has hosted a MEND event on "Islamophobia Awareness"[184]
- The EU, which has invited MEND to speak at events on Islamophobia The OSCE-based Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, which has rated MEND's work as "best example for civil society organisations"
- The World Economic Forum, which has described MEND's work as "best practice" in Human Rights "protection and promotion"

182. M. Bouattia, 'UK politicians are emboldening the nation's Islamophobes', al-Araby, 1 November 2018, https://www.alaraby.co.uk/english/comment/2018/11/1/uk-politicians-are-emboldening-the-nations-islamophobes.

183. 'MEND Achievements', Youtube, 3 May 2017, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v6AQ_NMh08s.

184. 'Islamophobia Awareness by Mend; Network Rail', 16 November 2018, https://www.interfaithweek.org/events/Islamophobia-Awareness-by-Mend-Network-Rail-2265.

MEND has particularly prioritised its work in schools, where sessions for children and teachers respectively are used to highlight the problems faced by Muslims in the UK. Often these are held under the banner of "Bullied for my Beliefs", or "Challenging Islamophobia in Schools".[185]

In April 2017, MEND created its "Islamophobia Response Unit" (IRU) – "a free and confidential advice service for those affected by Islamophobic discrimination and Islamophobic hate crime."[186] This unit claims to be engaged, inter alia, in the collection of data about Islamophobia across the country (with a review to raising awareness and shaping policy); and in the provision of legal, advice and referral services to victims through dedicated teams of caseworkers. In conjunction with the launch of the IRU, MEND published an "Islamophobia Toolkit".[187]

In July 2017, MEND's IRU took an active role in the case of Muhammad Chamoune – a man who had been subject to a stop-and-search procedure outside the Regent's Park Mosque in central London. Chamoune was not arrested, and no formal complaint was made; but this did not stop MEND from intervening. In a statement, the group said it was "unclear what 'reasonable grounds of suspicion' may have existed" for the stop and search, but added suggestively: "It appears as if an extra layer of clothing was the reason for the search and naturally this has caused major concern for Muslims across the UK and for the Islamophobia Response Unit (IRU)." For this reason, MEND's IRU approached "senior officers at the Metropolitan Police" seeking an explanation – and later, the group "facilitated a meeting" between Chamoune and an officer from the Professional Standards Unit of the Metropolitan Police.[188] More recently, MEND seems to have interposed itself into a case involving the West Midlands Police – after a video went viral that showed a police officer striking a man (who was said to be Muslim). In the aftermath, the IRU claimed to be "liaising" with the Police, and promised to provide updates on the episode.[189]

In both the above cases it is surely pertinent to ask why MEND should be treated as a privileged interlocutor by the police? On what basis was it accepted as an intermediary? Why should it be permitted to interpolate itself into such cases and so facilitate its broader agenda, which holds that "institutional Islamophobia" is rampant?

MEND has proven itself an especially vocal opponent of Prevent, often making highly questionable claims about the programme. In early 2018, for instance, it declared that "Muslims have become 40 times more likely than someone who is not a Muslim to be referred for the de-radicalisation programme since it was made a statutory duty in 2015".[190] Inaccurate in and of itself, the whole thrust of this claim – that Muslims are unduly stigmatised under Prevent – rests on the deliberate omission of the security context. It is inevitable that Muslims are, relative to their composition of the UK population as a whole, disproportionately engaged by counter-terrorism and counter-extremism policies, given that the security threat posed by those claiming to act in the name of Islam is high. Assistant Commissioner Neil Basu, the head of Counter-terrorism Command at the

185. For 'Bullied for my Beliefs' see the following pages, available at the MEND website: https://mend.org.uk/event/bullied-for-my-beliefs/; https://mend.org.uk/event/bullied-for-my-beliefs-2/; https://mend.org.uk/event/bullied-beliefs-chelmsford-mosque/; https://mend.org.uk/news/bullied-beliefs-purley-mosque/; https://mend.org.uk/event/bullied-for-my-beliefs-3/. For 'Challening Islamophobia', see https://mend.org.uk/event/challenging-islamophobia/; https://mend.org.uk/news/challenging-islamophobia-schools-birmingham/.

186. 'Statement on Assistant Commissioner Mark Rowley's comments about MEND'; 'Report an Incident Online – IRU', MEND, https://mend.org.uk/report-islamophobia/report-an-incident/.

187. *IRU Toolkit* (MEND), available at, https://mend.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/IRU_Toolkit-MEND_V1_01.11.17.pdf.

188. 'MEND Statement on "Stop and Search" of Muslim Males Outside Regent's Park Mosque', MEND, 9 July 2017, https://mend.org.uk/news/mend-statement-stop-search-muslim-male-outside-regents-park-mosque/; 'MET Police Response & MEND Update on "Stop and Search" of Muslim Male Outside Regent's Park Mosque', MEND, 14 July 2017. https://mend.org.uk/news/met-police-response-mend-update-stop-search-muslim-male-outside-regents-park-mosque/; 'Final Statement by MEND on "Stop and Search" of Muslim Male Outside Regent's Park Mosque', MEND, 15 August 2017. https://mend.org.uk/news/final-statement-mend-stop-search-muslim-male-outside-regents-park-mosque/.

189. 'MEND Statement: Viral footage of West Midlands Police Officers Raises Questions of Excessive Force', MEND, 11 March 2019, https://www.mend.org.uk/news/mend-statement-viral-footage-west-midlands-police-officers-raises-questions-excessive-force/.

190. 'Sara Khan: who is she and why can't she be the counter-extremism tsar?', MEND, 1 February 2018, https://mend.org.uk/news/sara- khan-cant-counter-extremism-tsar/.

Metropolitan Police, has said that his forces are investigating more terrorist plots than at any time in the last decade – with the vast majority involving Islamist extremists.[191]

But such realities are ignored by MEND, which instead seeks to challenge the validity of the entire counter-terrorism apparatus. Like CAGE, MEND has called for an independent review of "all counter-terrorism legislation enacted since 2000 with a view to curbing the encroachment of counter-terrorism policies on civil liberties". In making this case, MEND claims that existing provisions – such as Schedule 7 of the 2000 Terrorism Act, which gives the police powers to stop and detain people at all ports of entry to the UK – "enable racist and Islamophobic conduct." According to MEND, "Muslims have become securitised citizens subject to discriminatory policies that are contradictory to the democratic governing of a society centred upon human rights and civil liberties, but which have been exceptionalised by security discourses".[192]

Perhaps the apogee of its promotion of this victimhood mentality came in January 2018, when its head of policy and research, Isobel Ingham-Barrow, told an event organised by 'Stand up to Racism' to commemorate Holocaust Memorial Day that it was "not enough to ensure that the Holocaust never happens again – we have to stop the conditions that allowed those atrocities to happen in the first place." With regards to the situation faced by Muslims in the UK, she said "I'm sorry to say, we may already be close to those conditions again."[193]

The Media in the Spotlight

Newer groups like MEND have joined with the MCB in seeking to highlight, in particular, the iniquitous role of the British media, claiming that it "creates a hostile image of British Muslims and minorities, thus sowing Islamophobia, xenophobia, and racism into the milieu of British society."[194] The MCB's assistant Secretary-General, Miqdaad Versi, has emerged as an especially vociferous and active campaigner on the subject of how Islam is treated in the mainstream British press.[195] Versi has brought a succession of complaints to the Independent Press Standards Organisation (IPSO), about the way leading newspapers have covered stories that touch on Islam.[196] Beyond this, Versi and the MCB have demanded changes to the way IPSO operates.

At a November 2015 conference, for instance, the MCB called for it to consider cases of alleged discrimination against groups of people – something that currently lies beyond its remit.[197] This call has been repeated *ad infinitum* since then. And it has been strengthened by ongoing criticism of the way the media treats 'Islam'. David Anderson QC, for example, when still the government's independent reviewer of terrorism legislation, noted that much media coverage of Islam-related topics was "grossly irresponsible".[198]

In similar vein, MEND too has been a relentless critic of the British media and its coverage of Islam. The group also considers IPSO, as presently configured, to be insufficient, and has called for more assertive

191. C. Hymas, 'Police counter-terror investigations are highest for ten years', *The Daily Telegraph*, 23 January 2019, https://www.telegraph.co.uk/politics/2019/01/23/police-counter-terror-investigations-highest-ten-years/.

192. 'Schedule 7 declared "unjust" by European Court of Human Rights', MEND, 12 March 2019, https://www.mend.org.uk/news/schedule-7-declared-unjust-european-court-human-rights/.

193. 'MEND Head of Policy speech in commemoration of Holocaust Memorial Day', MEND, 24 January 2018, https://mend.org.uk/news/mend-head-policy-speech-commemoration-holocaust-memorial-day/.

194. Ingham-Barrow (ed.), *More than Words*, pp. 67-72.

195. H. Sherwood, 'Ipso: Mail Online wrong to use "Islamic honour killing" in headline', *The Guardian*, 20 July 2016, https://www.theguardian.com/media/2016/jul/20/ipso-mail-online-wrong-to-use-islamic-honour-killing-in-headline.

196. T. Slater, 'Policing criticism of Islam: the new Star Chamber', Spiked Online, 18 January 2017, http://www.spiked-online.com/newsite/article/policing-criticism-of-islam-the-new-star-chamber/19344#.WH_1nZIf_aY; S. Subramanian, 'One man's (very polite) fight against media Islamophobia', *The Guardian*, 18 October 2018, https://www.theguardian.com/news/2018/oct/18/miqdaad-versi-very-polite-fight-against-british-media-islamophobia.

197. 'British Muslims Explore Community-led Responses to Terrorism and Extremism', MCB, 12 October 2014, https://mcb.org.uk/press-releases/counterterror-conf2015/.

198. B. Flanagan, 'UK press watchdog urged to act against media slurs on Muslims', Al-Arabiya English, 13 November 2015, http://english.alarabiya.net/en/media/print/2015/11/13/UK-watchdog-urged-to-act-amid-irresponsible-media-slurs-on-Muslims.html.

regulation of the press. The dissatisfaction of MEND and the MCB with the performance of IPSO has focused in particular on article 12 of its editors' code of practice, which limited protections to individuals not groups. It is for this reason that they have promoted IMPRESS as an alternative regulator of the media – as its charter does stipulate that groups should be protected (Clause 4.3).[199] In taking this stance, the groups have joined up with 'Hacked Off' campaigners to demand a "genuine, independent press regulator". The media, it is claimed, has refused to take seriously "complaints about discriminatory language aimed at minority groups"; this is said to make them "complicit in the hate directed at minority ethnic communities".[200]

Whatever the basis for their dissatisfaction with the existing regulatory framework, MEND and the MCB have evidently sought to use the machinery of IPSO in order to limit what can/cannot be said about Islam in the media. In 2016, for instance, MEND welcomed the decision by *The Sunday Times* to correct an article which had described Deobandi Islam as "contrary to British values and human rights".[201] A particularly fascinating case, meanwhile, was the complaint brought against the *Daily Mail* by the MCB's Miqdaad Versi in 2018. At issue was an article entitled 'Powder Keg Paris', which reported on the situation in the north Parisian *departement* of Seine-Saint-Denis, utilising both a French parliamentary report on the subject and the experiences of a reputable investigative journalist who had spent several days in the area. Central to Versi's complaint was the assertion that the journalist had "misinterpreted what he had seen during his visit to Seine-Saint-Denis to fit a false and damaging narrative". This surely begs the question of how much expertise Versi himself can claim on this issue? As the details of the complaint and IPSO ruling make clear, Versi repeatedly challenged the veracity of the story as provided by the journalist – without any clear or compelling evidence for so doing, or explaining in other ways why he believed the story was inaccurate. For instance,

> *The complainant disputed the journalist's claims that "Arabic is more useful than French" in the area; that "other faiths and religious are being driven from the area"; that many of the "drug dealing by gangs" were Muslim; and that "when helicopters flew overhead in training for Bastille Day celebrations earlier this month, one man pretended to shoot at them with a machine gun. Another pushed him away and pretended to fire a shoulder-mounted missile, tracing the missile with his hand towards its targets and shouting: 'Boom!' Everyone laughed". The complainant also disputed that the journalist had seen a woman "walking in full face veil", as claimed by the journalist, and that the women that he saw shopping were "always accompanied by male relatives".*[202]

One surely needs to ask why Versi's rejection of the journalist's account should – absent any compelling evidence of his own – be accorded a hearing? Perhaps more importantly, as the terms of the complaint make clear, what was largely at stake here was a question of *interpretation*. Leaving aside a dispute over some statistics included in the story – themselves susceptible to varying interpretations, what Versi most objected to the journalist's *reading* of the situation that he found in France. Versi thus

199. 'Parliament hears evidence detailing growing problem of Islamophobia in the media and the powerless nature of regulators', MEND, 22 February 2018, https://mend.org.uk/news/parliament-hears-evidence-detailing-growing-problem-islamophobia-media-powerless-nature-regulators/.

200. 'Demand IPSO Protect Targeted Groups Against Press Discrimination', Hacked Off, https://hackinginquiry.eaction.org.uk/discrimination-ipso.

201. '*Sunday Times* correction on Deobandi imams preaching "anti-British views"', MEND, 25 July 2016, https://www.mend.org.uk/news/sunday-times-correction-on-deobandi-imams-preaching-anti-british-views/. The complaint had been brought by Dr. Rafaqat Rashid, a scholar at al-Balagh Academy.

202. '05228-18 Versi v *Daily Mail*', IPSO, 23 January 2019, https://www.ipso.co.uk/rulings-and-resolution-statements/ruling/?id=05228-18.

claimed that the article had breached both Clause 1 (Accuracy) and Clause 12 (Discrimination) of the Editors' Code of Practice.

IPSO, while rejecting Versi's complaints as to the journalist's personal reportage, found the *Daily Mail* to be in partial breach of its code – relating entirely to the statistics included in the report – and the newspaper was forced to make a partial correction to its story as follows:

> *A July 28 feature about a Paris suburb which was the subject of a French parliamentary report said that up to 300,000 illegal immigrants lived there and referred to it throughout as Saint Denis. In fact, the suburb is called Seine-Saint-Denis, in which the smaller commune of Saint Denis is situated, and the report referred to estimates of 150-400,000 illegal immigrants. The article also said 1,700 jihadists are believed to have returned after fighting for IS. This is in fact the number of people understood to have left France – not Seine-Saint -Denis – to join IS. The claim that the suburb is home to '350 known jihadis' was based on comments of an anonymous official who told another publication that there are about '30 possible terrorists living in this area and about 300 extremists who would support them', and there are no official figures for the number of jihadis there. We are also happy to clarify that the reference to 160 'mosques' should have been to 'mosques and prayer rooms'; the French veil ban was introduced for reasons of security as well as integration; [Name] was murdered in a different part of Paris; [Name] no longer works at French anti-Islamophobia group CCIF; and [Name] is a teacher, not a professor. We apologise for any confusion.*

At first glance, such errors appear significant. Yet when placed within the context of the original report, they in no way detract from the overall thrust and meaning of the article. On issues such as the number of jihadists who had returned from Iraq/Syria (1,700), we would suggest that any fair-minded reading of the article would have accepted this as relating to France as a whole, not just Seine-Saint-Denis. The other clarifications again turn on questions of interpretation, or minor errors that do not undermine the wider meaning.

Despite this, of course, Versi has heralded the IPSO finding as a great triumph.[203] And significantly, the Mail's original article has been removed online. In this way, it marked a triumph for Versi and his ambition to be recognised as the de facto arbiter of what the media can/cannot say about Islam and Muslims – in this case, even Muslims who reside beyond the UK's borders.

Lest there be any doubt that this is indeed how Versi wishes to be seen, the terms of a complaint he launched in late 2016 made it explicit. On that occasion, he challenged a *Daily Express* story about the extent to which Muslim-majority countries had joined the coalition against ISIS (again, note, a subject of no direct consequence to Muslims resident in the UK). According to IPSO, the terms of the complaint stated,

203. See, for example, Versi's Twitter thread of 6 February 2019, available at https://twitter.com/miqdaad/status/1093062764380200960?lang=en-gb.

> *that Clause 1(iii) of the [Editors' Code of Practice] had been breached because the publication had not offered him a right to reply. He said that he should have the right to reply in relation to all inaccurate reporting of Muslims or Islam, not least because of his personal work pursuing complaints on such matters, as well as his role as Assistant Secretary General at the Muslim Council of Britain.*

It is striking that while IPSO did not accept Versi's self-appointed status, they upheld the substance of his complaint and the newspaper agreed to print a correction. Moreover**,** it is clear that Versi's relentless campaigning on such issues has taken a toll (see box below).

All of this is evidently taking a toll on the way the media operates in this country. A number of editors and journalists have privately testified to the "chilling effect" that has already taken place, in relation to subjects that touch upon Islam. They know that publishing certain stories carries a cost; some therefore prefer to follow the path of least resistance and engage in a degree of "self-censorship". This is deeply troubling. Of course, one wants the media to report truthfully – and to avoid the dissemination of 'fake news'. But equally, a genuinely free press requires that there be a spirit of free inquiry, which does not place certain subjects 'off limits'. Setting aside the controversies aroused by the way IPSO has handled certain stories that have appeared in the public domain, the really disturbing question is: what stories have been set aside, or otherwise discounted, on the grounds that pursuing them brings too much trouble?

To give but one example of what this can mean in practice, certain press outlets refrained from including in their coverage of the Christchurch, New Zealand, terrorist attack, the fact that the killer had mentioned London Mayor Sadiq Khan's name in his manifesto. They did so, according to at least one senior editor, on the grounds that they did not want to be accused of facilitating an Islamophobic, white supremacist agenda. Yet this is a remarkable admission. In this case, readers were denied a fuller understanding of what motivated a far-right terrorist attack, because of the concern that such disclosures might be mistaken for Islamophobia. Should such confessions not prompt disquiet about the way the media is having to operate? And is there not a danger that something important is being lost here?

There has, it seems clear, been something of a shift over the last few years in what are considered 'normative' boundaries for press reporting. Social media has played a critical role in this, because of the way in which it permits a firestorm of indignation to spread rapidly in response to certain alleged violations of media best practice. In addition, the very nature of much social media – with clipped content, divorced from its original context – means that the press has to be extra vigilant about the way certain stories are reported: what might be deemed appropriate for a 1000-word article can look very different when appended to a 280-character tweet. In an age when reputational damage can be inflicted through multiple clicks of a button, newspapers are increasingly forced to err on the side of caution. As a result, new taboos or self-denying ordinances are being generated – and nowhere more so than in relation to any subject that appears to touch on Islam.[204]

204.'Resolution Statement Complaint 02746-16 Kozbar v *The Sunday Telegraph*', IPSO, 18 September 2016, https://www.ipso.co.uk/rulings-and-resolution-statements/ruling/?id=02746-16; '13416-16 Versi v Express.co.uk', IPSO, 20 March 2017, https://www.ipso.co.uk/rulings-and-resolution-statements/ruling/?id=13416-16; '15165-17 Versi v Mail Online', IPSO, 30 August 2017, https://www.ipso.co.uk/rulings-and-resolution-statements/ruling/?id=15165-17.

Policing the Media

As described above, groups like the MCB and MEND have repeatedly highlighted the media as a cause of the alleged rise in Islamophobia. In recent years, these groups have repeatedly levied complaints to IPSO on the basis of presumed calumnies against Islam, or Muslims:

- In early 2016, Mohammed Kozbar, chairman of the Finsbury Park Mosque and vice-president of the MAB complained to IPSO about a Sunday Telegraph article that reported he had blamed the UK for the creation of ISIS, and also called for the destruction of Israel. After an IPSO intervention, the newspaper printed a partial correction.
- In November 2016, Miqdaad Versi launched a complaint to IPSO about a Daily Express story entitled, "Anger as less than A THIRD of Muslim nations sign up to coalition against ISIS". The story in question covered the reaction of the UK's Permanent Representative to the UN, Matthew Rycroft, to the news that only one-third of OIC countries had joined the anti-ISIS coalition. Versi disputed the fact that Rycroft had shown anger. IPSO upheld the substance of the complaint and the newspaper agreed to print a correction, removing the word anger from the title.
- In January 2017, Versi complained about another Daily Express article – this time about the Belgium police purportedly being forced to "take lessons on Islam to foster 'respectful' ties with Muslim communities". In this instance, however, his complaint was unsuccessful.
- In June 2017, Versi turned his attention back to the Mail, complaining about a Mail Online article with the headline "Archbishop of Canterbury says Islam should 'take responsibility' for the London Bridge attack just as Christianity should for killing Muslims". Here, Versi insisted that the headline was misleading on the basis that there was "a marked difference between the Archbishop's comments that religious leaders should take responsibility for countering the religious justification for terrorist attacks, and the suggestion that he had called for Islam to take responsibility for the London Bridge attack itself". His complaint was not upheld.
- In 2018, Miqdaad Versi complained that a Daily Mail article titled 'Powder Keg Paris', which reported on the situation in the north Parisian suburbs (specifically Seine-Saint-Denis), had breached Clause 1 (Accuracy) and Clause 12 (Discrimination) of the Editors' Code of Practice. IPSO found the Mail to be in breach and the newspaper was forced to make a partial correction.

