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Theory Culture Society 2007 24: 187
DOI: 10.1177/0263276407075005

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British Muslim Perspectives on Multiculturalism

Tariq Modood and Fauzia Ahmad

THERE IS a general understanding today that Britain is a multicultural society, but what does this mean, how effective is it in practice and what questions does it raise about institutional racism, citizenship and national identity? Can we, in the current lexicon of the UK Home Office, talk with any coherence about ‘cohesive communities’? How are these defined – by ‘race’, ethnicity, national origins or religion?

The characterization of post-migration relations in Britain at least till the late 1980s was premised on the idea that ‘colour-racism’ defined the relationship, that it was a black–white racial dualism. With the splintering of ‘black’ into ‘black and Asian’ and, later, the rise of religious identities like Sikh and Muslim, a more pluralistic situation developed. With increasing evidence that South Asians, especially Muslims, give religion rather than national origins a greater saliency in self-concepts, and an on-going series of political crises featuring Muslims rather than Asians or non-whites per se – from the Rushdie Affair in 1988–9 to the first Gulf war in 1991, the controversies around Muslim faith schools, 11 September 2001, the resulting wars in Afghanistan and Iraq and the 7 July 2005 bombings – the term ‘Asian’ has ceased to have much content as a political category. It still has some resonance as a self-identity for some, especially young people, mainly in relation to a new, hybrid British Asian culture, but it is ‘Muslim’ that has emerged as the most prominent and charged communal category. Demography also has some relevance here, for at 1.5 million in the 2001 Census, Muslims are as numerous as all other non-Christian minority faiths. (They also constitute more than a third of non-whites; this estimation is complicated by the fact that most Middle Easterners regard themselves as white, though it is doubtful that others unambiguously regard them as such.) Thus new questions have been raised about tolerance and the conformity

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- *Theory, Culture & Society* 2007 (SAGE, London, Thousand Oaks and New Delhi),
Vol. 24(2): 187–213
DOI: 10.1177/0263276407075005

that a dominant culture which aspires to be liberal, democratic and inclusive may require from minority cultures; whether we need a new extended concept of racism which can incorporate hostility against Muslims; and about the place of religion in the political culture and institutions.

All these questions, which are central to working out a viable multiculturalism in Britain, were thrown into sharp relief by 11 September 2001 and its aftermath. There have been many reports of harassment and attacks against Muslims; and Muslims, who have expressed both vulnerability and defiance, have become a focus of national concern and debate. Muslim Britons have found themselves bearing the brunt of a new wave of suspicion and hostility, and strongly voiced if imprecise doubts have been cast on their loyalty as citizens (Werbner, 2001). There has been widespread questioning about whether Muslims can be, and are willing to be, integrated into British society and its political values. This has ranged from anxiety about terrorist cells and networks recruiting alienated young Muslims for mischief abroad and as a 'fifth column' at home, to whether Muslims are willing to give loyalty to the British state rather than to transnational Muslim leaders and causes, and to whether Muslims are committed to what are taken to be the core British values of freedom, tolerance, democracy, sexual equality and secularism. Many politicians, commentators, letter-writers and phone-callers to the media from across the political spectrum, not to mention Home Secretaries, have blamed the fact that these questions have had to be asked on the alleged cultural separatism and self-imposed segregation of Muslim migrants, and on a 'politically correct' concept of multiculturalism that fostered fragmentation rather than integration and 'Britishness' (*Independent on Sunday*, 9 December 2001).

There is also a further problem in relation to Muslims and religious minorities and current political attacks on multiculturalism (for elaboration of the argument below, see Modood, 2005). When the term 'multiculturalism' emerged in 1970s Britain, the initial policy focus was primarily on schooling. Multiculturalism meant the extension of the school, both in terms of curriculum and as an institution, to include features such as 'mother-tongue' teaching, black history, Asian dress and – importantly – non-Christian religions and holidays, religious dietary requirements and so on. It was criticized by socialists and anti-racists as not focusing on the real social divisions and causes of inequality, and caricatured as a preoccupation with 'saris, steel bands and samosas' (Modood and May, 2001; Troyna, 1987, 1993). One consequence was a perhaps unnecessary and prolonged division between anti-racists and multiculturalists; another was that religious identity issues were marginalized, even by advocates of multicultural education (Swann, 1985). Relatedly, as anti-discrimination legislation and policies were developed in Britain, the initial focus was on colour-racism. After a cursory discussion in Parliament, an amendment to include religion as a ground of discrimination in the 1976 Race Relations Act was withdrawn. However, while Jews were taken to be a 'race' by the legislators and the courts, and the *Mandala* decision of the House of Lords

judges in 1982 included another ethno-religious community, the Sikhs, within the protection of the Act, Muslims were judged to be solely a religious group and so direct discrimination against them was lawful (except in Northern Ireland) until the end of 2003, when religious discrimination in employment was made an offence.

This marginality of religious identity in the British equalities framework is a reflection of the wider culture, in which it seemed reasonable simultaneously to argue against colour-blindness and in favour of racial explicitness in policy; to celebrate and promote respect for black and ethnic minority identities; to argue that marginalized identities needed to be brought from the margins to the centre of public identity formation; and at the same time to argue that religion was a matter not of mutual respect but of mutual tolerance and had to be confined to a private sphere. This dichotomy between race/ethnicity on the one hand, and religion on the other, became part of the foundations of the theories of multiculturalism and politics of ‘difference’ as they came to be elaborated in the 1980s and 1990s. For example, Will Kymlicka, the leading international liberal theorist of multiculturalism, argues that a strict separation of state and ethnicity is incoherent but is content to apply the separation model to religion (Kymlicka, 1995: 107–8, 2001: 24; Modood, 2007). Similarly, the feminist political philosopher, Iris Young, develops a theory of empowerment for all forms of marginal groups (critics have joked that her amalgam of minorities includes 80 per cent of the population, for it only seems to leave out able-bodied, heterosexual white males) without mentioning religion, which does not even feature as a term in the index (Young, 1990; for a later contrast, see Parekh, 2000). In theory and in practice, then, while minority racial and ethnic assertiveness (not to mention women’s movements and gay pride) were encouraged by egalitarians, religious assertiveness, especially on the part of Muslims – when it occurred – was seen as a problem: not as a strand within equality struggles but as a threat to multiculturalism. The *Satanic Verses* Affair at the end of the 1980s is a notable example; it horrified liberals and socialists alike and divided both multiculturalists and anti-racists. An instance of which is that it led the Southall Black Sisters to found ‘Women Against Fundamentalism’ (WAF) to oppose the Muslim protesters against the novel (WAF, 1990; Yuval-Davis, 1992).

All these tensions have grown and, in the aftermath of 9/11 and 7/7, seem to be set to grow further. They are not necessarily irresolvable but the tension between Muslim assertiveness (in its varying forms) and the deeply embedded secularism of most liberal democracies is at the heart of what is perceived as a ‘crisis of multiculturalism’ in most of the countries of western Europe (Modood, 2007; Modood et al., 2006).

