Secularism, Racism and the Politics of Belonging

Edited by Nira Yuval-Davis and Philip Marfleet

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Foreword

This collection of papers is a reflection of an ongoing debate about the relationships between religion, the citizen and the state. It is a debate that is far from settled, and indeed one which may be unsettling, but a debate which too often generates more heat than light. It is, however, a crucial discussion since it goes to the heart of our understanding of modern citizenship, the role of the state and the struggle for equality.

Runnymede was especially pleased to partner with colleagues at the Centre for Refugees, Migration and Belonging (CRMB) at the University of East London in co-hosting the two conferences from which these papers are drawn. CRMB's serious and engaged approach to relating political theory to political action enabled academics, commentators and practitioners to share a platform where disagreements were aired and constructive debate and discussion enabled. We hope that the conferences act as a model for the deliberations which are necessary to address the thorny challenges raised by the authors. Many of these disagreements are reflected in the papers presented here. The collected papers discuss faith-based schooling, the veil, honour based violence, religious arbitration, and the delivery of public services by faith communities. All of these issues remain very much alive in contemporary public policy debates in the UK and beyond.

Since the conferences were held we have seen further attempts in the UK of politicians and policy makers seeking to address the relationship between state, religion and the citizen. Most notably, using the vehicle of a British government delegation to the Vatican, the only Muslim cabinet member, Baroness Sayeeda Warsi, made a speech seeking to recalibrate the relationship between religion and state, arguing:

> … to create a more just society, people need to feel stronger in their religious identities and more confident in their creeds…. My concern is when secularization is pushed to an extreme, when it requires the complete removal of faith from the public sphere. So I am calling for a more open confidence in faith, where faith has a place at the table.[1]

This collection of essays and papers critically engages with the question of what 'a place at the table' for faith means in practice and what it means for efforts to promote equality. The relationship between faith and state is increasingly seen through the lens of multiculture and the exemplar nodes of the discussion regularly focus on issues that impact on people from minority ethnic communities. This makes it a debate which is vital in Runnymede's ongoing mission to support the creation of a successful multi-ethnic Britain.

While I doubt that this collection will be the last word in this debate, I hope that the approach that it suggests of evidence based, well argued, engaged discussion between theoreticians, researchers and those working within communities will be a welcome addition to our understanding.

Rob Berkeley
Director, Runnymede
April 2012

Note
1. Baroness Sayeeda Warsi, 'We stand side by side with the Pope in fighting for faith', *The Daily Telegraph*, 13 February 2012. Available at: http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/religion/9080441/We-stand-side-by-side-with-the-Pope-in-fighting-for-faith.html

Introduction: Migration, Racism and Religion
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We are very pleased to introduce this publication, which follows annual conferences in 2010 and 2011 co-organized by the Runnymede Trust and CMRB - the Centre for Research on Migration, Refugees and Belonging at the University of East London. The concerns that brought us together, attracting large audiences of academics, activists, professionals and policy makers, are focused on ways in which issues of migration, racism and religion have recently been interrelated in practices and experiences of migrants and in public and policy discourses.

In Britain, the three areas of racism, migration and religion have been viewed as distinct – less in terms of social and political realities than in the ways that groups and organizations which address them have developed along separate, if not separatist lines. For many years, groups and organizations which formed to contest racism, such as the Commission for Racial Equality and the Institute for Race Relations, focused on what Stuart Hall called 'new ethnicities' - immigrants among whom most had entitlement to British citizenship, as they and their families originated in what were once called NCWP (New Commonwealth countries and Pakistan). In 1981, a British Nationality Act deprived many of them of this entitlement, while the character of migration to the UK started to change, becoming closer to that of other European countries in which rights were withheld even from those able to gain legal entry. At the same time, organizations such as the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants and a greatly expanded Refugee Council developed specifically to deal with issues raised by new patterns of migration.

We believe there is an urgent need to discuss, reconfigure and re-conceptualize relationships between these two sets of issues. Matters of colour and of 'race' are of importance for institutional and inter-subjective racializations but intersected factors have also become matters of crucial importance. These include diverse formal residency and citizenship status, class, gender and generation, and the social, political and civil entitlements attached to them. They play major roles in hegemonic racialization processes which naturalize 'autochthonic' boundaries constructed by various political projects of belonging, notably those advanced by hegemonic government policies and by the extreme Right.

We wished to relate matters of racism and migration to another issue which has been prominent in contemporary discourses and practices of racialization and the struggles against them – that of religion. Since the 1988 'Rushdie Affair', and even more so after September 11th 2001, religion in general and Islam in particular have occupied a special role in constructions of the racialized 'Other'.

These developments are associated with increased emphasis in official discourses in Europe and North America on culture as a source of tension and conflict. With the end of the Cold War, influential academic analyses and strategic assessments in the United States argued that global affairs would be influenced profoundly by problems of cultural difference. Huntington's proposition that international politics would be dominated by a 'Clash of Civilizations' was taken up by a host of conservative theorists, for whom problems of world order were to be understood as confrontations between a progressive Western bloc and a recalcitrant Islam. This refurbished Orientalism had its impact in Europe, where ideologues of the European Union and those associated with local nationalisms found a ready means of addressing increased social tension at a time when 'new migrations' from conflict zones of the Global South were bringing large numbers of people in search of sanctuary.

Across Europe, the state was retreating from commitments to protection of vulnerable migrants, including international agreements such as the 1951 Geneva Convention on refugees. Governments spoke of 'modernizing' the Convention and of 'hardening' borders against migrants they saw as opportunist, threatening, and – in the light of greatly increased use of irregular networks – probably criminal. Mobilizing language that drew upon well-established patterns of prejudice, British Prime Minister Tony Blair described such migratory movements as 'the dark side' of globalization.

It was in this context that, during the 1990s, a series of new laws established 'Fortress Europe'. European states combined to close territorial

borders and to establish new collaborations based upon national and pan-continental concerns for 'security' that excluded all but selected migrants. In Britain, successive governments limited access to state welfare and withdrew support for a host of statutory and voluntary sector initiatives which served vulnerable migrants.

These developments brought a new visibility and potency to religious organizations and networks undertaking 'faith' and 'multi-faith' agendas. Some were consistent with policies of the central state ('cuddlesome', to use Furbey's term in this publication); some disrupted official purposes ('troublesome', suggests Furbey). Issues of migration and religion have been combined in a wide range of meanings, from autochthonic exclusionary discourses to new markers of solidarity and co-existence, notably where religious institutions and networks support and advocate for migrants and other members of racialized communities.

The new visibility of religion in racist and anti-racist discourses has brought to the fore a major debate among people of the Left, feminists and other 'progressives' on secularism, its meaning and its relationship to anti-racist discourse.

As you will see from contributions to this collection, we did not attempt to give single answers to these questions - and not just because the editors do not necessarily agree on such important matters. As Patricia Hill-Collins (1990) observes, we can never know 'the truth' - but can approximate it by a dialogue in which people situated differently in relation to a particular issue can share their perspectives. Such a dialogue can build a more encompassing and epistemologically coherent perspective - if the participants share a normative value system that bridges and transcends the boundaries of their differential positionings and attachments.

The participants in this collection followed this pathway. They come from different ethnic, national and religious perspectives: some work as part of religious institutions, some in NGOs, some in academia. They do not always agree on the issues under debate – but all share a strong commitment to social justice, against racism and sexism and in support of migrants who have come to live in Britain. These shared values facilitated discussion in both conferences on the basis of which this publication evolved. We also shared an understanding that these issues should be addressed within local and global perspectives, contemporary and historical, avoiding simplistic dichotomies and highlighting complex and contradictory contributions of various social agents and both state and inter-state agencies.

We highlight the importance of intersectional approaches, appreciating the racialized, gendered, generational and class dynamics of situations under discussion and of their embodied nature, as well as the gazes and knowledge of participants in a wide range of debates.

Reference

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SECTION I: HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

1. Secularism and Conflicts about Rights
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During the period of the mass black, Asian and anti-racist movements of the 1970s and 1980s, one of the common slogans that was used in a number of campaigns was 'We are here because you were there'. That slogan is important because it said that migration in the 1960s and 1970s – against which there was a vicious mobilization by some mainstream politicians and neo-fascist movements alike – is part of an historical process. The histories of migrants did not begin in Britain but were shaped by British colonialism, plantation slavery, expansion and exploitation.

The demand that black and Asian people in the UK should be seen as part of an historical process is something that racism effectively denies. (Gilroy, 2002). It is an important demand. It means that we have to address fully the histories – including the political histories – of people before they arrive in the UK or Europe. These histories have many consequences that travel well beyond the characterization of people simply as victims of racism or producers of benign and colourful cultures, or people who only become significant when they need help.

One consequence is that some progressive discussions about racism and migration can be very narrow, since these only look at the history of migrants once they have passed through immigration control at Heathrow or Stansted or Dover. It is a paradox that progressive anti-racist discussions also reproduce a narrow kind of British nationalism that can be largely unconcerned with the world outside Britain, unless it can be related to Britain and its history of colonialism. Progressive anti-racism can also produce a kind of 'racial' victimhood that is outside history and politics.

We need to also consider the way that racism has changed over the last two decades. These new ideas around racism can challenge the understanding of racism that has been shaped by postcolonial

migration since the end of the Second World War. When we talk about postcolonial migration, we are talking about processes that largely occurred up to more than half a century ago. In terms of patterns of movement and settlement, post-war migration was highly predictable and largely consistent. One knew where a Kashmiri or Gujarati would come from. You knew not just the town, but probably also the village. You probably knew their sub-caste or sect and a range of other affiliations as well. You could probably tell with some certainty where they were going to reside or settle in the UK.

The human geography of movements of people across the globe today is very different. It often occurs through the paths and enclaves that sanctuary seekers are forced to use or because of other varied movements of people. The East African Asian migrants to the UK in 1968–74, for example, had already moved once and had made homes and families in another continent far away, well before coming to Britain. Many went on to have families dispersed across several continents. So we are not talking about the one-directional movement that is quite common in migration studies – for example from rural areas into the city and from the periphery to the metropolis. So we need to ask: Are terms such as migration and migrants always relevant? Do these terms adequately address the variety of movements of people today across the globe, often as a consequence of war and conflicts.

Equally important, for many sanctuary seekers, is the changed nature of militarism, humanitarism, war and conflict. We do not yet have adequate languages to grasp the variety of movements of people today across the globe, or the transformations of war and regional conflict since the late-1980s that have caused many of these movements.

Many dominant understandings of racism that have been shaped by the Asian, Caribbean and African experience may not necessarily be valid anymore,

or at least not valid in the way that is commonly thought. Partly this is about being alive to new forms of racism and fascism that have very little historical relationship with the movements of the 1920s and 1930s. These are fascisms that don't look at all like the fascism we are familiar with. Yet they are often skilful philosophical projects whose loathing can be as intense as that of older fascism.

If the lives and histories of migrants are considered as much more than the struggle against racism in the UK, and if their histories are considered in their fullness, in a way that a genuine antiracist approach has to, then other issues arise, like religion and faith. If we start talking about religion or about civil society, and about what makes a desirable civil society and what should be the place of religion within it, then this is inevitably where our disagreements start. We might begin to disagree about the relations between religion and the state and religion and public policy. We might begin to disagree about the role of religious organizations in progressive initiatives or as allies of progressive movements. I would be surprised if progressive people didn't 'appreciate and value diversity in a positive way'. But I expect that some of them might be wary of being asked to respect diversity independently of other considerations of equality, of women's rights, and of human rights.

We know the areas of disagreement well. For some, religions and faith organizations are seen as tools for 'cohesion' or manifestations of inalienable rights or the basis for legitimate political action. But for others, they are deeply divisive. When gender-based discrimination or violence is considered, these disagreements multiply. We have a clear division between secular universal human and women's rights on the one hand and authoritarian versions of religious faiths on the other. We also have an ethos of secularity that some may wish to see in civil societies and this is vigorously opposed by others in favour of a supposed cohesiveness that is brought about by religion. These types of issues are typical in British debates.

Let's take this outside Britain for a moment. In Gujarat in 2002, there was a large-scale pogrom in which some 2000 Indian citizens, mostly Muslim, were killed and up to a quarter of a million people displaced from their homes. The ensuing carnage, which is often called the Gujarat genocide, was undertaken by movements of the Hindu religious right. Members of UK affiliates of those same Hindu religious right organizations have been involved in a variety of inter-faith initiatives in the UK, including at the highest levels of government. Those

sympathetic to the Hindu Right and those who have defended the Hindu Right have been, among others, a government appointed commissioner on social cohesion (Gilligan, 2007). The chief minister of Gujarat state, widely thought to have played a key role in the 2002 violence, is regularly invited to the UK – though secular south Asian political groups have frequently sought to prevent his arrival here.

More broadly, the involvement of the religious right in policy areas is a common pattern, and it says something about the way the state in Britain relates to religion and culture. It also demonstrates how minority groups in civil society are conceived in policy terms. The state seeks 'community leaders' for minority groups (and creates them if they don't already exist, especially with Asian populations). For example, Lord the Goldsmith's report on citizenship in 2007 (Goldsmith QC, 2007) listed as having been consulted – as you would expect – politicians, academics and policy experts, groups that are specialists in some way or another on citizenship and migration areas. But the remainder were religious organizations and many were figures that were sympathetic to the religious right. How does civil society become 'substituted' by a collection of religious groups, many of them claiming marginality and therefore demanding representation? One can go very far in claiming that one is marginal, but what are the consequences of the religious rendering of civil society in these consultations?

I want to consider another example, from another vantage point. In 1971, in what was East Pakistan and is now Bangladesh, there was a monumental genocide with estimates regularly putting the number of people killed at between 2–3 million and in the war that led to Bangladesh's independence. It was a systematic genocide targeting intellectuals, communists, progressive journalists, feminists, lawyers and so forth. Religious militia acting with the Pakistani army were directly involved in the genocide. After Bangladesh's independence, some members of the militia or members of the political party that spawned the militia could not stay in Bangladesh for obvious reasons. Some of them came to the UK (along with numerous others who were refugees from the war and genocide itself) and later became involved in inter-faith and policy activities at the highest levels in the UK. Some were even implicated in war crimes and other atrocities. They are regularly opposed by secular Bangladeshi groups in the UK, all left-wing but who have no left-wing allies to speak of since many on the UK Left are aligned with the same religious right party that was implicated in the genocide. Now for the Left in

South Asia, it is very clear what real dangers the movements of the religious right represent. These religious movements are not inexperienced, but have been in existence for some 60–80 years. They are often massive and well-organized movements with a large number of wings – youth, women's, education wings and so forth. They are part of the histories of several of the countries of South Asia. It is then a paradox that the Left in the UK works with the UK representatives of the same movements that are attacking Left groups in South Asia.

Now I want to give a local example that illustrates other changes since the 1980s. Some of you will remember the terrible racist murder of Altab Ali in Tower Hamlets in 1978 and the subsequent rise of Bengali youth movements. Various conflicts occurred between the local community and the neo-fascist National Front or the British movement. In the 1980s and 1990s there were various campaigns and struggles concerning discrimination in housing and other public sector provision and the rise of several women's organizations. One of the key characteristics of the movements, groups and organizations, and the immense variety of cultural youth activities that emerged from that anti-racist period was that they were virtually universally secular in orientation. In this period, let's say, from the 1970s right through to the early 1990s, the term 'Asian' was a secular term of common affiliation.

There is a powerful history of secular Asian anti-racist and women's struggles over almost the past 30 years or so. These groups were important in facing down the real threat from organized fascism in the 1970s, as well as consolidating an independent political sphere that was well sustained right up to the 1990s. Such histories are written out of the discourses of multiculturalism and the faith agenda. They are also erased by the Asian religious Right who wish to impose an altogether different understanding on those histories – histories that they played virtually no part in. In this remarkably neglected history of secular Asian struggles in Britain, the ferocity of the racism that Asians faced and fought is at risk of being forgotten entirely by younger Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs. For some of those people, the term 'Asian' evokes disgust. They are instead keener to celebrate the supremacy of their religions, monuments or civilizations. We can mourn the loss of the memory of that history, or we can attempt to rescue it, but I doubt that there is a strong secular presence anymore that can challenge the ceaseless communalization of Asian politics in the UK.

Some people on the Asian religious right wish to

replace this history with the politics of religious identity. It is one of the peculiarities of this period that some young Hindus, for example, vehemently 'oppose colonialism' by claiming to be the real Aryans, just as some young Muslims claim that a Crusader-Zionist-Hindu conspiracy governs the world. Opposing racism and fascism can dovetail with other ideologies of communal purity.

We often hear of the transformation of official anti-racist initiatives, which started in the 1980s after which they became something like an official multiculturalism and then, more recently, multifaithism. At some point mutlifaith initiatives and other initiatives around social cohesion became linked. After 2001, more insistently after 2005, these linked initiatives became unevenly associated with counter-terrorism and preventing violent extremism. At a different, community level communal identity politics increasingly became the naturalized norm. The issue becomes not 'How are we Asians going to live with each other?', but instead 'Who am I? How can I be purer in who I want to be?' This becomes the register for thinking about anything to do with south Asians in the UK. Why should this be so?

Why indeed is the thinkability of Asians in this country inseparable from the view of them as target communities that need representation from unelected leaders? Minority populations receive institutional recognition primarily as communal groups. This recognition takes a form that advances the undemocratically-derived political interests of those groups that wish to make communal claims. Those groups tend to be dominated by the political parties of the South Asian and middle-Eastern religious right. So what is the democratic deficit here? Is this a kind of inferior citizenship?

Particularly after the 2001 disturbances in the Northern towns in the UK, some Hindu and Sikh groups demanded not to be addressed as 'Asians', and instead to be recognized as high achievers in employment and education, and as loyal, model minorities committed fully to Britishness. Here one can see how the rush to embrace British nationalism can link with ideas of communal purity. In this same process, class divisions in Asian populations came to be articulated as religious divisions, with some successful Hindus and Sikhs claiming to be a world away from the Muslims they rubbed shoulders with daily: the 'good' minorities against the 'bad', an absolute border created between the most proximate of peoples.

These communal dynamics pose other issues

about relations between so-called migrant groups not just in Britain but across Europe. For example, when and how will the second generation Turkish woman in Frankfurt be seen as a European by a second generation Indian woman from Leicester? Are both more at ease with seeing themselves as German or British rather than seeing each other as European? What might be the Europeanness that each might identify in the other? Or are there other transnational dynamics, including religious ones, that will ultimately be more critical?

The rise and impact of the transnational religious Right can be a difficult area for the Left. Issues of security and citizenship, policing and militarism are being raised today in the context of sustained political demonization of Muslim populations. We can recognize the difficulties that many progressives face in which, aside from the 'global war on terror' and the invasion of Iraq, there is an intense anti-Muslim bigotry of a systematic kind across Europe. This bigotry has become linked to immigration and border controls in the most insidious of ways – for example, by enforcing gender and sexuality rights against members of religious groups coming to Europe. In Britain, the association between belonging and patriotism or between social cohesion and patriotism is particularly troubling.

The political terrain is a peculiar one in many other ways, but one particularly powerful political configuration is between conservative tendencies and the supposedly liberal ones, both often proposing views that are pro-Israeli, anti-Palestinian, anti-Arab and anti-Muslim. And we see the use of the languages of liberty and freedom, women's and sexual emancipation directed against Muslim populations as a test of their acceptance of certain values. In concluding, our political choices are much wider than those offered by either the right-wing and libertarian anti-Muslim alliances on the one hand, or the different alliances of the Left with sections of the religious Right.

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2. Conservative Pluralism and the Politics of Multiculturalism

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Liberalism and Diversity

'Secularism' and 'the politics of belonging' often appear to stand in opposition to one another. Currently - and not least in the United Kingdom - the politics of belonging often articulates religious identities among immigrant and ethnic minority populations. This is disorientating for many radicals and liberals. We can see some of the reasons for this in retrospect. In the 1960s and 1970s, the people who campaigned against racially inspired immigration controls, and those who supported the race relations acts that tried to outlaw some forms of discrimination, were also found to be supporters of a broad roster of libertarian reforms. These causes endorsed the relaxation of censorship (the Penguin publication of *Lady Chatterley's Lover* in 1960 provided a landmark judgment under the Obscene Publications Act), and the legalization (under certain conditions) of both male homosexuality and abortion. In all these cases, the rising tide of reform weakened the authority of religious doctrine and undermined the capacity of religious leaders to legislate for the country's morals. Moreover, the feminism and anti- racism causes were also aligned when, in 1975 and 1976, Parliament legislated against sex discrimination and racial discrimination (Joppke, 1989).

In the four decades that followed the arrival of SS Windrush in 1948, there was no shortage of conflict and controversy attached to rising immigration and ethnic diversity. However, discord and debate in these years was overwhelmingly secular. It was the impact of immigrants on labour markets, housing, sex, crime and public order which shaped debate in parliament, in the press, in pubs and on the street in the 1950s and 1960s. From the late 1970s, debate shifted from concern with immigrants alone to encompass ethnic minorities. This transition carried with it the recognition that it was not only immigrants but, increasingly, English-born minority groups who lived with the burdens of racial discrimination and cumulative social and economic disadvantages. The rise of multiculturalism in education was, in part, a reflection of this perception. Famously, the Swann report of 1985, which outlined the outcome of an Inquiry into the Education of Children from Ethnic Minority Groups, presented multiculturalism as a vision for a modern Britain, not just for its education system. It disavowed assimilation and called both for 'a framework of commonly accepted values, practices and procedures', and for ethnic minority communities to be assisted 'in maintaining their distinct ethnic identities' (Anthias and Yuval-Davis, 1992). At the same time, a number of Labour-run cities and boroughs adopted ethnic monitoring and took positive action to increase the ethnic minority share of council staff as a way of addressing the consequences of racism and racial disadvantage.

In the late 1980s this almost exclusively secular focus to public debate was challenged. In 1989 the clashes that followed the publication of Salman Rushdie's novel *The Satanic Verses* were explosive. The offence it caused many Muslims and their demonstrative reaction which was most dramatically manifested in the form of a staged public burning, were an indication of this change. A second indication is the shift in policy as politicians and policy-makers increasingly spoke of Britain as a multi-faith society as well as, or instead of, a multi-ethnic society (Modood, 1990; Feldman, 2011). Yet despite these undeniably novel features the multicultural politics of the last two decades have striking and revealing antecedents in British history. In order to understand this, we have to discard the idea that multicultural societies are a new phenomenon in British history. Of course, the term 'multicultural' is relatively new – its use in the UK going back only as far as the 1970s. Certain features of 'multiculturalism' are novel too: above all, the radical claim that diverse religious and ethnic identities have an equal claim on the public sphere. However, the problem of how to make law and govern a society which contains more than one cultural community is not a new one in the history of the British state. We can see this by looking at three areas in particular: the multinational character of the United Kingdom; the practice of rule in the Empire; and the response to religious pluralism at home. This essay suggests that if we examine the strategies and practices employed by the British state as it governed diverse societies in the past we will gain some insights into the dynamics and forms of multiculturalism in the present.

The Origins of Conservative Pluralism

The United Kingdom is, of course, dominated by England. Yet the subjugation of Wales, Ireland and Scotland to English hegemony has gone hand-in-hand with the incorporation, not the erasure, of these subordinate nationalities. Home Rule, a sort of autonomy within the United Kingdom, was the preferred Liberal solution for the Irish problem between 1886 and the First World War. But once this became definitively unattainable, following the creation in 1920 of the Irish Free State, a sort of Home Rule was applied to Northern Ireland through the devolved administration at Stormont. The Scottish and Welsh assemblies are more recent creations which date from 1999. However, these nations also have a long history in which they have been allowed space to assert a degree of separateness. Even in the case of Wales, where English rule had destroyed independent political and legal institutions, from the late 19th century there was a national revival which was in part sponsored by the Westminster government. By the early part of the last century, Welsh language and literature were being taught in Welsh schools and the country boasted a national library and university. In the case of Scotland, following incorporation in the United Kingdom in 1707, the country retained its own ecclesiastical, legal and educational systems (Feldman, 2011).

In much of the empire, pluralism became the vehicle for British rule. This was the policy of indirect rule developed by Lord Lugard in Nigeria and widely adopted elsewhere. British policy in Asia and Africa aimed to conserve the power of traditional rulers and established rulers – or those who the British (sometimes mistakenly) imagined these figures to be. Inevitably, this produced a strong preference for native law in civil and criminal cases. As the Governor of Tanganyika, Sir Donald Cameron, declared, the aim was not to turn Africans into Europeans but to encourage them to become better Africans. Slavery was outlawed, as was witchcraft, but this apart, British colonial policy tended to judge the validity of local customs by local standards not metropolitan ones (Poulter, 1998). This had important consequences for the people subjected to British rule. The Empire endorsed and helped to perpetuate the rulers and institutions it sanctioned.

From the middle of the 19th century pluralism also became the predominant political response to religious diversity at home. By that time, as population growth outstripped Anglican church-building during the industrial revolution, large numbers of Christians affiliated themselves to non-Anglican denominations or simply ignored formal Christian observance altogether. As a result, pluralism became the guiding principle of the state's religious policy. Not only was Parliament opened up to Catholics and Jews but the state soon offered these other groups financial support for some of their activities. Post-1833, the state began to fund education. Within twenty years taxpayers' money was being used not only to support Church of England schools (voluntary schools, as they became known) but Catholic, Wesleyan and Jewish schools as well. At the start of the 20th century, this policy was extended considerably. By this time, Anglican voluntary schools were in dire straits financially. They were rescued by the 1902 Education Act which determined that secular education in these schools would be paid for by the rate-payers. However, the same support was also extended to Catholic and Jewish schools. In an increasingly democratic society, it was no longer possible for the Conservative Party to prop up the Anglican Church without extending the favour to other religions (Feldman, 2011).

The implications of this pluralism are doubly conservative, for it not only carries a strategy of governance but also has weighty implications for the communities who are incorporated in this way. For example, when the British State acknowledged religious minorities it also bolstered the claims of figures and institutions to represent those minorities. One expression of religious pluralism was the Marriage Registration Act of 1836. For the first time, this allowed men and women to marry outside of the Anglican Church. Jews were just one of the groups that benefitted from this measure. The state, in effect, sub-contracted the regulation of Jewish marriages to the Board of Deputies of British Jews and to its religious authority, the Chief Rabbi, whose job it was to ensure marriages were performed correctly and recorded. This was convenient for the state, but also had a huge impact on the Jewish community. The Board and the Chief Rabbinate were able to use the power invested in them to discipline congregations and exert sanctions on those who challenged their authority. When some reform-minded Jews created the West London Synagogue in 1842, they were not only excommunicated but the synagogue was refused a marriage licence (Feldman, 1994).

The Past and the Present

Over a period of two centuries or more, within the multinational Kingdom, in the empire and in relations between the state and different religious traditions, governments of all political parties have developed pluralist solutions. In each case, these solutions

developed as part of a strategy of containment calculated to preserve English dominance within the United Kingdom, to govern subject peoples within the Empire, and to preserve the privileges of the established Church. It is all very well, therefore, for the Prime Minister, Mr Cameron, to denounce the failure of what he calls 'state multiculturalism' but the origins of state multiculturalism do not lie in the radicalism of the 'loony Left' local authorities and politically correct educationalists (the usual suspects in this case), but with policies and strategies developed over a much longer time period which are deeply embedded in the nation's political culture (Cameron, 2011).

Since the furious and, above all, highly visible and vocal public response from some Moslems to the publication of the *Satanic Verses* in 1988, the causes of libertarianism and ethnic minorities have sometimes appeared at odds. As different groups have reasserted the centrality of religion to the politics of diversity, so multiculturalism has returned to territory that is easily accommodated by the practices of conservative pluralism. In 1991, the Conservative government established the Inner Cities Religious Council. Six years later, a handbook published by the Department of Environment, Transport and Regions declared 'churches, mosques, temples, synagogues and gudwaras have as much right to contribute to discussions concerning regeneration as residents' or tenants' organizations.' Trade unions do not even get a mention. It is a matter of resources as well as rhetoric. In 2006, 44 per cent of local authorities had an officer whose responsibility it was to liaise with 'faith communities' (Feldman, 2011). In Britain in the 1970s and 1980s this was unthinkable.

We can see this in the way that, following the election of a Labour government in 1997, Anglican, Catholic and Jewish faith schools were now joined by Moslem, Hindu, Greek, Orthodox and Seventh Day Adventist schools. On the one hand, the Church of England supported this expansion, but at the same time the supporters of these new faith schools were also supporters of the religious establishment. This remained a vastly unequal relationship. At the start of the 21st century there was one Moslem school for every 200,000 Moslems in England. By contrast, there was one Anglican school for every 8000 people who returned themselves as Christian in the 2001 census (Feldman, 2011). Under the present government, as public expenditure is cut and as the 'big society' project aims to relocate in civil society services once provided by the state, conservative

pluralism is set fair to gain renewed momentum. It will endow with prestige and resources those institutions and leaders it recognizes. Inevitably, religious organizations will figure prominently among those organizations that pick up the slack. One danger in contemporary politics is the combination of a rhetorical assault on 'multiculturalism' alongside policies that are destined to reinforce it.

Supporters of immigration control and Powellite opponents of the race relations acts were seen by their opponents as old-fashioned, out of touch and attached to a nostalgic, imperial vision of Britain. A generation of radicals became accustomed to see support for the rights of immigrants and for libertarian reform to be closely aligned in a progressive reformist political current. This cluster of causes encompassed free speech in the face of religious authority, gender equality in the face of male privilege, and sexual freedom in the face of conservative prescription. In the present, vocal opponents of all these causes can be found within as well outside of the country's ethnic and religious minorities. The connections between multiculturalism and secular progressive politics appear less obvious and less compelling than they used to. This is not because of anything inherent to the politics of diversity - as the history of the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s demonstrates – but it has much to do with the resurgence of a very British model of conservative pluralism.

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SECTION II: SECULARISM, RELIGION AND SOCIAL COHESION

3. Beyond 'Social Glue'? 'Faith' and Community Cohesion

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Introduction: The Rising Prominence of 'Faith'

Religion has been conspicuous in the recent development of social and community cohesion discourse in the United Kingdom and other nation states. Religion is seen simultaneously as a problem and a solution, a cause of social division and bloody conflict, but also a resource in building civic 'partnership', inclusive local governance, 'strong communities' and a vibrant civil society. This public prominence of 'faith' and 'faith communities' is a relatively recent development, a cause, variously, for surprise, dismay, celebration and often febrile debate.