As the above examples show, groups like the MCB and their representatives are using the IPSO process not only to correct factual errors, but also to challenge interpretation. They are de facto trying to police what can, and what cannot be said about Islam. And as the highlighted passage above indicates, someone like Miqdaad Versi is actively seeking to position himself as the arbiter of acceptable expression on any subject related to Islam.

Conclusion

As the above history demonstrates, the debate about Islamophobia has been far from neutral in the past thirty years. Instead this issue has been politicised and instrumentalised by a number of organisations, which emerged from the broader Islamist movement, in order to advance a particular agenda. Ever since the 1997 Runnymede Trust report, anti-Islamophobia activists have sought to achieve several things:

- A change to the legal framework that exists to combat discrimination and hate crime, so as to elevate religion alongside race and gender.
- A change to the way in which the media handles any subject connected with Islam, or Muslims

- A major revision of UK counter-terrorism measures that would see much of the existing apparatus abolished on account of its allegedly "Islamophobic" character and replaced with an approach that again placed a premium on engagement with Muslims "communities" – which is to say, groups like the MCB and MEND as the "representatives" of those communities.
- The embrace of groups like the MCB, or MEND as the authentic arbitrators of what does/does not constitute Islamophobia.

The significance of the latter lies in the fact that – to the extent that there is (to borrow Nathan Lean's term) an "Islamophobia industry" – it might be said to consist of a network of activists and writers who present an image of western governments and societies as almost-irredeemably 'Islamophobic'. This network is international in scope (as witnessed by the activism of the OIC and its affiliates) and has reached beyond purely confessional boundaries.

The usual suspects of Islamist-influenced organisations identified above have been joined by other non-Muslim-specific groups, mainly from the left of the political spectrum. One such body is the controversial 'racial justice' charity, Just Yorkshire, which has made several high-profile interventions in this sphere. In August 2017, Just Yorkshire released a major report claiming that Prevent was "built upon a foundation of Islamophobia and racism" and was instilling "fear, suspicion and censorship" on university campuses.[205] Yet closer analysis revealed that the 'research' was based on interviews with only 36 "Muslim individuals including activists, journalists, faith leaders and students" – hardly a credibly representative sample; and the named participants included Azad Ali (then at MEND, now at Cage), Asim Qureshi (of Cage – the man who said Jihadi John was a "beautiful man") and Ahmed Saad (formerly an imam at Finsbury Park Mosque, the home of the MAB). The same report repeated anti-Prevent myths such as the so-called "eco-terrorism case" and also falsely accused Sara Khan and her group 'Inspire' of being managed by the Home Office. Inspire complained and Just Yorkshire was forced to publish an apology online.[206]

Such 'push-back', however, has been all too rare. Instead, a one-dimensional narrative about the alleged pervasiveness of "Islamophobia" within the UK – and all its variant manifestations – has largely gone unchallenged. And it was against this backdrop that the last two years have seen a drive to try and establish a concrete definition of "Islamophobia". As the next chapter will demonstrate that initiative, in effect, seeks to realise many of the earlier objectives by other means.

205. The report has now been taken down from the Just Yorkshire website. See J. Halliday, 'Prevent scheme 'fosters fear and censorship at universities', *The Guardian*, 29 August 2017, https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2017/aug/29/prevent-scheme-fosters-fear-and-censorship-at-universities-just-yorkshire.

206. 'Inspire Statement on Just Yorkshire's "Rethinking Prevent"', Inspire, 29 August 2017, http://wewillinspire.sarakhan.co.uk/falsehoods-by-just-yorkshire-rethinking-prevent/.

2 Of Inquiries and Definitions

Islamophobia and the Conservatives

In early 2018, Baroness Warsi gave evidence to an inquiry being conducted by the House of Commons Home Affairs Select Committee into hate crime and its violent consequences. There, she reprised her 2011 argument about Islamophobia having passed the dinner table test, commenting that, "That was seen as quite a stark statement to make in 2011. It now seems like a very timid statement, seven, eight years on." Islamophobia was, Warsi argued, "Britain's bigotry blindspot".[207]

Over the last twelve months Warsi has come to focus more and more of her energy on the alleged sins of the Conservative Party on this issue; and the call for an inquiry into Tory Islamophobia has come to represent a new front in the wider campaign against alleged Islamophobia.[208] Such calls were first made back in 2016, after comments made by Prime Minister David Cameron (for which he later apologised) about Suliman Ghani, the Imam of the Tooting Mosque.[209] Shuja Shafi, then Secretary-General of the MCB called for an "urgent review" of Conservative Party Islamophobia, which might parallel the Chakrabarti inquiry into antisemitism in the Labour Party.[210] In the months that followed, this became a semi-regular refrain for the MCB and its allies.

In May 2018, the MCB wrote to party chair Brandon Lewis identifying nine individuals who were accused of Islamophobic behaviour. Significantly, the MCB ignored the fact that all of the individuals had either resigned from the party or had been suspended (two and seven respectively) – and that, far from being mainstream figures, the majority (six) were candidates to be local councillors. Despite the relative marginality of the individuals concerned, as well as the swift disciplinary action taken by the party leadership, the MCB and its allies sought to equate this situation with the scandal engulfing the Labour Party in the same period, where concerns about antisemitism reached right to the heart of the Corbyn leadership team.[211]

The MAB and MEND joined the MCB in calling for a "genuine independent inquiry", and for the Conservatives to adopt a "programme of education and training on Islamophobia".[212] The groups were decidedly vague as to what all this should mean in practice, but it is not hard to imagine that the real 'prize' they sought to win here was engagement with the Conservatives, of a kind that would allow themselves direct input into (if not control over) the process.

In the wake of the Boris Johnson-burqa controversy, the MCB reiterated its call for an inquiry into the Conservative Party, declaring that "Islamophobia

207. 'Parliament hears evidence detailing growing problem of Islamophobia in the media and the powerless nature of regulators', MEND.

208. Warsi, 'No more excuses'.

209. 'David Cameron sorry over "IS" cleric comment', BBC News Online, 11 May 2016, https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-36272269.

210. 'Prime Minister's Apology to Imam Suliman Ghani: Muslim Council of Britain calls for an inquiry into Islamophobia in the Conservative Party', MCB, 11 May 2016, https://mcb.org.uk/press-releases/pm-apology-to-sulaiman-ghani/.

211. 'The Muslim Council of Britain Officially Requests Inquiry into Islamophobia in the Tory Party', MCB, 31 May 2018, https://mcb.org.uk/press-releases/the-muslim-council-of-britain-officially-requests-inquiry-into-islamophobia-in-the-tory-party/; S. Khan, 'Conservatives must launch urgent inquiry into Islamophobia in the party, Muslim Council of Britain demands', *The Independent*, 30 May 2018, https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/islamophobia-tory-party-uk-conservatives-muslims-inquiry-a8376516.html?utm_campaign=Echobox&utm_medium=Social&utm_source=Twitter#link_time=1527709316.

212. Ibid.; 'A serious case of Islamophobia within the Conservative Party', MAB, 3 June 2018, https://www.mabonline.net/a-serious-case-of-islamophobia/; 'It is time to address the deep-seated Islamophobia in the Conservative Party', MEND, 1 June 2018, https://mend.org.uk/news/time-address-deep-seated-islamophobia-conservative-party/; 'Prejudice in political parties: why it's in everyone's interest to root it out', MEND, 28 February 2019, https://mend.org.uk/news/prejudice-political-parties-everyones-interest-root/.

and anti-Muslim hatred" were "becoming worryingly pervasive with disappointingly little action from this current government". The Conservatives, they said, seemed intent on "pandering to the far-right".[213] These calls were echoed by the Imam of the Finsbury Park Mosque, Mohammed Mahmoud, who had risen to wider public prominence the previous year because of his calm, brave reaction in the face of the right-wing terrorist attack on his mosque.[214] Mahmoud decried the "rising scale and severity" of Islamophobia that he saw around him in the UK.[215] Unsurprisingly, too, groups like the MAB and MEND reiterated their shared belief that Islamophobia was on the rise and was a particularly Conservative problem.[216]

When Brandon Lewis then announced an inquiry into Johnson's remarks, this was welcomed by MCB Secretary General Harun Khan, who said that the episode had "exposed the simmering underbelly of Islamophobia that exists in sections of the Conservative Party". At the same time, Khan warned against a "whitewash" and said that the investigatory panel should "include people who are aware of the seriousness of the issue and its effect on society."[217] Reading between the lines, it was not hard to see this as a call for input from the MCB or those with whom it agrees – with such comments effectively marking an effort by the group to secure engagement with the Conservatives (and government) by the backdoor.

Soon after, the MCB decided that Lewis was not doing enough to tackle the issue and called on the Prime Minister to take over the process.[218] When the eventual inquiry decided against sanctioning Johnson, the MCB accused the Conservative Party of giving "license to bigotry". Johnson's words had, they claimed, led to "'copycat' verbal assaults against Muslim women and the unleashing of hate and Islamophobia from Conservative supporters." According to the MCB, the failure to punish Johnson was indicative of the way "the Party is either unwilling or incapable of dealing with the scourge of Islamophobia."[219]

During the first months of 2019, calls for an inquiry into the Conservative Party's alleged problem with Islamophobia grew ever more vociferous. In February, the anti-racism charity, Hope not Hate accused the Tories of being "in denial" over the issue, and failing to deal adequately with complaints on the subject.[220] Miqdaad Versi accused the Party of turning a "blind eye" to repeated instances of Islamophobia and claimed that polling showed there was "a particular tendency for anti-Muslim racists to vote for the Conservative party, over and above others." Versi went on to argue that Islamophobia was not merely apparent in attitudes, but also policy; he accused the Conservatives of failing to make meaningful progress on anti-Muslim hate crime, and for failing to provide sufficient funding for mosques to support security. According to Versi, this highlighted the "institutional Islamophobia" that plagued the party – and he renewed his call for an "open, transparent and credible" inquiry into such matters.[221]

The revelation in early March that 14 members of the party had been expelled for making Islamophobic comments in a pro-Jacob Rees-Mogg Facebook group, lent further fuel to the fire.[222] Similar in effect was the revelation that Peter Lamb, a local councillor who had been suspended by

213. 'MCB Response to Boris Johnson's Comments on the Niqab', MCB, 6 August 2018, https://mcb.org.uk/press-releases/mcb-response-to-boris-johnsons-comments-on-the-niqab/; 'Boris Johnson's Islamophobia: Tory Leadership has Urgent Questions to Answer', MCB, 7 August 2018, https://mcb.org.uk/press-releases/boris-johnsons-islamophobia-tory-leadership-has-urgent-questions-to-answer/; 'What is the Impact of Boris Johnson's Comments this week?', MCB, 11 August 2018, https://mcb.org.uk/press-releases/the-impact-of-boris-johnsons-comments-this-week/.

214. M. Mahmoud, 'Mohammed Mahmoud: The Government should act to stamp out hate crimes against Muslims', *The Evening Standard*, 6 August 2018, https://www.standard.co.uk/comment/comment/mohammed-mahmoud-the-government-should-act-to-stamp-out-hate-crimes-against-muslims-a3904626.html.

215. 'Comment: Islamophobia must be rooted out in London', *The Evening Standard*, 8 August 2018, https://www.standard.co.uk/comment/comment/evening-standard-comment-islamophobia-must-be-rooted-out-in-london-a3904676.html.

216. 'Conservative Party must confront its Islamophobia problem', MAB, 8 August 2018, https://www.mabonline.net/conservative-party-must-confront-its-islamophobia-problem/; 'MEND Statement regarding Boris Johnson's Islamophobic comments about clothing of Muslim women', MEND, 7 August 2018, https://mend.org.uk/news/mend-statement-regarding-boris-johnsons-islamophobic-comments-clothing-muslim-women/.

217. 'Boris Johnson Islamophobia: Muslim Council of Britain Welcomes Conservative Party Inquiry', MCB, 9 August 2018, https://mcb.org.uk/press-releases/boris-johnson-islamophobia-muslim-council-of-britain-welcomes-conservative-party-inquiry/.

218. 'MCB calls on the Prime Minister to take charge of Islamophobia in the Conservative Party away from Tory Chair Brandon Lewis', MCB, 13 August 2018, https://mcb.org.uk/press-releases/mcb-calls-on-the-prime-minister-to-take-charge-of-islamophobia-in-the-conservative-party-away-from-tory-chair-brandon-lewis/.

219. 'Conservative Party Gives License to Bigotry', MCB, 21 December 2018, https://mcb.org.uk/press-releases/conservative-party-gives-license-to-bigotry/.

220. C. Drury, 'Tories "signalling Islamophobia is acceptable" by failing to tackle it within party, say Hope not Hate', *The Independent*, 18 February 2019, https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/tory-party-islamophobia-conservatives-hope-not-hate-state-of-hate-2019-a8783371.html.

221. M. Versi, 'The Tories' response to raging Islamophobia? Turn a blind eye', *The Guardian*, 2 March 2019, https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/mar/02/tories-islamophobia-bigotry.

222. A. Wickham, 'The Tory Party Has Suspended 14 Members Over A Series Of Islamophobic Facebook Posts', Buzzfeed, 5 March 2019, https://www.buzzfeed.com/alexwickham/the-tory-party-suspended-14-members-over-islamophobia.

the Conservatives for a series of anti-Islamic tweets, had been permitted to re-join the party and was due to stand as a candidate in upcoming local elections. (Lamb subsequently resigned from the Party.)[223] And further damaging stories of this kind have continued to appear in the media, with further suspensions, expulsions and controversial reinstatements.[224] To some, Islamophobia was a worse problem for the Conservatives than was antisemitism within the ranks of the Labour Party.[225]

Others have challenged this view. The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Children and Families, Nadhim Zahawi MP, for example, has defended the Conservative Party's record, insisting that, whenever examples of bigotry, or hatred were brought forward, they "stamped" on it.[226] Elsewhere, the Transport Minister, Nusrat Ghani MP, said that situation faced by the Conservatives in relation to anti-Muslim hatred "in no way compares to how anti-Semitism has been institutionalised within the Labour Party".[227]

Such politically-charged comparisons aside, a number of key questions remained unaddressed in the blanket demands for an inquiry into Islamophobia within the Conservative Party: What, for instance, would be the purpose of such an inquiry? What kinds of outcome would it seek to achieve? Who would lead it? The MCB, as noted, has made it plain that any inquiry must be "genuinely independent" – which is to say, they reserve the right to judge the credentials of whoever might lead such an exercise. It is therefore worth asking whether the reception of such an inquiry is effectively prejudged?

Questions of this kind matter because the push for an inquiry into the scale of Islamophobia within the Conservative Party has increasingly merged with a broader question: that of how to define the subject at hand. To groups like MEND and the MCB, it has become an article of faith that the only way in which the Conservatives can truly demonstrate their hostility to Islamophobia is to accept a formal definition of the term – and in particular, the definition that has emerged in recent months from the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on British Muslims.

Towards a Definition?

In November 2017, the Runnymede Trust produced a new report to mark the twentieth anniversary of their original publication on Islamophobia. With contributions from a number of long-time "anti-Islamophobia" activists and scholars, this noted the on-going rise of "anti-Muslim prejudice" – and highlighted, in particular, the structural, endemic nature of the phenomenon. As a start-point for countering such problems, it suggested updated definitions of the term 'Islamophobia'. The short version stated simply that "Islamophobia is anti-Muslim racism". The longer alternative read:

> *Islamophobia is any distinction, exclusion, or restriction towards, or preference against, Muslims (or those perceived to be Muslims) that has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life.*[228]

223. 'Theresa May's "head in sand" over Tory Islamophobia, says Warsi', BBC News Online, 5 March 2019, https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-47454993; P. Oborne, 'Britain needs a full inquiry into the poison of Islamophobia inside the Conservative Party', Middle East Eye, 5 March 2019, https://www.middleeasteye.net/opinion/britain-needs-full-inquiry-poison-islamophobia-inside-conservative-party.

224. A. Wickham, 'The Tories Have Been Forced To Act Over Anti-Muslim Comments From 25 Activists On Facebook', Buzzfeed, 18 March 2019, https://www.buzzfeed.com/alexwickham/tories-suspend-members-islamophobia.

225. See, for example, 'British Muslims deserve better than a Tory party that's deeply Islamophobic', *The Evening Standard*, 7 March 2019, https://www.standard.co.uk/comment/comment/british-muslims-deserve-better-than-a-tory-party-that-s-deeply-islamophobic-a4085256.html; and the Interview with Baroness Warsi, BBC *Newsnight*, 5 March 2019.

226. 'Tories "working properly" to deal with Islamophobia, minister insists', *The Belfast Telegraph*, 6 March 2019, https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/uk/tories-working-properly-to-deal-with-islamophobia-minister-insists-37886017.html.

227. 'Nusrat Ghani: "I was expected to marry young and live in social housing. I never expected to be a Member of Parliament"', Politics Home, 14 June 2018, https://www.politicshome.com/news/uk/transport/house/house-magazine/95987/nusrat-ghani-%E2%80%9Ci-was-expected-marry-young-and-live.

228. Runnymede Trust, *Islamophobia: Still A Challenge*.

These ideas were endorsed by Baroness Warsi, who wrote a foreword for the report, in which she called for a "cross-section of community organizations and individuals, parliamentarians and government", to come together to agree on a definition.

The following year, the APPG on British Muslims issued a call for evidence as part of an inquiry into Islamophobia. Unsurprisingly, many of the groups discussed in chapter one responded with submissions to the process. MEND, for instance, produced a lengthy, multi-author report that effectively sought to set the terms of trade for the parliamentary investigation. It is a revealing document, which promotes what it calls a "holistic understanding of Islamophobia" – a problem deemed to have "gone mainstream and become normalised".[229] MEND says that it defines "Islamophobia" as:

> *"a prejudice, aversion, hostility, or hatred towards Muslims and encompasses any distinction, exclusion, restriction, discrimination, or preference against Muslims that has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field in public life."*[230]

As this formulation implies, Islamophobia is to be understood not merely as "hate crime and abuse", but also includes all the ways in which Muslims were allegedly excluded from "all realms of civic life".[231] Laudable as these sentiments might sound at first glance, the comprehensiveness of the behaviour that MEND seeks to place beyond the pale is striking. Indeed, the group explicitly underlines its commitment to "an all-encompassing terminology", arguing that the term "anti-Muslim hatred" is insignificant precisely because it "obfuscates the damaging effects of political and media discourses."[232]

In line with this, one of the assumptions that is said to drive Islamophobia is the way in which "Western commentators" are said to feel "justified in criticising Muslim individuals and countries for their beliefs, practices, policies and behaviours", even as "the reverse" is deemed to be "unjustified and baseless". Yet any effort to introduce a definition of Islamophobia that rests on such a broad-based premise as this would seem to require a remarkable diminution of the right to free speech. It appears to rule as inappropriate any form of criticism of both people and nations that happen to be Muslim – simply on the basis of their religious faith.[233] What would this mean in practice? Would it, for example, now be Islamophobic to label attacks carried out by self-proclaimed jihadists, who insist that they act in the name of Islam, as terrorism? Would it be inadmissible to critique the situation that prevails in Iran – whether in relation to the absence of political freedom, or the position there of women, the LGBTQ community and religious minorities – on the basis that it calls itself an Islamic Republic? Or, indeed, would it have been Islamophobic to criticise the introduction of Shari'a-based laws in Brunei that made adultery and homosexuality punishable by death? (The enforcement of which has now been deferred, precisely because of the international outcry that attended the move).[234]

229. 'Parliamentarians celebrate launch of report exploring and defining Islamophobia', MEND, 27 June 2018, https://mend.org.uk/news/parliamentarians-celebrate-launch-report-exploring-defining-islamophobia/; Ingham-Barrow (ed.), *More than Words* p. 9.

230. Ingham-Barrow (ed.), *More than Words*, p. 10.

231. 'Parliamentarians celebrate launch of report exploring and defining Islamophobia', MEND; Ingham-Barrow (ed.), *More than Words*, pp. 23-4.

232. Ingham-Barrow (ed.), *More than Words*, p. 25.

233. Ibid., p. 10.

234. 'Brunei says controversial Sharia law aimed at "prevention"', BBC News Online, 12 April 2019, https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-47906070; 'Brunei says it won't enforce death penalty for gay sex', BBC News Online, 6 May 2019, https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-48171165.