The Role of ‘Moderate’ Muslims

One of the interesting aspects of the post-9/11 public statements of Muslims, which for example was missing at the time of the protests against Salman Rushdie’s novel, *The Satanic Verses*, is the expression of self-criticism. Some

Muslim commentators writing in the non-Muslim media, while maintaining a strongly anti-US/Western foreign policy stance, have expressed shock at how much anger and latent violence has become part of British Muslim, especially youth, culture, arguing that West-hating militant ideologues had ‘hijacked’ Islam and that the ‘moderates’ had to denounce them.¹ The following quote from Yusuf Islam, head of the Islamia Educational Trust, nicely captures this shift in the position of the ‘moderates’:

[At the time of the Rushdie Affair] I was still learning, ill-prepared and lacking in knowledge and confidence to speak out against forms of extremism. . . . Today, I am aghast at the horror of recent events and feel it a duty to speak out. Not only did terrorists hijack planes and destroy life, they also hijacked the beautiful religion of Islam. (*The Independent*, 26 October 2001)

Some Muslim intellectuals issued *fatwas* against the fanatics (Ziauddin Sardar, *The Observer*, 23 September 2001), and described the Muslim revolutionaries as ‘fascists’ (Sardar, *Evening Standard*, 5 November 2001) and ‘xenophobes’ (Yasmin Alibhai-Brown, *The Independent*, 5 November 2001), with whom they did not want to be united in the term ‘British Muslims’.² While in the *Satanic Verses* Affair ‘moderate’ Muslims argued against what they took to be a bias against Muslims – a failure even by liberals to extend the ideas of equality and respect for others to include Muslims – to this line of defence ‘moderates’ now added a discourse about the urgency of reinterpreting or re-reading Islam in an effort to retrieve and revive notions of tolerance, equality and compassion. This is variously taken to be a re-excitation of the Qur’an as a charter of human rights, which, for example, abolished slavery and gave property rights to women more than a millennium before either of these was achieved in the West; a restoration of the thirst for knowledge and rational inquiry that characterized medieval Muslim societies; a re-centring of Islam around piety and spirituality, not political ideology; a ‘reformation’ that would make Islam compatible with individual conscience, science and secularism. Ziauddin Sardar, one of the most prominent of the ‘moderate’ Muslim intellectuals, identified the failure of the Islamist movements of the 1960s and 1970s as among the causes of the contemporary distortions of political Islam. Such movements, he argued, had started off with an ethical and intellectual idealism but had become intellectually closed, fanatical and violent. As today’s middle-aged moderates had encouraged the earlier Islamic renewal, they must now take some responsibility for what had come to pass and must do something about it (Sardar, *The Observer*, 21 October 2001). This aspect of self-criticism was also found in Muslim discourses following the London bombings on 7 July 2005.³

Defining ‘Moderate Muslims’

This article is based on a research project that sought to explore the perceptions of some key Muslims in Britain on the place of Muslims in the kind of multicultural society that Britain is becoming or could become. It was

conceived with ‘September 11’ and its aftermath as a backdrop. This included the fear and anger that was being directed against Muslims for their real or imagined association with enemies of Britain, Islamic militancy and terrorism. The Muslims whose perceptions we researched were identified on the basis of two criteria. First, they had to be ‘public’ figures – visibly active as intellectuals, commentators and/or community activists or leaders engaged in debates about the politics of being Muslim in Britain. Some of them appear regularly on, say, current affairs television and in the opinion columns of the broadsheet newspapers, while others were less well known in the mainstream media but were prominent in Muslim community organizations and were regular speakers and contributors to Muslim public meetings, magazines and websites.⁴

Second, they had to be ‘moderate’. This is a difficult, indeed, controversial term, which, as we discuss below, was rejected by some of those whom we interviewed. Nevertheless, despite difficulties of terminology, we clearly chose to interview Muslims who held one kind of view and not another kind of view. So, by ‘moderate Muslim’ here is meant Muslims who are anti-terrorism (whether in the name of Islam or otherwise) and who are opposed to the invocation of Islam in militant political rhetoric. More specifically, they are opposed to the ‘clash of civilizations’ thesis, as espoused by, for example, American neo-conservatives and radical Islamists (another potentially controversial term), which claims that Islam and the West are two monoliths that are at war with each other and that the war is inevitable and stems from a deep civilizational difference and antagonism.

‘Moderate Muslim’ is obviously a relational term: it only makes sense in terms of a contrast with non-moderates, as is always the case in a moderate–radical couplet (cf. moderate feminist and radical feminist). While the discourse of ‘moderation’ is most clearly a reaction to, and defined in opposition to, terrorism of the kind that took place on 9/11, we can perhaps very briefly sketch the interpretation of Islam that, on the whole, ‘moderation’ is opposed to. As above, it must be stressed, however, that we are not claiming that all the individuals we refer to later in this article share this definition of ‘non-moderation’. Nevertheless, we might find it useful to draw on the arguments presented by Omid Safi (2003) for the development of a ‘progressive Muslim discourse’ in opposition to a ‘non-progressive’ one. This involves openly challenging and resisting oppressive regimes and practices that promote violations of basic human rights such as freedom of expression, as seen in several Muslim countries (for example, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Pakistan, etc.). It also involves challenging regimes, such as the Taliban, that promote narrow interpretations of the Qur’an, as demonstrated in its extreme forms of gender segregation, or the persecution of ethnic and religious minorities. As Safi goes on to say, ‘it means embracing and implementing a different vision of Islam than that offered by Wahhabi and neo-Wahhabi groups’ while remaining careful to avoid ‘de-humanizing’ and demonizing those who profess Wahhabist leanings (2003: 2). Besides rejecting certain versions of Islam, it also includes a strenuous resistance

to 'hegemonic Western political, economic and intellectual structures that promote an unequal distribution of resources around the world' (2003: 2).

In contrast, non-moderate Islam can be seen as ahistorical and making no concessions to interpretation and context. Actions that are prescribed in the Qur'an (e.g. compassionate treatment of slaves) are taken to be equally appropriate today, a time when slavery has no moral justification. Similarly, the harsh punishments of *hudud*, such as cutting off of the hand of a thief, are read as if they apply to all times and places, without regard to levels of poverty and welfare, and the achievement of social justice that the Qur'an exhorts. The Qur'an and *Shariah* are thus read as not primarily enunciating and illustrating principles for correct action but as concrete and fixed sets of actions. Prominent themes and principles within the Qur'an, and reiterated in *Shariah* and the Hadith, such as mercy, compassion and social justice, are relegated to the background in favour of narrow, rigid interpretations and extreme actions. No room for critical reasoning and interpretation (*ijtihad*) is allowed but a particular dogmatic interpretation is asserted to be the only one possible. Added to this is a concept of '*jihad*' in which military action – rather than spiritual, ethical or even political struggle – is given primacy and is seen as most apposite in the world today. It is this narrow, reductionist view of Islam and human conduct, without a full understanding of the scope of Qur'anic teachings and principles, along with a rejection of anything 'Western', that can be highly dangerous when directed towards political power or martyrdom. It is this rigid, fanatical (not to be confused with the term 'fundamentalist' – another contested term)⁵ and exclusionist vision of Islam that 'a progressive' perspective denounces and opposes.