Secularization, the draining of social significance from religious thinking, practice and institutions (Wilson, 1966), had been regarded as irreversible and ultimately universal. A defining feature of modernity in the West has been the ascription of religion to the private realm and to issues of personal religious practice and spirituality, distinct from the public and secular sphere of the state and politics. In England, despite the established status of the Church of England, this division has been particularly pronounced. Academic marginalization has also been evident, with religion often reduced to an epiphenomenon, a surface manifestation beneath which the 'real' causes of human development and conflict (specified in terms of such concepts as ethnicity, class and gender) can be uncovered (McTernan, 2003). Relatively little public research funding in the UK has been assigned to religion, while social policy debate in the decades after 1945 was preoccupied by the scope and delivery of state-funded welfare, with religious organizations accorded a subordinate role.

The secularization thesis continues to draw strength from the sharp decline in participation at formal worship in the main UK Christian denominations (see, for example, Brierley, 2000; Bruce, 2002). But other commentators point to the persistence, and indeed revival, of religion across the globe, with 'only secular Western Europe and Australasia … appear[ing] to be conforming to the demise of the public deity so confidently pronounced by the founding fathers of modern social science' (Ruthven, 2004: 196). Parekh goes further, arguing that 'the kind of inexorable and comprehensive secularization predicted and hoped for by secular writers has not occurred even in advanced western societies' (Parekh, 2006: 323).

Moreover, although it remains a personal matter for many, religion also refuses to remain confined to the private realm. Many Christians in the UK act in the 'public square', giving contemporary expression to longstanding social and political engagement, motivated by religious belief. Furthermore, the western distinction between public and private is liable to be less firmly drawn by the growing numbers of people of non-Christian religion in the UK:

> ...[Although] there was always recognition within Muslim societies of distinction between the public and private leading to a de facto division of powers,... the Divine Spirit touches all of man's actions whether this worldly or other worldly - in fact God is the Guide in all affairs [and] Muslim societies saw a fusion of religious, political, economic and social life. (Hussain, 2004: 92-93)

Much of this global religious resurgence is associated with separation and conflict, reflecting a defensive reaction to the uncertainties and risks of a globalized and 'liquid' world (Bauman, 2004; Sennett, 1998). The UK government's community cohesion

agenda has developed in a context punctuated by the attacks on New York and Washington in 2001, the London bombings of July 2005 and subsequent attempted bombings in UK cities. Perhaps most immediately significant in the development of UK community cohesion policies were the disturbances in northern British cities and towns in 2001. Here, religion was implicated, together with ethnicity and social class, in socio-spatial segregation and the development of what the influential Cantle report termed 'parallel lives' (Cantle, 2001). Yet, despite these negative associations, the UK government has emphasized the positive social impact of religion.

This chapter explores policy assumptions about faith and social cohesion. The first section explores the officially prescribed role of faith as 'social glue' and documents the government's support for the social engagement of 'faith', followed by an assessment of the contribution of religious organizations, communities and their members to social cohesion on the government's terms. The chapter then provides a critical account of the complexity of 'religion' and 'faith' and their capacity to present an independent challenge to the state. The concluding section draws on empirical research to assess the potential of faith communities and organizations to question the official definition of 'social glue' and to move beyond it, working with others in a free civil sphere marked by cross-boundary association, deliberation and empowered citizenship.

Faith's Prescribed Role

For centuries, the Church of England was both an instrument of social care and social control, reaching down into every locality. Churches and religious bodies were, after the family, the major source of welfare support. Christian social thought, campaigning and philanthropic action (Nonconformist and Catholic as well as Anglican) have been important in shaping social policy and practice (Farnell et al, 1994). Even at the high-point of secular welfarism in the decades after 1945, this religious influence persisted through the legacy of figures such as R.H.Tawney and Archbishop William Temple.

Nevertheless, the post-1945 welfare state was embraced, popularly as well as officially, as 'an effective guardian of the common good [that] should be the principal provider of welfare' (Forrester, 1985: 14), reducing the role in public policy of religious and indeed other voluntary organizations. It is only in the last fifteen years that 'faith' appears to have 'come in from the cold'.

The recent governmental 'turn to faith' in the UK pre-dates the advent of New Labour. The Inner Cities Religious Council (ICRC) was established in 1992 during the Major Conservative administration. Since 1997 the Labour government has been consistent in engaging with 'faith communities', retaining the ICRC as a forum where faith representatives 'can work together on urban renewal and social exclusion' (DETR, 2001: 1).

In 1997, a report by the Department of Environment, Transport and the Regions (DETR) made a positive case for faith community involvement in urban regeneration:

> *They can help regeneration partnerships to understand the needs and concerns of people living in particular areas, or groups of people with particular needs… In terms of their active membership, churches, mosques, temples, synagogues and gurdwaras are often among the most substantial community-based organizations within an area. They have as much right to contribute to discussions concerning regeneration as residents' or tenants' organizations.* (DETR, 1997: 149)

In the wake of the 2001 urban disturbances and 9/11 attacks, government partnership with faith communities was explicitly linked to community cohesion and became increasingly consolidated within the Home Office and its Cohesion and Faiths Unit within the Race, Cohesion and Faith's Directorate. In April 2006, the government combined the ICRC and the Home Office's Working Together Steering Group in a new Faith Communities Consultative Council (FCCC). The Council is a non-statutory body, including representatives of major world faiths, which:

> *… aims to provide a national forum, chiefly concerned with issues related to cohesion, integration, the development of sustainable communities, neighbourhood renewal, and social inclusion. [It also has] general oversight on engagement between central government and faith communities [and has the overarching aim of] giving faith communities a strong role and clear voice in improving cohesion, regeneration and renewal in local communities.* (http://communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1504813)

The place of faith in public policy and cohesion

strategies has been defended at regular intervals by senior politicians and key official documents. Tony Blair gave his strong endorsement early in his premiership: 'Our major faith traditions – all of them more historic and deeply rooted than any political party or ideology – play a fundamental role in supporting and propagating values which bind us together as a nation' (Blair, 2001).

In 2004, the Local Government Association (LGA) collaborated with the Home Office and the government-supported Inter Faith Network to produce a guidance manual for local councils working with faith groups, commending the latter as sources of community cohesion (LGA, 2002). In 2005 an interim report on the third sector included a positive assessment of the potential of faith communities in building networks and trust within civil society (ODPM / Home Office, 2005). Soon afterwards, faith communities were identified in a Local Government White Paper as having an important part to play in achieving 'strong and prosperous communities' (DCLG, 2006: 54).

However, the overall tone of these policy documents is instrumental. Faith communities are groups to be harnessed in order to address government objectives. Moreover, religion is seen in essentially functional and consensual terms: as a social glue

to be pulled out of the toolkit to bind community and society. Before critiquing this simplistic view, which neglects the complexity and independence of religion, the following section explores the contribution of faith in the government's own terms.

Contributions of Faith

The 2001 Census of Great Britain included a question asking people: 'What is your religion?' People assigning themselves to the category of 'Christian' constituted a large majority (71.82%), while the non-Christian religious population constituted 5.56%. The largest groups within the latter were Muslim (2.78%), Hindu (0.98%), Sikh (0.59%), Jewish (0.47%), Buddhist (0.26) (ONS, 2004). People stating 'no religion' constituted 15.05% and 7.76% did not enter any response. However, these broad categories can mask a complex 'range of diversities' and 'create an unhelpful abstraction that is not adequate to historical reality' (ODPM, 2006: 8-9). Moreover, the Census question sheds little light on the significance that people attribute to religion in their lives and the extent to which it influences their personal and social practice. When the European Values Survey asked respondents about the importance of religion in their life only 12.6% of respondents in Great Britain said 'very important' and 24.8% said 'quite important', while 33.0% said 'not important' and 29.7% said 'not important at all' (Halman, 2001: 33 – cited in ODPM, 2006: 7).

This gap between affiliation and the significance which people attach to religion varies across the major faith traditions. The fourth Policy Studies Institute (PSI) survey found that 95% of Muslims, 89% of Hindus and 86% of Sikhs regarded religion as 'very' or 'fairly' important in their lives. The comparable figures for White members of the Church of England and White Roman Catholics were 46% and 69% respectively (Modood, 1997: 301 – cited in ODPM, 2006: 7).

When assessing the contribution of 'faith communities' and 'people of faith' to social cohesion and its perceived component elements, this division between passive affiliation and positive commitment is underlined. Thus, the Home Office Citizenship

Table 6.1: Formal volunteering in 12 months before interview, by whether respondent currently practises a religion within ethnic group (%)

Ethnic group	Percentage of people who have engaged in formal volunteering
White	
Practises a religion	58
Others	41
Asian	
Practises a religion	36
Others	34
Black	
Practises a religion	51
Others	34

Source: NCVO (2007), drawing on the Citizenship Survey of 2005 (DCLG, 2005).

Table 6.2: Participation in civic activities, by whether respondent practises a religion within ethnic group (%)

Ethnic group	Percentage of people who have participated in civic activity (civic activism, civic consultation or civic participation)		
	Civic activism	Civic consultation	Civic participation
White			
Practises a religion	13	25	45
Others	8	9	37
Asian			
Practises a religion	8	16	27
Others	8	18	29
Black			
Practises a religion	13	22	29
Others	9	18	29

Source: NCVO (2007), drawing on the Citizenship Survey of 2005 (DCLG, 2005).

Survey of 2001 found that religious affiliation made little difference to levels of informal and formal volunteering (Home Office, 2001). The Citizenship Survey of 2005 found a similar pattern in relation to participation in civic activities and charitable giving (DCLG, 2005). However, volunteering and civic participation were, in general, above the national average among people claiming to practise a religion, as shown in Tables 6.1 and 6.2.

A similar pattern emerges in the context of charitable giving. Religious affiliation correlates positively with giving but the active practice of religion is associated with a further increase in levels of donation (DCLG, 2005).

This data requires further exploration. There is some unevenness between groups and in the forms in which 'contributions of faith' are made. Variations between religions and broad ethnic groupings are likely to reflect differences and inequalities in material, human and social capital; religious and cultural histories; and diversity in theology and tradition. Overall, however, religious commitment is associated with above-average levels of volunteering, civic activity and financial giving amongst individuals which address issues of social and community cohesion.

In relation to the role of collective activity through faith organizations, it was estimated that there were over 54,000 places of worship in the UK in 2005 (Christian Research, 2005). In addition, there are many and diverse organizations which are prompted and shaped by faith but not necessarily engaged in explicitly 'religious' activity. In August 2006, over 23,000 organizations stated in their returns to the Charity Commission that they engaged in religious activity. Many more organizations do not classify themselves formally as religious even though they are based on religious principles. Furthermore, faith community members engage in a multitude of social activities of varying scales which are not found on official registers. The National Council for Voluntary Associations concluded that: 'the institutional manifestations of faith are embedded in society, in the fabric of the voluntary and community sector' (NCVO, 2007: 16). In terms of social cohesion, however, much depends on what these faith communities and organizations actually do. There can be negative social, and indeed 'spiritual', capital which, in extremity, may ultimately be expressed in terrorism and murder.

An accumulation of recent research evidence indicates that many of the activities undertaken by faith groups may reasonably be seen as contributing implicitly to social and community cohesion. One study, notable for its scale and scope, was made in north-west England (Northwest Development Agency, 2003). This research surveyed over 2,300 faith groups and organizations, encompassing nine religions (and including nine Christian traditions). The researchers found over 5,000 social projects,

involving over 45,000 volunteers across the region. These initiatives addressed diverse issues including homelessness, asylum, racism, crime, drug and alcohol abuse, health, skills development, art, music and environment. Studies in other regions and in specific cities have produced similar findings (see, for example, Yorkshire Churches, 2002; Lovatt et al, 2005; and Cairns et al, 2005).

This research confirms the significance of individual action by faith group members and the provision by faith communities and organizations of charitable local social care and welfare. However, a closer reading of this research also suggests engagement at a more structural level. Thus, a study commissioned by the Church of Scotland concluded that '[Church of Scotland] congregations make important contributions to the institutional infrastructure and social cohesion of many Scottish communities' (Flint and Kearns, 2004: 18 -emphasis added). This prompts an assessment of the contribution, present and potential of faith groups in a wider official project of civic renewal, working explicitly across boundaries to achieve community cohesion as distinct from 'parallel' social cohesion. Research for the Home Office (Lowndes and Chapman, 2005) and studies funded by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (Farnell et al, 2003; Furbey et al, 2006) found evidence for a substantial contribution of faith in these contexts. But they also identify obstacles, misunderstandings and tensions. Any simple view of faith as handy 'social glue' is challenged by the complexity and independence of Britain's faith communities.

Misunderstanding Faith – Complexity and Independence

The instrumental tone of much official policy discourse and its underestimation of the complexity and independence of religious faith have already been noted. With regard to complexity, if religions indeed 'grow out of experiences, just like all other kinds of human knowledge' (Taylor, 2003: 27), then the faith landscape will be highly diverse (see also, Armstrong, 1999). This places major demands on the 'religious literacy' of government policy-makers, all actors in local and regional governance, which include political, official, academic, community, and indeed faith. There are few who are able currently to meet these challenges. 'Faith communities' exist at different spatial scales from global to local, with policy tending to focus on the local when religion is also a primary carrier of globalization. World faiths are all marked by internal differences of

belief, interpretation, tradition and practice. Local 'faith communities' that may seem homogeneous can exhibit significant internal diversity. Failure to recognize this can lead to false assumptions regarding such issues as the identity of 'faith leaders'; their legitimacy in representation; the establishment of 'faith seats' on regional assemblies and local partnership boards; and the existence of a discrete 'faith sector' view within a wider, similarly diverse, voluntary and community sector.

Complexity is related to independence. Although government ministers have approved the 'values' that faiths bring to civic renewal and community cohesion programmes and have sought the moral validation of faith, the main official endorsement of faith involvement in public policy is with regard to the resources and organizational capacity which they can offer as a distinctive part of the voluntary sector. At local level it is faith communities themselves that are more likely to stress the distinctive significance of both values and beliefs (Lowndes and Chapman, 2005): not only the concrete actions and institutional commitment of 'religious capital', but also 'spiritual capital' defined as: 'the motivating basis of faith, belief and values (sometimes expressed in tangible forms as worship, credal statements and articles of faith, or more intangibly as one's own 'spirituality') that shapes the actions of faith communities' (Baker and Skinner, 2006).

Of course, faith communities and their members have no monopoly of values, or indeed of faith and belief, although secular organizations may not readily use these latter words. Yet participation in a worshipping community accords a particular centrality and regular reminder of ultimate sources of motivation. Baker and Skinner observe that: 'Some of the contributions of spiritual and religious capital naturally overlap with the practices and values of secular civil society – others are more distinctive and can create dissonance and discomfort' (Baker and Skinner, 2006: 9). While not universal, therefore, it is in the nature of faith members, communities and organizations to assert varying forms and directions of independence from official agendas and vocabularies of 'regeneration', 'well-being' and 'prosperity' (see for example, Commission on Urban Life and Faith, 2006).

An earlier article on urban regeneration and faith (Furbey and Macey, 2005) risked the over-simplification just signalled by drawing upon a typology used by Castells to explore responses to globalization and its challenge to personal and collective identity (Castells, 1997). Castells refers

first to those who seek to assume the 'legitimising' identities offered and approved by dominant institutions. The evidence presented earlier in this chapter confirms the relative strength of engagement by faith communities, organizations and their members in voluntary action and varying 'legitimate' civic activities. However, even here independence is soon evident and what, from the state's perspective, might seem the 'cuddlesome' virtues of faith in assisting the 'delivery' of official policies and programmes is joined by 'troublesome' challenge. Thus, competing with their commitment to engagement with the state, faith communities and their members also experience (often in common with secular organizations) a sense of 'capture' and mission compromised (as argued strongly by Bretherton, 2006), pressed to redirect limited capacity to public initiatives that disappoint in their outcomes and involve contrasting understandings, priorities, processes and timescales to their own (Farnell et al, 2003; Baker and Skinner, 2006; Furbey et al, 2006). These experiences, refracted by the doctrines, beliefs, values and collective knowledge of faith communities themselves, can prompt critique and resistance.

Resistance is the second of Castells' types, a response that he sees as essentially defensive. In these terms, 'resisting' religious community offers strong internal bonding, separation from 'the world' and an emphasis on personal spirituality, piety and experience. Resistance can also involve the digging of 'trenches' of 'survival' (Castells, 1997: 9), designed to hold on to physical, cultural and, in the case of faith, theological turf. Such responses place more emphasis on internal social cohesion than on 'bridging' community cohesion.

But these fortifications can, in time, become bridgeheads, a basis for more active advance back into society. Re-engagement may take various forms, including the proselytising of individuals, but also social and political action. Whether they have a 'spiritual' or a 'social' emphasis or elements of both, such outwardly directed activities can begin to connect with Castells' final type, the 'project' identity. Here, the community or group goes on the offensive to empower people as subjects, transform society and to achieve a different life. People may be prepared for projects of this kind by the negative experiences and the capacity-building stemming from 'legitimising' activity, or by frustration with retreat as a mode of resistance.

Of course, much project activity, as well as resistance, is inimical to the boundary-crossing associated

with community cohesion, not least in a religious setting and particularly in a religious fundamentalist context. Ruthven underlines the origins of the term 'fundamentalist' in Christian Protestantism in North America and is careful to recognize the differences between world 'fundamentalisms'. Nevertheless, he identifies what he terms their shared 'family resemblances': 'Put at its broadest, it [religious fundamentalism] may be described as a "religious way of being" that manifests itself in a strategy by which beleaguered believers attempt to preserve their distinctive identity as a people or group in the face of modernity and secularization' (Ruthven, 2004: 8). But religious fundamentalism rarely involves only the resistance of retreat, because: 'For the activist fundamentalist (as distinct from the passive traditionalist) the quest for salvation cannot be realized by withdrawing into a cultural enclave' (Ruthven, 2004: 57).

The consequences can certainly be 'troublesome', and not only for governments. A key question is therefore whether in terms of social and community cohesion, faiths must either be the 'cuddlesome' instruments of government or divisively troublesome, or whether they have a more independent and positive potential.

Faith in Civil Society – 'Admirably Troublesome'?

Shortly after the London bombings of July 2005, Bernard Crick, a vice-president of the British Humanist Society, used the phrase 'admirably troublemaking' in reference to the East London Tenants Organization (TELCO). This organization (now part of the wider London Citizens network) is a coalition of faith and secular groups, whose beliefs, values and collective experiences motivate campaigns on issues of poverty, citizenship and empowerment. TELCO, Crick observes, 'stretched their ecumenicity' by electing him as an honorary fellow. He explains his reason for acceptance in these terms:

> I risked a humanist blasphemy trial gladly, because all their practical actions were motivated by a morality of social justice. That is what they had in common… their real religious differences, if insisted on at every turn, would render impossible their common commitment to concrete objectives of justice and human rights. (Crick, 2005)

This example serves to question the assignment

of 'faith' to a Durkheimian role as social glue with which to 'stick the teapot back together' – a source of 'binding' values, a stock of physical and human resources, a compliant 'partner' in governance, an agent of a 'responsibilized' moral community, and a means to restore neighbourhood 'governability' (Atkinson, 2003). Rather, we see here a particular expression of the 'independence' of faith as a critical and oppositional presence and its detachment from a purely civic role to one in the freer 'space' of civil society.

An influential advocate of an 'associational politics' of civil society was Paul Hirst who came to advocate a decentralized liberal politics, with 'associations' working with government to secure better services based on local democratic involvement and enabling social groups to build their own social worlds in civil society. He makes this particular reference to religion: 'At present [writing in 1994], it is not the old political forces of the left – who continue to advocate failed collectivist solutions - but religious and community groups who see the need for activism and co-operation to build a "civil society" for the poor and excluded' (Hirst, 1994: 10 – emphasis added).

The idea of 'associationalism' has been developed more recently by Chapman (2005) in relation to Christian theology and social practice in the age of New Labour. He contrasts the communitarianism, managerialism and nationalism of New Labour and 'its depoliticized public sphere' with a much more bottom-up pluralist society composed of participative communities characterized by the willingness and skill to resolve conflicts through deliberation and negotiation. Chapman refers to the 'premature harmony' of official 'partnership' and draws a parallel with what he regards as the oppressive notion, influential in Christian social theology, of a 'common good' as an end state. With Hirst, he prefers to focus on a process which involves communities which recognize the rights of others to be different and have a willingness to learn through dialogue, recognize complexity, and develop the qualities and skills of deliberation and negotiation (Chapman, 2005, chapter 7). These attributes seem highly congruent with those identified by Parekh for cohesion in a multicultural future: 'Our task today is to encourage this process of unplanned social and cultural integration by creating conditions in which our different communities can carry on their formal and informal conversation and help to evolve a shared but plural way of being British' (Parekh, 2005 – emphasis added). Similarly, Amin contrasts the frequently exclusionary, defensive, divisive and

reactive character of the politics of 'community' with a more open life in the wider public realm which demands the negotiation of difference and a willingness to 'transgress' the normal boundaries of interaction (Amin, 2002).

A faith contribution to such deliberation, conversation and transgression demands of faith communities and organizations, not the fix of social glue, but an ability to contribute as a lubricant in the outworking of what Modood terms 'an inclusive and work-in-progress concept of national identity' (Modood, 2007). In order to examine the potential and the limitations of faith organizations and their members in such a devolved and exploratory politics, the following discussion draws on evidence from two recent research studies (Farnell et al, 2003; Furbey et al, 2006).

With regard to the limitations of faith, earlier discussion has referred to assertive world religious fundamentalisms which define themselves in terms of boundaries. Further religious traditions involve a socially and politically passive retreat from 'the world'. In the language of social capital, both embody strong 'bonding' but exhibit very limited 'bridging' and 'linking'.

Secondly, many faith groups are not internally democratic and democracy may co-exist or conflict with scripture, tradition and charisma as principles of authority, reflected in internal exclusion and inequality on lines of gender, generation, ethnicity, class and sexuality. While such divisions and inequalities are not unique to 'faith' and may often have cultural rather than scriptural origins, barriers can arise which test the trust and understanding of other faith and non-religious groups and create tensions in the use of faith buildings for common civil endeavour.

Third, there is substantial inequality between faith communities in their capacity to engage across boundaries. The declining membership, the increasing average age of many 'mainstream' Christian congregations and the poor state and limited adaptability of religious buildings across the main traditions all raise issues of sustainability in civil engagement. The allocation of resources to external networking activities often has to be balanced against members' need for care. Non-Christian and Christian Black-majority faith communities and organizations vary greatly in size and material resources. However, compared for example with the Church of England, capacity in terms of physical capital, organizational development, training

and capacity is typically much less. In all faith communities and organizations, leaders may lack the awareness and training required for boundary-crossing encounter and deliberative politics.

More positively, however, faith communities can be important contexts which develop the motivation, skills and qualities needed for 'lubricating' activity in civil society. First, 'bonding' within a faith community can provide the individual with the required confidence, purpose, identity and ongoing sustenance, as many distinguished public lives confirm (the connections between Methodism and the Labour Party provide one example). Second, although faith communities may seem homogeneous to the outsider, many are internally very diverse compared with other voluntary and community groups. This provides a context for the practice of deliberation, negotiation, conflict resolution, and the exploration of other traditions and cultures. Third, faith communities are not just neighbourhood organizations. Rather, they are usually multi-layered, linked in varying degrees to national and international organizations, giving them access to wider networks of knowledge and material resources. Hence, although there is considerable diversity between local faith communities, they are not to be understood simply as locally bonded and 'parochial' in vision. For example, Church Action on Poverty (CAP) is a national organization which connects and supports local groups and, in turn, draws on their experiences in developing campaigns. CAP and a partnership of local churches established the Community Pride organization, building networks with secular community groups to achieve a voice in the regeneration of Manchester and Salford.

Fourth, although we have seen that faith buildings can be regarded as alien to members of other faiths and of no religious belief, there are multiplying examples of faith buildings which are being 'opened up' so that cross-faith and cross-cultural encounter and collaboration can occur. The importance of such physical 'spaces' is magnified in the many neighbourhoods which have become 'social deserts' through the closure of other contexts for civil activity. The Gujarat Hindu Society centre in Preston is adjacent to a magnificent temple and forms a major facility for Hindus in the city and well beyond. It serves to 'bond' and support local Hindu people through a range of services, but it also important in facilitating engagement with wider civil society and civic participation. The St Peter's Centre in Coventry and the St Mary's Church and Community Centre in Sheffield are two examples

of finely adapted churches which permit inter faith and faith-secular encounter and joint-working in civil society (see Finneron and Dinham, 2002 for further discussion of faith buildings).

Fifth, faith organizations and their leaders are often (although by no means always) trusted. This trust, stemming often from long-term presence and commitment in the field, and the wider institutional capacity of faith communities and organizations, can create various non-physical spaces which serve to connect and support the associations of civil society. An example here is the Churches' Regional Commission for Yorkshire and the Humber, formed in 1998 with a particular focus on equipping people for confident engagement with public policy. This organization has a good reputation and its resources permit the support and connection of both faith and secular groups. A more 'liquid' example of a 'space' is found in Together for Peace in Leeds (T4P) which has an institutional dimension in the form of a council of reference composed of individuals from a range of faith and secular backgrounds and ongoing links with the local authority. However, its overriding quality is that of a network, composed of individuals, often with no, or limited, connection with a formal religious congregation, but with beliefs that inform a 'vision for peace'. At the centre of T4P is a biennial cultural peace festival in Leeds. Between these festivals there is an ongoing programme of activity (theatre, film, music, sport, spiritual reflection and debate) on issues of peace and collaboration with others in events and campaigns.

Many of the preceding examples can be located in 'legitimate' and state-approved 'cuddlesome' activity. Yet they also signal the many contexts in which faith communities, organizations and their members are engaged with people of other faiths and of no religious faith in processes, which can contribute to a stronger, more independent and yet cohesive civil society, marked by associational politics and the qualities of negotiation and deliberation. Such processes can 'mess up' the tidy 'finality' of governance and issue in 'troublesome' campaigns, oppositional politics and, in Castells' term, 'projects', as in the cases of London Citizens, Church Action on Poverty and, on a national scale, Jubilee 2000. These activities, joined by the rapid growth of national and local inter faith forums, all seem to contribute to a less programmatic understanding of 'social' and 'community' cohesion than that expressed in the idea of 'social glue'.

Conclusion

This chapter has identified both the potential divisiveness of religion but also its complexity. The major faith traditions all have central beliefs which motivate activity that can build and sustain social and community cohesion, as reflected in the substantial commitment by faith communities, organizations and their members in voluntary action and civic and civil participation. A strong element of instrumentality is evident in the government's prescribed role for faith, presenting faith communities and organizations with both opportunities and dilemmas – a place at the table and an expanded role in service delivery, governance and civic and civil renewal, but at risk of capture and a compromise of mission.

Nevertheless, faith communities and organizations have not been reduced simply to the compliant applicators of consensual social glue. While they contribute substantially in 'legitimate' ways that accord with state priorities, they also operate in a freer mode in collaboration across faiths and with secular groups and organizations, contributing as lubricants and participants in the processes of associational politics in civil society which can challenge state and market and offer a more durable, if not easily measured, social and community cohesion.

Of course, not all faith actors are equally motivated, equipped or adept. If, as is so often stated, the practice of democratic citizenship has to be learned, then funding, substantially independent of government, must be found by faith communities to develop understandings, skills and qualities of deliberation, negotiation and wider democratic practice. Here we encounter the controversy at the heart of the debate on faith in the public realm.

The 'strong' secularist argument is that, when allowed public expression, religion is liable to be divisive and destructive because communal religious allegiance runs counter to political loyalty to the secular liberal state; religions are inherently averse to compromise; a religious contribution to debate will be tied unhelpfully to closed belief systems which obstruct rational debate; and that religion is concerned only with the transcendent, not the material. While this chapter has recognized religious traditions which display such characteristics, it has also identified very different expressions of faith, individual and collective, which contribute significantly to cohesion.

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4. Faith Organizations and Migrants Today: The Gender Question?

Pragna Patel

Southall Black Sisters & Women Against Fundamentalism

Introduction

Since the inception of Southall Black Sisters (SBS), the demands that women from a variety of different minority and ethnic women have made, especially in the face of gender-related violence and lack of state protection, have always compelled us to address needs arising from racism and gender discrimination and inequality – simultaneously. In meeting those demands, we have developed autonomous but also secular spaces, because of the failure of the state and indigenous community institutions to address the specific problems encountered by black and minority women.

Since 2000, however, the UK has seen a concerted assault on secular spaces in the wake of the civil unrest in northern cities in 2001, the 9/11 atrocity and the 7/7 London bombings of 2005. In the guise of the 'War on Terror', the state's response to the threat of Islamist terrorism has been dominated by a two-pronged approach to minorities – first, to counter the direct threat of terrorism with draconian, anti-civil liberties measures; and, secondly, the development of the cohesion and faith-based approach to minorities to replace the previously dominant ideological framework of multiculturalism for mediation between state and minority populations. Both these approaches contribute to what I would term as the de-secularization of public culture.

The process of de-secularization is having far-reaching consequences in re-ordering and undermining the democratic nature of civil society with very specific consequences for all progressive struggles but especially those waged by minority women. This process is occurring hand-in-hand with other overarching themes of governance in the UK including the dismantling of the welfare state and shifting responsibility for social and economic well-being onto local communities themselves and the pursuit of a racist anti-immigration agenda which has euphemistically been described as 'managing migration' by the government.

My view is that the new cohesion and faith-based approach to minorities has become a political resource used by the state and the religious right within minority populations to aid the de-secularization process. This has immense implications for minority women in particular, particularly as religious leaders jostle for the control of community representation. My argument is that struggles for gender equality, especially by minority women, and secularism now overlap and have taken on a sense of urgency because it is the human rights of minority women that are being traded in the various social contracts that are emerging between state and the dominant religious right minority leaderships in the UK.

The SBS Experience

To illustrate the problems that we now face, I want to take as my starting point the experiences of SBS in 2008, when we campaigned against a decision made by the local authority (Ealing Council) to cease critical funding used by SBS to provide life-saving frontline services for minority women subject to violence and abuse in the family. What began as a local funding dispute soon came to signify a much larger struggle for equality and for the right to exist as an autonomous, secular, anti-racist and feminist organization.