More broadly, MEND's report says that Islamophobia can be understood only if one appreciates all of "the social, political, and economic processes through which the behaviours, practices and identities [of] Muslims have become regulated at a social, political, and legislative level." In short, it appears that Islamophobia can be found everywhere and in everything. It is said to be particularly significant within the realm of public discourse and at an intellectual level. Reference is made to "Britain's colonial past" and the prevalence of "Orientalism" in public life. Islamophobia, it is claimed, is "the conduit through which Muslims are regulated into hegemonic Western conceptions of modernity". According to MEND, Muslims who "resist such Western appropriation are deemed a threat to the stability of the state" and subject to Islamophobic discrimination. This convoluted, bastardised-Gramscian/Frankfurt School/Subaltern Studies logic is not always an easy read, but it is significant for the scale of the project it conveys. MEND demands that government commit itself to tackling "Islamophobic narratives" – the "negative discourses about Muslims and Islam" – that are propagated by an "Islamophobia Industry", which is said to include think-tanks, politicians and policy-makers. Unsurprisingly, too, the press is a target for much criticism, given its allegedly "overly negative representation of minorities" and the assertion that it holds a "monopoly on public understanding". Leaving aside the bizarre nature of the latter claim (which is both hard to justify in the social media age and equally suggests a failure to understand the way in which a free press works), the scale of MEND's ambitions again become clear.[235]

In addition, it is clear that insofar as MEND is concerned, any given problem that afflicts British Muslims can be attributed at some level to Islamophobia. It is said, for example, to be behind the economic exclusion of Muslims within the labour market (itself taken as a given) – as if class and other socio-economic factors have no role to play. Typically, issues around security and terrorism are said to stem fundamentally from the "securitising" of Muslim identities and the adoption of "flawed" government policies.[236]

MEND also claims that there is a "disparity in protections" afforded by the Racial and Religious Hate Crime Act of 2006 and suggests there is "institutional Islamophobia" within the Criminal Justice System which leads to "discriminatory practices". Elsewhere, it cites the "apparent 'Trojan Horse' affair" of 2014 and Amanda Spielman's questioning of the appropriateness of the hijab for young girls as symptoms of Islamophobia in society. And a message from the MEND CEO, Shazad Amin, contained within the report, talks about "professional and structural Islamophobia, whereby the apparatus of the state and other institutions **conspire** to deny Muslims opportunities [emphasis added]". (The use of the language of conspiracy seems especially telling here).[237]

Needless to say, the prescribed remedies for this wide gamut of alleged ills are equally broad-based. MEND calls, for example, for the introduction of Leveson Part II, as well as an "investigation" into Islamophobia in the press; it demands an "independent review of PREVENT and all counter-

235.Ingham-Barrow (ed.), *More than Words*, pp. 11-12.
236.Ibid., p. 13.
237.Ibid., pp. 12-13, 20.

terrorism legislation enacted since 2000"; and it wants government action to tackle the "barriers to Muslim economic empowerment". One suspects, however, that the real kernel of the issue comes with the assertion that the Government's "current disengagement policy is a clear barrier to British Muslim's participation in social and political life" – and the parallel claim that it is "essential that the Government mends its broken relationship with Muslim communities by committing to engaging with and listen to a wider spectrum of representative Muslim grassroots organisations, such as MEND and MCB."[238] In such statements, the underlying agenda of these groups is revealed: the campaign against Islamophobia is in part a mechanism for leveraging them into the position of official representatives of, and gatekeepers for, Britain's Muslim communities.

Significantly, the launch event for MEND's report was endorsed by Afzal Khan MP and several members of the House of Lords.[239] Others, such as Labour MSP Anas Sarwar, echoed the call for the government to provide a legally clear definition of Islamophobia.[240] And beyond this, it seemed clear that the group had carefully choreographed the launch of its report to feed into the wider APPG process – a process over which, it later became evident, they had significant influence.

On 27 November 2018, the APPG published its own report titled *Islamophobia Defined: the inquiry into a working definition of Islamophobia*.[241] It offered the following definition of the term: "Islamophobia is rooted in racism and is a type of racism that targets expressions of Muslimness or perceived Muslimness [emphasis in original]." Building upon this intellectual foundation, the APPG argued that, in order to tackle anti-Muslim hatred, the "Government, statutory agencies, civil society organisations and principally, British Muslim communities" should adopt this "working definition of Islamophobia", which emerged from its inquiry.[242] The report makes the remarkable and unevidenced claim that: "…failing to adopt a definition of Islamophobia leads to vicious circle [sic] in which no community wins and our society becomes more and more fragmented."[243] Yet, it is far from clear upon what basis such a conclusion holds weight.

Moreover, there is much that remains vague about the purpose and likely impact of the APPG's definition. In part, this is by design. The report does not include "a list of essential features" of Islamophobia which could provide a standard against which to test the APPG definition. It claims that listing such essential features would "confine a prescriptiveness to its understanding to the detriment of contextual and fluid factors which continue to inform and shape manifestations of Islamophobia".[244] But a central feature of any definition in this highly contentious area should precisely be clarity about its semantic territory and who exactly has the authority to manage it. Indeed, as lawyers would acknowledge, a definition in and of itself is almost meaningless without some indicative examples of the way in which it is expected to operate. Closely tied to this is the question of purpose. A key question any lawyer would ask is, what behaviour is being targeted by such a definition?

There is a broader question here too: what is it about the existing

238. Ibid., pp. 1, 15-16.

239. 'Parliamentarians celebrate launch of report exploring and defining Islamophobia', MEND.

240. 'Anas Sarwar urges Government to define Islamophobia', MEND, 29 June 2018, https://mend.org.uk/news/anas-sarwar-urges-government-define-islamophobia/.

241. *Islamophobia Defined*.

242. Ibid., p. 8.

243. Ibid., p. 49.

244. Ibid., p. 56.

legislative framework that the APPG and its supporters believe to be deficient? The Equality Act 2010, which passed with cross-party support, prohibits discrimination, harassment, or victimisation on the grounds of religion, as per the same protections accorded to other "protected characteristics" such as race, belief, gender, disability etc.[245] Legally it is recognised that discrimination can be "intersectional" and can devolve from multiple lines of prejudice – and it is treated as such by the courts. Since 2006, moreover, we have had legislation that prohibits public order offences on grounds of religious and racial hatred.[246] What purpose, then, is the definition attempting to meet?

In reflecting further on this, too, there is an interesting parallel with the issue of 'caste'. This was not explicitly identified by as one of the characteristics to be 'protected' under the terms of the Equality Act 2010. Yet, it has been successfully argued that caste-based discrimination is de facto accounted for by the prohibition against race-based discrimination. For this reason, the Government has decided against trying to provide a formal definition of caste – itself, a fluid and much contested term – and has preferred to rely on case law operating within the terms of the existing system.[247] Surely it is worth asking why such an approach cannot be adopted in relation to Islamophobia – no less a contested term? Can the existing framework of legal protections not be given fuller chance to operate? Or, to put it another way again, what are the specific kinds of behaviour that the APPG's definition of Islamophobia wishes to place out of bounds? It is troubling that, until now, these vital questions have been ignored.

Concrete examples of Islamophobic behaviour may indeed evolve alongside the APPG definition, but there is surely a danger of a ratchet effect – that the definition will inevitably continue expanding *ad infinitum* with critical consequences for freedom of speech, freedom of conscience and the construction of government policy. To give but one example, chapter four of the APPG report avers that "Ofsted questioning the wearing of hijab" constitutes Islamophobia.[248] But what about those Muslims who might feel differently, and regard Ofsted's interventions more favourably? Such questions were of course dramatized further by the recent controversy surrounding the provision of LBGT awareness lessons in Muslim-majority schools in Birmingham and Manchester.[249]

245. *Equality Act 2010*, available at Legislation.gov, https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents.

246. *Racial and Religious Hatred Act 2006*, available at Legislation.gov, http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/1/contents.

247. D. Pyper, *The Equality Act 2010: caste discrimination* (House of Commons Library Briefing Paper No. 06862, 3 August 2018), available at, https://researchbriefings.parliament.uk/ResearchBriefing/Summary/SN06862.

248. *Islamophobia Defined*, p. 55.

249. On the campaign against LBGT awareness lessons (the 'No Outsiders' programme) in Birmingham, see 'Birmingham LGBT lessons row school staff "distraught"', BBC News Online, 25 March 2019, https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-birmingham-47692617; P. Allen-Kinross, 'Protests over religion and sex education reforms spread as MPs back changes', Schools Week, 29 March 2019, https://schoolsweek.co.uk/lgbt-education-protests-spread-despite-backing-by-parliament/; S. Griffiths and I. Ramzan, 'Supporters of Birmingham primary school's gay lessons warned they will "burn in hell"', *The Times*, 24 March 2019, https://www.thetimes.co.uk/edition/news/spporters-of-birmingham-primary-schools-gay-lessons-warned-they-will-burn-in-hell-mqz8lxb9z; 'GLMCC calls for greater tolerance over school LGBT row', Green Lane Masjid, 29 March 2019, https://www.greenlanemasjid.org/glmcc-calls-for-greater-tolerance/.

'Muslimness': An Infinitely Elastic Concept?

By making a vague notion of 'Muslimness' the criterion against which accusations of Islamophobia will be judged, the APPG definition risks driving a coach and horses through the existing framework and practice of equality legislation. The truth of this has been made manifest by the controversy over LBGT awareness lessons in Birmingham and Manchester. Activist Muslim parents have led concerted protests against an educational program designed to foster awareness of different sexual identities. Underpinning the case being made is the more or less explicit assertion that such programmes are 'Islamophobic'.

Events in Birmingham and Manchester thus highlight the problematic consequences of the effort to transform an issue of religious belief into a matter of essential identity. Moreover, it is worth asking: in the case of the controversy surrounding LBGT awareness training, do teachers and others who support such training, run the risk of being labelled "Islamophobic" for their willingness to challenge what some parents see as an expression of their "Muslimness"?

In making its case, the APPG report does reflect briefly on the more positive aspects of being a Muslim in the UK, with evidence cited that British Muslims are "more likely than the British public as a whole to say that their national identity is important to their sense of who they are".[250] But overall, to read it is to encounter a bleak and depressing picture of life for Muslims in modern Britain, one in which "structural anti-Muslim racism" that "impacts the lives of Muslims and leads to unequal outcomes" is pervasive.[251] The overwhelming emphasis of the report is to suggest that life in the UK is increasingly difficult for Muslims, with dozens of unfavourable opinions quoted without any critical scrutiny. It states, for example, that

> *"The evidence we have heard suggests Islamophobia manifests in a wide array of contexts, from casual stereotyping to* **rampant dehumanisation of Muslims** *as a collective group and from incidents of workplace discrimination to institutional dynamics which reproduce unequal outcomes for Muslims in policy design and implementation [emphasis added]."*[252]

It is worth asking: is this a reasonable evidence-based assessment of life in the UK? There are ample reasons to doubt such hyperbolic claim – but the APPG report layers unsubstantiated assertion upon unsubstantiated assertion. The Executive Summary, for instance, claims that "Muslim students who fail to secure entry to Russell Group universities" are victims of Islamophobia.[253] Yet not a single piece of evidence is offered to support this claim.

In similar vein, Paul Giannasi, who is on the advisory board of the Centre for Hate Studies of the University of Leicester and works on Hate Crime for the Ministry of Justice, is quoted as saying, "When Andrew [Anders] Breivik kills lots of people because of racist sentiments, we see him as a disaffected loner with mental health issues. But when it's a Muslim lad that does the same activity, we see it as a fundamentalist ideology that the communities are responsible for." This is simply not true. Newspaper profiles of the Norwegian terrorist and mass murderer from the time are clear that he was a "right-wing extremist who hated immigrants and multiculturalism" (*Mail on Sunday*)[254] and "a right-wing fundamentalist" (*Guardian*)[255]. Much

250. *Islamophobia Defined*, p. 55.

251. Ibid., p. 58.

252. Ibid., p. 13.

253. Ibid., p. 8.

254. A. Whelan and M. Delgado, 'Burning with hatred... The right-wing extremist who hated immigrants and multi-culturalism', *The Mail on Sunday*, 24 July 2011, https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2017962/Anders-Behring-Breivik-Right-wing-extremist-hated-immigrants-multi-culturalism.html.

255. P. Beaumont, 'Anders Behring Breivik: profile of a mass murderer', *The Guardian*, 23 July 2011, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/jul/23/anders-behring-breivik-norway-attacks.

of the subsequent analysis of the Breivik case has sought to connect it with the wider issue of extreme anti-immigrant and white power politics in Europe and elsewhere. We have seen this again in the extensive press and commentariat coverage of the recent terrorist attack in Christchurch, New Zealand, where the connections with Breivik and other white power individuals and groups have been extensively explored.

The vast bulk of the APPG's report suggests that the UK constitutes an "Islamophobic environment" and that defining Islamophobia is therefore as urgent a task as defining genocide was in the aftermath of the Second World War and the Holocaust.[256] It is as if we live in a country where it is "open season" on Muslims (to quote a phrase used by Fatima Manji[257]). In all of this, too, there are strong echoes of the hyperbolic assertions noted earlier, which depict life for Muslims in Britain as being akin to that of the Jews in the Third Reich. Certainly, there could scarcely be better examples of what David Cameron identified as the "grievance" narrative that is utilised by extremists to "poison" the minds of young people.[258]

Of course, not everyone who submitted evidence to the APPG inquiry, or who was cited in the final report, adopted such a perspective. Notable was the position of the Southall Black Sisters: "We worry that the institutionalisation of the term Islamophobia would lead to a specific kind of privileging of victimhood," says Pragna Patel, the group's director, in oral evidence. However, it is striking that while the APPG's report repeats uncritically, many claims made about the pervasiveness of Islamophobia, it goes out of its way to attack the position of the Southall Black Sisters. The report thus describes Patel as offering "a weak argument against a legal adoption of the term Islamophobia" and her group is described as having "little understanding of the meaning of Islamophobia".[259]

It is clear, though, that the APPG's own understanding of what constitutes Islamophobia is rather elusive. The use of the term "Muslimness" for instance is highly problematic. Despite the discussion of "intersectionality" (the notion that individuals can suffer oppression because of multiple identities, and one should therefore show solidarity with all minorities in the face of that oppression) and other jargon borrowed from the social sciences, the report essentialises religious identity in a way that leaves little room for other forms of social belonging. It is the identity of an individual Muslim as "a Muslim" which is held to explain his or her interaction with wider British society. But – as the report itself acknowledges only to ignore – the construction of social identity is complex and situational. And what is "Muslimness" and *who*, exactly, would decide what the concept meant in practice? There is, clearly, a risk that such terms would end up being policed by self-appointed gatekeepers. A focus on "Muslimness" has the potential to turn ascribed religious affiliation or cultural background into a new form of constraining, essentialised and static identity, to be given privileged status as part of a new kind of divisive politics.

One effect of this is to pre-emptively discount the possibility of hatred and bigotry perpetrated *by* Muslims *against* other Muslims. As Sara Khan has observed, "A narrow understanding of 'Muslimness' leaves behind

256. *Islamophobia Defined*, pp. 43, 49.

257. M. Weaver, 'Channel 4 presenter says hijab ruling means it's "open season" on Muslims', *The Guardian*, 20 October 2016, https://www.theguardian.com/media/2016/oct/20/channel-4-hijab-ruling-muslims-open-season-press-regulator-fatima-manji-kelvin-mackenzie.

258. D. Cameron, 'Extremism: PM speech', Gov.uk, 20 July 2015, https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/extremism-pm-speech.

259. *Islamophobia Defined*, p. 43.

those Muslims who, because of how they choose to live their lives or practise their religion, don't have a 'Muslimness' that other Muslims find acceptable."[260] In making her case, Khan drew attention to the frequent persecution of the Ahmadiyyah. And it is telling that the APPG report contained no mention of the Ahmadiyya community – or intra-Muslim hatred at all. In addition, as we know from the Middle East and North Africa, sectarianism among Muslims – between Sunni and Shia, between Salafis and Sufis and between different schools of jurisprudence, doctrine and practice – is common and often leads to bias, discrimination, legal disabilities and violence. Yet the report uncritically quotes Professor Tariq Modood's argument that, as the report puts it, "Islamophobia should be confined to naming the specific process through which Muslims are racialised by non-Muslims, which thus entails categorising sectarian issues under a different terminology".[261] It is surely worth asking why this should be the case. Why should intra-Muslim sectarianism and attempts by some Muslims to police the behaviour of others be erased from the debate?

Such sectarianism has, after all, led in the recent past in the UK to more than one Muslim-on-Muslim killing. In March 2016, Asad Shah, an Ahmadi Glasgow shopkeeper, was murdered by a Sunni Muslim from Bradford who claimed that Shah had "disrespected" Islam, "by claiming to be a prophet".[262] That same year, a 71-year-old imam from Rochdale, Jalal Uddin, was murdered by two fellow Muslims who accused him of performing black magic (he engaged in a form of faith healing).[263] And there have also been instances of non-fatal attacks by members of one Muslim sect on individuals belonging to another.[264]

The issue of intra-Muslim divisions and disagreement is further highlighted by a passage of the report which states that "accusing Muslim citizens of being more loyal to the 'Ummah' (transnational Muslim community) or to their countries of origin, or to the alleged priorities of Muslims worldwide, than to the interests of their own nations" is to engage in Islamophobia.[265] As repeated polling has demonstrated, Muslims in Britain show an overwhelming identification as British.[266] But the claim of higher loyalties is one made by many Muslims – especially Islamists – themselves. For example, according to Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu, the Secretary-General of the OIC, the term "ummah"

> *… means the 'community of the faithful'. It is unique bond [sic] that has no similar example under any other political or religious system in the world… It is a belonging to ideals which bring Muslims together in an eternal brotherhood lock which transcends all other considerations of allegiance or loyalties or barriers or nationhood, ethnicity, geography or language.*[267]

Closer to home, one of the present authors recalls being told in an official meeting in a Birmingham mosque in 2008, that Muslim lives anywhere were worth more to Muslims than those of non-Muslims in their own country. Such views are relatively common and deserve to be debated. But are they now to be deemed "Islamophobic"? Would Ihsanoglu's words be considered Islamophobic if they were uttered by someone else, for example

260. S. Khan, 'We Are Still Ignoring Victims Of Anti-Muslim Prejudice', Huffington Post, 3 December 2018, https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/islamophobia-extremism-hate-crime-racism_uk_5c0566e8e4b066b5cfa475a3.

261. *Islamophobia Defined*, p. 41.

262. 'Asad Shah death: Man admits killing shopkeeper because he "disrespected" Islam', BBC News Online, 6 April 2016, https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-glasgow-west-35976958.

263. 'Jalal Uddin murder: Syeedy guilty over Rochdale imam death', BBC News Online, 16 September 2016, https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-manchester-37388073.

264. In September 2017, Syed Hassan Abbas, a teenage boy, had his throat cut outside a Pakistani Shia Twelver mosque, Idara Maarif-e-Islam Hussainia, in what was believed to be a sectarian attack. See, K. Gibbons, 'Boy, 14, has throat cut at Birmingham mosque by religious rival', *The Times*, 2 October 2017, https://www.thetimes.co.uk/edition/news/schoolboy-in-coma-after-being-stabbed-at-birmingham-mosque-3vzt56gdv.

265. *Islamophobia Defined*, p. 56.

266. See, for example, Frampton et al., *Unsettled Belonging*.

267. 'Conflict Resolution: A New Vision for the Role of…', Youtube, 21 October 2008, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bDF9mDbVRqU [from 12.25].

a non-Muslim? Does this ambiguity not again demonstrate the potential for the APPG's definition to close down debate – sending a message that this is terrain where non-Muslims should not dare to tread, even if the issue is of significance to society as a whole.

As it is, the APPG report seems to assume *a priori* that Muslims cannot be Islamophobic. Islamophobia is instead persistently presented as abuse perpetrated against visibly practising Muslims (often women) by far-right extremists (men), or as the denigration of Islam and Muslims by: the media; sections of the political class; and the State.[268] This restrictive conceptualisation of the "sources of Islamophobia" brings further problems.

With regards to the former, the APPG argues that "the recourse to the notion of free speech and a supposed right to criticise Islam results in nothing more than another subtle form of anti-Muslim racism whereby the criticism humiliates, marginalises, and stigmatises Muslims".[269] This is balanced by a disavowal of any intention to undermine free speech. The report thus states that it has no intention of stopping "free and fair criticism or debate" about Islam; and it cites the views of Professor Tariq Modood that space should be preserved for "reasonable criticism" of Islam.[270] But it is the very use of terms like "fair" and "reasonable" that are of great concern here. For again, it raises the question of *who* gets to decide what is fair and reasonable?