'Moderate Muslim' is a relational concept in another, deeper sense too. It is about a relationship between Muslims and the 'West'. Moderate Muslims in the British or any other Western context, seek, albeit in different ways, positive mutual interaction between things Western and things Islamic, including socio-political integration and self-integration, that is, integrating aspects of one's thinking and behaviour that are Muslim and aspects of one's thinking and behaviour that are Western, so that there is no clear boundary or antagonism between the two (cf. Roy, 2004). The idea of reconciling two sets of intellectual-practical commitments, holding on to one without rejecting the other but seeking to make compatible the best from both, and to do so as a form of politics, is central to the concept of 'moderate Muslim'. So, 'moderate Muslim' can be seen as an explicit and reasoned struggle to create a hybrid position. At least sociologically, it is more like a 'hyphenated identity' than an interpretation of the Qur'an, though of course the motive for it may come from the Qur'an and it may have to be justified by an appeal to Islamic texts and precedents. Nevertheless, the non-Muslim context can be critical too. Of particular pertinence here is the suggestion that British Muslim political activism in relation to domestic politics is an outgrowth of movements for racial equality and multiculturalism (Modood, 2002, 2005).

One of the key distinctions between the ‘Progressive Muslim’ discourse in the US and those we interviewed is that, while the former represents a collective of individuals (such as Farid Esack, Amina Wadud, Kecia Ali, Ahmad S. Mousalli and Akbar S. Ahmed, to name a few) who openly identify as part of a ‘movement’, those in our sample do not. They speak either as individuals or as representatives (elected or otherwise) of groups and organizations, and as such demonstrate a diverse range of Muslim experience, opinion and interests.⁶ In any case, the important point to emphasize is that ‘moderate Muslim’ is not a single position but refers to a broad and vibrant field of identity debates and positions. Moreover, in relation to both our criteria, ‘Muslim’ operated as a sociological category for identification, not as a faith category. For the purposes of our study, it was sufficient that individuals selected were either actively a part of a Muslim community, group or organization, perceived themselves as Muslim, and/or were perceived by others as Muslims.⁷ (See Appendix ‘A’ for list of interviewees.)

While our interviewees, in our opinion, conformed to these criteria, not all were happy with the term ‘moderate’. Despite the recent claim that, among Muslims, it ‘has actually become somewhat fashionable these days to refer to oneself or one’s ilk as “being moderate”’ (Bokhari, 2004: 34), some of our respondents objected to the term in the title of the research project and we believe that it may even have influenced some to not cooperate. Of those who participated, several said that it was a divisive term, sorting Muslims into ‘good’ and ‘bad’ Muslims and therefore unhelpful, especially as it was external to Muslim discourses and seemed an invention of the Western media and politicians (Mamdani, 2002). Some objected that Islam, being the ‘Middle Way’, was already a religion of moderation and so did not need the prefix ‘moderate’. All said that the term had a negative association among some sections of the Muslim community, which constrained its use. As it was a term used of and used by politicians, including leaders of some Muslim countries, who were seen to be uncritically supportive of Western interests and policies, it had come to be synonymous with terms such as ‘stooge’, ‘collaborator’ and ‘sell-out’.⁸ So much so that even those who thought the term was reasonable, and who in some contexts would use it to describe themselves, found themselves having to be cautious. Some of these multi-layered meanings are nicely caught in the following quote from Ghayasuddin Siddiqui, Leader of the ‘Muslim Parliament’:

I’m reluctant to use this word, because it has come, as they call it, from non-Islamic sources, but I think we must hold the middle ground.

A number of assumptions and implications can be identified in this quote:

1. Islam is the middle ground, which he remains firm about.
2. He has nothing against the term ‘moderate’ but he is in a dilemma because:

- a. Muslim extremists have fouled the term with their sneers and accusations and
 - b. the term also has negative meanings within the wider British Muslim community as it implies a certain compromising of Islamic ideals.
3. The term therefore cannot be safely used to mark and hold the middle ground.

As a result of the responses described above we gave considerable and prolonged thought to substituting the word 'moderate'. Despite consulting many people, we failed to come up with a term that equally adequately met our criteria, as expounded above. Terms such as 'mainstream', 'liberal', 'traditional', 'British' and others were offered, but each was deemed by us to be less adequate, either because it was too extensive (e.g. 'mainstream', 'British'), too narrow ('traditional') or too contested ('liberal').⁹ We believe, therefore, that two of the important findings of this project are the rejection of the term 'moderate' by so many of our respondents and others; and that no alternative term can be identified. We mark this dual finding by using the term 'moderate Muslim' in quote marks throughout.

As mentioned, we did not take 'moderate Muslim' to be a single position but a number of approaches (which could be overlapping) to expressing Muslim identities in contemporary Britain. For the purposes of this project we characterized some of the important positions we were interested in the following way:

1. 'Traditional Islam' – reasoning from faith and first principles but doing so in the way of the traditional *ulemma* or, more likely, in a way not opposed to traditional Islamic learning.
2. 'Modernist Islam' – reasoning from faith and first principles but doing so in ways that draw upon modernist ideas within an Islamic methodology (*Ijtihad*).
3. 'Philosophical Muslim' – reasoning from first principles but without much systematic reference to Islam and drawing more on modern Western theory ethics and principles, including arguments about multiculturalism, equality and so on.
4. 'Existential Muslim' – arguing in a more existential and pragmatic way, for example, linking the communities and institutions that one belongs to, say, Muslims and the Labour Party, or Muslims and racial equality institutions. Or to treat being 'British Muslim' as a hyphenated identity in which both parts are to be valued as important to oneself and one's principles and belief commitments.

We sought to represent all four of these intellectual positions with the participants in our sample. We did not expect to cover each equally and did not do so, with the first position proving to be the most covered, though of course individuals did not neatly fall into one way of thinking or another. Shadid and Van Koningsveld (1996) classify Islamic perspectives on

Muslims living in non-Muslim countries into four on the basis of the position taken on the classical division of the world into a ‘Territory of Islam’ and ‘Territory of War’ (Shahid and Von Koningsveld, 1996). That classification had no purchase in our study as none of our interviewees made any reference to these classical concepts and therefore all of our respondents fall into only one of those four categories, namely, an implicit and pragmatic rejection of the classical division of the world into an oppositional ‘Us’ and ‘Them’.¹⁰ We would suggest that Shahid and Van Koningsveld’s classification is only useful in relation to those who do not think of themselves as British (perhaps some non-naturalized ‘first-generation’ immigrants), or those who are radical Islamists – who by definition were not included in the study. Perhaps a more pertinent contrast with our four identified positions within the category ‘moderate’ or mainstream is with the eight offered by Saied Reza Ameli (2002) in his study of British-born Muslims in the London Borough of Brent. Basing his typologies on the three forms of identity construction originally proposed by Castells (1997), Ameli distinguishes between eight differing but correlated types of British Muslim identity that reflect local, global and historical influences. He lists these as Nationalist, Traditional, Islamist, Modernized, Secular, Anglicized (Westernized), Hybrid, and Undetermined or ‘disorganized’, referring particularly to younger generations who display little loyalty either to their families’ country of origin or Britain. Like our study, he sought to differentiate along sociological lines rather than religious ones, though of course he casts a much wider net than we do and, in contrast to Ameli, our categorization was used to identify the sample and not as a tool of analysis or as a conclusion of research. With specific reference to those who refer to themselves as ‘moderate Muslims’, Bokhari believes they can be sorted into ‘moderate Islamists, traditional Muslims, liberal Muslims, and certain regimes in the Muslim world’ (Bokhari, 2004: 34). Interestingly, he suggests that ‘the shunning of the use of force to promote a particularistic political agenda should be the minimum requirement to qualify as a moderate Muslim’ and that the term should be about respecting the plurality of *ijtihad* (2004: 35).