In 2007, Ealing Council decided to cut funding to SBS on the grounds that specialist services for black and minority women worked against the interest of 'equality', 'diversity' and 'cohesion'. Our very name and existence was deemed to be unlawful under the Race Relations Act 1976 because the Council said that it excluded white women and we were therefore seen as discriminatory and divisive! Instead, in the name of 'best value' for money, the Council decided to commission a borough-wide generic domestic violence service using exactly the same funds that had previously been awarded to SBS – funds critical to SBS in meeting core costs which were not easily available from other grant-making bodies because most prefer to fund specific projects rather than overall running costs.

We were concerned that, if left unchallenged, Ealing Council's approach would have allowed public bodies to redefine the notion of equality in ways that stripped it of its progressive content. It had come to be defined by Ealing Council as the need to provide the same services for everyone, in

an attempt to address some resentment amongst the white majority population that it was the majority white population rather than the minorities that had historically been discriminated and 'excluded' from civic regeneration policies. The notion of equality in this sense was no longer linked to the needs of the most vulnerable and deprived, but instead viewed as reflecting the needs of the majority community. Our fear was that this approach would be replicated with confidence elsewhere in the country, leading to the widespread closure of similar organizations set up to counter racism and to provide minority women with real alternatives to patriarchal community (religious and cultural based) mechanisms for dealing with disputes in the family. In any event, the process by which Ealing Council had arrived at its decision was also unfair since it did not take account of the equality legislation and its own equality policies in reaching its decision.

SBS therefore brought a legal challenge against Ealing Council which culminated on 18 July 2008 when, at the High Court in London, we won an important affirmation of our right to exist as a secular specialist provider of domestic violence services to black and minority women. In court, SBS submitted that Ealing Council's approach to equality in effect meant that the race equality legislation in the UK could not protect those who are historically disenfranchised and discriminated since it rejected the notion of positive action in addressing racism. We argued that the Council's 'one size fits all' approach was misconstrued because it ignored unequal structural relations based on class, gender and race. We argued further that specialist services for minority women are needed for reasons to do with language difficulties and cultural and religious pressures, and because of the need for advice and advocacy framed within a democratic and secular ethos in complex circumstances where racism and religious fundamentalism are on the rise in the UK and worldwide.

SBS also argued that Ealing Council's approach to cohesion was fundamentally wrong because it failed to recognize that, far from causing divisions, the provision of specialist services may sometimes be necessary to address substantive racial and other forms of inequality, and that in turn is central to achieving a more cohesive society. We pointed out that the SBS project was in fact an example of how cohesion is achieved organically, borne out of collective struggles for human rights, and not by the imposition of ill-conceived social policies from above. We described how black and minority

women from various national, ethnic and religious backgrounds learn to co-exist in the secular space provided by SBS. In doing so, they both tolerate religious and cultural differences and at the same time challenge those religious and cultural practices that stifle their common desires and aspirations to live free from violence, abuse and other constrictions on their lives.

Cohesion – A New Policy Framework for Minorities

Cohesion is a malleable term that has never been precisely defined by the government. Official definitions refer to cohesion as a 'process that must happen in all communities to ensure that different groups of people get on well together'. At the national and local level a 'cohesive' community is described as one in which there is a common 'vision and sense of belonging for all communities; where the diversity of people's different backgrounds and circumstances is appreciated and positively valued; where those from different backgrounds have similar life opportunities and where there are strong and positive relationships developing between people from different backgrounds and circumstances in the workplace, in schools and within neighbourhoods.[1]

As the SBS example so clearly shows, the cohesion approach promoted by the Government is now the dominant framework for dealing with minorities. It is a policy objective that is linked to the other overarching themes of governance in the UK today, greater civic engagement increasingly on the basis of faith identity if you happen to be from minorities; preventing violent Muslim extremism; 'managing migration' with a view to assimilation and the shift in state (institutional) accountability towards faith based organizations and institutions.

Whilst the rhetoric of cohesion appears to have laudable aims and locates the responsibility for community cohesion on all communities including the majority community, in reality the government has linked the issue with race (assimilationist policies) and the need for faith groups to play a greater role in civic regeneration. As a policy objective, its roots can be traced back to July 2001 and the civil disturbances in the northern cities of Burnley, Bradford and Oldham when largely Asian and white male youths clashed in the midst of simmering racial tensions and immense deprivation. We all know that the disturbances were rooted in structural problems of industrial decline, social segregation in housing and education, weak 'kowtowing' political

and community leaderships and the failure of social policies to redistribute resources equitably. But instead of dealing with structural inequality – the poverty and racism that was experienced and which lay at the root of the problem – the Blair Government blamed minorities for eroding cohesion and decided to use the opportunity to reject multiculturalism, and to 'manage migration', a euphemism for draconian border controls and immigration policies. The Blair government set about dismantling the multicultural framework. Significantly it cut short policies and developments on anti-racism that followed the publication of the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry report in 1999,[2a] which recognized the fact of institutional racism, following the racist murder of black teenager, Stephen Lawrence. At the same time, in a somewhat contradictory fashion, the government also set about encouraging more educational apartheid through state funding of separate faith based schools, and it set about encouraging unaccountable and self styled religious leaders to assert control over community resources.

Local Authorities around the country have therefore divested themselves and their areas of their 'race' equality departments and officers and replaced them with Community Cohesion Directorates. They have also targeted long standing single identity groups (more often than not, progressive and secular) for funding cuts at the same time as encouraging faith based groups to emerge.[2b]

This dual process was vividly evident at the height of SBS's funding crisis. The irony of the situation in which SBS found itself was that at the same time that Ealing Council decided to withdraw financial assistance, Ealing's Cohesion Strategy was, and continues to be, dominated by the need to promote faith based (largely Muslim) groups to deliver local welfare services.[3a]

The following objectives, for instance, dominate Ealing's cohesion strategy, though they are by no means exhaustive: work with faith based groups; publish a faith directory; hold inter-faith conferences and improve inter-faith working; deliver Ealing Muslim Community engagement project by working with Muslim children and young people on issues, problems and social tensions affecting Muslims and how to engage Muslim communities to engage in the formation of public policy; deliver a faith volunteering project for schools, hospitals and the police targeting Muslim volunteers; provide conflict mentoring training for young Muslim children and people; hold a conference that will emphasize a scholarly interpretation of Islam that supports integration and citizenship; launch a

Muslim network; build the capacity of third sector organizations that will explore the values of Islam; develop questionnaire to gather the views of Muslims.

Ealing Council's Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE) strategies carry on in a similar vein – reflecting a major preoccupation with engagement with Muslims only. Of the £45m made available by the government to local authorities to tackle extremism amongst Muslims, Ealing Council received a total £205,000 for 2008–2009, rising to £225,000 for 2009/10 and £286,000 for 2010–11. Ealing's PVE agenda 2008 to 2011 seeks to 'gather greater understanding of the issues/concerns facing Muslim communities; provide space for greater dialogue and discussion around Muslim identity and understanding Islam values; provide more opportunities for engagement with the wider community through volunteering; and establish greater support networks for Muslim women. Under the theme of 'Engaging with Muslim Women', the Council has made a grant of £35,000 available to local groups to 'foster in young Muslim women a greater willingness to express their own views and influence their local community, a greater awareness on how to access public services offered by statutory bodies such as the Council, and a greater awareness on how to become involved in local decision-making processes.[3b] Youth services have also been provided with £10,000 to engage with Muslim girls in secondary schools through lunchtime sessions to discuss the concerns of the Muslim girls.[4] Yet the very group that was empowering such women was being shut down!

Whilst Ealing Council maintains that the PVE focus 'compliments the emerging borough 'Integration and Community Cohesion' strategy developed in 2007, in practice, the Council's PVE and Cohesion strategies are indistinguishable one from the other. One consequence of Ealing Council's cohesion approach is that it has encouraged the development of faith based initiatives including the creation of Muslim women only projects, without any reference to the politics and ethos of such projects and even though there are no visible demands for such organizations.[5]

We don't think Ealing is unique in this respect. This approach is being repeated throughout the UK and the organizations that have so far been closed or threatened with closure are secular organizations for black and ethnic migrants, secular women's refuges for black and minority women, disability groups and rape crisis centres. Following SBS's lead,

organizations confronting similar funding problems with their local authorities have mounted legal challenges against their Councils using the equality legislation but whilst some have been successful, others have not. Paradoxically, the emphasis on funding faith-based groups have led some previously secular black and minority organizations to re-fashion themselves as faith based groups – this has the effect of reinforcing the view that questions of identity within minority communities can be reduced to questions of religious values only.[6]

The state's multi-faith approach has opened up the space for a reactionary politics of identity based on religion to flourish and has put power and authority into the hands of religious leaders. The conflation of issues around race with religious identity as defined by the state and fundamentalist and conservative religious leaderships, has also, paradoxically, led to the direct sponsorship of fundamentalist or reactionary organizations such as the Muslim Council of Great Britain, The Muslim Association and the Hindu Forum of Britain,[7] all of whom claim to be 'moderates' and all of whom have enjoyed or enjoy an unprecedented influence on state policy towards minorities.

The so called 'moderates' may profess to keep law and order on the streets of Britain and decry the extremists in their midst but many are linked to violent fundamentalist movements abroad where violence is routinely used to subjugate women.[8] Nor are they moderate on the question of women's rights in the UK. Many have used the space opened up by the government's faith and cohesion agenda to put themselves forward as the 'authentic' voice of their communities and make demands which are primarily about limiting and policing women's participation in the public sphere and maintaining the private sphere of the family as the only legitimate arena of female existence.

Dilemmas and Contradictions of Faith-based Welfare Support

It has to be recognized that religious groups can and do play an important role in helping to combat poverty, homelessness and destitution faced by immigrants and asylum seekers, for instance, but they do this whilst remaining in the private sector, raising funds through their own membership and from other sources. Their users are relatively free to exercise choice in whether or not they wish to use their services. But what is harmful about the

cohesion and faith-based approach is the fact that in the name of equality, religious groups are being brought into the public domain through public funding to provide services on the basis of their religious ethos and belief systems. The danger is that through need and individual circumstances coupled with a lack of alternatives, as funding and state support dries up, vulnerable minority women and other sub groups have no choice but to use the services offered by religious organizations. Needless to say, and as the experience of women and sexual minorities shows, those who do not share the ethos and values of such organizations will find themselves discriminated against and excluded.

Increasingly, we are caught in a double bind in this respect. SBS has always sought to challenge mainstream religious leaders for their claims to be the 'authentic' voice of their constituencies. The entrenchment of faith-based welfare projects represents a particular threat for women, particularly in regions where there are no effective alternative voices to counteract the religious institutions or the stranglehold of religious leaderships which are more often than not patriarchal, conservative, if not fundamentalist, homophobic and discriminatory towards other groups.

We have had cases of migrant women with insecure status and who have been subject to domestic violence and abuse who have been forced to sleep on temple floors or in gurdwaras, that are unable or unwilling to protect them from abuse and harassment and who cannot offer appropriate services.

Yet the continuing dismantling of the welfare state also forces us more and more into the hands of those very institutions, to provide basic services for the women that we see. We have often had no choice but to turn to churches, temples and gurdwaras and to appeal to their charitable values to help with housing and providing food.

However, for obvious reasons in these situations, where possible and practicable, we have to insist on being involved to deal with casework aspects – whilst they use their resources to provide more immediate needs. But this situation is fraught with considerable difficulties since it tends to privilege religion as the main basis of belonging to a community or expressing identity and legitimizes religious leaders and their institutions as 'authentic' community representatives.

A key component of community cohesion policies is

to emphasize the role of religious leaders and their institutions as 'effective community representatives' with whose aid the greater integration of minority communities can be achieved. Thus, the cohesion agenda privileges religion or faith as the main basis of belonging to a community, or of expressing identity. The findings of the interviews conducted with 21 women from different religious backgrounds who use the SBS centre, reveals that this is a deeply problematic assumption. Indeed, it is in this sphere that the respondents were not only critical of religious leaderships but also of the current emphasis in policy which treats their identities as fixed and unproblematic and which allows leaders as representative of various faith-based communities to take power over their lives. This is especially pertinent because many of the women are at the forefront of personal and political struggles to redefine their identities and their environment in a positive way. Instead of this being valued and used as the basis for creating a more harmonious and just society, the effect of current official cohesion policy is to create ossified and reified religious identities forcing abused women and other vulnerable groups to remain at the margins of the wider society!

The state's immigration and asylum policies are not only a major factor in the creation of poverty and marginalization but they can also lead many to faith-based organizations, often out of desperation to meet immediate needs for food and housing. However, this brought about a series of other problems such as exploitation which cannot be regulated easily. It can also force some to adopt religious identities and lead even more segregated lives than they would otherwise choose to. The neoliberal policies which roll back what were once essential functions of the State also helped to reinforce the role of religious institutions as more than just places of worship.[9]

Florence had fled her native Kenya due to gender persecution (escaping tribal rituals and customs which posed a serious threat to her life because they insisted that as a widow she marry her husband's brother who was HIV positive) but in the UK, she is unable to work because her asylum claim and her application for NASS support was still pending. She is homeless and penniless and depends on a local Pentecostal church to provide her with a roof over her head and food. In return, Florence undertakes voluntary work for the Church – taking part in its various activities. She is very grateful for the help that she receives but she is also ambivalent about the relationship she has with the church and its congregation which is not entirely a matter of choice. She has been moved from member to member in

respect of her accommodation needs, but she also feels exploited because she is made to do all the cleaning and cooking and other domestic chores for the people that she is staying with:

> ...I knew that the pastor would help me with voluntary work and with accommodation. The pastor helped me when I was crying and said that I had nowhere to stay and he announced in church and a sister agreed. I have kept moving because they can't keep me for long because they have families. They take advantage of me – doing the house chores and you have to do the cleaning and shopping and sometimes you are tired but you just have to go because you are at their mercy. You just can't let them down. Sometimes, I am not in the mood for cooking but just have to do it because you are in their house... (Florence)

The state's policies on immigration and asylum not only increase destitution but encourage a culture of dependency on religious organizations which are not always welcome. In addition there are no safeguards against the forms of exploitation that occur due to the vulnerability of members who have no means or access to other essential support. For Florence, her over-dependency on religious based institutions has created its own forms of marginalization since there is little or no opportunity for her to mix with anyone other than those of the same religious backgrounds and with the same religious beliefs within the congregation.

> ...If I had my own accommodation and was working – I would still do voluntary work in Church but I wouldn't be as dependant on the Church. I would prefer to volunteer in the community – to reach out to all the people not just in the Church. I wouldn't be so religious, because I don't want to block people from reaching me and I like to be integrated with all.... I wouldn't like to stick to only religion so that I don't speak to another person of a different community or religion. (Florence)

The relationship between the respondents and their religious institutions is clearly not straightforward. Nor are such places often the most appropriate places in respect of the support and assistance that is often needed to address the complex family and immigration problems and the attendant trauma

that ensues that women who attend SBS present with. Often lack of support in these matters can even be dangerous since many refugees and immigrants are involved in issues of life and death. In Florence's case, although the Church offered her accommodation and food, it did not consider offering her assistance to address her immigration problems:

> ...SBS help with immigration problems and accompanying me. The Church didn't offer to help me with immigration - they know but they didn't take me anywhere for advice because they were thinking they would have to pay. They told me that it is very expensive – they know I had a problem but they could only help me with accommodation. They didn't show me SBS. I got it from the internet. (Florence)

The isolation and marginalization that women like Florence feel is often not alleviated by a religious organization which although it gives them some support and perhaps even peace of mind, may not be the place that women identify with completely or wish to unburden themselves in respect of their personal problems:

> …I identify with women's institutions so when I was down and I wanted to look for women's places, the first thing I found was SBS and I was surprised as I lived in Southall but did not know. I had not found a place where somebody would listen to me and I was relieved when I came to SBS. (Florence)

The links between poverty, racial discrimination and migrant communities are now well recognized, although both central and local governments have had little or nothing to say on these links in respect of their cohesion policies, despite talk of promoting equality. What is even more glaring is that even where there is some critique or recognition of the connection between poverty and minority populations, there is no proper recognition of the gendered dimensions of poverty and racism as experienced by women in their daily lives. Women's experiences of poverty is the result of a combination of factors both internal and external to their communities. On the one hand, patriarchal dynamics of family and community gave them little control over their lives, but on the other, lack of skills, insecure immigration status and racism result in their casualized and insecure positions in the labour market. The failure of cohesion policies to focus on poverty – a vital component of segregation in society – impacts not only on how poverty and well-being is experienced and tackled but also diverts attention towards superficial cultural manifestations of segregation in society. This approach obscures another overarching aim of the state which is to cut back the welfare state and shift responsibility for economic well-being on to communities themselves, thus sowing the seeds of further discord between different groups and sub-groups competing for scarce resources.

The Gurdwaras and the Concept of 'Sewa'

Although, even here, we question the way in which such services are provided. For example in Southall, gurdwaras have a strong tradition of carrying out 'sewa' and providing welfare housing and food for the destitute. This has taken on a new meaning recently with the wave of students from abroad – in our case from the Indian sub-continent who find themselves in the UK having been lured by bogus colleges or even if they have arrived legitimately, thinking that they can get jobs to enable them to study here. The recession has of course meant that they cannot find jobs and the situation of destitute students in Southall reached a peak in September 2009. In response the Sikh Awareness Society set up a helpline to provide housing and help for destitute students.

However, it was interesting to see that the helpline was advertised for female Sikh students only. When I asked about this the answer was that it was a massive problem and as a non-government funded body could not help the men but felt that the women were more vulnerable and therefore needed their immediate support. I was also told that once they were housed with well-meaning Sikh families, they were looked after and guided in the right direction. When asked whether they would benefit from referrals to SBS to provide further support and assistance the answer was a resounding 'No' and that amongst the congregation, they had all the skills they needed to help.

Perhaps this was a well-intentioned intervention – it is hard not to argue that women who are destitute are more vulnerable to sexual exploitation. However, when you look closely at the Sikh Awareness Society (SAS) associated with a well-known radical and fundamentalist gurdwara in Southall, which had set up the helpline you find that the society was established as a response to growing concerns about

the so-called 'grooming' of youth into criminality and drugs and interestingly their conversion to Islam. They claim to deal with problems affecting the Sikh community, to set up counseling and rehabilitation programmes, promote greater understanding of Sikh religious concepts and history; provide 'Big Brother' and 'Big Sister' support for Sikh youth and act as a liaison body between the Sikh youth and the committees of the gurdwaras.

However, on its website the SAS lists as one of its main aims the prevention of young Sikh girls from forced conversion into Islam and states that it has supported a family in trying to track down a runaway daughter who they argue was being forcibly converted to Islam (in fact, Hindu and Sikh leaders made much of this issue of forcible conversions categorized as 'extremist grooming – and even had the Metropolitan Police devote considerable resources to this – even though there is little or no evidence of such forcible conversions). It would appear that both Hindus and Sikhs are using this argument as a means of distancing themselves from Muslims, and to mobilize state resources to also be directed at meeting the needs of Hindu and Sikh communities (in other words, they endorse and encourage the communalization of Asian communities, even when they profess that communalization can cause racist tensions). Indeed the SAS's entire welfare approach is based on bringing the youth back into the religious 'fold' so to speak and in this respect targeting destitute and runaway women – whose minds and bodies are often used by religious fundamentalists or communalists as signifiers of the boundaries of community and cultural and religious values makes complete sense! The SAS argues that they have had great success in garnering support from Sikhs including getting millionaires and trustees of the gurdawara to pledge support. They stated that they had more rooms than they knew what to do with – but when pressed as to why those resources are not being used for destitute male students, they argued that they do not have the resources because there is a 'massive problem' of male Indian Sikh students in Southall and surrounding areas who arrive as bogus or legitimate students but who cannot survive because the jobs that they hoped to get are no longer available and the constant raiding of workplaces by immigration officers has made it difficult to find any informal work.

When I questioned why the helpline was limited to women, when a number of organizations in the area (including SBS) can help, the spokesperson argued that they have set up a sister charity S.W.A.T. This

charity the - Sikh Welfare Awareness Team is a new charitable organization set up to combat drug and alcohol involvement amongst Sikh youths by providing youth with activities and organized events to participate in. The Sikh Welfare Awareness Team (or S.W.A.T.) is currently working to bring awareness to the growing number of Sikhs, many who are recent immigrants from Punjab and are homeless living on the streets of Southall. Many of these men (and women) living on the streets have turned to drugs as a means of coping in their circumstances. While local Gurdwaras are feeding these young men, S.W.A.T. is helping to provide clean clothes, bedding, medical referrals and help for those who wish to return to Punjab.

This all sounds fairly innocuous until you get to the main point of the organization. The organization also notes that many local churches are also helping these young men by providing them with hot showers and counselling services. S.W.A.T. states that two young men have converted to Christianity through the efforts of the missionaries and asks why our own community is not doing more. So, one can't help but think that this is the real fear – conversions to Christianity – and with it the loss of control over youth and identity.

The vacuum that is created by the failure of the state to give adequate support to those who are destitute, especially migrants and asylum seekers who are unable to work or claim benefits to meet essential living costs, is increasingly filled by religious organizations. However, this does highlight significant contradictions in the cohesion rhetoric since it perpetuates exclusionary practices within the state and in community organizations because religious organizations are encouraged to provide welfare services on the basis of religious identity and membership and not need. This creates and reinforces segregation and division along various axes of power according to age, gender, caste, class, sexuality and so on. Women like Florence who are denied basic rights to live and work in the UK and who have the least socioeconomic and political power within and outside of their communities, bear the brunt of such segregation, resulting in further marginalization, disadvantage and disempowerment.

Conclusion

Unsurprisingly, the implementation of the cohesion and faith based agenda has set religious right forces and feminists within the minority communities in particular on a collision course. This is perhaps

nowhere more clearly evident than in the courts where conflicts between women demanding gender equality and fundamentalists demanding the absolute right to manifest religion are frequently occurring – a conflict in which the state has shown itself to be contradictory in its stance. For example, on the one hand, the state has begun to assert more clearly that harmful cultural practices such as 'honour' crimes and forced marriages are an abuse of women's human rights and actively seeks to intervene in families (the legacy of mature multiculturalism).[10] On the other hand, in the face of the power of religious claims, the state fails to acknowledge the lack of ability and the absence of social 'permission' for the more vulnerable in minority communities to exercise choice in determining their cultural affiliations, practices and identity. The primacy given to the right to manifest religious beliefs brings with it a number of problems linked to questions of 'validity' and 'authenticity'. Questions about which religious identities and demands are valid and whose opinion constitutes the 'authentic voice' are all issues that arise in the battles that are taking place.[11]

Notes

1. See Commission on Integration and Cohesion 'Our Shared Future', Communications and Local Government Publications, June 2007.

2a and 2b. The Stephen Lawrence Inquiry Report of an Inquiry by Sir William Macpherson of Cluny, February 1999. London: The Stationery Office.

3a and 3b. See 'Ealing's Shared Future: Integration and Community Cohesion Strategy 2007-2011.

4. See 'Preventing Violent Extremism, 2008-09 Programme. London: Ealing Council.

5. See 'Preventing Violent Extremism; 2008-09 Programme. London: Ealing Council.

6. Discussions with a number of anti-racist activists in the north of England have suggested that minority groups have often adopted a faith based identity in order to attract local authority funding that has been diverted from anti-racist projects to cohesion and preventing violent extremism work.

7. See 'The Islamic Right- Key Tendencies', Awaaz, June 2006, which alleges that the Muslim Council of Brtiain has roots to the longstanding Islamic Right political party – the Jamaati-I-islami (JI) from the Indian Sub-Continent. Awaaz (www.awaazsaw.org/awaaz_pia4.pdf) is a UK based secular network of organizations and individuals set up to monitor religious hatred in South Asia and the UK. Awaaz has also alleged that there are links between so

called 'moderate' Hindu organizations such as the Hindu Forum of Britain and the Hindu Council UK and Hindu Right organizations in India responsible for fomenting hatred and violence against Muslims. It also notes that in April 2006, Ramesh Kallidai, the General Secretary of the Hindu Forum was appointed commissioner by the Commission on Integration and Cohesion. Awaaz alleges that he is a sympathiser if not promoter of Hindu fascism. In April 2006, for instance, he is said to have attended a meeting of the Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh (HSS), a British branch of the RSS – a fascist organization in India that promotes Hindu supremacist ideology, where it is claimed that he paid homage to a previous leader of the RSS who extolled the virtues of Nazi Germany. The RSS has been widely blamed for large-scale anti minority violence in India and one of its former members was responsible for the murder of Mahatma Gandhi.

8. See 'The Islamic Right- Key Tendencies', Awaaz, June 2006.

9. I use the example of the case of Florence (not her real name) to illustrate some of the issues involved.

10. 'Mature Multiculturalism' as a concept was extremely short-lived. Until 2000, key state agencies failed to protect vulnerable Asian and other minority women and children facing domestic violence and abuse on the grounds that such intervention amounted to cultural and religious insensitivity. In 2000, following years of campaigning by SBS, this cultural relativist approach was finally acknowledged as an abrogation of state responsibility to protect minority women from violence and abuse. The then Home Office Minister Mike O'Brien who chaired a Home Office Working Group on forced marriage stated that 'multiculturalism cannot be an excuse for moral blindness'. This was a seminal moment in the struggles waged by Asian women since it provided the basis for an approach, which recognized the reality of institutional racism but also recognized violence against women as a fundamental human rights issue. The new insight however was quickly overtaken by the state's rejection of multiculturalism in favour of the cohesion and faith agenda.

11. As seen in the media recently, the first Hindu school has been established – Krishna Avanti Primary School. It is seen as a Hindu school but actually is based on one particular sect – the Hara Krishna Sect – which gives primacy to the god Krishna as the supreme being. It is therefore not seen as representative of all Hindus. Worse still, borrowing from Catholic and Jewish admissions policy into their respective schools, they will not allow members to subscribe unless they have attended a Hare Krishna temple and have a temple priest to confirm that they are regular worshippers. Thus it forces Indians of Hindu background to subscribe to a particular version of Hinduism and those who do not are treated as of lower priority.

5. The Diversity of Muslims and the Necessity of Secular Rule

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Introduction

There is a widespread tendency to present Islam as a unitary entity, exemplified in the reference to the 'Muslim World'. This totalization is shared by Muslim spokesmen indulging in identity politics as well as public discourses in the West, in the media and political pronouncements, notably President Obama's 2009 Cairo address to the 'Muslim world'. Islam, like Christianity, is a corpus of sacred texts, traditions, rituals and laws, diverse and even contradictory, which allow a wide range of constructions. There is no unitary 'Islam', but many sorts of Muslims, for whom religion plays diverse roles, or could be of little importance.

In the context of modern political discourses, in both the Middle East and among Muslim populations in the West, the presentation of Islam as a common identity plays an important part. We may identify what I call 'Umma nationalism', the idea that Muslims in the world are a unitary community under attack from hostile forces also identified as Christians ('Crusaders'), Jews and Hindus: a clash of civilizations cast as religious communities, and a representation of international relations as religious communalism. There are some militant and pious groups for whom this caricature is a central motif. But for many Muslims, even some secular Muslims, Umma nationalism is a floating discourse on which they occasionally draw for political pronouncements. Most Muslims, for instance, would not follow the Taliban or the late Bin Laden in their obscurantist and violent enterprises, yet may, on occasion, see them as a balance against an imperialist West, or would view manifestations of the 'war on terror' as an attack on Muslims in general.

Part of this Umma nationalism is to view certain wars or conflicts as attacks on Muslims as a whole, such as those occurring in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Palestine and Iraq. This conception obscures the imperialist and geo-political nature of these conflicts, and the fact that almost all of them involve conflicts in which Muslims fight on opposite sides. In Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iraq, it is primarily Muslims who have killed large numbers of other Muslims over the past years. Sectarian and doctrinal identities are superimposed on conflicts over power, territory and resources. Muslim rulers and dynasties, notably the impeccably Islamic Saudis, are intimate allies of the US. To label all these conflicts and wars as attacks on Muslims is not only wrong but politically counter-productive, for it obscures the real issues at stake.

The Diversity of Muslims

Muslims in Britain and the west consist of diverse populations, differentiated by ethnicity, class, gender, generation and religious orientation following those other factors. Many are secular or indifferent to religion or 'cultural Muslims'. Those with religious commitment vary between conservative/salafi, militant jihadi, modernist/reformist and traditional ethnic Islam, including Sufi orientations, or mixtures of those types, given that few people are ideologically consistent. There is, in addition, the bond of family and community, which is important to some, such as the Pakistani working class communities in the north of England, where the community and ethnic bonds are maintained through networks of connections with the home village and the import of brides and grooms.

Elsewhere, we find patterns of individualization. Individuals, escaping the ethnic and communal bonds, can be secular or adherents of one or other of opposing religious orientations present in the current discursive fields: modernist reformism or Wahhabi rigour, both of which seek, in different ways, an Islam 'purified' of its ethnic and popular accretions. These are the ideological Muslims. Here, we should distinguish between 'culture' and 'ideology': many of the individualized Muslims are culturally assimilated into the mainstream, and their dissent, if they are oppositional, is ideological, often expressed in the idiom of the ambient culture: language, idiom and conceptions of politics and society. This distinction is missed in the 'multi-culturalism' advocacy.

Superimposed on all these are formal communal organizations and leaderships with claims to 'represent' Muslims to the State and the wider society, and also with attempts to impose religious authority. Let me expand a little in this question of

representation and authority. Historically, both in Europe and the Middle East, religious authority was imposed on society, alongside that of princes and kings. The French Revolution was against Church as well as aristocratic rulers, and more recently the dictatorships of southern Europe, such as Franco's Spain were firmly supportive of Church authority, which has been considerably eroded since the establishment of democracy. That was also the case in Muslim States, such as the Ottoman where the religious hierarchy was a branch of State bureaucracy. The processes of modernity have led to a retraction of the functions of religion in social and political spheres, and with it a contraction in the scope of religious authority. 'Fundamentalism' is an attempt to re-impose this authority in a now highly secularized society, even in 'Islamic' Iran. As such, 'fundamentalism' is a modern phenomenon of secularization. Among Muslim populations in the west (and elsewhere) this attempt to assert religious authority chimes in with identity politics. Claims of leadership and authority play on these sentiments, as well as the politician's need for 'representatives' and voices of 'communities'.