Crucially, what the APPG report does not confront is the possibility that the definition it proposes and the processes for applying it might be utilised by others to control the boundaries of public debate in the service of sectional agendas. As chapter 1 made clear, the term 'Islamophobia' has been used to this effect in the past, by groups like the Muslim Council of Britain (MCB) and the Muslim Association of Britain (MAB) – highly vocal supporters of the APPG recommendations – but it has also been used far more widely as well.[271,272]

Who are the 'Islamophobes'?

In recent years, a remarkable array of mainstream political and cultural figures have been labelled 'Islamophobic' by their opponents – many of whom are the most active voices in debates about 'Islamophobia'. This includes:

- Theresa May – the Prime Minister
- Yasmin Alibhai Brown – journalist and author
- Sarah Champion, the Labour MP for Rotherham who publicly raised the issue of grooming gangs
- Peter Clarke, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons
- Sara Khan, Lead Commissioner for Countering Extremism
- Maajid Nawaz, founder of Quilliam
- Amanda Spielman, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted)

Furthermore, the report makes clear that a new definition could be the prelude to new kinds of "civil offences", pursued through the courts.[273] As such, the APPG's definition, if it was officially endorsed, could seriously undermine press freedom, as so much reporting and discussion could potentially be stigmatised as "Islamophobic".[274] A capacious definition of Islamophobia might make it more difficult to investigate future

268. *Islamophobia Defined*, pp. 16-29. The report cites a 1999 article in the *Journal of Personality Social Psychology* for these claims.

269. Ibid., p. 35.

270. Ibid., p. 11.

271. For their support of the APPG report, see: 'Muslim Council of Britain welcomes the definition of Islamophobia released by the APPG on British Muslims', MCB, 27 November 2018, https://mcb.org.uk/press-releases/mcb-welcomes-definition-of-islamophobia-by-the-appg-on-british-muslims/; 'Press Release: MAB Welcomes APPG Definition of Islamophobia', MAB, https://www.mabonline.net/press-release-mab-welcomes-appg-definition-of-islamophobia/.

272. S. Sattar, 'As a British Muslim, I'm terrified that Theresa May - winner of 2015's Islamophobe of the Year - is my new Prime Minister', *The Independent*, 13 July 2016, https://www.independent.co.uk/voices/as-a-british-muslim-im-terrified-that-theresa-may-winner-of-2015s-islamophobe-of-the-year-is-my-new-a7133981.html; L. Stuart, 'Ch4 Niqab Debate Islamophobe Panellists Exposed', Islam21C, 31 October 2013', https://www.islam21c.com/politics/ch4-niqab-debate-islamophobe-panellists-exposed/; *A Temperature Check Report* (Just Yorkshire, 2018), https://justyorkshire.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Version-10-_-Final-Sarah-Champion-Impact-Report-Rotherham-.docx.pdf; J. Rees, 'A new wave of Islamophobia: where it comes from and how to stop it', Stop the War, 24 April 2014, http://www.stopwar.org.uk/index.php/news-comment/1492-a-new-wave-of-islamophobia-where-it-rsquo-s-come-from-and-how-to-stop-it; 'Sara Khan Overview', MEND, https://mend.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/Sarah-Khan-Final-Overview-MEND.doc; A. Perra, 'How the Islamophobia Industry Silences Voices of Dissent', Counterpunch, 30 March 2018, https://www.counterpunch.org/2018/03/30/100867/; K. Beydoun, 'US liberal Islamophobia is rising – and more insidious than rightwing bigotry', *The Guardian*, 26 May 2018, https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/may/26/us-liberal-islamophobia-rising-more-insidious [The accusation of Islamophobia against Maajid Nawaz was later withdrawn]; E. Busby, 'Teachers accuse Ofsted boss Amanda Spielman of promoting Islamophobia over stance on hijabs in schools', The Independent, 1 April 2018, https://www.independent.co.uk/news/education/education-news/ofsted-hijab-ban-islamophobia-schools-amanda-spielman-national-education-union-neu-a8283786.html; 'Ofsted's Amanda Spielman panders to tabloids in another ideologically driven speech', Islam21C, 13 July 2018, https://www.islam21c.com/politics/ofsteds-amanda-spielman-panders-to-tabloids-in-another-ideologically-driven-speech/.

273. *Islamophobia Defined*, p. 34.

274. C. Moore, 'Leavers and Remainers will only be reconciled if we drop the Irish backstop', *The Daily Telegraph*, 25 November 2018, https://www.telegraph.co.uk/politics/2018/11/25/leavers-remainers-will-reconciled-drop-irish-backstop/.

stories like the Rotherham grooming scandals. (Recall how the respected *Times* journalist Dominic Kennedy[275] has been accused of "professional Islamophobia" for reporting another story concerning Islamism.)[276] The same may apply to journalistic investigations such as those into Lutfur Rahman, the disgraced Mayor of Tower Hamlets, who was found guilty of corrupt and illegal practices. (Recall how one 2010 study accused Rahman's detractors of being Islamophobic – see chapter 1.)[277]

Beyond such consequences for the media there are also key questions about what such a broad definition of Islamophobia would mean for government policy. Would Eric Pickles, as Communities Secretary, for example, have been able to order investigators to look into the financial management of Tower Hamlets, as he did in 2014, without falling foul of such a definition?[278] Would the Government have been able to appoint Peter Clarke as Education Commissioner for Birmingham with a remit to investigate "allegations concerning Birmingham schools arising from the 'Trojan Horse' letter" in 2014?[279] Would Ofsted have been able to carry out its inspections the same year, after the emergence of the scandal?[280] Such questions are scarcely academic. Many of these scandals only occurred *precisely* because those in positions of authority preferred to look the other way, rather than risk being accused of racism or Islamophobia (see box below). Would a nebulous, potentially-expansive definition of the term not exacerbate this problem?[281]

The 'Islamophobia' stigma: feeding the problem of institutional timidity

In recent years, a succession of scandals have shone an unfavourable light on the way in which many within positions of public authority feel cowed by the potential allegation that they are Islamophobic. Rather than risk being so-accused, they have preferred, as Dame Louise Casey has described, to turn a "blind eye" to major problems that have thereby been "ignored or swept under the carpet". To name but a few examples:

- In his report into the 'Trojan Horse' affair, which came to light in 2014, Peter Clarke noted that the local council had preferred not to investigate the matter earlier, because of fears that this would be inappropriate. The parallel report commissioned by Birmingham City Council (BCC) and written by Ian Kershaw likewise identified a "culture within BCC of not wanting to address difficult issues and problems with school governance where there is a risk that BCC may be accused of being racist or Islamophobic".
- The Casey report into child sexual exploitation in Rotherham highlighted how the local Council had lacked the confidence "to tackle difficult issues for fear of being seen as racist or upsetting community cohesion". Information about what was happening was, Casey concluded, ignored or missed, because the authorities prioritised political correctness and "community relations" over safeguarding the well-being of vulnerable children.
- The High Court's 2014 decision in relation to electoral fraud in Tower Hamlets, repeatedly drew attention to the way in which Lutfur Rahman and his supporters accused their critics of being 'Islamophobes'. Fear of being so labelled, it was noted, had led the police to act with "considerable caution". The Court concluded that "Events of recent months in contexts very different from electoral malpractice have starkly demonstrated what happens when those in authority are afraid to confront wrongdoing for fear of allegations of racism and Islamophobia. Even in the multicultural society which is 21st century Britain, the law must be applied fairly and equally to everyone. Otherwise we are lost.

275. "Dominic Kennedy belongs to a cadre of individuals that profit from what we can call 'professional Islamophobia'". See, 'A Response to Dominic Kennedy', MEND, April 2017, https://mend.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/MENDs-response-to-kennedy-allegations.pdf.

276. *The Times* was criticised by MEND for "racialising" sex grooming. See, 'Times criticised for "racialising" sex grooming', MEND, 13 December 2012, https://mend.org.uk/news/times-criticised-for-racialising-sex-grooming/.

277. England and Wales High Court (Queen's Bench Division) Decisions, *Erlam & Anor v Rahman & Anor [2015] EWHC 1215 (QB)* (23 April 2015), https://www.bailii.org/cgi-bin/format.cgi?doc=/ew/cases/EWHC/QB/2015/1215.html&query=(Lutfur)+AND+(Rahman).

278. 'Inspectors appointed to investigate London borough of Tower Hamlets', Gov.uk, 4 April 2014, https://www.gov.uk/government/news/inspectors-appointed-to-investigate-london-borough-of-tower-hamlets.

279. P. Clarke, *Report into allegations concerning Birmingham schools arising from the 'Trojan Horse' letter* (House of Commons, July 2014), HC 576, https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/340526/HC_576_accessible_-.pdf.

280. *Advice note provided on academies and maintained schools in Birmingham to the Secretary of State for Education, Rt Hon Michael Gove MP, as commissioned by letter dated 27 March 2014*, available at, https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/415115/Advice_note_on_academies_and_maintained_schools_Birmingham_toSoS_Education.pdf.

281. See, L. Casey, *The Casey Review: A review into opportunity and integration* (2016), https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/575973/The_Casey_Review_Report.pdf; I. Kershaw, *Investigation Report: Trojan Horse Letter* (Independent Trojan Horse Investigation prepared for Birmingham City Council, n.d), https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/downloads/file/1579/investigation_report_trojan_horse_letter_the_kershaw_report; L. Casey, *Report of Inspection of Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council* (House of Commons, February 2015), HC 1050, https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/report-of-inspection-of-rotherham-metropolitan-borough-council; England and Wales High Court (Queen's Bench Division) Decisions, *Erlam & Anor v Rahman & Anor [2015] EWHC 1215 (QB)*.

It is worth considering these issues in light of what the APPG report also says about the contemporary manifestations of Islamophobia in public life:

> *Making mendacious, dehumanizing, demonizing, or stereotypical allegations about Muslims as such, or of Muslims as a collective group, such as, especially but not exclusively,* ***conspiracies about Muslim entryism in politics, government or other societal institutions****; the myth of Muslim identity having a unique propensity for terrorism, and claims of a demographic 'threat' posed by Muslims or of a 'Muslim takeover' [emphasis added].*[282]

Again, an obvious question presents itself: if Islamophobia were to be understood in this way, what would be the impact on journalistic and official enquiries into issues like "entryism" and "terrorism"? Is there not a danger that it could be used to undermine a whole swathe of government policy – particularly in relation to anti-extremism and anti-radicalisation work. In this context, it bears repeating that many of those who are seeking to weaponise this definition already denounce Prevent as "institutionally Islamophobic".[283] Indeed, it is no coincidence that this was a major theme at the launch of the APPG definition, with multiple speakers making precisely this point.[284]

Significantly, the APPG fails to offer any example of the type of criticism of Islam, or Muslims, or especially, Islamists, that might fall outside the definition of "Islamophobia" that they urge the Government and others to accept. Indeed, the report systematically avoids making any distinction between Islamophobia and with what might better be described as "Anti-Islamism". This distinction – between Islam as a lived faith, a complex civilisational and cultural frame and the reductivist socio-revolutionary ideology of political Islamism – is fundamental. It is of long standing. It has been made in different ways by respected Muslim scholars and commentators such as Bassam Tibi[285], Aziz al Azmeh[286], Reza Aslan[287], the late Shahab Ahmed[288] and the late Mohammed Arkoun[289] and others such as Gilles Kepel,[290] By conflating Islam and Islamism and protecting both equally from criticism, the report takes sides.

The term "Islamism", significantly, does not feature in the report apart from in a quotation from written evidence submitted to the APPG by Bertie Vidgen, a DPhil student at the University of Oxford whose research focuses on online far-right extremism.[291] The APPG report states: "Anti-Islamism is not the same as anti-Muslimism, but the two are intimately connected and both can be considered constitutive parts of Islamophobia."[292] This uninterrogated statement is deeply problematic. It effectively seeks to delegitimate any criticism of Islamism – a sacralised political project that is deeply contentious and rejected by a majority of Muslims around the world. Why should the British government insulate *Islamism* from criticism?

This is not an abstract, idle question. It is clear that some of the more vocal proponents of the APPG's definition – like the Muslim Association of Britain - have previously used accusations of Islamophobia in response to criticism of themselves. This was the stance taken by the MAB when the government published a summary of its review into the Muslim Brotherhood (which included discussion of the MAB), in late 2015.[293,294]

282. *Islamophobia Defined*, p. 56.

283. 'Eight ways that Islamophobia operates in everyday life', The Conversation, 11 October 2016, https://theconversation.com/eight-ways-that-islamophobia-operates-in-everyday-life-64444.

284. As witnessed by one of those who was in attendance at the event.

285. B. Tibi, Islamism and Islam (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012); B. Tibi, Political Islam, World Politics and Europe: From Jihadist to Institutional Islamism (New York: Routledge, 2014).

286. A. Al-Amzeh, *Islams and Modernities* (London: Verso, 2009).

287. R. Aslan, *No God but God: The Origins, Evolution, and Future of Islam* (New York: Random House, 2005).

288. S. Ahmed, *What is Islam? The Importance of Being Islamic* (Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2016).

289. M. Arkoun, *Islam: To Reform or to Subvert?* (London: Saqi Books, 2006).

290. G. Kepel, Jihad: The Trail of Political Islam (London: I.B. Tauris, 2003).

291. 'Bertram Vidgen', Oxford Internet Institute, https://www.oii.ox.ac.uk/people/bertram-vidgen/.

292. *Islamophobia Defined*, p. 29.

293. S. Bell, 'Government report fuels another round of Islamophobia', Stop the War, 13 January 2016, http://www.stopwar.org.uk/index.php/news-comment/1-government-report-fuels-another-round-of-islamophobia.

294. P. Tatchell, 'Free speech is under threat over Islamophobia', *The Times*, 26 March 2019, https://www.thetimes.co.uk/edition/comment/free-speech-is-under-threat-over-islamophobia-85r6h8czr?t=ie.

Closing off Criticism of Islamism?

One of the major concerns about the proposed APPG definition of 'Islamophobia' is the way it could be used to shut-down criticism of Islamists. This is not idle paranoia. In the wake of the Christchurch attack, Esam Omeish, a former leader of the Muslim Association of America – an organisation founded and led by individuals with strong ties to the Muslim Brotherhood – wrote publicly that anyone using terms like "jihadist", "violent jihad", "Islamist terrorism" or "Islamic extremist" should be considered "Islamophobic".

In the past, too, campaigners such as Peter Tatchell, have been labelled 'Islamophobic' for challenging the Islamist extremist group, Hizb ut-Tahrir.

As the foregoing has indicated, there seems much that is remiss with the approach taken by the APPG. How, then, did it arrive at such a flawed analysis? It is possible to detect two primary influences on the report's authors. The first is the radical chic of critical theory, derived from a particular reading of the Frankfurt School and largely French postmodern theorists (who have curiously wielded more enduring influence in the Anglo-American academy than in France). Critical theorists claim a privileged insight into the structural but hidden discursive codes, power structures and dynamics that shape and control society in the interests of powerful, self-interested but often only vaguely identified elites (in the process, of course, themselves claiming an elite hermeneutical power not available to the rest of us). They purposefully occlude other dispersed systems of power and agency that are at work in complex modern societies. These do not start and end with the state and give modern societies a mobility, dynamism and capacity for self-reflection that they often refuse to acknowledge.

This in part underpins the second unacknowledged influence: the narrative of grievance and structural victimhood espoused by a number of Islamist and Islamist-sympathising groups in the UK who have an interest in promoting the idea of Muslims as a single, cohesive subaltern community of the structurally oppressed and as a consequence regularly complain, for example, of "the hostile environment faced by Muslims and other minorities in Britain".[295] In this regard, the influence of MEND looms larger than most. As should be apparent, the tone and substance of the APPG report bears more than a passing resemblance to the lengthy document produced by MEND a few months earlier.

Yet despite fundamental problems in construction and content, the APPG report quickly won wider support. Its launch was well attended, including by the Home Affairs Select Committee chair Rt Hon Yvette Cooper MP, Shadow Home Secretary Rt Hon Diane Abbott MP, Shadow Digital Minister Liam Byrne, Ed Davey MP, and Lord Bourne, Minister for Faith at the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government. Thereafter, as might be expected both the MCB and MEND urged the government to adopt the APPG's definition and give it legal standing.[296]

In addition, a website has now been created in support of the definition.[297] This explains that the term 'Islamophobia' is necessary because it "allows us to identify cruelties and injustices directed at expressions of Muslimness or perceived Muslimness which otherwise would go unrecognised and thus unchallenged".[298] It further states that "Being critical of Islam or any

295. 'Why it is wrong to highlight "Asian Grooming Gangs"', MEND, 8 November 2018, https://mend.org.uk/news/wrong-highlight-asian-grooming-gangs/.

296. 'Government urged to stop stalling and to adopt a legal definition of Islamophobia', MEND, 8 January 2019, https://mend.org.uk/news/government-urged-stop-stalling-adopt-legal-definition-islamophobia/; 'Islamophobia Inquiry: the Muslim Council of Britain's Submission to the Home Affairs Committee', MCB, 27 January 2019, https://mcb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/20190129-Muslim-Council-of-Britain-Response-to-Call-for-Evidence-on-Islamophobia-to-HASC.pdf.

297. See the 'Islamophobia Definition' web page, at, https://islamophobia-definition.com/.

298. 'FAQs', Islamophobia Definition, https://islamophobia-definition.com/#faqs.

religion does not automatically make you an Islamophobe. You are only an Islamophobe if you use the language of racism targeting expressions of Muslimness or perceived Muslimness to express your views." And on this basis, the website insists that the term 'Islamophobia' is required, as opposed to just referring to "anti-Muslim hatred", because the latter "does not incorporate the array of broader structural racial inequalities that Muslims face." A Muslim called Muhammad who faced workplace discrimination on account of his name, it was argued, was not subject to hatred *per se*, but did suffer from racism and Islamophobia.[299]

On this basis, the website called on the authorities to embrace the APPG definition. It also featured case studies highlighting anti-Muslim hate crimes. In many ways, these replicate and further highlight the problematic nature of the APPG's approach. The case studies are light on data and heavy on allegation-cum-assertion – most of which identify the kind of discrimination that is already covered under existing criminal and employment law. It is striking how discussion about the difficulty Muslims face in the job market is devoid of any explanation other than "Islamophobia" to explain the problems described. There was no effort to look for other factors – for example demographic (the relative proportion of British Muslims under 21, for example) or social (low levels of social capital on entry into the jobs market) - for the relatively low representation of Muslims in the workforce. Instead, an entirely one-dimensional, mono-causal explanation is offered – of course centred on "Islamophobia".

The website further carries a lengthy list of endorsements: from academics like Tariq Modood, Rizwaan Sabir and David Miller; groups like the MCB, Islamic Relief, the Muslim Association of Britain, the UK Islamic Mission, and Friends of al-Aqsa; and parliamentarians, such as Baroness Warsi, Anna Soubry MP, Wes Streeting MP and Afzal Khan MP. As shown in chapter 1, many of these groups and individuals have long been involved in the campaign against Islamophobia. The addition here of an organisation like Friends of al-Aqsa is interesting – given that it has itself previously opposed an embrace of the IHRA definition on antisemitism on the grounds that this "deliberately tries to silence campaigning for Palestinian rights."[300]

Together with the other groups listed on the new "Islamophobia" website, Friends of al-Aqsa have written to the Prime Minister requesting that she adopt the APPG definition on behalf of the Conservative Party.[301] In parallel, there has been an evident campaign to proliferate its adoption at a local level. This has resulted in a number of local councils formally embracing the definition: Newham, Redbridge, Islington and Oxford City.[302] Significantly, Oxford City Council released a list of examples of Islamophobia, which were now to be deemed "unacceptable". This included:

- "Making mendacious, dehumanizing, demonizing, or stereotypical allegations about Muslims as such, or of Muslims as a collective group, such as, especially but not exclusively, conspiracies about Muslim entryism in politics, government or other societal institutions"

299. Ibid.

300. 'Generation Palestine: The Student Movement', Friends of al-Aqsa, 3 October 2018, https://www.foa.org.uk/20181003-only-2-days-to-go/.

301. 'Joint Letter to the Prime Minister', MCB, 1 December 2018, https://mcb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/Islamophobia-Definition_JointLetter_1December2018-PM.docx.pdf.

302. 'Newham Council endorses All-Party Parliamentary groups definition Islamophobia', Newham Council, 17 December 2018, https://www.newham.gov.uk/Pages/News/Newham-Council-endorses-All-Party-Parliamentary-groups-definition-Islamophobia.aspx; A. Richardson and A. Walawalkar, 'Redbridge councillor talks of 'open racism' as Islamophobia definition adopted', *Ilford Recorder*, 23 January 2019, https://www.ilfordrecorder.co.uk/news/redbridge-council-adopts-islamophobia-definition-1-5863504; L. Cumiskey, 'Islington Council adopts new definition of Islamophobia to combat 'hatred and discrimination', *Islington Gazette*, 6 March 2019, https://www.islingtongazette.co.uk/news/islington-adopts-appg-on-british-muslims-islamophobia-definition-1-5920830.