Beyond specific exercises in categorization, there are of course various studies of Muslim discourses in Britain and how they sometimes use British race relations discourses (e.g. Lewis, 1994; Werbner, 2002), or how young British Muslims interpret being Muslim and British (e.g. Jacobson, 1997), and Muslim intellectual perspectives on the socio-political contexts of Muslims in the West (e.g. Ahmed, 2003). As far as we are aware, no previous study has attempted to empirically identify the positions of Muslim intellectuals and activists on multiculturalism and related concepts such as equality, citizenship and belonging. We do not attempt to locate the positions we discuss here to the philosophies of the 19th- and 20th-century reformist Muslim intellectuals; rather, the conceptualization used here to identify ‘moderate Muslims’ and different strands therein is original to this project.

Some will consider that our project as an inquiry into Muslim perspectives on multiculturalism is misconceptualized. They may contend that it should be framed as an inquiry into religious pluralism.¹¹ We, however, think that contemporary notions of multicultural equality and respect are a more appropriate discourse than the more traditional notions of religious pluralism and tolerance for understanding Muslim civic claims-making in contemporary Britain (Modood, 2007). Our invitation to our respondents was explicitly couched in terms of a request for an interview on a project on 'Moderate Muslims and the Politics of Multiculturalism'. While some, as we note below, queried the notion of multiculturalism, most were concerned to extend multiculturalism to encompass faith groups rather than to seek a domain of tolerance. We believe that both perspectives may be pertinent in their own way and each can benefit from mutual engagement.

Methodology

Interviews lasting an average of about two hours were undertaken during January–May 2003 in London. Our goal was 20 semi-structured interviews with prominent Muslims, though we achieved 21. Four of our contributors were women. The interview schedule was piloted and each interview was tape-recorded and transcribed. The interviews, due to the nature of the debates and our prior personal relationships with interviewees, were at times, informal in nature and most can be said to have taken on the form of 'structured conversations'. Therefore, interviews were organic in that we allowed respondents to discuss issues they felt particularly passionate about or keen to elaborate upon, and allowed the interview to progress and develop as themes emerged. We did not need to keep to a rigid list of questions as many respondents elaborated upon related items during the course of their responses and the discussion.

In addition, a number of key written articles by our interviewees were also referred to as part of the research process in helping us to map out the debates. Interviewees were invited to refer us to articles they felt were relevant to the research questions and to add further comment on the research throughout the research process.

Multiculturalism as a Muslim Position

None of our interviewees argued against the ideal of multiculturalism. There were two main dimensions arising from the interviews regarding multiculturalism. One was the emphasis many placed on the inherent plurality in Islam, the Qur'an and Islamic history, as well as contemporary examples. The other was an evaluation of the realities of multiculturalism as manifested and practised in Britain.

Islam as Inherently Multicultural

There were two main ways in which contributors highlighted Islamic perspectives and contributions to debates on multiculturalism. One was to refer to specific Qur'anic passages while the other was to refer to examples

from Islamic history. For example, the writer, broadcaster and convert Merryl Wyn-Davies cited the Qur'anic verse beginning, 'We have created you nations and tribes, that you may know one another' and 'We have created colours and tongues'. She linked these quotes to the concepts of identity and citizenship, arguing that Islam 'allows difference to flourish':

The whole sense of identity – the Qur'an does not talk in the language of rights, rather the language of endowments and obligations and responsibilities – but if you wanted to say, the right to an identity, up to and including a different religious identity is guaranteed within the matrix of the Qur'an. The Qur'an is to me inherently multicultural.

Wyn-Davies has in fact devoted a book to the idea of pluralism in Islam (Wyn-Davies, 1988; see also Asani, 2003 and Khan, 2002 for 'ideas that form the seeds for a theology of pluralism within Islam'). Many other respondents referred to examples throughout Islamic history to illustrate how concepts of multiculturalism, or rather plurality, were enshrined and practised within Islamic traditions of governance. For example, the late Sheikh Dr Zaki Badawi (not in our sample, but spoken to informally) has stressed that the constitution of Medina, under the Prophet Muhammad's leadership, was the first example of a multicultural constitution in history in that it guaranteed autonomy to the various communities of the city (Badawi, 2003). The Ottoman *millat* system is also often cited in contemporary discussions as a model of multiculturalism (Kymlicka, 1992; Modood, 1997). Similarly, contributors referred to the histories of Spain, India and the Middle East as examples of how tolerant and plural these societies were under Muslim rule, with faith communities being able to run their own affairs, as well as to dialogue with and learn from each other.

Although current political situations were often far removed from original Islamic influences, personal encounters and experiences with the Muslim world were illustrative of Muslim tolerance and respect for diversity. Documentary film-maker Navid Akhtar both spoke of personal experiences and referred to Islamic history:

Wherever I've travelled in the world, I've seen how other societies, other communities work. . . . people can live in harmony and they have managed to do that and also throughout history we can see that there's been incredible tolerance when Muslims have actually had the upper hand, there's been immense tolerance and an immense sense of respect for other religions, for non-Muslims, that's dictated by revelation in the Qur'an.

Malaysia, despite some of the serious problems of corruption and authoritarianism within Malay politics, was held up by Wyn-Davies as an example of a contemporary Muslim state that represented an Islamic model of pluralism in action since its constitution encouraged the communal sharing of the diverse range of religious traditions and symbols across society. After having lived some years in Malaysia, she believed it to be:

. . . the only genuinely functioning, truly definitional multicultural society in the world. That multiculturalism is operated under a constitution where Islam is the state religion but all other communities, cultures and religions are guaranteed within the constitution and have a communal role in politics. . . . Everybody takes it in turn so that everybody has public presentation of their identity within the public space, and the sense of sharing that identity. Now that, to me, I think is beyond multiculturalism. I think that is called genuine plurality.

Tolerance versus Mutual Acceptance and Mutual Respect

Islamic concepts of ‘tolerance’, as noted by Akhtar above, were contrasted with British debates where the question of ‘tolerance’ was contextualized differently. Labour Party Member of Parliament Shahid Malik (who was a parliamentary candidate at the time of the interview), like some others, believed that ‘tolerance’ was ‘fickle’ and preferred instead to talk about ‘mutual acceptance’ as a more ‘interactive’ avenue through which respect for difference could emerge. For Muslims, he felt this also meant accepting the rights of others who were different, such as gay groups, to coexist with respect:

. . . we need something much more substantive and meaningful than [tolerance]. I suppose that’s when *mutual acceptance* comes into it, which is much deeper, it’s saying you’re actually taking time out to understand where different people are coming from, you respect where they’re coming from, and you understand it. (Shahid Malik, MP)

However, although generally agreeing with the concept of respect for individuals, others within our sample were careful to distinguish between this and the religious and political acceptance of alternative forms of sexuality by Muslims, seeing that as contradictory to Islamic principles. For instance, Iqbal Sacranie, General Secretary of the Muslim Council of Britain (MCB) strongly opposed moves to repeal ‘Section 28’ and so allow same-sex partnerships to be presented within school education as valid alternatives:

. . . [support for opposition to] Section 28 . . . is totally alien to Islam. . . . we are making our position very clear that we cannot be a part of the liberal lobby . . . that goes against the very principle of existence, so that’s one area where we have to stick with the principles.