Secular Rule in the Islamic World

Secular State authority is the condition for peaceful co-existence between religions and sects. A secular State does not necessarily confine religion to the private sphere: churches, denominations and associations have occupied prominent parts in public life in the largely secular States of Europe and the Americas. In these contexts religious authority is confined to voluntary adherence of believers. It is in religious autocracies that minority religions are confined if not repressed. The extreme example is Saudi Arabia in which any religious manifestation or worship out of line with official Wahhabi rigour is suppressed. This persecution is particularly directed against the Shi`i population. The sectarian conflicts and violence in Iraq are well known, and the violent persecution of the Christians there is ensuring the depletion of that population through migration and displacement. In Syria, the Alawi controlled regime is 'secular'. Previously persecuted religious minorities such as the Alawis are always keen on secular government which would prevent Sunni impositions and discrimination.

This is even the case in 'secular' Turkey, where Sunni Islam is part of the national identity, to the detriment of the large Alevi minority, who are, in turn, supporters

of true secularism, especially under the current pro-Islamic government. Copts in Egypt have always been considered, officially, as equal partners with Muslims in the history and formation of the country and the nation. Yet, as religious piety swept Egyptian society in recent decades, Copts have been under attack in many contexts and suffering discrimination in jobs and official transactions. Sectarian conflict and violence were also part of the history of Europe, between Catholics and Protestants and against Jews. The difficult and uneven progress of those countries to mutual tolerance only became possible through the secularization of political authority and State institutions. This secularization was achieved through political struggles and some revolutions, such as the French. In Britain, paradoxically, it was an inter-religious struggle between the established Church of England and the non-conformist denominations which promoted the progress to a secular State. The founding US constitution was secular precisely to avoid State identification with any sect or the persecution of any other.

'Islamophobia'

This brings me to a consideration of 'Islamophobia'. This blanket term covers at least two quite distinct strands. One is straightforward racism and anti-immigrant sentiments. In the context of the presence of Islam in politics and public discourse, it has become a handy and emotive substitute for previous categories of race or ethnicity. The other strand is precisely the concern at the strident attempts of certain Muslim quarters to assert religious authority and censor by public campaigning or, in extreme cases, violence. The secular liberties in Europe, in the fields of free expression and cultural production and in the conduct and display of diverse sexualities is being put into question by those Islamic pronouncements, which have also encouraged Christian and Jewish conservatives into ever more strident demands. Those liberties are not somehow intrinsic to Western or Christian societies: there are many parallels between Christian and Muslim religious morality and censor. The liberties were won by protracted political struggles, aided by the socio-economic transformations of modernity. True religious freedom and the protection from religious persecution have only been guaranteed under the secular State.

Many of the themes discussed here are explored and elaborated in my recently published *Beyond Islam: A New Understanding of the Middle East*, I B Tauris 2011.

SECTION III: THE GENDERED DEBATE ON SECULARISM

6. Secularism, Racism and the Contemporary Politics of Belonging: Muslim Women in the UK

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Introduction

It is the contention of this paper that the notion of secularism as an inclusive political framework is deeply flawed. It is blind to the embedded nature of faiths that provide both a moral compass and a daily pattern of rituals, both in the public and often in the private domains. If secularism is identified as pivotal to defining nationhood and belonging then those who choose to be different are, by definition, rafts of peoples of faiths who view religion as part of their identities in theory and practice and would feel excluded and 'otherized'. In this context faith becomes a newfound surrogate for race and ethnicity in erecting barriers to the equality of rights and entitlements of many citizens. It is my contention that the demands of politicized radical Islam, in terms of the prescriptions that it makes, are not rooted in an antipathy between Islam and democracy, but rather in the failure of some democracies to meet the needs of Muslims. Furthermore, there is a highly gendered aspect to Islamic radicalism which may well be understood differently by Muslim women, including the mohajabehs –women born and raised in the UK who are demonized for their dress code and seen as a threat not only to norms and cultures, but also to national security.

Secularism became the preferred framework for nation building in the 20th century. Yet arguably the veneer of secularism hides the reality of Christianity as both the norm and the fundamental parameter of laws and politics in the West and Islam in the Middle East. For a democracy to live up to its name, it has to be accommodating of the nation's religious values and sentiment, if it is to reflect the popular will. Therefore it may be argued that for those who are religious a secular government could be said to be failing to represent their views and values and therefore could be considered not to be altogether democratic. If and when secularism becomes a quasi-religion in itself then it can actively bar the way to democracy, free choice of citizens to their faith and personal laws and in the case of women to their dress codes.

This is particularly problematic in contexts of Western democracy where even a constitutional commitment to laïcité, as in the case of France or the US has masked the prevalence of Christianity as the fundamental norm that shapes daily activities and provides legal and political frameworks. In his acceptance speech, the American President, Barack Hussein Obama invokes the God of Christianity and the President of secular France, Nicolas Sarkozy, claims France as 'the eldest daughter of the Church'. In the UK, the Bishops in the House of Lords have the right to speak up for the faith and be heard.

It may be argued that the commitment to secularism by states had in some cases offered an opening for the social inclusion of some minorities including Muslims, who were not immediately recognized by their dress codes or the colour of their skin as 'the other'. There was a level of fluidity that enabled them to be of a different faith – a good Muslim or a good Jew – and be a good citizen. However, that option was closed after 9/11 and in particular in the UK after 7/7 when once more the Muslims found themselves demonized as a category and branded as the enemy within. The question that then arose was that a newly constructed demonic status has been erected that bars the way to the fluidity of identities and demands of Muslims to choose between Britishness and their faith. The emotional barrier to belonging and national identity has been particularly hard to accept for second and third generation Muslims, many born and raised in this country, who were beginning to hope not to be classified as 'immigrants' any longer.

Decades of hard learned conformity, cohesion and collaboration over the divides were suddenly broken asunder as the barbaric behaviour of a handful of young men was described by the media and remarked on by some politicians as the true nature of Islam. Islamophobia was born, fully formed and vehemently aggressive as an effective means of 'otherizing' an entire category of people who, with

the exception of their faith, may well have little in common.

Presidents and Bishops have the luxury of proclaiming and practising their faith. When it accords with the mainstream underlying beliefs of the nation, religion becomes merely another indicator of belonging to the mainstream. Flouting secularism by a Christian may be considered curious by some but is accepted as fitting well within the parameters of liberal values. But when a Muslim does so, it is construed as divergence, or even a potential forerunner of extremism and a national threat.

Yet the self identification by faith does not in any way undermine commitment to the nation. As a matter of fact, as the 2007 Gallup and the Coexist Foundation survey indicated, despite rampant Islamophobia, 77 per cent of British Muslims identified with the UK, compared with 50 per cent of the general public. But whereas the vast majority of British Muslims (82%) felt Muslims were loyal citizens, the general public remained suspicious of them.

It is hardly surprising that there was a deep sense of confusion for these Muslims. Faced with Islamophobia in their everyday lives, many found it extremely hard to deal with the sudden feeling of alienation. The paucity of channels of communication led to the realization that the views of the Muslim communities were not heard and represented at the levels of legislature and decision making. The identification of the Muslims of all colours and varieties of the creed as one and the same made democracy and secularism into hollow promises. Political despondence and intensification of Islamophobia suddenly may have made the alternatives offered by groups such as Hizbut-Tahri seem attractive (http://www.hizb-ut-tahrir.org/english/).

Islamophobia

What was unexpected then was that secular countries, the media and government suddenly began defining a group of their citizens in terms of faith and demonizing Muslims as 'the other'– the unwanted cuckoo in the nest, the terrorist, sexual attacker and the abductor of 'white' girls. Islamophobia created a wide gap between the Muslims' perception of who they are and the ways that they are viewed by the host society. In the words of Baroness Sayeeda Varsi (*Daily Telegraph*, 20 January 2011), Islamophobia has passed the dinner party acceptability threshold.

The question that arose was: if a dispersed and diverse group of different colours, ethnicities and antecedence is demonized as representing a single threat, then how do the adherents to the faith respond to this ascribed identity? Many chose to abandon their Muslim identity, change their name and seek to become 'real' British by denying their creed. But for the majority such a deception was not an alternative, either because of their commitment to Islam, or by colour, or by a deep sense of entitlement to being both British and Muslim.

Some Muslims chose to adopt the ascribed identity of Muslim as a badge of honour 'to use Islam specifically as a means of creating political allegiances and solidarities. A new Islamic ideology gained momentum as a radical and viable political alternative' (Mirsepassi, 2000: 59-60). They too announced that it was no longer possible for the youth in the UK to be both British and Muslim and that it was necessary to 'choose' between faith and nationality (Sunday, BBC 4, 24 August 2003). Islamist groups such as the Al Muhajerun announced 'You are either with the Muslims or with the Kaafir' (*The Guardian*, 9 September 2004). They paraded their 'choice' in London by calling a conference on the 11 September 2003 to glorify the suicide bombers, calling them the 'Magnificent 11'. Although in October 2004 Al-Muhajerun closed its website and announced that it was dissolving and ceasing its activities (*The Guardian*, 13 October 2004), it is not clear whether they have simply been driven underground or have really disbanded. However, other groups such as Hizbut-Tahrir have retained a presence. They define themselves as a 'political party whose ideology is Islam, so politics is its work'.

The fears engendered by Islamophobia led to a political backlash on both sides and can play into the politics of groups such as the far-right British National Party (BNP) who capitalize on fear of the other. At the same time, restrictive policies that specifically target Muslims are fuelled by measures such as the US Patriot Act and the UK Anti-terrorism, Crime and Security Act 2001. Not surprisingly the riots in the outskirts of Paris led to wholesale arrests of Muslims. French born and bred Muslims suddenly found themselves branded as 'scum', 'foreigners' and the 'enemy within'. A legal technicality that requires citizens at the age of 18 to make a positive decision to be French was used by the Minister of Interior Affairs, Nicolas Sarkozy, to order the arrest and 'sending back home' of young men to countries that they may not have even visited before (*New York Times*, 10 November 2005). By November 2005 rafts of 'scum' and 'young hooligans' were arrested (*The Observer*, 6 November 2005) under the French emergency measures. As a matter of fact, they

had rioted to gain equality, not Islamic laws (*Paris Reuters*, 17 November 2005). Nevertheless they were to be 'expelled from the country, regardless of whether they [we]re in France legally or illegally' (*New York Times*, 10 November 2005).

The plight of the French merely highlights the difficulties that Muslims were experiencing. By November 2005 an estimated 800,000 Muslims were imprisoned across the world accused of 'terrorism'. Some were sent to countries that permitted torture in order to extract information from them (*The Guardian*, 18 November 2005). Many had no access to lawyers or entitlement to due process. It is still not unusual at gatherings of Muslims to find that the majority have either been stopped and searched or arrested themselves or this has happened to friends or relatives.

In the UK the situation became daunting after 7/7 and the realization that there was a shoot to kill policy that could threaten their lives (*The Guardian*, 14 September 2005). The combination of these measures locates Muslims in general and Muslim youth in particular as sometimes unwilling emblems of combative Islam at the crossfire between faith and state policies. It is at such points of crisis that some Muslims hanker back to the days of Islamic glory and find the call for the supranational identity of umma to be alluring.

The fear of otherization by Muslims was intensified in February 2004 when the French government decided to ban the head scarf from schools and bar access to education to anyone wearing religious insignia. The obligation to choose a specific dress code as an indication of Frenchness was problematic for many since it was not nuns that were prevented to dress as they chose, but Muslim women. In the name of secularism, young women born and bred in France were not permitted to exercise their right to education without abandoning what they saw as their religious demand to cover. Since these measures were introduced in the name of equality, it was perhaps unavoidable that the Muslim youth would, in the long run, protest as they did, to seek their elusive equal citizenship rights.

However, the demand for Muslims to recognize themselves primarily in terms of their faith makes an assumption about uniformity of the faith that is far from the truth. Though a powerful call, that maybe appealing in theory, in practice they have adopted the mantle of 'the other' in the name of a single Islam since the Koran is addressed directly to the believers and there are no intermediaries between

the text and the faithful, unless the latter chooses to consult an alem (scholar). Yet, since each person's understanding is shaped by the experiences of time, place and the ability to understand the true meaning of the classical verses in Arabic, it is hardly surprising that there are many different understandings and interpretations of the faith. In practice Islam is divided in its implementations by different schools of law and differing traditions of formulating and applying Sharia, religious laws.

The Mohajabehs

Men and women are likely to respond differently to the call for unity, not only because by and large terrorism is imagined to be the domain of men, but also because there is a gendered perception of Islam. Thus, although there is a shared experience of Islamophobia, for Muslim women this experience is not bounded by race and ethnicity. Islam subsumes, without excluding, their race, ethnicity and nationalities. Nor is it impermeable to feminists' demands for active political participation at all levels. For Muslim converts the decision to wear the hijab in the West is a public political assertion of the right to belong to the community of Muslims, but, particularly for convert women, it is not a rejection of home and hearth and kinship relations with their non-Muslim families and parents. Within liberal democratic states and feminist contexts their decision to wear the hijab is a matter of faith and identity and a political act of solidarity, but not one that alienates them from their kin and communities. Hence, umma becomes part of the fluid identity that is inclusive rather than one that delineates boundaries between Muslims and non-Muslims.

Women from ethnic minorities, particularly the mohajebeh, may have more in common with their 'white' British-Muslim sisters than their male brethren. Thus though there is a shared experience of Islamophobia, for Muslim women the umma means that this experience is not bounded by race and ethnicity. The umma subsumes, without excluding, their race, ethnicity and nationalities. Nor is it impermeable to feminists' demands for active political participation at all levels. For Muslim converts, the decision to wear the hijab in the West is a public political assertion of the right to belong to the community of Muslims, but, particularly for convert women, it is not a rejection of home and hearth and kinship relations with their non-Muslim families and parents. Within liberal democratic states and feminist contexts their decision to wear the hijab is a matter of faith and identity and a political act of solidarity, but not one that alienates them from their kin and communities. Hence umma becomes part of the fluid identity that is inclusive

rather than one that delineates boundaries between Muslims and non-Muslims.

Yet with the rapid rise of a virulent new form of Islamophobia, women who cover find themselves at the heart of the hatred and are targeted both in the media and in the public domain at large. According to one estimate after September 11, there was an average of 3.8 attacks a day on Muslims, mainly women (*The Guardian*, 8 December 2001). Strikingly, this number is only a reflection of those assaults that had been reported to the authorities; many of the violent assaults – hammer attacks, petrol bombs – remained unreported. A human rights activist who had received obscene phone calls noted: 'It's as if there is no confidence in the authorities to stop it' (Chrisafis, *The Guardian*, 8 December 2001). Muslim women had already been defined as clear examples of the barbarism of Islam. Kilroy–Silk had already announced that:

> ...*Muslims everywhere behave with equal savagery. They behead criminals, stone to death female – only female – adulteresses, throw acid in the faces of women who refuse to wear the chador, mutilate the genitals of young girls and ritually abuse animals… they are backward and evil, and if it is being racist to say so then I must be and happy and proud to be so.* (*Daily Express*, 15 January 1995)

The situation got far worse after the 7 July bombings. As a young woman explained:

> ...*We don't walk alone [since 7/7] because of attacks on Muslim Asian women like a Muslim Asian woman was physically abused in Roundhay Park.* (Murtuja, 2006)

Embedded in these statements was the assumption that the West and its warriors must rush to bomb the Middle East to democracy and liberate the Muslim women from the chains imposed on them by their faith. Such an analysis, by its very nature, makes the mohajebeh, women who cover, into an object of pity if not fear. They are seen as having been forced to cover and must therefore be liberated, in the West as well as in the East; even if this has to be done at the expense of closing the doors of schools to them. Feminists of all shades were urged to step forward to 'save' the Muslim woman from her plight. Many forgot that if feminism is about anything it is about celebrating difference and respecting the choices that women make. Commentators who could imagine that the very act of veiling may imply some element of choosing to be publicly labelled as Muslim, saw this very action not only as 'threatening

to the very fabric of society' (Barry: 2006:26) but also an act of desperation and thus a dangerous deed (Moore, 2006).

In this discourse of hate, covered women were singled out as the living example of backwardness and fearful subordination. Islam was considered to have defined itself 'through disgust for women's bodies' (Polly Toynbee, *The Guardian*, 28 September 2001). Toynbee in fact lashed out announcing that the veil arouses lasciviousness. More moderate versions of the garb – dull, uniform coat to the ground and the plain headscarf – have much the same effect, inspiring lascivious thoughts they are designed to stifle (*The Guardian*, 5 October 2001).

Such fears have been central in shaping 'secular' government policies such as banning the scarf from the schools in France. As Marieluise Beck (2004), the German Green politician in charge of immigrant affairs, notes, there has been a 'demonization' of the headscarf across Europe. The result is that many women who have worn a headscarf for a long time can no longer function in the countries where they have lived for a considerable time. What one participant in our conversations with Muslim women across Britain told us was typical of many similar stories:

> ...*My mum wears the hijab. She's a little old lady in her sixties. She lives in a white area. Now young kids are throwing things at her – bottles and cans – every time there's something in the media about Muslim extremism.* (She Who Disputes, 2006:8)

The 'otherization' ban in turn has become part and parcel of the public debate so that many politicians begin by condemning the cover and women's choices as being different. Even the Prime Minister has chosen to denounce diversity and multiculturalism as a cause for terrorism to be countered by 'muscular liberalism' (http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/mobile/uk-politics–12371994, 5 February 2011).

It is therefore time to consider whether secularism as a stated political requirement by definition denies the rights of citizens to exercise their faith as they see fit? Should British-born, British-educated, young, articulate and intelligent women who actively chose to cover, despite the virulent Islamophobia, submit to the intense pressures on them to take off the hijab? Is it the case that a ban on headscarves in schools has pushed 'Muslim women into the hands of Islamic fundamentalists' (Beck, 2004) or is it a choice? Yet as many more participants in our year long conversation with Muslim women told us:

...I choose to wear the hijab, I'm not forced. My dad would ideally like me to wear Western clothes to avoid all the hassle, but I choose to wear the hijab! (She Who Disputes, 2006: 5)

...People tell me that I'm oppressed by men into covering my hair – but it's my choice to do so. (She Who Disputes, 2006: 5)

As Fareena Alam (2004) the editor of Q-News, Europe's leading Muslim magazine states:

*...Modesty is only one of many reasons why a woman wears a scarf. It can be a very political choice too. I began wearing it at the age of 21, against the wishes of my family, while serving as president of the United Nations Students' Association at university. I wanted to assert my identity and counter common stereotypes about Muslim women. A woman who wears a hijab can be active and engaged, educated and professional.... Does this democratic society have any room for a British-Muslim woman like me who chooses to wear the hijab on my own terms? (*Alam, 2004)

The fundamental reason why women's veiling is important to the question of women's rights according to Muslim feminists is because power over the veil represents freedom of choice. In particular, the ability to choose whether to veil or not, in accordance with the Muslim feminist's own personal interpretation of Islamic faith and morality, is at the very heart of what Islam represents to Muslim feminists: the basic Qur'anic ethic of the sovereign right of both women and men as human beings who have the freedom of self-determination.

It is argued that it would be both illogical and impracticable to ask of them to submit to any man and do what they personally consider to be inconsistent with the essence of their faith. It is particularly unreasonable to ask them to change their dress codes to accommodate the public gaze. Surely what is required is careful and considerate discussion rather than confrontation.

The key to successfully combating terrorism lies in winning the trust and cooperation of the Muslim communities in the UK. However, the government's counter-terrorism legislation and rhetorical stance are between them creating serious losses in human rights and criminal justice protections. They are having a disproportionate effect on the Muslim communities in the UK and so are prejudicing the ability of the government and security forces to gain the very trust and cooperation from individuals in those communities that they require to combat terrorism (Blick et al., 2006: 6).

It is undoubtedly the case that there are Muslim men and mosque leaders who object to women uncovering their hair (*The Guardian*, 7 March 2011). But there are also a great many women who independently choose to cover. If it is a choice then why are some citizens encouraged to abandon dressing in what they consider to be an appropriate way to accommodate secularism?

Notes
1. For the purposes of this article Islamist is used to refer to groups who are choosing to use Islam specifically as a means of creating political allegiances and solidarities.

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7. Having our Cake and Eating It: Women's Quest for Justice and Equality in the Family in Britain's Muslim Communities
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Muslim Women's Network

First, an apology: I am going to argue strongly against essentialization but use many sweeping, polemical statements in the process. This is a contradiction caused by the pressures of space.

The question of how to advance the family law rights of women in Britain's Muslim communities is bound up with problems of racism and sexism. It touches upon some of the big binaries in public policy and sociological analysis, such as universalism vs. cultural relativism; individual vs. collective rights; rights vs. culture, and so on.

This is often reduced to a question of how to 'balance' rights and culture. I shall be making four main points:

1. First, the mistaken use of the terms 'sharia law', 'sharia' councils, and 'religious arbitration' in Britain are founded on gross misunderstandings about formal and informal law in Britain and misinformation about Muslim family laws here and globally;

2. Second, the claims and counter-claims of all parties to this debate are founded on a significant lack of empirical evidence;

3. Third, plural legal systems are neither the ultimate solution to the lack of access to justice for minority women nor are they the embodiment of all legal evil; and

4. Fourth, I shall provide suggestions for constructive ways to go about considering culture and women's rights.

Misunderstandings About 'Sharia Law' and Sharia Councils

Progressive Muslim theologians and scholars – men as well as women, both in classical Muslim thinking and in today's highly animated debates – have pointed out that while sharia (which means the path outlined by God) is divine, its interpretation in the shape of concrete laws and rulings governing daily lives is most definitely human. That interpretation is highly contested and diverse across time and geography. Polygamy is just one small example:

banned under an interpretation of Qur'anic verses in Tunisia, polygamy is permitted without restriction in the Gulf and subject to conditions in Pakistan, Malaysia and North Africa. If everything were agreed and crystal clear in the holy texts, there wouldn't be 22 different laws on divorce in 22 different Muslim countries according to Women Living Under Muslim Laws' (WLUML) 10-year Women & Law research programme.

It is all a matter of human interpretation. And when humans get involved, there is power, contestation and politics. Thus the interpretations of, for example, women's right to divorce by the sharia councils must be seen as an ideological statement. Having married and divorced in Pakistan, having edited Knowing our Rights, the international synthesis out of WLUML's W&L Programme, and having assisted dozens of women in crisis in Britain who have interacted with the sharia councils, I can confidently state that the sharia council interpretations here are among the most conservative and gender discriminatory in the world.

As a member of the Muslim Women's Network UK, I can tell you that Muslim women in Britain today are waking up to the fact that what they have been told is 'correct Islam' is decades if not centuries behind the experience of their sisters in other Muslim contexts – whether working from within the religion or from non-religious perspectives. And they are asking why this is so. The uncomfortable answer is that their 'community leaders' and the successive British governments who have promoted them do not see women in Muslim communities as having the same right to equality as other citizens.

So, Muslim laws are not divinely ordained and most sharia council members have a discriminatory, right-wing agenda. Unfortunately, not only do most Muslims and non-Muslims in Britain believe that the discriminatory position is ubiquitous and divinely mandated, most Muslim and non-Muslim members of the public, many policy makers and even some rights activists are also thoroughly confused about the actual legal status of decisions by sharia councils. Sharia councils are not 'courts' and their

decisions have no legal validity in this country. Indeed, their decisions carry no weight even in most Muslim jurisdictions abroad. For instance, a British civil divorce is regarded as a valid divorce between Muslims by the Pakistan courts whereas the validity of a sharia council decision would be litigated right up to the Supreme Court. Iran's courts resolutely require any decision by any foreign forum to be reviewed by an Iranian Court. The only decisions by non-state Muslim forums in this country that have some validity are decisions by forums set up under the 1996 Arbitration Act. Only one or two such tribunals have been set up, confirming the difficulty faced in their establishment. And the law does not actually allow them to arbitrate marriage and divorce – that they do is another matter.

Lack of Empirical Data

This brings me to my second point: that there is a significant lack of empirical data.

No one knows how many women there are in Britain who are in unrecognized unions – so-called *nikah* marriages where no civil ceremony has happened. No one knows what percentage of women in Muslim communities only seek relief through the civil courts or what percentage approach both the formal and the informal system. No one knows how many polygamous unions there are. No one conclusively knows why women approach sharia councils – is it deeply held faith, is it misinformation, is it community pressure, or is it all or none of these? No one knows the major reason why often highly educated women born and brought up here even agree to these *nikah* – is it because they are promised a civil marriage later which never happens and they are too invested in the relationship to demand their rights? Or perhaps because of some misplaced belief that *nikah* is the 'proper Islamic way' – overlooking the prevalence of registration laws across the Muslim world?

We all speak anecdotally which is a poor basis for policy.

There is a methodological problem which has intrigued me. There are now several studies on women and the sharia councils which attempt to explain why they use them. But by definition, that is an exclusionary method. What about those women who never go to the sharia councils – why is their opinion never sought? Are they somehow not 'real Muslims' in the eyes of academics and policy makers?

This lack of empirical data regarding plural legal orders is global and something I have published on recently: a paper for the International Council on Human Rights Policy (2009) entitled When Legal Worlds Overlap: Human Rights, State and Non-State Law; a chapter on legal pluralism for UN Women's bi-annual Progress of the World's Women (Balchin, 2011a) which focuses on access to justice for women; and a paper for the Danish Institute of International Studies called Strengthening International Programming on Access to Justice for the Poor and for Women (Balchin, 2011b), which is a strong critique of donor policies. In a fairly broad sweep of the literature regarding the challenge of recognizing non-state law and advancing women's rights, I found countless examples from every continent and context of policy being based on supposition (which I suggest is politically-motivated). The most common mistake was to conflate practice with moral preference.

One of the most frequently cited examples used to support the recognition of non-state law relates to Pakistan, my second home, and is very relevant to our discussion of sharia councils in Britain. A woman who went through Pakistan's formal courts is quoted as saying 'I'd rather die than go through this again'. Thereafter, the woman is removed from the analysis, and her words used – by well-paid academics and researchers – to argue that the formal process was unresponsive to her cultural needs and thereby non-state law should be recognized. We never find out: does she want the formal courts to be reformed so they are more sensitive to her needs; does she think only non-state forums will work for her; is she even representative of marginalized women in general; or is the problem unrelated to legal systems and simply that her family made her life difficult during the case?

Are Sharia Councils a Problem or a Solution?

Justice system reform and the whole field of access to justice is subject to what the eminent – and quite feminist – legal anthropologist Franz von Benda-Beckman calls 'pendulum swings' in policy. I shall be less diplomatic and note that, from experience, I have seen this policy area plagued by fashions. Donors are trying to find quick and easy fixes to complex social development challenges. Government and non-state political forces all have a political axe to grind: whether it is a neo-liberal desire to privatize justice and relieve the state court system of the burden of 'minor' matters such as family disputes; or a desire by those with the absolutist agenda of identity politics to control their own communities, and define for instance what is and is not 'Muslim'.

It is clear that legal pluralism is here to stay: it is a feature of life in developing as well as developed countries, and not just among minority migrant communities. Any legal matter that is settled outside the formal courts is part of legal pluralism. Therefore, pretending it doesn't – or shouldn't – exist is counter-productive and misses examining people's needs and practices on the ground.

At the same time, it is equally clear that plural legal orders are problematic. I am summarizing the UN Women chapter on legal pluralism here:

a) As they currently operate, non-state laws and multiple parallel laws based on religion or custom tend to be more discriminatory towards women than unitary systems;

b) Aside from the content of laws in plural systems, the structure of plural legal orders very often creates discrimination – between women of different communities, and against women who do not fall into the neat identity categories that such systems depend on, for example women who marry across religious or sect lines. The Arbitration Act in the UK is a good example of structural problems. By permitting religious arbitration in ancillary family matters, it gives state sanction to non-state orders that operate in a discriminatory manner. It relies on one of the parties blowing the whistle if the process has been unfair – but how many women in Muslim communities have the social and financial resources to blow the whistle?

c) Plural legal systems are usually harder than unitary systems to reform towards equality and justice because usually, being identity-based, there are high political stakes in silencing internal contestation.

I argue that ignoring the fact of legal plurality is both racist and deepens discrimination against minority women because it overlooks and doesn't address how things work in . I also argue that the recognition of plural legal orders can promote racism – the presumption that, in the example I'm discussing, Muslims are 'different' is reinforced. It can also promote sexism since minority women are left at the mercy of a discriminatory community leadership.

What Is the Way Out?

This brings me to my fourth point: what is the way out of these apparent dichotomies and essentializations? The simple answer is that there are no easy solutions! At the same time, I disagree with the postmodernist style teeth-sucking that 'it's

very complicated'. Implying that 'only experts can understand' is another way of silencing rights-based critiques from within and from outside. There are solutions but they're not always the ones that suit policy makers and the political elites of the majority and minority communities.

The solutions include:

- First, recognizing that culture is a human activity, political, contested, and diverse across and within cultures;

- Second, keeping a commitment to the rights of the marginalized centre-stage in all policy, including within minority communities;

- Third, recognizing that legal pluralism is here to stay and analyse its impact on minority women, including strengthening empirical knowledge (both quantitative and qualitative);

- Fourth, avoiding unhelpful binaries and essentializations, and instead examine how rights activists the world over have transcended these binaries and developed rights-based approaches to culture in daily practice on the ground;

- Fifth, supporting internal cultural contestation where this advances human rights for all minority community members;

- Sixth, moving beyond culturalizing all minority problems and seeing them as having purely legal solutions.

As the numerous feminist groups that exist in all religious traditions prove, religion and culture do not have to be discriminatory. If we accept that culture is a human activity and is thus contested, if we accept that we all have intersecting identities and belong to multiple collectivities simultaneously, we have to logically accept that there will be political and social trends within all religions and cultures that are fully supportive of human rights, including gender equality and the equality of all ethnicities. While international human rights standards have also been affected by the simplistic cultural relativism v. universalism debate, today (thanks in part to the input of women from the global South), they also have language that can take a nuanced position on culture.

In concrete terms for policy makers, what do these solutions and a 'nuanced position on culture' look like?

Women in Britain's Muslim communities are the primary users of the non-state sharia councils.