- "Accusing Muslim citizens of being more loyal to the 'Ummah' (transnational Muslim community) or to their countries of origin, or to the alleged priorities of Muslims worldwide, than to the interests of their own nations"
- "Denying Muslim populations, the right to self-determination e.g., by claiming that the existence of an independent Palestine or Kashmir is a terrorist endeavour"
- "Using the symbols and images associated with classic Islamophobia".[303]

What this reveals, therefore, is the way in which the APPG's one-line definition is being used de facto as a stalking horse for some of the more deeply problematic and controversial suggestions made within the report (see above). Oxford City Council's illustrative list of possible manifestations of Islamophobia would make it hard, if not soon impossible, to condemn groups like Hamas, Hezbollah or Lashkar e-Taiba. It would also stigmatise any discussion of what Islamic jurisprudents say about the legitimate use of violence against non-Muslims, as well as the whole area of jihad and anything else that might plausibly be subsumed under the rather inchoate term "Muslim identity".

And yet, important reservations continue to be voiced. Maajid Nawaz, for instance, has remained fiercely critical of the term 'Islamophobia' for failing to "distinguish between hating Muslims and criticising Islamic doctrine". Such conflation, he argues, is deliberate and adoption of the APPG's definition represents a "victory for Islamists".[304]

The head of the Network of Sikh Organisations (NSO), Lord Singh, for instance, raised objections to the term 'Islamophobia' during the December 2018 debate on the subject in the House of Lords. In addition, in evidence supplied to the Home Affairs Select Committee Inquiry into Islamophobia, the NSO reflected on the threat to free speech posed by attempts to define the phenomenon; also, they noted that the conflation of race and religion were "extremely problematic". Perhaps most significantly, NSO complained that "government policy on hate crime [had] marginalised minority faiths like Sikhs and Hindus, because the focus [was] primarily on the suffering of Muslims and Jews." This was a point Lord Singh himself had also made when he told the Lords that "Sikhs, who 'do not have a culture of complaint' are at risk of 'falling off the government radar'"; he urged the government to be "be even-handed" towards all communities.[305]

Elsewhere, Mohammed Amin, the chair of the Conservative Muslim Forum – whilst expressing public disquiet about "anti-Muslim sentiment" within the Tory party – has publicly questioned the appropriateness of the term 'Islamophobia' and associated efforts to arrive at a definition.[306] Amin observed that we already had laws that prohibited: racially motivated hate crime; religiously motivated hate crime; incitement to racial hatred; incitement to religious hatred; discrimination because of a person's race; and discrimination because of a person's religion or belief. On this basis, he queried what a definition of 'Islamophobia' might achieve – and in

303. I. Clayton, 'Oxford City Council adopts APPG definition of Islamophobia', *Oxford Mail*, 29 January 2019, https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/17392310.oxford-city-council-adopts-appg-definition-of-islamophobia/.

304. 'The word "Islamophobia" and its definition are not fit for purpose', *Jewish News*, 25 March 2019, https://jewishnews.timesofisrael.com/opinion-the-word-islamophobia-and-its-definition-are-not-fit-for-purpose/.

305. 'Response to Home Affairs Committee Islamophobia inquiry', Network of Sikh Organisations, January 2019, http://nsouk.co.uk/response-to-home-affairs-committee-islamophobia-inquiry/. For the comments of Lord Singh, see 'Islamophobia – Motion to take note; Lord Singh of Wimbledon', 20 December 2018, https://www.theyworkforyou.com/lords/?id=2018-12-20a.1926.3&s=speaker%3A25148#g1937.0.

306. For Amin's calls for an inquiry into anti-Muslim prejudice within the Conservative Party, see the Interview with Mohammed Amin, *BBC Today* programme, 6 March 2019; and 'Tory Muslim chief accuses party of failing to tackle Islamophobia', *The Times*, 6 June 2018, https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/tory-muslims-accuse-party-of-islamophobia-vp8nnrtj0?t=ie.

particular the effort to align it with a form of racism. As Amin noted, the term "racism" meant "something entirely different to sociology academics and to the man in the street. The man in the street knows that Muslims are not a race" – and on this basis, he asked, "how can you be racist against Muslims?" Unable to answer his rhetorical question satisfactorily, Amin went on to argue that it was "time to abandon the word 'Islamophobia' because using it harms Muslims. It diverts attention from serious anti-Muslim bad behaviours… and instead draws people into a wholly unproductive debate about the meaning of the word 'Islamophobia'."[307]

Conclusions

As can be seen, debates about a possible definition of 'Islamophobia' have become inextricably bound up with calls for an inquiry into Islamophobia inside the Conservative Party. According to groups like the MCB and MEND, the Tories cannot hope to cleanse themselves from the accusation that they are incubating Islamophobic sentiment, unless they both submit to an official investigation (to be led either by themselves, or some other group that they validate), and embrace the proffered APPG definition of Islamophobia.

Yet as has been made clear, there are very serious problems with the APPG approach – not least in the fact that it operates through a double conflation:

1. First, as has long been the case in debates about Islamophobia, it conflates the religion, Islam, with people, Muslims. In so doing, it risks impeding free speech and the right to criticise systems of belief – including religion – which are an integral part of the western liberal intellectual tradition.
2. The second conflation concerns religion and race. By insisting that "Islamophobia" is racism, it blurs the line between two concepts that have hitherto been kept apart – for very good reason. The effect is to essentialise identity and belief, in a way that again raises serious questions about liberty of conscience/belief. What happens, for example, when a Muslim stops being a Muslim: does Islamophobia stop applying, or is it then possible for Muslims to criticise the choice (and perhaps call for the death penalty to be applied) and not be Islamophobic? The authors of the APPG report of course insist that they are not engaged in such a process of essentialisation – not least by pointing to the fact that they are using the concept of 'racialisation' as developed by sociologists. Yet, as Mohammed Amin has pointed out, the simple fact is that "non-sociologists do not use the term racism that way. To a non-sociologist, a race is an ethnic group, however defined at a granular level." The result, as he goes on to explain, is confusing and fundamentally misleading.[308]

On top of these intellectual flaws, there are also very serious practical

307. 'Mohammed Amin: It is time to abandon the word "Islamophobia"', Conservative Home, 5 February 2019, https://www.conservativehome.com/platform/2019/02/mohammed-amin-it-is-time-to-abandon-the-word-islamophobia.html.

308. Ibid.

problems arising from the APPG's attempts to define Islamophobia:

1. The gloss that accompanies the APPG definition makes it clear that adoption would cut across the entire thrust of the government's counter-terrorism and counter-extremism agenda, as it has developed over the past decade. The 'Munich agenda' that originated under David Cameron and evolved under Theresa May rests on a commitment to call out extremism wherever it is found; on a refusal to passively tolerate intolerance; on the more vigorous assertion of liberal democratic values; and on a willingness to have – as the Prime Minister put it after the London Borough terrorist attacks of 2017 – "difficult and often embarrassing conversations".[309] Yet the APPG definition would probably rule much of that endeavour out of order, on the grounds that it risks being seen as 'Islamophobic'. Moreover, as was outlined in chapter one this seems far from accidental. Many of the groups most vigorous in their support of the APPG definition – MEND, the MCB, the MAB – have for a long time been vocal opponents of the existing UK counter-terrorism apparatus. They have frequently denounced the Prevent strategy and other associated programmes – and it is surely likely that they would seek to leverage any definition along APPG lines in order to undermine, and unpick the government's agenda in this area.
2. Another critical area of concern is the way in which the APPG definition might work to fundamentally transform the way in which press freedom works in this country. Again, the media have been a consistent target for anti-Islamophobia campaigners like the MCB and MEND. As described in chapter one, they have lined up alongside the Hacked Off campaign to demand that IPSO change the editors' code of practice "so that the press is not allowed to be abusive towards a group or individual on the basis of race and religion with no recourse available for marginalised groups to seek remedy". Already, it is clear that the sections of the media are beginning to fight shy of taking on stories that might touch on 'Muslims' – because of the likely consequence in terms of IPSO complaints' procedures. How much more would this be the case, if the APPG definition were to be implemented and weaponised by activist groups who wish to prevent any negative portrayal of aspects of Islam, or individual Muslims – regardless of how legitimate that might be?

Against this problematic backdrop, the on-going debate around possible definitions inevitably raise the critical question of how much Islamophobia is there in the UK? And it is to this issue that we must next turn.

309. 'PM statement following London terror attack: 4 June 2017', Gov.uk, 4 June 2017, https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/pm-statement-following-london-terror-attack-4-june-2017.

3 The scale of anti-Muslim Hatred

In the last two decades, there has without question been an increase in anti-Muslim prejudice – particularly on the far-right of the political spectrum. Anti-Muslim rhetoric has fuelled the rise of new populist parties that regularly frame their opposition to mass immigration with reference to the dangers posed by Islam. The latter is said to be inherently hostile to 'Western values' and often, Muslims are portrayed as some kind of "fifth column" to be feared, or opposed.[310] Italy's Five Star movement, for example, has indulged in such "dog-whistle" politics; so too has France's National Front (now renamed, National Rally).[311] Closer to home, it seems clear that the UK Independence Party (UKIP) has increasingly come to foreground its hostility to Islam – what some have termed the 'Tommy Robinson-ification' of the party.

Outside formal politics, Robinson has also played a key role in the emergence of movements like the English Defence League and the Football Lads Alliance, which have made opposition to 'Islamism' – which spills over into a clear vilification of Islam in general – a central part of their mobilising ideology. The leader of the far-right For Britain Party, Anne-Marie Waters, has spoken at FLA rallies for instance, as has UKIP leader Gerard Batten.

At the fringes, this has spilled over into acts of violence. Muslims have been subjected to attack, both verbal and physical, on account of their faith. Perhaps most dramatically, this included the terrorist attack perpetrated by Darren Osborne and aimed at worshippers outside the Finsbury Park Mosque in June 2017. One person, Makram Ali, was killed in the attack.[312]

Tragically, Ali was not the first to be killed for being a Muslim. In April 2013, a Ukrainian racist murdered Muhammad Saleem in Birmingham (and also went on to plant bombs at several mosques before being apprehended).[313] Though Saleem's killer appeared to indicate a more racial motive, religion clearly played a part in his motivations – and the victim's daughter has insisted that it was a result of Islamophobia.[314] In September 2017, Zaynab Hussein received serious, life-changing injuries after being deliberately run over by Paul Moore who expressed a mixture of racist and anti-Muslim sentiments; in March 2018, Moore was jailed for a minimum of twenty years.[315]

Thankfully, such lethal incidents remain relatively rare. But it is clear that there is a broader context of anti-Muslim invective that is current.

In a recent report, Hope not Hate identified anti-Muslim prejudice as the principal factor fuelling a growth in far-right activity in the UK. Polling organised by the group also showed that two out of five British people saw

310. R. Mason, 'Nigel Farage: British Muslim "fifth column" fuels fear of immigration', *The Guardian*, 12 March 2015, https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2015/mar/12/nigel-farage-british-muslim-fifth-column-fuels-immigration-fear-ukip.

311. S. Hamid, 'The role of Islam in European populism: How refugee flows and fear of Muslims drive right-wing support', The Brookings Institute, February 2019, https://www.brookings.edu/research/the-role-of-islam-in-european-populism-how-refugee-flows-and-fear-of-muslims-drive-right-wing-support/.

312. 'Finsbury Park attack: Makram Ali alive when hit by van', BBC News Online, 29 June 2017, https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-40444129.

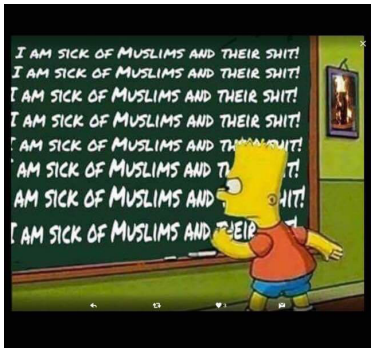
313. 'Mosque bomber Pavlo Lapshyn given life for murder', BBC News Online, 25 October 2013, https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-birmingham-24675040. M. Saleem, 'Britain's Systemic Islamophobia Is the Reason for My Father's Murder', Stop the War, 30 April 2018, http://www.stopwar.org.uk/index.php/news-comment/3012-britain-s-systemic-islamophobia-is-the-reason-for-my-father-s-murder.

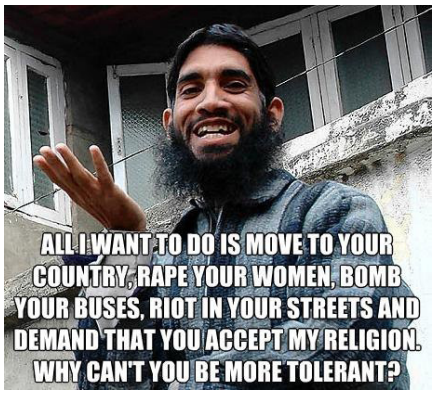
314. Ibid.

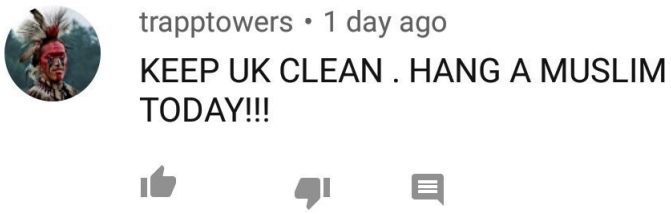
315. D. Casciani, 'Paul Moore guilty of Leicester hate crime car attack', BBC News Online, 2 March 2018, https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-43246496.

Islam as a threat to their way of life; and there were various conspiracy theories about the scale and purpose of Muslim immigration into the UK, as well as the existence of Muslim dominated 'no-go areas'.[316]

Meanwhile, anti-Muslim content is readily available on mainstream social media sites. As the following examples attest, much is made of the supposed threat posed by Muslims, with wild claims about sexualised violence and the 'Islamification' of the UK:[317]







316.J. Wilson, 'Islamophobia has "seeped into the public consciousness" as British Far-Right movement grows, polling shows', *The Daily Telegraph*, 25 March 2019, https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2019/03/25/islamophobia-has-seeped-public-consciousness-british-far-right/.

317.Examples collated from Twitter.com.

Against this backdrop, we need to ask seriously and forensically: how widespread is anti-Muslim bias and hatred in the UK?

What the Statistics Say

As described above in chapter one, the debate over how much Islamophobia there is in the UK has proven deeply controversial. On the one side there are groups like the IHRC, the MCB, MEND and Cage, which insist that it is widespread and ever-growing. The former Secretary-General of the MCB, Iqbal Sacranie for instance, claimed, as far back as 1997, that Islamophobia was a "virulent malaise not only in Britain but world-wide".[318] Various of Sacranie's colleagues, meanwhile, have argued that Muslims living in the UK face conditions analogous to those confronting Jews in 1930s Germany.[319]

Other commentators, however, have challenged this assessment. The author Kenan Malik, for example, is one person to have publicly questioned how far counter-terrorism 'stop and search' laws – a *bête noir* of many Islamophobia activists – have truly impacted Muslims. Malik found that in 2004, just 3,000 people of 'Asian' ethnicity – not all of them Muslim – had been subject to stop and search (out of a total of 21,000 people overall). This represented some 14% of those impacted by the powers – a figure proportionately higher than the Muslim composition of the wider population, but a long way short of the figures given by Iqbal Sacranie, who claimed that "95-98 per cent of those stopped and searched under the anti-terror laws are Muslim".[320]

More recently, research by the Woolf Institute in Cambridge concluded "There is little evidence of the indiscriminate use of stop and search that would comply with the definition of Islamophobia." Being Muslim, the same study found, did increase the likelihood a person would be stopped in the street by a "very small amount" – but it actually fell for those in vehicles. By the same token, the researchers did find that, once a Muslim had been stopped, they were more likely to be subject to a search than members of other ethnic or religious minority groups – but again, the difference was not deemed to be so great as to justify the wilder accusations of many anti-Islamophobia campaigners.[321]

So where does the truth lie? How difficult is it to be a Muslim in Britain today? One starting-point for thinking about these issues is obviously to look at the statistics for anti-Muslim hate crime as compiled by the police.

The Metropolitan Police define a hate crime as:

> *Any criminal offence which is perceived by the victim or any other person, to be motivated by hostility or prejudice based on a person's race or perceived race; religion or perceived religion; sexual orientation or perceived sexual orientation; disability or perceived disability and any crime motivated by hostility or prejudice against a person who is transgender or perceived to be transgender.*[322]

Not all hate crimes involve physical abuse; indeed, statistics show the vast majority do not. Police figures suggest that between 5% and 8% of racial or religious hate crimes can be classified as 'violent [offences] leading to injury'; another, roughly 25% are graded as 'violent but not leading to

318. UKACIA, 'Press release on OIC Summit'. See also, Malik, 'The Islamophobia Myth'.

319. See, for instance, Harper, 'Ministers compared to Nazis over Islam stigma'

320. K. Malik, 'Are Muslims hated?', Channel 4, 8 January 2005, https://web.archive.org/web/20050123093111/https://kenanmalik.com/tv/c4_islamophobia.html.

321. T. Harper, 'Police searches of Muslims "not unfair"', *The Times*, 20 May 2018, https://www.thetimes.co.uk/edition/news/police-searches-of-muslims-not-unfair-fmk55hbbg.

322. 'What is hate crime?', Metropolitan Police, https://www.met.police.uk/advice/advice-and-information/hco/hate-crime/what-is-hate-crime/.

injury'; while the remainder involve no physical contact.[323] Of course, this is not to belittle the mental damage and sense of insecurity caused by abuse of any kind; the occurrence of any kind of hate crime, is one crime too many.

Efforts to understand the trajectory of anti-Muslim hate crime over the longer term are made more difficult by the fact that, until recently, it was not subject to statistical analysis. It was only in 2015 that police forces across the UK began to record anti-Muslim hate crime as a separate category of offence – though some, like the Metropolitan Police, had already adopted the practice.[324] In October 2014, for instance, it was revealed that hate crime against Muslims in London has risen by 65% over the preceding 12 months, increasing from 378 recorded incidents to 570.[325] In September 2015, the Metropolitan police reported that there had been 816 'Islamophobic' crimes across London over the preceding twelve months. This represented a 70% increase on the adjusted figure for 2014 (478). But the police attributed much of this rise to the "improved methods of recording crime."[326]

Looking at the picture more widely, in 2014/15, there were 52,528 hate crimes recorded by the police across England Wales. This represented an increase of 18% compared with the figure for 2013-14 (44,480).[327] Of these, the vast majority (82%) were coded as racist incidents; 6% (3,254) were identified as religious-based hate crime.[328] Data from the Crime Survey England and Wales (CSEW), however, *did* show that Muslim adults – or those whose religion was coded as 'other' – were more likely to be victims of hate crime than the population as a whole (0.8% of British Muslims had experienced it, as compared to 0.1% of the population as a whole).[329]

The figures for 2015-16 again showed a rise in overall levels of hate crime (to 62,518 incidents) – an increase of 41%. Religious based hate crimes now accounted for 7% of the total (4,400).[330] By 2016-17, a further 29% increase brought the overall figure to 80,393 offences – with religion again accounting for 7% (5,949).[331] And in 2017/18, police in England and Wales recorded 94,098 hate crimes – a further increase of 17%.[332] Specifically religious-based hate crime had experienced a 40% increase, rising to 8,336 offences (9% of the total). Moreover, in those cases where the perceived religion of the victim was recorded, just over half (52%) of religious hate crime offences were targeted against Muslims (2,965 offences).[333] The data from the CSEW also showed that Muslim adults were more likely than the population as a whole to have been the victims of hate crime (1% of British Muslim adults were estimated to have experienced this – as opposed to 0.1% of the population as a whole).[334]

Year	Total No. Hate Crimes	Percentage Change	Total No. Religious-Based Hate Crimes	Percentage of Total
2013-14	44,471	+5%	2,273	5%
2014-15	52,528	+18%	3,254	6%
2015-16	62,518	+19%	4,400	7%
2016-17	80,393	+29%	5,949	7%
2017-18	94,098	+17%	8,336	9%

323. D. Goodhart, 'No, there isn't a surge in hate crime. It's confusion that's running riot', *The Sunday Times*, 10 December 2017, https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/no-there-isnt-a-surge-in-hate-crime-its-confusion-thats-running-riot-mqjl9d5mw.

324. 'Anti-Muslim crimes get own category in statistics', BBC News Online, 13 October 2015, https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-34511274.

325. 'Muslim hate crime "rises 65% in London"', BBC News Online, 1 October 2014, https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/av/uk-england-london-29424165/muslim-hate-crime-rises-65-in-london.

