Thomas Sealy and Tariq Modood
University of Bristol, U.K.

Symposium on The State of Muslim Minorities in Contemporary Democracies
Muqtedar Khan (Ed.)

East London Mosque

Muslims make up about 5-6% of the population in Britain, making Muslims the largest non-Christian faith group. They are diverse in their origins (50+ nationalities), with just over half from Pakistan and Bangladesh according to 2011 census figures (MCB, 2015) but this ratio is decreasing. In the last few decades Muslims' have often been at the centre of issues and debates around ethnic and religious minorities in the UK, and in relating to and managing its

Muslim population, questions have been raised over public religion, racism and anti-racism, national identity and citizenship, and public values.

Muslims came to widespread public and political prominence in 1988 with the Rushdie Affair. Following the publication of Salman Rushdie's novel, *The Satanic Verses*, seen by many Muslims as highly offensive, protests, riots and book burnings broke out, and Ayatollah Khomeini, then Supreme Leader of Iran, issued his now infamous *fatwa* calling for Rushdie to be killed. Muslims, then, burst into public and political consciousness associated with a form of religious-based intolerance seen as out of step with modern Britain. Despite these inauspicious beginnings, overall, we might say that pragmatic accommodation characterises how the UK's Muslims have been included within existing governance structures, and that Muslims themselves have positively impacted these structures and relations. Nevertheless, we can also see how these connections are politically contingent and how Muslims continue to come under greater scrutiny and emphasis in certain forms of governance.

Institutionalisation

In the wake of the Rushdie Affair what would eventually become the Muslim Council of Britain (MCB), now the largest Muslim umbrella organisation in Britain, was founded. Encouraged and supported by the government, who wanted an organisation that could speak with 'one voice' as representatives of Britain's Muslims, the MCB was very successful in its early years as an interlocutor with government on issues pertaining to Muslims (see Modood, 2010). In fact, this type of institutionalisation is a feature of government engagement with minority religious communities more broadly, and contrasts in this regard with the U.S.

where it is far less a feature. The government has since come to engage with and have a hand in supporting a 'democratic constellation' of Muslim organisations, including bodies for young people, women, sectarian differences and interests, and those focussed on mosque governance or areas such as education. Notably also, this has been a more 'bottom up' than 'top down' process in comparison to, for example, the founding of Muslim representative institutions in France.

Through the mechanism of institutionalisation, Muslim organisations have been able to lobby for some policies which reflect the particular experience and position of Muslims in British society and politics, sometimes successfully, sometimes not. A key example and issue has been increasing recognition of Muslims as a religious group since the turn of the 21st century, expanding from the lenses of 'race' and ethnicity of earlier decades (Modood and Ahmad, 2007). Following the Rushdie Affair, it became clear that Muslims, as a religious category comprising various ethnic and national backgrounds, were not protected under existing discrimination legislation. Neither the Race Relations Act 1976 nor accommodations made for other minority groups on the basis of ethnicity or as ethno-religious (and seen therefore as concomitant with 'race'), such as those for Jews and Sikhs, offered protection for Muslims *qua* Muslims rather than as national or ethnic groups (Pakistanis or Bangladeshis, for instance). The Conservative government in the 1990s, for example, had been reluctant to engage with Muslim communities on terms of religion (Nielsen 2009). In the late 1990s, however, the New Labour government actively engaged with faith groups on a much wider scale; and the report of The Commission on Multi-Ethnic Britain in 2000 can be seen, in retrospect if not at the time, to mark this transition (Modood, 2018). One significant gain during this period was in schooling. Calls for state-funded Muslim schools were rejected in the 1980s and first half of the 1990s (Modood, 2006; also see Carr 2018), before New Labour

undertook a general expansion of faith school provision for minority faiths, although this remains modest at just 31 Muslim schools in England (Long and Danechi, 2019).

In 2001 a religion question was included in the England and Wales census for the first time in 150 years, with lobbying on the part of British Muslim organisations concerned to highlight their self-understanding and that religion formed a category of difference with effects for their socio-economic situation (Sherif 2011). In 2003 legislation was enacted protecting against religious discrimination (in employment), in part owing to work by the MCB; 'religion or belief' is now a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010.