Because the system is unregulated and flexible, the women are free to choose whichever council they fancy and ignore the final pronouncements if they want. The anecdotal evidence we are getting in addition to one or two PhDs is that they're voting with their feet: they are going to those councils which offer less discriminatory procedures and decisions. Because the councils depend not upon the state for their legitimacy but upon their standing in the community, they are responding, however slowly and unwillingly, to women's increasing demands for fairness and justice. However powerful the male religious authorities, they nevertheless fear becoming irrelevant. The change I have seen in attitudes in the past ten years is significant. The point is to support and encourage this change by supporting and encouraging the women and men within the community who are taking this route, and to build the capacity of women – the primary users – to push the limits of this non-state system.

So what does the Ministry of Justice do? Instead of supporting women's organizations to build Muslim women's capacity and knowledge, they ignore the users and fund MINAB (Mosques & Imams Advisory Board) to produce a vague pamphlet for distribution in mosques (and which is untraceable online). Using men to conduct dialogue between other men is not how change has been happening to date.

By now you will have gathered that I do not agree with the slogan 'Abolish Sharia!' If people want to use religion as a frame of reference in their private disputes you cannot – and should not – stop them. But I am also strongly against any form of state recognition and regulation – including religious arbitration under the Arbitration Act. State recognition in this instance freezes the scope for change and legitimizes the discriminatory perspectives of existing power-holders. What may surprise you is that in my experience those authorities within the community who are demanding state recognition are the minority. Left and Right, most male scholars I know don't want state interference. Those who do are largely those who have a political stake in being seen as the legitimate representatives of an essentialized Muslim community: they are themselves both racist and sexist.

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8. Headscarf Debates as a Prism for Conceptions of National Identity

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Introduction

We have been involved in a European project comparing the political debate and regulating of the Islamic veil (see www.veil-project.org). Doutje Lettinga and I constituted the Dutch team. Our contribution is based on the work we have done for VEIL. All over Europe, headscarves, or more generally the veil, have become a controversial subject.1 One important insight we gained from comparing national cases is that the controversies over the veil are in reality not so much about the veil as about national identity. That is, about European states reconfiguring and reconsidering themselves as they are becoming increasingly more multicultural and multi-religious societies in a globalizing world. There are national differences in the response to the veil, but over time a convergence can be identified, which we find worrying because, in the end, it is limiting the space for Islamic women to choose whether they want to veil. We will illustrate our claim with data from our research on headscarf debates in France and the Netherlands, and conclude with some comparative observations with reference to Britain.

Dutch regulation is by and large accommodative, while French regulation has been prohibitive, culminating in the prohibitive laws of 2004 that forbid the wearing of signs or clothing, such as the veil, which conspicuously manifest students' religious affiliations in the realm of public schools. In this paper, we present an analysis of the political debates on the veil in France and the Netherlands covering the time period of 1989–2007. We review how the problem of the veil was defined and discussed in parliament to get a better understanding of these national differences in responses to the veil, and also to see whether a change occurred over time.

The Netherlands

While the regulation on veiling in the Netherlands is largely accommodative, we are seeing a gradual decrease in tolerance. An example of this occurred in 1999, when a teacher-trainee was forbidden to wear a headscarf in the classroom. This sparked a small opposition party, Groen Links (the Greens), to argue that it hampers emancipation if women cannot wear their headscarf at work. Again, in 2001, when a court clerk was refused to wear a headscarf, the Green Party's MP, Femke Halsema, compared the headscarf to ethnicity, social class, or sexual preference. She claimed the idea that the headscarf might be a symbol of oppression is mistaken, as it is simply a symbol of identity. The underlying problem is the discrimination Muslim women face from mainstream society. Therefore, the Greens proposed that dress rules be adjusted so that Muslim women could participate in society. The right to wear a headscarf was confirmed in a policy directive in 2003.

In 2004, Stef Blok, the chair of the Commission Blok in charge of evaluating the integration policy, expressed the view which was dominant at the time: "The main point is that it is someone's own choice. If you want to restrict it, you need to show good reasons for it." Public neutrality was considered as an insufficient reason for restriction. It was not that the Dutch did not care about neutrality, but they did not perceive the headscarf as a danger to public neutrality. This view was laid down again in a policy document. The preceding year saw cases in the courtrooms associated with the niqab. Two students brought a case before the Commission on Equal Treatment, which was then dismissed following the Commission's judgment that a niqab is dysfunctional when teaching young children. However, in two other cases on the use of the niqab, the Commission on Equal Treatment ruled in favour of the women.

In 2005, right-wing politician, Geert Wilders, proposed a motion to the Dutch parliament to ban the burqa in public spaces. His proposal was strategically timed to be discussed during a national debate surrounding terrorism. The burqa became framed as a problem of security and public order. Liberal MP Frans Weekers said: 'When people cover their face in public, whether this is with a burqa or with a balaclava, this seriously affects other people's feelings of safety, and the concern for a civil public order involves that we do not tolerate such face covers.' The burqa was also framed as a symbol of gender inequality within Islam. A right-wing majority in Parliament voted

Table 1. The Netherlands

Time and conflicts	Frame	Policy
1999 teacher trainee, court clerk Headscarf	Not allowing headscarves hampers emancipation & integration, the problem is discrimination by society (Green Party). Other parties: Mainly framed as conflicting with neutrality, but not strong enough to warrant a ban. (but socialists associated niqab with gender inequality within Islam)	Right to wear headscarves in schools and civil service confirmed in directive 2003
2004 police Niqab (students)	In general: right to religion trumps public neutrality except for certain functions (dress signalling authority, impartiality) (all parties except List Pim Fortuyn)	Policy document: confirms right to wear the headscarf, except for court personnel and certain police functions
2005-2007 Burqa	Burqa framed as security & public order problem and as a symbol of submission. Must be banned therefore (Geert Wilders Freedom Party, followed by majority in Parliament)	2009 law in preparation to ban burqa and niqab in schools, labour market and public transport

through a motion supporting prohibitive laws on the burqa. In 2009, the government announced its plans to introduce regulations that would forbid the wearing of all types of garments which cover the face (including balaclavas) in schools, both public and private, for school-goers and visitors alike. The reasons given included issues on interpersonal interaction, communication, public safety and active citizenship. A directive has been sent to Ministerial departments to prohibit this type of clothing in public offices as well. Wilders' initial motion (to ban the burqa in all public spaces) was rejected because it infringed on equality and religious freedom, and was considered disproportional. This explains the more moderate law of the current government.

France

In 1989, three Muslim girls were excluded from a College in Creil. In what later came to be known as the Creil affair, the socialist government condemned the ban on headscarves. Some wondered if this was inspired by the displays of Dutch multiculturalism , but the Socialists had other reasons to oppose the ban. They agreed with the Right that the Republican's promise of equality could only be maintained if citizens were treated as abstract individuals, instead of as members of ethnic-religious communities. They defended their belief that the school would liberate Muslim girls. Michel Rocard (then prime minister) said: 'I don't believe a pure authoritarian procedure

to be very effective, and despite the militant lay-man I am, I don't accept a repressive aspect to be the dominant face of laïcité. Laïcité wants to convince, to persuade and to be shining. That is the laïcité that should be maintained in our schools. (..) The aim of our public and lay school is to welcome, to persuade, to integrate, that means, to realize the goals of education in another way than through a politics of a priori exclusion.' The Socialists saw causes of the headscarf problem to include social deprivation and alienation, and they did not want to further isolate Muslim girls in their communities. This was reflected in their policy (see table below).

During the 1990s, the Socialists gradually lost their trust in the integrative and emancipative power of the public school, as Muslim girls stayed unwilling to give up their veil and hence appeared rather unassimilable on this point. The fact that girls insisted on wearing the headscarf was no longer considered as stemming from marginalization, but framed as expressing separatism and political Islam and. the policy changed accordingly.

At the turn of the 21st Century, the Socialists agreed with the analysis of the Right and the left-wing parliamentary groups Republic et Liberté (RL) and Radicale, Citoyen et Vert (RCV) that some Muslims rejected integration, secularism and the Republican project of equality. These fundamentalist groups forced their ideology upon others and particularly

Table 2. France

Time & conflicts	Frame	Policy
1989 Creil affair, 3 girls expelled from school	Headscarf in public schools conflicts with public neutrality (laïcité) & integration: symbol of alienation (marginalization) & gender: the laïc school liberates (socialist party)	Council of State: headscarves not necessary incompatible with laïcité, if not acts of pressure, provocation, proselytism, propaganda
1994 Several conflicts in schools, strike on behalf gym teacher (no headscarf for safety reasons)	Integration: headscarf symbol communalism, rejection French values and political Islam And a symbol of gender inequality (socialists now follow right wing (RPR) + Republican left wing (Groups RL, RCV)	Decree Bayrou: ostentatious symbols not allowed in public schools, room to negotiate about 'light' scarves, bandanas
2004 Commission Stasi installed	Same frames, but become stronger (2002 Right wing UMP majority in parliament) + decree Bayrou ineffective, for still many conflicts	Stasi commission Law: conspicuous religious signs or clothing prohibited in public schools. Headscarves always conspicuous.

threatened the freedom and equality of young secular Muslim girls. We can clearly see this diagnosis in a legislative proposal of 2003, in which some Socialists proposed to ban all religious, political and philosophical symbols from schools (law proposition no. 2096 put forward by Georges Sarre (PS) and signed by Jaques Desallangre, Jean-Pierre Michel, Pierre Carassus and Michel Suchod). Donning the headscarf was framed as a 'contestation of French values and culture' (referring to gender-equality and the freedom of individual conscience), and 'a rejection, often imposed on young girls, of the Republican and laic model of integration'. A growing communalism in the suburbs would contribute to this fundamentalism that fragmented the nation into separatist and potentially violent communities where the rights of women were being undermined. On March 15th 2004, the French government passed the law that banned the wearing of conspicuous signs of religious affiliation.

Comparison and Contextualization

Why is veiling more contested in France than in the Netherlands? It is often argued that the French adhere to a strict interpretation of public neutrality because of their Republican tradition. French secularism developed not only as a mechanism to free the state from religious influence, it also was a tool to emancipate individual citizens from (Catholic) communities seeking to control their members. The French Republicans sought to secure national cohesion by integrating citizens into a public realm where they were to share the same universal values of equality, freedom and solidarity (Scott, 2007). In contrast to France, Dutch secularism sought to protect the freedom of religious minorities from the liberal state. Furthermore, secular (leftist) liberals in the Netherlands were forced to make a compromise with Catholic and Calvinist minorities over political and social life. In the late 19th century, these had established local and regional politically organized religious subcultures to oppose the liberal's secular nation-building project, later joined by the social democrats that likewise had begun to organize parties, professional and leisure time associations (Kersbergen & Manow, 2008). This resulted into the segmentation of Dutch society along confessional lines, known as pillarization. Given this background it is understandable why veiling is more contested in France than in the Netherlands. The two countries' responses to the veil follow from their nation-building process.

It should be noted, however, that even in France there was a time when politicians did not consider the headscarf as conclusively incompatible with the laic public school. After 2003, Dutch tolerance towards veiling declined. This was in a context in which

new political players had made their appearance on the Dutch scene (Pim Fortuyn, Ayaan Hirsi Ali). The integration policy was blamed as being too multicultural, allowing Islamic radicalism. This was at a time when Islamic violence had not only manifested itself internationally, but also on Dutch soil. Dutch film maker Theo van Gogh was murdered by a radical fundamentalist in 2004. In this climate, Dutch politicians felt the necessity, it appears, to distance themselves from multiculturalism. Re-assertion of Dutch national identity and Dutch values became a theme. One way of doing this was by making a firm stand against the burqa. The change in attitude of Dutch politicians towards veiling that likened the Dutch political debate to the French debate was a reconfiguration of the Dutch ideal of a multicultural and multi-religious society in a globalizing world. The consequences for Muslim women were limitations on their freedom to wear the veil, due to manifestations of Dutch policy.

We did not research the British veil debates (see Kilic, 2008), and therefore limit ourselves to just a few comparative observations regarding Britain. In the literature on citizenship and immigrant integration, Britain and the Netherlands are usually lumped together as two multicultural countries and contrasted with France as an example of a civic assimilationist or universalist integration regime (see Koopmans et al., 2005). When we look at these countries through the lens of state-church relations, France gets characterised as following a model of strict secularism and the Netherlands as a case of principled pluralism. State neutrality means in the Dutch context of pillarization that the state does not ban religion from the public sphere, as in France, but that it does not discriminate between religious and non-religious institutions. Therefore, religious groups not only have the right to establish their own schools, but also receive full public funding. This gave Muslims and other newly-established religious minorities the opportunity to make religious claims and get them accommodated. Treating Islam differently from the established religions would amount in Dutch eyes to discrimination. The UK is an altogether different case, as the Church of England is the established religious authority in England, but not for the rest of Britain. Yet despite the decline of formal ties between Parliament and the Church of England, there exist comparatively strong formal and legal ties between church and state. The British Monarch also represents the head of the church and has considerable authority in church affairs, such as the power to appoint archbishops. The church itself continues to have an important political role in the workings of the state, as some bishops have reserved seats in the House of Lords (see Monsma & Soper, 1997 and Fetzer & Soper, 2005). How this affects the space for the religious claims of Muslims, and in particular, how this plays out in the framing and regulating of the veil is not so obvious. First, the big difference with both France and the Netherlands is that in these two countries there are legal rules which restricts, in the case of France, or accommodates, in the case of the Netherlands, the wearing of the veil, while in Britain there is no formal regulation. There exists a rather accommodative or laissez-faire practice as Kilic (2008: 444) calls it towards the veil. Secondly, until 2006 when former Foreign Affairs Minister Jack Straw publicized his article ('I want to unveil my views on an important issue', The Lancashire Telegraph, 6 October 2006) in which he expressed his discomfort with women wearing niqabs (a garment that covers the face, but leaves the eyes uncovered), Britain had not experienced a widespread public debate on veiling (Kilic 2008: 434). Given the privileged position of the Church of England as the established religious authority, the absence of a public debate and the accommodative practice is surprising as one would expect that the space for Muslims' religious claims would be limited in Britain. This is the more so if one realizes that the multicultural framework in Britain is set by the Race Relations Act that determines the space for recognition of minority claims. As Muslims are considered a religious group, and not as a racial or ethnic group like Jews or Sikhs, this works to the disadvantage of Muslims (Modood 2006). Yet this is not reflected in debates or policies regarding the veil. Up to this day, veiling in the UK is relatively uncontested and the policy reaction accommodative. While we were inclined on the basis of our comparison between France and the Netherlands to conclude that the framing and regulating of the veil is more determined by a country's self image as a nation and the way state-church relations are institutionalised in the nation-building process than by its integration regime, this explanation certainly will not do for Britain, but neither is an explanation in terms of integration regimes.

Notes

1. We will use 'the veil' as a shorthand to refer to all forms of Muslim women's head- and body- covering together, such as chador, jilbab or niqab. When we want to refer to a specific form of veiling, such as the headscarf or the burqa, this will be mentioned as such.

2. Fortuyn had founded his List Pim Fortuyn (LPF) in February 2002. After his assassination in May 2002 his party gained a huge election victory (26 seats in Parliament). Hirsi Ali was in 2003 elected as a MP for

the Dutch liberal party. She castigated Islam for its gender inequality. They were later followed by Geert Wilders, a dissident member of the liberal party who formed in 2004 his Patij voor de Vrijheid (Party for the Freedom) and by Rita Verdonk, again a former liberal MP who founded her movement 'Trots op Nederland' (Proud of the Netherlands) in 2007.

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9. The Struggle of French Women of Migrant Muslim Descent in the Defence of Secular State Schools

Marieme Helie-Lucas
Women Living Under Muslim Laws

Amongst the most determined defenders of secularism and of secular schools today are French citizens of migrant descent, whose families originated from Muslim countries or communities. In the words of the President of a prominent feminist organization, '[t]hose of us who came from other countries benefitted from secularism, and this is why we are so deeply attached to it'.[1]

As 'Muslims' are portrayed as victims of secular principles (considered as 'Western') in international English language media, and in British media, as well as in mainstream academic social science discourse,[2] such a blatant contradiction should at the very least call for a re-examination of facts.

The first source of misunderstanding is that different definitions of secularism are used on both sides of the Channel: while in the UK, secularism is conceived of as equal tolerance by the state vis-à-vis all religions, in France, the laws of 1905 & 1906[3] instituted a total separation between church and state.

In Article 1 of the 1906 law, the secular state guarantees freedom of religion, freedom of belief and of practice to the citizens of the secular republic, but Article 2 states that, beyond this, the state will not interfere with religions, nor grant them any recognition, nor fund them. In the UK, the King or Queen is both the Head of State and the Head of the Anglican Church; in Germany, the Landers collect religious taxes; in the USA, one swears in court on the Bible; but in France, over a century ago, the State declared itself incompetent in religious matters.

Regarding what pertains to the State mandate, secularism is the rule. Education, for instance, which from 1906 was made free of charge and compulsory (quite a unique revolutionary legal provision at that point in history), was to be entirely secular. Consequently, teachers and pupils are not allowed to display any sign of religious affiliation on the premises of State secular schools: they are there in their capacity as individual French citizens, not as representatives of divided and divisive 'communities'.

The first conclusion one can draw from this clarification of definitions is that it seems illogical to look at the application of these laws instituting 'separation' today in France through the British lens of 'equal tolerance'. To avoid any further confusion, I will thus use the French word 'laïcité', when referring to secularism in France.

The second conclusion is that it is factually wrong to refer to the 2004 law that reiterated - in a weaker version[4] - the principles set up in the 1906 law, as the 'law against the veil'. Not only was the initial law passed at a time when the Catholic Church was the only religion in France that could lay claim to political representation of State power (more than a century ago, Islam was not in the picture), but these laws banned equally all signs of religious affiliation, be it cross, kippa, headscarf or other. The fact that the 'law against the veil' is so widely adopted a label only shows the powerful ideological influence of the Muslim Right lobby, and the lack of historical knowledge on the part of left and human rights organizations, media and scholars that use this terminology.

The 1905-1906 laws on laïcité were followed by long battles with political forces of the right and far right, and with religious lobbies of the Catholic Church. Its opponents never ceased to attempt to undermine it and weaken it.[5] The struggle for laïcité has been ongoing since, albeit with new players. Among the most vocal adversaries of laïcité is the Muslim Right. However among its leading defenders are the anti-fundamentalist citizens who, whether migrants themselves or of migrant Muslim descent, have direct or indirect experience of living under the boot of Muslim fundamentalists.

This should not come as a surprise. An important percentage of citizens of migrant descent in France come from the Maghreb countries, mostly from Algeria. The economic migration started with World War I, when many unskilled Algerian workers became active in workers' unions and parties in France. In terms of recent migration, movement has been for the most part politically motivated. In the 1990s, intellectuals, artists, journalists, and feminists had to flee both targeted assassinations

and massacres committed by Algerian Islamic Armed Groups.[6] The political experience of French citizens of Algerian descent is a decisive factor in their stand for laïcité.

Laïcité is presently both under attack and instrumentalized by religious fundamentalists under the leadership of Muslim fundamentalism, but also by the French Right-wing government, and by the various political parties and organisations of the Far Right. Laïcité is also undermined by left-wing parties and human rights organizations in the name of religious rights, minority rights, and cultural rights.[7]

Sarkozy's government, in its attempt to gain the vote of all potential conservative voters – and among those, the 'Muslim vote'- could not fail to give guarantees to various religious fundamentalisms. Under the right-wing government of Sarkozy, various adjunctions to the concept of laïcité emerged, all aiming at weakening it.[8] References to 'positive laïcité', and 'open laïcité' were all very much in line with Canada's 'reasonable accommodations'. Sarkozy himself made several public statements that infuriated even mild secularists in France, especially during his visit to the Pope when he declared that a teacher will never be as qualified as a priest to give moral guidance to children.[9] He also took several measures in favour of confessional schools, such as granting equivalence to diplomas delivered by private confessional universities.

Similarly, doing away with all secular principles, Sarkozy set up an official representation of Islam with which he can conduct a 'dialogue', as if it were an elected body. This institution, the Conseil Francais du Culte Musulman,[10] is supposed to represent all 'Muslims'[11] in France. However, recent studies[12] show that the vast majority of people erroneously labelled as 'Muslims' are, as Catholics in France, not very religiously inclined: 20 per cent declare themselves unbelievers (vs 28 per cent in the whole population, and among those who identify as believers in Islam, 21 per cent barely ever set foot in a mosque or attend any religious ceremony (vs 15 per cent in the whole population). It follows suit that the frequenting of mosques, on which the estimation of the representativity of the CFCM is based, is extremely low: only 5 per cent of declared believers participate in the consultations organized by the CFCM.

In a context in which the far-right parties are gaining momentum everywhere in Europe,[13]

Sarkozy navigates a fine line in view of the April-May 2012 presidential elections: on the one hand, he must give positive signals to various religious fundamentalisms, including the Muslim Right, but on the other hand, he must cater to the needs of xenophobic far-right parties and newly-formed fascist-like groups.[14] Hence, the need for these political manipulations: The French Government passes laws that confirm secular schools in their mandate, represses jobless youth riots, organizes the deportation of illegal migrants, especially those from Muslim countries,[15] sets up a national consultation on 'French identity',[16] and bans full-face covering in public spaces, whilst simultaneously conducting 'dialogues' with 'Muslims', and giving in to many of their demands.

But small and very vocal radical subgroups on the right of the traditional far right are springing up, and in their view, the French State is far from taking a strong enough position vis-à-vis 'Muslims', be they fundamentalists or not. They demand that 'Islam' be outlawed in France, that immigration from Muslim countries be stopped, and that discussions be held with Muslim countries so as to organize for 'French Muslims' to 'migrate' to 'countries where they will be able to freely practice their religion'.[17]

These groups undertake provocative street actions against 'Islam', in response to equally provocative street actions taken by Muslim fundamentalist groups. For example, Muslim fundamentalists have organized public prayers every Friday for years in one predominantly North African area in the centre of Paris, during which they completely block the streets to traffic. The reason invoked is that they lack a big local mosque - while we have seen earlier that many mosques are under-used. In response, extreme-right groups organized 'pork and wine' parties in the very same location, an action which was grandly announced through the media. Both the new extreme-right groups and Muslim fundamentalist groups are looking for physical confrontation that would rally and radicalize their troops. The State's police keep turning a blind eye on these illegal actions.

Just to complicate matters, all the factions of the Right and far Right have appropriated the language of laïcité: Sarkozy, the National Front and the far Right groups[18] all refer to it as a 'French value' that needs to be preserved and defended against aliens. Meanwhile, the Muslim Right, engaging Article 1 (but conveniently ignoring Article 2) of the 1906 law, attempts to use laïcité as

a legal means for religious entryism in the public sphere.

While manipulating the concept to their benefit, Muslim fundamentalists in France are today the spearhead of attacks against laïcité, while official representatives of Catholics and Jews rush in support of their numerous demands, all in the name of religious rights. It is very clear that they all hope to benefit from the weakening and eventual eradication of laïcité. The policy of the common cause prevails over antagonisms between different religions.

The 'right to veil'[19] for girls under the age of 18 in State secular schools should not be examined in isolation. The veil in this context is only the visible political flag of a far-right political movement It should be placed among the numerous demands made by Muslim fundamentalist groups around the issue of separation of men and women in public spaces (schools, swimming pools, hospitals, etc.) and the replacement of democratically voted legislation applicable to all citizens by different religiously-inspired, non-voted laws, imposed by clerics for separate communities. It must also be seen as a replication of the steps taken by fundamentalist groups in Algeria,[20] where they now represent one of the major political players.

What is at stake? Issues such as women's place in the city; gender mixing in public spaces; violence against women being legitimized by culture and religion; the visibility of a far-right political movement; and strategies to inflecting the principle of democratically voted laws towards religious laws are all challenging the very principles of laïcité and of democracy.

Launched towards the end of the 1980s and throughout the 1990s, the battle around the veil/headscarf questioned the very roots of the secular republic by demanding that underage girls veil in State secular schools. Despite the limited number of girls concerned (a dozen initially), international media build this into a major issue.

Under the growing pressure of small but very vocal Muslim fundamentalist groups, the law on secularism was put into question and a Parliamentary Commission, the Stasi Commission,[21] was appointed to advise the government about what was to be done with the girls who came to school wearing headscarves. Women of Muslim descent volunteered to testify before this commission: women's organizations,

writers, journalists, and ordinary women from Muslim descent were heard. It is on their advice that France passed the 2004 law which reaffirms the principles of the 1906 secular laws.[22]

Following this controversy, new demands were made for separation of men and women in the public spaces such as schools, swimming pools,[23] and in hospitals.[24] Major cities in France bent to this demand for sexual segregation by granting women-only hours (or days) in municipal swimming pools. As for hospitals, the scarcity of personnel does not allow for the allotment of exclusively female personnel to female patients and there were numerous incidents of physical violence occurring when husbands or brothers refused to allow even gravely ill women to be treated by male doctors and actually used physical violence against male nurses and doctors. On one occasion, a child died in delivery and the father was taken to court for deliberately risking the life of his wife and child.[25]

Various attempts were made to induce tribunals to accommodate or endorse religious views. An example of this was a demand for the annulment of a marriage between two French citizens of Muslim descent rather than a divorce by mutual consent: the reason was that the bride was not a virgin; virginity was thus qualified as 'an essential quality of the bride', and the annulment was a disguised repudiation.[26]

Under the influence of fundamentalist groups, a rise in 'honour crimes' could be noticed in the poor suburbs around major cities. Teenage boys and young adults took it upon themselves to impose an 'Islamic' dress code and 'Islamic' behaviour upon their sisters and neighbours. Transgression was severely punished by beating, burning and stoning - often ending with the death of the girl.[27]

In this context, the school has been at the heart of the battlefield. This is where the future generations are trained as equal citizens rather than as representatives of a 'community'. Muslim fundamentalist groups demanded to put an end to co-education. The teaching of graphic arts, music, biology[28] and sports were to be eliminated from the curriculum 'for Muslims'. They demanded the introduction of the teaching of Islam within secular schools: it was to be delivered not by historians as can be done for other religions and ideologies, but by imams.

In Algeria too, the school has been hijacked and instrumentalized by Muslim fundamentalism.

Between 1962 (the year of Algerian independence) and 1965 (which marked the fall of the first president Ben Bella to a military coup by Houari Boumediene), Arabic language Egyptian teachers were imported[29] who were in fact part of the Muslim Brotherhood. Not only did they give questionable education on religion, creationism, the inferiority of women or hatred of Jews, but they also trained pupils in primary school to denounce their parents as 'bad Muslims'. For instance, children were asked to report whether or not their parents were praying or fasting at appropriate times, and they were shown corks so as to detect which parents were drinking wine.[30] Adults started fearing their own children, as being branded *kufr/Kafir* could implicate a death sentence. These 'teachers' 'educated' young generations who were exhausted by the lack of perspective in terms of access to the labour market or to any personal accomplishment, and were reacting desperately to the contempt[31] displayed by the Algerian government and elites *vis-à-vis* the people. These youths turned to extreme right political parties, listened to the teachings of the Islamic Salvation Front, rioted and took arms.

The same process can be recognized in France where citizens of migrant Muslim descent are faced with acute discrimination in the housing and job market.[32] As in Algeria, fundamentalist groups are taking over the social work[33] that the state has ceased to supply, and they build on the discontent of the people. Citizens of migrant Muslim descent are aware what schools could produce if fundamentalist groups were to have any further influence on the French education system, as they have already experienced it, either directly for those who migrated recently from Algeria, or through family stories. They do not want to be confronted again by the very same political forces of the Muslim right they tried to leave behind, nor do they believe that social and political problems can be solved through 'religious' means. This is why they fiercely defend laïcité and more specifically secular schools.

As the theme of this conference suggests, laïcité and racism are often seen as being in conjunction one with another: either because one expects secularism to put an end to racism - and blames it for failing to do so - or because one sees secularism as eroding religious particularisms and freedom of thought. Laïcité only defines the position of the state with regards to organized representations of religions. It may not be a sufficient condition to put an end to discrimination

and racism but it could well be a necessary condition for the process of doing so.

Laïcité regulates the position of the state towards both individuals' beliefs, by asserting and protecting their right to holding these beliefs, and towards organized entities that pretend to represent these individual beliefs in the political sphere, by refusing to interact with them. Laïcité makes the distinction between individual beliefs and self-appointed unelected political representatives. It made this distinction in France a century ago, at a time when the Catholic Church was an overpowering political institution that dictated laws and curtailed people's power to draft their own social regulations through their vote.

It is still a very valid distinction to be made today, when the Muslim Right demands from the European states that separate laws or separate courts be instituted for presumed Muslims (presumed on the basis of their origin and names). The principle of one law for all the citizens of a country or the democratic principles that representatives of the people should be democratically elected rather than self appointed are being threatened. Isn't it ironic that democrats in Europe do not stand for these hard-won basic rights anymore?

The very concept of belonging raises the question of choice. Does one only belong to one's birth given identity? Is one jailed and trapped forever into one's history? And on that note, when in the past have history and culture been frozen? Forging a new concept on the model of being 'under house arrest', I recently heard an Algerian man complain publicly that he felt 'under culture arrest'.[34] By this he meant that he was forced to 'belong' to something he could not identify with any more, old rules that did not match the evolution of his own thinking, nor the times and place he lived in. *Once upon a time, men used to beat their wives, once upon a time, men used to kill the unbelievers, once upon a time, men used to have the genitals of their daughters removed, once upon a time... that was 'their' culture.* Did those who fought against such rules and succeeded in bringing about transformation betray their culture, or contribute to its living evolution? Did those who struggled for democracy against theocracy 'belong' less to their people?

Today, the rightist dominant ideology condemns people to one single ethnic religious identity: acknowledging our multiple non-antagonistic

identities and the different possibilities of belonging makes one a traitor, or a *kufr/Kafir*. French citizens of 'Muslim' origin made the choice to belong to a secular republic. **Democrats in Europe should respect their will and choice and acknowledge that, today, secularism is their culture.**

Notes

* This paper exclusively discusses secular laws in state schools in France and their most recent implementation, i.e. the 1905, 1906 and 2004 laws which have repercussions on education. It does not discuss the 2010 law banning full-face covering, which has nothing to do with education and could not be justified by implementing secularism; reasons invoked for passing this law were security and human dignity. Right-wing strategies lump these different laws together in order to discredit secularism.