326. 'Islamophobic crime in London "up by 70%"', BBC News Online, 7 September 2015, https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-london-34138127.

327. K. Smith (ed.), *Hate Crimes, England and Wales, 2013/14, HOSB: 02/14* (16 October 2014), http://www.report-it.org.uk/files/home_office_hate_crime_data_201314.pdf

328. *Statistical News Release: Hate Crimes, England and Wales, 2014/15*, 13 October 2015, https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/467471/hosb0515snr.pdf/.

329. H. Corcoran et al., *Hate Crime, England Wales, 2014/15: Statistical Bulletin 05/15* (13 October 2015), http://report-it.org.uk/files/ho_hate_crime_statistics_201415.pdf; 'Hate crimes, England and Wales 2014 to 2015 - Appendix Tables', available at, https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/467369/hosb0515-apptabs.ods.

330. H. Corcoran and K. Smith, *Hate Crime, England Wales, 2015/16: Statistical Bulletin 11/16* (17 October 2016), http://report-it.org.uk/files/hate-crime-1516-hosb1116.pdf.

331. A. O'Neill, *Hate Crime, England Wales, 2016/17: Statistical Bulletin 17/17* (17 October 2017), https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/652136/hate-crime-1617-hosb1717.pdf.

332. *Hate Crime, England Wales, 2016/17: Statistical Bulletin 20/18* (16 October 2018), https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/748598/hate-crime-1718-hosb2018.pdf.

333. Ibid.; 'Religious hate crimes: Rise in offences recorded by police', BBC News Online, 16 October 2018, https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-45874265.

334. 'Hate crime, England and Wales, 2017 to 2018: appendix tables', https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/748508/hate-crime-1718-hosb2018-appendix-tables.ods.

Clearly, then, as the above figures show, the police have registered an increase in the number of hate crimes targeting Muslims on the basis of their religion. The Home Office suggests that the year-on-year increase over the last five years has been "largely driven by improvements in police recording", although it does also acknowledge that there have been spikes in hate crime following particular events – notably the EU Referendum and the terrorist attacks of 2017. With regards to the latter, it is clear that most Islamist-related terrorist incidents do generate a spike in hate crime attacks. To some extent, this is inevitable – and indeed, it is one of the outcomes sought by Islamist extremists, who wish to undermine the idea that it is possible to be both British and Muslim. History shows that on this issue their use of violence is effective: it serves to polarize society. Yet as Commissioner Cressida Dick has told MPs, there are strong grounds for questioning whether the terrorism of recent years has generated a sustained uplift in hate crime:

> *You rightly mentioned a year-on-year increase overall in hate crime. My view is that that is very largely accounted for by increased reporting and better recording, and by an increase in confidence. There are a number of reasons for that. One is because quite a high proportion now is online. It is still potentially extremely nasty and offensive or worse, but more easily found on some occasions. Just as it is easier for somebody to think, "I will just say that online"—no responsibility—it is also easier sometimes for those to be found. A lot of third parties—for example, the Community Security Trust and Tell MAMA—are getting very good, as are we, at finding online hate crime.*
>
> *Secondly, a whole variety of measures that we have all taken in society, in policing and in institutions, has increased people's confidence to come forward and report. A part of that is about us being really clear about the importance of this as an issue, about us taking victims seriously, which we do, and wherever possible bringing people to justice and ensuring we get the outcome that they would like to get.*
>
> *As you know, we saw a spike in Islamophobic hate crime after the EU vote and we saw another one after each of the attacks, although not so large. Actually, we did not have one after Parsons Green.* ***I can tell you that the London level at the moment is back where it was before the attacks.*** *This is very important and I am not complacent, but when you look at the type of crime we are talking about and the volume that we are talking about, I honestly believe that because we are so transparent and people care a lot in London, which is a wonderfully integrated and diverse city, sometimes the outside world internationally can look in and think, "Goodness me; there is all that hate crime. Have they got gangs of armed thugs going around with shaved heads attacking people?" No, we haven't. We have a base level of two or three crimes per borough per day online and off, the vast majority of which are at the less serious end of the spectrum, and* ***I do not believe the problem is getting worse****. But I am not complacent about that. [emphasis added]*[335]

335.'Home Affairs Committee', Evidence Hearing, 7 November 2017, http://www.parliamentlive.tv/Event/Index/23dd0cbf-6502-4732-a66f-224faf4ca73f; 'Home Affairs Select Committee Oral evidence: Policing for the future', House of Commons, 7 November 2017, HC 515, http://data.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/committeeevidence.svc/evidencedocument/home-affairs-committee/policing-for-the-future/oral/73142.html.

The period following the Manchester bombing of May 2017 seems to support Cressida Dick's conclusions. Tell Mama recorded 141 Islamophobic hate crimes across the UK in the aftermath of that attack – an increase of 500% on the usual daily average (25). Yet, the following week this figure fell back to 37 – a figure slightly up on the pre-attack number, but not wildly so. In other words, the empirical evidence seems to support the notion of key spikes, but no sustained escalation of the kind that would betoken a crisis.[336] The same pattern appears to hold true across Europe.[337]

Moreover, it is also interesting to note that not every incident where one might have anticipated such a spike delivered one. For example, despite reports there was an increase in hate crime following the August 2014 release of the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation in Rotherham (the Jay report), the Home Office concluded there was no clear spike around this time; the same held true in the wake of the Paris attacks in November 2015.[338]

Such nuances and explanations gain little traction with those groups that have been most strident in their campaigning about Islamophobia. The MCB, for instance, has seized on the latest figures to castigate "tepid" government responses to a rising scourge of "Islamophobia" and demand "strong action".[339] MEND likewise commented that the figures stood "testament to [the] growing Islamophobia in our society"; it further suggested (without any evidence to support the claim) that the figures likely significantly understated the scale of the problem: "considering only 9% of all hate crime is actually recorded as religiously motivated suggests that some of the cases of hate crime towards Muslims are likely to have been categorised as racially motivated." Given, then, that MEND believed the 'true' figures to be much higher, it called on the government to "equalise the legislation to remove the requirement for a specific intent to stir up religious hatred, to bring it in line with the racial hatred offences, for which no such intent needs to be proven".[340]

Yet are such claims proportionate to the story told by the data?

It is hard to gauge the exact size of the Muslim population of England and Wales (the relevant indicator given that this is what the CSEW analyses; also the vast majority of Muslims living in the UK live in England). The 2011 census produced a figure of 2.71million, of whom 1.81million were aged 16 years or over – though these figures are likely to be significantly out of date and understate the totals.[341] The Annual Population Survey for 2017-18 produced a figure for 3.37million Muslims in England, Wales and Scotland – a figure that might be adjusted to 3.29million, given there are reckoned to be around 80,000 Muslims resident in Scotland.[342] (And many less formal estimates of the British Muslim population would put the figure significantly higher). Depending on which figure is used, all of this translates into the following rates per thousand – when set against the CSEW figure of 2,965 hate crimes that targeted Muslims on the basis of their religion:

336. V. Dodd and S. Marsh, 'Anti-Muslim hate crimes increase fivefold since London Bridge attacks', *The Guardian*, 7 June 2017, https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2017/jun/07/anti-muslim-hate-crimes-increase-fivefold-since-london-bridge-attacks.

337. Bruckner, *Imaginary Racism*, p. 101.

338. Corcoran and Smith, *Hate Crime, England Wales, 2015/16.*

339. 'Rising Islamophobia in the UK: Muslim Council of Britain Demands Action', MCB, 16 October 2018, https://mcb.org.uk/press-releases/rising-islamophobia-in-the-uk-muslim-council-of-britain-demands-action/.

340. 'MEND statement on new hate crime figures released by Home Office', MEND, 16 October 2018, https://mend.org.uk/news/mend-statement-new-hate-crime-figures-released-home-office/.

341. 'Muslims in figures', MCB, n.d., http://www.mcb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/MCB-Muslims-in-Numbers-infographic-final.jpg.

342. 'Muslim population in the UK', Office for National Statistics, 2 August 2018, https://www.ons.gov.uk/aboutus/transparencyandgovernance/freedomofinformationfoi/muslimpopulationintheuk/.

Figure for Muslim Population of UK	Incidence of Hate Crime per 1,000 people
1.81m*	1.64
2.71m	1.09
3.29m	0.90
3.37m	0.88

This figure reflects the number of Muslims over 16 according to the 2011 census.

The above chart thus represents a plausible range for the likely incidence of anti-Muslim hate crimes per 1,000 members of the UK population who are Muslim. There are somewhere in the region of 0.88-1.64 episodes of hate crime per 1,000 people. By way of comparison, the rate of religious-based hate crime for the population as a whole can be estimated to be roughly around 0.19 per 1,000 people.[343] It does therefore seem to be the case that Muslims are significantly more likely to be the victims of hate crime than the population as a whole.

At the same time, it is clear that the overall levels of occurrence remain relatively low. As noted above, groups like MEND insist that the 'real' figure for anti-Muslim hate crime is much higher than offered by the police.[344] Yet, there is strong evidence that a group like MEND is misrepresenting the figures for Islamophobic hate crime – whether deliberately, or otherwise – so as to support its narrative of Muslim victimhood. A closer look at its methodology certainly raises troubling questions.

In April 2017, for example, MEND offered an estimate of the number of anti-Muslim hate crimes carried out in the UK between March 2015 and April 2016: 6,816 incidents. This was, as intended, a shocking figure – far higher than the 2,506 anti-Muslim hate crimes recorded across the UK in the same time frame. How, then, was this figure produced? It would seem that it was compiled by submitting Freedom of Information requests to police forces from across the country, to discover:

1. The number of hate crimes identified as having happened to Muslims as a religious community (2,506)
2. The number of hate crimes identified as having a racial motivation and targeted against people of Pakistani or Bangladeshi heritage (4,290)

These two figures combined bring the figure to 6,816. Yet as is self-evident, this misuse of statistics is deeply problematic. Racially motivated hate crime is manifestly not the same thing as crime motivated by Islamophobia. Of course, the two are equally reprehensible – but it is crucial to disentangle them, given that claims about a growth in anti-Muslim hatred are being used to advance a particular narrative about Muslim life in Britain.

In addition, the Metropolitan police specifically warn against conflating different categories of hate crime:

343. This figure was arrived at in the following way. Using the 2011 census figures, there were 44.32m adults in England and Wales population. Setting that figure against CSEW total for religious-based hate crime in England and Wales (8,336) brings you to an incidence rate of 0.19 per 1,000 people. By comparison, recent estimates by the ONS suggest an adult population for England and Wales of 44.86m. Setting that figure against the CSEW total for religious based hate crime in England and Wales, also gives an incidence rate of 0.19 per 1000 people.

344. 'Increase in Islamophobic hate crimes show why we need effective new laws', MEND, 22 February 2019, https://mend.org.uk/news/increase-islamophobic-hate-crimes-show-need-effective-new-laws/.

> *Hate Crimes are calculated to have very specific meanings therefore* ***none of the hate crime categories should be summed together****. Not all definitions are included here but, as an example,* ***Islamophobic Hate Crime is a subset of Racist and Religious Hate Crime (JW - i.e. all races and all faiths), and so the two figures should not be summed****. Racist and Religious Hate Crime includes Race Hate Crime, Anti-Semitic Hate Crime, Islamophobic Hate Crime and Faith Hate Crime. Hate Crime is the over arching category that totals all hate crime offences. Similarly, the individual Special Crime categories should not be summed. As an example, Gun Crime Lethal Barrelled Discharge and Gun Crime Personal Robbery is a subset of gun crime.*[345]

Yet MEND does not apply sufficient methodological rigour – preferring to advance a more sensationalist figure that is in keeping with its agenda. In many ways, this is unsurprising. The group's promotional literature has, in the past, made much of the image of the violent attack inflicted on 16-year-old Tasneem Kabir in east London, in November 2012. This, despite the fact that when the case came to court, there was no evidence of anti-Muslim intent. The perpetrator, Michael Ayoade (himself from the BAME community), was intoxicated on drink and drugs at the time of the attack, and said simply that he had attacked her because "she didn't have a friendly face" and had "intimidated him".[346] MEND seems to prefer to elide such details, however, in preference for a simplistic narrative that foregrounds anti-Muslim hatred alone.

In similar vein, it is worth looking at the way MEND uses statistics to argue that there has been an increase in anti-Muslim hate crime at the local level. In the autumn of 2016, for instance, the group claimed there had been a 43% increase in recorded Islamophobic attacks in the London borough of Redbridge; later they revised this number to 81%. Needless to say, such figures sound alarming. And yet, when one examines the statistics provided by the Metropolitan Police, the picture appears far more prosaic:

- October 2014-October 2015, there were 22 recorded Islamophobic hate crimes (out of 2,698 hate crimes in total in the Borough)
- October 2015-October 2016, there were 40 recorded Islamophobic hate crimes (an increase, it is true of over 81%)
- October 2016-October 2017, there were 58 recorded Islamophobic hate crimes (an increase of 45%; but again, it is worth setting this in the context of 2,984 hate crimes in total in the Borough).[347]

What such figures reveal, then, is that yes, there was a marked increase in recorded Islamophobic hate crime in Redbridge over the three-year period from 2014 to 2017. But there are surely grounds to pause before accepting any crude narrative that represents this as a tidal wave of Islamophobic abuse. Firstly, bearing in mind the above cited explanations from the Home Office and the Metropolitan Police, it is worth asking how much of this increase is accounted for by increased reporting. Secondly, each of these episodes was doubtless horrible and traumatic for the victim who suffered – but the aggregate figures in question are still low. 'Islamophobic' hate

345.'Hate Crime Dashboard', The Metropolitan Police, https://www.met.police.uk/stats-and-data/hate-crime-dashboard/.

346.'Man who knocked 16-year-old girl unconscious in street attack jailed', *The Daily Telegraph*, 25 February 2013, https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/crime/9892995/Man-who-knocked-16-year-old-girl-unconscious-in-street-attack-jailed.html.

347.'Hate Crime Dashboard', Metropolitan Police.

crime accounted for less than 2% of hate crime overall within the borough (the vast majority of which was accounted for by domestic abuse related hate crime); and there were, on average, five or fewer such incidents per month. Furthermore, this figure was raised by significant 'spikes' in the wake of terrorist incidents – as in June 2017 (in the immediate aftermath of both the Manchester and London Bridge attacks), when there were 16 attacks in that month alone (over a quarter of those recorded in that yearly accounting period).[348] But as people like Commissioner Cressida Dick have observed, such spikes are precisely that; rather than portending a new 'normal', the rate of hate crime occurrence tends to revert to its former levels within days.[349]

It is also worth putting the prevalence of anti-Muslim hate crime into comparative context with other kinds of hate crime offences. MEND states that is also committed to the fight against antisemitism. Yet, on this subject the group seems to have far less to say – despite the fact that the figures available there at both the national and local level show this to be a far more pressing problem. To take, once more, the example of Redbridge, the following levels of antisemitic hate crime were recorded:

- October 2014-October 2015, 17 recorded antisemitic hate crimes
- October 2015-October 2016, 25 recorded antisemitic hate crimes
- October 2016-October 2017, 18 recorded antisemitic hate crimes.[350]

In absolute terms, these numbers are obviously lower than the incidents of Islamophobic hate crime. However, it is worth setting these in demographic context. According to the 2011 census, the population of Redbridge was 278,970 (296,800 as of June 2015).[351] Of this overall figure, some 23%, or 74,200 were estimated to be Muslim; 3.7%, or 10,388, were estimated to be Jewish.

Though these figures may well have changed in the period since the census, they can be taken as broadly indicative of comparable community size. **And what they reveal is the simple fact that one is much more likely to be the victim of hate crime if one is Jewish than if one is Muslim**. The chances of being a victim of religious-based hate crime are one in a thousand if an individual is Muslim; they are one in a few hundred if that individual is Jewish.

The same picture holds true at the national level. The Home Office data for 2017-18 show that 672 offences were categorised as religious hate crimes aimed at Jews. This, it will be recalled, compares with a figure of 2,965 offences aimed at Muslims. Yet, when puts this into the context of overall population size it becomes clear that Jews are more likely than Muslims to be victims of hate crime. The rate of anti-Jewish hate crime is roughly 2.49-3.11 incidents per 1,000 people.[352] This stands against the figure for British Muslims of between 0.88 and 1.64 incidents per 1,000 people. Jews are, in short, more likely to be on the receiving end of such hate crime than Muslims.

348. 'Hate Crime Dashboard', Metropolitan Police.

349. 'Home Affairs Select Committee: Uncorrected Transcript of Oral Evidence - To be published as HC 231-Evidence taken before the Home Affairs Committee, Counter-Terrorism, Cressida Dick', 4 June 2013, http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201314/cmselect/cmhaff/uc231-i/uc23101.htm.

350. 'Hate Crime Dashboard', Metropolitan Police.

351. '2011 Census Results', Redbridge Council, https://www.redbridge.gov.uk/about-the-council/information-research-and-data-about-redbridge/2011-census-results/; 'Key Facts and Figures', Redbridge Council, https://www.redbridge.gov.uk/about-the-council/information-research-and-data-about-redbridge/key-facts-and-figures/.

352. The 2011 census recorded a UK Jewish population of 270,000. If one takes this number, one arrives at the figure for the incidence of anti-Jewish hate crime of 2.49 incidents per 1,000 people. Conversely, if one tries to account for the proportion of children within the Jewish population (bearing in mind the CSEW only applies to adults), one might use a figure of 216,000 for the total number of adult Jews in England and Wales. This gives a figure of 3.1 incidents per 1,000 people. Even then, this is likely to be something of an under-estimate given that it is almost 10 years since 2011 and the trajectory of the Jewish community over several decades has been to shrink.

The point here, however, is not to indulge in a game of religious/ethnic one-upmanship. But it is simply to challenge the idea that Muslims are somehow the victims of a uniquely 'Islamophobic' environment – of unrivalled scale and intensity.

In this context, it is also worth asking whether our perspective has been distorted by a number of high-profile episodes, which have been used – especially by groups like MEND – to highlight the alleged pervasiveness of Islamophobia. One such episode concerned the "Punish a Muslim Day" letters that were sent to hundreds of mosques and MPs in March 2018. Yet as was later revealed, this was all the work of a single individual who adhered to a white supremacist, anti-Muslim ideology.[353] More recently, MEND drew attention to the February 2019 case of "signs [that] were put up on the windows of people's homes saying "beware of Muslim rape gangs".[354] Yet again, this incident seemed relatively small-scale and localised to the Cambridgeshire town of St. Ives (population, circa 17,000).[355] And it is perhaps telling that in referring to such incidents, MEND invariably makes no attempt to explain how widespread – or indeed, how marginal – they were.

The reality is that MEND too often seeks to present the situation in the worst possible light – and to use this blackened image to advance a very particular agenda. It has, for instance, pointed to the alleged rise in Islamophobic hate crime to make the case that the existing legal framework does not do enough to deter Islamophobes from acting upon their feelings. The group has complained that the 1986 Public Order Act, as amended by the 2006 Racial and Religious Hatred Act, fails to criminalise "abusive or insulting" words or behaviour – and that it is too narrow in its insistence that those found guilty should be shown to have intentionally stirred up religious hatred.[356]

Furthermore, the group uses this issue to insist that the government "needs to consult with a wider range of Muslim stakeholders".[357] The same line of argument has been deployed in relation to online hate crime, with MEND claiming that social media companies should engage them to provide more effective protections against abuse online. In a revealing passage, MEND asserts that,

> *Working with credible organisations from communities affected by hatred is crucial to the effectiveness of any strategy to combating hate speech. Their level of understanding of the challenges faced by their respective communities puts them in a great position to differentiate between hate speech and free speech. Ultimately, the need to protect free speech is a reason often cited by social media service providers for their inaction in tackling hate speech. However, by collaborating with experienced human rights organisations, social media service providers can uphold this fundamental freedom at the same time as safeguarding society from becoming an incubator for hatred.*[358]

In their naked ambition, such statements are striking. MEND seems determined to win acceptance for itself as the arbiter of what constitutes 'Islamophobic' hate speech; it wishes to be the anointed gatekeeper for

353. 'Lincoln man admits sending "Punish a Muslim Day" letters', BBC News Online, 12 October 2018, https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-45838506.

354. 'Increase in Islamophobic hate crimes show why we need effective new laws', MEND, 22 February 2019, https://mend.org.uk/news/increase-islamophobic-hate-crimes-show-need-effective-new-laws/.

355. M. Olsen, '"Beware of Muslim rape gangs" appear in windows of people's homes', *The Metro*, 19 February 2019, https://metro.co.uk/2019/02/19/beware-muslim-rape-gangs-appear-windows-peoples-homes-8666925/?ito=cbshare.