Similarly, Anas Altikriti, press spokesperson for the Muslim Association of Britain (MAB), which jointly led a number of successful anti-war marches and demonstrations by forming alliances with left-wing political movements, did not want to make a political issue of homosexuality:

This issue we have decided not to touch on. As Muslims we’re very clear on this, that these are wrong activities. However, we also have another principle of Islam, that is personal lifestyle, the personal tastes of an individual is up to them.

The issue of sexuality, then, is in fact one of the pivotal points of contention between secular liberals and ‘mainstream’, practising Muslims within Western multicultural societies, and among Muslims themselves. It, together with the wider theme of sexual freedom, is central to the political hostility against Muslims in, for example, the Netherlands, where gay sociology professor Pim Fortuyn led a popular movement to restrict Muslim immigration because the attitudes of Muslims were alleged to be threatening traditional Dutch sexual liberalism. In London, when Mayor Ken Livingstone invited Shaikh al-Qaradawi (regarded by many Muslims as a moderate), who is based in Qatar but is the President of the European Council for Fatwa and Research, one of the foci of opposition to his visit was led by the gay rights group, Outrage.¹² Indeed, conceptually the issue is critical to the tensions between the idea of tolerating a disapproved lifestyle and the mutual acceptance of difference. Muslims may not simply want to be tolerated but there are clearly groups to whom some Muslims cannot themselves extend more than toleration. The Islamic ideal of plurality that some of our respondents referred to is not just about tolerating other religious communities but respecting them and sharing the public space with them; it, however, cannot offer more than toleration for what cannot be respected within Islam. The contemporary, secular, Western discourse of multiculturalism, on the other hand, seems to see all sexual orientations based on informed adult consent as equally worthy of respect and public space, but prefers to see religion as tolerated if confined to the private sphere (Modood, 2002). The two views are mirror-images of each other: in one homosexuality, in the other, religion, is tolerated as a private vice – like ‘a dirty smell’, as Shahid Malik put it – while other forms of difference are respected. Each distributes tolerance and respect differently but each employs a toleration/respect distinction.

This leads not only to different interpretations of multiculturalism but the potential for policy conflicts. In Britain, groups that mobilize on the basis of faith, such as Muslims, could, until recently, only access public resources if they complied with certain equal opportunities’ frameworks that could potentially oblige them to share resources with gay organizations or employ openly gay individuals. In response, Muslim organizations have argued that, in order to maintain their Islamic identities, compromise on the issue of sexuality, as now advocated by some within the Church of England, is unacceptable.

Celebration of Commonality

While most critiques of multiculturalism from our sample were directed towards its tendency to emphasize superficial differences in the name of cultural diversity, or its failure to engage with faith-based identities, some, such as Shahid Malik, also noted its failure to draw on shared commonalities across cultures:

We celebrate diversity on occasions but we don’t ever really *celebrate commonality* and the reality is that all these different cultures and religions

that we speak of, actually 90 percent of what they believe in is common to all of them, but we ignore the common and focus on that which isn't common. And actually, if we firstly focused on that which is common, it would make the things that make us different more digestible.

The issue of commonality was also raised by Sacranie, when explaining the development of Muslim organizations in the UK and how the MCB's motto 'Working for the Common Good' was designed to 'bring Islam in an inclusive way' by stressing that 'anything we do has to also benefit the wider community'. Commonality was most stressed by francophone Swiss public intellectual Tariq Ramadan, for some years a regular presence at British meetings and currently resident in Britain, who is strongly opposed to any kind of philosophical particularism and political communalism. He emphasized that citizenship was indivisible and that no one could be a 'minority citizen':

... equal citizenship means that we have to go out from our intellectual and cultural ghettos. To come to the mainstream society and say 'OK, I am a British citizen, I am a French citizen.' To do that, we have to understand that there is no minority citizenship in this country ... *as a citizen*, I am not part of a minority, I am a citizen, with my Islamic background and faith, but I am a citizen. And here is the link between universal principles and considering yourself as being part of mainstream society. And this is the main challenge of the years to come, and we have to build a concept of citizenship on that.

He cautioned against 'falling into the trap of the minority mind-set' as this compromised the establishment of universal values shared by both Muslims and non-Muslims. Ramadan further argued that the creation of a minority discourse was, in effect, a colonialist strategy that acted to prevent full integration and participation into mainstream society and equal citizenship. The challenge now was to build a concept of citizenship that facilitated the sharing of universal values. This was not only not inconsistent with being a Muslim, but in fact the search for commonality was directly derived from the universalism of Islam, no less than from the universalism of Western ethical traditions. In his philosophical writings, Ramadan develops this distinctive position in which he derives a form of civic integrationism by an appeal to faith. While his starting point is Islam, it is one that, far from being anti-Western, affirms ethical universalism as a basis for being a European or Western Muslim, civic obligations and anti-relativism (Ramadan, 2004a; see also Bechler, 2004).¹³

Dialogue and Transformation of Minorities and Majorities

Many of the respondents emphasized the importance of dialogue. For example, the legal academic, Maleiha Malik, stressed that 'multiculturalism requires two-way compromise and it's not just an effort to be made by the majority because there is some need to think about how minorities

should react and it should be a dialogical negotiation'. Similarly, the historian Humayun Ansari felt that Muslims in Britain could not make progress 'on the basis of values, norms and practices that evolved in largely non-Western/colonial contexts. It can only happen through the development of a synthesis commensurate with the Western environment.'

Ziauddin Sardar, while acknowledging that Britain was far more hospitable to difference than France or Germany, argued for the development of a 'European notion of multiculturalism' that would reflect the different histories and relationships between its constituent selves and also its particular relationship to Islam. He saw two main obstacles to the development of a 'true multiculturalism'. First, the hegemonic nature of Western discourses that prioritizes liberal individualism and thus cannot be reconciled with the ideal of 'multiculturalism'. The second is its failure to act as a transformative tool by which to challenge Western liberal values to allow for more 'inclusive forms':

I would argue that we need a new notion of multiculturalism that is basically transformative and the transformation we are looking for is essentially transformation within the minority communities themselves so they have power and the space to be different. And then, more important, transformation in the majority community as well. The majority community has to, in some cases, accept that some of its privileges are not deserved and so they have to hand those privileges in. Also in terms of power, so it's transformative in both cases, and it's not simply in terms of political power, it's in terms of intellectual power – in terms of how Britain or Europe sees Islam. So we're seeking transformation. Multiculturalism actually means that Europe has to learn to see Islam as a human culture, not as a demonized 'Other' . . .

Evaluation of Contemporary Britain as Multicultural

Throughout the interviews, 'multiculturalism' and its definitions were a recurring theme. Most participants remained cautious of the ways 'multiculturalism' as an ideology was used as an all-encompassing framework to engage with racial difference yet was ambivalent regarding faith-based needs. The thinness of some multicultural approaches, which focused on superficial differences – the 'saris, steel bands and samosas' syndrome – and not enough on faith, spirituality and power relations, was a feature that many of our interviewees, through their respective roles, have been attempting to challenge and deconstruct. While views were mixed, in the main respondents felt that multiculturalism in practice did not go far enough and was not adequately meeting the needs of Britain's faith communities. Many gave detailed responses, rooted in either practice or theory, to the particular ways in which they felt multiculturalism as a project had failed, or was failing Muslim communities, especially Muslim women. These views can be contrasted to those cited earlier, which argued that multiculturalism was so sympathetic to faith community leaders that it encouraged the proliferation of 'fundamentalist' religious views (Yuval-Davis, 1992).