1. With the notable exception of the brilliant 2008 article by Karima Bennoune, Law Professor at Rutgers University, entitled 'The Law of the Republic Versus the Law of the Brothers'. Published in WLUML, Dossier 30-31, 2011. Available at: www.wluml.org/resource/dossier-30-31-struggle-secularism-europe

2. Sihem Habchi, president of 'Ni Putes Ni Soumises' (Neither Whores Nor Submissive) press statement, 11 April 2011.

3. For a thorough discussion on the foundation of the secular state in France, with the Laws on Separation between State and Church (9 December 1905 published in the *Journal Officiel* on 11 December, and the following series of laws on separation in 1906, see Henri Pena Ruiz, France: Secularity and the Republic, siawi.org

4. The law on religious signs in state schools was passed on 15 March 2004 and was published in the *Journal Officiel* on 27 May 2004. Article L.141-5-1 states that 'ostentatious' display of religious signs is forbidden whereas the 1906 law of separation forbade just any sign of religious affiliation – thus leaving space to interpretation and controversy:

Dans les écoles, les collèges et les lycées publics, le port de signes ou tenues par lesquels les élèves manifestent ostensiblement une appartenance religieuse est interdit.

5. These ongoing attempts by Christian churches to challenge the law of separation between church and state, over the past century in France, were discussed at length during the celebration of the centenary of the law in Paris in 2005.

6. The decade of the nineties is known among Algerians as 'the dark decade', or 'the war against civilians'. The battle between an indeed undemocratic government and a ruthless extreme right fascist-like political force working under the guise of religion and its various armed organizations, made approximatively 200,000

victims. It is interesting to note that although men were the victims both of fundamentalist armed groups and of state forces such as police and army, women were massively victims of non-state actors armed groups.

7. Women Human Rights Defenders Coalition Consultation, Colombo, Sri Lanka, December 2005.

8. For various statements undermining laïcité by Sarkozy or his government see the website of laicite-republique.org

9. Déclaration de Latran : Quotations from the Statement by the President of the French Republic in the Palace of Latran, 20 December 2007: ' The school teacher could never replace the priest or the reverend'; 'France's roots are fundamentally Christian'; 'Laïcité does not have the power to sever France from its Christian roots'. See www.laicite-republique.org/Sarkozy-au-latran

10. Conseil Francais du Culte Musulman was set up in 2003 with the support of Sarkozy, then Minister of Interior. Details about its finances and composition can be found at fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/conseil_français

11. France does not allow ethnic and religious statistics since World War II, when the German occupation authorities and the French police used such data to arrest and deport Jews. In most 'studies' and surveys, Muslimness is assumed on the basis of the country of origin or of the first name of people; a sort of 'racial' category is created by assuming religious belief, as was done in the past with 'Jews'. The serious academic study referred to in note 12 took pains to ask people whether they believed in a specific religion or not and if so which one – not assuming any religious belief on the basis of origin. Its findings show a quite different picture of the so-called Muslims in France.

12. Patrick Simon, Trajectoires et Origines, joint study by INED-INSEE, 2008. Available on www.ined.fr

13. 'Traditional' far right xenophobic parties are fast rising in Western Europe: they score around 15 per cent of votes in France, Denmark, the Netherlands, Norway, Austria and Hungary, and more than 30 per cent in Switzerland and Serbia.

14. Marine Le Pen, daughter of the founder of the National Front party.

15. This refers to a recent example of borders being closed to Tunisian refugees coming by train and buses from Italy after the fall of Ben Ali, in breach of European agreements.

16. Consultation sur Identite Francaise: a national consultation on what is French identity was initiated on 26 October 2009 by the Ministry of immigration, integration and identity. Available at: www.immigration.gouv.fr/spip.php%3Fpage%3Dactus%26id_rubrique%3D2...

17. Published on the website of Riposte Laique.

Quotation from Fabrice Robert, former adviser to the city council of La Courneuve (a predominantly north African poor suburb of Paris) as an elected representative of the National Front Party (far right), now president of far-right group Bloc Identitaire. Presidents of two other such groups, Christine Tasin from Resistance Republicaine and Pierre Cassen (incidentally her husband) from Riposte Laique took part in the same national radio interview. They were demanding 'measures of public salvation', terminology which echoes pro-OAS army generals who fomented the 1958 Coup in Algiers.

18. Please note that one of these far-right groups calls itself 'Riposte Laique'.

19. It sadly reminds us of 'the right to FGM' that was defended in the 1970s, in the name of cultural rights, by part of the feminist movement in Europe and the USA.

20. For details on steps taken by fundamentalists in Algeria, see Marieme Helie Lucas, Wluml Dossier 30-31, 2011.

21. For information on the Stasi Commission see en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stasi_Commission

22. Having lost this battle within the limited space of secular schools, Muslim fundamentalist groups immediately engaged the battle around propagating the burqa in the public space.

23. Segregation in swimming pools. See: worldhaveyoursay.wordpress.com/2008/06/20/women-only-swimming-pool

24. Regarding physical violence against male medical doctors and nurses in state hospitals. In March 2011 the President of the Hospitals Federation in France stated that there was a 25 per cent rise in acts of aggression in hospitals between 2008 and 2009. The National Observatory of violence in hospitals shows a 80 per cent rise between 2009 and 2010. See: www.denecessitevertu.fr/2011/03/30/integrisme-et-violence-a-lhopital and www.lexpress.fr/actualite/societe/fait-divers/prison-ferme-pour-le-musulman-fondamentaliste-qui-a-agressé

25. A father who refused the assistance of a male doctor when his wife was delivering a child, and whose infant subsequently died, was charged with homicide.

26. Annulment of a marriage for non virginity of the bride: judgments in April 2008 and November 2008. See: www.lefigaro.fr/actualite-france/2008/11/17/01016-20081117ARTFIG00496-l-annulation-du-mariage-pour-non-virginite

27. Numerous cases of stoning or burning to death for 'unislamic behaviour' can be found on the website of Ni Putes Ni Soumises One such case is at the inception of this organization.

28. Creationism was to replace evolutionism.

29. Under colonial occupation, education was entirely in French, only two 'medersa' with a bilingual teaching existed for the whole of Algeria. A hasty political decision to 'arabize' education in Algeria was made under Ben Bella; since no one could teach in this language this led to recruiting teachers of Arabic language from the Middle East. Nasser sent many Muslim Brothers to Algeria, who were not even trained teachers.

30. Numerous personal testimonies were collected by RAFD Rassemblement Algerien des Femmes Democrates) and by myself during the 1990s.

31. What people call 'hogra'.

32. While the average percentage of jobless youth in France is 10 per cent, it rises to 16 per cent for the youth of migrant descent, and in some poor suburbs of Paris, it is estimated as being around 50 per cent.

33. For instance, fundamentalist groups set up martial arts clubs, youth camps, organize free tuition for students in difficulty, bring relief (including financial relief) to needy families. With other forms of relief also comes the free distribution of 'the Islamic veil' for women and the incitement to attend religious discussions at the local mosque for both sexes. How to refuse one part of the gift, when one is dependent on their help? Replacing the failing state is a strategy they tested in Algeria with much success. Novels by Orhan Pamuk describe very similar strategies in Turkey.

34. In French : être assigné à résidence / être assigné à sa culture.

SECTION IV: FAITH COMMUNITIES AND ANTI-RACISM

10. The Return of the Grand Narrative – Relating Secularism to Racism and Belonging

Gita Sahgal
Centre for Secular Space

I personally do not understand why religion should be given this vast, expansive jurisdiction, so as to cover the whole of life and to prevent the legislature from encroaching upon that field. After all, what are we having this liberty for? We are having this liberty in order to reform our social system, which is so full of inequities, discriminations and other things, which conflict with our fundamental rights.

(Dr BR Ambedkar in the Constituent Assembly in India, 1948)

Secularism has a bad name today in many circles including among irreligious academics and activists. To be 'secular,' is to be accused of virtually embracing authoritarianism, Western triumphalism and a racist belief in the superiority of the Western ideals descended from the Enlightenment. The attack on secularism has many antecedents beyond the scope of this paper, but what is clear is that it gained ground at a time when the idea of progress, and of support for large ideas of revolution or reform seemed to have ended. Today, the struggle for secularism has revived, carried along by mass movements for democratization. Long before the 'Arab Spring' made this question urgent again in Tunisia, Egypt and Syria, an election in Bangladesh had led to a sweeping victory for a set of secular demands that emerged from a young politicized electorate. In short, large ideas, 'grand narratives' are back – on the street, in politics and in the courts. Only the academy stands aloof, having spent the 'postmodern' moment burying most grand narratives.

These trends need to be understood and rooted in their relevance to Britain. Secular values are crucial to ensure freedom of religion and belief as well as limitations on religious coercion. They inform anti-racist struggles and develop a sense of belonging on the basis of equality, rather than subjecting people to a test of 'values' which demands not religious conformity (as is sometimes mistakenly argued) but enforced patriotism and political quiescence. They are crucial to women's rights and to equality *within* minorities.

The vexed question of what women should or should not wear immediately highlights all these issues. Wearing clothes without fear of attack, as the slut walkers[1] show us is fundamental to challenging attitudes tolerating sexual violence. It is far wider than the question of whether there is 'right' to wear the *hijab, burka* or *niqab*. While Islamists have mobilized to promote women's right to wear the *hijab*[2] – using the feminist slogan 'a woman's right to choose', it is clear that they don't support the right to take off these clothes. The veil is an obligation, which must be supported by all Muslims. As a Joint Statement of Islamist organizations and scholars said, 'The veil, irrespective of its specific juristic rulings, is an Islamic practice and not a cultural or a customary one as is agreed by the consensus of Muslim scholars; it is not open to debate[3].

As this statement shows, the very premise of 'the right to choose *hijab*' is that there is an underlying religious duty to cover. By implication, women who do not do so are to be regarded as objects to be attacked. In the London borough of Tower Hamlets, where the Jamaat e Islami, the Muslim Brotherhood and other groups such as the Tablighi Jamaat operate, Muslim women in public life such as the MP, Rushanara Ali and a local councillor Shiria Khatun, have been attacked for not wearing 'proper clothes, as have ordinary women living and working in Tower Hamlets[4].

The circumstances in which there is a right to wear what you want, needs to be carefully distinguished from attacks on people for how they dress. Some of these attacks may be on grounds of sex, they may be on grounds of race (or both) – including attacks on Muslims or people who are thought to be Muslim. The first revenge attacks in the US after 9/11 killed a Sikh man. Such attacks are criminal assaults which should be treated as such and may also be aggravated by racial hatred or religious hatred. Dealing firmly with such attacks should not be used as an excuse to justify as a religious 'right' the public exercise of sexual hatred and extreme misogynym,[5] which inevitably accompanies 'right to veil' arguments. Individual women who cover may not support such violence, but they act as models of modern, political and pure Muslim women who in the exercise of their 'right to veil' immediately designate other women as 'sluts', or as Karima Bennoune argues in a long, complex account of human rights of veiling and unveiling, 'their covering was my uncovering'.[6] Nor should it be a surprise that many young women are firm about their choice to veil. The religious right in all its forms attracts articulate right wing women from Phyllis Schafly in the US to Sadhvi Ritambara in India.

The choice of appropriate clothing is governed by numerous rules covering acceptable clothing - from the norms of the society, to uniforms worn at school or work, and notions of propriety, which vary between states and cultures. Political dress is subject to less human rights protection than religious dress and both should only be able to override 'normal' dress codes when they don't conflict with other rights. Islamists and their liberal supporters have benefitted from the multicultural muddle regarding 'the right to be different'. Anyone may choose to be different, but until it is normal to appear naked on the floor of the stock exchange or teach in Nazi uniform, the right to wear anything at all must continue to be circumscribed by other norms. If there is a conflict of rights, then freedom of religion or belief may be limited. Human rights law makes a useful distinction between the right to hold a belief which is absolute, and the right to manifest it, which is much more limited. The campaign to cover is clearly premised on gender segregation and discrimination however much it is packaged as a right. And that is why recognizing the wearing of *hijab, niqab*, etc., as a religious right is being developed: in order to enforce it as a duty, and make it an acceptable norm against which other Muslim women are judged.

Threats to women who don't want to cover in areas like Tower Hamlets, which has strong fundamentalist organizations, attract no attention from the proponents of 'choice', and are treated derisively by supporters of Islamists who, while attacking the manner in which the right wing press reports such threats, seek to explain away clear death threats and to accuse women who complain of having 'an agenda'.[7] As Rumy Hasan has pointed out, not even feminists have commented on such restrictive dress codes in England, including outspoken groups who oppose fundamentalism.[8] There are a few exceptions. Maryam Namazie who founded the One Law for All campaign has blogged on the harsh enforcement of dress codes by Iran.[9] Given that Khomeini admirers, the Islamic Human Rights Commission, are sometimes taken seriously as a human rights organization in the UK, it is worth understanding that their campaign on 'rights' does not extend to Iranian women being arrested or assaulted for being insufficiently covered.

Another exception is British Muslims for Secular Democracy who have issued a paper on dress codes, in which they gently remind Muslim readers that in the most sacred of places during the hajj, men and women are not segregated, nor are their faces covered.[10] Their view of veiling as a cultural practice which is not mandated by Islam contrasts sharply with the statement of the fundamentalist scholars quoted above. It is a critique of the anti-racist argument which has turned 'Islamophobia' into one of the few acceptable grand narratives of our times, by highlighting the right of Muslims to challenge fundamentalist narratives and offering genuine support to a wider range of choices by Muslim women.

The connection between secularism and belonging has been clear, too, in the anti-colonial resistance of the early 20th century, because the history of the struggle for secularism is not merely a European story. As the opening quotation shows, the desire to be free from religious control has been crucial to freedom struggles. In India, the Constituent Assembly debated creating a uniform civil code to replace separate religious based family laws, codified under the British Raj. It was no accident that a clear lead came from the great Dalit leader, Dr Ambedkar, who chaired the drafting of the Indian Constitution. For those who had suffered gross legal discrimination sanctified by religion, the creation of a secular legal system was a chance to break free from the dominant orthodoxies of codified Hindu law. Ambedkar's view of the value of secularism, and the desire for a common system of law, was radical in attempting to displace the colonial settlement on

family laws, and to create a new nation, based not only on foundational egalitarian principles of public citizenship such as universal suffrage, but also to promote equality in private matters – within the family. Support for such a code came from various sources. For Minoo Masani, a Parsi, and Amrit Kaur, a Christian, the reform of personal law was the opportunity to create a nation through the promotion of equality – between citizens of different religions. For feminists such as Hansa Mehta, it was also an opportunity to promote equality between the sexes. Far from being a majoritarian idea imposed from the top, the idea of a uniform code beckoned those who had most to lose from living in a Hindu dominated country.[11]

But for many legislators in the largest religious minority – Muslims – the issue was far more problematic. Many Muslim members argued for the retention of their customs, mentioning the Sheriat Act of 1937. This had been passed a mere eleven years before to substitute for customary laws governing Muslims. The arguments for reform of Muslim law were both to establish a religious rather than a customary foundation for law and to improve the rights of women. In codifying some aspects of Muslim law, many customary practices and juristic traditions were wiped out, helping to create a more homogenous legal ideal, which would mark out a communal Indian Muslim identity. The successful backlash against efforts to reform have left Muslim feminists in India struggling against the idea that their lives should be governed by their 'community leaders'.[12]   But the backlash that they face is a double one. The Hindu right in India embraced the idea of a uniform civil code and like those in Europe who fear that secularism is tainted by its association with majoritarian values, many liberal left activists, with a few exceptions, felt unable to create a separate discourse around a new civil code. Efforts to create internal reform continue with legal scholars and feminists from all religious backgrounds working to suggest different ways to reform the law.[13]

The provision of a Uniform Civil Code remains in the Directive Principles of the Constitution, but more than 60 years after independence, it has yet to be realized. Instead the fusion between separate law and religious identity has become more entrenched. Systems of religious personal law apply in many countries of the world. Even where there have been reforms in the legal codes governing majorities such as the Hindu Code Bill of 1955 and 1956, in India which abolished polygamy and introduced divorce by mutual consent long before it was introduced into English law, the laws of the minority

remain unreformed.. In Pakistan the Family Law Ordinance of 1961 brought about considerable reforms of personal law. The colonial Shariat Act no longer defined Muslim identity for Pakistanis whose sense of belonging lay in developing a new national identity. But it was one where Hindus, Sikhs and Christians were, at best, to be tolerated through indifference; and their laws were not reformed in Pakistan.

Where common codes were put in place, such as in Iraq, women have resisted the backlash against their legal status which came with the introduction of separate religious courts. As Sami Zubaida argues, 'Bridging the sectarian divide nurtured by the occupation and its Iraqi allies remains the biggest task facing the struggle of the Iraqi people for liberation and democracy'.[14] For Iraqi women, the struggle against separate laws is a way not only of restoring the status quo ante, but also of supporting a common platform which resists this sectarian divide.

Long before the 'Arab Spring', Nadje al Ali had identified the desire of some Copts to protect their status in a secular state. A Copt woman told her, 'I still feel that the only salvation of this country is to go back to the 1919 revolution slogan: "Religion is for God, and the nation for its citizens". I believe in a secular state where being Egyptian means to be a citizen.'[15] Not only was secularism important as a way of integrating women's and minority rights into the question of national belonging in 20th century struggles; it remains one of the pre-conditions for guaranteeing the success of the revolutions taking place in the Middle East and North Africa today.

In Bangladesh, the Awami League, elected to power under a secular mandate, backed by the Courts,[16] has thrown away the opportunity to return to the secular Constitution which was promulgated after independence. Although secularism remains in the directive principles (a compromise similar to the one arrived at in India in relation to the uniform civil code), Islam remains the state religion, to the distress of the minorities and of other secular Bangladeshis.

The return of the secular narrative has also come not so much as an embrace of international human rights discourses but of the particular traditions created by modernizing, anti-colonial projects. That is a lesson to feminists such as myself who examined the failures of the nation-state to fully include women as equal citizens. In discussions in Women Against Fundamentalism, in Britain, during

the 1990s, we were aware of the limited nature of the secular project, and critical of its many failures. But the struggle to establish nations which are not based on blood and soil or religious nationalism meant that the secular project, though highly contested, was embedded in anti-colonial struggles, particularly feminist ones.

Long before second wave feminism in the West, representatives of newly decolonized states were crucial to the drafting of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Hansa Mehta, for instance, credited as one of the most important influences on it, insisted on the language 'All human beings are equal in dignity and rights'… rather than 'all men' favoured initially by Eleanor Roosevelt.[17]

That is just one of the reasons why the timidity of the UN agencies in defending their own standards on gender equality is particularly depressing. The other is that the struggle against the attempt to get 'defamation of religion' accepted as an offence in human rights law is crucial to struggles to abolish blasphemy laws in countries like Pakistan. These laws are used primarily to legitimize attacks on religious minorities, but in Pakistan have also been used by Muslim groups to launch sectarian threats against each other. They are used as a tool to deny that any minority truly belongs.

That is why it is particularly frightening that the term 'Islamophobia' has achieved such wide currency. It concentrates minds on protecting a religion rather than people. it is often deployed by people who refuse to recognize intra community discrimination. It has invented a 'new' racism which has Muslims as sole targets, whereas the old racism, is alive and well. So that even though Muslims face discrimination , they are not the sole targets of racialised methods of policing. Concentration on Islamophobia has caused many to fail to notice that increased police powers have often been used to pick up young African Caribbean men, rather than those seen as Muslims. Racism in its classical forms has not been completely displaced onto the policing of Muslims, heavy though that has become. Identity politics has been substituted for the struggle against entrenched discrimination; and ideology for an account of the way discrimination has either persisted or reinvented itself.

Islamophobia is a flawed concept, closely allied to the concept of blasphemy, which should have no place in a secular state. It is often used to shut down criticism of Islam as a religion, thus threatening freedom of expression. Criticism of   particular

fundamentalist organizations may be silenced by claiming that it is criticism of Muslims in general, protecting organisations such as the Jamaat e Islami, the Muslim Brotherhood or salafi-jihadi groups from scrutiny. The lobbies promoting this term in Britain are themselves associated with those who are implicated in very serious crimes – such as mass murder and rape, in Bangladesh in 1971. From former policemen such as Robert Lambert, to members of the Stop the War Coalition, the assumption that fundamentalists speak for Muslims has become pervasive in British politics, causing a complicit silence in their involvement in serious human rights violations.

The importance of protecting freedom of expression and secular politics is a matter of life and death for religious minorities as well as atheists and ex-Muslims. Fundamentalists from all religious backgrounds have targeted religious minorities in virtually every country in the world. Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists and Christians have all been targeted at various times across the Indian sub-continent. But in attacking different religions, fundamentalists attack the lived experience of their own religious traditions as well. No religious group is free from the aesthetic and cultural practices of those with whom they live. share social space . Heterodox sects and small ancient religions that have flourished for centuries in Iraq or India find that their social space is squeezed by assumptions about who they are and which 'community' they belong to. Secularism protects 'freedom for religion, as much as it protects 'freedom from religion'. That is why the protection of secular space and the return to the larger idea of secularism has become urgent again; and why the dismissal of secularism as a concept seems to be so very outdated.

Notes
1.   See   http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/jun/07/marching-with-the-slutwalkers

2. See, for instance, Assembly for the Protection of the Hijab, founded by Muslim Association of Britain associated with the Muslim Brotherhood and announced by Muslim Council of Britain associated with the Jamaat e Islami, http://www.mcb.org.uk/features/features.php?ann_id=386

3. See Joint Statement about the veil from Muslim groups, scholars and leaders at http://www.mcb.org.uk/uploads/Joint%20Statement.pdf

4. See Tower Hamlets: Muslim Woman Councillor receives death threats from other Muslims: http://www.spittoon.org/archives/5481, See also youtube criticizing Rushanara Ali, http://www.youtube.com/

watch?v=NpzGFaUMnJc

5. For example, http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/nation/muslim-leader-blames-women-for-sex-attacks/story-e6frg6nf-1111112419114

6. See Bennoune, K. (2007) 'Secularism and Human Rights: A Contextual Analysis of Headscarves, Religious Expression, and Women's Equality under International Law', *Columbia Journal of Transnational Law* 45(2): 367–426. Available at SSRN: http://ssrn.com/abstract=989066

7. See http://www.islamophobia-watch.com/islamophobia-watch/2011/4/20/the-islamification-of-tower-hamlets.html

8. See Hasan, R. (2009) *Multiculturalism: Some Inconvenient Truths*. London: Politico's.

9. See Namazie, M. http://maryamnamazie.blogspot.com/2007/05/women-and-people-in-iran-resisting-veil.html

10. See British Muslims for Secular Democracy (BMSD) position on the wearing of the burka and niqab in Europe, http://www.bmsd.org.uk/articles.asp?id=34

11. See Dissenting Note written by Minoo Masani, Amrit Kaur and Hansa Mehta.

12. See Khan, H. 'No Faith in the Muslim Personal Law Board', *Communalism Combat*, 01 July 2004. Available at: http://www.cscsarchive.org:8081/MediaArchive/liberty.nsf/%28docid%29/D058CFE60AC2FC1C65256EEE001D046F?OpenDocument

13. See Aggarwal, B. 'Women's Inheritance: Next Steps', *Indian Express*, 17/10/2005 at http://www.binaagarwal.com/popular%20writings/Women%27s%20Inheritance_%20Next%20Steps%20IndianExpress_17Oct05.pdf

14. See Zubaida, S. 'After the Spring'. Available at: http://www.gpilondon.com/index.php?id=297

15. Al Ali, Nadje, found at: http://www.wluml.org/sites/wluml.org/files/import/english/pubs/pdf/dossier28/nadje-en.pdf

16. Habib, Haroon, Bangladesh: Restoring Secular Constitution, *The Hindu*, 25 June 2011. Available at http://www.sacw.net/article2162.html

17. See blog on UDHR, http://intlawgrrls.blogspot.com/2008/12/universal-declaration-of-human-rights.html, See also http://www.udhr.org/history/question.html

11. Faith Communities and Racism: Some Reflections from the Anglo-Jewish Experience

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Introduction

I approach the issue of faith communities and racism from the perspective of having done historical and sociological research on British Jews. Jews are one of the oldest 'minority ethnic' populations in Britain, although their presence in the country was interrupted for a few centuries when they were expelled in 1290. The modern Anglo-Jewish community dates from the period of 'resettlement' under Oliver Cromwell in the 1650s. Its long history has meant that it is both a useful lens for examining faith communities in Britain, and that it has been treated, in different ways, as a model minority by both sociologists and in public discourse. And because of the long history of racism against Jews in Britain, it provides a useful optic for understanding British racism and its changing nature.

Faith Communities

I want to start by saying something about 'faith communities'. The leadership of the Anglo-Jewish community historically defined itself in those terms: as a community of faith. I believe the term represented both an assimilationist and a communalist logic at work. The communal leadership were themselves highly acculturated in Britain, and did everything they could to 'anglicize', as they put it, the poorer Jewish immigrants. They understood themselves as 'Englishmen of the Jewish faith', different from other Britons only by virtue of religion. But the crucial area of difference – faith – was the grounds on which was based their right to lead and represent their 'co-religionists'. Faith legitimated their authority. In thinking about this, it is helpful to look at the inception of the modern Jewish community here. Jews had petitioned Cromwell that they may 'meete at our said private devotions in our Particular houses without fear of molestation either to our persons famillys or estates'. The words 'our private devotions' and 'our Particular houses' are key here to understanding the terms on which Jews were tolerated in Protestant England.

The presence of Jews was negotatied on the basis of Judaism as a private religion; the understanding was that only in this dimension would Jews be different from their fellow citizens. In other words, the normative public Protestant Christianity of the nation would not be disturbed. Jews were tolerated if their Jewishness was relegated to the private sphere; English tolerance was predicated on the invisibility of difference in public.

There is considerable evidence that ordinary Jewish people in places like London's East End or Chapeltown in Leeds understood their Jewishness very differently from this. Whether religious or not, they related to Jews suffering anti-Semitic violence in Russia and Romania as more than simply 'co-religionists', as the communal leaders called them, but instead used terms like 'brothers' and 'sisters'; they saw fellow Jews as their kin. In today's language, we would say that they conceived of Jews as an ethnic community rather than a faith community. In fact, the concept of 'faith' in the notion of a faith community is fundamentally Christian, and specifically Protestant, at odds with the practices of Jews, and indeed of Hindus, Muslims and other 'faith communities'. While Christianity, and especially Protestant Christianity, understands religion as personal belief, for others (including Jews) religion is about practices: not what you believe but what you do. In the Jewish case, this includes practices liking keeping a kosher home, particular practices of dress, carrying out the mitzvot (commandments) that constitute a Jewish life, a whole daily, weekly and yearly cycle of ritual and commemorative actions. As with other non-Christian religions, these practices are fundamentally public or communal, and not about private devotions. Thus the very concept of 'faith' as a way of defining identities conceals and reveals England's normative Protestant Christianity.

Later in the twentieth century, when the language of ethnicity was being widely disseminated in society at large, communal leaders were very reluctant to use terms like 'ethnic community' for Jews, because it undermined the assimilationist logic and its repudiation of Jewish difference on which their politics had been based. In my documentary research, I found some voices on the edge of the communal mainstream using those terms from the late-1960s, but it was not until the 1990s that members of the communal leadership would use those terms, and even now it remains contested.

What changed by the 1990s was a shift in the strategy whereby the communal leadership legitimated its authority. In work with my colleague Keith Kahn-Harris, we argue that the officially (if not of course actually) monocultural vision of Britain at the time when the community was being formed, and especially as it entered the 20th century, engendered a strategy of security among Anglo-Jewry. That is, especially after 1900, they emphasized secure

British belonging and citizenship. And, as the already assimilated, the already anglicized and successful, they were able to act as gatekeepers to secure British belonging and citizenship for the newly arrived (Kahn-Harris and Gidley, 2010).

Communal Responses to Racism: From a Strategy of Security to a Strategy of Insecurity

As Jewish presence in Britain became increasingly visible, and Jewish difference began to exceed or refuse invisibility in public, the 'anti-Semitism of tolerance' of the early modern period was replaced by new forms of anti-Semitism, closely linked to racism against foreigners and migrants in general ('aliens'). Jews were the main victims of the anti-alien movement that gathered force in the 1900s, and the main victims of new anti-immigration legislation driven by this movement, principally the Aliens Act of 1905 (Cohen, 2006). By the 1920s–30s, anti-alien groups like the British Brothers League had mutated into fascist movements like the British Fascists and later Oswald Mosley's British Union of Fascists, and violent attacks on Jews increased.

The way that communal leaders responded to fascism and anti-Semitism in the first half of the 20th century, for instance to both Mosley's Blackshirts here in the UK and the Nazis on the continent in the 1930s, exemplify the strategy of security, with the leadership responding as quietly as possible, urging communal caution and even blaming the 'ostentatious' behaviour of lower class Jews for the problem (Rosenberg, 1985). Only later, in the context of a shift away from monoculturalism to an official ethos of integration in the 1960s (defined by Roy Jenkins famously 'not as a flattening process of assimilation but as equal opportunity, accompanied by cultural diversity'), Anglo-Jewish leaders began to belatedly shift away from the strategy of security to one of insecurity. After a long transitional period in the years after the Six Day War, we have identified a crucial turning point at the beginning of the 1990s when the strategy of insecurity became dominant.

In the last two decades, communal leaders have highlighted various sources of insecurity and risk threatening the community. In the 1990s, as exemplified by Chief Rabbi Jonathan Sacks' book title, *Will We Have Jewish Grandchildren?*, the insecurities most often stressed were the rapidly declining rates of synagogue attendance and inter-marriage, which were in part arguably results of the assimilationist ethos having been too successful. In the current century, the threats most often stressed have been those associated with anti-Semitism, and especially the new anti-Semitism, which has

seen anti-Semitic incidents spiking a number of times after the start of the Second Intifada. The contrast between the frenzied communal reaction to the new anti-Semitism (Jonathan Sacks spoke of a 'tsunami' of anti-Semitism) and the early silence over Mosley and Hitler is instructive. Equally instructive, perhaps, is the dissent offered by communal radicals both then and now. Radical Jews in the Communist Party and other left and left Zionist groups led the fight against fascism when the communal leaders refused to act; where communal leaders emphasized security, communal dissenters emphasized threats. Now, left-wing Jews tend to minimize the danger of anti-Semitism; where communal leaders emphasize insecurity, communal dissenters exaggerate the comfortableness of the Jewish position in Britain. David Hirsh has used the apt term 'the new conservatives' to describe the denial of anti-Semitism from much of the Jewish left, pointing out how precisely it echoes the earlier position of the communal authorities (Hirsh, 2006).