A further institution serving Muslim communities, although one without state recognition or connections, is sharia councils. There are many such councils which arbitrate primarily on family issues (such as religious marriages and divorces) across different communities. They vary in size and standing and are without a centralised structure. Sharia councils have attracted attention and controversy, including in response to what was taken by many to be an overly supportive speech by the then Archbishop of Canterbury (Rowan Williams) in 2008 (Modood 2019a: chp 7). Sharia councils and their rulings do not have legal standing in civil law. In 2018, the government commissioned an independent review into their operation and has rejected the idea of official state regulation on the basis that it could create a parallel legal system (see Home Office 2018; Torrance 2019).

Islamophobia

In other areas related to identifying and addressing forms of discrimination faced by Muslims, there has been less success. Opinion polls have routinely found that over half think

Islam is not compatible with 'British values' (Ipsos Mori, 2018) and Islamophobia has become a particular area of concern. In 2017 the All-Party Parliamentary Group on British Muslims launched an inquiry into a working definition of Islamophobia in recognition of the persistent prejudice and discrimination faced by Muslims in Britain. Its report recommended the government adopt a definition of Islamophobia as "*rooted in racism and is a type of racism that targets expressions of Muslimness or perceived Muslimness*" (APPGBM, 2018). While this definition has been adopted by other major political parties, including Labour, the Liberal Democrats, the Scottish Conservatives, the SNP, Plaid Cymru, as well as the Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, the Conservative government has rejected it as 'unworkable'. Furthermore, in the report of the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities (CRED, 2021), established in the wake of the 2020 Black Lives Matter protests and data showing that ethnic minorities were much more at risk of infection and dying during the Covic-19 pandemic, the term Islamophobia is entirely absent, instead regional (South Asian) or national (Pakistani, Bangladeshi) categories are used.

There have been several arguments given for this rejection of Islamophobia as a form of racism, which relate to it being seen as about religion rather than as a quasi-ethnic category. A government spokesperson in a parliamentary debate said that it would result in legal and practical issues, is too vague and broad, and is in conflict with how 'race' is defined by the Equality Act 2010. It has also been argued that it would limit freedom of speech and legitimate criticism of religion. The head of the National Police Chiefs' Council along with a former head of antiterrorism at Scotland Yard have also suggested that it would undermine efforts to tackle extremism.

In relation to Muslims as a religious, or ethno-religious, group, there has, therefore, been mixed success. This last point above, however, points to a further aspect of governance related to Muslims that has become particularly salient in the last two decades, the impact of terrorism and extremism associated with particular forms of Islam. Moreover, on this issue, we can see another way in which institutionalisation, as a tool of governance, operates, where institutionalisation is also related to securitisation.

Securitization

Muslims have been active in all the major political parties, and occupied notable positions, such as the former Home Secretary (Sajid Javid), and the current London Mayor, Sadiq Khan, is the first Muslim mayor of a European capital city. Yet, Muslim organisations enjoy a politically contingent institutional relationship with the UK government, where the state might pick and choose which groups it works with and which it doesn't based on the alignment of political positionings, and organisations may fall in and out of favour for consultation and engagement with government departments depending on their stance on various issues. This has, for example, been the case with the MCB, which alongside its successes, fell out of favour in the mid-2000s for its criticism of the invasion of Iraq and 'war on terror' (Modood, 2010), and has had a patchy relationship since. These relationships and connections have come under particular strain in the last two decades in a context marked by fears of terrorism and radicalisation which has been very much attached to Muslims and Islam.

Most significant and controversial here is the government's counter-extremism strategy, Prevent. At the core of Prevent is working with community actors and organisations, seen to

have the social capital to influence people away from extremism. A large variety of community projects have been funded under the aegis of Prevent, some government-led but mostly led by Muslim and other community initiatives. This has been controversial with some civil society organisations and activists eschewing and denouncing any association with such funding, while others have been willing to accept the funding in order to carry out important community and safeguarding work. The high levels of involvement of civil society actors has meant a variety of ways in which such programmes have been implemented at local levels as community organisations have flexibly interpreted and applied the Prevent strategy (O'Toole et al. 2013, 2016).

Nevertheless, commentators have generally criticized its emphasis on Muslims, and this emphasis is reflected in how earlier iterations of the strategy were funded, which was initially channelled to city councils according to the size of the Muslim population (first to those at more than 5% and then where this was over 4000 people) and then, following the 2011 iteration, by the threat level still based on Muslim demographics, although it is now based on referral levels.