356. 'Increase in Islamophobic hate crimes show why we need effective new laws', MEND.

357. Ibid.

358. 'Why are we so hateful online?', MEND, 22 February 2019, https://mend.org.uk/news/why-are-we-so-hateful-online/.

what one can/cannot say about Islam.

Now, with all this said, there evidently remains a level of anti-Muslim hatred in society; and there have been clear spikes in such hatred at various points in the last two decades. The existence of discrimination and prejudice in any form is unacceptable and must be combatted.[359] How do we explain this phenomenon?

The British Muslim Experience

Inevitably, anti-Muslim racism must be situated against the backdrop of the wider struggle with racism and prejudice in society. But here, it should be acknowledged, there is a positive story to be told – one at least equal to, and arguably far more significant than, the Islamophobia campaigners would suggest. Since the 1970s, successive governments have legislated to proscribe and stigmatize all forms of racism. And in 2006, legislation was enacted specifically to outlaw religious hatred (though, as described, groups like MEND deem this law insufficient because of its requirement that 'intent' be demonstrated).

At the same time, the very recent past has witnessed some regression. This has widely been attributed to the impact of debates around immigration, Brexit and (relatedly) the Trump presidency in the US. Taken together, there does seem evidence of an increase. But how bad has this been? Again, is there a danger of over-stating the problem?

In April 2016, ICM carried out polling of British Muslim attitudes, which as the commentator Kenan Malik reflected, showed that:

> *Muslims do not appear to see Britain as a nation in thrall to Islamophobia. Seventy-three per cent thought that religious harassment of Muslims was not a problem, 82% had not faced harassment in the past 2 years; and of the 17% who had, more than three-quarters reported it as verbal abuse. More Muslims (40%) think anti-Muslim prejudice has grown in the last five years than think it has decreased (14%). But the comparable figures for the general public are 61% and 7% respectively. Muslims, in other words, actually seem less concerned about the growth of anti-Muslim prejudice than the public at large.*[360]

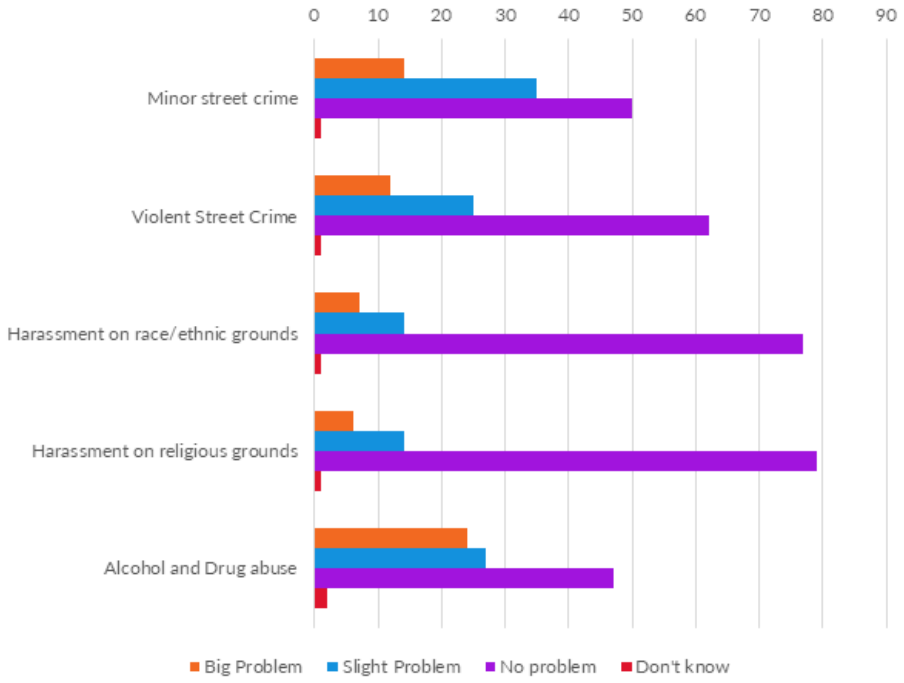
Soon after this survey, Policy Exchange, again in conjunction with ICM, carried out the largest ever polling of British Muslim attitudes. With regards to the question of personal security and harassment, the results were perhaps surprising. When asked to assess how big a problem was harassment on grounds of race, ethnicity or religion only 6-7% of respondents said it was a 'big problem'. A further 14% said it was a 'slight problem' and 77-79% said it was no problem at all.[361]

359. For a more sober, realistic appraisal of this phenomenon, see the work of Tell Mama, available at, https://tellmamauk.org/.

360. K. Malik, 'So, what do British Muslims really think?', Kenan Malik, 12 April 2016, https://kenanmalik.wordpress.com/2016/04/12/so-what-do-british-muslims-really-think/.

361. For full analysis, including breakdown of these results by region, see Frampton et al., *Unsettled Belonging*.

Figure 1: How much of a problem are these issues for Muslims?



It is striking that our control group survey (which asked the same question of a sample representing the population as a whole), recorded a much greater concern for these issues among the general population. On racial/ethnicity-based harassment, 12% said it was a 'big problem', 25% said it was a 'slight problem' and only 50% said it was no problem at all. With regards to specifically religiously-grounded harassment, 9% said it was a 'big problem', 22% said it was a 'slight problem' and 55% said it was no problem at all. The population as a whole, therefore, seemed to see such harassment as an issue of greater concern than did the British Muslim population specifically.[362]

This was somewhat surprising, given that there was a great deal of discussion in the focus groups that we held about fears over personal security linked to anti-Muslim prejudice and harassment. In particular, women who chose to wear Islamic clothing, were thought to be especially vulnerable to such harassment, as the following comments reveal:

> *"The veil is kind of a big issue. In University no one can tell if I'm a Muslim or not, but for a Muslim woman, the veil, so they're definitely going to tell you're a Muslim. So it relates to hate crime also because it's really easy for Muslim women to be victims of a hate crime because they're just wearing a veil and walking across the street"*
>
> [Male, Cardiff Group 1]

362.Ibid.

"My mum wears a headscarf, she was actually in Oxford Circus, she was… going down an escalator, someone decided to run down, sat behind her and pulled off her scarf from the back and ran away"

[Female, London Group 1]

"My sister, who does wear a hijab, my mum who does wear a hijab, they get spat on"

[Female, London Group 2]

"My mum, she wears a headscarf. My sisters wear headscarves. I get worried if they're going out walking around town and stuff because, you know, they might get abused."

[Male, Birmingham Group 1]

"You know my younger sister she wears a full veil… Ultimately I worry about my sister. I do. The reason being is she was, there was an occasion where… I think somebody called her a ninja or something.… she's been wearing the Niqab for I think over a year and she's had so much abuse."

[Female, Birmingham Group 1]

How to explain this apparent inconsistency between the quantitative and qualitative research? For one thing, there is always the possibility that it was merely a quirk of the polling sample, or the way in which respondents understood the question. Alternatively, however, one answer could lie in the fact that so much of the discussion about harassment and discrimination – as suggested by the comments above – actually revolves around 'third party' stories. When pushed, focus group participants tended to say that they themselves had not experienced racism or Islamophobia; however, almost everyone had a story to which they could point, as examples of these phenomena. Often these revolved around family members (mothers, sisters). Another common theme was that people had read about such incidents – particularly via social media. Without in any way wishing to deny the reality of racist and Islamophobic attacks, it is striking how, to many people, these are a mediated phenomenon.

One of the consequences of this is that for many people, harassment is an issue more in the abstract than as a tangible reality. It is something about which there is an underlying sense of anxiety, rather than direct experience – and for this reason does not loom as large as one might expect in questions about crime. Hence, several participants in focus groups talked of their sense that they received "filthy" looks or a "look of suspicion". There was, it seems clear from the below comments, a rather ill defined, but pervasive sense of unease, which in turn fed a strong belief that Muslims routinely faced discrimination.

"I remember after the Charlie Hebdo attacks and the stuff at the Bataclan Theatre, I was getting really weird looks. I'd come out of work and go on a lunch break, I'd walk through the city centre and I'd have lots of people just staring at me thinking I've got something hidden under my hat or something. So you get a lot of rubbish."

[Female, Birmingham Group 1]

"You feel like you have to answer for everything, you know, which is not a problem because I don't mind telling people about my religion…"

[Female, Cardiff Group 1]

"Being a British Muslim as well, yes I do get stigma, my family gets stigma and what have you."

[Female, Birmingham Group 1]

"I read somewhere in a book that the Muslims are the new Blacks"

[Male, London Group 1]

"I think every century or every generation, they'll find a new scapegoat"

[Male, London Group 1]

"Muslims are, like, the biggest victims out of everybody in all of this."

[Male, Birmingham Group 1]

"It's just this paranoia, you've been paranoid, you think people don't like you, you think, 'They're thinking, you know what, they're like them, they're like them,' although we're not, we're such nice people, but you feel so paranoid."

[Female, Slough Group 1]

As the last statement reflects, at least some focus group participants were willing to reflect critically about the extent to which an over-developed sense of victimhood might fuel paranoia. It is worth asking how far this is a product of a culture/mindset that is infused with an abstract sense of grievance. Within this context too, it is surely relevant that this perception of victimhood is deliberately exacerbated and manipulated by some of the very groups (such as Cage and MEND) that claim to be against Islamophobia.

In reflecting on these issues, answers to another question posed in our survey were especially striking: an overwhelming majority of respondents (91%) feel that they are entirely free to practice their religion in Britain; a further 7% said that they could 'partly' practice their faith freely; whereas only 2% said they could not.[363] When the 9% of Muslims who felt there were at least some limitations on their right to practice Islam freely, were asked to identify specific elements of their faith with which they had difficulty, 25% of this sub-group identified what might be termed 'structural' problems: namely, finding a place/facility to pray, including

363.Ibid.

at work. To some extent, such difficulties are inevitable: a result of the relatively recent arrival of Islam in Britain. Also, the fact that Islam remains very much a minority faith within the British context ensures that many people simply do not consider the creation of this infrastructure (prayer rooms etc.), to be a priority. This does not necessarily mean that they are hostile to such an endeavour; more likely, it is just not seen as an urgent necessity. One consequence of this is that there has been a lag in the development of facilities to accommodate Islam.

The second most popular answer to the question of what limits existed on the free practice of Islam in Britain was 'nothing in particular' (18%). 16% mentioned issues concerning dress code, such as those associated with wearing the veil, niqab and burka. Some reference to the latter was to be expected, given the controversy that has surrounded this subject – but again it is perhaps surprising that more people did not mention it.[364]

For these reasons, the results of our extensive polling do suggest that we should be wary about overstating the scale of Islamophobia that exists within the UK. To state this is not to deny that it *is* a problem – and evidently one that *has* increased in recent years. But it stands as a useful corrective to the wilder and more irresponsible claims made by groups like MEND, that British Muslims stand on the cusp of some kind of mass repression, or even a new Holocaust.[365]

A Prospective Holocaust?

In recent years, the suggestion that British Muslims face a situation analagous to Jews in 1930s Germany has been heard repeatedly from key leaders of groups like the MCB and MEND:

1. Dr. Muhammad Abdul Bari, while Secretary-General of the MCB, made this analogy on more than one occasion. In 2007, he warned that Britain was becoming like Nazi Germany, saying that: "Every society has to be really careful so the situation doesn't lead us to a time when people's minds can be poisoned as they were in the 1930s."

2. Ibrahim Mogra, a senior official in the MCB, said in 2011: "When I reflect on the tragedy of the Holocaust I think about how the Jew was persecuted as a misfit and somebody not to be trusted, as an alien. The drip, drip of hatred and bigotry by the Nazis led to them being described as rats and murdered in a horrible way. This situation is nowhere near that but there is always a beginning for everything. I hope this is not the beginning of something that could be horrendous. We said 'never again' and we have to nip this in the bud."

3. Isobel Ingham-Barrow, the head of policy and research at MEND, said in 2018: "After WWII, several international bodies such as the EU emerged to ensure that the atrocities of the Holocaust could never ever happen again. But, again, it is not enough to ensure that the Holocaust never happens again – we have to stop the conditions that allowed those atrocities to happen in the first place. And I'm sorry to say, we may already be close to those conditions again."

364. Ibid.

365. T. Harper, 'Ministers compared to Nazis over Islam stigma', *The Daily Telegraph*, 18 December 2006, http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/1537129/Ministers-compared-to-Nazis-over-Islam-stigma.html; R. Sylvester and A. Thomson, 'Dr Bari: Government stoking Muslim tension', *The Daily Telegraph*, 10 November 2007, http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/1568881/Dr-Bari-Government-stoking-Muslim-tension.html; R. Booth, 'Muslim leaders back Lady Warsi's comments on Islamophobia', *The Guardian*, 20 January 2011, http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/jan/20/muslim-leaders-lady-warsi-islamophobia; 'MEND Head of Policy speech in commemoration of Holocaust Memorial Day', MEND, 24 January 2018, https://web.archive.org/web/20180125104727/https://mend.org.uk/news/mend-head-policy-speech-commemoration-holocaust-memorial-day/.

Conclusions

In the face of all this, we must surely pause to reflect on the narrative that surrounds the word "Islamophobia". A close analysis of the statistical data surrounding anti-Muslim hate crime shows that there has been an increase in recorded incidents over the last five years. Some of this is, according to the Home Office, accounted for by improved rates of reporting – but it would be wrong not to acknowledge that there has likely been an increased level of hate crime in which Muslims have been victims. This must be challenged. One crime that targets Muslims on account of their faith is one crime too many. There must be no tolerance of anti-Muslim hatred or bigotry in Britain.

At the same time, it is surely important not to indulge in the wilder flights of fantasy – promulgated routinely by groups like the MCB and MEND – which depict Britain as in the thrall of an 'Islamophobic' epidemic. Surely, one has to be cautious about simplified narratives that the overriding experience of British Muslims is a feeling of communal victimhood. In a country where the Home Secretary is of Pakistani Muslim heritage; where the winner of *The Great British Bake Off*, a family TV show watched by millions of Britons, can be a hijab-wearing second generation Bangladeshi immigrant[366]; where 93% of Muslims say they have a strong sense of belonging to the UK[367]; where 94% of Muslims feel able to practise their religion freely[368]; and where Muslims have a long and distinguished record of services in the British armed forces, it is clear that anti-Muslim hatred runs completely counter to our established national culture.

Moreover, we must allow ourselves to reflect, in the broadest sense, on why anti-Muslim sentiment is on the rise. Of course, there is a danger here. There can be no slide into 'victim-blaming' – the blaming of Islamophobia on Muslims as a community. And the intention is certainly not to offer an apology for anti-Muslim bias or prejudice, or attempt to legitimate it in any way. Where anti-Muslim bias occurs it is always unjustifiable and wrong. At the same time, it has to be acknowledged that groups like MEND and MCB deliberately occlude any sense of context. They refuse to acknowledge, for example, that the reason Muslims might 'disproportionately' figure within the Prevent strategy, is because of the security situation; instead MEND likes to talk about the "perceived threat of Muslims to security" – the implication appearing to be, that there is no threat connected with Islamism.

Yet surely the recent surge in Islamophobia has to be placed within the context of a significant, enduring (and increasing) terrorist threat. To repeat, this is not to blame Muslims *in toto* for the actions of a small minority of their co-religionists who draw on a particular reading of the Islamic faith in order to legitimise their attacks. But it is to note that there is a context framed by conflict here; and that, that conflict is one in which agency lies with violent Islamism. Any attempt to tackle the problem of anti-Muslim hatred must surely weigh such realities into the equation, recognising that they further complicate the search for a viable way forward.

366. 'Great British Bake Off winners: where are they now?', *The Daily Telegraph*, 28 August 2018, https://www.telegraph.co.uk/tv/0/great-british-bake-off-previous-winners-where-are-they-now/nadiya-hussain-winner-series-six/.

367. Frampton et al., *Unsettled Belonging*, p. 41.

368. 'A review of survey research on Muslims in Britain', Ipsos MORI, 21 March 2018, https://www.ipsos.com/ipsos-mori/en-uk/review-survey-research-muslims-britain-0.

4 What is to be Done?

In the wake of the atrocity that was carried out by a far-right extremist against a mosque in Christchurch, New Zealand, many of the most ardent campaigners against Islamophobia have been quick to restate their case. The president of the Muslim Association of Britain, Anas Altikriti for example, was one of those who immediately sought to connect that terrorist attack with the alleged pervasiveness of Islamophobia across western society.

In a more formal statement, Altikriti warned against "the ever-increasing disease of Islamophobia", which had been "carried and promoted, often inadvertently or non-deliberately, but callously nonetheless, by mainstream elements within politics, society and media." He went on to argue that it was "time that Islamophobia, in all its shapes, tropes and forms, was criminalised and made punishable by the severest of sentences."[369] Harun Khan, Secretary-General of the MCB, likewise pointed to the "unabated Islamophobia and hostility" that Muslims faced and reiterated his call for the British government to adopt the APPG definition of Islamophobia.[370]

Subsequently, the Liberal Democrats and the Labour Party, as well as London City Hall, Plaid Cymru and all of Scotland's political parties – announced their adoption of the APPG definition – moves that have been met with predictable glee by groups like the MCB and MAB:[371]

369. 'New Zealand terrorist massacre driven by hate and Islamophobia', MAB, 15 March 2019, https://www.mabonline.net/new-zealand-terrorist-massacre-driven-by-hate-and-islamophobia/.

370. 'New Zealand Terror Attacks at Friday Prayers', MCB, 15 March 2019, https://mcb.org.uk/press-releases/new-zealand-terror-attacks-at-friday-prayers/.

371. On parties adopting the definition, see L. Perraudin, 'Labour formally adopts definition of Islamophobia', *The Guardian*, 20 March 2019, https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2019/mar/20/labour-formally-adopts-definition-islamophobia; S. Khan, 'May's failure to tackle Tory Islamophobia sends a dangerous message', *The Guardian*, 1 April 2019, https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/apr/01/theresa-may-tory-islamophobia-anti-muslim-sentiment; 'All of Scotland's political parties adopt formal definition of Islamophobia', Holyrood, 26 April 2019, https://www.holyrood.com/articles/news/all-scotlands-political-parties-adopt-formal-definition-islamophobia.

Azzam Tamimi – a Hamas supporting former member of the MAB who is on record supporting suicide bombing in Israel-Palestine and who hosts those who support the 'jihad' in Syria, 'likes' the MAB's reaction to Labour's embrace of the APPG definition. Note that the cited link ties this back to Tory 'Islamophobia'

There is – it is clear – a problem with anti-Muslim prejudice and hatred within our society. This is intolerable. And the impulse that 'something must be done' is both laudable and necessary. But the question remains: what is the right thing to do?

As we have made clear in the pages above, the APPG report is deeply flawed. Its central premise – that Islam has been 'racialised' and therefore anti-Islamic attitudes should be seen as racism – is highly problematic. Yet as some have pointed out, the elision of race and religion in this case obfuscates more than it illuminates. It introduces a terminological confusion that makes little sense to the general public and, as Mohammad Amin has noted, diverts attention from tackling serious anti-Muslim behaviours. The effect, as we have outlined, is a double conflation: of race and religion; of Muslims and Islam.

One effect of this is to obscure the diverse demographic of British

Muslims. The largest 'ethnic' group within that 'faith community' – by national origin – are Pakistanis, followed by Bangladeshis, but there are many other ethnic groups (Somali, Indian, Turk, Arab, eastern European etc).[372] In addition, notions of 'Muslimness' of the kind being propagated by the APPG seem designed to present a distorted, homogenised picture of a faith that is inherently pluralistic, with an array of sects and sub-groupings. This must necessarily impinge on the prospects and rights of liberal or dissenting Muslims. Enshrining a vague notion of "Muslimness" as the criterion of acceptability makes it almost inevitable that this will be interpreted in the most prescriptively coercive way. And that will mean that any criticism of standard Shari'a rulings - on apostasy, inheritance, sexual morality, women's roles, conversion and so forth – which all constitute or can be made to constitute normative "Muslimness" for many – but which are at odds with our laws and customs – will become unexaminable. That de facto serves an Islamist agenda.

It is surely salutary to note in this context that this is exactly what Islamists did in Egypt from the 1970s onwards, abetted by successive presidents, Anwar Sadat and Hosni Mubarak. Shari'a "lawfare" was waged through the courts, with al-Azhar mobilised in support. Prosecutions often began with petitions from Islamist lawyers – the beneficiaries of the take-over of professional associations and universities by the Muslim Brothers in the 1970s. Against this backdrop, prominent dissenting, or secular intellectuals became the targets for actual violence: Farag Foda was murdered; Naguib Mahfouz seriously injured; and Nasr Abu Zayd forcibly divorced (he fled like many others). The Foda case in particular was emblematic. It came after a public debate on (essentially) secularism versus Shari'a. Foda - who had consistently advocated the separation of religion and politics - was assassinated as a result. One of Foda's interlocutors, who had claimed to be a friend, Muhammad al-Ghazali, a Salafised Muslim brother and sheikh at al-Azhar, subsequently gave evidence during the trial of Foda's assassin, saying the murder was justified by Islamic law as Foda was an apostate.[373]

It is an extreme example, but it demonstrates what ultimately happens when the authorities hand over to the most zealous the right to decide what is acceptable/punishable: a stifling, normative hegemony that seeks to subjugate any threat to its control.