Is Islamophobia the New Anti-Semitism?

One common trope used by the 'new conservatives' in denying or minimizing contemporary anti-Semitism is the idea of Islamophobia as the new anti-Semitism. Last August, *The Guardian's* Comment is Free section carried an article by Mya Guarnieri entitled 'Islamophobia: the new anti-Semitism', concluding: 'In the past, there was anti-Semitism, roiling just below the surface. Now, there is Islamophobia' (*The Guardian*, 26 August 2010). Shlomo Sand, in an essay written around the same time for the Jewish Quarterly made the same point, in an article entitled '*From Judaeophobia to Islamophobia*' (*Jewish Quarterly*, 23 July 2010). Across the Atlantic, Daniel Luban wrote an article in the Jewish magazine The Tablet entitled '*The New Anti-Semitism: Recent Attacks on Islam in the United States Echo Old Slurs Against Jews*', noting that 'the problem for the ADL is that there simply isn't much anti-Semitism of consequence in the United States these days.... At the same time, many of the tropes of classic anti-Semitism have been revived and given new force on the American right [but] their targets are not Jews but Muslims' (*The Tablet*, 19 August 2010).

More sophisticated accounts of Islamophobia as the new anti-Semitism have been developed by academics, such as Nasar Meer and Matti Bunzl (Meer and Noorani, 2008). They argue for some structural similarities between the two racisms, but also for a chronological framework in which (especially for Bunzl) anti-Semitism is largely a thing of the past while Islamophobia is a phenomenon of the now. There are of course similarities and

structural relationships between the two racisms, and the faith dimension is one element in this. As Meer and Modood have written: 'as non-Christian monotheistic, though heterogeneous, religious minorities in an otherwise Established Christian country – both Muslims and Jews could also be subject to practices of 'cultural racism' that draw upon both race and religion, through the ways in which 'otherness' or 'groupness' [are] connected to cultural and racial otherness' (Meer and Modood, 2008). Further, as Ivan Kalmar, Sander Gilman and others have explored, both racisms are constituted and shaped by a common European orientalism.

However, I find the narrative of Islamophobia as the new anti-Semitism problematic for a number of reasons. First, it ignores the very real differences between the material conditions and patterns of exclusion experienced by Jews a century ago and Muslims today, and therefore often leads to quite an ahistorical mode of analysis. In this sense, it fits closely with other myths: of Jews as the model minority, or of immigration to Britain as a process whereby minorities arrive, struggle, then fit in, get on and disappear into British society (Gidley, 2010). These sorts of histories obscure the complicated, messy, non-linear histories of migration and racism both populations have experienced. The two following problems are closely related.

Second, by relegating anti-Semitism to the past, it denies the very real contemporary manifestations of anti-Semitism, including both discursive and violent physical manifestations. The annual monitoring by the Community Security Trust, often dismissed by the 'new conservatives', provides ample evidence for the persistence of anti-Semitism, sometimes alongside and inextricable from anti-Muslim racism, sometimes perpetrated by Muslims (see for example, Community Security Trust Anti-Semitic Incidents Report 2010).

Third, it accepts the earlier assimilationist logic in implying that Jews are now unproblematically part of the dominant white majority. In a sense, the 'strategy of security' of the early 20th century was too successful: many (but not all) Jews came to identify themselves as fully British, and Jews in general were seen by other, more visible minorities, in this light. Anglo-Jewish communal authorities shunned the opportunity to take a place at the table of multiculturalism until too late (despite the important efforts by groups like the Jewish Cultural and Anti-Racist Project, JCARP, and the Jewish Council on Racial Equality, JCORE), and this stymied an effective politics of anti-racist alliance with Muslims and other victims of other racisms.

Fourth, and this is the point I will conclude on, the narrative of Islamophobia replacing anti-Semitism

promotes a kind of zero sum approach to different racisms, a perverse calculus by which racisms are measured against each other, the intensity of one necessarily diminishing the value of the other. This is a bad policy for anti-racists. Instead, I think, if we want to combat anti-Jewish and anti-Muslim racism together, we need to attend to the commonalities and continuities between them, as well as the contrasts and specificities which make each of them distinct and in some senses unique.

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12. Racism, Religion and Community Action: The Work of the Jewish Council for Racial Equality (JCORE)
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It was over 35 years ago that I had a conversation about my interest in social justice. I was taken aback when my Jewish acquaintance said that he was glad I did the Christian thing and loved my neighbour. Although it was easy to correct him by reminding him of Jewish teaching (the injunction to love your neighbour occurs 36 times in the Torah), it spurred me on to create a Jewish anti-racist organization. Given all the anti-racist organizations in Britain, why did I want to make this organization Jewish? In other words, why the J in JCORE?

To answer that, I need to go back to my own history. I was born in 1949 on the West Side of Chicago. My parents were first generation Americans born to Russian immigrants. Like the East Side of New York and the East End of London, the West Side of Chicago was the area traditionally settled by newly arrived immigrants: Poles, Italians, Greeks and Jews.

Growing up in the 1960s, I, like many others of my generation, was profoundly affected by the civil rights and peace movements. At university I took a course called Judaism 101. We sat in our torn-off jeans and Che T-shirts, chewing gum and waxing lyrical about how it was possible to save the world. The rabbi who taught the class helped us to make the connection between our idealism and our Jewishness.

In the early 1970s I moved to Britain. In some sense, I felt I was a political exile from the America of the late 1960s. The enthusiasm and the optimism of the early 1960s in the United States had given way to despair. Our endeavours to create a more just world had come to nothing.

I left an America still recovering from the poison of 1950s McCarthyism, rife with political conflict thanks to the increasingly unpopular war in Vietnam, and a black population still disenfranchised from the American Dream. It was an America where student and political unrest were too often met by violent state response and which was scarred by the assassination of three of its most eloquent icons: John Kennedy, Robert Kennedy and Martin Luther King.

I also left an America where Jews, whether religious or secular, played a disproportionately prominent role in many of the social movements that were struggling to create a country with humane domestic and foreign policies.

When I arrived here, I found – in contrast to the US - that Britain had institutionalized outstanding social provision through the creation of its welfare state and National Health Service. But paradoxically, the Jewish community here was much less involved in issues of social justice than back home.

I was bewildered by the dearth of Jewish communal responses to social issues (as distinct from the large number of individuals involved), so radically different from my American experience. At the same time, I noticed that many of the Christians who were involved in human rights organizations readily quoted Jewish prophets as one of the main reasons for their involvement. I did not want this perception - that Christians had the monopoly on social justice - to go unchallenged. We had to be more outspoken about our own tradition of social activism.

It was in this climate that, in 1976, I started the Jewish Council for Racial Equality (originally known as the Jewish Social Responsibility Council).

But before jumping in and creating a new organization (being young, female and American was not the best combination to make waves in the Jewish establishment) I had to think critically about some of the reasons why responses to issues such as racism from British Jews were different from those of American Jews.

One of the first things I had to recognize was that Jews in the United Kingdom felt more vulnerable than those in the United States. They formed a much smaller minority of the population (under 0.5%, compared with the US's 2%). The actual proximity to the Holocaust (20 miles of English Channel were all that physically separated British Jews from the fate of French Jews and others) meant that its impact on the British Jewish community was much greater than on their American counterparts .

American Jews have been able to express their identity within a culture where ethnic diversity has been both acknowledged and celebrated. Though attitudes in the United Kingdom have changed in recent decades, British minorities have traditionally been more sceptical of outward celebrations of diversity for fear of reinforcing prejudice. Historically, the British Jewish establishment put pressure on people to conform to the majority culture. But what also complicates this issue of ethnicity is the fact that most Jews in the United Kingdom are white, placing us in the majority white population, though our Jewishness, whether religious or secular, makes us a minority within it. This ambiguity inevitably affects how we and others see us. The question of whether Jews in the United Kingdom are an ethnic minority is still debated both by Jews and others.

Then there is the vexed issue of anti-Semitism. At times, Jews have been quite aggressively excluded from the anti-racist movement, particularly in the 1980s when prejudice against Jews was seen as yesterday's racism. This was my experience as a trainer during racism awareness sessions with a variety of organizations. The credentials of Jewish anti-racists were called into question as a result of the persistent conflation of Judaism, Jewishness and Zionism. Jews in general could be held accountable for the actions of individual Jews (Home Secretary Michael Howard being a memorable example) in a way that, say, Christians clearly were not.

And yet, I found that, despite these obstacles, and despite the lack of Jewish communal action, there was still a large number of individual Jews involved in human rights and social action. Why was this?

First, I think, it was because of Jewish teaching, which places an emphasis on justice rather than charity, and emphasizes responsibilities towards individuals and to society. This has influenced observant and secular Jews.

Second, there is a Jewish tradition of debate and questioning, which has encouraged a culture of challenging government policy and the status quo.

And third is the Jewish experience of being 'the other' - whether as economic migrants, immigrants, asylum seekers or refugees. In Britain, Jews were the targets of the first anti-alien legislation in 1905. Recurrent discrimination, persecution and genocide throughout Jewish history have made many of us more sensitive and empathetic to others who have been oppressed. We feel a kinship with them and a responsibility to use our experience to assist them.

So it was my feeling the Jewish community needed to be more outward looking and more engaged in social action that inspired me to start JCORE, and it was the combination of Jewish teaching, tradition and experience that was JCORE's guiding principle then - and still is - more than thirty years later.

So what do we do, and what makes us different from other anti-racism groups?

In response to the many challenges of trying to create a fairer multiracial society, JCORE decided to concentrate its work in three main areas: race-equality education; Black, Asian and Jewish dialogue; and asylum and refugee issues.

Jewish education needs to be more explicit in making the connections between Jewish values and our responsibilities to the wider world. To help reinforce this connection, JCORE has developed a number of education packs, so that Jewish children can learn from a very young age and throughout their schooling about the relevance of Jewish teaching and history to the topic of racism. These educational resources encourage Jewish schoolchildren to see their individual and collective responsibility not only to combat racism, but to contribute to the development of Britain as a thriving multicultural society.

To develop contact between Black, Asian and Jewish communities, JCORE initiated a dialogue forum to create an opportunity to consider connections between our different communities.

Examining these connections can be a valuable exercise leading to greater insight. It can however lead to unfair comparisons between communities. There are of course many differences between Black and Jewish experiences. There can be a tendency to debate which group has suffered most in the past. Equity in victimhood is not something we should strive for, yet whether consciously or unconsciously, we often do precisely that. I know how difficult it can be for my community to 'share' the Holocaust both in terms of acknowledging its other victims, as well as making comparisons with other more recent genocides such as those in Cambodia or Rwanda.

This can also lead to the inappropriate rating of which was worse: slavery or the Holocaust. The creation of Holocaust Memorial Days has heightened this debate. The teaching of the Holocaust was made mandatory in the National Curriculum in 1991; the teaching of slavery was not

made mandatory until 2007. With the exception of the televised series, *Roots*, shown three decades ago, a variety of educational resources produced to mark the 200th anniversary of the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade and the International Slavery Museum in Liverpool, there is not enough in Britain to commemorate slavery so that, like the Holocaust, it can enter the public consciousness.

The Black/Asian/Jewish Forum uses its 'collective voice' to lobby government on a number of race and asylum issues, it writes letters to the press and also explores discrimination within the legal profession. In 2003, it created with Southampton University a major travelling exhibition seen by over 100,000 people as well as a website. This exhibition explored the connections between our three communities, where they worked and came together through their shared experiences of immigration. This resource is not just the history of three different minority groups, but rather of a Britain which minority groups are an integral part of.   This Black-Jewish dialogue has developed during a period of increasing social division in Britain: the gap between rich and poor is increasing, high unemployment disproportionately affects black and Asian people; the Welfare State is being eroded; racial attacks are still an all too common occurrence and far-right activity has increased.

In spite of the social pressures which Britain faces, we hope our dialogue will be a model to help us learn to share a civic space which is increasingly multicultural and pluralistic. This needs to be done in a way which positively accepts, rather than merely tolerates, the differences between us, and where we stop seeing both our own and other communities as monolithic cultural entities, but instead recognize the rich diversity inherent within all communities.

Refugees are an integral part of this rich diversity. One measure of the health of any society is how it treats its refugees. JCORE's work with refugees takes place on two levels. The first is to ensure that a Jewish voice and presence become part and parcel of national asylum and refugee campaigns, for example on detention and destitution.

It is vital that a Jewish voice is heard alongside other religious and secular organizations. It is rather sad that, when I describe the organization, the first question I am too often asked is: "Do you work just with Jewish refugees?" It seems that there is a perception both inside our community as well as outside it that Jewish involvement is mainly confined within the community itself.

Our second level of work with refugees is more practical. The Jewish community has built up an impressive network of social services. Can some of this knowledge be shared with other groups without being patronizing? Initially, JCORE became involved with the predominantly Muslim Bosnian community. Seminars were arranged so that refugees could meet Jewish therapists who had worked with Holocaust survivors. This work has brought us into contact with other refugee communities. As these groups are mainly Muslim, this work has inadvertently created a new area of Muslim-Jewish relations. Mindful of our own refugee experience, we set up three practical projects: to help refugee doctors re-qualify in the United Kingdom, a befriending scheme for unaccompanied refugee children, and a project to provide basic supplies such as nappies, toiletries and food items, which are not only necessary for normal life but also help to restore people's dignity.

Above all, Jewish communities as well as other minority communities (i.e. those who found sanctuary in the United Kingdom in the past) have an obligation, be it moral, religious or for the sake of honouring their own history, to be involved with the rehabilitation of the very notion of asylum/sanctuary. When such concepts as asylum are denigrated, our own histories are also denigrated.

JCORE's aspirations go beyond this anti-racist agenda. For the organization to be truly successful, the concern for social justice must become a more integral part of Jewish identity, our values and our interactions with the rest of society. This is vital not only for what it demonstrates to the wider community but also perhaps more importantly, for our sense of what it means to be a Jew in Britain today.

13. Resisting Racism and Racialisation: The Case of Ireland's African Pentecostals

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Introduction

The birth and spread of African-led Pentecostalism in Ireland have taken place against the backdrop of dramatic increases in immigration and of racially-motivated hostilities towards immigrants and minority ethnic groups. At the heart of the 'Celtic Tiger' economy were policies that encouraged direct foreign investment and repeated recruitments of foreign workers, including sub-Saharan Africans. Social and political instabilities in the African continent and the implementation of new refugees and asylum policies in Ireland also resulted in the increased and visible presence of refugees from sub-Saharan Africans from the late-1990s. During this period, racism and racially-motivated attacks on immigrants rose almost in equal proportion to anti-refugee tirades from anti-immigration groups, government officials and a section of the media.

Sub-Saharan Africans quickly attracted the ire of anti-immigration activists because of their distinctive phenotypical features and increased social and cultural activities mostly in urban centres like Dublin. As Paul Cullen surmised in an article in The *Irish Times*: 'Black immigrants simply stand out more than other groups… black-skinned immigrants have nowhere to hide in the face of racist behaviour' (Cullen 2002). In February 1999, The *Irish Times* also reported that 78 per cent of asylum seekers and 95 per cent of African asylum seekers had experienced racially motivated verbal or physical attacks. Some terrified African asylum seekers were too fearful to step out of their flats as a result of repeated attacks. Of the 622 people interviewed in an Amnesty International report, four out of five said they had been the victim of racism, most often on the streets or in shops or pubs. Racism was experienced in banks, schools, churches, buses and taxis, and from councils, housing and tax authorities (Amnesty International, 2001). While some African immigrants joined organized or formal protests against racism, many sought succour in the scriptures and among fellow worshippers. This paper explores the interpretation of and reaction to racism by Pentecostal African immigrants. It argues that churches and the company of fellow worshippers provided a 'safe' space from everyday racism while unique Pentecostal interpretations of

the Bible formed the basis of intellectual response to church members' direct encounter with racially-motivated hostilities.

The empirical research that informs my arguments in this paper was conducted mostly in the Greater Dublin Area. Many of the themes I develop no doubt apply to immigrant religious activism generally. In the next section I offer a brief introduction to African-led Pentecostal groups in order to provide meaningful contexts to my arguments. This is followed by a brief historical and substantive explanation of Pentecostalism. In the conclusion I examine African Pentecostals' experiences and interpretation of racism.

Who are Immigrant African Pentecostals?

The emergence of sub-Saharan African communities in Ireland coincided with the birth or formation of what Khalid Koser (2003) described as Europe's new African diasporas. Koser used the term to describe the newer and more recent transatlantic migrations to and settlement of 'black' Africans in the West, distinct from and largely unrelated to the forced shipments of Africans to Europe and the Americas for the purpose of slavery. Although African immigrants were present in Ireland as far back as the 18th century (McKeon 1997), large-scale immigration and the formation of communities did not happen until the 1990s. Whereas little is known about earlier migrations, the Africans that arrived from the mid-1990s consisted of asylum seekers, refugees, students, workers, diplomats and relatives of established migrants. The origin of African immigrant churches in Europe is traceable to the United Kingdom where students from mostly Nigeria started meeting for Christian worship in the 1960s.

Increased immigrations in the 1980s and 1990s resulted in dramatic increases in church groups, membership and a greater impact on the social and cultural landscape. Their activities quickly spread to continental Europe, particularly Germany and the Netherlands (Adogame, 2001; Ter Haar, 1998). Although the first African-led Pentecostal church was established in Ireland in 1997, it was not until

the early 2000s that they attracted the attention of the media and public (Ugba, 2011). Their arrival in Ireland represents a new dimension to what Adogame (2001) has described as 'a quest for a space in the spiritual marketplace' by members of the African New Religious Movement. Although there has been a tendency to rationalize the presence of these groups as a 'natural' consequence of the increased migrations of Africans to Europe, I argue for an interpretation that emphasizes the deliberateness, planned and highly aspirational nature of the quest by these churches for influence on the global religious landscape. Church leaders firmly believe that they are part of God's plan to re-introduce the gospel to Europeans, the very people who brought it to Africa about two centuries ago. The idea of reverse-mission and the conviction that there is a limited time to accomplish this work before God's judgment arrives motivate the activities of many African-Pentecostal groups. Their self-understanding aside, there is no doubt that their presence and activities in the nation-states of the West have re-defined the concept of community and complexified notions of boundaries, commonality and belonging, as I explain later in this paper.

What is Pentecostalism?

In this section I articulate a historical and substantive account of the main features of Pentecostalism in order to provide insights into the various ways that individual believers and groups engage with Pentecostalism's main tenets and how beliefs and practices in turn shape the believers' world views. It is perhaps easier to say who the Pentecostals are than what Pentecostalism is. Pentecostals are those who profess to be Pentecostals. In other words, people are Pentecostals if they say they are. There are no clear-cut and generally-accepted criteria for determining who is a Pentecostal. Outsiders, including academics and statisticians, have generally relied on the testimony or self-confession of believers or of their leaders/fellow believers. Pentecostals, even in small group settings, do not generally carry official identity cards. Membership of a group is established or affirmed by the regularity and levels of involvement in group activities, outward demonstration of fidelity to group beliefs and loyalty to the leadership.

Pentecostalism, on the other hand, is a generic term for a wide variety of religious practices based on or inspired by that dramatic holy spirit experience of the first century Christians, as recorded in the Acts of the Apostles (Acts 2:1–36.) in the Bible. The account states:

...Now while the day of the [festival of] Pentecost was in progress they were all together at the same place, and suddenly there occurred from heaven a noise just like that of a rushing stiff breeze, and it filled the whole house in which they were sitting. And tongues as if of fire became visible to them and were distributed about, and one sat upon each one of them, and they all became filled with Holy Spirit and started to speak with different tongues, just as the spirit was granting them to make utterance. (New World Translation (NWT) of the Holy Bible)

Although the majority of Pentecostals cite the above Bible passages as the inspiration or the reference for their unique practices, there is a great divergence of interpretations and application.

The diverse interpretations of doctrines and the conscious efforts of many groups to contextualize or make Pentecostal doctrines respond to and reflect their unique cultures and circumstances have created a collection of groups and churches across space and time under the umbrella Pentecostal banner. As Corten and Marshall-Fratani (2001: 7) note, 'each society, each group invests Pentecostalism with its own meanings.' The divergence and differences that exist among the various groups are doctrinal, methodical, social, structural and racial. Pentecostal believers, as Anderson (1999) puts it, 'range from the fundamentalist and white middle class "mega churches" to indigenous movements in the Third World that have adapted to their cultural and religious contexts to such an extent that many western Pentecostals would probably doubt their qualifications as "Christian" movements'. Evidence of racially-motivated divisions in the development of African-led Pentecostalism in Ireland was equally noticeable. These groups are mostly populated by sub-Saharan Africans and participation of Africans in Irish-led Pentecostal groups has been short-lived mostly because 'they do not pray the way we do in Africa'.

Modern-day Pentecostalism has been dogged by racial controversies from the very beginning. Pentecostalism, according to various sources, was either started in Los Angeles in 1906 by William Joseph Seymour, the self-taught son of a former slave, or it began in 1901 through the efforts of Charles Parham, a racist and anti-Semitic white American, who rigidly enforced segregation in his church (Anderson 1999; Hollenweger, 1976, 1999;

MacRobert, 1988). There is also a recurring debate on how much influence African traditional beliefs – transmitted through African slaves in the Americas – have had on the contents of Pentecostalism.

Despite the divergence of views on the beginning and contents of Pentecostalism, classical Pentecostals are unified by what Poloma (2000: 5-7) identifies as 'a particular Christian world-view that reverts to a non-European epistemology from the European one that has dominated Christianity for centuries'. Pentecostals have not only sought to relocate the geographical centre of Christianity from its European axis to many centres around the world (Pentecostalism has experienced the most dramatic growths in the Majority World – Africa, Asia and South America), they have re-interpreted specific Bible teachings, mostly by grounding them in non-European social and cultural practices. They have established alternative yardsticks for validating the Christian experience different from the long-established ones that are saturated by European values and cultures (Cox, 2003; Kalu, 1998; Ter Haar 2003).

Another trait that unites Pentecostals is their attitude towards the Bible. Most Pentecostals believe in the Bible as God-inspired and they often adhere to a literal interpretation of it. The Bible has relevance for their everyday conduct and experiences and it serves as a practical manual for life's processes. Margaret Poloma (2000: 6) puts it like this: 'The Word of the Scriptures and the Spirit of the living God are in dialogical relationship, playing incessantly within and among individuals as well as within the larger world'. The concept of spiritual re-birth or 'born-again' is the last of the unifying traits or practices that I want to mention before I move on to the next theme. As Corten and Marshall-Fratani (2001: 11) remark: 'The experience of getting born-again reproduces itself in an almost identical form across the world'. Every Pentecostal, even those born and brought up in Pentecostal families, affirms that this experience marks the beginning of a personal and intimate relationship with God. Pentecostals are fairly uniform in the way they describe and interpret the transformative qualities of re-birth. They say it is a prerequisite for salvation. Therefore those who hope to escape the destruction that awaits this ungodly world and go to heaven to be with Jesus Christ must undergo spiritual re-birth. They identify the encounter between Jesus and Nicodemus, as recorded in the gospel of John, as the basis of this unique interpretation. That accounts reads:

...Now there was a man of the Pharisees,

Nicodemus was his name, a ruler of the Jews. This one came to him in the night and said to him: 'Rabbi, we know that you as a teacher have come from God; for no one can perform these signs that you perform unless God is with him.' In answer Jesus said to him: 'Most truly I say to you, Unless anyone is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God'. Nicodemus said to him: 'How can a man be born when he is old? He cannot enter into the womb of his mother a second time and be born, can he?' Jesus answered: 'Most truly I say to you, unless anyone is born from water and spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. What has been born from the flesh is flesh, and what has been born from the spirit is spirit. Do not marvel because I told you, YOU people must be born again'. (John 3: 1-7)

Pentecostal interpretation of this experience tends to include not only a deeper commitment to God but also a rupture with the past and many aspects of the present. They develop new scripture-centred interpretations of their present, past and future and of their relationship to the 'other'. The person who has undergone spiritual rebirth is a 'new creation' who has forsaken 'worldly' or fleshly habits like drinking alcohol, smoking, visits to discos/pubs, sexual relations outside or before wedlock, quarrelling, fighting, resentment and enmity. The human race is one and fellow Pentecostals, especially members of the same group, are considered brothers and sisters. Ethnic, social and racial differences should pale into insignificance, replaced by love for humanity and concern for the ungodly. To buttress their point, Pentecostals often quote the Apostle Paul: 'Consequently if anyone is in union with Christ, he is a new creation; the old things passed away, look! new things have come into existence' *(2 Corinthian 5:17)*. However, construction and negotiation of boundaries is more complex in practice.

Experiencing and Resisting Racialization

Max Weber (1930) contends that the self-conception/social orientation of the Calvinists was influenced by their beliefs of predestination and salvation. They believed that those whom God has predestined for salvation he favours with material wealth in this world. The work ethic resulting from this belief resulted to wealth accumulation and the development of a unique spirit of capitalism. Weber's analysis emphasizes the contents of

beliefs and projects religion as a relationship between social actors and a super mundane being which has implications for the believers' ethical and everyday conduct. His analytical framework differs from functionalism, which focuses mainly on the uses and role of religion in society. Like Weber, other scholars (e.g. Bellah, 1976; Berger, 1973; Toulis, 1997) have acknowledged the transformative capacity of religious ideas and their role in the social construction of reality. African Pentecostals consider Pentecostalism as their essential and perhaps only window on the world and the main mirror for self-analysis and projection (Ugba, 2009a, 2009b, 2009c). The salience of Pentecostalism as a central element for ethnic and religious identity formation, reproduction and maintenance has been affirmed among Ireland's African immigrants.

For Pentecostal African immigrants, the experience of rebirth lays the basis for articulating a new and radical concept of self. This has direct implications for social actions and motives and for the way they construct or interpret commonality, connectedness and groupness (Brubaker, 2004). Their new and religiously-inspired interpretation of self foregrounds Pentecostal beliefs and morality and subverts the dominant portrayal of them in media and popular discourse. It can therefore be argued that beliefs, in the case of Pentecostal African immigrants, provide a basis for an alternative, subversive and empowering articulation of self. In their self-definition, African Pentecostals are not the racialized minority immigrant group on the periphery of society but empowered agents of social and religious change in an increasingly secular West, where the younger generations have swapped the spirituality of their forefathers for drugs, alcohol and revelries in pubs.

Commonality and groupness involve the dual but paradoxical tasks of simultaneously establishing and tearing down boundaries. Boundaries are generally erected to set Pentecostals apart from non-Pentecostals while bridges are mostly aimed at connecting one Pentecostal group to another. The boundaries set up by Ireland's African Pentecostals are multidimensional and based mostly on their unique interpretation of the Bible. In some cases, the boundaries are also marked by moral and racial/ethnic symbolisms. Such boundaries homogenize in order to essentialize sameness within distinct groups or the larger born-again family. The degree to which these boundaries are enforced depends on who the constitutive 'other' is. For example, the boundaries that separate Pentecostals from non-Pentecostals generally, or from the dominant society, are strongly articulated most of the times, while those that set

distinct African Pentecostal groups apart can sometimes be blurred and weak. The boundaries between them and the larger society permit some connections and interrelationships, which some Pentecostals argue would facilitate their eventual integration into the larger or dominant society.

Experiencing and Resisting Racism

The policies and politics of Fortress Europe promote racism and racially-motivated attacks, many of them directed at sub-Saharan Africans. Whereas many of the churches that I have investigated have not participated in collaborative anti-racism actions, for example, protest marches (though individual members may have participated), they have provided a physical space where members withdraw for relative safety and support. Also, specific Pentecostal teachings have formed the basis of intellectual response to racially-motivated attacks, enabling members to come to terms with them. Pentecostal teachings on forgiveness, loving the 'enemy' and the oneness of the human family have helped members to be less bitter about their experiences and, where possible, to seek means of reconciliation. They blamed 'ignorance' and the devil for the racially-motivated hostilities that they suffered and said the solution lay in the conversion of the perpetrators to Pentecostalism. As one research participant put it: 'We have only one enemy – the devil. Our fight is against the devil and his demons. They are responsible for all the wrongs that people commit'. In this sense Pentecostal teachings helped the members of these churches to assume a morally superior position by refusing to engage in retribution or openly expressing hatred towards the perpetrators.

Racial bias and discrimination often result in social isolation and the loss of societal recognition and prestige. Many Pentecostal African immigrants are successful professionals who had enjoyed respect and recognition in their home-countries. African-led Pentecostal churches have transpired into spaces where members could counter social isolation and reclaim a measure of the respect and recognition they once enjoyed in their home-countries, as Mella (1994) argues in relation to Chilean Catholic immigrants in Sweden. These churches are perhaps the only institutions in Irish society where Africans experience a sense of ownership and full belonging. This sense of ownership and belonging engenders trust and a sense of security and freedom that African immigrants do not experience in the larger society.

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14. Religion and Refuge
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Many of those working with and for migrants today are associated with religious currents. This is perplexing for some people of an avowed secular persuasion. In the case of Britain, for decades the state itself – as an essentially secular institution – played a central role in advancing rights which benefited migrants, especially refugees. In the 1950s and 1960s, governments approved arrangements for asylum and welfare rights which endorsed international agreements like the United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees - the Geneva Convention. This was largely uncontroversial – part of an agenda for change said to be associated with the 'Age of Rights', an era of reform during which governments and international bodies recognized human rights as foundational issues. Refugees were presented officially as admirable people who should be accommodated by a democratic order – they were often lauded as heroic figures whose struggles for freedom were associated with the values of free and open societies like those in which they sought protection.

People embraced as figures who captured the spirit of the age are now, however, targets for official hostility. For today's politicians, refugees in particular are a 'burden' and international agreements which once shaped national policy should be revised. It was in this context that, in 2001, former Home Secretary Jack Straw urged that the Geneva Convention should be reformed: "We need some radical thinking if we are to ensure that the principles of the 1951 Convention are to be applied effectively in the modern age," he said. Successive governments have since stripped most applicants for asylum of entitlements to work and to welfare support, so that little more than the legal skeleton of the Convention remains.