British Multiculturalism as Superficial or Partial

Humera Khan, social activist and co-founder of the An-Nisa Society, was one of those most critical of current multiculturalist policies in practice. For her, the superficiality of multiculturalism in practice was evident from the fact that most of the discussions simply consisted of continual battles against misrepresentations, prejudice and a general unwillingness on the part of secularized institutions to negotiate with religion. Moreover, there was a tendency to view the multicultural as the ‘fashionable’ and superficial. This, she argued, left room for only a partial acceptance of difference, which in turn manifests itself as rejection of the more significant and perhaps challenging facets to Muslim identities, and she described this as a ‘throwback to colonialism’:

The way that it’s developed really has been that you accept us for our food, you accept us for certain aspects of the way we dress, it’s become a little bit fashionable, but you don’t take the whole caboodle. I think this is where ordinary Muslims on the ground get really angry – that you don’t want all of us; you just want a bit of us. In a sense, that is a sort of throwback to colonialism, where the European colonials came and just took what they wanted and didn’t want to see the whole picture . . .

She recounted an experience at a sex education conference where, in expressing a ‘pro-chastity and pro-family’ position, which seemed natural to Muslims and flowed from Islam, she says she was left ‘feeling like a leper’.

British Multiculturalism as Excluding of Faith and Faith Identities

The most common criticism our respondents made of British multiculturalism was that it excludes faith and faith identities. Khan, taking further the point just noted above, articulated the centrality many Muslims attached to their faith and the failure of secularist local and central government structures and bodies to appreciate or accommodate this. Instead, she believed that Muslims were sometimes pressured into compromising on their religious identities in order to be accepted as part of the mainstream. This could be more explicitly explained through examples of social welfare practices, which privileged ethnic and racial identities yet ignored faith-based identifications and needs. Its impact on Muslim women and families, for example, resulted in perspectives and practices which problematized their needs and situated them within colonialist discourses of the ‘helpless victim’ in need of ‘saving from cultural and religious oppression’.

Another example of the marginality of religion is anti-discrimination legislation, with religious discrimination in employment having been made unlawful only with effect from December 2003, almost four decades after the first racial discrimination legislation, a point made by Sacranie. He went on to emphasize not just the importance of religious identity but religious needs:

I think the notion of multiculturalism must reflect the society we live in. And religion, faith, plays a very important part, therefore that area has to be

developed. Not just developed in terms of our identification in terms of identity, but in terms of our needs. In terms of how our argument comes out and that needs to be incorporated.

The absence of a strong faith element in society, and what this cost Muslims both in terms of participation in civil society, as well as policy processes, were highlighted by Ahmed Versi, editor of *The Muslim News*, in relation to popular culture and the media. He felt that ‘Hindu Indian culture’ had successfully monopolized and influenced common understandings of the term ‘Asian’ in Britain. This, he believed, was expressed through the mainstream media, which he felt tended to represent and encompass more Indian, ‘Bollywood’ manifestations of culture than faith perspectives, in particular at the expense of Muslim cultures. He linked this in with issues of resource allocation for community-based projects, especially with respect to the media, where description of a project as ‘Asian’ rather than by a religion was more likely to elicit a positive interest and yet it would probably, in his view, also promote ‘Hindu’ values:

The classical example of multiculturalism – because it goes to race issues – when they talk about culture, they would say ‘Asian’ or ‘African’ culture. I mean ‘Asian culture’ is mainly Bollywood culture, and therefore you have the ‘Meera Syal’ kind of people coming through. It’s got nothing to [do with] Muslims in a sense – there are Muslims who watch Bollywood, but we are talking about other issues, so if you look at any Asian programmes [in the name of] multiculturalism . . . BBC Asian Network . . . there’s hardly anything about the Muslim community as such. . . . Multiculturalism should include culture and practice of other faith communities, but Asian culture means Indian culture, nothing to do Muslim culture. . . . These kinds of labels are used by many in the Indian community for resource allocations and to get up the ladder in TV . . .

Multiculturalism as a Two-way Process

Based on the understanding that multiculturalism was a two-way process or dialogue, several respondents emphasized that, in practice, there is a lack of interaction. This was not only due to a failure of social structures to accommodate diverse needs, but also, according to some such as Maleiha Malik, partly due to Muslims themselves not engaging sufficiently with social structures, political processes or cultural dialogue at various levels. She went on to note, however, how debates on multiculturalism either failed to happen, or were overtaken by more sensationalized comments such as from a Home Secretary on ‘arranged marriages’, for example. Similarly, Siddiqui argued that even among Muslims themselves there was a lack of intellectual space available for progressive discussions and so ‘dialogues had become monologues’, where ‘a lot of issues are clouded with theology, various cultural obsessions, religious obsessions’. These, he argued, prevented the Muslim community from engaging not only with itself, but also with social problems in any coherent, practical way, and he regretted

that Muslims did not reach out enough or have enough people with sufficient understanding to engage in cultural dialogue at all levels.

Power Imbalances

The issue of power was thought by many to be integral to the goals of multiculturalism. Power imbalances existed in key arenas of British society, where often subtle forms of power were at work. These were evident where minorities, especially Muslims, were absent or under-represented, but could also be operative even where minority 'success' seemed apparent. Sardar, for example, reflected on this in relation to the media and the arts, where authors like Salman Rushdie, Hanif Kureishi and Zadie Smith had won the most prestigious prizes but only certain representations were 'rewarded' or acknowledged while others were not:

... the deeper worry for me, is that success comes to those who play the role of the *'ethnic minorities'* as *appreciated and perceived by the dominant majority*. So these are the guys who are, if you like, contemporary 'Uncle Toms' or 'Brown Sahibs'. These are the guys who are playing to the gallery and they do 'ethnic stuff'. Now I'm a Muslim writer but I don't want to write about Islam all the time – I'm a British citizen, I regard myself as an intellectual so any newspaper can come and ask me what I think of the Iraq war, or what I think of the GM food crisis. So I want to be approached on my own, and not as a kind of dog who is going to perform tricks and dogs who perform tricks are always rewarded.

More conventional power imbalances and lack of representation in the key social structures of British society were raised by several contributors. For instance, Shahid Malik talked of a 'deficit of power' in mainstream government positions and in political processes that contributed to a lack of adequate representation of Muslim needs at all levels. Yet he, together with other political figures in the sample, such as Iqbal Sacranie and Farzana Hakim, Chief Adviser to the Chair (Trevor Philips) at the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE) and former 'Race' Adviser at No. 10 Downing Street, noted how changes were taking place and Muslims had more access to the corridors of power since the arrival of New Labour in May 1997. Indeed, more than one of them thought that this change was more reflective of Tony Blair than of the government or political institutions as such; as Farzana Hakim notes:

I find it quite weird, though, that the CRE hasn't moved [on faith]; the Home Office has only just started to move and Downing Street did move a while ago but it didn't happen because of the machinery, it happened because of the individual. . . . No, I don't think Britain has coped with it [faith-based needs] at all; I think it's 'How do we deal with it?' and I think British people find it quite frightening actually . . .