Needless to say, we don't imagine anything like the Foda assassination – or indeed any other kind of physical violence – to be imminent in the UK context. We are not in any way accusing groups like the MCB, the MAB or MEND of inciting violence. But in their demands for an inquiry into Conservative "Islamophobia", or for the adoption of the APPG definition, they effectively reinforce their own hand and their ambition to be accepted as the authoritative arbiters of what is/is not acceptable to Muslim communities. This, in turn, will facilitate their restoration to the status of trusted interlocutors for government and the accepted 'face' of mainstream British Islam.

Yet does combatting Islamophobia mean embracing the MCB? Surely not. The Government must not fall back into the trap of embracing

372.J. Iqbal, 'The diverse origins of Britain's Muslims', BBC News Online, 18 January 2018, https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-33715473.

373.Kepel, *Jihad*, pp. 286-7.

'gatekeeper' Muslim organisations like the MCB, which have played a decisive role in fostering an exclusivist Muslim identity within Britain over the last three decades. These are organisations that insist a Muslim must see his/her identity primarily or even solely, through the lens of faith. More than this, they have long fostered a sense of victimhood and grievance. This is problematic because, a) that narrative of victimhood is the same one that underpins more pernicious forms of extremism; and b) it is deeply injurious to wider social cohesion.

One of the consequences of all this has been to deepen divisions between 'communities' (the existence of discrete forms of which Islamists insist upon); this has created openings for extremist perspectives and exacerbated the polarization of society.

Against this background, it is reassuring that the Home Secretary Sajid Javid has refused to heed those voices within officialdom seeking to overturn Conservative Party policy on the MCB. Indeed, Javid has publicly repudiated the organisation – for which stance, he was, inevitably but tellingly, lambasted as 'Islamophobic' in certain quarters.[374]

The fact is that there are progressive Muslim voices who are ready to challenge *both* anti-Muslim hatred *and* Islamist extremism. They understand that these two phenomena exist in a symbiotic relationship; we should make them our allies. One such voice is that of Yahya Cholil Staquf, General Secretary of the Nahdlatul Ulama (an Indonesian Sunni Muslim organisation that claims more than 50 million members) and advisor to the President of Indonesia on religious affairs, who argues that Islamophobia arises in part from the actions of Muslims themselves, motivated by their understanding and practice of Islam, notably those which can give rise to religious extremism and terrorism. As he declared in one revealing newspaper interview:

> *Western politicians should stop pretending that extremism and terrorism have nothing to do with Islam. There is a clear relationship between fundamentalism, terrorism, and the basic assumptions of Islamic orthodoxy. So long as we lack consensus regarding this matter, we cannot gain victory over fundamentalist violence within Islam. Radical Islamic movements are nothing new. They've appeared again and again throughout our own history in Indonesia. The West must stop ascribing any and all discussion of these issues to "Islamophobia." Or do people want to accuse me— an Islamic scholar — of being an Islamophobe too?*[375]

According to Yahya Cholil Staquf, the challenge for British Muslim communities – and Muslims globally – is to re-contextualize the teachings of Islam to remove the underlying cause of Islamophobia. This can only be done, though, by allowing more – not less – space for criticism and dissent. In the wake of the Christchurch terrorist attack, Yahya repeated this call for Muslims "to address those obsolete and problematic elements of Islamic orthodoxy that underlie the Islamist worldview, fuelling violence on both sides". Significantly, he also took the opportunity to critique the proposals put forward by the APPG on British Muslims for a definition

374. J. Johnston, 'Sajid Javid denies Tories have an Islamophobia problem', Politics Home, 3 June 2018, https://www.politicshome.com/news/uk/political-parties/conservative-party/news/95648/sajid-javid-denies-tories-have-islamophobia.

375. M. Stahlhut, 'In Interview, Top Indonesian Muslim Scholar Says Stop Pretending That Orthodox Islam and Violence Aren't Linked', *Time*, 8 September 2017, http://time.com/4930742/islam-terrorism-islamophobia-violence/.

of Islamophobia. This was, Yahya declared, "factually incorrect and counterproductive". The real drive of Islamophobia, he insisted was "the spread of Islamist extremism and terror"; and he called on all people "to renounce the practice of weaponising Islam for partisan advantage", and instead to support the effort "to reform obsolete and problematic tenets of Islamic orthodoxy, rather than bequeath a tragic legacy of hatred and violence to future generations".[376] The goal of government policy must therefore be to ensure that Muslim communities do not turn inwards and do not become intellectually mono-cultural.

To be clear, this in no way diminishes our collective duty to challenge bigotry, discrimination and prejudice wherever it is found. The right of Muslims to freedom of conscience and the free practice of their religion must be safeguarded – insofar as it does not impinge on the good of society as a whole. Islam, in short, must be normalized – and treated as we would any other religion.

Reassuringly, polling figures show that the vast majority of British Muslims do feel at liberty to practice their religion as they see fit. To compare the contemporary position of British Muslims to the years of Nazi persecution that preceded the Holocaust – a semi-frequent refrain in certain circles – is an egregious exaggeration, the purpose of which can only be to sow a sense of victimhood and division. Indeed, it is perhaps worth pausing to consider how distorting, absurd and offensive the analogy is – and the extent, therefore, to which its use can only be for destructive purposes. Nazi Germany after 1933 witnessed the imposition of ever-more expansive legal disabilities upon the Jews, which led to them being constituted – in law – as a separate and alien community. This facilitated violent attacks on Jewish persons and property (which reached a crescendo with Kristallnacht in 1938) and effectively granted immunity to the perpetrators. This was not simply 'popular prejudice', but the creation of a legal-administrative machinery (the perversion of the Weberian managerial state) that could subsequently be used to implement the 'Final Solution'. Jews were formally denied membership of the German national community; later they were denied their very humanity. Can anyone seriously claim that British Muslims face a remotely comparable process in Britain today?

Despite the self-evidently preposterous nature of the comparison, it continues to be drawn. It is worth asking why this is? As noted, certain 'Islamophobists' seem determined to see it supplant antisemitism within Western political consciousness as the ultimate exemplar of prejudice, discrimination and racism. Within this context, it is obviously critical that the historical specificity and uniqueness of the Holocaust be eroded. Its constant invocation as a point of comparison has this effect. In the process, too, the injunction 'never again' has metamorphosed into the warning that 'it could happen anywhere', with the implicit suggestion that 'it is beginning to happen here, now'. Such elision rests on a remarkable level of historical amnesia and flippancy.

There is undoubted hostility to Islam and Muslims abroad in the UK

376.Y. Cholil Staquf 'To prevent another Christchurch, Islam must confront the attacks in its name that have radicalised the West', *The Sunday Telegraph*, 24 March 2019, https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2019/03/24/prevent-another-christchurch-islam-must-confront-attacks-name/.

and internationally. But this is based largely on what people believe to be the actions and beliefs of a faith group – not, as was the case with the Jews, a group united by faith but believed to share an ethnicity. Antisemitism is the hostile construction of the essential nature of the 'Jews' as an ethno-religious group; it is rooted in historical tropes going back millenia; and it has been the cause of sustained, often State-sponsored prejudice and discrimination. There is, however, no Muslim equivalent of the characteristic *Der Stuermer* caricature of The Jew as an ethnic type; nor is there the same conspiracy-minded imagining of Muslims, as a kith-and-kin group, secretly wielding diabolical power over the world.

Why is it so difficult to acknowledge simply that not all forms of prejudice are identical in character – and in particular, that antisemitism is not directly comparable to Islamophobia? The existence of one broadly accepted definition for the former (by the IHRA) does not, in and of itself, demand a counterpart for the latter.

Islamophobia has appealed, too, to some on the left, for whom the class struggle has become less potent as a rallying cry – and who, consequently, have sought solace in an admixture of critical theory and identitarian politics, whether racial, religious, cultural or ethno-religious. Islam, in particular, has come to be seen as a vehicle of the 'oppressed' (echoing the Khomeinist doctrine of the 'mustadh'afoun', itself powerfully influenced by Fanonism), with Muslims held to be the preeminent victims of structural global inequality and injustice flowing from constantly metastasising forms of neo-colonialism and imperialism whose epicenter is the "West", itself a polemical construct. At the same time, Islam is seen not as a complex religious, cultural and political tradition whose meaning is generated through temporal interaction with other global traditions and currents but as an alternative and dissident modernity.[377]

These claims are hard to address as the premises are so general and untestable and the taxonomies of oppression so protean. Any criticism is seen as evidence of bad faith and itself used to reinforce a sense of victimhood. It is this perspective, moreover, which makes many leftists blind to the realities of Islamist extremism, and the extent to which this exists in dialectic with Islamophobia. For given their view that all racism and hatred flow ultimately from imbalances of power – and are indeed an integral part of a structural effort to control, or subordinate the powerless – it necessarily follows that they imagine the powerless to be incapable of holding meaningfully racist and hate-filled views or, if they do, then this is simply justified ideational resistance. This is the critical blind-spot at the heart of critical theory.

And it is on this (crude) intellectual basis that a swathe of the political left joins with groups like MEND to denounce government policies designed to tackle Islamist extremism, whilst simultaneously insisting that far more be done about Islamophobia. They seem blind to the irony that in making the case for the latter, they deploy the same argument they accuse the government of applying to Islamist extremism: namely, that it is not enough to focus solely on violent extremism, but one must instead challenge the

377. On an example of such thinking as it applies to France, see M. H. Davis, 'Racial Capitalism and the Campaign against "Islamo-Gauchisme" in France', Jadaliyya, 14 August 2018, http://www.jadaliyya.com/Details/37858/Racial-Capitalism-and-the-Campaign-Against-.

broader hinterland of non-violent extremism. As one writer for Middle East Eye put it, "violent Islamophobia is merely the tip of the iceberg, watered and fed by a body of ideas mainstreamed by governing parties when they allow fascist ideas to permeate their core."[378] The statement is hyperbolic, but arguably carries a grain of truth. But try making the same case in relation to the challenge posed by radical Islamism; those who do are immediately rebuffed by groups like the MCB and MEND.

In February of this year, for example, MEND attacked Home Secretary Sajid Javid for a statement several months previously in which had he said, "although we all share the responsibility for tackling terrorism, there's a unique role for Muslims to play in countering this threat." Javid had added that there was "no avoiding the fact that these people [i.e. terrorists] they self-identify as Muslims."[379] Yet MEND complained that "A statement like this gives credence to Islamophobic tropes which is then used to justify violence against ordinary Muslim citizens and to legitimately orchestrate the 'War on Terror'."[380]

Such arguments are pernicious precisely because of the way they seek to close down debate and shut off space for policy responses on a range of issues. As the Algerian writer Boulem Sansal observed in 2015, "Europe is in a catch-22. The problem of Islamic extremism has given rise to total paralysis. The fear of being considered an Islamophobe or a racist prevents any step or any practical and effective action."[381]

To return to the APPG definition, even if one sets aside the intellectual shortcomings of what is proposed, a more practical and perhaps more important set of concerns remain. By identifying Islamophobia as anything that targets "expressions of Muslimness" or perceived "Muslimness", the list of behaviours and attitudes thereby captured could be extended indefinitely. This potential expansiveness is highly problematic when one considers that groups like the MCB and MEND have repeatedly challenged government policy and sought to change the way in which press freedom operates in the UK. It is manifestly clear that they see a formal definition of 'Islamophobia' as a vehicle for undermining, or challenging in the courts, government policy on a range of issues: immigration, security, extremism and so forth. Supporters of the proposed definition have repeatedly denounced the Prevent programme – started under the New Labour Governments of Tony Blair and continued under the subsequent Coalition and Conservative administrations – as 'institutionally Islamophobic'. It is almost certain that such groups would seek to use such a loosely worded definition to overturn the policies of the democratically elected government.[382] It would also be used to challenge key public policy initiatives such as Peter Clarke's investigation into the 'Trojan Horse' conspiracy in Birmingham schools; or Eric Pickles' inquiry into the corrupt and illegal practices in which Lutfur Rahman was engaged in Tower Hamlets; or Amanda Spielman's work to promote British values at Ofsted; or the work of the Commission for Countering Extremism.

On a related note, as we have made clear, an endorsement of the APPG's definition could significantly undermine freedom of the media,

378. M. Francois, 'To fix Islamophobia, we must first define it', Middle East Eye, 23 June 2018, http://www.middleeasteye.net/columns/fix-islamophobia-we-must-first-define-it-1469998790.

379. 'Home Secretary announces new counter-terrorism strategy', Home Office, 4 June 2018, https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/home-secretary-announces-new-counter-terrorism-strategy.

380. 'Guilty until proven innocent?', MEND, 22 February 2019, https://mend.org.uk/news/guilty-proven-innocent/.

381. Gaby Levin, 'Arab World Is Dead, Iran Will Lead Islam', *Haaretz*, 2 September 2015, http://www.haaretz.com/news/world/.premium-1.674009.

382. J. Jenkins and T. Phillips, *Defining Islamophobia: A Policy Exchange Research Note* (London: Policy Exchange, 2018), https://policyexchange.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/Defining-Islamophobia.pdf.

as legitimate reporting and commentary could potentially be labelled 'Islamophobic'. A capacious definition of Islamophobia might make it more difficult to investigate future stories like the Rotherham grooming scandals (for which the respected *Times* journalist Dominic Kennedy was lambasted as a "professional Islamophobe").[383] Surely, all of this would suggest that the price of such a definition – in terms of its negative consequences – is too high?

In trying to find an alternative way forward, it is surely vital that we clearly distinguish between that which is unlawful and that which is undesirable. The former is the proper terrain of governments and legislation; the latter is a space of contestation, which has to be tackled across society. Of course, government might wish to signal that which is undesirable, but this is more properly achieved through dialogue and education, rather than the blunt instrument of the law. Ultimately, in a democratic society, the Government has no right to tell people what to think.

Anti-Muslim hatred, discrimination and bias is unacceptable; where it crosses the threshold of legality, it should be met with the full force of the law. Any behavior that unlawfully disadvantages Muslims on the grounds of their being Muslim, should be challenged through the courts. Equally, the government must be clear that Muslims are full citizens with equal rights – impediments to them enjoying such status must be tackled and removed.

At present, as we have shown, the discourse around the specific term "Islamophobia" remains highly problematic. But it may be that the word itself has gained critical mass in terms of public acceptability. If that is the case, we must surely be wary of embracing some kind of expansive definition that might carry all manner of (perhaps unforeseen) consequences. In seeking a way forward, the UK could do worse than looking abroad for how others deal with this issue.

The OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR)[384] uses the term "Bias against Muslims" in its regular reports on such subjects. It places it alongside other forms of prejudice such as antisemitism, racism and xenophobia, bias against Roma and Sinti and bias against Christians. The ODIHR rightly recognizes that such biases exist and need to be addressed sensibly, sensitively and proportionately, on the basis of credible evidence – not self-interested assertions. Equally, it highlights the fact that we need to distinguish between bias or prejudice and informed criticism.[385] Therein, perhaps, lies the beginning of wisdom and a way towards a genuinely progressive policy that eschews the pernicious politics of victimhood.

Moreover, by rendering 'Islamophobia' synonymous with anti-Muslim bias, the government can move on from interminable debates about language and identity and instead focus on taking steps that will actually improve the lives of its Muslim citizens. To this end, the government should revive and build upon the valuable report produced by Dame Louise Casey in late 2016. This laid bare the extent to which members of particular communities do face clear disadvantages which hold them back from being fully integrated and successful members of society. Particular attention was drawn to

383. Ibid.

384. Commonly regarded as the most reputable organisation in the field, and the first port of call for statistics and reports – available at 'Hate Crime Reporting', OSCE ODIHR, http://hatecrime.osce.org/. The EU uses the phrase "anti-Muslim hatred". See, 'Combating anti-Muslim hatred', European Commission, 11 February 2019, https://ec.europa.eu/newsroom/just/item-detail.cfm?item_id=50085.

385. A real danger otherwise, especially if the criterion is "expressions of Muslimness", is that the line between criticism and blasphemy becomes blurred: indeed, to some, this may be the point. See F. Shaikh, 'Pakistan is betrayed by its blasphemy laws', UnHerd, 19 February 2019, https://unherd.com/2019/02/pakistan-is-betrayed-by-its-blasphemy-laws/?tl_inbound=1&tl_groups[0]=18743&tl_period_type=3.

the situation faced by Muslims of Pakistani and Bangladeshi ethnicity. Members of these communities, Casey noted, tend to be more segregated residentially; to attend schools that are more segregated; to record lower levels of educational attainment; to experience an employment and pay gap; and to suffer from lower rates of social mobility. Casey acknowledged that part of this story could be accounted for by discrimination and prejudice; but reassuringly, she eschewed simplistic, monocausal explanations. Casey thus noted how much contemporary disadvantage stemmed from historic patterns of settlement and employment; she also pointed to "religious, cultural and social barriers" to success, which included "regressive and harmful practices" within communities that held back particular groups – such as Muslim women. Furthermore, Casey was unsparing in her critique of many public and political leaders, noting their failure to challenge such regressive practices "for fear of being branded racist or Islamophobic".[386]

Given her unique perspective, Casey herself should be asked to return to head a task-force that would produce and then oversee a five-year plan for challenging deprivation and promoting equality. No-one is doubting that many Muslims do suffer from disproportionately high rates of poverty, inequality of access to services and the job market. What needs to be ascertained is how far any of this flows directly from their religious faith – and more importantly, what concrete steps can be taken to create opportunity structures for advancement and prosperity.

Another useful step would be for the government to signal its commitment to tackling prejudice and discrimination in all its forms by tasking the lead Commissioner for Countering Extremism, Sara Khan, to head an inquiry that would bring forward policy solutions for tackling anti-Muslim hatred.

The Government can also underline its commitment to countering anti-Muslim hate crime (and indeed, all forms of hate crime) by establishing a single, credible and authoritative body that will collate such statistics. This would bring clarity to an issue that is the subject of too many unsubstantiated, often partisan, claims.

Finally, government should embrace those voices who are determined to challenge *both* anti-Muslim hatred *and* Islamist extremism – recognising the extent to which these two forces feed off one another, and together stand implacably opposed to a vibrant, liberal and successful multicultural Britain.

386.Casey, *The Casey Review.*

Policy Exchange

The authors of this important study have documented in great detail how the term Islamophobia evolved from relative obscurity to become an accusation of considerable consequence in public life. We know that the APPG's proposed definition would have a lamentable impact on the country's counter-terror legislation. In essence, the term Islamophobia conflates issues of religion with political questions. This creates almost insuperable difficulties for any prescriptive definition. The APPG's version risks creating very damaging consequences, and should be rejected.

Lord Carlile of Berriew CBE QC

The subject of Islamophobia is both complex and controversial. That is why it is so important to have publications like this report from Policy Exchange, which is prepared to ask difficult questions and avoids simplistic answers. Efforts to legally define and restrict "Islamophobia"—whatever their intention—threaten to strip Western societies of the freedom of speech required to identify and address the very real dangers that are posed by Islamist extremism, while encouraging Muslims to identify as victims and further politicizing religious identity. Rather than take sides in the highly polarized and increasingly lethal "culture wars" currently roiling the West, we urge Muslims to join hands with people of good will of every faith and nation who seek to prevent the political weaponization of Islam and curtail the spread of communal hatred. Islamophobia will only be overcome as part of a broader effort to defeat Islamist extremism.

Yahya Cholil Staquf, General Secretary Nahdlatul Ulama Supreme Council

This extremely valuable and comprehensive new study outlines clearly why the definition of Islamophobia produced by the APPG on British Muslims is regrettably so unhelpful and so flawed. This study meticulously details the role of Islamist groups in influencing the campaign for an Islamophobia definition and reveals how voices from that campaign have fed into the definition we are being presented with now. This contrasts noticeably with the APPG's own Islamophobia report, which was as silent on the impact of Islamism as it was on the very real discrimination that Muslim minorities and secular Muslims face from within their own faith. The APPG's definition does nothing to address this form of prejudice that many Muslims—myself included—have experienced first hand.

In short, the convoluted definition of Islamophobia that the APPG has come up with conflates religion (a question of belief) with a race (an immutable characteristic) — and defines Islamophobia so widely that it could encompass most people in this country. This new study demonstrates why that must be avoided.

Baroness Falkner of Margravine

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