An especially controversial aspect of the approach embedded in Prevent is how it has spread and seeped into public bodies, in education, welfare, and health services, for instance. The Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015 introduced a legal duty requiring public bodies to have "due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism" (Part 5, Chapt. 1, point 26) in carrying out their functions. As such "it has, arguably, become a civic obligation to contribute to, and participate in, the monitoring of others … In so doing, they may therefore become simultaneously the subjects, objects and tools of anti-terrorism" (Jarvis & Lister, 2013: 661) and has been referred to as the 'securitization of social policy'

(Ragazzi, 2017; Sabir, 2017). This feature of the programme is now also expanding into the private sector with staff at major retailers also receiving training in spotting signs of violent extremism in co-workers (FT, 2019; Home Office 2018).

Following the 2011 iteration, and despite the strategy explicitly stating that "the Government will not securitise its integration strategy", for some, Prevent continues to be criticised for doing exactly this. Even if we welcome the more recent move away from focussing on Muslims to also emphasise far-right extremism, it has cast a long shadow of distrust between many Muslims and the government.

Cohesion, values and counter-extremism

The influence and reach of these kinds of concerns have since come to be seen more generally in the policy landscape, and we can see the creep between cohesion strategies and counter-radicalisation strategies. Here we can note that the phrase 'Fundamental British Values' (FBVs – vaguely referring to the rule of law, democracy, individual liberty and respect and tolerance), although not without precedent, first occurred in this form in the 2011 Prevent strategy, where extremism is defined as the "vocal or active opposition to fundamental British values (FBVs)". In large part prompted by the recognition that terrorism and violent radicalisation were a British problem and not just a 'foreign' one, in 2011 the Prime Minister at the time, David Cameron, called for a defence of British values and a 'muscular liberalism'. Organisations accepting government funding under Prevent might also be expected to sign up to promoting FBVs through their programmes and projects, although this is not exclusive to Muslim organisations.

In this general atmosphere, Muslim schools became particularly controversial, highlighted by the 'Trojan Horse' affair beginning in 2014, in which it was asserted that there was a conspiracy over an alleged 'Islamisation' of some schools in Birmingham. The initial government response banned a number of teachers and prompted extra inspections of certain schools by the government's education inspectorate (Ofsted), although these were later overturned by the courts and the whole affair was shown to be unfounded (see Holmwood & O'Toole, 2017).

The link between cohesion and security is important but quite apart from policies directly connected to Prevent, FBVs have come to feature heavily in government integration and cohesion policy documents. There is a distinct emphasis in these documents on the values of some minority communities that are seen to conflict with FBVs, and which can generally, although not exclusively, be interpreted as veiled references to Muslims, not least because questions about whether Muslims can be, and are willing to be, integrated into British society and its political values became widespread (Modood and Ahmad, 2007).

The emphasis on values and a mismatch between those of some minority communities, particularly South Asian communities and Muslims among them, also stems from concerns and incidents more domestic than geo-political, urban riots in some northern towns (Bradford, Burnley, Oldham) in 2001 being an important turning point, and which were much more about discrimination and socio-economic problems. This has also been influenced by government commissioned independent reports (the Cantle report, 2001, which was commissioned after the riots, and the Casey Review, 2016), which highlighted issues of community segregation, the cause of which values and community practices became emphasised. As such, integration and cohesion strategies emphasise "difficult conversations

where cultural practices may be holding people back" (ICS, 2018: 58), women's and LGBT equality being particular examples. Repeatedly highlighted in integration and cohesion documents is this kind of assertion of rights and equality accompanied by a pivot towards communities themselves who are seen as not sufficiently reflecting or allowing these rights and (British) values at and within their local area.

A final important point to raise relevant to debates over cohesion, values and radicalisation is where governance hasn't been exerted in relation to Muslims. For instance, in much of Western Europe measures targeting Muslims have introduced full or partial bans of the headscarf or face coverings. Muslim (female) dress has not been without controversy in the UK, but similar bans have never become a serious political issue or debate.

In sum then, we can point to three main aspects of the governance of Muslims in the UK. In some ways, Muslims have adjusted and institutionalised to fit into existing structures, while there have also been positive gains and accommodations, where Muslims have not just come to be included in but also affect aspects of governance, some formal, some ad hoc. Yet, Muslims have also been the focus of particular structures of governance (now in some ways widening to also include other groups) based on perceptions of religious and ethnic 'otherness', and which is also marked by a darker side as it has become attached to issues of security and radicalisation.

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