Others were less pessimistic about what was happening and what was possible. Arguing that, in comparison to other European countries such as

Germany or France, British concepts of citizenship were accommodating and open to negotiation, Maleiha Malik took the view:

British Muslims are, in some respects, quite fortunate to live during a period in which there is, I think, a general effort to try to accommodate minorities. Not just British Muslims but all minority groups, but especially religious minorities, can use this to their advantage.

Accommodation of Religion in Public Life

Most of our interviewees remained positive about the possibilities for greater accommodation of faith-based needs within existing social structures and many also felt that religion – and the recognition of other faiths – could play a greater role in public institutions. The current relationship between Christianity as the traditionally dominant faith in Britain and the increasing secularism of social and political institutions still allowed for certain degrees of accommodation and recognition of faith within political structures. As Sacranie said:

It's a society that is very strongly influenced by people with secular views. Christianity is the dominant religion; the Anglican Church is the established Church but it doesn't mean that everything revolves around them. They have recognized that other faith communities and other sections of non-faith communities can play an equal part. So what we are saying is that the time will come when Islam and other faith communities will have the same opportunities.

None in our sample viewed secularism as a homogeneous concept and, while there was a certain degree of criticism reserved for those believed to hold 'extremist secular' perspectives, there was a general sense that 'liberal secularism' could, in theory, accommodate diverse cultural and religious needs. While none advocated the introduction of Muslim Personal Laws into Britain as a separate framework, for example, the majority of our contributors wanted to see religion play a greater role in public life and expressed confidence that Church-influenced structures, as a result of expanding inter-faith dialogues, provided appropriate avenues forward.

However, a significant minority of our respondents felt the need to state that there were proper limits upon religion in public life. For example, Sarfraz Manzoor (journalist and broadcaster) said that 'one's religion should not interfere in one's workplace'. Ansari noted that 'in practice, the ideology of secularism seems to be intolerant of other worldviews and operates in illiberal ways' but still felt that secularism held out the best promise for tolerance:

I feel that institutional life needs to be less influenced by any religion. For instance, I feel that discussion of all religions in schools should take place on the basis of equality and in critically balanced (various 'insider' and 'outsider' perspectives woven in) way. I would argue for the dis-establishment

of the Church of England and the abolition of the existing blasphemy law. . . . Politically, I would be closer to the 'secularist' as opposed to the 'Islamist' perspective.

For Maleiha Malik, for whom liberal political theory and Western legal models were as important a normative guide as her readings in and understanding of Islam, what was critical was to achieve a just and viable balance:

The challenge is to try to negotiate some sort of settlement which strikes the right balance between acceptance in the public sphere but also a recognition that their values, or their religion, can't provide the basis for all decision-making in the public sphere. Multiculturalism as part of a strategy to accommodate the most important aspects of the identity of citizens as far as possible is important to them, is a good idea. What's important now, in terms of how that's going to be given shape, is to try and give that central idea some sort of more concrete legal and political foundation. There are good examples of countries where that's been done quite well. Canada is quite a good example of a country where multiculturalism is taken quite seriously.

Conclusion

It is clear that, although 'moderate' or mainstream Muslims represent a variety of views, they are pro-multiculturalism as long as it includes faith as a positive dimension of 'difference'. They are very conscious that British advocates of multiculturalism have only belatedly, tentatively and slowly come to extend and deepen the ideas of multiculturalism to include faith communities. The concern that Muslims are uncomfortable with pluralism may be misplaced (Parekh, 2003). Indeed, some of this group of Muslims believe that the Qur'an, Islam and Muslim history are powerful sources of multiculturalism and religious pluralism, and represent a superior form of multiculturalism than has been developed elsewhere or is on offer in the contemporary West.

This ideal of Islamic multiculturalism is faith-based in identifying dimensions of 'difference', with other religions not just included but given primacy in terms of respect. It probably also is faith-based in terms of limits of recognition with, critically, homosexuality more likely to be positioned as what is tolerated rather than respected. The plurality within this ideal is mainly communal. If Muslim societies have had difficulties in ensuring the protection of individuals within communities, this was not an issue that our respondents raised. Finally, it was recognized that Muslim pluralism has historically existed where there has been one dominant or overarching faith, where Muslims were able to put their ideal into practice. There was no discussion of historical cases of successful pluralism where Muslims were a minority. On the other hand, there were few positive references to pluralism in contemporary Muslim societies that might be exemplars, with the exception of a singular but fulsome reference to Malaysia.

Most of the other aspects of the multicultural ideal and criticisms of contemporary British practice, such as the distinction between mutual

respect and tolerance, the importance of non-separateness and dialogue, the need for transformative change on the part of the minorities as well as the majority, seem to us to be very similar to the views held by non-Muslim British multiculturalists (Commission on Multi-ethnic Britain [CMEB], 2000; Parekh, 2000; though cf. Sardar, 2002, 2004). Some of the respondents explicitly drew on Western multicultural theory and practice in order to pose limits to ideas that others derived from Islam, such as those to do with sexuality and the secular.

So, both Islam and Muslim history on the one hand, and contemporary Western multicultural theory and practice on the other, were drawn upon, though in differing degrees and suggesting different syntheses. The important point, to conclude, is not that all non-militant Muslims agree on these matters, nor that there is no tension between Muslim and Western ideals. Rather, it is clear that there is much overlap between the two, with some creative tension and enough scope for dialogue and negotiation, contrary to the ‘clash of civilizations’ thesis.

It will also have been evident that the category of Muslim intellectual/activist – the kind of person who speaks in and for the Muslim public sphere in Britain – includes some whose ‘authority’ to speak does not primarily lie in expertise with scriptural texts and traditional Islamic scholarship. While many of the reformist and radical Muslims of the 19th and 20th centuries have been lay intellectuals (Hassan Al Banna, Syed Qutb, Abul Ala Maududi, Rashid Ghannoushi to name a few) and have been enormously and globally influential, the individuals our project has studied are primarily experts in using and engaging with contemporary Western discourses; in this and perhaps also in their commitment to identifying and serving the interests of British Muslims, they may, therefore, be a new kind of Muslim public figure.

Appendix A: ‘Moderate’ Muslims – interview list

Lord Nazir Ahmed	Labour Party member of the House of Lords. The first Muslim peer.
Navid Akhtar	Documentary film-maker and journalist.
Anas Altikriti	Media spokesperson for the Muslim Association of Britain. Came to prominence in the anti-war movements following September 11.
Humayun Ansari OBE	Professor of History of Islam and Cultural Diversity; Director, Centre for Ethnic Minority Studies, Royal Holloway, University of London
Farzana Hakim	Principal Adviser to the Chair, Commission for Racial Equality; former adviser on race relations to the Prime Minister.
Humera Khan	Co-founder of the Muslim women’s group, the An-Nisa Society, London.
Yusuf Al-Khoei	Director of the Al-Khoei Foundation, London; trustee of

Maleiha Malik Shahid Malik	Forum Against Islamophobia and Racism. Lecturer in Law, King's College, London University MP for Dewsbury, member of the Labour Party National Executive Council and former commissioner at the Commission for Racial Equality.
Sarfraz Mansoor Fuad Nahdi Aki Nawaz	Journalist and broadcaster Editor-in-chief, <i>Q-News</i> , the Muslim magazine. Head of Nation Records and leader of political band Fun-Da-Mental.
Tariq Ramadan	Visiting professor at St Antony's College, University of Oxford and probably the best-known Muslim intel- lectual in Western Europe.
Sir Iqbal Sacranie Ziauddin Sardar	Secretary General, Muslim Council of Britain. Writer, broadcaster, cultural critic and Commissioner, Commission for Equality and Human Rights.
Bobby Sayyid Massoud Shadjareh	Research fellow, University of Leeds. Chair of the Islamic Human Rights Commission, London.
Ghayasuddin Siddiqui	Head of the community-based forum, the Muslim Parliament and Director of an Islamic think-tank, the Muslim Institute.
Ahmed Versi Abdel Wahhab El-Affendi	Editor of the monthly, <i>The Muslim News</i> . Senior research fellow at the Centre for the Study of Democracy, University of Westminster.
Merryl Wyn Davies	Writer and broadcaster.