There is high scepticism about claims for asylum. Those who make such claims are in effect under suspicion, often viewed as potentially or actually dishonest - they are said to be engaged in illegal activity or even to be criminal in intent. People whose 'irregular' means of travel to states such as Britain was earlier presented as courageous risk-taking to be rewarded by security and later by citizenship are now viewed as illicit entrants to de detained and/ or deported. Notwithstanding the value of such migrants to important economic interests (acknowledged unofficially), they are vilified and targeted for exemplary measures which greatly increase their vulnerability. More and more migrants live in a shadowy area of semi-legality and heightened insecurity.

These developments have been under way for some 20 years, producing a profound crisis of the asylum/protection regime and driving hundreds of thousands of people to the margin of society. Among the responses are many 'faith-based' initiatives which advocate for and support vulnerable migrants - some organized at the institutional level, many others emerging from local congregations or informal networks. Is this a move by civil society into areas of social welfare abandoned by governments keen to find providers that will substitute for the state? In the case of Britain, is it primarily the result of imposing neo-liberal principles which underlie both Blair's 'Third Way' and/or Cameron's 'Big Society'? Has a shrinking state ushered religious currents into spaces it eagerly vacates?

There is some weight in this argument. Furbey et al. (2006, 2007) and Rochester (2007) have shown how 'faith capital' has been mobilized as 'service provision'. Churches and charities have been encouraged to address urban deprivation and support of marginalized and vulnerable groups – part of a sustained attempt, in my view, to displace responsibility for the effects of economic crisis and social instability away from those with political authority onto institutions, networks and individuals which retain active welfare agendas. There is much more, however, to the engagement of religious organizations with migrant issues – notably the impact upon them of decades of sustained immigration, and re-emergence of ideas about protection which were once integral to religious belief and practice.

New Congregations

In the 1960 and 1970s, many abandoned churches, chapels and synagogues were demolished or became warehouses or bingo halls: more recently they have been re-consecrated by active Christian currents or converted into mosques or temples. Religious practice in British cities has been revitalized, largely by immigrant congregations. One priest who recently returned to South London

after many years' work abroad as part of a Catholic order observes that his parish is unrecognizable from the one he left two decades before. Services are full to overflowing, he says, with local people of African, Asian and Latin American origin; Colombians and Filipinos are most numerous among those who have replaced the largely Irish-heritage worshippers of an earlier generation. The new congregations bring historic concerns of immigrants worldwide: problems of legal and economic status, employment, housing, welfare and (sharpened by the current crisis in relation to asylum) marginalization and general insecurity. They also bring religious traditions of the Global South which have not hitherto had a large following in British society, notably revived Catholicisms influenced by the Liberation Theology of Latin America, and the Pentecostalisms of Africa. The latter have established novel organizational forms (including structures of priestly authority), new liturgies and pastoral activities associated directly with migrant agendas. They have grown fast, sometimes at the expense of the established Church. In many British cities, Pentecostal, Evangelical and 'new church' movements have been animated by large and energetic congregations in which migrants are a very important component.

In parallel developments, migrants from regions in which Islam is the dominant cultural influence have been making space for their traditions. This has sometimes been a painful and difficult process, conducted against a background of hostility encouraged by national and local politicians and media, and increased levels of Islamophobia associated with international affairs. In Muslim communities worldwide, mosques have long had broad social agendas which address education, local commerce, health, welfare, mutual support and pilgrimage. In the British context, some of these functions, especially provision of Islamic education, have taken on added significance. At the same time, some mosques have become reception centres for newly arrived migrants - places of orientation and support. Islamic traditions mean that organizational structures and liturgies may be less amenable to modification than those undertaken by Christian currents: certain mosques are nevertheless especially responsive to migrant concerns.

These are not novel developments. There is ample research to demonstrate that religious groups and institutions are of central importance for migrants in many contexts. In the case of Britain, 19th century Irish immigration to England and Scotland had long-term effects on religious institutions and networks. Local parishes of the Roman Catholic Church rapidly consolidated as key networking centres for the migrants and soon increased the influence of the Church, most importantly in education - from the 1840s the state funded a Catholic Poor School Committee which established national school networks under direction of ecclesiastical authorities (Grace 2002). Similar developments took place in relation to Jewish immigrants from Russia and Eastern Europe: the first Jewish school opened in 1853 following demands for equality of provision and as Jewish immigration accelerated in the late 19th century a series of schools was established – though here the influence of mainstream religious institutions was much less pronounced (Miller 2001).

For today's migrants, especially for the most vulnerable, 'faith capital' is a key resource. There is increasing evidence that assets realized through religious links are mobilized against a background of the rapid decay - in some cases near-collapse – of long-standing community networks. Since the 1980s most British cities have lost core industrial employment and (an issue which has received much less attention) structures and forms of action which earlier played a key role in local social and political life. Collective organization in the workplace, local trade union groups and networks, trades councils, labour clubs and associated sporting and cultural activities have been greatly diminished. Migrants never found them easy to access but now they are rarely an option. Years of central and local government budget cuts have in addition removed community and day-care centres, nurseries, drop-in groups, legal advice and race equality centres. For many new migrants there are few points of contact with the wider society (for those with children, schools play an increasingly important role) and every reason to maximize the possibilities provided through co-religionists. Church, mosque and temple assume more and more significance - and more emphatically take on the agendas of their congregations and of those with institutional roles in lay office or as priests/ pastors.

Sanctuary

These are the contexts in which religious institutions and networks have become increasingly important for immigrants in Britain. But they are only contexts – how do religious currents address the detail of migrant concerns?

A key issue is that of basic security – how migrants, especially people newly arrived and experiencing various forms of vulnerability – cope with their circumstances. Here, religious traditions have much to say, notably about refuge, protection and

sanctuary. The great religions have vast resources of scriptural material, ritual practice, legal code, institutional history and popular memory. They are, in effect, detailed records of human conduct across the millennia. Notwithstanding claims from those who assert the uniqueness of divine authorities and the value of certain practices, dominant religious traditions have common principles, especially in relation to social solidarity, reciprocity and protection. These predate even the ancient Jewish texts, which first set them out in detail.

Epigraphic evidence from Egypt suggests that 5000 years ago religious practice was associated with specific sacred spaces. These were located principally in temples, where statues and paintings of the deities were imbued with the latters' special powers. This space was inviolable: artefacts and persons within it were secure from theft, damage, assault or abduction, and those who offended against these principles offended against the gods. The authority of priests and others with special roles was associated with such places – their practices confirmed and reasserted the status of the gods and the special character of sacred space. Ritual served to demarcate such space, establishing boundaries between the sacred and non-sacred or profane. One of the most celebrated theorists of religion, Mercea Eliade, calls this 'hierophany' or 'manifestation of the sacred' – means by which certain spaces are identified with supernatural forces and with the values and integrity of the wider community (Eliade 1987: 11).

The institution of sanctuary was described at length in the ancient Hebrew scriptures. Six settlements in the region of the River Jordan were identified as cities of refuge. Here, fugitives, including people alleged to be guilty of capital offences, could secure protection while they agreed means of atonement. Similar practices seem to have been general across the Middle East and the Mediterranean region throughout the Ancient and Classical periods. They are formalized in Islamic texts: the hijra, the journey of the Prophet Muhammed and his early disciples from Mecca to Medina in the 7th century CE – a foundational episode in Islamic history - is a successful search for protection. During the era of the Prophet, all those seeking refuge in a mosque or among the Muslim community were assured of security and ideas about both sanctuary and commitments to hospitality and protection were later inscribed in both hadith and shari'a (Arnaout 1987, Eickelman & Piscatori 1990).

The institution of sanctuary was similarly of great importance to the Classical Mediterranean civilizations. It was a key aspect of socio-cultural and political arrangements in Greece – here the physical space of the sanctuary, in the inner zone of the temple, was identified with the integrity of the community at large and especially of the city-state. The sanctuary was inviolable – subject to the widely held convention of asylon or 'unplunderability', the Greek word providing the basis for the later term 'asylum'. So too, in the case of the Roman Empire, in which the innermost areas of the temple were sanctum sanctorum – sacred zones in which no one should be threatened. Extension of the empire across Europe generalized and formalized sanctuary. Following Christianization of the empire in the 4th century CE, the institution was established within Canon Law, the code of the Church under which for the next 1000 years fugitives, victims of civil conflict and war, and those alleged to be guilty of certain crimes, secured protection on religious sites – cathedrals, abbeys, monasteries, churches, shrines and homes of members of the priesthood.

It was not until the early modern era that this form of refuge, Church Sanctuary, was limited by other authorities which had their own interests in formal means of protection. Powerful families were attempting to establish kingdoms which unified large territories under a single monarch. Clashing with the Church, they sought to limit the authority of ecclesiastical institutions by seizing the latters' rights, including the entitlement to guarantee protection. In England, Henry VIII identified eight towns as the sole locations of sanctuary sites - nowhere else could fugitives claim protection. In the 17th century, James II formally abolished sanctuary as a competence of the Church: when formal protection reappeared as 'asylum' in the 1680s it was the state itself, in the form of parliament, which offered refuge, so that the nation-state in effect replaced the Church as sole guarantor of physical security.

These developments were repeated across Europe. The Church attempted a series of rearguard actions, the Pope threatening with excommunication those who introduced sanctuary reforms. But by the 19th century, religious authorities had been entirely excluded from national codes of law associated with security of the citizen. Although there was no national legislation on refuge - and indeed no international agreement on refugee rights until the mid-20th century – in practice the Church had been forbidden to offer protection on the basis of ancient principles of protection.

Popular Practice

The state forbade religious authorities to guarantee refuge – but ideas about sacred space, inviolability and refuge remained within popular memory and practice. People continued to seek protection in churches, especially in cathedrals and monasteries, in the expectation that these places had special status which offered some form of security. It was not until late in the 20th century that police and other state officials began to enter churches, mosques and temples in countries of Western Europe to remove those who invoked ancient ideas about sanctuary.

Today, new sanctuary movements have emerged to revitalize the older tradition. These have been especially effective in France, Germany and Britain – but in each case they owe their inspiration to sanctuary activism in North America. From the 1960s, churches in the United States played a key role in providing protection for fugitives – initially for young men attempting to avoid conscription into US forces mobilized for war in Vietnam. In a famous speech in 1966 Rev. William Sloane Coffin Jr, the chaplain of Yale University, invoked conventions of the Church in medieval England:

> *Now if in the Middle Ages churches could offer sanctuary to the most common of criminals, could they not do the same today for the most conscientious among us? And if the Middle Ages they could offer forty days to a man who had committed a sin and a crime, could they not today offer an indefinite period to one who had committed no sin?*

Coffin and fellow activists maintained that Christian morality provided a basis for protection - that the exercise of individual conscience by members of a congregation rendered the space of their church a refuge which should be inviolable. They challenged the state itself: after centuries during which parliaments had claimed sole rights to determine who could legitimately seek protection, activist churches maintained that they could create new spaces of asylum delineated by their own members. By the 1980s, this movement had become widespread in the United States and Canada, further inspired by the Civil Rights Movement, the impacts of Liberation Theology and the presence of millions of migrants from Latin America who lived precarious and uncertain lives in American cities. The new activists called themselves 'sanctuarians', professing commitments to poor and vulnerable people, especially irregular migrants in danger from state and federal authorities because of their legal status.

It is this movement which, since the late 1990s, has inspired European activists. In Germany, the Ecumenical Committee on Church Asylum attempts to protect irregular migrants; in France and Belgium, a series of movements in solidarity with sans-papiers has mobilized around churches as protected sites; and in Britain the City of Sanctuary campaign seeks to support vulnerable migrants, most of its activists originating in Christian currents.

Outside these formal movements are a host of activities which usually go unrecorded, such as initiatives of local churches to address the pressing needs of congregants for housing, employment, education and welfare support. These are linked to the uncertain legal status of many migrants and the aspirations of family, friends and community networks to provide security by asserting traditions of sanctuary – offering what American researchers call 'evasion services', including protection from intrusive actions by forces of the state. Here the relationship between religious organizations and vulnerable urban populations moves far beyond agendas encouraged by government. Invoking both ancient traditions and moral imperatives, activists propose that they can establish novel spaces of protection in which asylum is realized by the exercise of will.

This challenge to political authorities is an outcome of the drift from state to non-state actors in assertion of rights to asylum and more generally of principles of protection. Twenty-five years ago Bau (1985: 2) commented that the initiatives of American sanctuarians were "shocking" to those who assumed that sovereign power was vested solely in the state. After years of further erosion of asylum, combined with erection of new exclusionary migration regimes, their activities in North America and Europe have even more striking implications.

Notes

1. See "An Effective Protection Regime for the Twenty-first Century: Speech to IPPR, 6 February 2001", in *The Guardian*, Tuesday 6 February 2001.

2. See "An Effective Protection Regime for the Twenty-first Century: Speech to IPPR, 6 February 2001", in The Guardian, Tuesday 6 February 2001.

3. See the report on migrant employment in the British economy commissioned by the Trades Union Congress and published by the Centre for Migration, Policy and Society (Compas): Anderson & Rogaly (2005).

4. See Fekete (2009).

5. Personal discussion with Father David, London (2009).

6. For an analysis of the advance of the Black African (Pentecostal) churches at the expense of traditional Anglican congregations see Gbonda (2010).

7. Zaman (2008) notes that certain mosques in London attract people from a wide range of ethnic and linguistic backgrounds, in part because of their responsive approaches to migrant concerns.

8. Much of this work relates to rural-urban migrations in the Global South – see Little (1965).

9. See, for example, Walker (1972).

10. See Fanning's discussion of social capital in the context of migrant communities in Ireland: Fanning (2011)

11. See the Book of Numbers (35: 6-34), Joshua (20: 1-9) and Deuteronomy (4: 41-43).

12. For a terse account of Graeco-Roman approaches to sanctuary see Marfleet (2011).

13. William Sloane Coffin Jr, quoted in Bau (1985):161.

14. See Hondangeu-Soleto (2008):145.

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15. Nationalism, Racism and the Secularism Debate

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Introduction

The debate on racism, migration and secularism in contemporary UK needs to be explored in both global and historical contexts. This is especially important because in the hegemonic form of racism today, at least in the West, discourses on migration and religion have merged together to construct the exclusionary boundaries of racist autochthonic politics of belonging of which I expand more below.

They have merged in at least two very different ways. Firstly, in that many of those who've migrated to the West in the post World War II period often came from different religious backgrounds which continue to play important roles in assigning particular people and groupings as belonging or not belonging to the national collective. Secondly, because – especially since the 1989 'Rushdie Affair' - religious belonging, especially Muslim belonging, has come to be seen as constituting an alternative political project of belonging to those of citizenship and nationalism. Islam, therefore, has come to be seen as a political enemy, rather than just as a cultural 'other'.

At the same time, religion – all religions – have also come to play a more dominant role in western civil societies, even in those in which most of the population do not practise religion in their everyday lives. As such, religious organizations have come to play a growing role in both racist and anti-racist social movements as well as in government policies aimed at dealing with migration and minority communities.

It is within this context that the debate on secularism arose, asking whether secular discourse needs to be seen as a necessary condition for anti-racism (see especially Sami Zubaida's contribution) while others would argue the opposite (e.g. Haleh Afshar).

I shall now try to expand briefly on each of these points.

Nationalism and Religion

Religions have had several contradictory relationships with nationalist movements and states which often shifted historically even in relation to the same national collectivities – of conflation, of exclusion as well as of co-existence in different social and political spheres.

According to most 'modernist' theorists, nationalism constitutes a modern alternative to religion, which emerged at the time of enlightenment and will, eventually make it redundant (e.g. Althusser, 1971; Gellner, 1983; Hobsbawm, 1990). Ben Anderson, for example, when wanting to explain the power of nationalism, explained it in quasi-religious terms – that its emotional powers and the willingness of people to kill and die for it are exactly because there is no instrumentalist value of self interest in it, but rather it is sacred (1983).

This view of religion, however, is problematic in several different ways. Firstly, it denies the implicit reliance on religion as a hegemonic cultural tradition which plays an important part even in states with secular constitutions – whether in determining national festivals, national symbols or civil exclusions. The debate on the possible inclusion of Turkey, whose population is mostly of Muslim rather than Christian origin, for example, into the EU, has highlighted this relationship and brought back to public memory the fact that the original 1957 Treaty of Rome, which brought the European Economic Community, later the EU, into existence, was blessed by the Pope. There was an implied assumption then that Europe is a Christian continent or, even more narrowly, one that followed non Orthodox forms of Christianity that characterized Eastern European societies under the Byzantine Empire (with the notable exception of Greece, the 'cradle' of 'European civilization' and enlightenment which was the only Orthodox Christian country then considered for EU membership, and even this only in 1979).

Moreover, when we view the states in the world as a whole, only in a minority of them is there a full separation of religion and the state. Even when there is no formal incorporation of at least some arenas of religious laws into state laws, and there exists an explicit secular republican ideology as in France, there is a reliance on Christian festivals, for example, as in the formal state holidays (after the abortive attempt during the French revolution to provide alternative 'festival of reason'). There have been numerous cases where nationalist movements, rather than distancing themselves from local hegemonic

religions, relied upon them to legitimize themselves as representing 'the people' and launching war against the 'enemy' and/or 'foreign oppressors'. This was true in Ireland and Poland, as well as in India and Algeria and the Jesuit order in Paraguay. Some national movements presented themselves as modernizing agents of religious as well as other cultural traditions (like in the cases of both the pan-Arab national movement and the Zionist movement), and have often fought against traditional religious leaderships for domination in the civil as well as political domains. In recent years, however, as a result of various factors, local and global, these power relations seem to be undergoing a significant reversal and 'authentic' authority is being 'restored' (in a selective and 'invented tradition' way) to religious leaderships in many countries among both majority and minority populations.

In the UK the separation of religion and the state has never been complete. The British king or queen is the head of the Anglican (and Scottish) church, as historically the foundation of the nation – and consequently of the empire – was a product of the formation of an alternative national version of Christianity which enabled not only Henri VIII to divorce his wife but also for him and his aristocracy to appropriate the local wealth and property of the Catholic church. Bishops (and the Chief Rabbi) occupy official places in the House of Lords and it is a legal grey area whether a non Christian (or even a non Anglican – Tony Blair did not convert to Catholicism until after he finished his office as a Prime Minister) can act as a Prime Minister, as it is part of his role to appoint (under the symbolic authority of the royal) the Archbishop of Canterbury.

It is a grey area, because at the same time that the English and British are officially a Christian nation, it is also a parliamentary democracy. Since the time that Catholics (and following them Jews and members of other religions) were allowed to be elected to the British Parliament, affiliation with different religions is not perceived as contradicting – at least officially – membership in the British national collectivity, something which obtained new meaning under Tony Blair's government, as will be discussed later in the article.

Religion and Civil Society

One of the reasons for the relative success of religious political movements in recent years both locally and globally is the fact that in most modern states, especially secular ones, religion was seen as either non political or as a neutral political force

with an agenda not competing with or threatening the political agendas of the ruling parties. In Israel, for example, different governments used to rely, especially before the 1967 war, upon the religious parties as convenient coalition partners with no autonomous agenda except for getting more resources for their educational institutions. It was only many years later that it became clear that many of the graduates of these schools and *yeshivot* constituted the popular basis of settler fundamentalist movements. Similarly, in India, although a member of the RSS (Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh) murdered Ghandi, it was not until many years later that the graduates of the schools of this religious movement were at the forefront of the rise of BJP (Bharatiya Janata Party), the political wing of the RSS, originally founded in 1951, as an alternative hegemonic political project in India in the 1990s. This ignorance also applied to the ways that religious movements were used by external political powers. The USA funded the *mojahidins* who fought against the USSR in Afghanistan (including Osama Bin Laden) and thus created the political climate which allowed the Pakistani military (with largely Saudi money) to fund the *madrassas* that became the basis for the training of the *Taliban* and other movements associated with them and *Al Quaeda*. Similarly, it was the Israelis who originally funded and trained *Hamas*, as a counter political power to that of *Fatah* and the PLO among the Palestinians. They indeed became such a power, and won the Palestinian elections, to the chagrin, and consequent economic and military conflict, with the Israelis who found them much less malleable than *Fatah*.

A somewhat similar phenomenon can be seen also in the economic arena where international economic and international aid organizations and bilateral and multilateral aid agencies, have developed growing bonds with various religious organizations (not differentiating usually between fundamentalist and non fundamentalist organizations) as part of the wider phenomenon in which NGOs are often seen and used not only as part of the civil society but as *the* civil society. Religious NGOs are gradually seen as the more sustainable civil society organizations. The most visible sign of influence of the religious Right on development aid was through George Bush's PEPFAR (President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief) which prohibited funds going to organizations (and countries) that supported abortion rights, and instead actively promoted abstinence programmes rather than sexual health and education programmes and the promotion of condom usage. Inevitably these

policies meant denying funding to progressive NGOs and extending funding to religious – mostly Christian – NGOs. Christopher Pallas (2005) describes also how this process has been taking place in the World Bank and traces its beginning with the growing interest of the World Bank in civil society and poverty and the naturalized association between poverty and religious organizations and those which are engaged in various civil society and welfare activities among the poor.

And indeed, in addition to education, part of the populist attraction of fundamentalist and other religious movements is the fact that so many of them are engaged in and are committed to welfare services in the community, especially in societies and communities where state services are either non existent or very poor. Regular charity activities – both financial and as personal involvement – are often seen as religious duties as well as a way of reaching potential new recruits for the movement. The sanctuary movement in the UK, USA and elsewhere has played a major role in defending and rescuing migrants and refugees since the time of slavery.

At the same time these charity activities can be very exclusionary and directed only towards those who belong – actually or potentially – to their constituency. It is well known, for example, that Mother Teresa's organization in India refused to take care of girls who were damaged by illegal abortions. Also, the individualistic nature of such charity work also means that it is not usually seen as relating to the overall political goals of those religious organizations.

As AWID (2009) reported after their 160 countries comparative action research:

> ...Women's rights activists in Egypt, Iraq, Pakistan, Turkey and Uzbekistan list numerous examples of religious fundamentalisms providing basic services where the state has failed to do so or where social divisions breed structural poverty. Many note, however, that such remedies are temporary and superficial, do not address the root causes of inequality and create dependency among those served by humanitarian or charity drives. Although service provision appears to be a relatively more popular recruitment strategy in the Middle East and North Africa region, it is also a feature of Catholic and Christian fundamentalisms. Evangelical Christian sects active in communities in Latin America, Asia and the former Soviet Union

> provide food as well as employment and educational opportunities to disaffected groups. (AWID, 2009)

Racism and Religion

As mentioned above, when I discussed the relationship between nationalism and religion, religion can signify belonging to a particular collectivity as well as being a signifier to an alternative political project of belonging which transcends ethnic boundaries and national borders. However, even when such boundaries are transcended, exclusionary boundaries continue to operate. Dante allocated all non Christians to be eternally excluded from Heaven and doomed to stay in Limbo, whatever they did during their lifetime, and Mohammad Sidique Khan, one of the 7/7 bombers in London spoke in his pre-suicide bombing video of 'his people' as the Muslim Umma all over the world but did not hesitate to randomly murder whoever was in the underground in London at that time. However, racism has two ultimate logics – one, indeed, is that of exclusion which ultimately can end up with mass murder and genocide.

The other, however, is that of inferiorization and subordination, the ultimate of which is slavery. While the missionaries attempted to convert everyone to Christianity and while many of them were engaged in humanitarian aid of individual people, they did not overall question the systems of colonialism and empire within which they generally worked. While many religious people are engaged in anti-racist struggles as a result of their beliefs, no matter what religion (if any) is that of those they help, others confine their charity to those who share their own religion and others use religious discourse in order to justify subjugating as well as excluding migrants and asylum seekers from the right to belong and get equal citizenship rights.

As mentioned earlier in this paper, in the UK's history, religion has played both roles, of exclusion (e.g. the expulsion of the Jews in 1290) and of growing incorporation in recent times. Until recently Muslims and members of other non Christian religions, except for Jews, were virtually excluded from having state support for their schools or carrying out marriage and divorce. Under New Labour, and continuing under the coalition government, there has been a major shift. This shift has been motivated both by an attempt to co-opt 'moderate' Muslims into the hegemonic majority as an anti-terrorist preventative strategy, but even more generally, has resulted from a major shift in state–society relations under

the hegemony of global neo-liberalism. With the growing privatization of the welfare state, religious organizations came to be seen as reliable and sustainable civil society agents which can shoulder some of the responsibilities previously held by the state. Moreover, in the Blairite discourse of classless, post-racist post feminist Britain, religious differences came to signify probably the only 'natural' legitimate differences among communities in an agenda in which multi-faith social cohesion replaced the previously hegemonic multiculturalism (Yuval-Davis, 2009). Moreover, religions, or rather religious leaderships (often self appointed), have come to be seen as the anchor for any moral claims and authority.

This has often worked in favour of migrants and ethnic and racial minorities, when religious authority has been exercised in anti-racist statements. Religious leaders have come to be active in most public organizations which have campaigned for the rights of migrants and racialized minorities. Moreover, as large sections of these sections of the population see themselves as part of specific religious communities, attending religious services, benefitting from religious communal services and getting social and moral solidarity and support, have helped many to survive daily realities of hardship, precariousness and discrimination.

On the other hand, as mentioned above, religious affiliation has also come to play a major role in racialized politics of exclusion. Much of recent autochthonic racist politics of belonging of organizations such as the English Defence League draw the boundaries of who belongs and who do not against the archetypical 'Other' – the Muslim.

Concluding Discussion: Secularism and Citizenship Rights

So what general analytical and political conclusions can we draw from the above concerning the debate on the role of religion and of secularism in the fights against racism and for equal citizenship and human rights of migrants and asylum seekers?

In our introduction to our book *Refusing Holy Orders*, Gita Sahgal and I differentiated between two very different notions of the secular which are very important in any attempt to answer the above question (Sahgal and Yuval-Davis, 1992/2001).

One meaning of secularism is that of atheism (denial of the existence of God) or, at best, agnosticism (indifference to the existence of God or belief that its existence or not can never be proven). This denial or indifference rejects a construction of separate transcendental or sacred sphere and sees it as an irrelevance at best, or as a dangerous illusion at worst, as the title of Christopher Hitchens' book (2007) states: *God is Not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything.*

This kind of secularism relates to a view of the world which is associated with the 'age of enlightenment', of scientism and extreme rationality. What cannot be observed, at least in principle, does not exist or is meaningless. Therefore there is no meaning to the notion of God except for the various roles – social, emotional, political and economic – it has played in people's lives. Any morality and principles of good and bad, if they exist, need, according to this perspective, to be anchored in other ontological bases than that of God.

This meaning of secularism is related to, but is vastly different from, the second meaning, which is basically political, rather than existential-philosophical and concerns the principle of the separation of religion from the state.

The best known example of such a principle can be found in the constitution of the USA – a constitution which was written for a society which was largely established by religious communities but with no one hegemonic religion. This meaning of the secular is not unique to the American constitution, however. It has been a basic political principle, applied in different ways, of other pluralistic states, such as India and South Africa, where the motivating drive for it has not been atheist secular ideologies, but rather, like in the USA, the defence of religious and communal pluralism.

Historically in Europe, the principle of the separation of religion and the state emerged as a result of two distinct stages. The first principle to emerge was that local political authority could determine the religion of its population. The Latin phrase *Cuius regio, eius religio* (whose realm, his religion) comes from the Peace of Augsburg 1555, which ended a battle between Catholicism and Lutheranism and allowed German princes to choose whichever religion they wanted within their domain. The space for Protestantism and secularism was further enhanced after the 30 Years War of 1618 to 1648 in which large parts of Western Europe broke away from the power of the Vatican, although there is still no full separation of religion and the state in most of Europe.

While different political rulers and Christian religious leaders struggled over domination, members of non Christian minorities, most notably the Jews, were excluded from this discourse and not considered part of the political community. The debates on the emancipation of the Jews emerged at the time in which atheist and secular 'enlightenment' ideologies were gaining prominence, and eventually, after the French revolution, brought about the second stage of separation, in which individuals could be of different religious belonging and yet had full citizenship rights. The first country to emancipate the Jews and grant them equal rights on a par with gentiles was France in 1791 with Netherlands following in 1796 but it was only in 1923 that Romanian Jews were finally emancipated.

Epistemologically, therefore, the two kinds of secularism are historically connected. Politically, however, the separation of religion and the state has enabled the privatization of religion in civil society, which paradoxically could protect religious communities from atheist secularization under certain circumstances (for instance, in determining the curriculum in private religious education).

When discussing the interrelationships between racism, migration and religion, it is clear that the only political project of belonging which would be inclusive to both people from hegemonic majorities and for migrants and other members of racialized minorities would be secularist in its second meaning, which would guarantee inclusive belonging and equal respect to members of all religions as well as those who are secular in the first meaning of the term, protecting religious and ethnic minorities from homogenizing assimilationism as well as denaturalizing and decentreing assumptions concerning what constitutes culture and morality of the hegemonic majority. Nevertheless, using Marshall's (1950) definition it is 'a status bestowed on those who are full members of a community. All who possess the status are equal with respect to the rights and duties with which the status is endowed'.

I would argue such a model of secularism, as it is based on an overarching notion of citizenship, can be a basis for inclusive politics of solidarity, whether this citizenship 'community' is local, national or global (Yuval-Davis, 2011), and thus human rights normative obligations would transcend religious and social community boundaries.

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Gita Sahgal is a Founder of the Centre for Secular Space. She is a filmmaker and writer active on issues relating to secularism, feminism and human rights. During the 1980s, she made numerous documentaries for Bandung File, a Black current affairs programme on Channel 4, on topics including racism in employment, housing, policing and prisons. She researched 'Hullaballoo over the Satanic Verses', the only film that examined the 'Rushdie affair' as a debate among secular and fundamentalist Muslims, and 'Struggle or Submission' on women, secularism and the Rushdie affair. She made two films for Dispatches Channel 4: 'The Provoked Wife',

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Abel Ugba is a senior lecturer at the University of East London, London. His research and publishing activities transcend media, journalism, migration and the sociology of religion. Among his most recent publications is a monograph titled, *Shades of belonging: African Pentecostals in Twenty-first Century Ireland*, published in 2009.

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