Informal conversations were also had with Sheikhs the late Dr Zaki Badawi and Hamza Yusuf.

Notes

This is an expanded version of a paper presented at the 'Global Islam and Democracy' conference, January 2004, University of Bristol. We are grateful for a small grant from the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation to fund the research.

1. The 'hijacking' theme was in fact most notably introduced by a charismatic, white US convert to Islam, Sheikh Hamza Yusuf, who was consulted by President Bush immediately after 9/11 but soon fell out of favour with the White House. His views were promoted by the magazine of the young Muslim professionals in Britain, *Q News* (e.g. in the November 2001 issue). Dr Muqtedar Khan, Director of International Studies, Adrian College, Michigan, had an even more uncompromisingly 'moderate' statement in the right-wing tabloid newspaper, *The Sun*, but was not taken up by British Muslims or the British media with comparable levels of enthusiasm (see Khan, 2002).

2. It should also be noted that a large proportion of Muslims representing varied political and religious sympathies can also object to the term 'British Muslim', preferring instead to talk of themselves as 'a Muslim in Britain'. Indeed, there was a minority within our sample who expressed such sentiments but this did not contradict their sense of being part of Britain. Bobby Sayyid, for example, rejected the term 'British Muslim' as he believed that Muslim subjectivities transcend 'all other

political identities'. It also represented the subordination of an Islamic identity to a nationalist one:

. . . where Islam is still considered to be . . . exterior to Britain – it's not part of that narrative and, if you really believe in Islam, then you also have to accept that Islam does not belong to any space or any time and that it's for everyone and we're for everything. Therefore, what is the point of calling yourself a British Muslim? To differentiate yourself from who? From other Muslims and why?

Attempts to 'nationalize or vernacularize Islam' were therefore potentially dangerous to its continued existence.

3. When showing a final draft of this paper to our interviewees, a few commented on how 7/7 had forced some British Muslim organizations to acknowledge the attraction some extremist movements held for some young British Muslims, but also the need for more concerted efforts to educate against extremism. For instance, Yousif al-Khoei, Director of the Al-Khoei Foundation, London said:

My own view is that, due to a combination of factors, mainstream Muslim organizations and institutions have not been able to counter the disproportionate weight and louder voice of the few extremists who have hijacked the good name of Islam. 7/7 was a turning point in galvanizing the voice of the silent majority who began to see the enormity of the damage caused and reclaim the rich legacy of reason, peace and coexistence within Islam.

This sentiment was also reflected in several newspaper and magazine articles by prominent Muslims.

4. Of course 'Muslim community' is no more a singular, undifferentiated term than, say, 'woman' or 'working class' or 'British', but if this was to inhibit the use of such internally differentiated and complex concepts, or even to inhibit marking them by a singular noun, social science, let alone speech, would be impossible (Modood, 1994, 2007).

5. Many Muslims, within a British context at least, distinguish between 'fanatics' and 'fundamentalists', in order to (re)appropriate the latter term (as black people in the US and UK have done earlier with 'black', turning a derogatory term into a proud identity). 'Fanatic' represents a follower of a rigid and authoritarian version of Islam. It is sought, however, to give 'fundamentalist' a positive meaning: someone who adheres to the fundamentals of their faith; an aspiration of all of the devout. Attempts to challenge negative connotations of 'fundamentalist' can take unusual forms; for example, through the naming of the popular music group 'Fun-da-mental', led by Aki Nawaz, one of our interviewees.

6. Worthy of some mention here is one of the more recent and controversial developments within the 'Progressive Muslim' movement in the US. In a single act of defiance against commonly held religious doctrine, one of the Progressive movement's leading female scholars, Professor Amina Wadud, led a mixed group of men and women in Friday prayers in March 2005. Her actions naturally sparked a heated debate among Muslims, not only for her actions but her rationale; she is alleged to have challenged the authority of the Qur'an by stating that she 'did not agree with the Qur'an' (Baksh, 2005).

7. There may be a group of people who may possibly fit all the above criteria but who it would not be correct to interpret as ‘moderate Muslims’. They are persons who may be from a Muslim background but who are publicly hostile to public Islam and to Muslim community politics (e.g. Salman Rushdie, Hanif Kureishi, Tariq Ali).

8. Similar meanings of ‘moderate’ are identified as the dominant meanings among Muslims by the American academic Muqtedar Khan, but he wants to save the term and defines a ‘moderate’ Muslim as a Muslim whose quest for social justice is through the spirit of *ijtihad* (see www.ijtihad.org/moderatemuslims.htm). For an overview of American Muslim political discourses, see Leonard (2003); for a European Muslim intervention, see Ramadan (2004a).

9. Tim Winter, a white English convert to Islam and academic (whose Muslim name is Abdul Hakim Murad), divides Muslims into the ‘mainstream’, who seek spiritual nourishment and peace of mind, and a small minority of ‘zealots’ and ‘liberals’, both of whom are overly influenced by Western thought and secularism (Winter, 2003). This is a perspective also shared by the prominent and popular regular visitor from the US, Shaikh Hamza Yusuf Hanson, who we spoke to informally. A group of mainly American Muslims has come together under the label ‘Progressive Muslims’ to interpret Islam for the 21st century, focused on social justice, gender and pluralism, and with equal respect for all communities (Safi, 2003: 3).

10. Shahid and Van Koningsveld (1996) themselves want to argue that some European Muslims realize that the ‘Territory of Islam’ and ‘Territory of War’ dichotomy is unhelpful and are developing a third category, ‘Territory of Covenant’. Our point is that none of our respondents referred to the dichotomy and so analysing British Muslim thinking today in terms of a critical engagement with this dichotomy is an inadequate way of framing the issues we are concerned with.

11. This was the emphatic view of one of the *TCS* anonymous reviewers of this article.

12. A more widely organized focus of opposition to al-Qaradawi’s visit was based on his endorsement of violent resistance to the Israeli occupation of Palestine, illustrating how this issue, too, is central to the political accommodation of Muslims in Britain and elsewhere, but clashes with the views and power of supporters of Israel. In order to contain this clash and develop positive links, there are now some Jewish–Muslim dialogue groups such as Calamus-Maimonides, Alif-Aleph and Discursis. However, the issue remains sensitive on both sides and it has been argued that the critique of Zionism is ‘one area in which most Muslims in Britain have a similar position’ (Sayyid, 2003).

13. It is sadly ironic that such an integrationist is reviled by many French intellectuals, has been denied entry into the US (Ramadan, 2004b) and was the target of a boycott attempt by the National Union of Students, which tried to exclude him from the 2004 European Social Forum (see www2.mpacuk.org).

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